

STARTING

CTV32 Montreal 2017

By Staff

Fenton, MI - "CTV32" is sure to be unique. This CTV, Catch The Vision, is for Southern Baptist (SBC) pastors who have not yet experienced CTV in a Send City with NAMB. These events are part of an annual CTV emphasis in all 32 Send Cities where the aim is to mobilize new churches. A "Catch the Vision Tour" (CTV) is typically a two-day experience where SBC pastors and key leaders travel to a Send City and are hosted by NAMB's Send City Missionary.

<https://www.namb.net/video/catch-the-vision-tour>

The purpose of the vision tour is to:

- Explore the city in-person and get a sense for what God is doing.
- Gain a better understanding of what it means to plant SBC churches in an urban environment.
- Meet church planters and observe their ministries first-hand.
- See communities that are in need of churches to send a planter.
- Explore potential partnerships, ask questions and pray.

The most effective means of sending church planters than to place feet on the ground, your feet, and walk the streets where a new work is so vitally needed. Join NAMB, the Send Network, and venture out with others from churches near and far as God leads us to work collaboratively for the kingdom. Montreal is calling!

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) is able to provide scholarships for the ground expenses of those seeking to attend. The limited scholarships allows for a SBC pastor to bring one person with him, usually a spouse or other staff member (Unfortunately, logistics of the event will not accommodate children.) Travel arrangements and expenses to/from the Send City are to be made and covered by the attendee. Only your ground expenses once at the CTV will be covered by scholarship.

Once registered, hotel information, along with arrival and departure times, will be sent to you. Your hotel reservations will be secured for you by NAMB and a confirmation will be sent to you at least one week prior to the event start date. Guests are responsible for their own travel arrangements and expenses to and from the Send City. For this specific CTV32 Montreal event, all hotel, meals and local transportation expenses in the Send City are covered by generous individual donations to NAMB for events such as this, beyond the Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong.

Details of trip:

- CTV-32 Montreal
- April 24, 2017 - April 26, 2017
- Friday beginning at 5:00 PM through Sunday morning 10:30 AM Eastern Time

“God is doing something amazing in this city,” said Chad Vandiver, Send Montreal City Missionary. “We are seeing the beginnings of a movement happen here,” ...

For more information visit: <https://www.namb.net/send-cities/montreal/>

God Always Provides

By Bob Bickford

Alpharetta, GA - Dear Potential or Present (Bivocational) Replanter, When we went to seminary or Bible college we hoped—or more likely, expected—upon graduation we’d embark on a ministry path that would lead us to full-time pay and benefits. Unless you were independently wealthy, academically brilliant or came from a family who was blessed to pay for your education, you likely took out school loans or worked hard supporting yourself through school. If that was the case, your mindset was likely something like this: “I’m so committed to pursue God’s call on my life, I’m happy to do whatever it takes (financially, vocationally) to follow His lead.”

Remember those days when the math didn’t work out on paper, but you still had enough to pay rent, utilities, have groceries, with even a little le over? Remember the time when the car needed repairs and someone from far away sent you a letter with a check that covered your need? Remember the time someone graciously and generously blessed you, so you could take a vacation, go on a date, purchase that much needed computer? Remember how, in your heart and mind, you just knew God would take care of you because He promised to do so in His Word? What changed?

You’re perhaps decades older now; your kids need braces, shoes, contact lenses and school books. Your wife would like a new wardrobe. You have to buy a new set of tires, and then there’s the summer AC bill, which seems more like a mortgage payment than a utility bill. You may find yourself struggling to sleep at night, dreading to look at the offering report from Sunday and fantasizing about receiving a call from a bigger church that could pay you a living wage, allowing you to have some left over. What changed?

You’ve gotten a little older, and your expenses are a little larger. But God has always provided. Don’t fall for the illusion that pastors at larger churches with full-time salaries have it easier. Don’t succumb to the belief that you must not be important because you have to work another job to support your family. Don’t let the discouragement of not having enough time to do what you would do in ministry—because you can’t devote yourself to it full time—overwhelm you. Why?

- You have automatic credibility in working a job outside the church.
- You have a better understanding of what it’s really like to work, have a family and participate in the life of a church.
- You are around more people who need to hear about Jesus every week than a pastor who works in a church building and has multiple meetings every week.

- You are more free to risk being bold in leading your church to radically embrace God's call to mission. As a full-time pastor, you might be tempted to "back off" and avoid rocking the boat and stepping on toes to keep your job.
- You have the opportunity to serve a church that otherwise couldn't afford to pay a pastor full time, and this allows the church to maintain a gospel witness in the community.

Things will break, kids will outgrow their clothes and offerings will rise and fall, but please remember: God always provide!

Bob Bickford is a National Replanting Catalyst for the North American Mission Board Chair of Church Revitalization Team of the St. Louis Metro Baptist Association

"A Season of Giving, Join God where he is at work"

By David Cox (Detroit Baptist Messenger)

Detroit, MI - When I hear the verse "For God So Love the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, and whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16), I just know with the gift of Salvation that, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). I believe that I can reach the lost and grow the saved, feed the hungry, build shelters for the homeless, and comfort the heart broken, all by myself. I want to give to others this great gift that I received, a new life in Christ. As I started on my journey I quickly realized this is a God sized assignment.

At Temple of Faith Baptist Church I took part in a great class called Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby. Blackaby made a statement "join God where he is at work" and it helped change my perspective from not only working for Christ, but working with Christ. I believe that God is already at work in the Greater Detroit Area. Pastor Rochelle Davis Jr. has helped me to see the importance of the local church, and the Greater Detroit Baptist Association(GDBA), as well as how much we can accomplish together.

We all have something to give, not only at this season, but all year long. The Bible says that "We have not because we ask not" (James 4:2). So I am asking you to give of yourself.

- Some have Time to give, volunteer at your local church or at the Association office.
- Some have Finances to offer, give to your local church, the GDBA, and BSCM.
- Some have Talent, become a teacher, a trainer, host a workshop, disciple others.

When you give, the Lord will do what he said he will do. Luke 6:38 – "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

David Cox Sr. has lived in the metro Detroit area for more than 21 years. David is a member of Temple of Faith Baptist Church, where he currently serves as the Youth Minister and Director

of Stewardship. In addition, he serves as treasurer for the Greater Detroit Baptist Association and the secretary of the Michigan African American Fellowship.

STRENGTHENING

Bobby Bowden documentary in theaters Jan. 8

by BP Staff

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) -- Legendary college football coach Bobby Bowden and his family will kick-off the NCAA Football National Championship weekend next month with the release of the true story, "The Bowden Dynasty: A Story of Faith, Family and Football." The film explores the life and career of Bowden, the winningest coach in college football.

"There is no question Coach Bobby Bowden is a legend on the grid-iron, but he also is a man that has 'run the race' in order to live a life that honors God in all he does," said Trey Reynolds, director of LifeWay Films, which is partnering with the film's promotion. "We encourage churches, small groups, and families to go to theaters Jan. 8 and experience The Bowden Dynasty on the big screen." Coach Bowden noted, "The most amazing thing about our dynasty years is how consistent we were. But what makes those dynasty years so ridiculously satisfying is that we ended each season ranked no lower than number four in the polls, won two national championships, played for three others and won 11 bowl games, including nine in a row."

