



September 2021

HORIZONS

 **YOMING**
Southern Baptist Mission Network

Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting

November 4-5, 2021

College Heights Baptist Church, Casper
Beginning Thursday November 4th at 2:00 pm



“TO THE ANGELS OF THE CHURCHES; I Know Your Works”

Revelation 2:1-3:22

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.” Revelation 3:22 NLT

New this year—Wednesday November 3rd!

Also at College Heights Baptist Church

The Evangelism Conference featuring Jeff and Ann Iorg will be held on Wednesday **November 3** beginning at 2:30 pm - Concluding at 11:45 pm Thursday. This time will include worship, messages, breakout sessions and prayer time.

The Annual Meeting will begin at 2:00 pm Thursday and conclude Friday at 4:00 pm

Please see basic programs on page 2

2021 Evangelism Conference

College Heights Baptist Church

Wednesday, Nov 3

2:30 pm Opening worship

Message—Jeff Iorg

Break

3:45 pm Breakout

Men: Jeff Iorg

Women: Ann Iorg

Break

5:00 pm Catered Dinner

7:00 pm - Evening Worship

Message Granger Logan

8:15 pm Dismiss

Thursday, Nov 4

8:30 am Opening gathering

8:45 am Question and Answers with Jeff and Ann Iorg

Break

10:00 am Worship

Message Jeff Iorg

11:00 am Collective Prayer Time

Break out into Regions

Prayer Time to be led by Regional Missionaries

11:45 am Dismiss

**Registration for Annual Meeting begins at 1:00 pm
Annual Meeting begins at 2:00 pm**

CONVENTION HOTELS

Ramkota Hotel & Conference Center

800 North Poplar, Casper
307-266-6000
\$80.00 + tax

Hilton Garden Inn

1150 North Poplar, Casper
307-266-1300
\$109 & \$114 + tax

Annual Meeting Basic Schedule

College Heights Baptist Church

Thursday, Nov 4

1:00pm - Registration Opens

2:00pm - Opening Session

New Ministers Welcome

Annual Sermon – Rudy Sanchez

Break

4:00 pm - Afternoon Session continues

Guidestone Report

Committee Reports

Executive Board Report (Dave Brown)

2022 WSBMN Budget Introduction

West Region Missionary Report (Dale Bascue)

Collegiate Ministries Report

7:00 pm - Evening Session

NAMB Presentation (Dave Howeth)

IMB Representative Report

Election of President

LIFT Offering

State Missionary Message– Quin Williams

(Executive Board organizational meeting following the session)

Friday, Nov 6

7:00 am - All-Seminary Breakfast Provided – Ramkota

9:00 am - Morning Session

Church Planting Strategist Report (Don Whalen)

Elections - Vice-Presidents & Secretaries

So Region Missionary Report (David Schroeder)

Mountain Top Baptist Assembly Report

Seminary Report

Break

11:00am - Morning Session continues

NE Region Missionary Report (Fred Creason)

Alliance Defending Freedom Report

Wyoming CLD Report (Fred Creason)

State Missionary Report (Quin Williams)

Discussion/Adoption of 2022 WSBMN Budget

12:00 *Lunch Break*

2:00pm – Closing Session

Committee Reports: Resolutions

2022 Time/Place/Preacher Report

WSBMN President Message - John Larramendy

Recognitions and Benediction

Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting

November 4-5, 2021

College Heights Baptist Church, Casper

“To the Angels of the Churches; I Know Your Works” is the theme for our Network’s annual meeting on November 4-5 at College Heights Baptist Church in Casper. At that time, messengers from across Wyoming will meet for our thirty-eighth annual meeting.

While gathering for a two-day business meeting doesn’t sound like a great time, I beg to differ. Yes, we will take care of business. A budget will be presented, discussed, and adopted. Officers will be elected. Reports from state and national entities will be shared. But, along with that and even during some of those things, what we will enjoy is a celebration of what God is doing throughout Wyoming and around the world. We will also have times of worship. These are the hallmarks of our annual meetings. Celebrating what God has done, worship Him for what He is doing, and be encouraged as we look forward to what we anticipate Him doing in the days to come.

