



The Christian Index

August 15, 2018 | Reaching the World Through Mission Georgia | www.christianindex.org

Don't forget to send in those VBS report forms ... or you might hear from Sherrie Gray

By Joe Westbury
Managing Editor

DAHLONEGA — “Send in that Vacation Bible School Report Form. Today. Right now.”

That’s the message Sherrie Gray wants VBS leaders to hear loud and clear before the summer ends and churches become preoccupied with Fall Sunday School programs.

Gray has been involved with the weeklong event for most of the 16 years she’s been a member of Dahlonega Baptist Church. Today she serves as preschool director and interim children’s minister and is heavily involved in family outreach.

But she was not always a believer on reporting her church’s numbers.

Her first response, when asked to help compile the numbers many years ago, was “What does it matter?” But when she had it explained to her, she became an advocate for the annual reporting.

“I thought, ‘What does it matter what we did in Dahlonega? It’s not that important,’ she says in an honest admission.

“But it really does ... especially since 50% of children in our preschool ministry are unchurched.”

The Vacation Bible School Report Forms have already been mailed to Southern Baptist Churches nationwide and the call has gone out for their return as soon as possible. The biggest fear is that they will become buried under other paperwork.

Georgia Baptist State Missionary Jenni Carter says this is the best time to

return the forms, which should be submitted by September. The documentation can be sent by mail to Carter at the Baptist Missions and Ministry Center at 6405 Sugarloaf Parkway, Duluth, GA 30097 or by email to jcarter@gabaptist.org. Her office can be reached at (770) 936-5370.

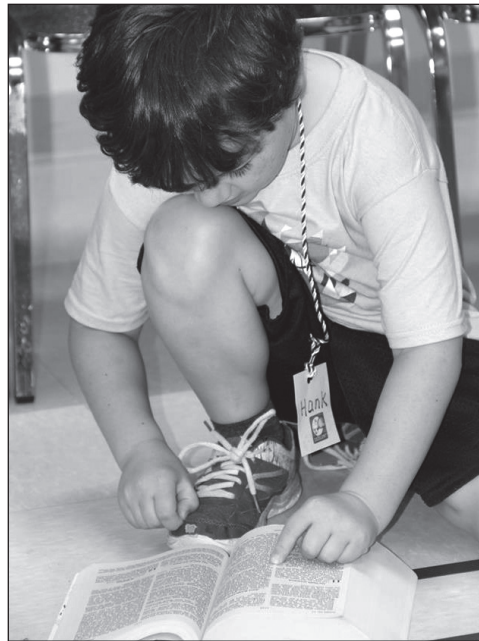
The Mission Board enters all the forms into a national database from which LifeWay Christian Resources tabulates and provides a breakdown of the previous year’s event. Those numbers were released last week and show the importance for each church, regardless of size, to report their results.

2017 results now released; 65,301 professions of faith For Summer 2017:

- 2,494,059 people participated in VBS;
- 65,301 people accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord;
- 835 people made decisions for vocational ministry;
- \$7,012,010 was given to missions.

Carter says Georgia churches are a little slow at reporting this year but she is optimistic the forms are being prepared.

“As they come in I look at every one, first to see how



A young child reads a Bible at this summer’s VBS in Dahlonega. DBC/Special

many professions of faith were recorded and then the number of unchurched families who were identified in the community,” she says.

“It is always encouraging to see our churches involved in outreach to children and their parents.”

What is also encouraging is the number of churches who help other congregations in their community, those who partner with others across the nation, and even those like First Baptist Church in Cumming who led a VBS in Ethiopia.

“But what really broke my heart is the blank form that was returned with no numbers and a note that apologetically said they had no VBS because they did not have enough volunteers,” she explains.

Dan Dockery, Director of Missions/Associational Missions Strategist for Carrollton Baptist Association, is one of those individuals whose Association takes VBS missions trips. This year the group traveled to Placerville, CA near Sacramento.

They helped with recreation, missions, and taught crafts to children at Placer Heights Baptist Church, where former Georgia Baptist pastor Mark Standridge serves.

About 40 children attended the outreach and there was one profession of faith at the small church. Dockery said VBS is “our greatest outreach tool that we have as Southern Baptists. It’s a powerful way for the church to move outside of its 4 walls and into the community in redemptive ministry.”

And just as important, he adds, it’s a great way to get families into the church in a non-threatening environment.

Gray, at Dahlonega, firmly agrees.

“It’s our largest outreach event for the year. For 5 days we have the completely undivided attention of the children. Whether they are working on crafts or playing a game or listening to a Bible story, seeds are being planted. We may never see the harvest but we know we are being faithful to plant the seeds and that is what is so rewarding.

“It’s a great opportunity to love on the children and their entire families.”

So send in those forms, she says.

