

WESTERN Recorder

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Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

Volume 189, Issue 13

Baptist leaders dismayed by Supreme Court decision

Washington, D.C.—The U.S. Supreme Court transformed the legal definition of marriage June 26, legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide.

In a 5-4 decision, the high court ruled states must recognize marriages between people of the same sex, providing a new definition throughout the country to an institution created by God as a covenant between a man and a woman.

Baptist leaders expressed their dismay at the opinion, as well as their encouragement for the church to respond with courage and compassion.

"I deeply believe in biblical and traditional marriage. The court has determined otherwise," SBC President Ronnie Floyd to Baptist Press.

"I deeply believe in biblical and traditional marriage. The court has determined otherwise."

SBC President Ronnie Floyd

"This decision shows one thing: Our desperate need for the next Great Awakening and the hope of the Gospel given to all persons. We must rise up like never before with great urgency, to forward the message of Jesus Christ to every person in America and across the world," Floyd said.

Paul Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, wrote on his blog (paulchitwood.com): "The hope

□ See Supreme Court ... Page 11

Hopkinsville native chosen as national WMU president

By Laura Fielding and Kathie Chute

Grove City, Ohio—Woman's Missionary Union elected Linda Cooper of Bowling Green to serve as national WMU president during the second day of their Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting, June 14-15, at First Baptist Church of Grove City, Ohio.

Cooper, a member of Forest Park Baptist Church, will replace Debby Akerman, who has served

as president for five years. In her final presidential address, Akerman thanked those present at the meeting for the opportunity to serve WMU. Cooper is the first Kentuckian to be elected to the post.

"Contrary to what some might think, you are not sitting in circles with your hair of blue simply reading missions articles," she said. "You are praying for our missionaries as the day begins; going out in active community missions to the many places where the hurting are found. You are going out through relationship building and steady witnessing to the up-and-out as well as the down-and-out. And you are leading missions teams to go across North America and to the nations of the world."

Surrender and service in missions

Between the two days of the meeting, some 500 people attended to hear how missionaries and ministry workers live out the year's theme, "All for You," through wholehearted surrender, sacrifice and service.

□ See National WMU ... Page 6



Linda Cooper, newly-elected president of the national Woman's Missionary Union, speaks during the WMU Annual Meeting at First Baptist Church of Grove City in Grove City, Ohio.



More than 5,000 messengers attended the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 16-17 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio. President Ronnie Floyd led a night session dedicated to a national call to prayer for the next Great Awakening and to reach the world for Christ.

SBC seeks awakening, supports marriage

By David Roach

Columbus, Ohio—Spiritual awakening, the defense of marriage and the preservation of religious liberty were among key themes addressed by messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 16-17 in Columbus, Ohio.

The meeting was highlighted by a Tuesday night prayer gathering led by SBC President Ronnie Floyd, at which an estimated 7,000 Southern Baptists spent two hours asking God for a third Great Awakening in America and the global advance of the Gospel. The gathering was watched by an additional 8,000 people online and broadcast on Daystar television.

The 5,407 registered messengers—up from 5,294 in Baltimore last year—also took several actions to advance racial and ethnic diversity within the SBC and celebrated nearly 60 missionaries during the first-ever joint missions service of the International and North American Mission Boards.

Awakening

Floyd, who was reelected to a second term as SBC president, called in his presidential address for Southern Baptists to provide spiritual and moral leadership amid a time of crisis in the world that also is "our most defining hour as Southern Baptists."

Building on Floyd's address, the June 16 prayer time featured intercession led by 11 pastors and was punctuated by hundreds, if not thousands, of believers kneeling and prostrated at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. Dozens more from a broad array of racial and ethnic groups voiced prayers from the platform.

A resolution on "revival and spiritual awakening" said Southern Baptists "faithfully and

fervently plead with our great God to open the windows of heaven and come down among His people with a fresh filling of His Spirit."

Marriage

With a U.S. Supreme Court decision on gay marriage expected in late June, Floyd and the living SBC presidents elected since 1980 issued a joint statement that pledged love for individuals with same-sex attraction yet stated, "We will not accept, nor adhere to, any legal redefinition of marriage issued by any political or judicial body including the United States Supreme Court." Floyd drew national headlines when he said in his presidential address that he will not perform gay weddings.

A resolution on the "public witness on marriage" called the Supreme Court to "uphold the right of the citizens to define marriage as exclusively the union of one man and one woman."

□ See SBC annual meeting ... Page 6

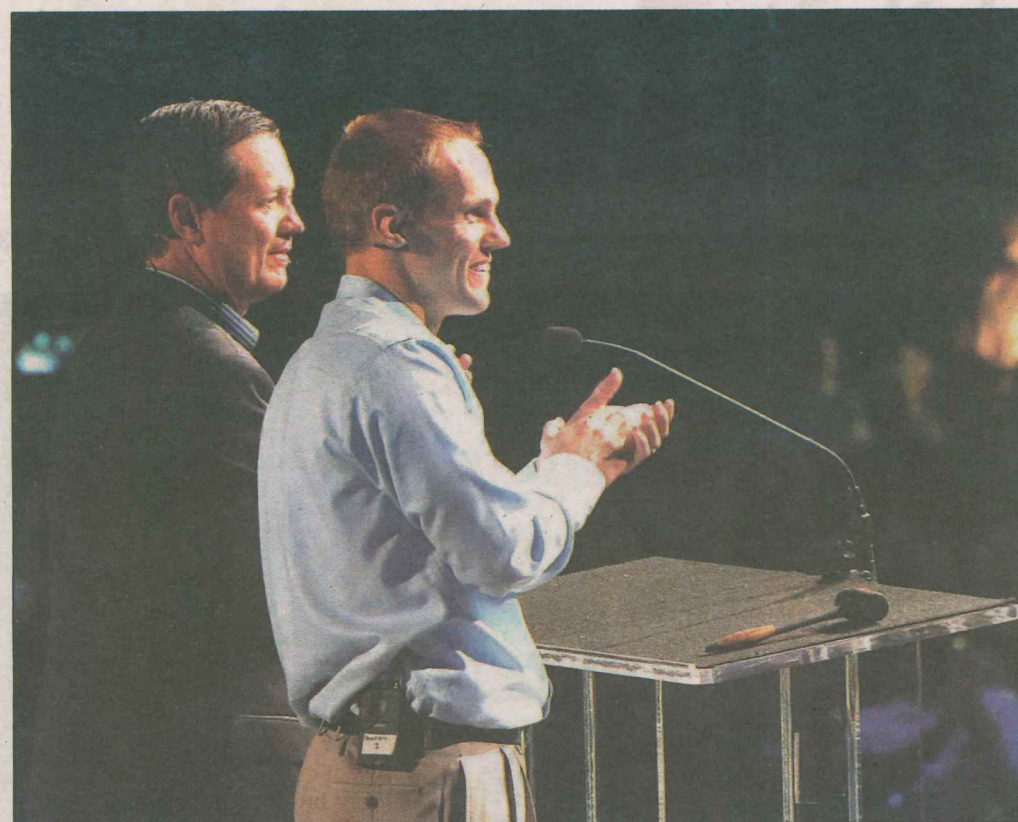


SBC messengers vote on resolutions by raising their ballots during a session at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio.

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Western Recorder 6-30-2015



IMB, NAMB celebrate missionaries, sending churches

By Laura Fielding

Columbus, Ohio—In a darkened convention center hall filled with Southern Baptist messengers, individual pinpoints of light illuminated the darkness. Moments earlier, in passionate pleas, IMB President David Platt and NAMB President Kevin Ezell urged Southern Baptist messengers not to be cold toward the vast lostness in the world, but to join in God's global mission as church planters, missionaries and sending churches to take the light of the gospel to a dark world.

IMB and NAMB partnered together in a Church and Mission Sending Celebration to recognize 59 missionaries and their sending churches during the final day of the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The stakes are too high, the gospel is too good for us to settle for incremental increases in Southern Baptist church planters and missionaries," Platt said in his message. "We need to open the door for tens of thousands more people to engage the nations with the gospel."

"Wouldn't you want that to be our legacy?" Platt asked. "Don't we cry out for God to bring a ... missions movement among us so that our legacy might be a convention of churches who send thousands, tens of thousands of God-exalting, Christ-following, Spirit-led, biblically faithful, people-loving, high-quality missionaries and church planters across North America and the nations for the sake of God's fame?"

Light of the world

The Sending Celebration symbolically celebrated commissioning the new missionaries and church planters to share Jesus as the Light of the World (John 8:12).

Of the 59 missionaries and church planters highlighted, 27 will serve in North America in the Northeast, South, Midwest, West and Canada, while 32 will serve overseas in East, Central and South Asia; North Africa and the Middle East;

Europe; Sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas.

Stationed throughout the crowd, missionary families and representatives of their sending churches stood with an open lighted "book" illuminating their faces, while information about the missionaries and their work was displayed.

The sending church

Ezell said although the service was focused on missionaries, they also wanted to celebrate the sending churches. "Churches plant churches," he said.

Ezell interviewed Chuck Herring, pastor of First Baptist Church of Collierville, Tenn., about being a sending church pastor. Herring has led the church to adopt an unengaged, unreached people group in South Asia and send a family to plant a church in Toronto.

"It's good for our church to have ownership of a church plant in an unreached part of North America," Herring said.

Being a sending church does not require a large congregation or a lot of money, Ezell said. "It's about having a big heart and compassion and a passion to reach people here and around the world."

"Think about the big vision of asking God for an awakening so we can reach the world with the gospel of Christ," Floyd said. "All of it goes together, a mighty move of the Lord and His people mobilized to reach the world."

SBC President Ronnie Floyd

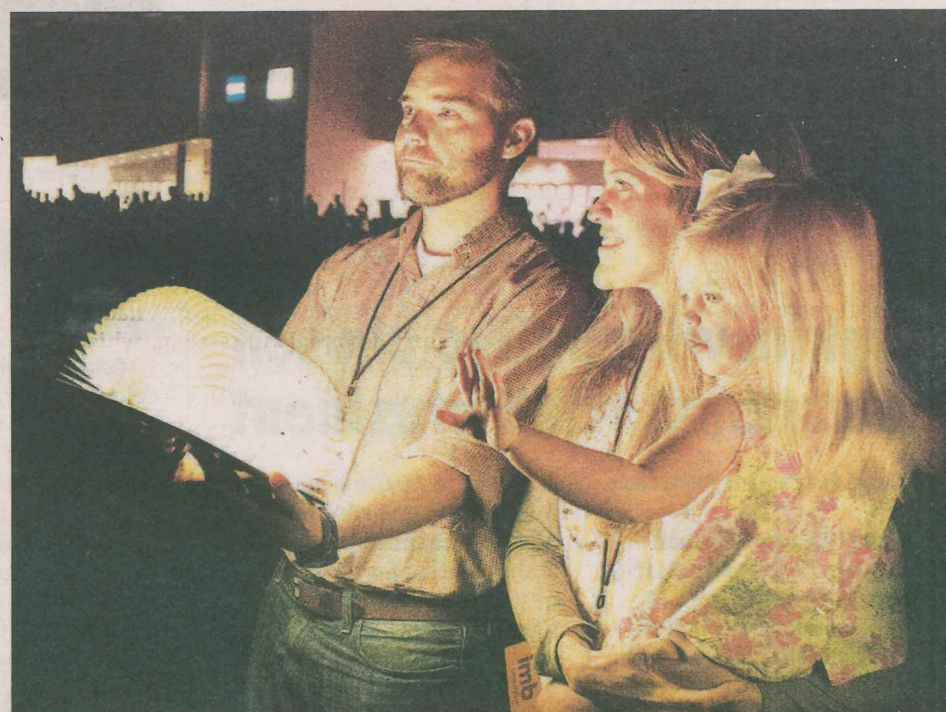
Five truths

In light of the vast darkness, Platt emphasized five truths.

The stakes are high. Darkness is a real destiny for billions of people who are headed to hell, he said. "We don't have time to waste our lives and lead our churches in casual, cold, comfortable, cultural Christianity."

The gospel is good. "The divine Savior has defeated the deceptive snake," Platt said. "The sovereign King has conquered sin and suffering and death forever. This is the greatest news in all the world."

The church is central. It is God's chosen agent for the eventual accomplishment of the Great Commission. That truth drives both IMB and NAMB, Platt said. "We want to say to 46,000 Southern Baptist churches, 'You exist for mission, we exist



Top, Kevin Ezell, left, president of NAMB, and David Platt, president of IMB, end a joint Church and Mission Sending Celebration by recognizing missionaries with a standing ovation at Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting. Above, David and Katie Kizziah and their daughter Karis, open an illuminated book during the celebration. Each missionary stood and opened their book. David, a graduate of Southern Seminary, is a former pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Springfield. (Photos by Paul Lee/IMB) (Photos by John Swain/NAMB)

to help you accomplish it."

The opportunities are limitless. Missionaries and church planters can be sent through new pathways for students, professionals and retirees.

"Are we going to let our minds broaden and in our churches begin to say to people, 'Global missions is not a compartmentalized program in the church for a select few people who are called to that—the glory of God among the nations is actually the reason you have breath on the planet?'" Platt said.

The time is now. Our lives are simply a mist (James 4:14), Platt stressed. No one is guaranteed tomorrow, so Southern Baptists should make their lives count now.

"As IMB, NAMB, as every entity and every local church across the SBC, let's unite together around this good gospel, in view of these high stakes, and in light of limitless opportunities God's given us to send and shepherd church planters and missionaries around the world," Platt said.

"May the urgency of this mission mark us. May our light shine amidst the darkness and may our mist count while we've still got time."

Sending out

After Platt's challenge, the missionaries, church planters and their sending churches stood with their faces aglow from their lighted books. Platt and Ezell led in prayer for them as messengers gathered around to lay hands on them in prayer.

SBC President Ronnie Floyd closed the celebration, urging pastors and church leaders to fill out commitment cards to pray passionately, give generously and intentionally disciple people to be sent out nationally and internationally.

"Think about the big vision of asking God for an awakening so we can reach the world with the gospel of Christ," Floyd said.

"All of it goes together, a mighty move of the Lord and His people mobilized to reach the world." (BP)

Southern names Chitwood alumnus of the year

Columbus, Ohio—Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, presented Kentucky Baptist leader Paul Chitwood with the Distinguished Alumnus of the Year Award at the seminary's June 17 alumni luncheon during the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"In his public life and in his private life, in his role as a denominational statesman and his role as a pastor, in his role as an alumnus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Paul Chitwood has brought great pride to this institution," Mohler said. "I can't tell you how much easier it is for Southern Seminary to communicate how important state conventions are when

students in Louisville, get to see a state convention like the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the kind of leadership that Dr. Paul Chitwood has brought."

