

# WORD & WAY

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## FAITH FOR THOSE **WITHOUT** EARS TO HEAR

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Sites in  
Iran  

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# JUSTICES CONSIDER *Church-State* ARGUMENTS

**O**n Jan. 22, the nine justices of the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case that could redraw the line separating church and state. The case, *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, features a dispute over a “no-aid” clause in Montana’s constitution that prevents state funding of religious schools. Similar no-aid provisions are found in 37 other state constitutions. Thus, if the justices strike down the no-aid clause, it could open the door for state funding of religious schools and even houses of worship across the country.

Holly Hollman, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, offered remarks about the case following the oral arguments she attended. BJC, which represents more than a dozen Baptist bodies,

previously filed a brief with the court urging the justices to uphold the constitutionality of no-aid clauses.

“States should not have to fund religious schools. Religion is treated in a unique way in constitutional law, both to avoid its establishment by government and to avoid government interference in its free exercise. This special treatment of religion stems from our country’s deep and abiding commitment to religious liberty for all,” Hollman explained. “No-aid provisions ensure that state funds are preserved for state purposes and not used to advance religion. The Court should reject blanket attacks on no-aid provisions and uphold Montana’s law that preserves public funding for its public schools.”

During oral arguments, the two sides used different language to describe the no-aid clauses, thus highlighting ideological disagreements over what to even call the provisions. While the attorney defending the prohibition use the language of “no-aid” clauses, those pushing the

justices to overrule the Montana Supreme Court instead called the provisions “Blaine Amendments” in an effort to disparage them as anti-Catholic by implying that U.S. Rep. James Blaine, a Republican from Maine, was anti-Catholic when he unsuccessfully push for a no-aid provision nationally. He did not, however, create the concept as 19 states already had no-aid provisions in their state constitutions, and later ones — like in Montana — were never added as amendments but simply included in the state constitutions.

Many court watchers predict a 5-4 ruling when the court announces its verdict. Chief Justice John Roberts is expected to be the swing vote. During oral arguments it seemed the justices might decide to reject the case on technical grounds since the school program being challenged as discriminatory against religious schools has since been scrapped completely. A ruling is expected before the end of June. **WW**

*NOTE: Learn more about the use of the term “Blaine Amendments” in an online editorial from Word&Way Editor Brian Kaylor: “Badly Blaming Blaine,” [wordandway.org/badly-blaming-blaine](http://wordandway.org/badly-blaming-blaine).*



Holly Hollman (left) and Jennifer Hawks of BJC talk to reporters on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court following oral arguments on Jan. 22. (BJC)

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**Oops.** In the December issue we said the first Southern Baptist state convention to elect a black president was Florida in 1999, a claim based on a *Baptist Press* story. However, that is incorrect. The D.C. Baptist Convention actually elected a black president in 1994. Although the SBC cut ties with the DCBC in 2018, the DCBC remains affiliated with American Baptist Churches USA and the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

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# LETTER

→ from the editor

## Faith in an Age of Elmer Gantrys

**A**t the start of a recent road trip, I popped in the audiobook *Elmer Gantry* by Sinclair Lewis. Although I'd heard the lead character, Elmer Gantry, used as an insult about fraudulent clergy like televangelists, I hadn't actually read the book. Since I enjoyed some other books by Lewis, I thought I should try this one.

When published in 1927, some called it anti-Christian since Gantry used the pulpit to chase money and women. But Lewis wasn't actually critiquing all churches. With a bit of the same indignation as the biblical prophets, he sought to expose frauds who prey on others. In many ways, Lewis predicted preachers like Jim Bakker, the televangelist who went to prison in 1989 after having an affair and cheating people out of money. Bakker later returned with a new wife and new ministry (in Branson, Missouri), where he today peddles products like apocalypse survival food buckets (for \$4,500) and makes outrageous claims about current events.

Gantry starts out as a Baptist in Kansas and Missouri. However, whenever Gantry gets caught, he moves to new place and switches faith traditions, becoming a Pentecostal evangelist, a sort of New Age teacher, and a Methodist minister.

So, there I was in eastern Kansas not far from where the beginning of the story takes place. Gantry the young Baptist starts preaching in a small Baptist church. While enjoying dinner at a deacon's house, the deacon tries to engage Gantry in theological talk but Gantry's more interested in the deacon's daughter. Deacon Bains then asks Gantry where he gets his Baptist news. (Readers already know by this point Gantry really isn't reading such things.)

Bains mentions a paper he used to read, the *Watchman Examiner*. I was surprised. That was a real Baptist

newspaper back in the day. Lewis did his homework, I thought to myself, unprepared for the next line.

"I've started taking the *Word and Way*," the deacon added. "Now there's a mighty sound paper that don't mince matters none, and written real elegant — just suits me."

I almost swerved off the highway with shock and excitement that *Word&Way* made it in Lewis's book. I later learned that Lewis spent quite a bit of time

“**In an age of deception, we need a publication committed to telling the facts.**”

in Kansas City, Missouri, meeting with various ministers as part of his research. At the time, *Word&Way* was even headquartered in Kansas City.

Fortunately, the swindling Gantry didn't add he also read *Word&Way* — there are some endorsements we don't want! But when Lewis wanted to depict a sincere Baptist deacon, he put the *Word&Way* in Bain's hands.

More than 90 years later — and nearly 124 years after our founding — that remains true. I'd say we're still mighty sound and don't mince matters. I'd like to think we're even elegant. And, above all, Baptists across the Midwest who are concerned about issues impacting their local churches, what's happening in the world, and sharing the Good News still read the *Word&Way*.

There will, unfortunately, always be characters like Gantry. Those who misuse churches, who lie, who hurt other people. And that's part of why we need *Word&Way* still today.

In an age of deception, we need a publication committed to telling the facts. In a time when people allow other causes to corrupt their priorities, we need a publication committed to biblical teachings.

But it can't happen without you. Somehow it seems the Gantrys of the world always get the money. Perhaps it's because they're so driven by it and not embarrassed to ask. But we need your support even more. If you believe in the work of *Word&Way* that has been inspiring Baptists — and novelists — for over a century, we hope you will help us in 2020:

- Tell your friends about *Word&Way*. You could give them that subscribe card stuck in this issue and encourage them to try *Word&Way* for themselves.
- Pray for us as we seek to tell real news that leads readers back to the Good News.
- Send us story ideas, letters to the editor, or other feedback.
- Call us to request a bundle of one upcoming issue that we'll them at no charge to be distributed at your church so people can see for themselves why *Word&Way* is worth a subscription.

- Donate to ensure *Word&Way* continues to inform and inspire Baptists.

Brian Kaylor is editor & president of *Word&Way*.



brianKaylor



# LETTER TO THE Editor

I respectfully must disagree with Christine Fournier's letter to the editor in the December 2019 issue of *Word&Way*.

An overwhelming number of respected scientists are very concerned about climate change as the world's population increases and more and more carbon emissions go into the atmosphere. According to the December 23-30, 2019 issue of *TIME* magazine, 7 million people were displaced by extreme weather during the first half of 2019.

I feel that this is a moral issue and a religious issue. God created the world and we should respect and care for it.

If each of us would reduce our waste of resources, reuse what we possibly can, and recycle, we could make a difference. We can educate ourselves and encourage others to do so. I also feel that our churches could and should educate members about climate change. We should be setting a good example.

At my age I will not be in this world many more years, but I am concerned about what will happen in my grandchildren's and great-grandchildren's lifetimes.

— Ruth Thompson  
Cassville, Missouri

*Got an opinion? Send us your letter to the editor:  
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# “YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID”

**You are not a talk radio host or a carnival barker. You are a pastor, an attorney, and a sitting member of Congress. Therefore, the evidence would suggest you should know better. To utter such garbage, which you know to be false and defamatory, goes against all the training and teaching you must have received.**

— Preet Bharara, a former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, in a Jan. 10 CNN editorial criticizing U.S. Rep. Doug Collins, a former Southern Baptist pastor. Collins, who had claimed Democrats were “in love” with terrorists, later apologized for his remarks.

**I really believe we have God on our side.**

— President Donald Trump in Jan. 3 speech at a Pentecostal church in Miami just hours after ordering the assassination of an Iranian general, Qasem Soleimani.

**There is no question that the founders of our nation came from places where there was way too much involvement of the church with the affairs of the state. And they never wanted that to be the case.**

— Ben Carson, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in response to question from Word&Way Editor Brian Kaylor on Jan. 9. Hear the full exchange in episode 105 (Jan. 17) of the Word&Way podcast “Baptist Without An Adjective,” [podcast.wordandway.org](http://podcast.wordandway.org).

**Especially with hate crimes and hostility toward certain faiths rising, all Americans must categorically reject fear-mongering on factors such as religion, race, and ethnicity. And religious liberty advocates must demand freedom for all, not religious privilege for a few.**

— Melissa Rogers, visiting professor at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, in a Jan. 3 Religion News Service column.

## The Baptist Home



### Calendar of Upcoming Events

•Chillicothe Charity Golf Tournament: May 29, 2020•

Green Hills Golf Course, Chillicothe, MO  
Registration at 10:00 a.m. Tee Time at 11:00 a.m.  
Contact: Steve Moseley  
[smoseley@thebaptisthome.org](mailto:smoseley@thebaptisthome.org), (660) 646-6219

•Ashland Charity Golf Tournament: June 12, 2020•

Eagle Knoll Golf Course, Hartsburg, MO  
Registration at 7:30 a.m. Tee Time at 8:30 a.m.  
Contact: Derek Tamm  
[dtamm@thebaptisthome.org](mailto:dtamm@thebaptisthome.org), (816) 868-4144

•Chillicothe HomeComing: June 13, 2020•

The Baptist Home-Chillicothe Campus, Chillicothe, MO, 10 am - 2 pm  
A festive celebration emphasizing visits with residents from home churches and families. Traditional bake sale benefits residents. Music and entertainment with barbeque lunch served in and around the gazebo.  
Contact: Lisa Moseley or Angie Hamilton  
[lmoseley@thebaptisthome.org](mailto:lmoseley@thebaptisthome.org), (660) 646-6219

•AV HomeComing & Auction: September 5, 2020•

The Baptist Home-Arcadia Valley Campus, Ironton, MO  
Annual auction now in its 41st year, for benefit of residents. Auction begins at 9 a.m.  
Contact: Sherri Snider or Tiffany Sletten  
[tsletten@thebaptisthome.org](mailto:tsletten@thebaptisthome.org), (573) 546-7429

•AV Charity Golf Tournament: September 25, 2020•

Terre du Lac Golf Club, Bonne Terre, MO  
Registration at 10:30 a.m. Putting Contest at 11:30 a.m. Shotgun start at Noon.  
Contact: Becky Barton, [bbarton@thebaptisthome.org](mailto:bbarton@thebaptisthome.org), (573) 546-2709

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# “ I SAY TO You... ”

Voting for the 2020 presidential primaries begins in February. For much of the year, the campaign will dominate news reports, Facebook feeds, and more. *Word&Way* asked three Baptist leaders who have engaged in public policy advocacy:

## As the 2020 Election Heats Up, What's the Top Piece of Advice You Have for Churches?

First, the easiest thing every church should do is pray for our country. That includes our current leaders, each candidate, for the healing of our divisions, and that justice for all will become a reality. The second thing is much more difficult. Each church should consider how Christian citizenship is encouraged and modeled for members. I fear that neglecting this responsibility in the name of conflict avoidance leaves spiritual political formation up to cable news or social media manipulation. If the church is not the place where Christians learn what it means to love our neighbor with our vote, then where? We need churches committed to cultivating Christians who provide an alternative public witness to politics of selfishness, scarcity, anger, and fear.

— Stephen Reeves, associate coordinator of partnerships & advocacy for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship



Remember that God is larger than any political party or election. We can provide a powerful witness to that truth by responsibly engaging during this election year. It's important to remember that "participating in, or intervening in ... any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office," could jeopardize your tax status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. But even more importantly, partisan political campaigning could harm your church's fellowship and your ministry to the broader community. So, think about what engagement can look like for your church. It might include participating in nonpartisan election activity, like hosting candidate forums, running voter registration drives, or even serving as a polling place. Others might feel called to speak and preach on issues that arise during the course of the campaign. These activities will not run afoul of the letter of the law or the spirit of a free church in a free state.

— Amanda Tyler, BJC executive director



First and foremost, church leaders can encourage believers to keep focused on spreading the Good News of Jesus. Second, I pray that church members keep studying scripture and seeking God for wisdom to inform their opinions and political positions. Believers do need to participate. Third, believers need to pray about communicating their biblical convictions without bullying or being bullied by others. Fourth, we are faced with divisive issues. I hope that as we represent our positions and convictions, we keep focused on the Lamb's Agenda.

— Gus Reyes, director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas



## NEWS BRIEFS

### MOST GOVERNORS AGREE TO ACCEPT REFUGEES

After a presidential executive order in September that required local and state governments to consent to refugee resettlement, most governors have responded by informing the administration they will continue to accept refugees in their states. Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott on Jan. 10 became the first governor to reject allowing refugees. But by that point, 18 other Republican governors had already approved the continuing resettling of refugees. And 22 Democratic governors also approved refugee resettlement.

Two of the Republican governors approving refugees are Southern Baptist: Asa Hutchinson in Arkansas and Mike Parson in Missouri. Another Republican governor who approved accepting refugees, Jim Justice of West Virginia, is a member of a church affiliated with American Baptist Churches USA. One Democratic governor approving refugees, Ralph Northam of Virginia, is a member of a Progressive National Baptist Convention congregation.

### UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TO SPLIT

More than eight months after a contentious vote about same-sex marriage and LGBTQ clergy, the United Methodist Church on Jan. 3 announced a proposal to split the denomination over “fundamental differences.” Currently, the UMC has more than 12 million members worldwide and is the second largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. — behind Southern Baptists.

The proposal will be voted on in May at the UMC’s general conference. If it passes, the more conservative Methodists would leave to form a separate denomination that does not recognize same-sex marriage or LGBTQ clergy. The new denomination would receive \$25 million, and current clergy and lay employees would keep any current pension plans. Local churches would be able to vote to stay or leave, and can leave without losing assets.

The plan was mediated by lawyer Kenneth Feinberg, best known for overseeing the September 11th Victim

Compensation Fund. The proposal has been praised by those across the continuum of theological perspectives.

“Every other mainline denomination in the United States has faced this conflict,” Keith Boyette, a conservative Methodist leader told NPR. “This agreement models how a conflict can be addressed in an amicable way.”

