

## Stetzer highlights keys to revitalization

By Gary D. Myers

News has been bad for churches in America as growth has slowed to an all-time low, and according to Ed Stetzer, congregations are dying at a rate of eight per day. But Stetzer sees a glimmer of hope as some churches refuse to give up and are making a comeback.

Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research and author of "Comeback Churches," spoke about growing churches during the keynote address at the Church Revitalization Conference sponsored by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health Oct. 11-12.

The two-day conference, which was cosponsored by the Perry R. Sander Center for Ministry Excellence at the seminary, featured three pastors who led their churches to dramatic turnarounds: Chad Grayson of Airline Baptist Church in Bossier City, La.; Mike Walker of East Bayou Baptist Church in Lafayette, La.; and Alan Floyd of First Baptist Church in Middleburg, Fla.

New Orleans Seminary professor Reggie Ogea, who directs the doctor of ministry and doctor of educational ministry programs, also spoke on the principles of church growth.

To illustrate the pervasive nature of the current decline among U.S. churches, Stetzer cited a 2004 study by the Leavell Center that found only 11 percent of

Southern Baptist churches could be considered "healthy, growing churches." The study looked at key church health indicators such as membership increase, number of baptisms, membership-to-baptism ratios, additions by conversion and percentage of members involved in discipleship programs.

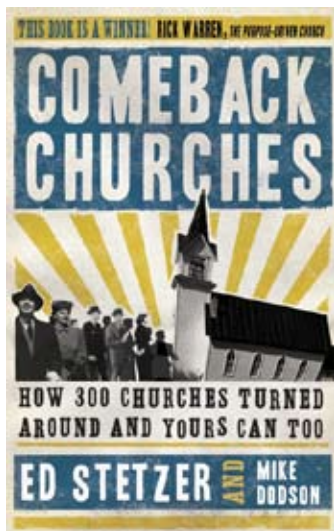
According to Stetzer, since 2000 every category of baptisms is down in Southern Baptist churches except one – the number of baptisms of those under 5 years of age. The number of churches baptizing 10 or more people is declining every year. These statistics are an indication that something is wrong in Baptist churches, he said.

But Southern Baptist churches are not the only ones struggling with stagnant growth, Stetzer said. Two-thirds of Assemblies of God

churches and 80 percent of Nazarene churches are plateaued or declining.

To compile research for *Comeback Churches*, Stetzer and co-author Mike Dodson surveyed 300 churches across 10 denominations that achieved significant growth after a period of decline. Stetzer and Dodson found many common factors in the churches that learned to grow again.

"The pain of staying the same has to become greater than the pain of change," Stetzer said. "The pain to be inflicted is they have to fall in love with lost people again. They've got to fall in love with seeing men



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## This Week in Chapel

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6

**Dr. Jack Allen**

NOBTS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7

**Dr. Richard Land**

President

*Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission*

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8

**Dr. Tony Merida**

*Dean of the Chapel*

## Next Week in Chapel

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13

**Dr. Rick Morton**

NOBTS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

**Dr. David Meacham**

NOBTS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15

**Dr. Tony Merida**

*Dean of the Chapel*

## Have a Great Thanksgiving Holiday!

November 19-23

## All in the Family

Justin and Allison Raburn welcomed their daughter, Lilian Claire, on Oct. 27. The baby weighed 7 pounds, 1 ounce and was 19 and 3/4 inches long.

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and women come to faith in Christ.”

Effective leadership was the issue that surfaced most often among comeback churches. Leaders helped their churches see the harvest and made people a priority, Stetzer said.

“We became convinced that leaders grow churches,” he said. “I know that is cliché, but there was no getting around it.”

Comeback church leaders share ministry with church members and model a passion for evangelism, Stetzer said. Communicating a clear vision also was a key factor in growth.

Comeback churches exhibited three common faith factors: a renewed belief in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church; a renewed attitude of servanthood; and a more

strategic prayer effort, Stetzer said.

