



Focusing on the Landscape... Across Utah and Idaho

This past week, I had the opportunity to listen to 17 of our Church Plant Network leaders from across our state convention. They are pastors, planters, church planter catalysts, and denominational missionaries. What a joy to hear reports of Utah-Idaho SBC churches assisting new churches that are being started across our region. It is exciting to hear of folks responding to the gospel and churches being strengthened. God is moving in hearts and he is using his churches that form the Utah-Idaho SBC to make disciples, strengthen disciples, and to multiply disciples! Since the first Baptist church of Idaho and of Utah started our churches have been multiplying themselves in new churches being started across our region.

Reading about the early days of Southern Baptist work across our region we see that starting churches, sharing Christ, and strengthening churches has always been at the heart of who we are. We are sharing the gospel in multiple languages and yet there are still many who have not had the opportunity to respond to Jesus' offer of salvation. We have communities that still don't have a gospel ministry or church and we have churches and members who need a helping hand at the task of making, maturing, and multiplying disciples. I thank the Lord for continuing to bring more laborers to our mission field and I praise the Lord for more laborers being raised and called in our mission field.

The task continues as our region sees unprecedented growth and companies started and moving in. During a recent conversation with one of our associate pastors, he told me that they are hearing that the Treasure Valley area will double in population between now and 2030. That amazes me and puts forth the challenge to see more churches started and all the existing churches strengthened to reach folks with the gospel. From our northern most point to our southern most point, our region is seeing new people moving into our area. There is no secret that Idaho and Utah are great places to raise a family and plant their lives.

UISBC Cooperative Program Giving Report

January/February 2019

Cooperative Program giving	
January	\$69,924.74
February	\$72,648.33
Cooperative Program budget	
	\$59,326.67
Over/Under CP budget	
January	+\$10,598.07
February	+\$13,321.66
State Missions Offering given	
January	\$3,984.75
February	\$5,831.92

January/February 2019

Cooperative Program giving	
	\$142,573.07
Cooperative Program budget	
	\$118,653.34
Over/Under CP budget	
	+\$23,919.73 (+20%)
State Missions Offering given	
	\$9,816.67
State Missions Offering 2019 Goal	
	\$95,000

Reaching the lost cont...

Jesus said to look into the harvest fields and to pray for laborers. Laborers who have a personal relationship with Jesus and have a task called the great commission. From the youngest to the oldest to the most mature in our churches, we are on mission with Jesus proclaiming the gospel to all.

Rob Lee

Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest. John 4:35b

U & I Praying Together

Pastorless Churches

Priest River Southern Baptist Church- Athol Baptist Church filling pulpit
Sevier Valley Baptist Church, Richfield, David Payne, Interim
Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Pocatello, William Beard, Interim
Pleasant View Baptist Church, White Bird, Dr. Russ Daines, Interim
First Baptist Church, Mt. Pleasant
First Baptist Church, Grantsville
Gospel Community Church, Price
Mountain Shadow Baptist Church, Grangeville, Matthew Claridge, Mount Idaho Baptist Church leading
Salt Lake Chinese Baptist Church
Stites Baptist Church

Prayer & Praises

- Pastor Nathan Simmons, FBC Centerfield- new treatment is working and cancer count lowering, pray for his anxiety.
- Ronnie Floyd, newly elected President of the SBC Executive Committee
- Pray for our pastorless churches and their interim pastors
- Praise- former Church Planter, Derek Jones, who started Lakeside Church in Syracuse, had heart surgery to clean out pacemaker infections and they were able to get last one out of his heart, pray for his recovering
- VBS training clinics across our two states
- Pastor Larry Kelley, FSBC Gooding, recovery from throat surgery and for church as Larry recovers the next two months
- Condolences to the Gardner family for Berniece going home to the Lord, wife of former State Missions Director Bruce Gardner
- Prayers for healing for Jan Harding, wife of retired Pastor and former Executive Director Jim Harding, as she goes through treatment.

Orphan Care Conference a Success!

A huge thank you to those who helped with an amazing Risen Life Orphan Care Conference! We had 70 people from churches all over the valley join us for the all-day conference to learn about God's heart for the orphan and all the different ways - adoption, foster care, volunteering, supporting adoptive families - that we as believers can help. The Lord SHOWED UP and blessed that day like crazy, down to every detail, and we are so thankful.

Our committee of seven people from three different churches have been meeting and planning this conference since fall 2018. Andrew & Kelsey Conroy, Michelle Erard, Jess Reeves, Jacquy Currie, Kiersten Ramierez, and Shannon Yessick (and their families!) are the reason this year's conference was better than ever. If you see them, give them a big thank you!

Thank you to Jared Jenkins for the keynote message, and Tina Pelton for keeping things running as moderator. Jill Wiggins helped moderate many of the speaker panels. David and Jackie Askvig, Doug and Jess Grennan, Brian and Jacquy Currie, Scott and Ja Morrison, and many families from other churches shared their stories of adoption, foster care, and orphan care.