In addition to this, on Wednesday, the day before the annual meeting, we will begin our Evangelism Conference. This will carry over into Thursday morning. Jeff and Ann Iorg will be our keynote speakers for the Conference and the break-out sessions. It will indeed be a great time.

So plan to be a participant in the 2021 Evangelism Conference and Annual Meeting. You will be blessed by being here and you will be a blessing to others at the same time. See you there!

Quin Williams

ATTENTION WYOMING CHURCHES:

To prepare for the upcoming Wyoming Southern Baptist Mission Network Annual Meeting, November 4-5 please review the messenger requirements and the Resolution guidelines as outlined in the WSBMN Constitution and Bylaws.

Constitution Article III:

MEMBERSHIP and AUTHORITY

Section 1. This convention is an autonomous body made up of messengers in session from cooperating Southern Baptist churches to fulfill the purpose for which the convention was organized by the churches. The messengers have no rights to act except for the annual or special meetings for which they have been elected by their cooperating churches.

Section 2. Each church shall be entitled to two (2) messengers if the total membership is fifty (50) or fewer, and one additional messenger for each additional fifty (50) members or major fraction thereof, or one additional messenger for each \$250 given through the Cooperative Program during the previous year, provided that no church shall have more than a total of ten (10) messengers.

Bylaws VI.4 COMMITTEES

4. A Resolutions Committee will be a sub-committee of the WSBMN Executive Board, appointed by the Chairman of the Executive Board by the April meeting of the Executive Board. Any resolutions to be considered by the Resolutions Committee should be submitted in writing to the committee chairman at least one month prior to the opening session of the annual meeting. No resolutions to be considered may be submitted after the opening session of the Convention. The Resolutions Committee shall submit a written copy of its proposed resolutions at least one session prior to their presentation for adoption. The Resolutions Committee need not feel compelled to accept all proposed resolutions, but should use discretion in the evaluation process.

Submit in writing to:

Wyoming Southern Baptist Mission Network, 3925 Casper Mt. Road, Suite 101, Casper, WY 82601

WSBMN Region Celebrations!

Northeast—Fred Creason

Ben (and Cindy) Bannister is the new pastor at **First Southern Baptist Chapel** in Kaycee. Ben (MDiv) and Cindy (MACM) are graduates of Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. Cindy also holds a MA in Professional Counseling from Kent State University and a RN in Nursing from Northwest College Powell, WY. Ben and Cindy are on the field in Kaycee. We are thankful to have them in our Northeast Region of Wyoming Southern Baptist Churches.



On Sunday, July 18, **Bar Nunn Baptist Church** licensed Daniel Wright to the gospel ministry. Daniel is a student at Gateway Seminary through the Wyo-

oming Southern Baptist Center for Leadership Development. Pictured are Bar Nunn pastor, Randy Barnett, Daniel Wright, and Fred Creason.

South—David Schroeder

Calvary Church Encampment had the excellent Roger Barker mission team in from MO, and much needed work was done around church and parsonage. This team brings great skill, a load of people, and even a smoker to help with the mass meals they prepare! Mike Wilcox (Mandy) is pastor.

Memorial Wheatland held VBS followed by a block party with hundreds in total attendance. Pastor Chris Furl was dunked on the coldest day of the summer.

Also, **Memorial** recently hosted a *Basic Accounting Principles for the Local Church* workshop with Doug Lohrey from Rocky Mountain Foundation in Colorado. Ten people attended with three churches represented. Doug talked about the top tax mistakes that churches make and how they can be avoided. He explained the appropriate way to designate a pastor's housing allowance, especially on a W-2. He explained the difference between an employee and a contractor. Along that same line, he explained who should get a 1099 and who should get a W-2.

South *continued*

Lastly, he dealt with how to handle the offering and checks that are given "with strings attached" and how to handle those. He also gave a list of websites and books to help further educate those who have questions.

In Laramie, **Trinity Baptist and Snowy Range** churches held a joint VBS, with the best attendance in years. Two pastors suffered minor indignities.



Several churches are going through difficult losses of members, but others are showing increased attendance, with reports of several saved and baptized also.