Miracles at FBC Villa Rica and at the base of the Feugo volcano

By Gerald Harris
Senior Editor

VILLA RICA — Georgia Baptist churches have been challenged to be Acts 1: 8 churches. In other words, our churches have been encouraged to think in terms of sharing the Gospel in their Jerusalem (their community), their Judea (Georgia), their Samaria (the U.S.A.) and the uttermost parts of the earth (our world.)

Many have become Acts 1:8 churches, but the news of what God is doing through First Baptist Church in Villa Rica is exceedingly heart-warming.

The church is reaching out to their Jerusalem (Villa Rica). The last two Sundays in June, according to First Baptist pastor Kevin Williams, the church received 64 new members into the fellowship of the church. Forty-four of the new members came on a transfer of their letter from another church, but 20 came on profession of faith and for baptism.

Additionally, the church had an incredible Vacation Bible School with 67 first-time decisions. Vacation Bible Schools provide an excellent opportunity for churches to reach the next generation, the current emphasis of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board – #reachingnextgen.

Recently the church prepared 2,500 meals for children in the Villa Rica school lunch program and 50-60 people delivered the lunches to the homes of the children. Every Wednesday First Baptist is the distribution center for the local food bank and scores of families come to the church for food they likely could never purchase. On Thursdays the church has a soup kitchen



Pastor **Kevin Williams** of Villa Rica First Baptist baptizes a new believer in a lake. **Pastor Manuel**, of Primera Iglesia Bautista, stands at left while **Gary Eudy** of ES Volunteers and former pastor of Central Baptist Church in Douglasville, assists on the far right. Primera Iglesia Bautista was planted by Villa Rica First Baptist. VRFBC/Special

The church website explains that the best way to connect at First Baptist is through service. The church declares, “When we minister and serve according to our passions and gifting, we are glorifying God, furthering His Kingdom and fulfilling our purpose.”

for indigent persons in the community.

The church website explains that the best way to connect at First Baptist is through service. The church declares, “When we minister and serve according to our passions and gifting, we are glorifying God, furthering His Kingdom and fulfilling

and their coaches to the hospitality of the church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

FBC Villa Rica is reaching out to their Judea. They recently ministered to the Georgia Baptist Children’s Home by going to the campus in Palmetto and baptizing four of the several children who were saved in the church’s Easter production: “The Promise: A Passion Play.”

Williams said, “We don’t do as much in our Judea, unless we are asked to serve another church or invited to support another ministry in our state. We have 3,600 churches in Georgia and while we are willing to help other churches fulfill their mission, we don’t want to infringe on their turf or ministries unless we are invited to do so.”

First Baptist is also reaching out to their Samaria. The church’s senior adult choir recently returned from Charleston, S.C., where they were engaged in blessing the folks with their singing and service. Another team was on a mission trip to Kentucky.

Villa Rica First Baptist is also reaching out to the uttermost parts of the world. The church has just had a team of 60 members return from San Juan La Laguna, Guatemala where they planted a church three years ago. Nine new converts were added to God’s Kingdom during this visit and 48 have been baptized since the church was started in 2015. A new church building has been constructed and the church is alive and well.

Williams has helped enlist ten other pastors in Georgia and North Carolina who are helping plant additional churches in the same region where San Juan La Laguna is located.

our purpose.”

The football coach at Villa Rica High School recently called Williams and asked if the team could come to the church for worship on the first Sunday in August. Williams responded in the affirmative and agreed to feed the team after the service. That will expose 109 football players

Church, don't give the world what the world already has

I recently had lunch with the preachers on the program for the annual Bible Conference at Morningside Baptist Church in Valdosta. Our conversation turned to compromise in the church. That's when Dr. Hershel York, Dean of the School of Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said, "The church doesn't need to give the world what the world already has." The statement was profound.

I was seated by Pastor Wayne Robertson and said to him, "Dr. York's statement has just inspired an editorial." So, here it is!

It is an enormous challenge to attract the lost world to the church in this 21st century, because everything this world knows comes through 30-second sound bites and Tweets.

Pastors and church planters are searching for ways to have a successful and fruitful ministry, but sometimes they look in the wrong places for the keys to starting a church.

I had a conversation with one church planter a decade or more ago and he told me he was surveying the community where he intended to start his church and asking people the question: "If you ever decided to become a part of a church what kind of church would you like for it to be?"

The young church planter took weeks going to the homes of people in this section of greater Atlanta and asked people, most of whom were presumably lost, what kind of church they would like to see planted in their neighborhood. Perhaps I am wrong, but it appeared to me that he was attempting to establish his church around the vision and values of the unredeemed.