The people behind-the-scenes who stepped up and made the planning and the day run smoothly, plus gave us a hand with setup on Thursday and Friday and cleanup (so we could be ready for church) - THANK YOU for all your hard work: Jonathon Marshall, Sam Riley, Denise Boertje, Tracy Harris, Christina Curtner, Lani Romaine, Scott & Ja Morrison, Danny Reeves, Leonard and Daniel from the LINK college group, Troy Lawson.

Please watch for the next opportunity to serve the orphan care ministry at Risen Life! We are so thankful for all RLC's support and encouragement of orphan care.

Kelsey Conroy

Local Happenings

- ◇ Idaho Baptist College invites you to Share the Vision on May 11, 2019 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Location is 7910 Meridian Road, Meridian, Idaho. Barbecue lunch will be provided. A gift to all church in attendance. For more information, call 208-573-7999 or 208-249-2109; email abcibc@hughes.net. Please RSVP.
- ◇ Calvary Baptist Church, Boise, is looking to hire two new part time staff members. The first is for a part-time Worship Leader. The second is for a Youth Director. All interested persons can apply by sending their information to Calvary Baptist Church, 911 S. Cole Road, Boise, Idaho, 83709, or by email to cbeboise@gmail.com. For complete job descriptions, please go to cbeboise.org.

LifeWay to focus on digital retail, close brick-and-mortar stores

By Carol Pipes

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—LifeWay Christian Resources is charting a new course in 2019 marking a strategic shift of resources to a dynamic digital strategy. As part of the transition, LifeWay will close its 170 brick-and-mortar stores in 2019.

The organization will continue to offer a broad selection of resources through LifeWay.com and the LifeWay Customer Service Center (1-800-458-2772). LifeWay Customer Service hours are Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Central). LifeWay will also continue to serve customers through its network of church partners who work directly with churches.

“LifeWay is fortunate to have a robust publishing, events and church services business. Our retail strategy for the future will be a greater focus on digital channels, which are experiencing strong growth,” said acting President and CEO Brad Waggoner. “LifeWay is moving into a new era with a strategic digital focus that will prepare us for the future and allow us to better serve our customers.”

In January LifeWay announced it would reduce the number of its retail locations due to declining customer traffic and sales. “While we had hoped to keep some stores open, current market projections show this is no longer a viable option,” Waggoner said.

“The decision to close our local stores is a difficult one,” Waggoner said. “LifeWay has developed close connections with the communities where our stores are located, and we have been honored to serve those communities. We will continue serving local congregations as they meet the spiritual needs of their neighbors.”

The timing of store closings will vary depending on local circumstances. LifeWay expects all brick-and-mortar stores to close by the end of the year.

In operation since 1891, LifeWay offers a comprehensive selection of Bibles, books, Scripture reference tools, Bible studies, children’s products, Christian music and movies, gifts and church supplies. Additional items including church signs, furnishings and buses, as well as background checks, electronic giving and other services are available through LifeWay’s OneSource program at LifeWay.com/OneSource. LifeWay also hosts a number of camps and events throughout the year for all age groups.

As part of the organization’s strategy, LifeWay has introduced a number of digital resources including online Bible studies, worship planning, live streaming of events and online training opportunities.

“LifeWay has been serving the church for 128 years, and we will continue to grow our ministry to churches and individuals into the future,” Waggoner said. “As the market continues to change, primarily through shifts in brick-and-mortar retail, we are taking steps to meet customer demand for digital shopping experiences and to expand our reach globally.” LifeWay distributes resources in 164 nations and licenses resources in more than 60 languages.

Like other retailers, over the last decade the organization has seen commerce increasingly move online, while experiencing overall growth in digital sales.

In one month, LifeWay interacts with five times as many

LifeWay cont. on page 4

Refinitiv Lipper Award for Best Overall Fund Family for 2019 goes to GuideStone Funds

By Roy Hayhurst

GuideStone Funds® was awarded the Lipper Fund Award from Refinitiv – formerly presented by Thomson Reuters – as the Best Overall Small Fund Family for 2019 on March 7. The entire GuideStone Funds family won the Lipper Fund Award for 2019 Best Overall Small Company over 3 years (out of 29 eligible as of November 30, 2018). Based on risk-adjusted total return. Of the 222 Small fund families, only 29 met the standards to be considered for the Best Overall Small Fund Family prestigious award – with up to 76.8 billion in assets under management. This marks the second time in less than a decade that GuideStone® was honored with this top award.

During a dinner Thursday night in New York, several members of the GuideStone leadership team, including chief strategic investment officer David S. Spika and GuideStone Funds chief investment officer Matt Peden, were on hand to accept this honor on GuideStone’s behalf.

“It is a tremendous honor to be recognized by the peers in our industry for this prestigious accolade: Performance plus values wins again,” GuideStone chief operating officer John R. Jones said. “We give thanks to the Lord, first and foremost, for His leadership of this ministry and then thanks to the hard-working employees at GuideStone and the managers we have assembled to invest on behalf of our participants.”

