



Spring 2015

# Spirit of grace, charity prevails at GA

By Scott Swanson

The 18th General Assembly of the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches, hosted by Heritage Baptist Church of Mansfield, Texas, was unique from any of its predecessors.

Both of the men scheduled to speak on the GA's first day ended up in the hospital and were unable to attend at all.

There was no question in the minds of most who attended that this conference had the potential for division and many prayers were voiced asking for humility, love and grace.

At the end of the week, it was universally acknowledged that those prayers were answered, no matter where individuals stood on the matters decided.

The elephant in the room was the ARBCA Theology Committee's position paper on God's impassibility, a subject that had become a matter of controversy and, unfortunately, some sharp differences over the previous several years.

Delegates at the 2014 GA authorized the committee to produce a position paper on the topic, which deals with the question of God's unchangeable nature and has implications for many of His other attributes.

The discussion, which accounted for most of the business conducted by the delegates, occupied the better part of two



*Attendees at the 2015 ARBCA General Assembly gather in the sanctuary at Heritage Baptist Church in Mansfield, Texas.*

days. At a normal GA, the association's business is dispatched within a two-hour session.

The business meeting, on Tuesday morning opened with subdued, meditative singing of "Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now," and rapidly proceeded to the discussion of the Theology Committee's position paper on the words "without ... passions," found in the first paragraph of the second chapter of the 1689 Confession.

Secretary Doug VanderMeulen exhorted delegates to maintain Christian love and

friendship, no matter what the outcome of the vote.

"Deliberative bodies deliberate. There are no bad guys here," VanderMeulen reminded the audience. "Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose."

But, he said, the more the issue is talked out, the better understanding would be for all participants.

"The conversation is worth having," he said.

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# ARBCA Update

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ASSOCIATION OF REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA

The Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America is a nonprofit organization registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The purpose of this association is to advance Christ's kingdom by providing a fellowship in which churches of common confession may find mutual encouragement, assistance, edification, and counsel, and may participate in cooperative efforts such as home missions, foreign missions, ministerial training and publications — all of which are often beyond the scope of one local church.

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Reibers Reformed Baptist Church, Shermansdale, PA

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Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Ontario, CA

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Trinity Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, LA

Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, Jackson, GA

Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, La Mirada, CA

Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, Mercer Island, WA

Tucson Reformed Baptist Church, Tucson, AZ

West Suffolk Baptist Church, Suffolk, VA

# Commentary: Take care the foundation on which you build

By John Giarrizzo

*“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

*“Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.*

*“If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” (1 Cor. 3:10-15 ESV).*

In this text Paul points to the grace of God that had been given to him so that he was made like a skilled master builder.

The word for “master builder” in the Greek is *architectron*, which means somebody who draws up the plan and builds the building. He is a combination of architect and general contractor.

Paul laid the foundation and Apollos built on what Paul had begun. What is this foundation that Paul has laid? What is foundational to Christianity? Is it our ethics? Is it tradition? Is it the historical church?

No. Christ is the foundation of Christianity! We can only build on a true doctrine of Christ. In a sense, the foundation is the whole of the word of God. Apostolic doctrine was about Christ. The whole New Testament is about Christ. If that foundation goes, everything falls.

And that is precisely what is happening in many churches today – the attempt to build their ministries without the true foundation. Paul laid the apostolic foundation of gospel truth concerning Jesus Christ.

Thus the foundations of Christianity are, once for all, laid. The word for “laid” points to what was done once in the past and never needs to be repeated. However the word for “building” is in the present tense, pointing to a continual work.

So while the foundation is once for all laid, our building upon that foundation continues to the present day. The passage

is referring primarily to those pastors and missionaries who are called to preach Christ and teach the whole counsel of God.

How are we going to build on this foundation of Christ and with what materials? Paul mentions a variety of building materials – but he places them into just two groups.

Each group consists of three materials that can be reduced to non-combustible materials that will withstand the test of a fire, and combustible elements that are consumed by fire. If you were going to build a lasting building – then granite or marble would be a good choice. But wood, hay, and stubble would be unable to withstand fire. What does Paul have in mind when he uses this analogy of building materials that are classified under these two groups? What is being represented?

Consider these three basic interpretations to this text:

■ **Some assert that Paul is referring to our own good works.** Gold, silver and precious stones equal good works, while wood, hay and straw equal bad works. Roman Catholics promote this interpretation, along with their concept of Purgatory.

Yet there are places in Scripture that liken our works to precious treasure. In Matt. 19:21, “Jesus said to him, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’” Luke 6:45: “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Luke 12:33: “Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.”

Could Paul be thinking of a believer’s good works? While good works play an important role in the life of a believer, this interpretation is highly unlikely.

■ **The more common interpretation is that Paul is referring to the doctrines that we teach and preach.** We are instructed in Prov. 8:10-11: “Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice

gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.” Paul has been writing about wisdom in the first two chapters of this book. The Corinthians had been trying to build their church by man’s wisdom, the wisdom of this world, instead of God’s wisdom in His Word.

In Matt. 13:52 Jesus said, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” Doesn’t it seem to you that we are living in a day in which people have grown indifferent to doctrine? There was a time in which Christians would take a hard stand upon certain doctrines, defending them to the end. But not any more – nowadays it’s more important to be tolerant and accepting of other people’s positions.

But we must take care that our teaching is in accord with sound doctrine (Titus 1:9-14, 2:1). It is not enough to live right if we don’t teach right. There are many God-fearing people who hold to erroneous teachings. One such man was the famous monk from Britain, Pelagius. He was very devout, pious, and learned in theology. He was certainly well known in Rome, both for the staunch asceticism of his public life as well as the power of his persuasive speech.

His reputation for pious devotion earned him praise early in his career even from such pillars of the church as Augustine, who referred to him as a “saintly man.” But the problem with Pelagius was that he did not pay heed to his doctrine. He went astray in his teaching on the Fall, original sin, moral corruption, and free will. The teachings of Pelagius were later condemned at the Council of Carthage in 418, and again at the Council of Ephesus in 431. So, living right is not enough – we must also teach what is right.

Truth matters to our Lord. He is the God of truth, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and Christ is the Way and the Truth and the Life. Does it honor God when His truth is stifled, watered down or adjusted to fit human fancies? Woe to those who attempt to alter, soften or tame God’s truth! Since truth

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# Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies: Wisdom from the past

**By Dr. James M. Renihan**

There is a lot of wisdom buried in old reports from churches and associations of bygone eras.

I have profited greatly from the musings, advice and opinions of wise Christians from the past. They frequently struggled with the same kinds of practical church difficulties we face, and often provide excellent solutions to these problems.

Recently, one of our graduates pointed me to some interesting material in the *The Year-Book of the American Congregational Union for the Year 1854*. In the "Condensed Report of State Associations," the account from the General Association of Massachusetts includes the "substance" of an investigation appointed the previous year into the question of the increased instances of relatively brief pastorates. They were concerned, since (according to the report) 50 years before the average pastorate lasted nine years, while in 1853 it was from three to six years.

They suggest that this was to the serious detriment of the churches. Several reasons are provided for this decreased length of pastor-church relations. They are insightful and helpful, and one is especially of interest to us. It says:

"Another cause of frequent changes in the ministry is the want of an adequate preparation for its duties. Associating during his collegiate and theological course with few except students, a young man enters upon the ministry with but a limited acquaintance with any other class. It can hardly be supposed that he will have that knowledge of the world as it is, which will enable him to adapt his discourses to all the varieties of character of which a congregation is composed.

"Not a few are willing to be dismissed within three or four years of their settlement. They have gone over the topics they investigated, and used up the materials they collected, during their preparatory course, and they lack the high and noble purposes, the indomitable energy and relish for hard study essential to meet this crisis, and to ensure freshness and continual growth. They are willing to remove to another field, where they may repeat what has been written, and secure some time for reading and pastoral labor.