Chitwood, who graduated with his M.Div. (1995) and Ph.D. (2001) from Southern Seminary, serves as the executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

He also served as KBC president (2005-06) and chairman of the board for the International Mission Board (2008-10), and is a former assistant professor of evangelism and church growth at Southern Seminary.

A native of Jellico, Tenn., Chitwood served as pastor of Kentucky Baptist

churches for nearly 20 years before assuming the role of KBC executive director in 2011. During a reorganization of the KBC in 2012, Chitwood created a consulting and revitalization team to promote church revitalization along with church planting.

The team also includes a group of six consultants living and serving in different regions of the state, whose primary ministry focus is assisting pastors with revitalization efforts.

Chitwood's emphasis on church revitalization may explain why KBC churches—contrary to national trends—have added new members the last three years: 27,694 in 2012 and 26,572 in 2013 and 26,222 in 2014. (KBC)



Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, presents Kentucky Baptist leader Paul Chitwood with the Distinguished Alumnus of the Year Award June 17 during the SBC annual meeting.

Kentucky Baptist choirs minister in Amazon rainforest

By Robin Cornetel

Manaus, Brazil—Kentucky Baptists used the transcendent power of praise music to break through language barriers and minister to hundreds in the Amazon rainforest.

The 31 members of the Kentucky Baptist men's and women's chorales sang, taught and shared the love of Christ in Manaus, Brazil, June 9-16.

Women's leader Roxanne Nanney, who coordinated the tour, said chorale members helped strengthen and encourage local churches during the eight-day trip by leading workshops and worship services.

"What a joy to worship with our

brothers and sisters in Christ. The language was sometimes a barrier in communication, but there was no difficulty in communicating and receiving the message of love," said Nanney, minister of music and senior adults at First Baptist Church of Brandenburg.

During the trip, Kentucky Baptists led more than 200 adults and children through a music conference for the Amazonas Baptist Convention.

Nanney said one missionary brought at least 20 children from an outlying village.

Conference participants had their choice of breakout sessions, which included Bible readings, Scripture memorization, vocal and instrumental tech-

niques and children's choir leadership.

A children's track ran simultaneously with the adult sessions. Children made instruments and learned three songs in English, which they performed for conference attendees.

"It was the first conference they have had like that," Nanney said. "They were surprised at the response, and the participants were very encouraged and challenged by what they experienced."

While visiting the largest metropolitan city in the Amazon rainforest, the chorales also performed at a local Baptist school and made stops at seven Baptist churches.

"Music is the universal language," said Jason Stewart, Kentucky Baptist

Convention worship and music consultant. "It not only communicates the gospel clearly, but it equips the hearers to repeat the message—first to themselves and then to others."

Nanney said the chorales' purpose was to encourage and strengthen the churches in Manaus, a goal which she believes they accomplished.

"Along the way, we received unexpected and immeasurable blessings. I know that I left part of my heart in the Amazon," Nanney said.

The combined choral mission trip is the first since 2002, when Kentucky Baptist men's and women's chorales traveled to Europe. The groups also traveled to Russia in 1995. (KBC)

Miller earns WMU's top honor; Konneh shares Acteens' impact

By Julie Walters

Birmingham, Ala.—Arlene Miller, of Crofton, received the Dellanna West O'Brien Award for Women's Leadership Development, and Hydiatu Konneh, a National Acteens Panelist from Louisville, shared her testimony during the WMU Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting in Grove City, Ohio.

Miller, a member of New Palestine Baptist Church, serves as co-coordinator of Christian Women's Job Corps in Hopkinsville, where she helps women develop personally and spiritually; and as director of Impact Ministry, an outreach effort she helped to start in 1994 with the Christian County Baptist Association that offers assistance to low income families.

Joy Bolton, executive director of Kentucky WMU, said Miller leads a team of volunteers at Impact Ministry who are mostly women.

"Arlene inspires commitment to the ministry and helps develop them in their roles," Bolton said. "She is very good with children and is a wonderful role model to mothers who come into Impact Ministry or CWJC."

Working alongside Miller as co-coordinator of CWJC, Linda Moore said Miller is effective in meeting needs and touching many lives as a result, as well as encouraging others to volunteer.

"Arlene spends many hours at the ministry sites as well as developing support for and educating area churches about needs



Arlene Miller, of Crofton, received the Dellanna West O'Brien Award for Women's Leadership Development.

and opportunities in each ministry," Miller said.

"She has a genuine love for others and a desire to serve others."

Sandra Duguid, who has worked alongside Miller in missions for nearly 40 years, agrees.

"Arlene truly has a missions heart that has developed as a result of allowing God to take her and use her," Duguid shared.

"I know there were times she fought against it because of fear or just simply because there were things God was calling her to do that she didn't want to do."

"But each time, I saw her surrender to what she knew she was to do. With that surrender came growth and a joy that one can't help but realize comes only from a right relationship with God."

Miller also serves on the WMU leadership teams for Christian County Baptist Association and Kentucky WMU, as WMU

director in her church, and led Acteens, the WMU missions organization for teenage girls, for 27 years.

"If Arlene hears of a need, she will do whatever it takes to meet it," said Laura Clark, Acteens leader at New Palestine Baptist Church. "She is always sensitive to the needs of others and is always doing something innovative to meet needs and share Jesus."

Clark continued, "As a little girl, I was a GA. My missions education has continued through the efforts of Arlene Miller. She has been an inspiration to me and to all that come in contact with her."

A retired nurse and widow, Miller has three children and five grandchildren.

She is also a Kentucky Missions Service Corp missionary and serves as a missions mobilization consultant with the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

She has participated in missions in Haiti, Poland, Greece, and across Kentucky.

As recipient of this leadership award, Miller received a \$2,000 grant from the WMU Foundation to further her ministry efforts.

Acteen testimony

Konneh, a member of Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, told how she grew up in a home of two faiths—her father was Muslim; her mother was Christian.



Hydiatu Konneh

"I chose to follow the Christian faith because I was active in the Christian faith and church," she shared.

"I was taught the Bible and at an early age began reading the Bible along with my mother."

Konneh accepted Christ in her heart at a young age, and was baptized at the age of 10 in 2008 at First Baptist Church of Davenport, Iowa.

"Being an Acteen has impacted my life in many ways," Konneh said.

"It has made me bold to share my faith, to talk about Jesus' love and how he died to save sinners like me."

"It has given me the opportunity to view the purpose of my life, to love and serve God and Jesus Christ with all my heart and strength; to do what He com-

mands of me, to make disciples of all nations and to teach others what Jesus has taught me according to the Bible; and to love others as myself, to be a servant, serving my fellow man each day of my life."

Through Acteens, teen girls develop their faith and experience missions, and they learn what it means to live as a follower of Christ, said Bolton.

"We are proud of Hydiatu and encourage other churches to engage their teen girls in Acteens," Bolton added. "The impact of women as role models and mentors for teenage girls is vital." (WR)

'Red and yellow, black and white'

My earliest memories of music include the lyrics, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His site. Jesus loves the little children of the world."

From Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, I knew that song to be true. I learned Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). I also learned, "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).

Together
We are the KBC

Paul Chitwood

Over time I learned that our Lord's love and concern for children will be shared by all genuine disciples.

A recent article in the Louisville Courier-Journal raised the above thoughts and memories when it reported on the woeful state of Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS). The opening line announced, "State social service officials in northern Kentucky lost

track of nearly 100 cases of alleged child abuse or neglect—some not assigned to workers for investigation and others languishing for months after social workers responsible for them resigned." Present and past employees revealed enormous caseloads, epidemic employee turnover, and workers' debilitating stress levels.

The systemic brokenness of the state system is a matter of life and death for Kentucky's children. A report published by the Division for Protection and Permanency of CHFS reveals that in 2013, 22 abused and neglected children died. The state had received credible reports of abuse and neglect on 17. Our system failed 17 kids to the point that they are now dead. I know that the abusers are ultimately responsible. But I also know that, since the abuse had already been reported, the deaths of these children could have been prevented.

Why do I highlight such sad and disturbing news? Because, as Kentucky Baptists, we can help.

Joshua Hutchens, pastor of Mt. Tabor Baptist Church in Buffalo, puts it like this: "What does the foster care system need? An invasion! The only way to fix it is to invade with Spirit-empowered, church-supported, praying, in-home missionaries!" Like a growing number of Kentucky Baptist ministry couples and lay couples, Joshua and his wife, Stacy, practice what they preach. They have welcomed victimized children into their family where these precious little ones will learn that Jesus loves them and they will also have parents to love them.

For the past year, Michelle and I have been working with Sunrise Children's Services to challenge Kentucky Baptists to "Be the One." We have had many opportunities to celebrate families being trained as foster parents and welcoming children into their homes. We decided to do what we asked others to do by being trained and welcoming a foster son into our home in February.

While we are thanking God for those who answer the call, kids are still dying in Kentucky. They are still dying because wicked people, typically in their own families, victimize them. And they are still dying because an overburdened, broken system is failing them.

Kentucky Baptists, let's help relieve the burden. Let's step in and step up. We can advocate for the kids. We can become foster and/or adoptive parents. And we can support the work of Sunrise Children's Services through Cooperative Program giving and donations.

Why should we? Jesus loves the children, all the children of the world ... and all the children of Kentucky.

Paul Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

'Thank you for showing us the better way'

On Tuesday evening at the Southern Baptist Convention in Columbus, we witnessed a beautiful and moving scene as thousands of messengers knelt in prayer for revival and a great awakening. Spiritual leaders from Anglo American, Hispanic, Korean, Native American and African American churches prayed together for an end to racism and prejudice, embraced each other, and pledged to work together "as one family."

President Ronnie Floyd began by urging Southern Baptists, "The only thing that can ultimately reshape America is a spiritual awakening and a great movement by God." Floyd asked messengers: "When was the last time you gathered thousands of people on a Tuesday evening and prayed for spiritual awakening?"

Plano pastor Jack Graham then issued a call for personal repentance. "God is calling us to brokenness and humility," he said. "The greatest sin is pride."

Paul Kim, of Cambridge, Mass., said Asian American churches join him in calling for "racial reconciliation and healing in our land." Kim observed, "What we do here can lead the entire nation."

K. Marshall Williams, an African-American pastor in Philadelphia, prayed for racial reconciliation. "The Bible calls us to be in unity," Williams exhorted. "It's skin; not sin. Come together. Stand up and be the people of God. Rise up!"

Pensacola Pastor Ted Traylor told how some of the same people in his church who taught him as a boy to sing "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight," left the worship service when a black man started attending.

David Galvan, a Hispanic pastor in Dallas, confessed, "Early in my ministry, I had to come to the realization

that I had misunderstood the Great Commission. I thought that I should only be reaching Hispanics for Christ. I had to come to the point of repentance and ask God to forgive me for what I'd done."

Timmy Chavis, a Native American pastor in Pembroke, N.C., said, "I am so glad that God has brought our convention together to be the spearhead of not just a national effort, but a global effort to let all people know that we stand together as God's people.... We have one Father, there is one Lord, we're going to one Heaven, we have one faith and one baptism and are one people."

Atlanta pastor Robert Wilson said his prayer was for real unity. "We're not about just trying to be segmented, but we want to ask God to take our hearts and really meld them together, so that when the world sees us as Southern Baptists—black, white, red, yellow, brown—they see us as one."

In a terrible twist, the following night was marred by a horrific demonstration of racist hate and of our nation's dire need for a spiritual awakening. A young man, tragically warped by a racist ideology of white superiority, ruthlessly shot nine worshippers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.

Yet, what was meant for evil was transformed to good as Charleston churches—and, most notably, the son of one of the victims—testified to the world: "Love is stronger than hate" (see story, p. 10)

In the following guest viewpoint, Baptist Courier Editor Rudy Gray shares how real-world Christians have chosen to respond with "what seemed like unbelievable love and forgiveness." Their "shining" example convicts us with the truth of 1 Corinthians 13:1: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

After
Thought

By Todd Deaton



Light shines from Charleston after massacre

By Rudy Gray

The spotlight has been on Charleston for several days following the massacre of nine Christians during a Bible study at the predominantly black Emanuel AME Church. A 21-year-old white supremacist, Dylann Storm Roof, joined the service for about an hour before opening fire on the group.

This act of racist hate could have exploded into confusion and violence, but the light from Charleston has shone brighter than the media light that has been on the picturesque South Carolina city.

Roof said he chose Charleston "because it is the most historic city in my state. Someone has to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me." What Roof soon discovered was that the hate and evil he demonstrated was met with love and forgiveness.

Chris Singleton, a sophomore at

Charleston Southern University and member of the baseball team, lost his mother in the attack.

Less than 24 hours following her death, he said, "Love is always stronger than hate." Charleston Mayor Joseph Riley said, "If that guy thought in his tortured mind that he was going to divide the races, it had the opposite effect."

The Charleston Post and Courier wrote, "In a remarkable display of joy, sorrow, and trust, worshippers at Emanuel AME Church on Sunday morning honored slain parishioners by celebrating the power of faith and community."

Norvell Goff, elder in charge of the AME Edisto district that includes Emanuel, said, "A lot of people expected us to do something strange and break out in a riot. Well, they just don't know us."

Marshall Blalock, senior pastor of Charleston First Baptist, said, "This tragedy was a despicable act of

hatred, that no one can understand. God, in his goodness and sovereignty, has inspired these families to magnify the blessing of grace and prevailing love in the midst of what was intended for evil."

Churches across denominational lines have joined to support for Emanuel. Blalock noted, "The beauty and power of the gospel was on display at the bond hearing where black lay Christians from Emanuel AME Church gave the greatest gospel witness in the history of our city. One after another, families forgave the man who killed their loved ones and even called on him to repent and receive Christ as his Savior."

Three Charleston-area congregations—Awaken Church, Journey Church and Centerpoint Church—joined for worship in sweltering heat on Marion Square, conveying to Emanuel their love and support.

South Carolina Rep. Davey Hiott, a member of Pickens First Baptist

See Charleston church ... Page 5

FIRST PERSON

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Southern Baptists weighing 'What Now?'

By Ed Stetzer

Southern Baptist leaders found a modicum of solace amidst national uncertainty for a number of years from a LifeWay Research chart illustrating Southern Baptist Convention membership since 1950. In 2008, I wrote that Southern Baptists shouldn't build denominational confidence on this chart, because the growth of the Convention in the 1950s became as it approached the new millennium.

In 2009, Cliff Tharp, the late LifeWay statistician, noted: "We have been slowing in our growth and have now passed into decline. We are right at the top of the arc and beginning to go down. But changes we make now can change that trend significantly."

The just-released 2014 Annual Church Profile report shows the pattern continuing on track with the trend line first gaining national prominence in 2008. Membership, baptisms and weekly worship attendance continue to decline.

