

THE COURIER

INFORMING AND INSPIRING SOUTH CAROLINA BAPTISTS



Longtime, pro-life advocates in SBC rejoice at Roe's demise. **Page 3**



Churches give thanks for Supreme Court decision. **Page 5**



Life after Roe: responding to a historic decision. **Page 7**

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ROE OVERTURNED!

Supreme Court Returns Abortion To States

The U.S. Supreme Court achieved the most significant victory in the history of the pro-life movement." "The issue of abortion has

LIFE AFTER ROE:

CREATING A LASTING CULTURE OF LIFE



AUGUST 2022

▶ **ALSO INSIDE:** ■ S.C. Leaders Renew Resolve to Protect Life ■ 4 Misperceptions About Abortion Law

justices also invalidated Planned Parenthood v. Casey opinion that affirmed Roe. The watershed decision v. Jackson Women's Organization - a case regarding Mississippi's prohibition of the abortion of preborn children whose gestational age is more than 15 weeks. Elizabeth ERLC's vic operations a described the a "historic moment for the dignity of human life, and we estimate that thousands of lives were saved while we followed a draft opinion by Alito indicated the high court would reverse Roe and Casey if the time remained

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INFORMING AND INSPIRING SOUTH CAROLINA BAPTISTS

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ROE V. WADE OVERTURNED

BY RUDY GRAY, Editor

THIS HAS BEEN A MONUMENTAL AND

historic year for the pro-life movement in America. On Friday, June 14, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned Roe v. Wade (the right to abortion ruling), sending it back to the states. It was a time of gratitude, rejoicing, and refreshed hope among the majority of evangelical Christians.

“We were all sitting around the table when the news came. When we heard the news, we just sat in silence for a few seconds. Then tears began to flow, and our phones blew up. Roe was no more,” said Alexia Newman, director of Carolina Pregnancy Center in Spartanburg. “Supporters, friends, and pastors were calling and texting, asking if we were safe.” A celebration ensued and additional security was added at the center.

Newman said, “Bottom line for us is that this ruling changes nothing. We will continue to serve women and families. We will provide our services at no charge, and we will continue to provide diapers and formula. We will keep offering ultrasounds, provide information on adoption, and, most of all, keep telling people about Jesus and how they can find hope and forgiveness through Him.”

This year marks 50 years under the yoke of Roe v. Wade, and this year brings with it the hope that Christians have prayed for since the inception of the original and controversial ruling in 1973. Justice Samuel Alito stated, “It is time to heed the Constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people’s elected representatives.” This meant that the status of abortion was sent back to the states, where it was 50 years ago.

South Carolina, along with several other states, had passed various types of anti-abortion legislation. The Heartbeat Bill in South Carolina was “immediately enjoined by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, which had become very liberal, and it looked like it was going to be held up indefinitely,” said Tony Beam, director of Public Policy for the South Carolina Baptist Convention. The ruling by the Supreme Court was the final word in this long battle and overturned the ruling of the Fourth Circuit: “Within about 24 hours, Attorney General Alan Wilson filed to have the ban lifted. That basically means a woman cannot have an abortion after a heartbeat is detected (around six weeks).”

“There is an agreed-upon effort by the pro-life community to get a bill passed in South Carolina that would outlaw abortion beginning at conception, with the only exception being the life of the mother. There will be a strong push by some to make sure that if we do ban abortion, that exceptions for rape and incest will be included as well as the life of the mother.”

A longtime supporter of the right to life, Robert Jackson, a family physician serving in the Upstate, said, “I

am relieved that this has happened in my lifetime. Now, I feel like the children of Israel returning from Babylon who said, ‘We feel as if we are in a dream’ (Psalm 26:1-3). I wake up each day and I remind myself that it is really true. God has answered our prayers after all of these years.”

He added, “The next several months will be pivotal in South Carolina as our legislators wrangle over legislation to limit or outright abolish abortion in our state. Our lawmakers tend not to see the light until they feel the heat. The outcome will depend on how often they hear from concerned citizens/voters who demand the complete elimination of abortion in our state.”

Crisis pregnancy centers will likely see an increase in clients in the months ahead. Newman said, “It will take more people to volunteer to see the potential increase in numbers. We will need more diapers, formula, and, of course, more finances to increase our services. People are already calling to see how they can help, and money is coming in from unexpected sources. The Lord is moving on hearts, and we are grateful. The opportunities for ministry ahead are countless, and we are pumped for the future.”

Jackson noted, “I am so grateful to be a part of an army of Christians who’ve prayed for 49 years at the abortion clinics. I am grateful to those who have traveled to Columbia to lobby our legislators who call and write them diligently as well and pray for them year in and year out. I am thankful to be a part of 26 crisis pregnancy centers in our state that provide alternatives to abortion. I am thankful to be associated with sidewalk counselors, prayer warriors, and preachers who show up week after week at the three abortion centers, standing at the very gates of hell!”

While Roe v. Wade is no longer the law of the land, abortions will continue in this nation. Since each state has the right to pass its own laws regarding abortion, several states will continue to offer abortion throughout a woman’s pregnancy. States like California, New York, and others have offered free passage for women desiring an abortion. Beam observed, “There is actually some discussion between Oregon, Washington, and California to make the West coast an abortion haven.”

He stated that Dick’s Sporting Goods has said they would pay “up to \$4,000 for a woman to travel to get an abortion. They are putting that in their healthcare plan.”

The battle for the life of unborn children has not ended, as the Biden administration and the House of Representatives continue to push for ways to circumvent the Supreme Court decision and support abortion advocates. However, the Supreme Court ruling has severely slowed the progressive death march. Millions of lives will be saved, but it is up to Christians to step up with their time, money, and resources to help helpless children. ■

S.C. LEADERS REACT TO ROE'S END, RENEW RESOLVE TO PROTECT LIFE

BY TODD DEATON, Managing Editor

SOUTH CAROLINA BAPTIST LEADERS

responded to the Supreme Court's ruling in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization case that overturned Roe v. Wade with jubilation — and a renewed resolve to protect life on the state level.

The Court's decision, however, does not ban abortion, but rather returns the matter to voters in each state to decide. The fight to end abortion, thus, is entering a new phase, they explained, adding that there is still work to be done.



▲ Gary Hollingsworth

For 50 years, pro-life advocates have prayed for the day when Roe v. Wade would be reversed, South Carolina Baptist Convention Executive Director-Treasurer Gary Hollingsworth noted. "While this is a great step forward for those who believe the unborn should be protected, the work has just begun," he said.

"A great part of that work will be to help mobilize God's people to be more proactive in caring for children whose lives will now be spared, which is why foster care and adoption ministries are so vital," Hollingsworth said.

"This is a great opportunity for every church to find tangible ways to show the love of Jesus to the most vulnerable among us," Hollingsworth urged South Carolina Baptists.



▲ Wayne Bray

Recalling that he was only nine days old when Roe v. Wade became the law of the land, Wayne Bray, president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, said that fact "puts the impact of this evil in perspective" for him.

"That's 49 years of the legalized murder of over 63 million unborn babies. It's unfathomable to me how it's taken this long for our society to correct this evil, but our stand for life must not end now," said the pastor

of First Baptist Church, Simpsonville.

"Christians across this country must now provide the care and compassion necessary to help make abortion in the individual states unimaginable," said Bray, urging the Church to rise up in love and respond in grace.

"Yes, we are grateful to God for this answered prayer, but we must now be gracious to our fellow man," Bray urged South Carolina Baptists. "The church must not push people

away from the cross with antagonizing rhetoric or hateful aggression. No, now is the time to demonstrate that, like Christ, we are full of both grace and truth (John 1:14). This is what it truly means to follow Jesus."



▲ Tony Beam

Tony Beam, director of the Office of Public Policy for the South Carolina Baptist Convention, rejoiced, "June 24, 2022 will long be remembered as the day the national nightmare of abortion came to an end."

The question of how life will be protected in the womb is now in the hands of the states, Beam pointed out. "Reasonable, God-fearing people will move swiftly to extend legal protection to babies in the womb from the moment of conception," he added.

Beam reported that South Carolina's Heartbeat Bill is now in effect, and the South Carolina General Assembly already has several bills that will ban all abortion, beginning at conception. "Soon, our dream of a state where all life is protected ... where the most innocent among us are allowed to flourish ... will become a reality," he predicted.

But the church's pro-life work is not over, he concurred. "We must be ready as the Body of Christ to work together to increase, strengthen, and improve our foster care system. We must support and work to extend our Christian adoption centers and crisis pregnancy centers," Beam urged. "We must be prepared to meet the needs of women who need our help as they embrace a new ethos of life!"

"Now that abortion is illegal, we must continue to spread the Truth of God's Word to make abortion unthinkable as more people embrace the Truth," he urged.

On the national level, Southern Baptist leaders also were rejoicing in the Supreme Court's decision as "a true turning point in the pro-life movement," while refocusing on the pro-life work still ahead.

"More lives are now protected today than yesterday," said Brent Leatherwood, acting president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "As this chapter comes to a close, we must understand this is not the end of our important work," he continued. "A consistent, convictional pro-life witness is needed now more than ever in state legislatures and local communities.

"So let us rejoice that we live in a nation where past injustices can still be corrected," he continued, "as we also roll our sleeves up to save pre-born lives, serve vulnerable mothers, and support families in our communities." ■

4 MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT ABORTION LAW IN THE POST-DOBBS ERA

THE SUPREME COURT RULING IN DOBBS V.

Jackson Women's Health Organization is only a few weeks old, and already there are misperceptions and misunderstandings about what abortion law will look like now that *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned. Here are four main misperceptions that have been expressed in light of the recent ruling and explanations of how to think through them.

MISPERCEPTION #1: THE SUPREME COURT TOOK AWAY A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT.

In a speech delivered on the same day the Supreme Court released the Dobbs decision, President Joe Biden said, "Today the Supreme Court of the United States expressly took away a constitutional right from the American people that it had already recognized." Biden is implying that the U.S. Constitution contains a recognizable right to abortion, but the Supreme Court determined that is not the proper reading of the Constitution.

The court explained its reasoning, in part, by considering whether the right to obtain an abortion is part of a broader entrenched right that is supported by other precedents. The majority of the justices concluded that the right to obtain an abortion cannot be justified as a component of such a right, and that attempts to justify abortion through appeals to a broader right to autonomy and to "define one's 'concept of existence' prove too much." If there was a right to abortion, the court noted, then *Roe* and *Casey* would also allow as fundamental rights such things as illicit drug use and prostitution.