“You can’t love Jesus and hate His wife ... you know

the church is the bride of Christ,” Stetzer said. “The reality is they fell in love with the church again.”

Leaders of the revitalized churches stopped focusing on their own preferences and began focusing on servanthood. According to Stetzer, the successful leaders began exhibiting the attitude of Jesus found in Philippians 2:5-11. And they focused on seeking God’s direction through prayer.

“They prayed. They heard from the Lord. They got on mission,” Stetzer said. “There were a lot of structural changes, but we need to start with the spiritual things. Leaders lead people to spiritual changes.”

Comeback churches renewed their evangelistic efforts, and for many churches, this means learning to love the lost, Stetzer said.

The churches illustrated their love for the lost by actively witnessing. Stetzer said each successful church used a variety of evangelism methods. While some church members excelled at traditional door-to-door outreach, other members developed relationships with the lost as an avenue for witnessing. None of the comeback churches in the Stetzer survey used only one evangelism method, but each created an environment where both spontaneous and planned evangelism could take place.

“Most churches love their traditions more than they love the lost,” Stetzer said. “We lock ourselves into a self-affirming subculture.”

Removing barriers to the Gospel was another way the churches showed love for the lost, Stetzer said. These barriers

included meaningless tradition and practices that repelled unchurched people. Stetzer suggested keeping the focus on the Gospel.

“We need to remove every stumbling block we can except the stumbling block of the cross,” he said.

The conference was designed to stimulate creative ideas for leading churches to evangelistic growth. The speakers represented a wide background of church situations and contexts, and each led a church to significant growth.

On the second day of the conference, Chad Grayson shared the story of Airline Baptist Church’s turnaround over the past three years. The church has focused on three things during Grayson’s time as pastor: magnifying Jesus, ministry to others and missions.

When he became pastor the church was ready for change, Grayson said, and change

has come. Baptisms at Airline are up from an average eight per year to more than 100 per year.

Sunday School attendance has grown from an average of 180 to 600, and more than 70 people participate in FAITH evangelism each Tuesday night.

Ogea, an experienced pastor and Baptist associational leader, identified a number of crucial issues for church growth. Like Stetzer, Ogea pointed to effective pastoral leadership as the most important factor in bringing growth to a church. Ogea said understanding the “how” and “when” of change is a critical issue as well.

“The ‘how’ of change involves creating a sense of urgency,” Ogea said. “Effective change must be slow, incremental and exponential.”

Other issues Ogea explored included raising the church to a new level of excellence one ministry at a time and refocusing the purposes of the church in its community.

“It’s always exciting to hear the firsthand accounts about churches that are growing again and reaching people for Christ,” said David Meacham, director of the Leavell Center. “At NOBTS we are focusing on training leaders for healthy church growth.”

Bill Day, associate director of the Leavell Center, found in a 2004 study that only 11 percent of Southern Baptist churches were experiencing healthy growth. Thus, revitalizing plateaued churches is a crucial task.

In conjunction with the Baptist Center, the Leavell Center honors “Churches of Excellence” which meet five criteria for healthy churches. The churches honored this year may be seen online at <http://baptistcenter.com/leavellcenter.html>.

**Upward Rep Needed**

Are you a self-starter who believes in the value and benefit of reaching children and families through sports? Upward Unlimited wants you! The seminary rep position involves working on campus in and among students, staff and faculty to raise the awareness of Upward Children’s Sports Ministry. This person will discover and execute ideas and strategies to help others understand this valuable outreach and church-building tool.

For more information, contact current student Kyle Cox at 504.858.6797; send a resume to Tommy Yessick at [tyessick@upward.org](mailto:tyessick@upward.org); or call Yessick at 864.706.5713 (cell) or 645.599.3853 (office).

**Calling All Doctors!**

Students interested in the Ph.D. program are invited to a Recruitment Fair after chapel November 6 in the Creole Room. Faculty and ReDOC staff will be available to answer questions and share information about research doctoral study in Old Testament, New Testament, church history, theology, Christian education, evangelism, missions, preaching and psychology and counseling.