GuideStone president O.S. Hawkins echoed those sentiments.

“What this truly comes down to for us is the matter of stewardship,” Hawkins said. “As a ministry organization, GuideStone believes every good and perfect gift comes from the Lord Himself. As the parable of the talents clearly



GuideStone cont. on page 4

Ronnie Floyd elected SBC EC president/CEO

By Diana Chandler

DALLAS (BP) -- Ronnie Floyd is the new president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, elected today (April 2) by ballot vote in a called meeting in Dallas.

Floyd received 68 of 69 votes cast, the EC said, electing Floyd in an executive session of nearly four hours.

A former SBC president, Floyd will resign April 7 from the longtime pastorate of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas and begin his EC leadership immediately, he said in acceptance remarks.

"We're going to come and we're going to reach the world with all we have and call this convention up to a level that we all need to go to," Floyd told the EC. "Please pray for us."

The strong vote in Floyd's favor, he said, followed his prayer that the Lord would clearly declare His call for Floyd to serve in the new post.

SBC President J.D. Greear affirmed Floyd's election in comments to Baptist Press.

"This is a crucial moment for Southern Baptists, and I am excited to work



Ronnie Floyd is the newly elected president of the SBC Executive Committee. Photo by Adam Covington

alongside Ronnie Floyd as he leads the Executive Committee forward," Greear told BP. "Pastor Ronnie has had a lifetime of leading in the kinds of evangelism and sending we are promoting in the Who's Your One? and Go2 initiatives, both on the local church and national convention levels.

"He is a man of prayer and a man of action; a man of prudence and man of boldness," said Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area. "He is a gifted leader who I

believe will keep the Gospel above all."

Floyd alerted his congregation March 31 to the possibility of his election.

"As an ambassador for Christ, the Gospel and our Southern Baptist Convention," Floyd said in a video now posted on YouTube, "this role provides influence for the Lord and His Gospel message in all kinds of ways and in all kinds of places, nationally and globally."

"The thought of parting from you has been gut-wrenching for Jeana and me. Words cannot describe it," Floyd told his congregation. "The sense of loss is undeniable. But the sense of calling at this point is greater."

Floyd's election came on the same day as the release of the 20th anniversary edition of his book, "How To Pray," copies of which he presented to EC members and staff. The limited edition new release has five new chapters and is more than 90 percent rewritten from its original 1999 edition.

Floyd, married to Jeana 42 years, is widely endorsed by Southern Baptist leaders including entity presidents, state convention executives, a diversity of pastors and others as well as the Woman's Missionary Union.

"Impeccable integrity," "visionary leader,"

Floyd cont. on page 5

LifeWay cont...

people through its digital environments as it does through LifeWay stores.

"Our world and our customers are increasingly online," Waggoner said, "Investing in a dynamic digital strategy allows LifeWay to better serve the Church in its mission and only enhances our ability to provide biblical solutions for life."

More information about store closings is available at LifeWay.com/StoreFAQs.

Carol Pipes is director of corporate communications for LifeWay Christian Resources.

GuideStone cont...

communicates, we are called to be stewards — managers — of the resources with which we're entrusted.

"This Lipper Fund Award helps demonstrate — in the accounting we are called to give — that our team is following a proven process that benefits pastors, missionaries, hospital employees and college and university faculty, plus thousands of individual investors."

Spika, a frequent guest on CNBC and Fox Business, said the award speaks to the professional respect that GuideStone has assembled over its relatively short history as a fund family — the GuideStone Funds complex was first launched as a registered mutual fund company on August 27, 2001.

"We founded our mutual fund family in 2001 on the belief that we could achieve competitive investor outcomes while at the same time aligning our portfolios with Christian principles. This recognition highlights our belief that investors can invest according to their values without sacrificing performance," states David Spika, president of Guidestone Capital Management.

For more than three decades, the Lipper Fund Awards have evaluated mutual funds and fund management firms that have provided consistently strong risk-adjusted performance relative to their peers. Their methodology reviews fund performance based on three-, five- and 10-year periods. The award program is regarded as one of the most prestigious in the financial services industry.

Floyd cont...

"prayer warrior" and "a role model in the pursuit of inclusiveness" are traits noted among endorsements offered in advance of the vote.

EC Chairman Mike Stone led the EC in concerted prayers for Floyd, his family, the EC and the EC staff in the midst of transition.

"When we gather again at our next meeting it will be under the strong and capable leadership of our newly elected president and CEO," Stone said in calling the body to prayer.

Floyd is in his 33rd year as the pastor of Cross Church, which celebrates its sesquicentennial in 2020. Under Floyd's leadership, the multisite congregation has planted 148 churches and baptized more than 22,000 people, according to a [press kit](#) distributed by the SBC Executive Committee in advance of today's vote. Cross Church reached \$1 million in annual giving to the SBC Cooperative Program in 2015 and has since exceeded that amount annually.