"None of us thought about these things at the time," he said. "Nor did we plan for them. In hindsight, I realize we accomplished something unique in college football history." From 1987 to 2000, the Florida State Seminoles thrilled their fans with 14 consecutive top-four seasons with 10 or more wins. Beginning with a come-from-behind victory in the 1988 Fiesta Bowl, Bobby Bowden's teams began a flirtation with perfection. In seven of those seasons they lost only one game. More often than not, the player's quest for a perfect season came down to one play where mere inches or seconds determined the outcome.

The feature documentary all-star cast includes: Fred Biletnikoff, the Bowden family, Kenny Chesney, Jimmy Johnson, Jim Kelly, Burt Reynolds, Nick Saban, Deion Sanders, Charlie Ward, Peter Warrick, and more. The film was produced by John Corry, along with Rob Harvell and Brian Goodwin (ESPN Films' "The Book of Manning").

The Bowden Dynasty will be shown in U.S. theaters for a one-night premiere on Sunday, Jan. 8 live at 6 p.m. Eastern/5 p.m. Central and tape-delayed to 6 p.m. MT/6 p.m. PT. The event will be broadcast live from the Mahaffey Theater in downtown St. Petersburg, Fla., on the eve of the NCAA Football National Championship happening across the bay in Tampa. Following the feature presentation will be an exclusive question-and-answer session and presentation with Coach Bowden and special guests.

Tickets can be purchased online by visiting www.FathomEvents.com or at participating theater box offices which are available on the site. More information about the film is available at www.BowdenDynasty.com

This report was compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources and Baptist Press. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

By All Means...Go!

By Sue Hodnett

Fenton, MI - As I reflect on the verse Psalm 68:11, I am reminded that a team of great women continue to rise up to the call, to assist, to serve, to pray and to lead with purpose and intentionality in Michigan Baptist churches, associations and communities, all in partnership with the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

"The Lord issues a command. Numerous are the women who announce the news:"
Psalm 68:11 ISV

Some are called to lead as wives, mothers, teachers, administrators and friends. Whether called to serve in their homes, in their work places, in their churches, or in their community, they lead others to worship the glory of God. Sharing the hope, reflecting His love and "Sharing the Light" of Jesus Christ. We will move forward into 2017 with the foundation of "Prayer" and a continued heart's desire to "Assist" in all ways possible with the advancement of Jesus Christ in Michigan.

"Go" will be our themed focus for the new year. This will bring new challenges! Building on the foundation laid in the past two years, and using what we have learned, we will take it to new heights. It will move many of us outside of our comfort zones, but in turn bring us into a closer relationship with God. We will dare to be bold! Challenging Michigan Christian believers to understand and be radically involved in the mission of God. Sharing the Light in our communities, state, country and around the world. The call of the Great Commission is to "GO"! It is not only a call to move from our current location, it's a reminder to be on mission for Jesus wherever we are and whatever we are doing. Open your eyes. Slow down a little bit and choose to make time for the people in your path.

Our continued commitment to making "Prayer" a first priority will literally continue to move us into communities and churches throughout our state, taking us to the next level of trusting in our God for direction and vision.

Virtual Prayer Walking Events

Prayer Walking events have opened the doors for more Michigan Baptists to be involved in praying for and encouraging our Michigan churches, both established congregations and new church plants. As people walk and pray sharing onsite photos and current ministry requests,

the opportunity to personalize prayers for pastors, their families, their church leadership and their communities is given to those who follow online.

Please visit our FaceBook page: www.facebook.com/michiganWMUprayerwalking/ to like and follow us in 2017 as we Prayer Walk Michigan. Our scheduled locations for the new year are:

Michigan WMU / Prayerwalking - 2017 Calendar

January - Detroit / Int'l Auto Show
February - West Branch
March- Grand Rapids / Wyoming
April- Detroit (eastside) / Montreal
May- Novi / FRe Outreach
June- Waterford / Oakland / Sarnia / Port Huron
July- Pines Association
August- Sault Ste Marie, Ironwood, Iron Mountain & Menominee
September- Bay Association
October- Southfield
November- Clawson
December- BSCM / Fenton

Alone our team can't reach all of Michigan, but with your help we can reach more areas together. If you are interested in partnering with us, please contact us and let's "GO" together.

Prayer Campaigns

Weeks of Prayer for the North American Mission Board, Frances Brown State Missions Offering and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for the International Mission Board and 40 Days of Prayer for the BSCM will continue to give intercessory opportunities and increased awareness of missions as we punch holes in the darkness in Michigan and the world beyond.

Our Purpose

As our leadership team comes alongside pastors, pastors' wives, church planters and women in ministry our focus is to train, resource, encourage and assist them in their leadership roles. In 2017, every retreat, camp, conference, mission trip, coaching session and prayer walking event will include components to equip each participant with the means for success in leadership and ministry. First time conferences are being planned to target specific interest and/or age groups.

Preparing future leaders for a mission lifestyle is an overall objective for all of our children's events. Mission education for our children is significant; they are our future missionaries. Children's mission education centers on meeting the spiritual needs of boys and girls, preschoolers to high schoolers. The focus is to help them grow in their faith in Jesus Christ and teaching them how to minister to others. We offer many programs and material to assist leaders and parents in helping to growth their churches discipleship to children, youth and adults.

Throughout the year the Women's Ministry and WMU Teams sponsor many events, both evangelistic and mission focused. Many of our events are listed below. Continue to check www.bscm.org for the latest details on these events, ongoing and short term mission projects and more.

2017 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan.	28	Women's Ministry Team Leadership Meeting	BSCM, Fenton
Feb.	17-19	Women's Missions Retreat	Bambi Lake, Roscommon
Mar.	5-12	North Amer. Missions Study - Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and Week of Prayer	
Mar.	18	MI Children's Ministry Day	Several Locations
Mar.	25	Young Women's Conference	
Apr.	29	Women's Ministry Team Leadership Meeting	BSCM, Fenton
May	19-20	Women's Conference	Legacy Church, Novi
Jul.	10-14	MI Girls' Mission Adventure Camp	Bambi Lake, Roscommon
Jul.	14-15	MI Mom & Me Mission Adventure Camp	Bambi Lake, Roscommon
Sep.	16	Women's Ministry Team Leadership Meeting	BSCM, Fenton
Sep.	10-17	Frances Brown's State Missions Offering Week of Prayer for Michigan	
Sep.	30	WMU 59th Annual Meeting/ Missions Celebration	Sunrise Baptist, Midland
Oct.		Women's Harvest Retreat	Bambi Lake, Roscommon
Dec.	3-10	Int'l Missions Study Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and Week of Prayer	
Dec.	14	Women's Ministry Team Christmas Celebration	BSCM, Fenton

The time is now! We are well equipped! "By All Means", we need to "Go", praying and assisting along the way as we share Jesus in Michigan!