There was never a "constitutional right to abortion," only a legal fiction established by *Roe* and *Casey* to give that impression. The Supreme Court did not remove a right held by individuals but merely recognized the reality that the Constitution allows abortion to be an issue decided by the individual states.

MISPERCEPTION #2: OVERTURNING ROE MAKES IT HARDER TO TREAT MISCARRIAGES AND ECTOPIC PREGNANCIES.

"The medical options used to treat some miscarriages, as well as some ectopic pregnancies, can be the same or similar to those prescribed for an abortion," said Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's Chelsea Sobolik. "This makes it imperative to carefully define our terms."

Take, for example, dilation and curettage (in which the pre-born baby is removed through surgery) or dilation and evacuation (in which a probe-guided vacuum removes fetal tissue from the uterus). These procedures can be used in elective abortions (in which the child is killed before removal) or in circumstances when the child is already dead and needs

to be removed from the woman's body. Similarly, medications called mifepristone and misoprostol are sometimes used as abortifacients (i.e., medication to cause an abortion), but they can also be used to treat cases of miscarriage.

"There is no current policy in place prohibiting the treatment of miscarriage or ectopic pregnancies, and many laws similarly exclude such circumstances from the definition of abortion," Sobolik said. But she also points out that this misperception has gained traction because some recently proposed state-level legislation included wording that would affect access to treatment for miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy.

There was never a "constitutional right to abortion," only a legal fiction.

For instance, Sobolik noted that an abortion restriction bill was initially proposed in Ohio in 2019 advocating for the reimplantation of ectopic pregnancies — invoking the use of a nonexistent and medically impossible procedure — but was struck down in hearings. The Ohio lawmaker behind the bill later admitted that he had not researched ectopic pregnancies beforehand.

Such misguided proposals have always been caught before they become law, and pro-life groups are working closely with state legislators to ensure that such unhelpful language does not find its way in any stage of the legislative process.

MISPERCEPTION #3: ANTI-ABORTION LAWS DO NOT PROTECT THE LIFE OF THE MOTHER.

On the same day in 1973 that the *Roe v. Wade* decision was handed down, the Supreme Court also issued its decision in *Doe v. Bolton*. In that ruling, the court said that a state must permit a "health" exception to any laws restricting abortion. But "health" was defined so broadly that it allowed abortion in all nine months of pregnancy for nearly any reason, including the mental or emotional health of the mother.

Abortion advocates claim that without that "health"

► Misperceptions... CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

exception that women's lives will be put in danger, but every pro-life statute in states where abortion is being restricted currently has an exception for the life of the mother. Many of the states, such as Utah and Texas, also include exceptions for "harm to the physical health" of the mother along with exceptions for the life of the mother.

MISPERCEPTION #4: THE INDIVIDUAL STATES NOW HAVE FINAL SAY ABOUT ABORTION LAWS.

The ruling in Dobbs says, "The Constitution does not confer a right to abortion; Roe and Casey are overruled; and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives." While this means that the states can decide the issue, it also leaves open the possibility that a federal law could regulate abortion in all 50 states.

Nothing in the Dobbs opinion prohibits the U.S. Congress from passing federal legislation to restrict, ban or allow abortion. Whether such legislation could pass constitutional

scrutiny remains to be seen. For now, given the even divide in the U.S. Senate, states will be tasked with regulating abortion as they see fit, but the possibility does remain that a future Congress could pass federal legislation on the issue.

Many Christians fervently prayed and planned for the overturning of Roe and Casey, yet never dreamed they would actually see the day. Now that it's here, we rightly rejoice and celebrate. However, we also recognize that many in our broader culture are anxious about what life will be like in a post-Roe world, and that fear is largely supported by misinformation portrayed as fact. We must stand ready to pray for our neighbors and meet them with truth and compassion, demonstrating that a post-Roe culture is indeed a good one where women will be cared for and babies will be given a chance at life. ■

This article was provided by the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

MINISTRY BY CHURCHES CRUCIAL IN POST-ROE WORLD, ADVOCATES SAY BY TOM STRODE

CHURCHES AND THEIR MEMBERS HAVE essential roles to play in helping women and pre-born children in a post-Roe world, Christians involved in pro-life ministry say.

The U.S. Supreme Court's reversal of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision has given states the authority to put into effect abortion bans for the first time in almost 50 years. Nearly half of the states already have laws prohibiting abortion either throughout pregnancy or at some stage of pregnancy, although courts have blocked enforcement of some.

In states with abortion bans, the change in the legal landscape has placed a renewed focus on pro-life work — and on the ministry of the local church, Christian pro-life advocates said.

"What we want to see is the church is the first place that [a woman with an unplanned pregnancy] goes, that she feels that love and that compassion, that she feels that the church is going to be a refuge for her," said Elizabeth Graham, vice president of operations and life initiatives for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. Graham's comments came during a June panel discussion about the future of the pro-life movement that took place before the overruling of Roe.



Rick Morton, vice president of engagement for Lifeline Children's Services, said, "We love crisis pregnancy centers [and] believe that there's great necessity [in them]. And we believe in the church. We believe that ultimately the place that those women need — they need to be disciplined, they need to be surrounded by community — is in the local church."

Lifeline has prepared discipleship resources to provide churches with "the building blocks" to engage in ministering

for the long term to women with unplanned pregnancies, Morton said.

Even before the Supreme Court overturned Roe, churches were asking how they could serve after a draft opinion annulling the 1973 decision was leaked in early May.

Churches reached out to Lifeline after the leak to say, “[W]e are recognizing that we need to do more, and so can you help us learn how to do more? Can you help us figure out ways that we can get engaged?” said Chris Johnson, the ministry’s national director of church partnerships, in a June interview by Baptist Press.

Lifeline’s work includes pregnancy counseling, adoption and family restoration in the United States, with offices in 16 states. The 41-year-old ministry, which is based in Birmingham, Ala., offers international adoption in 18 countries.

In some ways, this is “a beginning” and “not an end,” Morton said. “[M]aybe some of the hope out of this actually is that there are people who are rethinking and reframing the issue in their own mind, and maybe some folks who haven’t been as active and haven’t really related their pursuit of Christ and the gospel to this issue.”

It may be “a beginning point” for such Christians to say, “I’ll begin to get in and minister to women in crisis, to minister to those women and their unborn children, adoptive families,” he said. “I think there are all kinds of people that God could potentially use to wake the church up.”

Sometimes that ministry is simple and practical, said Lori Bova, who has participated in pro-life work for more than two decades.

“I have learned that creating a culture of life often looks like meeting needs — driving women to appointments, buying diapers and wipes, providing childcare, etc.,” said Bova, chair of the ERLC’s trustees and a member of a Southern Baptist church in New Mexico. “We have a Savior who came to serve. It should be no surprise that this is our best means to change hearts and minds toward life, and ultimately the gospel.”

Churches can seek to address the “systemic drivers” that pregnant women often say push them to choose abortion, including the need for affordable housing and childcare, as well as a sufficient salary, Graham said. Church members can provide childcare, help women find jobs, volunteer with need-meeting programs and open their homes to pregnant women to offer a “continuum of care” for the long term, she said.

“[W]e just need to connect with her, help her to feel safe, help her to know that she has other options and to walk alongside her,” Graham said. “These women know that the decision they’ve made is a sin against God, but we can be there to show them compassion and grace and the cross.”

Herbie Newell, Lifeline’s president, said churches need to be “long-suffering and patient” and “lean in on” God’s call to disciple women and children, “walking with them through the long term and being the place where women and children find help, healing and rescue. And that’s in the arms of the gospel and Christ Jesus.”

“[O]ne of the greatest things the church can do is to be a resource of social capital to a woman in crisis,” he said. “The

truth of the matter is most of these women have nowhere to turn in their darkest hour. And there need to be churches that they can turn to who will do the hard and messy work.”

Churches can partner with gospel-focused pregnancy resource centers (PRCs) in serving vulnerable women, pro-life advocates said.

PRCs form the “front line in this battle,” Carol Everett told BP. “I would really like to see the Baptist church come to the forefront and every church get involved with a pregnancy resource center. That doesn’t mean they have to start one. They can get involved with their local one, and then they can have volunteers in there who serve as local missionaries. It’s a wonderful place for us to act as missionaries without going to a foreign mission field.”

The change in the legal landscape has placed a renewed focus on pro-life work — and on the ministry of the local church.

The Heidi Group, which Everett founded in 1995, is working to open PRCs in unserved locations, such as the 21 counties in central and west Texas without one, said Everett, a member of a Southern Baptist church.

One way Southern Baptists have supported the work of PRCs is through the Psalm 139 Project, the ERLC’s ministry to help provide ultrasound technology to pregnancy centers and train staff members in its use.

The ERLC has nearly reached its goal of 50 ultrasound placements between December 2020 and January 2023. The Psalm 139 Project has 49 machines placed or committed to be placed by January. Since 2004, Psalm 139 has helped place ultrasound equipment at centers in 16 states.

Lisa Cathcart, executive director of the Pregnancy Care Center in Old Hickory, Tenn., for more than 13 years, told BP that advocating for and financially supporting PRCs is a way churches can conduct pro-life ministry.

PCC has “always worked for the dignity and welfare of both [mother and child], and our work starts with her — the woman who needs compassion, hope and practical help to consider alternatives to abortion,” Cathcart said in a written statement after Roe was overturned. “Our work will continue, even increase, and we are prepared to meet this moment.” ■

Tom Strobe is Washington bureau chief for Baptist Press.

SCBC OFFICE OF PUBLIC POLICY SENDS LETTER TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES

BY TODD DEATON, *Managing Editor*

IN A JULY 7 LETTER FOLLOWING THE

overturning of the Roe v. Wade decision by the Supreme Court, Tony Beam, director of the Office of Public Policy for the South Carolina Baptist Convention, expressed the full support of thousands of South Carolina Baptists for a bill that will protect life in the womb, beginning at conception, to Rep. John McCravy III, chairman of the state's House of Representatives Ad Hoc Committee.

"The only exception we believe is appropriate is to protect the life of the mother," Beam clarified. "Since 1973, between 60 and 70 million precious babies have been swept out of the womb with no regard for their life or the contributions they might have made to society," he said.

Noting that all South Carolina Baptists recognize and respect every woman's reproductive rights, Beam added, "But once the decision is made to engage in unprotected sexual activity with the result being the creation of another human being, a woman's reproductive rights end and the baby's rights begin."