Floyd has been active in various arenas of Southern Baptist life and interdenominational ministry. He has served as president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force since 2017 and is a member of the board of directors of the Family Research Council in Washington.

Floyd has 43 years of pastoral experience dating back to First Baptist Church in Cherokee, Texas, in 1976 and subsequently including congregations in Milford, Palacios and Nederland, Texas. He began leading Cross Church in 1986 when the congregation was known as First Baptist Church of Springdale, Ark., and expanded the ministry to include campuses in Pinnacle Hills, Rogers and Fayetteville as well as a campus in Neosho, Mo. Weekly Sunday attendance encompasses more than 9,000 people in 11 worship services across the various Cross Church campuses, according to the SBC Annual Church Profile.

Floyd is the author of more than 20 books and host and lead



Members of the SBC Executive Committee join in prayer for Ronnie and Jeana Floyd after his election April 2 as the EC's new president. Photo by Adam Covington

speaker of The Summit businesspersons' luncheon of northwest Arkansas, equipping more than 400 business leaders each week.

He was president of the SBC from 2014–2016, chaired the SBC Great Commission Task Force from 2009–2010, and chaired the SBC EC from 1995–1997.

Diana Chandler is Baptist Press' general assignment writer/ editor. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists' concerns nationally and globally.

Reprinted from Baptist Press (www.baptistpress.com), news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

BGR accepted as associate member of Sphere

NASHVILLE—Baptist Global Response (BGR) has been accepted as an associate member of Sphere, a community of organizations committed to the highest standards of humanitarian response.

BGR Director of Disaster Response and Training Pat Melancon says with its inclusion in Sphere, BGR “joins other international organizations in affirming the need for ‘knowing what to do’ in a time of crisis to meet the survival needs of people.”

BGR began training as a Sphere organization in 2016. Now, as a member, BGR can actively help Sphere implement its policies on improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian aid.

Sphere was founded in 1997 under the

conviction that people affected by disasters or conflict have the right to receive protection and assistance that ensures both quality of life and dignity. Sphere members created a set of minimum standards for humanitarian response in four areas: water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); food security and nutrition; shelter and settlement; and health.

According to Sphere's website, the Sphere standards are the most widely recognized humanitarian standards around the world.

Melancon says Sphere recognized BGR's commitment to upholding those standards in its response to disasters.

“Sphere wanted members who showed

commitment to the training and worked to spread the minimum standards to be used in humanitarian crises,” he says.

“The membership...is a huge validation to the many years of hard work and proven track record of BGR and our disaster response approaches,” says BGR CEO Jeff Palmer. “This makes us better in our disaster response, our ability to train, equip, and lead others in disaster events, and even more credible to countries and governments we work with during a disaster.”

For more information on Sphere, its humanitarian standards and members, visit www.spherestandards.org. For more information about BGR, visit www.gobgr.org.

BAPTIST GLOBAL RESPONSE LAUNCHES 3RD ANNUAL WELL DIG DARE

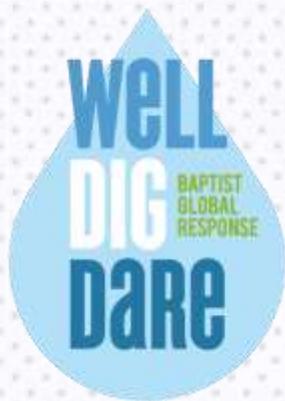
March 18, 2019, NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Baptist Global Response (BGR), a Southern Baptist humanitarian aid organization, is challenging Southern Baptists to take on its third annual Well Dig Dare. In 2018, BGR supporters raised over \$30,000, providing 30 wells for communities in need. In 2019 the organization's goal is increase once again and raise \$40,000 for 40 wells and water systems.

In conjunction with World Water Day, BGR launched the Well Dig Dare on March 22. Donors are challenged to raise \$1,000, which is about the cost of one well and will have until April 30th to reach their fundraising goal. This year, participants will have access to online resources where they can choose to make a donation or fundraise with others.

“Last year, generous friends of BGR provided over 800 total community water systems around the world. This gave clean water to almost 250,000 people!” says Jeff Palmer, BGR CEO. “About 30 of these wells came from partners who participated in the Well Dig Dare program. This year, we would like to provide 40 wells through our 2019 Well Dig Dare initiative. That will give clean water and the hope of living water to almost 8,000 people! It is always a wonderful experience to see a community turn on the faucet and have clean water right in their home community for the very first time! It is also a great way to demonstrate and share the love of Jesus.”

Participants can learn more about the dare and make their donations at gobgr.org/welldigdare. Here, they will also find resources to help promote the event online and in local churches as well as fundraising ideas and marketing material. BGR encourages him or her to spread the word about it on social media using the hashtag,

“#BGRWellDigDare.”