Sue Hodnett is Women's Ministry Director for BSCM and Executive Director for WMU, Michigan.

Christ-Care at Christmas

By Ed Emmerling

Flushing, MI - Christ-Care at Christmas has been a long time ministry of Westside Church in Flushing, MI. It began in the early 1990's and has grown into a partnership between six of local schools and Westside Church. Each year in November the school counselors begin to refer families that are struggling and may not have any presents for Christmas. Erv and Irene Willingham, the Christ-Care Coordinators, shop all year, buying sale items and stockpiling them for Christmas time.

In early December, the church's entire children's area is turned into a department store. We have a boys department, girls department, along with teen and adult clothing rooms, as well as a large toy room. Appointments are made for each family to meet with volunteers from the church and take them through the store shopping. After they get all the clothes and toys

picked out, they go into the wrapping room where several more volunteers assist with wrapping the presents and taking them to their cars.

Pastor of Westside Church, Ed Emmerling says, "It is such a blessing to see the look on peoples faces and how empowered they feel as they get to pick out the presents their kids will receive." Volunteers share how blessed they are to participate in this ministry, and they come back year after year. Emerling adds, "The goal when we started this ministry is still the same today: We want people to feel the love of Christ as we celebrate together the birth of the One who was born to die for their sins and ours."

Over the years Westside has helped more than 1,500 families and each year they share the love of God, and the hope of the Gospel, in a tangible way through the Christ-Care at Christmas ministry that God has led, provided for, and blessed.

Ed Emmerling has been the Pastor of Westside Church since 2002 which was started by his grandfather in 1955, and is the church he attended from nursery to adulthood. He pursues his personal mission statement which says, "Using my strength of casting vision and inspiring others I will be a part of a team in developing innovative and new ministries to impact people with the love of God and the Word of God to help them take their next step toward Christ."

New law to aid global religious liberty

by Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP) -- The United States government has new means to help protect Christians and other religious minorities around the world from persecution. President Obama signed into law Dec. 16 the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). The president's enactment of the legislation came only three days after Congress completed its approval of the bill without any opposition in either the Senate or House of Representatives. See related report.

The new law -- supported by a diverse coalition of non-government organizations -- amends the original IRFA passed in 1998 by updating some of the measure's provisions in an effort to make the federal government's promotion of global religious freedom more effective. Southern Baptists were among those who applauded enactment of the legislation. "The bipartisan nature of this passage shows us that religious freedom does not have to be a partisan issue but is rooted in our deepest commitments as Americans, and I hope that persecuted religious minorities around the globe will see that they have not been forgotten," said Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), in a written statement.

"While the passage of this act by no means solves the religious freedom crisis around the world, it is a step in the right direction," Moore said. Sen. James Lankford, R.-Okla., a member of a Southern Baptist church in Oklahoma City, expressed his appreciation for the president's

action. "Religious freedom is more than an American right; it is a human right," Lankford said in a written release. "As a world leader for freedom and the protection of basic human rights, the United States should take every opportunity to advocate for people to think, believe, and act according to their religious belief, whether they belong to a minority or majority religion."

The new version of IRFA includes the following provisions intended to strengthen the U.S. promotion of freedom for all religious adherents:

- It requires the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom to be able to report directly to the secretary of State;
- It institutes an "entities of particular concern" category -- a companion to the "countries of particular concern" classification used for nearly 20 years by the State Department -- for non-government actors, such as the Islamic State (ISIS) and the Nigerian terrorist organization Boko Haram.
- It establishes a "designated persons list" for individuals who violate religious freedom and authorizes the president to issue sanctions against those who participate in persecution.

The new law -- signed by Obama without comment with nearly 50 other bills the same day -- also creates a list of overseas religious prisoners, mandates religious liberty training for all Foreign Service officers and calls for a minimum number of full-time staff members in the State Department's international religious freedom office. The original IRFA established a religious freedom office in the State Department to be headed by an ambassador-at-large. It also created an independent watchdog panel, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Wolf, the since-retired congressman from Virginia who long championed global religious liberty, sponsored IRFA 18 years ago.

In its annual report in May, USCIRF said global religious liberty continued to decline in the previous year. The commission cited the rampant imprisonment of prisoners of conscience, the startling increase in refugees and the ongoing bigotry toward Jews and Muslims in Europe as examples of attacks on religious adherents. This year, violent religious persecution has been reported in such countries as Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria and Syria. The State Department named its "countries of particular concern" (CPCs) in April, adding Tajikistan to a list that already consisted of Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The CPC designation is reserved for governments that commit or tolerate "systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom."

USCIRF -- a bipartisan, nine-member panel appointed by the president and congressional leaders -- urged the State Department a month later to add the Central African Republic, Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria and Vietnam to the CPC list. The Southern Baptist Convention has adopted numerous resolutions calling for religious freedom overseas, and the ERLC has backed IRFA throughout the legislation's history. The SBC approved its latest resolution on international religious freedom in 2015, saying it encourages U.S. government

officials "to elevate religious liberty concerns to the highest priority in foreign policy, invoking sanctions against those nations which advocate or tolerate persecution of those with differing religious beliefs."

Tom Strode is Washington bureau chief for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

SENDING

25 Years of Michigan Disaster Relief Ministry

By Win Williams

Fenton, MI - 25 YEARS!! 1992-2017 It is amazing how time goes by so fast. I am told that years ago a group of volunteers from Michigan Baptist churches would go to Ohio to help serve in a time of disaster. I guess when the Lord calls, you will work with anyone! (Go Blue). In 1992, Michigan Baptist Men invited Bob Dixon from Texas to come and speak at a Winter Men's Retreat at Bambi about disaster relief and how to get a chapter started. Bob Dixon is one of the 6 men from Texas who is credited with starting Southern Baptist Disaster Relief 50 years ago.

From that meeting Michigan Disaster Relief was officially organized. Fred Kinsey, a layman from Monroe, was appointed as the first state disaster relief director. I have enjoyed talking with Fred about the challenges and blessings he and his wife Rose had together in disaster relief. They learned to use whatever they had, and prayed to the Lord for whatever they needed. Their willingness to go any where in the state to train volunteers and sometimes only for one person. Fred had no budget to speak of or salary, expenses many times were paid by Fred and the other volunteers. Tears would build up in Fred's eyes as he would share with me about the old equipment someone donated to DR, and how they sold it and raised money to buy the first feeding unit. We still have that feeding unit today. Fred said many times when they needed something for DR the men would chip in their own money to buy what they needed. Let me say, "Thank you Michigan Southern Baptists for your giving to the Francis Brown State Missions Offering and your special gifts throughout the year. In fact, while I am writing this article I was notified of a gift of \$500.00 from one of our local churches. Thank You Jesus!

The Lord used Fred in disaster relief work to minister in His name to people across the state of Michigan and across the country. Fred worked with the National Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief as a liaison person to the American Red Cross in Washington DC, retired as Michigan State DR Director in 2005, and became a volunteer with the American Red Cross full time. My job is easier today because of the groundwork he laid.

