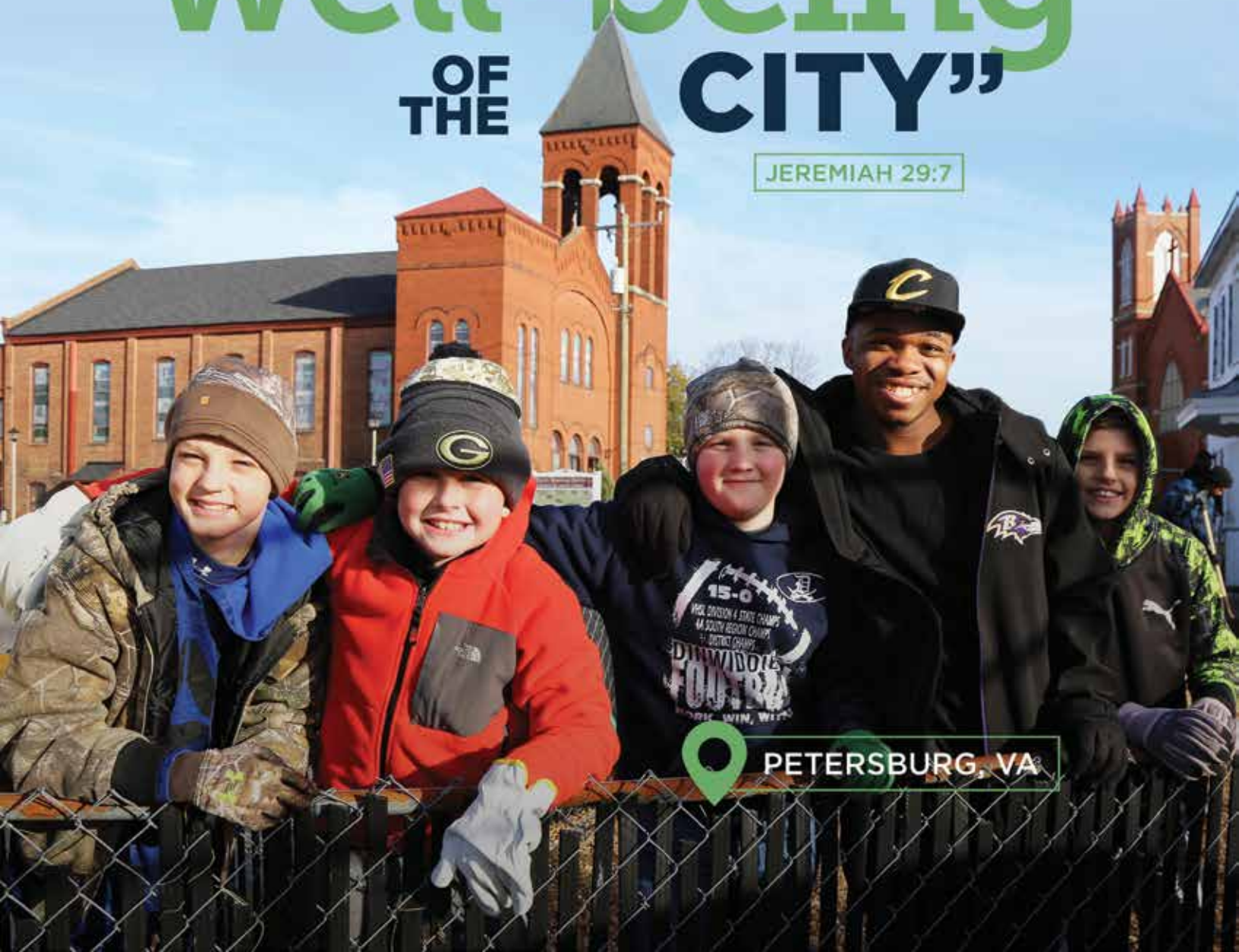



“PURSUE THE well-being OF THE CITY”

JEREMIAH 29:7



 PETERSBURG, VA

Don't Just Say *God Bless You*



FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Brian Autry

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Executive Director
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My wife, our three children, and I pulled up in our minivan to the entrance of one of the national parks. As I was paying our entrance fee to the park ranger, my son sneezed. I responded, “God bless you.” The park ranger heard me and asked what I had said. I repeated, “God bless you,” to him. He looked at me as if I were speaking a foreign language. He said he’d heard people say things like, “gesundheit,” but never, “God bless you.”

According to *National Geographic*, the response of “God bless you” started with a plague. “In Rome during the plague of 590, Pope Gregory I ordered unceasing prayer for divine intercession. Part of his command was that anyone sneezing be blessed immediately (“God bless you”), since sneezing was often the first sign that someone was falling ill with the plague.”ⁱ The park ranger’s “gesundheit” is a German expression wishing someone good health, “formed by a combination of *gesund* (“healthy”) and *-heit* (“-hood”).”ⁱⁱ

Why share that bit of trivia and experience with you? Because it occurs to me that as followers of Christ, we need to do more than just say, “God bless you,” and we certainly need to do more than simply wish people good health. Don’t *just* say, “God bless you.” Let’s actually seek to be used by God as a blessing to others.

SBC of Virginia churches are being used by God in many ways to bless others. For example, churches are mobilizing for Disaster Relief; ministering in local schools; hosting block parties; teaching English as a second language; and sending teams to minister around the world. This past November, we mobilized for an effort we named Bless Petersburg. This year, we’ll mobilize for a similar effort called Bless Portsmouth.

As we seek not to *just* say but show “God bless you,” SBC of Virginia is mobilizing churches for compassion ministries. Opportunities abound for churches to mobilize right where they are to bless others. Not only do we have the opportunity to bless others, we have the *responsibility* to bless others.

“Therefore, through him let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Don’t neglect to do what is good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices” (Hebrews 13:15-16, CSB). The world needs more than a passing, “Gesundheit!” Let’s show and tell others about the blessings of God found only through the Lord Jesus Christ. Don’t *just* say, “God bless you”—show it too.

ⁱPatrick, Bethanne Kelly; Thompson, John Milliken (2009). “An Uncommon History of Common Things.” *National Geographic*. p. 74.

ⁱⁱ*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

MOBILIZING

For more information and support in mobilizing as a church, contact mobilizing@sbcv.org.



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Prayer for Neighbors

Fincastle Baptist Church reaches out to the community by helping and praying with their neighbors.

God's Providence OPENS DOORS FOR SBCV in **Alleghany County**

There is now an SBC of Virginia church in Alleghany County, VA, and it happened because of a flood and a legacy.

In June 2016, **Fincastle Baptist Church** (located in Fincastle, VA just outside of Roanoke) reached out to the town of Covington after a flood that affected portions of Covington, western Alleghany County, and Greenbriar, WV. Fincastle responded with Ready Church volunteers (known as the Go Team) and developed a plan to provide furniture and appliances to flood victims. In partnership with SBCV Disaster Relief and with the help of *Vision Virginia* funds, Fincastle was able to help close to 500 families.

Prior to the flood, there were already 75–100 people from the Covington area who would drive to Fincastle for church. People in that area knew about Fincastle Baptist, but the church's flood response allowed the community to see the love of Jesus in action. Numerous Gospel conversations took place, and a pastor's vision was about to take flight. This vision had been bubbling in Pastor Cummings' heart for a while. "For almost 10 years," he shares, "God

has been building on my heart to do something in Covington, Alleghany County, Bath County, and in Greenbriar County, WV. I had traveled this region through my connection with high school sports."

Then the phone call came—an unexpected gift. In December 2016, Pastor Cummings heard from a church trustee in Covington. The man said, "We've decided to give you our church." Unbeknownst to Cummings, a struggling church in Covington had voted to close its doors (after declining to an attendance of eight). With Fincastle's ministry in the community having become widely known, the church determined to give its assets to Fincastle. Flabbergasted, Cummings asked him to explain. The man continued, "We voted on Sunday to give you our church." Transferring their property to Fincastle was their way of preserving a legacy of worship and missions since 1929 when the church began. After much prayer and discussion of the proposal, Fincastle decided to start a new campus at the donated church building in Covington. Fincastle Baptist is now one church meeting in two locations.



Unity for the Community Revival

Pastors come together for a community revival. Joining Pastor Kevin (far right) were Pastors (l-r) Montie Brown Sr. of First Baptist Church of Fincastle; Vittorio Devlin of Lily of the Valley Baptist Church; and Sean Burch of First Baptist Church of Amsterdam.

Once the property was obtained, a steering committee of members local to Covington developed a strategy for planting the Highlands Campus of Fincastle Baptist Church. Fincastle volunteers worked tirelessly to make the upgrades and renovations needed to the building. The Highlands Campus began with evening worship services in the fall of 2017 with plans to add a campus pastor and move worship services to Sunday morning when the time is right. Through outreach activities and events and by adopting five local schools (to help with school supplies), Fincastle Baptist Church is continuing to minister to the Covington community.

As he was quoted in the local paper, Pastor Kevin Cummings says, "Only God could take something bad like a flood and make something good come out of it."



Community Outreach

Fincastle Baptist ministers to the community through its Octoberfest. This little "princess" enjoyed the festivities.

Top photo:

Raised to Life

This past August, Fincastle's new believers in Jesus Christ went to the river for their baptism celebrations.

■ MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FINCASTLE BAPTIST CHURCH AND ITS CAMPUSES CAN BE FOUND AT: fincastlebaptist.org.



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Taking a Lead Role in NAME Strategy

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, SUFFOLK

Over the last several years, the SBC of Virginia has pursued strategic opportunities to reach with the Gospel the affinity known as North African and Middle Eastern (NAME) peoples. The strategy entails reaching NAME peoples in their native countries and also identifying cities in Europe and North America where there are pockets of NAME populations. To date, connections have been made in places like Washington, DC, Barcelona, Montreal, and Greece. This is still a developing strategy that will be pursued for years to come.

The SBCV is working with churches around Virginia to reach each of the nine global population affinities. Under the leadership of Pastor Thurman Hayes and in coordination with SBCV's Missions Mobilization Team, **First Baptist Church of Suffolk** has recently taken the lead as an affinity catalyst for NAME peoples. The goal is to help SBCV churches engage with each other and the International Mission Board (IMB) to strategically reach NAME peoples. This work includes helping plan an affinity summit and helping connect churches with each other and mission field personnel.

Missions engagement is nothing new for First Suffolk. Since Hayes became pastor in 2012, the church has done work in Thailand, Romania, Haiti, Cambodia, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, India, France, Guatemala, and Burkina Faso. Hayes, who is currently serving a three-year term as a trustee with the IMB, is quick to point out that First Suffolk was a missions-minded church long before his tenure as pastor began. Having grown up at First Suffolk, Hayes says, "Our engagement with international missions is nothing new. Growing up there as a child, I can remember

missionaries calling on the telephone and being piped through our sound system on Sunday morning to speak to the congregation! Giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is always a highlight." First Suffolk exceeded its 2017 Lottie Moon goal of \$62,000!

The affinity catalyst role in SBCV's NAME strategy was a good fit for Hayes and First Suffolk. "I have a long-time interest in this part of the world. Before I came [here] as pastor, I had done three trips to Morocco and had traveled extensively in Jordan, Israel, and the Arabian Peninsula. After coming to First Suffolk, I was excited to learn about our special relationship with *Nathaniel, who has become one of my dearest friends in the world." Nathaniel is a missionary who engages in strategic discipleship of Muslim-background Christians, most of whom are from North Africa and the Middle East. First Suffolk and several other churches support him financially. Nathaniel's work is so dangerous, his name has been changed in this article for his protection. Through their relationship with Nathaniel and their ongoing relationship with the SBCV and the IMB, First Suffolk is leading a cohesive Acts 1:8 strategy to reach NAME peoples here in Virginia and to the ends of the earth.

**Name has been changed for security reasons*

TALK TO US

If you or your church is interested in reaching NAME peoples and partnering with other SBCV of Virginia churches, email mobilizing@sbcv.org.

GO TO fbcsuffolk.org FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FIRST BAPTIST SUFFOLK.



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Who Will Go and Serve?

