WESTERN Recorder

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Bragging on Jesus

By Tobin Perry

Indianapolis—Three years ago Barry Rager was the pastor of a small Kentucky church. Most of his days were centered on important church business. He prepared sermons, visited sick members and mediated church disputes. All good work. All important work. All kingdom work.

"I was kind of like the coach saying, 'Hey, reach the people you are with,' but I wasn't actually the one doing it," Rager says.

Three years later, and his life couldn't be more different. Living in the midst of the Mapleton-Fall Creek neighborhood of Indianapolis' inner core, his mission field is everywhere.

A trip to Indianapolis for the 2008 Southern Baptist Convention first opened Rager's eyes to the needs of the city. It wasn't until 2012 that James Edwards came to him with an offer: "We want to plant a church in a major U.S. city, and we want you to be the planter."

Rager didn't have to think hard about which city.

Edwards, pastor of Pleasant Valley Community Church, and the congregation felt the call to plant a church in an urban city, which eventually led to a strong calling for a church plant in Indianapolis. Edwards had met the Ragers on a playground where a strong friendship was formed. For years, the Ragers and Edwards encouraged and supported each other and their separate ministries. When Pleasant Valley felt God tell them to plant a church, they prayerfully considered who would lead the church plant.



Send North America: *Indianapolis church planter Barry Rager (left) and New Circle Church use events like S'mores and Snow in the Park to reach a neighborhood many describe as dangerous. Church member Courtney Ekema (second from left) and North American Mission Board Student Missionary Olivia Lehman enjoyed the event along with a neighbor. (NAMB photo by John Swain)*

"Barry Rager's name continued to surface," said Edwards. Pleasant Valley asked the Ragers to pray about planting a church in Indianapolis. "It was clear to Barry and Amy that God was calling them to plant a church in the heart of Indianapolis," said Edwards. "Our strong inclination to partner with Barry and Amy came primarily through the leadership of the Holy Spirit."

A thriving city in the 1920s, by the 1960s many of the residents moved to suburban homes, due to overcrowding. Over the next several decades, Mapleton-Fall Creek continued to struggle.

Today, 41.5 percent of residents do not have a high school diploma. A 2013 NeighborhoodScout.com article called the northern half of the area the 17th most dangerous neighborhood in the U.S.

To most, it's a terrible trade-off. As their new neighbors fight to get out of inner-city Indianapolis, the Ragers have fought their way in.

Once the Ragers relocated to Indianapolis, they were told it would likely take them years to connect with their neighbors and build disciple-making relationships.

"When we moved in, we decided that we were going to be as open and positive as we possibly could be," Amy Rager says. "Most of the people around here keep their blinds shut 24-7. They're very closed. So we thought, you know what? Our blinds are going to be open. We're going to act like we trust these people. We're going to do anything we can to initiate that relationship."

Before their boxes were even unpacked, the family showed up on their neighbors' doorsteps with freshly-baked homemade cookies. They also invited their neighbors into their home for dinner.

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Floyd County resident named Ky. Baptists' Missionary of Year

By Brandon Porter

McDowell—As a young boy growing up in Hazard, John Morris' life was impacted by the famed Southern Baptist missionary to China, Lottie Moon. Through the stories of his teachers, he heard the obedience and passion of Moon. Their voices still echo in his mind today.



John Morris

After becoming a Christian at 12, Morris said it wasn't long before he knew God was calling him to be a missionary.

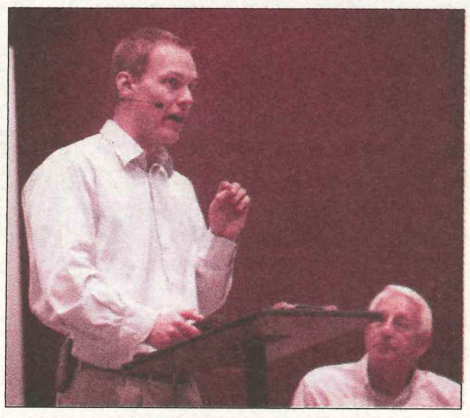
Morris is the executive director of God's Appalachian Partnership, known locally as GAP. Based in the eastern Kentucky coal fields, Morris has been named the 2016 Missionary of the Year by the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

GAP's focus is to reach the lost and unchurched of Floyd County by "meeting the person on the level of spiritual need so that they will grow into the person God created them to be and share that with others." GAP began in 1999, and Morris came on board in 2014.

Floyd County is home to less than 40,000 people. The poverty rate is 31 percent and per capita income is $18,000.

There are many needs in the Appalachian community, but Morris said

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"IMB is now in a much healthier financial position," IMB President David Platt tells trustees Feb. 24 during their plenary session. (Photo by Lexie Bennett)

1,132 missionaries, staff leaving IMB service

Nashville—The International Mission Board announced Feb. 24 that 1,132 missionaries and stateside staff have transitioned outside the entity during the past six months as a result of its voluntary retirement and resignation incentive programs.

IMB President David Platt told trustees the organization now expects to operate a balanced budget for 2017 due to its organizational "reset" processes and the generosity of Southern Baptists who have given sacrificially.

"IMB is now in a much healthier financial position," Platt said during IMB's meeting near Richmond, Va. "Due to increased giving from Southern Baptist churches, Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering giving are trending upward."

Over recent years, IMB has consistently spent more money than it has received—a combined $210 million more since 2010. Though IMB has covered the shortfalls through reserves and global property sales, in August 2015 Platt announced a critical need to balance the organization's budget.

Because 80 percent of IMB's budget is devoted to personnel salary, benefits and support expenses, leaders determined a need to reduce personnel by approximately 600-800 people to get to a healthy financial place for sustained growth and engagement in the future.

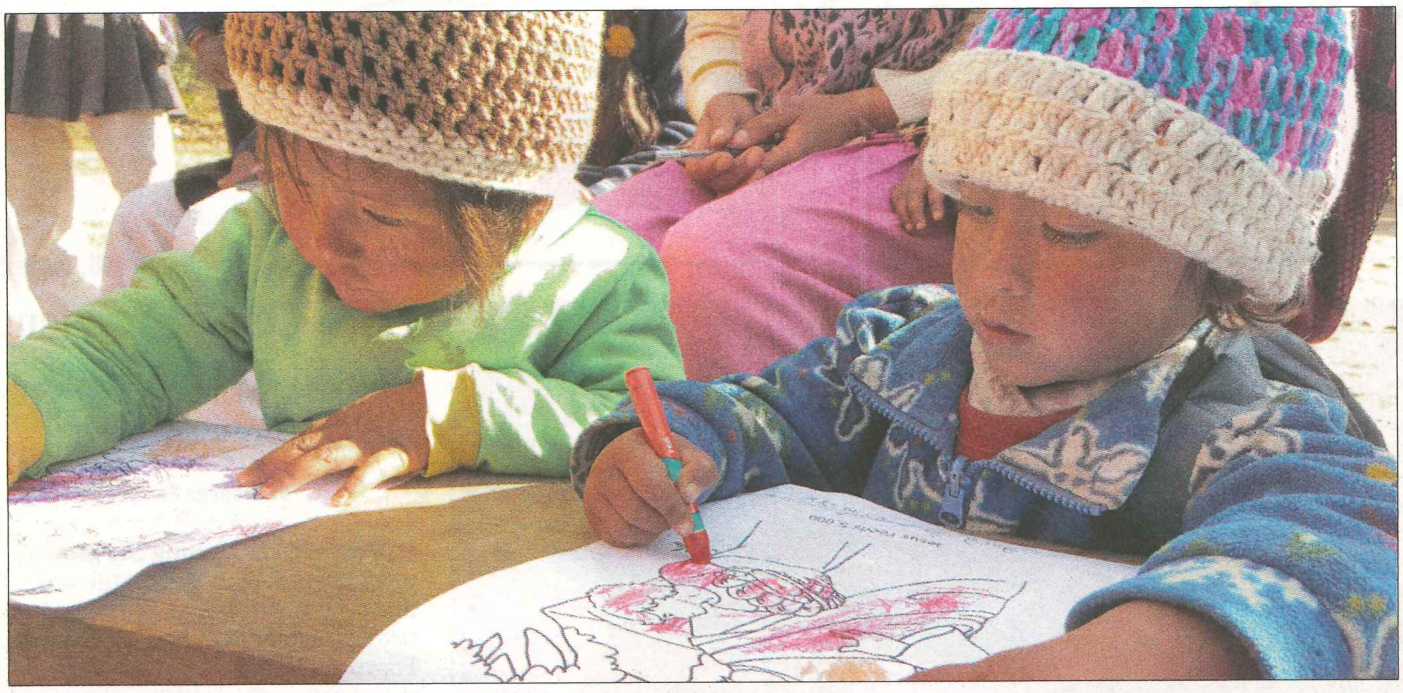
At that time, Platt outlined a two-phase process for reducing IMB personnel. Phase One involved a Voluntary Retirement Incentive available to eligible retirement-age personnel, and Phase Two included a Hand Raising Opportunity available to everyone in the IMB.

Platt reported that the VRI and HRO have resulted in 983 missionaries and

❑ *See IMB cuts... Page 7*

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Nepali children entertain themselves with coloring sheets. Visitors from the United States are helping trained Nepali volunteers lead these children through group therapy sessions so they can process anything they felt in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes. Sessions for kids include lots of games and coloring. (Photo courtesy of Wanda Lovely)

Ky. volunteers help women, children heal in Nepal

By Lily Jameson*

Waddy—On a sunny day in December, a Nepali child colored a picture of Jesus. Through the young artist's creative license, the Messiah grew blue hair and donned crimson robes. The young boy drawn beside Christ was holding a bowl of loaves and fishes and had been colored red from head to toe.

That simple coloring book picture of a Bible story was supposed to help Nepali children heal from the shock of last year's earthquake and to allow them rest from daily chores.

"The children's lives there are so hard, you know, from what I was able to observe," Susan Bryant, member of Graefenburg Baptist Church in Waddy, said.

"When I got up at 7 o'clock in the morning to have breakfast, the children were already taking the goats up the mountains. They work very, very hard. They don't have a lot of time to play or to be children, really," she said.

Bryant, president of the Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, traveled to the Sindhupalchok District in Nepal at the end of 2015. She joined Joel Catron, member of First Baptist Church of Monticello, and Wanda Lovely, from Urbancrest Baptist Church in Lebanon, Ohio.

Operating in partnership with Baptist Global Response, Lovely and Bryant worked with trained national partners to help women and children process their emotions after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake hit the area in April 2015. The disaster destroyed a large percentage of homes in two districts and killed thousands. While Bryant and Lovely counseled, Catron spoke to the local men about spiritual matters.

The trip's therapeutic focus, Bryant said, fit well with WMU's four-year emphasis on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. According to the organization's website, the WMU committed to helping Baptist churches address PTSD through its Project HELP initiative.

In Nepal, Bryant worked with children who had suffered similar trauma during the quake. She said the therapy sessions, held in schools and churches, looked a lot like general playtime. In addition to distributing coloring sheets, Bryant and a national volunteer also played games with the children that involved balls or bubbles.

During the program, kids had opportunities to write about the disaster, as well, and they delved into questions about where they were when it hit and how it made them feel.

"This would be an opportunity for them to have playtime and for them to talk to other children and to discuss what happened—give them an opportunity to really decompress, I guess, after the earthquake," she said.

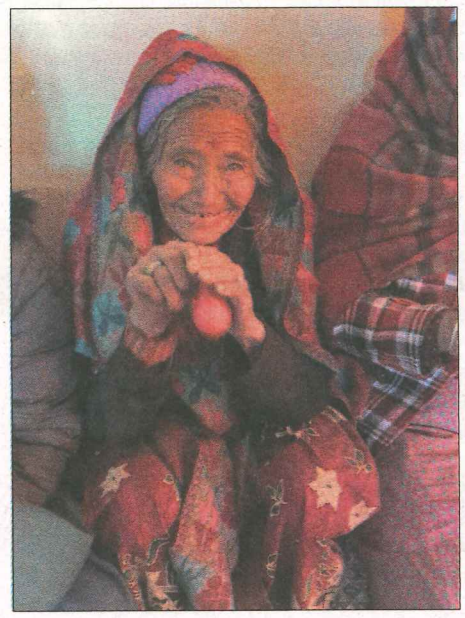
While Bryant played with children, Lovely assisted women's therapy sessions and said she also spent her time playing games and encouraging women to participate in simple group activities.

> ***"(The Nepali children) work very, very hard. They don't have a lot of time to play or be children, really."***
>
> Susan Bryant, Graefenburg Baptist Church member

In the midst of all that rubble and reconstruction, Lovely and other volunteers told Nepali women to blow up balloons until they popped.

"The thought behind all of it is: this is the same thing that goes on in our hearts," Lovely said. "You know, we carry these burdens and these pains and these worries and it just gets bigger and bigger and bigger, and finally, it just explodes. ... You have to be able to share your thoughts before you explode."

She said games and questions provided a framework, allowing women to talk about heartfelt matters within a light and fun context. She believed the jobs she and Bryant performed filled a particular need for women and children—groups of people who didn't always have emotional outlets. And, although both the women and children seemed to love the games and conversations, Lovely believed the team also impacted Nepali villagers by simply showing up.



An elderly woman laughs as she blows up a balloon. She's participating in a group therapy session for survivors of last year's devastating earthquakes in Nepal. The balloon is part of an activity conducted by trained Nepali volunteers and by visitors from the United States. (Photo courtesy of Wanda Lovely)

"When you go halfway around the world, you've already done a great deal to lift someone's burden because just by default, your presence in their life says, 'I care,' because you didn't show up by accident," she said.

Lovely said she clearly remembered how Bible stories affected villagers, as well. She acted out the story of the sick woman, told in the fifth chapter of Mark, who received healing from Christ merely by touching his robe. An old woman in the crowd cried. That biblical story of healing had given her hope.

Anyone who wants to follow in the footsteps of this team and help other disaster survivors recover can volunteer through BGR. Email disaster@gobgr.org for more information. Or, visit www.gobgr.org/volunteer/requests to read about other ways to volunteer. (WR)

*Name changed

Recorder staff earns Ky. Press Association honors

Louisville—Western Recorder staff members received recognition for their journalistic work during the Kentucky Press Association's "Excellence in Newspapers" awards banquet Feb. 25 in Lexington.

Myriah Snyder, the Western Recorder's news writer, brought home a third place award in the Best Enterprise or Analytical Story category for her article, "Is electronic giving catching on among Ky. congregations?"

Western Recorder Editor Todd Deaton was awarded first and second place awards in the Best Editorial category for Associate Newspapers.

The contest period was open for entries published between Oct. 1, 2014 and Sept. 30, 2015 by more than 80 KPA member newspapers. (WR)

John Morris

Continued from page 1

there are great assets as well. He's guiding the ministry to focus on investing in the residents of the community.

Morris recalled a lady that came in for a haircut, an ongoing ministry at GAP, and left transformed by the love she was shown. Because her appearance was changed, she began to see herself differently. As she was leaving, Morris offered encouragement by telling her how good she looked.

Morris said the woman broke down in tears and told him it was the first time she truly felt beautiful. Realizing the importance of the moment he said, "You're beautiful, not just because of your hair, but because you were created by God. You are created in His image."

One of the greatest challenges Morris and his wife faced in realizing God's call was that they might need to leave Floyd County. They both thought God would lead them far away from Kentucky to some distant tribal ministry. But that wasn't God's plan.

"Because he is from the mountains, he understands the people he is ministering to," said Teresa Parrett, KBC's mission mobilization coordinator. "(He) is loved and respected by them."