In 2005, Rev. Stacy Britt of the Jackson area, was appointed as State Director. It was under Stacy's leadership I had my first mud out unit experience in Boston, Ma. It was one of those trips where if something was going to go wrong, it did. We had car trouble on the way, spent 24 hours on the road, and we had car trouble while in Boston. I still felt blessed and enjoyed the fellowship with other volunteers while sharing Christ love with the people we helped.

In the 4 years before I became State Director, I was asked several times to serve as a blue hat leader and I refused. I was retired and just wanted to do whatever other volunteers did not want to do. I loved doing dishes at DR, but not at home. My wife won't let me use a power wash machine in the house for the pots and pans. In March of 2007, Dr. Michael Collins, our state executive, ask me to serve as state director. I won't go into the detail, but after 3 or 4 days of thinking and praying about it, I said. "Yes." It was not the knowledge about DR work or its organization, for I had only gone on 4 trips. It was the love I have for DR volunteers, and the ministry we do together to bring help, hope, and healing to a hurting community.

I said, I would do it only if I had Dr. Collins full support, which I had, and only if the focus was only about Him, and not about us and what color of hats we wore. Dr. Collins said, "Okay, and you have a National DR meeting in Shocco Springs, Ala. in April and a Homeland Security meeting in Grand Rapids in May." It has been a blessed time of learning.

Michigan Disaster Relief has grown in the past 25 years from its humble beginning of working with Ohio and nine volunteers to more than 400 trained volunteers. I wish we had kept better records of how many souls have been won to the Lord from the DR ministry. The wonderful thing is the Lord keeps good records because once their name is entered He never removes them. We have 2 feeding units, 2 chain saw units, 2 mud out units, 1 utility trailer, 2 luggage trailers, a 12 passenger van, a portable water purification unit, a shower/laundry unit, and this past June, we were given a 40' MCI bus by the Missouri DR to build a command unit. God has given us what we need when we needed it. Michigan DR has truly been blessed.

Our hopes for 2017 is to build a new garage next to the state office so our equipment can be protected and safe. It will also allow us to maintain the equipment better. Presently, our equipment is at 4 different churches and in the past 9 years we have had 2 trailers stolen.

Michigan DR is strong and well respected in our state by our partners in Michigan Volunteers Active in Disasters(MiVOAD) like the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, World Renew and others. Michigan DR is now on several local government disaster relief action plans, such as Warren, Battle Creek, Grand Rapids and others. From this respect and awareness comes responsibilities. Are we still ready to do what God has put before us as Michigan Southern Baptist?

I will be sending new information about the development and financing of the new garage in an upcoming Baptist Beacon. If you have any ideas about the new garage, and how we can raise the money please email me at dr@bscm.org. Also, as the plans for the 25th anniversary is finalized we will share it with you in the Beacon. If you would like to share any ideas you may do so at dr@bscm.org.

As we remember our history with fondness and marvel at the results, let each one of us with a grateful heart look to the future with joy and expectation as we claim what God has promised us.

Happy 25th Anniversary Michigan Southern Baptist Disaster Relief!!
Happy 50th Anniversary National Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief!!
REMEMBER, "IT'S ALL ABOUT HIM!!!"

Win Williams lives in Brighton, MI, has been married to Carolyn for 52 years, father of Christa McGuire, and has four grandsons. Win is a deacon of FBC in Brighton and has been involved in Michigan Baptist since 1961.

Kelley to grads: God's promise changes everything

by Marilyn Stewart

NEW ORLEANS (BP) -- New Orleans Baptist Theological President Chuck Kelley reminded graduates at their Dec. 17 graduation that though trials come and the future may be uncertain, "knowing the end of the story" changes everything. Kelley compared God's promise that one day all wrongs will be set right -- the end of the story -- to finding an overlooked gift under the Christmas tree. "No one goes through life unscathed," Kelley said, noting that difficulties come to every life. "That's what makes the most overlooked gift so important."

Deep tragedy marked the life of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Kelley recounted, and suffering touched Longfellow's life one Christmas during the Civil War when he learned his son, a Union soldier, had been severely wounded. Longfellow penned the poem "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" as he despaired that the message of "peace on earth" as sounded by church bells would never come, Kelley said. Kelley told graduates that Longfellow's poem didn't end on heartache but moved to confidence that God would have the final word as he penned: "The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail, with peace on earth, good-will to men."

"It doesn't matter what life looks like today," Kelley said. "It doesn't matter what life looks like tomorrow ... how many tears you cry or how helpless you feel, in Christ you have the end of the story." Challenging graduates to carry that message of hope to others wherever they go, Kelley reminded listeners to "unwrap" God's promise "every chance you get."

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary conferred 89 masters degrees and 23 doctoral degrees including 7 Ph.D.s, 12 D.Min., 3 D.Ed.Min., and 1 doctor of musical arts degrees. Forty-four M.Div. degrees, 18 with specializations, were conferred. New Orleans Seminary's Leavell College granted 54 bachelor degrees, including the bachelor of arts in Christian ministry degrees to 24 Louisiana State Penitentiary inmates at Angola, La. and to one inmate at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women.

The Lockman Foundation presented each graduate and awardee with a copy of the New American Standard Bible.

Marilyn Stewart is assistant director of public relations at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

BSCM Resources Expressly For You

By Staff

Fenton, MI - The staff of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) is finalizing plans for a number of amazing resources coming in 2017. There will be some incredible speakers, teachers and preachers coming to Michigan, each with a specific focus - informing, educating, encouraging and leading the churches of the BSCM.

Men's Retreat - January 13-15 at Bambi Lake where Jimmy Jones, Jim Palmer and our very own, Tim Patterson will be leading men in a time of fellowship, worship and bringing the Word. What better place for a bunch of guys to be gathered than a wooded retreat in January. Bring along a busload of your men.

Women's Missions Retreat "By All Means" - February 17-19 will be led by Cindy Bradley along with resident missionaries Bill and Cindy Haas. Encourage the women of your church to make plans and join us at Bambi Lake for a time of interactive missions, Bible study, worship and fellowship. Registration is now open.

Every Believer A Witness with Dennis Dunn will be offered twice. February 27-28 at Riverwalk Baptist Church in Bay City and again March 2 at Southfield Road Baptist Church in Allen Park. Select a Friday evening and Saturday morning or the one day March second all day instruction. We should see every believer reaches a comfort level with sharing their faith and punching holes in the darkness.

Men's Retreat - On March 10-12 we will be hosting Evangelist and TV personality, Chuck McAlister, for a Wild Game Dinner plus a jam-packed weekend with men from across the state. Let your men know and make plans now to be with us at Bambi Lake. Registration is open.

Expository Preaching Conference with Dr. Paige Patterson and Dr. David Allen will be an amazing opportunity to sit at the feet of, not one, but two great preachers of our day. March 24-25 at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Roseville, MI will be an excellent opportunity to learn from, ask questions of, and gather insight into expository preaching in today's church.