Don't be shocked

Sometimes I miss the days when people debated if we were headed into decline. But this shouldn't shock us. Like Cliff said: It's just math. Yet, in 2008 there was a flurry of articles and debates about these numbers. National leaders spoke of this as a blip. It wasn't then—I think everyone now agrees—and it isn't now. The Southern Baptist Convention is declining and, if the trend continues, the decline will accelerate. While some statistics show that membership has increased since 1950, others show we have increased at slower rates for decades, eventually dipping into decline.

The chart of concern

The chart that should concern Southern Baptists

is one that shows growth versus decline from 1950 through last year. If this trend continues, decline will not merely continue, it indeed will accelerate. Follow that trend and soon the SBC will be declining at 2 percent a year, then 3 percent, then...

In 2013, the SBC claimed 15,735,640 members, and in 2014, that number fell by 236,467—a 1.5 percent decline. The claim could be made that churches are simply clearing out the cobwebs and tidying membership rolls, so their numbers more accurately reflect active members.

FIRST PERSON

The problem is, membership isn't alone in its decline—it's joined by baptisms and weekly attendance. In 2013, Southern Baptist churches reported 310,368 baptisms. Last year, they reported 305,301, down by 5,000 baptisms, or 1.63 percent. The highest percentage of decline last year in weekly attendance. In 2013, 5,834,707 people attended SBC churches for worship each week. In 2014, that number dropped by 2.75 percent, or 160,238, to 5,674,469.

What now?

At the core, these numbers tell us this: It is as important as it has ever been for Southern Baptists to share and show the love of Jesus. But that does not require a Southern Baptist Convention. That's true for nondenominational churches as well.

So, for the future, the SBC needs to find a way to cooperatively work together—what SBC President Ronnie Floyd has called "visible unity"—to lead out in evangelism and church planting, provide resources for church revitalization, engage young and more non-Anglo leaders, and do so as a denominational family.

The SBC decline is not reversing. It is not too late to make changes to reverse the decline, but we must do so together. (BP)

Six Steps for Financial Security

Step 1—Invest in yourself—Your earning power is an important asset. Seek opportunities to develop skills that will increase your earning power. These new skills might be related to another job but often they are simply improving the skills required of your current work. As you accumulate financial assets, learn good money management skills.

Step 2—Protect your loved ones and your assets—Have adequate insurance to cover possible major expenses due to illness, disability, liability and death. Without adequate insurance, you are betting your financial security that nothing bad will happen.

Step 3—Control the use of debt—This is a major problem for many people. Debt controls your life. You will never have financial freedom as long as debt controls you. If debt is a problem, get rid of the credit cards. Many studies have proven that people spend more when using credit than when using cash.

Step 4—Pay God and yourself first—As a Christian, contribute your tithe and set aside a specific amount for savings. Do this first. Do not wait to see if there is money left at the end of the month. Discretionary expenses always seem to expand to consume all available funds.

Step 5—Don't go for the homeruns—Invest regularly and wisely. Use time, not timing in investing. In baseball, those who go for the homeruns also strike out frequently. Most successful investors aim for lots of singles and doubles. Invest in high quality. Diversify your investments. At any given time, some types of investments will be up and other will be down. No one can consistently predict with accuracy which ones will be up in the near future. Diversifying into different investments reduces your risk in investing.

Step 6—Reduce expenses now to fund a more comfortable future—Take steps now. Take advantage of tax deferred retirement plans. Reduce and avoid debt. Use a budget to prioritize fixed and flexible expenses.

Address these steps in the context of a Biblical based perspective and your financial security will improve dramatically.



By Don Spencer

Who is calling the shots?

In this column I want to step away from my revisiting of David Elkind's "The Hurried Child" and talk about something that I see from time to time, and that surfaced again last week during our Vacation Bible School.

We had an amazing, fun week of Vacation Bible School, but I have a friend who missed out. He missed the opportunity to make some new friends. He missed a great week of FUN, including a trip to Mega Cavern. As a 6th grader, he missed out on his last chance to come to VBS.

Most importantly, he missed out on the chance to hear again the story of Jesus and God's plan for his life and to move closer to making the decision to follow Jesus—a decision I know he has been pondering since January and that he says he wants to make.

He missed out because his parents let him opt out. I just don't see why parents are not more assertive when it comes to the spiritual life of their children. There are things that as parents we should insist that our kids do even though they might not want to do them. We see a bigger picture, and we see it because we know more about life than they do. There really is a sense in which father (and mother) knows best.

The parent/child relationship is not a democracy. We do our children a huge disservice when we abdicate our authority, and instead let our kids decide what they are and are not going to do—especially when it comes to church and things spiritual.

There are things my wife and I made our kids do. The only choice they had was whether or not they would enjoy it—and they usually did!



By David Garrard

Charleston church

Continued from page 1

Church, said, "It is hard to put into words how someone could have that much hate built up inside of them to carry out such a horrific tragedy. ...

"Many expected racial tension and division, but what they got was comfort, care, love and forgiveness. The families involved are to be commended for their selfless response to senseless killing. What man intended for bad, God can—and will—use for good."

good."

On Sunday night, a walk across the Arthur Ravenel Bridge meant as a display of solidarity turned into a celebration of unity, faith and hope. Organizers anticipated 3,000, but police estimated 10,000.

Our nation can say to Charleston, with deep gratitude, "Thank you for showing us the better way."

The light that is shining from the "Holy City," nicknamed because of its many churches, touches us all. In this struggle between love and hate, love won.

We have seen the power and truth of God in action—not in times of ease, but in a time of great tragedy.

Roof brought murder to the real world and found that the darkness of that evil providentially became the backdrop for God's light to shine even more brightly.

As most of our state mourns this great injustice and prays for the families of the deceased, we are also encouraged by the testimony of God's people.

There is a light in Charleston that shines brightly.

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Platt envisions 'limitless' missionary pathways

By Laura Fielding

Columbus, Ohio—Messengers resoundingly affirmed David Platt's report that noted IMB trustees' recent policy changes are focused on throwing open the funnel of missionary sending so more Southern Baptists called by God can make disciples and multiply churches among those who've never heard the name of Jesus.

"We're praying for limitless men and women from Southern Baptist churches to say, 'Yes,' to that invitation until the day when the concept of unreached peoples is completely eradicated," Platt said in his first report as IMB president during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio.

Platt shared highlights of the entity's work in the last year, speaking to about

5,300 Southern Baptist pastors, leaders and church members who attended the meeting.

Last year, more than 4,700 IMB missionaries proclaimed the gospel to nearly 2 million people in nearly 1,000 people groups, seeing about 200,000 people baptized and more than 13,000 new churches started—in addition to training their pastors to start new churches.

Southern Baptists have enabled those positive results through their praying, going and giving, Platt said, with more than \$94 million given to IMB through the Cooperative Program last year, and more than \$153 million to Lottie Moon, the second-largest offering in IMB history.

"But we have a problem," he said.

In 2009, IMB had a record-high 5,600 missionaries overseas. Today, the number

has dropped to 4,700 and is fast on its way to 4,200, primarily because IMB is not financially able to support their missionary force on the field. Last year, IMB operated with expenses nearly \$21 million more than income.

The decreasing number of missionaries "is not tolerable when two billion people still haven't heard the name of Jesus," Platt said. "Consequently, we are evaluating all of our structures and systems in order to discern how we can more efficiently and effectively use the resources Southern Baptists churches have entrusted to us."

As long as fully financially supported missionaries are the only way IMB can send Southern Baptists, Platt said—even if the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering both increase dramatically—"we will keep a cap" on Southern

Baptists' missions involvement.

"I want to lead the IMB to blow open that funnel to create as many pathways as possible for Southern Baptists to get the gospel to unreached people," Platt said.

God is divinely opening the doors to take the gospel around the world not just through traditional missionary routes, he said, but also through nontraditional roles including the globalization of the marketplace. He challenged messengers to imagine a team led by a traditional missionary and surrounded by students, professionals and retirees—potentially supporting themselves financially—working alongside him or her, all focused on making disciples and multiplying churches among the unreached.

Platt said IMB trustees evaluated the

□ See *Missionary pathways* ... Page 7

SBC annual meeting

Continued from page 1

Southern Baptists will not waver in their defense of traditional marriage regardless of how the court rules, the resolution said.

A presidential panel discussion addressed ways churches can prepare for continuing challenges to biblical sexual morality. Panelists included Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Rosaria Butterfield, a former lesbian who is now a pastor's wife and defender of traditional marriage.

Religious liberty

To combat global religious persecution, the ERLC announced the opening of an international religious freedom office in the Mideast and appointed Travis Wussow of Austin as director of international justice and religious liberty.

Barronelle Stutzman, a Washington state florist held liable by her state's government for refusing to provide flowers for a same-sex wedding, received a standing ovation when she was introduced during the ERLC report. Naghmeh Abedini, wife of a U.S. pastor imprisoned in Iran for his Christian faith, briefly addressed the SBC Pastors' Conference June 15 and spoke at the Pastors' Wives Conference. Floyd asked God specifically for Saeed Abedini's release during the convention's evening of prayer.

Two resolutions spotlighted religious persecution, pledging prayer for "the persecuted church worldwide" and denouncing religious persecution and human rights violations in North Korea.

The marriage resolution said "the religious liberty of individual citizens or institutions should not be infringed as a result of believing or living according to the biblical definition of marriage."

Ethnic diversity

Messengers received a report from the SBC Executive Committee reviewing the convention's progress on racial reconciliation between 1995-2015.

A motion from the floor to commend the EC for its work was adopted, and a resolution pledged messengers' rededication to the work of racial reconciliation.

The Committee on Nominations elected for the coming year is the most diverse in the SBC's history, with 27

percent of members coming from ethnic and minority groups.

Missionary celebration

At the joint NAMB-IMB Church and Mission Sending Celebration, messengers were introduced to dozens of North American and international missionaries in a video presentation, then gathered around them to pray and offered an ovation of support. (See related story, page 2.)

In other action

■ IMB President David Platt denied reports that a new personnel policy lowers standards for missionaries. The policy seeks to align the IMB's requirements with the Baptist Faith and Message and does not signal a shift in practice related to speaking in tongues or divorce among other missionary qualifications, Platt said.

Messengers did not ask Platt questions despite media reports that some planned to voice concerns about the revised policy.

■ NAMB President Kevin Ezell reported 985 church starts in 2014, a 5 percent increase from the previous year. Some 58 percent of last year's church plants were non-Anglo, he said.

■ Messengers amended an EC recommendation that would have allowed the messengers present at any session of an SBC annual meeting to constitute a quorum. As amended, the EC recommendation maintains the current SBC Bylaw 35 definition of a quorum as "a minimum of 25 percent of those duly registered and seated messengers."

■ An EC recommendation was approved to change the name of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary to Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention. Relocation of Golden Gate's primary campus to Southern California should be complete next summer.

■ Messengers approved an EC recommendation to amend NAMB's ministry assignment, enabling the convention's entity charged with facilitating North American missions to "provide specialized, defined and agreed upon assistance to the International Mission Board in assisting churches to plant churches for specific groups outside the United States and Canada."

■ Nine resolutions addressed pornography, the sanctity of human life and the Cooperative Program among other subjects. (BP)



Anna Mary Byrdwell of Kentucky pets one of the Good News Llamas at the WMU annual meeting and Missions Celebration at the First Baptist Church in Grove City, Ohio. (Photo by Matt Miller)

National WMU

Continued from page 1

Capt. Michael Coleman, a U.S. Army chaplain who also serves with the North American Mission Board, challenged the audience to educate themselves about post-traumatic stress disorder, pray for those hurting and be a friend to those who come to church.

Coleman served on WMU's initial task force to begin the organization's Project HELP: PTSD. He said it was important for churches to be prepared for those who are returning to the U.S. from battlefields, but he warned it was not a strategy for building church membership.

"This is not an outreach opportunity for your church," he said. "This is 'inreach.' You can be that back row Baptist who grabs that person by the hand and says no matter what you look like, no matter who you are, I'm going to walk with you along the way."

Christian workers David and Alicia shared about their ministry work in Southeast Asia where their family has served three years in a city of 3 million people, finding ways to share the gospel with unreached people groups.

David said serving God may make some think of moving to Africa or working in a soup kitchen, but God gifts people in different ways to serve Him. For David, this means being a travel agent. Running a tour and travel business is a vehicle to share the gospel with hard-to-reach groups that otherwise do not welcome foreigners.

Many skills and giftings from the Lord—from travel agents to business people—can be an asset to the Kingdom of God, David said.

Marion "Bud" Fray, a retired IMB missionary who served in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and Kim Davis, former missionary, are the authors of this year's WMU emphasis book, "Both Feet In: A Journey to Surrender, Sacrifice, and Service."

But Fray said the book was not quite finished—in fact, far from it. He hoped attendees would take it home and "help write the next chapters" in their own stories of surrender to the Lord.

Passing the gavel

As remembrance of her service, Akerman presented national WMU a new gavel made of Cocobolo wood with a woven handle, artfully crafted by master wood turner James Silva of Wareham, Mass., and Akerman's brother, Nantucket basket crafter Robert MacNevin Jr.

She also passed on three items to newly elected Cooper to be safeguarded by the current WMU president: a book on historic WMU leader Fannie E.S. Heck and two bejeweled rings from past WMU presidents.

"Finally, with this newest gavel, I pass the leadership of WMU to you," Akerman said through tears. The audience gave a standing ovation as the outgoing and new presidents embraced.

Cooper said she had "big shoes to fill" following Akerman, who led with "such grace and such a godly spirit."

"Please pray for me, for national WMU and for those lives who are being eternally changed through you as you lead missions education each week through WMU," Cooper said in closing. "With God's help, I will live wholeheartedly for the Lord, moment by moment, as I serve WMU because I, too, am 'both feet in.'" (WMU)

'He Must Increase' focus of SBC pastors

Columbus, Ohio—Pastors and churches must humble themselves and pursue a closer walk with God if they want to experience His peace, joy and purpose, speakers urged at the 2015 Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference June 14-15.

The conference, focusing on the theme "He Must Increase" from John the Baptist's statement in John 3:30, preceded the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. John Meador of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, was elected as next year's Pastors' Conference president. Among the dozen speakers to address the conference were:

Dean Fulks

Dean Fulks, lead pastor of LifePoint Church in Columbus, Ohio, in the opening message of the conference June 14, used the story of Jonah to illustrate the need for pastors to live with repentant hearts.

Sometimes pastors may mistakenly believe that God is waiting for them to step out of line so He can clobber them, Fulks said. But a biblical picture is found in Romans 2:3, where Paul writes that God's kindness is what leads to repentance.

"God will be glorified by my life. God will be glorified by your life," Fulks said. "Either through my joyful obedience or through my rebellious disobedience ... God will be glorified."

As God didn't give up on Jonah, Fulks said He wouldn't give up on pastors.

"Jesus took on His shoulders the wrath of God—not just of the sinners that fill our pews but the sins of those of us who fill the pulpits," Fulks said.



