

Columns

Hope Floats

By Tim Patterson

Lake Amistad is a large lake that in some places straddles the Mexico and United States borders. The dam that stopped and controlled the flow of the Rio Grande River and subsequently created the lake was a joint effort of the two governments. Both countries knew that hundreds of acres of land and property would be consumed by the waters that would rise and cover the area when the flow of the Rio Grande was halted. The purpose was to help supply the ever-increasing water needs of Mexico and neighboring Texas.

When mapping out the proposed site it was realized that a small town would be lost to the lake. No matter how they planned or what precautions they might take that little hamlet would soon be underwater. Much discussion went back and forth, and finally the decision was made to go ahead with the project and to relocate the people. It would be several years before the move would take place and much had to be done before the reservoir would become a reality. A major dam had to be built and thousands of tons of earth had to be moved. Land had to be purchased and deeds transferred. The paper work alone would take years.

But something unusual took place during the interim. What was once a nice, neat and pretty little town began to deteriorate. The yards were no longer kept and weeds and debris accumulated everywhere. The houses went unprepared, broken windows remained open to the elements and badly needed paint was never applied. Trash was strewn about carelessly and potholes in the roads became craters. Automobiles were abandoned and left to rust where they stopped. Even though the community was full of people carrying on their daily lives, the town deteriorated and began to fall in around them.

When the leader of the community was asked why the people had allowed this to take place even though they had several more years to live there he said, "When people have no hope for the future, then they just don't care about the present." How true that is! Just look at our society today. If deep down in our souls, we don't have a hope for the future then our very lives will fall down around us. Without hope there is no present and no future. Without hope, life has no meaning. Without hope nothing really matters.

Many will question why the inner cities of our great metropolitan areas are such deplorable places. They wonder why the people of the ghettos and slums just don't seem to care. Bony fingers of accusation are pointed at these blighted people accompanied with statements like, "They are just lazy. That is just their culture. Those kind of people will never be any different." A life without hope always has the same effect. If there is no better tomorrow, then why care about today?

The sentiment of hopelessness is not only reflected in our decaying inner cities, but it is reflected in our entire society and especially in our youth and young adults. As believers, it is our responsibility to share the Hope that we know and possess. Hope for tomorrow and for eternity is not only a good thing, but also essential. It is our job to give the world a reason for tomorrow. We cannot turn a blind eye to the blighted urban centers of our nation. We must deliberately and specifically focus on providing help and hope to those that have been engulfed with the floods of despair. We are the possessors and proclaimers of the only hope for mankind. It is high time that we set sail on the seas of despair, and share the lifesaving love of Jesus.

I Peter 3:15, But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

BSCM offers Ministry Safe training for free

By Mike Durbin

FENTON - Recent reports about sexual abuse in Southern Baptist Churches by the Houston Chronicle and San Antonio Express were heart breaking. Investigative reporters discovered more than 700 victims of sexual abuse and 220 offenders in SBC churches since 1998. The collective response from across the Convention has been one of concern for the victims and a commitment to prevent sexual abuse from ever happening.

All 41 state conventions responded quickly and "...committed to partnering with the Sexual Abuse Presidential Study Group to equip churches and ministries in our respective states to engage the issue of abuse with compassion and care. Our desire is for the churches and ministries in our states to become safe for survivors and safe from abuse." The SBC Executive Committee is recommending a bylaw change to disfellowship churches that demonstrate an indifference to sexual abuse (and racism). Convention President, JD Greear, announced that a new resource called, "Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused" will come out soon. The study will be a free 12 lesson, 20-minute training for ministry leaders.

The Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) wants to lead the way by requiring all Convention employees to take Ministry Safe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training. Ministry Safe is a leader in providing churches and ministries with tools to prevent child sexual abuse proactively. Gregory Love, one of the founders, says: "We want to equip people with the information necessary to understand the risk, see how it unfolds, so they can participate in what is necessary to make sure that the child isn't placed in harm's way."

The Sexual Abuse Awareness Training deals with:
Facts and Misconceptions
Abuser Characteristics
The Grooming Process

Methods to Reduce Risk
Peer to Peer Abuse
If a Child Reports Abuse
Impact on Children
Responsibility to Report

As it relates to child abuse, our BSCM is making this training available to every Michigan Baptist pastor free of charge. Pastors, watch for an email with a link to the training. Our hope and prayer is to prevent sexual abuse from ever happening by making resources available to churches. For churches that are interested in using Ministry Safe training for all their children's workers, we have an agreement with Ministry Safe to provide their service for a greatly reduced price. Contact mike@bscm.org for details.

Another critical safety step is for churches to conduct background checks on every person who works with children. This not only protects children, it tells parents, the church family, and the community that we take our responsibility to physically and spiritually care for children seriously. Background checks are about safety, should not be considered optional, but mandatory for all who work with children. LifeWay has an excellent service that provides background checks for as low as \$10.

The era of thinking it can't happen to us is over. Real people have experienced a devastating hurt and we grieve over their pain. Let us be the generation of churches and leaders that ends this forever!

Protecting the Vulnerable

By Tony Lynn

I was naïve during most of my childhood. I thought friends and family only did good things for one another. I was wrong. After forty-one years of adulthood, missionary service and ministry, I realize some people experience the most painful hurts and receive lasting scars from the friends and family members they should have been able to trust.

When I learn about vulnerable people being abused, I feel my heart pound in my neck, my breathing takes on a deliberate pace, I become nauseated, and angry ideas swirl in my head. My remedy is remembering the voice of my university Old Testament professor, in his shrill, penetrating voice quoting ceaseless lines of Bible verses from memory. Even now, I can hear him quoting Exodus 22:22 (CSB), "You must not mistreat any widow or fatherless child."

Beginning on February 10, 2019, The Houston Chronicle and the San Antonio Express-News, published a three-part series entitled an "Abuse of Faith." The team of reporters, during their long investigation while reviewing the last twenty-years, found seven-hundred victims of sex abuse in the churches. Reporters created a database of two-hundred-twenty church leaders and volunteers. I read those articles each day they came out, then again in one-setting. My soul is still sorrowful from the reading, but what I feel is nothing compared to what the victims and their family members have felt.

Dr. Russell Moore is president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention which is the moral and public policy agency of the convention. Moore praised the newspapers' investigation and said people with "functioning consciences" have been "filled with rage" by the findings. Moore added, the two papers "really did a service to churches by collating together this information, doing the hard work of going through and talking to people who have experienced awful, awful trauma."

Looking back to last year, I realize that I was too naïve again, but I am grateful for leaders who understood the times in which we live. On July 26, 2018, Dr. J. D. Greear, pastor of the Summit Church in Durham, NC and president of the Southern Baptist Convention formed a Sexual Abuse Study Group. It was one of his earliest actions as president. Last year's press release said:

"The group's purpose will be to consider how Southern Baptists at every level can take discernable action to respond swiftly and compassionately to incidents of abuse, as well as to foster safe environments within churches and institutions. This group will study both how Southern Baptists are currently engaging these issues and develop recommendations in consultation with relevant SBC entities on strategies and resources for ministering to victims and protecting people and churches from predators."

Greear in that same press release said, "How we as a convention of churches care for abuse victims and protect against vile predators says something about what we believe about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our churches should be a refuge for the hurting and a safe haven for the oppressed."

I hope you will join with the growing crowd who will be calling us to rapid, radical, responsible and repeated efforts to protect the vulnerable.

Rapid – We must change immediately.

Radical – We must change aggressively.

Responsible – We must change personally.

Repeated – We must change constantly.

We cannot turn our eyes away from this matter even though it sickens us. We cannot abandon our personal response to 47,000 convention churches and do nothing in our own local congregation. We cannot expect national, state and associational leaders to police our individual churches. Each one of us must protect the vulnerable.

For valuable resources click the link below.

<https://www.anniearmstrong.com/resources/>

Such is Life

By Mick Schatz

ROSCOMMON - Here at Bambi we have been covered up with the white stuff for what seems like forever. When spring breaks through everything that was once covered in a sheet of white will become visible again.

Covered-up projects left uncompleted will be back on the to-do list along with the unfinished landscaping that was so easy to ignore as long as it was covered-up. When the snow melts, everything that was once hidden will become visible again and require some attention. Honestly, as much as I get tired of the snow, it is nice to have a rest from weeding, mowing, edging, and all the other yard maintenance stuff. Nevertheless, left unattended the grass and the weeds will become overwhelming and difficult to cut back. I know this for a fact because I have often ignored yard work and just the thought of mowing and trimming the yard back into a manageable situation is overwhelming. The longer it is ignored, the more difficult it is to fix and so on and so on. If I would just do regular maintenance on the yard it would never grow out of control.

Well, such is life.

I don't like it but it's true. My natural tendency in dealing with conflict, relational issues, or frustrating circumstances of any kind is to ignore it, and hope it goes away. Often, in the moment it seems so much easier to ignore the situation. It is easier to cover it up with rationalization, denial or busyness. If I can keep my mind preoccupied then I do not have to think about the problems. Obviously, this does not fix anything.

Unfortunately, as broken humans, we use all sorts of coping mechanisms or escapes to white-out anything we don't want to deal with or see. I like to dive into a project I really enjoy so I can validate the time I'm not spending on fixing the problem. No matter your choice of escape, all are equally wrong because it reinforces our selfish, sinful nature and denies an opportunity for God to intervene. My pride will keep me from experiencing God's provision. My pride will keep me from experiencing God's healing in me and in those around me. This will prohibit new growth and fresh life in my relationship with Christ.

Spiritual/life maintenance is crucial to our spiritual growth. Colossians 3:12-14 tells us, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

As God's children we are to live life with compassion, humility, meekness and patience so we can continually maintain our relationships with others by holding them up in times of need and forgiving. Love is to be our default heart condition - we should never be without it! Oh the frustration, anger and stress we would avoid if we just maintained our

lives with these Godly actions. Imagine the growth we would experience if we just act out of God's love, and not our own selfishness. Imagine the warmth of healing melting away the cold of bitterness.