Jerry Elgin, the good pastor at **FBC Hanna**, has moved from WY due to his tent-making employment. The church is seeking a pastor to preserve the progress made and reach more people.

Bairoil Community Church has been pastorless for a long time but had a good reunion day as most recent pastor Dennis (Rosilyn) Fish returned for a few days.

West—Dale Bascue

Berean Bible Fellowship of Afton has purchased a building on the main street in Afton, less than a block from the famous elk antler arch. This very visible property in the heart of a predominately LDS community now sports a cross. Thanks to the labor of several work crews who have partnered with Berean Bible Fellowship over the summer, the newly renovated building is near completion. Doug Hollen is pastor.

Water of Life Church in Cowley has also been blessed this summer with volunteer construction crews who have help build a new facility in – again – a predominately LDS community. Water of Life Church is the first evangelical church in Cowley since its founding in 1917. The building is easy to find, sitting on the main highway through town, Wyoming Highway 789. Johannes Slabbert is pastor.

While not a new or renovated building, **Wind River Church** in Shoshoni also has a new building. The new church now meets in the old Presbyterian church on Highway 26. The building is a state historical site and is easy to spot being right in the center of town. The bell tower is the highest structure in Shoshoni, and the bell is rung every Sunday morning! John Scudder is pastor.



The Astonishment Factor

By David Schroeder
South Region Missionary

It came out of the blue. Literally. In fact, **It. Was. Blue!** This sapphire whatever-it-was burst onto the scene and ushered me into a new state of consciousness. Fast as a wink, I understood something radically new. Moments before, I had no clue there was anything more to know. But that was then. That was ancient history! Suddenly, I had seen the light!

Here's the backstory. A family invited Carla and I to an open house celebrating the completion of their new home. It was a home far in the countryside of China. The home was so far afield, it was at the end of the powerline that served it. There were no other homes on that line for miles and miles.

During an amazing feast of a lunch, a little thunderstorm began brewing up some distance away. I watched with interest as the husband, builder of the house, turned down the handle of a large switch under the eaves of the house. This seemed prudent, disconnecting from the powerline. Otherwise, if lightning came down that line, it would surely spew out of every fixture in that house.

It is the custom in rural China to have a naptime after the mid-day meal. The host couple insisted Carla and I take their bed for such a nap. Soon, the house grew quiet, everyone resting. I laid on the bed, staring vacantly at the closed bedroom door. A light switch was there beside the door; a wire ran down the wall from the ceiling.

There was a faint flash of light from the thunderstorm. Suddenly, in an instant, along that wire to the light switch came a blue presence, without a sound, and a foot wide, like the plasmatic flare inside a fluorescent lamp! The bedroom glowed eerily as this apparition danced on the wall. Gawking but barely believing my eyes, I thought, "That wall's gonna be badly scorched!"

After three or four seconds the blue specter flickered away as quickly as it had come. Just then, thunder sounded, arriving from the lightning strike a mile away as if to say, "What did you think of that?" To my amazement, the wall wasn't scorched at all. The house was entirely unharmed.

Ball lightning? Saint Elmo's Fire? I know not. It must have been something like that but that is not important to me. What I treasure is the liberating astonishment, experiencing something fantastic when I had thought I understood all there is to know . . . about lightning.

In church, we talk about God's grace until we are blue in the face. We talk about "unmerited favor" and many other truisms. It's all accurate, but is it conceivable we are missing something? Where is the power? Is it possible we could be astonished again, experiencing something fantastic just when we think we have grace pegged? I sure hope so!

The Apostle Peter wrote about living as servants of God. He wrote much about submission to the people around us, too, having a greater appreciation for submission's power than is popular today. Previously a man of considerable ego himself, Peter applied the principle of submission's power to himself and even to slaves of his day. I Peter 2:18-19 reads, **"Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God."** (NIV)

The translation "commendable" hardly gets at the power here. Stops-you-in-your-tracks astonishing might be better. Grace is the Greek word Peter uses to measure and describe such a slave's behavior. There is nothing ordinary about choosing respect rather than rebellion when faced with something so abhorrent and dehumanizing as slavery. It is grace, astonishing grace, that even an abused slave might choose to submit rather than retaliate because of his consciousness of God.