ARECIBO, PUERTO RICO



On September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria, the most powerful storm to make a direct hit on Puerto Rico in almost a century, ravaged the island, knocking out all electricity, causing floods, and impacting hundreds of thousands.

The storm left Puerto Rico devastated and in need of repair. Millions of people were without power, and thousands lost their homes. The need was and continues to be great.

Disaster Relief (DR) volunteers from the SBC of Virginia responded in an incredible fashion—with reportedly the largest response from the Southern Baptist Convention. The first team arrived on October 3, carrying out their mission to prepare meals, distribute food, and help with home recovery. Teams have continued to respond, providing an ongoing presence since the initial team arrived.

This effort has led to our adoption of the city of Arecibo. Our desire is to help meet physical and spiritual needs by working with local churches and church planters for the next two years. Make no mistake, the relief and recovery ministry is the platform for sharing the love and hope that can only be found in Christ. Evangelism is the purpose behind the mission.



As the hurricane made landfall, not one part of the island was spared its wrath. Coast to coast, every part of the island was impacted. Now, over five months later, there are still areas without power, and some estimates indicate there will be parts of Puerto Rico that will be without power for more than a year!

The SBCV has developed a long-term strategy through Virginia Global Response. We would love to see at least 10 SBCV churches commit to at least two trips per year for the next two years. Currently, teams are full





through April, but there will be plenty of opportunities to go for the next two years, starting this May. This is no longer a Disaster Relief response, so everyone is eligible to go.

Teams will be limited to 10 volunteers at a time. In partnership with Primera Iglesia

Bautista de Arecibo, lodging is provided at a mission center, where team members will sleep on bunk beds.

We are developing relationships with 6–8 Southern Baptist churches in Arecibo. The work will be a combination of food distribution, recovery, general cleanup, and other ministry opportunities that arise or are requested by one of the local churches.

The cost will be approximately \$550 for airfare, and individuals can anticipate \$100 for meals for the week (shopping and meal preparation will be done by the team). Due to the generous donations of SBCV churches, a van is available for ground transportation.

GET INVOLVED

If you or your church is interested, visit sbcv.org/puertorico.



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who you are,
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be used."**

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VOLUNTEER



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Doing Hands-On Missions

Cave Spring Baptist Church returned to meet peoples' needs in a physical way and to share the Gospel too.



“
DURING TIMES OF
DISASTER, WE HAVE
FOUND THAT PEOPLE,
IN MANY CASES,
HAVE LOST NOT
ONLY A LOT OF THEIR
POSSESSIONS...
THEY'VE LOST HOPE.
”

~ Mark Gauthier

Just days after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in September

2017, Disaster Relief (DR)

volunteers from the SBC of Virginia mobilized to provide tangible support in the form of food and home repair. From October through January, more than 130 volunteers from more than 20 SBCV churches participated in the relief efforts, and teams are continuing to go.

Mark Gauthier, SBCV's director for Disaster Relief and Virginia Global Response, traveled to the island close to four months after the storm and said there was still much recovery work to be done, as the majority of the island still had no electricity.

“Driving down the roads, there [were] still trees and power poles that [were] broken and on the side of the





road,” Gauthier says. “There [were] tangles of wire that [had] just been pushed off the side of the road. Large areas...of the island [did] not have safe drinking water.”

The SBCV partnered with the North American Mission Board and chose to focus its efforts on the city of Arecibo. There are eight churches in Arecibo who are a part of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Gauthier says he hopes to create a two-year partnership that will help strengthen the existing churches and plant new ones in the region.

“During times of disaster, we have found that people, in many cases, have lost not only a lot of their possessions—a lot of their property—but in many cases, they’ve lost hope,” shares Gauthier. “We have a desire to bring help in the form of physical relief...but also hope. The hope is what we find in Christ.”

Much of the work done by teams includes cleaning up homes, distributing food, and putting together relief baskets that are distributed throughout the community and taken to peoples’ homes. Groups also host block parties, says Gauthier, “to bring some semblance of relief...to children in

the community.”

Allen James, associate minister of community and missions at **Cave Spring Baptist Church** in Roanoke, VA, traveled to Puerto Rico, December 2–8, with a team from his church. The church in Arecibo had a building that was still in need of renovation, so the team repaired leaks, painted, and performed electrical and plumbing work. Their work prepared a place for future DR teams to stay without the main church building having to house teams.

While much of their work was within the church, James shares, “some other [groups of] twos and threes were out in peoples’ homes and were able to have some pretty significant spiritual conversations that way.”

Regarding DR work, James explains, “We just feel like it’s a great way



to do missions in a hands-on way, in a way that [doesn’t just] help peoples’ needs in a physical way, but gives us a good opportunity to share the Gospel as well.”

He says the impact that mission work has on the volunteers is “invaluable.” One team member, who had attended Cave Spring for about a year but had not yet joined the church, came back and said, “We’re ready to join, and I want to be



baptized. This is the kind of church I want to be involved with.”

Some of the most important moments for discipleship happen on mission trips, which is one of the reasons why three of Cave Spring’s pastors traveled with the team.

“We had more time to invest in church members in that week than we would in a year or two just back in normal church life,” James explains. “It is probably the most significant discipleship thing we can do in the church in terms of a short-term basis.”



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Not Alone in Church Revitalization

Churches helping churches is at the heart of what it means to be a convention—a network—of churches. The spirit of cooperation and encouragement is moving to a new level within the SBC of Virginia. In 2018, a group of pastors from every region of Virginia are meeting to be an encouragement to one another in church revitalization.

This group of pastors consists of Burton Corley, Mark Reon, Randy Fields, John Brownlee, Tim Chrisman, Rick Mallory, Wayne Rogers, and Troy Mueller. These pastors are focused on seeing their churches take further steps in church revitalization this year.

Partnering with these pastors, the SBC of Virginia is marshalling all resources and tools at its disposal to aid these churches in developing a personalized plan for each church's specific situation and to provide assistance in their revitalization goals.

This group of pastors will have six face-to-face meetings with one another (along with numerous conversations via phone/



This group of pastors consists of Burton Corley, Mark Reon, Randy Fields, John Brownlee, Tim Chrisman, Rick Mallory, Wayne Rogers, and Troy Mueller.

THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT IS MOVING TO A NEW LEVEL IN THE SBC OF VIRGINIA

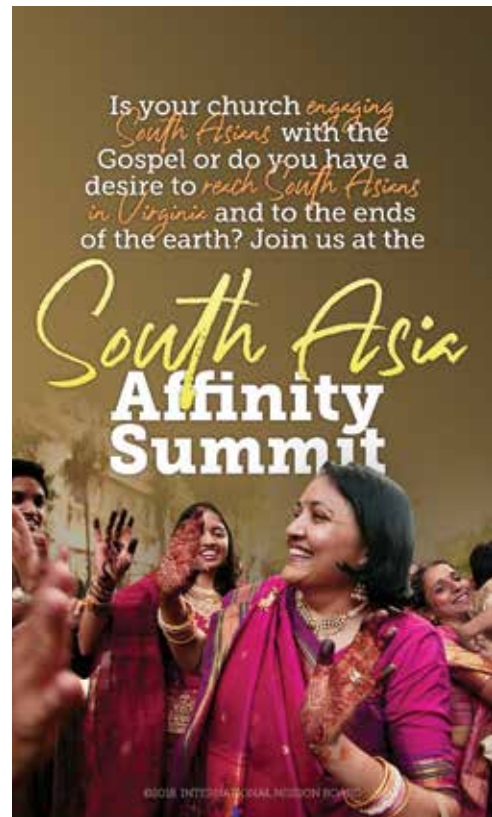
Skype), will receive site visits, will meet with the Executive Committee, and will have consultations with various SBCV staff. We hope, in 2018, to see a new plan implemented where church revitalization becomes even more evident in every region of the state.

The SBC of Virginia is attempting to develop multiple cohorts of pastors who are willing to engage in a similar process for church revitalization. If you are interested, contact Rusty Small, SBCV Revitalization Strategy leader, at rsmall@sbcv.org

JOIN A GROUP

If you are interested in being included in a cohort like this, contact Rusty Small, SBCV Revitalization Strategy leader, at rsmall@sbcv.org.

■ GO TO sbcv.org/revitalization FOR MORE INFORMATION.



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A Springboard to Practice **PERSONAL EVANGELISM**

Reaching the Unchurched in Altavista

It's not often that you hear of a church leading 16 people to Christ at a singular outreach event, but that's just what happened with **Calvary Baptist Church** in Altavista, VA.

It all started at Uncle Billy's Day in June 2017, an annual community gathering to celebrate Billy Lane, one of the founders of the town. Food vendors and live music draw a crowd from all over Altavista. Led by 24-year-old Pastor Seth Peterson, Calvary used the two-day gathering as a springboard for church members to practice personal evangelism.

"What's been great about the salvations that we have experienced [20 in the summer of 2017 alone] is that these kids and adults are coming to our church now," Peterson said. "We've been able to plug many of them into our Next Steps membership class, and we have baptized six people with many more wanting to be baptized."

Uncle Billy's Day is not the only community event Calvary has used for outreach purposes. They also hosted a basketball tournament and barbeque to raise money for local firefighter David Cox, who was diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy. The church raised over \$6,500 from around 30 sponsors in just 5 days.

For Calvary Baptist Church, these outreach efforts have a specific and concentrated goal of reaching the unchurched in the Altavista community.

"We've had the opportunities that we've had because we've gone out into our community," Peterson shared. "There is a misconception that if we just wait for people to come to the church, then that's when we can get the Gospel to them, but I really think that Jesus always went to where the sinners and the lost were. That's what we want to do."



Pastor Seth Peterson

Peterson became Calvary's pastor in early 2017 after SBCV regional missionary Shawn Ames helped connect the two.

"We were able to identify a church that wanted to do what Seth had the ability to lead them to do," Ames explained. "We, as the SBCV, try to connect the dots for churches to try to find for them a candidate that fits what the church needs."

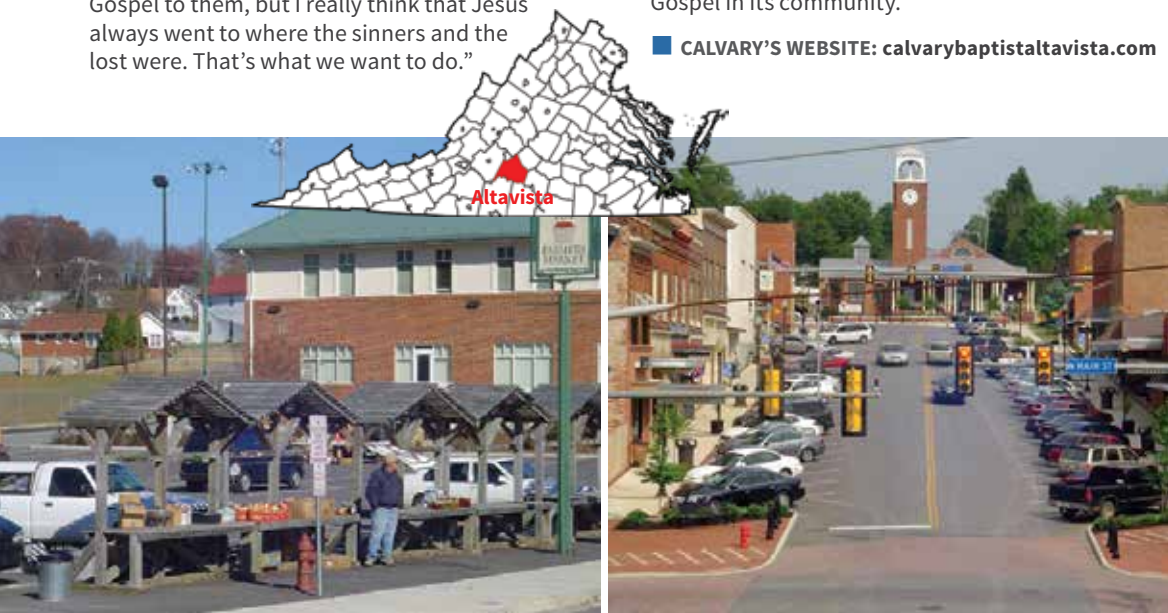
According to Peterson, SBCV was instrumental in last summer's outreaches, providing ministry experience and practical resources.