STARTING

Covocational Church Planting, a free E-book

By Brad Brisco

ATLANTA - Over the past several years there has been an increasing interest in church planting. As a result of declining attendance and the closing of many existing churches, every major denomination is focusing more resources toward starting new congregations. In the midst of this proliferation of church planting, one of the most significant trends is the starting of new churches by covocational leaders.

A covocational church planter is one whose primary vocation is in the marketplace, but at the same time he feels lead to start a church. A "covo" planter is one who knows God has called him to be a teacher, or a mechanic, a web designer or a doctor and he desires to weave that calling into the plan to plant a church. He realizes those two callings are not isolated from one another; they are interlinked and equal.

In Covocational Church Planting, Brad provides not only a new way to think about vocation, but also a fresh vision for church planting as a covocational leader.

Covocational Church Planting E-book is available in both English and Spanish and can be yours free via namb.net/covocational. Plantación de iglesias covocacional está disponible en inglés y español. Envíe el siguiente formulario para recibir un enlace para bajarlo gratuitamente por correo electrónico.

About the author: Brad is currently the Director of Bivocational Church Planting for the North American Mission Board. He holds a doctorate in the area of missional ecclesiology; his doctoral thesis was on assisting existing congregations in transitioning in a missional direction. Brad is the co-author of Missional Essentials, a twelve-week small group study guide, The Missional Quest: Becoming a Church of the Long Run, and Next Door As It Is In Heaven. He and his wife have three children and have been foster parents to more than fifty other kids.

STRENGTHENING

2019 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

By Staff

FENTON - Southern Baptists have generously supported the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® for North American missions since 1933. These sacrificial gifts have made it possible for millions to experience the hope of the gospel through the work of missionaries across the United States, Canada and the territories of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam.

Today the spiritual needs are as great as ever. Approximately 363 million people live in North America with a projected 75% who do not have a personal relationship with Christ.

Many communities, especially outside the South, have a serious lack of Bible-teaching, Evangelical churches. One look at the headlines tells the story of how secularism has overtaken our region. Poverty, violence, sky-rocketing divorce rates, human trafficking and an overflowing foster care system sadly demonstrate how greatly North America needs the hope of Christ.

At the same time, the nations continue to come here in search of a new life. Many immigrants and refugees arrive from unreached people groups and can now hear the gospel for the first time.

The opportunities are endless. That's why the North American Mission Board, in partnership with Southern Baptist pastors and churches, is committed to sending hope.

Every gift to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering—100 percent—goes to train, resource and deploy more than 5,000 missionaries involved in church planting and compassion ministries. Together we make a difference by meeting needs, planting churches and discipling new believers. Transformation is taking place one life at a time.

National Goal - \$70 million

Week of Prayer for North American Missions – Sunday, March 3 through Sunday, March 10

Offering Theme – Sending Hope

Verse – “...He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” – 1 Peter 1:3, CSB

Offering Resources Available: www.AnnieArmstrong.com

50-35-15

By Tony Lynn

Attending high school during the 1970s, I memorized a new combination for my school locker each year. If you rolled the combination incorrectly, the locker would not open. The latch would not release. You would have to roll the combination two to three times and start all over again.

Certain hallways were named after the classmen. There was the freshman hall and the sophomore hall, you get the idea. That is where our lockers were located. During the last two years of high school I dated Jamie, who is now my wife. We moved through the hallways of the school with our bell-bottom jeans, our matching shirts, and euchre cards in our back pockets. Jamie and I graduated in 1976 and 1977, so we shared lockers making it easier to change textbooks in between classes. Life was simple and easy.

I need to let you know, however, that the numbers 50-35-15 have nothing to do with my high school lockers. I just wanted to walk down that memory lane for just a moment before I revealed the meaning behind 50-35-15.

Two Questions - Three Sources

Let me start with two questions. Would you like it if your paycheck depended on three different people? Would you be calm if paying your monthly bills depended on the generosity of three different people? Fifty percent from someone. Thirty-five percent from another. Fifteen percent from another? That is the meaning behind 50-35-15.

In Michigan I work with church planters throughout the state and Ontario. On any given moment, I am working with forty to fifty church planting families. The finances that I use from the North American Mission Board to help church planting families comes from three sources.

Fifty percent comes from a special offering we call the Annie Armstrong Missions Offering or the North American Missions Offering. During one-week each year, churches can request prayer guides, offering envelopes, and media to promote this important offering.

Thirty-five percent comes from the ongoing contributions to the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention. Two-thirds of the churches within our state give regularly to this offering making this a constant source of useful resources.

Fifteen percent comes from private donors who give over and above the other two offerings. Some people set-up trusts. Others donate a portion of their estate. Some men or women are just good at making money and love to give it away to something eternal like church planting, relief, and evangelism.

What Is Done with Your Contributions?

A lot is done each and every day, throughout our country, with your contributions, but space will only allow me to share two examples.

We help families with normal life experiences. There is another article, in this issue, about three church planting families recently giving birth. The grandparents from two of those families live far away from Michigan. Your gifts are given consistently each month, in the form of monthly supplements, so church planting families can buy food when their relatives come to town. Your gifts bought meals at the hospitals during labor and the early days after the babies' birth. Your gifts bought diapers. Your gifts purchased approved car seats. You helped families with normal expenses.

We help families in times of crisis. Last year, one of our church planting families experienced a long-term stress. They agonized until they were crushed. As the holidays approached, I knew loneliness would overwhelm them. When I heard they were going to spend time with family in the south, and that travel was going to cost them within their limited budget, I was able to help them with a special gift. Because you gave, this family was able to recover within the arms of their loved ones during the holidays. Your gifts prevented a family from being smothered by their sorrow.

If you find yourself ever asking, "What good am I to God's Kingdom?" Or "How can I help when I am not a preacher?" Just remember that by giving something during the special offering, or through the Cooperative Program of your church, or through your will that you are making a difference in the lives of church planting families. If you want more information on how to give and how to help just reach out to me at tony@bscm.org or at (734) 770-0608.

FIRST-PERSON: Prayer moves the arm that moves the world

By J.D. Greear

EDITOR'S NOTE: March 3-10 is the Southern Baptist Convention's Week of Prayer and Mission Study for North American Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. J.D. Greear is the president of the SBC and pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area

DURHAM, N.C. (BP) -- The books of Luke and Acts, which were originally one volume, are like a hand and a glove. In Luke, we see the shape of the divine hand in the person of Jesus. Then in Acts, we see the invisible hand, the Holy Spirit, filling the church.

Seeing the church pray is a perfect example. What Jesus teaches about persistent prayer in Luke is seen in action when Peter gets imprisoned in Acts.

In our upcoming Week of Prayer for North American Missions for the 5,000 missionaries serving in cities, small towns and college campuses across North America, here are three aspects of the early church's prayer that will embolden our own:

1. WHATEVER THEY WERE AFRAID OF, THEY TALKED ABOUT TO GOD.

Eugene Peterson, in his book "Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer," notes two types of prayer in the psalms: evening prayer and morning prayer. Evening prayer is marked by praying your worries to God. Psalm 4 is a good example: David commits to God what he is worrying about, the people who are bothering him, the things that make him angry or sad. Then he reminds himself of the promises of God. Morning prayer, as in Psalm 5 meanwhile, is active, petitionary prayer, boldly praying against things in the world that aren't right.

What the church does in Acts 12 when Peter is imprisoned is, in a sense, evening prayer. Herod had just beheaded James, the leader of the early church, and it looks like Peter is next up for execution. Peter's friends are understandably worried for his future and their future. So they fervently talked to God about it.

Our missionaries laboring in North America face daily challenges and even opposition as they seek to share the Gospel. They may know better than any of us the necessity of evening prayer, committing to God their worries for sustaining their ministries and families. We can talk to God for them, too.

What do we do when we are afraid, worried or upset? Look at what David says: "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8 ESV). If we would develop the practice of evening prayer, it would give us such an incredible sense of peace. It would give us the capacity to rest, knowing that our prayers are heard by the One whose arm controls the universe.

2. THEY USED PRAYER LIKE A 'WARTIME WALKIE-TALKIE'

The early church prayer isn't just an evening prayer asking for peace. It is also a morning prayer -- an active, bold, petitionary prayer throughout Acts as the church prays about the mission.

As John Piper says, "Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den.... Until you know that life is war, you cannot know what prayer is for: Prayer is for the accomplishment of a wartime mission."

This kind of prayer is bold and audacious because they knew it is God's will for the church to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth, regardless of Herod's plans for Peter. So they got on their knees and prayed, knowing that prayer actually changes situations, that it moves the arm that moves the world.

We often think of praying to God when we should be praying with God. He's already shown us His will and His promises in Scripture. We know it isn't God's will for the Gospel to wither and die. We know it isn't God's will for our neighborhood, our city, our world to perish. So let's rebel against the status quo and pray with God for the advance of His Kingdom.

3. THEY WERE PERSISTENT, LIKE THE WIDOW IN LUKE 18.

Remember the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18? A widow bothers and nags a judge so incessantly that he decides to hear her out -- even though he doesn't care about her, about justice or about God. And Jesus says (incredibly) to pray to God like that.

Look at Acts 12, and you'll see that the early church got the message. With Peter in prison, they prayed and prayed and prayed. Verse 12 says that when God answered their prayer and broke Peter out of prison, Peter showed up that night and found them in prayer, beating down God's door!

I know there are times when God directs us away from specific requests, even godly ones. The apostle Paul asked for God to remove his "thorn in the flesh," and God gave him a firm "no" three times (2 Corinthians 12:9). But in general, I think we give up way too early in our prayers. We ask once, maybe twice, and then simply stop asking. But Jesus told us to keep asking, even to harass God as if He's asleep (Luke 11)!

Acts shows us that when the church prays like that for a united purpose -- to see churches planted and the Gospel preached in every corner of North America -- prison doors come off their hinges. Thousands of people come to faith. Cities are turned upside-down.

Not from technique, from skill or from planning. From prayer.

Information about Southern Baptist Convention's Week of Prayer and Mission Study for North American Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering can be accessed at <https://www.anniearmstrong.com/about/the-mission> www.anniearmstrong.com.