Dean Fulks

Vance Pittman

Christ alone satisfies, and ministry both locally and globally overflows from a relationship with Him, Vance Pittman said.

"As Christ has increased in my life, I've realized that God's primary call on my life is not ministry," said Pittman, pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas. "It's intimacy."

Calling attention to Luke 4:42, Pittman noted that Jesus "walked away from ministry to pursue intimacy with the Father."

"Some of us are too busy with ministry to pursue intimacy," he said, warning that such a lapse in intimacy may come with dangerous consequences.

But intimacy with Christ overflows with ministry, he added. According to Mark 3:13-14, Christ called the 12 apostles

first to "be with Him" and then "to preach."

Christ's increase in a minister's life, Pitman said, means that they are called not only to a church, but to a city. Ministers who gain a heart for the city "develop a passion to multiply the church" and "a passion for multicultural expressions of the gospel," he said, which in turn connects the pastor with God's global Kingdom work.



Vance Pittman

David Uth

David Uth, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., urged conference participants to turn from casual Christianity to a willingness to die for the cause of Christ.

Citing 2 Timothy 4:6, Uth noted that the apostle Paul, in his last days, spoke of having been "poured out like a drink offering" for the cause of Christ, referring to the Old Testament practice when a priest pours a sacrifice on the altar until the last drop was gone.

Uth cautioned against pouring one's life on the altar of one's ministry or the altar of the denomination, noting only one altar is worthy—"pour every drop you've got on the Lord Jesus Christ."

"If Jesus is going to increase," Uth said, "We have to decrease by pouring everything out on the altar for Christ."



David Uth

Clint Pressley

"God takes what seems impossible, and He makes it a reality," said Clint Pressley, senior pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., and first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Pressley preached from Ezekiel 37:1-10 and encouraged pastors to not be fearful.



Clint Pressley

"Don't be afraid, brothers and sisters, if God calls you into the valley of the dry bones," Pressley said. "You stand there with the word of God; you preach the word of God and beg the Spirit to come give life."

Pressley focused on allowing God to work through the power of the Holy Spirit. "Do you believe that it is God doing the work or you doing the work?" he asked. "The conversion of our people, the strength of the church and the power for our ministry cannot come from the flesh; it comes from the Spirit."

"Don't be afraid to walk into something that doesn't make sense to anybody but you and the Lord," Pressley said.

H.B. Charles

Preaching on "The Changeless Christ" from Hebrews 13:18, H.B. Charles, pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla., declared, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow."

While leaders come and go and rise and fall, Jesus Christ is the same, Charles said.

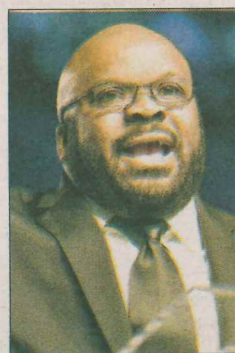
And while preachers come and go, "preaching must remain gloriously monotonous. You don't need new truths when you have the same Christ."

No matter changing circumstances or the way that the wind blows, "you can face the changing culture with faith in the changeless Christ," Charles said.

The name "Jesus" reflects His humanity, Charles said, and "Christ" is His divine office that is found in His exclusivity, Charles said. "He is able to sustain our faith, our witness, our ministry because He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow."

"Jesus is heaven's wonder. Jesus is hell's worry. Jesus is humanity's way out of sin, guilt, shame, death and hell," he added.

"Whatever you are going through, whatever your days may bring, you can always count on Jesus Christ because of His matchless name, His exclusivity claim and the unwavering faithfulness of Jesus Christ," Charles said.



H.B. Charles

Steve Gaines

Pastors must pray with fervency, faith and forgiveness if their ministry is to follow the model for biblical revival, said Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., and a former president of the Pastors' Conference.

"The difference between us and the

early church is that we don't pray like they prayed," Gaines said.

Preaching from Mark 11:22-25 when Jesus told His disciples how to move mountains through prayer, Gaines said, "If we want God to birth a revival, we must labor in fervent prayer."

In addition to fervency, Gaines said pastors should learn to pray with faith and forgiveness. Faith, Gaines said, is placing trust and dependency in God and His promises.

And prayer will not be effective, he said, unless believers first forgive those who have wronged them.

Closing with the "Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor," Gaines encouraged attendees to seek out those who have hurt them and forgive them in Jesus' name.



Steve Gaines

James MacDonald

James MacDonald, pastor of Harvest Bible Church in Chicago—who announced that the church had recently voted to join the Southern Baptist Convention—explained to Pastors' Conference attendees that when one is enduring a particular trial in ministry that "you can't do what you want" but must "humble yourself."

Drawing from John 13:1-16, MacDonald portrayed Jesus' example of humbling Himself before the disciples on the eve of His greatest trial. In light of this, regardless of "when it's hardest to love," "when it's personal and painful," "when you endure injustices," one should "humble yourself."

MacDonald noted that the act of humbling oneself is an action, not a concept, and it requires servanthood.

Like the servant and messenger depicted in verse 16, MacDonald said, "I am the servant. I am the messenger, and I am nothing.... I deserve nothing.... The messenger is nothing; the message is everything."

"And if you get ahold of 'I am nothing,' the message is everything. I am sent, but it is about the Sender.... Only God is great; humble yourself.... It's okay if we decrease ... so that He (Jesus) could increase." (BP)



James MacDonald

Missionary pathways

Continued from page 1

entity's policies to make such "limitless" teams possible.

In May, trustees voted on a statement of qualifications that must mark every single IMB missionary: a vibrant disciple of Jesus who is making disciples; called by God and affirmed by church leaders and IMB; committed to the vision, mission, values and beliefs of IMB; and a baptized Southern Baptist church member "with a clear

conviction of truth" as expressed in the Baptist Faith and Message.

IMB took these steps to "tether ourselves in the tightest possible way to the confessional statement that unites Southern Baptists," Platt said.

Contrary to what some news sources falsely reported, Platt said, the policy in no way signals a change in practice regarding how IMB works in relation to Southern Baptist doctrinal distinctives, or a shift in IMB missionaries' practice when it comes to issues like tongues or private prayer language.

"To be crystal clear, IMB missionaries do not and will not in any way promote speaking in tongues or private prayer language," Platt said. He and IMB have deep concerns about this issue, which is why IMB has an intentional appointment, training and supervisory process.

Additionally, the new policy that replaces the previous policy on divorce simply means that if a person has divorce in their past, they are not automatically disqualified from playing a part in spreading the gospel overseas.

"This action by our trustees is

intended to shout to every member of every Southern Baptist church, 'If you have been baptized by immersion as a symbol of your salvation, if you are committed to the Baptist Faith and Message, if you are a healthy disciple whom God is calling to make disciples and multiply churches among men, women, boys and girls—who aren't talking about tongues because they've never heard the name of Jesus in their own language—Southern Baptists who want to change that, the door is open at IMB to do that,'" Platt said. (BP)

'What if?' asked at Send North America luncheon

By Joe Conway

Columbus, Ohio—"What if?" That was the question posed to more than 2,600 attendees of the June 15 Send North America luncheon at the SBC Pastors' Conference in the Greater Columbus Convention Center. The event promised a glimpse into the future of missions in the SBC from the presidents of the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board.

"What if we looked for every possible way to partner together to equip the church in North America for missions?" NAMB President Kevin Ezell began. "What if we equipped every pastor to lead his people to live lives on mission?"

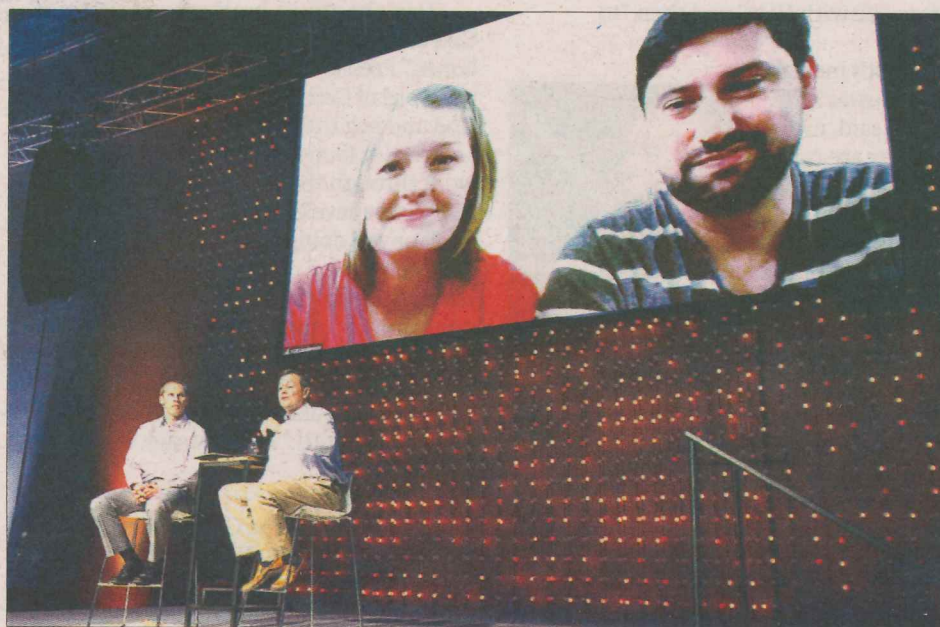
Ezell said NAMB has streamlined to advance the Send North America strategy to assist every church in finding its next step in missions—both across the continent and through 32 strategic Send North America cities.

"I am excited about what God is doing through the church in North America," said David Platt, president of IMB, who co-sponsored the event. Platt said he believed it unwise both practically and biblically to pursue a top-down strategy of missions.

"The local church is the center of missions," he said. "When you look at the Book of Acts, you don't see NAMB or IMB anywhere, but you do see churches."

Platt shared IMB's concept of limitless mission teams which combine traditional, fully funded missionaries; professionals who move to an area to both work in a secular job and serve with the team; retirees who intentionally use their status to serve on a team; and students who strategically select their universities and commit to serving with the teams.

"We have 4,700 missionaries who are challenged in serving in some of the hardest and darkest places on the planet," Platt said. "But there are 6,000-plus unreached people groups. In its history, IMB has funded 26,000 missionaries. I am thankful for their service. But we need 26,000



International Mission Board President David Platt (far left) and North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell visit with IMB missionaries Scott and Wendy via Skype during the Send North America luncheon at SBC Pastors' Conference. Scott and Wendy serve in a South Asian megacity working to evangelize an unreached people group. (Photo by John Swain/NAMB)

missionaries now."

Facing reality, Platt said the IMB missionary force will likely drop in the coming year because of last year's \$21 million budget shortfall.

"We have to think in different ways," Platt said. "We don't need 100 more missionaries, we need 1,000 more. Our mission demands more. God is opening up opportunities for us with the globalization of the marketplace. We have to recognize those opportunities. When we think of global missions, we have to know that everyone has a part to play. The IMB has a part in that."

Effective, efficient systems

Ezell asked Platt about his first nine months at the helm of IMB and where he finds himself today with potential changes.

"Everything is on the table," Platt said. "We are exploring the most effective and efficient systems to get the gospel to the

nations. But we must be deliberate in what we do."

The move to a more simplified leadership structure at IMB was one change that made sense, Platt said. Policy changes to advance the creation of limitless missionary teams also made sense, he said. He emphasized that IMB's board of trustees is in no way diminishing its commitment to the sound doctrinal and theological principals that have made the entity trustworthy, but rather is aligning policies with the Baptist Faith and Message.

The mission board presidents also discussed ways the entities can cooperate to benefit God's kingdom and Southern Baptists in advancing God's mission.

"We are working as closely together as we can," Ezell said. "There are aspects of missions and church planting that are different in North America and overseas, but there are also commonalities in church planting. We can rely on each other's expertise. People need to be

comfortable with us exploring ways to advance missions."

One of those possibilities is a combined registration process for missionary candidates, Ezell noted. Platt added having competing systems "makes no sense." NAMB also provides scholarships for church planters to take vision trips to connect with people groups overseas for possible adoption.

Another area of cooperation is the Send North America Conference the entities will host Aug. 3-4 in Nashville.

"What if we held a missions conference to celebrate what we can do together and explore the mission of God?" Ezell asked. He told the gathering the initial goal for 2012's first Send Conference was 1,000 people; 2,200 attended. In 2013, more than 4,400 participated. Paid registration for the 2015 conference is above 12,000. Only 1,500 seats remain. The Send Conference is designed to help churches find their next steps in missions, regardless of their level of engagement.

The luncheon also included a Skype session with the two presidents and two Christian workers serving in South Asia. The couple has seen 25 people accept Jesus as Savior.

"We are working among an unreached people group," one of the workers said. "We give the churches tools for multiplication. Seeing them catch the vision is exciting."

The couple met in seminary and married before serving on mission in South Asia. They had been unable to have children, a journey that led them to commit to adoption.

They received a letter of acceptance for a three-month old child with special needs from another country. And, six months ago, they welcomed the birth of their first son.

Platt informed the couple that the SBC Minister's Adoption Fund, founded by Ezell when he was president of the Pastors' Conference in 2010, will pay the remainder of their adoption expenses, about \$10,000. (BP)

Bumpers: 'Earnestly cry out' for awakening

By Benjamin Hawkins

Columbus, Ohio—God can send the flames of spiritual awakening that the church and nation so desperately need, Eddie Bumpers told messengers during his convention sermon.

"It is possible for God to send revival to bring us to a place of new obedience to God, a new commitment to the Great Commission and the Great Command of the Lord Jesus," said Bumpers, pastor of Crossway Baptist Church in Springfield, Mo. He said the story of Elijah, King Ahab and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 depicts the conditions in which God chooses to send the fire of His Spirit upon His people.

"Step one to the fire of God falling is that we must aggressively deal with our sin," he said. "There will never be revival in my life, your life, my church, your church or this nation until we put our finger on the problem and say, 'Sin is the problem.' It is not economics. It is not

education. It is not the environment. It is sin, my sin, your sin, that must be confronted and must be dealt with aggressively. ... We must get honest with God and confess our sin before God."

In 1 Kings 18, Bumpers explained, God sent the prophet Elijah to confront King Ahab, who had abandoned the worship of God for idolatry and had led God's people to do the same. Ahab accused Elijah of bringing trouble to Israel, but without flinching Elijah declared the truth of the Israelite king's sinful behavior and its detrimental effect on that nation.

Southern Baptists likewise must stand for the truth of God's word as they confront sin, Bumpers said.

"It is our responsibility as preachers and teachers and leaders and believers to speak the truth to a culture that does not want to hear the truth," he said. "We speak the truth in love. We speak the truth in grace. We speak the truth in wisdom, but we must speak the truth because that is what God called us to do."