The right to life belongs to the baby who is conceived, he maintained. "What grows inside the mother is not a problem, a financial liability, a mistake, a bad decision, or a hindrance to the mother's life goals," he said. "What grows inside the mother is a human baby with a soul, created

in the image of his or her Creator, that deserves all the protections offered to any other human in a civil society.

"The baby's temporary residence should never be a place of violence where life can be swept away. It should be a place of safety and security where life is cherished, protected, and allowed to grow," he said.

The recent overturning of the Roe v. Wade decision will allow South Carolina to lead the way in protecting life in the womb because of its intrinsic value that comes from the fact that life bears the image of God, he continued.

"That image is never marred by the method of conception," he continued, referring to an exception allowing abortion in cases of rape or incest. "But civility, compassion, and common sense should tell us a baby conceived by a crime is not the one who should bear the penalty," he observed.

For years, the pro-life community in South Carolina has been stepping up to meet the needs of mothers who believe their pregnancy is a crisis and to care for the babies of mothers who choose life, Beam observed. Through crisis pregnancy centers, churches, Christian adoption agencies and foster care facilities, and other pro-life ministries will continue working together to make abortion unthinkable and unnecessary, he said. ■

COACH'S PRAYER RULED CONSTITUTIONAL

THE POST-GAME, MIDFIELD PRAYER OF A

high school football coach did not violate the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 6-3 decision June 27.

The justices decided the Bremerton (Wash.) School District violated the First Amendment rights of Joseph Kennedy by removing him as a coach because of its concerns that his practice infringed on the Establishment Clause.

"[A] government entity sought to punish an individual for engaging in a brief, quiet, personal religious observance doubly protected by the Free Exercise and Free Speech Clauses of the First Amendment," Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in the court's opinion. "And the only

meaningful justification the government offered for its reprisal rested on a mistaken view that it had a duty to ferret out and suppress religious observances even as it allows comparable secular speech."

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission joined in three friend-of-the court briefs in support of Kennedy, two urging the Supreme Court to review U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals rulings and one in March calling for the justices to reverse the lower court. "The Establishment Clause, as properly interpreted, does not override the government's duty to accommodate the free exercise of religion on a nondiscriminatory basis," the most recent brief said. ■

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BLALOCK REFLECTS ON SERVICE WITH SBC SEXUAL ABUSE TASK FORCE

BY TIMOTHY COCKES

MARSHALL BLALOCK, PASTOR OF FIRST

Baptist Church, Charleston, said one of the spiritual lessons he learned through serving on the SBC Sexual Abuse Task Force was how to “think and act with more compassion.”

Blalock was one of the eight members selected by immediate-past president Ed Litton to serve on the Task Force, and was also named vice chairman.

The Task Force began its work last fall by signing a contract with independent firm Guidepost Solutions, who conducted an investigation into allegations of mishandling of sexual abuse claims by the SBC Executive Committee.

Guidepost released its full report in May, and the Task Force later released recommendations for reform based upon the findings of the report. Those recommendations were overwhelmingly approved by messengers at the 2022 SBC annual meeting in Anaheim, Calif.

“There are certainly some things from the past I would have done differently from the pastoral perspective regarding abuse.”

— First Baptist Church, Charleston, Pastor and SATF member, Marshall Blalock

Blalock said the whole experience greatly impacted his understanding regarding ministering in situations of abuse.

“There are certainly some things from the past I would have done differently from the pastoral perspective regarding abuse,” Blalock said.

Blalock described a couple of previous situations at his church where instances of abuse happened at a school that met on its campus. The church immediately reported these instances to law enforcement, and the abusers were convicted and went to jail.

The regret for Blalock lies in the way he would have

ministered to the survivors of abuse in these situations. He said this is a good lesson for all pastors to learn.

“Had I known what I know now, we would have gone back and operated more effectively in caring for the sexual abuse victims,” Blalock said. “I think when it comes to those who have been affected by sexual abuse, the first thing is to be able to see them and try to understand the kind of trauma they have experienced.

“I think that most, if not all, pastors have a heart to want to help and serve people ... but if you want to lead and pastor well, it’s important to understand how sexual abuse has affected the people in your church. I, along with the other pastors on the Task Force, didn’t realize the depth of the trauma that’s involved with someone who is abused. It’s much more traumatic and life-altering than I ever understood or knew.”

When initially approached by Litton about joining the Task Force, Blalock was willing to serve, but had no idea what he was getting into.

“I love the cooperative work that we do as Great Commission Baptists together, so that’s my baseline when I’m asked to do something,” Blalock said. “When President Litton called me, I had no idea at the time what was really involved or the burden it would be.

“Had I known what I know now, I would never have volunteered for this. Yet, the Lord sustained us, and the Lord gave us direction. It was really a sense of love and appreciation for the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention that made me feel called to serve in this regard.”

Blalock said he is grateful for the passing of the Task Force’s recommendations during the annual meeting, and the great first step of reform in the Convention that it represents.

“I’m so grateful the Convention overwhelmingly adopted the recommendations,” Blalock said. “The unique factor of what has happened in the last year is that the messengers initiated this investigation with clear directions to the Task Force to bring recommendations on handling and preventing sexual abuse. That was a huge initiative that wasn’t forced on us; it actually came from us.

“We’re hoping for a cultural change where churches have no toleration for sexual abuse and are taking all the steps to make sure we prevent it in our churches. We believe the local church is ultimately where this has to happen.”

Among the practical ways Blalock said churches should care for survivors in their church and community is to see them and try to understand what they are experiencing, provide access to trauma-informed counseling, and take steps to try to prevent abuse from ever happening again.

Regarding caring well for survivors, Blalock said the main spiritual lesson he took away from his service with the Task

Force was a deeper understanding of the compassion of Jesus Christ.

“One of the words in the Gospels that is most meaningful to be describing Jesus is when it says He had compassion on people,” Blalock said.

“There were times where people would have needs, and the Gospel writers stop and make note of the fact that He had compassion on those people. My experience on the Task Force has caused me to want to think and act with more compassion for the people around me who have suffered sexual abuse — and in some ways even the abusers, as they certainly need help and they need God’s grace to shape their lives.”

The Task Force recently began meeting with new SBC President Bart Barber for times of questions and discussion as he prepares to name the upcoming Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force.

A love for the Convention is what continually carries Blalock on as the work continues.

“I love the SBC, and I want to see us be the people God has called us to be,” Blalock said. “I want to see our churches working together and cooperating to serve God’s purpose



▲ Marshall Blalock speaks at the press conference following the SATF report at the 2022 SBC annual meeting. (Photo by Adam Covington)

and do missions throughout the world.

“We don’t think that we can stop sin, but we can sure do all we can as churches to have policies that can make it very difficult for sexual abuse to happen.” ■

Timothy Cokes is a Baptist Press staff writer.

MINISTRYU CONFERENCE TO FEATURE PRACTICAL MINISTRY INSIGHTS

“EFFECTIVE MINISTRY IN A DISTRACTED Age” is the theme of MinistryU, a one-day conference on Aug. 4 sponsored by Clamp Divinity School of Anderson University. The conference will take place on the Anderson campus, beginning at 9 a.m. and concluding at 3:30 p.m.

Keynote speakers for MinistryU will be Don Wilton, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Spartanburg, and Wayne Bray, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Simpsonville and current president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

The conference will also feature a number of practical workshop sessions, with some based on ministry areas such as pastoral ministry, youth ministry, worship leadership, children’s ministry, and media ministry, and others based on topics such as discipleship, preaching and leadership. Among the workshop leaders will be Todd Adkins, director of Leadership Development at Lifeway Christian Resources; Lee Clamp, chief strategic officer for the South Carolina Baptist Convention; plus several area church leaders and faculty at Clamp Divinity School.

“MinistryU is a day packed with learning opportunities for pastors and church leaders,” explains Michael Duduit,

dean of Clamp Divinity School and editor of Preaching magazine. “Coming out of a pandemic and serving in a culture shaped by social media, we are all ministering in a different world than the one we served just a few years ago. Our goal will be to provide a toolbox of insights and skills to help church leaders minister more effectively in this distracted age in which we live.”

In addition to the general sessions and the workshops, each participant will go home with a bag of books and resources. Advance registration is just \$25 per person (\$35 at the door), which includes all sessions and workshops, lunch, and the resource collection. For every four paid registrants from a church, they will receive an additional free registration.

“We encourage churches to send their whole leadership team,” Duduit said. “MinistryU is one of the most productive and cost-effective ways they can invest in their leadership and in the work of their churches.”

In addition to Clamp Divinity School, conference sponsors include the South Carolina Baptist Convention and Lifeway Christian Resources. To learn more or register, call (864) 328-1809, or visit www.ministryu.org. ■

AMERICANS BELIEVE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IS DECLINING, CHRISTIANS FACE INTOLERANCE

BY MARISSA POSTELL

WHILE MOST AMERICANS SAY RELIGIOUS liberty is on the decline in the country, even more believe Christians are increasingly confronted with intolerance in the U.S. But some say American Christians complain too much about how they are treated.

More than half of Americans (54 percent) say religious liberty is on the decline in America, including 24 percent who strongly agree, according to a Lifeway Research survey of 1,005 Americans in September 2021. Nearly 1 in 3 disagree (32 percent), and 14 percent aren't sure.

Although a similar percentage of males (53 percent) and females (54 percent) agree religious liberty is on the decline, more females say they are not sure. Males (36 percent) are more likely than females (29 percent) to say religious liberty is not on the decline in America.

Religious affiliation, worship service attendance and religious beliefs are also factors in a person's belief about the state of religious liberty. Americans who are more engaged with their faith are among those most likely to believe religious liberty is on the decline in America. Those who are religiously unaffiliated are least likely to agree that it is declining (40 percent). And among Christians, those who attend a worship service at least four times a month (64 percent) are more likely to believe religious liberty is on the decline in America than those who attend less than once a month (53 percent). Furthermore, those who hold evangelical beliefs are more likely to say religious liberty is declining than those without evangelical beliefs (74 percent vs. 48 percent).

"Freedoms are not limitless," said Scott McConnell,

executive director of Lifeway Research. "As some groups seek more freedom, it often encroaches on another's freedom. It's not surprising those who are more religiously active are the ones noticing reductions in religious freedom compared to those who don't practice religion."

BELIEF IN DECLINING TOLERANCE FOR CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA

When asked specifically about how Christians are treated, Americans believe religious tolerance for Christians in America is declining. More than half of Americans (59

percent) say Christians are increasingly confronted with intolerance in America, including 24 percent who strongly agree. Fewer than 1 in 4 (24 percent) disagree, and 18 percent say they are not sure.