"We really could not have done the ministry, events, and community fundraisers that we did [last] summer if not for the SBCV," Peterson said. "Having people like Shawn Ames and Rusty Small available for help and advice is amazing."

Despite his young age, Peterson says he is confident—not because of his own ability but because of God's infinite ability. "We often overestimate what we can do and underestimate what God can do."

Uncle Billy's Day is evidence of what God can do with a church that is committed to sharing the Gospel in its community.

■ CALVARY'S WEBSITE: calvarybaptistaltavista.com



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Never too Late

THE REWARD OF A DAUGHTER'S PRAYER

Never Stop Praying for the Salvation of Your Loved Ones

Few things are as special as the love a daughter has for her father. And few things break a daughter's heart more than the thought that her dad might not be forever with her in heaven.

In 1987, my wife became a believer. It was a beautiful sight to behold. Theresa blossomed as a sweet fragrance of Christ in all she did and with everyone she met. Her smile and giving spirit were contagious.

On that same day, Theresa began praying earnestly for her father to place his trust in Jesus for salvation. It became a daily prayer. She prayed and hoped that her dad would see her own life change and be drawn to it and want the same thing. But her dad was self-sufficient; everything he got, he earned.

Daily, I heard my wife pour out petitions to the Lord for the salvation of her father. It touched, if not broke, my heart. At least once a year, I would whisk my father-in-law off to a secluded spot and share the Gospel with him. After ten years, Dad sternly told me never to speak of Jesus again. He was fine just the way he was and didn't need anything.

My wife, although heavy hearted, never stopped praying daily for her father to trust the Lord. She prayed that God would bring others into his life or that he would allow us to speak of Jesus to him again. The years piled up, though daily prayers persisted.

Last year, I mustered up the courage to ask Dad what was holding him back from trusting Jesus. He confided that he didn't want to give up control to anyone or anything, period. That was that. No more conversations about trusting Jesus. So my wife added to her daily prayers a petition for God to do whatever it took to break her dad's hard, stubborn heart.

Several months ago, we got a call. Theresa's dad was rushed to the hospital with a severe head injury from falling down a flight of stairs. He needed brain surgery to drain the bleeding on the brain. We didn't know it at the time, but the trauma was so severe that Dad would never be able to leave the hospital.

During his stay in the hospital, there were days where Dad would only be awake for 15 minutes. His symptoms were a lot like those of a stroke. His left side was not able to move much, he could not sit up on his own, and he was fed through a feeding tube. It was so sad to see such a strong man become so weak—only a shell of his former self.

All the while, I kept getting a nagging feeling that I was supposed to go see him one more time and share the Gospel. It seemed futile, but I kept feeling this pressure inside of me that would not let me have any peace until I finally told Theresa that I had to take a trip to see Dad.

When our plane landed, our phones were blowing up. We were told Dad stopped breathing and might not make it. When we got to his bedside, he was asleep. I tried to wake him by pushing on his arm. I even asked him to squeeze my hand if he could hear me. Nothing.

I was frustrated. Perhaps even a bit mad at God. I thought, *Really? You tell me to go see Dad only to watch him die without knowing You?* Then I regrouped. I figured, *God told me to come and share the Gospel one more time, and that is just what I am going to do!* I spoke softly into his ear, sharing the great love Jesus has for him. I shared the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus. Then I said, "Dad, did you want to ask Jesus to come into your heart?"

What happened next gave us all goose bumps. Dad raised both of his arms straight up towards heaven (including his bum left arm) and loudly



by Joel Hesch, Founder of Proven Men,
a ministry partner of the SBC of Virginia

uttered, "Come into my heart! Come into my heart!" Then he put his arms down and had a peaceful look on his face. I whispered to him, "Now you will be forever in heaven with Jesus." With a grin, Dad repeated, "Forever, forever, forever." Then he went into his deep sleep.

I turned to my precious wife and saw tears of joy flowing freely down her face. I told her, "This was also God's gift to you. Dad could have trusted Jesus in his heart without saying it aloud, but God wanted you to know that your father will be forever with you in heaven."

After 30 years of praying for her dad's salvation, my wife finally had the answer she wanted. Even though we knew that Dad would never regain his health or leave the hospital, we were finally at peace. It wasn't long before Dad went to be with the Lord. In the midst of the pain of losing him, we rest in the joy of knowing that we'll see him again.

This is a reminder never to stop praying for the salvation of your loved ones. Theresa prayed daily for 30 years even if it didn't seem likely.

Please, don't give up hope. Hope is our anchor. In fact, in the midst of darkness, Theresa took on this verse, "I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope" (Ps. 130:5, NIV 1984). Theresa did not put her hope in healing, but placed her hope in the God who heals regardless of whether He chooses to heal. Her hope was in God's unfailing promises in the Word of God and the person of God. That is what kept her going each day.

Finally, be obedient. Even if it doesn't seem to make sense, be obedient. I felt God's calling to share the Gospel one more time. It didn't seem to make sense to share the Gospel with a man who appeared to be in a coma, but I obeyed. Only God can save, and there is no obstacle He can't overcome. I was obedient to share the Gospel in the ear of a man I thought was unable to hear, but God opened his ears and his heart and even moved his lame arms up toward heaven. Yes, heaven. Dad is now with the Lord in the promised new home and has a new, healthy, heavenly body.

■ FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROVEN MEN MINISTRY, VISIT provenmen.org.

A night out with Dad



These church planter prayer cards are available for you to view and download at sbcv.org/planters. You may also view many other church planter profiles there.

PRAYER for Church Planters

"Then Jesus came near and said to them, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

Matthew 28:18-20 (HCSB)



The Bonner Family

Greater Love Church

MEETING AT
4421 Jay St., NE
Washington, DC 20019



The Bibbs Family

Bedrock Church Franklin County

MEETING IN
Franklin County, VA
For location updates, view
bedrockfc.com

BIRTHDAYS: Scott (February 20), Karen (January 28)

PRAYER NEEDS

PRAY that God will soften peoples' hearts so they will be willing to hear the Gospel and open to receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior.

PRAY for the church elders and leaders to have unity.

PRAY that God will provide finances and necessary repairs for the 15-passenger van that was donated to the church.

PRAY for us as we implement Northeast Bible Institute this spring.

PRAY for two new GLC outreach initiatives: WOKE Academy and The Movement Martial Arts (MMA).

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP! (needs)

- Volunteer professional partners to help youth and young adults
- Mission teams to partner through street evangelism, sports, etc.
- Partners for remodeling projects and building upgrades
- Financial partners to help with our vision.

BIRTHDAYS: Russon (October 9), Nicole (September 24)

PRAYER NEEDS

PRAY that God would give us favor with the people, businesses, and community of Franklin County.

PRAY that we would come in contact with those who are far from God in order to share in Gospel conversations with them.

PRAY that we will learn and live out what it means to live in community, to fellowship, and live as the Church.

PRAY for the brokenness in our community and that the people would find restoration in Jesus.

PRAY that our team will grow in unity and love, and closer to Jesus as well as one another, as we journey.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP! (needs)

- PRAY with us for the community of Franklin County
- FINANCIALLY INVEST in the work being done in Franklin County
- SERVE with us as we engage the community of Franklin County

3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide Goes to Zimbabwe

In 2012, the Lord led **GraceLife Baptist Church** in Christiansburg, VA to accept a challenge from the International Mission Board (IMB) to reach an Unreached/Unengaged People Group (UUPG). This prayerful and intentional journey brought Pastor Tim Hight and his congregation to adopt the Ndau of Zimbabwe in a long-term mission partnership with the IMB and the Zimbabwe Baptist Convention. Other Southern Baptist churches have participated as well with prayer, financial support, and teams.

Located along the border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, the Ndau are a tribe of people numbering approximately 450,000. This “forgotten tribe” of Zimbabwe is considered the only UUPG left in the nation. Less than 2% evangelized, most of the Ndau have heard little or nothing about the truth of Jesus and His saving work on the cross.

“The mission we have embraced is to send small teams into select unreached Ndau villages where there is no Gospel witness,” shares Hight. “Each team of 4–6 spends their mornings sharing the Gospel in homesteads and leading evangelistic meetings in the evenings. Afternoons are spent leading discipleship sessions, children’s ministries, and doing leadership training.” As of 2017, they have been able to plant four new churches and establish another three more preaching points.

In April 2015, Hight’s team and local pastors planned a leadership conference in the village of Muanganidze with a two-fold purpose: 1) to provide evangelism training for the leaders and new believers; and 2) to explore this new village



Randy Aldridge shares 3 Circles by drawing in the dirt

as a potential preaching point. Hight and SBCV church planting strategist Randy Aldridge held training sessions at the local school during the day and evangelistic services at night.

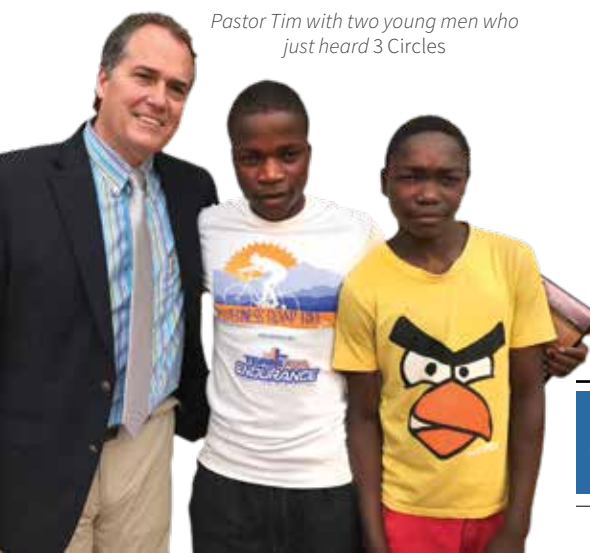
The *3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide* was the evangelistic tool used for the training event, where approximately 50 people attended. Each participant learned the *3 Circles* Gospel presentation and had the opportunity to practice it with several people before going out to do evangelism in the villages.

The conference attendees found the *3 Circles* presentation easy to learn and an excellent cross-cultural tool for sharing the Gospel. Participants practiced drawing the circles in the sand as they explained the Good News. One associational leader, Pastor Karakadzai Manyanga, says, “We can use this method all over Zimbabwe to share God’s salvation with His people.”

“One highlight of the weekend,” says Hight, “was when an unexpected opportunity arose to share the Gospel with a local soccer team of young adults. The *3 Circles* presentation was used, and nearly the entire team—21 to be exact—made commitments to follow Christ.”

Many of the new believers came forward in the evening service and later joined the new church plant. All in all, some 165 people made decisions to follow Christ over the three days of witnessing and evangelistic meetings. Pastor Hight rejoices, “[On this trip,] a new church plant was birthed in a previously unreached and unevangelized village, and the congregation is still prospering nearly three years later.

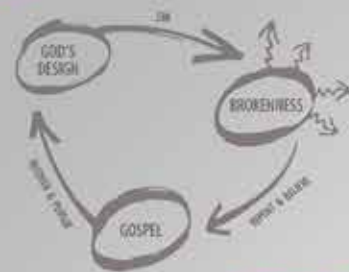
“The *3 Circles* presentation proved to be practical, reproducible, and transferable among the Ndau tribe of Zimbabwe and is still being used there to introduce others to Christ and the Gospel.”



Pastor Tim with two young men who just heard 3 Circles

MORE ONLINE

View more about GraceLife Baptist Church at gracelifamily.org and find more information about the *3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide* at lifeonmissionbook.com/conversation-guide.



A simple conversation guide
to help you as you talk with
people about Jesus.

ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS OF FAITH

What was God's design?

How did we depart from
God's design through sin?

Can anyone escape brokenness and
what does brokenness feel like?

Download the app or get the printed guide at:
lifeonmissionbook.com/conversation-guide



Persistent Follower or Perfect Leader?