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM: Together in God's mission

By J.D. Greear

DURHAM, N.C. (BP) -- A lot can be lost in a single generation. The writers of Scripture often warned the leaders of Israel that unless they rehearsed the works of God to their children and grandchildren, a generation would arise that "knew not the Lord or his ways" (Judges 2:10).

Southern Baptists have a lot to pass on to the next generation, and one of the most important principles is the concept and practice of cooperative mission, a strategy that has yielded one of the greatest Gospel impact movements in history.

Cooperation between churches for the sake of mission is what drives the Southern Baptist Convention. Of course, Baptists didn't invent the idea of missional cooperation.

All throughout the New Testament, we see churches partnering together to advance the mission. The apostle Paul mentioned giving -- from one church to another -- in several of his letters (Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8-9; cf. Acts 11:27-30). Interestingly, when Paul mentions the gift given by the Macedonian Christians in Romans 15, he calls it "koinonia" -- literally, "fellowship." Bible scholar Chad Brand goes so far as to say that financial sharing for the sake of the mission is the key element of fellowship for churches in the New Testament.

The church I pastor, The Summit Church, has "fellowshipped" with the SBC since our birth, and it is a partnership that has greatly enriched our church.

The SBC enables and equips us to send our people out in ways that we simply could not do alone. We currently have more than 200 people serving overseas, most of whom are with the International Mission Board (IMB). That's an enormous investment, and we are incredibly grateful to stand with Southern Baptists in support of all IMB missionaries worldwide.

Closer to home, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) has been a crucial partner in all of our 43 domestic church plants. Then there's the world-class training provided by our SBC seminaries, which has equipped a huge portion of our staff. And I can't ignore the personal debt I owe to the SBC as a two-time seminary graduate and former IMB missionary.

I could go on -- disaster relief, children's homes, community outreach, mission trip coordination, representation in Washington, D.C., local and state church planting partnerships, aid in work among refugees and immigrant communities -- all of that, and more, is made possible by our cooperative giving.

When we give through the Cooperative Program as well as the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Offering for North American Missions, we are giving to a powerful and proven method for supporting the Great Commission. This is what the CP has always been about.

Greear cont. on page 7

'Together,' 'strategy,' 'genius' among CP descriptors

By Karen L. Willoughby

MILES CITY, Mont. (BP) -- A Montana pastor likens the effect of the Cooperative Program to a fence line.

"It's like multiplying our labor, like building a fence two miles long together, rather than a quarter-mile if you had to do it alone," Jeff Cahill told Baptist Press. He's a rancher and pastor of Valley Community Church in the far-reaching prairies around Miles City, Mont. "We see the Cooperative Program as a way we can reach beyond our abilities."

The Cooperative Program is the way Southern Baptist churches band together to advance God's Kingdom work in state and regional conventions, across North America and throughout the world.

"Let's be found consistent in our actions and guilty of doing good," said Nick Garland, pastor of First Baptist Church in Broken Arrow, Okla. "God has blessed the Cooperative Program and the people who give to missions through it."

Each church determines the amount or percentage of their undesignated offerings to be allocated for cooperative work outside their local reach. That amount is forwarded to the state or regional convention, which determines by vote at its annual meeting the percentage to be sent to Southern Baptists' national and international causes.

"The genius of the Cooperative Program is

that percentage-wise a small church is just as invested in missions as the church that gives millions," Garland said. "Both honor the Lord with their gift. The key to the success of the Cooperative Program is that it is not impulse giving, emotional giving, but that it is giving consistently."

The Southern Baptist Convention allocates percentage amounts of what it receives to the International Mission Board (50.41 percent); North American Mission Board (22.70 percent); the six Southern Baptist seminaries (22.16 percent); Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (1.65 percent); and the SBC operating budget, 2.99 percent. These percentages were approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Dallas last June.

"We're better together," said Billy Russell, pastor of First Baptist Church in Bolivar, Mo. "We want to connect and serve people and reach people much further than just Bolivar. The Cooperative Program does that better than any other organization I know."

Pastors across the SBC say their churches believe in and support the Cooperative Program with at least 10 percent of undesignated offerings. These same churches also cooperate hands-on in local, regional, national and international missions.

Some examples:

-- "We believe in missions, and the

Cooperative Program is part of our missions strategy," said Steve Carne, pastor of Hamilton (Va.) Baptist Church. "We feel God would have us send missionaries throughout the world, as the International Mission Board does, to send church planters to underserved populations as the North American Mission Board does, and to train future pastors as our seminaries do. We give to the Cooperative Program because we yearn to be part of this Kingdom-building work."

Hamilton Baptist gives 35 percent of undesignated income to missions, including 12 percent through the Cooperative Program. The church also has a longstanding partnership among Native Americans in the Dakotas and recently began partnering in Ghana, West Africa.

-- Union Baptist Church in Harrison, Ark., where Bill Melton has been pastor for two years, for many years has given 25 percent of undesignated offerings to missions through the Cooperative Program.