Alongside challenging the culture, Southern Baptists must challenge God's people if they desire to see the fire of God poured out in this nation, Bumpers said. After confronting Ahab, Elijah confronted the Israelites, who refused to follow God wholeheartedly, wavering between the worship of God and the false god Baal.

"You cannot walk with God with one foot on the path of obedience and another foot in the ditch of pluralism," Bumpers said. "God wants all of me and all of you, and He wants us to believe His Word

totally."

Elijah, after rebuking God's people for their unfaithfulness, then challenged the prophets of Baal to set up an altar and call on Baal to send fire from heaven that would consume the sacrifice on the altar. They accepted his challenge, but Baal never responded to their prayers. Then Elijah built an altar, drenched it in water several times and prayed that God would magnify Himself and show His people that He alone was God.

Even so, Southern Baptists must earnestly pray for God to send the fire of spiritual awakening, Bumpers said.

"We must earnestly cry out to God," he said. "We've all agreed in visible union and earnest prayer during these days of this convention that what we need the government can't give us, Republicans can't give us, the SBC can't give us, the church can't give us. Only God can provide what we need. ... What our nation needs and our churches need is to see the power of God." (BP)

SBC presidents unite, declare stand on marriage

By Bonnie Pritchett

Columbus, Ohio—A coalition of all living former Southern Baptist Convention presidents since 1980 issued a joint statement declaring they will stand on the biblical truths concerning marriage despite anticipated legal and civil changes to the definition. Pastor Jack Graham called it “the most critical issue of our times—religious freedom and the very definition of marriage itself.”

Current SBC President Ronnie Floyd led the press conference and was joined on the platform by former SBC presidents Jimmy Draper, Bailey Smith, Paige Patterson, James Merritt, Jack Graham, Frank Page, Bryant Wright and Fred Luter.

Reading from the statement, Graham said, “The Scriptures’ teaching on marriage is not negotiable. We stake our lives upon the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. We will not accept, nor adhere to, any legal redefinition of marriage issued by any political or judicial body including the United States Supreme Court.”

The statement, signed by 16 former presidents, was not issued on behalf of the

SBC but issued to the SBC, evangelicals and the nation, Graham said.

The statement reiterates the long-established SBC stand on homosexuality and same-sex marriage but was issued as a proactive response to the impending U.S. Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage.

The 2015 National Day of Prayer served as the impetus for the statement. Floyd said he felt the weight of the nation’s burdens at that event and asked Graham, coordinator of the prayer event, to spearhead the drafting of the statement.

Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, said the document was written from the heart of pastors and with a spirit of brokenness and boldness.

He said, “No one needs to wonder where we stand as Christians in these days.”

James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church, Duluth, Ga., said the issue is not who can get married but what marriage is.

As the culture lunges toward a historically unprecedented alteration of the definition, pastors, religious institutions, ministries, and individual Christians will face

spiritual and legal challenges for standing on the biblical truth about marriage.

“This is coming and it’s coming now. And the trajectory of this issue is at breakneck speed,” Graham said.

If the Supreme Court affords gays and lesbians protected class status—as the Civil Rights Act afforded the same status to blacks—refusing to marry same-sex couples or affirm homosexuality in the workplace could come with fines, taxes, and, as demonstrated in one case in Idaho, threats of incarceration.

Frank Page, president of the SBC executive committee, said, “Many churches live on a razor-thin edge of finance and it well could be catastrophic to many churches. Even more than the tax-exempt status are the fines levied against churches” for failure to comply with local, state, or national



Ronnie Floyd, SBC president, speaks during a press conference at the Greater Columbus Convention Center about biblical marriage and the national ramifications of same-sex marriage.

regulations.

Pastors offered advice on how pastors and leaders of religious institutions can insulate themselves, to a degree, against the legal tide.

Bryant Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., said these institutions must have well-documented policies clearly defining marriage and the policies grounded in that definition. (BP)

Committees report giving, diversity of members

Columbus, Ohio—The SBC Committee on Nominations for the coming year has the most diversity in its history, Committee on Committee Chairman Bryan Smith reported at the SBC annual meeting.

The Committee on Committees, which includes two members from each state convention, names members of the Committee on Nominations, which nominates people to serve on the Southern Baptist Convention’s boards, commissions and committees.

Ethnic and minority members comprise 27 percent of the new Committee on Nominations, Smith said, calling it “one of the highlights” of the report.

“It is the largest percentage of racial diversity ever brought to our convention for the Committee on Nominations,” Smith said. With Southern Baptists committed to reaching America for Christ, he noted, “Our convention committees ought to reflect the faces of those in America for whom our Savior died to save.”

The churches of those serving on the Committee on Nominations give an average of 7 percent of their non-designated receipts to the Cooperative Program, and 12.6 percent to Great Commission giving, including the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Smith reported.

The Committee on Nominations will nominate members to the boards of the Executive Committee, GuideStone Financial Resources, the International Mission Board, the North American Mission Board, LifeWay Christian Resources, the six Southern Baptist seminaries, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and the Committee on Order of Business.

Currently, members appointed to boards by the 2014-15 Committee on Nominations include 16 percent non-Anglos, are members of churches that gave 8.7 percent to the Cooperative Program, and include 86 nominees serving in their first term on an agency or institution board, 2014-15 committee chairman John (Chip) Hutcheson, a member of Southside Baptist Church in Princeton, reported at the SBC annual meeting. (BP)



Chip Hutcheson

SBC panel: Value love, gospel with LGBT community

By Tom Storde

Columbus, Ohio—Christians should not undervalue the effect of love or the gospel in relating to gays and lesbians, recognizing, however, that faithfulness to the biblical definition of marriage will prove costly, members of a special panel told messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Five panelists answered questions from SBC President Ronnie Floyd about how churches and pastors can minister in an American culture that increasingly approves of homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

The discussion occurred about two weeks before an expected U.S. Supreme Court ruling that resulted in gay marriage’s legalization nationwide. Same-sex marriage already is legal in 37 states and the District of Columbia. In addition, the conversation came on the same day Floyd and 16 former SBC presidents released a statement saying they will not perform and the churches they pastor will not host same-sex ceremonies.

Rosaria Butterfield, an author who has chronicled her journey from lesbianism to Christ, told messengers not to “deny the power of the gospel to change lives and to travel at the grass-roots level. Your friendships matter.

“Don’t underestimate the power of genuinely loving people with a sense of fervency and consistency and honesty,” Butterfield said in explaining how to minister to gays and lesbians. “(W)ith compassion, we’re going to speak the truth in love, but we’ve got to show up to do it.”

Matt Carter, lead pastor of Austin Stone Community Church, said the Texas church is attempting “to train the believers who go to our church to pursue (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender—LGBT) people with the gospel in the same way they would pursue anybody with the gospel.”

“We try to help our folks understand: ‘These people are not your



Ronnie Floyd leads an SBC Presidential Panel on “The Supreme Court and Same-Sex Marriage: Preparing Our Churches for the Future.” The panel was held during the last session of the SBC annual meeting in Columbus.

enemy.’ Satan is our enemy. These are people that desperately need the blood and the love of Jesus Christ,” Carter told messengers.

“We offer love. We offer grace. We offer kindness. But we do call to repentance.”

Albert Mohler Jr. said he believes “we’re going to pay an enormous social, cultural price for not doing a same-sex ceremony.”

In the past, people “gained social capital” by joining SBC churches, said Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. “Now they’re going to lose it.”

For pastors, “the next decade of ministry is going to require courage,” said Ryan Blackwell, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in San Francisco.

Pastors should teach their church members “a robust understanding of biblical sexuality” and instruct them “to be very good listeners,” Blackwell said. “Our churches should be the safest places to have conversations about same-sex attraction.”

When asked how to help Christians with same-sex attractions, Russell Moore said the first thing needed is to “recover testimonies in our worship services in Southern Baptist churches.”

Those testimonies need to reflect the biblical reality that Christians are “all fighting spiritual warfare,” said Moore, president of the Ethics &

Religious Liberty Commission. In the case of same-sex attraction, he said, a Christian would testify, “I’m a follower of Christ, and I’m having to fight and to struggle against the temptation to homosexuality.”

He also urged Christian parents not to be ashamed of their gay and lesbian children.

Churches need to become communities that are safe places “to work through who I am,” Butterfield said, “and whose I am eventually.”

Mohler said the SBC and its churches must be diligent to confess and abide by biblical truth to make certain they do not follow other denominations that long ago abandoned the word of God and the gospel and now affirm homosexuality and gay marriage.

Southern Baptists also should say, “There but by the grace of God would we have gone—and we nearly did,” Mohler said.

At Floyd’s request, Moore closed the discussion by referencing the ERLC’s resources on the issue for pastors and churches.

These include “Protecting Your Ministry,” a new legal guide for churches and other institutions, and Equip, an online initiative with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention to aid pastors and others in ministering to the LGBT community. (BP)

Floyd: 'Rise up' in a 'dangerous, hopeless world'

By Tammi Reed Ledbetter

Columbus, Ohio—Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd called for pastoral leadership in the nation's largest Protestant denomination to seize a "Bonhoeffer moment" by refusing to be silent in the face of persecution, to hold on to the word of God, take heart and be encouraged.

"The lostness has never been greater in our dangerous and hopeless world," Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, said in his president's message to the SBC annual meeting June 16.

"Everyone, and I mean everyone, needs to rise up and lead."

Punctuated by frequent applause from nearly 5,000 messengers, Floyd's message, titled "Now Is the Time to Lead," began with broadcast clips showing that "the alarm clock is going off in our nation and across the world."

"I believe if the 59 presidents who have preceded me could speak to us in this hour, ... they would declare to us that we are living right now in our most defining hour as Southern Baptists." Citing Romans 13:11 to declare it a "kairos" moment, Floyd described a season "fixed by a sovereign God as a true moment of destiny."

From Islamic militants' savagery and the horrors of human trafficking to the void of religious liberty that wrongly imprisons believers like Saeed Abedini in Iran, Floyd appealed for Christians to heed the warning of the German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Quoting from "The Cost of Discipleship," Floyd said the opponent of the Nazi movement was right in saying, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

With 153 million orphans worldwide, a seventh of the world living in extreme poverty, 750 million lacking clean water, continuing natural disasters and the global economy hanging in the balance, Floyd said the world not only is dangerous but living without hope.

Racism, abortion & marriage

He called on Christ-followers to decry all racism and prejudice as well as callousness over the estimated 57 million babies killed since the 1973 Supreme Court ruling on abortion.

He underscored Southern Baptists' belief that God created all people for His glory, "that humanity's bearing of God's image is not contingent upon one's skin color."

Abortion, meanwhile, remains "a glaring desecration of the unborn child's purpose and value," he said, urging vigilance on behalf of all human life and dignity from the womb to the tomb.

"Now we await the outcome of the next possible Supreme Court ruling that could alter our nation's belief and practice on traditional and biblical marriage, but also our historic commitment to religious liberty for all people," Floyd said, calling it a watershed moment potentially fueling "the already sweeping wildfire of the sexual revolution" beyond "anyone's control locally, statewide, nationally and globally."

He appealed to Southern Baptists to love all people "even if they are struggling with same-sex attraction or adultery or anything else," aware that "we are all sin-



Ronnie Floyd, SBC president, called on all Southern Baptists to pray for the next Great Awakening.

ners in need of the Lord's help and grace."

Since neither the Supreme Court nor the culture is the final authority, Floyd insisted that he and thousands of pastors in the nation refuse to officiate any same-sex unions. Advocating freedom of religion, Floyd said Christians in America must stand for that priority, knowing it promotes the common good of the nation and the world.

Local churches

Instead of advancing as leaders, Floyd said many churches are sleeping or fighting, affected by indifference or internal debate.

The fellowship of the Southern Baptist family is challenged by a mindset that believes "combat against one another is some valiant, spiritualized effort," Floyd said. "We need to be careful not to chase after secondary matters that end up in the weeds of suspicion, skepticism, criticism and cynicism about one another," he said, calling on leaders to refuse such carnal actions by operating relationally from Matthew 18.

Instead of shrinking back in timidity and fearfulness, Floyd appealed for leadership that "believes and stands" on the promises of God's Word, pointing to the Lord's words in Revelation 3:7-8 that "I have placed before you an open door that no one is able to close."

"When other denominations and leaders are beginning to relax their message to be more politically correct, will we rise up in faithfulness to believe and stand on His word and for Jesus' name?" Floyd asked. "There is not one government, one Supreme Court, one court case, one editorial, one commentator, one liberal, one conservative, one world leader, one politician, one radical group, one demon or one of anything that can shut the doors Jesus Himself has opened for us."

Not only is Jesus the door to salvation, Floyd reminded, but He is the overseer of

all doors.

"Stop seeing all the trends and events as obstacles for us and the gospel," he insisted. "These are things that God will turn into open doors for the gospel."

Era of desperation

Underscoring the focus on prayer for spiritual awakening at the SBC annual meeting, Floyd reiterated a theme he has been declaring most of his adult life—since his own conversion as a teenager in Texas in 1972 when baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention peaked at 445,725.

"In that same year, we saw 137,667 12- to 17-year olds baptized, almost double what we reach today," Floyd said. He described God's awakening of "the fearful preacher, the dead church, the lifeless state convention and even the complex Southern Baptist Convention" as "our greatest hope today."

While rejoicing that the SBC is gaining ground in the number of churches, Floyd lamented that churches reported evangelistic outreach so low that they returned collectively to the level of baptisms 67 years ago when the U.S. population was 144 million in contrast to the 321 million Americans today.

The call for a simultaneous prioritization of evangelism and spiritual awakening requires great risk, Floyd acknowledged, calling on Southern Baptists to rise up and pray, give, believe, live and go like never before.

Floyd concluded by stating, "The need is great, the hour is late and we must advance the gospel together to every ethnicity in the world."

"I appeal to you, that if anything in our churches, Southern Baptist Convention entities, state conventions and associations is not accelerating the Great Commission locally, nationally and internationally, we need to rid ourselves of it now. The urgency is upon us." (BP)

Victim's son says love is stronger than hate

By Butch Blume

Charleston, S.C.—Less than 24 hours after his mother died at the hands of an assassin during a church prayer meeting, Charleston Southern University sophomore Chris Singleton stood before television cameras and declared that "love is always stronger than hate."

Flanked by coaches and teammates, Singleton, who plays baseball at CSU, thanked his teammates for their "amazing" support and recalled his mother's example of showing love to others.

"If we just love the way my mom would, then hate won't be anywhere close to what love is," he said. "My mom was a God-fearing woman. She loved everybody with all her heart."

Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, 45, was a speech therapist and women's track-and-field coach at Goose Creek High School outside Charleston. She was one of nine people shot to death June 17 by a lone gunman in the basement of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston.

Chris Singleton recalled a game in which he was standing in the on-deck circle. He caught his mom's eye, and she told him she was praying for him. "Mom, don't you think I already did that?" he said.