### ATHEISTS PREFER CATS, CHRISTIANS LOVE DOGS

A new study published in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* found significant differences on pet ownership and religious affiliation. While dogs were the most common pet overall, evangelicals and Catholics are much more likely to own dogs than those of other traditions. Those of no religion or religious traditions other than Christian or Jewish are more likely to own cats than Christians. Jews are more likely to own small mammals and birds than other traditions.

Another finding in the study showed that people who attend worship more frequently on average own fewer pets. This finding was particularly true for cat ownership — meaning that those who attend worship less frequently on average own more cats. In a Jan. 7 piece for *Religion News Service*, one of the study’s authors suggested a couple reasons for this

“One is practical. People who are highly involved in activities at church or

other houses of worship may not have the time to take care of a lot of animals in their home,” wrote Ryan Burge, who is an American Baptist pastor and an assistant professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston. “A second possibility is that people may be using pets as a replacement for social interaction. Therefore, people who are frequently attending church events don’t need to fill that social void with pets.”

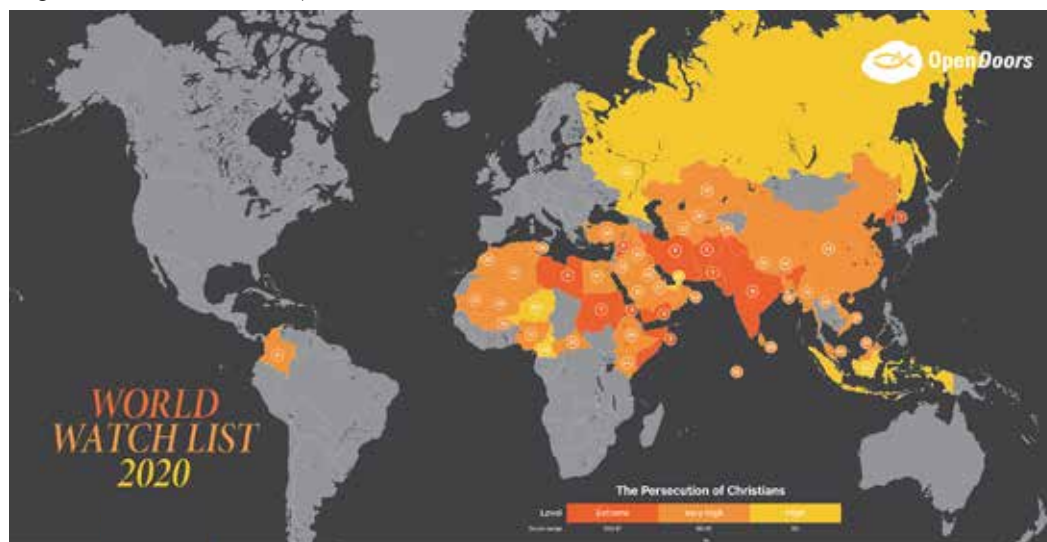
### UK CITY CANCELS FRANKLIN GRAHAM RALLY

On Jan. 27, a conference center in Liverpool, United Kingdom, announced it canceled a booking by U.S. evangelist Franklin Graham. The stop was to be one of eight by Graham in June. Graham’s attacks on Islam and the LGBTQ community were noted as reasons for the cancellation after months of local activists urging such a move. Similar efforts are underway in other cities on Graham’s planned tour.

“Over the past few days we have been made aware of a number of statements which we consider to be incompatible with our values,” the venue said in a statement. “In light of this we can no longer reconcile the balance between freedom of speech and the divisive impact this event is having in our city.”

Graham said in response that he was “being discriminated against” and that the cancellation “does far more to harm and divide society” than his event would.

**Most dangerous places to be a Christian.** Open Doors USA released its 2020 list of the 50 countries where Christians are most persecuted. The top 10: North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Yemen, Iran, and India.





**BAPTIST-CATHOLIC  
DIALOGUE HELD IN POLAND**

The third meeting in a five-year dialogue between global Baptists and Catholics occurred in December at the Warsaw Baptist Theological Seminary in Poland. The ecumenical dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is designed to explore areas of commonality and disagreement to spark greater understanding. Baptists in the delegation included leaders from Argentina, Australia, France, Jamaica, Lithuania, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Catholic delegation included people from Argentina, France, India, Italy, Poland, and the United States.

The theme of the week’s dialogue was “Challenges to Common Witness.” It followed the meeting in 2019 at the Vatican and in 2018 in Waco, Texas. The 2020 meeting will again occur at the Vatican.

**SBC PRESIDENT CONDEMNS  
PAIGE PATTERSON**

After disgraced former Southern Baptist leader Paige Patterson sparked headlines with invites to speak at churches, Southern Baptist Convention President J. D. Greear on Jan. 24 urged SBC churches not to host Patterson. Patterson, a former SBC president, was fired in 2018 as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, over mishandling of rape allegations on campus.

“Trustees terminated Paige Patterson for cause, publicly disclosing that his conduct was ‘antithetical to the core values of our faith,’” Greear told the *Houston Chronicle*. “I advise any Southern Baptist church to consider this severe action before having Dr. Patterson preach or speak and to contact trustee officers if additional information is necessary.”

A church in Texas honored Patterson in January as a “defender of the faith,” and he is scheduled to speak at a Baptist church in Florida in February. His presence on that schedule led two state SBC leaders to withdraw from also speaking at the event. Additionally, a publication of the Missouri Baptist Convention feted Patterson in an

interview published last year.

Patterson led the rightward shift in the SBC along with Paul Pressler, who has been accused in court of unwanted sexual contact and advances by multiple men.

**INDIANA COLLEGE FIRES  
PRESIDENT AFTER ARREST**

Trustees at Franklin College, a school in Franklin, Indiana, affiliated with American Baptist Churches USA, fired the school’s president after his arrest days earlier. Thomas Minar was arrested Jan. 6 in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, on suspicion of child sex crimes involving a computer. Founded as Indiana Baptist Manual-Labor Institute in 1834, the school has about 1,000 students.

Minar, FC’s 16th president since 2015, had announced last June he would step down at the close of this academic year. Minar, who is gay and married, was arrested after interacting online with a person he thought was a 15-year-old boy but was actually an undercover officer.

**ARK. CONVENTION SUED  
IN ABUSE CASE**

A lawsuit filed in December accuses the leader of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention of mishandling a sexual abuse case. The suit alleges that Sonny Tucker, the executive director of the state convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, did not properly respond when allegations of sexual abuse were made in February 2018 against Teddy Leon Hill Jr., a Baptist minister in Hot Springs. The suit also names the church Hill pastored at the time, the state convention, and the local association.

The male victim has not been named and was a minor at the time of the alleged sexual abuse. The suit claims Hill’s ex-wife reported suspicions about the abuse to Tucker. ABSC claims the lawsuit is wrong since ABSC does not control local churches and thus “the convention has no responsibility in this case.”

**BAPTIST BLOGS HIT FOR FALSE  
GEORGE SOROS CLAIMS**

Two fundamentalist blogs critical of the Southern Baptist Convention for supposedly being too liberal recently drew criticism for using anti-Semitic rhetoric

in claims that liberal billionaire George Soros was funding groups the bloggers oppose. Conspiracy theories about Soros, who is Jewish, have long been denounced as inaccurate and anti-Semitic.

After the conservative evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* published an editorial in December urging President Donald Trump’s removal from office, the blog Pulpit & Pen claimed the magazine is “a Soros front organization,” particularly attacking Southern Baptist writer Ed Stetzer. CT President and CEO Tim Dalrymple responded: “We have never received a donation from George Soros or the Open Society Foundation. Of the foundations who have given us support, we cannot find any connection to Soros or any of his funding entities.” The fact-checking website Snopes.com analyzed CT tax returns and rated the Soros funding claim by the blog as “false.”

In a March 2019 article on online tone in Christian blogs, *Word&Way* noted the blog Pulpit & Pen “frequently includes anti-Semitic tropes” because of the frequent Soros posts. That blog has been the harshest online critic of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri, for firing a theology professor.

On Jan. 9, Capstone Report claimed Jason Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, met with Missouri Governor Mike Parson, also a Southern Baptist, and pushed Parson to accept refugees. The post included attempts to link Allen to allegedly Soros-funded groups and said Allen went to “lobby for the George Soros immigration agenda.”

Allen — and another Baptist leader at the meeting — disputed that refugees came up during the ten-minute meeting. Capstone Report later updated its post — though left the original claims there — to say their source was wrong. The update and apology, however, once again tried to link Allen to supposed Soros funding.

In January, the SBC’s *Baptist Press* ran criticized claims that Soros is funding the SBC’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. Pulpit & Pen and Capstone Report are among the blogs that frequently make that claim. BP denounced the “rumors” that “proved to be false” since “ERLC has never received funding from Soros.”



From  
*Little League*  
to  
**COLLEGE CHAMPION**

By Bill Sorrell  
for Word&Way

Zach Hall. (Southeast Missouri State University)

Zach Hall finished his award-winning college football career haunted by an elementary school memory. Playing in the Optimist League in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, Hall fumbled a handoff as he was trying to cross the goal line when he was in the fourth grade. His team lost.

“I still think about it to this day,” said Hall, an inside linebacker who finished his senior year in 2019 at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau after achieving the epitome of goals of national defensive players.

In 2018, Hall won the Buck Buchanan Award given to the most outstanding defensive player in the Football Championship Subdivision. With a school-record 168 tackles, including 67 solos, Hall was the first in SEMO history to win the coveted award. He led the FCS in total tackles. He was also the Ohio Valley Conference Defensive Player of the Year and named to eight All-America teams.

“It was a big honor for me. I am not someone who is used to winning awards. I never thought I would be in that position. That was the first real award that I won. It means a lot to me. While I was playing I didn’t think about it much but now that I finished my college career, it was a big accomplishment. It was a blessing,” he said. “I had to work

really hard to get there. It took a lot of extra film study, believing in the people around me so I could play my game, a lot of patience.

“It was a big season. I stayed the course and it was worth it. I always believed in myself and made it happen,” added Hall, whose only Division I offer came from SEMO. “To be the first, it’s a big deal for the university and program. I’m glad to be a part of it.”

Hall winning the award helped solidify SEMO as a national program, said head coach Tom Matukewicz.

“You can’t be a national program without national players,” Matukewicz added. “He is the most productive player I’ve coached. He makes game-changing plays. What makes him good is his instincts. He can process very quickly and react and get his body to react. He was the best player on the team. When your best player is the hardest worker and best culture builder, it’s easy to coach.”

Hall played in the Spiral Tropical Bowl for elite Football Bowl Subdivision and FCS seniors in January in Daytona Beach, Florida. There were 28 NFL teams represented.

“I made the most of it,” said Hall, who is now training in Nashville to prepare for April’s NFL Draft as he also prepares to graduate in May. “I have always wanted to graduate college. Being able to make it this

far is a blessing right at the end of the tunnel. I’ve come too far to stop now.”

**FOCUS & FAITH**

During his journey, Hall’s faith has been vital. It has kept him focused and grounded.

“It doesn’t let me get too high or too low and helps me put things into perspective and prioritize things in my day-to-day life,” he said. “I want people to see that I am a Christian by the way I act. I am always going to give my best in any situation no matter how big or small, doing everything the right way.”

During his college sophomore year his faith became stronger as he started going to FCA led by Mike Litzelfelner, who became a spiritual mentor.

“I started to gain an interest in Christ, going to church, getting into the word. In college I couldn’t do it all by myself. I needed another way to live my life. It wasn’t going the way I wanted it. I needed something else,” Hall said.

“FCA helped me create a relationship with Christ,” added Hall, who wore an FCA wristband during games to remind him of why he plays and “what I need to be, how I need to act, know who I need to play for.”

“I had always been curious about Christ. I didn’t have an outlet for it. My sophomore

year in college the football season was good but I didn't have anything outside of football. I was focused on football. It was my life. I would live for football and other things in this world and not for Christ," Hall said.

"God came to me. He met me where I was. He accepted me no matter what situation I was in. If you want to build that relationship with him it is a two-way street. You have to put in the time," he added.

Praying before every game, Hall felt free because he did not have to worry about how well he performed. He left the results "all to Christ" and focused on playing for his family and teammates.

Becoming a spiritual leader for the team, Hall led by example. Matukewicz said that Hall is trying to live like Jesus would want him to.

"He doesn't talk about it, he lives it. People see his faith by his actions," Matukewicz explained. "He was the same person, the same humble guy I recruited. His humble spirit is built with his faith and trying to live like [God]. His maturity puts football in its place. It is important but not the most important thing."

Hall is proactive in his faith by not just saying that he is a Christian but by praying, reading the Bible, and doing devotionals. He also wants people to see Christ in his life by the way he treats people, showing them love, whether a teammate is excelling in football or not and regardless of their status. He wants to follow the Golden Rule.

"I believe in treating people nice. Accept them for who they are. More than just teammates, I want to be brothers with them," said Hall.

As Hall prays, he reflects on how he can become a better Christian. Spending time with believers who have the same goal and mindset that he does is essential in his spiritual growth. His favorite verse, Philippians 3:14, reflects that growth: "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

"My faith was challenged most when I became a Christian and started to build a relationship with him. I hold myself to a certain standard. It's something you don't always meet but it is important how you bounce back and learn from that," Hall said. "I know this life isn't all about myself. It's the people around me and the kind of impact I can have on them and help them through life. I want people to remember me as a good person, a good teammate, someone who cared

about the community and the university."

"I have learned it is not all about the game. The game is a blessing itself. There is so much more I can do outside of football that can affect others and the community," he added. "I want to be someone who makes a difference, whether on a big scale or small, to help change people's lives spiritually. I want to be a role model. I have had a lot of role models in my life who have molded me into who I am today."

His mother, Amy Kaelin, a nurse in Louisville, has been his biggest role model.

"She taught me what hard work was. She consistently made something out of nothing. When there was a doubt she made sure it happened. I have always been amazed by that, by her work ethic and how she treats others," he said.

“

I want to be someone who makes a difference, whether on a big scale or small.

#### PART OF A WINNING TEAM

SEMO wide receiver Zach Smith, a redshirt senior who also played with Hall at Louisville Male High School has been there for much of the winning. As seniors at Male, Hall and Smith won the 2015 6A state championship.

"A connected team is a dedicated team, not only developing relationships on the field but off. It is always having that mindset that you are going to win no matter who the opponent is. We had a lot of confidence. We took practice seriously," said Smith, who was the star of the offense at Male while Hall was the star of the defense.

Smith has known Hall since they were 7. They competed against each other in little league football championship games. Smith was known for his quickness and speed and Hall for being a hard-hitting linebacker. One time after a game they shook hands and their "relationship took off from there" said Smith.