Union Baptist, averaging 90 people in Sunday morning worship, gives another 6 percent to the North Arkansas Baptist Association, 2 percent to church-generated missions causes, and its people pay their own way on mission trips.

"As the new pastor coming in who has never seen this kind of percentage giving I had to ask, 'Does that kind of giving hurt

CP cont. on page 8

Below, Trekking to Montana, a Baptist volunteer with teams from Texas and Tennessee helps rebuild a fence damaged by wildfire in 2017. Making a comparison to Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program, Montana pastor Jeff Cahill says two miles of fence can be built far more effectively with many people working together, than by one man working alone. Photo submitted

Right, Jeff Cahill, pastor of Valley Community Church in Miles City, Mont., describes the "beauty of the Cooperative Program" by noting, "When we all do our part, everything comes together like it's supposed to."



Greear cont...

One of the biggest challenges for the SBC in the next two decades will be increasing the engagement of a new generation of churches in our convention.

All churches ought to be learning more about cooperative missions and giving more to the Cooperative Program. Because it is our denomination's primary source of missions funding, we need to put our money where our mouth is. If we care about reaching the nations, we need to show it by equipping our Southern Baptist entities to keep sending to the nations.

J.D. Greear is the president of the SBC and pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area. For information about the Cooperative Program, go to sbc.net/cp

this other ministry or that special project," Melton told Baptist Press. "It doesn't hurt anything! It helps everything.

"I would love churches to have the courage to say, 'We're going to increase our giving dramatically and put our finances out of our hands and see what God can do,'" Melton said. "Too often we do what only we can do, what we feel comfortable doing. We limit God and what He can do when we do that."

Union Baptist is known statewide for its willingness (with the association's activities trailer) to help churches put on block parties. Members go on short-term mission trips at least twice a year to Fort Worth, Texas, where they "feed the homeless, love on people and share Jesus," Melton said, through the Beautiful Feet street ministry.

The church gives to missions first through the Cooperative Program because of CP's inherent strength, Melton said. "For a missionary to be able to be on the field and to not have to worry about where his support is coming from -- 'Is it going to show up this month and am I going to be able to stay?' -- the Cooperative Program is an aid for our missionaries."

-- Cutting downed timber into sections and splitting logs for firewood shows how the Cooperative Program works, said Eugene Overstreet, pastor of Sierra Baptist Church in Pioneer, Calif.

"The men work together, each doing something that leads to a shared goal: bringing God's love to those who need to hear of it, and in this case, to feel it," Overstreet said of the warmth for

those who need firewood as well as the warmth of God's love. "That's what the Cooperative Program does. It supports the whole program of what Southern Baptists are doing throughout the world, and we do it together."

Sierra Baptist starts by giving 14.5 percent of undesignated offerings to missions through the Cooperative Program, plus 5 percent to the Mother Lode Baptist Association. It's heavily invested in community ministries as well.

"We try to share Jesus with the people around us," Overstreet said. "We need to be involved in our community, to be a witness for the Lord and hopefully reach people for Christ.

"One of the reasons we continue to do well, I believe, is because when we give, God blesses and He brings more people here because we're willing to give and to share," the pastor noted. "That's very important, I think."

-- Back to eastern Montana, where there is more space than people.

"Neighboring," no matter the distance, is a necessity of life, said Cahill of Valley Baptist in Miles City. "Working together makes everything easier. That's the beauty of the Cooperative Program. When we all do our part, everything comes together like it's supposed to."

Karen L. Willoughby is a national correspondent for Baptist Press. For information about the Cooperative Program, go to sbc.net/cp.

God's grace counters fundamentalist Mormon polygamy

by Diana Chandler

SALT LAKE CITY (BP) -- Standing outside the locked bedroom door, little Doris Hanson heard her mother's daily, tearful prayers. She would later share why she believes her mother's pleas were never answered.

"God didn't answer her prayers because she was praying to a fake God," Hanson told Baptist Press decades after her childhood. "She believed in work salvation, polygamy, sexuality for heaven, sexual favors, sexual exchange for heaven. It's horrible, the loneliness, the deceit, the lies."

A member of the Latter Day Church of Christ (Kingston) polygamy clan, Hanson's mother was one of two concurrent wives. She didn't live with her "husband," concealed his identity from Hanson and her siblings, and lied to government authorities who inquired of the children's paternity.

Hanson fled her mother's home at age 18, avoiding a promised "marriage" to the Kingston sect leader. She accepted Jesus 25 years later and is today a 72-year-old

Southern Baptist spreading the truth of the Gospel to fundamentalist Mormons who believe in polygamy for salvation. Polygamy is still practiced in the U.S. today, estimated to encompass perhaps 100,000 people.

Hanson leads A Shield and Refuge Ministry, a Christian outreach launched in early 2008 to share the Gospel with polygamists in particular. Through her weekly online talk show, "Polygamy: What Love is This?" Hanson reaches mainline as well as fundamentalist Mormons. Teaching the truth is her main goal, Hanson said. But she also works to place former polygamists in private host homes and is raising money to build the Hagar Home to house polygamy refugees.