Eric Allen, KBC's missions mobilization team leader, said he is thankful for Morris' leadership of GAP and credited him with helping the ministry "become most effective in reaching people and assimilating them into the local church."

Morris said prayer is one of the most important parts of his day. Through prayer God has proved His care and provision to Morris time and again. One of the things he hopes clients and volunteers at GAP take away is that prayer should be the Christian's first instinct rather than a last resort.

Morris will be honored as the 2016 Kentucky Missionary of the Year at the Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union Annual Meeting April 9 at First Baptist Church of Madisonville. (KBC)

'The Heart of the Story' focus of 113th WMU meeting

Louisville—A special showing of the new movie, "The Insanity of God," and collection of "Buckets of Love" for Baptist Global Response are among the featured events of the 113th Kentucky WMU Annual Meeting, April 8-9, at First Baptist Church of Madisonville.

"The Heart of the Story" will be the focus of the two-day event, which begins on Friday at 9 a.m. and concludes on Saturday at noon.

Linda Cooper, president of National WMU, will provide theme interpretations in the general sessions. She is the first national WMU president ever elected from Kentucky.

Wayne and Barbara Myers will tell about work in Swaziland, including the impact of hospice care buckets in sharing the gospel.

Terry Sharp, who works with Urban Mobilization Strategies with the International Mission Board, will share ways to reach internationals living in the United States.

Ron and Marilyn Leonard, along with Molly the Therapy Dog, will tell about their work with military families and those suffering from PTSD.

Ruth Ripken, featured in "The Insanity of God," will introduce the movie in the Friday evening session. The movie is based on the book by Nik Ripken and shares the stories of believers from around the world who have not only survived, but thrived under persecution.

A variety of missions conferences will be offered on Friday at 11:15, 12:15, and 1:15 p.m., and on Saturday at 9 a.m. Participants can also eat a boxed lunch, visit displays, and go to the book store during the conference.

Participants may assist with collection projects for two ministries. Kentucky WMU is collecting completed hospice care buckets in cooperation with Baptist Global Response. Each bucket contains items to help a family provide care and comfort to a family member with AIDS.

Participants may drop off buckets at the church on arrival. Following the meeting, BGR will ship the buckets to a country in Sub-Sahara Africa to be distributed by missionaries and nationals. A complete shopping list and project information can be found at: kywmu.or/bucketproject.

Food items are also being collected for Breaking Bread Ministry, a free meal outreach program in Madisonville. Items such as cereal, dried beans, boxed potatoes, canned tuna and chicken, saltine crackers, soups and peanut butter have been requested.



Molly the Therapy Dog

There will be a special time for children with the Leonard's and Molly the Therapy Dog on Saturday morning at 9 a.m.

The final session will begin at 10 a.m., when the Kentucky Missionary of the Year Award will be presented, followed by a commissioning service for new Kentucky missionaries. Ron Leonard will share a closing challenge.

Following the Saturday morning session, a time of prayer will be held at the collection truck for the buckets and those who will receive them.

An offering for Kentucky WMU ministries to missionaries and Missionary Kids will be received during the meeting. Kentucky WMU provides Christmas gifts to Kentucky-born international missionaries as well as a fall and spring gift to Kentucky MKs who are attending college in Kentucky. Those unable to attend the annual meeting but who want to support the ministries to missionaries are encouraged to send a gift for the offering or mail to the Kentucky WMU office.

A boxed lunch will be available on Friday, and Baptist Nursing Fellowship will host a dinner at the church at 5 p.m. Pre-registration is required for all meals and preschool child care.

Contact Kentucky WMU for registration information or download an informational brochure at www.kywmu.org/annualmeeting. Online registration is also available.

Joy Bolton, Executive Director-Treasurer of Kentucky WMU is excited about the 2016 Annual Meeting.

"Not only do we have a great program, but there will also be the excitement of being one of the first sites in the country to show the new Insanity of God movie," Bolton said. "You will enjoy the fellowship, music, and missions inspiration. Come see what the WMU tag line 'missions for life' is all about!" (WMU)

Invest in others through CP, Ky. pastor urges

By Karen Willoughby

Bowling Green—In Bowling Green, which leads the nation in restaurants per capita and is home to General Motors' Corvette plant, Eastwood Baptist Church provides spiritual food and a fast ride to supporting missions across the globe. Tom James has for 11 years pastored the church where about 850 people worship on Sundays, up from 450 attenders at the beginning of his pastorate before the congregation had two campuses.

"I had been here a year when God gave me a vision, to be on mission in every continent," James said. "Today we have three Asia partnerships, two in North America, and one each in South America, Europe and Africa."

Eastwood's missions awareness starts with its commitment to give 12.5 percent of undesignated offerings to missions through the Cooperative Program.

"You can't out give God," James said. "God is the consummate businessman. If God is going to invest in people, he's going to get the best return for His efforts.... When He's going to financially bless a church, He blesses the church that uses funds to invest in other people's lives.

"The Cooperative Program is the greatest means of missionary support that any denomination has ever experienced," he said. "We're the only organization—the International Mission Board is—where people don't have to pay or solicit their own support. We should be doing so much more."

The Cooperative Program also is personal to James.

"I'm a benefit of it," he said. "I tell the church, you were helping pay for my seminary before you knew I existed. We're now paying for someone who will be on staff here 30 years from now.... When people know the impact of the dollars they give, they're more prone to give.

"We have to put a face or faces to the Cooperative Program," he said. "We need to tell our people what the Cooperative Program does. We can't blame our people for not knowing what CP does if we don't tell them."

Because of the CP, a girl who once contemplated suicide lives today as a Christian, the pastor recalled being told by Tommy Johnson, a Baptist Collegiate Ministries director in Kentucky.

Johnson was discipling a deaf college student who felt called to do ministry one summer in Philadelphia, his hometown. The student's planned to go to parks and playgrounds, giving away drinks, sharing the gospel.

He set up a men's basketball league that's still active. Through the league the student encountered the suicidal girl, who came to the game with a team member.

"(The student) shared the gospel with her and she gave her heart to Christ," James said. "That's the power of God at work through the Cooperative Program." Today, (the student) is a high school teacher and elder in the Kentucky church he attends.

> ***"We can't blame our people for not knowing what CP does if we don't tell them."***
>
> Tom James, Eastwood Baptist Church pastor

In addition to Eastwood's sizeable CP gifts, major thrusts take place during seasonal missions offerings. In 2015, the church gave $62,772 to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American missions, and $77,725 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions.

"On Easter we set up two crosses and call it March to the Cross; two weeks before Christmas we set up two mangers and call it March to the Manger," James said. As the congregation files past the seasonal displays at the front sides of the worship center, they place their missions offering in nearby baskets.



Eastwood Baptist Church member Kathy Austin leads children in an exercise during an Eastwood 2015 mission trip to Southeast Asia.

"They really do enjoy giving," he said. "One year we gave $105,000 (to the Lottie Moon offering) and sent two career and two journeymen missionaries to the field that year."

Having Skype conversations during worship services with missionaries is another way Eastwood fuels the congregation's enthusiasm for missions.

"We try to have partnerships, each with a different focus," James noted. "In Canada we work with First Nations people; (Vacation Bible School) works especially well there. In Romania we targeted Gypsy people, who are real outcasts, highly frowned upon. They respond to personal attention; we try to work with pastors there in evangelism and women's ministries. Other outreaches are to Europeans in southern Brazil, and work to supply clean water to Muslims in Southeast Asia, establishing water filtration systems."

In a security-sensitive, extremely remote area, Eastwood was directed to an unreached people group. Outside one village, the team encountered a large family where no one had ever seen a Westerner. After several years of return visits, the as-yet non-Christian "family of peace" calls Eastwood members "family."

Last year, 111 Eastwood adults participated in a mission trip. While the church provides $500 scholarships to those in need, most adults pay their own way. The last three years, Eastwood has put $6,000 into its budget to pay the way for two small church or bivocational pastors to accompany the church on an international mission trip.

The church is also active in local missions, conducting ministries to low income families, helping build a Habitat for Humanity home annually, supporting an annual children's camp and offering money management classes.

"When you look at the various ministries done in North America and internationally, and in Warren County, if we did all those things and didn't share the gospel, it would be no gospel at all," James said.

While Bowling Green has 42 Southern Baptist churches, there are still 94,000 unchurched people in Warren County, James said, expressing a desire to open additional Eastwood campuses there.

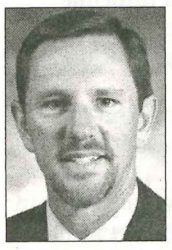
"I've got to believe God wants more from us than what we're doing now," he said. "My vision is to continue to have a mission mindset but also to help people focus also on our community, our Jerusalem." (BP)

We have what it takes

This is a guest column from Andrew Dyer, pastor of Corinth Baptist Church in London and Kentucky Baptist Convention first vice president:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," begins Dickens' classic "A Tale of Two Cities." Regarding the present and future of the work of God's Baptist people, many are taking a rather pessimistic view. Many pundits and pastors are lamenting the demise of our churches, convention, and gospel Christianity overall.

Together
We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

While there are significant challenges facing our churches, local associations, and state and national conventions, Christ followers must remember His clear teaching that we should not lose heart. Jesus Himself promised to build His church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

Following His ascension, Christ did not leave His infant church vulnerable. He empowered it with the Holy Spirit. This was the same Spirit of God involved in creation and the resurrection. Through this Spirit, Christ left His disciples with the assurance that He would be with them always, and that certainly includes today. The Holy Spirit is more than enough to comfort the brokenhearted, convict the sinner, conform the saint into the image of Christ, and cultivate fruit that demonstrates a life of victory.

Jesus also equipped His church by giving them His word—the law, the prophets, the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, as well as the soon-to-be-finished Word through the writings of the apostles themselves. This God-breathed book is given that His people might grow in faith and be equipped for every good work.

Baptists are a people who believe the Bible. The reclamation of the biblical doctrines of Scripture's inerrancy and authority has been an emphasis throughout my lifetime as a Baptist. However, I believe there is another biblical doctrine that is much neglected in today's church. I believe this doctrine is not only the theoretical, but also the practical key to stemming the tide of despair and decline as we move forward to fulfill the calling of Christ. If we, as God's church, are going to see God work in our midst, we must recover the doctrine of Scripture's sufficiency.

Undoubtedly, most Baptists would verbally affirm the doctrine of sufficiency. However, one look at the methodology of many churches would practically show there is a denial that Scripture alone is enough. One has to look no further than our pulpits to see there is doubt about whether God's word really contains all we need for life and godliness.

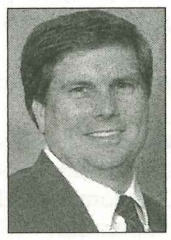
In many places, sermons are built around a felt need, a contemporary happening in the world, or even an illustration or quote the pastor finds "inspirational." Blogs, conferences, books, and programs offer little biblical substance, but instead heavily focus on style and fads. Our children's and youth ministries—even our worship ministries—seem to downplay the priority of Scripture for things deemed more "relevant."

God has equipped His church for these days. His word still works. His Spirit is still powerful. By God's grace, we have what it takes.

Replacing that 'sinking feeling' with a hopeful outlook

One-thousand, one-hundred and thirty-two—Let that number sink in. That's how many International Mission Board missionaries and staff are leaving. While we grieve for these missionaries and their loss of calling, we also grieve for the people groups whom they were striving to lead to the Lord, for the varied ministries they served, and for the churches they started. It is a sad day—especially for a denomination that once boasted of having some 5,600 serving on the mission field.

Eleven hundred and thirty-two—The thought induces a sinking feeling. It's approximately 20 percent of our international missions force departing at the same time. The number is nearly twice what had been anticipated taking the Volunteer Retirement Incentive or the Hand-Raising Opportunity.



After Thought

By Todd Deaton

Questions leap off the page: How could this happen? How can we possibly be as effective in accomplishing the Great Commission going forward?

A quick answer is the IMB for years has spent more on sending missionaries that it has received through Cooperative Program gifts and Lottie Moon offerings. Subsequently, the IMB has been selling off overseas assets and depleting reserves. It had to catch up with the board one day. And when David Platt assumed the helm, he told Southern Baptists that something had to be done; the board must gain more solid financial footing. So, here we are.

At our meeting in Puerto Rico, Platt asked state editors to encourage unity among Southern Baptists, knowing the shock that was imminent. How would we react to the mind-boggling numbers? Even though we'd like to comply with his request, it is hard to escape that sinking feeling. It is difficult to remain positive when so many good, faithful servants are losing their livelihoods. One wonders how we can possibly be as effective in carrying the gospel to the nations.

Last Thursday, via livestream, Platt shared his vision for the International Mission Board, attempting to shift focus to the remaining missionaries—and those to be appointed. If the questions tweeted to Platt are any indication, many Southern Baptists are eager to know where the IMB is headed. In case you missed it, you still may be able to hear his vision at lifestream.com by searching for "Q&A with David Platt," or read a news release on our website, westernrecorder.org.

Platt shared his five desires for IMB's work: to exalt Christ, to mobilize ordinary Christians, to serve and equip local churches, to facilitate church planting, and for SBC churches to each play a part in accomplishing the Great Commission. He envisions a "three-legged stool" of local churches sending and encouraging missionaries while the IMB facilitates them by coordinating a global strategy to evangelize the world's unreached people groups.

"The potential exists in every single church no matter what size—13 or 13,000—to send somebody," he said. "If that's the case, then how much more the beauty of how this picture in the Southern Baptist Convention works, because no one church can do this alone," Platt said. Attempting to restore a hopeful outlook, he noted that thousands of missionaries, with thousands of years of collective experience, still remain on the field, and the IMB wants to surround them with students, professionals and retires who will leverage their studies, vocations and relocations to help spread the gospel.

In our assessment, Platt cast a biblical vision and attempted to stay within historical Baptist polity in encouraging associational, state, national and international cooperation. Yet, it is going to take time for his church-centric model to resonate with some pastors and churches that they can and must become sending agencies of missionaries. While he didn't throw out the IMB's role as a sending agency, he did embrace an emphasis on facilitating churches in direct engagement in their missions work. However, as more and more of our churches accept the challenge of obeying the Great Commission, it could have an unintentional consequence of necessitating fewer dollars going through the Cooperative Program to support the IMB's ongoing work. This, indeed, would be tragic!

Wonderful words of life, even if difficult

Are Christ's words relevant—still true—even when they are difficult? We say they are, but then we cluck around like nervous chickens, on the hunt for distraction and satisfaction.

What really is our way of life? Is it spending time with Christ, following Him even if it leads to human rejection, or melding with the culture around us?

First Person



Kristen White

We are constantly bombarded with the temptation to think that the current ways are truer than Scripture that they will lead to more meaning and significance.

But think about it, marketers heave massive amounts of money and research to get their products, movies and messages into the public eye. They want to change your thinking and appeal to your wants and needs, yet they offer nothing lasting. Their words are only as good as the next product.

God's words are different. They have power. They endure.

The first "word" He spoke into existence—light—still exists. Then, Jesus became the Word incarnate (John 1:1). God will have the last word, too. All people will bow and call Him the holy Lord of Lords, even those who want us to think their goods or words are god.

Imagine, everything is inferior compared to Him, yet we tend to look to everything but Him for happiness and validation.

In John 6, the people following Jesus around were having difficulty digesting His words. The very ones who had been miraculously fed by Him turned and walked away because He said strange things, things that meant they would have to surrender personal agendas. And they didn't want to, just like so many of those leaving the church today.

And in this chapter we read: Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69, NIV).

Every day, we face a choice. We have been given the words of life that will absolutely satisfy us, more than food and drink, more than the next gadget or achievement. Will we prioritize Him, trust Him to be what our hearts are looking for?