Both All-State as seniors, Smith received offers from University of Tennessee at Martin, Murray State, Southern Illinois. With Hall's

one from SEMO they said, "We won a championship in high school, why not try to win another in college."

Smith has seen Hall's game evolve.

"His knowledge of the game, the preparation he puts into Saturday, watching film every day, knowing what the other team was going to do before they did it, his instincts with the ball, his ball skills are good for a linebacker, always being in the right place at the right time," said Smith. "He is not a big talker, example can go a long way. I saw him transform into a vocal leader on the sideline his senior year and on the field. Whatever he said people listened to. If he notices a flaw in your life, he is going to let you know about it. He will shoot straight with you whether you like his response or not."

They are on the same page about wins and losses.

"I hate losing more than I like winning," said Smith.

Their freshman and sophomore years the Redhawks finished 3-8. But then they made it to the FCS playoffs in 2018 and 2019. In 2019 they the Redhawks were Ohio Valley Conference champions, which the team had not accomplished since 2010.

One of their best high school experiences together was before their senior season at a 7-on-7 tournament played in Hoover, Alabama, the biggest in the nation. As teams were being introduced, Male's name was left out.

"That whole weekend we used it as a motivation. We knew going in that nobody could beat us and we had to go out and prove it," said Smith.

Hall got several game-winning interceptions and Smith came up big on deep balls and go-pass routes. The Bulldogs played Hoover, renowned among national programs, for the championship and won.

"It put our school on the nationwide watch list," said Smith. Male finished ranked 9th in the nation by *USA Today*.

Even as their time as teammates end, their bond remains.

"I love the dude," said Smith. "He has been my boy since seven-years-old. I know our relationship is only going to get stronger since he knows the Lord." **WW**

*Bill Sorrell is pastor of First Baptist Church in Whiteville, TN. He writes the "Keeping The Faith" column for Lindy's Sports magazine and writes for various Baptist publications.*

# MBC Lies About Windermere Purchase Details

By Brian Kaylor  
Word&Way Editor

**T**he Missouri Baptist Convention in December regained control of the property and facilities of Windermere Baptist Conference Center in Roach, Missouri, after nearly 20 years of fighting for the campground. However, in its announcement of the purchase through a newly-formed shell company, the MBC lied about its role in the purchase. And the purchase raises new questions about claims MBC leaders used to justify their nearly 17-year litigation against five Baptist ministries in which the MBC used millions of dollars of Cooperative Program money.

The MBC sued WBCC and four other ministries (including Word&Way) in 2002 after the five groups moved to self-perpetuating trustee boards. The MBC filed a second case against WBCC — as well as against several individuals and financial institutions — in another county in 2006. The MBC lost its first case against WBCC in 2009 and its second in 2014. The MBC dropped its case against Word&Way in 2010, and later won cases against the other three institutions, the Missouri Baptist Foundation, Missouri Baptist University, and The Baptist Home.

In addition to the litigation, the MBC also harmed WBCC financially with false claims about WBCC and by interfering in WBCC's businesses practices. In 2006, WBCC trustees released a document outlining the MBC's "attempts to harm Windermere," calling the MBC's actions "unethical and potentially illegal." The statement mentioned several times when MBC leaders contacted speakers and camps to discourage them from doing businesses with WBCC. Additionally, the document outlined times when MBC leaders contacted construction companies and financial institutions to urge the companies from working with WBCC. The WBCC statement also attacked the MBC for "spreading false rumors about Windermere."

Some of the MBC's actions detailed in WBCC's statement formed the basis for a countersuit against the MBC by businessman William Jester in 2008. He accused the MBC of making derogatory statements about his

businesses and for taking actions to block his construction plans with WBCC. After Jester died in 2010, his estate won a \$500,000 settlement from the MBC in 2012. The MBC did not report the settlement until it was reported on months later by EthicsDaily.com.

Word&Way trustees similarly accused the MBC in 2005 of "tortious interference" in business practices after MBC leaders contacted Baptist organizations to urge them to stop advertising in Word&Way. The trustees decided not to file a lawsuit, but maintained the MBC's actions were wrong.

"Our trustees feel strongly that the [MBC] Executive Board's interference in Word&Way's daily operations is unlawful, pure and simple," then-Word&Way Editor Bill Webb explained. "Wise stewards do not seek to harm what they truly believe belongs to them."

## Purchase of WBCC

On the Friday before Christmas (Dec. 20), the MBC announced the purchase of the WBCC property by Straightway Holdings, Inc. nine days earlier. SHI is led by Neil Franks, who also serves as president of the Missouri Baptist Foundation. WBCC President and CEO Tim Huddleston started at WBCC in March after serving as an MBF vice president, where he had been hired by Franks who had just started as MBF president. Huddleston had been a member at First Baptist Church in Branson, Missouri, where Franks had been his pastor. In the announcement of Huddleston's hiring at WBCC, Franks urged people to join Huddleston "in restoring Windermere to being a place where all Missouri Baptists and all Christians can find reconciliation and restoration with God and with each other."

Just a few months later, Huddleston sent a letter of apology to the MBC, claiming WBCC sought "divine forgiveness" and looking for reconciliation. In response, the MBC in August established a task force — that included Franks — to meet with WBCC leaders. Huddleston then appeared on stage during the MBC annual meeting in October to again express his desire for forgiveness so that "we would fully reconcile with the

Missouri Baptist Convention." On neither occasion did MBC leaders reciprocate with an apology.

At the point Huddleston claimed on stage to apologize on behalf of WBCC, the plan for the MBC and MBF to obtain WBCC was apparently already in place. At that same MBC annual meeting, the MBC Executive Board brought motions to messengers to empower the MBF to buy real estate and to set up a shell company. Those votes allowed the creation of SHI the next month.

While Huddleston appeared with MBC leaders in the name of "reconciliation," he ignored numerous contacts from Word&Way and key donors who had supported WBCC while the MBC sued and attacked the organization. WBCC trustees contacted by Word&Way in the weeks prior to the finalizing of the purchase refused to comment, instead promising that Huddleston would respond. He never did. (Huddleston also ignored a request for comment for this article.)

The announcement of the purchase of WBCC by an MBC publication said that the MBF had incorporated SHI. The statement also claimed the MBC was not involved: "The Missouri Baptist Convention itself is not involved in the new ownership structure at Windermere." Franks repeated that claim in a Jan. 14 interview with an MBC publication, saying "The Missouri Baptist Convention was not part of the transaction and has incurred no debt or any ongoing obligations related to the transactions." However, those statements are not accurate.

According to the Missouri Secretary of State's office, SHI was created on Nov. 15 by Michael Whitehead, legal counsel for the MBC. Additionally, SHI's Articles of Incorporation for the new tax-exempt non-profit organization clearly state the MBC's involvement.

"The purpose of Straightway Holdings, Inc. (SHI) as an entity related to Missouri Baptist Convention and Missouri Baptist Foundation, is to glorify God by engaging in transactions involving real and personal property which advance, are compatible

with, and are supportive of the religious and charitable purposes of the Missouri Baptist Foundation, the Missouri Baptist Convention, and its statement of faith,” the document reads.

The Articles of Incorporation add that the MBC is “the sole member” of SHI with the right to elect trustees and approve changes to the governance documents. Both the MBC president and executive director are given the right “to serve as a non-voting *ex officio* Trustee of the SHI board.” The document says the trustees for SHI are to be the MBF trustees elected by the MBC, adding that “SHI and its trustees have a fiduciary relationship to the Missouri Baptist Convention.” And the MBC is named as having the right to approve or reject “the sale, mortgage, lease, pledge, or transfer” of SHI assets.

Franks did not respond to a Word&Way request for comment.

Although SHI now owns the real estate and personal property formerly held by WBCC, the corporation known as WBCC appears to still exist as paperwork has not yet been recorded by the Secretary of State’s office to dissolve the corporation that no longer owns the campground. But that means the name Windermere Baptist Conference Center might not be available to the new owners, even though the WBCC website and Facebook account still uses that name.

In the announcement of the purchase, the MBC said SHI would not run the facilities but would instead lease it to another newly-created company, Arukah Cove, Inc. That corporation, which does not include MBC or MBF oversight in its Articles of Incorporation, was created on Dec. 6 by former WBCC trustee Tim Mensendiek. Arukah then on Dec. 13 filed with the state the registration of a fictitious business name to also do business under the name of Windermere Conference Center (without the word Baptist). The MBC has not reported if it approved the leasing of SHI’s property to Arukah.

A board member for the WBCC corporation that formerly owned the campground told Word&Way that they did not learn of the sale of the land and property — nor about the purchaser — until receiving an email from Word&Way nearly two weeks after the sale. The board member also said that while the board had supported Huddleston’s vision for reconciliation, they had not envisioned that as returning to MBC ownership.

### Broken Promises

By obtaining control of WBCC, the MBC inadvertently proved their nearly 17-year litigation against five Baptist ministries was based on yet another false claim: that the lawsuits were the only way to regain the institutions. Other broken promises made by MBC leaders at the start of the litigation include that the litigation did not violate 1 Corinthians 6 since they were not suing individuals (which they later did), and that they would not use Cooperative Program money to fund the litigation (which they later did).

In an Aug. 13, 2002 open letter explaining the filing of the lawsuits that day, then-MBC President Robert Curtis claimed the MBC had to sue since the actions of the institutions were “leaving no choice but to select a civil judge.” Two months later, after a messenger made a motion at the MBC’s annual meeting that the MBC end its lawsuits, Curtis incorrectly claimed before the vote that voting for the motion would end all of the MBC’s efforts to recapture the institutions. The pastor who made the motion (now the editor of

Word&Way) approached the microphone and corrected that the motion would only end the lawsuits, not other efforts to regain the institutions.

MBC leaders continued for years to make this claim of having no other option. In the MBC’s official Agency Restoration Group video report at the 2013 annual gathering, MBC employee Rob Phillips called the lawsuits “a last resort” to regain the institutions.

“We all know that legal actions were a last resort,” Phillips repeated in the next year’s video report, before repeating the “last resort” claim in the 2015, 2017, and 2018 video reports.

John Yeats, MBC executive director, also voiced this claim in the 2016 video report: “It’s good to keep in mind that after all other efforts were exhausted, litigation was always our last resort.”

However, more than five years after that “last resort” against WBCC ended, the MBC managed to regain the campground without the expense of CP-funded lawsuits against individuals and others. Yeats did not respond to a Word&Way request for comment. **WWW**



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# FAITH FOR THOSE WITHOUT EARS TO HEAR

By Jana Bennett  
*The Conversation*



**F**or years, my husband would say after we returned from the church, “I thought the sermon was good.” To that, I would reply, “I didn’t hear the sermon, as usual.”

As a person with a severe to profound hearing loss, I nearly left the church out of frustration and anger. In addition to hymns, spoken readings, and testimonies, Christian

worship focuses on the spoken word. As scripture says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

I am not alone in feeling discouraged by so much focus on the word of God and spoken words in Christian tradition. Many people with hearing loss leave or disengage

from their Christian faith. But that doesn’t have to happen. As a theologian, I study how adults with hearing loss worldwide engage with their Christian faith through unique forms of worship and contemplative prayer, and I have found examples of holy people who experienced hearing loss.

One popular deaf Christian organization,

Silent Blessings Deaf Ministries, estimates that as many as 4% of Christians worldwide are profoundly deaf. That number doesn't include the people who have milder hearing loss, or older adults who experience hearing loss later in life. About 13% of Americans experience some hearing loss, which can affect their ability to participate in worship.

A 1997 National Council of Churches document on deafness describes the frustrations of people with conventional church services that emphasize spoken words. One woman who lost some hearing later in life said: "I was very active in the church, taught Sunday School for many years, and served on the boards of various women's groups. But then I started to lose my hearing and stopped understanding what was going on. I became very depressed and isolated. I don't go to church any more."

The biblical stories recounted in some scriptures also can feel alienating to deaf and hard-of-hearing people, according to theologian Wayne Morris. In his 2008 book on deaf Christianity, Morris describes, as an example, how the story of Moses and the burning bush might be received in a deaf congregation. In it, Moses covers his eyes when he encounters God in the burning bush. Yet no person with deafness could stand to cover their eyes: Sight is what enables hearing-impaired people to navigate the world.

Other scriptures even name hearing loss as indicating separation from God. In Psalm 58:3-4, God's chosen people of Israel are compared negatively to a deaf person. "The wicked go astray from the womb; they err from their birth, speaking lies. They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ears."

And Jesus repeatedly tells his listeners: "Whoever has ears, let them hear."

### Worship Services

As a result of the challenges they face in churches that emphasize spoken words, deaf people might choose worship services led by deaf pastors, or hearing churches whose worship styles engage all five senses of the body rather than focusing on hearing alone.

A hearing church that adds a signing interpreter but that maintains reliance on spoken words isn't necessarily being welcoming. This can make people with hearing loss feel like they need to be "fixed," or "made able" to attend hearing worship.

A deaf worship service includes not only the deaf, but those who appreciate a worship that involves more than just the sense of hearing. There are several church communities that do signed worship. There are also emerging translations of the Bible, including one in American sign language and a few other languages.

During a deaf worship service, praying happens with open eyes and with lots of signing. Hands are often raised up to sign a joyful "alleluia" to God. In fact, the whole

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**I listen with my whole body. My eyes see the joy, pain and sorrow sometimes hidden in the words as the ears of my heart listen and read the body language of the speaker.**

congregation creates a mosaic of gestures that praise God. Silence is not required in order to hear the pastor speaking from pulpit.

### Experiencing Silence

People with hearing loss may find access to faith in the Christian tradition of silence, too. Christian contemplative prayer, which developed among monks in the third and fourth centuries, celebrates silence as an essential part of prayer to God. The 20th-century monk Thomas Merton, who is known for his contemplative and mystical spirit, once observed the ways words can even divide people from God.

"When we have really met and known the world in silence, words do not separate us from the world nor from other people, nor from God, nor from ourselves because we no longer trust entirely in language to contain reality," he wrote in 1956.

Some deaf Christians see not hearing as a gift from God.

"He has created me with ears that hear what people REALLY say, for in my intensity to hear I listen not just with mechanically assisted hearing," the deaf pastor Elizabeth von Trapp said in a 1999 interview whether disability could be a gift from God. "I listen with my whole body. My eyes see the joy, pain and sorrow sometimes hidden in the words as the ears of my heart listen and read the body language of the speaker."

For Christians like von Trapp and Merton, silence can enable a person be a better witness to the world around them.