So, this is a bit of a word study that points us higher. Grace, the grace of God toward us, is not ordinary. Far from it! Grace is not what anyone would rightly expect. We would expect any deity over us to disdain us, wipe us away, regarding us as less than nothing in our puny lives and pitiful sins. That's the only possible conclusion. It is indisputable. Such grace if dreamt up by the most arrogant of atheists would draw nothing but laughter. So yes, God's grace towards us is inconceivable until experienced firsthand, with one's own astonished heart.

Continued on page 6

The Astonishment Factor *continued from page 5*

God shocks us to redeem us. He stuns us. God, the King of the Universe, astonishes us by stepping down from His judgement seat, just when He could be bombing us with our due. Instead, He stoops to Calvary's Cross, heaping the punishment we are justly due upon Himself! In the person of Jesus, His Son! Astonishing!

Paul wrote it so plainly: **"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."** (Romans 10:9 NIV) When I experienced that so many years ago, I did not need an invitation to come to Jesus; nothing could hold me back!

It is the astonishment factor that makes grace what it is. Life-giving. Sinner-saving. World-changing. Kingdom-bringing grace.

When we tell people about grace, we must witness to the astonishment factor, the power, and the light of conversion.



It's State Missions Time

By Quin Williams

When September rolls around in Wyoming, there are certain things that mark the season. The weather begins to cool down. Fall is in the air. Those days with temperatures of 95 and up are behind us. Generally speaking, subfreezing temps have not yet arrived. The aspen trees will go through their annual ritual of turning beautiful yellows, golds, and reds. The antelope and elk will be in rut. They will be nearly as excited as those who will be

hunting them either with firearm or bow. It is a wonderful time of the year.

Another tradition that arrives in September for Wyoming Southern Baptists is that it is our traditional time for our State Missions Offering. Some of our churches have opted to emphasize this offering at another time of the year. Some include this offering in a monthly gift, so no annual emphasis is made. Some have a single mission offering during the year and divide that offering according to a local formula that church has developed. We are good with all those, but September is still the traditional time for this offering and emphasis. I won't go through the details of everything this offering accomplishes. That has been done in several forums. Allow me to encourage you and your church to be involved in this mission offering and emphasis. I cannot stress just how important this offering is to our work across our state and across so many ministries. Talking about money is not my favorite topic. But our financial strength can either limit or unleash the ministries that we as Wyoming Southern Baptists can do together. That is the simple truth of the matter.

So, September is State Missions Time. Now that I think about it, every season, every month, every day is State Missions Time. This is true because the objective of our State Missions is to spread the saving knowledge of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ across the length and breadth of Wyoming. That effort never goes away, it never lessens. So, every day is State Missions Time!

Dolores Goolsby, 85, of Cedar Hill, Texas passed away on August 17, 2021. We are so thankful for the ministry of Jack and Dolores. They have been great volunteers, support and friends of Wyoming Southern Baptists for many years. Please pray for Jack and family.

Remaining Mountain Top Baptist

Assembly 2021 Schedule

Sept 10-11 Northeast Region Ladies' Retreat

Sept 20-24 CEF Leadership Retreat

Sept 24-26 BCM Retreat

Sept 27-30 Close camp

Lynda Roark
mountaintopba@gmail.com
 307-315-4759

PRAY for the Harvest

Thank you for praying for churches seeking God's direction for a new pastor.

David Schroeder, South Region:
 Bairoil Community Baptist Church, Bairoil
 First Southern Baptist Church, Hanna

Fred Creason, Northeast Region:
 Iglesia Bautista Principe de Paz, Casper
 Redemption Church, Gillette

Dale Bascue, West Region:
 Warm Valley Baptist Church, Pavillion

2021 WSBMN Cooperative Program Giving Update

May	\$22,896.97	59% of Budget
June	\$37,719.26	96% of Budget
July	\$30,306.71	77% of Budget
YTD	\$233,020.44	85% of Budget