"And the temptation is strong in proportion to the amount of labor required of ministers, and never was that pressure so great as now."

This analysis points to a two-fold lack in the young ministers of the Congregational churches, and both of these are deficiencies related to their preparation for office.

On the one hand, this is an indictment of sequestering students away from practical experience during their ministerial training. Or, to phrase this differently, it demonstrates that it is very important for students to have intimate involvement in the life of a church while they are preparing for ministry.

As with any other task, students live during their years of education within a certain subculture. This is not the case for them only. We all live within subcultures—they might be our places of employment, or our neighborhoods, or the hobbies we share with



**Photos courtesy of Victor Smith**  
*Graduates and current IRBS students made up a significant portion of the attendees at the ARBCA General Assembly.*

other enthusiasts. Engineers may tend to mingle with engineers, and young mothers tend to seek out friendships with their peers.

But the subculture of students with students may produce a stifled view of the world if it is not consciously overcome. The church is not made up only of young scholars, but it includes many different kinds of people, all with their own subcultures. In preparation for service in the church, it is absolutely necessary for those seeking to lead congregations in the future to become acquainted with these kinds of people, and to be able to know, love and ultimately minister to them.

At the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies, we believe that this point is essential, and we seek to meet it in two ways.

On the one hand, and perhaps most importantly, we expect all of our students to be members of local churches, and exhort them to be deeply involved in every facet of the lives of the assemblies they attend. They ought to be mingling with all of the different people of the congregation, learning how to understand and relate to others whose lives may be very different from their own. We encourage them to begin to learn to show hospitality, to spend time with folks from other walks of life, and to know what it is to love and serve the variety of people who make up our churches.

On the other hand, we also strongly emphasize the internship program and requirements that students must meet in order to graduate. We are convinced that practical experience in ministry is indispensable. Spending significant quality time at the elbow of an experienced pastor is priceless. Our association has a wealth of godly, gifted, mature men who have learned how to serve the wide variety of people who sit before them week by week. We want our men to learn from these pastors through lengthy internships. This is a huge benefit to our young men. It provides them with real life experience, but also

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# RBMS missions around the world



While we are still getting to know the area and make more contacts, we are planning for events that will, Lord willing, take place at the end of this year and next year as well.

We hope to have a Carol Service during Christmas in the community centre in Carlingford with the help of Dundalk Baptist Church. We are also in the process of planning a basketball camp for February of 2016 and a VBS for next summer.

I have also made contacts with several individuals, most of whom work at my favorite restaurant in Carlingford, Riina's. I also completed a radio course so that I can be on DundalkFM, the community radio station.

Right now I co-host with Pastor Stephen Murphy and Kevin Marley on their show called "Heart of the Matter" every Monday night. I am praying that I would be able to have my own show as well.

We learn each day how relational Ireland and the Irish are and how important it is to build trust within the community. This can only be done through time. It

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will be a slow going process with kingdom advances that will be measured in inches rather than miles.

I recently spoke with an Irish church planter who is working in the south and he told me that if you meet a man whose heart is extremely hard, don't immediately think, "how can I reach him right now?" but it may be better to think, "how can I reach him in three year?" Long-term vision is absolutely necessary if we are to see a lasting impact.

Ashley continues to meet with three (unconverted) women, who have become

very good friends. With one of them in particular she has had many opportunities to speak truth to her. Perhaps God will see fit to have these ladies, whom we met the second day here, be the first fruits of this harvest!

The Cooley Peninsula on which we live has roughly 20,000 people and not a single evangelical church. Carlingford, in particular, has one Christian, yet five practicing witches, three spiritual yoga instructors, and *everyone* else has no idea what the gospel is!

Pray. Pray. Pray.

## IRBS

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develops relationships that will supply help for years to come.

The second lack identified by the 1854 Congregationalists is the meager training some of these men received. Apparently, many of them considered the instruction received in the classroom as something of a resource for preaching and teaching alone. Perhaps their lecturers had given that impression.

The passive student receives instruction in a subject, and simply repeats what he has received. When this material runs out, he has no more to give, and moves on. When schools present their teaching in this manner, it does not really prepare men for a lifetime of service in a church.

I personally observed this approach

many years ago as a young college-age student. It was obvious that such a method did not adequately prepare men to serve long pastorates.

The alternative is to recognize that our task as professors is to provide our students with the best tools possible so that they will be able to use these tools for the rest of their ministerial lives. We must teach them how to think clearly – how to reason and evaluate difficult doctrinal and practical problems.

We must give them thorough instruction in the languages of Scripture so that they may bring forth a lifetime of treasures from God's Word as He gave it – not through the barrier of a second language.

We must help them to understand the great heritage the Lord has given to His church. We must show them the importance and relevance of our Confession of Faith. Our task is extensive, but the work that men face when they graduate requires this depth

of careful preparation.

At the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies, we labor to give men the tools they need to serve their people. We cannot anticipate every practical problem they may face, or every wind of doctrine that may seek to blow them away.

But we can show them how to exegete the Scriptures carefully, how to check their conclusions against the wealth of wisdom 2,000 years of the Lordship of Christ provides, how to respond to the profound changes in our culture (or whatever culture they minister in may present), and how to help their people come to maturity in all of these things.

That is our goal in ministerial training: to help men to grow in grace and in giftedness; to understand how to minister to people and glorify God through their preaching and teaching. Please pray for us, that the Lord will keep us faithful in this great task.



# RBMS missions around the world

Helping young men prepare for pastoral ministry is more and more a pressing burden for me since I have passed 55 years of age and am now looking toward 60 as the next milestone.

In January 2014 Thiemo and Yasmine joined our church plant in Aix-en-Provence, France. Thiemo was a student at the John Calvin Seminary in the city, at which I give several hours of courses each year to first-year students on the spiritual disciplines.

Through his studies at the seminary, Thiemo had come to understand God's sovereign grace in salvation and undergone a major shift in his theology. He and two other students, who had undergone the same change, were doing most of the preaching at a local charismatic Baptist church.

The radical change in their message led to a disruption and then to one of the young preachers being asked to leave the church, even though he was the son of the church's founder. These three young men had moved from man-centered preaching with a felt-needs emphasis and a focus on experiences to a God-centered preaching anchored with a focus on God's glory and grace in Christ and the great truths of the gospel.

Thiemo left the church during the disruption and finished the second half of his year-long pastoral internship, required by his seminary course, with me. He is now at a church in Paris for a two-year stint as his first real pastoral call.

We continue the contact with Thiemo and Yasmine, mainly by phone. Recently, Thiemo was here to present and defend his master's thesis at the seminary and we had a good time of discussion together. We trust that our relationship with this fine young couple will deepen over the years to come.

I will be going up three times in June 2016 to Belgium Bible Institute in Brussels to give 24 hours of teaching for a Saturday course which the Institute offers to the Christian public in the city. Strong ties have been made with BBI and we would

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very much love to have the opportunity to do more for the students there in the years to come. One of the students finishing this year, and which whom I was impressed, asked me to play a mentoring role in his life as he goes off to take his first pastorate in a few months, in Paris. We have begun regular phone calls and I look forward to helping this gifted young man.

### The Church-Plant

We continue to meet in rental premises in a suburb town of Aix-en-Provence called Bouc Bel Air. This town is one of three suburb towns that are closely attached and located between Aix-en-Provence and Marseille, France's second-largest city. These three suburb towns have no Protestant church and are home to about 35,000 inhabitants. As Bouc Bel Air is only a 25-minute drive from both Aix and Marseille, it is a feasible commute for people in both places on a Sunday morning. In fact, members of our church plant live in both Aix and Marseille, as well as in Bouc Bel Air itself and other neighboring areas.

