

WESTERN Recorder

June 3, 2014

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

Volume 188, Issue 21

'Who we are'

Louisville's Sojourn Church seeks to live missional lifestyle locally, internationally



Pastors, friends and family pray for Colin and Anna Freeman during their commissioning service at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville. The couple began serving as Southern Baptist missionaries in the Horn of Africa in early 2014. "They're not being released from the church as much as they're going to a new location to see the gospel go forward through our church," missions pastor, Nathan Garth, said. (Photos by Paul Lee/IMB)

By Laura Fielding

Louisville—The majestic brick church with stained glass windows towers above a dilapidated neighborhood. It is located in a seedy section of Louisville where drug deals go down daily, prostitutes line the streets, and murders are routine. Boarded-up houses, broken glass and graffiti dot the streets in all directions.

But Sojourn Community Church is a beacon of hope for the neighborhood. Sojourn, which began as a church plant 13 years ago, decided to make a permanent home in an area where many fear to tread. Not only is the church a part of the neighborhood, but the pastor and many of the members live here as well.

Colin and Anna Freeman* moved to Louisville in 2008 to attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and prepare for international missionary work. However, Colin said they became so

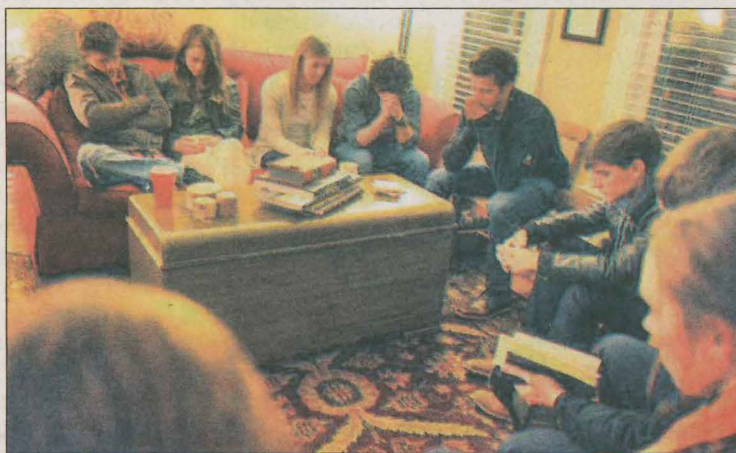
focused on what was ahead "that we really forgot to be about where we currently were."

The Freemans soon connected with Sojourn, which emphasizes that believers should not "dichotomize" their lives: separating who they are at church from who they are during the week.

"God calls us to Himself, and out of that call comes a new identity as servants," Sojourn Lead Pastor Daniel Montgomery said, "and so, service just isn't something we do, it's who we are."

The Freemans put down roots. They joined Sojourn, bought a house in the

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More than 100 community groups of about 10-15 people which meet once a week in members' homes is "how we manifest gospel living every day at Sojourn," said Colin Freeman, a Sojourn member and Southern Baptist missionary in the Horn of Africa.

Baptism, worship declines prompt prayer calls for 'renewed passion'

By Carol Pipes

Nashville, Tenn.—Southern Baptists experienced growth in the number of churches affiliated with the convention in 2013, while other key measures declined, according to the Annual Church Profile compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources, in cooperation with Baptist state conventions.

The number of churches in the Southern Baptist Convention grew by 91 to 46,125, a 0.2 percent increase over 2012. SBC churches also reported 4,789 church-type missions last year, a decline of 203 from 2012. However, some state conventions no longer use the designation of church-type mission, which may have impacted the total.

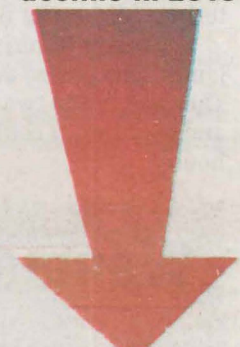
While the number of SBC churches increased, reported membership of those churches declined by 136,764, down 0.9 percent to 15.7 million members. Primary worship attendance declined 2.21 percent to an average of 5.8 million Sunday worshippers.

For the second year in a row, Southern Baptists experienced a decline in baptisms, down 1.46 percent to 310,368. Reported baptisms have declined seven of the last nine years. However, the decline in 2013 is not as sharp as the previous year's decline. In 2012 baptisms declined 5.5 percent.

"I am grieved we are clearly losing our evangelistic effectiveness," said Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources. "I continue to pray for revival and a renewed passion for the Great

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SBC areas of decline in 2013



Baptisms	-1.46%
Worship Attendance	-2.21%
Membership	-0.9%
Total receipts	-2.7%
Undesignated receipts	-1.4%
Missions Expenditures	-1.5%

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Opening her heart & home

Sunrise foster mom works hard to give abused, neglected kids 'a more normal life'

By John Shindlebower

Mount Washington—The 8-year-old boy lugs in a heavy book bag from school on a Friday afternoon and lifts it onto the kitchen table. He looks at Barbara Wolfe, sighs and makes a simple request.

"Can you help me go through this bag?" he asks.

She nods, smiles, then opens up the bag and begins helping him sort papers, but not before his arms are wrapped around her waist and she hears him say, "I love you."

Those three words are a precious reward for Wolfe, who has fostered this young boy and his three younger sisters for nearly two years. She has provided them with stability, love and a place where they know they are cared for. Wolfe said that's the role of a foster parent.

"They know that it's safe here. They feel loved and they can feel like they're in a normal family," said Wolfe, who has been fostering children for nearly a decade.

She began fostering with her husband, James, who passed away three years ago. They had raised two biological children, and they simply couldn't get used to a quiet house.

During the past decade, Wolfe has had nearly 50 children and teens in her home. Some were there only a few days or weeks. Others stayed months and even years.

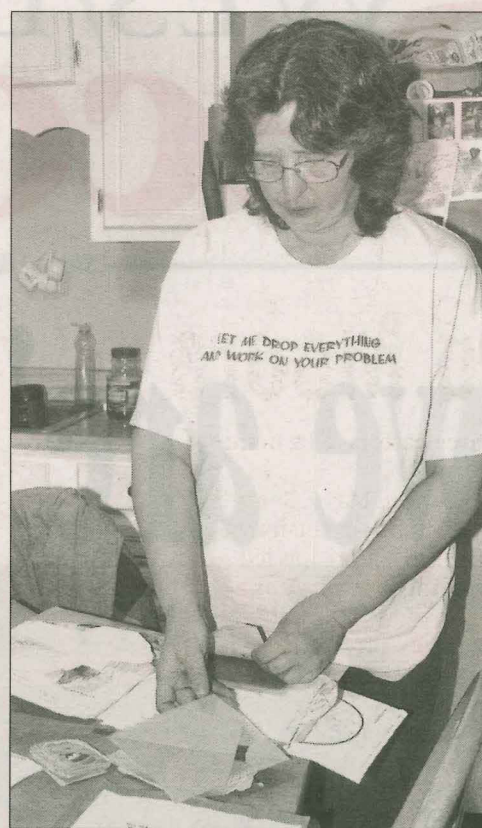
"We treated them like they were our kids. We took them on activities and every vacation we took as a family," she said.

Many are still like family, Wolfe said. She stays in contact with some of her former foster children. They call, visit and send cards. Some still consider her a mother figure and an extremely influential part of their lives.

That maternal bond may be the strongest with the four children Wolfe is caring for now. They arrived two years ago. A 6-year-old boy, two girls, ages 1 and 2, and an infant who was severely malnourished and in need of immediate care. The baby has overcome developmental issues and started walking only a few months ago.

At first, all four of the children slept in her bedroom. They feared being apart. Wolfe recalled a few sleepless nights of rocking the baby, holding another in her lap, while patting another on the back. It was all about making them feel safe and secure.

Today, however, the toddler smiles



Foster mom Barbara Wolfe sorts through her foster son's school work on a Friday afternoon. Wolfe and her late husband, James, began fostering a decade ago. She currently has a sibling group of four in her home. (Sunrise photo)

brightly as she explores every room and plays with her toys and sisters. The older sisters, both with blonde, curly hair, are happy, outgoing and expressive. Only the older brother recalls much about his previous life. He has required therapy to deal with some of the issues, and Wolfe patiently helps him work through anything that arises.

There is a strong possibility all four children may soon be eligible for adoption. Wolfe smiles at the prospect of pursuing their legal adoption and making sure they have a forever home.

"It's rewarding, and I do it for the children," she said. "There's nothing better than to take them out of a bad situation and give them a good home."

Even with those children she only fostered for a short time, Wolfe said she believes she had an impact.

"You gave them a period of time when they had a family (and) a more normal life," she said. "You just do the best you can while you have them."

Wolfe has even convinced some friends to become foster parents and is always encouraging to those considering it. But she's quick to offer advice.

"Make sure you're doing it for the children," she said.

Patience is the most important virtue. Wolfe said most kids are going to love their biological parents, regardless of past abuse or neglect. Kids are hurt, angry and confused when they lose that connection with their parents, and foster parents have to be there for the kids as they work through it.

Wolfe has fostered through Sunrise Children's Services for several years, and finds the support she gets from Sunrise invaluable. "I can call them any time, day or night."

Sunrise provides assistance when Wolfe needs it, she said, and is quick to help out with medical, therapy or other needs the children may have.

Wolfe no longer has to worry about a noise-free house, and she's perfectly happy with that, she said, especially knowing she is making a difference in children's lives.

"Children are our future. Helping them is awesome," she said. (Sunrise)

Six more Kentucky Baptists tapped for SBC roles

Baltimore—An additional six Kentucky Baptists have been selected to serve on Southern Baptist Convention committees during next week's annual meeting.

SBC President Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, appointed six Kentuckians to serve on the tellers and credentials committees at the June 10-11 annual meeting in Baltimore.

Those individuals selected for convention service are:

Donavon Burton, pastor of Beacon Hill Baptist Church in Somerset, credentials committee;

Erdie Carter, pastor of Glasgow Baptist Church, tellers committee;

Gregg Farrell, pastor of Crossland Community Church in Bowling Green, credentials committee;

Rick Hardison, pastor of Great Crossing Baptist Church in Georgetown, tellers committee;

Rick Hatley, director of missions for Pulaski Baptist Association in Somerset, tellers committee.

David Stokes, director of missions for Elkhorn Baptist Association in Lexington, credentials committee.

Those six will serve alongside fellow Kentucky Baptists **Roger Alford**, communications director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention in Louisville, and **Norm Brock**, pastor at First Baptist Church of East Bernstadt, both of whom were named to the SBC's Committee on Committees in early May.

The SBC annual meeting convenes June 10, 8 a.m., at the Baltimore Convention Center. (BP)

Correction

In the recent article, "On holy ground: Crossings dedicates new worship center at Jonathan Creek camp" (WR, May 27), it should be noted that Jeff Eaton was a founding member of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies' board of directors and Jason Ellerbrook previously served as an assistant director for Crossings Ministries.

Wanted: A child's superhero*

**Super skills not necessary*

Mount Washington—What does it take to be a foster parent?

Kenny Williams, vice president of community-based services for Sunrise Children's Services, said it starts with an understanding that children "deserve to be part of a family where they can be loved and nurtured for who they are."

It doesn't take super skills, but it does take a special heart, he said.