African-Americans (68 percent) and white Americans (59 percent) are more likely to agree than people of other ethnicities (47 percent).

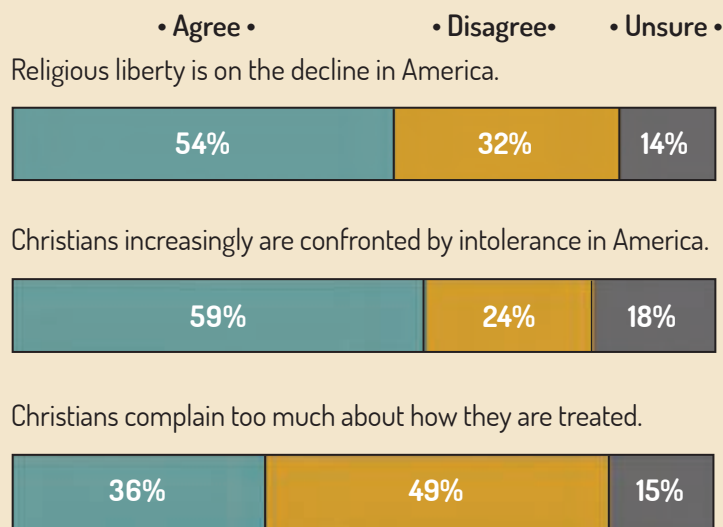
Those with more education are more likely to disagree. Americans with a bachelor's degree (30 percent) or graduate degree (31 percent) are more likely to say Christians are not increasingly confronted with intolerance in America today than those who are high

school graduates or less (21 percent) or with some college (20 percent).

"Intolerance is about cultural pushback," McConnell said. "In the American marketplace of ideas, not all systems of thought are welcomed. The majority of all religions notice this pushback against Christians today."

Again, religious affiliation, worship service attendance and religious beliefs are factors in a person's beliefs

Most Americans say religious liberty is declining in the U.S. and Christians face growing intolerance. (Among U.S. adults)



Lifeway research

Note: Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Source: Lifeway Research online survey of 1,005 Americans conducted September 3-14, 2021.

regarding tolerance levels for Christians in America. Protestants are the most likely to agree that intolerance is increasing (69 percent), followed by Catholics (59 percent), people of other religions (53 percent) and the religiously unaffiliated (41 percent). Evangelicals (84 percent) are more likely to agree than non-evangelicals (52 percent). And among Christians, those who attend a worship service less than once a month (55 percent) are least likely to believe Christians are facing increasing levels of intolerance in America.

Americans who are more engaged in their faith are most likely to believe religious liberty is declining.

TOO MUCH COMPLAINING

More than 1 in 3 Americans (36 percent) say American Christians complain too much about how they are treated, including 14 percent who strongly agree. Nearly half (49 percent) disagree, and 15 percent aren't sure. "While people

of faith have had real challenges to their religious liberty in recent years in the U.S., it's easy to become known only for talking about these issues," McConnell said. "It's ironic that the very ones people of faith would like to convert are noticing what Christians say about what they're losing rather than what good they have to offer."

There are several demographic indicators of whether someone believes Christians complain too much about how they are treated. Males (40 percent) are more likely than females (32 percent) to agree. And those who are oldest or have the least education are most likely to say American Christians do not complain too much. Nearly 2 in 3 (64 percent) of those over the age of 65 say American Christians do not complain too much. And those who are high school graduates or less (56 percent) are the most likely to say the same.

When it comes to religious beliefs and practices, the religiously unaffiliated, Christians who attend church some and non-evangelicals are among the most likely to say American Christians complain too much about how they are treated. Those who are religiously unaffiliated (53 percent) are more likely to agree than Catholics (34 percent) and Protestants (27 percent). Among Christians, those who attend a worship service one to three times a month (44 percent) are most likely to agree Christians complain too much. Those with evangelical beliefs (61 percent) are more likely to disagree than those without evangelical beliefs (45 percent). ■

Marissa Postell is a writer for Lifeway Christian Resources.

NOVELIST MARKS DEBUT WITH 'SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL FOR LAUREN'



▲ Stephanie Whatley

COURIER PUBLISHING IS

pleased to introduce Stephanie Whatley's first novel, "Something Beautiful for Lauren" (softcover, 258 pages, \$13.95).

Lauren Hardy is 37 and has lost her husband. She is left to raise three children on her own. In her grief, she has become numb, going through the motions of life. She has learned to "play the part" at church and at work so that everyone thinks she

is moving forward. But she is distant from God and feels unknown by those closest to her. Gathering what faith she has left, she decides to have some work done on her house, thinking it might be a step forward.

Bo McElwaney had what many would consider a successful life — money, a beautiful home, a gorgeous wife. But he could not shake the feeling that something

was missing. He recognized his need for a personal relationship with God — a relationship that would cost him everything and send him back to his hometown to work as a handyman. His first job is for a widow, and Bo prays that God will use him to be a blessing to her and her family.

Whatley, who has a background in language arts and attends Philippi Baptist Church in Johnston, S.C., with her husband and four children, has loved the written word since she was old enough to sit on her great-grandmother's lap, absorbing one book after another.

"Something Beautiful for Lauren" is available at major online booksellers, including Amazon and Barnes & Noble. ■



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MACKEY: 'CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN,' RESPECTED LEADER

BY TODD DEATON, Managing Editor



▲ Bill Mackey

BILL MACKEY, A FORMER

executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, who earlier had served as director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention's leadership development and evangelism growth team, died July 14 after a battle with cancer. He was 81.

Mackey is remembered by those who served with him as a "Christian gentleman" and servant leader.

Mackey's leadership and ability were recognized and respected throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, Bill Cox noted in a recent Facebook post. Cox, director of Concoctions, who organized the Chillipepper and Seesalt student conferences for many years, worked as his associate while Mackey served with the SCBC from 1979-92.

"Bill was a gifted preacher, teacher, thinker and more, but I think where he really excelled was in relationship. Bill genuinely cared about people. And it showed," Cox wrote. "Pastors and others across our state and beyond knew that they had a trusted and passionate friend in Bill Mackey. That respect and admiration was well deserved."

Observing that Mackey had been called "the ultimate Christian gentleman," Cox added, "I believe and agree with all the wonderful things people will say and write" about him.

Joy Bolton, who was executive director of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union during Mackey's tenure, recalls him as "a servant leader, friend and mentor." Earlier, they had worked together in South Carolina on the annual Women's Lifestyle Evangelism Conference.

"When I came to Kentucky, he met with me regularly and included Kentucky WMU in many KBC efforts," said Bolton, who retired to Charleston, S.C. "He understood the value of missions discipleship for long-term support of missions and encouraged churches to teach children about missions."

Mackey's 13-year tenure at the KBC included a strong emphasis on evangelism, missions and church planting. Under his leadership, Kentucky Baptists developed missions partnerships with Baptists in Tanzania, Poland, and Brazil. The KBC also began developing "high impact" churches started with the intention of beginning other churches.

Mackey and his wife, Kay, moved to Raleigh, N.C., to be near grandchildren following his retirement in 2011. He continued to work on a contract basis for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

"He was so Christlike in his attitude and actions," said Milton Hollifield, the BSC's former executive director. "He possessed a great heart for the Lord and displayed a deep

commitment to following Jesus in his daily life."

A native of Lancaster, S.C., Mackey earned master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to his state convention work, he served as a pastor in Whitesburg, Ky.

A memorial service for Mackey was held July 25 at Wake Crossroads Baptist Church in Raleigh, where he was a member, and a funeral and burial service was held July 26 at Fork Hill Baptist Church in Heath Springs, S.C.

Steve Hogg, pastor of First Baptist Church, Rock Hill, who preached for both services, said he considered Mackey to be "one of the two most spiritually impactful people" in his life. Mackey had baptized and ordained him and was the first pastor with whom he served on a church staff, he said.

"He was probably the most passionate one-on-one soul winner I've ever known. He was a man of the highest integrity, who wanted God's kingdom to grow more than he wanted anything else," Hogg said. "The ripple effect of his life and ministry is only known in heaven." ■

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Would you be willing to serve your local school by becoming a Reading Buddy, providing Teacher Support or through Backpack Buddies (weekend food for students)? For more info, to attend our September training, or to find out how you can join this movement of partnership, contact Angela McNeal at www.scbaptist.org/heart4schools.



Jon Jamison

Jon Jamison
Serve Team Leader



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SOUTH CAROLINA VOLUNTEERS SERVE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

BY TODD DEATON, Managing Editor

TWO SOUTH CAROLINA BAPTIST VOLUNTEERS,

Jolla Powell of Hemingway and Donna Horton of Conway, recently returned from Southeast Asia, where they assisted with childcare for a week-long gathering for missions workers.



▲ Jolla Powell

Since the pandemic, it was particularly meaningful for the workers to be able to meet together again after more than two years. While the adults met, Horton helped care for children from babies to 4-year-olds, and Powell assisted with fourth- and fifth-graders.

“Our assignment was to teach, entertain, and allow our special workers’ children to just be kids,” said Powell. “They listened, sang,

prayed, talked, and giggled. They painted, glued, played games, swam, and built with Legos. Their parents were so appreciative to have their children loved, protected, and entertained as they met together.”

The childcare team also had the opportunity to hear about the places and people where the families are living and to hear ways God is at work in Southeast Asia.

“We were able to converse with our special workers and learn about their calling, work, and experiences,” Powell added. “I now pray for them with renewed vigor and purpose.”



▲ Donna Horton

“We received so many sincere words of appreciation from parents who were reluctant to leave their children with strangers,” said Horton.

For her, the trip was best summed up by a teenage boy there in an elevator. “He said, ‘Thank you so very much for coming all the way here to keep my siblings for my parents to attend classes and to give them a bit of rest. And thank you for giving me the freedom to walk to dinner and around the campus with new friends. My parents didn’t have to worry that I would be safe,’” Horton recalled.

Even though it was a long trip, they would do it again, Horton said. “My heart was deeply touched that this was truly a ministry for our Lord. I fell in love with my little ones and their families. I’m so glad I said yes! My heart has been blessed.” ■

STATE CAMPS SEEING KIDS RETURN, MAKE LIFE-CHANGING DECISIONS

BY TODD DEATON, Managing Editor

SUMMER CAMPS HOSTED BY THE SOUTH

Carolina Baptist Convention and its three universities — in spite of having to overcome the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic — are seeing thousands of kids returning for fun and hearing the gospel each week.