I have had meetings with the mayors of two of the three towns which we are trying to reach and they have been receptive. The mayor of Bouc Bel Air has put me on a list so that I receive a personal invitation card for all the official ceremonies and important events in the town.

The mayor of Simiane-Collonge told me that he had, in his previous military career, seen and been involved in too many terrible things to be a man of faith. He said that he did not have too much confidence in

humanity. I responded that if he really knew what the Christian gospel he would find that it was just message for someone like him. When I quoted Christ's words that he had come not for the just but for the unjust and explained them a bit, he responded that here was something with profound sense. He did not want to go any farther in spiritual discussion for the moment, but I want to give him something to read and am looking for something appropriate.

In recent months we have gone door to door, meeting the people of the community, telling them about the new church and giving them a flyer with information about the church and inviting them to a six-week Bible study called Discovering Christianity that started on April 6. We also had a special Friday night conference on March 27 on the theme "What I believe : is it important?"

For the moment we have a core group of 15 people and another six that are regular or occasional attenders.

Perhaps the most dynamic thing happening in this little group for the moment is the ladies' Bible study which Nicky leads. Ten women are coming and there has been very open, frank and important discussion centered around chapters of Nancy DeMoss' book, "Lies Women Believe: And the Truth that Sets them Free."

We are very thankful that the weekly prayer meeting is well attended in our little

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# RBMS missions around the world



I have been stationed at Hurlburt Field, Fla., which is home to the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), since this past August.

I am assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing (1 SOW), where the mission focus is unconventional warfare (counter-terrorism, combat search and rescue, personnel recovery, psychological operations, aviation assistance to developing nations, “deep battlefield” resupply, interdiction, and close air support).

The 1st SOW is the most heavily deployed wing in the Air Force, and the deployment cycle is by no means slowing down, despite the stated conclusion of the war in Afghanistan.

Units for which I have direct responsibility are the 505th Command & Control Wing (CCW); the 361st Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance Group (ISRG); the 19th Special Operations Squadron (SOS); and the 823rd Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer (RED HORSE) Squadron.

Interestingly, the CCW, ISRG, and RHS are all tenant units that belong to the Air Combat Command (ACC); the Command to which I belonged during my first two assignments. That point has actually been helpful in building bridges.

Work with the 505th and 361st has required top-secret clearance, which I was granted in January. Inroads with these units have grown exponentially in the past couple of months as a result. Our military members are handling matters of life and death on a daily basis, even in non-deployed settings; and are also burdened by the challenges associated with abridged manpower and reduced budgets.

Military families are under greater strain than ever as workloads have increased and benefits have decreased. Both military members and their families require robust support to navigate the emotional turmoil that accompanies these stressors. My counseling load has intensified in recent

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months, and I pray regularly that the Lord would grant opportunities for the gospel to advance, especially in particularly dark circumstances. I ask that you join me in that prayer.

Within the Protestant Chapel parish, preaching responsibilities are rotated, which means that I am in the pulpit about once every month to month-and-a-half. I preached the first Sunday of the new year from I Tim. 4 regarding the importance of doctrine and devotion, the first sermon of a series related to the teaching of the Apostles' Creed.

My intention for this year is to teach fundamental biblical truths as confessed in the Apostles' Creed as I fill the pulpit. In January I was handpicked to represent the USAF Chief of Chaplains Office and speak at the Department of Defense (DoD) / Veterans Affairs (VA) Suicide Prevention Conference in Dallas, Texas.

I addressed the role of chaplains in suicide prevention, with a particular emphasis on the impact of moral injury and its relation to post-traumatic stress. The two sessions were well received by those in attendance. I deployed briefly to Qatar in March as one of four members of a Reintegration Assistance Team. We assisted special operators returning from combat duty in Afghanistan.

This duty afforded me a few opportunities for counseling and providing encouragement. At the tail end of this duty we heard about the fatal aircraft mishap that occurred back at our home station. Not all risks faced by military members are in

combat zones.

A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, on training maneuvers, crashed in the Santa Rosa Sound. All 11 crew members – seven Marines and four soldiers, – were killed. Shortly after returning from deployment, I joined one of the several search-and-recovery teams combing the Gulf Coast for wreckage and human remains.

As a chaplain, duties extended beyond search-and-recovery to tending to those scarred by the experience of discovering fragments of God's most sacred creation. The year ahead is filled with uncertainty. While I was originally slated for deployment, it appears that tasking has been pulled. I am unsure how that will affect the assignment of duties, but it will certainly do so.

Leadership will be changing, as the current wing chaplain (a fine Latter-Day Saints gentleman) will be replaced during the summer (by a Southern Baptist with a solid reputation). Change in leadership generally brings a change in style and focus, and requires adjustment, no matter how positive.

The present ambiguity regarding the circumstances at work is coupled with that of the current situation faced by our Association. Regardless of how uncomfortable I may find myself in some situations, I find a great deal of comfort in the wise and good providence of our sovereign Lord. Believing the promises of God in such difficult times provides a great deal of assurance.

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# RBMS missions around the world

At the end of May, we will mark our second year here in Las Vegas, and I must say that the ministry with my organization has really hit a great stride. The Lord has allowed me to build a good reputation with my unit, something that is absolutely foundational to successful ministry.

As the community has become comfortable with me, I have seen an exponential increase in my counseling ministry. Last month alone I held over 70 counseling sessions! I praise the Lord of this as counseling is a great time to open the Word with people and to share the gospel.

The two biggest issues I see are work stress and family stress, and the two are certainly related. When things are hard at home, work becomes difficult; when work is hard, that stress is often carried home. Several marriages are on the edge of failing, several are in recovery, and a few have tragically ended in divorce. Yet, even in the pain of divorce we have seen the Lord's grace.

One member who started coming to me for counseling early in 2014 has come to faith, joined a local church, and been baptized as a result of divorce. While we want to see marriages saved, we want to see men and women saved all the more! Similarly, I have seen spouses able to forgive sin as the Lord has forgiven them. I have seen unbelievers come to faith and ungodly husbands by their new faith to love their wives as Christ loves the church.

Continue to pray for this counseling ministry, that the Lord would keep bringing people to my door, and that by those counseling sessions he would bring his children to saving faith!

As I've addressed work-related issues, the Lord has graciously allowed me to speak to leaders at all levels, from frontline supervisors to commanders. I serve with a wonderful leadership team and, working together, we have been able to address several significant workplace moral issues. In particular, we have been able to advocate for a few key changes that

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## HOME MISSIONS

allow single parents to better care for their children. I have been very pleased to see this cooperation, and blessed to see those in single-parent situations cared for.

In addition to the military ministry, Janet and I have been blessed to find a good church in Las Vegas and to really settle in with that community. The pastor and his family actually live in our neighborhood, and we have built a strong friendship. We are able to serve them regularly in children's' ministry, weekly in Bible study and, on occasion, in the pulpit. It took us about a year to find this particular church, but we are so thankful the Lord brought us to them.

Janet and I continue to rejoice for all that the Lord has done and continues to do in our family and in ministry. This past year we welcomed our fourth child, Lukas Mathew, and the three other children are doing well at home and in school, and really settling into our new home. They have built great friendships with other children from church and in our neighborhood, something that is always important for military children who move from place to place.

Similarly, Janet has forged several wonderful friendships with other ladies in our neighborhood and church. As a homeschool mom, these relationships are so very important for her.

Looking to the year ahead, we prayerfully expect more blessings, more challenges, and more opportunities. I have two years remaining in my current assignment, and am very thankful for that. I pray that the Lord will continue



to open doors and avenues allowing me to ministry in His name. I pray that the surge in counseling continues, and that the Lord gives me the stamina to keep up. In particular, we are praying that the Lord would open a couple new doors this year allowing me to reach out to certain areas of my organization that I haven't yet had access too. I would appreciate your prayers to this end.