Williams cited five qualities a foster parent must possess in order to provide the type of setting a child needs:

- The ability to love unconditionally;
- The desire to truly listen and hear with eyes, ears and heart;
- The gift of seeing potential;
- The empowerment of a sense of humor and ability to laugh at oneself;
- The strength to be flexible in meeting a wounded heart's needs, yet the ability to remain strong.

Children enter the foster care system for a number of reasons, many of which can be devastating, Williams said. Abuse and neglect take a toll on a young person. They require stability in their lives, and foster families can provide just that.

"The ultimate goal is to transition these children back into a healthy environment with their biological families, or, if that is not possible, to assist that child in finding a permanent home through adoption," Williams said.

According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, 51 percent of children who left the foster care system nationally in 2012 were reunited with their biological parents or guardians, 21 percent were adopted, and

10 percent reached an age of independence. Most others chose to reside with other relatives or guardians.

Last fall, Sunrise celebrated its 200th successful foster-to-adopt success. Such cases are testament to the life-changing and lasting relationships foster parents afford children in need, Williams noted.

"Every success is a life made complete," he said. "They are lives full of potential that are being nurtured and supported."

Organizations like Sunrise make a priority to serve foster families with assistance and continual support. Sunrise employs a full array of counseling, training and in-home support staff members for the foster family and children.

"We are not doing our families a favor by reaching out to them; they are doing us the favor by allowing us into their lives and giving us the opportunity to know them, serve them and learn from them," Williams said.

To become a Sunrise foster parent, the following is required:

- Be at least 21 years of age;
- Have a valid driver's license;
- Have reliable transportation and automobile insurance;
- Be physically and mentally healthy;
- Maintain a safe, hazard-free home;
- Have space for an additional child in your home;
- Complete criminal background and child abuse checks;
- Be willing to complete 42 hours of pre-service training and participate in a home study.

To learn more about becoming a foster parent, visit Sunrise.org. (Sunrise)

Q & A

Trio of pastors vying for Southern Baptist Convention presidency have their say prior to upcoming election

Editor's Note: Baptist Press and the Western Recorder have edited candidates' responses for both space and clarity.

Jared Moore

The Kentucky pastor is one of three pastors to be nominated for SBC president June 10.

Moore's nomination was announced May 7. Bennie Smith, a deacon at New Salem Baptist Church in Hustonville, where Moore is pastor, will nominate him. Moore has led New Salem for the past four years, serving previously as a pastor and youth pastor in Tennessee.

Moore is currently the SBC's second vice president. He has served as a teaching assistant at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and an online adjunct professor at Mid-Continent University in Mayfield.

Moore is a regular contributor to the SBC Voices website and is the author of "10 Sacred Cows in Christianity that Need to Be Tipped" and "The Harry Potter Bible Study: Enjoying God Through the Final Four Harry Potter Movies."

Moore holds a bachelor of arts from Trinity College of the Bible, a master of arts in religion from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and a master of divinity from Southern Seminary. He is a doctor of philosophy student at Southern, majoring in systematic theology.

What influence on the Southern Baptist Convention do you pray to have during the two consecutive one-year terms that an SBC president typically serves?

MOORE: I hope to encourage all Southern Baptists to continue laboring for God's glory, especially those who serve in difficult areas for ministry. I hope to encourage young leaders and leaders of small churches to be more involved in the ministries of the Cooperative Program and in the annual convention. If I am elected, I plan to invite many small-church leaders to serve on the committees I appoint. Large church leaders will be invited as well, but there will be many new faces. Not only must the SBC president encourage all Southern Baptists, he must seek to involve all Southern Baptists in the decision-making process. There is much untapped potential in Southern Baptist churches, and I hope to invite faithful Southern Baptists to serve who have not served before.

If elected SBC president, in what ways do you envision calling Southern Baptists forward in seeking to fulfill the Great Commission?

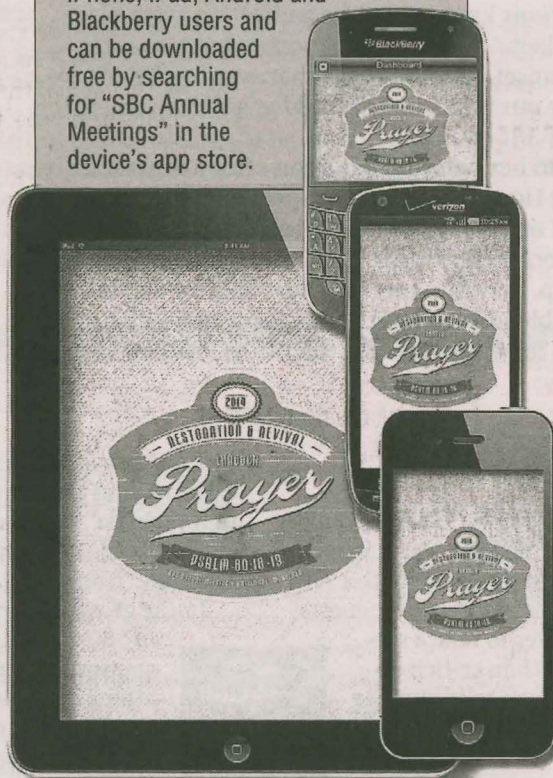
MOORE: My goal is to call all Southern Baptists to faithfulness to God as revealed in His word. We must be satisfied in God while having a healthy dissatisfaction with our tangible results. Of course, we must examine our ministry, look for other avenues to share the gospel, and seek to be more effective in our gospel presentation.

□ See Moore ... Page 8



SBC annual meeting app available

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting can stay up to date with a smartphone app that includes more than a dozen features, including schedules, maps, alerts, speakers, news feeds, the Book of Reports, the Daily Bulletin and more. The app is available for iPhone, iPad, Android and Blackberry users and can be downloaded free by searching for "SBC Annual Meetings" in the device's app store.



Dennis Manpoong Kim

The Maryland pastor is one of three people to be nominated for SBC president June 10.

Kim's nomination was announced May 20 by Dwight McKissic, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas.

Kim has led Global Mission Church of Greater Washington in Silver Spring, Md., for 23 years. The congregation, which has a predominantly Korean membership, is the largest church in the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware. Global Mission Church has produced more than 50 International Mission Board career missionaries and has planted churches in four states and South Korea.

Among Kim's leadership roles in the SBC, he is a member of the Pastors' Task Force on Evangelistic Impact and Declining Baptisms. He also served on the SBC's resolutions committee in 2012 and 2013 and has taught courses at Southern, New Orleans and Midwestern seminaries.

Kim holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Korean institutions; a master's from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Boston; a master of divinity from Southern Seminary; and a doctor of theology from Boston University.

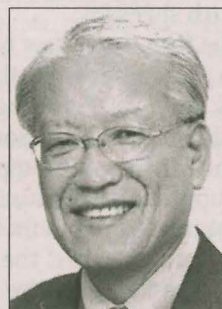
What influence on the Southern Baptist Convention do you pray to have during the two consecutive one-year terms that an SBC president typically serves?

KIM: If God gives me the opportunity to serve as SBC president, I will endeavor to accomplish the following for the glory of God: 1) to promote fellowship among all Southern Baptists of different nationalities and ethnicities so that we may show the world true unity within diversity; 2) to accomplish the Great Commission by mobilizing the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world; 3) to empower the church to prepare the way for the second coming of the Lord by equipping believers with practical and effective tools of evangelism and discipleship.

If elected SBC president, in what ways do you envision calling Southern Baptists forward in seeking to fulfill the Great Commission?

KIM: In a time when about 1,000 churches close their doors every year, I believe that the need of the hour is an evangelistic tool that is simple enough to train all church members, effective enough to ignite believers' passion for evangelism and engaging enough to captivate the hearts of the present generation. I will partner with all entity leaders to equip Christians with an evangelistic training that is simple, effective and engaging to reach this generation for Christ.

□ See Kim ... Page 8



Ronnie Floyd

The Arkansas pastor is one of three pastors to be nominated for SBC president June 10.

Floyd's nomination was announced Feb. 20 by Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Floyd has led Cross Church in north-west Arkansas for 27 years, now with three campuses statewide.

Among Floyd's SBC leadership roles, he chaired the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force that set forth wide-ranging recommendations for expanding the SBC's missions outreach. Earlier, he served as chairman of the SBC Executive Committee and was a member of the mid-1990s SBC's Program and Structure Task Force that produced The Covenant for a New Century.

Floyd has served as general editor for the updated and enhanced version of "Bible Studies for Life," LifeWay's Bible

study curriculum series. He also is the author of 10 books.

Floyd holds doctor of ministry and master of divinity degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and an undergraduate degree from Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas.

What influence on the Southern Baptist Convention do you pray to have during the two consecutive one-year terms that an SBC president typically serves?

FLOYD: If called upon to serve as SBC president, I would humbly urge Southern Baptists to join me in two vital efforts.



First, I will call upon us to cry out to God in prayer for the next great spiritual awakening in America. Second, I will do all I can to lead Southern Baptists to do all we can to accelerate our pace in completing the Great Commission. It is imperative we penetrate lostness in the world. Evangelizing, baptizing, discipling, sending and giving must be escalated.

If elected SBC president, in what ways do you envision calling Southern Baptists forward in seeking to fulfill the Great Commission?

FLOYD: I was privileged to lead the

Great Commission Resurgence Task Force. Through that report, Southern Baptists have taken important steps to penetrate the lostness of our nation and world. Accelerating the pace of completing the Great Commission demands we address the financial future of the Southern Baptist Convention and its support of all of our Great Commission ministries, especially how we can increase penetrating global lostness.

Describe ways you have led your church to be involved in Great Commission outreach through Southern Baptist cooperative missions and the Cooperative Program.

FLOYD: In the journey of leading the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force, God changed my life and ministry. Confronted with the reality of lostness, I

□ See Floyd ... Page 9

Mission Board report, part 3

The third and final part of my May 5 report to the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board:

Together
We are the KBC

Paul Chitwood

The Bible says, "It is required of stewards that they be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). In an era of diminishing resources, when times are lean and money is scarce, our faithful stewardship of what the Lord has entrusted to us is more critical than ever.

In his book, "The Great Evangelical Recession," John Dickerson sounds a startling alarm when he writes, "The generation that gives almost half of total donations began passing away about three years ago. ... Over the next 12 years, this faithful and reliable generation will pass away."

"As they do, total giving will decrease by as much as half. ... This continuing decrease will challenge the most creative and forward-thinking ministries, and it will bankrupt the unprepared."

"A great crisis of funding is swelling on the horizon—a silent tsunami that has already broken—unnoticed and miles off the coast. Most ministries are entirely unprepared."

What does this prediction mean for the KBC? Like Joseph interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh, we must warn the churches and help them prepare for years of famine.

As a Mission Board, we must keep our budgeting in check and remain light of foot as an organization, ever pressing to do more with less and stretch the missions dollars further.

One of the areas that could be hardest hit is the local association. Already many of our associations are struggling financially and in ongoing decline. The financial "tsunami" threatens to wash away some if intentional steps are not taken to preserve this strategic level of church partnership.

The window of opportunity stands open for many associations to combine their resources, thereby increasing the numbers of churches and their capacity to have a strong, missional leader as a director of missions. But this window may not remain open for very long. While each association is autonomous, the KBC is committed to assisting but never interfering in their work.