Jesus wants to save us the disappointment of prioritizing the next fad. He wants people who have come to believe and to know that there is no place, no one, no thing, no word as absolutely true and fulfilling as Him. To whom will we go today?

Kristen White, on the Web at www.womenwithroots.com, is a writer in Shelbyville.

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BAPTIST FORUM

Why don't choir members smile more?

By Chasity Phillips

FIRST PERSON

I'm a choir member now, but for a long time, I was in the pew. In fact, I was in the very last pew in the very back of the church. But, there was never a Sunday when I wasn't singing ... taking my lead from those standing in the choir loft. Finally, one Wednesday night, I did it. I. Joined. The. Choir.

There were many reasons behind my decision to join—my wanting to serve, my love of singing, my desire to honor a promise I made to God, but there's one reason I don't talk about much ... I wanted to be one of the choir members smiling down from the loft and generally looking like I loved what I was called to do—joyfully singing to the Lord.

Why? Because I wanted those looking up to see engaged choir members leading in worship.

Which leads me to the question: Why don't choir members smile? Seriously, why aren't they smiling?

Psalm 33:1 says, "Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him."

Notice, it doesn't say sing solemnly. Or sadly. It's says, "Sing joyfully." By definition, joyfully means: showing or expressing joy, as looks, actions, or speech. And what better way to show joy than to smile.

So I ask, "How many times have you sat in the pew, looking up at the choir loft filled with choir members, and wondered, 'Why aren't they smiling'?" Or at least looking like they are praising God. Or taking to heart what they are singing. Yeah. Me too.

Now, to be fair, I'm Southern Baptist to the core. Raising hands and clapping were just not how I was raised, so I get it. But a little smiling, even crying, can be seen all the way to the back of the church. I promise.

So, here's what I know: It's almost impossible to tell the minister of music that his choir needs to smile. It's definitely impossible to tell a choir member they need to look like they want to be there. In fact, I'm fairly certain only an 80-year-old woman can get away with that!

So, as choir members, knowing there could be a million reasons why we're not smiling, what can we do to help each other sing joyfully to the Lord? Because no one else is going to tell us (except maybe the 80-year-old lady).

First step: Be excited to be part of the choir. It is a privilege to lead from the loft each Sunday. Your heart will show ... all the way to the very last row. Really.

Second step: Be encouraging to fellow choir members. If you see they're struggling, encourage them. Remind them why they are there ... to lead others, but to also be led.

Third step: Listen to the music. From the favorite hymns to the praise-filled anthems, the music sets the tone of our worship. Whether it's joyful or reverent, let your face, gestures and presence show your emotion.

Fourth step: Think of those in the pews. They are watching you sing. Whether you're singing joyfully or tearfully, these are precious moments God uses to bring His people closer to Him. Psalm 40:3 says, "He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord."

And the last (and most important), Fifth step: Remember to whom you are singing. Would you stand in front of Jesus and sing without enthusiasm or emotion? Or, would you stand in front of Jesus and sing with all the love and joy in your heart?

As someone that sat in the pews for a long time, I can tell you, I wanted to see the choir singing with emotion—whatever that may be. Just know... every smile, every praise, every tear makes a huge difference to those looking up from the pew. Even to the very last pew in the very back of the church.

Chasity Phillips is the marketing strategist for LifeWay Worship. She's also a choir member at Brentwood Baptist Church in Tennessee and an every Sunday nursery worker. Used with permission.



News anchor inspires young girls

FAMILY FORUM

David Garrard

Candyce Clifft is co-host of "WDRB in the Morning." She is also an active member of Hurstbourne Baptist Church. In 2012, Candyce was selected as Most Admired Woman in Media by Today's Woman Magazine. She is a wonderful example of a Christian living out faith in the workplace. She is also a terrific role model for young girls.

In January, Candyce spoke at St. Matthews Baptist Church's annual Dad/Daughter Banquet. She was a huge hit. Here are some of the insights and wisdom Candyce shared that evening.

Listen to your parents! They are your biggest cheerleaders. They want you to succeed.

Choose friends who love you for who you are! Be wary of those who only like you if you dress, act or talk a certain way.

Be nice to everybody! At the same time, understand this doesn't mean you have to like everybody or run with everybody. Just treat everyone the way you want to be treated.

Be yourself! Remember that God made you. Celebrate the ways in which you are different from others instead of trying to be like everybody else.

Follow your dreams! Try things you are interested in and keep trying even if at first you don't succeed. Be passionate as you pursue what you feel gifted by God to do.

Include God in everything you do! Be faithful to God—especially in your prayers. As you pray, ask God to show you His will for every part of your life—your work, your spouse... everything. Put God first and center your life around Him.

Boomer retirement regrets

FINANCIAL FORUM

Don Spencer

The baby boom generation is now in their mid-50s and older. Many now have regrets about what they did not do to prepare for retirement, but those in younger generations can learn from their regrets.

The primary regret is the failure to plan. Too many get into their retirement years with no plans. Those plans need to include tax planning with forethought toward the future. Many are taking Social Security early, only to find doing so results in paying more taxes and significantly decreasing their retirement income in later years. Most people would benefit by waiting until age 70 to start social security.

Another regret is not making wise investing choices. Many have found their conservative investments resulted in earning less than the rate of inflation. Some failed to diversify their investments adequately.

Over extended periods of time, retirement savings in a well-diversified mix of stocks of bonds has proven to be a wise choice.

Consumer debt is another issue for boomers. Excess debt not only controlled their financial lives but diminished their ability to save for retirement. Now for the rest of their lives, they pay the cost of that debt.

Boomers often retired early, robbing them of saving more for retirement in peak earning years. Add to that, they also underestimated life expectancy, which means they need more money.

As boomers continue to age, they will find their lack of planning for age-related expenses. This includes planning for significantly increased medical costs and potential long-term care.

If you're a part of a post baby boomer generation, you would be wise to learn from the mistakes many baby boomers made.

Getting out of the ivory tower

Youth Ministry Corner



Joe Ball

For the first time in more than 25 years, I have a job that requires me to punch a time clock. I have been a salaried employee since graduating seminary in 1991. In this short time it has been good to experience life outside the ivory tower of church life. Below are a few ministry related things I am learning during this season.

1. Spare time is precious. A lot of us who have been privileged to work full-time in ministry forget what it is like to punch a time clock. Trying to work a trip to the barbershop, the bank, the post office, and to the store to get something for Gina for Valentine's Day became an adventure. Things I would normally do at lunch, or on my way home from work, had to be planned around a nine-hour workday. Then to get home and go back out for a meeting at church, or miss dinner with my family to go gives me a whole new appreciation for the volunteers in our churches who do this week-in and week-out.

2. Bi-vocational ministers are the bomb. In addition to working at Lowes, I also serve as the part-time, interim education minister at Parkland Baptist Church in Louisville. I am enjoying this immensely and getting the opportunity to get involved in ministries I haven't had an opportunity to as an interim pastor. It has also given to me a renewed appreciation for men and women, like Chris Salyers at First Church, Myra, or Michelle Paschall at Memorial Church in Murray, who work full-time and do ministry out of a sense of call that is not necessarily tied to a paycheck. Just arranging my schedule to accommodate being off on Sundays, Wednesday nights and Monday afternoons for staff meetings took some doing, and a very understanding HR person.

3. Lost people do exist. Don't get me wrong. I knew this, but working outside the walls of a church or denominational entity has put me alongside non-believers. The opportunity to work closely with people who don't share my beliefs, aren't receptive to hearing the gospel, don't pray before they eat, and don't have any scripture memorized, has been a reminder that a whole world of people exist who I haven't had regular contact with in years. There are a few words and phrases I haven't regularly heard in years. For some, there has never been a time in their life where a church, of any flavor, has been relevant in their lives, and they don't see it ever being—no matter how many catchy sayings we come up with.

4. There are Christians living their faith in the workplace. It has been refreshing to see Christian workers talking about the faith to co-workers. They aren't beating them over the head with the gospel, sharing the four spiritual laws or the FAITH outline, or condemning them with a bullhorn, but they are engaging them in conversations about life, church and God, attempting to be salt and light in the world. They are living a life worthy of their calling, and leaving room for the Spirit to work.

5. We need to do a better job preparing our students. The need for discipleship is huge. But I wonder if we are preparing students for a world that doesn't exist, because those of us that work in the ivory towers of churches don't know the world that does exist. I remember thinking as a naïve 20-something that a minister ought to work a real job every seven to 10 years.

The world is definitely a different place than the church, and sometimes it is good to come out of the ivory tower and see what life is really like. Maybe we should even follow the lead of Jesus and eat with the sinners and tax collectors.

Five 'ships' key to small church's rapid growth

Salyersville—Although it is difficult to say Bethel Bible Baptist rapidly, it doesn't take long to figure out that something special is going on in this small rural church located just a few miles west of Salyersville.

In looking at the church's Annual Church Profile for the past six years, Bethel Bible Baptist Church has experienced a tremendous time of revitalization. Membership has increased 25 percent; baptisms have increased in excess of 110 percent; Sunday School has increased 26 percent; worship attendance is up over 27 percent.

Pastor Tim Clark humbly offered some helpful insights for other small-church, rural pastors. After speaking with Clark, I determined that there were five "ships" present within the congregation: stewardship, discipleship, fellowship, relationship and leadership.

Stewardship. The church has not only been faithful in supporting missions by giving liberally through the Cooperative Program, but they also have been faithful to do the work of missionaries in the community. Clark said, "Our church was doing "Operation In As Much" before it became cool." He also mentioned other acts of benevolence that the church has been involved in since he assumed leadership of the church more than five years ago.



Discipleship. It is Clark's desire to teach the congregation to learn what it means to be a follower of Jesus. A good example of this is the church's Sunday School. One of the methods used to increase attendance in Sunday School has been serving breakfast. He has a list of volunteers, usually couples, who are placed in a rotation. When their turn comes, they serve breakfast to the entire Sunday School. Each couple is responsible for purchasing breakfast food and the church reimburses them.

It is important to note the church is currently under construction adding class space.

Tim also disciples his congregation by teaching them the value of prayer. On Wednesday nights, after a 15-minute devotional, the church will use the remaining time to focus on prayer concerns, praying for the lost, sick, and one another.

Fellowship. It is not an exaggeration to say that they do the work of the Lord together. They are a small church, and being such, they see no need for committees. Tim said, "I just take matters to the church and we decide things together." They do life together, pray together, and sing together. For example, although the church is small, they have a 25-member church choir. Paulette Prater leads the music and incorporates a blended style of worship.

Relationship. You can't have a revitalized church without a right, vertical relationship with the Father and a right, horizontal relationship with each other. The church strives to have both. A good example of relationship within the church is the relationship between Tim and his wife Sarilda.

Clark said, "Without Sarilda I could never do what I do. Since I am bi-vocational, she makes phone calls and contacts, answers emails, and performs internet searches that I do not have time to do."

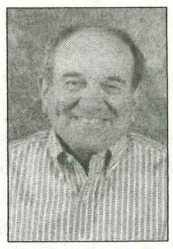
As far as Tim is concerned, Sarilda is the most important member of Bethel Baptist.

Leadership. Tim has provided excellent servant-leadership for his congregation. He was a deacon in the church for 30 years prior to becoming its pastor. He told me he felt like Caleb, who answered God's call at age 80. He added, "The church understands that I am a bi-vocational pastor; therefore, they know our church must be a shared responsibility." (WR)

Later in life pastor finds his calling in support position

By Myriah Snyder

Lexington—He was the pastor of a church that grew from less than 200 to more than 300 in attendance in the 13 years he was their pastor.


Dan Russell

Already in his 60s, he could have easily chosen to stay at Central Baptist Church in Paris until retirement. However, Dan Russell chose to listen to God calling him away from his pastorate.

"Three years ago, Dan Russell was pastor of a good-sized church in Paris. It is a strong, vibrant church in our state." Ron Edmondson, Russell's pastor, said.

"Dan served on numerous state and associational boards and is well respected among Baptists. Dan's church was healthy, they loved him; there was no pressure for him to go anywhere," he added.

"Instead, Dan began asking if he was the right person to carry the church into the future, or should he step aside while the church was strong and let a younger person come in and take the church forward," Edmondson said.

Russell explained that Central Baptist had begun to plateau.

"We weren't really reaching any young couples, which is typical of a lot of our churches. I began to investigate what we could do to get over the hump and move on," he said.

"In that process, someone at the KBC gave me a book called 'There's still hope for your church' by Gary McIntosh," Russell recalled. "The Lord just used the book to convict me that it was time in my ministry for us to move on and allow for hopefully a younger pastor to move in, (which they did get a younger pastor) and begin to attract young families (which they're doing)."

Before Russell had even announced the decision to his congregation, he met with Edmondson to seek counsel.

Russell is now a part of the pastoral staff at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington as the care and adults minister.

"Dan has been phenomenal for our church in a senior adult ministry role. I hope he has no plans to retire soon," Edmondson said. He encourages "churches to get some of those type people on their staff who still want to work full-time, but may not want to be in the senior role anymore."

Russell offered this advice for pastors who find themselves in similar situations, "We really just need to look at the church and obviously seek God's will. There is a time when our ministry is completed, and we need to be willing to sense God's will to leave."

He continued, "It may be that you need to step out of that situation. I think churches can gain a lot by bringing someone on staff that has all those years of experience in a support role," Russell said, encouraging "churches not to close the door on a guy just because he's in his 60s or 70s.

"To me, it speaks of a very kingdom-minded person who did what he felt was best for the church–not for his personal livelihood. I was so impressed by this humility. I wonder how many pastors are willing to step away when it's time, rather than when it makes sense for them financially," Edmondson said. (WR)

Greear to be SBC president nominee

By David Roach

St. Louis—North Carolina pastor J.D. Greear will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Florida pastor Jimmy Scroggins announced March 2.


J.D. Greear

Greear, 42, "is leading his generation to live out a passion for the SBC, missions and the local church," Scroggins, pastor of Family Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., wrote in a news release stating his intention to nominate Greear during the SBC annual meeting June 14-15 in St. Louis.

During the 14 years Greear has pastored The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., worship attendance has grown from 350 to just under 10,000, Scroggins said. Total baptisms increased from 19 in 2002 to 928 in 2014, the last year for which statistics are available through the SBC's Annual Church Profile.

Scroggins said The Summit's "149 people currently with" the International Mission Board marks the largest total from any church in the convention—a statistic the church told Baptist Press. Greear himself served two years with the IMB before being called to The Summit. Closer to home, The Summit has planted 26 churches in North America in conjunction with the North American Mission Board.

Another key emphasis at The Summit is diversity, Scroggins said, with nearly 20 percent of worship attendees coming from non-Anglo ethnic groups. One of the congregation's nine campuses is Spanish-speaking, and one is located in a prison.

In his release, Scroggins said the church "voted last year to give $390,000 to the Cooperative Program in 2016, making it one of the top CP giving churches in the state of North Carolina and the SBC." He noted this marks a 230 percent increase in The Summit's CP giving.

Three years ago, the congregation voted to increase its giving through the Cooperative Program over a five-year period to 2.4 percent of undesignated receipts, the church confirmed to BP.

The Summit reached its goal two years early.

As of Jan. 1, 2016, The Summit began forwarding all its CP giving through the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC).

Previously, it forwarded some CP gifts directly through the SBC Executive Committee for distribution according to the CP allocation formula. In 2013-14, for instance, it gave $96,000 directly to the EC. The BSCNC reported CP receipts of $54,000 from The Summit in 2014. Adding the two numbers together yields the $150,000 the church self-reported as "CP giving" on its 2014 ACP—a total amounting to 1 percent of undesignated receipts.