Finally, as we look forward to the year ahead, we are looking forward to adding one more to our family. Just a few weeks ago Janet told me that she is pregnant again, No. 5 for us. We praise God for blessing us yet again, and we certainly feel the blessing the Psalmist speaks of as our quiver fills.

We thank you again for all you support, you prayers, and your letters. I'mr sorry I could not make the GA this year, but look forward to joining you next year.

## Galyons

From page 7

I am certain that the love and support my family and I have received from ARBCA congregations (especially Miller Valley) has been a tremendous blessing. Please know that we appreciate your incredible kindness.

It is an honor to labor with those who remain steadfast to our Lord and His Word in the midst of a crooked generation, and a privilege to join with you for the sake of our Lord and advancing His gospel.

I thank you, and praise God for our partnership.



# RBMS missions around the world

I have been reassigned to Naval Air Station Fort Worth in March and we have been reunited with the rest of our family there – an unexpected but very welcomed gift from God! I am looking forward to being with a Navy unit after being with the Marines for so long.

It is my privilege to spend my days doing pastoral visitation to Marines and Sailors in their work places and to proclaim the Gospel at the base chapel monthly and lead two Bible studies. Of course I also counsel troubled servicemen in the aftermath of the difficulties of their lives and help them navigate this demanding environment.

A number of men I have invested in heavily through the past five to 10 years are reaping souls for the kingdom at a much greater rate than I am – and I am delighted to see their labors and faithfulness. Their family and church leadership, devotion to sound theology and biblical faithfulness fuels my own race and provokes me to good works.

I have been laboring in the Bible books of Hebrews, Genesis, and Romans. I have been studying the subject of holiness and led studies through several works of Sproul, Ryle, and Lloyd-Jones. I have enjoyed opportunities to preach on base

## The Joyners

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Patrick, Rhonda, Audrey, Jordan, Maggie, Noah, Laurel Anna, Mary M'Cheyne

Chaplain, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, USMC



and at various other churches we have had associations with through the years. The difficulties in our association have involved a transition of sending churches for us and we testify that we have been well loved and cared for by Ephesus Church and are also very thankful to (again) be officially sponsored by West Suffolk Church.

My family is well and by God's grace He is working His work in us and doing Gospel labors though us.

Rhonda remains fully engaged in hospitality and mentoring young wives and mothers and invests much time in assisting the homeschooling efforts of many newly involved in teaching their children.

Audrey remains involved with assisting in the care of Pastor Doug and Selah Helms' family in Fort Worth (with whom

she lives) as well as their son, Peter, in a coma for several years – along with weekly visits to assist in worship in nursing homes, evangelism in the malls and, of course, her college work.

Jordan, Maggie and Noah provided instrumental accompaniment and frequently assisted with child care at our church in Jacksonville, N.C., before we moved.

Will and Natalyn are also in Fort Worth in preparation for Gospel labors.

Audrey, Will, and Natalyn have just recently returned from a mission trip to Mexico leading Bible School along with other evangelistic meetings. LaurelAnna and Mary M'Cheyne are very comfortable in their vocation as hospitality assistants in our home.

## Vaughns

From page 6

church and that there is real pleading with the Lord that He would stretch forth His hand, give open doors for the Word and grant that the gospel come to people through us not in word only but in the power of the Holy Spirit and full assurance.

Our desire is that the Sovereign Lord would glorify His name and show forth His power in such a way that, looking back, there would be no human explanation for what has happened (especially in light of the very ordinary character of our group!),

but that all who see would be constrained to say, "Look what God has wrought!"

This is our prayer, not just for the work we are undertaking in our little corner, but for all of France. We pray that the recent terrorist attacks, which have shaken the French people, would be used to drive men and women from their false comforts and cause them to wake up to ultimate questions which only the gospel of Jesus Christ can answer.

### The Church Plant in Grenoble

One final short word on the Church Plant in Grenoble. Joel and I both are going up regularly to preach in Grenoble at the Reformed Baptist church there. It

has been 2½ years now since I left, and the church has still not found a pastor. Please pray earnestly for this need. It is difficult for a small church like this to carry on for long without a pastor. Nevertheless we are very encouraged with the news there.

The church members are presently conducting four evangelistic Bible studies groups, all doing the Discovering Christianity series of studies in the gospel of Luke. Those leading the groups think that some of the people attending are "close to the kingdom" and in one or two cases may have already come to faith in Christ. Please pray for these people and for the church in Grenoble!



# RBMS missions around the world

We want to praise the Lord for His faithfulness and goodness towards us.

We have seen Him taking care of us in many aspects of this new life in Mulhouse, France.

We received a very warm welcome from the people in the church "La maison de l'Evangile." The members seem to appreciate the preaching of the Word and they have a very good fellowship. They have a real burden to see God's Word being spread around and the church growing in a biblical way.

We really appreciate the flat we were able to rent close to the church building. After a few days we already felt at home. Little by little, we are adapting to life in this new country.

Most of the administrative steps to change countries have been made without too many complications.

We are happy to see the Lord is giving strength and wisdom to Stefan Zürcher to face the various challenges in the Payerne church.

Presently, I am preaching through the book of Hebrews on Sunday to around 30 people, who gather for the service. In the midweek Bible study we are studying the Gospel of John with about 16 people.

## The Favres

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Olivier and Denise

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## FRANCE



Towards the end of February we had a one-week evangelization effort with a team of 10 people coming from different European countries. We had some good contacts and now a part of my job will be to follow them up. Please pray that the Lord will change the hearts of many of them.

Besides that we are trying to get to know everyone in the church, having people in our home or in their houses sharing meals together. Since there are some old people who cannot come to church because of bad health, we visit them at home. We still have a few of them to visit.

As we think and pray about the organization of the church and the activities to introduce, we pray for wisdom in order to see the needs of the different people and to set new activities which will really be spiritually profitable for the growth in

knowledge and holiness of everyone.

Olivier has been having very good fellowship with the two elders who took care of the church during these last years and he praises the Lord for these two men and their wives who have been very dedicated to the Lord and his church in Morschwiller over the years. Thank you to pray that we will be a good and harmonious working team on the long-term, each one being able to use his gifts for the benefit of the all body.

Please pray for the challenges facing us in this first year in Morschwiller-le-Bas, Mulhouse, France. We do really appreciate your spiritual and financial support in this new step in our ministry, because we feel very weak and we count on the wisdom of the Lord to face it with the right attitude.

## Commentary

From page 3

matters to God it should matter to us too.

The need for defending the truth is emphasized by Philip Ryken:

"A gospel minister must defend the faith. He must fight for the infallibility, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Holy Scripture, maintaining that the Bible is the Word of God, written. He must fight for the deity of Jesus Christ, maintaining that Jesus is fully God as well as fully human. He must fight for the depravity of humanity, maintaining that all mankind are born in sin and misery. He must fight for the

holiness of God, maintaining that God will judge the world in righteousness. He must fight for the efficacy of the substitutionary atonement, maintaining that Christ died on the cross in the place of sinners. He must fight for the bodily resurrection, maintaining that Jesus Christ is the risen Lord.

From beginning to end, he must fight for the sovereignty of God's grace, maintaining that salvation is the choice and gift of God, to the praise of his glory. The fight for such truths is the good fight of the faith."

While there is much in the above interpretation that could apply to Paul's analogy, it is doubtful that these building materials represent the doctrines that we

preach and teach.

Yet there is one other interpretation that demands our attention.