In these and many other areas, the sand beneath our feet is shifting as wave after wave of cultural change comes crashing against the church. But, thanks be to God, the house of God has been built upon the rock, and even the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

As for our work as Kentucky Baptists, let us be as wise as that builder and keep all of our work firmly established upon the Chief Cornerstone and the word of God. And let us be as faithful in our stewardship of the work to which God has called us as the servant who was put in charge of his master's household and, upon the master's return, was found carrying out that charge.

Paul Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Celebrating a silver anniversary today

Today is a very significant milestone for Michelle and me. Twenty-five years ago on June 3 we met each other at the altar of West Main Baptist Church in Danville, Va., and said, "I do."

A handbell choir from my home church in Denmark—that's in South Carolina, not Scandinavia—made the long trip to Virginia for the ceremony. Bells pealed as we walked back down the aisle hand-in-hand as a couple, but I barely heard them over my pounding heart, flooded with sheer joy.

I still recall the first time I saw her. No, I won't pretend to remember what she was wearing that day, but I was hanging out in a friend's room down the hall at Southern Seminary, watching him as he supposedly was repairing her bike. I say "supposedly" because she had stopped by to see why it was taking so long to fix it, as I recollect. She caught my eye! Leaning against the doorway, I coyly remarked, "Who was that girl? I've got to meet her."

Before my friend could answer, another classmate, Mike, spoke up from across the hall, "That's Michelle. She's my girlfriend's roommate." How convenient, I mused. "Do you want me to get her to introduce you two?" he volunteered. "Well, Yea!" A week or so later he and his girlfriend followed through, and so began a new course of study not on the curriculum.

I wish I could say we hit it off immediately, but that wasn't the case. We went out a few times before she went home that summer. It wasn't until she returned for the fall semester, though, and we went for a stroll around the waterworks' pools on Frankfort Avenue in St. Matthews. (Most seminarians know the place well.) It's a great place for casual walkers—and it can be a somewhat romantic spot around sunset. At least it was that evening. There, we began to sense our relationship could grow into something special.

I proposed to her before graduation after a fantastic dinner at the Galt House. (She had to expect something was coming.) I still remember her Dad's response when I later asked, old-school style, for her hand in marriage. First, he asked in a deep, gravelly voice that sort of grew on you, "Will you be able to keep her in the lifestyle to which she's accustomed?" Yes, sir, I replied. Truthfully, I had no idea

what he meant ... but I'd learn. Then he added, "She has a mind of her own. If she loves you and wants to marry you, that's good enough." I now realize the veracity of both those statements.

She does have a mind of her own, she won't deny. Moreover, her love has indeed proven time and again more than enough—so much better than I deserve. We've raised a great daughter and son together—one in college, the other a year away. We've watched many dance and piano recitals, band concerts, baseball and basketball games, violin practices, tennis and golf matches. We've lived in three cities in as many states—in a duplex, two apartments, two townhomes and two houses. We've cared for three dogs, four cats and six or seven fish, and we've killed more flowers than I care to count (neither of us has a green thumb, though I do pretend to grow roses).

Like everyone, we've weathered our share of rough storms—personal losses, deaths of a brother, father and grandparents, and life-threatening illness and frightening accidents. But we've also rejoiced in marriages of siblings, births of nephews (no nieces, however), and remarriage of her mother. And we've taken some great family vacations along the way.

We've been partners in ministry, too. Through the years, we've attended six churches—four where she served on staffs as a minister to children, youth or education, and three of which I served as a deacon. She's been my constant support and strength as I served three Baptist newspapers, and I've tried to reciprocate the blessing as she completed post-graduate studies and pursued her dream of a counseling career. She, in turn, provided stability for our busy family while I worked toward a doctorate.

At our wedding 25 years ago, I read a poem that alluded to 1 Corinthians 13, which concludes with an affirmation of three things that endure: faith, hope and love. These comprise the anchor of agape love and of Christian marriage, undergirded by a covenant of faith in God and commitment to one another, by a shared hope in their future and of eternity, and by an abiding love that sustains them through all our days. "But the greatest of these is love." Indeed.

problem," "a leadership problem," "a disciple-making problem," "a next-generation problem" and "a celebration problem"—all accurate target issues—but we also have "a doctrinal problem."

In the growth years of membership in SBC-related churches, as a youngster growing up in church, attending associational activities and knowing our associational missionary well, I remember that Baptist churches baptized all who came to join from non-Baptist backgrounds. The fact that others might immerse at times, but also practice sprinkling and pouring as baptism invalidated even their believers' immersions, because of the lack of doctrinal authority based in truth. Those who only immersed professing believers, but also taught the possibility of loss of

salvation also invalidated their immersions, as we were taught.

While the word "Baptist" is not a "magic formula," the doctrine on which the older Baptists' actions was based certainly did not restrict our growth in those years. It must be noted, whether the task force simply overlooked the fact or whether the omission was deliberate, that decline in total baptisms has come as we have accepted more and more non-Baptist "baptisms," thereby declaring to all that we care more about getting folks on our rolls than we do about the truth on which our actions should be based.

Matthew 28:18-20 still gives us our "marching orders." Let's try following the "all things" Jesus gave as commands and see what God can do.

Charles Blair
Clinton

Power play

Regarding the story, "Board reaffirms request made of A&I trustees last year" (WR, May 13): No matter how you slice it, when an agency "requests" affiliated agencies to take a specific action and then criticizes those agencies for declining that request, it's a power play, period.

Marshall Hacker
Covington



Missing factor

The lengthy report on declining baptisms (WR, May 20) addresses five specific problems as possible causes of the continuing slide. One factor is omitted, intentionally or by oversight.

We not only have "a spiritual

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God uses interruptions in life for His purposes

By Sharon Yeats

NOTE: This column emerged from a mission trip to the Philippines in late April prior to surgery for stage 3 melanoma that Sharon Yeats was facing in early May.

The Lord is beginning a new work in my heart about how I view interruptions in my life. Little did I know when I bought a Bible study book by Priscilla Shirer—"Jonah: Navigating a Life Interrupted"—that I would be in the middle of a health interruption several months later. But God's timing is always perfect.

The book of Jonah, as Shirer recalls, is about a man whose life was interrupted by God. Jonah was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. God would give him a word, and then he would share it with the people. In 2 Kings 14:25, King Jeroboam set the border of Israel according to the word of the Lord that Jonah received. Jonah lived in a prosperous Israel. Because he foretold good things to the people, he was probably popular, highly respected and appreciated.

Jonah's interruption began in Jonah 1:1 when "the Word of the Lord" came to him: God was changing Jonah's priorities and instructing him to go in an entirely different direction. He would be giving up his plans and the comfort of the familiar to go to Nineveh.

We have the privilege of reading the entire book of Jonah at one time, so we see all the events laid out at once. But Jonah didn't have that opportunity. If he could have read all four chapters, he would have seen that what he saw as a huge interruption in his life was really an invitation from God to make a huge difference in the lives of people in Nineveh.

Misconceptions about disability

By Don Spencer

Disability insurance is often overlooked. What would happen to your family if you were no longer able to work? Some misconceptions about disability are common and can be costly:

Social Security disability will cover my expenses and start quickly. Qualifying for social security disability can be difficult and time-consuming. It is generally for people who are severely disabled and often takes months for approval. If you can continue to work, you are not likely to be approved.

Most disabilities are caused by accidents. Only about 10 percent of disabilities are caused by injuries or accidents. The rest result from illnesses.

My family will be OK financially if I were disabled. About 71 percent of Americans are at immediate financial risk after missing only one paycheck. Costs related to medical problems contribute to almost two-thirds of personal bankruptcy. Loss of pay from an extended disability means you'll likely be among those with financial risk. This risk can, to some degree, be protected through disability insurance.

Most disabilities are short term. The average disability lasts about two and a half years. One in eight disabilities will last more than five years.

My disability will most likely be covered by workers' compensation. Fewer than 5 percent of disability-causing incidents are work related. Most do not qualify for workers' compensation.

Others will provide for my family until I'm back on my feet. Family, church members, neighbors and close friends often pitch in, but these resources are already stretched thin, making it unlikely they can sustain the level of support you'll need for an extended period.

It won't happen to me. In a recent survey, 64 percent of people believe they are highly unlikely to become disabled. But the reality is different. A significant number will become disabled during their working careers.

If you become disabled and need to spend time away from work, disability insurance replaces some of your income. It is a way to protect your income and your family's financial future. Think of it as "income insurance."

Don Spencer is a certified financial planner and is a church financial benefits consultant with the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

VIEWPOINT

The Filipino people we have been ministering to had a huge interruption in their lives by Typhoon Yolanda. But as a result, they have experienced God's love through the helping hands of Missouri Baptists. As we have shared with them, many of them have received Christ. The storm and the response of Southern Baptists from Missouri and other states have been God's transformational instruments.

When the strategy for the disaster relief project was initiated, we were planning to assemble and distribute water filtration systems to the people, but the freighter carrying the filtration parts went down in rough seas. Obviously, when we heard the news of no water filtration units, that was an interruption.

However, we shifted to construction. After all, the first word on mission trips is "flexibility." So, we began restoring their homes and painting the school. The result was we had more direct contact with people, and many have received Christ.

I was excited about the plan to give the people clean water and disappointed when that plan was changed. However, God was more interested in them receiving Living Water.

I don't know where this medical interruption in my life will take me, but I want to view it not as an "interruption," but as "God's intervention" in my life for His purposes.

As Priscilla Shirer states in her study of Jonah, "When we signed up to follow Christ, we automatically signed up to be open to divine interventions—God interruptions. While His call might not always be convenient or easy, responding to it should not just be a duty but our joy."

Living a life devoted to Christ doesn't mean we don't have aspirations or that we shouldn't make plans, but it does mean that we should be open for God to intervene. We should hold our dreams and plans in our hands and not in our hearts. We should be open to the divine interventions that come our way to mold us in His image. We can trust Him to have the best plan for us. (BP)

Sharon Yeats is the wife of John Yeats, executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention recording secretary.

Install the wisdom

By David Garrard

"Install the wisdom. The uncertainty of the road can be defeated with one ancient weapon."

These statements appear on the website for RoadNinja, a GPS app that provides access to information on road conditions, gas prices, directions, restaurants and attractions. "Install the wisdom of RoadNinja and never travel alone again."

The first time I saw a RoadNinja billboard, I thought of parenting. As parents, we are responsible for installing wisdom into our children's hearts to help them navigate life's roads.

The Bible echoes this idea in Deuteronomy 6:6-7: "These commandments ... are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road."

Road wisdom encompasses a lot of things. Ultimately, the best we can do for our children involves helping them become wise in the ways of God. Unfortunately, there is no app or GPS that can be purchased to do the job for us. So, how do we install the wisdom?

Church can help. Make sure your children are regularly involved in Bible learning through Sunday School, VBS and similar programs. Encourage their spiritual growth just as you do their mental, athletic or musical prowess. Practice the advice found in Deuteronomy. Talk with your children about God and about how He wants us to live. Show them that life is better when it is lived according to God's commands.

Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Remember that your example influences your children more than any other single factor. What you say must be backed up by how you live.

The uncertainty of life can be defeated through the ancient wisdom of the scriptures and the truths they contain. Install the wisdom and rest easy knowing your children will never travel any road of life alone.

David Garrard is minister to children at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville.