At Anderson University, Crossroads Camp, coordinated by Clayton King, saw 2,300 students and leaders attend during its first two weeks.

“This is our 27th year of camp and our biggest summer ever,” said King. “We’ve broken all previous attendance records and are seeing more students respond than ever before, which, I believe, is a sign of the spiritual hunger in our nation.”

Crossroads reported 465 professions of faith, 138



▲ Crossroads at Anderson University and other Christian camps across the state are seeing thousands of kids return this summer.

decisions for ministry, and more than \$13,800 raised for missions. In addition, 107 children have been sponsored through Compassion, a non-profit ministry based in Colorado Springs that feeds and teaches the Bible to more than 2 million children worldwide.

At Camp McCall, Director Matt “Spinner” Allen said, “Summer is going very well.”

McCall’s attendance will finish near the 2,000 camper range for the summer, which is “a great number based on a number of very big hurdles we have,” Allen said.

Most importantly, McCall has seen 130 decisions — 26 professions of faith, 86 re-dedications and 18 commitments to Christian service — during its first four weeks of camps.

“And we know, because we consistently hear it from parents/churches and even campers, that many lives are impacted without ever making a ‘formal decision,’” Allen added. “The strong positive example and role model that our staff have set is a huge part of the ministry here and has a lasting impact.”

“It’s a challenging time to run a summer camp, but we’re glad to be back,” he said.

“Camp LaVida is also going well,” said Program Director Cindy Skelton, who reported that LaVida was averaging 100 campers per session and 125 for Mother/Daughter overnights.

“Our attendance is about the same as last year,” Skelton said. “We have fewer staff this year, so we can’t accommodate as many campers as we could have.

“Our campers have really enjoyed our staff and missionaries, and they have made some life-changing decisions, too,” Skelton said.

After four weeks of Lifeway’s FUGE camp held at North Greenville University, attendance has been steady and near capacity, reported Billy Watson, an NGU assistant vice president.



▲ *Worship is an important part of Crossroads — and other camps — where many decisions for Christ are made each year.*

“After four weeks, we have had just over 3,400 participants and expect close to 5,000 campers before the summer is over,” Watson said.

So far, FUGE had seen 85 salvations, 87 recommitments, 36 calls to ministry, and 12 other decisions, he added.

Charleston Southern University is hosting SummerSalt and KidSalt camps (both sponsored by the South Carolina Baptist Convention) this summer. As for pre-COVID numbers compared to now, CSU appears to be rebounding a bit: SummerSalt has seen 2,900 campers, and KidSalt has seen 843 campers. Adding music and athletic camps and others, CSU will see more than 4,000 campers this summer.

The university learned a lot through COVID, especially focusing more on how to care for others, but CSU missed the opportunities to build community, according to Clark Carter, vice president of Student Life. “Life is about relationships, and virtual relationships are poor substitutes for building a genuine community,” Carter said. ■

FARMER BRINGS BACK SMALL TOWN’S LIFE IN ‘FROM MURPHY TO MILEY’



▲ *Jane Farmer*

“FROM MURPHY TO MILEY” BY

Jane Jumper Farmer is a heartwarming account of family life in a low-country lumber mill town in South Carolina in the early 1900s.

In this historical fiction, Farmer relates the story of her grandparents, Carrie and Saylor Jumper, and how their steadfast faith in God undergirded, sustained, and directed their lives. Together, the couple raised 10 children through the years of World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II.

While remnants of the mill still remain, the once noisy, bustling town of Miley has vanished, replaced by quiet fields

and pine woods. Yet, the visits of the Jumpers’ oldest granddaughter to Miley instilled in her a lifelong wish to recapture the sights, sounds, smells, and people of the once-vibrant little town. It is her hope that, through the pages of “From Murphy to Miley,” the Hampton County hamlet on the banks of the Salkehatchie will live again.

“From Murphy to Miley” (Courier Publishing, \$15.95) is available at major online booksellers, including Amazon and Barnes & Noble. ■





SEND RELIEF ESTABLISHES FUND TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

FOLLOWING THE RECENT REPORT THAT

addressed how Southern Baptists have handled sexual abuse allegations in the past, Send Relief is seeking to be a part of the solution by establishing a survivor care fund.

Send Relief, the compassion ministry arm of the Southern Baptist Convention of churches, committed \$3 million in funding to the SBC Executive Committee ahead of the 2022 SBC annual meeting to be put toward the cost of implementing recommendations approved by messengers. In addition, Send Relief provided seed funding of \$1 million for a sexual abuse survivor care fund that Southern Baptists can contribute to as well through SendRelief.org.

The fund will provide survivors of sexual abuse within

the SBC the opportunity to receive professional trauma counseling, and it will also help provide trauma-informed trainings for SBC pastors, churches, associations and state conventions. Those trainings will help equip church leaders to better prevent sexual abuse from happening and minister to survivors in the tragic aftermath of abuse.

Send Relief is a cooperative effort between the SBC's International Mission Board and North American Mission Board that provides gospel-focused compassion ministry. If you are/have been a victim of sexual abuse or suspect sexual abuse by a pastor, staff member or member of a Southern Baptist church or entity, please reach out for help at 202-864-5578 or SBChotline@guidepostsolutions.com. ■

SEBTS LAUNCHES MANDATORY SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE COURSE

IN AN EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS

are equipped to prevent and respond to abuse in their ministry contexts, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has announced the launch of a mandatory sexual abuse prevention and response course.

"Sexual abuse in any form should not be tolerated. It is a sinful act against fellow image bearers and an affront to a holy God," said SEBTS President Danny Akin. "Southeastern is committed to preventing sexual abuse and training

students to respond well to survivors with proper care and advocacy."

Undergraduate, graduate and advanced students will be required to complete the course on sexual abuse prevention and response during their programs at Southeastern. The mandatory training course will provide an overview of practical strategies for preventing and responding to sexual abuse and will clarify biblical and theological foundations for caring well for survivors of abuse. ■

NEW FROM COURIER PUBLISHING



"THE PREACHER MAN: WHEN THE ROBE DIDN'T FIT" (2022, COURIER

Publishing, \$14.95) is a lighthearted book about a man who fought God's call on his life because he didn't feel he could fit the mold of what others expected of him as a minister.

Norman Gardner's uniqueness — as evidenced in his larger-than-life presence, in his choice of attire, in his plainspoken but heartfelt sharing of the gospel — endeared him to those who loved him and who saw Jesus in his life.

For some time, he wanted to write a book as a way to let others who might be dealing with a call of God know that God can use them just the way they are, but he passed away before he could get too far with the project.

June McManus Gardner, his wife of 66 years and a published author, completed it for him, with the help of comments contributed by members of the 10 churches he pastored (four of them in his home state of South Carolina).

"The Preacher Man: When the Robe Didn't Fit" is available at junemgardner.com or by calling the author at 864-641-9984. To purchase by mail, send \$19.95 (which covers the cost of the book plus shipping) to June M. Gardner, 350 N. Pacolet Road, Campobello, SC, 29322. ■

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COURIER PUBLISHING

RECEIVE TODAY GIVE TOMORROW

Edna and her husband never earned a lot of money in their working years, but Edna's keen financial knowledge was a blessing as they saved well. She understood that *her blessings were from the Lord* and she was generous with what He provided.

In 2004, Edna found that she could establish a charitable gift annuity that would *provide her lifetime income and could support ministries she loved* at her death. She used a portion of her blessings to establish her first gift annuity and over the next several years, she established four more! Until her passing last year, those annuities provided supplemental income in her retirement days.

But Edna's story did not end there. The monies remaining at her death are now providing support to Connie Maxwell Children's Home! Edna came to faith in a Christian home and had a heart for children to know Christ. She chose to leave a legacy of giving so that other children could be loved and cared for in a Christian environment. What a blessing!

A Charitable Gift Annuity provides lifetime (one or two lifetimes) fixed income as well as a gift to the ministries you choose.

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1 SAMUEL 19-29: DAVID'S FIRST EXILE

WHENEVER I ENCOUNTER THE QUESTION, “What are your favorite books?” I am always reluctant to mention the Bible. While I understand and appreciate why Christians mention Scripture, I hesitate to evaluate Scripture because Scripture evaluates me (James 1:23-24). Whether or not I delight in the Bible — and sometimes I don’t — says more about me than about the Bible.

We could think about this principle when we think about the last third or so of 1 Samuel. In 1 Samuel 19, Saul boils over with envious rage against David, and his murderous rampage ravages the land of Israel. Beginning with Chapter 19, David is in exile until Saul’s death at the end of the book. We’ve seen in this column that a major purpose of 1 Samuel is to highlight David’s importance as God’s king over Israel. The lens through which we’ve looked at 1 Samuel is one in which we see David as foreshadowing Christ. If Scripture reveals who we are, we can think of the characters who encountered David in exile as ways people can respond to Christ.

Saul’s son Jonathan is one of the first characters who believed in David (1 Samuel 19-20, 23:16-18). Since Jonathan had the most to lose, we would expect him to be the least likely to trust in David. Along with accomplishing major

military victories, he was the presumptive heir to the throne, yet he laid aside that privilege in accepting God’s promise that David would be king (23:16-18). Jonathan’s life parallels those who sacrifice much to follow Jesus.

Each one who followed David ... was committed to God’s newly anointed king.

Secondly, an unlikely group followed David: “every man who was desperate, in debt, or discontented rallied around [David], and he became their leader” (1 Samuel 22:2, CSB). This ragtag group was never large or influential, which reminds us of Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:28-29). We have nothing to boast of before God since the despised are often the quickest to follow Christ.

The high priest Ahimelech was another who trusted David. When David came to him at Nob desperately needing food and supplies, Ahimelech provided food and a sword (1 Samuel 21; see Mark 2:25-28). With the help of Doeg the Edomite, Saul did to the little town of priests what he was unwilling to do to the Amalekites: He killed everyone except for Abiathar (1 Samuel 22 and Psalm 52). Ahimelech’s righteous death prefigures the deaths of the martyrs. He and dozens in his extended family died because of his faithfulness.

Lastly, Abigail, the wife of a wealthy landowner, supported David. When her husband, Nabal (whose name means “fool”), refused to give David and his men supplies for protecting Nabal’s land, Abigail quickly rectified her husband’s injustice. After Nabal died, Abigail became one of David’s wives (1 Samuel 24). She reminds us of those who have been willing to place their faith in God’s Anointed One above their commitment to family and friends (Luke 14:25-27).