Whether you've been preaching for decades or recently started a church there is much to gained from this experience.

Evangelism Conference - May 6 at Grace Church in Jackson, MI will be another opportunity to immerse yourself and your people in evangelism training. If we are to truly live out our faith as Christ Followers we must know how to effectively share the Good News. BSCM is offering yet another means of learning and growing the local church in such ways. Registration is open and you are invited.

These are just a few of the scheduled resources available to you in the first half of 2017. Check out register@bscm.org for further details and/or contact us if we can help in anyway. BSCM Office: (810) 714-1907 and www.bscm.org

GuideStone reflects on year, gives thanks

by Roy Hayhurst

DALLAS (BP) -- O.S. Hawkins declared 2016 as the "Year of Influence," for GuideStone Financial Resources. He noted 2 Corinthians 10:13, which says, "But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you." Each year, the entity's president chooses a passage and theme to guide the ministry's work.

GuideStone seeks to use its influence, Hawkins said, as an advocate for pastors and other ministry workers and investors it serves. Noting that people and organizations of influence possess vision, integrity and purpose, the GuideStone team sought to live those three characteristics throughout the year.

Church retirement plan clarification law

GuideStone began making available updates to church plans thanks to church retirement plan clarification language passed in 2015. Provisions of the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act -- the PATH Act -- were meant to help clarify the purpose of church retirement plans, like those offered by GuideStone. It allowed church plans to include automatic enrollment features in their retirement programs regardless of state wage withholding laws, as well as allow for certain kinds of transfers and mergers between accounts of the same employers. Additionally, provisions addressing counting employees for benefit purposes among certain church-related employers help distinguish between different kinds of church and denominational governance structures.

The legislation -- long sought by a broad coalition of large and historic denominational retirement plan providers -- took three Congresses to consider before being tacked onto the PATH Act in December 2015. President Barack Obama signed the bill into law on December 18. "This bill was a long-awaited and hard-fought bill to pass," said O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources. "We appreciate all who made this bill a reality."

Additionally, GuideStone has been at the forefront of litigation concerning the rights of religiously affiliated groups to use church health plans, filing amicus briefs as part of an

established alliance of large and historic denominational pension plans. Earlier this month, litigation in which GuideStone has supported the plaintiff's' position made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Though the cases will not impact GuideStone or its participants, the cases are important as GuideStone seeks to limit government interference in religious matters.

<http://www.bpnews.net/46254/church-retirement-plans-aided-by-2015-legislation>

<http://bpnews.net/48020/hospitals-religious-liberty-and-the-supreme-court>

Training and education for church, ministry leaders

In March, GuideStone played host to the Southern Baptist Business Officers Conference (SBBOC), where more than 100 business officers from Southern Baptist churches, organizations, conventions, foundations and educational institutions came to learn the latest in tax, human resources, retirement plan and insurance rules, regulations and legislation from GuideStone and industry experts. The SBBOC meeting will be combined with another GuideStone meeting, the Benefits Forum, and will take on a new form in 2017. The Employee Benefits Summit presented by GuideStone, March 27–29, 2017, will provide an expanded menu of networking and training opportunities. More information can be found by visiting EmployeeBenefitsSummit.com.

Contraceptive mandate before U.S. Supreme Court

On March 23, lawyers for GuideStone and other plaintiffs argued its litigation against the contraceptive mandate issued under the Affordable Care Act before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court issued a unanimous opinion May 16 ordering the government to work out a solution in the contraceptive mandate cases that would protect the religious beliefs of objecting religious organizations. This decision included GuideStone and the ministries it serves.

The Court vacated the lower court decision that had gone against the religious organizations and ruled that the government cannot fine the ministries as the cases proceed. No new proposed regulations have been issued out of the ruling. The mandate would have required certain ministries served by GuideStone to provide abortion-causing drugs or devices as part of their health plan or face crippling penalties. Churches and integrated auxiliaries of churches are exempt from the mandate and its penalties.

<http://bpnews.net/46869/abortion-mandate-cases-returned-to-lower-courts>

Expectancy for 2017

The new year will have new changes -- a new president inaugurated January 20 will mean changes in the regulatory environment in Washington. Regardless of health care reform legislation, the high cost of healthcare will continue to be a struggle for insurers and providers alike. "Whatever changes come down in 2017, we will continue foremost to keep our focus on the Lord and honoring Him as Asaph said of King David, 'with the integrity of our heart and the

skillfulness of our hands," Hawkins said. "Our commitment to serve our participants, whether they are the dear soldiers of the cross and their widows through Mission:Dignity, our

retirement and insurance plan participants, our churches and ministries in property and casualty and our investors, is unwavering."

Roy Hayhurst is director of denominational and public relations services for GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Mich. Baptists increase CP allocation to SBC

by BP Staff

BURTON, Mich. (BP) -- Michigan Baptists will forward a larger percentage of Cooperative Program receipts to the Southern Baptist Convention this year, despite an anticipated decrease in CP receipts from the state's 262 churches. The \$1,292,886 in CP funds the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) anticipates receiving from its cooperating churches in 2017 is 8.6 percent less than this year's receipts of \$1,415,291, the BSCM reported. Yet, the state will forward \$351,256 of 2016 CP receipts, 32.5 percent of the total, to the SBC for national and international causes. In 2016, the state forwarded 31.5 percent of CP receipts to the SBC.

The state's total 2017 budget is also down from the 2016, with the new budget of \$2,057,873 totaling 6.5 percent less than the 2016 budget of \$2,201,778. The 2017 budget allocates 20 percent, or \$212,098, to cover expenses shared by the BSCM and the SBC.

"Celebrating Missions" was the theme as 167 messengers and 14 guests gathered Nov. 4-5 at Eastgate Baptist Church in Burton. Those in attendance represented 68 of the state's 262 churches and all 14 of its associations. North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell was the keynote speaker during the meeting. At the preceding pastors' conference Nov. 3 at Eastgate Baptist Church, former SBC President Fred Luter was the keynote speaker.

In other annual meeting business, messengers elected 2017 officers. They are president Jerome Taylor, host pastor; first vice president Nathaniel Bishop Sr., pastor of Middlebelt Baptist Church, Inkster; second vice president Scott Blanchard, pastor of Lakepointe Church, Macomb; recording secretary Roy Henry, pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Battle Creek; and assistant recording Secretary Jeff Buchholz, pastor of Merriman Road Baptist Church, Garden City.

The 2017 annual meeting is set for Nov. 7-8 at the Bambi Lake Baptist Retreat and Conference Center in Roscommon.

Compiled by BP general assignment writer/editor Diana Chandler, based on reports from the Baptist General Convention of Michigan.

Moore clarifies comments on Trump supporters

by David Roach

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission President Russell Moore has clarified that he never intended to criticize all evangelical supporters of President-elect Donald Trump, noting many were motivated by "biblical convictions" and "voted their conscience." In a Monday (Dec. 19) blog post, Moore acknowledged "pointed conversations in my denominational family about the election" over the past month, "some of them ... directed at me."