■ **The third interpretation is that the gold, silver, precious stones are genuine converts brought into the church by wise and faithful ministers.** Wood, hay, straw would be the false professors who have been brought into the church by less prudent ministers.

This interpretation that likens the building materials to the people in our church is convincingly argued by the southern theologian, Robert Lewis Dabney: "That the

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# RBMS missions around the world



The last 16 or 18 months brought some clouds in the sky of our association in Quebec. We lost a pastor who has been disciplined by his church for immorality and for some other circumstances, our unity has been tried.

We are thankful that our God, in His mercy, has kept us together until now and we pray that He will strengthen our bonds of love for each other. This is also my prayer for ARBCA, as our unity is facing a big challenge. As each and every one of you, I spent a lot of time studying the doctrine of impassibility in the last past months and I have to confess very humbly that I was ashamed of my ignorance on this important subject, specially that I am supposed to be a systematic theology teacher.

I am very thankful for the work of the Theology Committee as well as for all the documents that our sister churches have posted on ARBCA's website.

Getting back to our work here in Quebec, I have spent a lot of time and energy working at the integration of the little church, made up mainly of Hispanic people, who merged with us last year. The issues are not so much with our church but with personal and marital difficulties. I even decided to take one of them in our home in order to be in a better position to help him out.

Our radio station ministry is still at the same time demanding and rewarding. Pastor Pascal Denault is more and more involved with me, as well as Pastor Pelletier, so that we have been able to add new programs. At the moment, in my morning program, I am expositing the book of Genesis.

Speaking of the radio station, I am thankful to God for the relationship that I have been able to develop with our technician, a 86-year-old man. I had the privilege, some months ago, to lead him to Christ and since that time, I am meeting with him almost every week for prayer and Bible reading and study.

Our CERB (Centre d'études réformées baptistes/Reformed Baptist Study Center) has continued its activities. Last October,

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we had Dr. Joey Pipa from Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, who came to teach for us an intensive course on worship. Next May, Dr. Guy Prentiss Waters from Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Miss. is scheduled to come up for teaching on Pauline theology. As we work to be in position to offer a full bachelor's program without having to send our ministry candidates away, we came to make important decisions concerning our operation.

First, we are developing a partnership with a seminary in the States that showed a lot of flexibility in order to be helpful to us. We also presented a financial proposal to our churches in order to keep the cost as low as possible for the students.

Our vision for our CERB is threefold: sound theology, accessible geography and affordable tuition fee. With the program we have now, we have reached our goal. And we have been pressed to go forward as a handful of young men came to us inquiring about the possibility of being theologically trained.

I am still teaching our Confession of Faith every Sunday morning at our church in Quebec City with an average attendance of about 25-30 people. Two or three among them could be potential officers in the future.

Last year, I was supposed to go and teach in Congo, Brazzaville with the Faculté de théologie évangélique de Montréal. For different reasons, one of them being the moving of the Faculté as their building was sold, it had been delayed to this year. I am still waiting to know the dates they want me to go. The initial planning was for me to

go at least once a year. So we will see how it develops. Speaking about the Faculté de théologie évangélique de Montréal, I have been invited twice last year to be part of the panel for a thesis defense.

I would like to end with a few prayer requests:

- M. G with whom I keep meeting regularly for prayer and Bible study;
- Our radio station ministry;
- The projects of our training center;
- Our potential candidates for the pastoral ministry; and
- The unity among the pastors of our Quebec association.

## Commentary

From page 10

structure is the church and the contrasted sets of materials are genuine and spurious church members, we may solidly establish by several proofs. First, the passage itself expressly asserts that the foundation laid is Jesus Christ. But the usual tenor of scripture figure, in both the Old and New Testaments, represents the church of Christ as the structure built on that foundation, and individual Christians as the constituent parts of the structure. Let the reader only refer to the well known passages in Isaiah 28:16; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5. In all these passages, the building resting on this foundation is the church, and Christians are the stones united to that sure

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# RBMS missions around the world

My wife Katie and I are thankful to have been approved earlier this year as missionaries being sent out by First Baptist Church of Clinton, La. with the help of RBMS.

We are still very much in the preparation phase of our plans to go to Western Australia but in God's kindness we have been able to take some steps toward our ultimate goal of beginning a church plant in the northern part of Perth.

The first step of preparation, which we took from Jan. 26 to Feb. 20, was to attend a four-week training course in cross-cultural adaptation in Union Mills, N.C. at the Center for Intercultural Training, sponsored by United World Mission. The training included coursework for our children as well as for both Katie and me and all of us greatly enjoyed our time.

It was difficult to pack up and move for one month, and especially to be away from our home church; however, we felt that the information and skills we received at CIT could not have been gained by simply reading or studying online and we believe our time there to be well spent. We hope that other prospective missionaries will avail themselves of similar training prior to going overseas.

Another step of preparation involves obtaining a work visa for myself. This visa allows for my family to come with me and lasts for four years. Also, it will serve as a "bridge" visa so that eventually I will be able to receive permanent resident status in Australia. Lord willing, the first part of the application will be accepted by mid-May. While waiting for my visa to be accepted and while completing my cultural training, I have been contacted by several ARBCA churches to come and present my proposed work in Perth. So far I have been able to visit two of these churches, with more lined up in the future. It has been a blessing to be able to visit sister churches and to worship our Lord with them.

Of course, prayer is the most important

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## AUSTRALIA



part of this time of preparation. Please join with me as I seek the Lord in a number of areas.

Please pray first of all that the Lord would provide funding for me and my family. At this time I do not have the funds necessary to be able to set a date of departure but my hope is that later this year I will be able to begin the work of church planting in Perth. Of course, this will mean that I must transition out of my current role of associate pastor here at First Baptist Church and I ask prayer for the Lord to bless the timing of my departure from Clinton.

Please pray that the timing of our move would not adversely affect our children's schooling, since Western Australia's school calendar does not match up with ours. Please pray for the small group of believers that are coming from another church in Perth to help us plant our church. Ask that the Lord would enable us to be of one mind in worshipping him and reaching the lost.

I look forward to the GA and trust that if any of you are interested in the work being planned you will feel free to introduce yourselves to me and allow me the chance to get to know you. May the Lord continue to build his church as he has promised.

## Commentary

From page 11

basis. Why suppose that the apostle departs from this uniform mode of using the figure here?

But second, the context of our passage settles the meaning. Look at the immediate context: 1 Cor. 3:9 says, "You are God's building," and 3:16, "You are God's temple." The subject is introduced by that unseemly strife in the Corinthian church in which the disciples ranked themselves in parties, according to the minister by whom they had been gathered in.

The apostle's object is to rebuke this division, by showing that the foundation is one; that the only Efficient in making a true Christian is God; that the only function of

any minister is to be an instrument in building up this one structure . . . and that all should tremble with holy fear, because a man might be connected with the true, orthodox church of Christ, and might even be introduced into it by a minister who was a sincere Christian, and yet be damned."

This interpretation certainly highlights the need to be careful when we welcome new members into our churches. We want only genuine converts in our membership. Of these genuine converts, there are three classifications – gold, silver, precious stone.

I wonder if there might be a parallel with the three classifications in our Lord's parable in Matt. 13:23, in which each bears fruit, "in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." Even in our congregations

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# RBMS missions around the world

We have certainly been encouraged by the number of visitors who drop in to both our morning and evening services; rarely does more than two or three weeks pass without there being someone new present, but it would be even better if they would return repeatedly and hear more of the Word of life!

We are also greatly encouraged by a baptism and the addition of four adults to our membership on the last Sunday of March. While these are people who have been worshiping regularly with us for between five months and three or four years, it will be an enormous blessing to have them more actively involved in the life of the church. This is particularly timely as a young family, who have been deeply committed to the church for a number of years, have recently moved to another city for work and to be closer to aging parents.