THE LEADER YOU ARE IS DETERMINED BY THE FOLLOWER YOU'VE BECOME

In Psalm 42:1, the psalmist captures what I believe is essential in true Christian leadership—“...As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.” With so much attention placed on leadership and training leaders today, I believe Christendom borrows much of its instruction from the world rather than the Word. Overseers placed among the flock must avoid the forbidden practice of learning the ways of the world for training leaders. Worldly strategies and methodologies for leaders are driven by their “own” counsel (Jer. 7:24), but Kingdom leaders are based on God’s ways and thoughts (Is. 55:8-9). His ways and thoughts are revelations, not estimations. An essential characteristic found in God’s leaders is that they pursue Him. God says, “...I will give you shepherds after My own heart...” (Jer. 3:15). Being after God’s heart is the only position for leaders in the Kingdom of God. True shepherds are followers of Christ who

lead from their relationship with Him. The two kingdoms can’t be compared (John 18:36a). The world’s system is of Satan (1 John 5:19). Its leaders are trained and equipped with tainted philosophy and ideology that doesn’t glorify God (Matt. 6:24). On the other hand, leadership in the Kingdom of God is simply this: Jesus says, “Follow Me” (Matt. 4:19). The emphasis is placed on following Him. His purposes, teachings, and applications always glorify the Father without compromise! Leadership begins with humility, obeying and serving God with a heart set on pleasing the Father (John 8:29). Ecclesiastical leadership in an eternal Kingdom will not be effective using temporal kingdom (world system) strategies and ways. The destinations of the two kingdoms are different. I believe many churches are dying today (unadmittedly) because leadership compromises God’s desire by using sensual-based ideology and psychology-laced strategies as wisdom appealing to the masses (James 3:15).

Brothers, what must we do? First, let us repent with godly sorrow if

we’ve fallen into the trap of leading as the world leads. Then let’s embrace this truth from 2 Chronicles 12:8—“... that they may learn the difference between My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.” God teaches Israel that serving God is *not* the same as serving the world and, thus, the leadership is different too. The Apostle Paul, as Saul, was a great leader of the Jews. His resume, thinking, and practice had all of the “right” worldly, religious training and teaching as evidenced by his own assessment—“...if anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless (Phil. 3:4-6). Paul would have wowed any pastor search committee! But Paul, on journey with Christ, recognized that knowing Christ is key to being a follower and leader used of God. Listen to his heart again in Philippians 3:8—“...I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.” Paul placed a high value on knowing Christ intimately. In fact, knowing Christ and proclaiming Him was his whole life’s journey and mission. Reality, to Paul, as a follower of Christ (a leader) was in this verse—“...for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel...” (1 Cor. 9:16).

Paul also recognized that leadership is about edifying (building) and equipping others to walk righteously! Yes, brothers, we’re building temples whose foundation is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15), and how we build (lead) on God’s Church is not to be taken lightly. Our work will be revealed—tested by God’s fire—whether you lead by following Christ or by following worldly standards. In addition, Hebrews tells us that leaders are to model the power of the Word in their own lives that those watching might emulate it—“... Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith (Heb. 7:13).

My brothers, leading is learning leadership principles lived out by following Jesus. God is not raising up *perfect leaders* but *persistent followers*. Ask yourselves, *How thirsty am I for Him? Do I thirst for true leadership? Is my leadership tainted by worldly ways and is repentance my next step?*

All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).



Ministering to the Deaf

WAYNE HILLS DEAF FELLOWSHIP



*Pastor John Wyble
baptizes a new
believer*

Imagine

walking into
a room and

being the only person who doesn't know the language. This uncomfortable scenario is often a reality for the Deaf everywhere they go, including church. Now go even further and picture the seemingly impossible scenario of being both Deaf and blind. It is hard to think of how the Gospel could be communicated in such a situation.

Thankfully, there is an SBC of Virginia church plant that has been able to minister to Joey Botkin, who is both Deaf and blind. At **Wayne Hills Deaf Fellowship** in Waynesboro, VA, the Deaf can come and learn about Jesus in a way they can understand. Botkin is able to speak American Sign Language (ASL) with his hands while an interpreter communicates a response in ASL by moving their hands against his.



"For those who are Deaf, having a church body to come to where they speak ASL is like heaven," says Sue Browning, ministry facilitator at **Wayne Hills Baptist Church**, the partnering church where Wayne Hills Deaf Fellowship meets.

Browning said the church plant has been incredibly fruitful, with 10 salvations and baptisms in the last few years. Wayne Hills Deaf Fellowship provides the Deaf a place to come and interact with those who share the same culture, worldview, and language. Browning says that having these three things in common categorizes the Deaf as a people group. When they are correctly identified as such, the Deaf are actually the largest unreached people group in the world.

John Wyble is the founder and pastor of Wayne Hills Deaf Fellowship. Having Pastor Wyble is crucial to the ministry because he understands how to engage and communicate with the Deaf because he himself is Deaf. Wyble also helps coordinate Deaf ministry around the state for the SBCV and has served as a national consultant for the North American Mission Board.

"American Sign Language is the heart language of the Deaf people group," says Wyble. "They feel comfortable with that and can stop me to talk [about] any questions that they have with no fear."

"The Deaf people group works completely backwards," Wyble explains. "They visualize an image first and then change that into words. They have to have a picture and then turn that into words. It is important to understand this difference when I am teaching the Bible."

SBCV's church planting strategists work with Wyble to coordinate the planting of other Deaf churches around the state. Strategist Randy Aldridge worked with Wyble to establish the SBCV Deaf Church Planting Network as

well as the SBCV Deaf Leadership Roundtable, which held its second annual meeting in 2017.

"As a hearing person, I will never be able to fully and effectively reach the Deaf community like those who are Deaf," Aldridge says. "The Deaf community will reach the Deaf community, but we can help by supporting and facilitating Deaf church planting."

Pastor Wyble says the best way to pray for the Deaf people group is to pray that people like Joey Botkin will have the opportunity to hear and understand the Gospel in their own heart language.

"We have made a lot of progress in terms of Deaf church planting, but we are nowhere close to where we need to be," Aldridge shares. "We need to continue to promote awareness and education about the Deaf people group. I would like for us to get to a place where we see the Deaf people group in the same light as we see any other people group."

"We need to see them not only as a people group that needs to be reached, but also as a group that is very capable of reaching their own people group if they have a platform from which and through which to do so."

**The term, Deaf, with a capital "D" refers to those of the Deaf culture*

ABOUT THE CHURCH

More about the Wayne Hills Deaf Fellowship can be found at whbc.net/deaf-ministry.

LOVE
804

Bless Petersburg

Every church longs to demonstrate love to its community. **The Heights Baptist Church** is taking that love to its entire area code! What started as a summer project has turned into a movement. Over the past 10 years, the church has averaged 400–500 volunteers each summer as they’ve served their community through revitalizing schools, doing construction projects, restoring camps at Pocahontas State Park, and coming alongside the SBC of Virginia and other churches for the 2015 HOPE outreach during the UCI Cycling World Championships in Richmond.

This past summer, the church continued this 10-year mission with strategic objectives for its community. First, they went into one of the neediest areas in the community to show God’s love with no strings attached. Second,

they demonstrated Christian unity by partnering with another local church and building that relationship. This strategy birthed LOVE804, a partnership to reach their area code with the love of Christ.

Through prayer, The Heights was led to partner with Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Petersburg. The two churches began the process of asking the City of Petersburg to allow them to revitalize and restore historic Poplar Lawn Park to its former glory. Working with the mayor’s office, City Council, and several city leaders, the churches were able to get to work.

Donning their LOVE804 t-shirts, members from both churches took to the park. “Work began in early June,” says Wes Rose, missions and outreach pastor of The Heights. “Small groups from the churches worked in the evenings and on Saturdays to get some of the heavy moving done. On Saturday, July 29, the churches came together with nearly 400 volunteers for an all-out work day at the park.” Joining in on the efforts were Virginia General Assembly delegates from the 66th and 63rd districts, Petersburg city officials, and members from both congregations.



10

did you know...

Over the past 10 years

The Heights averaged 400-500

volunteers each summer?

Thank you
for **giving**
through
the SBC of
Virginia
missions
offering!

Rose adds, "The day was an overwhelming success with the work that was done; more importantly, it was a visual demonstration of churches coming together as one in unity and love to show the community the power of the Church and the positive impact we can have on a community."

Work continued for the next three weeks as the churches finished the final details of the project. On Saturday, August 19, they came back together at the park to host a community festival with carnival games, inflatable rides, and free food. The highlight of the afternoon was having the two churches present the revitalized Poplar Lawn Park back to the city and the mayor of Petersburg.

The Heights continues to work in Petersburg, through efforts like SBC of Virginia's Bless Petersburg (prior to the 2016 Annual Homecoming), and by encouraging the churches in



Petersburg and the surrounding area to continue stepping outside the church walls to be a light in their community...to LOVE804.

■ **FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH, VISIT theheightsbaptist.church.**

**GET
STARTED**

If you are interested in serving your community through meeting practical needs with Gospel intentionality, your SBC of Virginia Mobilization Team stands ready to help you get started. Contact Brad Russell, SBCV Mobilization Team leader, today at brussell@sbcv.org.



visionvirginia

**2016 WEEK of PRAYER
& OFFERING for MISSIONS**

**100% of your gift goes
to the mission field.**

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We Are NOT ALONE HOMECOMING

SBC of Virginia Passes Resolution on Sin of Racism,
\$100K Check for Disaster Relief, Largest Giving on Record

Nearly 1,500 people came from across the Commonwealth to **The Heights Baptist Church** in Colonial Heights, VA, on November 12-14 for the 2017 SBC of Virginia Annual Homecoming.

The three-day event centered around the theme, *We Are Not Alone*, and had 701 messengers and 738 guests in attendance.

Before the business meeting began, 418 volunteers from 24 churches and 2 colleges hit the streets of Petersburg for SBCV's Crossover event, Bless Petersburg. This was a collaborative effort between SBCV churches and city and school officials for A.P. Hill Elementary and Robert E. Lee Elementary to meet needs, which would lead to Gospel conversations. Mission projects included painting, landscaping, a soccer clinic, and working with the local fire department and Red Cross to install 100 smoke detectors. Through these projects, more than 60 Gospel conversations took place.

"We are ecstatic!" exclaimed Dr. Marcus Newsome, superintendent for Petersburg City Schools. "This has been an answer to prayer. It has been my hope to get the community involved in making a difference."

"The power of churches *Not Alone* is seen as churches are strengthened and mobilized, planted and revitalized," shared Dr. Brian Autry, SBCV's executive director. Autry continued, "This results in more disciples made, more locations and nations reached."

Keynote speakers reminded messengers and guests that they are *Not Alone* in the work of the Great Commission. Guest speakers included Dr. Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB); Dr. Alex Himaya, senior pastor of theChurch.at



The unanimous support
of the resolution on
the evil of racism was a
highlight of the meeting.



in Tulsa, OK; Dr. Don Wilton, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Spartanburg, SC; Dr. Bryan Carter, senior pastor of Concord Church in Dallas, TX; and Dr. Bryan Smith, senior pastor of **First Baptist Church of Roanoke, VA**.

Smith, who was the outgoing president of the SBCV, shared, "The emphasis on biblical, Gospel preaching and teaching brought by those who spoke in each session was yet another reminder why we're truly thankful to be a part of the SBCV family!"

Ezell shared in his message Sunday night that, through the Cooperative Program, SBCV churches were a part of helping provide assistance to First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, TX after the shooting that killed 26 people on November 5, 2017. NAMB is providing funds that will take care of all of the funeral expenses for families impacted, a new church building, and the pastor's salary for the next year. Ezell also thanked SBCV for its partnership in Disaster Relief (DR) Ministry.

A special lunch reception was held in honor of the thousands of SBCV volunteers from nearly 200 churches who have served in DR over the past 15 years. SBCV DR has provided



Resolutions Committee Member,
Pastor Charles Shannon

well over one million meals to the hungry, worked in thousands of homes, and helped lead hundreds to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. David Melber, vice president for Send Relief at NAMB, was the guest speaker at the reception. Autry, along with Mark Gauthier, SBCV's Disaster Relief director, presented NAMB with a check for \$100,000 for Disaster Relief in Puerto Rico.