Associational missions & 'authentic' Baptists

By Tony Hough

During May and June, Baptist associations both promote and celebrate associational missions. Baptist associations first appeared in England in the 1600s and 1700s. Churches connected with one another because they possessed too few resources for their challenging journey. What, then, constituted these "authentic Baptists"?

Authentic Baptists sought fellowship

The renowned Baptist historian, Robert Torbet, in "A History of the Baptists," quoted William Whitley, who wrote that Baptists, "from the beginning were not 'independents'; they always sought for fellowship."

Authentic Christ-followers need other believers. Whether as families, faith families or associations, authentic Baptists long for shared life with like-minded persons.

One thread which Baptists wove into their associationalism emerged from the period of the English Civil War. Oliver Cromwell's people organized "for political action and protection of communities against plunder." Each regiment sent representatives to council gatherings.

One unit of Irish soldiers, comprised primarily of Baptists, disbanded in 1653. They "transferred this plan to church organization as they sought to maintain fellowship between their lonely congregations ... by correspondence and frequent meeting of delegates."

Even more remarkably, "These Irish associations sought contact with Welsh, Scotch and English Baptists who were attempting a similar type of inter-church communication," Torbet wrote.

Authentic Baptists shared resources

When congregations needed ordained preachers to lead them, they sought those leaders from sister

churches. From sister bodies they also sought certified leaders to ordain and mentor inexperienced pastors. However, our Western Hemisphere individualism saturates how we live out being Baptists.

In 2014, personal rights, personal resources and personal agendas overshadow authentic Baptist life. Simply said, we are too comfortable for our own good. We think we do not need others.

Even if that were not a problem, a corollary has become a millstone around our necks: Since we don't need others, we conclude that they should not expect us to be their helpers and family. Authentic Baptists know better.

Authentic Baptists focused on common purposes

Early English Baptists realized that reaching their communities with the good news could best be achieved by cooperation. Authentic Baptists of that era sidestepped the temptation to exult themselves. Their primary goals were to glorify their Lord, not themselves; and to serve others, not themselves.

Competition between churches and pastors in this era must deeply grieve the Lord. Authentic Baptists focus their attention on Jesus and others.

As Owensboro's Third Baptist Church notes on its sign, "Jesus is first. Others are second. We are third." Can we, reflecting authentic spirituality, claim that we do not need one another to achieve Jesus' purposes? Authentic Baptists never model such indifference.

As we consider again what Baptists are and do, let us share ourselves with our sister congregations. Let us share fellowship, resources and purpose with one another. Authentic Baptists create church and associational life around such mutual concerns. Authentic Baptists always have.

Tony Hough is director of missions for Shelby Baptist Association.

VIEWPOINT

Louisville's Sojourn: Joy & tears abound at 'sending church'



Each missionary from Sojourn Community Church in Louisville has three "adoptive community groups" and an advocate team of about 10 of the missionaries' closest friends to provide connection and care. "We are the connector between the church and them being abroad," said Sam Gafford (right), advocate team leader for Colin and Anna Freeman. (Photos by Paul Lee/IMB)

By Laura Fielding

Louisville—As Colin and Anna Freeman* spent their last few weeks in the United States, the question they heard most often from family and friends was: "Are you excited?"

It was just before Christmas 2013 and they were on the verge of leaving to serve as missionaries to the Horn of Africa.

"I didn't know how to answer that" the first few times he heard it, Colin admitted.

There's nothing exciting about telling your father-in-law you are taking his daughter halfway around the world, Colin said, or telling your parents that your future children will not grow up in the presence of their U.S. families. Nor is there anything exciting about telling your friends they won't be part of your everyday lives for many years.

"I think that you have to put it into perspective: What God has done for us has been beautiful and that every day we have been given more of a longing to be with the people" they are called to serve, Colin said.

"I think it is exciting, but it's also very sobering."

God equipped the couple for missionary service through Sojourn Community Church in Louisville. Although the Freemans knew God was calling them to become missionaries and spend their lives ministering to others, that kind of obedience comes at a cost—for both the Freemans and Sojourn.

Sojourn emphasizes living in community and being on mission at home. The Freemans planted roots in the church through first leading and then coaching community groups—small groups that meet once a week in homes to discuss the Bible and "live life" together.

But living life together can be tough. "If you really are obedient to what you're being called to, then you get really deep into people's lives and you see how messy they are, and they see how messy you are," Anna said.

It is hard work to talk about sin and be there for others who are struggling with sins, she noted, and it is especially difficult to be constantly available to sup-

port and talk with people.

"It's exhausting to do after working 10 hours and doing laundry, and at 11 o'clock getting a phone call," Anna said. "But that's what we're called to do—that's what the word calls us to do."

Though the calls can be inconvenient, Anna said she is thankful when she answers them.

"There's so much freedom that the gospel gives us in community, that we can be with one another and know each other's struggles and still have the same love that Christ has given us that we can love others," she said. "You get to see how He moves and changes people."

As a "sending church," Sojourn lives sacrificially to send its members to the nations, said Nathan Garth*, pastor of global missions.

"Everything great in life calls for sacrifice," Sojourn Lead Pastor Daniel Montgomery noted. "Great mission in the local church calls for great sacrifice, and we resolve to sacrifice for the mission of God, really for the joy that's set before us."

"I mean, it's a sacrifice of time, it's a sacrifice of resources. We have chosen to be deliberate about sacrificing our best and brightest to the mission field."

Like the early church in the New Testament, Sojourn experiences the laughter and joy of sending out missionaries, Montgomery said, but also the tears and pain of seeing those they love being sent far away.

"It's difficult when you have to say goodbye to friends and family for the sake of the gospel," Garth added.

As Sojourn releases elders and leaders to plant churches among the nations, one would think the number of leaders would decrease, but in reality Sojourn has seen an increase.

"That's not math I understand—that's God's math," Garth said. "But as we're releasing people, we're seeing multiplication happen, even with our own body."

For the Freemans, the sacrifice also has been worth it.

"I just have so much joy in getting" to see Christ change people, Anna said, "and I'm really looking forward to seeing that happen among a people who don't know who Jesus is." (BP)

*Names changed for security reasons.

Sojourn

Continued from page 1

surrounding neighborhood, graduated from seminary and got jobs in the city, waiting on God's timing for overseas service.

Nathan Garth*, pastor of global missions, described Sojourn as a "sending church" that encourages its members to "live sent."

"The concept is as Christ's followers, the commission He gave to us is that all believers are to go out to proclaim the gospel, to disciple new believers and to see multiplication happen," Garth said. "And that's what we want to see—our church here, every member to take ownership that they live sent."

"If we're not moving outward," Montgomery added, "something is fundamentally wrong with our spirituality and our understanding of Jesus."

That particularly resonated with Colin and Anna, who had wrestled for several years about committing to serve overseas until God began to give them a new perspective on living missionally through Sojourn.

"You're not going to be effective missionally cross-culturally if you're not effective across the street, and that is evident in the way they preach," Colin said.

"In order for you to be effective, you have to be present, you have to be in people's lives, you have to be living life with others in the way that draws you closer to the Father through gospel community."

"And so to be missional doesn't mean it has to be glamorous or big," he said. "It just means it has to be intentional."

That has been Sojourn's philosophy from the beginning. More than a decade ago, founding members asked themselves tough questions, Montgomery said, such as, "Is church more than just an activity once a week?" and "Is mission more than just sending missionaries overseas?"

They found that many of the people they interacted with daily in Louisville were "interested in our spirituality," the pastor recalled, "and who we were and the way of life that we're about, but they had no interest whatsoever in the church."

"And so we wanted a place where people could really explore authentic biblical Christianity."

Continuous support

Part of "moving outward" at Sojourn means sending workers overseas. And the church's relationship with its missionaries is comprehensive, providing pastoral care, financial support, encouragement, accountability, networking and strategy support.

"We want to send and never let go," Garth said. "That 'never letting go' piece is not a negative thing—the idea is continually holding on to relationship."

Once Sojourn's missionaries are on the field, three "adoptive community groups" stay connected by sending care packages and communicating regularly

through email or Skype.

An advocate team of about 10 of the missionaries' closest friends meets regularly to pray for them, is their first contact if they need something and also may travel to visit the missionaries overseas.

These influences "encouraged" Anna, she said, reminding her of what it means to affirm that, "Yes, we want to support you and enable you and prepare you to go."

Preparing to go

The Freemans will take overseas the lessons they learned while immersing themselves at Sojourn.

"One of the key things about being a sojourner is to live in community," Garth said. "So, we gather on Sundays and then we scatter to community groups, to small groups, throughout the week."

Sojourn has more than 100 community groups of about 10-15 people who meet once a week in someone's home.

Colin said they focus on being part of the community in which they live and making those relationships work. That mindset extends to each of the four locations where Sojourn now is active—two urban churches (which includes the main campus), a suburban campus and a rural site.

Encouraging people to live missionally is not like starting a program, Garth said. It's more difficult. It's changing individuals' worldviews to the idea that "we are all on mission, we are all to be Christ's disciples to the nations—and our neighbors are included in that."

Colin and Anna started out as community group leaders and then transitioned to coaches to mentor several community group leaders.

"That, I think, just as much as anything, prepared us for cross-cultural living and understanding how people work and understanding how sin relates to people's lives on a regular basis," Colin noted.

Sojourn's "School of Missions," a yearlong development program focused on international missions, also was key in preparing Colin and Anna.

Participants "get the ins and outs about what does it mean to cross a culture, how do we communicate the gospel in a contextual way, all the things you can imagine that go along with being an international missionary both across the waters and here in our own city," Garth said, noting that Louisville is home to about 80,000 internationals.

The Freemans were sent out by Sojourn as missionaries to the Horn of Africa in early 2014. The church currently has 20 missionary units (singles or families) serving in several strategic locations overseas and many more in the church's assessment and development process.