The Catholic Church recognizes some saints who were deaf. Saint Teresa de Cartagena, a nun who lived in 15th-century Spain, lost her hearing in childhood. She wrote *Grove of the Infirm*, a book about disability and faith, sometime between 1450 and 1460. Teresa writes of her deafness as a great good because it leads her toward God. She explained that "God has placed such cloisters on my hearing" so that she could "maintain complete silence in order to better understand" an inner spiritual life with God.

The 16th-century Saint Teresa of Avila similarly found her tinnitus — a ringing in the ears often associated with hearing loss — "no hindrance either to my prayer or to what I am saying now, but the tranquility and love in my soul are quite unaffected, and so are its desires and clearness of mind."

An Italian woman, Benedetta Bianchi Porro, was recently declared blessed, a step before being named a saint, on Sept. 14, 2019. Porro experienced progressive deafness beginning at age 15 as a result of polio. She sought healing in 1963 for deafness, along with other conditions associated with the disease, at Lourdes, a shrine in France that people visit in hopes of being healed of various diseases. While there, she wrote a letter to a friend saying that she had received a miracle — not of recovery from deafness but of an understanding of the "richness of my condition."

Porro isn't the only Christian to learn that being deaf can deepen one's faith. For me, finding a worship service that emphasizes all five senses and discovering that the silence I live because I am deaf has helped me embrace Christianity instead of leaving it behind. Rather than fixing hearing loss or seeing deafness as a sign of God's disfavor, the faith of deaf and hard-of-hearing Christians brings new understandings about God to the world. **WW**

## JESUS IN *Sign Language*

By Jack Jenkins,  
*Religion News Service*

**D**eaf Missions, an Iowa-based Christian group that claims “only 2%” of 70 million deaf people around the world “have been introduced to Jesus.” Since about 80 percent of deaf children globally do not have access to formal education to learn to read and since 95 percent of the 400 global sign languages have no Bible translation, the group is producing a film on Jesus for those who are deaf.

Gideon Firl, who attends a Church of the Brethren congregation in Frederick, Maryland, portrays the titular Christ in a pilot version of the film that focuses on the biblical story of a woman who committed adultery. With enough funding, they are hoping to expand production to chronicle Jesus’s entire life as told in American Sign Language.

“The Bible is wonderful, but (some) people don’t have language to read it, so we focus on presenting it in ASL,” Firl said. “I’m a little biased, but I think the Bible is best told in sign language.”

When asked how communicating in ASL alters his experience with scripture, Firl instructed an interpreter who had been vocalizing Firl’s signs to stop. Then Firl began to sign theatrically, adding dramatic flourishes and gestures to his words. His exact phrasing was unclear to those unschooled in ASL, but his meaning was easy to parse: In the midst of darkness, a tiny ball of light burned; then a figure emerged to lead others away.

“Jesus came to show us the way,” Firl said, permitting the interpreter to speak again. He smiled as he appeared to paraphrase a quote from the Gospel of John: “(He is) the light, and the light in our lives.”

“I feel like sign language is in a way universal,” he added. “There’s something there that everyone can understand.” **WW**

# *Silent Revival*

By Luis Andres Henao  
*Associated Press*

**T**he Lord’s Prayer ended with the bang of dozens of fists that landed on open palms after a circular motion and a thumbs up in a joint “Amen!” Not a voice could be heard inside the cavernous sanctuary of Holyrod Episcopal Church-Iglesia Santa Cruz in Manhattan, New York. There was no need for words: From the altar, the deaf congregants led the hearing ones, who from the wooden pews repeated the silent movement of their hands.

Music, sermons, prayers, even confessions make up much of the experience of a typical religious service. So, for the deaf, how does faith flourish in an environment that so revolves around sound?

The deaf worshippers at Holyrod in the northern edge of Manhattan say that what might be considered a limitation has strengthened their sense of community, and expanded their understanding of

God, and the sacred gift of silence in a noisy world.

During a recent Sunday service, deaf and hearing worshippers sung and signed hymns, offered the sign of peace bringing palms together with a twisting motion — and joyfully waved their hands high in the air in a sign-language equivalent of applause.

“When I sign the music and the hymns to God, I actually feel the Holy Spirit with me. I give my all to him,” said Lidia Martinez, 54, who spoke to the AP through her daughter, who is a sign language interpreter.

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, Martinez felt alienated from her faith because she was deaf. When she moved to the U.S. in 1993, she continued to feel like an outsider in a hearing church.

“I remember going to other churches and sitting in the benches and not knowing what they were saying because





Worshippers Carlos Tirado (left) and Lidia Martinez (second from left) sign in response to a sermon at Holyrood Episcopal Church-Iglesia Santa Cruz on Dec. 15, 2019. (Jessie Wardarski/Associated Press)

**400**

sign languages  
worldwide

**70**

million deaf  
people

**0**

complete Bibles  
in sign language

**2%**

of deaf people globally have  
been introduced to Jesus

there were no interpreters available,” she said. “It was really hard to follow the Mass with just the readings.”

After visiting multiple churches, she walked into Holyrood last year. That’s when she saw the Rev. Maria Santiviago signing from the pulpit.

“It was heartwarming to have her interpret the Mass,” Martinez said about Santiviago, a 77-year-old Paraguayan who came out of retirement to help lead the ministry for the deaf. “Before I wasn’t understanding anything. This was like a Eureka moment.”

Now, her whole family is part of the Holyrood community. They recently walked into the church past the Nativity scene and a brightly lit Christmas tree and sat in the front pews, illuminated by sunlight from colorful stained-glass windows. Her husband, Carlos Tirado, 54, who is also deaf, signed. Her daughter Leisha Martinez,

and her granddaughters, Arly Gordon and Lyann Gordon, who can hear, sang along.

Facing them — and all the deaf worshippers — stood her eldest daughter, Diely Martinez, an American Sign Language/Spanish medical interpreter, who now volunteers at the Sunday Mass.

“I want (God) to touch their lives,” she said. “So, it’s more than interpreting. It’s a calling.”

During the service, the Rev. Luis Barrios asked the deaf and hearing worshippers to form a prayer chain around a congregant who fears that she’s also losing her sight.

The Sunday service for the deaf and a weekday American Sign Language classes have helped once-dwindling attendance to rise at the Gothic Revival-style church.

“God can also be found in the silence,” Santiviago said. “We’re empowering their language.”

Holyrood, which is located in the mostly

Latino neighborhood of Washington Heights, also takes pride in being a sanctuary church for immigrants and fully trilingual in English, Spanish, and ASL.

“We have revived this church. We wanted the church to support the people,” Barrios, who is from Puerto Rico, said. “We need to find ways to make changes so the church remains relevant.”

He said that they still hope to reach out to more children and teenagers.

Technological advances, including apps for texting and talking, continue to help the deaf and hard of hearing worldwide. But, Diely Martinez said, a church for the deaf and hearing — like Holyrood — is vital.

“Every Sunday, we come here and we’re a family. It can be deaf friends; it can be my immediate family. But not only that,” she said. “I can see how the hearing people are more accepting of the deaf, and that’s very touching. They come together.” **WW**



# NOT FAKING THE WORD

By Caroline Anderson  
*International Mission Board*

**S**ombat Apichai\* understood only 50 percent of the Thai Sign Language interpretation of the sermon at his church in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The sermon was translated into what is known as word signing, which is in Thai word order, and is different from Thai Sign Language, thus making the translation choppy. To complicate things further, Thai religious vocabulary is hard to understand, even for hearing Thais.

Sombat and other deaf Christians were unable to truly connect or intimately worship God because they didn't fully understand and were never disciplined. They didn't really have a way to contribute or volunteer at church. They felt disconnected and isolated from the hearing members of their church.

Sombat and his wife, Alisara,\* met Victor and Madeline Hawthorne,\* workers with the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board, who invited them to Story One, a new church for the deaf. The Hawthornes introduced them to Bible stories in Thai Sign Language.

Astonished, Sombat noticed the

Hawthornes followed the Bible exactly when they signed, and they signed the story in the deaf style — not in word-for-word sign like his hearing church did with their sign language interpretation. Sombat and Alisara started attending a camp the Hawthorne's hosted that taught deaf Christians how to craft Bible stories in Thai Sign Language.

'Crafting' is a multi-step process to transform a two-dimensional written text into three-dimensional communication via drawing, dramatization, and dialogue. The aim is to accurately and clearly communicate the Bible in deaf people's heart languages, which utilizes these three elements.

### **Equality in the Family of God**

Believers at the camp were empowered to dissect Scripture and understand it for themselves. The Hawthornes gave them background to the Old Testament to help them as they crafted stories. The process was time-consuming and difficult, but empowering.

The faith of Sombat, Alisara, and other deaf Christians flourished, and they realized they could play a vital role

in the church and in the fulfilling of the Great Commission.

"When I joined the Story One church, it was the first time that I felt like I was equal in God's eyes to a hearing person, and I was able to, for the first time, serve in a church without fear," Alisara said.

The Christians met in the Hawthorne's house. But it was far away from most of the members' homes. They started meeting after work on Saturday in the food courts of shopping malls — often late into the night — until the mall security guard motioned for them to leave because the mall was closing.

Eventually, the believers were able to rent property in a neighborhood for their church. They now have a vibrant church that is deaf-led, with equal participation and shared leadership. Their church services look different than traditional church services. Members can't sit passively in this church, Sombat says.

They meet on Saturday nights, which is when most members have time off from work. The believers eat dinner and fellowship with one another prior to the service. The members sit in a

circle, so they can all see each other as they sign. Their core group of six Christians in their twenties and thirties alternate in their roles. Each week, one member is the storyteller, and another member does the dialogue.

The storyteller signs the Bible story multiple times to help members commit it to memory. The person in charge of dialogue is responsible for making sure that everyone has the chance to participate, that all words in the story are discussed, and that everyone understands the story and isn't just 'faking' understanding. The person in charge of the dialogue also makes sure all of the signs in the story are correct.

Sombat and Alisara said deaf Christians often feign understanding in mixed congregations of hearing and deaf Christians because there isn't usually time to ask questions, and if there is an opportunity to ask, there aren't many hearing church members who are able to communicate the real meaning in Thai Sign Language.

But at their Saturday night church services, "Nobody goes away just faking

understanding. It's a true understanding. I can see in their expression and how they sign their responses," Sombat said. "I don't know their heart, but I know that at least they're receiving God's word."

After the dialogue and practice, the storyteller tells the story again. After that, they discuss the characteristics of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit that they find in the story. A person who hasn't yet signed the story then signs the entire story to cement biblical truths in the story. Another person retells the story, and they enter into a time of reflection.

Each member reflects on the Bible story and shares how they are going to change. They discuss the areas in their lives where they need to repent, and the areas where they need accountability. Lastly, the person who was in charge of dialogue signs the story a final time.

By the end of the service, church members see the story six or seven times, if not more. The deaf are visual learners, and reading isn't part of their heart language, so memorization and repetition are important.

After closing in prayer, they sign worship songs. The members are encouraged to share that week's Bible story with someone else. Sombat and Alisara work at a hotel, and they share the stories with other deaf staff there and in the market near their house.

Beyond sharing the gospel among the deaf in Thailand, Story One church members are also sharing a message of empowerment to Christians in Nepal and Indonesia. Sombat and Alisara compare their ministry strategy to when Jesus sent out the seventy-two in Luke 10. He first equipped them, then sent them out to spread the gospel message. Believers at Story One church recently had the chance to coach and equip Nepali deaf Christians who traveled to Thailand to learn from their church model.

"We were able to share how we are empowered in Christ and have freedom even though we are still oppressed by hearing people," Alisara said. **WW**

*\* Names changed for security*



# IRANIAN CULTURAL SITES INCLUDE IMPORTANT *Religious* LANDMARKS

By Yonat Shimron  
*Religion News Service*

**W**hen President Donald Trump tweeted on Jan. 4 about the possibility of retaliatory strikes on “52 Iranian sites,” including some that are important to “the Iranian culture,” the world reacted with alarm. Strikes on cultural sites are considered illegal — some would even say a war crime. The U.S. is a signatory to several international agreements, including the 1954 Hague Convention, which calls on warring parties “to protect cultural property.”

Trump’s own defense secretary, Mark Esper, followed up on Jan. 6 by saying the United States would not target Iranian cultural sites, should Tehran retaliate for America’s targeted killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

But scholars say it’s important to distinguish today’s Iranian leadership from the rich legacy of Persian culture, which predates the rise of Shiite theocracy, Islam, even monotheism.

Iran is part of the cradle of civilization, the place where civilization is understood to have emerged. Its history goes back at least 2,000 years before the rise of Islam.

The country, which is about twice the size of Texas, has many religious sites important

to Jews and Christians, too. Many pointed out that Iran has 22 cultural UNESCO World Heritage Sites. But in addition, a number of its religious landmarks continue to function as places of worship and pilgrimage.

“They’re not just cordoned off but are woven into the fabric of everyday life,” said Seema Golestaneh, assistant professor of Middle East studies at Cornell University.

Golestaneh compared the threat of attacking these sites to “threatening to bomb Notre Dame or the Sistine Chapel.” Thousands of people took to Twitter in the wake of the president’s tweet using the hashtag #IranianCulturalSites to post photos of their favorite Iranian landmarks. Here are six that serve as important religious sites:

## **Fire Temple of Yazd**

Long before Islam became ascendant, Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion in Iran. In Zoroastrianism, human life is a struggle between good and evil, truth and deceit, light and darkness. Fire is sacred to Zoroastrians as a symbol of truth, and fire temples began to emerge around the fifth century B.C.

Zoroastrian fire temples can be found in many places across Iran but this brick Zoroastrian temple holds a fire that has burned for more than 1,500 years. This fire, located in Yazd to the east of Shiraz, has burned since 470, during the reign of the Sasanian Empire.

## **The Tomb of Esther and Mordechai**

Located in Hamadan, the tomb is believed by some to house the remains of the biblical Queen Esther and her cousin (or by some accounts, uncle) Mordechai. It is the most important pilgrimage site for Jews in the country.

Esther, as described in the Bible, was the Jewish queen of the Persian king Ahasuerus. In the Book of Esther, Mordechai informs her of a plot to kill the Jews, and together they work to save Jews throughout the Persian Empire from annihilation.

The exact date of the 50-foot-tall brick dome’s origin is disputed. An outer chamber holds tombs of famous rabbis. The interior chamber features Hebrew writing along the walls and holds two carved sarcophagi, with the two burial plots for Esther and Mordechai.