Each one who followed David differed from the others, but they all were committed to God’s newly anointed king. Many of them never saw God fulfill his promises before they died (Ahimelech and Jonathan). We, too, are all different, but what matters most is whether we put our faith in God’s Anointed King. ■

Russell Freeman is upper school principal and Bible teacher at Greenville Classical Academy, a Christian school in Simpsonville.

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S.P.R.I.N.T.

HOW DO YOU SPRINT THROUGH LIFE? NOT with your mobile phone, but with your personality? Here's how to spell sprint:

Get Specific. Life is not lived in general. Life is lived very specifically. Decide exactly what you need to do. You can say that you will have a better marriage next year. Guess what? You won't have a better marriage. You have to be specific. Decide what will give you a better marriage. For example, spending 20 minutes talking to your mate every night and having a date every other Thursday is a great way to start. If you want your dreams to come true, then wake up and do something specific.

Be Positive. You can't "not" do anything. The more you try to stop something, the worse it gets. What you resist persists. The more you try to stop a habit, the more you do it because you think more about the habit. Stopping one thing means you have to start something in its place. You must erase and replace.

A peddler went through a western town selling a white powder. He told the people that if they mixed the powder with water it would make gold. However, he told them that while they were mixing the powder they could not think about red monkeys. He made a lot of money! The people asked for their money back after the powder didn't turn to gold. But he asked if they had thought of red monkeys while mixing the powder. Of course they had.

You have to replace the negative with the positive or you will end up like the Australian aborigine who got a new boomerang. He spent the rest of his life trying to throw away the old one. By the way, what do you call a boomerang that doesn't come back? A stick.

How does this relate to our world? Your problem might be handling anger. You decide that you will not get angry anymore. That is too general, and it is also negative. You need to replace your anger.

An example: "When I get angry this year, I will count to 10, take a few deep breaths and hum some silly song that makes me smile." Now this is a strategy that is specific and positive.

Be Realistic. Many people get discouraged because they set unrealistic goals. I had a goal of playing in the NBA. Since I was short and slow, I had to change the goal. I played college basketball.

When I was in private practice in Dallas, I saw men who were stressed out about the traffic. When I asked them what they expected every morning, they described a perfect trip: no traffic jams and no crazy people cutting them off. That's very unrealistic. There are no perfect trips in a big city. There are benefits, but traffic is not one of them. So I told them to be realistic about their drive. They should expect two traffic jams and five crazy people

each time they drove into Dallas. It was amazing how their attitude changed. They called and said they were having a great day: They had just one traffic jam and two crazy people.

Involve Others. When you make changes, you need someone who knows what you're changing, someone to encourage you and hold you accountable. There's something about going public that puts positive pressure on your performance. Sprinting alone is more difficult than sprinting with people cheering for you.

That brings us to the next term: **Nice Reward.** Sprinting for a touchdown is easy because there is an immediate reward. Overall, people do what is rewarding.

A grandmother who sang in the church choir told her grandson that she would pay him 50 cents if he would poke his grandpa every time he went to sleep in church. Grandpa dozed off and slept through the whole service. After church, she asked her grandson why he didn't do what he was supposed to do, especially since she paid him 50 cents. His response was that Grandpa had paid him \$1 to let him sleep.

S.P.R.I.N.T. ... can be an enjoyable way to make progress in life.

Choose a great reward in advance. Be careful about rewarding yourself with what you're trying to change. If you're changing your eating habits, do not reward yourself after four weeks of good eating with a trip to the Donut Palace.

Finally, set a **Time Deadline** for your accomplishment. In other words, a dream without a deadline becomes a nightmare. If you have a dream, you need discipline and a deadline to accomplish it. Your accountability person should know when to expect your changed behavior.

Spell S.P.R.I.N.T. the way I've taught you: **Specific, Positive, Realistic, Involve Others, Nice Reward, and Time Deadline.** You will discover that it can be an enjoyable way to make progress in life. ■

Charles Lowery is president and CEO of Lowery Institute for Excellence, Inc., a non-profit training and consulting organization. This article was adapted from his book, "Comic Belief 2." For more information, visit CharlesLowery.com.



CHOOSING LIFE SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY CHOOSING LIGHT

IF YOU HAVE BEEN ANYWHERE NEAR THE pro-life movement in the last 50 years, you have probably quoted, preached from, or in some way referenced Deuteronomy 30:19: “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring might live.” Granted, we can debate the contextual use of this passage, but there can be no doubt the stark choice offered between life and death, between blessing and curse, that is being played out in our culture right before our eyes.

When *Roe v. Wade* declared a constitutional right for a mother to kill her baby in what should be the safest and most sacred place for life on earth — her own womb — our culture began the downward slide from a culture of life to a culture of death. Now, with *Roe v. Wade* overturned, as the battle shifts to the states, we see the vitriolic and violent culture of death seething in anger over the choice of life made by the Supreme Court.

As followers of Christ, the world (should) see our light rather than feel our heat.

During a recent U.S. Senate Judicial Committee Hearing on the effects of the Supreme Court’s decision, several women celebrated their abortions, with one stating triumphantly, “Abortion is healthcare. My abortion was the best decision I ever made, and an act of self-love.” That last phrase is not a misprint. She actually declared her decision to end her own child’s life to be an act of self-love. Allie Beth Stuckey, a conservative commentator and pro-life advocate, responded by Tweeting, “She’s correct. She loved herself, her convenience, her comfort so much that she was willing to kill her child for them. That’s why the Bible says godless people in the end days will be lovers of self.” Now that is a proper contextual use of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Major corporations including, but certainly not limited to, Amazon, Disney, Paramount, Starbucks, Apple, Facebook,

Microsoft, etc., announced they will be providing travel expenses and other benefits for women who need to travel from a state that bans abortion to a state that welcomes the death of the unborn. These corporations and others like them fulfill the description of Romans 1 that says not only do they openly defy God’s righteous decree, they approve of those who practice defiance. They are openly and without shame aiding and abetting the incessant march of the culture of death.

What are Christians to do in the face of such unspeakable evil? Our flesh cries out for us to lash out in anger and hatred against those who would brag about or support such evil. We resort to angry words thrown like daggers toward those who so blatantly undermine our sense of right, decent, and godly behavior. But we are left unsatisfied by our rants because they lead only to a helpless feeling that the world is spinning out of any sense of moral control, and there is nothing we can do about it. While we may not be choosing death over life, what we are doing is choosing to curse darkness instead of lighting a candle.

Enter Peter Rex, founder and CEO of Rex, a tech company producing products that support the real estate industry. According to Daily Wire reporter Amanda Harding, Rex “slams big companies that brag about offering abortion tourism.” He believes the alternative is to assist and encourage employees to welcome their babies into the world. So his company is offering \$7,500 to employees who resolve their unwanted pregnancy by choosing life and then giving their baby up for adoption. And Rex is not the only company pushing back against the culture of death by offering incentives to their employees to choose life. Texas-based Buffer Insurance announced it would offer paid time off for maternity and paternity leave, and it will pay all expenses and medical costs associated with adoption.

Peter Rex and Buffer Insurance are choosing to do more than curse the darkness of our culture of death. They are lighting the light of love and the Gospel by encouraging their employees to choose the blessing of life by offering them the blessing of encouragement and support. They are fulfilling Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:14-15: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.” As the battle over abortion heats up, let’s make sure, as followers of Jesus Christ, that the world sees our light rather than feel our heat. ■

Tony Beam is senior director of Church and Community Engagement at North Greenville University and director of the Office of Public Policy for the South Carolina Baptist Convention.



UNWANTED LIVES

SHELLEY WAS AN UNWANTED CHILD.

Ruth had longed for a child of her own and adopted Shelley at birth and loved her. Ruth never hid from Shelley that she was adopted. It was important to her that Shelley know that she had been “chosen.”

Shelley would wonder at times who her birth mother was. The year after she graduated, she would find out who she was. She sat across the table from an investigator and listened to a few facts about her birth mother. Shelley then asked her name.

Her name is Norma McCorvey. You may know her by her pseudonym, Jane Roe.

Four months before Shelley was born, Norma signed an affidavit with her lawyers that filed a lawsuit now known as Roe v. Wade to abort Shelley’s life. Somewhere along the way, Roe v. Wade has become a bumper sticker slogan or a cause to try to get elected. We must never forget that Roe v. Wade was about one life.

Shelley was fortunate that the court system takes longer than four months. Roe v. Wade’s verdict occurred in 1973 when she was 2 years old and in a loving home with Ruth.

Many South Carolina Baptists celebrate the overturning

of Roe v. Wade to hopefully give other children like Shelley the opportunity to be wanted and loved. We grieve the 63 million unwanted lives that were aborted over the past 49 years. We have compassion for women in unplanned pregnancies and those affected by past abortions.

How hypocritical would it be of us to be caught partying instead of preparing to adopt, foster, or advocate for every unwanted child in the state of South Carolina? The time is now to rise up as South Carolina Baptists and be poised to love every unwanted child. Every dollar contributed to the cooperative mission in the state helps fund Connie Maxwell Children’s Ministries and missionaries from our South Carolina Baptist Convention team dedicated to helping each church advance in the area of adoption, fostering, and advocacy for those who have been marginalized. It will take more than our dollars. The solution will take selfless lives who are willing to lay down their lives for the sake of others.

Your community has children like Shelley and mothers like Norma who need someone to love them. ■

Lee Clamp is chief strategic officer for the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Find him on Facebook and Twitter (@leeclamp).



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WHAT IS AN ECTOPIC PREGNANCY?

I JUST SAW A POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA THAT proclaimed, “An ectopic pregnancy is not a real pregnancy.” This was, of course, in response to legal questions in the wake of Roe v. Wade. It was also wrong and confusing.

As Christians, it is incumbent on us not to simply be people who scream slogans and offer rhetoric in place of discussion and understanding, or who bring anger instead of compassion to our conflicts. Therefore, we do need to understand what we’re discussing.

An ectopic pregnancy means a pregnancy that begins to develop outside of the uterus. It may be in the Fallopian tubes, on an ovary, or in another location somewhere in the abdominal cavity. Symptoms include vaginal bleeding, pelvic pain, lightheadedness, weakness or passing out. Risk factors for tubal pregnancy include presence of an IUD, tubal ligation, prior tubal surgery, fertility treatments, endometriosis and previous sexually transmitted infection.

Like any pregnancy, an ectopic pregnancy is the product of the fertilization of an egg by a sperm. It divides and grows (for a while) like any other pregnancy. It is false to suggest

that it is anything other than a real, very human pregnancy.