His mom replied, "You can never have too much prayer."

Answering reporters' questions, Singleton admitted that his knees were "a little weak right now, but I'm trying to stay as strong as I can while I press on."

"I just think about her smile," he said.

Singleton described Emanuel AME as a place where he felt like "everybody's grandson."

"This church is such a family," he said. "It's tough times, but our church will get through it. Everybody will press on."

Following the press conference, Singleton's teammates and coaches surrounded him and placed their hands on him while a coach led the group in a prayer.

In a school press release, CSU baseball coach Stuart Lake said the players and coaches are hurting and are praying for Singleton and his family. "Chris's mother was just that parent that, as a coach, you are proud to have as part of your program," he said. "What she brought to our team is immeasurable."

Charleston Southern University is one of three South Carolina colleges affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist Convention. (BP)



Chris Singleton

Lottie Moon mission gifts top \$153M

By Erich Bridges

Richmond, Va.—As they plan creative new ways to reach the lost, International Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union leaders expressed gratitude to Southern Baptists for the generous support churches gave to the 2014 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

Finalized in early June, the 2014 Lottie Moon offering totaled \$153,002,394—the second-highest total in the 126-year history of the offering. While it fell about \$1 million short of 2013's all-time record offering of \$154 million, the 2014 total surpassed the previous record, \$150.4 million in 2007, by more than \$2.5 million.

"We have so much grace from God to celebrate in this offering," IMB President David Platt said. "This is the second-largest Lottie Moon offering ever. It will supply more than half of our total IMB budget. We are deeply grateful for the faithfulness and obedience of the countless churches and individuals who have given sacrificially to this offering. Because they love God more than the pleasures, possessions and pursuits of this world, and because they want to glorify His name among all nations, we'll be able to partner with them and missionaries sent from Southern Baptist churches around the world to take the gospel to people who have never heard it."

"Every dollar given to the Lottie Moon offering will enable a man, woman or family to stay on the field, to lift the light of Jesus Christ amidst some of the darkest,

most dangerous and difficult-to-reach places, and to make disciples among unreached peoples," Platt noted. "God has given His people wealth for the sake of His worship, and I praise Him for how this money will serve as a tool in His hands for the multiplication of the church and the magnification of His name."

Wanda Lee, executive director/treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union, which promotes the offering in partnership with IMB, also expressed gratitude.

"We are grateful for the continued strong financial support and fervent prayers of Southern Baptists for international missions," Lee said. "Praying for our missionaries and giving of our resources to aid in the work of overseas missions is at the heart of who we are in WMU. As Southern Baptists learn how God is at work around the world, they give of their resources and offer more informed prayers for those who have committed their lives to following the Great Commission into all the world so the gospel will be proclaimed among all people."

Platt, who was elected last year to lead Southern Baptists into a new era of international missions, wants to greatly expand pathways for churches and individuals to participate in God's global mission—especially in cities and difficult places. Those avenues will include many new ways for congregations, professionals, students, retirees and others to join "limitless teams" to reach the unreached.

Full-time missionaries are more important than ever in new approaches. They



The Lottie Moon offering—and regular missions giving by churches through the Southern Baptist

will lead many of those teams and continue to be the key strategic workers in some of the toughest areas on earth. That's why the Lottie Moon offering is so crucial: More than 4,700 IMB missionaries depend on it to pay day-to-day expenses and fund their efforts to spread the gospel.

The Lottie Moon offering—and regular missions giving by churches through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program—fund missionary salaries, housing, medical care, children's education, field transportation and other expenses. Supporting one fully funded missionary overseas costs an average of \$141 per day, or about \$51,000 per year.

Every penny of the Lottie Moon offering, named for Southern Baptists' most famous missionary, goes to the IMB overseas budget, which directly supports missionaries and their work. The 2014 offering will account for more than half of the total

2015 IMB budget of \$301.1 million.

The offering enables missionaries to go into areas untouched by the gospel, engage groups with no believers or Scriptures, start churches and make disciples.

IMB missionaries and their ministry partners communicated the gospel to more than 1.7 million people, led nearly 275,000 people to faith in Christ, baptized more than 190,000 new believers and started more than 13,000 churches and many more believer groups that will become churches, according to IMB's 2014 annual statistical report (reflecting 2013 year-end statistics). Trained disciples among 235 people groups engaged their own people inside their countries. Disciples among 62 people groups engaged different groups or cities within their countries—and workers representing 26 peoples went beyond their own countries to reach different groups. (BP)

SBC resolutions on key issues pull broad consensus

By Tom Strode

Columbus, Ohio—Messengers to the 2015 Southern Baptist Convention adopted nine resolutions—some on culturally divisive issues—with almost no opposition.

All the resolutions offered June 16 at the SBC's meeting gained passage by unanimous or nearly unanimous votes. The messengers affirmed biblically based stances on such topics as same-sex marriage, racial reconciliation and the sanctity of human life, as well as religious persecution and pornography. Approved resolutions also called for spiritual awakening and celebrated the 90th anniversary of the Cooperative Program.

Prior to the convention, the Resolutions Committee received only four resolutions, an unusually small number. As a result, the committee initiated more resolutions than normal, but committee chairman Steve Gaines said finding topics proved no problem.

"There are so many pressing issues morally and spiritually in our nation right now, it really didn't take long to figure that out," Gaines said at a news conference after the committee's report.

He illustrated for reporters what he meant by pointing to a few of the resolutions.

"When it comes to our nation, when you look back at just the last 12 to 18 months, racial reconciliation needs to be at the top of our

list," said Gaines, senior pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., a suburb of Memphis. "All of us who have children or grandchildren are very concerned about pornography. All of us are concerned about abortion and not just abortion but the sanctity of life on both ends."

He added, "It's not hard in light of what's going on with (the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and what's going on in North Korea and other places to make resolutions" on religious persecution.

The approved resolutions: ■ urged the Supreme Court in its decision this summer to affirm the right of citizens to limit marriage to a male-female union, reasserted the SBC's belief in the biblical view of marriage no matter how the justices rule and called for religious freedom for individuals and organizations who conscientiously object to same-sex marriage.

■ called for SBC churches and entities to work toward racial and ethnic diversity in their leaders and encouraged Southern Baptists to be "faithful ambassadors of reconciliation."

■ affirmed the sanctity of human life "at all stages of development" and exhorted Southern Baptists to seek "the repeal of unjust laws and inhumane practices that degrade human life."

■ denounced all religious persecution and called for Southern Baptists to pray for persecuted

Christians during personal times and corporate worship.

■ appealed to the North Korean government to respect human rights and urged the U.S. government to pressure North Korea to recognize the religious freedom of its citizens.

■ expressed grief over the destructive impact of pornography and affirmed the power of the Gospel of Jesus to deliver those who have committed sexual immorality.

■ pledged a commitment by Southern Baptists to seek God and to pray that He would bring revival.

■ expressed gratitude to God upon the 90th anniversary of the Cooperative Program for His leadership in its establishment and encouraged Southern Baptist churches to consider increases in their giving through it.

■ thanked God and all those who helped with this year's meeting.

"We want to speak the truth, but we always want to do it in love and redemption," Gaines told reporters. "And we are not in any way angry with anybody. We love everybody. But when you love the Lord, you have to say what the Bible says."

Messengers approved amendments to three of the resolutions presented by the committee. (BP)

Editor's Note: The full text of the resolutions adopted during the 2015 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting is available on our website, www.westernrecorder.org.

Supreme Court

Continued from page 1

of the gospel of Jesus Christ and our confidence in the sovereignty of God gives Baptists in Kentucky joy and optimism even in the face of (the Supreme Court's) ruling....

"Moving forward, one of the most pressing questions now regards religious liberty. Does the ruling threaten this foundational principle of American law and life?" he asked.

"... Appealing to the First Amendment, biblically faithful Baptists in Kentucky will continue to preach and teach God's truth on the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman, as well the sinfulness of the homosexual lifestyle," Chitwood continued. Should the First Amendment fail to provide protection to the Church, nothing changes. Like the early disciples, those who love the Lord and live by His word will continue to do what pleases God rather than men and face whatever consequences Caesar may bring.

"As for our ministry to those who practice homosexuality, again, nothing has changed. We will continue to love all sinners and hate all sin, including the sin of homosexuality," he concluded.

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said, "I am a conscientious dissenter from this ruling handed down by the Court today, believing, along with millions of others, that marriage is the sacred union of one man and one woman and that it is improper for the Court to redefine an institution it did not invent in the first place....

"Despite this ruling, the church of Jesus Christ will stand fast. We will not capitulate on this issue because we cannot," he said.

"The church must now articulate and embody a Christian vision of marriage and work to rebuild a culture of marriage."

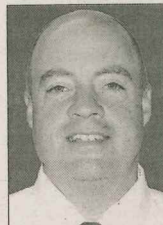
Same-sex marriage already was legal in 37 states and the District of Columbia. Court rulings had produced legal gay marriage in more than two-thirds of those states before the justices' opinion expanded it to all 50 states. (BP/WR)

More 2015 graduates share their stories

The following are excerpts from four of our 2015 graduates.

Male staff student—"I learned to use every week, every day, every hour, every minute and every second to my advantage. We only have so

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

much time and no matter what you do with it, it will pass. I learned to turn off my phone, put down my laptop, and shut my iPod off. I learned to live in the moment I am in. When you are at OBI, maybe you don't want to be. I didn't always, either. It's not about where you are or even who you are with; it is about what you take from all of these! It's

not about what you walk away from. It is about what you walk away with. I learned to have ambition, embrace desire and dream ridiculously big dreams!"

Male boarding student from Liberty

Township, Ohio—"Even though I have been through countless chapel services, OBI has increased my spiritual growth. There are many that I have stayed awake in, and every single one has taught me a lesson. Whether it is repeating the same lesson over and over again, there is always something new to learn. I thank God for bringing me here to get closer to Him and to learn more about Him and His love."

Female student from Cincinnati, Ohio—

"The first thing that comes to my mind when I think about the day I arrived at OBI is the feeling of acceptance I got. I felt relieved to see that all of the girls in the dorm were expected to pull as much weight as the rest. At my house, since I was the only girl, I was expected to take care of all the chores; even the ones more fit for a man. Before I went bed, the houseparents came to each room to say goodnight, and before school, they wished us each a good day. The little

things like that made me feel so much warmth and comfort. Not long after I got here, the love of Jesus started taking hold of my heart. For the first time I learned about God and Christianity. I felt at peace with myself."

Female boarding student from Ethiopia—"I'm thankful that I went to OBI to give me a glimpse of the world. Before, I didn't know a lot about the world because I lived under my parent's roof; but now, I'm more familiar with it. I guess this made me more ready to go to college and face the world."

Thank you, friends of Oneida, for helping these four young people reach their dreams. Even though they may never meet you or know you personally, they are grateful to you.

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute. Website: oneidaschool.org. Phone: (606) 847-4111

Right where he needs to be

New student Tyler Schwartz knew that Clear Creek Baptist Bible College was right where he needed to be the first time he visited our campus.

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

"I was saved when I was 8 years old and was then called into ministry this past year while working in a youth camp with my church," Schwartz said.

"The speaker at the end of the week of services challenged us to be attentive to God's calling on our lives," he recalled.

"I just knew that was what I was supposed to do, something in my spirit said 'yes' right then. But I did not immediately surrender," he continued.

"I wrestled with it for a while and questioned it frequently, but all

along I knew that was what I was supposed to do," Schwartz recalled. "Then one day I quit secular school, gave up my baseball career to follow God's call to ministry, and He has not let me down since."

"My girlfriend's father introduced me to Clear Creek, and I am sure glad he did," said Schwartz. "He scheduled a visit to campus for us and while I was there on the visit I just felt at peace."

"I knew this is where God was calling me to be," he said.

"I am currently on the pastoral ministry track right now, but the Lord has placed evangelism on my heart," he said. "and I am excited to see where God leads!"

"My classes at Clear Creek are phenomenal," said Schwartz. "The instructors are excellent, and the faculty and staff are incredible!"

"My favorite class would have to

be New Testament 2. I really enjoy learning about my King, and it really has allowed me to understand more about the life of Jesus and how we have no excuse not to strive to be like Him," he added.

"To anyone who is called into ministry and considering Clear Creek as an option; DO IT!" Schwartz urged.

"If you feel like God is calling you to Clear Creek do not hesitate, just do it," he said. "The whole school is like one big family; the education you receive is second to none; and, most importantly, the presence of God is there, which is by far what this world needs more of."

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.

What's the plan?

The most likely reason people fail to plan their finances, especially the preparation of an estate plan may fall into the category of "life just gets in the way." For some it's "I'm too busy," for others it's the uncomfortable idea of planning to die, and for another group their reason may be "no one can know the future," so why plan if things are just going to change.

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Richard Carnes

The reality is, if we develop a plan, for our family vacation, a party at our home, a career change, and yes, stewardship plans for our family and our

finances, these events will all go more smoothly and our lives may be less stressful.

The Kentucky Baptist Foundation strives to fulfill its Christian service

mandate to individuals through a variety of educational efforts. One of the ways this is done is through the presentation of educational seminars within your local church. Examples of the seminars are as follows:

Estate Planning Mistakes and Solutions—Discover what the ten biggest estate planning mistakes are and how to avoid them to assure you make the most of what you have.

Who Will Be In Charge If ...?—Explores incapacity planning tools—powers of attorney, health care advanced directives, Living Trusts and what happens if no prior planning has been done.

Legacy Giving Ideas—Ways to give that benefit the giver as well as the charity—gifts of appreciated assets; gifts of life insurance and retirement assets; and life income gifts.

Ask A Lawyer—The Foundation's attorney, Laurie Valentine, is ready to

answer your estate planning, incapacity planning, long-term care planning and charitable gift planning questions and ... there's no "meter" running.

Ways To Make Gifts To Your Church—Estate stewardship giving ideas to encourage church members to take stewardship to a deeper level—what to give, how to give, and why we should give.

These topics and more are available as no-cost stewardship education seminars that can be conducted at your church. The Kentucky Baptist Foundation's trust counsel, Laurie Valentine and I will welcome your invitation. Call us at our toll-free number (866) 489-3533.

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

SBTS publishes church revitalization guide

By Andrew Smith

Louisville—Christian leaders and pastors consider the necessity and nature of church revitalization in the 21st century in a new guide book released by SBTS Press, sponsored by the Mathena Center for Church Revitalization of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In "A Guide to Church Revitalization," which released in June, editor and Southern Seminary President Albert Mohler Jr. highlighted in the opening chapter the need for a new generation of church revitalizers. Replanting struggling churches about to close their doors is a critical calling for contemporary pastors, Mohler writes.