Do you have to adopt the world's ways to attract the

lost? No, the Bible, and specifically the book of Acts gives us God's principles for church growth and health. Any truly healthy church is built upon God's infallible Word and in the book of Acts great churches were known for having great power (Acts 4:33), great grace (Acts 4:33), great fear (Acts 5:5), great persecution (Acts 8:1) and great joy (Acts 15:3). I would also add great faith as a requisite for a

It is an enormous challenge to attract the lost world to the church in this 21st century, because everything this world knows comes through 30-second sound bites and Tweets.

great church, because Jesus commended it on several occasions (Matthew 8:8-10 and Matthew 15:22-28).

Many churches seem to have adopted the world's accouterments (trappings, accessories), philosophies and ideologies to attract the unbeliever. Much of this "new approach" to reaching the lost comes out of a church growth movement that stressed seeker sensitive worship, felt needs preaching and consumer driven programming.

Along with the "new approach" came a "new theology" – pragmatism. Pragmatism may be defined as "the doctrine that results and success are the criteria of truth, meaning and value."

God may not be blessing every thing that looks successful. I am convinced that the devil sometimes appears to bless compromise and counterfeits to deceive the very elect. Consequently, churches established on a faulty foundation may draw a crowd, but whether or not they grow a church through authentic

evangelism and biblical discipleship is debatable.

It is being commonly repeated that the culture has influenced the church more than the church has influenced the culture. In some cases the world has begun to infiltrate the church. In some cases that is through seniors idolizing their traditions and in some cases that is through young adults doing "whatever works" to grow their church.

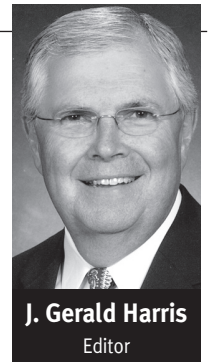
We can bring all of the world's music, drama, videos and methods of communication into the church, but we need to make absolutely sure that we don't give the world what the world already has.

There was a man, according to Jesus, who had great wealth. He had barns with no room to store his excess produce and fruit, so he decided to tear down his barns and build larger barns so that he would have goods laid up for many years. The rich man prepared himself to "take (his) ease, eat, drink and be merry." However, God called him a fool and predicted his immediate death.

That rich man didn't need anything the world had to offer. He needed Jesus.

I understand that one of the James Bond movies was entitled "The World is Not Enough." I don't know what the film was about, but there is much truth in the title of the movie. That is why the church doesn't need to give the world what it already has.

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be dis-



J. Gerald Harris
Editor

tinctively different from the world. Adrian Rogers used to say, "The Christian/church needs to stand out in this dark world like a diamond in a coal mine."

The Apostle Paul declared, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (I Corinthians 6:17).

Exodus 11:7 states, "... the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

God obviously wants there to be a marked difference between His people and the people of the world. The church is not to be like the country club, the sorority, the fraternity, the civic clubs, the educational system, the Loyal Order of the Moose, the United States Congress or the credit union.

The true church offers light; the world offers darkness. The church offers hope; the world offers despair. The church offers eternal joy; the world offers temporary happiness. The church offers peace; the world offers war and conflict. The church offers love; the world offers lust. The church offers salvation; the world offers sin. The church offers deliverance; the world offers deception and death. The church offers heaven; the world offers hell.

So, the church has something to offer the world that the world does not have, so why would any church conform to the world, its methods and ideology and try to give the world what the world already has?

