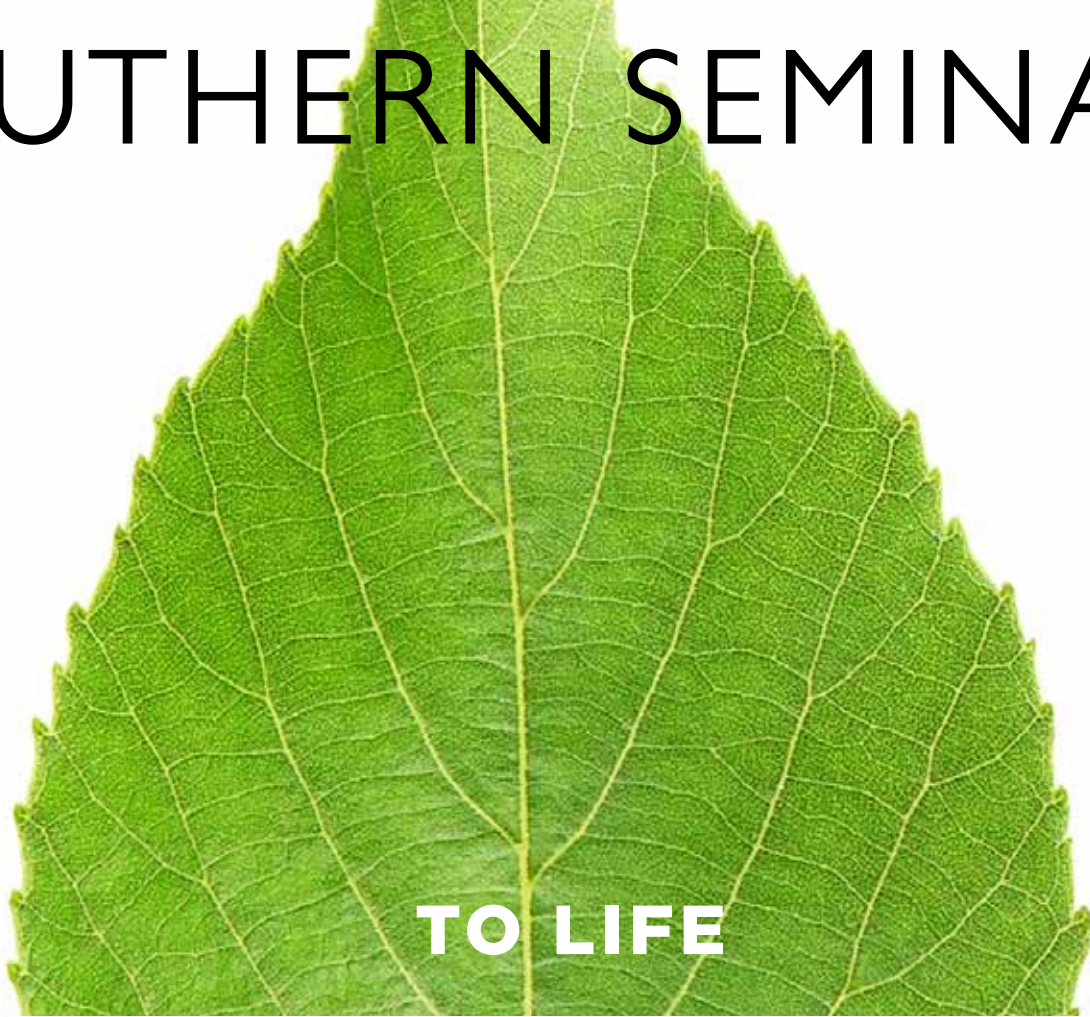


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‘Feed my sheep’: A shepherd’s call to war

The church desperately needs a new generation of pastors and preachers who are ready to be kind and courageous shepherds of Christ’s flock.

Do you remember the conversation between Peter and our Lord after his resurrection from the dead?

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:15-17, ESV)

These utterly simple commands are a job description for ministry. The church desperately needs a new generation of tender and tenacious shepherds who will serve and lead the

church — feeding them always the truth of God’s Word.

We often underestimate what it means for Christ to be our good shepherd. We tend to think of shepherding in entirely pastoral terms, but it is a profession of spiritual warfare: shepherds tend to their flock, but they must also slay predators.

To Peter, Christ gave the command to “feed my sheep.” Three times the command is repeated. Three times the commission is extended. Three times Peter receives the pastoral calling.

But it is not just Peter who received this calling.

flock, to guard and to tend and to love.

Southern Seminary is a school for shepherds, and we are incredibly thankful for this calling. Just imagine the courage required of this generation of preachers and pastors. The good news is that this generation of young pastors, the young men on the Southern Seminary campus, is ready for this challenge. They are courageous and convictional, passionate and gospel-centered.

They are ready to go to the nations and to go into the churches. They are ready to plant churches and they are ready to replant churches — and that is the great story told in this edition of the *Southern Seminary Magazine*.

Southern Seminary and Boyce College have never been more needed, and this work has never been more important. We are headed into a time

We are headed into a time of great challenge for the Christian church, but this generation of courageous young Christians is determined to be faithful.

Every God-called minister is assigned this role. Ministers are called and charged to feed the sheep, to tend the flock of God and to guard the sheep entrusted to their care. Jesus Christ, the crucified, resurrected and ascended Lord, is the good shepherd of his sheep, those he purchased with his own blood. And he called and commissioned under-shepherds to feed his

of great challenge for the Christian church, but this generation of courageous young Christians is determined to be faithful. Our task is to get them ready for deployment.

Our mission is to get an army of shepherds ready for service. Just try explaining that to a secular world. Thank you for all you do to help make that mission possible.

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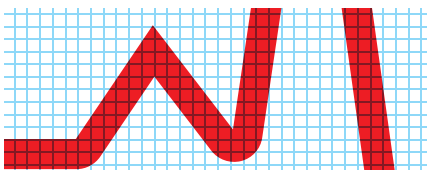
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For Harold Mathena, business was always a means to ministry. After selling his \$240M business, that goal continues. *By James A. Smith Sr.*



32 Breathing new life into dying churches

How the North American Mission Board is working to decrease the number of dying churches in America. *By Kevin Ezell*



34 The revitalization of Rehoboth Baptist Church

Troy Bush is leading the historic Rehoboth Baptist Church to recapture her identity. *By Aaron Cline Hanbury*



38 Restoring the church's first love

The church at Ephesus provides a case-study for church revitalization today. *By Adam W. Greenway*



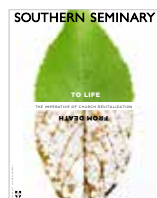
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An alumnus and former professor leads Kentucky Baptists to revitalize churches around the state. *By Erin Roach*



42 Implementing the 'Change Matrix' in the local church

The four-step "change matrix" can help pastors initiate and sustain change in their churches. *By William D. Henard*



On the cover

This cover illustration by creative director Eric Jimenez depicts the contrast between life and death, which alludes to the urgency of church revitalization.

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26 Evangelicalism’s major turn

Many Southern Baptist congregations face the same crisis as mainline churches across the west: replant or close.
By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

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News



Street preaching, Muslim outreach focus of Detroit mission trip

Ten students from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary spent a week of their spring break on the streets in Detroit, Mich., evangelizing, ministering to the homeless and sharing the gospel with Muslims in the community.

The seminary's Bevin Center for Missions Mobilization sent the team to struggling Detroit neighborhoods, March 29 - April 6, to partner with the North American Mission Board's urban ministry program, helping local church plants and evangelism in the area.

The Detroit team is one of 11 mission trips the Bevin Center for Missions Mobilization at Southern Seminary and the school's D3 youth camp will send during the spring and into late summer. With more than 70 participants total, teams will work in domestic locations, including Maine, Connecticut, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Utah, and internationally in southern France, central and south Asia, Uganda, Nepal, India, Brazil and Kazakhstan during the summer break.

Mark T. Coppenger, professor of Christian philosophy, led the Detroit trip. He said mission trips are "transformative for the short-termers. But, having served as a church planter in a 'pioneer area,' I can assure you that volunteers can be a great encouragement to the saints who live there and are doing their best to be salt and light in the community," noting the importance of mission trips for urban church plants.

At the beginning of the week, students spent Sunday ministering at Victory Fellowship Baptist Church whose pastor, Darryl Gaddy, is the moderator for the Greater Detroit Baptist Association.

They also worked with Matt Vroman, pastor of Eastside Community Church. The group helped him canvas the neighborhood in which he ministers through flyer distribution, inviting families to the church. On their final Sunday in the city, the group drove Eastside's church van to pick up people for the morning worship service. Coppenger preached and the students led the service.

Later, the team met with the North American Mission Board's Send: Detroit and associational leaders to create promotional videos for five selected neighborhoods in the city: Rivertown, Corktown, Lafayette Park, Midtown and Poletown. Students filmed videos of local residents in each area for NAMB to use for church planting promotion in the selected neighborhoods.

A primary focus of the trip was evangelism to Muslims, including a visit to the House of Wisdom Mosque where they attended a service, met and shared the gospel with the Imam — the leader of the mosque — and shared a meal with him and his wife.

The team later worked with a Detroit parachurch ministry to homeless people, distributing more than 80 sack lunches which lead to several evangelism opportunities.

Steve Runner, a student who went to Detroit with the team, said the trip benefitted him as a seminary student.

"Especially beneficial on this trip was the exposure to the Muslim community in Dearborn," he said. "We were able to attend a Friday prayer service at a Mosque, then spend some time with the Imam and his family. This 'boots on the ground' experience is unavailable in the academic environment, and provides invaluable insight into the 'real lives' of people of other belief systems." —RUTHANNE IRVIN

More information about mission trips with the Bevin Center, ways to support students going on the trips or ways to pray, visit the Bevin Center, located in Honeycutt 218.

Utah evangelicals on ‘vanguard’ for American believers, Mohler says

Southern Baptists in Utah and other western states live at the forefront of a cultural change sweeping the nation at a rapid pace, R. Albert Mohler Jr. said Feb. 25 at First Baptist Church of Provo, Utah.

Mohler, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, spoke earlier in the day at Brigham Young University in Provo, owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That evening, Russ Robinson, pastor of First Baptist Provo, invited Mohler to bring a message to area evangelicals, who travelled from as far as Winnemucca, Nev.; Twin Falls, Idaho and St. George, Utah, five hours southwest of Metro Salt Lake City.

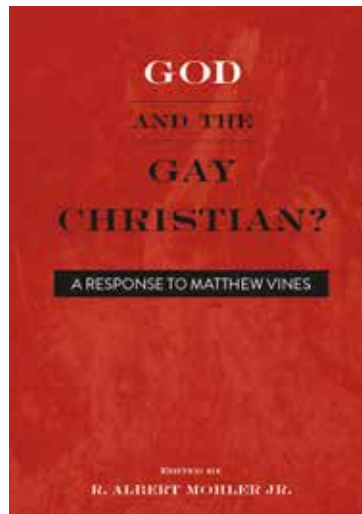
Preaching from the first epistle of Peter, Mohler said American culture is moving toward what first century Christians faced.

The speed of cultural change is “beyond our imagination,” he said. “But in many ways, if you look at 1 Peter, this is the normal, if not normative, experience for the church. The church, usually where it’s found, is not found in power; it’s found among the powerless. It’s not found as the dominant force; it’s found as a group of holy, elect, faithful exiles.”

Addressing the Utah and western states Southern Baptists in the audience, Mohler said, “You are living in some ways as the advance edge of what that looks like. You’re living in a place right now in which gospel Christianity is the minority position.”

At the conclusion of his message, Mohler answered questions from the approximately 140 people in attendance. During more than three hours at the church facility, Mohler also met with 41 pastors and church planters to dialogue further about their challenges.

—KAREN L. WILLOUGHBY



Mohler, colleagues publish e-book refuting new book, ‘God and the Gay Christian’

A new book’s “exceedingly dangerous” assertions that homosexual orientation and gay marriage are consistent with a high view of the Bible is refuted by President R. Albert Mohler Jr. and four of his colleagues at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in an e-book, published April 22.

God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines released the same day as the official release of Vines’ volume, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*, which garnered significant attention in the days leading up to its release.

Vines, a 24-year-old former Harvard student, weaves his personal biography of growing up as an evangelical Christian and “coming out” as a homosexual to his parents and now former home church. In the process, Vines left Harvard in order to study the Bible’s claims about homosexuality, which later resulted in the publishing of his book.

“Not every book deserves a response, but some books seem to appear at a time and context in which response is absolutely necessary,” Mohler told Southern Seminary News. “The kind of argument that is presented by Matthew Vines, if not confronted, can lead many people to believe that his case is persuasive and that his treatment of the Bible is legitimate. I think that it’s very important that evangelicals be reminded that the church has not misunderstood Scripture for 2,000 years.”

Published by SBTS Press, *God and the Gay Christian?* is a 100-page critique of Vines, edited by Mohler, who also contributed a chapter. Other contributors are: James M. Hamilton Jr., professor of biblical theology; Denny Burk, professor of biblical studies; Owen Strachan, assistant professor of Christian theology and church history; and Heath Lambert,

“I think that it’s very important that evangelicals be reminded that the church has not misunderstood Scripture for 2,000 years.”

assistant professor of biblical counseling. Burk, Strachan and Lambert teach primarily for Boyce College, the undergraduate school of Southern Seminary. —JAMES A. SMITH SR.

Southern Seminary’s e-book — published as the first in a new “CONVERSANT” series from SBTS Press — is available for free as a PDF download at press.sbts.edu, and available for order on digital platforms, including Kindle, Nook and iBook.