About the author: James David (J.D.) Greear is the Pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina (a position he has held since January 2002) and the 62nd President of the Southern Baptist Convention. Before coming to work at The Summit he worked with the International Mission Board. He entered the Ph.D. program at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1999, graduating in 2003 with a doctorate in Philosophy, concentrating primarily on Christian and Islamic theology. He is also a graduate of the Word of Life Bible Institute and received his Bachelor of Arts from Campbell University. Greear comes from Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

How to Stay Motivated in 2019

By Christy Wright

BRENTWOOD - Did you know that by the middle of February, 80 percent of people give up on their New Year's resolutions? As a certified business coach and best-selling author, I've worked with thousands of women who struggle to stay motivated past the January high—especially when things get hard.

I love what Zig Ziglar says about this: "People say motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing. That's why we recommend it daily." It's so true. We can't expect to stay fueled for 12 months from the excitement of a new year. Instead, we need to be intentional about creating small habits that can fuel the flame in us throughout the year. If you're struggling to stay motivated this year, here are three things you can do this week to get back on track:

Remind Yourself of Your Why

When I coach women, the first thing I do is encourage them to define their why. Your why is the very specific reason for doing what you're doing and what you want to accomplish as a result. If you want to start a side business, for example, your why might be that you want to stay home with your newborn while still bringing in an income, and eventually turn it into a full-time job.

When you remind yourself of why you set that goal in the first place, it resets your focus and gives you the boost you need to get back to work.

Make One Small Change

Sometimes, all it takes to multiply your productivity, which improves your motivation, is to make one small change to your environment or method of work. That could mean decluttering your workspace or moving to a completely new environment, like a coffee shop, to get better focus.

Or maybe you need to introduce something new into your daily routine. When I started listening to podcasts instead of music while getting ready for work, I multiplied my time by combining two things I wanted to do: investing in my mind while putting on my makeup. The inspiring content is always a motivating way to start my day.

Find a Cheerleader

There's nothing like encouragement from someone who cares about you to fire you back up. Grab a friend who could also use some accountability, and commit to being one another's cheerleader. Not only will you serve as their hype person when they need a pep talk, but when you're encouraging them it will energize you as well.

The bottom line is this: Staying motivated in 2019 requires you to make a commitment. We're all wired differently, so you have to choose what works best for you and then be intentional about injecting those things into each week. You won't achieve your goals by

sitting still. And over time, motivation will go from being a once-a-year thing to being as natural as breathing—or as Zig Ziglar reminds us, as often as bathing!

About the author: Christy Wright is the #1 national best-selling author of *Business Boutique*, host of the *Business Boutique Podcast*, a Certified Business Coach and a Ramsey Personality with a passion for equipping women with the knowledge and steps they need to successfully run and grow a business. Since joining Ramsey Solutions in 2009, she has spoken to thousands across the country at women's conferences, national business conferences, Fortune 500 companies and her own sold-out live events.

MICHIGAN SHIFT CONFERENCE 2019

By Stan Parker

DETROIT - Most Michigan Baptists would agree it is a duty to share our faith through evangelism. However, many members of the state's congregations feel they are not adequately prepared to do that. The Michigan Shift Conference is one tool being made available to assist them in being trained so they can share their faith.

Traditionally, Sunday school classes were considered the headquarter for developing the knowledge to learn how to witness. Today, many churches experience lower attendance due to the competing priorities of families. The Michigan Shift Conference is designed so the entire family can participate in learning how to share their faith and will provide tools to assist in making disciples. The members of the churches of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) must be trained to answer the questions today's generations are asking.

Many of the younger generation want to know the real Jesus. However, often time believers are not prepared to provide a correct biblical response. The Shift conference will have workshops available to help answer the questions of today's generation. Churches are full of individuals who agree we should be prepared to answer today's questions regarding Jesus and Christianity, and many of these same people will say they are willing, but not ready.

A special prayer concert will take place on March 23, 2019 at the Detroit Association office to lift up the various presenters, those who will be attending, and those who will be ministered to, as a result of the Shift Conference.

There are three primary goals for the Shift Conference this year. First, providing information which will equip pastors, church leaders and church members to share the gospel of Jesus Christ unashamedly. Secondly, offering workshops for all age groups in the church and to address the needs of each group. Third, to have an audience which reflects the diversity within the body of Jesus Christ and to praise our God in one voice. To help achieve these goals we have asked Pastor Fred Luter, the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) first african-american president to open our conference with an

inspirational message. The conference will also have other SBC leaders providing workshops. Lifeway Resources will be represented at the conference with Mark Croston, and Michael Pigg. Our SBC Executive Committee will be represented by Vice President Ken Weathersby.

The Shift Conference will be held at People's Missionary Baptist Church, 3000 McDougall Street Detroit, Michigan 48206. The conference begins on Friday April 12, 2019 and ends on Saturday April 13, 2019 at 3pm. There is no cost for the conference, however you must register. To register for this event go to www.bscm.org. For any additional information call 517-853-9897.

About the author: Stan Parker is senior pastor of Faith Fellowship Baptist Church in Lansing, MI and a regular contributor to the Baptist Beacon.

Most Pastors Want an End to Illegal Immigration

By Aaron Earls

NASHVILLE - As U.S. lawmakers continue to debate the best approach to illegal immigration, most Protestant pastors say the solution should be multifaceted.

Nashville-based LifeWay Research surveyed 1,000 Protestant pastors on their views on illegal immigration and how the church should view those in the country illegally. Eighty percent say the government has the responsibility to stop illegal immigration, while 9 percent disagree and 11 percent are not sure. Meanwhile, 70 percent of pastors say they are in favor of an immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship for those who are currently in the country illegally. Seventeen percent disagree and 13 percent are not sure.

Three-quarters of pastors (76 percent) say Christians have a responsibility to assist immigrants even if they are in the country illegally, while 14 percent disagree and 10 percent are not sure. Currently, almost 3 in 10 pastors say their churches are involved locally in assisting immigrants. Seven in 10 say they are not currently involved. "Lawmakers have left many of the bigger immigration questions unresolved often voicing 'either-or' positions," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. "Pastors don't seem as conflicted desiring improvement in both border security and a path to citizenship for those here illegally."

Stopping illegal immigration

While 80 percent of pastors today say the government has the responsibility to stop illegal immigration, that's down from 87 percent in a 2014 LifeWay Research survey. "Among these questions, stopping illegal immigration registers the strongest sentiment from pastors," said McConnell. "But support for this is now more in line with caring for immigrants already in the country and establishing a path to citizenship." Today, African-American pastors are more likely than white pastors to disagree that the government carries the responsibility to stop illegal immigration (21 percent to 8 percent).

Those in the Northeast (15 percent) and Midwest (12 percent) are more likely to disagree than pastors in the South (5 percent). Education, age and denomination all factor into how likely a pastor is to say the government bears the responsibility to stop illegal immigration. Pastors 65 and older are more likely to see that as the government's job than pastors 44 and younger (85 percent to 75 percent). Those with a bachelor's degree or less (87 percent) are more likely than those with more education (77 percent). Evangelical pastors (87 percent) are more likely to agree than mainline pastors (74 percent). Pentecostals (94 percent) and Baptists (89 percent) are more likely to agree than Church of Christ pastors (79 percent), Lutherans (74 percent), Presbyterian or Reformed (74 percent), or Methodists (68 percent).

Path to citizenship

More pastors today favor immigration reform that provides a path to citizenship for immigrants currently in the country illegally. Since 2014, the percentage of pastors who favor a path to citizenship has grown 12 percentage points from 58 percent to 70 percent today. The percentage who disagreed was cut in half—34 percent to 17 percent. “For immigrants in the country illegally, there are no real options for redemption,” noted McConnell. “That doesn’t sit well with pastors—the majority of whom were ready for lawmakers to offer a means of making restitution and gaining legal status years ago.”

In 2019, African-American pastors are the ethnicity most likely to agree (91 percent), while pastors 65 and older are the age range least likely to agree (62 percent). Mainline pastors (80 percent) are more likely to back a path to citizenship than evangelical ones (66 percent). Methodist (86 percent) and Presbyterian or Reformed (80 percent) pastors are more likely to agree than Church of Christ (65 percent), Baptist (60 percent) and Pentecostal (59 percent) pastors.

Support for immigrants

Compared to 2014, a similar number of pastors say Christians have a responsibility to assist immigrants even if they are here illegally—76 percent today and 79 percent then. Evangelical pastors are more likely to disagree than mainline pastors (16 percent to 10 percent). Pastors 65 and older are least likely to agree (67 percent). Those in the Northeast (85 percent) are more likely to agree than those in the South (74 percent) or Midwest (74 percent). Holiness (88 percent) and Presbyterian or Reformed (87 percent) are more likely to agree than Lutherans (74 percent), Church of Christ pastors (73 percent), Baptists (70 percent), or Pentecostals (66 percent). Almost 3 in 10 pastors say their church is currently helping immigrants (29 percent), while 70 percent say they are not.

Mainline pastors (33 percent) are more likely to say they are assisting than evangelical ones (26 percent). Lutheran (40 percent), Methodist (33 percent) and Presbyterian or Reformed pastors (35 percent) are more likely to say they are helping than Baptist pastors (23 percent). Pastors of churches with 250 or more in attendance are more likely to say they are currently assisting immigrants than pastors of churches with less than 50 in attendance (37 percent to 23 percent). “Pastors place just as much responsibility on their congregations as they do legislators,” McConnell said. “More than twice as many

pastors say Christians should help immigrants than say their church is personally involved assisting local immigrant neighbors today.”

Methodology:

The phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was conducted January 14-30, 2019. The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used for church size. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called. Responses were weighted by region to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

About the author: Aaron Earls is a writer for LifeWay Christian Resources.

Sex abuse prevention tops SBC Exec. Comm. agenda

by BP Staff

BSCM Family,

In recent days much has been disseminated in the media concerning sexual abuse in some Southern Baptist Churches and the response, or lack of response to those cases by churches, leaders and our Convention. Our SBC President, J.D. Greear has taken the lead on addressing these sinful and criminal acts by doing more than just calling for a statement or resolution. He has put together a team that has worked diligently to give us a real solution to the problem and to ferret out any who would cover their sin and perpetuate these criminal and ungodly acts.