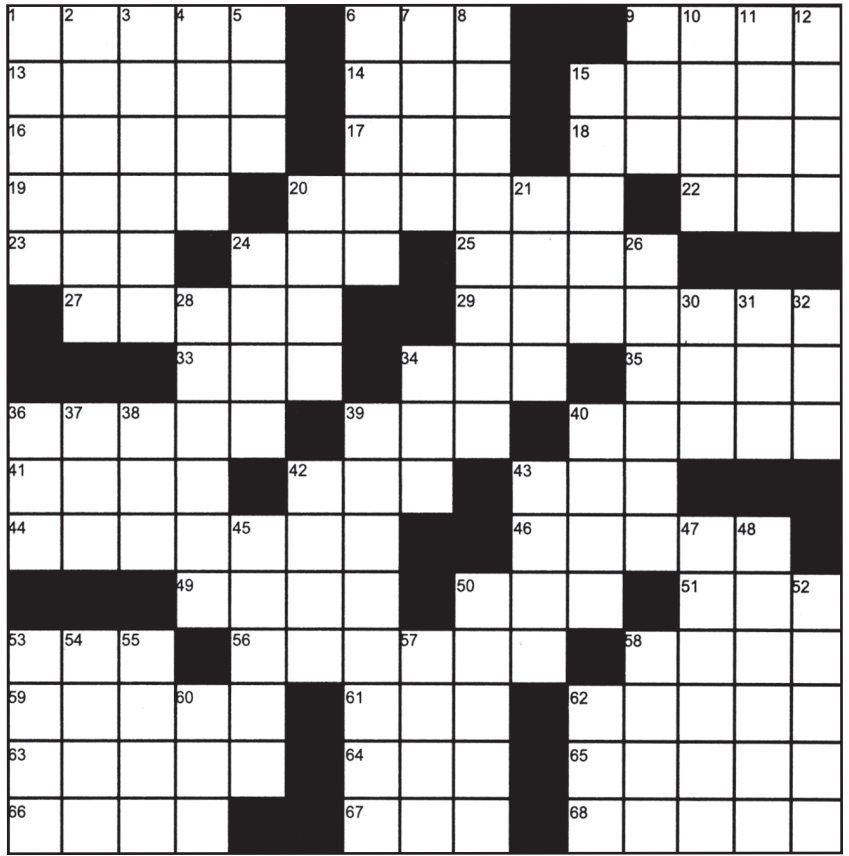
ACROSS

- 1. "Take my ___ in thine hand" (2 Kings 4:29)
- 6. Pouch
- 9. Doorway in Samaria where measure of fine flour was sold for shekel (2 Kings 7:1)
- 13. Height of chapter: ___ cubits (2 Kings 25:17)
- 14. Sheet
- 15. Moab's king (2 Kings 3:4)
- 16. "___ men went before the priests" (Josh. 6:9)
- 17. "___ him come now to me" (2 Kings 5:8)
- 18. Anesthetic
- 19. "___ is the word of the LORD" (2 Kings 20:19)
- 20. Traded check for money
- 22. Avowal (Rom. 3:29)
- 23. African antelope
- 24. Smote by archers (1 Chron. 10:3)
- 25. Long narrative poem
- 27. Say hello (1 Sam. 25:5)
- 29. Renounces
- 33. Elisha did this over a dead child (2 Kings 4:34)
- 34. "Thine eyes shall not ___ all the evil" (2 Kings 22:20)
- 35. Grain Elisha cast in pot (2 Kings 4:41)
- 36. Josiah "walked in all the way of ___ his father" (2 Kings 22:2)

- 39. Government security agency (abbr.)
- 40. Miss Boop
- 41. Center of rotation
- 42. Make a mistake (Prov. 14:22)
- 43. Bad (prefix)
- 44. Apiary
- 46. Fertile desert area
- 49. Among
- 50. Roman deity
- 51. Girl
- 53. Time zone (abbr.)
- 56. Dilemma
- 58. Women's magazine
- 59. Depart, as Elisha refused to do from Elijah (2 Kings 2:2)
- 61. Digit priest put oil on (Lev. 14:28)
- 62. Company of men, such as Jesus' disciples
- 63. Holy messenger (2 Kings 19:35)
- 64. Lode yield
- 65. Express emotions
- 66. Fine dirt made by threshing (2 Kings 13:7)
- 67. Agent (abbr.)
- 68. Microwave laser

DOWN

- 1. Canned chili brand
- 2. Crowd together (Mark 3:9)
- 3. Equipment used in battle (2 Kings 20:13)
- 4. Give meal, as ravens did (1 Kings 17:4)



- 5. Supplied bread and water (1 Kings 18:13)
- 6. What a dropped melon does
- 7. Beers
- 8. Greek island of Aphrodite
- 9. "___ into the city" (2 Kings 7:12)
- 10. Pallid
- 11. Biblical you (2 Kings 1:13)
- 12. "He read in their ___" (2 Kings 23:2)
- 15. Doctor
- 20. Habitation broken in war (2 Kings 25:4)
- 21. Type of sword
- 24. "Hath shaken her ___ at thee" (2 Kings 19:21)
- 26. Desert animals (2 Kings 8:9)
- 28. He asked for double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9)
- 30. The LORD "shall pluck my feet out of the ___" (Ps. 25:15)
- 31. Make lace
- 32. Cunning
- 34. Title of respect (John 4:11)
- 36. Smear
- 37. Wood chopper that fell into water (2 Kings 6:5)
- 38. Contend
- 39. Person to whom money is owed (2 Kings 4:1)
- 40. Idol Israelites burned incense to (2 Kings 23:5)
- 42. Jehoiakim "did that which was ___" (2 Kings 23:37)
- 43. Discuss
- 45. Urge forward
- 47. Ice houses
- 48. Greeting Gehazi was not to use (2 Kings 4:29)
- 50. Animals Naaman gave to Gehazi (2 Kings 5:26)
- 52. Biblical outcast (2 Kings 5:27)
- 53. "Went unto their tents joyful and ___" (1 Kings 8:66)
- 54. Restaurant dinner listing
- 55. Labels
- 57. Stab with tusk (Ex. 21:28)
- 58. Writer Bombeck
- 60. Animal doctor (abbr.)
- 62. Jewel