"Words simply are not adequate to express our thankfulness for the SBCV as a key partner with NAMB and Send Relief," Melber shared. "SBCV is a powerful leader for the SBC in challenging us to be on mission and to demonstrate that, as Southern Baptists, we are *Not Alone*, but a part of a large family."

"One of the most encouraging moments of our Homecoming was the celebration of SBC of Virginia churches giving more than \$500,000 for Disaster Relief to those devastated by hurricanes [in 2017]," shared Dr. Eric Thomas, pastor of **First Baptist Church of Norfolk, VA**. "We are truly known as belonging to Jesus by our love."

Gauthier shared, "The dedication and passion with which these volunteers serve is incredible! They give up time and comfort to sleep on air mattresses, work in extremely difficult conditions—heat, cold, wind, and rain—all for the opportunity to share the love that Christ has for each one of us. These men and women are my heroes as they go and serve!"

During the Annual Homecoming, SBC of Virginia churches dropped off donations for the Christmas Backpacks for Children in Appalachia project. More than 3,100 backpacks were loaded into a Send Relief NAMB tractor-trailer. These gifts were distributed to impoverished children just in time for Christmas.

The total 2018 Ministry Investment Plan (MIP) or budget for the SBC of Virginia was approved at \$9.704 million, an increase from the 2017 MIP of \$9.675 million. Planned Cooperative Program (CP) gifts for 2018 are \$9.3 million (an increase from 2017's CP of \$9.2 million), while the remaining \$404,000 of gifts are coming from SBC of Virginia partners. The SBCV continues to provide 51% of its total budget for Southern Baptist Convention CP ministries and 49% of its total budget for Virginia CP ministries. Additionally, a budget provision of 3.26% for shared expenses was made for CP resourcing.

In 2017, the SBC of Virginia received its largest Cooperative Program, Annie Armstrong, and *Vision Virginia* (SBC of Virginia state missions) gifts in its 21-year history. As of this article, SBCV's 2017 *Vision Virginia* offering stands at more than \$412,000, the highest in its history.

Seven resolutions were unanimously approved during the business meeting. A standing ovation from messengers took place after Resolution #7 was read. The resolution's focus was "On Charlottesville and the Sin of Racism" to decry every form of racism and the need to share God's love.

"As the senior pastor at **First Baptist Church of Charlottesville**, I thought it was absolutely essential that our state convention denounce the deadly violence of white supremacists in Charlottesville on August 12, 2017," said Dr. Rob Poche, chairman of the Resolutions Committee. "It is something quite different for 718



Dr. Autry with the 2018 Officers (l-r): Tim Ma, Secretary; Emery Minton, Second Vice President; Allen McFarland, First Vice President; and Eric Thomas, President

churches to speak with a unified voice, not only to condemn what happened over the summer in Charlottesville, but to speak clearly and unequivocally about the sinful nature of racism and our repudiation of it. Because these events happened in Virginia, it was particularly important that we speak to them, as a convention, at our first opportunity. And that is what we did."

"The unanimous support of the resolution on the evil of racism was a highlight of the meeting," shared Dr. Doug Echols, pastor of **Bethel Baptist Church** in Yorktown, VA and the chairman of SBCV's Executive Board. Echols continued, "[This] affirms our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ being shared with every man and woman regardless of their race, nationality, or ethnicity."

"The living of God's Word is displayed pre-eminently through our unanimous adoption of a resolution decrying racism," agreed Thomas. "I am proud to serve in such a network of churches as this."

Monday evening, Autry shared his executive report, which highlighted that through biblical truth and SBCV resources, churches are *Not Alone*.

"This is not cooperation for cooperation's sake," Autry shared. "This is cooperation because souls depend on it. Messengers and guests were able to witness multiple stories of God at work and the Gospel being

proclaimed through the Great Commission coalition of churches known as the SBC of Virginia. The one true God, empowering His people to proclaim the only name by which one can be saved—the name of Jesus."

Messengers approved 18 new affiliations, which brought SBCV's number of churches to 718. One of those new affiliations is **Winfall Baptist Church** in Gladys, VA. Pastor Phil Stevens shared, "Today we were officially voted in as the newest member of the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia. This is a big win for all of us. As we now give money to our [convention], we now give money to organizations, groups, missionaries around the world that believe as we do. Every single dollar that we send out now reflects the values of our congregation."

The SBCV elected convention officers for 2018: Eric Thomas, pastor of **First Baptist Church of Norfolk**, as president; Allen McFarland, pastor of **Calvary Evangelical Baptist Church** in Portsmouth, as first vice president; Emery Minton, pastor of **Christian Life Fellowship** in Jonesville, as second vice president; and Tim Ma, pastor of **Emmanuel Baptist Church** in Manassas, as secretary.

"I am honored to serve alongside such Christ-exalting, Gospel-advancing, church-multiplying leaders such as Brian Autry and his team, along with the family of churches in the SBC of Virginia," Thomas said.

Messengers and guests enjoyed a Great Commission Dinner under the tent on the grounds of The Heights Baptist Church.





Janna and Greg Long of Avalon

“It’s been one of the true highlights and privileges to have served as convention president,” shared outgoing president Bryan Smith. “I wish every SBCV pastor had the joy of getting to know so many of our fellow SBCV pastors and convention staff as have I during my time of service. We are indeed truly blessed to belong to a very special ministry and mission family of faith as the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia!”

The three-time Grammy-nominated and American Music Award- and Dove Award-winning Christian group, Avalon, performed a special concert the Sunday night of Homecoming. Their well-known song, “Testify to Love,” brought a standing ovation.

Other opportunities at the 2017 Annual Homecoming included 11 breakouts, meals/dessert fellowships (Women’s Ministry, church planting, and Great Commission emphasis (with Dr. Chuck Lawless)), and the opportunity to celebrate what God is doing through SBCV churches.

Pastor Mark Reon, pastor of **Liberty Baptist Church** in Suffolk, VA, shared, “I was moved many times by the generosity and efforts of the SBCV. I could spend an evening telling you all about the great people in the SBCV and all the awesome things getting done right now. Thank you, Brian [Autry] and staff, for all you do.”

“The SBCV Annual Homecoming was a refreshing time of encouragement, challenge, and commitment to the mission of God in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the world,” Echols said. “The theme of *Not Alone* is a great reminder that, in our partnership of churches, we can do more together than we can ever do alone. I am thankful for the unity and passion of the SBCV leadership, pastors, and churches to impact the state of Virginia and the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In a time when our country seems to be more divided than ever, it was refreshing to be in a meeting with such unity and common purpose.”

“SBC of Virginia churches experience the power of *Not Alone* because Jesus does not leave us or forsake us,” Autry said. “He has empowered His church with His Spirit to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.”

NEXT YEAR

The 2018 Annual Homecoming will be held at Liberty Baptist Church in Hampton, VA, November 11–13, 2018. Join us as we focus on the theme *They Are Not Alone*. For more information, go to sbcv.org/homecoming2018.

■ RESOURCES FROM THE 2017 ANNUAL HOMECOMING ARE AVAILABLE AT sbcv.org/homecoming.

A large, vibrant promotional graphic for the Bold Fusion Mission Camp 2018. The background features a map of Virginia and Maryland with two locations marked: 1. NOVA / DC (June 18-22) and 2. CHRISTIANSBURG (July 23-27). The text "bold" is prominently displayed in a large, bold font, with "Share Christ's love" written in a cursive script below it. The words "FUSION MISSION CAMP 2018" are also present. At the bottom, it says "two weeks TWO LOCATIONS" and "more info at sbcv.org/fusion". The graphic is decorated with images of people with their hands raised in praise, and the "nextgen" logo is in the top right corner.

Called Out to Pray

THE SBC OF VIRGINIA WOMEN'S MINISTRY is excited to announce its **newest team member, KAREN REASOR**. Karen is our prayer coordinator for the Southeast Region. For the past two years, she has been gathering women to pray for our state events, and she recently participated in a prayer effort for the Beth Moore Conference and the Angie Smith Conference.

Our vision for the SBCV Women's Ministry is to raise up prayer coordinators all over the state of Virginia and Washington, DC. We want to lay a foundation for God to move in our ministries, events, and outreaches. Missionary Wesley Duewel said, "Every time in the history of the church revival has come, it has followed extensive prayer and seeking of God's face by some of His children."

We hope to put together a prayer strategy for Women's Ministry that will enable us to see a movement of God that changes lives. With the leadership of SBCV's statewide prayer coordinator, Darrell Webb, the SBCV has been preparing for such a movement. Webb coordinates SBCV's yearly Prayer Summit, prayer boot camps, and a statewide prayer effort, Pray VA. Our vision is that every SBCV church will become "a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17, HCSB).

The SBCV's Women's Ministry desires to have a group of ladies all over the state who are willing to be called out to pray—to receive emails to pray for churches, pastors/leaders, mission mobilization efforts, Disaster Relief emergencies, bills that need to be passed in



Karen Reasor

the state legislature or Congress, etc. To join this team, email kyreasor@cox.net with the subject line, "SBCV Women's Ministry Prayer Team."

Please pray for Karen as she leads this effort for the Women's Ministry. In Ephesians 1:16, Paul did not cease to give thanks for the Ephesian believers and to remember them in his prayers. Let's make that our goal as we pray for our brothers and sisters in Virginia, DC, and around the world.

We cannot wait to see how God will move through the prayers of the women of SBCV churches!

MORE ONLINE

Upcoming prayer events and resources can be found at sbcv.org/prayer.

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A CALL TO MISSIONS

A CALL TO AVAILABILITY

“ *When the Lord puts a call upon your heart and you surrender to it, you just wait and make yourself available.*

~ Paul Cox

”

It was a decision Paul and Jolene Cox made together—to serve the Lord in missions when they retired in their 50s. They have been following that call for 21 years now. They’ve loved their work so much that Paul used to wonder, “Is this of me or is it of the Lord?” But “Time and time again,” says Paul, “The Lord let individuals cross my path to affirm to me that if you are doing what God has called you to do, it is a joy.”

Their church of 60 years, **Memorial Baptist Church** in Pulaski, VA, has always been involved in missions, providing an atmosphere and opportunities for the Coxes’ heart for missions to thrive.

Paul and Jolene’s sense of calling into missions has been mutual and has grown through years of spiritual growth and training as they served in their church. In 1996, less than a year into retirement, Paul experienced several health problems and a serious bout of cancer. They couldn’t have imagined then the opportunities they still had before them. Since that time, they have served in missions as far as the Czech Republic, Albania, Hungary, Jamaica, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Honduras, and Thailand.

Eight years of hard physical labor building churches in Honduras took a toll on Paul’s body and left the Coxes feeling that their mission work was over.

But in the spring of 2005, an opportunity came while attending the SBC of Virginia Evangelism Conference in Roanoke, VA. Paul heard Randy Aldridge speak about a Southern Cross mission team he would be leading to Pattaya, Thailand, to get Mandarin Chinese Bibles into the hands of the Mainland Chinese. Paul recalls, “It made my ears perk up.” Paul had lived for two years (1959–1961) in Bangkok, working out of the US Embassy for the military. Aldridge ended up asking the Coxes to lead a Southern Cross team. For Paul, returning to Thailand as an ambassador for Jesus Christ was a dream come true. That trip would begin their long partnership with the Southern Cross Project and the Light for Asia ministry.

After several years, the Southern Cross Project moved and it seemed, once again, as if their mission work had come to an end. But in 2013,



another mission opportunity arose. This time, it came in a phone call from a Southern Cross team member who said, “They’re giving out Bibles in Pattaya again. Come and go with us during the Chinese New Year.” So, the Coxes headed back for two months, their hearts filled with joy.

Paul and Jolene are now in their mid-70s. With his three bouts of cancer behind them, they remain available to answer the call of the Lord upon their lives. On January 16, 2018, they left for a two-month mission—their fourth season partnering with SBC missionaries Joseph and Sai York in Pattaya.