Matt Schmucker of Washington, D.C., first vice chairman; John Thweatt of Pell City, Ala., second vice chairman; Phil West, Warner Robbins, Ga., secretary; and Stanley Craig of Prospect, Ky., chairman of the seminary's Financial Board. Chad Wilson of Jackson, Tenn., was elected chairman of the Audit Committee.

Trustees approved the designation of J. Scott Bridger as Bill and Connie Jenkins Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies. Bridger also will serve as director of the Jenkins Center for the Christian Understanding of Islam, which the school dedicated in February.

Bridger currently is assistant professor of world Christianity and Islamic studies at Criswell College. He holds a master of arts degree in Arabic language and Islamic studies from the University of Haifa (Israel) and doctor of philosophy degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, with a dissertation on a Christian exegesis of the Qur'an.

Also announced was the appointment of Owen Strachan, assistant professor of Christian theology and church history, as director of the Carl F.H. Henry Institute for Cultural Engagement, a think tank studying the present and future of American evangelicalism.

In addition to Bridger and Strachan,

Trustees update faculty hiring policies, 'unify' faculty

In order to continue to "attract and retain a first-class academic faculty," said President R. Albert Mohler Jr., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's board of trustees approved updates to faculty employment policies and unified the graduate and undergraduate faculties during its April 14-15 meeting.

Trustees also approved promotions, designations to academic chairs and sabbatical leaves for certain faculty, elected new officers and approved a \$40.572 million budget for the 2014-2015 academic year, a 5.87 percent increase from the current year.

All actions were unanimous.

Under new employment policies, all elected faculty will serve under a "simple academic instructional contract" rather than a tenure-based contract. Faculty will be eligible for contract terms of between one and nine years. The new policy is effective immediately and applies to all current faculty.

Tenure is a "ticking fiscal time-bomb" in the larger world of higher

education, Mohler said. "It is an economically unsustainable model and sooner or later virtually every academic institution is going to have to abandon tenure or face disaster."

Trustees also approved an administration recommendation to "unify" the faculties of Boyce College, Southern Seminary's undergraduate school, with the graduate faculties in the School of Theology and Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry.

Mohler said with the trustee action, the college faculty is now "on par" with the graduate school faculties.

Trustees also approved an administration recommendation to "unify" the faculties of Boyce College, Southern Seminary's undergraduate school, with the graduate faculties in the School of Theology and Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry.

Philip Gunn, speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives, was elected as chairman of the board of trustees, replacing outgoing board chairman E. Todd Fisher, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Shawnee, Okla. Joining Gunn as officers are:

the board approved several members of the faculty to various academic chairs of study. And, effective Aug. 1, 2014, trustees granted promotions in faculty rank to six members. In addition, trustee granted several faculty sabbatical leaves. —JAMES A. SMITH SR.



1937 PROJECT

Southern Seminary's second annual 1937 Project, April 26, sent students, their spouses and families to serve through various projects around the city of Louisville, Ky. The project is named after Louisville's Great Flood in 1937, when the seminary served the city by offering its campus as a refuge. This year's 1937 Project sent students to churches and ministries around the city, including Sojourn Community Church; Kids Against Hunger, Louisville; Scarlet Hope; and Jefferson Street Baptist Center and many other locations.



Mohler to graduates: ministers must open their mouths

God calls Christian ministers to open their mouths so that others can “hear his voice, believe and be saved,” R. Albert Mohler Jr. told the 2014 graduates of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Two hundred fifty-six students received degrees — ranging from certificates to doctorates — during commencement exercises on the seminary lawn, May 16, 2014. A week earlier, May 9, 107 students received degrees from Boyce College, the undergraduate school of Southern Seminary.

In an address from the Acts 10 titled, “So Peter Opened His Mouth’ — The Preacher’s Calling Reduced to Five Powerful Words,” Mohler explained that the “Bible presents an astonishingly simple method of preaching.”

Mohler drew from verse 34, where the text records that the apostle Peter “opened his mouth,” suggesting that these words encapsulate “the essential act of preaching reduced to five earth-shaking words. So Peter opened

his mouth.” And, Mohler said, the “most clarifying way to understand the preacher’s task is to consider its most quintessential act — the opening of the mouth.”

“So Peter opened his mouth. He obeyed the call. He fulfilled his calling. He did not remain silent or hide, he opened his mouth and declared all that God had commanded him to say,” Mohler said.

God commanded Peter to declare that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ receives the forgiveness of sins, including both Jews and Gentiles, according to Mohler.

“Peter had declared the story of Jesus, who went about doing good and healing, but was put to death by hanging him on a tree,” he said. “God raised him up on the third day, and after appearing to many witnesses he commanded the apostles to preach the gospel to all people, to all nations.”

Mohler concluded by calling the graduates of Southern Seminary to follow Peter’s example.

“The Christian ministry requires courage, and we can see even more courage required in the near future,” he said. “There may well be a higher

price exacted for opening our mouths. But God has called us to open our mouths so that others can hear his voice, believe, and be saved — so that his church will be fed and taught, and be matured.

“So, dear preacher, go ye into all the world, and open your mouth.”

Also at graduation, Mohler presented the annual Findley B. and Louvenia Edge Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence to Robert L. Plummer, who is professor of New Testament interpretation at the seminary. He is also the author of several books, including the popular *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*. He is an elder at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville. He and his wife, Chandi, have three daughters: Sarah Beth (11), Chloe (8) and Anabell (“Bella,” 6). —AARON CLINE HANBURY

Mohler’s entire address is available in audio and video at the SBTS Resources page, www.sbts.edu/resources. A complete manuscript of the address, “So Peter Opened His Mouth’ — The Preacher’s Calling Reduced to Five Powerful Words” is available at www.albertmohler.com.



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Events



Gheens Lecture focuses on faith and politics

A mutual commitment to religious freedom — more than Christianity — formed America’s founding, Thomas Kidd argued, March 25-26 during the Gheens Lecture at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Kidd, professor of history at Baylor University and senior fellow at Baylor’s Institute for Studies of Religion, and prolific historian and author, including evangelicalism and the American Revolution, argued in his introductory lecture, “God of Liberty: How Religion Framed America’s Founding,” that what grew into America from the 13 colonies was not unequivocally Christian, nor was it intended to be.

“Religious odd-fellows” like skeptic Thomas Jefferson and Baptist preacher John Leland set aside their differing convictions and, through an agreement on the role of church and state, served as co-belligerents for the cause of religious freedom and against the error of religious tyranny, Kidd argued.

“The Baptists of New England saw Thomas Jefferson to be something of a religious savior,” Kidd said.

When one remembers less than a century earlier Baptists languished in Virginia prisons for “illegal,” non-Anglican preaching, this assertion is less than startling, he said.

Kidd recalled five ideas that connected early Americans in their mutual pursuit of religious freedom: the disestablishment of state-sanctioned, state-funded churches; equality by creation; the political threat of human sinfulness (thus a decentralization of power); the necessity of virtue in maintaining the Republic; and a belief that God or providence moved in and through nations.

These five tenets, shared by Jefferson, Leland and others, paved the way toward an “unusually free nation where the exercise of religion could flourish unfettered,” Kidd said.

No unprecedented conviction is without its accompanying difficulties, and this was never clearer than when Founding Father Thomas Jefferson became president in 1800, Kidd said. Jefferson’s liberalism caused some New England Federalists, according to Kidd, to hide their Bibles for fear of quickly-coming government coercion.

“To their relief, of course, there was no anti-Christian horror, no dramatic changes in regards to America’s stance

on religion,” he said. “Jefferson simply believed we should never promote one denomination, coerce religious observance or persecute one’s beliefs.”

This compromise provided ballast, perhaps shakier in today’s recent decades, where Americans of any religious stripe may worship freely and even flourish.

“

Jefferson simply believed we should never promote one denomination, coerce religious observance or persecute one’s beliefs.

Kidd’s final two lectures were biographical. The first focused on the Founding Father Patrick Henry, a man who has perhaps fallen on the wrong side of history due to a view of church and state that was never widespread and the prevailing popularity of others, like James Madison and Jefferson — both of whom eventually served as president. —ALEX DUKE

Audio from the Gheens Lecture is available at sbts.edu/resources.



At Renown Conference, McDowell plays the atheist as speakers equip students in apologetics

Apologetics — the practice of defense of the Christian faith — is important for Christians to understand, particularly in today’s culture, according to the speakers at Southern Seminary’s annual Renown Conference, March 14-15, which featured apologist Sean McDowell.

In his first of two plenary sessions, McDowell, a popular author and speaker, led an unconventional talk, posing as an atheist as he answered questions from the audience. He emphasized several things, including the way in which Christians treat those who hold different beliefs, the importance of a growing knowledge of Scripture and how the study of apologetics can serve as a means to love people well.

“When we study apologetics, when we study Scripture, it’s not to win an argument, it’s not to prove somebody wrong. It’s for God to break our own hearts so we can speak truth in a loving, compassionate, thoughtful manner,” he said after answering questions about ethics, morality, genocide, the human soul and more, all from an atheistic view point.

Later at the conference, Southern Seminary president R. Albert Mohler Jr. preached a plenary session from Ecclesiastes 12.

The two-day event also offered students breakout sessions focused on topics about gender, the rationality of Jesus, the apologetics of C.S. Lewis, the exclusivity of Jesus and more, each led by Southern Seminary faculty members. —RUTHANNE IRVIN

Audio and video from Renown is available online at sbts.edu/resources.

Andrew Fuller Center hosts lecture about 19th-century missionary Adoniram Judson

Christians are given two options in response to missions: either go, preach and establish churches or support those who go, according to Jason Duesing who lectured at Southern Seminary’s Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies mini-conference about Adoniram Judson, March 5.

The lecture focused on the ministry and legacy of Judson, 19th century missionary to the Burmese people. Judson pioneered American missions, setting a precedent for the stateside-supported, agency-based sending that is common today.

Duesing, vice president for strategic initiatives and assistant professor of historical theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered the two-part lecture, “Throwing Our Hats Over the Wall: Adoniram Judson and the Global Gospel Call.” His first lecture introduced Judson’s role in the American missions movement. Duesing discussed Judson’s conversion, consecration and commission. His second lecture discussed Judson’s dedication to Baptist convictions, the Burmese people, and, ultimately, the Bible.

Duesing noted potential responses to the world’s “tsunami of lostness” whose tide pushed Judson and his wife out to the Burmese unreached more than two centuries ago. He argued the Christian may respond one of two ways: go, preach and establish churches where Christ has not yet been named or stay, pray and support this globally necessary endeavor.

More than anything else, though, what compelled Judson and his new wife to the ends of the earth was his belief that the gospel of Jesus Christ is one of power and grace, that it contains a command whose completion is sure due to the promised plan of a faithful God, said Duesing. —ALEX DUKE





Wives of prominent Southern Baptist leaders encourage Southern Seminary women's groups

In the last two months, the wives of prominent leaders within the Southern Baptist Convention spoke to women's groups at Southern Seminary. In the first, Susie Hawkins encouraged wives of ministers to think biblically about expectations, and later, Joyce Rogers reminded ladies that life's difficult seasons have a purpose.

A woman's negative experience may shape their view of ministry, according to Hawkins, author of *From One Ministry Wife to Another* and wife of GuideStone Financial Services president, O.S. Hawkins, at the seminary's women's fellowship event, Koinonia, March 25.

In ministry, one can become cynical and disillusioned, she said, pointing to the common Christian response to failure within ministry that brings stigma. Instead of becoming cynical, women should "have a proper view of success and failure within the will of God."

Hawkins offered three biblical definitions of success: success is faithfulness, success is believing and success is holiness.

Rogers, widow of long-time pastor at Bel-

levue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and Southern Baptist leader, Adrian Rogers, said that God designs the winter seasons of life for a purpose, at Southern Seminary's spring Woman's Auxiliary luncheon, April 14.

The Woman's Auxiliary encourages and equips young women to continue their training and preparation for ministry.

This year's luncheon featured Rogers, whose late husband played an instrumental role in the convention's Conservative Resurgence during the 1970s and 1980s, speaking to the group of 270 women from 17 Kentucky-area churches about difficult seasons in life and encouraging them that "spring comes after a long winter."

Rogers said God made the literal season of winter for a purpose, and the same applies to the seasons of life that are cold and dark.

Woman's Auxiliary also awards scholarships for women studying at the seminary.

—RUTHANNE IRVIN AND HAYLEY SCHOEPLER

More information about Koinonia and Woman's Auxiliary and audio from the Woman's Auxiliary event is available at sbts.edu/women.

Seminary Wives Institute hosts annual Seminar Saturday

From raising healthy children to gracious communication skills to discipline issues in parenting to the power of prayer, Southern Seminary's recent women's event, Seminar Saturday, encouraged women in diverse areas for more fruitful ministries.

Seminar Saturday is an opportunity for women to gather for a one-day event for fellowship and to hear from professors and their wives about various ministry topics.

The March 8 event hosted more than 200 women from the seminary community who participate in women's events throughout the year on campus, specifically Seminary Wives Institute. Led by Mary Mohler, wife of seminary president R. Albert Mohler Jr., SWI is a semester-by-semester program for seminary wives who desire to receive further ministry training by professors and faculty wives.

—RUTHANNE IRVIN

More information about Seminary Wives Institute, Seminar Saturday or to request audio from the event is available at sbts.edu/women.

SBTS and Boyce College host spring preview days

More than 400 prospective students visited the campus of Southern Seminary and its undergraduate school, Boyce College, for spring preview days.

The college hosted more than 170 prospective students to its preview day, April 25. And the seminary welcome more than 200 prospective students to campus for the one-day event, March 25.

Both Boyce and Southern preview attendees spent a Friday touring campus, meeting with faculty, listening to testimonies from current students and parents of students. Each group also concluded its preview day with a reception at the home of Southern Seminary president R. Albert Mohler Jr.