Feel free to stop by for some fellowship and light refreshments as you explore the possibilities.

**Karate Club Results**

The NOBTS Karate Club had several students compete at the “American Black Belt Academy Fall Classic” Karate tournament in Deville, La., on Oct. 13. Be sure to congratulate these students for their hard work and dedication. Here are the results:

**Adult Beginners**

Dr. Mari Wirfs  
Men & Women Kata, 1st  
Women Sparring, 2nd

**8-year-old Beginners**

Rhett Riley  
Kata – 1st  
Sparring – 1st  
Grapppling – 1st

**11-13-year-old Beginners**

Jennings Riley  
Kata – 1st  
Sparring – 1st  
Grapppling – 1st



## Jacksonville Pastor's Conference

The Jacksonville Pastor's Conference Workshop is being offered for academic credit as a workshop. This workshop is for both graduate students and undergraduate students. Dr. John Gibson will be teaching this course.

Each year the conference provides a great opportunity for spiritual renewal and refreshment – as well as academic credit. The conference will be held on Feb. 1-5, 2008, in Jacksonville, Fla., at First Baptist Church. For students attending the conference through the seminary, the host church will subsidize the regular fee. Each student will pay only \$50 for the conference registration. Housing and lunches are provided. This course has not been approved for on-campus hours.

For more information, please contact Dr. Gibson at [jgibson@nobts.edu](mailto:jgibson@nobts.edu) or 282.4455, ext. 8590. The deadline to apply to be a part of this conference is Nov. 30. Applications must be in Dr. Gibson's office by that time.

## Attention: Returning Students

All returning students can now register for the Spring 2008 semester through IQ Web. Registration for undergraduate students will be open through IQ Web until January 11, 2008. Graduate students will be able to register online until January 18, 2008. Returning undergraduate students will need to contact their academic advisor before being cleared to register online. January 18, 2008, is also the "Final Day for Tuition Payment". Payment must be received in the Business Office and posted to your account by this date.

All schedules for the Spring 2008 semester can be viewed online at [www.nobts.edu](http://www.nobts.edu).

## Attention: Graduates

Orders for rented graduation regalia must be submitted by Friday, Nov. 16, 2007. Regalia will be available for pick-up at the New Orleans LifeWay Campus Store on Wednesday of the week of graduation. All regalia, excluding tassel, must be returned following the graduation ceremonies.



## Shelter Needs Volunteers, Monitors

The Salvation Army men's shelter opened October 29 and needs MALE volunteers. Volunteers would hang out with the men and could start Bible studies.



The Salvation Army is also hiring monitors for the men's shelter. Shifts for monitors are Monday-Friday, 4:30 p.m. to 12 a.m., Saturday-Sunday, 4:30 p.m. to 12 a.m., or Saturday-Sunday, 12 a.m. to 8 a.m.

The shelter opens each afternoon at 4:30 p.m. and the men go to bed at 10 p.m. It is located at 4500 South Claiborne in New Orleans. Please call program director Doyle Duren at 504.234.9084 for more information.

## Rec Lab '08

Check out this January workshop option to be held Jan. 27-31, 2008, in Jacksonville, Fla., at <http://www.lifeway.com/ecard/reclab08>. You can earn seminary credit while attending this exciting conference along with participants and seminar leaders from around the country. Whether you're building a recreation/sports and family ministry from the ground up or wanting to revitalize an existing one, Rec Lab 2008 will supply the tools you need. Contact Judi Jackson at ext. 3223 for more information.

## IMB Candidate Consultant On-campus

Dr. Bob Dilks, IMB Candidate Consultant, will be at NOBTS Wednesday, Nov. 14. He has limited daytime appointments available. If you would like to meet with him, please contact Mindy McCord at 1.800.765.0011 or [mmccord@imb.org](mailto:mmccord@imb.org) no later than Nov. 7.