However, the tragedy of an ectopic pregnancy is that because it is very vascular, when it ruptures it can cause fatal bleeding in the mother. The other tragedy is that it cannot be carried to term. An ectopic pregnancy will not survive because it lacks the necessary support structures of the uterus.

So even as we recognize the intrinsic, God-breathed humanity of the ectopic pregnancy, we must also understand that the pregnancy is doomed. Without proper and timely treatment, the mother may be as well.

Treatment of an ectopic pregnancy is not the same as an abortion. It is an important, life-saving medical therapy.

A woman who has treatment for an ectopic pregnancy has not had an abortion, nor has the treating physician performed one. However, both deserve our love and kindness. ■

Edwin Leap is an emergency physician and writer from Walhalla. Read more at EdwinLeap.com. For more detailed information on ectopic pregnancies, follow this link: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9687-ectopic-pregnancy>.



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OBITUARIES

HARVEY M. JOHNSON

Harvey M. Johnson, 98, of West Columbia, died June 30, 2022.

A native of Aiken County, he graduated from Columbia Bible College (now Columbia International University) and served in the U.S. Navy from 1944-1945 before being called into the ministry. He helped start several churches in Aiken County in 1948 and served as pastor for five years before attending Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He returned to South Carolina and served a number of churches before he was called as director of missions for Waccamaw Baptist Association in 1982, where he retired in 1988.

After retirement, he served as interim pastor and other short-term positions with the Lexington Baptist Association and various churches within the county.

Survivors include two sons, one granddaughter, and one great-grandson. He was preceded in death by his wife of 63 years, Ernestine Johnson.

THOMAS EDWARD JOHNSON JR.

Thomas Edward Johnson Jr., 86, of North Charleston, died June 15, 2022.

Born in Atlanta, Ga., he served as a sergeant in the U.S. Army in Korea. After returning to the States, he attended Georgia State University, then worked and retired from Xerox, Inc. After retirement, he became a Southern Baptist pastor and served at Hillcrest Baptist Church in North Charleston.

Survivors include his wife of 66 years, Young Sook Johnson, three children, eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by two sons, John Mark Johnson and Robert William Johnson.

CHARLES LAUNIE PRICE

Charles Launie Price, 90, of Charleston, died June 13, 2022.

A native of Columbia, he was a graduate of the University of South Carolina and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Upon graduation, he became pastor of Varnville Baptist Church for nine years. He then became a founder of the Baptist College at Charleston, (which later became Charleston Southern University), where he served as vice president for student affairs. He and his wife moved to Columbia in their mid-life years and were active members at Park Street Baptist Church for many years.

Survivors include two children, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Juddy Browning Price; his oldest daughter, Linda Price; and his oldest granddaughter, Erin Hill Hebler.

CLASSIFIEDS



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MINISTRY

EDITOR/PRESIDENT: The Baptist Courier, the oldest ministry partner of the South Carolina Baptist Convention (153 years), is seeking a full-time Editor and President. The position requires oversight of the print and electronic editions of the monthly magazine, the website, weekly podcast, social media, Courier Publishing (books), tours, and fundraising. Qualifications include significant experience as a Baptist communicator/writer who adheres to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message; active member of a Southern Baptist church; résumé with at least three references; and at least a master's degree. Deadline for receiving résumés and letters of reference is September 30, 2022. Please email résumés and letters of reference to: tarafreeman@fbccola.com.

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Northside Baptist Church in Calhoun Falls, SC, is searching for a full-time Pastor. We are a Southern Baptist church and member of Lakelands Baptist Association. We firmly believe and affirm the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. We are seeking a dedicated Pastor who will preach the inerrant Word of God without compromise. Please mail résumés and references, by August 31, to: NBC, Pastor Search, 205 Marion St., Calhoun Falls, SC 29628 or email to: NBCPastorSearch@yahoo.com.

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Sparrow Swamp Baptist Church in Timmonsville, SC, is searching for a full-time Pastor. We are a Southern Baptist church and a member of the Florence Baptist Association. We are looking for a man who will preach the infallible Word of God, who has a heart for missions, and who will love our members and community. Please mail résumés to: James Stewart, 951 Deerfield Rd., Timmonsville, SC 29161 or email to: jstewart050@gmail.com.

PASTOR: Ridgeway Baptist Church in Candler, NC, is prayerfully seeking a Pastor. We are a conservative, mission-minded church seeking an experienced, dedicated, and effective leader who will preach from the KJV, minister to all age groups, visit the sick, help evangelize the lost, and lead our church on mission for the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Lord is leading you to this calling, please email your résumé to Rev. Perry Brindley at: pbrindley@buncombebaptist.org. Deadline to submit résumés is Sept. 1.

LEAD PASTOR: Impact Community Church in Moore/Duncan, SC, is searching for a full-time Lead Pastor. We are a Southern Baptist church and member of Spartanburg Baptist Association and South Carolina Baptist Convention. We firmly believe and affirm the Baptist Faith & Message. We are seeking a dedicated Pastor who will preach the

Word of God without compromise. Please email résumés, with cover letter, references, and video of sermon to: pastorsearch@impactcommunity.church. For more information, visit: <https://www.impactcommunity.church/pastor-search/>.

FULL-TIME PASTOR: First Baptist Church of Johns Island, SC, is a rural church in a growing community looking for an energetic Pastor to help us reach younger people moving into our community. Please email your résumé, with link(s) to sermons, to: fbcjohni@bellsouth.net or mail to: FBC Johns Island, PO Box 218, Johns Island, SC 29455.

FULL-TIME PASTOR: White Plains Baptist Church in Gaffney, SC, is prayerfully seeking a Pastor. We are searching for a man who will preach the inerrant Word of God. This man should have a heart for missions and will love our members and community. Email résumés to: waynepowell127@gmail.com or mail to: WPBC, Pastor Search, 609 White Plains Road, Gaffney, SC 29340.

FULL-TIME SENIOR PASTOR: Hulon Baptist Church in Batesburg, SC, is seeking a Senior

▶ Classifieds... CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

Pastor who effectively preaches the Word of God without compromise. The candidate must have a shepherd's heart for our congregation and community and a passion for outreach. Our church goal is to grow spiritually and minister to more people. If you feel led toward this opportunity, please email your résumé, by August 30, to: greenwoodgail323@gmail.com.

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Tucapau Baptist Church in Startex, SC, is actively seeking the Pastor whom God has chosen to lead us into the future. We are a well-established, family-oriented, missions-minded, and loving church family located in the fast-growing western part of Spartanburg County in Upstate SC. Our church has an established reputation in the community and around the world for nearly 125 years. Our facilities consist of our main sanctuary with beautiful stained-glass windows, office areas, numerous classrooms accessible from the sanctuary in the educational portion of the building, and a fully functional Family Life Center with a full kitchen, gym, and upper room for our youth. Our community, as well as the entire area, is growing with new construction of single-family homes, renovations of existing housing, and plans for more new construction and gathering areas on the old Startex Mill site. Our loving and compassionate congregation needs a dynamic visionary man to come along beside us to lead us during this time. This man should possess the gifts of preaching, teaching, and shepherding our church family while being able to lead in growing our church family into this exciting new time for our church. Please mail your résumé and links to sermons or websites to: TBC, Pastor Search, PO Box 250, Startex, SC 29377.

FULL-TIME PASTOR: Secona Baptist Church in Pickens, SC, is seeking a Pastor who will be a visionary leader for our congregation, preaching the infallible Word of God without compromise, and showing the unfailing love of God to our church and surrounding community. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/secona> to learn more. Please mail résumés and references, as well as any questions, to SBC, Pastor Search, 234 Secona Rd., Pickens, SC 29671 or email to: sbsearch1786@gmail.com.

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FULL-TIME PASTOR: Ridge Spring Baptist Church is seeking a Pastor. We are a forward-thinking community of believers located in the small, charming town of Ridge Spring, SC. Ridge Spring has deep roots in agriculture and is picturesque, with a diverse population. We are ready to see God expand His kingdom through our church and community. If you are interested in more information and leading us in this endeavor, please submit your résumé to: dswannamaker@aol.com. For more information, visit: <https://www.ridgespringsc.com/> or: <https://www.ridgespringbaptist.com/>.

PASTOR: Woodhaven Baptist Church in Rock Hill, SC, is prayerfully seeking the Pastor whom God has chosen to lead us into the future. We are a missional church affiliated with the SBC, SCBC, and York Baptist Association, and we adhere to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. A seminary degree from an accredited Southern Baptist seminary is preferred. Please mail résumés to: Woodhaven Baptist Church, 2060 Marett Blvd., Rock Hill, SC 29732, Attn: Pastor Search, or email to: psc@woodhavenbaptistchurch.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR: New Hope Baptist Church in Pelion, SC, is a Southern Baptist church in a rural area that is prayerfully seeking an energetic, bivocational Pastor to help us reach our community. Please email your resume to: newhopebaptistpelion@gmail.com or mail to: New Hope Baptist Church, Attn: Mary Lou Starnes, PO Box 218, Pelion, SC 29123.

INTERIM PASTOR AVAILABLE: Experienced, retired, SBC Pastor available for interim or supply role in Upstate SC. Seminary graduate. Email: pacwriter@gmail.com or call: 704-690-3927.

PART-TIME PASTOR: Crescent Hill Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist church, near downtown Columbia, SC, is seeking a Pastor. A seminary degree and pastoral experience are preferred.

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Please mail résumés to: CHBC, Pastor Search, 2659 Two Notch Rd., Columbia, SC 29204 or email to: contactchbc@gmail.com.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: The Broad River Baptist Association is seeking a full-time Director of Missions. Please email résumés to: melissa@brbasc.org or mail to: PO Box 1299, Gaffney, SC 29342.

FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR/YOUTH: Hopewell Baptist Church in Seneca, SC, is seeking an Associate Pastor/Youth to lead our student ministry (grades 6-12) and assist our Senior Pastor. Interested candidates must have a love for the Word of God and a love for teaching/preaching the Word to students. Please email résumés to: whaleysc@bellsouth.net.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH AND FAMILY: Clear Spring Baptist Church in Simpsonville, SC, is prayerfully seeking a Minister of Youth and Family. The ideal candidate will be an active Southern Baptist with an effective Christian testimony who is willing to serve by developing a comprehensive educational ministry for the spiritual growth of the youth and children of the church. Experience in ministry and theological education are preferred but not requirements. Please email résumés, with references, to: sarahreule@gmail.com or mail to: CSBC, 301 Bethany Rd., Simpsonville, SC 29681.