Some Boyce College preview attendees participated in the seminary's second annual 1937 Project, a service project around the city of Louisville Ky. —SBTS COMMUNICATIONS

More information about events at Boyce College and Southern Seminary, including the preview days for fall 2014, is available at sbts.edu/events.



Planters in Catholic regions, Christians need biblical discernment regarding the new pope

International church planter Leonardo de Chirico lectured at Southern Seminary about how the new pope affects church planting in Roman Catholic contexts, Feb. 20. Christians, according to De Chirico, need to use “biblical discernment” when interpreting the new pope’s words.

De Chirico, who presented “Pope Francis, Developments in Contemporary Roman Catholicism, and the Impact of Church Planting,” is vice-chairman of the Italian Evangelical Alliance and pastor of Breccia di Roma, a Reformed Baptist church in Rome, Italy.

The Bevin Center-sponsored event focused on Pope Francis’ place within Roman Catholicism and whether or not his intended initiatives coincide with the Christian call to evangelism, church planting and discipleship.

TIME Magazine chose Jorge Mario Bergoglio as the 2013 Person of the Year.

“(To Francis), the gospel appears not to be the message of salvation from God’s judgment,” he said. “Instead, it is access to a fuller measure of a salvation that is already given to all mankind at different levels (extending) the fullness of grace to a world already under grace.”

De Chirico noted the Protestant dilemma, and his assessment, if true, requires one to pursue three important postures regarding the modern Protestant-Catholic relationship: theological awareness, historical alertness and spiritual vigilance.

“Our task is to exegete the language of the pope,” de Chirico said, “going beyond mere linguistic similarity and using biblical discernment without being impressed by superficial similarities.”

According to De Chirico, this discernment should then lead to a biblical rendering of the gospel and, concurrently, a renewed urgency for church planting in deeply Roman Catholic contexts where many claim to be religious, even “Christian,” with no notion of personal faith in Jesus Christ. —ALEX DUKE

Audio from de Chirico’s lecture is available online at sbts.edu/resources.



T4G encourages evangelism

A (partly) graphical survey of the 2014 conference

By Aaron Cline Hanbury, James A. Smith Sr. and RuthAnne Irvin

R. Albert Mohler Jr. argued that the exclusivity of the gospel is not an apologetic burden, but rather life-giving good news, during a general session at the 2014 Together for the Gospel conference, April 8-10.

Mohler, who is president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, called his sermon “The Open Door is the Only Door: The Singularity of Christ and the Integrity of the Gospel.”

“We come to celebrate and declare the great fact that we are unashamed of the gospel and to point to Christ as the door of salvation and to pray, with the apostle Paul, for an open door for the proclamation of the gospel,” he said.

“But we are also here to confess together that the open door is the only door.”

Preaching from John 14:1-7, Mohler described Jesus’ statement that he is “the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through [him]” as an “unavoidable

claim of exclusivity.”

In addition to nine general sessions — with Mark Dever and Ligon Duncan, who co-founded T4G along with Mohler, and featured speakers Thabiti Anyabwile, Matt Chandler, Kevin DeYoung, John MacArthur, John Piper and David Platt — the conference also held several plenary panel discussions.

A panel about the issue of homosexuality included Mohler, joined by Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and a distinguished faculty member at Southern Seminary, and Sam Allberry, a pastor at St. Mary’s Church in Maidenhead, U.K.

Two Southern Seminary leaders gave breakout sessions during the three-day conference, including Mohler and Owen Strachan, assistant professor of Christian theology and church history at Boyce College.

In conjunction to his breakout ses-



“We come to celebrate and declare the great fact that we are unashamed of the gospel and to point to Christ as the door of salvation.”

— R. Albert Mohler Jr.

sion, Strachan taught one of two academic courses offered by the seminary, each giving the 166 students who participated an opportunity to earn transferable credit for either the graduate or undergraduate level. Strachan taught “The Pastor in the Public Square” course, and Adam W. Greenway, dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry, taught “A Theology of Evangelism.”

T4G Attendance by country

29 Countries in attendance



6,833
United States



324
Canada



15
United Kingdom



13
Cayman Islands



6
Germany



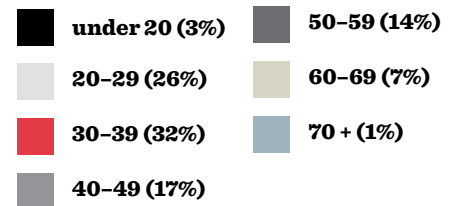
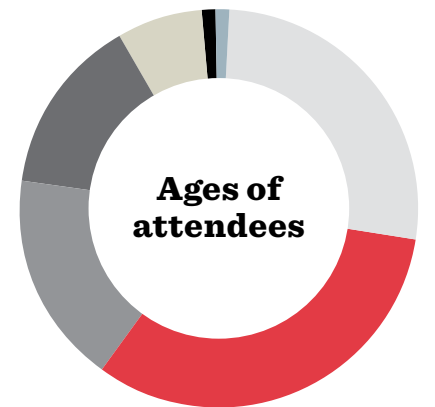
5
Mexico



7
Brazil



7
Dominican Republic



The biennial conference for pastors and church leaders brought together more than 7,500 men and women from all 50 states and 29 different countries. More than 60 percent of those in attendance were younger than 40 years old.



“You can’t cleave the gospel and ethics; the gospel creates ethics. Preaching can bring ethics to bear on all of life.”

— Owen Strachan



3,157
attendees
identified as
Southern Baptists
out of 22+
denominations
represented

Jesus or Nothing

(Crossway 2014, \$10.99), Dan DeWitt

At first, Dan DeWitt's book, *Jesus or Nothing*, seems like another stick in a bonfire of (welcome) discussion of the biblical gospel over everything else, like Tullian Tchividjian's math equation or even Fernando Ortega's "Give Me Jesus." A fitting synonym might be "Nothing else but Jesus."

But that assumption doesn't make it past the book's introduction. It turns out, "Nothing" is actually a something — a story, in fact.

DeWitt explains in the book that "believers and unbelievers alike feel the draw of the gospel and the allure of the Nothing." And ultimately, everyone must decide between the two narratives. This decision, he writes, is between "which story line accounts for the human experience."

DeWitt develops these two narratives throughout *Jesus or Nothing*. If atheism — the story of Nothing — is true, human life and existence loses objective and intrinsic worth. He describes a world without God that, despite the lifelong attempts of atheists, skeptics and other non-believers, leads only to despair — functional, if not philosophical, nihilism.

But if the gospel — the story of Jesus — is true, then human existence con-

tains worth and meaning — "in this story we will understand our story," writes DeWitt.

"Apart from Christ there are no objective explanations, no certainty, no grace, and no ultimate meaning. He alone possesses the words of eternal life. For the first-century disciples, and for us today, it is simply Jesus or Nothing."

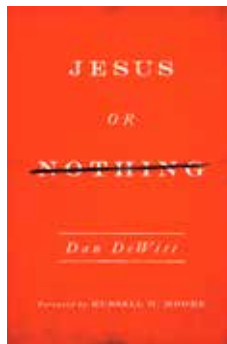
DeWitt shapes *Jesus or Nothing* around five "offers" of the gospel, which he calls the "anti-Nothing."

He writes that the gospel of Jesus Christ offers "explanation for our existence, clarity for our confusion, grace for our guilt, meaning for our mortality, and answers for our adversaries. The gospel makes sense of the world while filling life with

meaning and purpose."

In *Jesus or Nothing*, DeWitt provides a brief and winsome tour of the Christian worldview, and how it not only makes sense, it paints a vibrant picture of life that Nothing simply can't. So maybe Fernando Ortega's "Give Me Jesus" isn't too far off, after all.

—REVIEW BY AARON CLINE HANBURY



Excerpts from the book:

1

"Only the gospel can lead us further up and further in. That's why the Christian should seek to counter alternative worldviews not with an unknowable god but with Christ himself. While theism provides a compelling explanation of reality, it falls dreadfully short without the gospel.

"Theism best explains reality: Jesus best explains theism."

2

"Sin is a cruel master, and her offspring — regret and shame — will torture us in our despair. We have no hope apart from total and absolute clemency. And this is exactly what the gospel offers us."

3

"Paul tells the Colossian believers to seek joy and fulfillment from above. He tells them to set their eyes on things above. This does not mean Christians devalue the world below; they simply recognize that its intrinsic worth comes from outside itself.

"In short, we have meaning below because there is a God above."

4

"In the gospel we are offered a worldview that allows us to consistently and logically live above the line of despair. And because, as Paul said, 'in fact Christ has risen from the dead,' our optimism is not in vain. It is sufficiently grounded in historical fact."

An imaginative apologetic: DeWitt explores the path of unbelief and of the gospel

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the following, Boyce College dean Dan DeWitt discusses his new book, *Jesus or Nothing*, with Southern Seminary Magazine managing editor Aaron Cline Hanbury.

ACH: What are the two major premises in *Jesus or Nothing*?

DD: There are two propositions that I'm working on throughout the book. The first proposition is if atheism is true, there's a loss of objective meaning and intrinsic worth. That's not to say there's not proximate meaning, but it's just not objective; it's not true for all people in all places at all time. And worth is not intrinsic to who we are; it's something extrinsic. That's one proposition I hope readers deal with, and that some of my skeptic friends have been dealing with in a really impressive way.

And the other proposition is, if Christianity is true, it would offer those things, objective values and intrinsic worth. So I hope readers will deal with that and respond to that, and I look forward — even as painful as it might be at times to read some of the reviews — to seeing how they're doing just that.

ACH: You write that the gospel is the “theist's guide to reality” and the “theory of everything.” Can you tease out these concepts?

DD: Theism best describes the world we live in. We are personal, rational beings who long for transcendence; we place trust in our cognitive abilities, our minds. I think theism gives a good reason for that. But, if the ultimate reality behind everything is just matter, eternal, non-personal, non-rational matter, then it's hard to say we have good reason to trust our minds. Even the atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel, at New York University, in his



recent, controversial book, says there must be something behind the cosmos other than just matter. Of course he doesn't say what it is. The theism seems to answer that.

But theism only takes us so far, and theism can't make sense out of the fact that we live in a world where children are discarded and where women are raped. And not just moral evil, which is certainly horrific, but natural evil: there are tsunamis in which thousands of people die. Theism has a hard time making sense of that apart from the gospel. So theism best describes reality, the gospel best describes theism.

ACH: How do you see believers using the book?

DD: The way I would hope Christians use the book would be to grow in their compassion for people who don't believe. That may sound like a weird goal for this book, but I hope that a Christian parent, for example, who maybe has a college student who has walked away from the faith, can empathize a bit more and understand perhaps what had led to his or her journey. Of course, every story is completely different, but I really do hope that's accomplished: that believers will read it and be more empathetic and they'll be quick to listen and slow to speak.

Introduction to Global Missions

(B&H Publishing Group 2014, \$34.99), Zane Pratt, M. David Sills and Jeff K. Walters

God commissions his people to take the gospel to the peoples of the world.

In their new book, *Introduction to Global Missions*, Southern Seminary missions professors M. David Sills, Zane Pratt and Jeff K. Walters equip readers with the best biblical tools necessary to understand and accomplish God's mission mandate.

The three authors combine their missions experience and expertise to guide readers through what a call to missions looks like, the theological, missiological and historical basis for global missions, culture and global missions and applications for individuals and local churches.

In the introduction of the book, Sills, Pratt and Walters — who write in one voice — explain the missionary call on the life of each believer. From beginning to end, the Bible is missiological they say, noting that God calls each Christian to global missions in some capacity.

"The way to find God's will is to become so close to him that your heartbeat resonates with his own," they write.

The book has four sections: "Biblical and Theological Foundations for Global Missions," "Historical Foundations for Global Missions," "Culture and Global Missions" and "The Practice of Global Missions."

In section two, "Historical Foundations for Global Missions," they lead readers to see God's work through history. They review the expansion of Christianity from the early church through the Reformation to the "Great Century and beyond."

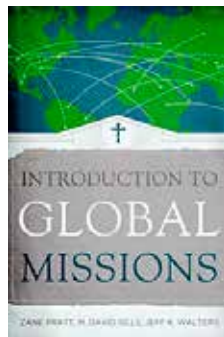
Sills, Pratt and Walters examine diverse cultures and the challenges of global missions in the third section, "Culture and Global Missions." The authors give an overview of several major world religions, encouraging readers to love people who hold to different religions for the gospel's sake.

The fourth section, "The Practice of Global Missions," concludes the book with application both local churches and individual Christians.

Introduction to Global Missions concludes with "six keys" to thinking globally about the missionary call in

local churches: "a biblical understanding," "a global vision," "understanding missiological principles," "prayer," "connecting yourself to missions" and "connecting the church to missions" through short-term mission trips.

Anyone looking for an in-depth introduction to global missions for both those who will go and those who send and support, *Introduction to Global Missions* is a great place to begin reading. —REVIEW BY RUTH-ANNE IRVIN



Excerpts from the book:

1

"Much of what passes for evangelical missiology nods to biblical inspiration and inerrancy but then looks to secular sources for its methodology as though the Bible were inadequate. However, because the Bible is inerrant, authoritative, clear and sufficient, it not only has the final word in all legitimate evangelical missiology; it also has the formative word."

—from the chapter, "Theological Foundations for Global Missions"

2

"The missionary's challenge is to avoid judging the [new] culture as inferior before he understands it. ... We all have this tendency because our own culture is all we know; thus it seems 'the right way to do it.' We can never totally erase ethnocentrism, but being aware of it can help us delay critical judgment and learn to appreciate many aspects of other cultures."

—from the chapter, "Applied Anthropology in Missions"

3

"Given the level of syncretism with animism that exists in most religions, it is necessary to explore what people actually believe and do, not what their formal religion says they ought to believe. The purpose of this research is not disinterested scholarship or pluralistic dialogue but effective communication. People hear new information through the filter of their existing worldview."