The Summit's Great Commission Giving "has been at or around 10 percent for the last several years," Scroggins wrote. Great Commission Giving is a category of giving the SBC established in 2011 that encompasses giving through CP as well as direct gifts to SBC entities, associational giving and giving to state convention ministries.

The Summit's Great Commission Giving includes more than $1 million annually to IMB-related causes and more than half a millions dollars to NAMB-related causes.

The Summit is also in the process of funding an endowed chair at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to the total of $500,000.

Greear told BP, "One of the things God has put on my heart is that my generation needs to take personal responsibility for the agencies and the mission boards of the SBC and not just think of them as the SBC's, but think of them as ours."

He continued, "The second thing I want to do is celebrate the autonomy of the local church in choosing how it's going to give. We want to see CP giving elevated, and we are doing that ... but we also want to see Great Commission Giving celebrated, because that's part of the autonomy of the local church. Ideally, I want to see churches ... give more sacrificially to the CP but then have the autonomy to direct (their) gifts to Great Commission Giving and have that not only be legitimate but celebrated." (BP)

EC looks at small-state representation, approves NAMB funds transfer to IMB

By David Roach & Art Toalston

Nashville—After nearly an hour of discussion, the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee's officers withdrew a recommendation to propose granting representation on three key SBC committees to Baptists in pioneer regions. EC leadership promised, however, to make an alternate proposal with the same goal but addressing logistical concerns raised by EC members.

In other business during their Feb. 22-23 meeting in Nashville, the committee approved a one-time transfer of funds from the North American Mission Board to the International Mission Board to assist IMB personnel leaving the board during its "organizational reset"; and withdrew the convention's fellowship from a South Carolina church whose pastor performed a same-sex wedding ceremony with the deacons' approval.

The initial recommendation on "representation from new states and territories" would have asked the SBC's legal counsel to present a recommendation to the EC's Bylaws Workgroup for consideration in June on providing "representation on the Executive Committee, the Committee on Nominations, and the Committee on Committees for the following states or defined territories: The Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin, Montana, and Puerto Rico-U.S. Virgin Islands."

The recommendation also proposed "limit(ing) to four the maximum number of members which any cooperating state or defined territory shall be entitled to have on the Executive Committee."

Currently, EC representation for any state or territory is capped at five members, with Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas having maximum representation. According to SBC Bylaws, having 15,000 members in cooperating Southern Baptist churches qualifies a state or territory for initial representation on the EC, the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Nominations.

When a state or territory reaches 250,000 church members, it qualifies to have a second EC member. Each additional 250,000 church members qualifies a state or territory for an additional EC member up to the maximum.

The recommendation would have granted one EC member to each pioneer state and territory listed while maintaining at present levels the representation of states and territories with 1-4 EC members.

The recommendation was affirmed by EC officers, the Bylaws Workgroup and the Administrative Committee. However, when the matter came before the full EC, members raised questions, such as:

- Why does the proposal reduce EC representation from states whose Baptists support the Cooperative Program with some of the largest financial gifts?
- Why does the proposal specify a set number of EC members from each state and territory rather than establish a formula to determine representation?
- To what extent is the reduction of EC representation from certain states driven by a need to limit the EC's spending?

After 40 minutes of discussion, SBC President Ronnie Floyd, who serves as an ex officio EC member, asked, "Could we simply say the will of the body would be that it is our intent to study seriously, without involving the negative of taking away (EC members), ... a way, if possible, to give representation to every state convention, period?"

EC President Frank Page said he believes "the big issue" is granting EC and other committee representation to Baptists in every state and territory. He asked that all recommendations and amendments be withdrawn so that officers and staff "might ... come back with a cleaner way to say, 'We want to add five'" EC members from the states and territories mentioned in the recommendation. He said EC staff can, if instructed to do so, re-appropriate funds to allow five new members without reducing any state's current representation.

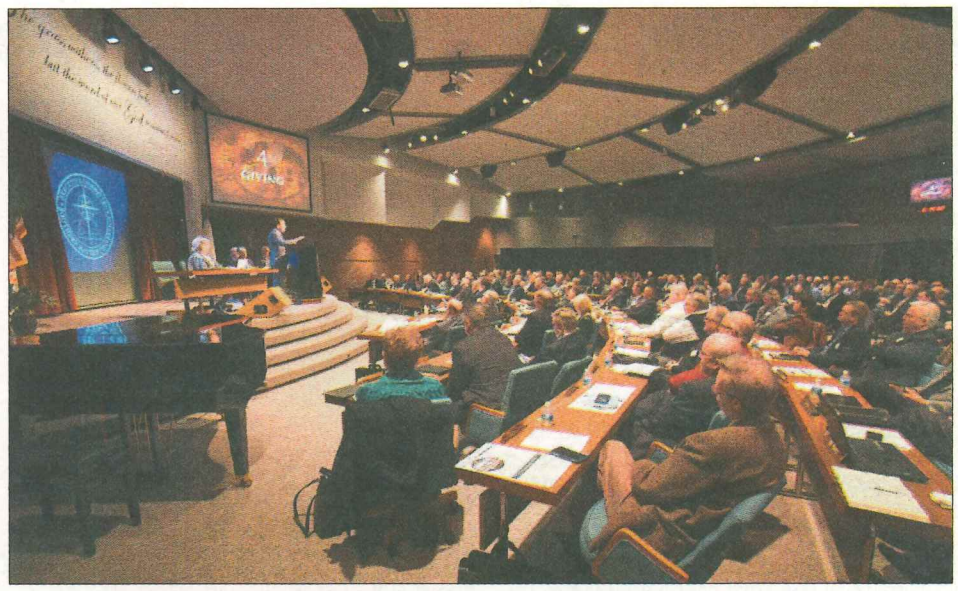
NAMB funds transfer

The EC approved a one-time transfer from NAMB to the IMB of up to $4 million, with three conditions which must be approved by NAMB's trustees:

- The transfer must be drawn from the reserve portion of NAMB's unrestricted assets.
- The transfer must not "negatively impact the performance of NAMB's ministry assignments."
- The transfer must be "designated to the IMB for the specific purpose of assisting transitioning IMB missionaries who have accepted the IMB's Voluntary Retirement Incentive or its Hand Raising Opportunity."

NAMB President Kevin Ezell told Baptist Press NAMB's "main motivation (for the gift) is that we're family."

"We've walked down this path before," Ezell said. NAMB "let 817 people go in a transition. I know how hard that is along with trying to balance a budget. We look at the IMB as a sister entity. We are a family. When families hurt, you make sacrifices for family."



The SBC Executive Committee gathered Feb. 22-23 for their meeting in Nashville. (Photo by Morris Abernathy)

S.C. church disfellowshipped

The EC's decision to withdraw fellowship from Augusta Heights Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., acting on behalf of the SBC ad interim, was based on "public information provided by the church which amounts to clear evidence of the church's affirmation and approval of homosexual behavior," according to the recommendation.

Article III of the SBC Constitution stipulates that "churches which act to affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior would be deemed not to be in cooperation with the Convention."

Background material provided to EC members stated Augusta Heights pastor Greg Dover "sought and acquired approval" from the church's deacons to perform a same-sex wedding ceremony and did so Oct. 10, 2015. Dover told EC staff in a letter the congregation "does not have a marriage policy, or any official position or doctrinal statement on issues of homosexuality or same-sex marriage." The church, Dover said, "does not wish to end our relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention."

Augusta Heights, which also has been disfellowshipped from the South Carolina Baptist Convention and the Greenville Baptist Association, was invited to send representatives to the EC meeting but did not do so.

In other items on its agenda, the Executive Committee:

- Approved a 2016-17 Cooperative Program Allocation Budget of $189,000,000 for recommendation to the SBC during the June 14-15 annual meeting in St. Louis.
- The proposed budget maintains current allocations to the convention's ministries, including 50.41 percent of receipts to IMB and 22.79 percent to NAMB, for a total of 73.20 percent allocated for mission ministries nationally and internationally.
- The convention's six seminaries will receive 22.16 percent. The budget proposal maintains a 1.65 percent allocation to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.
- The SBC Operating Budget, the only CP-funded facilitating ministry, encompassing the SBC annual meeting costs and the work of the Executive Committee, would receive 2.99 percent of the budget. (BP)

IMB cuts

Continued from page 1

149 stateside staff transitioning outside the IMB over the past six months. He reported 702 missionaries and 109 stateside staff took the voluntary retirement incentive, and 281 missionaries and 40 stateside staff took the hand raising opportunity. He noted it is possible the number of missionaries who have taken the HRO may decrease, since missionaries can rescind their decisions through April.

"IMB chose a voluntary process that would leave as much decision-making as possible in the hands of IMB personnel," Platt said. The same voluntary process was applied to stateside staff, with the exception of 30 personnel in IMB's Richmond communications office whose positions were eliminated in IMB's new mobilization structure.

The number of missionaries on the field is now around 3,800, according to IMB figures. The last time the number of missionaries was below 4,000, according to SBC Annual reports, was in 1993 at 3,954.

"While this news is disappointing to all of us," said Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, "we know we have prayed for God's leadership; therefore, we will trust God in this season and with our future as Southern Baptists."

"This reset is not regress or retreat," Floyd said. "Southern Baptist churches must see this as a fresh calling to reaching the world for Christ. Now is the time to go forward with a clear vision and an aggressive strategy to make disciples of all the nations for Christ."

Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, said, "My heart is broken to hear of the large number of missionaries and staff who are leaving the IMB. My prayers are with them as they transition.

"However most of all, my prayers are focused on the fact of the massive lostness in our world. May God bless Dr. Platt as he leads us in a new strategy to see a new day of intentional evangelism around our world."

Exponential opportunities

In addition to reducing personnel, IMB has made significant changes to its infrastructures and systems to work with greater excellence, effectiveness and efficiency, Platt reported. The future IMB strategy revolves around:

- Enabling limitless men and women to participate in global missions. This involves supporting full-time, fully supported personnel around the world and surrounding these personnel with students, professionals and retirees who are leveraging their studies, vocations and relocations to spread the gospel.
- Serving and mobilizing local churches as the primary agent God has promised to bless for spreading the gospel.
- Training and equipping Christians, church leaders, pastors and missionaries to make disciples and multiply churches across cultures.
- Engaging and reaching unreached peoples and places through missionary teams who are maximizing opportunities for evangelism, discipleship, church formation and leadership training from the most populated cities to the most extreme places in the world.
- Supporting and strengthening an ever-multiplying mission force through practical services that include everything from logistical help to health care to tax assistance. (BP/IMB)

Waterfront Church aims to be a fort in the nation's capital

By Jim Burton

Washington, D.C. — Zack Randles believes that the nation's capital needs another fort, and he's willing to build that fortified structure.

The fort he envisions will not look anything like the military installations that protect the hub of America's government—this fort will be a church.

The young west Texan set his heart toward Washington during his senior year at Oklahoma State University where he studied sociology. He committed to God in prayer to "do whatever you want me to do." Randles had prayed that before, but this time was serious about obedience for the first time in his life.

"That day the Lord cast a vision for a place I'd never been and for people I'd never met," Randles said. "I felt drawn to Washington, D.C."

During the next several years, Randles worked on ministerial staffs of several large Texas churches while attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He regularly led mission trips to the nation's capital with his wife, Autumn. In 2005 with 42 students, "The spirit just fell in a way that I had not experienced before. We knew that we would come back here."

What he didn't immediately know was that coming back would involve church planting.



Fifteen people were baptized in the first eight months of Waterfront Church's existence. (NAMB photo by Lee Love)

ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING®

A ministry legacy

Randles grew up in the pastorates his father served. Jon Randles was a pastor and an evangelist who served the Baptist General Convention of Texas as their director of evangelism. When the senior Randles served existing churches as pastor, those churches typically experienced much growth. But his father never planted a church.

"My dad was my absolute hero," Zack said. "It's very rare. It was not always this way. It's very rare to find someone who is your dad, best friend and hero all wrapped into one. He was an incredibly godly man."

Zack was already following in his father's steps by preaching at events for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, something his father did for years. So if the Lord wanted him in Washington, there surely would be an existing church calling him.

"I had been filled with so much pride that I had to take over a pre-existing church," Randles said. "I thought people planted because they couldn't plug into an existing system. I was incredibly wrong."

God was calling the younger Randles to a city that many churches had recently abandoned for the suburbs. During his trips there, he determined that if his calling was to pastor in Washington, he would have to plant the church. The "follow me" passages of Luke 9 helped bring him to that realization.

Of the three people Jesus encountered that day, Randles realized that the only person Christ called to action was the second one. He wanted to bury his father first.

"The second guy in the story, Jesus has a mission set aside just for him," Randles concluded. "It's strategic and timely."

Randles then understood God to say, "Trust me, and do the mission I've called you to do."

His father became sick before Randles left Texas. A month after arriving in Washington, the diagnosis was pancreatic cancer. There was no turning back, but his heart was clearly back home.

As Zack and Autumn poured themselves into starting Waterfront Church, they wrestled with how best to support Jon. For Zack the answer was to preach. His dad had said to him, "If a Randles can preach, he should preach."

The flights between Lubbock where his father was and Washington where he was planting a church, and the emotional roller coaster, stretched him.

His father died April 1, 2015. Several days later, after preaching an Easter message in Washington, he returned to Lubbock to preach his father's funeral to about 2,500 people in attendance and several thousands more via a live stream of the service.

"That was the hardest thing I've ever done," Randles said. "Planting a church is a close second."

Building the fort

The Randles felt God's call to plant along a revitalized area between the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, less than a mile from the capital and just two blocks from major league baseball's Nationals Park.

"In the years we came here to do short-term mission work, we met brick wall after brick wall when it came to the gospel message," Randles said. "When we moved here, it was the exact opposite. We prayed for 25 people. God sent us over 100."

They now practice what he calls "M&M evangelism" because Washingtonians can have a hard shell that must melt before revealing their soft, gentle side.

Waterfront Church launched August 10, 2014, at the Courtyard Marriott Navy Yard. By Easter Sunday 2015, Waterfront Church had 150 in attendance. Randles baptized 15 people in the first eight months of the church–11 of whom were adults.

Randles calls Waterfront the bridge between politics and poverty. Though the neighborhood is now upscale, homeless people are still in the area.

"A homeless man walked in late," Randles said of one Sunday service. "He sat next to a congressman."

Waterfront is mixed culturally, ethnically and economically, Randles said. Members range from Capitol Hill workers to military to hot dog sales people at the nearby ballpark, and the congregation is not necessarily a young one.

"We don't sell ourselves as the young-person church or the southern-gospel church," Randles said. "We sell ourselves as the church that really does care about our community and wants to share the gospel message above all else."

Planting a church in Washington hasn't been cheap. Waterfront's five-year budget is $1.3 million. An acre sells for $10 million. Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® and Cooperative Program funds helped Waterfront launch.

In spite of the cost, Waterfront's leadership plans to have a permanent presence in the capital.

"Our goal is to establish a fort," Randles said. (NAMB)



Zack and Autumn Randles are leading a church plant in Washington, D.C., with their children, Lulu, 5, Jack, 4 and Harper, 2.

Bragging on Jesus

Continued from page 1

As they continued to build community, the Ragers eventually started worship services with 40 people attending in September 2014. That was the launch of New Circle Church in Indianapolis. A year later their worship attendance more than doubled and they had seen 22 people baptized.