"One of our central tasks in the present generation is to be bold in our vision of replanting churches—helping existing churches to find new vision, new strategic focus, new passion for the gospel, new hunger for the preaching of the Word, new love for their communities, and new excitement about seeing people come to faith in Jesus," writes Mohler in the chapter. "Replanting churches requires both courage and leadership skills. A passion for replanting a church must be matched by skills in ministry and a heart for helping a church to regain a vision."

The guide book details the necessary elements of revitalizing a dying church, from the centrality of expository preaching to cultivating spiritual discipline among members.

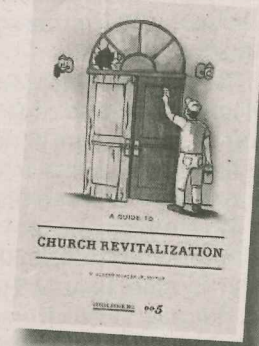
It includes a description of the revitalizing process, a summary of the factors indicating ultimate success, and a depiction of the personal character required to be a spiritually effective church planter.

Also featured in the guide book are Dan Dumas, senior vice president for institutional administration; Croft, who is also senior pastor of Auburndale Baptist Church in Louisville; Donald Whitney, professor of biblical spirituality; and David Prince, assistant professor of Christian preaching and pastor of Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Lexington.

"This new guide book seeks to help this historic need in the SBC by relying, not upon the latest trends and church growth gimmicks, but upon the power of God working in his Word," said Brian Croft, senior fellow at the Mathena Center. "It is a helpful beginning to what we hope will launch a great movement of God's Spirit and equipped men called to this unique work to breathe new life into dying churches."

The book concludes with a series of interviews with Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.; Andrew Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church in Durham, N. C.; and Croft. The interviews present evaluations of necessary components of church revitalization.

A Guide to Church Revitalization is available at sbts.edu/press. (SBTS)



Elisabeth Elliot: 'reckless abandon to the Lord'

Gloucester, Mass.—Elisabeth Elliot Gren, missionary, missionary widow and widely influential author and speaker, died June 15. She was 88.

Elliot died in her sleep in her home in Gloucester, Mass. In addition to suffering from dementia for a decade, she recently experienced multiple mini-strokes, her daughter Valerie Elliot Shepard said.

Her death has inspired many reflections on her life and ministry, some by personal acquaintances and some by those whose own ministries were influenced by her writings. Her Facebook page is flooded with tributes to her influence.

Various women at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 16 in Columbus, Ohio, conveyed their appreciation for Elliot and her impact on believers.

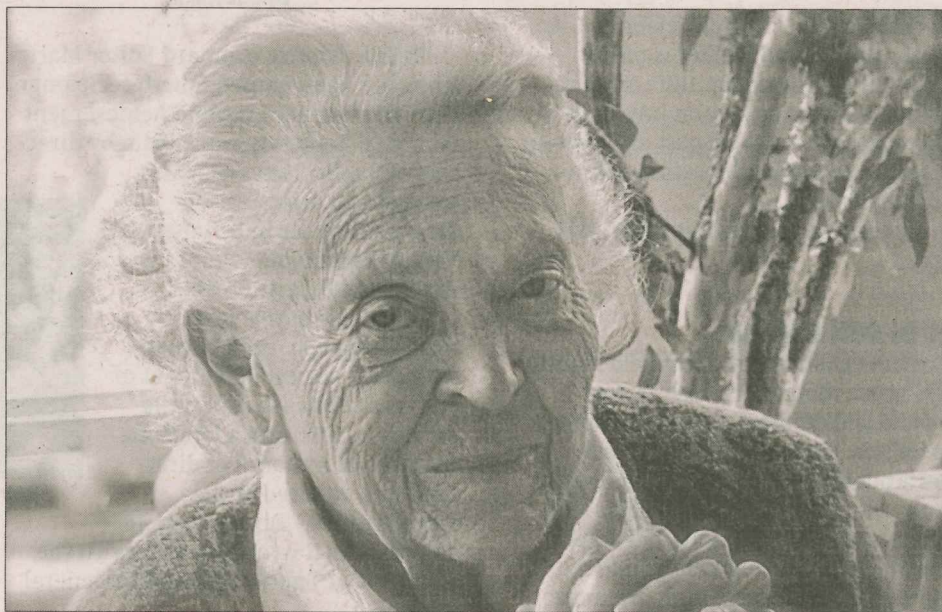
"She was a godly woman with a mentoring spirit," said Monica Vaught from Revive Our Hearts, a radio show based in Michigan aimed at Christian women.

Lindsay McDonald of First Baptist Church in Casey, Ill., told Baptist Press that "her call for purity and excellence is a reminder for who we are as women."

Elizabeth Morris of Vernon Baptist Church in Vernon, Ind., said Elliot's willingness to continue her outreach to the Auca "was profound."

Dorothy Patterson, professor of theology in women's studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said Elliot "has been my mentor, friend, co-laborer in the Kingdom and kindred spirit for half a century. She challenged me and modeled for me the honoring and helping of my husband, the nurturing of my children and grandchildren, and the doing of woman-to-woman teaching."

Through her books, Patterson said, Elliot's influence "continues in the ministries of women like me who have sat at her feet and been covered with her



Author Elisabeth Elliot Gren pauses before her Women's Fellowship Day message at Southeastern Seminary. (By Courtney Navey)

influence. No one delivers to women a more heartfelt, God-anointed, timely and yet timeless message. She loved God's Word and she was bound to it in every area of life and ministry."

Rhonda Kelley, adjunct professor of women's studies at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, told Baptist Press, "As a young woman and wife, my faith and convictions were greatly influenced by the writings of Elisabeth Elliot. I have had the privilege of hearing her speak and re-reading her books through the years. ... I am forever grateful for her influence of femininity and purity in my life and the lives of thousands of other women."

Kathy Litton, national consultant for ministry to pastors' wives with the North American Mission Board, said Elliot "mentored me in my widowhood most powerfully through her book 'Pathway Of

Loneliness.' Her words and example gave me hope to walk a life that seemed bitterly impossible" after the death of her first husband in an automobile accident.

"Yet more than that, Elisabeth trailblazed a path for women and men alike in missions, biblical truth, sexual purity and suffering," Litton said. "I wept when I heard news of her death. I felt I had lost a dear, dear friend. Yet I celebrate her glorious reunion."

Elisabeth Elliot's public ministry ended soon after she was diagnosed with dementia. She responded to her diagnosis the same way she reacted to the other tragedies in her life—with peace, her husband Lars Gren said.

The daughter of missionaries who had served in Belgium, Elliot was raised in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and attended Wheaton College in Illinois,

graduating with a degree in Greek in 1948. It was at Wheaton where she met her first husband, Jim Elliot.

After a lengthy courtship documented in her book "Passion and Purity," she and Jim married in 1953. In 1956, Jim was killed by the Auca Indians in Ecuador. Elliot and her then-10-month-old daughter Valerie continued mission work in Ecuador for 10 years, eventually living among Auca tribesmen who had slain her husband.

"I have one desire now—to live a life of reckless abandon for the Lord, putting all my energy and strength into it," Elliot wrote in "Through Gates of Splendor." The book along with "My Savage Kinsmen" told the story of her and Jim's ministry in the jungles of Ecuador, his death and her continued ministry in South America.

In a later work "These Strange Ashes," Elliot reflected, "To be a follower of the Crucified means, sooner or later, a personal encounter with the cross. And the cross always entails loss."

Her other works include "Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot," "Quest for Love," "Let Me Be a Woman" and "Be Still My Soul."

Upon returning to America, she became a professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and hosted a radio program, "Gateway to Joy," which aired from 1988-2001 and was rebroadcast by the Bible Broadcasting Network in 2014, which can be accessed at bbnradio.org.

In 1969, Elliot remarried Addison Leitch, a college professor of philosophy and religion. After his death from cancer in 1973, she married Lars Gren in 1977. (BP)

Compiled by Baptist Press editor Art Toalston, with contributions by Myriah Snyder of the Western Recorder and other news reporters.

Ferguson Baptist honors members with Legacy Building

By Myriah Snyder

Ferguson—Ferguson Baptist Church dedicated its Legacy Building on May 17.

The building was dedicated to two members, Z.M. Ford and Thomas Boone, for their dedication and hard work "behind the scenes," said Jason Moore, pastor of Ferguson Baptist for the last 10 years.

The church, founded in 1908, honored Z.M. Ford, a deceased charter member, and Thomas Boone, a faithful active member for the past 90 years.

"When I think of Tom Boone and his contributions to Ferguson Baptist Church over many decades, I have such fond memories," Shirley Gifford, 40 year member of Ferguson Baptist, said.

Gifford recounted, "Tom has been such a wonderful example of what a leader in the church should be. I remember Tom serving in practically every position in Ferguson Baptist Church from deacon, trustee, Sunday school teacher, Bible study course leader, treasurer, choir director... to name a few."

"Tom is certainly a legacy to me and my family, along with his wife, Marjorie, for their contributions to Ferguson Baptist Church and to Ferguson as a community. I am confident that Ferguson Baptist Church would not be the church it is today if we dared to remove the contributions of

Tom Boone and his wife, Marjorie," she said.

Boone, who has been a part of Ferguson Baptist since he was 5, was adamant that Ford also be honored for all of his hard work and dedication to the church, Moore mentioned.

"But the key to this legacy building is not to just recognize those two, because there's been a whole lot of people who have been in the church that have done so many things," Moore continued. "And that's why it's called the Legacy Building."

"So many people have worked so hard in the church and outside the church to see this building built so the legacy of what we are trying to do at Ferguson Baptist Church can continue.

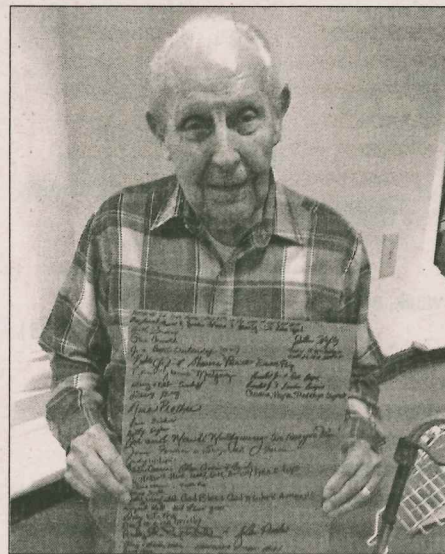
"We are trying to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the legacy," Moore said.

Moore presented Boone with a cast of the plaque that will be put on the completed Legacy Building.

Each member present signed the mold for Boone.

Construction on the building began January 2014 and will be completed next year. The project will be debt-free, with funding from yard sales, auctions, lunches, a Legacy 5K and a "leaving a legacy" theme for the church's homecoming.

The building will solve many practical



Pastor Jason Moore presented Tom Boone with a signed template cast plaque that will be displayed on the Legacy Building.

issues for the church such as providing a fellowship hall that is handicap accessible so the entire church can fellowship together.

"God gets all the glory for everything that has happened. It's not something we did. It's not something just Tom did or Z. M. did. They were used; they were the instruments. But ultimately it's God," Moore concluded. (WR)

Harvie to help plant churches in Northeast

Louisville—Kentucky-based church planting strategist Aaron Harvie has broadened his role with the North American Mission Board, taking responsibility for getting new congregations started in the Northeast.

Harvie, based at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, had split his work between NAMB and the Kentucky Baptist Convention for the past two years. He will work exclusively for NAMB, and will no longer work part time for the KBC.

"We celebrate Aaron expanding his ministry to include mobilizing partners for NAMB's church planting in the Northeast region," said Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Paul Chitwood. "Since he will still reside in Kentucky, we know he will continue to be a cheerleader and supporter of work in our state."

A native of Lebanon, Ohio, Harvie moved to Louisville in 1995 to attend Southern Seminary. He served churches in Louisville while he was a student. In 1999, Harvie and his wife, Allison, planted Riverside Community Church in Philadelphia. Riverside has since planted four more churches.

NAMB wants to plant 13,500 new churches by 2022. "That's an exciting thing to be a part of," he said. (KBC)



July

- 10-11** Acteens Splash, Jonathan Creek Camp & Conference Center, Hardin
- 10-11** GA Overnight, Jonathan Creek Camp & Conference Center, Hardin.
- 10-11** Mother/Daughter Overnight, Jonathan Creek Camp & Conference Center, Hardin.
- 11-18** Kentucky Changers, Henderson.
- 17-18** GA Overnight, Cedar Crest Camp, Bagdad.
- 17-18** Mother/Daughter Overnight, Cedar Crest Camp, Bagdad.
- 18** International Disaster Relief Training, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 18** Operation Inasmuch: Kentucky Training, Beaver Dam Baptist Church.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

LOUISVILLE—Carlisle Avenue Church celebrated its 104th anniversary on June 7. **Brad Walker** is pastor. Deer Park Church will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the completion of its sanctuary on July 12 at 10:45 a.m. The congregation invites all past and present members to share in the worship celebration. A luncheon will immediately follow.

MT. STERLING—Macedonia Church has called **Jim Skidmore** as pastor.

Mid-Continent to sell campus

Mayfield—Mid-Continent University, a Mayfield institution with Kentucky Baptist roots that ceased to hold classes in June 2014 and laid off most of its staff, plans to put the campus up for sale, the Paducah Sun reports.

The sale includes academic and dormitory buildings. "Huntington Bank, the trustee for bond holders who have a secured interest in the MCU campus, has asked that the property be officially listed for sale," said Tim Walker, vice president of finance and administration at Mid-Continent. He said the institution hopes to show about 300 creditors that it can make payments to them.

Mid-Continent plans on securing that money by collecting student debts, pending "assurance of voluntary compliance" on MCU's proposed loan repayment plan in accordance with the Attorney General's Office. (WR)

Former WR editor, Knox, honored

By Bob Allen

Dallas—Baptist Standard Editor Marv Knox has been named fourth recipient of the Greg Warner Lifetime Achievement Award in Religious Journalism by directors of Baptist News Global, a journalistic organization formed last year in a merger of Virginia's Religious Herald and Associated Baptist Press.

Knox, one of the Baptist state newspaper editors that supported the establishment of ABP as an independent news service in 1990 and a longtime member of its board of directors, was honored at the Friends of BNG Dinner June 18 in Dallas held in conjunction with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly.

"Marv Knox is one of the premier journalists in American religion," said David Wilkinson, executive director and publisher of Baptist News Global.

"As a brilliant writer and editor, his



Marv Knox

influence on Baptist life has been profound. Over a 36-year career, his work has consistently reflected the highest standards of journalistic excellence.

He has fashioned a rich legacy etched with courage, integrity and grace."

A graduate of Hardin-Simmons University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Knox joined Baptist Standard Publishing as associate editor in December 1995 before being named editor effective January 1999.

Knox previously served as editor of the Western Recorder, the Baptist paper of Kentucky, from 1990 to 1995.