## Oxford Study Trip: June 23-July 6, 2008

The Oxford Trip scheduled for 2008 will be June 23-July 5. This trip will be led by Dr. Bob Stewart and will include visits to places such as St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and more. Students may earn up to nine hours of credit if registered with NOBTS. For additional information contact Linda Jackson at 504.816.8060 or [linda@missionlab.com](mailto:linda@missionlab.com).

## Global Missions Day

Global Missions Day is coming on Tuesday, Nov. 27. Dr. Jerry Rankin, IMB president, will speak in a special missions chapel service. The Seminary will host several IMB missionaries who will be available to meet with students and speak in classes. Please keep checking the Gatekeeper in the upcoming weeks for details or contact the Global Missions Center at [globalmissionscenter@nobts.edu](mailto:globalmissionscenter@nobts.edu) or 504.282.4455 ext. 8124.

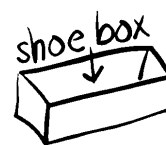
The IMB and Global Missions Center will sponsor a luncheon following chapel on Tuesday, Nov. 27, in the Creole Room. Dr. Jerry Rankin will speak and answer questions from students. For more information, contact the Global Missions Center. The luncheon is free, and a reservation is needed by Friday, Nov. 16.

## Youth Camps Seeks Director

Stoney Creek Ranch, a youth camp in New Ulm, Texas is seeking a Camp Director for Summer 2008. The camp director will be responsible for overseeing smooth flow of groups, supervision of Stoney Creek staff, ensuring compliance with Texas youth camp standards and enforcing Stoney Creek policies and procedures.

Applicants may receive a job description from [pam@stoneycreekranch.org](mailto:pam@stoneycreekranch.org). Send resumes to 281.494.1012. Please visit [www.stoneycreekranch.org](http://www.stoneycreekranch.org) for more information.

## Calling All Shoe boxes!



Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes have arrived. We will be collecting shoe boxes from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 12-17 and Nov. 19 in

the atrium of the student center, near Lifeway Christian Store.

To participate in Operation Christmas Child, simply fill a shoe box with toys and other presents. You can even write a personal note to the child! Then, bring the shoe box to the collection center with \$7 to cover the cost of shipping and evangelistic outreach.

If you would like to volunteer for a two-hour shift to help staff the collection center, please see Dr. Harsch or call ext. 3212. Join us in sharing the love of Jesus with those in need. Remember that every shoebox gift impacts a life for Christ.

## Church-Minister Relations

### Ministry Opportunities

The following are a few of the ministry positions received by the Church-Minister Relations office. Churches are listed according to the type of ministry position needed and whether the position is classified as part-time or full-time. All positions within a 2-hour radius of New Orleans are listed separately with the approximate distance in parentheses. To contact any of these churches, or to have your resume sent to other unpublished ministry opportunities, visit the CMR office (second floor, Frost Building) or contact them at 504-282-4455 or 1-800-662-8701, ext. 3291, or [cmrconsultant@nobts.edu](mailto:cmrconsultant@nobts.edu).

#### New Orleans Area

##### Full-time

- First Baptist Church, Zachary, La.; children (98)
- Parkside Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La.; pastor (81)
- First Baptist Church, Saint Rose, La.; pastor (23)
- Wadesboro Baptist Church, Ponchatoula, La.; pastor/music director (53)
- Part-time
- St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, La.; youth (10)
- Bayou Blue United Methodist Church, Houma, La.; youth and children (59)
- Hope Church of Waldheim, Covington, La.; music (43)
- First Baptist Church, Albany, La.; music (64)
- Gretna United Methodist Church, Gretna, La.; music (11)
- Lake Vista United Methodist Church, New Orleans, La. youth (5)
- Big Level Baptist Church, Wiggins, Miss.; music (102)
- Broussard Grove Baptist Church, Prairieville, La.; music (67)
- Poydras Baptist Church, St. Bernard, La.; music (18)
- Plainview Baptist Church, Bogalusa, La.; youth (70)
- New Palestine Baptist Church, Picayune, Miss.; youth (48)
- Tammany Hills Baptist Church, Covington, La.; pastor (43)
- Immanuel Baptist Church, Morgan City, La.; youth (87)

