

The Baptist

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Southeastern Trustees Elect Danny Pitts as President

Southeastern Trustee Chairman Matt Hudson shares that the trustees have elected Interim President Danny Pitts as President of SBC. They noted the progress made during his tenure as interim and the need for permanent leadership. More information will be presented at the annual meeting held October 21-22, in Laurel.

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On The Road To Post-Christian America?

from *Prophecy News Watch*
By Tom Olago

Is the United States in a free-fall from the Christian faith, down towards secularization? Indications are that this is indeed the case, with waning levels of influence, commitment and beliefs spreading like a wildfire across traditionally strong Christian communities, taking down many individual adherents in its wake.

Recent research bears out this trend and prompts the question: "Is America, home to the largest Christian population in the world, actually becoming a 'post-Christian' nation?"

Although 78% of Americans are self-proclaimed 'Christians', a recent study conducted by the Barna Group seems to

support a resounding 'yes' answer to the question. In just two years, the percentage of Americans who qualify as "post-Christian" rose by 7 percentage points, from 37% in 2013 to 44% in 2015.

Across the United States, cities in every state are becoming more post-Christian, moving deeper into a backslidden state - some at a faster rate than others.

The Barna Group analyzed 60,808 interviews conducted over a seven-year pe-

riod to measure 'irreligion' in American cities, looking at a variety of key faith indicators for both belief and practice.

Questions were designed to get beyond how people loosely identify themselves (affiliation) and get to the core of what people actually believe and how they behave as a result of their belief (practice).

Based on Barna's research criteria, to qualify as "post-Chris-



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Is Discipleship a Starting Line or a Finish Line?

Many times, people involved in planned discipleship think of it as a finish line. If the person being discipled can just complete a discipleship program, he or she will cross a spiritual finish line to a place of full maturity. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, discipleship is not a program with a graduation ceremony. Discipleship is a lifetime investment. Although the disciple-makers may move on to invest in other people, the disciples should always know that their mentors are available to them for life. Sometimes the most impactful discipleship opportunities occur during late-night phone calls, even if two people haven't been in contact for years. Because of a disciple-maker's past investment in a life, the disciple knows that help and support is available at any time.

Instead of a finish line, discipleship is more like a starting line. It's a place where the process of growing in Christ can be developed then cross the finish line to victory.

For most believers, God supplies multiple lifetime disciple-makers with just the right person to teach them just the

right thing and at just the right time. Each person's discipleship is like a new starting line to begin the rest of his or life. Ultimately, every piece of the discipleship puzzle points to one's ultimate place as a disciple of Christ.

So don't sweat it if your disciple can't quote the entire genealogy of Christ, the ten plagues of Egypt, or the twelve tribes of Israel. Instead, work hard to train that disciple to keep running the race.

If Jesus really meant for disciple-makers to teach every detail to their disciples, then the Lord set a poor example for them. By his own admission in John 14:25-26, Jesus explained that there were more things for his disciples to learn that the Holy Spirit would teach while being reminded of things they learned personally from Christ. In other words, Christ did not "teach them everything" in the sense of exhaustive, literal facts while he was with his disciples on earth.

So what did Jesus mean by "teach them to observe everything I have commanded"? Christ meant for disciple-makers to live by his principle of teaching: To make sure that His disciples were trained in such a way that they would learn all

things. In other words, he trained them so they would continue their education under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

This is just like the old saying, "Give a man a fish and you will feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you will feed him for a lifetime." Jesus was not satisfied to train his men to be dependent upon his physical presence with them—after all, he would only spend three years with them before ascending to heaven. Instead, he transformed them into self-feeders with "ears to hear" (Matthew 11:15), so that when he was gone, they would be able to learn for themselves from Scripture through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Disciple-makers must always emphasize Christ's discipleship over their own.

DiscipleGuide

Scott Attebery
Executive Director
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Attebery

Texas Chooses Missions Director

from Baptist Progress

Following the recent retirement announcement by Jerry Burnaman as Texas State Missions director, trustees of the department sought resumes for three months. After narrowing the search to four candidates and conducting interviews, trustees chose Heith Mitchell as their nominee. He has served as pastor of Myrtle Springs at Quitman, his current ministry position since 2011.

In his 19th year of full time ministry, he has also served as worship leader at Walnut Street at Winnsboro, was employed by Daniel Springs Baptist Camp in Gary and served as youth and music minister at O'Quinn at Pollok and Friendship at Mesquite.

The nominee said, "The best preparation for ministry I have had over the years has been the opportunity to serve under godly men. These men have been both biblically sound and excellent pastors and leaders. My family has been blessed to serve in loving churches with a heart for God and others."

He continued, "I have a burden for the work of the Great Commission. I love to see people saved and to make disciples. I have a burden and a love for churches and a passion for helping them. I have friends and acquaintances all across our work, both in Texas and across our national work."

The nominee said, "I feel very inadequate for the job that lies ahead for the new director, but I firmly believe that God equips us to accomplish His will. He has taken me on quite a journey so far that I believe uniquely equips me. I also know that success requires working together. For the BMA of Texas to have a successful church planting movement and church revitalization movement, it will take us all working together."

"I look forward to serving our planters by physically chipping in on work days, outreach days and whenever needed," Mitchell said. "I look forward to worshipping with

them and getting to know them better. I also look forward to serving the churches of our association. I look forward to partnering with and learning from our national missions work. They are really paving the way toward an exciting new day for planting churches in the BMA."

Mitchell has been married for 19 years to his wife, Christi. They have three children — Allison, 16; Logan, 12; and Emily 11.