Barry and Amy Rager moved to Indianapolis with their children, Yonas, 8, Titus, 8, Justus, 6 and Fable, 6, to plant New Circle Church. (NAMB photo by John Swain)

Barry focuses the church on a simple-yet-comprehensive mission—introducing people to Jesus, developing gospel-centered community and commissioning them to reach people for Christ.

"What I get to do is brag on Jesus and what He has done," Rager says. "It is such an honor to brag on Jesus."

"I think if it is never our intention to live on mission, then we won't live on mission," Rager says. "We have to be intentional in the way we use our time, and in the meetings we have with people.

Pray for the Ragers for:

- continued growth as they work towards being self-sustaining;
- the discipleship of new believers;
- the training and development of new leadership;
- the projected first church plant of New Circle Church in 2016 or 2017.

Send North America: Indianapolis, part of the North American Mission Board's national church planting strategy, benefits from the generous gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® and the Cooperation Program. Rager receives support through the offering as well. (NAMB)

Reluctant no more:

Rice plants Life Church in his childhood neighborhood

By Jim Burton

New Orleans— Ryan Rice once despised the church. Then he found love.

Growing up in greater New Orleans, an aunt read the Bible to him. Rice found the stories about Jesus fascinating.

"I was the kid who raised his hand to answer every Bible question," Rice said of his early exposure to Sunday School and Vacation Bible School.

When he turned 8 years old, his mother married a man who was an abuser and drug user. As a child just discovering the Bible, he learned about the dark side of life, and he asked a big question for a child, "Where is God?"

In middle school, his mother dragged him to church.

"I remember sitting there and thinking, 'This is the worst thing ever. I hate church. I hate the people here.' That was coming from a lot of hurt," Rice said.

That hurt remained as he grew to become a popular and handsome athlete who was the high school student council president. On the outside, Rice appeared to have his life together.

"From every aspect of my life, I was empty on the inside," Rice said. "I was just broken."

Then he met Seane' Smooth and her father, Andrew Honore. On the first day of his freshman year at Dillard University in New Orleans, he saw Smooth and knew she was special. Smooth began praying for him.

Rice met Honore when he visited Smooth's home in nearby Slidell and attended church with her family. Honore led his future son-in-law to Christ during Rice's sophomore year.

"I knew a couple of months after I came to faith in Christ that God was calling me to preach," Rice said. "I didn't know what that meant. I had no clue. What does it mean to be called?"

A Jonah experience

After college, Rice and Smooth married, and he began a career in insurance. They were living in Baton Rouge—just 90 miles north of New Orleans. Through prayer, he understood God to be directing him to serve in the children's ministry at church.

"The ministry had been praying for more guys to serve with the children," Rice said.

The pastor began discipling him, which furthered his understanding of God's call in his life.

"It started with me being obedient to serve in my church," Rice said.

But as he sensed a call to plant a church in his Algiers childhood neighborhood on New Orleans's west bank, he still battled God.

"I can totally relate to Jonah," Rice said. "I had this call, even desire, but I didn't want to go. It was a reluctant kind of thing."



Rice didn't go to the Tarshish of old. Instead, He went to Michigan to interview with a church needing a children's pastor.

During the interview a pastor randomly asked him this question, "When are you going to church plant?"

Then Rice knew that he had to go home to his Nineveh.

"God has given us the green light of the gospel to go to a place that is without hope and in need of hope. I'm sold. I said yes," Rice said. "One day I had no desire to move to New Orleans or Algiers. Then one day I did."

Life Church New Orleans

The Rices soon found themselves in post-Katrina Algiers with no place to live. An apartment complex owned by a Christian company invited them to live and minister there. At the first outreach event, they gave away 110 book bags with school supplies.

"The people we connected with were so hungry for something more," Rice said. "They were hungry for truth."

Rice found that the people in his community were at the same place he had been as a teenager.

"People were a lot like me when I was in the churchy world," Rice said. "They know things about God and call themselves spiritual."

After months of cultivation, Life Church New Orleans launched in September 2014. By January, weekly services began.

Most attendees are people they met prayerwalking in Algiers. An Easter outreach also connected them to scores of prospects–many of whom had some type of experience with church but had never made a profession of faith in Christ. The Easter outreach hit another nerve with Algiers residents.

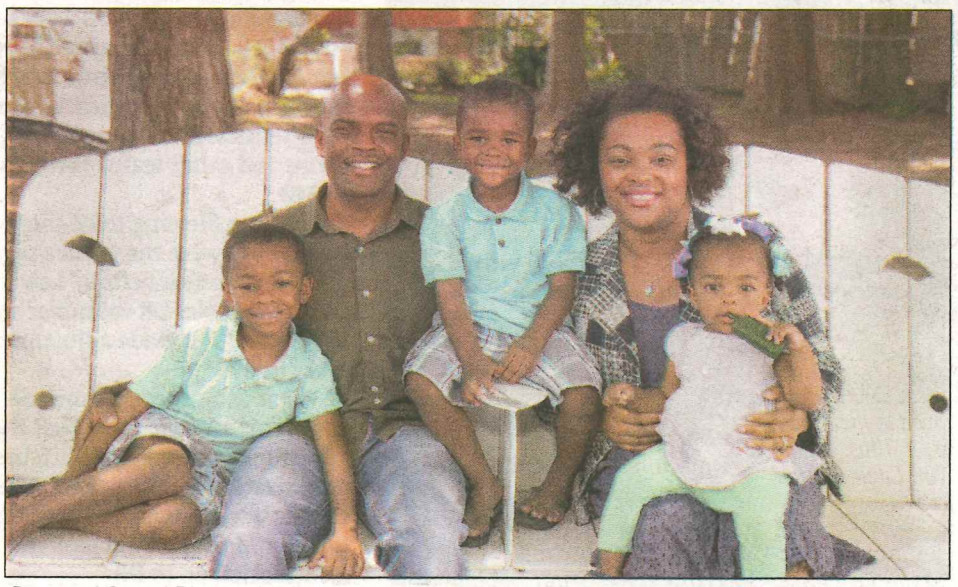
"Anything that is free and is the church blows people away," Rice said.

Already, they are seeing some dramatic events. Rice met a military couple with two kids at the Easter outreach. She was raised Southern Baptist; he was an animist.

One night during Bible study, the wife said, "I'm not a Christian. This is the first time that I'm realizing that I'm not born again."

Rice led her to Christ, and the husband soon made the same decision.

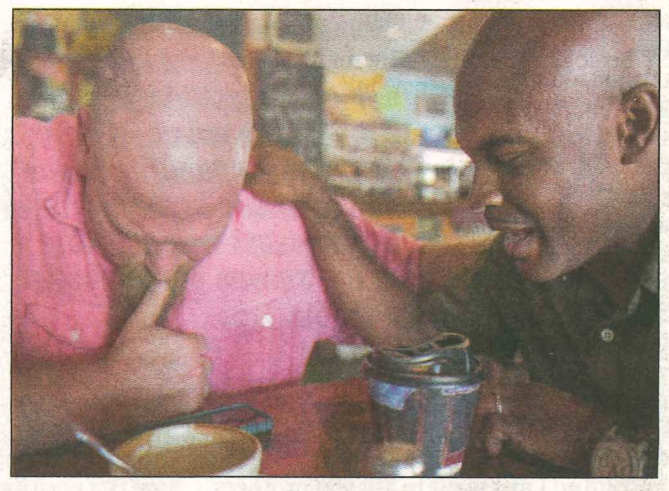
"That whole next generation is going to be different because their parents are following Jesus," Rice said.



Ryan and Seane' Rice are leading a church plant in New Orleans with their children Ryan Jr., 6, Brayden, 4 and Reagen, 2. The Rices are North American Mission Board 2016 Week of Prayer Missionaries.



Above: Church planter Ryan Rice first began his time in ministry by serving with children in Baton Rouge. Now he serves families and kids in his own childhood neighborhood of Algiers.



Right: Send North America: New Orleans church planter Ryan Rice (right) prays with Life Church New Orleans worship leader Michael Phelps. (NAMB photos by Mark Sandlin)

> ***"I can totally relate to Jonah. I had this call, even desire, but I didn't want to go. ...Then one day I did."***
>
> Ryan Rice,
> Missionary to New Orleans

Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge wanted to find a way to be engaged in New Orleans. As soon as they met the Rices, they knew that the couple was right for the job.

"After our meeting with Ryan we immediately said, 'That's the guy,'" said Istrouma missions pastor Dwayne Pitre.

"We chose to support Ryan because we believe in what God is doing through him," Pitre said. "He has a strong faith, knows his calling, preaches God's Word, he is outreach oriented, has a positive solution-seeking attitude and is passionate about ministering to people in New Orleans. He is evangelizing, baptizing and making disciples. People matter to him."

Rice returned to a different Algiers than the one he knew as a child. Crime has gone up since Hurricane Katrina as many new people have moved in from New Orleans.

He also sees some extreme socioeconomic disparity. He points to Appaloosa Street, a main Algiers thoroughfare, where on one side of the street the median household income is an estimated $80,000. The other side is at or below the poverty level.

Rice is new to Southern Baptist life, and he has quickly grown to appreciate the financial support he's receiving—particularly through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering®.

"Because of people giving, we've been able to be supported, make sure our kids are supported, and be sure that we can go forth and do the work that God wants us to do without hindrances," Rice said. (NAMB)

Platt asks Baptist papers to encourage unity

By David Roach

Ponce, Puerto Rico—International Mission Board President David Platt asked Baptist state papers to encourage unity among Southern Baptists following the announcement of how many IMB personnel have left the board through a series of voluntary resignation programs.

Addressing a gathering of Baptist state paper leaders Feb. 16 in Ponce, Puerto Rico, Platt detailed what he deemed some of the most exciting work God is doing through IMB missionaries across the globe. He was among several key Southern Baptist leaders to address the group, including Frank Page, president of the Executive Committee; Ronnie Floyd, convention president; and Kevin Ezell, North American Mission Board president.

"As we announce a number" at the Feb. 23-24 IMB trustee meeting in Richmond, Va., Platt said, "I know that the reality of so many IMB missionaries making transitions will set in in a fresh way across the SBC. And I know there's an adversary who would love to use that to breed discouragement and division and disunity. And I just want to ask you brothers and sisters for your help in encouraging the churches."

> ***"We have a responsibility to Southern Baptists to (ensure) that every position we have is a position we need. We have a responsibility to use the resources entrusted to us in the wisest way possible for the spread of the gospel to the nations."***
>
> David Platt,
> IMB President

In response to a $210 million difference between gifts from churches and expenditures since 2010, the IMB launched a two-phase "organizational reset" in August, which included a voluntary retirement incentive for personnel 50 and older with five or more years of service and a "hand raising opportunity" for all remaining staff and missionaries to voluntarily resign and receive a benefits package.

Platt had previously said a combined total of at least 600-800 missionaries and stateside personnel would need to accept the offers. He told the state paper leaders no involuntary reductions of overseas missionaries have been necessary as part of the reset, though some overseas missionaries may have their duties adjusted.

The "one area of our staff in Richmond that has been affected in a more involuntary way," Platt said, is the communications center, which is slated to close April 29. Of the 40 Richmond communications employees, 10 were offered positions on the newly formed mobilization team.

"This decision to remove various positions in Richmond was not driven by a financial need as much as it was driven by stewardship of responsibility," Platt said. "We have a responsibility to Southern Baptists to (ensure) that every position we have is a position we need. We have a responsibility to use the resources entrusted to us in the wisest way possible for the spread of the gospel to the nations."

He added, "At the same time, we obviously want to honor these brothers and sisters whose positions were eliminated, through generosity, through expressions of gratitude for the pivotal role many of them have played for decades in service to the IMB.... These are some of the kindest servants and leaders in the Richmond office."

The decision to close the Richmond Communications Center stemmed from the fact that "our mobilization efforts"—presumably including the communications strategy—"have not kept up with our times," Platt said. "We are way behind in the development of a digital mindset that builds on customization and flexibility rather than predictability and uniformity. Our field and stateside communicators struggle with employing new methods for reaching a changing audience.

"In all of this, our home office mobilization efforts have often been disconnected from our field strategy. And as a result, looking across the IMB after months and months, it's clear we're sorely missing a culture of growth in which silos are broken down, mobilization needs are adequately addressed and mobilization goals are actually accomplished," he said.

Platt invited Baptist journalists to participate in an overseas trip later this year to visit the IMB's global communications teams, which will assume some duties formerly performed by the Richmond communications office, and learn about the new communications strategy.

The board's two overseas communications teams are based in Eurasia and Asia, with the Eurasia team primarily relaying news from IMB personnel in Europe and Africa and the Asia team reporting primarily on personnel in Asia.

Some communications functions likely will be outsourced in keeping with a longstanding IMB practice, Platt said.



California editor Terry Barone, outgoing president of the Association of State Baptist Publications, passes the gavel to Western Recorder Editor Todd Deaton (left), president-elect, during the group's recent meeting in Ponce, Puerto Rico. Deaton will preside at next year's ASBP meeting in Ontario, Calif.

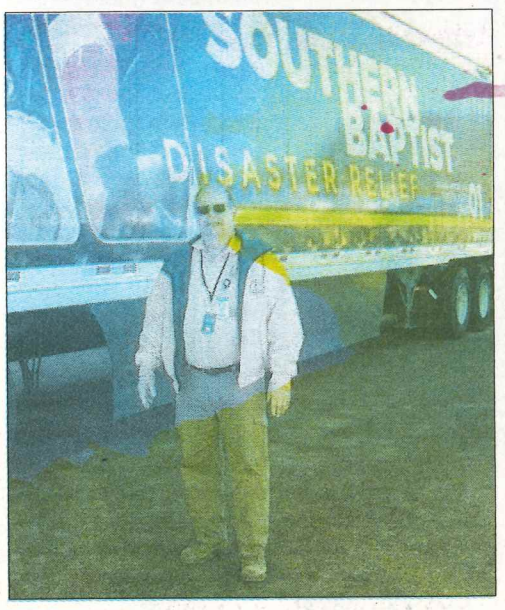
In response to a question about encouraging work occurring among IMB missionaries, Platt referenced "multiplication of churches" in South Asia, "miraculous things happening through the spread of the gospel in Southeast Asia" and "unprecedented opportunity" for evangelism associated with the Mideast refugee crisis.

Platt referenced "people being martyred" among IMB national partners in Southeast Asia and said "the Lord (is) blessing even that ... in an Acts 7 kind of way for the spread of the gospel." One IMB partner was stabbed, Platt said, and the alleged assailants were saved in prison through the witness of the victim's wife, as were police officers investigating the incident.

"It's awesome," Platt said. "That's happening all around the world every day."

Platt also asked Southern Baptists to pray for the ministries of IMB missionaries whenever they hear about international crises in the news. (BP)







Ky. Disaster Relief finished in Flint

Myriah Snyder

Flint, Michigan—Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief has completed its work in Flint installing water purification systems for those affected by the city's water crisis. Currently, other state disaster relief teams are ministering in Flint.

At the invitation of Michigan emergency management officials, five disaster relief teams were sent out on Feb. 15 and returned around Feb. 23. During their time in Flint, they had the opportunity to work with Tennessee Disaster Relief teams and other teams through NAMB.

"It was a blessing to be there because we were the guinea pigs; we hadn't done it before," Lew Cook, Kentucky DR volunteer since 1992, said. "We made adjustments every day."

What was especially unique about this situation was that the government called in a faith-based organization to assist them. The county would receive calls for assistance, and they would pass this information on to DR.

It was "very peculiar for a government entity to ask a faith-based group to do something like this. We felt very fortunate. It was just a God thing," Bill Johnson, DR volunteer since 2009 and former North American Mission Board employee, said.