**The Tomb of Daniel**

There are many places that claim to be the traditional burial place of the biblical prophet Daniel, but this one, in Susa, Iran, is the most widely accepted. According to the biblical book by the same name, Daniel was taken to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem. There, he was rescued from lions with the aid of the prophet Jeremiah. The apocalyptic genre of the Book of Daniel is important to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Above the mausoleum of Daniel is a conical-shaped building.



*The Tomb of Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae, Iran. (Bernd81/Creative Commons)*

**The Tomb of Cyrus the Great**

Many prominent white evangelical leaders have compared Trump to King Cyrus, who became the first emperor of Persia. Cyrus is celebrated multiple times in the Bible for freeing a population of Jews who were held captive in Babylon — an act some consider to have made him anointed by God. Cyrus died in 530 B.C. and is buried in Pasargadae, an archaeological site about 56 miles from the modern city of Shiraz. According to literary sources, more than two centuries later, Alexander the Great ordered his tomb to be restored.

**Vank Cathedral in Isfahan, also known as Holy Savior Cathedral**

Vank means “monastery” or “convent” in the Armenian language, and this one is especially important to Armenians who are part of the Armenian Apostolic Church. There are a total of 16 Armenian churches in the New Julfa region on the outskirts of Isfahan. Murals adorn the walls of the cathedral with gold inlay. The cathedral was completed in 1664 and includes a bell tower, built in 1702. It is still used.



*The Tomb of Daniel in Susa, Iran. (Meysam Ebrahimi/Creative Commons)*



*The Tomb of Esther and Mordechai in Hamadan, Iran. (Zahramoradii/Creative Commons)*

**The Imam Reza Shrine**

Many Shiite Muslims revere the 12 successors to the Prophet Muhammad as divinely ordained leaders. Only one of the 12 is buried in Iran — Imam Reza, who was the eighth imam. (Shrines to the other 11 imams are in Iraq and Saudi Arabia.) The Imam Reza shrine, a huge complex containing a mausoleum, a museum, and a library in the city of Mashhad, is a massive pilgrimage site that attracts upward of 25 million visitors a year. It is one of the most important Muslim shrines in the country. **WW**



*The interior of Vank Cathedral in Isfahan, Iran. (Bernard Gagnon/Creative Commons)*

# PROTESTANT PASTORS DON'T THINK GEOPOLITICS

## CAN SPEED SECOND COMING

By Jack Jenkins  
Religion News Service

**A** new survey of American Protestant pastors by LifeWay Research of the Southern Baptist Convention reveals that most don't believe they can speed up Christ's return by supporting geopolitical changes mentioned in the Bible, but most predict the world will enter a period of moral decline before Jesus comes back. According to the poll, which was released on Jan. 14, only 12% of Protestant pastors in the U.S. said they strongly (5%) or somewhat (7%) agree with the idea that Christians can hasten the Second Coming by backing particular international political developments.

The survey did not name any specific events sometimes associated with bringing about Christ's return, such as activities in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. In his 2006 book, *Jerusalem*

*Countdown*, televangelist John Hagee described a future situation in which an Israeli or U.S. strike against Iran would set in motion an "inferno (that) will explode across the Middle East, plunging the world toward Armageddon." Similarly, Southern Baptist pastor Robert Jeffress, a spiritual confidant of President Donald Trump, argued in 2014 that then-President Barack Obama was "paving the way" for the Antichrist — a precursor to the end times — by supporting same-sex marriage.

While LifeWay's survey suggested few clergy would make similar claims today, it also noted variations. Pastors with no college degree were listed as more likely to agree (22%) that Christians can hasten the Second Coming by supporting certain geopolitical events than those with a bachelor's degree (10%) or a master's degree

(10%). What's more, pastors age 65 and older were more likely (16%) to agree than pastors age 18-44 (9%). Lutherans were the most opposed to the idea, with 92% of those surveyed saying they somewhat or strongly disagreed.

By contrast, 41% of pastors strongly (28%) or somewhat (13%) agreed with the idea that Christians can speed up the return of Christ by sharing the gospel with all people. Pastors age 65 and older were the most likely to agree (52%), and once again education appeared to play a role in shifting sentiments: Pastors with no college degree were more likely (56%) to agree than those with a bachelor's degree (35%) or a master's degree (38%).

Among religious groups, Pentecostals were the most likely to agree with the idea, with 66% arguing that widespread evangelism will bring about Christ's return. Many Christians point to verses in the biblical Book of Revelation that refer to members of "every nation" standing before God, believing it implies the need for widespread conversion.

Most pastors also espoused a gloomy outlook for the world's ethical future: 20% agreed somewhat and 47% strongly agreed that culture will increasingly get less moral until Jesus Christ returns. Even so, the concept exposed theological divides: Evangelical pastors were listed as far more likely to agree than mainline pastors — 80% compared with 51%. In addition, male pastors were far more likely (72%) to agree than female pastors (44%). **WW**

### Speed up the Second Coming?

Among Protestant pastors

"Christians can speed up the return of Jesus Christ by supporting geo-political changes mentioned in the Bible."



"Christians can speed up the return of Christ by helping to share the Gospel with all people groups."



Agree Disagree Not sure

# Faith, POLITICS, & REGGAE

By Brian Kaylor  
Word&Way Editor

**T**hroughout 2020, *Word&Way* will consider the intersections of faith and politics by exploring how Baptists in other countries engage — or not — in their political systems. This month, we look at Jamaica.

When one lands on the island of Jamaica, the music greets your ears and even seems to pulse through the ground. At night, the hills are alive as the music continues. And often the music in this highly-religious nation offers praise to God.

Baptists make up about eight percent of the population, coming in as the third-largest religious group — just behind Seventh-day Adventists and at about half the size of the Church of God. Christians account for about two-thirds of the population, with those with of no affiliation (21 percent) and other religious groups making up the rest, including Rastas, Muslims, Buddhists, and more. With such numbers, Baptists and other Protestants often populate the Parliament and other key political leadership roles.

Eron Henry, a Jamaican Baptist leader who has lived in the U.S. for several years as he led communication efforts for the Baptist World Alliance, said that since “Jamaica is a highly-religious country,” even though the government is secular “it is not unusual for persons of faith, ordained

or lay, to hold political office.”

“Christian leaders are often named to government or quasi-government bodies such as boards, commissions, inquiries, etc.,” he explained. “In more recent times, Jamaica Baptist Union General Secretary Karl Johnson and former president Devon Dick served on such boards or commissions. Prior to becoming BWA general secretary, Neville Callam was the first board chair of the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica, a government company.”

Henry added that before he moved to the U.S. to work for the BWA, he had been “approached directly by a former prime minister to run for office” but didn’t. He said that while he’s heard of other pastors also being approached, he’s not sure the Baptist convention would approve of pastors running for political office. They have, however, served in appointed roles, and lay Baptists have run for office.

The longest-serving prime minister since the nation gained independence from Britain in 1962, was a Baptist: P.J. Patterson, who served from 1992-2005, as he led the liberal People’s National Party. Another prime minister was also a Baptist: Hugh Shearer, who served from 1967-1972 while leading the conservative Jamaica Labour Party. That means that Baptists have accounted for more

than 20 percent of the nation’s prime ministers, while less than 10 percent of U.S. presidents have been Baptists (Warren Harding, Harry Truman, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton).

Dick, a recent JBU president and the pastor at Boulevard Baptist Church in Kingston, called Patterson “a pride of Jamaica” who “called for civility on the political landscape.”

“The present Jamaican political landscape could benefit from an attitude wherein there is discussion and debate over ideas, policies, and programs without distasteful comments and commentary and no dismissive posture or divisiveness,” Dick added. “This ought to be based on our common humanity of being made in the image of God with all having equal dignity and all deserving of respect.”

Other Baptists have also served in key political roles. Henry pointed to two senators in addition to Patterson and Shearer as prominent Baptist politicians. (Senators in Jamaica are not popularly elected but appointed; 13 to represent the party in the House of Representatives that has the most elected members, and 8 to represent the next party that serves as key opposition in the House.)

Errol Miller, a Baptist deacon and senator, served as the first head of the Electoral Commission of Jamaica that has overseen Jamaican elections

since 2006. Henry added that under Miller’s leadership, the ECJ gained a reputation “globally as one of the prime examples of how to plan and run clean and fair elections.”

Henry and Dick both mentioned C. Sam Reid, who not only served as a Jamaican Senator but also as president of the Jamaica Baptist Union, president of the Jamaica Council of Churches, and vice president of the BWA. Dick said Reid was “courageous and a visionary leader.”

### ADDRESSING SOCIAL ILLS

Henry and Dick both noted that Baptist individuals continue to engage in Jamaican politics, particularly to advocate on critical issues impacting the nation. The third-most populous English-speaking country in the Americas (after the U.S. and Canada), Jamaica continues to struggle with poverty and crime — an image far different than the relaxing beach life popularized in ads for high-end resorts and cruises. Its murder rate of about 62 per 100,000 people is one of the highest in the world — usually putting it at or near the top of the list each year with El Salvador, Honduras, and Venezuela. Gang violence particularly fuels the violence in Jamaica.

Additionally, just miles from international tourists enjoying fruity cocktails and beautiful beaches, many Jamaicans live in poverty. About 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty line of less than \$5.50 per day (or about \$2,000 per year).

Those social issues monopolize the attention of Baptists and other Christians as they press for political action.

“Jamaican Baptists have been active politically,” Henry said. “Baptists may lobby or advocate on issues and positions. In the past, gambling was a major issue that the church, Baptists included, took strong positions on. Another was politically-motivated violence.”

Dick also noted that “Baptists have been speaking about the high homicide rate.” At the same time, he said that such advocacy doesn’t really

come from the Baptist convention.

“The Jamaica Baptist Union rarely deals with such issues but rather allows the Jamaica Council of Churches to speak on its behalf.”

“**Gambling was a major issue that the church, Baptists included, took strong positions on. Another was politically motivated violence.**”

But that does not stop Dick and other individual Baptist pastors from speaking out. Since 1995, Dick writes a weekly column for the largest newspaper in the Caribbean in which, he said, he “largely deals with the issue of faith and politics.” And last year, his third book was published, *Enduring Advocacy for a Better Jamaica*. A compilation of many of his columns from *The Gleaner*, the book covers a variety of topics like justice, politics, education, religion, sports, and economics. He said he wants his columns to “influence and transform the society for good so that there’s equality and there’s justice for all.”

Issues of church-state relations remain a bit more nuanced. The constitution offers religious freedom and outlaws religious discrimination, though that has not always been actually implemented for religious minorities like the Rastas. But it does not go as far as the U.S.’s constitution in preventing religious establishment. Henry noted that and said that although there is some church-state separation and “religious liberty is generally respected,” it is different than in the U.S. since church-state separation in Jamaica

is more “practice and not policy.” He added that Baptists in Jamaica hold to the idea that “the government cannot dictate to faith groups on matters of belief, practice, and governance.”

“Most prominent cases of religious concerns had to do with Rastafarian self-expressions, such as locs hairstyle, which in the past posed problems for schoolchildren and places of employment,” he added. “I’m unaware of the current regulations concerning students wearing locs. Seventh-day Adventists have had issues with employers enforcing work on Saturdays, contrary to their faith tradition.”

Dick pointed to ways church-state separation does not occur in Jamaica, including that “a church body works with government in planning national worship services” and the “church does devotions at schools.” In fact, the public school curriculum includes religious education and some of the public schools are even operated by religious institutions.

### A NATIONAL HERO

In addition to many recent Baptists in politics, Jamaican Baptists also point to a significant 19th century figure who is recognized as one of seven people in the “Order of National Hero,” the highest honor given to a Jamaican citizen. Samuel Sharpe, an enslaved Baptist deacon and preacher, played an influential role in ending slavery in Jamaica and other parts of the British Empire. Today, his image is on the \$50 Jamaican banknote.

In December 1831, Sharpe led a strike for wages among enslaved persons in Jamaica. The movement, often called the “Baptist War” due to the leadership of Baptists like Sharpe, ended in May 1832 with around 600 enslaved persons, including Sharpe, executed and hundreds of churches and church properties destroyed. The brutality in response to Sharpe’s mostly nonviolent movement sparked a backlash among the British public that resulted in the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.

“Sam Sharpe is commonly regarded as a deacon, a preacher, a liberator, a



national hero — these are roles that define him,” explained Delroy Reid-Salmon, a Jamaican who authored a 2012 book on Sharpe’s revolt, *Burning for Freedom*. “These roles, of course, followed by the term — I call it a derogatory term, dehumanizing term — a slave.”

Reid-Salmon, a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent’s Park College in the United Kingdom and pastor of Grace Baptist Chapel in New York, explained Sharpe’s significance: “What Moses was to his people is what Sharpe was to those who were in slavery in the British Empire.” Reid-Salmon added, however, that Sharpe did not allow his enslavement to define him and “never regarded himself or his fellow strugglemen as slaves or enslaved persons.”

“This condition did not define him,” Reid-Salmon added. “The idea of freedom is what defined Sharpe.”

“Sharpe was free long before slavery was abolished,” Reid-Salmon insisted. “And the abolition of slavery did not free him. It was he that freed the slavers and the system of slavery.”

Garnett Roper, president of the Jamaica Theological Seminary in Kingston, is particularly drawn to the fact that Sharpe used nonviolent means to challenge the violent system of slavery. The numerous violent revolts from enslaved persons in the Caribbean had merely sparked more violence in response, Roper said. Sharpe instead led a nonviolent movement to bring about an end to a violent system.

“Violence in response to violence as a methodology had exhausted itself,” Roper explained. “Violence produces more violence. It neither succeeded in overthrowing slavery nor in getting the enslaved to accept their lot.”

“The most striking thing, to me, about Creole Sam Sharpe is that he stands out as a gentle man in a world of remarkable savagery,” Roper added. “The means we use must resemble the ends we seek — that is the real genius of Sharpe.”

Noting that Sharpe organized his revolution after a prayer meeting,

Reid-Salmon praised Sharpe’s faith.

“His life and work bore witness to the liberated Christ through events that corresponded to Christ’s life,” Reid-Salmon said. “His faith was what defined him, who he was — defined both his identity and his destiny.”

Roper, similarly, noted how Sharpe’s Baptist faith rested at the heart of his revolutionary effort and his view that slavery was inherently sinful. Roper said Sharpe centered his anti-slavery position on the admonition of Jesus that “no man can serve two masters.” Arguing that only Christ could be one’s master, Sharpe insisted that an enslaved person could therefore not also serve a slave master. Thus, Sharpe’s movement didn’t demand freedom but instead announced they were already free and needed back pay for the work already done.