The trustees of the State Missions department will officially nominate Heith Mitchell to serve as State Missions director when the BMA of Texas meets for annual business in November.



Heith Mitchell

Southeastern Baptist College

Danny Pitts - Interim President

4229 Highway 15 North, Laurel, Mississippi 39440, (601) 426-6346



Danny Pitts

Serving Christ With a Biblical World View In A Christian Atmosphere

State Meeting Approaching

The members of the staff at Southeastern Baptist College are working to prepare for the State Meeting. As usual we are making special efforts so the time of the messages here will be as pleasant as possible. Let us know if we can do anything for you or your committees.

Parking Lot Repaired

During the summer the condition of our parking lot was painfully evident. Someone said that we might have to mow the lot. The cost for repaving was estimated at about \$60,000. A coating with new striping was substantially less. Dr. Aaron Parker, our dean, spent four days doing some of prep work when the temperature was around 100 degrees. His son, Robbie, contributed a couple thousand dollars to offset much of the cost for the coating.

Another person gave \$200 to hire other prep work. Negotiations reduced the final figure even more. Although the coating is a temporary fix, it does allow time for long term planning. Hopefully this example illustrates our desire to be frugal. We try to use the Lord's money well.

Recruiting Is Vital & You Can Help

Our greatest needs continue to be students and income. Obviously enough new students will meet the need for income. Ronnie Kitchens, our Financial Aid Officer who also serves as recruiter, will have surgery in a couple weeks and be out for a month. Remember him in your prayers. The staff will be reaching out to prospective students while Bro. Ronnie is away. We need everyone in our churches to view themselves as recruiters for the Spring Semester.

Think about someone you know who could profit from classes or a degree from Southeastern. Share the contact information with the school. Encourage the prospect to consider courses. We will take it from there. Our Bachelor Degrees are in Church Ministries and Business. We offer the two year associates with an emphasis in Bible, Education, and Business.

The degrees can be earned on campus or completely online. Pell Grants and VA Benefits are available and pay almost all of the cost for many students. We can be reached by calling 601-426-6346.

Post-Christian America

from page 1

tian," individuals had to meet 60% or more of the following factors (nine or more). "Highly post-Christian" individuals meet 80% or more of the factors (12 or more of these 15 criteria):

1. Do not believe in God
2. Identify as atheist or agnostic
3. Disagree that faith is important in their lives
4. Have not prayed to God (in the last year)
5. Have never made a commitment to Jesus
6. Disagree the Bible is accurate
7. Have not donated money to a church (in the last year)
8. Have not attended a Christian church (in the last year)
9. Agree that Jesus committed sins
10. Do not feel a responsibility to "share their faith"
11. Have not read the Bible (in the last week)
12. Have not volunteered at church (in the last week)
13. Have not attended Sunday school (in the last week)
14. Have not attended religious small

group (in the last week)
15. Do not participate in a house church (in the last year)

Highlights of the study results were as follows:

- Based on a city-by-city comparison, six-state New England dominated the post-Christian metrics, claiming five of the top 10 most post-Christian cities, including Boston, Massachusetts (65 percent), Providence, Rhode Island (60 percent), and Portland, Maine (60 percent), with eight of the top 10 in the greater Northeast region.

- The West Coast is also fairly well represented among the top 15 cities, with San Francisco, California (66 percent) climbing up the rankings from 6th place in 2013 to top the list as the most post-Christian city in America, and Los Angeles, California (54 percent), coming in at 5th place.

- Newcomers to the top 15 cities include Las Vegas, Nevada (59 percent), Fort Myers-Naples, Florida (56 percent), Chicago, Illinois (54 percent) and Los Angeles, California (54 per

cent).

- As opposed to the West Coast and New England states, regions in South the nation's interior aren't losing their Christian roots quite as fast: "The South and Midwest have both lower comparative and slower rates of post-Christian growth... in line with these regions' typically higher rates of church attendance and self-identified Christians."

- In particular, cities where church attendance is high and the Christian tradition is generally strong were less affected by the post-Christian shift.

There are those who believe that perhaps the question was inaccurately framed. Could it be that America is not even predominantly Christian in the first place and is only nominally so?

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission opines: "If we take the opportunity to be the church, we may find that America is not 'post-Christian,' but is instead maybe 'pre-Christian.' It may be that this land is filled with people who, though often Christ-haunted, have never known the power of the Gospel, yet."

Moore further stresses that the "mis-

sion of Christ" never calls people to nominal Christianity.

Which is why the Barna study was designed to weed out those who essentially seem to have 'a form of Godliness, but denying the power' (2 Timothy 3:5). The questionnaire, though not all-inclusive, attempted to gauge the extent to which a profession to the Christian faith is living, active and serious, rather than passive, casual and convenient.

On that basis, it can be concluded from the statistics that there is indeed a decline in post-Christian America away from the principles and practices that are an integral part of the Scriptures, and consistent with true obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Or simply put, America is in the throes of backsliding from the faith of her fathers and is indeed becoming 'Post-Christian' in the Biblical sense.

This is disturbing but not altogether surprising when placed in prophetic end-times context:

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Matthew 24:12-13).

The Most Important Piece of Furniture in the Home

I know many of you would say the bed is the most important piece of furniture in your home. Ha! And I would be the first to agree that crawling into your own bed for a nap or a good night's rest is a great thing. But I am looking at the piece of furniture that would have the greatest impact on the family for good. And to that end, there is no comparison to the dining table. Even in one of the most iconic pictures that we see of a portrayal of Jesus; he is at the table eating with friends during the Last Supper. The dining table is the most important piece of furniture in your home for building family bonding and cohesiveness.