Last year, the Yorks, along with volunteers like the Coxes, gave out more than 7,200 Bibles. Since the Yorks’ ministry began, over 462,668 Bibles have been distributed. The fields are white unto harvest, and short-term mission teams are needed for this fruitful ministry.

“Imagine,” says Paul, “having the opportunity to meet thousands of Mainland Chinese, the majority of whom have never heard of Jesus, give them a free Chinese Bible, and have the opportunity to tell them about the only true and living creator God who loves them. It’s exciting.

“When the Lord puts a call upon your heart and you surrender to it, you just wait and make yourself available.”

MORE
ONLINE

Information about the Southern Cross Project can be found at southerncrossproject.org. For information on the Light for Asia ministry, go to lightforasia.com.

CHRISTMAS BACKPACKS

for Children in Appalachia

In the fall of 2017, SBCV churches collected 3,770 backpacks for the **CHRISTMAS BACKPACKS FOR CHILDREN IN APPALACHIA** mission project, an annual initiative that provides impoverished children with a holiday present.

“It is a tremendous outreach tool,”

says Sue Sawyer, who recently retired as state mobilizing associate for the SBCV. “They’ve seen thousands of people over the years come to the Lord just through the backpack project.”

The backpacks were collected and loaded into a Send Relief NAMB tractor-trailer at SBCV’s Annual Homecoming, where churches surpassed their initial goal to donate 3,000 backpacks. From there, the backpacks were shipped to numerous locations throughout Appalachia, including Oneida, KY, where members of **Journey Christian Fellowship II** (of Williamsburg, VA) distributed the gifts at the Oneida Baptist Institute.

Twenty-year-old Ayana Smith, a volunteer with Journey, shares that when the students walked into the room, “Their eyes were really huge, and they were whispering to their friends, ‘I like that one,’ and ‘I want that one.’ They were just super excited.”

With each grade level, the team had the opportunity to share the Gospel and what the Christmas story meant to them. Smith was presented the chance to share her testimony in front of the 6th–12th graders. Despite her initial hesitation, the Holy Spirit reminded her that she had been praying for two weeks for God to use her.

“I went up there and I shared with them the Scripture about being made a new creation in Christ,” says Smith. “I just remember telling them [to be] assured of their value to God—not being ashamed of the Gospel and not being ashamed of their faith.”

After she spoke, she connected with individual students, and one of the teachers expressed appreciation because her students could relate to what Smith had shared. The two exchanged contact information and have been able to stay in touch, which has allowed Smith the opportunity to continue ministering to the students.

New Life Community Church in Louisa, VA collected 130 backpacks. Operations pastor, Todd Lewis, says the church had recently been praying about local mission projects in which they could participate. Just a day or two later, they received the backpack information in the mail, which he says confirmed God’s plan for them to get involved.

“Our congregation got so fired up when we announced this initiative due to the fact that we have members of our congregation who grew up in Appalachia, and this was a great opportunity to witness and share the Gospel right in our own backyard,” shares Lewis.

The project also aligned with the church’s mission statement, which is “Connect, Grow, Serve, and Send,” and the backpack project hit all four categories. The congregation connected with the parents and children in Appalachia, grew in their obedience to share the Gospel, served God and those around them, and prayed over the gifts before sending them.

First Baptist Church of Roanoke, VA also participated in the initiative and sent a team to help distribute backpacks in elementary schools. It was the church’s first year fully engaged in the project.

“This ministry is so much more than simply giving kids a backpack filled with ‘things,’” says Jay Dove, minister of local and global missions. “What we saw was a ministry intent on proclaiming the Gospel boldly and plainly to those kids and teachers.”

In 2017, the SBCV surpassed its 2016 collection by more than 1,000 backpacks and plans to participate again in 2018 for the fifth year in a row.

BACKPACKS FOR 2018

Churches, drop off collected backpacks at the 2018 Annual Homecoming. For more information, visit sbcv.org/backpacks.



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BIBLES FOR HISPANIC MINISTRIES

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Go and Make Disciples

English VERSION

*José Morelos
(left) sharing the
Gospel in Peru.*

This past October, José Morelos led a team on a short-term mission trip to Peru—just one of many teams and trips he has led. Morelos is the missions pastor of **Point Harbor Community Church** in Chesapeake, VA, but the route to get there is a story carefully orchestrated by the Lord.

Sometime during the 1940s, an American couple sensed and followed God's call to "go and make disciples." They were sent by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to share the Gospel in Ecuador. Even though they didn't know how to speak Spanish very well, they didn't let that hold them back. They went from village to village, passing out a Spanish Gospel tract. One day, they came upon an older man who, upon receiving and reading the tract, became a follower of Christ and eventually led everyone in his family to faith as well.

Years later, the man's grandchildren went to New York to study and to seek a better

life. They joined a Baptist church in Paterson, NJ, part of the New York metropolitan area. On a cold winter day, the oldest grandchild stopped to give a ride to a Colombian man named José. During the ride, he shared the Gospel with his shivering passenger and invited him to church.

Several weeks later on a Sunday morning, José Morelos responded to the invitation and gave his life to Christ. At the moment of his conversion, even though he did not know much about the Bible or how to be a follower of Christ, Morelos felt God's call to missions. He wanted to "go and make disciples."

"As a young convert," shares Morelos, "I became a summer missionary working with migrant workers in Hope, AK. Later, I was selected to be part of an international Gospel share team. I traveled with four other international students, sharing our faith at college campuses and universities throughout the US. One of the places we traveled

to was El Paso, TX, the headquarters of Casa Bautista, which was then part of the Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Casa Bautista de Publicaciones (or Baptist Publishing House) produced theological textbooks and other Bible curriculum material for Spanish-speaking countries. The general director of Casa Bautista was in the audience when the students were in El Paso and heard me speak."

At the end of the mission tour, Morelos returned to New York, where he received an invitation from the general director to move to El Paso to work at Casa Bautista. José accepted the assignment and served there for over 10 years. During that time, he was instrumental in the publishing of many books, new Bible editions, magazines, curriculum, and Gospel tracts—even the same tract that was used by the missionary couple in Ecuador, whose faithful witness led to a salvation that led to another salvation that eventually led to Morelos' salvation. Only God could bring all of that together!

Now, as a pastor, Morelos is serving the local church in the US, sharing the Gospel in South America, training others how to do the same, and preparing the next generation for the mission field. Through it all, the Lord's commission in Matthew 28:19 continues to resonate—"Go...and make disciples..." (ESV).

■ FOR MORE INFORMATION ON POINT HARBOR'S MISSION PROGRAM GO TO: pointharbor.com/missions-3.



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Ve y haz discípulos

En octubre del año pasado José Morelos dirigió un equipo en un viaje misionero de corta duración a Perú, uno de los muchos equipos y viajes que ha dirigido. Morelos es el pastor de misiones de **Point Harbor Community Church** en Chesapeake, VA, pero el camino para llegar allí es una historia orquestada y dirigida por el Señor.

En algún momento durante la década de 1940, una pareja estadounidense sintió y siguió el llamado de Dios a "ir y hacer discípulos". Fueron enviados por la Junta de Misiones Extranjeras de la Convención Bautista del Sur para compartir el Evangelio en Ecuador. A pesar de que no hablaban español muy bien, no dejaron que eso los frenara. Fueron de pueblo en pueblo, repartiendo un tratado evangélico en español. Un día, se encontraron con un hombre mayor que, al recibir y leer el tratado, se convirtió en un seguidor de Cristo y eventualmente llevó a todos en su familia a la fe en Cristo también.

Años más tarde, los nietos del hombre fueron a Nueva York para estudiar y buscar una vida mejor. Se unieron a una iglesia bautista en Paterson, NJ, parte del área metropolitana de Nueva York. En un frío día de invierno, el nieto mayor se detuvo para llevar a un colombiano llamado José. Durante el viaje, compartió el Evangelio con su tembloroso pasajero y lo invitó a la iglesia.

Varias semanas después, un domingo por la mañana, José Morelos respondió a la invitación y entregó su vida a Cristo. En el momento de su conversión, aunque no sabía mucho sobre la Biblia ni sobre cómo ser un seguidor de Cristo, Morelos sintió el llamado de Dios a las misiones. Él quería "ir y hacer discípulos".

"Como un joven convertido", comparte Morelos, "me convertí en un misionero de verano trabajando con trabajadores inmigrantes en Hope, AK. Más tarde, fui seleccionado para formar parte de un equipo internacional de Compartir Evangelio. Viajé con otros cuatro estudiantes internacionales, compartiendo nuestra fe en los campus universitarios y universidades en los Estados Unidos. Uno de los lugares a los que viajamos fue El Paso, TX, la sede de Casa Bautista, que era entonces parte de la Junta Bautista



José Morelos compartiendo el Evangelio en Ecuador.

de Misiones Extranjeras. La Casa Bautista de Publicaciones (o Editorial Bautista) produjo libros de texto teológicos y otro material de currículo bíblico para países de habla hispana. El director general de Casa Bautista estaba en la audiencia cuando los estudiantes estaban en El Paso y me escucharon hablar."

Al final de la gira misionera, Morelos regresó a Nueva York, donde recibió una invitación del director general para mudarse a El Paso para trabajar en la Casa Bautista de Publicaciones. José aceptó la tarea y se desempeñó allí durante más de 10 años. Durante ese tiempo, jugó un papel decisivo en la publicación de muchos libros, nuevas ediciones de la Biblia, revistas, currículum y tratados del Evangelio, incluso el mismo tratado que utilizó la pareja misionera en Ecuador, cuyo ministerio fiel condujo a otros a la salvación que llevó a otra salvación y que finalmente condujo a la salvación de Morelos. ¡Solo Dios podría unir todo eso!

Ahora, como pastor, Morelos está sirviendo a la iglesia local en los EE. UU., Compartiendo el Evangelio en América del Sur, capacitando a otros sobre cómo hacer lo mismo y preparando a la próxima generación para el campo misionero. A través de todo esto, la comisión del Señor en Mateo 28:19 continúa resonando: "Id ... y haced discípulos ..." (Reina Valera).

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Baptism Celebration

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS THROUGH VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

“HAVING BEEN BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM, IN WHICH YOU WERE ALSO RAISED UP WITH HIM THROUGH FAITH IN THE WORKING OF GOD, WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.” Colossians 2:12 (ESV)

*by Drake Caudill, Minister of
Children and Families,
First Baptist Church,
Roanoke, VA*

Vacation Bible School proves to be an exciting and powerful evangelistic opportunity. Each year, children place their faith in Jesus during Vacation Bible School. Every church has different methods of following up with these new believers, and LifeWay provides wonderful follow-up resources in its VBS curriculum package.

At **First Baptist Church of Roanoke**, we intentionally plan Vacation Bible School as an evangelistic outreach to our community. The Good News of Jesus is explained clearly, using age-appropriate methods in each rotation. In the summer of 2017, we also planned what we called VBS Celebration Sunday as well as a Baptism Celebration on the final day of Vacation Bible School.

On day four, the Gospel of Christ was clearly explained to all elementary children. An invitation was given to our second through fifth grade children to place their faith in Him. Afterwards, we made phone calls to all of the parents/guardians of the children who made decisions, shared the good news about their child, and gave them the opportunity to ask questions. We also explained our plans for the Baptism Celebration on the final day (Friday) and asked if they would like their child to participate and be baptized.

As the minister of children and families, I personally spoke to each parent/guardian of



those who were interested in our Baptism Celebration. God allowed me to have wonderful conversations with each family about the meaning of baptism, why we baptize, and even why we submerge. I explained to each family that the purpose of our Baptism Celebration was so that the children's friends can see them baptized and everyone can celebrate the work of Christ in the child's life. Every family was invited to attend and observe.

On the day of the Baptism Celebration, all of the baptism candidates were present, along with their parents/guardians, and many of them brought additional family members as well. All of the VBS children and leaders were also present. With the understanding that all ages were represented, I was able to explain baptism to the entire group before I baptized the new believers. The children were

baptized, the Good News was presented, we had made contact with all new believers, and God received the glory.