WSBMN Calendar of Events

September

5-12 Week of Prayer WSBMN State Mission
 6 WSBMN Closed, Labor Day
 9 Adm Team, WSBMN Resource Center
 10 Executive Bd, WSBMN Resource Center
 10-11 Northeast Region Ladies Retreat, Mt. Top
 11 South Region Annual Meeting, TBD
 20-24 CEF Leadership Retreat, Mt. Top
 24-26 Collegiate Ministries Retreat, Mt. Top
 27-30 Close Mt. Top Camp

October

November

3-4 WSBMN Evangelism Conference, College Heights Baptist Church
 3-4 WSBMN Office Closed
 4-5 WSBMN Annual Meeting, Casper, College Heights Baptist Church
 4 Executive Board Organizational meeting following the evening session
 5 All Seminary Breakfast, 7:00am, Ramkota
 5 WSBMN Church Planter Luncheon, TBD, 12:00 pm
 9 New Church Planter Orientation, Denver CO
 10 Local Send Network Gathering, Denver CO
 15 Dec Horizons deadline (Dec, Jan, Feb)
 TBD Denver Church Planting Assessment Retreat, Denver CO
 25 WSBMN Closed, Thanksgiving SDOM Meeting, TBD
 28-12/5 Week of Prayer for Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

December

2&7 South Region Christmas Dinner TBD
 9&14 South Region Christmas Dinner TBD SDOM Fellowship meeting, TBD
 24-Jan 1 WSBMN Closed, Christmas Holiday
 24 Christmas Eve
 25 Christmas Day

January 2022

3 WSBMN Resource Center Reopens



(Editor's note) Recently, I received this blog from Jeff Iorg, the President of Gateway Seminary and a great friend of Wyoming. We do not normally print articles this long in our Newsletter, but this article is of particular interest due to current goings on in our national denomination and our recent Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Nashville. Many of us across the nation have felt a certain level of frustration over recent events. In this article, Dr. Iorg does a masterful job identifying much of the controversy. He offers an insightful perspective on what this means to all of us who choose to relate to Southern Baptists. Therefore, I have chosen to print the article in its entirety.

Quin Williams

Positive Perspective on Denominational Involvement

Dr. Jeff Iorg, President, Gateway Seminary

August 2021

More than 25 years as a Southern Baptist denominational executive, preceded by more than a dozen years as a Southern Baptist pastor, has shaped my perspective on navigating the vagaries of working among and with such the large network known as the Southern Baptist denomination. It can be a daunting, and at times disappointing task. Here are eight perspectives (and one concluding story) which have helped sustain my spiritual, emotional, and strategic equilibrium – and helped me maintain a positive perspective on denominational involvement and leadership.

1. Recognize the denomination has always been and always will be an imperfect organization.

There never have been any “good old days” when the denomination functioned without difficulty, divisions, conflicts, and scandals. We have lived through moral failures, criminal activities, strategic blunders, and financial disasters throughout our 175-year history. We have struggled with sins like racism and failures like mishandling sexual abuse. We have always been, and always will be, an imperfect denomination. While we must strive to solve pressing problems and build a healthier organization, we must also admit perfection will never be achieved.

It is astounding, however, what this imperfect denomination has accomplished. An underlying conviction of some critics is our denomination must reform itself and reach moral, spiritual, theological, or organizational health (as they define it) before it can be effective in accomplishing its mission. That perspective ignores the plain evidence of the historical record and simply is not true. God has used Southern Baptists, despite their flaws and while they are flawed, to accomplish more temporal and eternal good than any other denomination in American history. So, while improving denominational function is desirable, demanding it be perfected as a condition of future usefulness (or to assure our loyalty) is an unreasonable expectation.

Maintaining this perspective means my denominational commitments are based on valuing the positive outcomes we have achieved and are achieving, while also working on but not being preoccupied by denominational reform

Continued on page 9

2. Remember the denomination exists as a means to serve others.

The Southern Baptist denomination, in all its forms, exists to serve others. It was founded to combine and coordinate the efforts of churches doing together what they cannot do as well by themselves.