Of course that assumes that the family actually uses the dining table. And that they have boundaries and house rules for the table traditions. The reason the table is so important is not the food consumed. It is the conversation that is carried out. Communication is the key to a close family. The more we communicate, the better and stronger we become. No matter what the problem in the home, as long as we keep a dialogue of open, honest and loving communication between family members, all problems can be solved with God's help. Hopefully, Christian families sit down at the table to eat and start the entire process off with the most important form of communication – and that is prayer. The family that prays together – stays together.

Since biblical times, the breaking of bread together as a family was critical for social bonding. It offers opportunities for inter-generational exchange of



ideas and values. It is checking in with your family. It is finding out what is going on in their day. It is a great time to teach family doctrine. During the course of conversation with children, there are many opportunities to speak of what is right and wrong and how we should handle situations. Talking at the dinner table is where a family can learn how to respond to life in general on a daily basis. It can be a time of sharing, learning and dreaming together.

It does not have to be all conversation of significant meaning either. Just sitting around talking about anything builds time together as a family. Some of my greatest memories are sitting around with my extended family at the dining room table during the holidays. There was so much laughter. Story telling for 2 hours after eating was quite possible. This is where little children and grandchildren learn so much of who they are as a people. They hear stories of how it was in the old days. They hear parents, grandparents and others share how they survived or made it through some situation. And all the

family learns the value of laughter. It is good medicine. Families should make meal times enjoyable with lots of stories that often times begin with..... do you remember the time when.....

But we need a few simple rules to insure that meals times are pleasant experiences for everyone. All tense situations or difficult topics are off limits. Grades, who you are dating or not going to date, the horror of work etc., should be discussed at family meetings or at another time. If an argument ensues, the adults must make sure to say we can talk about it after supper. Siblings are not allowed to make fun of others or put others down. People should be encouraged during meal times. Everyone should have an opportunity to share their day, but do not have to be forced to share. It should be a happy time. Sensitive family issues are put aside for another time. Arguments are never allowed at the table.

The cell phone is the single greatest destroyer of family communication. All families must set a hard "house rule" of no cell phones at the dinner table. You

surely can go an hour talking with your family gathered around the table without your phone. If you can't, then you need to get help for your phone addiction. Adults always find excuses for themselves. It is work. There might be an emergency. People found out about emergencies and dealt with them for thousands of years before cell phones.

There is no email or text from work that is more important than family time together. Of course, none of this matters if the family doesn't actually eat together. You must find time to eat together at the table multiple times per week. The more the better. Yes, we are all busy and having to run here and there. Yes, young people always want to be engaged with electronics like TV or music. We must come apart or we will fall apart.

We must take time to talk and eat and be together with no outside influences. And yes it does need to be at the table. This forces you to look into each other's eyes. Sitting on the couch or floor can mean no eye contact. Biblical families always broke bread together with those they loved. So did Jesus. We must get back to this important aspect of family life. It's a major factor in a loving family.

Family Ark Ministries

Dr. Travis Plumlee is a full-time professional speaker and leads Family Ark Ministries. For more information or to contact him, visit www.travisplumlee.com.



CHURCH NEWS IN BRIEF

East Central Association Annual Meeting

The East Central Association held their 2015 annual meeting on September 12 at Tiger Creek Church near Ovett. Reports were given from various committees and adopted. Reports were given by Bro. Geraldson for State Missions, Paul Lee for Prisoners Bible Crusade, Phillip Reynolds for Missionary Sam Freeman in the Philippines, and Phillip Burns on his mission work in Sumrall, Mississippi.

A meal was enjoyed after the meeting. The next quarterly meeting will be November 5 at Tiger Creek Church.

I.L. Stinson, moderator
Jerry Overstreet, reporter

Oak Grove Association Meets

The fifty-seventh annual session of the Oak Grove Missionary Baptist Association met with Good Hope Baptist Church on September 17. The service was opened with a devotional from the Moderator Bro. Ted Quinby. The Committee on the Digest of Letters and Finance reported there were 12 churches present for the meeting.

Officers to serve for the next year were

elected with Bro. Ed Steele as Moderator, Bro. Chuck Lee as Vice-Moderator, Bro. Sam Oglesby as Clerk Treasurer, Bro. Glen Pace as Vice-Clerk Treasurer, and Bro. Ed Steele as Reporter. Bro. Blake McCain, Pastor of Midway First Baptist Church, was chosen to preach the 2016 annual message and Bro. Greg Medenwald, Pastor of Magnolia Baptist Church, was chosen to be the alternate. The 2016 annual meeting will be hosted by Calvary Baptist Church in Purvis.

Present to give reports were Bro. Danny Pitts representing Southeastern Baptist College, Bro. Paul Lee from the Prisoners Bible Crusade, and Bro. Larry Geraldson from the State Missions Department. State Missionaries also giving reports were Bro. Phillip Burns from Sumrall, Bro. Sidney Farmer from South Forrest, and Bro. Estuardo Maroquin speaking on behalf of the Hispanic missions.

After a special in music by Bro. Larry Lott, Ed Steele, pastor of Mount Gilead Baptist Church, brought the annual message. The church provided a bountiful meal following the conclusion of the service. The next monthly meeting will be with Pine Grove Baptist Church on November 12.

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME

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Don Brown

Mississippi Baptist

Opinion Page

www.ms baptist.org

Journal of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi

Don Brown - Editor

Voters Encouraged to Bring Authority of Word of God to Bear

(OneNewsNow.com) - A network of pastors and church partners say they want to have an influence on the outcome of the 2016 presidential election by bringing a biblical perspective to voters.