Twenty miles away in Draper, Utah, Holding Out Help focuses expressly on helping women and children flee polygamous sects and live independently, extending the love of Christ as the Gospel in action. Tonia Tewell, Holding Out Help executive director, provides housing, basic necessities and a plethora of aid to those fleeing polygamy, and often has a waiting list.

"We realized they needed so much more than just a roof. They were like refugees coming in from another country," Tewell said, recalling the earliest years of her ministry founded in 2009. "We were overwhelmed with their needs of food and clothing, not only the shelter, but counseling, education, legal services, the most basic of life skills."

Hope Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Sandy, Utah, is among Holding Out Help's supporters, pastor Ben Heile told BP.

"Any of the calls to mercy that we have in Scripture definitely apply to these people, specifically to the women and children," Heile said. "But the husbands who perpetuate the abuse are also people that need Christ's love.

"Polygamy is definitely a part of our history as a state," Heile said. "The desire to engage this community and reverse that curse is what we're called to in Christ."

The Salt Lake Baptist Association in Salt Lake City is starting to reach fundamentalist Mormons through the

God's grace cont...

association's food and clothing ministry, the Concern Center. But the center does not target polygamists specifically. About 10 families fleeing the Kingstons have sought help there in the past nine months or so, association executive director Ron Clement told BP.

"We do share Christ with them intentionally and we're trying to see if we can get them into Bible study," Clement said. "It's been pretty slow going. They come out of (polygamy) and they're pretty distrusting of anyone. We just try to be very open and loving toward them. We give them a lot of food. If we have it available, we try to give them as much as possible."

The Kingston clan is suffering as some of its leaders, Jacob, Isaiah, Kelly and Rachel Kingston, face multiple federal criminal counts including mail fraud and money laundering in association with their company, Washakie Renewable Energy, KSL-TV in Salt Lake City reported Jan. 23.

The Kingstons are among a half dozen or more sects in the U.S. that continue to teach and practice polygamy as a requirement for salvation, including the prominent Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS), associated with jailed polygamist Warren Jeffs. Also active are the Apostolic United Brethren (Allreds), the Righteous Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Petersons), Rockland Ranch (Rocks), the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days (Harmstons) and several independent groups difficult to track, Hanson said.

Hanson is a member of Millcreek Baptist Church in Salt Lake City, a Southern Baptist congregation of about 25 members. Her ministry is sponsored by the non-denominational Main Street Church in Brigham City, Utah. She's available to speak at churches and ministry groups, and her weekly broadcast is available at www.whatloveisthis.tv.

"Many times we have in our own backyard unreached people. Mormonism and polygamy especially is one of those unreached people groups," Hanson said. "There's a lot of Christians who minister to Mormons, but it seems like up until the past few years polygamy has been more of a circus freak show than a missions field, as far as Christians are concerned."

More common than outreaches to polygamists are ministries to the mainline Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS or Mormons), including the Mormonism Research Ministry (MRM) in Draper, led by Eric Johnson and Bill McKeever.

While the LDS church officially dropped the practice of polygamy in 1890 amid governmental pressure, the church still believes in polygamy in the afterlife, Johnson told BP.

"For instance, if a man's wife dies to whom he was sealed for time and eternity in one of the 161 LDS temples located around the world, then he has the ability to marry another woman, also for time and eternity, provided she was never married for eternity to another man," Johnson said. "If this happens, the man is sealed to two women, both of whom he expects to see in the celestial kingdom, which is the very best a Mormon can hope to attain and is associated with godhood of those individuals."

Hanson and Tewell estimate there are between 40,000 and

Polygamy cont. on page 10

FIRST-PERSON: LaVern told me about Jesus

by Kevin White

RENO, Nev. (BP) -- Church planting is not new or something special to our day of ministry. Here in Nevada and across the Southern Baptist Convention, Jesus-centered, Gospel-purposed church planting as well as church revitalization have long been at our roots.

All of this came to mind as I had the honor of attending LaVern Inzer's funeral service in Elko, Nev., in January. Some of us have known LaVern as Pastor Inzer or, like me, Reverend Inzer.

He served in the Navy during World War II in the South Pacific and had two aircraft carriers sink on him during battles. Post-war, he attended college and then Golden Gate Theological Seminary (now Gateway Seminary).

In 1959, he was called to Winnemucca, Nev., by a small group of people brought together by Leonard Siegel, who served all of northern Nevada at the time as director of missions.

Siegel challenged LaVern to come to northern Nevada and its 500,000 square miles to start churches. He gladly took the challenge, and at the beginning he took several side jobs to be able to pastor. He simply had a desire to share the Gospel with everyone -- from ranchers and miners to migrant workers -- and would not give up regardless of the challenge.