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**Because of the resurrection of Jesus, injustice is on the way out and justice is on the way in.**

“The genius of Sharpe is that he rooted his rejection of enslavement and his resistance against slavery in the nature of God,” Roper explained.

Roper hopes Christians today will find inspiration in Sharpe’s approach to advocacy. Explaining how scripture raised Sharpe’s consciousness to see the injustice of slavery, Roper suggested that churches today need to use Bible study in similar ways.

“There is a need for the church to develop within the life of the congregation tools for moral development, moral positioning, and moral engagement in relation to the broader society,” Roper said. “There is a need for Bible study to be used

as an instrument of catechism to the church ... but, more importantly, as a tool of consciousness-raising. Bible study must awaken and sharpen God’s people in relation to things as they are.”

Connecting this principle to economic inequality in Jamaica as a form of violence, Roper urged Jamaican churches to discover Sharpe’s moral courage: “These are the realities to which the church in Jamaica is called upon to respond by bringing the grace and power of God to bear upon these realities and liberate and then transform the world.”

Other official national heroes of Jamaica were also Baptists, including Paul Bogle, who led an 1865 march to protest against injustice and was hanged by the British; and George William Gordon, who was also executed for his leadership in the peaceful 1865 march. Bogle is on the 10-cent coin and Gordon on the \$10 coin.

For Dick, social ills today cannot be divorced from religious concerns or historical factors that Sharpe confronted. At last year’s BWA annual gathering in the Bahamas, he made the case for reparations for slavery. He mentioned that the British gave reparations for the slaveholders when the enslaved in Jamaica were set free but never for those formerly enslaved.

“The present challenge for Baptists is that there is no place to remain silent or neutral in relation to the issue of reparations,” he said. “Reparations is about vindication for persons who are victims and not compensated. Reparations is based on justice, which presupposes the equality of all races and equity for the disadvantaged.”

“Those who struggle for justice never struggle alone, but God struggles with you. God is on the side of justice,” he added. “Because of the resurrection of Jesus, injustice is on the way out and justice is on the way in. Injustice carries the seed of its own destruction because Jesus has defeated, disarmed, and disgraced the principalities and powers.” [www](#)

# Q&A

# Interview:

## with Holly Hollman of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

Interview by Brian Kaylor



**Holly Hollman serves as general counsel and associate executive director for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.**

**She has worked for BJC for 19 years as the group advocates for religious liberty for all.**

**Word&Way Editor Brian Kaylor interviewed Hollman in January. This interview has been edited for clarity.**

**You are the general counsel and associate executive director for BJC. So, what does that involve?**

BJC is a historic religious liberty organization that stands up for faith, freedom for all, and has done so for eight decades. BJC has always had policy people and, for most of its history, lawyers on staff so that in the promotion of religious liberty we are ready to engage in policy debates, things that happen in Congress and in the administrative branches — the executive branch in Washington — as well as at the Supreme Court.

In my role as general counsel and associate executive director, I get to help decide what cases, what policy issues we will get involved in order to defend religious liberty for all people in the historic Baptist tradition. That tradition that says all people should be free, our conscience is should be respected, and government should keep a safe distance from the institutions of religion so that religion can flourish on

its own merits.

**After we had scheduled this interview and kind of thought about things we would talk about, more news happened, like on school prayer. This is one of those topics that BJC has been engaged in for literally decades. So, I wonder if you could help us make sense of what happened?**

There's no shortage of religious liberty topics for us to engage in, for us to try to educate the public on, and influence policy makers. And [in January] we had an unexpected one.

There was this leak that the president was going to make a major announcement about religious freedom. And we heard he's going to do something on faith-based organizations and how they operate. And then he had guidelines on religion in public schools. And that idea that there was going to be new guidance on constitutional prayer in schools really got people's attention.

Some people I'm sure learned about that after remarks made at a rally. That's where President Trump said that there was a need to fight efforts to take prayer away, or something like that. And those kinds of claims you hear every once in a while, sometimes just misrepresentations of law, sometimes there'll be an incident someone is talking about.

Frankly, from the church-state perspective that we serve and have long served, the rules for how to treat religion in the public schools have been set for a long time. For about 25 years, there have been guidelines that represent the basic themes of church-state law, Supreme Court precedent on religion in public schools.

And it's largely that, of course, individuals have free speech and free exercise rights that they can exercise

during the school day, before and after the school day. But within reason, because of the context. You can't disrupt class by starting a big prayer and asking all your friends to join in with you, disrupting the very hard algebra test you're in. That's not protected. But there are plenty of ways that students can express their religion at school.

At the same time, it's been very clear since the 1960s that schools cannot sponsor, mandate, or write prayers. And that's what prevents teachers from praying with their students or students using the machinery of the school, you know, over the loudspeaker in the morning. These things that would involve the government — and public schools are an arm of the government — in taking over religious exercises, which of course, would be bad for religion, bad for the school, bad for the diverse student populations in public schools.

The school should serve the religious liberty interest of all students, so no government sponsorship. But plenty of opportunities for religious expression and freedom of students.

So, what are we going to see from the president? We didn't know.

And then when it came out, there are guidelines that largely echo guidelines from the past. Going back to the Clinton era, there were some other guidelines in the Bush era. And, you know, sometimes these presidents put their own slight stamp on them. You might lean a little bit more toward concerns for student expression or a little more toward concerns to stop some governmental abuse. But generally no big fireworks to come out of the Trump guidelines that we see.

**You made the reference to algebra. And, of course, that reminded me of one of my favorite lines by James Dunn,**

**who led BJC for years, about as long as there are math tests, there will be prayer in schools. And so, you know, it's the difference between praying and then the state-sponsored or state-forced religion. And I think that's the line that he was drawing and that you all are continuing to draw today.**

Exactly. It's really quite puzzling for the president or anyone else to suggest that school administrators stop prayer, or that through issuing guidelines he opened the prayer channels. That makes no sense to us Baptists and many religious people from traditions where we're taught to pray without ceasing.

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**It's really quite puzzling for the president or anyone else to suggest that school administrators stop prayer, or that through issuing guidelines he opened the prayer channels.**

We can pray in ways that could not be stopped by school. And for those who pray in different ways, we know that there are opportunities before and after school or during free periods that don't disrupt the academic agenda of the school or any other kind of school priorities.

**So, how did you get into this work?**

I grew up in Southern Baptist life in Jackson, Mississippi. My grandfather was a Baptist preacher, and my parents and my family were, you know, typical Southern Baptists.

It's funny, I say I grew up in a Southern Baptist church in Jackson, Mississippi, or as we called it the time, a

Baptist church. There wasn't all this talk about what's Southern Baptists or not.

So, the idea of religious liberty, especially individual conscience and individual responsibility, was part of my church training, my understanding, my baptism story, all of that. I knew about religious liberty.

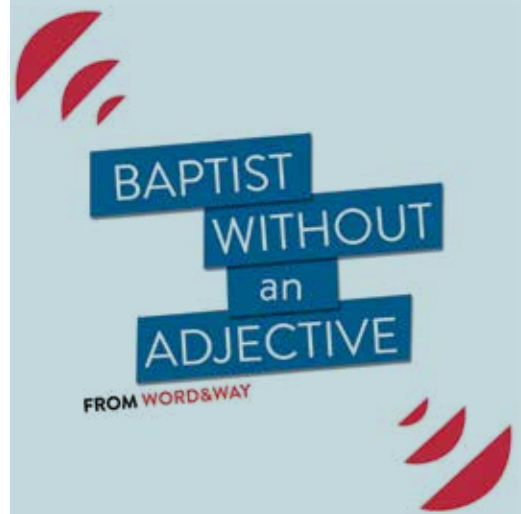
I didn't know about the historical role that Baptists played in preserving religious liberty in our constitutional order until much later, but I had the opportunity after college to intern at BJC. I'm sure I learned about that from someone who had done that at my church or my college or something.

It was just one of a couple of post-college jobs where I was just trying to decide if I wanted to go to law school. But it turned out that Brent Walker and Buzz Thomas and James Dunn would have a real effect on me, not only showing me that, yes, I indeed want to go to law school and I wanted the skills that they have to speak and to write in a way that was persuasive about things that were important. But it affected me and my commitment to religious freedom.

I went on from that experience to law school and private practice where I did more traditional work defending employers and various employment disputes and did contract work and just basic civil litigation work. And then later, when I moved back to Washington with my family, the job came open at BJC. And I had maintained a relationship with Brent Walker, and he got me to come back to this job.

It really fit very well with both something that I cared about very strongly and my professional interest as a lawyer and particularly to be a lawyer in the nation's capital at an organization working on important matters across the government. [WW](#)

*Note: A longer version of this conversation — with discussion about Christian Nationalism and several U.S. Supreme Court cases — can be heard in episode 106 (Jan. 22) of the Word&Way podcast “Baptist Without An Adjective” at [podcast.wordandway.org](#). Learn more about BJC at [bjconline.org](#)*



**CONVERSATIONS**  
crossing the  
**DENOMINATIONAL, ETHNIC,**  
**NATIONAL, & IDEOLOGICAL**  
lines that too often divide us.

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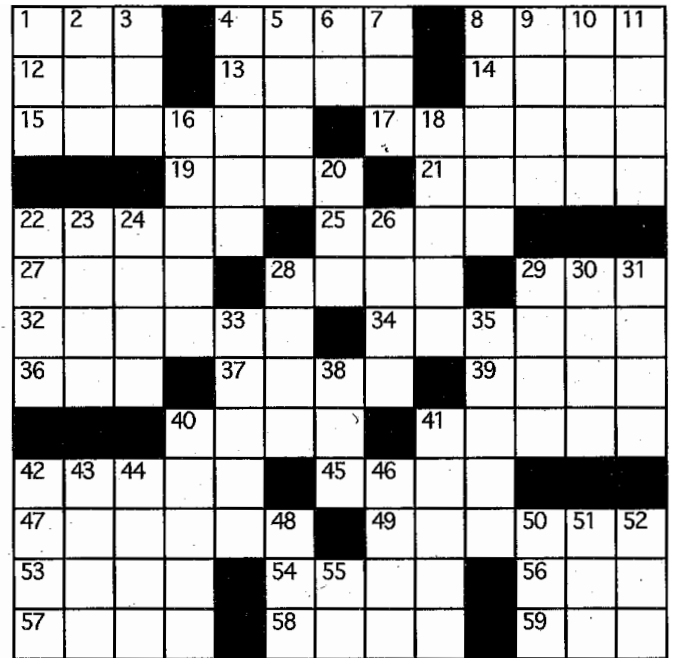


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**Across**

- 1. "For there is nothing ... \_\_\_\_\_, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10:26)
- 4. "Wizards that \_\_\_\_\_, and that mutter" (Isa. 8:19)
- 8. Same, prefix
- 12. "Why make ye this \_\_\_\_\_, and weep?" (Mark 5:39)
- 13. Belonging to Adam's wife
- 14. Book that follows Joel
- 15. Third son of Levi (Gen. 46:11)
- 17. Plan
- 19. Handle of a weapon
- 21. "For, lo, I will \_\_\_\_\_ up a shepherd in the land" (Zech. 11:16)
- 22. An aromatic herb
- 25. "Learn to maintain good works for necessary \_\_\_\_\_" (Titus 3:14)
- 27. "For this \_\_\_\_\_ is Mount Sinai in Arabia" (Gal. 4:25)
- 28. Pocket bread
- 29. "The \_\_\_\_\_ of violence is in their hands" (Isa. 59:6)
- 32. "\_\_\_\_\_ that thou forget not

- the Lord thy God" (Deut. 8:11)
- 34. Father of Mahath (1 Chron. 6:35)
- 36. "\_\_\_\_\_, Lord: yet the dogs ... eat of the children's crumbs" (Mark 7:28)
- 37. "Then Pharaoh's \_\_\_\_\_ was come forth out of Egypt" (Jer. 37:5)
- 39. "Let us not \_\_\_\_\_ it, but casts lots for it" (John 19:24)
- 40. "Which in other \_\_\_\_\_ was not made known unto the sons of men" (Eph. 3:5)
- 41. "Not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly \_\_\_\_\_" (1 Tim. 2:9)
- 42. "As I wrote \_\_\_\_\_ in few words" (Eph. 3:3)
- 45. Angel's aura
- 47. "\_\_\_\_\_ the spoil of your enemies with your brethren" (Josh. 22:8)
- 49. "Their \_\_\_\_\_ are desolate" (Zeph. 3:6)
- 53. Thoroughfares, abbr.



See answers on page 39

- 54. Existed
- 56. Furnish with special gear
- 57. Only
- 58. Naked
- 59. "My \_\_\_\_\_ also will I spread upon him" (Ezek. 12:13)
- 24. "Sawed with \_\_\_\_\_" (1 Kings 7:9)
- 26. "\_\_\_\_\_, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night" (1 Sam. 15:16)
- 28. Father, Fr.
- 29. Tribe of Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:36)
- 30. "There was a marriage in \_\_\_\_\_ of Galilee" (John 2:1)

**Down**

- 1. "And Noah beget Shem, \_\_\_\_\_, and Japheth" (Gen. 5:32)
- 2. Chemical suffix
- 3. "The inhabitants of \_\_\_\_\_ and her towns" (Josh. 17:11)
- 4. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall ... famine, or nakedness, or \_\_\_\_\_, or sword?" (Rom. 8:35)
- 5. "Deliver me, O Lord, from the \_\_\_\_\_ man" (Ps. 140:1)
- 6. Electrical engineer, abbr.
- 7. Letter addendums, abbr.
- 8. Words that can be laughter or scorn (Job 39:25)
- 9. Buddhist sacred mountain
- 10. Mothers
- 11. "In \_\_\_\_\_, I will call them my people, which were not my people" (Rom. 9:25)
- 16. "\_\_\_\_\_ the son of Enan" (Num. 1:15)
- 18. The yellowish fatty part of milk
- 20. Parson bird
- 22. Infant
- 23. "After him was Shammah the son of \_\_\_\_\_" (2 Sam. 23:11)
- 31. Neat
- 33. "The heathen \_\_\_\_\_" (Ps. 46:6)
- 35. "Nor shoot an \_\_\_\_\_ there" (2 Kings 19:32)
- 38. Melanocyte-stimulating hormone, abbr.
- 40. "\_\_\_\_\_, O God, judge the earth" (Ps. 82:8)
- 41. "Who can forgive sins, but God \_\_\_\_\_?" (Luke 5:21)
- 42. "For \_\_\_\_\_ was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13)
- 43. "Wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of \_\_\_\_\_?" (Gen. 18:28)
- 44. "The Lord will pass \_\_\_\_\_ the door" (Ex. 12:23)
- 46. "The children of \_\_\_\_\_, the children of Talmon" (Ezra 2:42)
- 48. Recede
- 50. Sea eagle
- 51. "But the wheat and the \_\_\_\_\_ were not smitten" (Ex. 9:32)
- 52. A noncommissioned office, abbr.
- 55. Apiece, in other words, abbr.