—from the chapter, "World Religions"

Missions for a post-9/11 world

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the following, Southern Seminary missions professors M. David Sills and Jeff Walters discuss their new book, *Introduction to Global Missions*, with Southern Seminary Magazine managing editor Aaron Cline Hanbury.

ACH: What makes *Introduction to Global Missions* different from other introductions?

MDS: The world is changing with increasing velocity, and global dynamics such as globalization, urbanization and diaspora migration patterns are forcing constant re-evaluation of how ministry is done. Ministers in the USA and around the world must be knowledgeable about other people groups, world religions, worldviews and assimilation levels to serve their communities and churches effectively.

Introduction to Global Missions is a textbook designed to teach students in colleges and seminaries. It serves as a broad compendium that addresses global missions issues for biblically faithful ministry in today's world. With such rapid changes in our world, textbooks that were written just 15 to 20 years ago fail to prepare students and ministers for ministry in a post-9/11 world.

JW: What sets it apart is that it reflects the teaching of a significant number of our missions faculty and decades of combined experience. It is designed to help everyone from missions volunteers to local church pastors to future and current missionaries think about how to do missions well.

ACH: In your book, you devote a full section to historical foundations. Why?

MDS: Good stewardship of all God gives us includes the wise use of the church's experiences throughout the expansion of Christianity. Standing on the shoulders of those who went before us allows us to see farther down the road than they could. When we learn how the church dealt with heresies, threats



and opportunities in the past, we are able to incorporate those lessons in addressing challenges facing the contemporary church.

JW: The history of the church is the history of missions. Good missiology and missionary practice is built on the Scriptures, but it is informed by history. For example, we can see throughout history examples of good contextualization and bad contextualization. As we think about how to plant churches in various cultures, we want to avoid those past mistakes. Most of all (and this is personally the case), history inspires me. When I read about Carey or Judson or Bill Wallace or Jim Elliot, God uses their stories to fuel my own calling.

ACH: How do you hope to affect or influence readers?

MDS: I pray that every reader of this book will not finish it in the place where he or she started. I pray that each reader will grow theologically, missiologically and evangelistically. I pray that each reader will be more committed to missions, read the Bible through a missiological lens and understand whether God has called him or her to international missions service. And I pray that reading this book will move readers right around the world as God uses it to stir hearts and mobilize his church.

JW: There's a lot of poor teaching out there on various aspects of missions — leadership, calling, contextualization, etc. My prayer is that God will use this book to help sending churches, agencies and missionaries fulfill their calling well and that the nations will be impacted.



Dangers of Denial in a Declining Church

By Thom Rainer

The word “declining” can have different connotations as it relates to churches. It can mean declining influence in the community, or decline in effective preaching, or decline in evangelistic impact. Most of the time, though not all of the time, one of the symptoms of this decline is a numerical decline.

According to our best estimates, nearly nine out of ten churches are either declining, or they are growing less rapidly than the community in which they are located. In other words the church is not keeping up with the community. Many of our congregations, plain and simple, are not in good health.

A few months ago, I wrote about my obesity, and my determination to do something about it. Do you know what one of my key problems was? Denial. I did not want to admit I was obese. I did not want to look in the mirror. I did not want to see photos or videos of me. I wanted to avoid thinking about my unhealthy state through denial. And that denial led me to continue down the path of doing nothing about it.

Many church leaders and members are in denial. They refuse to see the diminishing influence of their churches for the good of the Kingdom. So they do like I did with my perpetual problem of bad health and obesity. They do nothing about it.

Denial is deadly. Denial means the problems are not addressed. Denial means more and more churches will be closing their doors. Though the manifestations are many, look at these ten key dangers of denial.

Thom Rainer is president of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville, Tenn. This article originally appeared at ThomRainer.com. Used by permission. The founding dean of Southern Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry, Rainer is author of many books, including the recently released, Autopsy of a Deceased Church (B&H Publishing Group, 2014).

1

The problems will only worsen. We can't wish away the challenges in our churches. We must be biblically obedient. We must take action or the situation will worsen.

2

Future generations are forsaken. Churches in denial are not thinking about their children or grandchildren or any future generations for that matter. They are only concerned about their present perceived needs.

3

Leaders will have regrets. True leaders, both staff and laity, desire to make a difference in this world. They desire for their churches to make a difference. These leaders will regret their failures to admit that problems exist.

4

Churches will miss opportunities for solutions. It is amazing to see what the body of Christ can do when it works biblically together. But the first step is admitting there is a need.

5

There is no urgency for change. The gospel and biblical truths are unchanging. But the world is changing rapidly. Churches in denial have no urgency to change in this fast-changing culture. They quickly become irrelevant.

6

Maintenance ministries engender frustration and conflict. Churches in denial try very few things new and challenging. They tend to be focused on keeping

things the same. Such a posture is frustrating. Such a posture, because it is not looking forward, causes members to fuss and fight over their particular preferences.

7

Churches in denial are usually disobedient. They can be disobedient to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. They can refuse to obey some of the challenging commands of Scripture because it will get them out of their comfort zones.

8

Many of these churches will tolerate open and flagrant sin. Churches in denial tolerate mediocrity. The members don't like to “rock the boat.” This attitude can lead to a tolerance of some of the most flagrant sins. I spoke with one church leader where it was commonly known in the church that three of the elders were involved in adulterous affairs. No one ever spoke up, and three families were torn apart.

9

The church will lose its best members. They will leave to go to a congregation where they can make a difference. They will refuse to accept the mediocrity that comes with denial of problems.

10

Comfort becomes an idol. Eventually churches in denial will become congregations of members who are focused on their comforts and needs. The denial will become entrenched, and hopes of biblical and healthy change will fade rapidly.

The need is great. The time is urgent. Denial and decline are a reality. But, in God's power, there is always hope.

Reflections on Church Revitalization

By Timothy J. Beougher

In my early years of ministry I was involved in several church planting efforts. I had embraced the axiom, “It is easier to give birth than to raise the dead.” I still believe in church planting and am a passionate proponent of starting new churches. But if 80-85% of the churches in America are plateauing or declining, then we not only must focus on church planting but also on church revitalization. I have much to learn about church revitalization, but I have discovered a few truths over the years.

First, church revitalization is **kingdom work**. While church planting receives much focus today (and rightly so!), church revitalization is no less kingdom work than church planting. Christ loves His church. He loves all of His church; not just the healthy parts, but also the sick parts. Christ loves churches that need revitalization – and we should love what Christ loves.

Second, church revitalization begins with **personal revitalization**. We too easily can make excuses for ourselves and our churches, can’t we? We have too little parking, a bad location, poor signage, and an archaic sound system. We convince ourselves that if only we had what other churches have, we would be at the top of the growth curve!

Puritan pastor Richard Baxter, in his classic work on pastoral ministry, *The Reformed Pastor*, notes the God-given sequence in Acts 20:28: “take heed to yourself, AND THEN to the flock of God.” Church revitalization begins with personal revitalization. Where do we as church leaders need a fresh touch from God? Where do we need to repent and pursue God in a new way?

Third, church revitalization is **hard work**. It involves God’s inspiration but our perspiration. The adage is true, *it is easier to give birth than to raise the dead*. If church revitalization were easy, everyone would be doing it! If it were easy, 80-85 percent of our churches would not be plateauing or declining. Why is it hard work? In part, it is because we face the opposition of the world, the flesh and the devil. This poem highlights the reality we face in church life:

To dwell above with saints we love,
That will be grace and glory.
But to live below, with folks we know,
Now that’s a different story!

Revitalization is hard work, because church revitalization is really people revitalization. While outdated buildings might need a fresh coat of paint, redecorating is not revitalization.

Fourth, church revitalization demands **persistence**. It is a process, not an event. It takes time. Events can help facilitate the process, but they can’t circumvent the process. Revitalization is a process, not a program. There is not a “one size that fits all.” Lest we think that we are alone in our

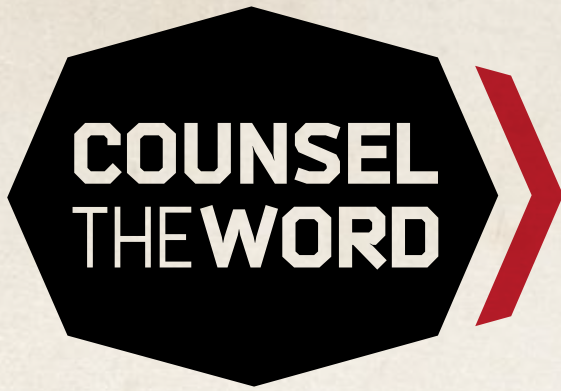
revitalization struggles, have you ever considered that out of the seven churches referenced in Revelation, four needed revitalization? Church revitalization demands persistence.

Fifth, church revitalization requires **God’s blessing**. It is a spiritual work! Revitalization is a supernatural work, and therefore needs supernatural power to make it happen. Only God brings revival and revitalization. The observation of G. Campbell Morgan applies, “We cannot cause the wind of the Spirit to blow, but we can set our sails to catch the wind when it does blow.” We need to employ the God-ordained means of prayer, preaching the Word, and sharing the gospel in our revitalization efforts.

Paul’s exhortation in I Corinthians 15:58 is a good reminder for those involved in church revitalization: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know that your work is NOT in vain in the Lord.”

Timothy J. Beougher is Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism at Southern Seminary.





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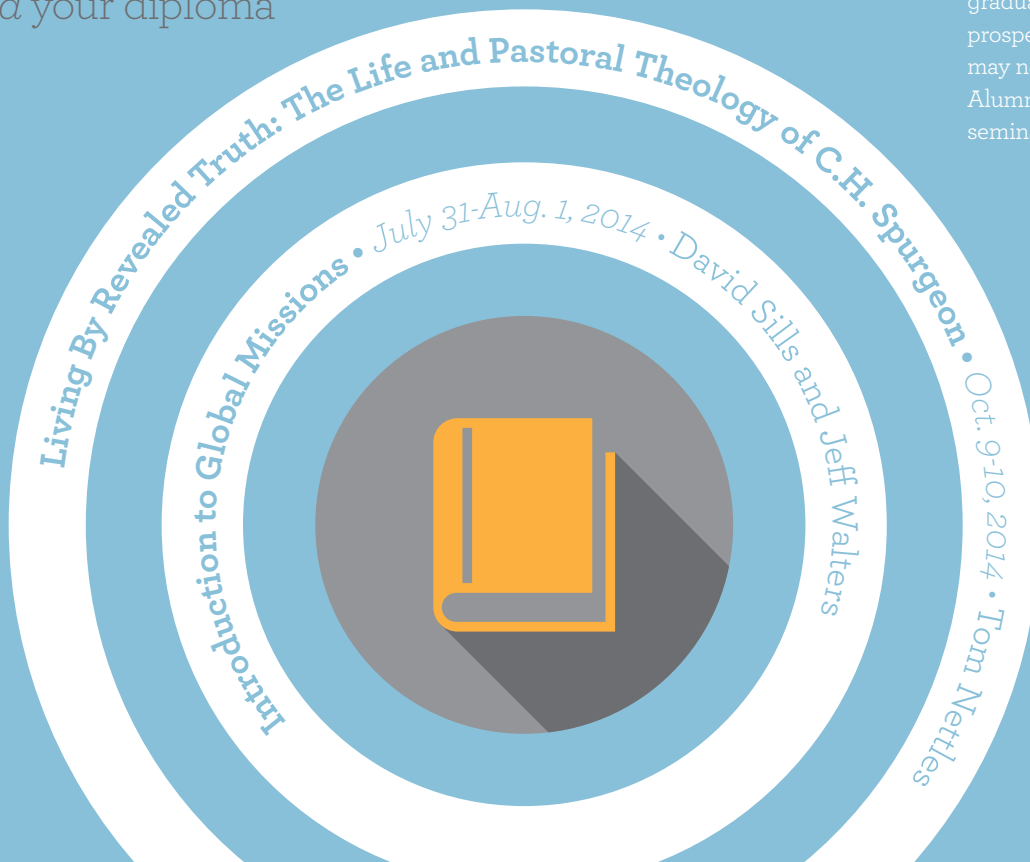


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We Are Serious About The Gospel

JOHN FOLMAR

*Pastor of
United Christian
Church of Dubai*

M.Div. 2003



BY THE NUMBERS: THE NEED FOR REVITALIZATION

As years pass, people are leaving the Southern Baptist churches at troubling rates. Without a change, many of these churches will simply close their doors. Churches in decline in small-town America and urban cities alike need pastors and members who are committed to the Word of God and Jesus Christ to join in revitalizing congregations. Christians are called to take the gospel to all peoples. Often today, that means taking the gospel to the people sitting in the pews of dying churches.

Source:
Annual Church Profile, LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, Tenn. Compiled by the Center for Missional Research, North American Mission Board, Alpharetta, Ga.

Note:
Figures are based on total membership gain or decline in previous five years. Growing implies more than 10 percent growth, while declining implies more than 10 percent loss.

SBC CHURCHES GROWING

1994-1999



33.3%

2007-2012



27.1%

SBC CHURCHES IN DECLINE

1994-1999



22.7%

2007-2012



29.5%

SADLY, MANY

CHURCHES WILL DIE

R.

BY CONGREGATIONAL

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SUICIDE. UNWILLING TO

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BE REPLANTED, THEY

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SIMPLY WANT A SLOWER

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DISOBEDIENCE TO CHRIST.



Evangelicalism's major turn

The need for 'generation replant'

One stunning building in Manchester, England, is now a climbing center. In Bristol, one is now a circus school, with trapezes hanging from the rafters. Others are now grocery stores, car dealerships, libraries and pubs. All over England, many are now Islamic mosques.