The American Pastors Network held its first "U-Turn Conference" in Pennsylvania back in March. More than 500 attended to learn how to impact cultural trends with biblical truths.

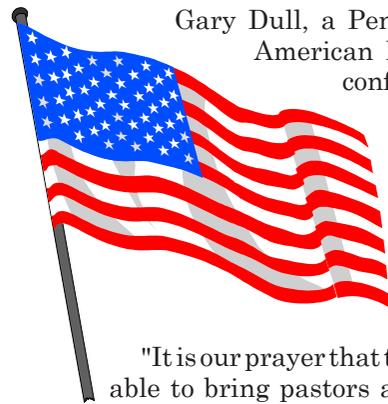
Gary Dull, a Pennsylvania pastor and a board member of the American Pastors Network, tells OneNewsNow the first conference was so effective that they now want to take it to states that will play a key role in deciding the next U.S. president.

"The Word of God reaches into every aspect of our lives if we will allow it to do so, even as it relates to that which is on a national scene - including the presidential election," he says.

Dull explains that the next conference will be held in Iowa on December 1.

"It is our prayer that through the U-Turn Conference in Iowa we will be able to bring pastors and lay people back to the commitment, to the authority of the Word of God, to pray for the upcoming elections, and to pray that God will raise an individual in the White House to lead this nation from a purely biblical perspective," he says.

Headlining the December 1 event in Des Moines will be social researcher George Barna and WallBuilders leader David Barton.



Former Mississippi Pastor Dies

Rev. David B. Rice, 81, of Conway, Arkansas, passed away on Sunday, October 04, 2015 at Conway Regional Medical Center. He was born April 27, 1934, in Tupelo, Arkansas. He was a Baptist Minister for 66 years. He began preaching when he was 15 years old.

He pastored Baptist churches in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi and Arkansas. He served

on various committees in the National, State, and Local Associations in the BMA work. His last pastorate was Lakeview Baptist Church, Mayflower, Arkansas.

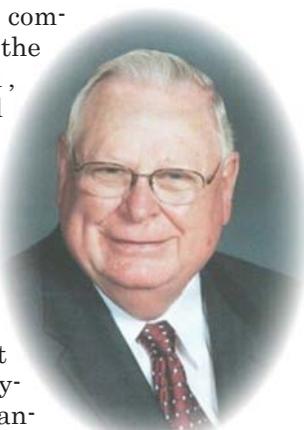
He attended Central Baptist College, Arkansas State Teachers College, (UCA) and has a master of Theology degree from the American Bible School, Kansas City, Missouri. He did extensive evangelistic work and preached in 21 states in the U.S. and two foreign countries. He was instrumental in organizing 3 Baptist Churches. He authored several booklets and pamphlets on various Bible subjects and wrote a historic novel about his family dating from the early 1800's to the Twentieth Century.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Janada; his parents, Austin E. Rice, Sr. and Clara "Burton" Rice; three sisters, Lindell "Rice" Morris, Ruth "Rice" Stewart, Doyce Eloise Rice, and a brother, Austin E. Rice, Jr.

He is survived by four children: Rev. Wayne Rice, wife Carole, from Laurel, Mississippi; Jana "Rice" Hefner, husband Jay; Phillip Rice, wife Angela; and Jeff Rice, all of Conway, Arkansas. There are 7 grandchildren, and 5 Great-grandchildren.

Service were held at Antioch Baptist Church, Conway, Arkansas, on October 6, 2015. Bro. Wayne Rice, Bro. Donny Parrish and Dr. Jason Aultman officiated.

Memorials can be sent to Central Baptist College, Conway, Arkansas.



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FW

Sofilthy's Attic

by Barbara White

A Letter From Home

Don't you just love to get a letter out of the mailbox? I received this letter the other day and I thought I'd share it with you.

Dear Sofilthy,

I write to let you know I am still alive. I am writing slowly as I know you don't read fast.

You won't know the house when you come home - we moved. We had trouble moving especially the bed - the man wouldn't let us take it in the taxi and we were afraid we might wake your father.

Your father has a nice new job and very responsible. He has about 500 people under him. He cuts the grass at the cemetery.

Our neighbors, the Browns, started keeping pigs. We got wind of it yesterday. I got my appendix out and a dishwasher put in. There is a washing machine in the new house here, but it don't work too good. Last week I put 14 shirts in the washer and pushed the little handle. They whirled around real good, but then disappeared. I think something is wrong with the machine.

I went to the doctor with your father last week. The doctor put a small glass tube in my mouth and told me not to open it for ten minutes. Your father wanted to buy it from him.

It rained only twice last week - once for three days and once for four days. Monday was so windy that our chicken laid the same egg four times.

I got a letter from the undertaker this morning. He said if we don't make up the installments on your grandmother's grave - up she comes.

Your loving mother

P.S. I was going to send you the \$10.00, but I had already sealed the envelope. Proverbs 15:15

COMMISSION ON History & Archives

4229 Highway 15 North, Laurel, Mississippi 39440
601-794-8861



Ed Steele
Director

The History and Archive Commission has extensive files containing the annual minutes from the various Local Associations around the State. For the last several years, however, many minutes are missing and we would like to receive copies of those as well. I was able to go through all the files and determine the last minutes which have been received.

We would like for the clerk, or some of the pastors, from the various associations to provide the missing copies for us. The last copy on file for Big Creek was 2012, for the Capital it is 2007, the last Gulf copy was 2002, Hobolochitto is 2010, Ten Mile is 2010, and Tombigbee was 2013. The clerks from East Central, Harmony, Judson, Oak Grove, and Washington have annually mailed a copy so we have them through 2014. The missing copies can be brought to the annual meeting at Southeastern and I will be glad to take them to the Library for you.