As the Executive Director of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, I am in full and complete support and agreement with the efforts of our SBC President. This perpetuated abuse must stop and by God's grace it will do so on our watch!

Please read carefully the news release from J.D. Greear. Also, I encourage you to click on the video link below and watch and listen to my statements about this matter and how we are dealing with this matter at the State offices and what can be done in your local church.

*In Him,
Pastor Tim Patterson*

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Preventing and responding to sexual abuse was a major focus during meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Feb. 18-19 in Nashville. Among the EC's actions was recommending an amendment to the SBC Constitution stating churches are not "in friendly cooperation with the Convention" if they "have evidenced indifference in addressing sexual abuse."

The EC also:

- proposed an SBC constitutional amendment specifying racial discrimination as a basis to disfellowship a church;
- heard a report that the EC presidential search committee believes it has found "God's candidate"; and
- responded to two SBC messenger motions seeking to disallow addresses by elected officials at SBC annual meetings.

Sexual abuse

The proposed amendment on sexual abuse -- adopted without opposition -- would add a section to Article III of the SBC Constitution defining a "cooperating church" as one that "has not been determined by the Executive Committee to have evidenced indifference in addressing sexual abuse that targets minors and other vulnerable persons and in caring for persons who have suffered because of sexual abuse."

"Indifference," according to the amendment, "can be evidenced by, among other things, (a) employing a convicted sex offender, (b) allowing a convicted sex offender to work as a volunteer in contact with minors, (c) continuing to employ a person who unlawfully concealed from law enforcement information regarding the sexual abuse of any person by an employee or volunteer of the church, or (d) willfully disregarding compliance with mandatory child abuse reporting laws."

To take effect, the amendment would need two-thirds approval at both the 2019 and 2020 SBC annual meetings. EC chairman Mike Stone said adopting the amendment would make "explicit what has been implicit already in our government documents. That is, churches who do not deal decisively and biblically on issues of sexual abuse are not in good fellowship with the Southern Baptist Convention." Survivors of sexual abuse "are loved, and we commit to seek to care for them," said Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Blackshear, Ga.

As the proposed amendment was discussed in the EC's Bylaws Workgroup and Administrative Committee, EC leaders clarified that abuse committed by one member of a church would not in itself trigger disfellowshipping, but only action of the church body as a whole that evidenced indifference to the abuse. Additionally, if a church evidenced repentance for its indifference, the disfellowshipping process likely would stop, according to committee and workgroup discussion. SBC President J.D. Greear named several specific churches Feb. 18 as he reported to the EC on sexual abuse and asked the Bylaws Workgroup to determine whether they meet the SBC's standards for cooperating churches.

After meeting with Greear Feb. 19 in executive session, the Bylaws Workgroup reported their adoption of a motion requesting that Greear "provide to the workgroup through its staff liaison any information which he wishes to provide tending to demonstrate that a particular church is worthy of consideration as to whether or not it is currently in cooperation with the Convention." Amid the two-day discussion of sexual abuse, at least five EC members shared their personal experiences with abuse, ranging from being

abused and being pursued by a sexual abuser to prosecuting child abusers and dealing with abuse in churches. "I was moved," Stone said, "by the number of Executive Committee members who expressed personal stories of connection to child abuse." Personal experience "did not drive our deliberations," but it "gave a personal backdrop to the necessity of our action."

Greear's report to the EC addressed a plan to battle sex abuse and its enablers among Southern Baptist churches, noting the Gospel's call to protect the vulnerable. "We serve a God who laid down His life to protect the vulnerable," said Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area. "How dare we proclaim that Gospel with our mouths and then turn a blind eye when the vulnerable in our midst cry out for help?"

Greear offered a wide-ranging plan to combat sex abuse including education, proven sincerity, accountability and possibly a sex abuse database and congregational disfellowshipping. The recommendations stem from the work of the Sexual Abuse Presidential Advisory Study to date. Funded by the EC and initiated in response to an SBC messenger motion, the study includes male and female security, legal, medical and religious professionals.

Racism amendment

The proposed amendment on racial discrimination would add a section to Article III of the SBC Constitution specifying a cooperating church as one that "has not acted to affirm, approve, or endorse discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity." If adopted by SBC messengers, Stone said, the amendment would alter "our governing documents" but not "our position."

"Southern Baptists have already taken strong stands on the issues of racial discrimination," Stone said. "... But I felt, as we were amending our Constitution, that it was very important that we send a message of love, compassion and partnership to people of all ethnicities."

In 2018, the EC, acting for the convention ad interim, disfellowshipped a Georgia church accused of racial discrimination.

Presidential search

EC presidential search committee vice chair Adron Robinson reported the committee has "identified God's candidate for such a time as this" and will announce the nominee "very soon." Stone, an ex officio member of the committee, added that "every" candidate submitted "has been seriously considered, for every submission is a sacred trust from Southern Baptists." The committee "has been both unanimous and unified at every single turn."

Elected officials at the SBC

The EC declined two requests made by SBC messengers in 2018 seeking to bar elected officials from speaking at SBC annual meetings. The requests were made as motions

amid discussion of Vice President Mike Pence's speaking appearance at the Dallas annual meeting. In declining to take up the messenger motions, the EC noted it "has updated the Committee on Order of Business's orientation manual to highlight that SBC Bylaw 2 requires the authority of the officers ... in conference with the Committee on Order of Business when considering inclusion on the annual meeting agenda of causes other than those provided for in the regular work of the Convention."

EC ambassador Jimmy Draper told Baptist Press he recounted to the Bylaws Workgroup how he declined a 1982 request by then-President Ronald Reagan to speak at the SBC annual meeting when Draper was SBC president. Current and future SBC officers are free to do the same, Draper said, if an elected official requests to speak and the officers feel it would be inappropriate.

Children's Ministry Day

In a brief speech to the EC, 10-year-old Zak McCullar of Jasper, Ala., advanced his call for the addition of a Children's Ministry Day to the SBC calendar. "I think children's ministry workers should be thanked by this day," McCullar said during a rare opportunity to address the full EC from the stage. "And I want children to be recognized for the work we do to share Christ, even though we are young."

The EC voted to recommend to 2019 SBC messengers in Birmingham, Ala., the addition of Children's Ministry Day to the SBC calendar as the third Sunday in July, expressly July 21 this year. In forthcoming years, the day would be celebrated July 19, 2020; July 21, 2021; July 24, 2022, and July 23, 2023.

Louisiana's Hankins honored

The EC honored David E. Hankins, who will retire June 30 after more than 14 years as executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, crediting his leadership in numerous initiatives among the LBC's 1,650 churches. In a resolution of appreciation, the EC noted that in 2005 during his first year with the convention, Hankins played a key role after the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in working with churches, Baptist associations, state conventions and the North American Mission Board in disaster relief and recovery.

Before leading Louisiana Baptists, Hankins had served as chairman of the SBC Executive Committee during two of his eight years as a member. He subsequently served as the EC's vice president for convention policy from 1996-1998 and vice president for Cooperative Program from 1998-2005. He is the coauthor with Chad Brand of "One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists."

As a pastor for nearly 25 years, Hankins led three churches in Texas followed by Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles, La., from 1985-1995. The resolution stated that the churches he led were marked by "strong Cooperative Program support and promotion," evangelistic outreach and involvement in their local Baptist associations, their state conventions and the SBC. While Hankins led Louisiana Baptists, the convention recorded more than 140,000 baptisms, 200 church plants and \$300 million in gifts

through the Cooperative Program. Hankins led an array of statewide campaigns, with such emphases as "80-20 church" calling Louisiana Baptists to send 20 percent of their gifts to ministries beyond the local church; the "Peace of Jesus" evangelistic appeal; "Kairos" (Key Acts In Reaching Our State); "The Pledge" for churches to advance their CP giving; and a "Harvest" initiative to pray for every home and share Christ with every person across the state.

Hankins and his wife Patty celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Jan. 4 of this year. They have three sons, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

About the author: Compiled by Baptist Press chief national correspondent David Roach, BP senior editor Art Toalston and BP general assignment writer/editor Diana Chandler. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

Unforeseen joy, as a pastor's wife

by Veronica Greear

DURHAM, N.C. (BP) -- It is unquestioned among the women I know: Being in the ministry is hard. And let me say up front, clearly, that I am not here to dispute that. However, I find myself unsure why I don't often think in negative terms -- that is, feeling resentful toward what my husband and I have been given to do, while others struggle to think of the ministry in positive ways.

Surely I can say the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places as David did in Psalm 16:6, but I think there is more to it because that has not been true of every moment. As I have wondered about this over the years, I have come to believe there are things J.D. and I practice that help us love what we do. We generally love being in the ministry because of the rich, meaningful relationships we have found. From the beginning, we have pursued close friendships both with people on staff and in the congregation.

I have heard people say to pastors that you can't or shouldn't do either of those, and I always feel sad when I hear that. I wonder, What must that person's life be like? How carefully guarded and walled off and lonely? It is obvious that you should choose wisely and take your time to discern people who are godly and mature -- and who know you before you have to demonstrate for them, in all its harshest light, that just because you and your spouse are in ministry does not mean you are not sinners.

But find and choose those people you must because of that very same fact -- that you are sinners. Being in close relationships with people is how God has done His best work in me, even though I sometimes hate to admit that. It keeps me from feeling isolated and lonely and taken for granted. It is how I have found the wisdom I need in hard situations that are more than I can figure out on my own.

And those relationships are how God has provided for us in so many different, tangible ways, from meals after babies, to information I needed but didn't have in parenting my teens, to even a place to go when our family needed a vacation.

We know these things at some level, but if we are in ministry, Satan has convinced us we are taking a greater risk in these relationships than others somehow. To that I would ask, Why? Relationships are always a risk for anyone. Are we worried that the ministry will be affected if our relationship fails us? This, I would say, is where we have to #sendit -- if you are not a millennial, that means to put your money where your mouth is and trust God with your ministry and your friendships, since it is He who called you to both in the first place. It is hypocritical to do otherwise.