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# JOHNNY CASH, *Patriotism,* & NATIONALISM

By Richard Beck



**M**arching through dark streets under torches, the mob proudly displayed their swastikas, shouting “Heil, Hitler” and chanting the chilling refrain, “Blood and soil! Blood and soil!”

One of the marchers, captured by a photographer, wore a Johnny Cash T-shirt.

This wasn’t 1930s Germany. This was Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017.

The association of Johnny Cash with the hate-filled, white-supremacist “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville drew a sharp and public rebuke from the Cash

family. Cash’s daughter Rosanne posted a passionate note on her Facebook page on behalf of herself and the other Cash children. Under the heading “A message from the children of Johnny Cash,” Rosanne described her father as “a man whose heart beat with the rhythm of love and social justice.”

“His pacifism and inclusive patriotism were two of his most defining characteristics. He would be horrified at even a casual use of his name or image for an idea or a cause founded in persecution and hatred,” she added. “Our dad told each of us,

over and over throughout our lives, ‘Children, you can choose love or hate. I choose love.’”

When you think of the music of the Man in Black, you mostly think of the music where Cash speaks up for the poor, the struggling, and the disenfranchised, songs that “beat with the rhythm of love and social justice.”

But Cash was an outspoken patriot and he loved America, and his patriotism often made the gospel messages found in his music vulnerable to distortion and misappropriation, in exactly the same

# JOHNNY CASH, THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST

Long before becoming a famous singer, Cash grew up in a Southern Baptist church. He was baptized in 1944 — at the age of 12 — in the Tyronza River to join Central Baptist Church in Dyess, Arkansas. As an adult he was a longtime member of First Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee.

“He realized the heart of happiness was in serving God and doing his bidding in real life, and that’s what he tried honestly to do. He struggled with addiction to the pills, but Johnny was a person who never quit struggling. He continued his fight, and to me, he won a victory over it,” Cash’s former pastor in Hendersonville, Courtney Wilson, told the *Baptist Press* after Cash’s death in 2003. “His music affected a great many more people than most of us realized, and I’m thankful for that.”

way that patriotism and nationalism of all sorts can distort and twist the gospel. Nationalistic nostalgia can lead us into some dark, troubled waters. A neo-Nazi could end up wearing your T-shirt.

No song better captures this dynamic than “Ragged Old Flag.” The song, from the 1974 album of the same title, recounts a narrative of loss and decay. The flag — and the nation it represents — has been damaged.

The problem with this “narrative of injury” is that it conjures up feelings of resentment, causing us to peer anxiously across the political aisle, our backyard fences and our national borders as we search for the culprits who are hurting America. The image of the ragged old flag — a damaged America — creates suspicion and paranoia, and that fear breeds intolerance and hate.

We can keep the gospel witness of Johnny Cash free from the temptations of patriotic nostalgia by focusing on how his music spoke up for the people the American Dream has left behind. The music of Johnny Cash is at its best, artistically and theologically, when he calls for an “inclusive patriotism.” When Cash sings “These are my people” in his love song to America, we keep in view his advocacy for Native Americans, the prisoners cheering in Folsom and San Quentin, the Great Depression farmers in Arkansas, and the African American artists he invited on “The Johnny Cash Show” in the early 1970s.

For us to avoid the trap of nostalgia, the songs we sing about America must be complicated and often critical. Such criticism is an expression of love and an act of patriotism. My favorite lyric of Cash’s in this regard comes from his little-known song “All God’s

Children Ain’t Free,” from the album “Orange Blossom Special”: “I’d sing more about more of this land, but all God’s children ain’t free.”

I don’t want to suggest that Cash fully reconciled the political tensions and inconsistencies we observe in his music and life. But Cash’s music would be hopelessly vulnerable to patriotic nostalgia if albums like “At Folsom Prison” and “Bitter Tears,” an album of Native American protest songs, didn’t exist.

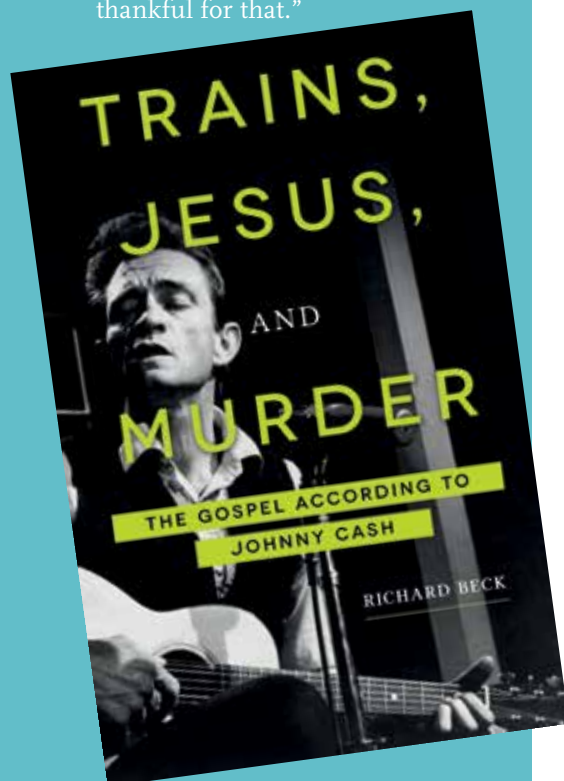
Our capacity for prophetic critique flows out of these conflicts and tensions — the gap between national aspiration and national failure, between national pride and national guilt. When this capacity for criticism erodes, we lose what Walter Brueggemann has called “the prophetic imagination,” the ability to imagine our nation standing under the judgment of God.

To be sure, this will be harder or easier depending upon how you feel about America, but cultivating a capacity for prophetic critique is the task of every Christian, especially when you live in a nation you are proud of and grateful for.

As Ralph Gleason wrote of Cash’s political witness during the tumultuous years of Nixon, race riots and Vietnam: “He’s struggling. He’s not perfect, but he’s trying. He loves this country but he’s trying to keep that from meaning he hates some other.”

In our own troubled, polarized political climate, none of us is perfect, and most of us are struggling. Like Johnny Cash, a lot of us are trying to love our country without that meaning we have to hate somebody else. We are grateful for our freedoms, but we

“  
**For us to avoid the trap of nostalgia, the songs we sing about America must be complicated and often critical.**





Johnny Cash meets with President Richard Nixon in the White House in July 1972. (Ollie Atkins)

are also crying out for “a more perfect union.”

In the end, I think Cash himself summed it up best: We’d “sing more about more of this land, but all God’s children ain’t free.” **WW**

*Adapted from Trains, Jesus, & Murder: The Gospel According to Johnny Cash (Fortress Press, 2019). Richard Beck, a professor of psychology at Abilene Christian University, teaches a weekly Bible study for inmates at the French M. Robertson Unit, a maximum-security prison in Abilene, Texas. He is the author of several books, and serves as an elder at his local church.*



richardBeck

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**Though your**  
*sins are like scarlet,*  
**they shall be as**  
**white as snow;**  
**though they are**  
*red as crimson,*  
**they shall be**  
**like wool.**

**Isaiah 1:18**

(Jennifer Kaylor/Word&Way)

» Faith in Action

## FOR THE LOVE OF JESUS



christopherDixon

February is a strange month for a few reasons. I think if February could talk it would tell us that it feels a little inadequate because even in a leap year it doesn't have the days to offer us that the other months have.

Couple that — pun intended — with the fact that commercialized or Christian or in between, we think of February in two words (at least I do): “pink” and “love.”

That's a little odd and for those of us who are Christian and/or married, we groan a little when February draws close. Because nothing says “I love you,” as society seems to portray, like a box of chocolates and overpriced flowers from the grocery store at the last minute. We realize those things have nothing to do with real love.

In our home and church, we talk about how Jesus is our first\* love. But personally, I do so with an asterisk, because I was raised in a Christian home, and have no recollection of a time when I didn't love Jesus, if that makes any sense.

Even though it would seem that being in church work was my ‘first’ love, it actually wasn't. Like many young men and women, I grew up wanting a career and, while Jesus would play a role in that decision-making process, there was no desire to attend a Christian college or seminary, and certainly no desire to be in ministry.

My wife grew up with an angry and alcoholic stepfather who wanted nothing to do with her or with Jesus. And while her mother and grandparents believed, she never envisioned serving in ministry, to say the least.

But like me and our teenage son, my wife loves Jesus and for the second time in our life — almost five years ago now — we returned to our first love of ministry and are grateful that we found our church home, our people.

We did not envision ourselves in ministry and to this day(!) we sometimes have to do a double-take when someone refers to us in a ministry capacity. Because like most of us Christians, our first love isn't in the position; it's in the person of Jesus. And Jesus himself being our first love asked us to serve in a capacity we never expected.

He may just do the same for you, if you let him.

» Christopher Dixon is chief operating officer of eLectio Publishing ([electiopublishing.com](http://electiopublishing.com)) and pastor of West Finley Baptist Church near Fordland, Mo. He is also a Word&Way trustee.

» The Shepherd Calls

## NOW HEAR THIS



wadeParis

Her name was Patty; she signed for the deaf. According to other signers, Patty was good at it.

Our church was considering a deaf ministry to use her talents. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the ministry never materialized.

However, when our church choir sang at the malls at Christmas, Patty signed the tunes. One of

the lines in Jingle Bells says, “Bells on bob-tail ring.” After a mall performance, I asked Patty, “How do you sign “bob-tail?” She looked at me and said, “You don't need to know that!”

I was disappointed we could not begin the deaf ministry; but at the time, I did not realize I would one day have a new appreciation for the hearing impaired.

As I have aged, my hearing has deteriorated steadily. While hearing aids help some, my hearing is poor enough to give me a new appreciation for the deaf.

When I say, “What?” people often look at me and say, “You don't have your hearing aids in, do you?” If I ask, “What?”, a second time, they may scream their reply to let me know my handicap is inconveniencing them. Worst of all, sometimes people think or say, “He hears what he wants to.”

Age-related hearing loss is not a major handicap like blindness or the loss of a limb. Still, my small handicap has given me a new appreciation for people who face life with serious physical or mental shortcomings.

We met a young lady at the grocery carrying a cute newborn baby. My wife complimented the mother on the child's beauty. The mother confided the child is desperately handicapped and, if he lives, will always struggle. I breathed a prayer, “God help her and him.”

As I write, I am wondering what it would be like to never hear the birds sing, or hear the “Hallelujah Chorus.” I hear our dog barking; she barks too much. It bothers me, but I am thankful I can hear her barking.

Most of us take our hearing for granted. If you doubt that, let me ask when was the last time you thanked God for your hearing? Did you ever do so? Remember, hearing is a gift from God. Brother James tells us, “Every good and perfect gift comes from God” (James 1:17).

My hearing is not perfect; but it is good, and I am thankful.

» Wade Paris writes a weekly syndicated column, “The Shepherd Calls.”

# God Is SOVEREIGN

**I** understand the overarching theme of the book of Daniel to be that God is sovereign despite what things may look like. One of the challenges followers of God experience is that, although God is sovereign, God sometimes allows things to occur that we do not understand, and life may not go the way we envisioned. But even amid those realities, God is still in control.

I must admit that Daniel 1 begins in a way that is less than confidence-building for Daniel and his fellow citizens. It begins by acknowledging that the nation of Judah had been overcome by King Nebuchadnezzar and the powers of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar and his army overran the city of Jerusalem, plundered the temple, the king of Judah and multiple other people from the community were taken to Babylon in chains, and the land left scarred.

In addition to human bodies being taken to Babylon, artifacts from the temple in Jerusalem were taken and placed in the temple of Marduk, Babylon's primary god. This was nothing short of an embarrassment for Judah because outside of Ba'al, Marduk was the biggest competitor to the Hebrew god, Yahweh. This left God's children with a serious question to ponder. What did it mean for the armies of Marduk to overpower the armies of Judah?

At first glance, the actions recorded within Daniel 1:1-2 are a disaster. But, is that really the case? The writer of Daniel leaves multiple clues throughout these

two verses that show that's not what's really going on. The writer tells us that Nebuchadnezzar's victory was possible only because God allowed it.

The point the writer was making was that Nebuchadnezzar's victory came not because of his military might but because God allowed it to occur as part of a larger plan God had going. Based on all that we know about Judah's relationship to

“

**Why does God sometimes allow evil to prevail? Why does God not always show God's self strong immediately?**

God, we know what that plan was. Due to Judah's ongoing sin, God decreed that God would allow them to be overtaken by a stronger nation. Nebuchadnezzar just so happened to be the king of that nation.

If what I believe is true and the overarching theme of Daniel is God's sovereignty, I can understand why an initial reading of Daniel 1:1-2 would leave people with multiple unanswered questions about God and God's trustworthiness. Why does God sometimes allow evil to

prevail? Why does God not always show God's self strong immediately?

What Daniel and friends, King Nebuchadnezzar, and anyone who was paying attention learned through the overall events recorded in Daniel was that God was sovereign and greater than any other god, king, or nation. Because of this, God's followers could stand strong in the face of uncertainty. When they did stand strong, God was pleased with them. God's enemies were also to recognize God's authority and standing as the supreme God who was greater than any opposition. If God's enemies did not understand that, God would hold them accountable and punish them.

Daniel is ultimately a story of hope. Hope because God was, and still is, on the throne ruling over the world and humankind. Because God is in control, God's followers will not only survive hard times, but they can also thrive for God's glory. **WW**

*Terrell Carter is vice president of community life and chief diversity officer at Greenville University in Greenville, Ill., and pastor of Webster Groves Baptist Church in Webster Groves, Mo.*



terrellCarter

▶▶ Media & Faith

## END OF LIFE (FOR YOUR COMPUTER)



ken Satterfield

In 2015, Microsoft introduced the Windows 10 operating system. Many businesses — including *Word&Way* — upgraded our hardware and software to start taking advantage of faster speed, touch technology, and the ability to run on a variety of devices.

Well, except me. My relatively-new laptop had a compatibility issue with the Win 10 OS. So, it was a rollback to Windows 7.