Almost every year for about a quarter of a century (with a couple of exceptions when he had visa problems) Pastor Stephen Turner of one of our sister churches in the Fellowship of Reformed Baptist Churches in New Zealand has been visiting the southern state of Tamil Nadu (Coonoor hill station) in India to lead a week of studies with men in ministry or preparing for ministry. More recently, Stephen has also been leading a similar group in the western state of Maharashtra (city of Pune).

By the time you read this, Stephen will have visited this latter group another four times, if all goes as planned, and this year Crosspoint Church has sent Dafydd to accompany and assist Stephen during the early part of May. Depending on how this goes, Dafydd may return for each of Stephen's future visits with a view to possibly continuing the studies beyond that point. This year Dafydd will also have briefly visited the Coonoor group as he has taken a keen interest in Stephen's ministry to India since its inception and this will be Stephen's final trip to that location (Mike Beck—the pastor of another FRBCNZ church—will continue leading the Coonoor studies in future years).

## The Hugheses

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Dafydd, Maria, Ajinkya and Anjali  
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## NEW ZEALAND



Incidentally, Pune happens to be Maria's home city, so Dafydd will have a chance to visit the family there, though Maria and the children will not be accompanying him to India on this occasion.

Each July we host a School of Theology in Palmerston North. Last year we had 15 men from New Zealand and Australia who gathered to be taught by Dr. Fred Malone on the topic of Preaching Christ in all the Scriptures. Not only was the teaching extremely helpful, but the fellowship during the breaks while consuming the excellent food (provided by Maria and her little team) was both enjoyable and greatly beneficial. This year we are looking forward to Dr. James Renihan's seventh visit in which he will be teaching on the Doctrines of Grace

July 13-17.

Following the School of Theology, the Hugheses hope to visit Dafydd's family in the UK for the first time in almost five years. It will be a special visit to celebrate his parents' golden wedding anniversary. The children are excited at the prospect of seeing their grandparents and cousins again. Ian Fuller, Dafydd's co-elder, will carry the load at Crosspoint during this time, but we are thankful for men within the FRBCNZ who will assist with preaching.

Once again we want to express our deep gratitude for the support and fellowship we enjoy in this partnership with Christ Reformed Baptist Church in Vista, and with ARBCA. It is a great privilege and blessing to co-labor with you in the work of the gospel.

## Commentary

From page 12

there can be found those who exhibit different degrees of productivity.

So, as pastors and missionaries, what kind of buildings are we building? What type of material are going into the construction of our churches? There is going to be an inspection.

This is true with any building we build. "Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done" (1 Cor. 3:13).

At the final Day of Judgment, the fire of

God's scrutiny will test the quality of each minister's labors. Happy will be the shepherd who enters into the joy of his master, along with the members of his own flock. These are the ones who built with gold, silver, and precious stone.

But how hard it will be for the shepherd who built with wood, hay, and straw. He will enter alone into glory, while his unconverted church members are cast into the lake of fire. He work has gone up in flames and thus he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved (1 Cor. 3:15).

May the Great Architect help us to build only with gold, silver, and precious stone – to the glory of God.

*John Giarrizzo is ARBCA Coordinator.*

# GA

From page 1

Delegate Sam Waldron, of Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Owensboro, Ky., asked the assembly and the Administrative Council for “all possible understanding and patience” in dealing with the issue.

The tenor of the debate and discussion was almost entirely gracious over the approximately eight hours of debate and discussion, broadly acknowledged as such by the participants, despite the strong opinions expressed on various sides of the issues.

Some questioned, at various points during the discussion, whether it is even possible to explain or understand God’s impassibility.

In addition to varied interpretations of the words in question, Theology Committee members, who sat on a stage throughout the proceedings and responded to questions and comments from the other delegates in the audience, reflected on the impact and importance of the Confession to an organization such as ARBCA and future generations, and of this particular doctrine to other attributes of God and to the gospel.

Some focused on the critical nature of the Confession as a capsulation of ARBCA churches’ common bonds.

Rob Crosby, of the Reformed Baptist Church of Tucson, Ariz., reminded the group that the Confession “contains the doctrine of our faith and practice,” quoting from the preamble composed by the writers of the 1689 document.

Great emphasis was placed by several delegates on the fact that God’s impassibility, the unchangeableness of his perfections, is integrally linked to not only all His other attributes, but the preaching of the gospel. Delegate Jerry Slate of Berean Baptist Church in Austel, Ga., noted that his own passion for preaching the gospel “waxes and wanes,” but God’s passion for the gospel never changes and neither does His love and grace to save souls.

Don Lindblad of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church of Kirkland, Wash., said that the doctrine gives preachers of the gospel reason to be “bold and assertive.”

“Do you know there is a God whose love is unchanging? It will never change. That energizes me to preach the gospel to



Photos courtesy of Victor Smith

*Theology Committee members, from left, Brandon Smith, Stephen Means, Stefan Lindblad, Ron Baines, Rich Barcellos, Jim Renihan, Mike Renihan and Jim Butler, discuss a question as Coordinator John Giarrizzo, center, listens. Below, Jeff Oliver, one of the parliamentarians for the business meeting, makes a point to the delegates.*

sinners.”

Lindblad noted that the doctrines in the Confession are the result of many centuries of theological study, dating back to the early church. Thus, he said, the specifics are critical. “Words are important and the definition of words are important,” he said.

The debate included substantial opportunity for delegates to question Theology Committee Members on various aspects of their paper and to make comments. Those comments include a variety of alternative interpretations of what “without passions” means with respect to God. Some questioned whether that particular phrase in the 1689 might reflect philosophical influences common in the 1600s and there was substantial discussion of the nature of God and how it impacts this doctrine and vice versa.

Responding to questions of the reliability of the 1689 as a summary of biblical truth, Theology Committee member Stefan Lindblad asked attendees to consider the implications of changing the Confession, warning that while small changes might seem insignificant now, what would be the effect to future generations if those changes continued to occur?

At the conclusion of testimony, delegates voted 78-11 to affirm the position paper on Divine Impassibility.

“We are so thankful for the grace, humility and love shown by you during this process,” Administrative Council Chair John Giarrizzo said. “This has been hard for some of you and it has torn you up. But it is God’s will



for us to uphold our Confession.” Giarrizzo had his hands full trying to moderate such an emotionally charged business meeting.

Following the vote, the delegates determined to give churches at least 180 days to determine their courses of action and how to balance that with the leadership and financial needs of the association – employee costs and missionary support, in particular.

VanderMeulen who chaired an Ad Hoc Committee for Strategic Planning, tasked with determining what steps ARBCA should take following a divisive vote that might result in churches leaving the association, said the committee’s goals was to “come up with a way in which we could affirm each other as brothers and sister churches.”

Delegates voted to give churches with qualms about ARBCA’s position a minimum of 180 days to decide their course of action.

“We don’t want to push anybody out any door,” VanderMeulen said. “We want to help bring resolution.”

He urged individuals or churches with

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## GA

From page 14

questions to contact the Theology Committee for suggestions on reading materials and other resources to achieve closure on the topic. He said churches with divisions within their leadership should contact the Membership Committee for help.

“We wanted to provide you opportunity to go back to your churches, talk with your leadership, determine if there is any particular need,” VanderMeulen said.

Treasurer Jeff Oliver of Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Placerville, Calif., echoed some of the concerns noted by VanderMeulen.

The last year has been marked by “difficult issues,” he said, including resignations of five members from the Administrative Council.

He and VanderMeulen urged churches to remember that ARBCA has a personal element – its employees and the missionaries whose finances it handles.

“We can’t bind anybody to that,” VanderMeulen said. “But we’re making an appeal within the bounds of Christian love to go the extra mile.”