It will be appreciated if the clerks of each local Association would send annual copies of the minutes of their Association to be placed in our files as soon as they receive them from the printer. They can be mailed to the address for Southeastern Baptist College and designated for History and Archives. It will really be helpful if three copies can be included in your mailing and we will be able to place one in the files and provide the other copies for the President of Southeastern and the Missions Director. They have also had difficulty in keeping an up-to-date copy for their respective offices.

We also have files on each church who has sent us bulletins or programs from any special service such as a Revivals, Homecoming, Church Anniversary, Pastor Appreciation, etc., in the past. Each church is encouraged to make sure someone will continue to do this so your file will grow and remain current.

A copy of any book or pamphlet written by any Pastor or member needs to be placed in the History & Archive Library for others to read. This includes Bible studies or articles on current issues and moral problems that will be helpful to any who use the Library.

Thanks to all the churches who have been faithful in supporting the Commission financially. An extensive report will be given at the annual meeting. Any item or offering should be mailed to History & Archive Commission at Southeastern Baptist College, 4229 Highway 15N, Laurel, MS 39440. If I can be of any assistance or provide further information, please feel free to contact me at any time. My address is 1244 Purvis Oloh Road, Purvis, MS, 39475 and my phone is (601) 794-8861.

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME

Special Emphasis Needs \$25,000
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We Need Your Help!

Let's get 'er done, church!

By Joe McKeever

(If we wait until we can do everything perfectly, we will still be sitting here when the Lord returns. Let us be up and doing.)

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men" (Colossians 3:23).

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

A minister who was interviewing for a position on the staff of my church said, "If I come as your (whatever the position was), I would not make any changes for the first year, but spend that time building relationships."

That was it for me. We have work to do, I thought. Relationships are good, but they may be built and must be maintained in the midst of doing the work the Lord has given us.

Stephen Dill Lee, well-known Confederate general who later became the founding president of Mississippi State University and served as a deacon at nearby Columbus's First Baptist Church, once resigned from the church's deacon board. He said, "When I was in the service, my approach was always to charge, charge, charge. Go forward. But these deacons don't want to do anything."

The minutes of the deacons from those years, the early 1900s, indicate that some prevailed upon General Lee and he agreed to stay on. Then, he chaired the church's building committee that tore down the 1838 sanctuary

and built the 1908 edifice which still stands. He was a get 'er done leader. "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing poorly." That has always been my philosophy.

Some of us have a running dispute over that little adage. My wife Margaret's version goes, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well." Our friend Annie insists that her approach is, "If it's worth doing, it's worth overdoing."

I imagine that at one time or other, each of those has its application.

Margaret points out that my philosophy—if it's worth doing, it's worth doing poorly—seems to endorse shoddy work. To the contrary, it's saying "Even if we

cannot do it perfectly, it's still worth doing." I've drawn many thousands of cartoons for various publications over a half century, but not a one was perfect. Likewise, I suppose I preached five thousand sermons, all of them flawed in one way or the other. But they were worth doing.

Had I delayed until the cartoon was perfect or the sermon was without some weakness, we'd still be looking for the first one.

Recently, during my reading of several Civil War books, I've been struck by a life lesson demonstrated by the generals on both sides of the conflict.

Some generals were accused of inaction, not because they were afraid, but because they were perfectionists. They had to have everything "just right" before engaging the enemy.



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Richard Smith
Speaker



Antioch Vocal Band
Concert



Gordon Mote
Concert



SIX
Branson Show



Triumphant Quartet
Concert



Shelby Race
Worship

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continued on page 8

Eight Reasons Many Churches Are Living in the 1980s

by Thom S. Rainer

Nine out of ten churches in America are either declining, or they are growing so slowly they are not keeping up with the growth rate of the community in which they are located.

It's a long sentence. Read it again carefully. Soak it in. Across America 90 percent of the churches are losing ground in their respective communities. Most of them are declining. Many of them will close.

As I have worked with thousands of churches over the past three decades, I have noticed something fascinating, yet disturbing, about many of these churches. They are still acting like it's the 1980s. The world has passed them by. They are deemed irrelevant by members of their communities. They are frozen in a time warp.

Why has this tragedy fallen on so many churches? Though I don't want to oversimplify the issue, I see at least eight reasons for this crisis.

They are trying to shelter themselves from culture.

In the 1980s, congregations were typi-

cally part of the mainstream culture. They were accepted in most places, and embraced in some. That is not the culture of today. Many church members use their churches as a getaway from the realities they don't want to face.

Programs were easy answers.

The vast majority of churches in the 1980s were program-driven. If there was a perceived need, they would order a resource that best solved that need. Many churches today still think they can get quick fixes from programs.

Churches largely catered to the needs of church members in the 1980s.

We thus created a culture of membership that is me-driven. Many church members do not want to make the sacrifices necessary to reach our communities and culture today. They are demanding their own needs and preferences to be the priority of their churches.

continued on page 8

Seminary Recognizes 50 Years of Ministry

Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) Theological Seminary faculty, staff, and friends recently helped Tony M. Cleaver celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination. Dr. Cleaver currently serves as the Director of Distance Education and Professor of Biblical Studies at the Seminary. During the Paschal Lectures, Dr. Charley Holmes surprised Dr. Cleaver with the presentation of a plaque, followed by a luncheon in his honor.