- First Baptist Church, Kentwood, La.; youth (90)
- Calvary Baptist Church, Thibodaux, La.; music (68)
- Kedron Baptist Church, Amite, La.; youth (75)
- Greenlaw Baptist Church, Kentwood, La.; pastor (90)
- Diamondhead Baptist Church, Diamondhead, Miss.; music (55)
- The Rock Church, Gonzales, La.; youth and music (60)
- Olive Branch Ministries, Kenner, La.; children (15)
- Red Bluff Baptist Church, Folsom, La.; worship (54)
- Red Bluff Baptist Church, Folsom, La.; children (54)
- Cedarcrest Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La.; pastor (81)

#### Pastor

##### Full-time

- Pine Grove Baptist Church, Magee, Miss.
- Grace Bible Church, Chesapeake, Va.
- Willow Point Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.
- First Baptist Church, Blountstown, Fla.
- Cleveland Road Baptist Church, Bogart, Ga.
- First Baptist Church, Celeste, Texas
- Union Baptist Church, Belmont, La.
- Willow Ridge Church, Lexington, S.C.
- Mars Hill Baptist Church, Summit, Miss.
- First Southern Baptist Church, Lawrence, Kan.
- Part-time
- Haverhill Community Church, Haverhill, Mass.
- Calvary Baptist Church, Tylertown, Miss.

#### Music

##### Full-time

- Emmanuel Baptist Church, Carlinville, Ill.
- Westside Baptist Church, Simpsonville, S.C.
- Heartland Baptist Church, Alton, Ill.
- Part-time
- Temple Baptist Church, Moss Point, Miss.

#### Youth

##### Full-time

- Rock Hill Baptist Church, Brownsboro, Texas
- Central Baptist Church, Americus, Ga.
- First Baptist Church, Murphy, N.C.
- First Baptist Church, Lynn Haven, Fla.
- First Baptist Church, Garland, Texas
- West University Baptist Church, Houston, Texas

- Ferry Farm Baptist Church, Fredericksburg, Va.
- Tusculum Hills Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.
- Sharon Baptist Church, Wichita, Kan.
- Hot Springs Baptist Church, Hot Springs, Ark.
- Life Church, Sulphur, La.
- New Orleans Chinese Baptist Church, Kenner, La.; Associate English Minister/ Youth
- First Baptist Church, Belen, N.M. Part-time
- Shady Grove Baptist Church, Lucedale, Miss.
- Baker Road Baptist Church, Baytown, Texas
- Valley Brook Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga.

#### Children/Preschool

##### Full-time

- River Oaks Community Church, Clemmons, N.C.

#### Combination

##### Full-time

- First Baptist Church, Fordyce, Ark.; Worship and Education
- New Hope Baptist Church, Foxworth, Miss.; Music and Education
- Richmond Hill Baptist Church, Calgary, AB, Canada; Worship and Discipleship
- Bethel Baptist Church, Alamogordo, N.M.; Associate Pastor/Music and Worship
- First Baptist Church, Jacksonville Beach, Fla.; Music and Youth
- First Baptist Church, Pierce City, Mo.; Associate Pastor/Youth and Music
- Miner Baptist Church, Sikeston, Mo.; Associate Pastor/Children and Family Ministries
- McGehee Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala.; Students and Education
- Crossroads Baptist Church, Marshall, Texas; Youth and Families
- Bethel Baptist Church, Alamogordo, N.M.; Associate Pastor/Students and Families
- Southside Baptist Church, Southside, Ala.; Evangelism and Singles
- First Southern Baptist Church, Overgaard, Ariz.; Children, Youth, and Families

#### Other

##### Full-time

- Hughesville Baptist Church, Hughesville, Md.; Associate Pastor
- First Baptist Church, East Bernstadt, Ky.; Associate Pastor
- Life Church, Sulphur, La.; Maturity (Education) Pastor
- First Baptist Church, Copperas Cove, Texas; Discipleship