This next statement may cause some angst, as it has for the 25-years I have been saying it. The denomination does not exist “to serve churches.” Any denominational mission statement that includes that phrase is well-intended, but misguided. The denomination exists as a channel for churches to serve the world, not as a collective that meets their needs. This distinctive is subtle but significant. When a church, or church leader, believes the denomination exists to meet their needs they will demand of the denomination what it was not created to provide. The denomination – national convention, state conventions, local associations, and other entities – were created so churches could do things for other people, not for themselves.

Maintaining this perspective helps me view my denominational involvement as a means to serve others. It prevents me from asking “what do I get out of it?” when considering the value of denominational outcomes.

3. Remember the purpose of the denomination is missions.

The denomination was created for missions, in the most limited use of the word, which means sharing the gospel, making disciples, starting churches, facilitating networks of churches, and then repeating the process. The denomination focuses its mission primarily on people and places – domestic and international - where there is limited or no access to the gospel. The denomination was not started primarily for political action, cultural reform, program promotion, materials production, or financial services.

The most controversial aspects of being a Southern Baptist today revolve around political and cultural differences. While there is some debate about why and how we do missions, program promotion, materials production, and financial services, these discussions are not nearly as divisive as the cultural and political issues which create much more conflict.

One illustration of how Southern Baptists prioritize missions over cultural or political engagement is the budgets of the two mission boards compared to the budget of our public policy entity. The combined operating budgets of the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board for 2019-20, including Cooperative Program, Lottie Moon, and Annie Armstrong Offerings (along with other revenue) totaled more than \$391 million. The budget for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission was about \$4.3 million. Southern Baptists invest the bulk of their ministry dollars in missions, a clear statement of priority above cultural and political activism.

Because American culture is changing in alarming ways, some Southern Baptist leaders speak more often on political and cultural issues than global missions. Secular media care more about these issues and constantly trumpet the opinion of a few Southern Baptists on these controversial subjects – while ignoring almost all messaging about our missional priority. The preponderance of media comments makes it seem like political action and cultural reform are our mission and message. They are not.

Maintaining this perspective helps me focus on the eternal nature of our mission. Getting the gospel to a person who has never heard the name of Jesus is far more important than solving the supposedly urgent issue dominating today’s 24-hour news cycle.

Continued on page 10

4. Distinguish between the Southern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist denomination.

By now, you may have noticed my use of the word “denomination” instead of “convention” in this paper. That is intentional. The Southern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist denomination are not the same thing. The Southern Baptist Convention is a relatively small part of the Southern Baptist denomination. The Convention has 12 national entities and one auxiliary. The denomination has 1 national convention, 42 state conventions, almost 1200 local associations, about 48,000 churches, about 60 colleges, and countless hospitals, camps, retirement centers, pregnancy centers, children’s homes, and other ministry organizations. The largest amount, by far, of Southern Baptist ministry resources are controlled by Southern Baptist churches, denominational bodies, and local organizations - not the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Southern Baptist Convention has no authority over the Southern Baptist denomination – a distinction almost completely lost on secular media and misunderstood by many in our constituency. We are a huge collective, not a streamlined corporation. All Southern Baptist denominational groups are autonomous, and even the entities owned by those groups are independently governed by Boards with wide latitude in organizational control and performance.

Maintaining this perspective helps me realize the denomination will always operate in somewhat of a haphazard fashion, enjoying both the benefits and challenges of autonomy. We will never speak with unified voice, never all rally to the same cause simultaneously, and never agree on a common set of priorities. We will also enjoy remarkable strength because, even when some parts of our denomination struggle, our disconnected polity prevents those struggles from infecting the rest of the denomination.

5. Refuse to idolize or demonize Southern Baptist leaders.

God has given Southern Baptists remarkable leaders – including thousands of pastors and hundreds of specialized leaders who work for denominational bodies and entities. We expect these leaders to be convictional and definitive in their doctrinal, moral, ethical, strategic and financial pronouncements and decisions. We value strong leaders and reward them with our allegiance and financial support - when we agree with them. We also often attack them when we disagree with them. When we go too far to either extreme, we idolize or demonize leaders.