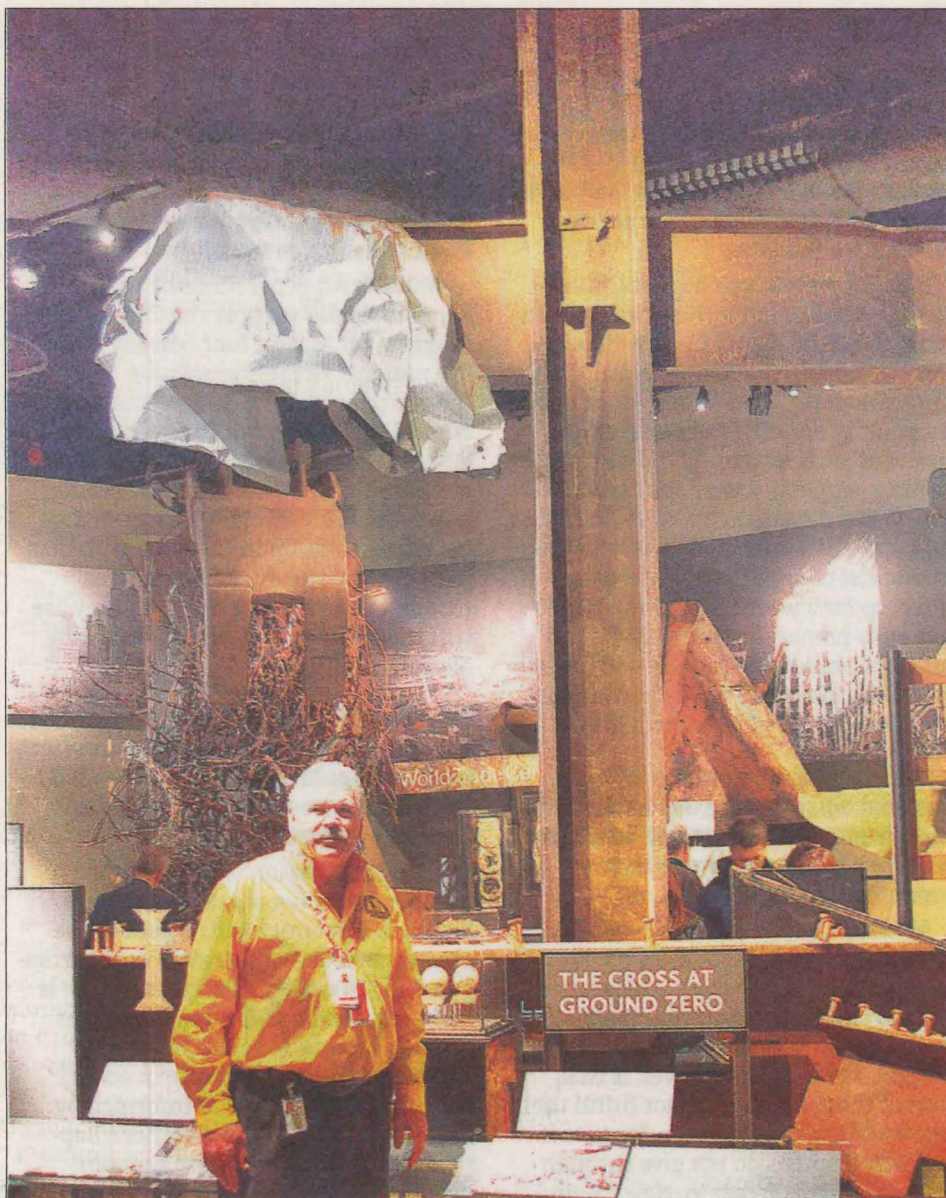
"This is not because we're anything special; it's the opposite actually," Garth said. "We've made a lot of mistakes, ... but by God's grace, He's doing something through our people." (BP)

*Names changed for security reasons.

"If we're not moving outward, something is fundamentally wrong with our spirituality and our understanding of Jesus."



Daniel Montgomery



Above: Oklahoma's Disaster Relief Director Sam Porter spent the day reliving Sept. 11 and the days that followed, when he attended an invitation-only event at the new National September 11 Memorial Museum in New York. Porter spent a total of 39 days in Lower Manhattan providing relief in the wake of the attacks. **Right:** Photos of those killed in the Sept. 11 attacks take up an entire wall of the museum. (Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma photos)



Disaster relief leader moved by visit to new 9/11 museum

By Bob Nigh

New York—Oklahoma's disaster relief director Sam Porter spent an emotional day at the National September 11 Memorial Museum during a special preview of the facility in New York.

National disaster relief leaders with the North American Mission Board asked Porter to represent the Southern Baptist Convention at the invitation-only event May 19. The museum officially opened May 21.

The preview days were open to first responders, rescue and recovery workers and survivors and relatives of those who died in the attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993 and 2001, the Pentagon in Washington, and those who aboard United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania.

Porter spent a total of 39 days in Lower Manhattan providing relief in the wake of the terrorist attacks nearly 13 years ago.

The attacks came in the days when disaster relief chaplaincy was in its infancy and had not yet been organized nationally. Mickey Caison, then NAMB's disaster relief director, called Porter after American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 hit the Twin Towers. Caison asked Porter to collect a team of chaplains and get to Ground Zero as soon as possible.

The Oklahoma team carried with them the experiences of ministering to people impacted by the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995.

Since Oklahoma Baptists' response to the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001, they now have nearly 290 endorsed disaster relief chaplains. Nationally, there are about 700, according to NAMB statistics.

Porter's group of five chaplains arrived in New York three days after the towers fell and manned the temporary morgue at Ground Zero for about two weeks.

His reflections of the memorial plaza and museum stem mainly from those first few days of ministry.

"I think the biggest thing about the museum is that it truly tells the whole story of what happened at 9/11," Porter said. "I believe my grandkids can go there 10 years from now and if they don't know anything about it, they can walk through that museum and know everything that took place, from the actions of national leaders to seeing everything that I experienced and knew firsthand."

Porter got emotional as he described walking with other visitors through the museum.

"We walked through with firefighters

who were there, and I saw people who worked in the towers and got out alive," he said. "I heard a guy describing to his wife about where he was (in the building) and where he parked that day. I saw lots of family members sitting in the video rooms. Even some watched the videos of people jumping from the buildings."

"That probably got me more than anything, family members who lost a loved one," Porter said. "Thirteen years later, I'm still pretty tender on that because we worked the morgue, and they brought the bodies out and we saw hundreds of body bags come through."

"And, seeing some of these firemen—who lost 343 brothers—that's still pretty emotional for me."

Porter said he sees his service in New York as a milestone in his life.

"That has been a major part of my life and ministry, and so I feel honored to get to go on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention," he said. "I was thrilled that they asked us to go, because our leadership called us to be the first to respond to coordinate the chaplaincy, not knowing what that would be. But when we got there, God knew what we needed to do."

The museum includes a total of 100,000 square feet of exhibition space and is located near Ground Zero, where the World Trade Center stood.

The original complex consisted of seven buildings, spanning 16 acres. About 50,000 people worked at the complex, with another 40,000 passing through daily.

Porter said he learned a lot about the World Trade Center from the exhibits in the museum.

"I learned more about some of the flights, even down to the terrorists," he said. "It had a display about the radical Muslim agenda, and I was pleased to see that they did not shy away from that, trying to be politically correct. They showed exactly how Al Qaeda expanded and what they're doing. They were very fair about that."

Porter said he was disappointed with only one aspect of the museum.

"They never said anything about our part in the whole event," he said. "We helped prepare 1.29 million meals from the first week of October with the Salvation Army until the landfill closed in July 2002."

"We had a Southern Baptist team there every single day, ... and every state got to send teams."

Volunteers from 32 SBC state conventions participated, contributing 20,842 "volunteer days." SBC disaster relief volunteers served 842 children in child care centers, and cleaned 643 apartments during the 319-day response. (BP)

ACP statistics

Continued from page 1

Commission in our churches. May God renew all of us, including me, with a greater heart for the lost."

Commenting on the annual summary, SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page cited Old Testament prophet Amos: "Woe to you who are at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1).

"That warning in the Book of Amos is a clear call to the people of God who have lowered their guard, relaxed their vigilance and reduced their commitment and passion for the things of God," Page said. "That very same thing can be said of our modern-day churches as we yet again see a disappointing decline in our ability to reach our continent for Christ."

Page said he is thankful for an increase in the number of churches, but lamented a "lack of passion for reaching people for Christ. The numbers of people in our continent are increasing dramatically while our evangelistic efforts are failing in many places and in many ways."

"God help us realize the great needs that are before us and the great opportunities that are there. Lord, forgive us for being at ease in Zion," Page said.

Giving and missions expenditures

Total and undesignated church receipts reported through the ACP decreased 2.7 percent and 1.4 percent

respectively. Total mission expenditures reported by churches also declined by 1.5 percent in 2013. However, reported "Great Commission Giving" increased 4.5 percent from \$744 million in 2012 to \$777 million in 2013. This is only the third year churches have been asked to report "Great Commission Giving" as a reflection of each church's financial gifts to local, state and national SBC missions causes.

Giving through Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program is not included in the ACP annual report because those totals are more accurately available through Baptist state conventions and the SBC Executive Committee, which processes the missions gifts. CP gifts forwarded from state conventions for SBC causes in fiscal year 2012-13 were 1.92 percent below the previous year. CP gifts received by the Executive Committee for the first seven months of the 2013-14 fiscal year were reported to be 0.58 percent behind the same period the year before.

While several categories of the ACP reflected a decline in 2013, totals for various categories were affected by the fact that not all state conventions asked churches for the information in a way that would allow proper year-to-year comparison.

Statistics for the national ACP are reported by individual churches to their local associations and/or state conventions. National totals are compiled and released after all cooperating state conventions have reported. (BP)

Graduation day

54 more Oneida Baptist Institute grads going to take on the world

May 17 was a great day of celebration on our campus. Even still, I couldn't help but be a little sad, because I knew it was the last time I would see many of those young people.

On the morning before the graduation service, I pulled down the alumni history that sits on the shelf in my office. I looked at the names from my 1993 graduating class. Many names I remembered, but some I did not. I wondered what all of my classmates with whom I have lost touch are now doing. I encouraged our graduates to keep in touch with one another. They now have technologies other generations did not have that will enable them to easily do just that.

For the very first time, we live streamed both the baccalaureate and graduation services. They can be viewed during the next couple of weeks at Livestream.com by searching "Oneida Baptist Institute."

Fifty-four young people walked across the chapel stage to receive their diplomas. At our baccalaureate service, our speaker from the Elgin Foundation in Knoxville, Tenn., challenged our young people to live a life of service and make their "dash" count. The "dash" is that mark between our birth and death dates on our eventual tombstones that represent our lives.

Please join me in praying that our young people meet this world head on and make their "dash" count for the cause of Christ.

Of the 54 graduates, 48 indicated

they know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Many of those 48 came to know Jesus right here on this campus, and many of them had their walks strengthened through our discipleship programs.

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

Of the 54 graduates, 48 earned advanced diplomas, the most in school history. Those students did a little extra in math, science and language.

Many of our kids will go on to college; some will join the workforce; others will join the armed forces. Hopefully all will live for Christ or, at minimum, live their lives in a way that serves others.

Many tears were shed May 17. There were many smiles, hugs, shared moments and goodbyes. Our principal challenged our graduates to cherish the memories made at Oneida and to remember their favorite moments with their classmates just as he did in 1982. The Oneida bond is unlike any other.

Addresses were given by our class president, salutatorian and valedictorian. Each did a great job in his or her own way. Scholarships, awards and diplomas were awarded. Just as quickly as people from all parts of the world swooped in to see their young people graduate, they were then gone, and our campus became unusually quiet and somewhat empty.

I pray our graduates will make a difference in the world and, more importantly, the kingdom of God. Thank you for helping us put those graduates in the position to do just that.

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, a Christian boarding and day school. Website: oneidaschool.org. Phone: (606) 847-4111

Giving back

Faithful servants provide financial assistance for those called by God

I recently returned from a memorial service for a good friend of Clear Creek, Robert Johnson, whose wife, Trula, had preceded him in death. One of the great privileges of my position is being able to meet wonderful Christian servants of the Lord who are committed to giving back out of the abundance of the Lord's blessings. Robert and Trula Johnson were examples of such a commitment.

I was able to visit with them multiple times and shared many telephone conversations with Mr. Johnson. One thing was abundantly clear: They had a deep burden for those who had answered the call to ministry.

Their mindset was that God had blessed them tremendously, and they wanted to give back to the Lord by helping men and women who had surrendered their lives to the ministry.

I am so thankful for Kentucky Baptist Foundation President Barry Allen and Trust Counsel Laurie Valentine who came alongside the Johnsons in 2000 to develop ways to help them in financially assisting deserving ministerial students.