Second, J.D. and I make a habit of thinking and talking about the things we wouldn't get to be a part of if we were not in the ministry. Even the simplest things, like being part of worship planning, can be a delight that most people never get to do. Being there with your very best people setting up and closing down for the Christmas service is an honor and privilege I would be sad to miss.

And absolutely best among all the privileges is having a front row seat to the life changes of the people in my church. This is something that gives me great joy -- and many people simply don't know about those things if they aren't directly involved. I love that people consider me a safe place to come to when they are trying to figure something out or discern what the Lord is telling them. It is a privilege so many do not get.

Finally, we do not require of ourselves (or our children) anything simply because we are in the ministry. The things we require, we require because we love and follow Jesus Christ.

We often evaluate, particularly with our teens, the "why" behind something, and if it is ever just because they're the pastor's kids, then it's dropped. We tell our kids this regularly, as well as their teachers and student ministry leaders. Our kids should have the same expectations on them as all the other kids, and truly, as friends and fellow church members, expectations should be the same of us.

Ministry is actually hard, but it doesn't have to be bad. By choosing to build relationships that support us, by spending most of our mental time thinking about the privileges we have as ministers of the Gospel, and by recognizing that what we do for the body of Christ is only and always just an extension of following Him, may we find unforeseen joy in our ministry.

About the author: Veronica Greear, a wife and mother of four, serves and worships at The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area where her husband, Southern Baptist Convention President J.D. Greear, is pastor. This column first appeared in SBC LIFE (www.sbclife.net), journal of the SBC Executive Committee.

What does God want from us?

By Jerome Taylor

BURTON - Serving as a Pastor has many joys. There is no greater joy that I have experienced in my 20 years of ministry work than to see someone come to a greater understanding of God which leads to a next step of faith and life transformation. That's a pleasure that we find in our communication to all who will hear. And for those who seem prepared to listen, there seems to be an underlying interest. They want to know, as we all really do, what it is that God wants. And we aren't the first ones to want these answers.

One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, "Which command is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these."

-- Mark 12:28-31 (CSB)

In the middle of this most familiar of passages, in the "testing of Jesus," an important dialogue is taking place that has significant ramifications for us all. What ramifications you may ask? This discourse shows us that the most important of commands from God is to love. (I know. I know. It's a radical new idea here.) To love God and to love others is of utmost rank in God's economy, and thus in our message to those we come in contact with.

We must share with urgency & passion about the person who is the One True & Only Living God. We must proclaim with love about who He is (majestic & mighty); about what He has done (the redemption & the restoration); and about what He has said (His Word, His Will, & His Way). By communicating this truth in love well, it is my prayer that those that hear about Him will understand His love for them and see why He is worthy of such love. He is worthy of love through our all of heart's affections. He is worthy of love through our complete soul's relation. He is worthy of love through all of our mind's attention. He is worthy of love through all of our strength's interaction. This is the vertical relationship of love that is based on the Gospel.

We must also teach about this love for God that is such an immense relationship vertically that it has a transformation horizontally among our fellow man. It is a love that has made it's way to us as it was also on the way to someone else. This is a calling, compelling, & charging love. We are never left the same when we find out what God really wants. We are certainly never the same when we start to do and share what He wants. Let us love as He has declared to love.

About the author: Jerome Taylor is the pastor of Eastgate Baptist Church in Burton, Michigan (2013-present) and the former president of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (2016-2018). He currently serves Michigan Baptists churches as the chair of

the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and Genesee Baptist Association Church Strengthening Teams." Please use this bio with his March Baptist Beacon article.

SENDING

MICHIGAN SHIFT CONFERENCE 2019

By Stan Parker

DETROIT - Most Michigan Baptists would agree it is a duty to share our faith through evangelism. However, many members of the state's congregations feel they are not adequately prepared to do that. The Michigan Shift Conference is one tool being made available to assist them in being trained so they can share their faith.

Traditionally, Sunday school classes were considered the headquarter for developing the knowledge to learn how to witness. Today, many churches experience lower attendance due to the competing priorities of families. The Michigan Shift Conference is designed so the entire family can participate in learning how to share their faith and will provide tools to assist in making disciples. The members of the churches of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) must be trained to answer the questions today's generations are asking.

Many of the younger generation want to know the real Jesus. However, often time believers are not prepared to provide a correct biblical response. The Shift conference will have workshops available to help answer the questions of today's generation. Churches are full of individuals who agree we should be prepared to answer today's questions regarding Jesus and Christianity, and many of these same people will say they are willing, but not ready.

A special prayer concert will take place on March 23, 2019 at the Detroit Association office to lift up the various presenters, those who will be attending, and those who will be ministered to, as a result of the Shift Conference.

There are three primary goals for the Shift Conference this year. First, providing information which will equip pastors, church leaders and church members to share the gospel of Jesus Christ unashamedly. Secondly, offering workshops for all age groups in the church and to address the needs of each group. Third, to have an audience which reflects the diversity within the body of Jesus Christ and to praise our God in one voice. To help achieve these goals we have asked Pastor Fred Luter, the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) first african-american president to open our conference with an inspirational message. The conference will also have other SBC leaders providing workshops. Lifeway Resources will be represented at the conference with Mark Croston, and Michael Pigg. Our SBC Executive Committee will be represented by Vice President Ken Weathersby.

The Shift Conference will be held at People's Missionary Baptist Church, 3000 McDougall Street Detroit, Michigan 48206. The conference begins on Friday April 12, 2019 and ends on Saturday April 13, 2019 at 3pm. There is no cost for the conference, however you must register. To register for this event go to www.bscm.org. For any additional information call 517-853-9897.

About the author: Stan Parker is senior pastor of Faith Fellowship Baptist Church in Lansing, MI and a regular contributor to the Baptist Beacon.

MICHIGAN NEWS

50-35-15

By Tony Lynn

Attending high school during the 1970s, I memorized a new combination for my school locker each year. If you rolled the combination incorrectly, the locker would not open. The latch would not release. You would have to roll the combination two to three times and start all over again.

Certain hallways were named after the classmen. There was the freshman hall and the sophomore hall, you get the idea. That is where our lockers were located. During the last two years of high school I dated Jamie, who is now my wife. We moved through the hallways of the school with our bell-bottom jeans, our matching shirts, and euchre cards in our back pockets. Jamie and I graduated in 1976 and 1977, so we shared lockers making it easier to change textbooks in between classes. Life was simple and easy.

I need to let you know, however, that the numbers 50-35-15 have nothing to do with my high school lockers. I just wanted to walk down that memory lane for just a moment before I revealed the meaning behind 50-35-15.

Two Questions - Three Sources

Let me start with two questions. Would you like it if your paycheck depended on three different people? Would you be calm if paying your monthly bills depended on the generosity of three different people? Fifty percent from someone. Thirty-five percent from another. Fifteen percent from another? That is the meaning behind 50-35-15.

In Michigan I work with church planters throughout the state and Ontario. On any given moment, I am working with forty to fifty church planting families. The finances that I use from the North American Mission Board to help church planting families comes from three sources.

Fifty percent comes from a special offering we call the Annie Armstrong Missions Offering or the North American Missions Offering. During one-week each year, churches can request prayer guides, offering envelopes, and media to promote this important offering.

Thirty-five percent comes from the ongoing contributions to the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention. Two-thirds of the churches within our state give regularly to this offering making this a constant source of useful resources. Fifteen percent comes from private donors who give over and above the other two offerings. Some people set-up trusts. Others donate a portion of their estate. Some men or women are just good at making money and love to give it away to something eternal like church planting, relief, and evangelism.

What Is Done with Your Contributions?

A lot is done each and every day, throughout our country, with your contributions, but space will only allow me to share two examples.

We help families with normal life experiences. There is another article, in this issue, about three church planting families recently giving birth. The grandparents from two of those families live far away from Michigan. Your gifts are given consistently each month, in the form of monthly supplements, so church planting families can buy food when their relatives come to town. Your gifts bought meals at the hospitals during labor and the early days after the babies' birth. Your gifts bought diapers. Your gifts purchased approved car seats. You helped families with normal expenses.

We help families in times of crisis. Last year, one of our church planting families experienced a long-term stress. They agonized until they were crushed. As the holidays approached, I knew loneliness would overwhelm them. When I heard they were going to spend time with family in the south, and that travel was going to cost them within their limited budget, I was able to help them with a special gift. Because you gave, this family was able to recover within the arms of their loved ones during the holidays. Your gifts prevented a family from being smothered by their sorrow.

If you find yourself ever asking, "What good am I to God's Kingdom?" Or "How can I help when I am not a preacher?" Just remember that by giving something during the special offering, or through the Cooperative Program of your church, or through your will that you are making a difference in the lives of church planting families. If you want more information on how to give and how to help just reach out to me at tony@bscm.org or at (734) 770-0608.

“Night to Shine” In Lansing

By Charlotte Parker

LANSING - It was definitely a “Night to Shine” for more than 30 special needs guests, and family and friends. A “PROM” to remember; sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, and hosted by the Faith Fellowship Baptist Church, and the Reachout Christian Center, was held at RCC on February 8. Pastor Stan Parker of Fellowship Baptist, and Pastor David Foreman of Reachout Christian partnered together with many volunteers, creating memories to cherish for a lifetime.

It was truly a “Special Night to Shine” filled with irresistible contagious “royal treatment” of laughter, dancing, and many prizes. Each guest was welcomed and crowned “Queen”, or “King” with cheers, open arms, big smiles, and hugs as they eagerly strolled down the “Red Carpet” of Fame. Each guest was personally served a “special dinner” and later given a personal “Prom” picture, and gift bag to take home. In addition, the Michigan State Mascot “Spartan”, and the Chick-Fil-A “Dancing Cow” joined them for pictures and dancing with step, step slide to the right.

Volunteers said this event is to celebrate the “love of God”, and to thank God for the remarkable opportunity to make a difference in our community. Unfortunately, many with special needs do not get asked to a prom. Volunteers wanted to make this prom a “Night to Remember”, and everyone in attendance said that that was a success.

As a result, it was a time to renew, relax, and rejuvenate as the guests danced, taking in the sweet “magic sounds” of music. Special thanks to Michael McFadden and Team, who provided the incredible music. Community business partners, Dean Trailways, Sohn Linen, and Chick-Fil-a made the night possible.