"While our people were in the homes, they were able to share with the people. We were giving the love of Jesus to people. The number of people that would allow us to pray with them and the number of people that took Bibles from us really surprised us," Johnson continued.

Cook added, "We were the only contact these people had with a faith-based organization."

In all, the Kentucky DR teams made 23 gospel presentations, saw two decisions for Christ, distributed 135 Bibles and assisted 275 homeowners.

"We've just been given a God-given chance to share with these people, and are taking advantage of it.

"It's a really good opportunity to serve. It's not just the actual putting on the filters and changing cartridges, but it is a way for us to have a foot in to witness and talk to people," Cook concluded. (WR)



Jarvis Williams (left to right), SBTS associate professor, moderates a panel discussion on race with Kaitlin Congo, member of the leadership team for the Arise City Summit; Matthew Hall, vice president for academic administration; Felipe Castro, director of Hispanic initiatives; and Curtis Woods, associate executive director for convention relations at the Kentucky Baptist Convention. (Photo by Emil Handke)

SBTS panel: Don't ignore racial reconciliation

By Craig Sanders

Louisville—Southern Baptists must consider racial reconciliation as important as abortion and same-sex marriage, said leaders and pastors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary during a Feb. 17 forum.

"Southern Baptists got (race issues) so wrong for so long that we have to deal honestly with it, because we do not have credibility," said Matthew Hall, vice president for academic administration and assistant professor church history. "Southern Baptists were not just implicated in racial injustice, we were directly feeding it. We have blood on our hands so we can't try and address other issues of injustice and kind of leap over this one."

Hall participated in a "What's the Word" panel discussion on racial reconciliation hosted by the ONE student group, which says it seeks to reconcile ideas across race and gender lines through cross-centered conversations. Other participants included Felipe Castro, director of Hispanic initiatives at Southern Seminary; Curtis Woods, associate executive director for convention relations at the Kentucky Baptist Convention; and Kaitlin Congo, member of the leadership team for the Arise City Summit.

"We want to talk about justice for the unborn or whatever your issue is and ignore racial justice, but we do not have that luxury," Hall said. "If you care about life in the womb, but you do not give a rip about life in the hood or anywhere else then you will not have any credibility."

Scripture commands Christians to pursue all forms of reconciliation, but many people do not understand the need for it because they view racism as individual acts of prejudice, panelists said. But, they noted, racism affects systems, not just individuals, and when people grasp the full extent of American racism then the need for Christian reconciliation will be obvious. Reconciliation begins with seeing the image of God in all people.

"The Bible mentions groups of other people and that is how we need to see race. Christians need to desire groups of others and unlikely people coming together, because this is at the root of the gospel. This is not just different skin colors, but also includes different genders and disabled people," Congo said.

"What Jesus ultimately does is bring groups of unlikely people together to display the power of the gospel to transform hearts and cause us to desire relationships with Christians who do not look like us," Congo said.

Distinctly Christian reconciliation is rooted in discipleship and believers should allow the gospel to tear down any sinful boundaries people establish, panelists said. Woods suggested that a biblical theology of friendship will overcome most barriers to reconciliation. Many white Christians do not understand the unique struggles that people of other skin colors face because they do not have close friends who are not white. Compassion for different groups of people only comes through deep friendships.

"Spiritual friendship is a means of grace," Woods said. "What I seek to do is enter the life of another image bearer and see that image bearer as the most important person I will ever meet. And I seek to help anyone who has been placed behind the eight ball."

While seeking friendships with different groups of people Christians cannot see them as just another need to meet, said Castro, who noted the deep desire for Hispanics not to be seen as simply a compassion ministry.

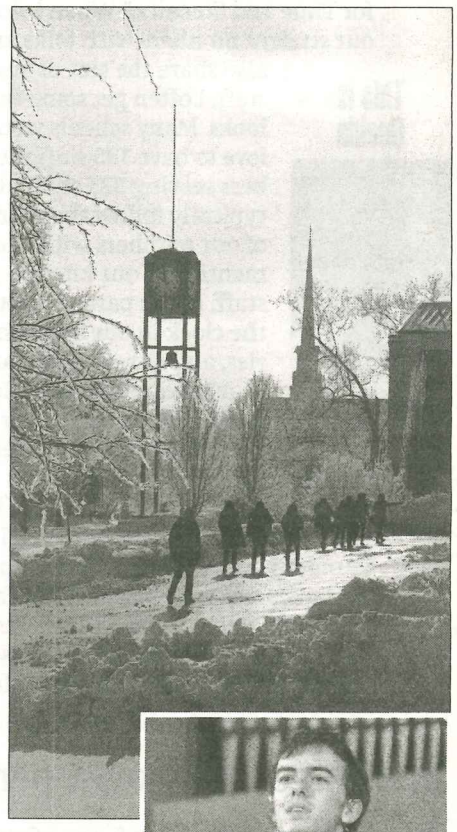
"This is especially important for Hispanic people. Often times we see poor people and want to be God for them so instead of asking them about what God is doing in their lives we just ask them what do you need," Castro said. "So if we are talking about the gospel and walking with other people then for Hispanics it means meeting them at their level."

Christians should also see reconciliation as practice for the age to come, Hall said. In the eternal kingdom people will only be divided based on their relationship with Christ, not skin color, gender, or any other physical characteristic, which is an often overlooked aspect of union with Christ.

"The kingdom of God will be established with people from every race, tribe, and tongue so the local church should strive to eliminate these distinctions now," Hall said. (SBTS)

Students undeterred by blizzard, conduct campus worship service

By Josh Christian



Campbellsville–With many area churches canceling services during the recent snowstorm on Jan. 24, Campbellsville University students had nowhere to go to worship, so they took matters into their own hands.

At 10 o'clock that day, the campus community assembled for worship in Ransdell Chapel.

The service had a variety of parts, all student led, including music, testimony and preaching.

The students were part of the university's Church Outreach team, which helps lead services each Sunday at many churches.

Among the students participating were Daniel Bannister, freshman, member of Immanuel Baptist Church in Glasgow; Kathryn Weeks, freshman, member of Hurstbourne Baptist Church in Louisville; Cassie Emery, freshman, member of Cloverport Baptist Church; and Ross Allen, sophomore, member of Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green.

Jamie Lawrence, Church Outreach pastor and head coach for the CU Tigers men's bowling team, of Danville, led the congregation in song.

Hope Weird, a freshman from Shepherdsville, gave a testimony about her life experience and keeping eyes on Jesus even when things get tough.

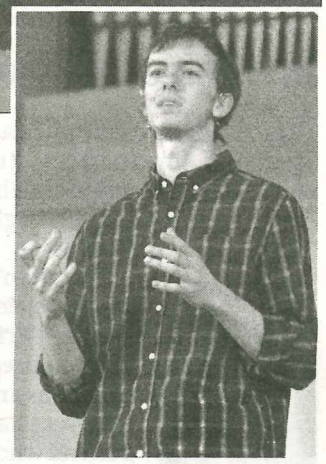
"He filled me up when I was empty, and I know He can do the same for everyone here," she said.

And Cody Jones, a freshman from Glasgow, delivered the message based on Matthew 14:22, which describes Jesus walking towards His disciples on the water in the midst of a storm.

He used the passage to speak about God using the storms and hindrances in our lives to His glory.

"Jesus will do that. He sent His disciples to go out and preach the gospel. He will often separate Himself from His disciples, not to create a spirit of fear, but a spirit of faith," Jones said.

Jones used the passage also to illustrate looking toward Christ for faith and to abolish fear.



Cody Jones

"Until fear has died in us, Jesus won't live," he said. "Revival starts with God in us. Until we want it and desire it with our hearts, it won't happen," he said.

An alter call, where students could come and pray, concluded the service. (CU)

Josh Christian is a student writer at Campbellsville University. He is a member of First Baptist Church of Portland, Tenn., where Tim Colovis, who formerly served at Oakland Baptist Church in Bowling Green, is now pastor.

Western Recorder

The Western Recorder would like to express its sincere appreciation to our church and association partners that utilize its newsletter plan. By using our back page(s), they not only are saving their church the costs and time involved in printing, addressing and mailing newsletters, but they are also keeping their members better informed and engaged in Kentucky Baptist life.

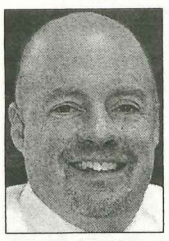
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- Ralph Avenue, Louisville
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- Pulaski Association, Somerset
- Russell Creek Association, Greensburg
- Severns Valley Association, Elizabethtown
- Taylor County Association, Campbellsville
- West Union Association, Paducah

Thank you!

Down on the farm

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

Oneida has many moving parts that work in unison to provide our young people with an "Education for Time and Eternity." When I share our student numbers with folks and also share the size of our staff, I often get some funny looks. Many schools would love to have 135 staff members serving 325 students. I typically follow the sharing of our numbers with the mention of our kitchen staff, house parents around the clock in our dormitories, and our working farm.

It takes a large staff to make Oneida thrive. For most of our history, a very intricate part of our ministry has been our farm. In 1909 Elizabeth Milbank Anderson, after hearing OBI founder James Anderson Burns speak at Madison Avenue Baptist Church in New York, followed him to the elevator and asked, "Mr. Burns, what is it you want?" He replied, "I want a farm for our boys." The following day, Burns received a check for $5,300 from Mrs. Anderson with a note saying, "Here is your farm."

On our farm, we say the kids are the crops. We have pigs, cattle, goats, sheep, chickens, crops, and more. Some of what we do puts food on our table, but a large part of what we do on our farm centers on our young people. All of Oneida's dormitory students are required to have a job. Participation in a varsity sport qualifies as a job, but most of our kids work for an hour a day. Many of those working students choose to work on our farm. Other students who are sent to the farm for disciplinary reasons may not enjoy the work as much as the 40 or so kids who choose to work there.

I recently spent an afternoon on our farm. I wasn't well prepared, and was wearing my normal shirt and tie attire. In spite of my poor choice of clothing, I was blessed to be better educated in seeing what our kids do after school each day. They start with a student-led devotion, and then head out to their jobs. Some work with lettuce and tomatoes being hydroponically grown in our greenhouses. Some do vaccinations for our pigs. Others wrestle cattle. Some shovel. Some feed animals ... and much, much more.

I enjoyed seeing all that I saw, but what I enjoyed most was seeing the love and direction our farm staff offers to our kids on a daily basis. Make no mistake about it; the young people on our farm are presented the good news of Jesus Christ, and they are loved beyond measure.

Your love and support enables us to use our farm as a ministry to our young people, and for that we are grateful. Come and see our farm and how God uses our people and even our animals to show his love to so many kids.

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute. Website: oneidaschool.org. Phone: (606) 847-4111. Follow OBI on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OBI.KY and Twitter, @Oneida_Baptist and @lgritton.

International student perseveres against all odds: Part II

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

Shamma Lorrean is one of our international students from Haiti. He continues his testimony about how God brought him to Clear Creek.

"I couldn't breath and my knee was bleeding," Shamma said. "Frightened and badly injured, I became unconscious and woke up to discover I had been saved by a friend who helped get me out of the building. It was a miracle. I should have been dead. My friend had been in the building a couple of minutes before the quake and had left unexpectedly. If he had stayed, he would have been dead like the rest."

"After several days, through the indescribable destruction of the dead and dying, I was able to find my way back to my family. For the next year, my family and I spent our lives living and struggling in a city of makeshift tents," Shamma recalled. "This was the worst year of my life!"

"But I feel like God put me through this disaster and kept me alive because He wanted to break my pride. He changed my hardened heart to a new heart that now wants to serve and love Him and others. During these dark times, God sent some of His servants to come and take care of me and my family. I had the opportunity to meet some wonderful people from America, Dr. John Williamson and his family, who have become a big help for me and involved in my life restoration.

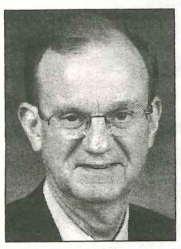
"After all I had been through, God restored me and put me back where I belonged," said Shamma. "I got back to church to serve alongside my Dad. I began to be more and more involved in the youth and children's ministry and also became more concerned about the social life of the people in our community. I began coordinating programs to help churches provide basic needs to people through health care, feeding programs and education. This was a great way to witness to people in a country like Haiti. In Haiti today, there are people who live from hand to mouth, not knowing where the next meal is coming from. They can't even provide their own food for a day. I feel God wants me to help care for these people."

... To be continued

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.

Serving with a great board

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Richard Carnes

As CEO of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, I am honored and blessed to be supported and guided by an excellent board of directors. The 16 men and women who serve as directors of the KBF are elected by the Kentucky Baptist Convention messengers during the KBC's annual meeting. All of these individuals are active members in their local Kentucky Baptist church, and they each bring professional experience to the financial stewardship ministry of the KBF.

A nonprofit board member plays a vital role in the ongoing success of an organization's ministry. While each organization is unique, nonprofit boards usually have decision-making responsibility on strategy, direction, policy and governance. A board's scope of responsibility normally includes:

- Defining the organization's mission and goals, and making decisions on strategy.
- Monitoring organizational performance to confirm the organization is being managed capably and there is accountability for the organization's operations and results.
- Providing effective stewardship of the organization's resources.
- Overseeing the stability of the organization in critical areas, including financial statement integrity and internal risk systems and controls.
- Recruiting, selecting, supporting and assessing the organization's chief executive.
- Evaluating and strengthening the board's effectiveness.
- Enhancing the organization's public image and generating support.

Directors of a nonprofit organization such as the KBF have fiduciary duties and thus have the responsibility to protect and preserve the organization's resources for the ministry and charitable purposes for which the organization was established. This means that the directors accept a stewardship role over the KBF's assets to confirm that resources are utilized in a reasonable and appropriate way. As persons of trust, board members have the authority and obligation to act prudently, honestly and in good faith on behalf of their nonprofit entity.

Kentucky Baptists can be assured that the KBF's board of directors and staff work diligently to fulfill its stewardship duty in all of its work. The KBF is honored to work with Kentucky Baptist families that are seeking how best to organize their estate planning goals to achieve their personal and charitable objectives in support of their church and other Baptist causes. To learn more, you may contact the Foundation's trust counsel, Laurie Valentine, or me the number below.

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



Carol Taylor accepts a gift from the church. Others (left to right) are Gary Johnson with the personnel committee, Julie Johnson, and Matthew Bone, music minister.

Parkland ministry assistant retires after 31 years

By Myriah Snyder

Louisville—Parkland Baptist Church's ministry assistant for the past 31 years, Carol Taylor, retired Feb. 26. The church held a celebration in her honor Feb. 28.

Taylor became a part-time assistant secretary, returning to work after having her second son. A year later, the secretary retired and she moved into the role. She has held that position, now referred to as a ministry assistant, for 30 years. She also served as Parkland's bookkeeper.

She also served as president of the Baptist Ministry Assistants of Kentucky from 1997-1999, was a member for nearly 30 years, and was the secretary treasurer of the National Association of Southern Baptist Secretaries from 2013-2015.

"I've always felt like it was not a job, it was more of a ministry," Taylor said.

"I've always loved working with the people. Everybody has always been very kind to me a supportive of me. I've never dreamed of working anywhere else, because I had what I thought was the perfect job," she added.

Taylor's advice to other ministry assistants echoed these thoughts: "Just to look at it as a ministry and not a job. There's times when things get rough and there are difficult times, but you've just got to work through them and trust the Lord that He will get you through them. If you do this, you are going to love serving the Lord and carrying out the business of the church."

Taylor has been a member of Parkland for more than 50 years now. She and her husband were married at Parkland. In addition to being ministry assistant, she has been involved in various other ministries including youth, preschool and Bible school.