In 1964 while a student at Baylor University, Tony Cleaver made the decision that set the course for his life for the next 50 years. Heeding the urging of the Holy Spirit, he changed his plans of becoming a dentist to surrendering to the call of The Lord to the ministry. In September 1965, he answered the phone at his brand new in-laws' home and spoke with Bro. Clarence Hatton from Brownsboro, Texas. "Son! We are looking for a preacher!" Bro. Hatton said. Cleaver replied, "I'm a preacher, will I do?" Dr. Cleaver preached at Opelika Baptist Church the following Sunday, and three weeks later he was ordained at First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, to pastor Opelika.



Dr. Tony & Mrs. Jerri Sue Cleaver

In addition to Opelika, Bro. Cleaver pastored First Baptist Maydelle, Texas; First Baptist Italy Texas; and First Baptist of Shady Grove, Laurel Mississippi. In 1977 he became the first chaplain appointed by the BMA of America to serve in the United States Army. From January 1977 to September 1992 he served in the U S Army. Duty stations included Ft. Lewis Washington, Stuttgart Federal Republic of Germany, Ft. Hood Texas, Istanbul Turkey, and Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey. He returned to active duty in 2003, going again to Germany. Since that time he pastored First Baptist of Las Colinas, Irving, Texas; Tabernacle Baptist Jacksonville, Texas; and he was interim pastor at Clear Creek Baptist Church, Kempner, Texas.

Throughout his fifty years of ministry, Cleaver continued to pursue his education. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Religion from Baylor University, a Master of Divinity from BMA Theological Seminary, a Doctor of Ministry from Luther Rice Seminary, and a Master of Science in Educational Psychology from Baylor University.

Women's Missionary Auxiliary

President
Linda Smith
2816 Old Bay Springs Rd.
Laurel, MS 39440
601-470-1398



Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. Shirlene Smith
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Laurel, MS 39443
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Oak Grove District WMA

by Betty Kendrick, Reporter

The Oak Grove WMA held its quarterly meeting at Bethel Baptist Church on October 9, 2015. The President, Tina Ross welcomed members present.

The blessing was led by Bro. Denny Patterson followed by a delectable home cooked meal. The devotion was on being positive, even when we don't feel like it. We were asked to take a thirty-day challenge by wearing elastic ribbon bands on our wrist. Anytime we complained we are to pop our wrist bands as a reminder of being positive.

The business included election of officers for 2016. They are as follows: President Debbie Patterson, Vice-President Belinda Lee, Secretary-Treasurer Freda McNeese, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Lynn English, Reporter Betty Kendrick, Song Leader and Pianist Janice Ramshur, It was also approved to give one of our missionaries a mon-

etary gift as a wedding gift. Alicia Ramshur is a missionary in the Phillipines and will be wed at Good Hope Baptist Church on October 24, 2015. She is one of two missionaries we sponsor.

Freda McNeese presented the program. Pictures were used as visuals to find a small animal located in each picture. The point of this is sometimes we overlook the simple small things because we look for the larger things or see the negative instead of the positive. Instead we were encouraged to be thankful for everything that comes our way as a blessing and be thankful for even the small things. The text was taken from I Kings 19:9-12.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer. The next meeting will be held on January 8, 2016 at Good Hope Baptist Church.

Girls Missionary Auxilliary

State Youth Auxiliary Director
Beth Caldwell
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Lucedale, MS 39452
601-947-6011



State GMA Promoter
Becky Farmer
464 Churchwell Road
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601-596-1005
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GMA Pianist Highlights 2016 Camp

Hello everyone! This is Tori Clark your state GMA Pianist! I am so excited about camp this year! In regards to camp, however, I would like to ask you to begin praying for everyone involved in preparing for camp and your state officers. We have a lot of great ideas for camp this year and hope that everyone is planning to attend!

Our theme this year is 'Anchor In Hope' and our theme verse is Hebrews 6:19 "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." This year we will be having Bro. Bryson Hayden as our camp. I would

like to ask you to continue to pray for him as he prepares to bring God's word to us in March 2016! I'm so excited and cannot wait to see all of your smiling faces at camp!

State GMA Outreach News

Mississippi State GMAs plan a Mission Outreach in July 2016. We are currently taking applications for GMAs who are interested in participating with this outreach. We will provide one of our local church plants with a Vacation Bible School next summer. Please contact Lane Flynt at 601-641-1475 or email at lane.flynt@ymail.com for more information.

Big Creek District WMA - Brotherhood

The Big Creek District WMA & Brotherhood will meet at First Baptist Church of Shady Grove, Laurel on Monday, November 2. The meetings will begin at 7:00 pm.

“What is the difference between Catholics and Protestants?”

by **Mike Harmon**
(Taken from Bro. Harmon's personal blog via Facebook post)

Editor's Note: *Considering all the recent publicity concerning the Catholic's Pope and his visit to the United States, I find this article informative and interesting. This will help us as Baptists to better understand the Catholics and their theology and help us to appreciate what we have in Christ and His Word.*

Answer:

There are several important differences between Catholics and Protestants. While there have been some attempts over the last several years to find common ground between the two groups, the fact is that the differences remain, and they are just as important today as they were at the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. The following is brief summary of some of the more important differences:

One of the first major differences between Catholicism and Protestantism is the issue of the sufficiency and authority of Scripture. Protestants believe that the Bible alone is the source of God's special revelation to mankind and teaches us all that is necessary for our salvation from sin. Protestants view the Bible as the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. This belief is commonly referred to as “sola scriptura” and is one of the “five solas” (sola is Latin for “alone”) that came out of the Protestant Reformation as summaries of some of the differences between Catholics and Protestants.