Although the Night was filled with food, fun and fellowship, it was also an opportunity to evangelize some of the volunteers. One such volunteer was Orlando who surrendered his life to Jesus Christ as the Roman Road evangelistic method was shared with him. He left with a new light in his life, and it will be shining both day and night.

About the author: The Article was written by First Lady Charlotte Parker, pastors wife of Faith Fellowship Baptist Church. She is our Community Liaison Leader.

Westside Church Hosts the 'Night to Shine' prom

By Ed Emmerling

FLUSHING - Westside Church hit a milestone of their history on February 8, 2019. It was a night when more than 200 volunteers gathered and shined God's love into the lives of 80 guests with special needs and more than 80 members of their families. It was a Night To Shine prom sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation and Westside Church.

Guests check-in and met their buddy that would be their guide to a fun-filled night like they have never experienced. They danced the night away, sang karaoke, took a silly photo and then a beautiful prom picture. They primp and were pampered before they made their grand entrance from a limo on to the red carpet. Lori Rathbun lead the primp and pamper station and said, "So many volunteers come expecting to be a blessing, but end up receiving the biggest blessings."

All of this was led by volunteer Robbie Lawrence, who put countless hours into organizing and carrying out the night, but it could never have happened without the more than 200 other volunteers who serve so selflessly. Everything done that night was about sharing God's love and the hope that can only be found in His gospel. Lawrence said, "I love that we can provide a place for people with special needs to come and have an evening that is all about them."

This night is not just about the guests, but it's also about their families. According to one mom, "Night to Shine not only is a place that our child is accepted and loved, but so are we." Great effort is made to be sure that the family members have a night with no worries, and they just get to relax and enjoy a great meal and time of fellowship.

The night ended with a special message from Tim Tebow via video, and Pastor Ed Emmerling live, telling each guest how special they were created by God who loves them and made them just the way they are. Then each guest was crowned king and queen of the prom followed by a couple last dances to top it all off. Annette Howser, who served as a buddy, remembers "the joy that overwhelmed me at that moment the crown was placed on her guest's smiling face." The crowning moment was a favorite by many of the guests, volunteers and family. As guests leave they were given parting gift bags with several things to commemorate their "night to shine", but nothing will top the memories.

About the author: Ed Emmerling is Pastor of Westside Church in Flushing. He is married to Renee.

SEND Detroit Update - February 2019

By NAMB.NET

2019 so far...

... two new churches launched in Detroit.

...17 planting families enjoyed retreat and refreshing at Great Wolf Lodge

... 3 new babies born to church planting couples.

2019 coming soon...

...Detroit Assessment Center with 5 church planting candidates.

...new churches looking to begin public launch in this Spring.

...planter encouragement with Send Network Gathering in Chicago.

...partnership opportunities explored through Catch the Vision Tours.

Read on to see what God is doing for his kingdom in Send Detroit! We are grateful for your partnership.

2 New Churches Already in 2019!

Praise God for two new churches that are ministering the gospel in the urban areas of Detroit. On Sunday, January 13, The Commonwealth of Faith (Pastor Torion Bridges) began weekly services and hosted a community breakfast in Redford. Then just on Sunday, February 10, The Refuge Detroit transitioned to weekly services in Southwest Detroit where Pastor Drew Ansley aims to live out a church that lives out the gospel, and makes disciples in community 7 days a week.

2 More Churches Starting Soon!

Mile City Church (Pastor Travis Whittaker) is following the Lord to plant a second campus in South Lyon later in March. Pray for God's grace upon them as they hold a preview service on March 3.

Transformation Church, Waterford has been building a team and has secured a location for public worship services. Pastor Seth Springs is leading the church by faith for a public launch on Palm Sunday, April 14

**Great Wolf Lodge Family Retreat
February 8-9**

Thanks to generous support of our partners, last weekend 17 church planting families numbering 63 people, were able to enjoy two days and one night at Great Wolf Lodge. Church Planting is challenging ministry, and the opportunity for retreat and refreshment was greatly appreciated by all. Please continue to pray for and support the missionary families of Send Detroit.

New Babies Abound!

Church planters have experienced growing families this year! Praise God for these precious new gifts of life and pray for God's grace in the lives of these growing families!

John Robinson Guyer

Born January 2, 2019

9 lbs, 4 oz

To parents: Michael and Emily Guyer

Treasuring Christ Church, Ann Arbor, MI

Noah Cruz Caldwell

Born January 5, 2019

7 lbs, 12 oz

To parents: Roland and Tedi Caldwell

The House of Restoration Church, Detroit, MI

Lily Joy Springs

Born February 5, 2019

10 lbs, 0 oz

To parents: Seth and Taylor Springs

Transformation Church, Waterford, MI

2018 Q4 Report

Among 11 Send Detroit church plants that are 3 years or less from their launch we have some encouraging stats from the last quarter of 2018...

517 average weekly worship attendance

65 people trusted in Jesus as Savior

25 believers were baptized

119 leaders active in making disciples for Christ

Cooperative Program giving was \$5,627

Send Detroit Assessment Retreat

February 25-26

Send Detroit will be holding its 3rd assessment retreat later this month, hosted by Merriman Road Baptist Church, Garden City, MI. Please pray for wisdom and discernment among the assessors and God's will concerning the 5 church planting candidates who are planning to attend this assessment retreat.

SBC NEWS

10 calls to action for Southern Baptists on sexual abuse

BY PHILLIP BETHANCOURT

NASHVILLE - The Houston Chronicle recently published a series of articles related to sexual abuse and the Southern Baptist Convention. The stories included are heartbreaking. Part 1 brought to light over 380 Southern Baptist Church leaders or volunteers accused of sexual abuse or misconduct impacting over 700 victims and survivors. Part 2 covered predators who successfully moved from one church to another. Part 3 dealt with youth pastors who prey on teens by using their access to students through the church to groom and sexually abuse youth.

Today as the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention convened, SBC President J.D. Greear announced 10 calls to action for Southern Baptists based on initial recommendations from the Sexual Abuse Presidential Advisory Group. The group's efforts are ongoing, and there will be more resources and responses released in the months to come. But Greear called Southern Baptists to:

Enter a season of sorrow and repentance. Southern Baptists should lament abuse in our churches and repent of our failure to adequately address the issue.

Embrace a new curriculum for holistic care in the early stages of learning of abuse. *Becoming a Church that Cares Well on Abuse* is a free video-based curriculum created by a diverse team of survivors, advocates, and experts. Contributors to the curriculum include Rachael Denhollander, Diane Langberg, Andrea Munford and more. Greear encouraged people to sign up at the curriculum's website to stay informed about its launch.

Affirm three separate "Statement of Principles" documents. Three separate documents were ratified by (1) all six SBC seminaries and (2) all 41 SBC State Conventions, and (3) SBC Associational Leaders signal a collective commitment to address abuse at every organizational level of the SBC.

Take immediate action on abuse prevention and care. Churches, associations, state conventions, and entities should seek to strengthen their policies and practices on abuse.

Consider requiring background checks, at a minimum, for all SBC standing committees and trustee appointments. The Executive Committee should consider integrating background checks into the standard process for evaluating appointees and trustees in a manner that fits our polity. Our goal is to be vigilant to make sure that predators have no place at any level in our structure.

Reexamine the ordination process. Churches should evaluate how to strengthen screening and background efforts in the ordination process.

Update the Annual Church Profile to ask about abuse. Questions related to updated abuse policies and occurrences of abuse should be considered for inclusion in the Annual Church Profile completed by SBC churches.

Prepare to address abuse at the 2019 SBC Annual Meeting. The 2019 SBC Annual Meeting will address abuse through prayer, reports, events, and resources.

Explore possibilities related to a database solution. The Study Group will continue to evaluate possibilities for a registry of offenders.

Request that the Executive Committee enhances governing documents on disfellowshipping churches and evaluates several churches. The Executive Committee should strengthen language in the SBC's governing documents related to mishandling abuse as a grounds for disfellowshipping churches. They should also do due diligence on several churches specified in media reports on abuse to evaluate if their standing aligns with our faith and practice.

In addition, the SBC Executive Committee approved the following amended language to be added to Article 3 of the SBC Constitution, which states the qualifications for churches to be deemed in cooperation with the Convention:

(4) Has not been determined by the Executive Committee to have evidenced indifference in addressing sexual abuse that targets minors and other vulnerable persons and in caring for persons who have suffered because of sexual abuse. Indifference can be evidenced by, among other things, (a) employing a convicted sex offender, (b) allowing a convicted sex offender to work as a volunteer in contact with minors, (c) continuing to employ a person who unlawfully concealed from law enforcement information regarding the sexual abuse of any person by an employee or volunteer of the church, or (d) willfully disregarding compliance with mandatory child abuse reporting laws.

(5) Has not acted to affirm, approve, or endorse discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity.

In order for any constitutional amendment to become official, SBC messengers must vote to approve it in two consecutive SBC annual meetings. This means that, upon approval, this amendment will officially become part of the SBC Constitution at the 2020 SBC Annual Meeting in Orlando.

How can Southern Baptists stay involved and connected to the advisory group? The group wants to hear from you. If you have suggestions, questions, connections, or ideas, please send those to studygroup@erlc.com. If you would like to receive updates regarding the new curriculum, you can sign up for updates [here](#). You can also sign up to receive updates on the presidential study [here](#).

If you would like to learn more regarding this important issue, here are further resources:

Four updates on the Sexual Abuse Presidential Study Group, September 19, 2018
An update on the Presidential Study on Sexual Abuse, January 14, 2019
Facebook Live with Russell Moore, February 12, 2019
Becoming a Church that Cares Well curriculum website
Southern Baptists Face Their #MeToo Moment

About the author: Phillip Bethancourt is Executive Vice President of the ERLC. He leads the ERLC team to develop innovative strategies to equip churches to address the key moral and ethical issues of the day. He completed an MDiv and PhD in Systematic Theology at Southern after attending Texas A&M University. Phillip and his wife, Cami, have been married since 2005, and have four boys.