It has been my privilege to work with many of the strongest leaders/personalities in our denomination. In almost every case, these leaders have been passionate Christians, devoted spouses and parents, and doting grandparents. They are personal evangelists, spirited speakers, loyal church members, and generous personal donors to Southern Baptist causes. They are remarkable leaders, but they are also all flawed people. We must have the spiritual maturity to draw on the strengths while managing the shortcomings of our leaders.

Maintaining this perspective has helped me focus on the good our leaders accomplish while being patient with their mistakes and failures. Leaders are a gift from God. We can follow them without idolizing them. We can disagree with them without demonizing them. Doing this has helped me experience the good results of many leaders, without being disappointed by their mistakes or demoralized by their failures.

6. Accept the reality of mixed outcomes in denominational decisions and programs.

Strong leaders working in de-centralized networks assures significant variety in denominational decisions and programs. Most of the time, I agree with the choices and the approaches which are taken. Sometimes, I do not. Being part of a huge denomination means some aspects of what we are doing are thrilling, while other aspects are infuriating. Adjusting my expectations (not always expecting things to go my way) and accepting mixed outcomes enables me to celebrate progress without being overly critical of people, choices, and programs which seem flawed from my perspective. After more than 25 years of executive leadership, I have a long track record of mistakes which others have tolerated. This recognition also contributes to my humbly accepting the reality of mixed outcomes.

Perspective Continued from page 10

Maintaining this perspective has helped me celebrate the overall good we are achieving, without being frustrated or discouraged when results do not meet my expectations. It has also helped me more patient and forgiving of other leaders.

7. Trust governance processes will make the right decisions most of the time.

Most Southern Baptist denominational bodies and entities are governed by a Board of Trustees. Baptists elect these Boards and trust them – hence, the name “trustees” – to lead with doctrinal, financial, and missional integrity. For the most part, trustees are everyday Baptists who use their spiritual sensitivities, professional competencies, and common sense to make reasonable decisions related to their respective entity. Occasionally, they make mistakes and when they do the media – secular, religious, and social – delight in reporting it thoroughly.

For the most part, however, trustees do a credible job leading our denomination. They provide a workable method for millions of Baptists to have a grass-roots voice in governing denominational entities. While it is easy to point out the problems with this system, doing so begs the question, “How would you replace it?” A pope? A synod? A council? There is no perfect process because there are no perfect people, but trustees bringing their collective wisdom to bear on governance issues is the best way for us to guide our collective work.

Maintaining this perspective gives me confidence in decisions I may not understand or even agree with and patience to wait for the full results. Rank-and-file Baptists, working in a prayerful context, take their trustee roles seriously and make the best decisions most of time.

8. Accept some losses, prepare for public embarrassment, and refuse to react to the negative ways we are portrayed.

Southern Baptists, despite our size, are a minority in American culture. We stand for minority positions on issues like morality, marriage, gender definition, and abortion. The Bible promises believers will face opposition for living out gospel-mandates. In our generation, this expresses itself in almost constant media attacks on and negative public portrayals of Southern Baptists.

Confronting these critics will not mollify them. Addressing the problems they raise will not satisfy them. Trying to answer complaints and win arguments is futile – like playing media “Whack-a-mole.” Time is better spent on more positive pursuits.

Maintaining this perspective keeps me centered on our mission. We can do very little to control the narrative others broadcast about us. Our media-ability pales in comparison to the communication-sophistication of our critics. While talking back is temporarily satisfying, staying on message about the gospel and our mission is more eternally significant.

A Final Story

Several years ago, I vented my frustrations about the ineptness and dysfunction among Southern Baptists to a veteran, loyal denominational leader. I told him I was ready to leave Southern Baptists. He replied, “I agree with you.” I was shocked. He was a stalwart and for him to agree with me meant my hopes were dashed. Then he asked, “So, where are we going?” He paused for a few seconds and then continued, “Where are we going that has thousands of missionaries, hundreds of church plants, dozens of colleges and seminaries, a publishing house and financial services provider, hospitals, camps and conference centers, crisis pregnancy centers, and more than 40,000 mostly Bible-believing churches? Where can we find all this without any of the negative that has upset you? So, where are we going?” We looked at each other for a few seconds and I said, “I guess I’m staying.” He smiled and said, “Me too.” I hope you will do the same.