As he began planting churches, he became known far and wide as a circuit riding preacher much like days of old. He would travel 1,000 miles a week across northern Nevada, and many of those roads were not paved. In 1998, he was recognized as the Nevada State Citizen of the Year for his service to those in need.

Reverend Inzer possibly was the most prolific church planter in the history of Nevada Baptist Convention. One is hard-pressed to find a church in central and northeastern Nevada that LaVern Inzer did not plant or play a major role in seeing it planted.

But for me there is so much more to the story. You see, Reverend Inzer was the first person I ever heard speak about the loving grace of Jesus.

This determined man did not accept rejection when he traveled to Crescent Valley, Nev., to plant a church. He wouldn't accept rejection from my father but continued to visit in our home. That was just the beginning of how God would use LaVern in my family to see our lives turned for Jesus.

From that first visit, little did he know that my father would surrender to preach and also plant churches. Little did he know that I, a 4-year old boy, would later surrender to preach and plant churches and now serve pastors in Nevada. How could he know that his calling would lead to my two sons' own surrender to preach, one serving with the International Mission Board and the other serving a church in Nevada.

Tell me about Jesus cont. on page 10

Polygamy cont...

100,000 people living in polygamy in the Western U.S., Canada and Mexico, although numbers are difficult to confirm because of deep-rooted secrecy. Groups are in Montana, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, Washington State, Oregon, California, Canada, and Mexico, Hanson said. Government documents might indicate polygamists have one wife, but concurrent unions are typically performed by sect leaders to avoid prosecution, the ministers told BP.

Fundamentalist Mormons believe men will inherit a planet of their own in heaven for every wife they have on earth, and will continue to be sexually active in heaven, fathering "spirit babies to populate their planets," Hanson said.

"I was raised in polygamy and the people today who are born and raised in polygamy, it's all they know, so it's not so weird to them."

Those needing help tend to find Hanson and Tewell through word of mouth.

"Their emotional state is zero hope," Tewell said. "They are told that outsiders are evil, and that they are condemned to hell. The women are told they are going to be used and raped within a week.

"That is the state with which we get these people," Tewell said. "Counseling is imperative for what we do, trauma counseling especially."

Tewell founded Holding Out Help after taking into her home a family that had fled polygamy.

"After serving that first family, it completely rocked our world in such a positive way," Tewell told BP. "We felt we're supposed to be believers in God. How can we turn our backs and say 'No, we're not going to start an organization, and no we're not going to help your family?'

"We just felt like God called us to that," Tewell said, "and what a privilege it is to be able to serve God in this way." Holding

Out Help assists more than 600 women and children a year, and often has a waiting list. The ministry is accessible at holdingouthelp.org.

Each polygamous sect is different. But among FLDS women seeking help from Tewell, she said, 75 percent have suffered sexual abuse, they average a sixth-to eighth-grade education, 99 percent suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, 92 percent suffer emotional, religious or physical abuse, and 90 percent either have no insurance or are on Medicaid. The FLDS sect has fractured since Jeff's 2011 imprisonment but is still active.

Tewell places families and children in transitional housing, using donations and volunteers. Hope Church has helped the ministry with transitional housing and mentoring.

"We channel some of our resources and people to help make transitional homes a safe landing place for women and children that may be fleeing with nothing more than the clothes on their backs" pastor Heile told BP.

At A Shield and Refuge, Hanson's knowledge of salvation by grace is foundational to the ministry.

"I realized I had loved ones and many, many people who were still in the polygamy group ... and they were all depending on polygamy for their salvation," Hanson said. "God just laid it on my heart. I actually wanted to get on the housetops and just shout it. 'You don't have to do this.'"

"If the polygamists could know this, there would be a lot of people who would reject polygamy," she said. "That's my purpose; bring them the Word of God."

Reprinted from Baptist Press (www.baptistpress.com), news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Tell me about Jesus cont...

No, he just knew the Gospel call to plant churches and held true to that call.

I will miss Reverend Inzer on this earth, but I look forward to my reunion with him in glory. But for now, with joy, I return to my roots and desire to be focused and determined to plant more churches so that the next Kevin White can hear the Gospel, maybe for the first time.

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What's Next?

- April 20, Spanish VBS Training, Ministerios Nueva Vida, Wendover, Utah
- April 27, VBS Training, Calvary Baptist Church, Boise, Idaho
- May 2, National Day of Prayer
- May 3-4, Preacher School, Salmon Valley Baptist Church
- May 9-10, Executive Board Meeting, First Baptist Church, West Valley City, UT
- May 18, OneFocus Tour, Central Valley Baptist Church, Meridian, Idaho
- May 28, Sonfest 2019 Registration and deposits due

Don't miss what's happening all around the UISBC. Join our Facebook page, "Utah Idaho Southern Baptist Convention" (www.facebook.com/UISBC) where we share relevant articles, share your church events, and much more. We also have a page just for the women of our area churches, "Alive—Utah-Idaho SBC Women". (www.facebook.com/groups/AliveUISBCWomen)