While there are many verses in the Bible that establish its authority and its sufficiency for all matters of faith and practice, one of the clearest is 2 Timothy 3:16, where we see that “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Catholics reject the doctrine of sola scriptura and do not believe that the Bible alone is sufficient. They believe that both the Bible and sacred Roman Catholic tradition are equally binding upon the Christian. Many Roman Catholic doctrines, such as purgatory, praying to the saints, worship or veneration of Mary, etc., have little or no basis in Scripture but are based solely on Roman Catholic traditions. Essentially, the Roman Catholic Church's denial of sola scriptura and its insistence that both the Bible and tradition are equal in authority undermine the sufficiency, authority, and completeness of the Bible. The view of Scripture is at the root of many, if not all, of the differences between Catholics and Protestants.

Another disagreement between Catholicism and Protestantism is over the office and authority of the Pope. According to Catholicism the Pope is the “Vicar of Christ” (a vicar is a substitute) and takes the place of Jesus as the visible

head of the Church. As such, the Pope has the ability to speak *ex cathedra* (with authority on matters of faith and practice), making his teachings infallible and binding upon all Christians. On the other hand, Protestants believe that no human being is infallible and that Christ alone is the Head of the Church. Catholics rely on apostolic succession as a way of trying to establish the Pope's authority. Protestants believe that the church's authority comes not from apostolic succession but from the Word of God. Spiritual power and authority do not rest in the hands of a mere man but in the very Word of God. While Catholicism teaches that only the Catholic Church can properly interpret the Bible, Protestants believe that the Bible teaches God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell all born-again believers, enabling all believers to understand the message of the Bible.

Protestants point to passages such as John 14:16-17 “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.” (See also John 14:26 and 1 John 1:27.)

A third major difference between Catholicism and Protestantism is how one is saved. Another of the five solas of the Reformation is *sola fide* (“faith alone”), which affirms the biblical doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-10). However, Catholics teach that the Christian must rely on faith plus “meritorious works” in order to be saved. Essential to the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation are the Seven Sacraments, which are baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and matrimony. Protestants believe that, on the basis of faith in Christ alone, believers are justified by God, as all their sins are paid for by Christ on the cross and His righteousness is imputed to them. Catholics, on the other hand, believe that Christ's righteousness is imparted to the believer by “grace through faith,” but in itself is not sufficient to justify the believer. The believer must supplement the righteousness of Christ imparted to him with meritorious works.

Catholics and Protestants also disagree on what it means to be justified before God. To the Catholic, justification involves being made righteous and holy. He believes that faith in Christ is only the beginning of salvation and that the individual must build upon that with good works because God's grace of eternal salvation must be merited. This view of justification contradicts the clear

teaching of Scripture in passages such as Romans 4:1-12, Titus 3:3-7, and many others. Protestants distinguish between the one-time act of justification (when we are declared righteous by God based on our faith in Christ's atonement on the cross) and the process of sanctification (the development of righteousness that continues throughout our lives on earth). While Protestants recognize that works are important, they believe they are the result or fruit of salvation but never the means to it. Catholics blend justification and sanctification together into one ongoing process, which leads to confusion about how one is saved.

A fourth major difference between Catholics and Protestants has to do with what happens after death. Both believe that unbelievers will spend eternity in hell, but there are significant differences about what happens to believers. From their church traditions and their reli-

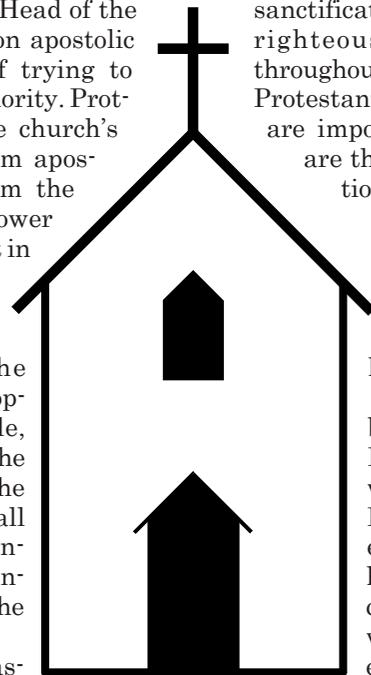
ance on non-canonical books, the Catholics have developed the doctrine of purgatory. Purgatory, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, is a “place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God's grace, are not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions.” On the other hand, Protestants believe that because we are justified by faith in Christ alone and that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us—when we die, we will go straight to heaven to be in the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-10 and Philippians 1:23).

One disturbing aspect about the Catholic doctrine of purgatory is the

belief that man can and must pay for his own sins. This results in a low view of the sufficiency and efficiency of Christ's atonement on the cross. Simply put, the Roman Catholic view of salvation implies that Christ's atonement on the cross was insufficient payment for the sins of those who believe in Him and that even a believer must pay for his own sins, either through acts of penance or time in purgatory. Yet the Bible teaches that it is Christ's death alone that can satisfy or propitiate God's wrath against sinners (Romans 3:23; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10). Our works of righteousness cannot add to what Christ has already accomplished.

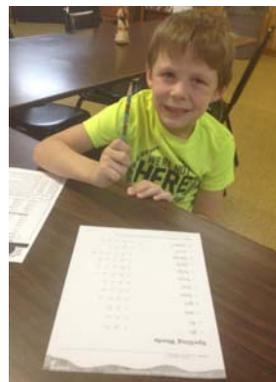
The differences between Catholicism and evangelical Protestants are important and significant. Paul wrote Galatians to combat the Judaizers (Jews who said that Gentile Christians had to obey the Old Testament Law to be saved). Like the Judaizers, Catholics make human works necessary for one to be justified by God, and they end up with a completely different gospel.