What do these venerable buildings have in common? Until recently, all formerly housed Church of England congregations. The secularization of Britain is not a new development, with church attendance falling for decades. But a new tipping point has been reached: the Church of England now has an official "Closed Churches Team" that makes decisions about what to do with abandoned church buildings.

Between 1969 and 2011, the Church of England knocked down 500 churches and "deconsecrated" another 1,000. That pace is set to increase dramatically, and England is not alone. *The Montreal Gazette* recently reported that 340 church buildings are now seeking "new vocations," with that Canadian city now representing one of the most secularized metropolitan areas in North America. Neighbors did not even notice that one Methodist building no longer housed a congrega-

tion. They found out when the large stone building collapsed and no one seemed to care.

The same will soon happen in the United States of America. In downtown Louisville, Ky., former church buildings now house doctors' offices and other businesses — but the problem is no longer limited to the inner cities. Churches are closing in the suburbs as well.

According to a report from the Assemblies of God, 4,000 congregations close their doors in the United States every year, while only about 1,000 evangelical churches are planted. We are falling further behind.

Add to this the fact that between 80 and 90 percent of all evangelical churches in the United States are not growing, and a significant percentage are in outright decline. We face a major turning point in the history of evangelical Christianity in America, and the Southern Baptist Convention and its churches are at the center of a great and unavoidable question: "Do we have the courage and conviction necessary to replant churches?"

For the past 30 years, evangelicals have been learning anew the importance of church planting. Excitement

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

and passion for church planting come right from the New Testament, which is a manifesto for planting rightly ordered churches. A generation of young evangelical pastors have been righteously infected with the vision for church planting. Their heroes are church planters, their inspiration is church planting and their missiology is directed toward the birth of new churches. That must continue. Church planting must remain at the forefront of our mission efforts. The only documentable evangelistic and congregational growth experienced by evangelicals within America's major urban areas directly traces back to newly planted churches — and replanted churches.

The idea of church replanting may be new, but this pattern is also as old as the New Testament.

In Revelation 2:1-7, Christ warns the Ephesian church that they have “left [their] first love” and grown spiritually cold and ineffective in ministry. Jesus told the church to “repent and do the deeds [they] did at first.” In other words, that congregation needed a reformation. At some point, declining churches actually

Given the scale of our need, this rising generation needs to be known as “Generation Replant.”

need to be replanted.

In one sense, this is just a matter of stewardship. All around us are churches falling into patterns of decline and decay. Most of these churches started with a gospel vision and a “first love” for Christ that propelled them into existence. For some

time, most of these churches experienced years of effective ministry, reaching their communities and reaching out to the world. Somehow, at some time, for some reason or combination of reasons, they lost that first love and the ministry was endangered.

Practical realities also play a role in understanding this stewardship. All over New York City, for example, young evangelical church plants are looking for places to meet. A hostile city government threatens to evict all churches from meeting in public school auditoriums and many will be homeless. At the same time, vacant or near-vacant church buildings dot the horizon.

There is also the fact that millions of Christians remain in these declining and decaying congregations. These Christians represent a wealth of experience and an army of workers. In many cases, what they most lack is visionary, courageous and convictional pastors and leaders.


Then there is this obvious fact: if existing congregations do not thrive, there will be no one to plant, sustain, support and lead church planting. We cannot have one without the other.

Consider also that many of the most exciting church ministry stories of this generation have come from replanted churches. We can look around the country and quickly find church buildings, once empty, now filled with young families and students, senior adults and business executives.

We need to tell the stories of these churches, even as we continue to tell the stories of newly planted churches. Both contexts of ministry require courage. Both require vision and conviction. Neither is the answer in itself, and both should be celebrated together.

But one of our central tasks in the present generation is to be bold in our vision of replanting churches — helping existing churches to find new vision, new strategic focus, new passion for the gospel, new hunger for the preaching of the Word, new





We face a major turning point
in the history of evangelical
Christianity in America, and the
Southern Baptist Convention and
its churches are at the center of
a great and unavoidable question:

“Do we have the courage
and conviction necessary to
replant churches?”

love for their communities and new excitement about seeing people come to faith in Jesus.

Replanting churches requires both courage and leadership skills. A passion for replanting a church must be matched by skills in ministry and a heart for helping a church to regain a vision. Church replanting and church planting are both frontlines of ministry and mission. And I am excited to see what God will do in this age with a generation of young pastors ready to plant and replant gospel churches with unbridled passion.

Of course, this will also require that churches in decline recognize the need for radical change and reorientation in ministry. No young pastor worthy of his call will be excited to assume the pastorate of a church that simply wants to stem the losses or

slow the decline by doing slightly better than the congregation at present. Sadly, many of these churches will die by congregational suicide. Unwilling to be replanted, they simply want a slower decline. This is disobedience to Christ.

Given the scale of our need, this rising generation needs to be known as “Generation Replant.” If it is not, it might not be long before the Southern Baptist Convention needs a “Closed Churches Team.” May that day never come. Instead, may all of our churches, new and old and in between, follow the promise of 1 Corinthians 3:6 — Paul “planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” >

R. Albert Mohler Jr. is president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Harold Mathena: faithful steward of God's blessings

BUSINESSMAN/REVIVALIST GIVES \$1 MILLION FOR
CHURCH REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS

By James A. Smith Sr.

Harold Mathena has “dabbled” in business throughout his life. For him, business has always been secondary to his desire to serve the Lord as a pastor and evangelist. Business was his means to ministry, not the end itself.

Most people’s dabbling, however, rarely results in a successful business, sold after 22 years for \$240 million.

Mathena is not most people.

‘Major new emphasis’

Because of his business acumen and God’s blessings, Mathena has given Southern Seminary a \$1 million gift to fund a “major new emphasis” in church revitalization, said the school’s president, R. Albert Mohler Jr.

“We are so thankful for this gift because it will enable us to provide both instruction and special experiences for students in order to help them to understand the great challenge and opportunity of church revitalization in this generation,” he said.

Mohler noted that as important as the recent emphasis in church planting is for Southern Baptists, revitalization of existing congrega-

tions also is critical.

“We need young pastors to recognize the incredible, untapped opportunity of those churches and to recognize that even as church planting is a courageous calling, so also is going into a church and helping it to recapture its vision, re-embrace its convictions and re-address its community in the world with an opportunity for missions and evangelism,” Mohler said.

Mohler said many Southern Seminary alumni are demonstrating leadership in church revitalization, citing as examples Mark Dever at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., Aaron Menikoff at Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Sandy Springs, Ga. and Greg Gilbert at Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.

Mathena’s gift will also support the seminary’s new doctor of ministry in church revitalization degree, Mohler said.

Starting in the oil fields

Starting out after high school, Mathena, now 79, worked in the oil fields in south Louisiana, learning

the industry and eventually developing oil field drilling equipment. After 20 years, Mathena left the industry for a time in order to take a pastorate in Yukon, Okla. After eight years as a pastor — five years full-time and three years bivocational — he began an evangelism ministry, having started his first company to support it.

“The reason for starting the company was to make a living so I could do evangelistic work,” Mathena told *Southern Seminary Magazine* in a recent interview. “I couldn’t work for someone else and have the freedom to do revivals.”

Four years after starting Omega Equipment Company, Mathena sold it in 1982. By 1990, he was ready to start another business, Mathena, Inc., also providing oil field equipment.

Launching the company during a significant economic recession for the oil industry in Oklahoma didn’t prevent Mathena’s business from thriving. “It was just a God-thing from the very beginning,” he said, noting the “miraculous” blessing on his business in spite of an otherwise down economy.

“God just gave us an unusual amount of wisdom and discernment about the work we were involved in and it was wholly of Him,” he said.

Business for evangelism

Mathena is certain that God’s blessings on his business were for the purpose of advancing his evangelistic ministry.

“When we started the business in 1990, I wrote a prayer in a little spiral-bound notebook I had in my shirt pocket asking God to bless our business and committing my efforts to be successful with God’s help,” he said. “And God honored that prayer and allowed us to be successful in the business and it was totally of God we were able to do what we did.”

In 2012, Mathena sold Mathena Inc. to a Scottish company — directing the buyer to give \$21.6 million in proceeds to his home church, Quail Springs Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, as a testimony. The gift, one-tenth of the sale price after a portion set aside in escrow, was no different than his first tithe of \$25 as a new believer in 1958, Mathena said.

“Having tithed all those years that we served the Lord, when we sold the company, it was no issue, it was no problem, and it was a normal and natural thing to do to give a tithe of what we’d received from the company,” he said.

More than just tithing on the sale of his business, Mathena and his wife, Patricia, have given generously to other Christian causes, including Southern Seminary.

Mathena became aware of Southern through his son, John, who served as a member of the Board of Trustees,

“In every church you go to, there’s a need for spiritual awakening. ... We need to do everything we can to train and project young people into society and into our culture to make a difference.”

2002-2012. While the senior Mathena has ministered throughout his life without formal theological education, he was “impressed” with what he experienced while visiting the campus and seeing the “young people that had been trained” at Southern.

John Mathena said his parents’ faithfulness in stewardship has had an impact on the entire family — and are models for others.

“I truly believe that God has blessed our family because we have been good stewards of what he has placed under



“I wanted to support the ministry and this was an opportunity to do that,” he said.

“We all know there’s a great need in Southern Baptist life for revival,” he said concerning his gift to support church revitalization efforts at Southern. “In every church you go to, there’s a need for spiritual awakening. ... We need to do everything we can to train and project young people into society and into our culture to make a difference.”

Stewardship model

Mathena’s giving, however, is not generosity — it’s stewardship, according to Hance Dilbeck, his pastor. “He lives with a keen sense of the Lord’s ownership of 100 percent,” Dilbeck told Southern Seminary Magazine.

The Mathenas are “model church members,” Dilbeck said, noting Harold teaches a Sunday school class and is faithful in worship attendance.

“Harold Mathena has the gift of evangelism,” according to his pastor. “He preaches the gospel with passion and clarity. As an evangelist, he gives a clear and compelling invitation. His preaching is consistently productive.”

our care,” he said. “Dad and mom have been great examples for all followers of Christ to watch when it comes to stewardship.”

His father’s virtually life-long bivocational ministry was demonstrated in the fact that “he rarely separated” his business interests from his role as a pastor and evangelist.

According to John Mathena, his father’s ministry of evangelism is joined with a concern to “encourage the pastors to run the race with endurance.”

Mathena has no plans of slowing down in his revival ministry, which generally has him preaching services in churches every other week in the spring and fall. With no website or other promotion, invitations come via word-of-mouth — keeping his calendar full.

“I just think it’s a remarkable thing that any church would want a 79-year-old man to come and that in itself is a God-thing that I have an opportunity to preach at all. And of course, as long as I have opportunity, I’m going to do what I can.”

James A. Smith Sr. is executive editor and chief spokesman of Southern Seminary.

Breathing new life into dying churches

By Kevin Ezell

At the North American Mission Board (NAMB), our mission is to help Southern Baptists push back lostness in North America. Our primary strategy for doing that is called Send North America, and that strategy includes two primary goals. First, we want to help increase the church birth rate by helping Southern Baptists start 15,000 new churches over a 10-year period. Second, we want to help decrease the church death rate.

The reason both of these endeavors are so important is because Southern Baptists have lost significant ground in the church-to-population ratio during the last 100 years. In 1900, there was one Southern Baptist church for every 3,800 people in North America. Today, that number is one for every 6,200. In the south, that ratio is much better (one SBC church for every 2,722 people). But in other regions, we have much work to do: in the west the ratio is 1:15,885; in the northeast it's 1:36,998 and in Canada it's 1:117,925.

These widening gaps come from two problems: first, we have not started enough churches — especially in and around cities where 83 percent of North Americans live; second, each year an average of 1,000 SBC churches disappear.

Viewed through the lens of any research you look at, Southern Baptist churches are in the midst of a health crisis and have been for many years.

We analyzed data from the Annual Church Profile (ACP) and found that between 2007 and 2012, only 27 percent of reporting SBC churches experienced growth. Forty-three per-

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DISAPPEAR

cent were plateaued and 30 percent declined. But our analysis looked at membership numbers. A study by the Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary looked at worship service attendance and found that in 2010 only 6.8 percent of SBC churches were healthy according to that rubric.

These trends should concern everyone. Even if we are successful in starting thousands of new churches over the next few years, if less than 10 percent of established SBC churches are healthy and growing, we cannot hope to keep pace with population growth.

Partnering to help churches at risk

It's not an easy thing to say, but some of the churches that die each year need to. They have long since outlived their purpose. They have been a hollow, ineffective presence in their communities for years. But many more churches have members with a heart for the gospel who want to reach their communities for Christ. They might have lost touch with their communities' new demographics or been derailed by poor leadership. If these churches want to be helped, they can be.

NAMB is stepping into this crisis in several ways, and many of our state convention partners are also doing very good work, such as:

One-day conferences

In 2011, we began partnering with Johnny Hunt, former president of the SBC and pastor of Woodstock First Baptist Church near



Atlanta, to conduct a one-day Church Growth and Revitalization Conference for pastors. Johnny has a heart for encouraging pastors, and his church has helped churches in the Atlanta area regain their spiritual footing and become vibrant gospel proclamation centers again. Our state convention partners make venue arrangements and we take care of the rest. So far we have conducted 15 of these events with several more scheduled during 2014.

Individualized tools and resources

After attending our one-day conference, many pastors and churches start to realize they need outside assistance if they are to put their churches back on a path to growth. That is where our state convention partners step in. They are equipped to work closely with individual churches, and we are making funds available for assistance as they help their churches get on the road to health.