Through our Baptism Celebration, we saw firsthand the benefit of speaking with every parent/guardian whose child placed his/her faith in Christ. We rejoice with these families and agree with the Apostle Paul when he wrote, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, ESV).

Children's ministers plan and pray all year for their next Vacation Bible School. We plan and pray for the safety of the children, more volunteers, more craft donations, and no rain the same week as VBS. Most importantly, we pray that God will begin to work in the heart of each child who will attend and that families will come to know Christ through VBS.

An advertisement for innovative faith resources. It features a tablet displaying a graphic with the text "SBC of Virginia churches receive a discount of 15%". A child's hand is visible, pointing at the tablet. The background is dark red.

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■ FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FIRST ROANOKE'S CHILDREN'S MINISTRY, VISIT firstroanoke.com.

PROTECTING & LOVING YOUR FLOCK

by Andrew Cheatham, Associate/Youth Pastor, Swift Creek Baptist Church, Colonial Heights, VA

250. That's the number of criminal incidents that occurred at churches in 2015 and 2016, according to church security consultant Carl Chinn. He estimates that between 1999 and 2017, there were 1,617 violent incidents at faith-based organizations.ⁱ Sexual abuse trial attorneys Gregory Love and Kimberlee Norris site an average of 23 news articles each day from 2005 to 2008 regarding sexual abuse allegations in Protestant churches.ⁱⁱ This staggering number still doesn't give us a full picture of the amount of abuse in churches, as some victims never come forward. Churches most certainly are not immune to violent incidents and cases of abuse from the inside.

Many churches are totally unprepared for incidents like the ones we have seen in the news. Rather than giving in to fear, we must respond with wisdom, courage, and clarity.

You may be wondering, *Should we be concerned for the safety of our church members, volunteers, and visitors?* The answer is yes. The church exists to love God and love people. If we do not address critical safety issues in our churches, we neglect good stewardship and fail to love our people well.

So what can you do in order to protect your people?

KNOW THE ISSUES



Critical to protecting and loving your people is knowing the key safety issues concerning your congregation. Spend time researching the main areas of vulnerability in churches and consider having a consultant or coach assess your church's preparedness. Fire departments and police departments will sometimes do this for free.

DEVELOP A TEAM



One of the best ways to do the important work of risk management is to develop a team of people who can help you create, implement, and sustain safety practices and policies for your local church. This is an involved process that requires research, follow-up, and regular maintenance. Insurance companies need to be contacted,



Make safety a priority in your church—it's a worthwhile and essential investment!

training needs to take place, and volunteers need to be organized. Forming a risk management team can be one of the most effective ways of creating a safe and healthy environment in which your congregation can gather.

COUNT THE COST



Creating a risk management team and having an effective process will cost time, energy, and financial resources. Background checks, insurance, first aid kits, ministry check-in software, consultations, and many other areas of risk management can be costly. Plan your budget around these costs. Spending \$500–\$2,000 a year is a good place to start. Those just beginning the process should plan to utilize more resources initially then prepare a regular budget for background checks, first aid updates, and unplanned safety expenses.

ⁱ tinyurl.com/ct-pastors

ⁱⁱ tinyurl.com/cnn-shootings



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RESOURCES Check out the SBCV Kids page at sbcv.org/children.



God Is on the Move & We Want to Join Him

English VERSION

“Aslan is on the move.” This is a line from C.S. Lewis’ book, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In a time of despair and bitter cold, the characters of the book are reminded that Aslan had arrived and he was moving to free them from the oppression of the White Witch. Likewise, among the Spanish-speaking congregations in the SBCV, God is on the move!

This past October, Spanish-speaking churches from across the SBC of Virginia held their annual Hispanic Conference. Dr. Brian Autry, SBCV’s executive director, spoke and reminded the leaders of the strength there is when churches work together as one—they are *Not Alone*. Dr. William Ortega, senior consultant of the Spanish-speaking churches of the Baptist Convention of North Carolina, taught on the importance of planting churches together and on accomplishing the precious commission that has been given—but doing so as one body.

The SBCV invited Ortega to speak to Spanish-speaking pastors and leaders again at Annual Homecoming in November. He taught on leadership



development and shared with those present how God is at work in North Carolina, where there is great fruit among Spanish-speaking congregations. SBCV Hispanic leaders long to see that work among their churches in Virginia as well.

These two events were the catalyst for SBCV Spanish-speaking leaders to begin envisioning and planning what is next for their ministry here in Virginia. For the

by Fernando Mangieri,
Pastor of Iglesia Bautista
Conexión, Moseley, VA

We Are NOT ALONE

Work is not done alone; we all do it.

It is important to serve in unity, to work together to bless and build the body of Christ and empower our ability to reach the lost.

Working in unity increases the result and relieves burdens.

SBCV Hispanic churches met last October in Richmond for our annual Hispanic Conference. It was a success—we were able to worship, share, grow, and receive new challenges. Every year, new churches come together, and the number keeps growing.

If we understand that we are not alone, then let's work together.

Pastors, leaders, and members of six Hispanic churches joined together, along with pastors and leaders of two English-speaking churches (Parkway Baptist Church (Moseley) and Kingsland Baptist Church (North Chesterfield)).

What results did we have working together?

We had the assistance of 23 churches, 240 participants, and 40 servers. The nursery, the children's camp, and the youth conferences were in English because our children and young Hispanics are bilingual and bicultural. We glorified God, we worked in unity, and our SBCV churches were strengthened and challenged.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Is my church serving and impacting the community?

Is my church working with the other cultures around?

Is my church joining with other churches to reach and develop new ministries and new churches?



past four years, the SBCV Hispanic Leadership Team has been working on strengthening relationships between the Spanish-speaking churches. The network is stronger and healthier now and is bearing fruit, as new churches are being planted and added to the SBC of Virginia.

These committed leaders are eager to join God in what He is doing. He is on the move, and they are asking what He wants them to do next. They're sensing His leading to start training centers around the state that can be a seedbed of new leaders and church planters—leaders who can strengthen the existing churches and church planters who can inspire others to further the mission. There are more than two million Hispanics in Virginia who need to be reached with the Gospel!

In John 5, Jesus said, "My Father is working until now, and I am working...Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise" (John 5:17, 19 ESV).

God is on the move, He is at work, and Hispanic leaders across the state want to join Him. They are asking, "Lord, what is next? How can we join you in furthering the Kingdom?"



Dr. David Lema. Ph. D. DMin

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by *Fernando Mangieri,*
Pastor of Iglesia Bautista
Conexión, Moseley, VA

NO ESTAMOS SOLOS

El trabajo no se hace solo; lo hacemos todos.

Es importante servir en unidad, trabajar juntos para bendecir, edificar el cuerpo de Cristo y potenciar el alcance del perdido.

El trabajo en unidad potencia el resultado y alivia las cargas.

En octubre pasado una vez más nos reunimos en Richmond como iglesias hispanas de SBCV para las conferencias. Fue un éxito... pudimos adorar, compartir, ser edificados y desafiados. Cada año nuevas iglesias se unen y el número sigue creciendo.

Si entendimos que no estamos solos, entonces trabajemos juntos.

Pastores, líderes y miembros de 6 iglesias hispanas trabajaron juntos y a este grupo se unieron pastores y líderes de dos iglesias americanas (Parkway y Kingsland).

¿Que resultados tenemos al trabajar juntos?

Contamos con la asistencia de 23 iglesias, 240 participantes y 40 servidores. El cuidado de los pequeños, el campamento de niños y las conferencias de jóvenes fue en inglés... entendiendo que nuestros hijos y jóvenes hispanos son bilingües y biculturales. Glorificamos a Dios, trabajamos en unidad y nuestras iglesias de SBCV fueron edificadas y desafiadas.

PREGUNTAS

¿Mi iglesia está sirviendo e impactando a la comunidad?

¿Mi iglesia está trabajando con otras culturas alrededor?

¿Mi iglesia se está uniendo con otras iglesias para alcanzar y desarrollar nuevos ministerios, nuevas iglesias?

Dios está en movimiento queremos unirnos a él

VERSIÓN EN **Español**

“Aslan está en movimiento.” Esta es una de las frases del libro de C.S. Lewis, *Las Crónicas de Narnia*. En un momento de desesperación y frío, a los personajes del libro se les recuerda que Aslan había llegado y que se estaba moviendo para liberarlos de la opresión de la Bruja Blanca. Del mismo modo, entre las congregaciones de habla hispana de la SBCV, ¡Dios está en movimiento!

En octubre de 2017, las iglesias de habla hispana en todo el SBC de Virginia realizaron su Conferencia Hispana anual. El Dr. Brian Autry, director ejecutivo de SBCV, habló y recordó a los líderes la fortaleza que existe cuando las iglesias trabajan juntas como si fueran una, no están solas. El Dr. William Ortega, consultor principal de las iglesias



de habla hispana de la Convención Bautista de Carolina del Norte, enseñó sobre la importancia de juntos plantar iglesias y sobre el cumplimiento de la preciosa comisión que se ha otorgado, pero haciéndolo como un solo cuerpo.

El SBCV invitó a Ortega a hablar con pastores y líderes



de habla hispana nuevamente en Homecoming Anual en noviembre. Allí enseñó sobre el desarrollo del liderazgo y compartió con los presentes cómo Dios está trabajando en Carolina del Norte, donde hay grandes frutos entre las congregaciones de habla hispana. Los líderes hispanos del SBCV anhelan ver ese trabajo entre sus iglesias en Virginia también.

Estos dos eventos fueron el catalizador para que los líderes hispanohablantes de la SBCV comenzaran a imaginar y planear el siguiente paso para su ministerio aquí en Virginia. Durante los últimos cuatro años, el Equipo de Liderazgo Hispano del SBCV ha estado trabajando para fortalecer las relaciones entre las iglesias de habla hispana. La red es más fuerte y más saludable ahora y está dando sus frutos, ya que se están plantando nuevas iglesias y se están agregando a la SBC de Virginia.

Estos líderes comprometidos están ansiosos por unirse a Dios en lo que está haciendo. Él está en movimiento, y están preguntando qué quiere Él que hagan a continuación. Están sintiendo que su dirección es comenzar centros de capacitación en todo el estado que pueden ser un semillero de nuevos líderes y plantadores de iglesias, líderes que pueden fortalecer las iglesias existentes y los plantadores de iglesias que pueden inspirar a otros a promover la misión. ¡Hay más de 2 millones de hispanos en Virginia que necesitan ser alcanzados con el Evangelio!

En Juan 5, Jesús dijo, " ¹⁷ Jesús les respondió: —Mi Padre hasta ahora trabaja, y yo trabajo.

... ¹⁹ Respondió entonces Jesús y les dijo: —De cierto, de cierto os digo: No puede el Hijo hacer nada por sí mismo, sino lo que ve hacer al Padre. Todo lo que el Padre hace, también lo hace el Hijo igualmente, " (Juan 5:17, 19 RV95).

Dios está en movimiento, Él está trabajando, y los líderes hispanos en todo el estado quieren unirse a él. Están preguntando: "Señor, ¿qué sigue? ¿Cómo podemos unirnos a ti en la promoción de tu Reino?"



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A

Admit you're a sinner who needs to be saved.

Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

B

Believe that Jesus died for you and rose again.

Romans 10:9, "If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

C

Commit to accepting Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

Romans 10:13, "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Would you be willing to pray this prayer with a heart of faith, trusting and believing what the Bible says about Jesus and His love for you?

"Oh, God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross for me. I believe His shed blood paid the price for my sin, and that His death, burial, and resurrection were all for me. I now receive Him as my personal Savior and Lord. Thank you for forgiving me of my sins and for the gifts of salvation and eternal life. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

Take God at His Word and claim His gift of salvation.
Believe and you will be saved.



James Madison University

Mission Impact on the Football Field

In the summer of 2017, the nation grieved the horrific events that transpired in Charlottesville, where a riot and racial tensions resulted in a tragic death and a wakeup call for our country. But that same weekend, a glimmer of hope and redemption was ignited in another university town—Harrisonburg, VA.