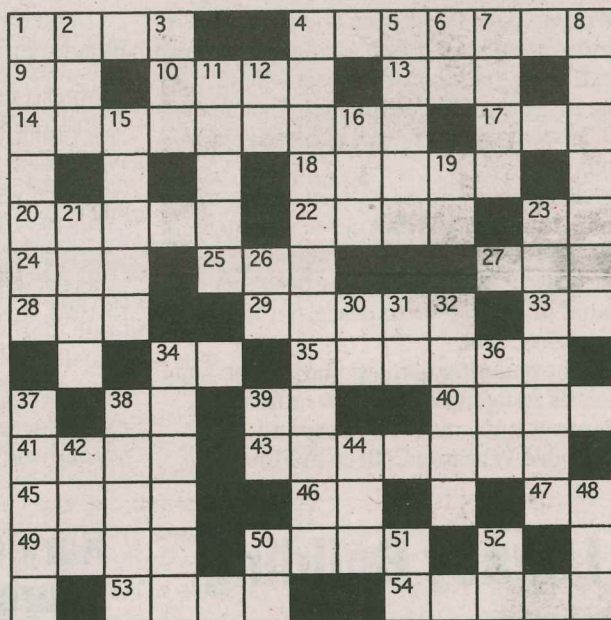
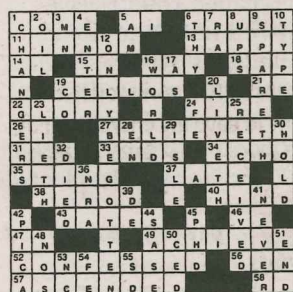
Before that he was features editor for Baptist Press, associate editor of the Baptist Message of Louisiana, director of news and information at Southern Seminary, assistant news director of the Home (now North American) Mission Board in Atlanta, and staff writer for the Abilene Reporter News. (BNG)

Bible Crosswords

Across

- 1 "Ye tithe ____ and rue and all manner of herbs" (Luke 11:42)
- 4 "But the ____ are beaten out with a staff" (Isaiah 28:27)
- 9 Sound of hesitation
- 10 "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ____" (Psalms 89:1)
- 13 Poem
- 14 "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of ____" (John 12:3)
- 17 Royal Air Force, abbr.
- 18 African antelope
- 20 "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and ____" (Psalms 45:8)
- 22 "I will give unto thee the ____ of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19)
- 23 "I ... brought thee out of ____ of the Chaldees" (Genesis 15:7)
- 24 Republic of Rwanda, abbr.
- 25 "They slew the kings of Midian ... namely, ____" (Numbers 31:8)
- 27 Biblical plain (Nehemiah 6:2)
- 28 Arid
- 29 "Ye pay tithe of mint and ____ and cummin" (Matthew 23:23)
- 33 Follows em
- 34 A greeting
- 35 "Beaten out with a staff, and the ____ with a rod" (Isaiah 28:27)
- 38 Sixteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet
- 39 Myself

#039



#040

- 40 "Thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ____ of the earth" (Acts 13:47)
- 41 Sweet potatoes
- 43 "The smoke of the ____ ... ascended up before God" (Revelation 8:4)
- 45 Cereal grains
- 46 First day of the week, abbr.
- 47 Twice, prefix
- 49 City in Nevada
- 50 Native of Serbia
- 53 Canned meat product
- 54 "Such ____ as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon" (2 Chronicles 9:9)

Down

- 1 "Faith as a grain of ____ seed" (Matthew 17:20)
- 2 Mischievous child
- 3 Moslem monastery
- 4 "They presented unto him gifts; gold and ____" (Matthew 2:11)
- 5 "____ shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43)
- 6 Record's replacement, abbr.
- 7 Zeus's sister
- 8 "Thy plants are ... spikenard and ____" (Song of Solomon 4:13-14)
- 11 Bible division within a chapter
- 12 Printer's measure
- 15 "His belly is as bright ____" (Song of Solomon 5:14)
- 16 Grain
- 19 Library science, abbr.
- 21 "The ____ is my shepherd" (Psalms 23:1)
- 23 Infinite
- 26 Southern state, abbr.
- 30 Iowa University, abbr.
- 31 Not large, abbr.
- 32 To correct
- 34 "They filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon ____" (John 19:29)
- 36 ____ and outs
- 37 "They presented unto him gifts; gold, and ____" (Matthew 2:11)
- 38 Prayer endings
- 39 Do, re, ____
- 42 Opposite of nay
- 44 Worthless dog
- 48 Frozen water
- 50 Samarium, chem. symbol
- 51 Undergraduate degree, abbr.
- 52 Seventh note of the musical scale

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SEEKING: Crofton Baptist Church in Crofton, Ky., is prayerfully accepting resumes for the position of full time pastor to lead our congregation. Experience is preferred. Please send resume to Crofton Baptist Church, Attn: Pastor Search Committee, 155 College Street, Crofton, KY 42217 or email to office at croftonbaptist@bellsouth.net.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Bowling Green, Ky., is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor who God has chosen to lead and shepherd our congregation. Resumes will be accepted until 6/30, and can be submitted via email to 621SGW@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Part-time music director position available to serve at First Baptist Church of Cold Spring by coordinating and administering an effective music program by blending contemporary and traditional music at the 10:30 am and 6 p.m. Sunday and Wednesday evening services. Please send resumes to Music Ministry Search Team at 4410 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076. Job description available at http://fbccs.com

SEEKING: Oneida Baptist Church, in Oneida, Ky., and adjacent to Oneida Baptist Institute, is prayerfully accepting resumes for a bivocational pastor. Email resumes to christy.gay@clay.kyschools.us

SEEKING: Small Baptist church in Warren County, Ky., seeking a bivocational pastor. Close personal walk with the Lord along with knowledge, wisdom and understanding of the Holy Bible is required. Motivated leader with vision and focus to carry on God's mission, "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Prior pastoral experience, education and training is preferred. Applicants send your resume to pkbcsearch@yahoo.com or mail to PKBC, P.O. Box 54, Rockfield, KY 42274.

SEEKING: Wickland Baptist Church in Bardstown, Ky., is seeking a part-time youth minister. Potential candidates may visit our web site at wicklandbaptist.org to view a job description. Send resumes to the church at wicklandnewslink@gmail.com.

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: Bandana Baptist Church is prayerfully accepting candidates for a full-time or bivocational pastor to lead our congregation (avg. 55 W.S.). Send resumes and CD/DVD to: Bandana Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 87, Bandana, KY 42022.

SEEKING: Pianist for small Baptist church in Camp Taylor area of Louisville. A.M. service only. Salary available. Call (502) 499-6962.

SEEKING: Dry Run Baptist Church in Georgetown, Ky., is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Mail resumes to: Search Committee 2109 Cincinnati Pike Georgetown, KY 40324 or email to drbc-search@yahoo.com

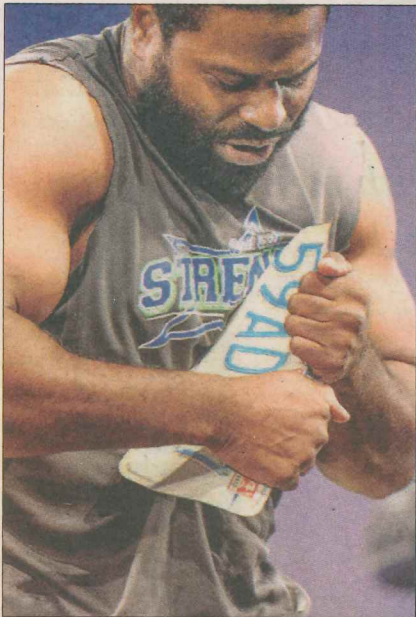
SEEKING: Broadway Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky., is accepting resumes for the position of senior pastor. Please send resume to Broadway Baptist Church, Attn: Pulpit Committee, 2500 Harrodsburg Road, Lexington, KY 40503 or e-mail to pastorsearch@broadwaybaptistchurch.org.

SEEKING: Highland Ave. Baptist Tabernacle Church in Fort Thomas, Ky., is prayerfully accepting resumes for the position of full-time pastor to lead a congregation with average worship attendance of 100. Experience and seminary degree preferred, but not required. Please send resume and CD/DVD/Internet link for sermons to: Highland Ave Baptist Tabernacle Attn: Pastor Search Committee, 1080 Highland Ave, Ft. Thomas, KY 41075 or email to pastorsearchhbtcfuse.net

SEEKING: Columbia Baptist Church is seeking a children's minister with a passion for reaching children and their families with the gospel of Jesus Christ. CBC has plenty of room to grow and currently serves approximately 30-50 children weekly, with 90 or more during VBS. A bachelor's degree and prior experience working with children and their families is preferred. Applicants seeking either part-time or full-time work will be considered. Please submit resume to: Personnel c/o Columbia Baptist Church, 201 Greensburg St, Columbia, KY 42728.

FREE: Small electric church Conn Organ to someone who can use it. May need minor work. Must be able to pick up. Contact me and mention this ad @ 502-744-6349.

FOR RENT: Two condos for rent in Destin, Fla. 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. Book now for 2015. lbrammer@charter.net (423) 309-4422.



Crossover nurtures churches' ties to Ohio communities

Columbus, Ohio — "Do you know why we are here, sweetheart?" Paulette Foster asked a young girl receiving a Parsons Fest registration bracelet at Indian Mound Rec Center in south Columbus.

"Are you here to tell people about Jesus?" she asked.

"That's right! And what did Jesus do?" Foster asked.

"He died for our sins?"

"That's right, He died for our sins on the cross. We are here to show people His love. You know Jesus loves you, don't you?" Foster said.

Similar conversations took place at 47 venues around the greater Columbus area June 13 as thousands of volunteers—local Baptists and others from across the U.S. and Canada—took part in the culmination of a year-long effort to reach the city with the gospel and connect local ministry and outreach to long-term church strategy.

Weeklong activities with college and seminary students and Monday events increased the number of opportunities for gospel conversations. Early reports for Crossover showed at least 3,385 participants making 4,950 gospel presentations and recording 345-plus professions of faith. (BP)

Photos by Bob Carey,
Adam Covington,
Matt Miller & Paul Lee



Center, Greg Hitchcock, pastor of Transformation Church in Carroll, Ohio, builds a gazebo June 13 as part of Crossover 2015.

Above, Jeff Vana, a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, helps a toddler hit a whiffle ball at a block party June 13 at Cassingham Elementary School in Columbus, Ohio.

Top, former Cleveland Browns player William Green, a member of the Strength Team, rips apart a license plate during a block party at Violet Baptist Church in Pickerington, Ohio.

Top center, Traci Stanton, left, Steve Lopper, back right, and Scott Sanders of Bloom Baptist Church in Lithopolis, Ohio, provide free full service at a local Marathon gas station.



Taylor Warren, 4, part of a mission team from Eagle Lake, Fla., washes cars at a free car wash at Bloom Baptist Church in Lithopolis, Ohio.



Leo, 5, who lives in Columbus, Ohio, helps Morehead State University senior Chelsea Turner, center, and MSU grad Rebecca Seagraves plant vegetables.

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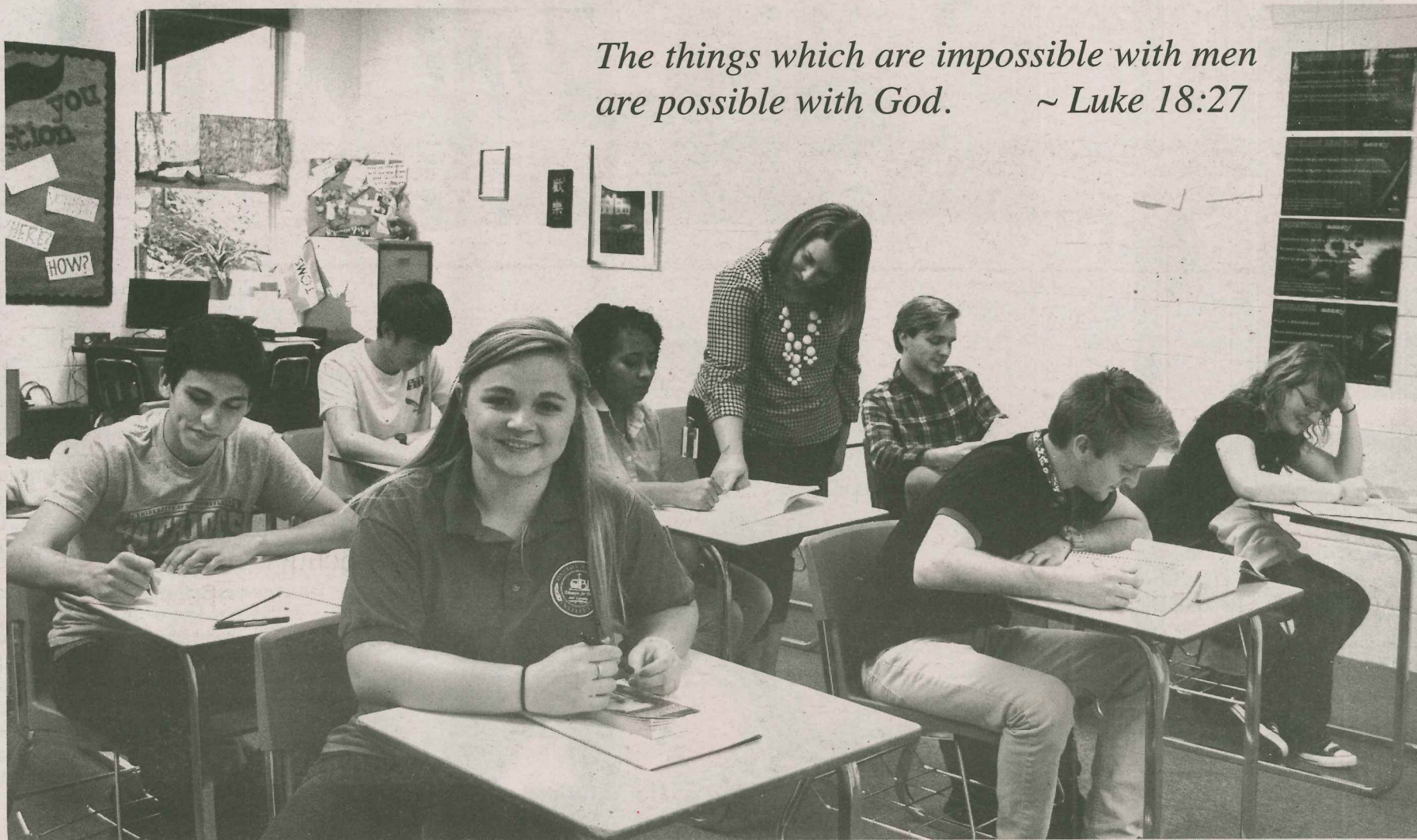
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*The things which are impossible with men
are possible with God. ~ Luke 18:27*



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