Oliver assured delegates that no ARBCA funds were used in the publication of a book on impassibility, as was stated in a letter from a departing church. He responded that all fund disbursement is governed by the ARBCA policy manual and that GA delegates empower the ARBCA Finance Committee to make specific disbursements. “No ARBCA funds were used to publish the book,” he said.

“By God’s grace, we administer all those funds according to those policies,” he said. “All the books of ARBCA are open to all the churches. If you’re interested, get on a plane and go to Carlisle. We would be awfully glad to walk you through the books and answer any concerns.”

Oliver and others said it was very important to maintain financial support for missionaries and ARBCA’s ties with its chaplains, who in the military’s eyes, answer to the ARBCA coordinator.

Delegates voted to give churches essentially until the end of the year to determine their course of action regarding their ARBCA membership. They also agreed



Photos courtesy of Victor Smith

*Delegates enjoy food and fellowship during delicious meals served by the congregation at Heritage Baptist Church.*

to not close the GA, since financial decisions will need to be made, depending on how things play out, and to permit votes by delegates prior to the 2016 GA, with information necessary to those votes communicated to the churches before they occur. Also, delegates voted to permit the Financial Committee to use ARBCA’s financial assets “to ensure salaries and support be maintained during this period of transition.”

Oliver reminded delegates that ARBCA policy dictates that the association cannot spend more than it takes in, but given the possibly fluid financial situation as member churches possibly withdraw, that was the reason for the vote to allow the committee to dip into reserves to keep operations going.

“As a practice, we won’t seek to do that,” he said.

Delegates approved a proposed budget for 2015 of \$351,707 – some \$25,000 less than the 2014 spending total. Most of those cuts are reflected in expenses regarding the coordinator’s activities.

Oliver reported that ARBCA’s 2014 income of \$354,152 was nearly \$13,000 more than its expenses – \$341,593, leaving it with a budget equity of \$128,312 at the end of the year.



*Administrative Council members are, from left, Doug Vandermeulen, Steve Marquedant, Ron Baines, Fred Pugh, Coordinator John Giarrizzo, Brandon Smith and Jeff Oliver.*

“We’re thankful to the Lord for providing for all our needs and activities,” Oliver said, noting that many delegates remember times when ARBCA’s finances were much more tenuous.

Oliver asked delegates to agree that a special fund be established to receive and administer donations to ARBCA that come in the form of special gifts. He said that unlike special projects, which are authorized for a year at a time, there was no way to handle donations from churches or individuals for specific purposes that might extend beyond a year.

“What we’re trying to do is just bring some clarity to a particular activity or project that doesn’t fit under a regular line item in the budget,” he said.

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## GA

From page 15

Outgoing Coordinator Gordon Taylor reported that, in his final year in the position, he visited 20 churches, one of them outside the U.S., and made one international trip, to Quebec. He also particularly thanked ARBCA secretary Vickie Bookamer for her labors over the past seven years, along with Bruce Kronheim, who serves ARBCA as assistant treasurer.

“Some people have asked what we’re going to do,” Taylor said, of his retirement. “I tell people I don’t know what I will do when I grow up.”

He said he planned to take a two-month vacation, his first of that duration in 46 years, and then will fill a pulpit in Clarksville, Tenn., for three weeks in July.

Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies Dean Dr. Jim Renihan reported that the program graduated five seniors in May 2014, with four more expected to graduate this May. He asked IRBS graduates at the GA to stand; 15 rose to their feet. Renihan said he expects six new students in September.

“I’m tempted every year when I stand before you to say this has been the best year ever,” Renihan said. “I’m tempted again, because this has been a very good year.”

The program continues to grow, he said, with “more students than we have ever had before,” and “great interest,” including some from the current Westminster West student body.

He reported that IRBS trustees, after evaluating the strengths of several possible locations for an independent ARBCA seminary, have decided that the Dallas/Fort Worth area would be best place to locate it, due to the availability of “world class theological libraries,” a low cost of living, central location, a cluster of local Confessional Reformed Baptist churches, and other factors.

He thanked the Foundation for Reformed Baptist Causes for its contributions to the IRBS efforts.

The General Assembly got off to a bit of a rough start Tuesday morning as the speaker scheduled to give the opening devotional, Thomas Waters, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church of Jesup, Ga., wound up in the



Photo courtesy of Jack DiMarco

*Delegates assemble in the sanctuary at Heritage Baptist Church.*

hospital and retiring Coordinator Gordon Taylor was forced to step in.

Pastor Earl Blackburn of Heritage Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., scheduled to give the sermon on Tuesday evening, instead suffered a heart attack and was recovering in the hospital as the GA commenced. Giarrizzo reported that doctors had inserted a stent and were giving him a good prognosis for full recovery.

Both were reported to be doing well at press time.

Delegates also voted to accept two new churches into the association:

Providence Baptist Church of Walkersville, Md., in the greater Frederick, Md. area, where there is a population of some 200,000, is a church whose pastor had left and Bob Minto, once pastor of another ARBCA church, became their new pastor. Though the church owns its building, built prior to the Civil War, Minto said, the situation is similar to a church plant. The church has 15 members currently, he said.

Redeemer Reformed Baptist Church in Redlands, Calif., pastored by Jeff Massey, who was a pastor at the mother church, Sovereign Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Ontario, Calif., for some 17 years before moving to Redlands two years ago to plant a new church. The church constituted earlier this year, after “moving a lot faster than we

had planned,” Massey said.

He urged the men in the audience to consider planting churches and, particularly those churches with multiple elders, to “release an elder” with the intent of planting a church. “To whom much is given, much is required,” Massey said.

Delegates elected John Giarrizzo of Grace Covenant Church of Gilbert, AZ, as interim coordinator to replace the retiring Gordon Taylor. They elected Jerry Slate of Berean Baptist Church of Hiram, Ga., John Miller of Covenant Baptist Church of Clarksville, Tenn., and Brandon Smith of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church of Jackson, Ga. as trustees of Reformed Baptist Missions Services.

Taylor and Pastor Fred Malone of First Baptist Church of Clinton, La., introduced Allen Beardmore, who is being sent out as a missionary to Perth, Australia. Beardmore has been an associate pastor at First Baptist Church in Clinton for several years. He will be the first missionary in the 175-year history of the church, which, Malone reported, has grown “exponentially” in recent years and has come to the point where the small rural congregation can send out a foreign missionary.

“One of the sad things about sending a

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# In The Books: Living big for God where He has us

## By Steve Martin

My favorite movie always airs on television from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day: "It's a Wonderful Life."

Directed by Frank Capra and starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed, it chronicles the life story of a man who must learn the painful lessons of dying to self and giving away one's life in service for others. He must learn what is important and what is only chaff.

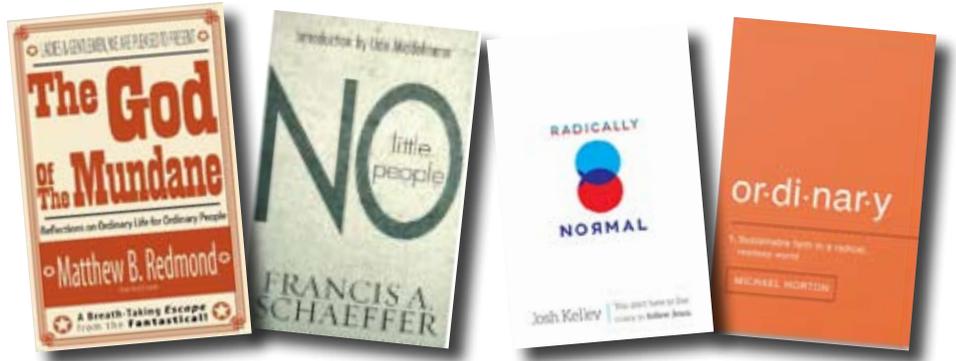
In the movie, we follow George Bailey from his present reality as he is contemplating suicide on a bridge while a God-sent angel grabs his attention and shows him his true life story. George Bailey feels a failure because he never achieved any of his life dreams and ambitions—college, New York City, big buildings and big bridges, world travel, bright lights and fame, recognition and money galore—meanwhile financial ruin and public scandal are staring him in his face.