2019 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

By Staff

FENTON - Southern Baptists have generously supported the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® for North American missions since 1933. These sacrificial gifts have made it possible for millions to experience the hope of the gospel through the work of missionaries across the United States, Canada and the territories of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam.

Today the spiritual needs are as great as ever. Approximately 363 million people live in North America with a projected 75% who do not have a personal relationship with Christ.

Many communities, especially outside the South, have a serious lack of Bible-teaching, Evangelical churches. One look at the headlines tells the story of how secularism has overtaken our region. Poverty, violence, sky-rocketing divorce rates, human trafficking and an overflowing foster care system sadly demonstrate how greatly North America needs the hope of Christ.

At the same time, the nations continue to come here in search of a new life. Many immigrants and refugees arrive from unreached people groups and can now hear the gospel for the first time.

The opportunities are endless. That's why the North American Mission Board, in partnership with Southern Baptist pastors and churches, is committed to sending hope. Every gift to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering—100 percent—goes to train, resource and deploy more than 5,000 missionaries involved in church planting and compassion ministries. Together we make a difference by meeting needs, planting churches and discipling new believers. Transformation is taking place one life at a time.
National Goal - \$70 million

Week of Prayer for North American Missions – Sunday, March 3 through Sunday, March 10

Offering Theme – Sending Hope

Verse – “...He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” – 1 Peter 1:3, CSB

Offering Resources Available: www.AnnieArmstrong.com

FIRST-PERSON: Prayer moves the arm that moves the world

By J.D. Greear

EDITOR'S NOTE: March 3-10 is the Southern Baptist Convention's Week of Prayer and Mission Study for North American Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. J.D. Greear is the president of the SBC and pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area

DURHAM, N.C. (BP) -- The books of Luke and Acts, which were originally one volume, are like a hand and a glove. In Luke, we see the shape of the divine hand in the person of Jesus. Then in Acts, we see the invisible hand, the Holy Spirit, filling the church.

Seeing the church pray is a perfect example. What Jesus teaches about persistent prayer in Luke is seen in action when Peter gets imprisoned in Acts.

In our upcoming Week of Prayer for North American Missions for the 5,000 missionaries serving in cities, small towns and college campuses across North America, here are three aspects of the early church's prayer that will embolden our own:

1. WHATEVER THEY WERE AFRAID OF, THEY TALKED ABOUT TO GOD.

Eugene Peterson, in his book "Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer," notes two types of prayer in the psalms: evening prayer and morning prayer. Evening prayer is marked by praying your worries to God. Psalm 4 is a good example: David commits to God what he is worrying about, the people who are bothering him, the things that make him angry or sad. Then he reminds himself of the promises of God. Morning prayer, as in Psalm 5 meanwhile, is active, petitionary prayer, boldly praying against things in the world that aren't right.

What the church does in Acts 12 when Peter is imprisoned is, in a sense, evening prayer. Herod had just beheaded James, the leader of the early church, and it looks like Peter is next up for execution. Peter's friends are understandably worried for his future and their future. So they fervently talked to God about it.

Our missionaries laboring in North America face daily challenges and even opposition as they seek to share the Gospel. They may know better than any of us the necessity of evening prayer, committing to God their worries for sustaining their ministries and families. We can talk to God for them, too.

What do we do when we are afraid, worried or upset? Look at what David says: "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8 ESV). If we would develop the practice of evening prayer, it would give us such an incredible sense of peace. It would give us the capacity to rest, knowing that our prayers are heard by the One whose arm controls the universe.

2. THEY USED PRAYER LIKE A 'WARTIME WALKIE-TALKIE'

The early church prayer isn't just an evening prayer asking for peace. It is also a morning prayer -- an active, bold, petitionary prayer throughout Acts as the church prays about the mission.

As John Piper says, "Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den.... Until you know that life is war, you cannot know what prayer is for: Prayer is for the accomplishment of a wartime mission."

This kind of prayer is bold and audacious because they knew it is God's will for the church to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth, regardless of Herod's plans for Peter. So they got on their knees and prayed, knowing that prayer actually changes situations, that it moves the arm that moves the world.

We often think of praying to God when we should be praying with God. He's already shown us His will and His promises in Scripture. We know it isn't God's will for the Gospel to wither and die. We know it isn't God's will for our neighborhood, our city, our world to perish. So let's rebel against the status quo and pray with God for the advance of His Kingdom.

3. THEY WERE PERSISTENT, LIKE THE WIDOW IN LUKE 18.

Remember the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18? A widow bothers and nags a judge so incessantly that he decides to hear her out -- even though he doesn't care about her, about justice or about God. And Jesus says (incredibly) to pray to God like that.

Look at Acts 12, and you'll see that the early church got the message. With Peter in prison, they prayed and prayed and prayed. Verse 12 says that when God answered their prayer and broke Peter out of prison, Peter showed up that night and found them in prayer, beating down God's door!

I know there are times when God directs us away from specific requests, even godly ones. The apostle Paul asked for God to remove his "thorn in the flesh," and God gave him a firm "no" three times (2 Corinthians 12:9). But in general, I think we give up way too early in our prayers. We ask once, maybe twice, and then simply stop asking. But Jesus told us to keep asking, even to harass God as if He's asleep (Luke 11)!

Acts shows us that when the church prays like that for a united purpose -- to see churches planted and the Gospel preached in every corner of North America -- prison doors come off their hinges. Thousands of people come to faith. Cities are turned upside-down.

Not from technique, from skill or from planning. From prayer.

Information about Southern Baptist Convention's Week of Prayer and Mission Study for North American Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering can be accessed at <https://www.anniearmstrong.com/about/the-mission> www.anniearmstrong.com.

About the author: James David (J.D.) Greear is the Pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina (a position he has held since January 2002) and the 62nd President of the Southern Baptist Convention. Before coming to work at The Summit he worked with the International Mission Board. He entered the Ph.D. program at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1999, graduating in 2003 with a doctorate in Philosophy, concentrating primarily on Christian and Islamic theology. He is also a graduate of the Word of Life Bible Institute and received his Bachelor of Arts from Campbell University. Greear comes from Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Most Pastors Want an End to Illegal Immigration

By Aaron Earls

NASHVILLE - As U.S. lawmakers continue to debate the best approach to illegal immigration, most Protestant pastors say the solution should be multifaceted.

Nashville-based LifeWay Research surveyed 1,000 Protestant pastors on their views on illegal immigration and how the church should view those in the country illegally. Eighty percent say the government has the responsibility to stop illegal immigration, while 9 percent disagree and 11 percent are not sure. Meanwhile, 70 percent of pastors say they are in favor of an immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship for those who are currently in the country illegally. Seventeen percent disagree and 13 percent are not sure.

Three-quarters of pastors (76 percent) say Christians have a responsibility to assist immigrants even if they are in the country illegally, while 14 percent disagree and 10 percent are not sure. Currently, almost 3 in 10 pastors say their churches are involved locally in assisting immigrants. Seven in 10 say they are not currently involved. "Lawmakers have left many of the bigger immigration questions unresolved often voicing 'either-or' positions," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. "Pastors don't seem as conflicted desiring improvement in both border security and a path to citizenship for those here illegally."

Stopping illegal immigration

While 80 percent of pastors today say the government has the responsibility to stop illegal immigration, that's down from 87 percent in a 2014 LifeWay Research survey.

“Among these questions, stopping illegal immigration registers the strongest sentiment from pastors,” said McConnell. “But support for this is now more in line with caring for immigrants already in the country and establishing a path to citizenship.” Today, African-American pastors are more likely than white pastors to disagree that the government carries the responsibility to stop illegal immigration (21 percent to 8 percent).

Those in the Northeast (15 percent) and Midwest (12 percent) are more likely to disagree than pastors in the South (5 percent). Education, age and denomination all factor into how likely a pastor is to say the government bears the responsibility to stop illegal immigration. Pastors 65 and older are more likely to see that as the government’s job than pastors 44 and younger (85 percent to 75 percent). Those with a bachelor’s degree or less (87 percent) are more likely than those with more education (77 percent). Evangelical pastors (87 percent) are more likely to agree than mainline pastors (74 percent). Pentecostals (94 percent) and Baptists (89 percent) are more likely to agree than Church of Christ pastors (79 percent), Lutherans (74 percent), Presbyterian or Reformed (74 percent), or Methodists (68 percent).

Path to citizenship

More pastors today favor immigration reform that provides a path to citizenship for immigrants currently in the country illegally. Since 2014, the percentage of pastors who favor a path to citizenship has grown 12 percentage points from 58 percent to 70 percent today. The percentage who disagreed was cut in half—34 percent to 17 percent. “For immigrants in the country illegally, there are no real options for redemption,” noted McConnell. “That doesn’t sit well with pastors—the majority of whom were ready for lawmakers to offer a means of making restitution and gaining legal status years ago.”

In 2019, African-American pastors are the ethnicity most likely to agree (91 percent), while pastors 65 and older are the age range least likely to agree (62 percent). Mainline pastors (80 percent) are more likely to back a path to citizenship than evangelical ones (66 percent). Methodist (86 percent) and Presbyterian or Reformed (80 percent) pastors are more likely to agree than Church of Christ (65 percent), Baptist (60 percent) and Pentecostal (59 percent) pastors.

Support for immigrants

Compared to 2014, a similar number of pastors say Christians have a responsibility to assist immigrants even if they are here illegally—76 percent today and 79 percent then. Evangelical pastors are more likely to disagree than mainline pastors (16 percent to 10 percent). Pastors 65 and older are least likely to agree (67 percent). Those in the Northeast (85 percent) are more likely to agree than those in the South (74 percent) or Midwest (74 percent). Holiness (88 percent) and Presbyterian or Reformed (87 percent) are more likely to agree than Lutherans (74 percent), Church of Christ pastors (73 percent), Baptists (70 percent), or Pentecostals (66 percent). Almost 3 in 10 pastors say their church is currently helping immigrants (29 percent), while 70 percent say they are not.