FULL-TIME STUDENT PASTOR: Ringel Heights Baptist Church in Georgetown, SC, is seeking a Student Pastor. We are a Southern Baptist church in fellowship with the SCBC, SBC, & the Southeast Baptist Association. Qualified candidates should possess proper ministry education and

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experience. We are a growing church and feel God has the right person to lead our youth and children. Look us up on Facebook. Please email résumés to Pastor Kenny Johnson at: ringelheightsbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

FULL-TIME YOUTH PASTOR: Lakewood Baptist Church in Rock Hill, SC, is prayerfully seeking a Youth Pastor. This person is expected to be above reproach, while conducting God's business with a servant's heart. The Youth Pastor works in conjunction with our Senior Pastor and the supervisor as needed and as daily events require. The primary responsibility is to plan, implement and carry out activities for our youth. Please email résumés to Anita McAllister at: neetneet1117@gmail.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH PASTOR: Harmony Baptist Church in Elgin, SC (Columbia Metro Association), is prayerfully seeking a Youth Pastor. Duties include all normal activities, youth meetings, and special events. Please email résumés to: harmony998@gmail.com or you may call: 803-438-3439 for more information.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S OR STUDENT DIRECTOR: Seminary or college students, get experience while you are in school online. FBC in beautiful Hartsville, SC, can be the place for you to grow spiritually as you start the journey of your calling to lead others to love God, love others, and make disciples equipped to reach the world for Jesus. Besides our middle school and high schools, Coker University is very close to our church, and the Governor's School for Math and Sciences is next to Coker. See potential? Email your résumé to: ruth@firstbaptisthartsville.org.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR: First Baptist Church in Bamberg, SC, is seeking a Music Director. This role will involve planning and leading worship in a blended service. This person must be spiritually gifted in leading worship with the ability to read music. We will offer a competitive salary. All interested candidates may email questions or résumés to: bambergfbc@gmail.com.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER: Cedarwood Community Church, an SBC church in Waterloo, SC, is seeking a Worship Leader. We are a dynamic congregation of approximately 300 members located on Lake Greenwood. We are seeking someone who can lead a blended worship service. This position could become a full-time position in the near future. Our core values are Real, Loving, Accepting, and Serving. Please mail résumés to: CCC, 17194 Highway 72 West, Waterloo, SC 29384 or email to: ccarter@cedarwoodcommunitychurch.com.

PART-TIME WORSHIP DIRECTOR. Are you a seminary or college student? Get experience while you are in school online. FBC in beautiful Hartsville, SC, can be the place for you to grow in Christ as you start the journey of your calling to lead others to worship God, love others, and make disciples. Do you already have experience and sense God leading you to check us out? Great! Email your résumé to: ruth@firstbaptisthartsville.org. We recently transitioned to one blended service, so both traditional and contemporary worship skills are necessary.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER: Hermitage Baptist Church in Camden, SC, is seeking a Worship Leader. Responsibilities include leading music for our blended Sunday morning worship service, direct our sanctuary choir, and prepare and coordinate music for special services throughout the year such as Christmas and Easter. Please email résumés to: mark@hermitagebaptist.com or mail to HBC, Attn: Pastor Hopkins, 814 Jefferson Davis Highway, Camden, SC 29020.

FULL-TIME PIANIST: Peoples Baptist Church in Simpsonville, SC, is seeking a full-time Pianist, one with experience in old-time gospel music. Must be available for all Sunday services (10:45 AM and 6 PM). Salary is negotiable. Call 864-593-6500 or 347-303-2362 for more information.

PART-TIME PIANIST: Port Royal Baptist Church in Port Royal, SC, is seeking to fill this role. If interested, please email: secretary@portroyalbaptist.org or call: 843-521-1994 with questions.

PART-TIME CUSTODIAN: Port Royal Baptist Church in Port Royal, SC, is seeking someone to keep our buildings and grounds clean, neat, and in good repair. Please email the church at: secretary@portroyalbaptist.org or call 843-521-1994 with questions.

VACATION/TRAVEL

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A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO COURT DECISION

LIKE MANY CHRISTIANS, I HAVE RECENTLY felt a responsibility to say something about the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade and open the door for abortion restrictions across the country. My goal in doing so is not to score any points or to take a victory lap. I am not under the illusion that I have the influence or eloquence to change any hearts and minds. I am praying that God will do that. Instead, my purpose is to issue a brief call for a biblical and Christ-like response in these days.

Because of ... what God says about life in the womb, there is no room for Bible-believing Christians to equivocate on this issue.

Part of the problem is that so many Christians do not know why we believe what we believe. Let me be clear. Christians should believe abortion is wrong. God's Word makes it clear that every human life is made in God's image and therefore has infinite value. The dignity of human life must be protected and respected because God has created us with purpose and worth (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 9:5-6; James 3:9). Scripture also leaves no doubt that an unborn baby in the womb is a human life (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:13). Because of the unmistakable nature of what God says about life in the womb, there is no room for Bible-believing Christians to equivocate on this issue. Babies who are yet to be born are human beings made in the image of God, and their lives must be protected.

Even if Christians know what we believe about abortion and why we believe it, I have become convinced over the last few days that we have no idea how to express these beliefs. The overturning of Roe v. Wade has only served to highlight what has long been clear: We are better at gloating than giving grace. We are happier to win an argument than to win a friend. We would rather receive likes on social media from those who agree with us than extend love and compassion to those who do not. It is heartbreaking because this is not the way of Jesus. He never held his righteousness over the heads of the hurting and broken. He was never content with

simply being right. He desired to win us over even when we were wrong. He said, "I know you are broken and weary. Come to me and I will give you rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). Jesus drew his enemies near. He refused to push them away. He refused to push us away. That is the heart of Christ for sinners.

We are right to praise God for the protection of human life, but we are wrong if we think that this is an excuse to say, "I told you so." We are throwing away one of the best opportunities we will ever have in our lifetimes to show the world the love and grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. I am afraid that most Christians are currently blind to the extraordinary opportunity in which we are now living. The most recent studies suggest that over 300,000 babies who would have been aborted will now be born every year.¹ This means that there will now likely be thousands more unwanted children in need of adoption. There will likely now be thousands more expectant mothers with pain and fear and questions. Unfortunately we are already failing, and our job just got a lot harder. There are approximately 117,000 children waiting to be adopted in the United States alone.² Restrictions on abortion will undoubtedly add to their number. The Church must step up and be the city on the hill that Jesus called us to be. Fatherless children in our communities are not someone else's problem. They are our calling.

Yes, unborn babies are made in God's image. We cannot, and will not, deny or compromise on that truth. But so are women who have had abortions. So are unexpected mothers who are deeply afraid. So are the thousands of fatherless children who have been born into abandonment, poverty, and brokenness. So are the people who disagree with us. They are made in God's image, too. Jesus is drawing them in. Are we? ■

1. *This figure was calculated by adding together the most recent abortion estimates from every state in which almost all abortions will now likely be illegal.* https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_downloads/abortion-incidence-service-availability-us-2017-tables.pdf <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2021/10/26-states-are-certain-or-likely-ban-abortion-without-roe-heres-which-ones-and-why>

2. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/media/press/2021/national-data-shows-number-children-foster-care-decreases-third-consecutive-year>

Will Bray is teaching pastor of Upstate Church, Anderson, a campus of First Baptist Church, Simpsonville. He is the son of SCBC President Wayne Bray, senior pastor of First, Simpsonville.



THE MONTH OF AUGUST

SOMEONE RECENTLY SAID, “AUGUST IS SORT of a nothing month.” I disagree with that assumption. It is a hot month, often the hottest of the year for the people of South Carolina. Kids are going back to school and college football is ramping up for another season. The anticipation of autumn begins to influence our thoughts.

August is named after Augustus Caesar and has two birthstones: peridot and sardonyx. The flower for this month is the gladiolus from the Latin word *gladius*, which means “sword.”

Aug. 12 is Vinyl Record Day and Aug. 13 is International Left-Handers Day.

August contains the dog days of summer, where there is a peak in both temperature and humidity.

Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous “I Have A Dream” speech on Aug. 28.

Our oldest and youngest daughters and our oldest grandchild were born in August.

Elvis Presley died in August 1977, three days before Anne and I were married. August is a meaningful month for our family. Following the wedding, we traveled to St. Augustine, Fla., where we quickly discovered we had food poisoning along with several members of the wedding party. Our first three days as husband and wife were spent in separate beds feeling pretty miserable. We did eventually revive and enjoyed the rest of our honeymoon.

We enjoyed St. Augustine Beach and Jacksonville Beach — and we even visited the Fountain of Youth, where I bought an empty bottle and filled it with water from the famous fountain. I kept it in our fridge for many years, taking a sip now and then. Anne was somewhat disgusted with my practice. Eventually, we tossed the bottle and remaining water. It did not help me stay young, but I did start losing my hair!

This year we will celebrate our 45th wedding anniversary. I shared with my radiation oncologist that I wanted to live long enough to celebrate our 50th anniversary. He encouraged me, saying, “That’s very doable.” Then I pushed him a little further, saying I wanted to see all my grandchildren graduate from high school. He said it was good to have goals!

I was the pastor of my first church when we got married. Anne was teaching high school algebra. In January 1977

we spent a week attending the “January Bible Study” on Romans. That was the first time I told her indirectly that I loved her. When I dropped her off at her house, I asked her to look up a Bible verse and that would explain my feelings. The next night, on our way to Bible study, she didn’t say anything. I finally said, “Well, did you read the verse?” She grinned and said, “Yes, I love you, too.”

I like August ... because of all the significant things that have occurred in our lives.

By the way, the verse was 2 Corinthians 11:11: “Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!” This verse had nothing to do with my admission of my love for Anne, but it got the point across. Years later, she teased me about being a coward because I did not just come out and plainly say, “I love you.”

We owned almost nothing as newlyweds, but we were able to get a loan and move into our first house in August.

When I proposed, we went to my study and knelt before the couch to pray. While she was praying, I very quietly slipped the diamond ring and one rose from underneath the couch. I prayed briefly, and then she opened her eyes. That’s when I popped the question: “Will you marry me?” She responded with a yes and a hug.

I wasn’t trying to be cheap by giving her just one rose, but with my finances following the purchase of the ring, it was about all I could afford. I did not realize it then, but over the years one rose on our anniversary became the standard — and it was a lot cheaper than a dozen!

I like August, not because it is a spectacular month, but because of all the significant things that have occurred in our lives. I was born July 31 — almost an August baby.

Here’s to August — a great month! ■

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