"Carol has been a server to servers, family, friends and a dedicated employee to our church for 31 years," said Tom Curry, pastor of Parkland and the only pastor with whom Taylor has served.

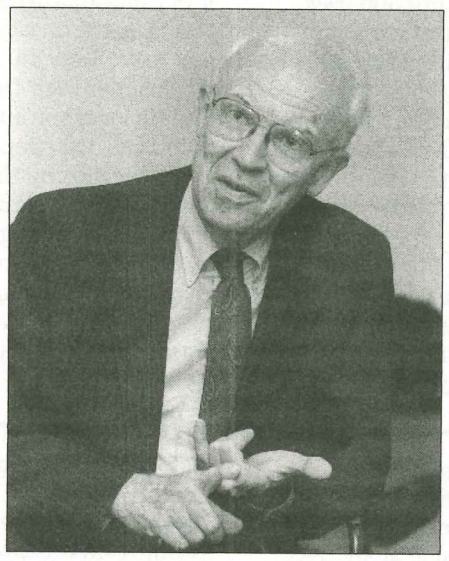
"Carol has been the front line minister to everyone who comes into the office," he added. "Her dedication deserves our very best thanks." (WR)



Longtime SBTS preaching professor dies at 93

Louisville—James William Cox, a renowned homiletics professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for more than four decades, died Feb. 21 in Louisville at 93.

Born in Kingston, Tenn., on Jan. 18, 1923, Cox trained generations of pastors and wrote several notable books on preaching.



He joined Southern Seminary's faculty in 1959 as professor of Christian preaching and in 1981 became the first occupant of the Victor and Louise Lester Chair of Christian Preaching. He retired in 1993 and served as a senior professor until his death.

"Dr. James Cox was one of the greatest scholars of preaching of the past century. His knowledge of homiletics and the history of preaching was unsurpassed," said Southern Seminary President Albert Mohler Jr. "He was also a Christian gentleman who was always ready with a kind word and a faculty member who warmly encouraged his colleagues.

"He will be greatly missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with his faithful wife of so many years, Patricia, and the Cox family."

Cox earned both his M.Div. and his Ph.D. at Southern Seminary. He graduated with his bachelor's from Carson-Newman College.

During his tenure at Southern, Cox was a visiting lecturer at Princeton Theological Seminary, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, and Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary (now called Virginia Theological Seminary). He was also a regular interim pastor and had numerous pulpit supply pastorates during his time as a seminary professor.

Before teaching at Southern Seminary, Cox was the founding pastor of Memorial Baptist Church in Frankfort, and served as pastor at Nance's Grove Baptist Church in New Market, Tenn., and Central Baptist Church in Johnson City, Tenn.

He wrote several books, including "Surprised by God" and "A Guide to Biblical Preaching," and contributed to several others. Cox edited numerous academic papers and served intermittently as a member of the editorial board at the Review & Expositor. He had numerous stints in academic study throughout his tenure, including Harvard University, the University of Zurich, and Princeton Theological Seminary.

At his death, Cox was a member of Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, where he was a longtime Sunday School teacher.

During a Feb. 23 chapel service, Matthew J. Hall, vice president for academic services, described Cox as a "hero and giant of the Southern Seminary family."

"There has been no other member of this faculty who has had more of a shaping influence on American preaching in the whole tenure of this institution, and I would include in that even John Broadus," Hall said.

Cox is survived by his wife of 64 years, Patricia Parrent Cox; two sons, David and Kenneth; and four grandchildren. (SBTS)

Christ permeates all of life, not just camp

By Rochell Goff

There are many great things about camp. There are the random adventures you get to have with your friends, the activities that you cannot do in your everyday life. Then there are the amazing college-age, summer staffers who want to invest in you.

Camp is a fun-filled week when you are exposed to the gospel at all points of the day. The gospel permeates all aspects of camp, and when we go to camp we feel renewed and refreshed. We feel as if God is everywhere, and we cannot escape Him ... but then we leave camp.

After returning home, this feeling stays until suddenly something happens and we feel abandoned, that He has left us. I have heard again and again how camp is just not like everyday life.

At Crossings, we affectingly call this the camp spiritual high, and we try to avoid this at all costs. We want everyone who comes to camp to remember this truth; Christ permeates all points of our life, not just at camp.

In Psalm 139: 7-8, David asks God "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!" The scripture helps us remember the truth, that God is ALWAYS with us and there is nowhere we can go, nothing that we can do, that He will not know.

As I prepare to live at camp this summer, I am praying that students and adults who come to camp do not see camp as a spiritual high, but instead as another opportunity to know God more. For those who have yet to start a relationship, we want the Lord to change their heart of stone to a heart of flesh and to begin that journey with Him.

Camp is a place where so many wonderful adventures happen. One of those adventures is furthering your relationship (or beginning your relationship) with the Lord.

As for today, right now, how should you be pursuing the Lord? Remember, nothing is too big for Him, and there is no place that you are that He is not right there with you.

Rochell Goff is director of children's programming at Crossings Ministries.

Home

Karlee Brewer

Home—What does this word mean to you? For you and me, home is comfort, security, stability and love. Home is childhood memories of playing in the back yard and our sloppy family portraits displayed proudly on the refrigerator door.

But for Linda, home was fear, vulnerability, neglect and uncertainty. Home was sleeping with the lights on, because you didn't know if mom's new boyfriend would creep in at night just like the last; and avoiding every mirror throughout the house because you couldn't stand your reflection anymore.

Linda's reality was one that many Sunrise children face. At 15 years old, she was the adult of her household. Linda tried to nurture her mother back to health after every binge and relapse, all the while dismissing her own emotional needs.

In April 2015, Linda was admitted to Sunrise Children's Services residential facility, Glen Dale, in Elizabethtown.

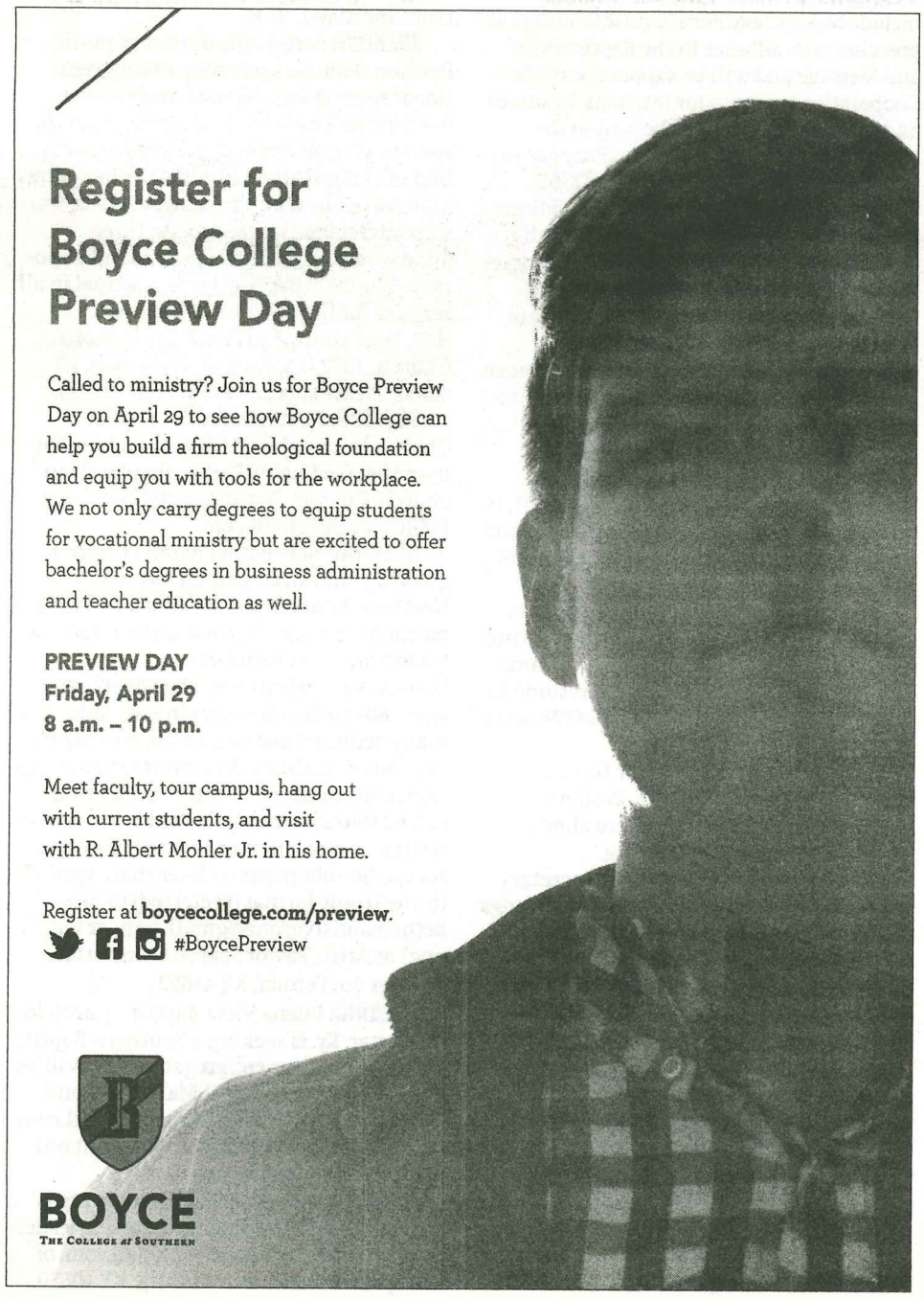
When Linda arrived at Glen Dale, her toolbox was empty. Coping with aggression and sadness were drastic burdens before, often leading to acts of self-harm and emotional outbursts. Countless occurrences of sexual abuse caused Linda to turn to anorexia for support. In Linda's eyes, her body was impure and unlovable.

At Sunrise, the implementation of routine combined with therapy began to rebuild Linda's emotional foundation. Her toolbox began to overflow with healthy coping skills and a reformed self-esteem.

Every morning when Linda woke up, she would look at her reflection in the mirror through tear-filled eyes and say, "You are beautiful." She was finally beginning to believe it.

In December 2015, Linda had successfully completed the therapy program at Glen Dale and was discharged to a foster family. At night when she lays in her bed, tucked in with love, compassion and safety, Linda smiles to herself because she knows she is finally home.

Karlee Brewer is the marketing and advancement associate for Sunrise Children's Services. Contact Sunrise Children's Services, P.O. Box 1429, Mount Washington, KY 40047-1429; (502) 538-1000; www.sunrise.org.



KBC Calendar of Events

March

11-12 Creative Ministries Festival 2.0, Rich Pond Church, Bowling Green

11-12 Ky. Baptist Disaster Relief Chaplaincy/ Phases 1 & 2 Training, Crestwood Church

11-12 Vacation Bible School Clinic, First Church, Richmond

17 Men's and Women's Chorales Combined Concert, Consolidated Baptist Church, Lexington

19 RAMCON 2016, First Baptist Church, Hopkinsville

29 Get Acquainted Day, Ky. Baptist Building, Louisville

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Staff

FULTON–New Hope Church will hold revival March 20-25. **Mark Green** will bring the messages. **Randy McClure** is pastor.

LOUISVILLE—Deer Park Church will hold "Lift High the Cross"—A Lenten service of music and scripture with chancel choir and instrumentalists. Sunday, March 13, at 10:45 a.m. **Albin Whitworth** is minister of music and worship/ organist. **David Platt** is pastor.

MAYFIELD—New Vision Church has called **Billy Kennedy** as pastor.

PRINCETON—Southside Church has called **Baxter Boyd** as senior pastor. He is from Princeton and will be graduating from Boyce Bible College in May. He began as a summer youth intern in 2014 and later moved into the youth minister position. Boyd serves on Kentucky Baptist Convention's Committee on Public Affairs.

SHELBYVILLE— **Will Macpherson** is the new worship and youth pastor at Highland Church. **Chris Platt** is pastor.

First Church will host a "Voice of the Martyrs Conference" on April 16, starting at 9 am. For more information, call (502) 633-1317. **Maurice Hollingsworth** is pastor.

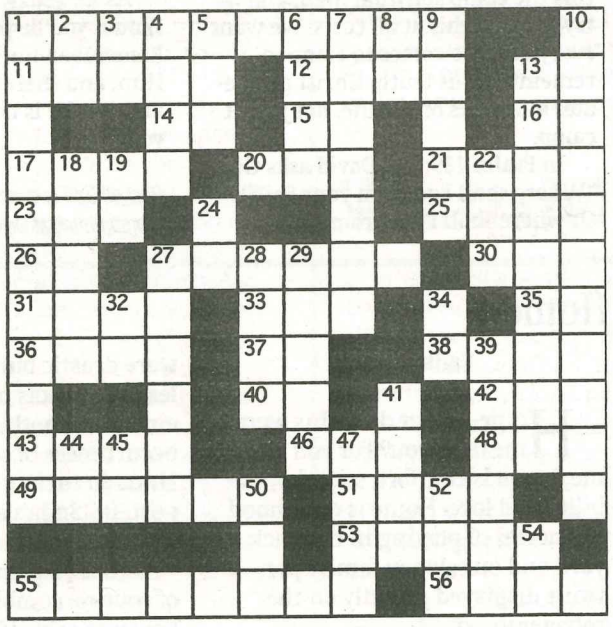
LEBANON—Central Association of Kentucky Baptists will hold their Association Annual Spring meeting March 28 at Springfield Church. Meeting will begin at 6 p.m. with a meal and move into session at 7 p.m. **Joseph Lumbrix**, pastor of Mt. Olivet Church, will preach, and guest speaker is **Susan Bryant**. Director of missions is **Jay Hatfield**.

Western Recorder + Your church newsletter

TWO GREAT PUBLICATIONS, ONE LESS POST OFFICE HEADACHE

Bible Crosswords

By Sissy Magnusson



#058

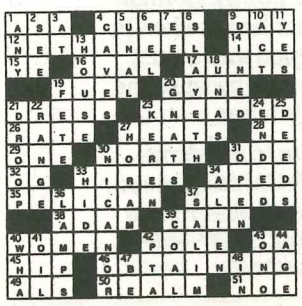
Across

1 Our ____ is with the Father (1 John 1:3)
11 Constellation (Job 9:9)
12 The ____ chapter (1 Corinthians 13)
13 Southern slang for poor
14 A populous place (Nahum 3:8)
15 Son of Peleth (Numbers 16:1)
16 Printer's measure
17 To boast
20 Wonder
21 Vehicle (Amos 2:13)
23 An age
25 Otherwise
26 ____ me, expression of sorrow
27 Pure
30 Writing instrument
31 Forbidden insult (Matthew 5:22)
33 Great happiness
35 Montpelier's state, abbr.
36 Pertaining to wings
37 Astronomical unit, abbr.
38 Oldest son of Noah (Genesis 9:18)
40 Head nurse, abbr.
42 Sooner than
43 Oldest son of Adam (Genesis 4:1)
46 City on the coast of Caesarea (Joshua 11:2)
48 Short for Leonard
49 A riddle
51 None in Gilead? (Jeremiah 8:22)
53 Come in
55 Opposite of pride (1 Peter 5:5)
56 Will come out of Jacob (Numbers 24:17)

Down

1 Control of one's feelings (Ephesians 4:2)
2 Son of Jose (Luke 3:28–29)
3 New York's largest island, abbr.
4 A fruit of the spirit "____ -suffering" (Galatians 5:22)
5 Biblical city (1 Chronicles 8:12)
6 "____ to anger" (Nehemiah 9:17)
7 Truthfulness
8 Intravenous, abbr.
9 The absence of strife
10 Satisfaction
13 Keep on keeping on
18 Kingly
19 Article
22 European mountain
24 Expression of satisfaction
27 Loving
28 Son of Zibeon (Genesis 36:24)
29 "Healthy" heart (Proverbs 14:30)
32 Earthquake state, abbr.
34 In like manner
39 "____ of salvation" (Ephesians 6:17)
41 Name meaning "wild goat" (Genesis 36:28)
44 Airman, abbr.
45 2, Romans num.
47 "To ____ is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22)
50 Name meaning "my brother" (1 Chronicles 5:15)
52 Lights, abbr.
54 Egyptian sun god

#057



IMB commissions 26 new missionaries

Rockville, Va.—Asked to confront the world's lostness, the International Mission Board trustees approved and commissioned 26 new missionaries at the International Learning Center outside of Richmond, Va. Feb. 23.