It is our prayer that God will open the eyes of those who are putting their faith in the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is our hope that everyone will understand that his “works of righteousness” cannot justify him or sanctify him (Isaiah 64:6). We pray that all will instead put their faith solely in the fact that we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith” (Romans 3:24-25). God saves us, “not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7).



MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME

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We Need Your Help!

Church Let's Get 'er Done - from page 5

General George McClellan seems to have been such a leader. Put in charge of the Federal forces early in the War, he is said to have done a masterful job of planning and preparing his troops, organizing his forces, and inspiring his men. What he did not do well was actually engage the enemy with his armies and win battles.

Despairing of his inaction, President Lincoln pulled together some of the generals to formulate a plan. He commented, "If General McClellan does not want to use the army, I would like to borrow it for a time."

He was removed and replaced by a succession of leaders until Lincoln found the one he was looking for: General U. S. Grant.

Grant was a "gung ho" fighter. His style contrasted with most of his predecessors (as well as with the Confederate generals) who liked to wage a battle, then pull back and lick their wounds for a time, regroup, reorganize, make new plans, etc. That method of warfare guaranteed that the conflict would go on and on, turning it into a marathon.

Grant's plan was to keep pressuring the enemy. Once he pulled back to reorganize, you kept coming at him, giving him no respite, no relief, no time to get his people together to formulate new plans. By hounding him relentlessly, you made your enemy deplete his resources and run out of troops, all of which forced the war to an end more quickly.

Eventually, that's how Grant led his forces to victory over the great Robert E. Lee.

In "Grant Takes Command," a wonderfully readable volume by eminent historian Bruce Catton, Grant is seen as frequently frustrated by his own generals who would not move until every detail was in place. He would send a courier with a message: "Move out against the enemy tomorrow at sunrise." The courier would return with the reply: "Unable to comply. The cavalry finds the going slow crossing the swamp. Will not be in place until sunset."

In World War II, the U.S. Marines gave to the world the expression "gung ho!" Wikipedia identifies this as a cor-

ruption of a name for a Chinese organization which originally meant something like "work together" or "work in harmony." However, the Marines turned it into a battle cry, a spirited call to action. Even today, we speak of certain people as "gung ho" types.

Are there church leaders waiting until all the factors are right before beginning a ministry? They should learn about faith.

By faith Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. By faith Noah built a boat far from the ocean. By faith Moses walked away from Pharaoh's house without any assurance the Israelites would welcome him in. By faith John the Baptist stood in the desert and began preaching.

James B. Sullivan, leader of Southern Baptists' Lifeway ministry when it was still called The Sunday School Board, once told of a church in Mississippi whose old minutes he had been reading. Sometime around 1900 they decided to construct a new building. However, they needed more money and chose to wait until they'd raised enough.

Then the First World War came along and that was followed by inflation of the 1920s and the Depression of the 1930s, and then the Second World War. The 1950s were unsettled with people moving about the country and the 60s saw racial riots and a loss of confidence in the government and the Viet Nam war. Dr. Sullivan said, "At last report, that church still had not built their building."

Waiting until all the conditions are just right.

The call to "get 'er done" in the Lord's work is based on a number of factors....

- the urgency of the hour.
- the reality of spiritual warfare.
- the need of our loved ones and those in darkness.
- the brevity of life.
- the will of God.

A young man I once knew was trying to establish a ministry in his apartment complex. Interviewed by a reporter, he was quoted as saying he had no intention of telling anyone the gospel of Jesus until he had been there a solid year, that he was trying to build up their confidence in him.

I wrote him a letter.

"My friend, I have been doing such a ministry in my apartment complex in Jackson, Mississippi, and have found that the turnover rate for residents in these establishments is very high. In fact, around 30 percent move in or out every year. I suggest that there is no time for you to enjoy the luxury of 'earning their trust.' You need to get on with the business of telling them about Jesus."

I never heard back from him.

So, what are we waiting for? A better economy? Good weather? All the bad guys to go away? A warm feeling?

The Bible says, "He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

Let's get on with it. Get 'er done.

Dr. Joe McKeever is an itinerant preacher who served five years as director of missions for the 100 Southern Baptist churches of metro New Orleans, and several years as a pastor.

Living in the 1980s from page 6

Change was more incremental.

If your church is stuck in the 1980s, it does not have to worry about the rapid pace of change today. Members can pretend like their church does not need to change despite the massive upheavals of change in the world.

Church growth was easier.

In the 1980s, a number of people would visit our churches without much effort on the members' part. One church member told me recently, "If lost people

want to come to our church, they know where we are." Sigh.

Denominations provided solutions.

Not all churches in the 1980s belonged to a denomination, but many did. And many members expected the denominational organizations to guide them and resource them. Denominations work best today in partnership with churches, but too many church members want to return to the paradigm of the 1980s.

Others did evangelism for the members in the 1980s.

Evangelism was the responsibility of the pastor or the denomination or a few people in a program. Church members paid others to do the work they were supposed to do. Some church members today are more concerned about their worship style preference than lost people who need to hear the gospel.

Some churches would rather die than to get out of the comfort of their 1980's paradigm. I feel certain they will do just that.

Alabama Church to Dedicate New Building

Fountain of Faith Baptist Church of Creola, Alabama, will hold its first service in their new building on November 1st. After their morning worship service they will assemble at 2:00 pm and hold a dedication service. The members have given and sacrificed to make this day a reality. The church is located at 1308 Dead Lake Road, Creola, Alabama. The public is invited to this celebration service. Bro. Al Moore is the church pastor.