Mainline pastors (33 percent) are more likely to say they are assisting than evangelical ones (26 percent). Lutheran (40 percent), Methodist (33 percent) and Presbyterian or Reformed pastors (35 percent) are more likely to say they are helping than Baptist pastors (23 percent). Pastors of churches with 250 or more in attendance are more likely to say they are currently assisting immigrants than pastors of churches with less than 50 in attendance (37 percent to 23 percent). "Pastors place just as much responsibility on their congregations as they do legislators," McConnell said. "More than twice as many pastors say Christians should help immigrants than say their church is personally involved assisting local immigrant neighbors today."

Methodology:

The phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was conducted January 14-30, 2019. The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used for church size. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called. Responses were weighted by region to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,000 surveys. The sample provides 95 percent confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.2 percent. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

About the author: Aaron Earls is a writer for LifeWay Christian Resources.

Sex abuse prevention tops SBC Exec. Comm. agenda

by BP Staff

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Preventing and responding to sexual abuse was a major focus during meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Feb. 18-19 in Nashville. Among the EC's actions was recommending an amendment to the SBC Constitution stating churches are not "in friendly cooperation with the Convention" if they "have evidenced indifference in addressing sexual abuse."

The EC also:

- proposed an SBC constitutional amendment specifying racial discrimination as a basis to disfellowship a church;
- heard a report that the EC presidential search committee believes it has found "God's candidate"; and
- responded to two SBC messenger motions seeking to disallow addresses by elected officials at SBC annual meetings.

Sexual abuse

The proposed amendment on sexual abuse -- adopted without opposition -- would add a section to Article III of the SBC Constitution defining a "cooperating church" as one that "has not been determined by the Executive Committee to have evidenced indifference in addressing sexual abuse that targets minors and other vulnerable persons and in caring for persons who have suffered because of sexual abuse."

"Indifference," according to the amendment, "can be evidenced by, among other things, (a) employing a convicted sex offender, (b) allowing a convicted sex offender to work as a volunteer in contact with minors, (c) continuing to employ a person who unlawfully concealed from law enforcement information regarding the sexual abuse of any person by an employee or volunteer of the church, or (d) willfully disregarding compliance with mandatory child abuse reporting laws."

To take effect, the amendment would need two-thirds approval at both the 2019 and 2020 SBC annual meetings. EC chairman Mike Stone said adopting the amendment would make "explicit what has been implicit already in our government documents. That is, churches who do not deal decisively and biblically on issues of sexual abuse are not in good fellowship with the Southern Baptist Convention." Survivors of sexual abuse "are loved, and we commit to seek to care for them," said Stone, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Blackshear, Ga.

As the proposed amendment was discussed in the EC's Bylaws Workgroup and Administrative Committee, EC leaders clarified that abuse committed by one member of a church would not in itself trigger disfellowshipping, but only action of the church body as a whole that evidenced indifference to the abuse. Additionally, if a church evidenced repentance for its indifference, the disfellowshipping process likely would stop, according to committee and workgroup discussion. SBC President J.D. Greear named several specific churches Feb. 18 as he reported to the EC on sexual abuse and asked the Bylaws Workgroup to determine whether they meet the SBC's standards for cooperating churches.

After meeting with Greear Feb. 19 in executive session, the Bylaws Workgroup reported their adoption of a motion requesting that Greear "provide to the workgroup through its staff liaison any information which he wishes to provide tending to demonstrate that a particular church is worthy of consideration as to whether or not it is currently in cooperation with the Convention." Amid the two-day discussion of sexual abuse, at least five EC members shared their personal experiences with abuse, ranging from being abused and being pursued by a sexual abuser to prosecuting child abusers and dealing with abuse in churches. "I was moved," Stone said, "by the number of Executive Committee members who expressed personal stories of connection to child abuse." Personal experience "did not drive our deliberations," but it "gave a personal backdrop to the necessity of our action."

Greear's report to the EC addressed a plan to battle sex abuse and its enablers among Southern Baptist churches, noting the Gospel's call to protect the vulnerable. "We serve a God who laid down His life to protect the vulnerable," said Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area. "How dare we proclaim that Gospel with our mouths and then turn a blind eye when the vulnerable in our midst cry out for help?"

Greear offered a wide-ranging plan to combat sex abuse including education, proven sincerity, accountability and possibly a sex abuse database and congregational

disfellowshipping. The recommendations stem from the work of the Sexual Abuse Presidential Advisory Study to date. Funded by the EC and initiated in response to an SBC messenger motion, the study includes male and female security, legal, medical and religious professionals.

Racism amendment

The proposed amendment on racial discrimination would add a section to Article III of the SBC Constitution specifying a cooperating church as one that "has not acted to affirm, approve, or endorse discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity." If adopted by SBC messengers, Stone said, the amendment would alter "our governing documents" but not "our position."

"Southern Baptists have already taken strong stands on the issues of racial discrimination," Stone said. "... But I felt, as we were amending our Constitution, that it was very important that we send a message of love, compassion and partnership to people of all ethnicities."

In 2018, the EC, acting for the convention ad interim, disfellowshipped a Georgia church accused of racial discrimination.

Presidential search

EC presidential search committee vice chair Adron Robinson reported the committee has "identified God's candidate for such a time as this" and will announce the nominee "very soon." Stone, an ex officio member of the committee, added that "every" candidate submitted "has been seriously considered, for every submission is a sacred trust from Southern Baptists." The committee "has been both unanimous and unified at every single turn."

Elected officials at the SBC

The EC declined two requests made by SBC messengers in 2018 seeking to bar elected officials from speaking at SBC annual meetings. The requests were made as motions amid discussion of Vice President Mike Pence's speaking appearance at the Dallas annual meeting. In declining to take up the messenger motions, the EC noted it "has updated the Committee on Order of Business's orientation manual to highlight that SBC Bylaw 2 requires the authority of the officers ... in conference with the Committee on Order of Business when considering inclusion on the annual meeting agenda of causes other than those provided for in the regular work of the Convention."

EC ambassador Jimmy Draper told Baptist Press he recounted to the Bylaws Workgroup how he declined a 1982 request by then-President Ronald Reagan to speak at the SBC annual meeting when Draper was SBC president. Current and future SBC officers are free to do the same, Draper said, if an elected official requests to speak and the officers feel it would be inappropriate.

Children's Ministry Day

In a brief speech to the EC, 10-year-old Zak McCullar of Jasper, Ala., advanced his call for the addition of a Children's Ministry Day to the SBC calendar. "I think children's ministry workers should be thanked by this day," McCullar said during a rare opportunity to address the full EC from the stage. "And I want children to be recognized for the work we do to share Christ, even though we are young."

The EC voted to recommend to 2019 SBC messengers in Birmingham, Ala., the addition of Children's Ministry Day to the SBC calendar as the third Sunday in July, expressly July 21 this year. In forthcoming years, the day would be celebrated July 19, 2020; July 21, 2021; July 24, 2022, and July 23, 2023.

Louisiana's Hankins honored

The EC honored David E. Hankins, who will retire June 30 after more than 14 years as executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, crediting his leadership in numerous initiatives among the LBC's 1,650 churches. In a resolution of appreciation, the EC noted that in 2005 during his first year with the convention, Hankins played a key role after the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in working with churches, Baptist associations, state conventions and the North American Mission Board in disaster relief and recovery.

Before leading Louisiana Baptists, Hankins had served as chairman of the SBC Executive Committee during two of his eight years as a member. He subsequently served as the EC's vice president for convention policy from 1996-1998 and vice president for Cooperative Program from 1998-2005. He is the coauthor with Chad Brand of "One Sacred Effort: The Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists."

As a pastor for nearly 25 years, Hankins led three churches in Texas followed by Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles, La., from 1985-1995. The resolution stated that the churches he led were marked by "strong Cooperative Program support and promotion," evangelistic outreach and involvement in their local Baptist associations, their state conventions and the SBC. While Hankins led Louisiana Baptists, the convention recorded more than 140,000 baptisms, 200 church plants and \$300 million in gifts through the Cooperative Program. Hankins led an array of statewide campaigns, with such emphases as "80-20 church" calling Louisiana Baptists to send 20 percent of their gifts to ministries beyond the local church; the "Peace of Jesus" evangelistic appeal; "Kairos" (Key Acts In Reaching Our State); "The Pledge" for churches to advance their CP giving; and a "Harvest" initiative to pray for every home and share Christ with every person across the state.

Hankins and his wife Patty celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Jan. 4 of this year. They have three sons, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

About the author: Compiled by Baptist Press chief national correspondent David Roach, BP senior editor Art Toalston and BP general assignment writer/editor Diana Chandler.

BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

CLASSIFIEDS

Worship Leader

Fellowship Church of Muskegon is looking to hire a full-time Worship Leader to lead our Sunday morning worship services. Our worship services are the foundation of everything we do as a church, and we are looking for a musically-gifted leader who is highly engaging and a spiritual influencer. The best candidate will have a minimum of 3 years' experience in leading worship, and will also have practical experience in personal discipleship. Our worship & discipleship ministries complement each other, and we hope to involve our worship leader in the development and growth of our small group ministry.

Our worship leader will work with a talented group of creative volunteers, and we're looking for a leader who can coach them to lead well. You'll need to be highly relational, a developer of people, and a committed follower of Jesus Christ with an infectious faith. Our vision for worship involves services that connect with people's heart and minds, and our worship leader will understand how best to engage people and draw them to a deeper commitment to Christ.

If this sounds good to you and you'd like to know more, we'd love to know more about you! For a complete position description, please contact us at worship@fellowshipmuskegon.org. Please be sure to provide us with at least two references, and a video of you leading worship would be very helpful. Thank you for your interest!

About Fellowship Church Fellowship Church is located in northeast Muskegon, and is a growing and vital body of approximately 500 worshipers. We are strongly invested in our community and in the local school district, with over one dozen ministries targeting our neighborhoods. We recently completed a re-visioning process focusing on spiritual formation and transforming our community, and our new worship leader will help implement that vision.

ABOUT THE BSCM

The Baptist Beacon is the official newsjournal of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM), in association with the Southern Baptist Convention. The mission of the Baptist Beacon is to communicate with Michigan Baptists in our shared mission of punching holes in the darkness through starting, strengthening, and sending churches.

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