With the KBF's help, the Johnsons were able to establish a perpetual

scholarship endowment for Clear Creek students in memory of Mr. Johnson's parents. This endowment was the remainder beneficiary of several charitable trusts the foundation

helped the Johnsons establish.

Because of their commitment to giving back out of the Lord's blessings, the Johnsons' legacy will continue to assist ministerial students at Clear Creek through this established scholarship endowment.

Bob and Trula Johnson were real-life world travelers. They had literally lived all over the world through Mr. Johnson's

career. I remember many times visiting in his home when he would point out a certain object that came from a specific part of the world—and he would always have a story to tell about the piece. But no matter how far the Johnsons traveled or how much world experience they had, they never forgot about their commitment to give back to kingdom work.

I encourage you to take advantage of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation's services, so you or someone you know, like the Johnsons, can prepare to give back.

Donnie Fox is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, 300 Clear Creek Road, Pineville, KY 40977; toll-free: (866) 340-3196; ccbbc.edu; email: dfox@ccbbc.edu.

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

Moore

Continued from page 1

Describe ways you have led your church to be involved in Great Commission outreach through Southern Baptist cooperative missions and the Cooperative Program.

MOORE: New Salem Baptist Church participated in Find It Here two years in a row through Lincoln County Baptist Association and the Kentucky Baptist Convention. We went door to door in our community handing out copies of the Gospel of John, sharing the gospel and inviting people to Easter Sunday worship. When a tornado hit West Liberty, in 2013, the KBC connected us to a Southern Baptist church there. We took a group up for a weekend mission trip to help with homes for families who had lost their homes. We worked with one of the family members on his house and were able to share Christ with him.

In what ways do you see the SBC president coming alongside leaders of the convention's entities and seminaries to undergird and encourage their respective ministries?

MOORE: The leaders of our entities have an enormous responsibility. My hope is to encourage their endeavors to be good stewards of Southern Baptist resources for fulfilling the Great Commission. The reality, however, is that most of these entities cannot fulfill their responsibilities to Southern Baptists if Southern Baptists do not give through the Cooperative Program. New Salem Baptist Church believes in CP. We give 16 percent of our undesignated receipts

through CP. I hope to encourage Southern Baptist churches to continue giving and to increase their giving.

If elected SBC president, how do you foresee speaking to the next generation of Southern Baptist leaders to be involved in expanding the convention's Great Commission work?

MOORE: All generations of Southern Baptists should support the Cooperative Program for at least four reasons: 1) the "all nations" Great Commission (IMB); 2) the church-planting, disciple-making biblical model (NAMB); 3) confessionally biblical training (BF&M) by top Christian scholars and seasoned pastors (seminaries); 4) the confessionally Southern Baptist representation in the marketplace of ideas (ERLC). The ministries funded through CP are not perfect, but they are still the best way to support worldwide disciple making.

What do you see as the key moral issues of our day and how can the SBC president represent Southern Baptists as the U.S. increasingly moves away from Judeo-Christian values?

MOORE: Abortion is the greatest moral issue facing not only our country but all of humanity and, arguably, the greatest evil our country has ever participated in. Currently, biblical marriage is being attacked on all sides. Christians should continue to unashamedly say what the Bible says and vote in accord with their consciences as informed by God through Scripture. Southern Baptists, however, must realize that our neighbors will not be transformed by government or civil laws. Our neighbors need the gospel. (BP)

Kim

Continued from page 1

Describe ways you have led your church to be involved in Great Commission outreach through Southern Baptist cooperative missions and the Cooperative Program.

KIM: I believe in the power of collaboration. That is the reason I have always led the Global Mission Church to be faithful in its participation in the Cooperative Program. In the year 2013, Global Mission Church gave \$93,600 to CP. In addition, it has given \$13,061 for Lottie Moon and \$11,396 for Annie Armstrong. Global Mission Church is also active in its involvement with the Council of Korean Southern Baptist Churches. Our church invested \$25,520 last year to send short-term mission teams around the world. With a steadfast commitment to world missions, our church is training and sending more than 10 short-term mission teams every year, and it has produced more than 50 career missionaries working for the IMB.

In what ways do you see the SBC president coming alongside leaders of the convention's entities and seminaries to undergird and encourage their respective ministries?

KIM: First of all, I would like to seek opportunities to (1) meet personally the leaders of the IMB, NAMB, LifeWay Christian Resources, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, GuideStone and the convention's six seminaries; (2) listen to them; (3) learn from them; (4) understand each others' roles; and (5) endeavor

to positively undergird and encourage their respective ministries as one great team for the kingdom of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If elected SBC president, how do you foresee speaking to the next generation of Southern Baptist leaders to be involved in expanding the convention's Great Commission work?

KIM: My vision is to challenge and train the next generation of Southern Baptist leaders so that they can truly mobilize the whole church for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Whereas Christians generally agree that it is imperative for all believers to share the gospel, few Christians actually evangelize in their daily lives. For the purpose of equipping my whole congregation to fulfill the Great Commission, I have devised a tool of evangelism and discipleship called Anothren Training.

What do you see as the key moral issues of our day and how can the SBC president represent Southern Baptists as the U.S. increasingly moves away from Judeo-Christian values?

KIM: Religious pluralism is one of the greatest epidemics of our day that erodes Judeo-Christian values in America. I indeed believe that only the word of God provides the ultimate standard and guideline for our lives. I recognize the dignity of human life that starts from the very moment of its conception. I believe in the biblical view of marriage of one man and one woman. As a Southern Baptist, my allegiance to the biblical standard will always remain the same. (BP)

Mission:Dignity focuses on 'love story' of pastors, wives

Dallas—Twenty-five dollars a month. That's what Bobby Walker received at his first pastorate.

"He never made a decision for a pastorate on salary," Tommie Walker said of her late husband. "He said, 'If God guides, He will provide.' So we went on that."

The Walkers' testimony is not uncommon. A deep love for each other and a commitment to the calling God bestowed on them characterized their marriage.

"We never did have much of a salary, but God blessed us in so many ways. We had each other," Walker said.

Tommie Walker's story is shared in new Mission:Dignity videos available free to churches. The videos also include the story of Virginia Pangle, another pastor's widow, as well as Raymond and Odessa Crow, a retired pastor and his wife.

"Our videos help tell the story of Mission:Dignity," said John Ambra, director of development for GuideStone Financial Resources. "Under the theme of

'Every Love Story Deserves a Happy Ending,' we are showing these stories of the enduring love and devotion of these retired pastors and their widows, and showing how Southern Baptists have helped to provide a true happy ending—that they may live out their later years with a sense of financial dignity."

Raymond Crow served nine churches during his 34-plus years of ministry. He and Odessa have been married 72 years.

"Mission:Dignity has been a life saver," Crow said. "She and I are both on medicines, and that gets to be very expensive. We've been able to make ends meet because Mission:Dignity has been here to help us."

Churches, Sunday School classes and missions groups are invited to participate in Mission:Dignity Sunday June 22. Free bulletin inserts and videos (available in varying lengths) are available by request. Call (888) 98-GUIDE or visit www.MissionDignitySBC.org. (GuideStone)

Assisting needy retired ministers

Mission:Dignity Sunday highlights ministry to 'God-called servants'

A few years ago, a retired Baptist pastor and his wife inquired about how they might assist in meeting the financial needs of other retired Kentucky Baptist ministers and their wives who needed more income to cover the essentials of daily living.

Although their retirement income was modest, they were debt free, had accumulated some savings and wanted to leave a legacy of their gratitude to the Lord for His provisions throughout their ministry by helping other needy retired ministers. With interest rates on their savings at such lows, they also were seeking a way to increase their retirement income for as long as they lived.

We informed them about the benefits of a charitable gift annuity (CGA) and the Kentucky Baptist Foundation's Minister's Aid Society Fund (MASF) as a solution to both their charitable interests, as well as their income needs.

The CGA payout rate was substantially higher than any CD rate, a portion of it was not considered taxable income to them, and they would receive an income tax deduction on a portion of the CGA gift amount.

The perpetual earnings of the MASF are used to supplement the provisions by GuideStone Financial Resources, formerly the Annuity Board, to assist needy retired ministers and their wives—or

their widows—with extra money for housing, food and medications, while seeking to ensure a well-deserved dignity and independence.

This GuideStone ministry is called Mission:Dignity, and it provides \$6.2 million annually to approximately 2,000 recipients per year ranging from \$200 to \$530 per month. The KBF provides \$300,000 annually from the MASF to 91 Kentucky recipients.

You can participate in this important "relief" ministry by sending a designated gift directly to GuideStone and/or the KBF. Your gift can be a check; appreciated assets like stock or real estate; a beneficiary designation of life insurance or retirement account; and/or a bequest in your will.

For more information about how you can support this ministry, visit www.MissionDignitySBC.org, call toll free, (888) 984-8433, or call me toll free (in Kentucky only) at (866) 489-3421.

What an opportunity to assist a generation of God-called servants who loved their churches and their churches loved them, but for whom planning for the future was not emphasized when they began serving. They trusted the Lord to provide, and they put the needs of their churches first. Now they need and deserve help. Let Mission:Dignity Sunday, June 22, be the day you decide to help.

Barry Allen is president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, PO Box 436389, Louisville, KY 40253; toll-free (866) 489-3533; KyBaptistFoundation.org

Ky. Baptist Foundation



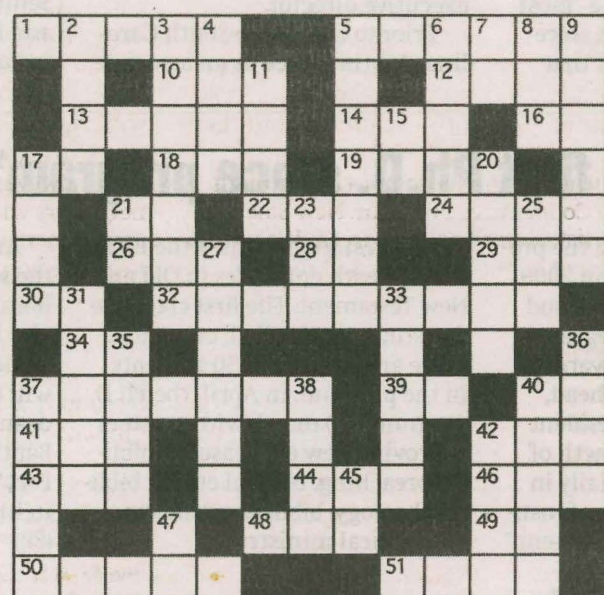
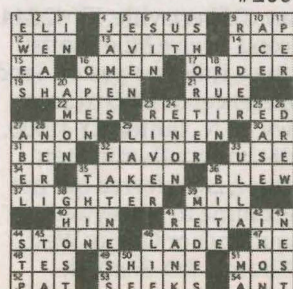
Barry Allen