Admittedly, I was not too upset; change and I have an adversarial relationship. Win7 met my needs and we worked well together. I did not particularly want to get to know Cortana (Win10's built-in voice assistant) or her friends, Groove Music and the Edge browser. (*Note to Apple fanboys who are probably thinking, "You should just get a Mac.": Stop. Just stop.*)

I knew my days with Win7 were numbered. Microsoft had announced that the end of extended support would be Jan. 14, 2020. And finally, we have arrived. While that does not mean your computer running the Win7 OS will suddenly stop running and turn into a giant paperweight, it does mean Microsoft now no longer sells or supports it. (To know what version you are running, press the Windows key + R, and type winver.)

Software will increasingly not be designed to run on out-of-date operating systems. More importantly, Microsoft will wash its hands of providing free technical support, software updates, and security updates. Of the 1.2 billion computers running Windows, between 200 and 446 million are still running the out-of-date operating system. These will be extremely attractive targets for hacking and cyberattacks. What should you do?

- Businesses, but not individuals, can purchase Windows 7 Extended Security Updates annually, per machine, with the price doubling each year ([tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-2](http://tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-2)).
- If you continue to use Win7, disconnect your device from the internet to protect it and your data.
- Can your Win7 computer run Win10? Microsoft will help you know at [tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-3](http://tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-3).
- You may be able to still upgrade to Win10, or upgrade from the Home to Pro version, free. Check details: [tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-4](http://tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-4).
- Microsoft has more information about end of support, steps to take, and a quiz to assist you in choosing a PC that meets your needs: [tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-5](http://tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-5).
- Use migration software such as Laplink PCmover to easily move your applications and files to the new computer; its basic version is currently free ([tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-6](http://tinyurl.com/MAF-Win10-6)).

▶▶ Ken Satterfield wrote this last column on his Win7 laptop (sniff). Find more links online.

▶▶ Guest Voice

## GRATEFUL TO GOD FOR THE WHEELCHAIRS



aaron Menikoff

A couple of gray, dinged wheelchairs and a walker linger a few feet off the entrance of my church. They've been there for years, but I notice them more now. Perhaps it's because I have a few gray hairs of my own! I'm glad they are there. Those medical devices serve the aged who need them. And they remind me the church is for young and old alike.

When I came to pastor here more than a decade ago, I wanted to see younger people join the church. Everyone did. The "young" represented life, vitality, and the future. A quiet children's ministry had the stench of death about it. We needed to grow as a church and subtly thought the best growth was young growth.

By God's grace, our membership has increased over the years — slowly and steadily. But now more than ever, I'm thankful for those wheelchairs.

I rejoice at the sight of those wheelchairs because I believe the Bible: *Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life* (Proverbs 16:31). There is something honorable about aging gracefully. Not all the elderly are saints, but the saints who are elderly deserve special honor. I love those wheelchairs because Paul saw fit to commend "grandmother Lois" for investing in young Timothy, and I want a church filled with grandmothers like Lois (Connie, Carolyn, Sylvia, Jane, and Fredda — to name just a few of the grandmothers in my own congregation). Those wheelchairs mean a great deal to me because growing old is hard, and I long for the aged to lean into the church and for the church to lean into the aged. There is no time-stamp on Hebrews 3:13: *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

Being a multi-generational church has its challenges. For example, the worst of each generation expects all other generations to kowtow to its musical preferences. Not long ago we sang the older, "My God, How Wonderful You Are" and the newer, "King Forevermore," in the same service. We don't offer multiple services, so everybody needs to give a little. It's worth it; we are one church, one family.

If I could go back ten years I would have spent less time worrying about when more young people would join the church, and more time engaging with the elderly saints who had called this church home for decades.

Thankfully for me, it's not too late. I'm grateful to God for the wheelchairs.

▶▶ Aaron Menikoff is senior pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Sandy Springs, Georgia. This column is reprinted from Baptist Press.

# ← Looking Back TO LOOK FORWARD →



**S**hoveling snow always provides some head-clearing, a sort of free association process allowing my brain to jump from topic to topic without any linear or logical development. As I recently scooped four inches of partly cloudy from my driveway, my thoughts went back to my childhood.

I used to marvel at my father's strong arms. In his prime, he could quickly make a path through drifted snow. He could loosen any bolt on a plow, no matter how rusted. With a spade, he could dig more turf than any backhoe could — or so it looked to an eight-year-old.

Then several years later I saw my dad at his weakest, the night my brother Dennis died in an automobile accident. What a contrast. My thoughts went from an eight-year-old's musing, "What would it be like to be that strong?" to an eighteen-year-old's, "What must it be like to love that much, to hurt that deeply?"

Later, when my wife and I had our first child, I recall grieving my brother's death in a qualitatively different way. The pain was sharper. Looking back, I think I had stumbled onto a terrifying discovery. Love makes us vulnerable, totally at the mercy of life's randomness.

January marked the 50th anniversary of Dennis's death. The sheer volume of days, months, and years is staggering. But it's more than that. I'm amazed that after five decades, the dull ache of loss persists. I wish I had listened to my brother more carefully

that last day as he told me something. What was it? At the time, his words didn't seem very important. How was I to know it would be our last conversation?

Sooner or later all of us look back on some golden season of our lives and wonder, "Why didn't I enjoy those days more? Why wasn't I more attentive to the wonder of it all?" In the 1973 film, "Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams," the character played by Martin Balsam sums it up well: "You are given a cupful of time and you either drink

“**In looking back on irretrievable loss, perhaps we can do a better job of capturing the here and now.**”

it or spill it on the ground.”

If the old adage is true — hindsight is 20/20 — then perhaps that hindsight can serve us in the year 2020. Call it 20/20 in 2020. In looking back on irretrievable loss, perhaps we can do a better job of capturing the here and now.

If you're like me, you have thousands of photos stored on your smartphone. Have you ever wondered why we take so many pictures? The answer is simple. We want

to freeze a moment in time.

Likewise, when we savor a sunset, remain attentive to another person, or utter a prayer of gratitude, we are preserving an experience — or at least holding it a bit longer. We are claiming the only thing available to us, the moment in front of us.

When we are busiest, we naturally hurry. But what if we did what is counter-intuitive during our most hectic moments? Instead of rushing, what if we slowed down, took a breath, and snapped a mental photo? Or to change the metaphor, what if we stopped gulping our life events as if they are fast food morsels grabbed out of a paper bag? What if we began to savor our moments as five-course meals, experiencing them with more leisure and intentionality? The goal of a fast food meal is to get it over with; the goal of a five-course meal is to taste and enjoy.

And as we use our 20/20 hindsight in 2020 to capture more right-nows, we have a bonus. It's Leap Year. We have one more day to live, twenty-four additional hours in which to taste and savor. *Bon appetit.* **WW**



*Doyle Sager is lead pastor of First Baptist Church in Jefferson City, Mo.*

doyleSager



# Baking Memories

Everybody deals with winter differently — some cheer and some need cheering up. When the brutal chill of winter hits me, especially in February when the gray days go on forever, I bake. There is something about baking that warms the home and the heart.

I started baking when I was young. Although baking always puts me in a happy place, how I got started baking begins with a sadder story. My grandma got cancer. Our relationship had been distant at best before the cancer, including her rocky relationship with my mom, but cancer was a wake-up call to get busy living and start forgiving. My grandma

did both in grand fashion. When I was 10, we began spending every weekend with my grandma either at the hospital or at her home in Freeburg, Missouri.

My aunt and mom were tasked with all the hard things for grandma, including medical care, cleaning and shopping, and financials. Grandma and I got to have all the fun! She would sit at the kitchen table to rest and I would be her hands and feet at the counter.

We baked homemade bread and supper cake together. We shook buttermilk in a jar until it became butter and made refrigerator cookie dough to put in the freezer (just in case visitor would come by and you would need to bake a few on the fly to serve with coffee).

I snapped green beans and dug potatoes out of the garden, all while my grandma supervised and told me stories. I soaked it all up. I really loved learning how to take ingredients, perfectly measured and mixed together, to make something that came out totally different. However, it was the time in the kitchen with my grandma that I loved the best, including her sharing secret tips or how she used to make this or that for her beloved

husband, Louis, who had passed away years before.

I didn't realize it then, but my grandma was passing along a family legacy of sacred stories and delicious food. I think she knew heaven was calling her name with a whisper.

My grandma died when I was 12. We had two years of baking bliss and storytelling gold. I still tear up when I see a rerun of "Murder She Wrote" on television, a show we watched every Sunday with her on the couch and me stretched out on the floor.

But when I bake her recipes, including her supper cake that I make often in winter, I just feel love and heartfelt joy that I had that precious time with grandma. I also feel like love and forgiveness won in this story. It makes me want more of that in my life every time I smell her recipe's baking.

Happy winter, dear friends. Here's to a winter season of love, forgiveness, and baking! **WW**

*Heather Feeler loves trying new recipes. Feel free to send her your favorite family recipe and story to Word&Way, Attention: Heather Feeler, PO Box 1771, Jefferson City, MO 65102.*



heatherFeeler

## Grandma's Supper Cake

*In loving memory of Marie Haller Boehmer*

¾ c. sugar	1 ½ tsp. baking powder
¼ c. shortening	¼ tsp. salt
1 egg, unbeaten	Topping:
1 tsp. vanilla	1 tbsp. butter
½ c. milk	3 tbsp. sugar
1 c. sifted flour	1 tsp. cinnamon

Add sugar to shortening, stirring until fluffy. Add egg, beat well. Add vanilla and milk, then add sifted flour, baking powder, and salt; beat smooth. Bake in greased 9" round pan or 8" square pan at 375 degrees for 20-25 minutes. Remove from oven. At once, spread butter on top of cake, then sift sugar and cinnamon over the top. Serve warm.

## Classified Ads

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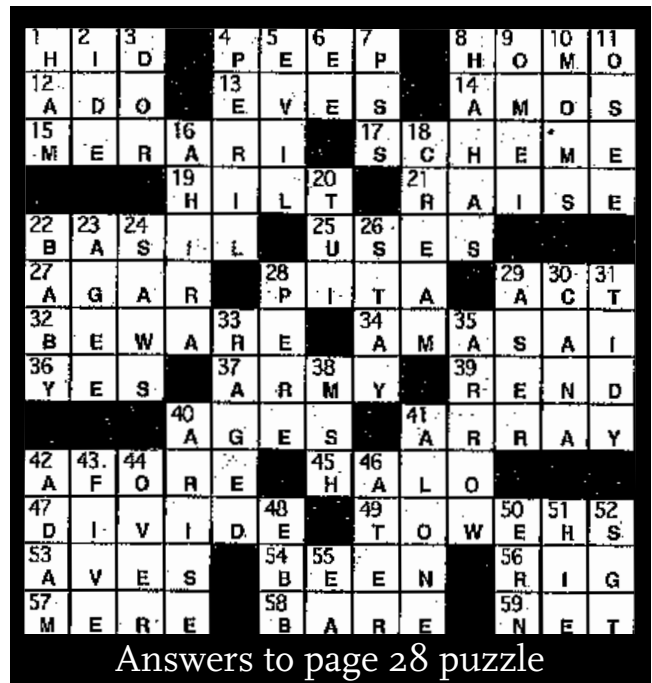
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Answers to page 28 puzzle

## Formations Bible Study Commentaries

Each week, Word&Way posts free Bible study commentaries online for use in Sunday School or small groups. Written by Michael Olmsted, the lessons follow the Formations curriculum by Smyth & Helwys. Here is a summary of the current unit.

### Moses & Exodus

Moses has attained an almost mythical status, but his life story is not merely the saga of a national hero — it is more a picture of God's grace and power in an imperfect but surrendered life.

It begins in the dark days of Israel's slavery to the Egyptians, when the boy Moses was raised in the household of Egypt's king, as though Moses was one of Israel's oppressors.

We examine the uncertainty and confusion of a much older Moses as

he responds to the voice of God in a burning bush. His big brother Aaron is available to help with the gift of speech if necessary. The struggle to get free from Egypt is won by plagues God brings upon Israel's oppressors. The prolonged wilderness journey is supported by God's daily protection and guidance by a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day. Forty years of that struggle pass before Moses dies and God brings Israel to the border of their "promised land" and freedom at last.

As with Moses and God's chosen people, we who profess faith in God often make wrong choices and learn slowly. Only in trusting faith can the love and grace of God grow and become real. Find yourself in the powerful narrative of Exodus and experience the life of faith.

- February 2: Moses' Early Life (Exodus 2:1-15a)
- February 9: Moses' Call (Exodus 3:4-8a, 9-10; 4:10-17)
- February 16: The First Plague (Exodus 7:14-25)
- February 23: The First Passover (Exodus 12:21-31, 40)
- March 1: The Victory at Sea (Exodus 14:10-14, 21-27, 31)

► Retired after almost 50 years in pastoral ministry, Michael Olmsted enjoys family, supply preaching and interim work, literature, history, and the arts.

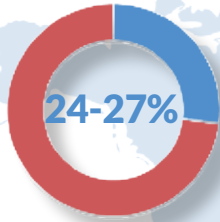


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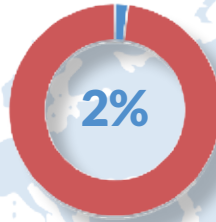
**News**  
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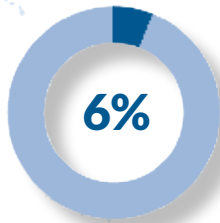
There are at more than **7.7 billion** people in the world.  
**466 million** have disabling hearing loss.  
And **70 million** are deaf.<sup>1</sup>



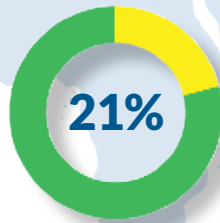
An estimated **24-27%** of the world's population have not had the Good News presented to them<sup>2</sup>



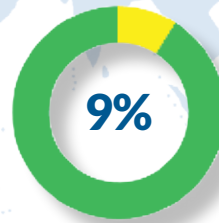
An estimated **2%** of those who are deaf **HAVE** had the Good News presented to them<sup>3</sup>



There are at least **7,000** languages. More than **400** are unique sign languages<sup>4</sup>



Languages with a New Testament Bible translation



Languages with a complete Bible translation



Deaf languages with a complete Bible translation<sup>4</sup>

Notes:  
<sup>1</sup> Global population: worldometers.info/world-population. Hearing loss estimates (2018): World Health Organization, who.int/pbd/deafness/estimates/en Deaf statistics: Deaf Bible Society, deafbiblesociety.com  
<sup>2</sup> Operation World, operationworld.com, cited by Joshua Project, "Has Everyone Heard?" joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has\_everyone\_heard  
<sup>3</sup> Deaf Bible Society, deafbiblesociety.com  
<sup>4</sup> Wycliffe Bible Translators, wycliffe.org/about/why and Deaf Bible Society, deafbiblesociety.com