Legacy church planting

Some churches cannot be redirected toward health without some dramatic changes. When a church comes to this point of realization and is willing to ask for help, NAMB can partner with another church, local association or the state Baptist convention to help restart the church. We call this “Legacy Church Planting” because it gives a dying church the opportunity to live on through a new work that starts in their church building.

This is not an easy step for most churches to take. We require that there first be a viability study to determine the likelihood of

success a new work would have. A leadership change is also required, and we ask that the church property be turned over to either the partnering church, local association, state convention or NAMB until a new work is up and viable.

Even though the legacy church plant is not an easy road, we are seeing more and more successes with this model. Wornall Road Baptist Church in Kansas City is healthy, growing and has become a vital part of its community after pastor John Mark Clifton arrived to restart a decades-old congregation that dwindled to only a handful of weekly attenders. In New Orleans, a dozen church members in their 70s partnered with church planter James Welch to birth Harbor Community Church from the ashes of their dying church. First Baptist Church in Odessa, Fla., had not seen a baptism in years. They turned to Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Fla., for help and now their baptismal waters are stirring on a regular basis once again.

If we don’t step in to help these dying churches, over the next few decades we will see thousands of properties worth millions of dollars slip through the hands of Southern Baptists. They will become cafes and office space or just abandoned buildings gathering dust. My hope is that more churches and more pastors will turn their focus outward once again and reach out for help in returning their church to health. And I pray that those who need to make the decision to become a legacy church plant will see how they can pass the spiritual baton and see God work powerfully through their churches again. ➤



Kevin Ezell (D.Min., Southern Seminary) is president of the North American Mission Board. More information about NAMB’s church revitalization ministry is available at NAMB.net/revitalization.

The revitalization of Rehoboth Baptist Church

SOUTHERN SEMINARY ALUMNUS TROY BUSH LEADS TOWARD RENEWAL

By Aaron Cline Hanbury

Harriet and Johnny Carter came to Rehoboth Baptist Church in 1956. Upon joining, they found a growing, energetic community with hundreds of worshippers each weekend. And then-pastor Lester Buice was a decade into what would become a 36-year ministry at the church.

A century earlier, Rehoboth, sitting about 10 miles northeast of downtown Atlanta, Ga., began in August of 1854, when a small group of people met in what is now Tucker, Ga. — immediately the church baptized 21 new members, including two slaves, and four more people joined, one of whom was a slave. From that group, the little mission church grew. By the peak of Buice's pastorate in the 1970s, Rehoboth included nearly 5,000 members — up from 160 members when he arrived. And then in the 1980s and 1990s, Rehoboth even pro-

duced a nationally viewed TV ministry and operated the largest church-based sports ministry in the country.

Around the turn of the century, however, things changed. Rehoboth members called two consecutive pastors who they eventually forced to resign because of the theological and methodological directions toward which those men led. And people left.

Even some of the cornerstone-type members, like John Brown, who joined in 1965 and served for 29 years as chairman of the deacons, considered leaving.

"I prayed about leaving," he told *Southern Seminary Magazine*. "When the last interim pastor started, my wife and I decided we were going to stay, but we'd see who they called as pastor. If [the church] wasn't changed, we were leaving."

Other long-time families like the

Carters — along with hundreds of similar families — watched the church steadily decline.

"It had gotten pretty bad," said Harriet Carter during a recent conversation. "We lost a lot of people, and we were down. We did owe a lot of money over the years. And, you know, it really could've been a time when we lost the church."

In the interim

In October of 2011, Larry Wynn, who is now the vice president for church revitalization and leadership for the Georgia Baptist Convention, began pastoring Rehoboth as an interim.

Along with him was Troy Bush, who began a little earlier in the year helping out the church in administration on an interim basis. At the time, Bush taught part time at Southern Seminary — where he also earned a doctor of



philosophy degree in 1999 — and consulted on church planting efforts.

Early on, Wynn encouraged some of the lay leaders of the church to pray regularly and intently for Rehoboth and her future. As a result, an intimate group of men — among them Johnny Carter, Ray Pinkerton, Larry Ross and John Brown — began meeting in the conference room at LTR Land and Development office on Main St. in Tucker, a company owned by Ross.

Around the same time, Wynn and Bush began an “honest assessment” of the long-term viability of Rehoboth. And from early December until the middle of February 2012, they studied the demographics of the community, the gap between the community and the church’s ministry engagement of the community. They also looked at the spiritual health of the body and its perceived and real possibilities of moving forward, considering financial matters, its reputation in community, existing leadership and the enormous campus.

In the end, they concluded that they “did not see a viable pathway” for Rehoboth. When they met with the prayer group, they announced that Rehoboth was on a “terminal” trajectory and only had 24 to 36 months left.

“However, in the final days before presenting our recommendation to the

leadership, we believe God led us to see a pathway forward that would end the terminal decline and restore Rehoboth to being a strong, gospel-centered church in this community again,” said Bush.

Wynn and Bush presented four options for the church: (1) sell the property and relocate; (2) merge with one of the partner churches meeting on the Rehoboth property; (3) an aggressive revitalization for which the congregation would seek out a pastor to lead; or (4) a reorganization and relaunch.

“We shared that it was our conclusion that only option number four provided a viable pathway for them to again be a vibrant church that impacted the community for the kingdom of God,” said Bush.

That fourth proposal, included several elements: a partnership with First Baptist Church Woodstock; a change in worship style; a “whatever-it-takes” commitment to reach the lost; and a transition from a deacon board to a deacon body whose primary function would be to serve the church rather than manage it. Additionally, Rehoboth would transitioned its committees to ministry teams and dissolve its executive, personnel and finance committees in order to establish an advisory team in their place.

Because of a lack of trust in pastoral

leadership — due in large part to the two turbulent pastorates in succession — the church drifted in a direction that minimized pastoral leadership. So a key step in the proposal emphasized restoring the pastoral leadership.

The morning of April 22, 2012, Wynn, along with other leaders from the church, presented to the church this “strategic plan.” And, as Wynn insisted earlier in the process, to call Bush as senior pastor. Immediately, they went into a special-called business meeting, where members voted 96 percent to adopt the plan.

“There was so much thought and discussion before about trying to get back where we were instead of looking ahead to where we should be going. And I think the Lord just revealed to the men of the church — and to the whole church for that matter — that Troy was the one to lead us to do that. God revealed that to us,” said Pinkerton, a member since 1987.

A sign to the community

At that time another Southern Baptist congregation, significantly larger than Rehoboth, met on the church campus. And the churches shared a temporary sign — two four by eight sheets of plywood in a V-shape. One side said “Rehoboth” and the other side displayed the other church’s name. So,

depending on the direction from which an area resident saw the sign, they might think a different church met there. And, according to Bush, many people in the community thought that Rehoboth had died.

Both congregations worked toward a long-term partnership for sharing Rehoboth's facility, but they eventually concluded that two congregations of their respective sizes could not effectively utilize the same campus. (Rehoboth currently hosts 11 smaller churches.)

And, in October of 2012, Rehoboth put up a new sign. But for many of the Rehoboth members, the bricks and lights formed much more than a signal that a church met there.

"That sign became an 'ebenezer' for Rehoboth again that they survived. It was the George Bailey one dollar that we made it, that we came through the hardest of storms that this church has ever known and God persevered them," Bush said, referring to the character in the 1946 movie, "It's a Wonderful Life."

All nations, all generations

Now in the summer of 2014, Bush has been at Rehoboth for a couple of years. And he insists that the church still has "a lot of work to do." But the congregation feels and sounds different — less like the Rehoboth of the past decade and more like the Rehoboth of the past century.

Harriet Carter, one of the longest-tenured members of Rehoboth calls the recent happenings at Rehoboth a "miracle."

"Ever since Troy's got here, he just hit the road running," she said. "We just thank the Lord, we just feel like we're on a new journey now for the Lord."

Pinkerton agreed. And, he said, more than anything, Rehoboth now knows where she's going. "What Troy did was lay out a vision that people bought into. And then he has the will, the determination, the skill and God has led him to lead us in a direction that we support. So we're focused on where we're going."

One of the primary objectives for Bush is to lead the church toward unity.

When he first became pastor, the church held two worship services on Sunday mornings, one with a traditional music style and the other with a contemporary style. The structure divided the congregation, essentially, by age.

When he announced that the new director of worship ministries — Chris Fowler — would lead an "inter-generational" style of worship, Bush told the congregation that would mean all age groups deferring to each other. Right then, he called for the older members to show their support for embracing a multi-generational service by standing.

"To be here that morning and hear all the adults standing and just weeping — 55-year-old adults standing and weeping — it was unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable," Bush said.

On that day, Jennie Ross, wife of Larry Ross, was standing.

"I'm excited about the services not being separate," said she said. "Troy has blended the services and so now families are back together, and everyone's going back to church at the same time. That's what I'm most excited about."

This move, in many ways, represents Bush's larger goal of reaching "nations and generations" with the gospel and making Rehoboth a church that reaches every demographic, both ethnic and life-stage.

"Our vision whether we're talking about Louisville or Lima Peru is the same: it's that his kingdom will come that his will would be done on earth as

it is in heaven," he said. "It's that you and I would be making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and seeing them baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and that they would obey the teachings of Christ."

The future of Rehoboth Baptist Church, according to Bush, centers on this vision, which he says was the vision of the church from her beginning. So when, on April 22, 2012, the church members voted to reorganize and relaunch, it returned the church to the missionary legacy begun by its founders — and its Founder. ►

Aaron Cline Hanbury is the managing editor of Southern Seminary Magazine.





Life cycle of churches

WHERE IS YOUR CHURCH?

Jim Stitzinger, director of the Bevin Center for Missions Mobilization at Southern Seminary, uses this chart by church revitalization specialists Jay Letey and Ken Priddy to help churches understand their need for and process of church revitalization. The chart helps to illustrate the status of a church in the life cycle in order to take steps toward revitalization.



INCLINE

Future-oriented
 Vision-driven
 Community Focus
 Innovative
 High-risk Faith
 Faith Decision
 \$ = Investor
 Serve by Gifts
 New Leadership
 Conversion Growth



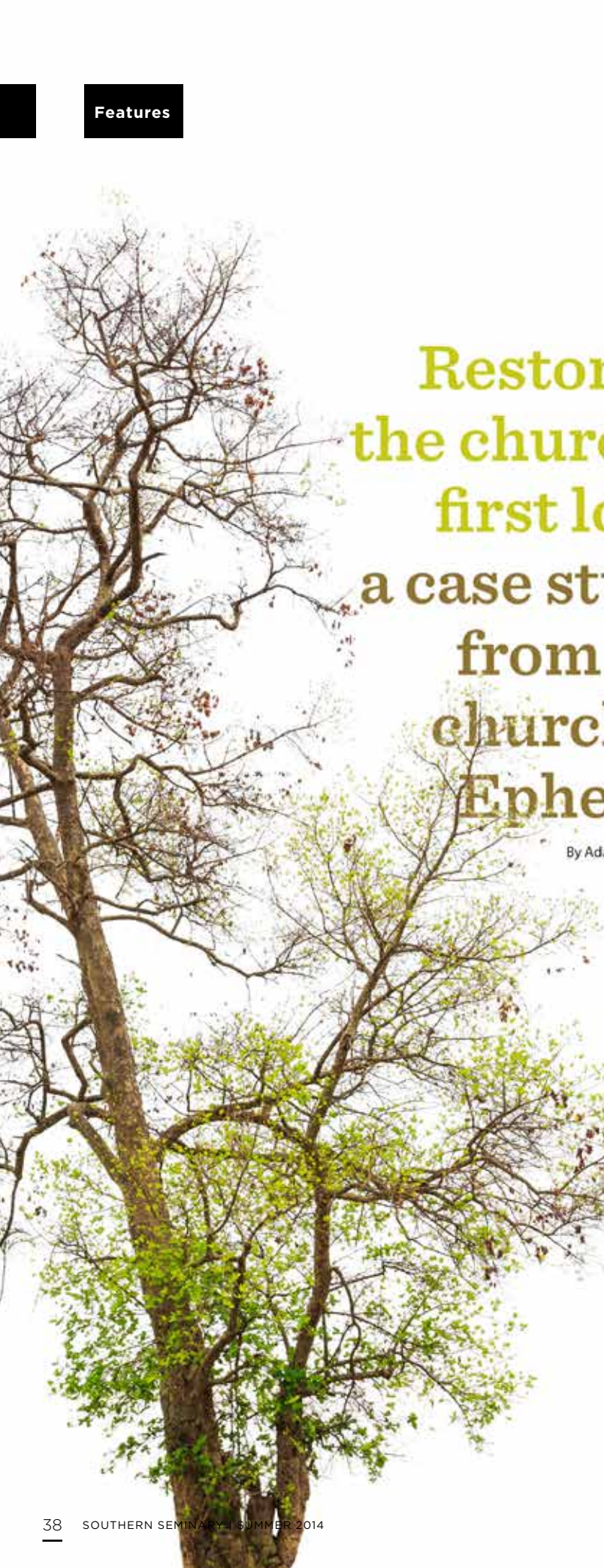
RECLINE

Present-oriented
 Program-driven
 Congregation Focus
 Routine
 Low-risk Faith
 Resource Decision
 \$ = Provider
 Serve by Slot
 Stagnant Leadership
 Transfer Growth



DECLINE

Past-oriented
 Structure-driven
 Core focus
 Complacent
 No-risk Faith
 Indecision
 \$ = Preserver
 Serve by Default
 Incumbent Leadership
 No Growth



Restoring the church's first love: a case study from the church at Ephesus

By Adam W. Greenway

The ministry of church revitalization is as old as the church itself. One church mentioned in the New Testament in particular seems in perpetual need of revitalizing.