Bible Crosswords

Across

- 1 "Abraham built an ____" (Genesis 22:9)
- 5 "After these ____" (Genesis 22:1)
- 10 Public transportation
- 12 Needed for a shower
- 13 "Where is the lamb for a ____ offering?" (Genesis 22:7)
- 14 Irish freedom fighters, abbr.
- 16 Peter said, "____, we have left all" (Mark 10:28)
- 17 Male pronoun
- 18 "____ took all the silver" (1 Kings 15:18)
- 19 Study for an exam
- 21 Exclamation
- 22 Asian beast of burden
- 24 Concern
- 26 Isaac's replacement (Genesis 22:13)
- 28 First person pronoun
- 29 Place where Mary and Joseph found no room
- 30 Preposition that indicates belonging
- 32 Where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:2)
- 34 He "laid the wood ____ order" (Genesis 22:9)
- 37 "God will ____" (Genesis 22:8)
- 39 "I and the lad will ____ yonder" (Genesis 22:5)
- 40 Company, abbr.
- 41 The opposite of followed
- 42 Irish county, abbr.
- 43 Lemon thirst quencher

#200



#001

- 44 Elongated fish
- 46 "Abraham and the ____ went together" (Genesis 22:5)
- 48 Adjective suffix indicating nationality or "somewhat"
- 49 Simile preposition
- 50 "Abraham rose up ____" (Genesis 22:3)
- 51 Abraham took three ____ to reach the mountain (Genesis 22:4)
- 17 The story's main character
- 20 Northeastern state
- 21 Either
- 23 Sky fellow, abbr.
- 25 Nurses, abbr.
- 27 Where Abraham was told to go (Genesis 22:2)
- 31 ____ up, excited
- 33 "The ____ of the Lord called unto him" (Genesis 22:11)
- 35 A swollen mass of tissue
- 36 The ____ was laid on the altar (Genesis 22:9)
- 37 "Abraham ... saw the ____ afar off" (Genesis 22:4)
- 38 "Abraham lifted up his ____" (Genesis 22:4)
- 40 School group
- 42 "Pharaoh ... sought to ____ Moses" (Exodus 2:15)
- 45 Inquiring noise
- 47 Overhead train

Down

- 2 The kind of job your car needs
- 3 "God tested ____" (Genesis 22:1NIV)
- 4 What a baseball player wants
- 5 Where the ram was caught (Genesis 22:13)
- 6 Abraham's son
- 7 Negative
- 8 Guy's date
- 9 Voiced
- 11 "None can ____ his hand" (Daniel 4:35)
- 15 Transportation on tracks, abbr.

Floyd

Continued from page 1

was convicted to give the rest of my life to influencing and investing in others to win the world to Christ. Last year, Cross Church contributed more than \$700,000 through the Cooperative Program. Projected to top \$750,000 this year, our CP giving increased significantly even during the Great Recession. Since 2000, our church has invested in and planted 101 churches—56 in the last three years. In 2014, we are investing in 27 church plants, 15 of which are in NAMB's designated SEND cities.

In what ways do you see the SBC president coming alongside leaders of the convention's entities and seminaries to undergird and encourage their respective ministries?

FLOYD: As president, I would be a strong advocate for our SBC entities and tell the story of what we are doing together to reach the world for Jesus Christ. I have been privileged to serve in various capacities in the SBC over the years. Currently, I serve as lead pastor and strategist for SEND North America. I also serve as the general editor for LifeWay's "Bible Studies for Life" curriculum series.

If elected SBC president, how do you foresee speaking to the next generation of Southern Baptist leaders to be involved in expanding the convention's Great Commission work?

FLOYD: For the past five years, I have

been speaking to next-generation leaders about their involvement in our convention's Great Commission ministries. Through the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force report, I think we have handed the next generation a vision for which they are very excited and becoming increasingly engaged. As president, I will continue to listen to young leaders, appeal to them and convey their interests and concerns to our leadership. It's my desire to reinvent our annual meeting with the goal of making it a spiritual experience that is fresh and exciting.

What do you see as the key moral issues of our day and how can the SBC president represent Southern Baptists as the U.S. increasingly moves away from Judeo-Christian values?

FLOYD: As the cultural landscape of America is changing rapidly, it is imperative that the SBC president walks closely with SBC leaders to articulate a clear message representing the Lord, His word and our churches. We must uphold the clear biblical view of marriage, the sanctity of human life and religious freedom. We must defend the defenseless, including the poor and victims of human trafficking. We must pray for justice to be done—that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. As we encounter those with whom we disagree, let us be faithful to hold up simultaneously the truth of God and the love of God, communicating with compassion God's word. I resonate with ERLC President Russell Moore's call for "convictional kindness" in addressing our culture, and it's one I would seek to emulate. (BP)



June

- 3** June Power Lunch, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 7-13** Kentucky Changers 2014, Hopkinsville.
- 8-9** National Woman's Missionary Union Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting, Baltimore.
- 9-13** Mission Adventure Camp for Girls and Boys, Cedar Crest Camp, Bagdad.
- 10-11** Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, Baltimore.
- 13-14** Mother/Daughter and Father/Son Overnight Camps, Cedar Crest Camp, Bagdad.
- 15-20** Kentucky Changers 2014, Louisville.
- 16-20** Mission Adventure Camp for Girls and Boys, Cedar Crest Camp, Bagdad.
- 20-21** Mother/Daughter and Father/Son Overnight Camps, Cedar Crest Camp, Bagdad.
- 21-27** Kentucky Changers 2014, Frankfort & Lawrenceburg.
- 22-29** All-State Youth Choir and Orchestra, Campbellsville University.
- 23-27** Mission Adventure Camp for Girls and Boys, Cedar Crest Camp, Bagdad.
- 28** Kentucky Baptist Nurses Fellowship Summer Meeting, Elizabethtown.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

CADIZ—Donaldson Creek Church recently celebrated its 200th anniversary with homecoming services with **Mike Rust**, director of missions for Little River Association, as guest speaker. **Russ Thomas**, a direct descendant of Donaldson Creek founding members, **James and Mary Thomas**, is pastor.

CERULEAN—Cerulean Church

recently called **Greg Giltner** as interim pastor.

LOUISVILLE—Carlisle Avenue Church will celebrate its 103rd anniversary with a celebration worship service June 8, 10:45 a.m. **Brad Walker** is pastor.

Ralph Avenue Church will hold a community block party June 7, 11 a.m. **Samuel Vance** is pastor.

WAKE FOREST, N.C.—**Jimmie Lee**

Nelson, of Campbellsville, received a bachelor's degree in Christian studies May 16 from The College at Southeastern, the undergraduate school of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Nelson was one of 259 students who graduated from the seminary and the college during recent spring commencement ceremonies.

Spotlight on ...

Hodgenville



Nolynn Church will present a historical program titled, "West of the Alleghenies: A Remarkable Church Called Nolynn," June 8, 11 a.m., featuring historian **Don Patterson**. The program will be presented from the perspective of **Jacob Van Meter**, who led the first migration to the Falls of the Ohio and was instrumental in establishing Nolynn and other churches in the area. A meal will follow the presentation. **George Smith** is pastor.

S.C. convention executive director Austin to retire

Columbia, S.C.—Jim Austin, executive director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention since April 2007, has announced he will retire in October.

Dwight Easler, chairman of the SCBC's executive board, confirmed that Austin, 60, informed the board of his decision last week.

In his retirement announcement, Austin said he wants to "pass the baton of leadership" to a

new executive director who will "assume the challenge of ... fleshing out" the initiatives of the Great Commission Resurgence and Seeking the Kingdom task forces. The reports of both task forces were adopted by South Carolina Baptists during Austin's tenure.



Jim Austin

Austin noted that his arrival in South Carolina in 2007 coincided with the "most severe economic recession since the Great Depression," but that

South Carolina Baptists "continued to enthusiastically embrace our Lord's Great Commission and model sacrificial living and giving."

Easler said Austin's tenure will be "remembered and celebrated ... because of his love for pastors and his heart for missions."

Austin succeeded Carlisle Driggers, who retired in February 2007 after 15 years as the convention's executive director.

Prior to coming to South Carolina, Austin served as an associate

executive director for the Missouri Baptist Convention and pastor of churches in Georgia and Virginia.

Austin is a graduate of Jacksonville State University in Alabama, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. (BP)

Midwestern Seminary confers first Ph.D. since program's 2008 launch

Kansas City, Mo.—Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's first Ph.D. graduate was among more than 100 students to receive degrees at the school's recent spring commencement.

Todd Chipman became the doctor of philosophy program's first graduate, receiving a Ph.D. in biblical studies with an emphasis in New Testament. Chipman was one

of six students to enroll in the program's second Ph.D. class in 2009.

"Institutionally, we are proud to award our first Ph.D. degree, and we look forward to awarding many more in the years ahead," Midwestern Seminary President Jason Allen said. "The growth of our Ph.D. program, especially in recent months, is a source of institutional joy and accomplishment."

Midwestern launched the Ph.D. in 2008 with emphases in Old and New Testament. The first class saw five students enrolled; currently, there are more than 50 students in the program. In April, the Ph.D. program expanded, with trustees approving new emphases in biblical preaching, biblical ethics, biblical theology, biblical missiology and biblical ministry.

At its spring commencement, the school also honored longtime librarian, Craig Kubie, for his service to multiple generations of students, faculty and staff. Kubie will depart in August to become dean of libraries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He has worked in his current position since 1988. (BP)

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR RENT: Beach trip or Smokies? Accommodations for Christian families available at reduced rates, Myrtle Beach or Pigeon Forge. Call (865) 210-1118.

SEEKING: Central Baptist Church in Winchester, Ky., is seeking a full-time associate pastor of family life/outreach. Candidate needs to have a passion and calling for families and family ministry. If you feel God is leading you to apply for this position, please send your resumé to searchcommittee@cbcwinchester.com by June 15. For additional church information and a job description, see our website at www.CBCWinchester.com.

SEEKING: Tunnel Hill Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth director for approximately 20 hours a week. If interested, please email resumé to tunnelhillbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Pinckard Baptist Church, located in Woodford County, is in search of the man that God has chosen to be our full-time pastor. Forward resumé to Pastor Search Committee, 3401 Pinckard Pike, Versailles, KY 40383, or email to pbcpastorsearch@windstream.net.

SEEKING: Bivocational minister of music; minimum of 10 hours per week; must be a Southern Baptist; Sunday a.m. & p.m. choir practice. Resumé to Crittenden Baptist Church, P.O. Box 132, Crittenden, KY 41030, Attn: Personnel Team.

SEEKING: Part-time music director; send resumé to Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, 6070 Lonoke Road, Horse Cave, KY 42749, or email to neila.combs@me.com; (270) 786-1475.

SEEKING: Versailles Baptist, a dynamic fellowship 10 miles west of Lexington, is seeking a minister to children. We average more than 400 weekly worshippers and serve nearly 100 children per week through multiple ministries. Part-time and full-time candidates will be considered. Resumé should be sent to glyn@versaillesbaptist.org.

SEEKING: Versailles Baptist, a dynamic fellowship 10 miles west of Lexington, is seeking a part-time minister of worship to lead our blended service of more than 400 Sunday morning worshippers. Resumé should be sent to glyn@versaillesbaptist.org.

SEEKING: Cecilia Baptist Church is seeking a children's minister intern. The position will last through the end of July 2015. Anyone interested should email a resumé to travis@ceciliabaptistchurch.com or by mail to Travis Vaughan, 416 E. Main St., Cecilia, KY 42724. For more information, call Travis at (270) 862-4228.