But George and the viewer are enabled to see, by the grace of a God-sent angel, that one's life is only gained by losing it. George wants to keep his life, but time after time he reluctantly or eagerly chooses to give it away in service to others.

George needed to learn, as we still do, that God does not call us to live "significant lives" but instead calls us simply to be faithful – not in being spectacular or showy or anything else.

Like George Bailey, we wrongly believe that God wants us to do something "significant" with our lives. But we do not realize that only the Eternal Creator God knows everything, and in the vast flow of time He alone knows what is truly significant and what is merely ephemeral.

From childhood George had sacrificed his comfort, his goals, his dreams, his hopes, his ambitions, his life in service to others. Others moved ahead, others got rich, others went to college, others were "successful," others "got in on the ground floor," others lived "significant lives" while George Bailey stayed in little Bedford Falls, gave himself to a little broken-down Savings & Loan, loved his wife, raised his



family, helped when he could, served when he could, invested in others when he could and inwardly died a thousand deaths.

As our Sovereign King has given us life and entrusted a length of time to us to live to His glory, the questions we face are "What will we do with our lives?" and "Were our lives 'faithful' to Christ and His Word?" "Did my life count for anything?"

Being only creatures and not the Creator, we cannot know what is "significant" and what is not. Only He knows what He sovereignly plans to do with our humble lives of obedience. Christians cannot and should not aim to be "significant" but instead we should aim to be faithful and let God be concerned about what He will do with our faithfulness. We must do our duty which is laid out in Scripture, which lays out the path the faithful Christian should follow. And we long to hear our God say one day, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Christian authors have been addressing these truths about the biblical perspective on our lives if we would only listen to them and what they show us from God's Word. A collection of Francis Schaeffer's sermons, entitled "No Little People" (Crossway Books), shows us that God has no "little people" and no "little places of service." We are either faithful people or unfaithful people, and clamoring for success and privilege and notoriety are carnal remnants of our sinful nature that must be put to death.

Think of John Bunyan in Bedford jail; Robert Murray M'Cheyne dying of

tuberculosis in Dundee, Scotland; Eric Liddell choosing not to run on Sunday in the Olympics and later dying in a Japanese POW camp in China; Francis Schaeffer burying himself and his ministry in a small village that does not even appear on most Swiss maps – none of these men sought notoriety and fame. They sought to be faithful in the context of their own lives and God determined according to His will and eternal plan what significance their faithfulness would later have.

A couple of years ago, Matt Redmond wrote a tiny blockbuster – "The God of the Mundane: Reflections on Ordinary Life for Ordinary People" (Kalos Press). Why call it a tiny blockbuster? Because it is a small book that carries a big impact if taken seriously!

I have given away many copies. Whole churches have read it and profited from it and enjoyed it together. Most who have read it have read it at least twice – it's that good and that important. In a day when Christians are bombarded to be radical, take risks, act "crazy like God," and altogether be "extreme Christians."

Redmond takes us to the Scriptures to show us that God's consistent call in the Bible is to be none of these things but instead to be faithful Christians in our homes and marriages, our parenting, our work lives and our local citizenship. To those who have drunk the Kool-Aid that one must be doing spectacular things to please God, this may seem all rather humdrum and

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## GA

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missionary is we want to send our best men,” Malone noted.

Perth is one of the most expensive places to live in the world. Malone said some \$55,000 has been pledged from Australia for start-up costs. First Baptist of Clinton has also proposed a special project of \$18,000 to cover the Beardmores’ start-up costs. Delegates did not vote on that project in Mansfield.

Delegates also heard reports from Rob Cosby of Tucson Reformed Baptist Church; Sam Waldron of Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Owensboro, Ky.; Steve Garrick of Emanuel Reformed Baptist Church of Georgetown, Texas; Ken Prichett of Mariposa Baptist Church in Mariposa, Calif. – “at the entrance to Yosemite” as Prichard noted, inviting ARBCA church members to join Mariposa’s worship services if they visit the area.

Giarrizzo announced that next year’s General Assembly will be held at Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Rockford, Ill., April 26-28.

In the final message of the GA on Thursday evening, Giarrizzo preached on the “final general assembly” that awaits pastors and the people of God, how God preserves His people and will present them



**Photo courtesy of Victor Smith**  
*Outgoing ARBCA Coordinator Gordon Taylor takes a picture of his wife Rayna with flowers presented to her by the association, as ARBCA secretary Vickie Bookamer watches.*

spotless on the final day.

VanderMeulen urged the departing delegates to pray fervently for one another.

“Our association exists to support one another,” he said. “We need to pray for one another even more.”

## Books

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mundane. And that’s the point. Believers are not called to “push the envelope” or be awesomely creative and innovative. Leave that to the liberals and heterodox! We are called to be faithful.

Josh Kelley has picked up the same themes and aimed at the same target—the idea that Christians have to be extraordinary and exceptional and radical and extreme for their lives to count. In his book, “Radically Normal: (You Don’t Have to Live Crazy to Follow Jesus)” from Harvest House, Josh fleshes out what “normal” is and how it pleases God. This life is preparatory for the next and faithfulness is the criteria by which Christians will be judged. Believers do not have to sell their homes and move to rough, tough neighborhoods or Outer Slobovia to be real Christians.

Being a faithful Christian man or woman, husband and father or wife and mother, neighbor and friend are not small things. These are the building blocks of lives, families, communities and civilizations. How much different our churches would look if everyone was simply faithful at these primary callings on our lives.

The newest and most thorough title to address the false siren call for Christians to be radical is Mike Horton’s “Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World” (Zondervan).

I believe Horton shows conclusively that the New Testament calls Christians to be faithful, not flashy, settled, not restless and to bloom where they are planted—not take the world by storm. There are calls in the Bible for ministers of the gospel to take the gospel to the ends of the earth but ordinary laymen are called to live out the message of Christ and the gospel in their local communities as faithful men and women, husbands and fathers, wives and mothers, employers and employees. As another blogger has put it, just studying the book of Ephesians showed that God’s goal for believers is faithfulness in our callings, not to be “radical” in our desperate desires to find “significance.”

Here are Horton’s chapter titles:

### **RADICAL AND RESTLESS**

1. *The New Radical*
2. *Ordinary isn’t Mediocre*
3. *The Young and the Restless*
4. *The Next Big Thing*
5. *Ambition: How a Vice Became a Virtue*

6. *Practicing What We Preach: No More Super-apostles*

### **ORDINARY AND CONTENT**

7. *Contentment*

8. *We Don’t Need Another Hero*

9. *God’s Ecosystem*

10. *Stop Dreaming and Love Your Neighbor*

11. *After Ordinary: Anticipating the Revolution*

I believe every American Christian should read Dr. Horton’s book for our bad practices are based upon bad theology and Horton shows us how we have gotten off the biblical path into a miry bog of self-fulfillment and self-aggrandizement.

I would like to challenge you to buy and read at least two of these excellent books and find someone to discuss them with. This ‘radical’ mind-set has become endemic to the Christian sub-culture and needs more than just a Christian tract and a prayer to excise it from our lives. When lived God’s way, the Christian life truly is “a wonderful life”.

*Steve Martin, a retired pastor, is chair of the ARBCA Publications Committee. These books are available from CVBBS.com, as well as other sources.*