Along similar lines today, countless churches desperately need revitalizing. And, in God's goodness, the same prescription he gives for that ancient church is the same for today's churches. Indeed, the early church at Ephesus is a case study in church revitalization with relevance far beyond its own time.

In Acts 20, the apostle Paul in Macedonia, sends word to the church at Ephesus. He instructs the church elders to "pay careful attention" to the congregation to which the "Holy Spirit has made them overseers," and to "care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." Paul warns, "Fierce wolves will come in among [the church], not sparing the flock." Further, he says that these wolves will arise "from among" the church itself.

Paul had poured himself into the life of this church: he spent three years there; he preached the gospel; he disciplined believers; he appointed elders. And now he is warning them to be on guard for what will happen as, over time, false teachers and deception come.

Later, in his first letter to Timothy, Paul encourages his son in the faith

to stay with the Ephesian church in order to preserve it against the false teachers about which he warned them, that he “may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.”

In our terms, Paul sends Timothy to revitalize the church at Ephesus.

In the timeline of the New Testament, this exhortation is coming less than 20 years after Paul’s first letter to the Ephesians. And, evidently, false teaching had already infiltrated the church.

So in Acts 20, Paul warns the Ephesians to be on guard. Then, in 1 Timothy 1, he tells Timothy he sent him there to deal with false teaching. But the story of the church of Ephesus does not end there. The Ephesian church appears again in the second chapter of the Book of Revelation, where, this time, Jesus speaks to the church. The Savior commends the church on several points, and then speaks perhaps the most indicting words found in all the New Testament: “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.”

The timing here is about 55 years after Paul’s original admonition to the elders, and the Ephesian church needs revitalization again.

Many times we become more enamored with the maintenance of the ministry than the movement of seeing people come to Christ. A lot of things that pastors are often expected to do are not all that exciting, but they have to get done: someone has to clean the bathrooms, turn on the lights and turn off lights, lock up the building. And we can focus upon all of the elements of church life that are financial, physical, material and so forth. But many times, we lose a sense of mission. When our focus is upon the wrong things we end up getting the wrong results.

And, for many of our churches, the results are indeed wrong. Roughly 80 to 85 percent of established

ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL THINGS WE MUST DO AS LEADERS OF THE CHURCH IN ORDER TO BE AGENTS FOR REVITALIZATION IS HELP BELIEVERS RECAPTURE A FOCUS ON THE PERSON AND WORK OF GOD.

churches in America are either plateaued or declining. And sadly, 3,000 to 4,000 churches are closing every year. In 1920 there were 27 churches for every 10,000 Americans; by 1996, there were only 11 churches for every 10,000 Americans. The Southern Baptist churches are baptizing no more people today than they did in the 1950s, when the population of the United States was less than half of the current population.

Many churches today once experienced a fire for God; their people were passionate about the work of God. But, for one reason or another, they departed from the mission. They, like the Ephesian church, lost their first love.

It is striking in the Book of Acts that the early church had almost none of the things we do. But they had something that many of our churches, sadly,

do not — and what is absolutely indispensable to the ministry of church revitalization — the fullness of the power and the presence of God in the life of that church.

The early church — as reported throughout the book of Acts — prayed for boldness and the boldness came (Acts 4:23-31). This episode is a powerful example to us of what happens when a church has the right kind of focus: a God-centered focus. One of the essential things we must do as leaders of the church in order to be agents for revitalization is help believers recapture a focus on the person and work of God. This church is God’s church, this work is God’s work, and apart from the overcoming, enabling grace of God we are nothing and we can do nothing.

Church revitalization, first and foremost, is not a plan; it’s not a scheme; it’s not a strategy. Primarily, revitalization is a reconnecting with the heart, mind and purpose of the Lord of the church himself; it is a spiritual matter. Revitalization is remembering what God has done, calling for repentance where there is unrepentant sin. Where there is a doubt in the capacity of God we call for faith. We proclaim the Word of God. And we lay out once again what it means to be the church. The goal of revitalization is to help people recapture — as Jesus says in Revelation to the Ephesians — their “first love.”

If we have the right love, then everything else falls into place. Because if we truly love the Savior, we will love what the Savior loves. We will have a burden to connect lost people to Christ and to take people deeper into God’s Word so that they may be more fully conformed to the character and commission of Christ. That, in essence, is the ministry of church revitalization. ➤

Adam W. Greenway is dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry as well as William Walker Brookes Associate Professor of Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Southern Seminary

Chitwood leads Kentucky Baptists to prioritize revitalization

By Erin Roach



Paul Chitwood believes church revitalization is as important as church planting.

“Revelation 19:7 says of the Lord’s church, ‘His Bride has made herself ready,’” said Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC). “I believe one of the primary roles of pastors, and the denominational missionaries who serve them, is to ensure the local church is healthy when Christ comes to claim her.”

During a reorganization of the KBC

in 2012, Chitwood, a two-time graduate and former faculty member of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, created a church consulting and revitalization team.

“This, our largest team, consists of 21 full-time team members who work with churches toward a goal of revitalization,” Chitwood said. “On this team we have consultants who specialize in everything from children’s ministry to church finances to senior adult ministry.”

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

Steve Rice, the Church Consulting and Revitalization Team leader, said revitalization work rarely leads to instant success, but several KBC churches experienced significant levels of revitalization during the past year.

One such church that benefits directly from Chitwood’s revitaliza-

tion emphasis is Junction City First Baptist Church in Danville.

The church's pastor, Choe Sergent, said: "The team assisted me in identifying our areas that we were losing members as well as developing effective strategies to both retain new members and disciple established members."

Junction City started new member classes, increased the options for discipleship and began emphasizing missions involvement.

"But it wasn't the program or plan that benefited me the most," said Sergent, who plans to attend Southern in the fall. "It was the people that the KBC sent me — people who have led a church successfully. People who are servant leaders who in turn provide KBC pastors the principles of servant leadership."

Under Chitwood's leadership, Sergent said, the revitalization team is reviving, creating and equipping

leaders who then lead their churches toward revival.

"The church revitalization team under Dr. Chitwood is exactly what KBC churches need," Sergent said.

Chitwood's emphasis on church revitalization may explain why KBC churches — contrary to national trends — have added new members the last two years: 27,694 in 2012 and 26,567 in 2013.

Adam W. Greenway, dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry at Southern Seminary, was the first KBC president to serve a full term with Chitwood as executive director.

"I've had a chance to walk with him through what I can only describe as transformational leadership on display as he has refocused, right-sized and revitalized our state missions and ministry efforts, particularly honing in on our primary purposes of helping churches reach Kentucky and the world for Jesus Christ," he said.

"I think it's showing up in the kind of staff that he has been able to attract, the kind of programming and consulting work that is now coming from guys who are out on the field helping pastors and churches really get a sense of what it means to help their churches experience revitalization and renewal," Greenway said.

People find Chitwood incredibly accessible, according to Greenway, and he makes changes "in the least disruptive manner possible."

"Immanuel Baptist Church down in Corbin right now is having genuine revival," Greenway said. "They're seeing some significant turning of people to Christ. Chitwood and his team have rushed to see what God is doing, learn from it and are working to see it spread to other churches. I think there's a general atmosphere now of a heightened expectancy for God to do something in the state."

Due in large part to Chitwood's emphasizing an increase in giving, going and witnessing, Greenway said, "I think we're seeing pastors across the state have a greater burden for the lost-

ness that surrounds them."

"Having someone like Dr. Chitwood who is consistently calling our attention back to the Great Commission, the Great Commandment, proclaiming the gospel, I think that's the kind of thing that hopefully motivates and inspires pastors and others to be about the task that matters," Greenway said.

Chitwood, a former pastor of First Baptist Church in Mount Washington, Ky., earned a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in 1995 and a doctorate from the seminary in 2001. He then served as an assistant professor of evangelism and church growth there before becoming KBC executive director.

"I am hopeful that the next generation of gospel ministers will be trained specifically for the areas of church planting and church revitalization," Chitwood said. "Although church planting has been emphasized in our colleges and seminaries for some time, degree programs in church revitalization are relatively new.

"I believe Southern Seminary's new D.Min. in church revitalization will meet a tremendous need for our pastors and churches," Chitwood said. "Another exciting development regarding the KBC and the seminary has been our 'Seminary for a Day' events where we utilize professors from Southern to help train KBC pastors in ministry skill areas that are essential for a leader seeking to revitalize a church."

Given the statistical realities of the number of churches plateaued or in decline, Chitwood believes "the investment we are making in the area of church revitalization is every bit as important as the sizable investment we are making in the area of church planting."

He said: "While the KBC will continue to serve our churches in a host of ministries, church revitalization and church planting are our primary focus as we move forward." ➤

Erin Roach is a correspondent for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Paul Chitwood



"Having someone like Dr. Chitwood who is consistently calling our attention back to the Great Commission, the Great Commandment, proclaiming the gospel, I think that's the kind of thing that hopefully motivates and inspires pastors and others to be about the task that matters," Greenway said.

Implementing the ‘Change Matrix’ in the church

By William D. Henard

INITIATING CHANGE WITHIN A LOCAL CHURCH represents one of the most difficult tasks, if not the most difficult task, pastors face. Whether one desires to instill an evangelism DNA into a plateaued congregation or initiate new ministries or programs, change usually proves difficult.

This four-step course of action — “The Change Matrix” — takes time to initiate and implement, with all four steps working concurrently as well as consecutively. And they must be repeated consistently. The matrix also offers flexibility for each church to experience God’s will and unique vision.



First, the pastor must set biblical priorities for the church. Various authors offer suggestions for the priorities of the church, but this matrix utilizes five priorities based upon Acts 2:41-47.

The five priorities include: worship (Eph 5:18-20); evangelism (2 Cor 5:18-19); discipleship (Eph 4:11-15); fellowship (1 John 1:6-7) and ministry (1 Pet 4:7-11).

In order to communicate these priorities, it is essential that the pastor preach a series of sermons on this topic, along with teaching and repeating these ideas. He should also teach and discuss these standards within the leadership of the church, and should lay the foundation for the entire process. The congregation must buy into these priorities or the matrix will not work. Therefore, discussion and discipleship are necessary.



Many church members find themselves uncomfortable with change because of the fear of pragmatism. The solution is to insure that all change will fall within certain biblical parameters. These five parameters include: holiness (Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 1:13-21), excellence (Phil 1:9-11); anticipation (Acts 1:4-5, 14); relevance (1 Cor 9:19-23) and teamwork (Phil 4:1-3).

Out of the priorities and biblical parameters develop a church mission statement and purpose statement.

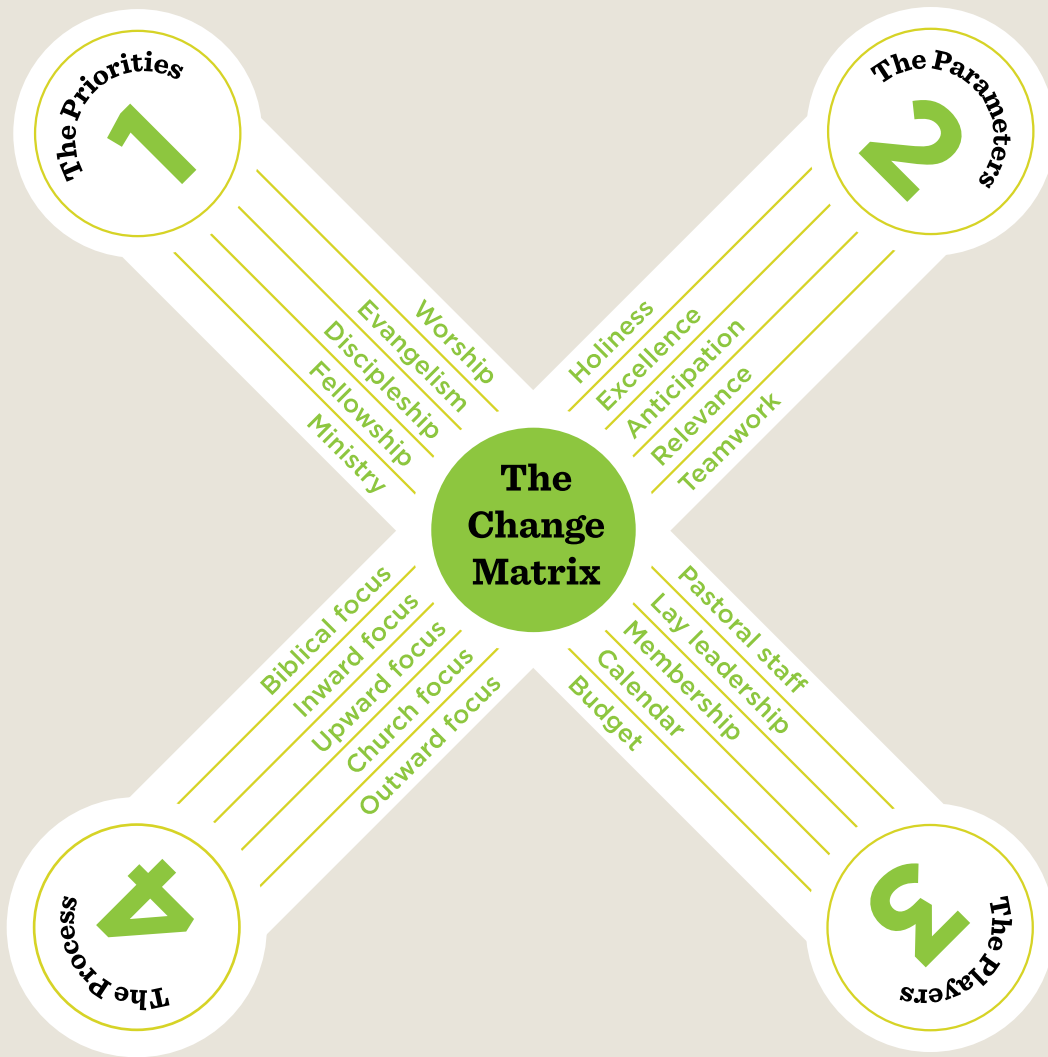
At my church, we developed this mission statement: “Our mission is to worship God, to globally lead people to faith in Christ, and to grow together to be like Him.” Each Sunday, we remind the church of our mission, and welcome and invite newcomers to join our fellowship based on this statement. The words “worship,” “lead,” and “grow,” serve as the foundation for every ministry, function and program of the church. Coupled with this mission statement is a simple purpose statement that communicates the attitude under which our church operates.