The event was broadcast via livestream, allowing friends, family members and churches a chance to hear the testimonies of the new missionaries. Only darkened silhouettes were shown to protect the security of personnel who will be serving in dangerous places.

Of the new missionaries, seven are going to Central Asia, five to South Asia, 11 to North Africa and the Middle East, one to Europe and two to sub-Saharan Africa.

IMB President David Platt turned to Luke 9:57-62 to describe what it means to follow Jesus as he challenged new missionaries. "Apparently, the call to follow Christ is not simply a call to pray a prayer," he said. "It's a summons to lose your life."

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have found someone who is worth losing everything for," he said. "Jesus is this good, this great, and this glorious that He is worthy of the surrender of our lives.

"Don't doubt for a second in the valleys you walk through, the challenges you face, the questions and confusion you have, 'How did I get here? Why is this happening?' Don't doubt for a second He loves you so much. He's worthy of your total affection."

Before closing the service in prayer, Southeastern Seminary President Danny Akin gave a message from the Brazil mission board president who asked him to thank Southern Baptists for their witness. "His great, great, great grandfather was led to Christ by a Southern Baptist," Akin said. (BP)

Classified Ads

SEEKING: Bi-vocational pastor for small congregation located in DeMossville, Ky. In charge of the welfare and responsible care of the church. Preside at all meetings of the church. Preach at appointed hours of worship on Sunday, lead regular midweek meetings, and administer ordinances as taught in Scriptures. Have general care of the spiritual welfare of the membership of the church. Submit your resumé by mail to DeMossville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 27, DeMossville, KY 41033, or e-mail to dbc@zoomtown.com.

SEEKING: Munfordville Baptist Church is seeking its next full-time pastor. Criteria include being a Southern Baptist Convention preacher who adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message and will be supportive of the Cooperative Program for missions. Resumés and sermon DVDs should be sent to the attention of Pulpit Committee Chairperson at P.O. Box 445, Munfordville, KY 42765.

SEEKING: Children's minister for Elkton Baptist Church, Elkton, Ky. This is a full-time position, and we are looking for someone who is a team player, energetic, self-motivated, well organized and can relate to children, parents and the rest of the church. A bachelor's degree and experience is a plus. Send or email resumés to: elktonchurch@bellsouth.net or Elkton Baptist Church, P.O. Box 547, Elkton, KY 42220.

SEEKING: Evergreen Baptist Church, 2698 Evergreen Rd,, Frankfort, KY 40601, is seeking a part-time children's minister and a part-time youth minister. (502) 223-8364 office@evergreenbaptistchurch.us.

SEEKING: New River/McCreary County Missionary Baptist Association is accepting resumés through March 31 for a full-time director of missions. Please send resumé to nrmc@highland.net, or mail to 24728 Scott Hwy, Winfield, TN 37892.

SEEKING: Send resumés for full-time music pastor to EHBC, 703 E. Walters, Harrison, AR 72601, or email to ehbcadmin@eagleheightsharrison.org.

SEEKING: Secretary/financial secretary with typical duties and working knowledge of MS Office and QuickBooks software. Send resumé to Green Acres Baptist Church, Attn.: Personnel Committee, 5189 Poplar Level Rd., Louisville KY 40219, or email same to cwmgabc@gmail.com

SEEKING: Interim/transitional pastor for Green Acres Baptist Church. Mail resumé with cover letter to church Attn.: Pastor Search Team, 5189 Poplar Level Rd., Louisville KY 40219, or email to cwmgabc@gmail.com.

FOR RENT: Destin, Fla., beach house. 6 Bed/ 4 Bath. 1/2 block to beach. Perfect for family vacations. VRBO.com/454133. (502) 727-7426.

TRAVEL: Bus tour with First Baptist Church, Richmond, May 16-21. Trip to Hershey, Gettysburg, Philadelphia, George Washington Crossing. $740 per person, single. Call Floyd Price (859) 421-1418.

SEEKING: Flemingsburg Baptist Church seeking full-time minister/evangelist to Fleming County youth. Duties will include building relationships with county schools and students, developing evangelistic and discipleship opportunities for community youth, and being an active member of Flemingsburg Baptist Church and discipling its student members. Send resumés to FlemingsburgBaptistYouth@gmail.com. Deadline May 1, 2016.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music. Position requires leadership of congregational singing for 2 Sunday morning services (traditional/blended), Sunday evening service, Wednesday evening service, direction of choir, seasonal cantatas, other events as needed. The church averages 350 for worship attendance spread among three Sunday services, one of which is contemporary. The 2008 Baptist Hymnal is used in all services for the purpose of this position. Send resumé to Zion's Cause Baptist Church, 1532 U.S. Hwy. 68 W, Benton, KY 42025. Please submit resumé by April 15.

SEEKING: First Missionary Baptist Church in Lewisburg, Ohio, is seeking the man that God has called to shepherd our church. Contact: Joe Staggs 937-545-0498 or FMBCsearch@gmail.com.

SEEKING: New Bethel Baptist Church, a growing, mid-sized church located in Northern Kentucky, is seeking a full-time pastor to provide spiritual instruction and leadership to its members and to the Verona, Ky., community. The church averages 160+ in Sunday morning worship, has many active ministries, and is seeking to expand its facilities. A complete job description, and community and church profile can be found at http://www.nbbcky.com/. A resumé, cover letter and three references should be submitted no later than April 15 in electronic format (preferred) to newbethelbaptistverona@gmail.com, or via mail at Attn.: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 50, Verona, KY 41092.

SEEKING: Buena Vista Baptist Church in Lancaster, Ky. is seeking a Southern Baptist pastor to lead our congregation. We will be accepting resumés until March 30. Send your resumé to buenavistabap@gmail.com. To learn more about BVBC, check out our website: www. buenavistabap.org.

SEEKING: Pioneer BC in Harrodsburg is seeking a part-time ($100/wk) worship leader. Send resumés to chrisorrsr@gmail.com, or 260 Sparrow Lane, Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

Study Bible scholar Charles Ryrie dies

By Art Toalston

Dallas—Charles C. Ryrie, a scholar whose name abounds on Ryrie Study Bible editions with more than 2.6 million in print in multiple languages, died Feb. 16 in Dallas at age 90.

Known for his end-times theology of dispensationalism, Ryrie was a longtime systematic theology professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and a member of First Baptist Church in Dallas. At FBC Dallas, Ryrie became close friends with the current pastor, Robert Jeffress, and his predecessors at First Baptist, O.S. Hawkins and Mac Brunson.



Hawkins, now president of the SBC's GuideStone Financial Resources who served at First Baptist from 1993-97, said in comments to Baptist Press: "If ever there lived a man whose life was immersed in the Bible it was Charles Ryrie. This is evident not only in the legacy he left in the Ryrie Study Bible, his amazing collection of rare and antique Bibles and books, but his passion to never stop studying even into his ninth decade of life.

"What many do not know," Hawkins noted, "is that he was a great churchman" who attended regularly.

"He was a mentor and compassionate counselor to me personally," Hawkins said, "and I already miss our frequent visits and fellowship. I can still hear him say, 'The Bible is the greatest of all books, to study it is the noblest of all pursuits, to understand it, the highest of all goals.'"

Brunson, pastor of First Baptist Dallas from 1999-2006 and now pastor of First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla., said Ryrie "will be remembered as one of the great theologians of the 20th century.

"He was a tremendous synthesizer of text and theology, making it so plain anyone could understand. His study Bible stands alongside the work of Scofield and Dabney."

Ryrie joined First Baptist when he was a student at Dallas Theological Seminary from the mid- to late 1940s and the late W.A. Criswell was the church's new pastor, ultimately serving there 50-plus years.

A seminary tribute to Ryrie stated the professor and Criswell became friends and that Ryrie "regularly taught a Sunday School class there and enjoyed a long-term relationship with the church."

The Ryrie Study Bible, with the DTS professor's 10,000–plus explanatory notes, used the King James Version when it was first published in 1978. It is now also available in New American Standard Bible and English Standard Version translations. In addition to the study Bible, Ryrie wrote more than 50 books. While at Dallas Theological Seminary, he also served as dean of doctoral students for more than 20 years before retiring in 1983.

Craig Blaising, executive vice president and provost at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and coauthor of the 2000 book "Progressive Dispensationalism" with DTS New Testament professor Darrell Bock, noted in written comments to Baptist Press that Ryrie, in his book "Dispensationalism Today," released in 1965, "defined dispensationalism for the generations of dispensational scholars who took their training in the '60s through the '80s, and it is still quite influential today.... Most importantly, it provided a clear, concise definition of dispensationalism that focused upon the essence of the system as he saw it."

Blaising added that Ryrie's influence extended beyond eschatology. "He wrote widely, with books on the Holy Spirit, the Christian life, grace and the doctrines of salvation. He was one of the earliest to address the growing question concerning the role of women in the church.... In all that he wrote, he was a masterful theologian, concise, readable, and understandable to the average layman as well as to the scholar. (BP)

Anne Graham Lotz: Prayer makes a difference

By Harper McKay

Wake Forest, N.C.—Anne Graham Lotz encouraged listeners at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to be like Daniel who was compelled to pray, centered in prayer, and persistent in his petitions.

Speaking from Daniel chapter nine, Lotz posed a question, "What can one person do when we're faced with a mess or a disaster?"

"Our world is in a mess," Lotz said. "My challenge to you tonight is ... wrap your mind around your sphere of influence—your family, your church, your nation ... and say, 'God I will not let you go until you bless those who are in my circle.'"

Lotz outlined a pattern of prayer exemplified in the life of Daniel. Like Daniel, Christians should pray the promises of God back to the Lord.

"Daniel was compelled by the promises in God's word," she said. "So I don't know what the problems are in your world, but whatever they are would you ask God to give you the promise to match it and then pray those to him?"

Lotz explained how Daniel centered on God in his prayers, turning from everything else to focus on God. She said we likewise should put everything else aside and petition the Lord in prayer.

Daniel also prayed for forgiveness of the sins of Judah in a very unique way, she said. "He was so identifying with the sins of his people that he took them upon himself."

Lotz said Christians today should keep accounts of their sins, confessing every day, and stop seeing "others" as the problem. "The basic problem in Judah was sin," she noted. "And in America the basic problem in our nation is not political, not immigration. The basic problem in America is sin."

In closing, Lotz urged listeners to continue in prayer until an answer comes.

"You're not going to know until you choose to be that one person," she saod. "Would you pray until God delivers his people and takes them home?" (BP)

50th Year!
KYANA GIANT INDOOR SWAP MEET
Saturday March 12th • 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM
Sunday March 13th • 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Kentucky Exposition Center Louisville, KY
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www.kyanaswapmeet.info





Fatal shooting in church parking lot turns man to Christ

By Jessica Vanderpool

North Little Rock, Ark.—When John Eric Schmidt was charged with second-degree murder, no one could have known within a year, not only would the charge be dropped but Schmidt would be celebrating his salvation.

Schmidt, 53, of North Little Rock, Ark., was charged after shooting 32-year-old Chad Johnson during what Pulaski County sheriff's deputies said was a property dispute, according to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

The incident took place in Graves Memorial Baptist Church's parking lot in North Little Rock around 6:25 a.m. July 7, 2015. Schmidt, who has emergency medical training, tried to administer first aid to Johnson, but Johnson died en route to the hospital. Schmidt required medical attention for his injuries in the incident.

Authorities dropped the murder charge on Jan. 8, according to the Democrat-Gazette.

Schmidt's lawyer, David Cannon, said the charge was dropped after it was determined that Schmidt acted in self-defense, the Democrat-Gazette reported. Cannon said Johnson had choked Schmidt, which had forced Schmidt to act.

In an interview with the Arkansas Baptist News, Graves Memorial pastor Travis Matthews explained that although the event occurred on church property, it did not involve the church. Matthews also confirmed that Schmidt and his wife Amber had been attending Graves Memorial, though they were not members at the time—a fact that changed over the course of several months.

The tragedy turned into a ministry opportunity for Graves Memorial. Matthews recounted that Schmidt's daughter Felicity had been baptized and was involved in the student ministry and praise team at the time of the shooting, so Schmidt and his wife had visited the church several times to support her. Because of this, the groundwork had been laid for ministry to the family following the shooting.



John Eric Schmidt (left) was baptized by Graves Memorial Baptist Church pastor Travis Matthews two months after a shooting on church property in North Little Rock, Ark.

Matthews said he met regularly with Schmidt, who had become very depressed in the weeks after the incident.

"The shooting really became an opportunity to build a deep relationship with the family," Matthews said. "(It was) a painful journey but a way God used to bring healing in their lives overall."

Eventually, both Schmidt and his wife accepted Christ as Lord and Savior and were baptized at the church in September and are now active in ministry.

"I believe God takes the hard things in life, and when we surrender to God and let God do a work, you can see the fruit of God doing great things in those circumstances," Matthews said. "You don't want to make light of a horrible situation, but it definitely brings joy to see God bring beauty from ashes."

The church "has learned to love in a different way and have a compassionate spirit," the pastor added.

As for Schmidt, he said his prayer has been that the ordeal would be "used for good and as example of the power of God and of love between Christians." (BP)

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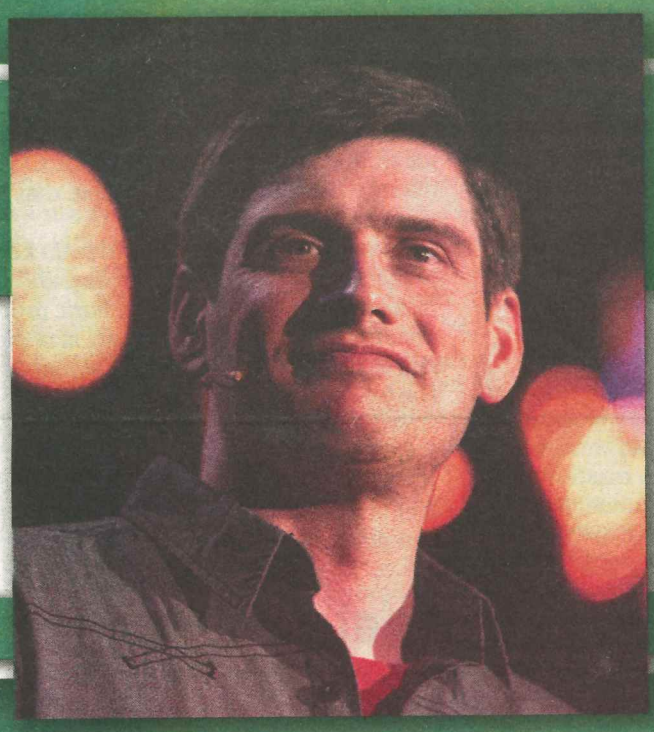
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