SEEKING: Minister of children, Springfield Baptist Church is about 30 miles north of Nashville, Tenn. We average about 400 in worship and have a very

active children's ministry. Candidates should have a minimum of two years' experience and a seminary degree is preferred. Please send resumé to Beth Bohler at bethbohler05@gmail.com. The deadline for resumé is June 30.

SEEKING: Stanford Baptist Church in Stanford, Ky., is seeking a full-time pastor. See our website, www.stanfordbaptist.com, for job description. Please email resumé and DVDs to 204 Church St., Stanford, KY 40484.

SEEKING: Emmanuel Baptist Church in Shelbyville, Ky., is looking for a part-time music leader. Please send resumé to kbkimes@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Horse Cave Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of education. Responsibilities include leading Sunday School, discipleship training, leadership development and missions. Send resumé to kdenton.hcbs@gmail.com or 301 E. Main St., Horse Cave, KY 42749.

SEEKING: Bruner's Chapel Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Ky., is prayerfully accepting resumé for the full-time position of pastor. Sunday morning attendance between 180-200. Candidate will have previous pastoral experience, and education is preferred but not required. Please send resumé (with references) and CD/DVD/Internet link of three sermons to: Bruner's Chapel Baptist Church, Attn:

To place an advertisement in the Western Recorder:

Rates are available upon request. Call (502) 489-3428; or visit westernrecorder.org



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Pulpit Committee, 2672 Mackville Road, Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Bethel Baptist Church of Gilbertsville, Ky. Please send a resumé to Search Committee, 2603 Tatumsville Hwy., Gilbertsville, KY 42044.

SEEKING: Second Twelve Mile Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé with references or DVD to Scott Horn, 14007 Hwy. 10 N., Butler, KY 41006.

SEEKING: Full-time youth minister; seminary education is preferred but not required. Send resumé to graceywestunionb@bellsouth.net or Gracey West Union Baptist Church, P.O. Box 154, Gracey, KY 42232.

Baltimore = Every City

Urbanization affecting more than just world's urban population centers

By Adam Miller

Baltimore—North Avenue in Baltimore is where King Thomas learned to walk. It is where his mother died when he was 2. It is where his dad and brothers learned to deal drugs.

The neighborhood boomed from the early 1900s until about 1960. Nearby Royal Theatre hosted performances by the greats—Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday. The famed Pennsylvania Avenue was the center of an artistic renaissance rivaling Harlem's.

The community had been an enviable collection of neighborhoods where families could make an honest living and raise their children.

But then the shift came.

During the 1970s, many families left for the suburbs. It was an urban exodus that accelerated to all-too-familiar consequences: rapid decline and abandonment.

The once-glittering North Avenue grew notorious. It became the Baltimore into which King Thomas was born. In this Baltimore, Thomas knew by age 10 what his life would be like—no bright future.

His dad, a respected gang leader, was behind bars, and Thomas spent his life in and out of foster homes. He and his brothers had come to view their gang as family.

"For me, life was all about being in the gang and taking care of my 'family,'" Thomas, now 21, said. "By the time I was 10, I was in a gang. When I was 18, I went to jail."

North Avenue is everywhere

Baltimore is a microcosm of what many cities, their suburbs and even rural areas increasingly experience as North America and the world become more urban. Baltimore could be any city, especially as cities become dominant, global

population centers.

According to United Nations' reports, 2008 marked the first time in history more than half the world's population lived in towns and cities. Global urbanization affects areas not typically thought of as urban. A 2012 USA Today study found that even in rural areas, Asian and Hispanic populations are growing more rapidly than whites.

Greater concentrations of population and growing diversity impact how communities look, shift how people interact and create challenges previously found only in large cities.

Even towns like Longview, Texas, reflect the effects of this global shift. And as the culture of Longview—population 84,000—shifts more Hispanic, Mobberly Baptist Church faces the challenge and opportunity of shifting with it.

MBC's Missions Pastor Eric Perkins said Longview churches have a window of time to influence pockets of culture in the community.

"If we don't have an intentionality to reach people, we're going to create a greater divide between segments of population," Perkins noted. "Different segments almost live in their own world with socioeconomic barriers. Once these barriers are up, they're almost impossible to overcome."

Perkins said Mobberly would like to be a multi-cultural congregation that transcends cultural and socioeconomic barriers. Actively reaching into white, black, Hispanic, poor, destitute and fringe communities with the gospel and service has garnered influence and opened ears for the church. Likewise, building a church culture where people see every color and socioeconomic class, especially those different from theirs, is shaping the church's future.



Church planter Joel Kurz (center), pastor of the Garden Church, Baltimore, leads a weekly gathering in his home for Bible study and fellowship. Kurz originally planted a suburban Baltimore church, but God led him to move to the core of the city to plant the Garden. (Photos by Colby Ware/NAMB)

"It reminds us of who our community is, and it's empowered us even more to reach our community," Perkins said.

These trends are also playing out in places like Springfield, Mo.

Doug Irvin, pastor of that city's Glenstone Baptist Church, said that even in their majority white, conservative city, the world is at its front door.

Nearby Missouri State University has drawn Asian populations and even a small population of Saudi Arabians. A growing Filipino population has come to the area for jobs. A Syrian family has even been attending Glenstone. They heard about Springfield from missionaries serving in their home country.

In addition to growing diversity, Springfield's homeless population is growing—up to 58 percent last year.

Irvin, who was only recently called as pastor, said he wants to see his church respond in whatever way possible.

"I think our American mentality is we look for the magic key and think it's going to fix it all," Irvin said. "But it's not there. We have to look at the uniqueness of each situation."

Saving King Thomas

Baltimore church planter Joel Kurz has found this to be just as true in his city.

"To reach Baltimore, you have to reach the neighborhoods," said Kurz, pastor of

The Garden Church, Baltimore. "That's why we intentionally moved into the same neighborhood as the church."

Thomas, the gang member, might not have paid much attention to God or his own potential to impact his community if Kurz had chosen to live elsewhere.

Thomas had seen a lot of life—and lives lost—by the time he was 10. Stories like his could be told anywhere, but the likelihood is greater in a place like Baltimore. What is uncommon is Thomas' story over the past year.

Thomas has grown in his faith, his calling and a sense of mission to his community as part of an urban leadership intern program with Kurz, who came to Baltimore six years ago to start a citywide church. A call to a neighborhood in the city's west side shifted Kurz's thinking.

"That's why we intentionally moved into the neighborhood," Kurz said. "We embraced a slow kind of growth. Anything we did was in the neighborhood."

Kurz realized his disadvantage to reaching a city population that is 63 percent African American and native to Baltimore—he isn't African American, nor is he from Baltimore.

But Kurz wanted to reach Baltimoreans. And to do so, his church would have to reflect the city. Already four years into the neighborhood focus, Kurz said his home has truly become the neighborhood he is reaching.

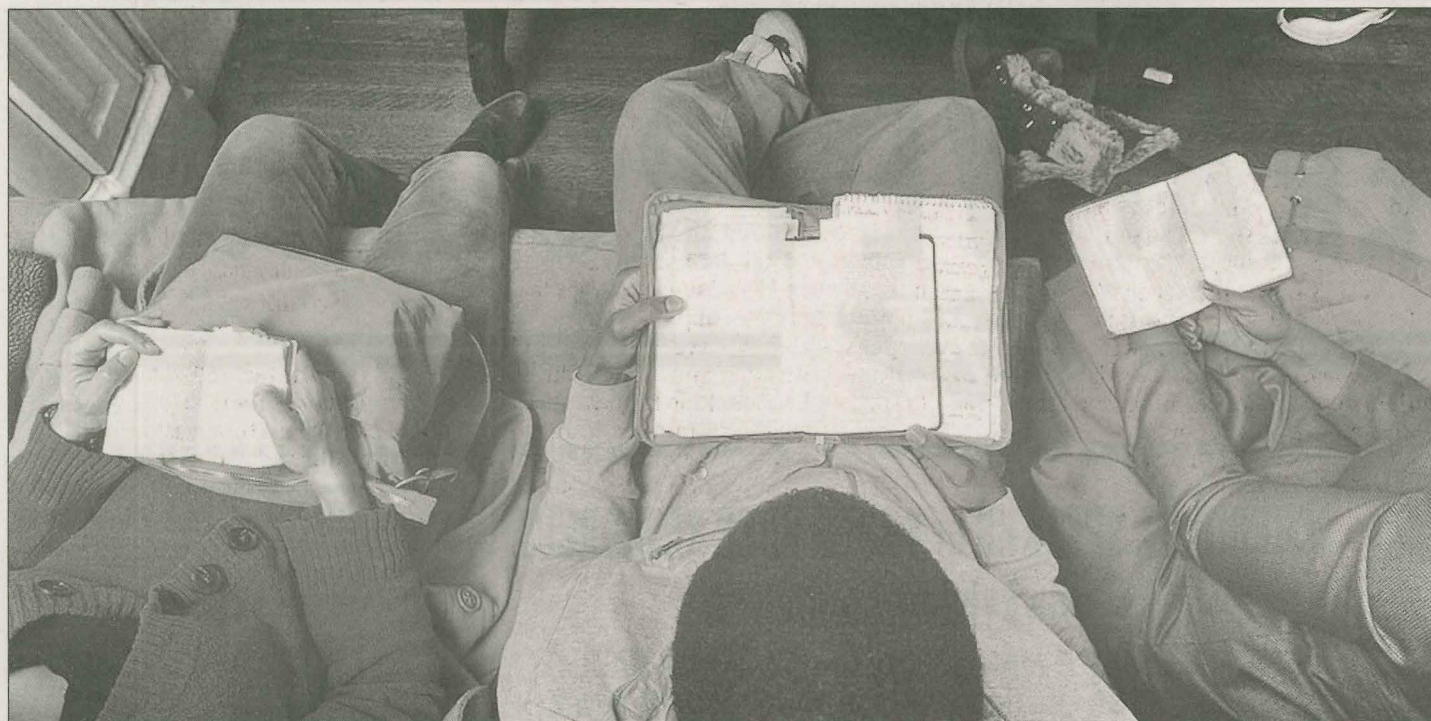
According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 45 percent of this area is below the poverty line. Many residents turn to gangs and selling drugs as a way of life.

It is the only way of life Thomas knew growing up. He had seen churches come and go but had experienced little of the gospel they proclaimed.

"There are a lot of churches in the neighborhood, but their people live in the suburbs. It's kind of phony," Thomas said. "When churches come to the city they have to at least build a relationship."

When Kurz and Thomas met, Thomas was a young believer and still a bit skeptical. Now, he is teaching a kids' Sunday School class. Thomas is also a living testimony to his dad, brothers and former gang family that Christ can change the people in a place like North Avenue.

"In tough communities, things get started and often don't last," Kurz said. "We really want to be faithful and continue to develop into a healthy church and be a faithful gospel presence in the community." (NAMB)



Members of the Garden Church, Baltimore, gather for Bible study in the home of Pastor Joel Kurz, who planted the church as part of the North American Mission Board's Send North America: Baltimore initiative.



THE POWER OF 'AND'

IN ACTS 1:8, JESUS SAYS,

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

IN JERUSALEM,
AND IN ALL JUDEA
AND SAMARIA,

AND TO THE ENDS
OF THE



JESUS DIDN'T SAY 'OR.' HE SAID 'AND.'

HOW CAN
YOU



AS

1

BELIEVER

bear witness here, there **AND** everywhere?

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