In order to understand the effectiveness and extent of the change, communication and evaluation must take place in five specific areas: the five “players” include pastoral staff, lay leadership, membership, calendar and budget.

Communicating necessary change must begin with the other pastors or elders of the church. Then those in the broader church leadership, including church committees, deacons and Sunday school teachers need to embrace change. Finally, the need for change must come before the congregation, using whatever form of church polity is presently in place. Except for very rare occasions, even if the church follows a pastor-led or elder-led model, the members must understand the process that is being undertaken.

Calendar and budget provide important evaluative measures because the changes are not really implemented until they reflect what the church does and what it funds.



The Process 4

Finally, a particular process will help lead the church to understand the need for change and how these changes will be implemented.

1. Biblical focus. Be consistent in teaching the church about the centrality of biblical revelation, and make the preaching of the Word primary. Insist that everything that the church does follows a biblical precedent.

2. Inward focus. The church must discover a “holy dissatisfac-

tion” with its current status or accomplishments. Complacency kills Christians, so they must go through that valley experience whereby they recognize that God has much bigger plans for them.

3. Upward focus. A key element to finding this “holy dissatisfaction” arises out of a commitment to prayer. As the church leader, lead your church to pray. This prayer focus will move the church to be broken about personal sin and will help in leading the church to then re-dream the dream.

4. Church focus. Once these new priorities have been set, lead your church to implement the dream. Celebrate with them the victories that the church has and make sure to listen to your people. They will provide a good barometer on the success of the changes made.

5. Outward focus. In order for believers to see the need for change, they must recognize more fully their role in the Great Commission. As the church leader, help your church to get involved personally in doing missions and ministry outside of the walls of the church. ➤

William D. Henard is assistant professor of evangelism and church growth at Southern Seminary and senior pastor of Port Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky. This essay is an adaptation from a chapter in Henard's forthcoming book, Can These Bones Live? (B&H, June 2015).



MICAH NAVE

Southern Seminary ('14)
Ph.D., Billy Graham School of
Missions, Evangelism and Ministry

I am currently privileged to be serving at Springdale Community Church in Louisville, Ky. A little over a year ago, I came on staff as the director of children's ministry, and that was quickly followed by the addition of the women's ministry director position. While this dual position might seem overwhelming or mismatched, it has proven to be an ideal pairing.

Out of a genuine love for the children and the children's spiritual well-being comes a connection to the mothers, grandmothers and so many family members. Overall, I count it as pure joy to serve as a member of this body of believers and have them as a loving spiritual community.

Southern Seminary has provided me with an excellent foundation for ministry. As a master's degree student I focused on women's leadership. I learned the importance of honoring the authority structures God has established.

Family ministry coursework during my master's and doctoral studies taught me a lot about the support and actuation of parents as the primary disciple-makers. It encouraged me to take the truth of the gospel with seriousness when it comes to our families.

At Southern, I also learned the value of a purpose statement, a litmus test for what God is calling me to do. Through prayer and wrestling with God's Word, he gave me this concentration: To train and equip girls and women. It's not long, it isn't profound but it has proven to be a trustworthy guide for ministry opportunities I have encountered.



CURTIS WOODS

Southern Seminary
Ph.D. candidate, School of
Theology

How do you see your work at the Kentucky Baptist Convention serving the churches of Kentucky?

A lesser known Reformed theologian named Rupert Meldenius said, "Unity in essentials, liberty in incidentals, and in all things charity." In a sense, this maxim drives my ministry passion as I minister to an extremely diverse family of Kentucky Baptists. The KBC is comprised of 2,400 autonomous churches totaling 750,000 members. As a denominational servant, my sole responsibility is to remind our churches to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Why is revitalization of particular interest/concern?

Simply put, we love the bride of Christ. We, like the Puritan Richard Sibbes, believe Christ will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. When we come alongside a church in need of revitalization, we prioritize their intimacy with Christ and one another before attempting to develop a revitalization strategy.

How do your studies at Southern Seminary relate to your ministry?

In a world that readily distorts the gospel by questioning the authority of Scripture, I find each seminar academically challenging and spiritually edifying. For example, Dr. Shawn Wright, in a seminar on Puritanism, introduced me to the works of Richard Sibbes. After reading "The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax," I knew I would use Sibbes's counsel to mentor young pastor-theologians for many years to come. The sermon strengthened my resolve to love the church well even when she appears unlovable.

TWO-TIME GRADUATE NAMED BAPTIST PRESS CHIEF CORRESPONDENT

David Roach, a two-time graduate of Southern Seminary (master of divinity, 2005; doctorate, 2009), recently became a chief national correspondent for Baptist Press.

He is a regular contributor to Baptist Press and numerous other publications. In addition to Baptist Press, Roach has been an editorial associate for *SBC LIFE* since 2012 and was a newswriter for Southern Seminary News from 2003 to 2009. He also has written for the Kentucky Baptist Convention; the *Southern Baptist TEXAN*; *Florida Baptist Witness*; *The Alabama Baptist*; LifeWay Christian Resources; *Kairos Journal*; and BibleMesh.

GRADUATE AND CURRENT STUDENT JOINS FACULTY OF WESTERN SEMINARY

Patrick Schreiner, a graduate (master of divinity, 2011) and current doctor of philosophy candidate at Southern Seminary, will begin teaching at Western Seminary, a multi-city seminary on the west coast of the United States, in the fall 2014 as instructor of New Testament.

According to a release from the school, Schreiner — who is the son of Southern Seminary professor Thomas R. Schreiner — will teach primarily at Western's Portland, Ore., campus, in addition to the San Jose, Calif., and Sacramento, Calif., and online campuses.

This academic year, Southern Seminary enrolled more master of divinity students than any other school accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.



Two-time alumnus leads NAMB in mobilizing church planting

During his time planting in New York City — which he calls “an incredible experience” — Aaron Coe, a church planting missionary pastor from 2003 to 2008, learned two principles: First, a focus on church planting in the city will result in growth of the Christian population.

Noting the growth in the Christian population since the 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, he said “40 percent of the Christian churches in Manhattan started between 2001 and 2007. The wake of church planting activity post 9/11 increased Manhattan’s Christian population from one percent to nearly four percent.”

Second, Coe said he learned that

Christians need to plant a variety of churches in the city if they want to see the gospel penetrate lostness.

“There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach,” he said. “In New York City, there are 800 different language groups. Of those language groups, Southern Baptists have churches in approximately 30. If we are going to reach the people of North America and the world, we have to plant churches for every demographic,” said Coe, who in 2008 founded “City Uprising” and, in 2009, initiated “SendNYC” in order to help plant churches in New York City.

In 2011 — despite how much Coe and his family enjoyed New York City — Coe moved to Alpharetta,

Ga., in order to expand what he learned in the city to other areas of North America as a vice president of mobilization at the North American Mission Board.

“The North American Mission Board gave me a platform for the things we were doing in New York City to be expanded across the U.S. and Canada,” Coe said. “Essentially, the principles that we learned in New York have become NAMB’s Send North America strategy.”

Many years ago, I determined that I wanted to give my life in building Jesus’ church. Additionally, I believe that evangelistic church planting is the best way to see the culture of a city change.

Coe, a two-time graduate from Southern Seminary — he earned a master of divinity degree in 2009 and a master of theology degree in 2011 — said his time at the school prepared him for his current ministry.

“My two degrees from Southern Seminary prepared me immensely for what I’m doing now. It helped me focus and refine my thinking related to cities and church planting,” he said.

Coe said the motivation behind his work is the advancement of the church.

“Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that he is going to build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Many years ago, I determined that I wanted to give my life in building Jesus’ church. Additionally, I believe that evangelistic church planting is the best way to see the culture of a city change.”

Coe and his wife, Carmen, have four children: Ezra, Danielle, Joshua and Harper. —AARON CLINE HANBURY

Some background materials provided by Baptist Press.



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HERITAGE GOLF CLASSIC (*August 18*)

Invest in the mission of Southern Seminary by supporting the 11th Annual Heritage Golf Classic. Play, sponsor or donate an item for the silent auction and be a part of Southern's premier fund-raising event of the year. For more information please contact Michael Craig at mcraig@sbts.edu.

FIRST ANNUAL SOUTHER SEMINARY AIM HIGHER TRAP AND SKEET SHOOT (*November 7*)

We are pleased to announce the inaugural Southern Seminary Aim Higher Trap and Skeet Shoot to be held November 7 at Jefferson Gun Club. This exciting event will provide sportsmen with a fun and unique way to support the students of Southern. For more information, please contact Michael Craig at mcraig@sbts.edu.



Troy and Mary Ellen Lawson supporting students who will lead healthy churches

In 2009, Troy Lawson and his wife, Mary Ellen, began looking for a new church in their hometown of Bardstown, Ky. During the preceding months, Troy Lawson — a real estate broker and agent for Semonin Realty, as well as an auctioneer and cattleman — read *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* by R. Albert Mohler Jr. The book caused he and his wife to think more about and value what Mohler, who is president of Southern Seminary in nearby Louisville, Ky, defines as true worship: biblical, expos-

itory preaching. And they decided to join a church where preaching is the highest priority.

When they began searching for a church, they only knew a little bit about Southern Seminary through a friend who works at Dorothy Sayers Classical Academy in Louisville. But they didn't know about the seminary's mission and students.

Then their friend Donald S. Whitney, who is a professor at the seminary, invited the couple to an informative donors' dinner at the

seminary. As they spent time on campus that evening and began to meet students when they visited local churches in Louisville, they grew in appreciation and affection for the school and its community.

"We felt at home," Mary Ellen Lawson said. "We enjoyed fellowshiping with those folks on the foundation board and just began getting more and more involved."

As they continued to meet families from the seminary community, the Lawsons began to support students individually until they learned the church they attended supported students through a fund, which they began to support.

This naturally led them to join the school's Foundation Board, where they've been members for almost four years.

"We see what the mission of Southern is, which is to help the local church, not just around Louisville but everywhere," Lawson said.

The Lawsons support the seminary because they trust the money helps keep tuition rates low. And, because they experienced an unhealthy church early on, they see the importance of helping students finish seminary so they can minister in churches that need biblically sound pastors who lead the congregations to health.

"There is such a need to get people who are willing and ready and trained to go out and preach the gospel and to revitalize our churches," Lawson said. "By supporting them financially, they can get through their education and, when they graduate, they don't have to linger, working off debt but they can actually get busy doing what God has called them to do."

The Lawsons love the seminary and its mission. They also love the local church and recently joined a church plant from Louisville's Crossing Church in Bardstown. The church launched April 20, 2014 and they look forward to what the Lord does next in their journey in supporting healthy churches and the pastors who lead them. —RUTHANNE IRVIN



Craig Parker is the vice president for institutional advancement and executive director of the Southern Seminary Foundation.



An international investment

Niklas Riedel hails from Heidelberg, Germany. He recently graduated from Boyce College, and will begin at Southern Seminary this fall. His story of getting from Germany to Louisville has much more to it than that, though.

Niklas grew up an atheist, but after a year of studying abroad in the United States, he returned home to Germany in 2007 a theist. He began attending an evangelical church with a friend when he returned to Germany. In 2008, at age 19, God used that friend and that church to convince Riedel that Jesus was real and that the gospel was true.

After a year-long stint with the German navy, Niklas discerned a call to ministry. He enrolled in a German university to begin studying theology, but quickly observed pervasive theological liberalism and immorality in his classmates. He grew tired of fighting battles in class and looked to America for a place to study. He liked what he had heard about the Southern Baptist Convention, and so decided to give Boyce College a call.

The helpfulness of those he contacted at Southern Seminary and Boyce College impressed Niklas, so he visited the school in September 2011. What he saw at Boyce, with its commitments to the Bible, stood in stark contrast to his experience in Germany.

In January of 2012, he began classes in the biblical and theological studies program at Boyce College.

In Niklas' mind, he made the right choice.

"Boyce has taught me what a healthy church looks like," Riedel said. "And that has shaped me in my understanding and desire of what I want to do in my future ministry — whether that is preaching, church leadership, baptism, church discipline or simply loving other church members."

home to come to Boyce College, and now Southern Seminary.

Niklas' story is a wonderful reminder that schools like Boyce College and Southern Seminary simply aren't very common. The school's administration, faculty and healthy environment for growth make it a truly unique school, and an attraction for students even at the international scale.

How unfortunate it would have been had Niklas been unable to enroll in a biblically committed school because

Schools like Boyce College and Southern Seminary simply aren't very common. The school's administration, faculty and healthy environment for growth make it a truly unique school, and an attraction for students even at the international scale.

"Seeing that the Bible points toward God's saving work through Jesus Christ has changed so much for me and has given me a great desire to preach and teach like my professors and pastors here," he said.

In some ways, Niklas' story is unique. We don't have a whole lot of students from Germany. In other ways, though, his story is like so many others. He sacrificed the comforts of

of a financial obstacle. It is part of our stewardship to ensure that other students like Niklas will not decide against Boyce or Southern because of tuition costs.

You never know how far an investment might reach. A prayerful investment in Boyce College, Southern Seminary and the students that come here to train for ministry just might have international implications.

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