"I remember one situation where I witnessed a handful of Christian political operatives excusing immorality and confusing the definition of the gospel," Moore wrote. "I was pointed in my criticisms, and felt like I ought to have been. But there were also pastors and friends who told me when they read my comments they thought I was criticizing anyone who voted for Donald Trump. "I told them then, and I would tell anyone now: if that's what you heard me say, that was not at all my intention, and I apologize. There's a massive difference between someone who enthusiastically excused immorality and someone who felt conflicted, weighed the options based on biblical convictions, and voted their conscience," Moore wrote.

Moore's blog post was published the same day as a Wall Street Journal article about the ERLC president with the headline "Baptist figure faces backlash over his criticism of Donald Trump." Moore has voiced criticism of Trump's candidacy since at least September 2015. The Journal, to whom Moore provided an advance copy of his blog post, included critiques of Moore by former Southern Baptist Convention President Jack Graham, Louisiana Baptist Convention executive director David Hankins and former SBC Executive Committee chairman William Harrell among others.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. and evangelical voter Ruth Malhotra, a Millennial Republican who opposed Trump, expressed support for Moore to The Journal. ERLC trustee chairman Ken Barbic told Baptist Press Moore "is a Gospel centered and faithful voice for Southern Baptists." "He speaks with prophetic clarity to the pressing cultural and ethical issues of our time, with which every Christian must wrestle," Barbic, a member of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, said in an email. "I am particularly grateful for his courageous and convictional leadership, under which I've observed within our convention and beyond, significant newfound energy and excitement about the work of the ERLC the last several years. I have had the privilege of seeing up close the remarkable efforts he leads the ERLC to undertake here in Washington, across this country and abroad, all of which make me thankful for his leadership within the Southern Baptist Convention."

In the Journal article, Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, and a member of Trump's Evangelical Executive Advisory Board, cited Moore's criticism of Trump

during the presidential campaign for alleged "disrespectfulness towards Southern Baptists and other evangelical leaders, past and present." "It's disheartening that this election has created this kind of divisiveness," Graham said, adding Prestonwood is "considering making major changes in our support of the Southern Baptist Convention," presumably a reference to designating financial gifts to specific SBC causes rather than giving through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified channel of supporting missions and ministries in America and worldwide, including the ERLC.

Hankins told The Journal he knows of churches that "have said they are going to" divert their giving away from the ERLC. Messengers to this year's Louisiana Baptist Convention annual meeting referred to the convention's Executive Board a motion regarding concerns with the ERLC. Harrell, EC chair from 2006-08, made a similar assertion about churches' potentially withholding funds from the ERLC in a Nov. 15 blog post, stating the ERLC "was never meant to be a political voice which would promote a certain candidate or ... discourage people from voting for another one."

As examples of allegedly inappropriate statements by Moore, Harrell, a retired Georgia pastor, cited a Sept. 2015 New York Times op-ed, in which Moore argued "evangelicals and other social conservatives" must "repudiate everything they believe" to support Trump, and a Jan. 2016 Roll Call article that quoted Moore as stating, "Ted Cruz is leading in the 'Jerry Falwell' wing of evangelicalism, Marco Rubio is leading the 'Billy Graham' wing and Trump is leading the 'Jimmy Swaggart' wing." Former Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee wrote in an email obtained by Townhall.com, "I am utterly stunned that Russell Moore is being paid by Southern Baptists to insult them."

In support of Moore, Mohler told The Journal in an email, "I know his heart and his character and his love for the Southern Baptist Convention. I also have confidence in his ability to serve all Southern Baptists as president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission." Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Provost Jason Duesing and former SBC president Bryant Wright have expressed similar sentiments. Duesing wrote in a Nov. 8 blog post that Moore and the ERLC staff fulfilled their ministry assignment well during the presidential election season. "While no leadership team of the convention's public policy arm, past or present," Duesing wrote, "can carry out this task with perfection or to the full approval of every member of the churches they serve -- nor should they be held to that unassailable expectation -- it is always right to express thanks to them and for them for their service, courage, and efforts. Particularly, that is true during this election year."

Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., tweeted May 9 following criticism of Moore by Trump, "Coming from Trump, this is a badge of honor. Thankful for Russell Moore's leadership." In May, Trump mentioned Moore by name when he tweeted, "Russell Moore is truly a terrible representative of Evangelicals and all of the good they stand for. A nasty guy with no heart!" to which Moore responded on MSNBC, "I am a nasty guy with

no heart, which is why I need forgiveness of sins and redemption through the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The Journal quoted Malhotra, a 32-year-old Baptist, as illustrative of the "younger evangelicals" who allegedly support Moore and "who are becoming more diverse and appear to be turned off by the culture wars of their parents' generation." Moore seemed to reference that supposed generational divide in an Oct. 9 op-ed for The Washington Post, in which he stated, "The evangelical old-guard is easier to engage in politics, because they find identity in a 'silent majority' of Americans. The next generation knows that our witness is counter to the culture."

Moore called "reaffirmation of support for Trump" by members of "the old-guard Religious Right establishment" "a scandal and a disgrace" but "not ... a surprise." His op-ed followed reports of "sexually predatory recorded comments" made by Trump. In his Dec. 19 blog post, Moore clarified that "many Christians, including some of my very best friends and closest ministry partners approached the ballot box conflicted but felt compelled to cast a ballot for the 'lesser of two evils,' hoping for the best with a less than ideal president."

Moore added, "We all owe it to our brothers and sisters in Christ to understand their convictions and be slow to judgment when biblical motivations are the primary motivators. In the heat of an extraordinarily divisive campaign, that is something all of us, myself included, are wise to remember."

Here is the link to Russell Moore's blog post of December 19, 2016.

<http://www.russellmoore.com/2016/12/19/election-thoughts-christmastime/>

David Roach is chief national correspondent for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

SANCTITY OF LIFE: 30 years of offering hope

By Anthony L. Jordan

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) -- What a contrast! Oklahoma Baptists have celebrated the 30th anniversary of its first Crisis Pregnancy Center (now called Hope Pregnancy Center). At the same time, abortionists are rejoicing at the opening of the first new abortion clinic in Oklahoma in 40 years.

One organization -- Hope Pregnancy Center, now with five locations in the state -- has spent three decades serving women facing a crisis pregnancy and saving the unborn child from certain death. Now, we have a new abortion death chamber dedicated to destroying the unborn child. One organization celebrates life, while the other celebrates death. The Trust

Women South Wind Women's Clinic opened for business in September. According to The Oklahoman daily newspaper, CEO Julie Burkhart described the clinic as committed to address the lack of reproductive health care in Oklahoma.

Interesting choice of words. There is nothing reproductive about abortion -- it is anti-reproductive as an unborn child is eliminated with every abortion. While the clinic physicians will address other health issues for women, there is little doubt abortion is a central focus of their practice. Indeed, Burkhart proclaimed the clinic expects to perform 1,500 abortions the first year, with an expected level of 3,000 abortions to be reached each year. Let that soak in a minute. Every abortion kills an unborn child! Every abortion means money for the clinic.