In the wake of what had just happened in Charlottesville, **Crosslink Community Church** welcomed James Madison University's football team and coaching staff that Sunday. Crosslink's church family had been praying for some time for God to open doors to build relationships with and serve the JMU faculty and students. At the end of Sunday's service, several players prayed to receive Christ.

Pastor Matthew Kirkland of Crosslink

explains, "We were contacted by the football team's representatives about attending, and we rejoiced at the opportunity to connect with them. Our church sought to show love to the players in practical ways, which included serving them lunch and presenting some welcome gifts."

Later that fall, the JMU campus newspaper, *The Breeze*, took note of the Gospel impact. Reporter Catie Harper wrote, "The bond held by the JMU football team isn't just one seen on the field under the bright lights, surrounded by roaring fans. It's one that can also be found even after the final seconds tick off the clock and the fans go home. Every Sunday, members of the team pull themselves out of bed and get ready to head off to church alongside one another. It's a trip that highlights just how united the team is. The

weekly visits to church came to JMU's football program last year along with head coach Mike Houston."ⁱ

While none of the players are required to attend the services, one of Coach Houston's

main hopes from his players attending church is that it will make them better men than they were before they went. "To me, the whole thing revolves around building a team that has strong character, has integrity, that's doing the right things, and that's kind of our thing we preach to them," Houston says. "We are going to do the right things on and off the field and [in] the way we conduct ourselves and [in] the way we carry out our business."

The players agree that their faith has had a positive impact on the team. "People think [football's] just physical and it's just mental," senior defensive lineman Andrew Ankrah says. "Coach Houston has brought a faith and spiritual aspect to this team that I feel like a lot of guys are learning to really grasp onto. If you add [spirituality] in there, you are just going to be that much better because you have faith in yourself, faith in your teammates, and faith that you have a Protector up there [Who's] going to protect you when you're out there on that field."ⁱⁱ

It is great to see SBC of Virginia churches like Crosslink Community Church viewing their local college campuses as a mission field. Loving our neighbors, as Jesus commanded, includes our local campuses, where thousands come with open minds and, many times, open hearts looking for a connection.

ⁱ *The Breeze*, October 4, 2017.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

■ **CROSSLINK COMMUNITY CHURCH'S WEBSITE CAN BE VIEWED AT crosslinkva.com.**



CHURCH Safety and Security

The need for security policies and practices has long been on the radar of local churches. Most of these concerns have rightly focused on providing safe environments for children and youth, and most of the practices have consisted of background checks for volunteers and secure check-in and checkout procedures. Sadly, concerns have broadened in recent years with the increase of murderous attacks in church worship services and prayer meetings. The horrific shootings at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC in 2015 and First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, TX in 2017 have left indelible images on the minds of church leaders and worshippers alike.

Chuck Lawless recently authored an article that listed reasons why churches need safety and security teams.¹ He wrote of the vulnerability of worship gatherings; the risk of parking lot thefts; being prepared for emergencies; utilizing qualified people who are already members of the church; and the benefits of peace of mind and preparedness in the midst of chaos. Reasons such as these, along with the emotions that follow tragic mass shootings, have led more churches to begin developing a security plan and team. However, some church leaders have yet to guide their churches to put such measures in place.

Kurt Beach is a follower of Jesus, a retired police lieutenant, and a crime prevention specialist with the Smithfield Police Department—with 28 years of service. Beach, who has a national certification in law enforcement, is spending an increasing amount of his time consulting with churches and other organizations regarding crime prevention. He says, “The moral fabric of the country has been destroyed, the government is in disarray, and people have been left not knowing where to turn.

“In such a climate,” Beach continues, “the church is positioned to emanate hope, love, and

guidance.” He likens the current reality of the church to the days of Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of the city of Jerusalem. “Nehemiah resolved not to allow the enemy to prevail, and [he] resolved to rebuild.”

Beach references Nehemiah setting up sentries to protect the workers as they rebuilt the wall. He suggests, “Securing the faithful requires training church leaders in security policies and practices as part of the normal course of ministry training.” Beach warns, “A church with no security policy in place will make bad decisions in the midst of a crisis, which could possibly compound the problem and escalate the violence.

“Having a comprehensive security policy in place is essential in every local church and needs to be fully embraced by the pastor in order for it to be effective.”

Even before the 2015 shooting in South Carolina, **Grove Avenue Baptist Church** in Richmond, VA had security policies and practices in place. Alan Ware, formerly on staff at Grove, was tasked with developing and implementing its security plans. Since 2015, Alan has served on the staff of Third



Church (Presbyterian) in Henrico. Ware continues to grow in his expertise in the field of church security and has consulted with many churches about this important matter.

When developing a security plan for a local church, Ware recommends implementing three rings of security. The first ring starts in the parking lot; the second pertains to the entrances to the facility; and the third focuses on both worship and education space inside the facility. The central activity that Ware promotes in his training is guest relations—that is, how a church relates to its guests from their arrival in the parking lot, to their entrance into the church facility, and through their time in worship.

Ware says, “All mass shootings at churches start in the parking lot. Handling resistance of any form is better handled in the parking lot as opposed to the sanctuary.” He points out that many churches already have a greeting team that welcome guests as they arrive. Ware advocates helping the current greeters be more aware in the work they are already doing. This is done through training and by adding people to the team who can be more assertive if needed.

Once guests have entered the parking lot and are making their way to the building, Ware suggests the following layers of guest relations. First, have people at the door who can walk in with new guests. They should be eager and prepared to engage guests in conversation and carry them through their time of worship. Second, have people who can share the Gospel who are ready to receive guests from greeters as needed. And finally, have a more select group prepared to host guests who need extra help and/or attention. These would be guests who have, for some reason, raised the awareness of the greeters in the parking lot and at the entrances (ex., someone who is intoxicated or seems outwardly agitated).

Ware says, “Relating to guests well every week will prepare you for the one time when things go horribly wrong.”

The SBCV will be partnering with Ware, Beach, and other security experts to provide church security training at many of our training events in the future. Plan now to join us at one of these events and check our website often for resources we will share to help you make your church safe and secure.

¹Chuck Lawless, *7 Reasons Your Church Needs a Safety and Security Team*, www.chucklawless.com/2018/02/7-reasons-your-church-needs-a-safety-and-security-team/, 2018.

■ WANT TO CONTACT KURT OR ALAN? KURT CAN BE REACHED AT kbeach@smithfieldva.gov or 757-499-4849, AND ALAN CAN BE REACHED AT aware1059@gmail.com.

ONLINE TRAINING

You can view the “Avoid, Deny, Defend” video by going to tinyurl.com/avoid-vid. Another valuable video is available at tinyurl.com/civilian-response. Online training and information is available at these two websites: sheepdogsafetytraining.com and alicetraining.com.

INSURANCE

Online resources with in-depth information regarding church security and insurance are available at Guide One (tinyurl.com/guideone-safety) and Church Mutual (tinyurl.com/churchmutual-safety).



from the EDITOR

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Brandon

DO YOU EVER FEEL . . . LIKE YOU WERE
JUST GOING ABOUT LIFE AND TURNED
AROUND AND ANOTHER WEEK,
MONTH, OR YEAR WAS ALMOST OVER?

The Trouble With Time



Does it feel like time is speeding up? It seems to me like we just celebrated New Year's Day and already it is March! Maybe it's that I'm getting older, but the days and weeks are running together. And it doesn't help that as I write this, we have just celebrated my daughter's 18th birthday. How can this be? I feel like it wasn't that long ago that I was carrying her to bed and helping tie her shoes. Now she is legally an "adult" and ready to graduate high school! In fact, it feels like just a few years ago, I was taking her picture for one of the first *Proclaimer* magazines I worked on after arriving at the SBC of Virginia. My friend, Charles Billingsley, has a song called, "Baby, I Blinked." In it, he sings, "Oh, how fast it went past—it leads me to think that maybe, just maybe, Baby, I blinked." I can really relate to that!

Do you ever feel like that too? Like you were just going about life and turned around and another week, month, or year was almost over? In the song, the lyrics are haunting:

***"Sometimes it breaks my heart,
I wish that I could find a way to
slow it down—I wish I could turn
back time."***

We have probably all had that emotion at least a time or two. But how can we live getting the most out of each moment without having regrets? Scripture has a few things to say about time. In Psalm 90:12 we read,

"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Paul cautioned the Colossians to

*"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders;
make the most of every opportunity"*
(Colossians 4:5-6).

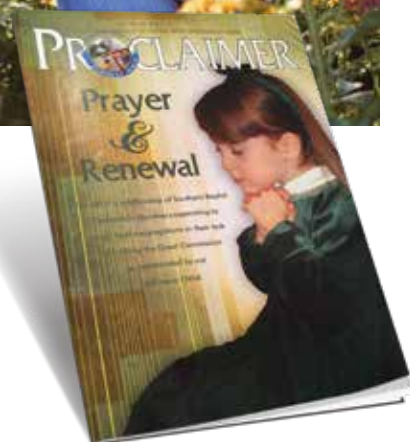
And to the Ephesians he said,

*"Be very careful, then, how you live—not
as unwise but as wise, making the most of
every opportunity, because the days are evil"*
(Ephesians 5:15-17).

Now that we've started 2018, I hope we have that heart and passion to "make the most of every opportunity!" Whether it is to encourage a fellow church member, reach out to a guest, or get out of our comfort zone and share the Gospel with a stranger. Yes, the days may be evil, but the love of our Lord is greater. And all we are asked to do is be His witnesses—or His storytellers—to those who need to hear about His love. Now that's a surefire way to live every day with intention and without regret!

In the song, one of the verses ends with, "I look back on a thousand scenes, and I'm blessed beyond my wildest dreams. You brought me joy and all good things. And who you are—it makes me proud." I know that's how my wife and I feel about our daughter, Lauren. My prayer is that our Heavenly Father feels that way about us—no matter how fast time flies.



**All Scripture references are from the New International Version, 1984 (NIV 1984).*



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Calendar

view the online calendar at **sbcv.org/calendar**

MARCH

- 16-17 Valley Student Conference; First BC, Roanoke
- 16-17 Women's Ministry Conference; River Oak Church, Chesapeake
- 20 Next Level Church Summit; Ministry Support Center, Glen Allen
- 24 Disaster Relief Training; Southeast Region

APRIL

- 10 Pastors of Smaller Congregations Summit; Hyland Heights BC, Lynchburg
- 13-14 Statewide Church Planter Network; Charlottesville
- 14 Disaster Relief Training; Central Region
- 17 Youth Ministry Roundtable; Ministry Support Center, Glen Allen
- 20-21 South Asia Summit; Parkway BC, Moseley
- 21 Hispanic Conference; Lynchburg
- 24-26 Prayer Summit Tour
- 28 Disaster Relief Training; North Region

MAY

- 5 Disaster Relief Training; Valley Region
- 7-8 Executive Board Meeting
- 10-12 PLANT A—Church Planting Team Training; Ministry Support Center, Glen Allen
- 19 Deaf Leadership Roundtable
- 19 Fit 2 Lead; Rosedale BC, Abingdon
- 24 Intern Training; Ministry Support Center, Glen Allen

JUNE

- 1 Worship and Technology Conference; Liberty University, Lynchburg
- 7 Church Planter Interviews; Ministry Support Center, Glen Allen
- 10-13 Southern Baptist Convention; Dallas
- 11 Dessert Reception at SBC; Dallas
- 18-22 Fusion Mission Camp; Northern Virginia/DC
- 22-23 PLANT B—Church Planting Team Training; Ministry Support Center, Glen Allen
- 22-23 Virginia Bike Rally
- 23-30 South Hampton Roads Mission Project
- 25-29 Fuge Camp; Liberty University, Lynchburg
- 28-7/7 Barcelona Trip—ESL Camp

JULY

- 4 *Independence Day*
- 5-14 Barcelona Trip—Science & Summer Fun Camp
- 12-15 Family Fusion; Eastern Shore
- 12-21 Barcelona Trip—Art & Music Camp
- 16-20 Fuge Camp; Liberty University, Lynchburg
- 19-28 Barcelona Trip—Basketball Camp
- 23-27 Fusion Mission Camp; Christiansburg



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