Let me put that number in perspective. From 2002-2015, Oklahoma averaged 5,646 abortions per year. After a peak of 6,807 abortions in 2006, the number dropped to a record low of 4,330 in 2015. Contrast abortion clinics with the Hope Pregnancy Centers. In 1986, God allowed me to lead a small group of pastors and churches to open the first Oklahoma Baptist Crisis Pregnancy Center in Oklahoma City; another center was opened in Tulsa. Oklahoma Baptists opened the centers to provide love and care for women faced with "unwanted" pregnancies. Rather than going to abortion clinics and shouting at the women who made their way to destroy their unborn children, Oklahoma Baptists determined to provide a loving alternative. Rather than charge for services, we would provide counsel, love, support and extended involvement with women facing crisis pregnancies.

Over these last 30 years, the number of Hope Pregnancy Centers has increased to five. Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children operates these centers. The ministry of these centers cannot be put in mere numbers, but the numbers do provide a picture worth seeing. From 1986-2015, these centers of Christ's love had 130,139 client visits. During these visits, each client was given a pregnancy test, factual information about the baby she was carrying and options beyond abortion. While we cannot absolutely know for sure the number of children saved through these centers, we do know of 9,807 children who were given life instead of death through this ministry. Since the inclusion of the ultrasound, the percent of clients choosing life over death for their unborn child is an amazing 96 percent.

These centers are not only vitally involved in saving the lives of the unborn, but they also are committed to sharing with the mother the Good News about abundant life through Jesus. These centers have recorded 1,929 professions of faith by clients over these last 30 years. To God be the glory!

Yes, there is a huge contrast between the Trust Women South Wind Women's Clinic and Hope Pregnancy Centers. One receives payment to destroy unborn children while the other gives

freely to help pregnant mothers choose life. Oklahoma Baptists are people of life, and the life of every unborn child is precious to us. We give and serve because unborn children are precious to God.

Anthony L. Jordan is executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. This article first appeared in the Baptist Messenger (www.baptistmessenger.com), the convention's newsjournal.

Trump's EPA pick called 'magnificent Christian leader'

by David Roach

WASHINGTON (BP) -- Oklahoma attorney general Scott Pruitt, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to lead the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has drawn praise from Southern Baptists despite charges by secular media outlets, environmentalists and theologically liberal clergy that his leadership could harm the environment.

"Scott Pruitt is one of the finest, a committed follower of Christ and Oklahoma Baptist," Anthony Jordan, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, told the BGCO's Baptist Messenger newsjournal. "He has been a great attorney general and will be terrific at the EPA." Pruitt, a deacon at First Baptist Church in Broken Arrow, Okla., was announced as Trump's selection for EPA administrator Dec. 7.

That same day, The New York Times published a news article calling Pruitt a "climate change denialist" and noting his participation in a 28-state lawsuit challenging some of the Obama administration's carbon-emission regulations. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., vowed to "vigorously oppose this nomination" while numerous media outlets published objections to Pruitt's nomination by environmentalists. A coalition of Massachusetts Episcopal bishops released an open letter to Trump Dec. 13 expressing "dismay" at his selection of Pruitt.

The Washington Post editorial board opposed Pruitt's confirmation Dec. 9 because he allegedly has a record of "rejecting or playing down the near-unanimous warnings of experts" on climate change. The Post took issue in particular with a May op-ed in the conservative publication National Review co-written by Pruitt and Alabama attorney general Luther Strange. In stating their opposition to a criminal investigation of oil and gas companies that "have disputed the science behind man-made global warming," Pruitt and Strange wrote that "healthy debate is the lifeblood of American democracy, and global warming has inspired one of the major policy debates of our time."

"That debate is far from settled," they stated. "Scientists continue to disagree about the degree and extent of global warming and its connection to the actions of mankind. That debate should be encouraged -- in classrooms, public forums and the halls of Congress. It should not be silenced with threats of prosecution. Dissent is not a crime."

Critics answered

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where Pruitt is a trustee, said The Washington Post's critique appears to stem from an ideological framework

that contradicts the Christian worldview. The Post's editorial board, Mohler said Dec. 13 in his podcast The Briefing, apparently regards the views of some contemporary scientists as "the ultimate authority not to be questioned." In reality, it is "an ideological framework to which they are committed ... advertised to the public as settled science."

Christians, in contrast, should be "committed to the truth," which is pursued through "the scientific method" among other means, Mohler said. He noted science often revises its conclusions from one generation to the next. Pruitt "does not deny that there is a human impact on the climate," Mohler said. "He doesn't deny what's called now the reality of global warming or of climate change. He says that the debate is not settled and the degree and the extent of global warming is not yet fully known." Pruitt's pastor, Nick Garland of First Baptist Broken Arrow, told Baptist Press Pruitt displays "a tremendous amount of Christian character" and has been "faithful in every way to the church."

As a public servant, Pruitt "obviously is a man who is a Christian," Garland said, yet he doesn't "operate with a bias based on his faith, but rather a clear-cut dedication to how this country was founded." Charges that Pruitt is "going to throw out" all environmental regulations are unfounded, Garland said. "Scott has always been concerned that we take care of the water and mineral resources that we have here in Oklahoma," Garland said. He has at times opposed specific environmental regulations "because he believes in constitutional law" and rejects "overreach" by the EPA "that would create problems for the local farmer or for the local oil industry."

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, told BP in a statement, "Scott Pruitt is a dear friend and a magnificent Christian leader. I've known and worked with him since the beginning of his time on the board at Southern Seminary. Since then we've worked together on numerous issues of religious freedom and liberty of conscience. He has always modeled integrity and excellence, and I look forward to seeing his leadership at the EPA."

Sen. James Lankford, an Oklahoma Republican and fellow Southern Baptist, said in a statement, "Pruitt has served Oklahoma as a tireless defender of justice and law, and I am confident that he will serve America well. "I look forward to working with him to restore a balanced approach to regulations and governance that fosters economic growth, advances energy independence and ensures stewardship for the environment. Scott Pruitt knows the difference between a state responsibility and a federal responsibility. The American people deserve an EPA that rejects extreme activism and instead returns to its proper interpretation of environmental law," Lankford said.

Pruitt's office declined an interview request by BP, stating an interview would violate presidential "transition protocol."

David Roach is chief national correspondent for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's news service. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

COLUMNS

2017 A New Year

By Tim Patterson

Fenton, MI - Well my friends, it's a new day and a new year. It's that time of year when we get a new calendar from the funeral home or our life insurance agent. Have you ever thought about that? One group depends on your death for their livelihood and the other depends on you staying alive, and both of them want you to count the days.

The New Year is a time for new beginnings and starting again fresh and new. Throughout the history of all mankind the New Year has been a time of second chances. A time where everyone can put the past where it belongs and forge ahead with renewed vision and hope. The New Year is the annual opportunity to do right when in the past we have done wrong. As a kid growing up in West Texas while playing certain games, one could ask for a "do over". The adult equivalent of that is the infamous "Mulligan" in golf. At one time or another, we all need a "do over, Mulligan or second chance," and the New Year provides just that.

It is a time to clean house and to get rid of the old, broken and burdensome stuff of life. Those inventive people, the Italians, have a custom. As midnight on New Year's Eve approaches, the streets are cleared. There is no traffic; there are no pedestrians; even the policemen take cover. Then, at the stroke of 12, the windows of the houses fly open. To the sound of laughter, music and fireworks, each member of the family pitches out old crockery, detested ornaments, hated furniture and a whole catalogue of personal possessions which remind them of something in the past year they are determined to wipe out of their minds.

Now I am not suggesting that we clutter the streets of our Michigan cities and towns with our physical junk, but it would be most beneficial if we would do some real spiritual house cleaning and get rid of all the junk that is cluttering our souls. Now is a great time to get quiet and ask the Father to show you the encumbering garbage in your life, and to confess it and give it the old spiritual "heave-ho." Were you deeply hurt this past year by someone or some event? Don't let that hurt continue to dominate your heart. The person may or may not have had evil intent, but one thing for sure, as long as you allow that pain to reside in the house of your heart, it will continue to crowd out the good and new that God has for you.

Did you make some big mistakes this past year? Did you, as we say around here, "step in stupid"? The cause or the source is really not the issue. The issue is to get clean and clutter free, and now is a great time to begin the holy, healing, and helpful process. Clean out every

nook and cranny, and don't forget to get under the bed and sink. Don't leave any rug unturned or any baseboard untouched. And all that past guilt and grime that has been weighing you down - chunk it!

The only caution I would give is that you make sure everyone is off the street and out of your line of fire. If you are like me, there could be plenty of debris for the dumping. I hope you have a Happy New Year and a really good house cleaning.

Helping Your Church Advance

By Tony Lynn

Let me introduce Will Mancini to you. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvOHhv4QWs>

Will Mancini says and writes, "Clarity changes everything." He also states, "The greatest secret for real church growth is unleashing the personal vision of your people." Our team of 6 church planting catalysts and I are reading and discussing Mancini's "out-of-the-box" approach to ministry.

Will Mancini earned a chemical engineering degree at Penn State and a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary. Those two seemingly opposing studies created a man who reflects on "process." I think that is what makes his discussions about ministry so interesting. He looks at ministry and its development differently than most.

Let me recommend 3 of Will Mancini's books and his website to you for these cold, short days of winter.

In *Church Unique*, Mancini explains that each church has its unique culture that reflects its particular values, thoughts, attitudes, and actions and shows how church leaders can unlock their church's individual DNA and unleash their congregation's one-of-a-kind potential. The framework is an easily teachable and transferable tool that helps you answer the five irreducible question of leadership:

- What are we ultimately doing? (mission)
- Why do we do it? (values)
- How do we do it? (strategy)
- When are we successful? (mission measures)
- Where is God taking us? (vision proper)

Innovating Discipleship provides a simple and powerful way to innovate your disciple-making strategy. The book helps you answer the question, "How do I want my church to be different in the next two years?" The book is built around a little formula, $1 + 2 + 4 + 16 = \infty$. The formula points to 1 whiteboard drawing, defined by 2 vision decisions, which

creates 4 pathways to the future. These 4 pathways are "walked" using 16 super questions that lead to limitless ministry innovation.

God Dreams by Mancini was published in 2016. The book's ultimate purpose is to add greater meaning and freedom in the busyness of church ministry. It does this by showing how to inspire others and focus your team around a specific, vivid picture of your church's next big dream. The most unique feature of this book is the 12 templates. Each template comes with biblical, historical and contemporary illustrations of dynamic vision. The templates are just one step in a guided process as you build your own visionary plan for your church.

After you have investigated Will Mancini's writings, his blog, or his materials, please feel free to contact me and let me know what you think. I strive to share resources that will create a movement forward for your church: Tony Lynn (734) 770-0608 or at tony@bscm.org

Strength for the Journey

By Mike Durbin

Fenton, MI - From time to time, God lays a passage of Scripture on my heart that becomes especially important for a season of ministry. I sensed that recently when I read the Apostle Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. In this powerful prayer, Paul asks God to strengthen believers. That's what you and I need individually, and it's what we need collectively as Michigan Baptists. We need strong believers in strong churches glorifying God and punching holes in the darkness together. I am inviting Michigan Baptists to join me in asking God to strengthen our churches.

The Apostle Paul is in prison for his faith in Christ as he prays these words. It's a remarkable scene. This man who has traveled to some of the greatest cities in the world to share the Gospel is now in prison because of that same Gospel. His world is reduced to the space between prison walls. Physically, he can only move a few feet in every direction, but on his knees, he prays a prayer that touches the heart of God for the people of God.

In my mind I see Paul as he kneels "before the Father" (verse 14). He is entering the presence of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The word "before" means "facing." The picture is of an intentional turning toward God. Paul focuses intently on God as he bends his knees in humble submission. His heart and mind are captured by the God who changed his life on the Damascus Road. His body is imprisoned, but Paul's reality is not going to be defined by the difficult circumstances around him, but by the Christ above him. Paul prays and the impact of that prayer reverberates in the church even today.

The ask of the prayer is verse 16: "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man...." Paul boldly asks God for believers to be "strengthened with power through his Spirit in their inmost being." The burning desire of Paul in these verses is not for his freedom. It would have been OK for

Paul to pray for release, but that's not his first concern. He prays for God's people to be strengthened. Isn't that amazing? His prayer isn't about him. It's about us. He asks God to make us strong in Christ.

Notice where this strength comes from. It comes from the riches of God's glory. Do you see the flow? It's from God to us. It comes to us according to the riches of his glory. That's good news because there is no limit to the riches of God's glory. Paul asked God to strengthen us, not out of our riches, but according to His riches. The universe, and all that it comprises,, cannot contain the riches of God's glory. Here is a deep, abiding, limitless source of strength, available to believers from the inexhaustible riches of God's glory. Paul prays for us to be strengthened with power through His spirit in the inner man according to those riches.

Now, that's a prayer! It's a bold, audacious, incredible prayer for the People of God! That's what you and I need as we follow Christ. So let's follow Paul's example and pray boldly in the year to come for God to strengthen Michigan Baptists. Let's pray that God strengthen us according to the riches of His glory. And let's watch as God does great and amazing things in and through His strengthened people.

CLASSIFIEDS

Firewood is needed throughout the winter months!: The Ministry of Life Challenge of Southeast Michigan, has an on-going need of Firewood donations. If you cannot deliver it, they will come and make the pick-up. This ministry provides "hope, healing, and help for people who struggle with Addiction. We are located at 17667 Pierson St., Detroit - 48219. Call us at (313) 531-0111 or (313) 461-7618 to coordinate delivery. Thank you in advance for your assistance, Rev. Nathaniel Bishop, Sr.

ABOUT THE BAPTIST BEACON

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

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