

# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Greg Warner  
Associate Editor: Bob Allen  
Phone: (904) 262-6626  
Fax: (904) 262-7745

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## **Beeson Divinity School adds Methodist to faculty**

By Bob Allen

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- A Methodist theologian has been added to the faculty of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School.

Craig Gallaway has been appointed to teach in the areas of Methodist studies and spirituality, Beeson Dean Timothy George announced in a news release dated Jan. 4.

George said adding Gallaway, the first full-time United Methodist faculty member at Beeson, "helps us to fulfill the founding vision of our school as an evangelical, interdenominational community of faith and learning."

The Beeson School of Divinity was established in 1988 with a bequest from the estate of philanthropist Ralph Waldo Beeson. Beeson, a retired insurance executive and Presbyterian layman, left gifts totaling \$31.8 million to the Baptist school in Birmingham, Ala., to establish an interdenominational, evangelical divinity school.

A 1994 lawsuit, however, claims Samford violated terms of the Beeson will by refusing to let a Presbyterian faculty member teach at the divinity school. The professor, John Killinger, alleges he was denied teaching assignments because of his moderate theological views.

Rather than an ecumenical school, Beeson is fundamentalist and sectarian, advocating "the theology, liturgy and biblical interpretation of the fundamentalist wing of the Southern Baptist Convention," Killinger's suit alleges.

Killinger's suit is pending in U.S. District Court. Samford sought to have the case dismissed last summer. Judge William Acker has yet to rule on that motion or set a trial date, the Birmingham News reported Jan. 8.

Samford officials have declined to comment on specific charges in the pending litigation but deny Killinger's allegations. The university "has not violated a single stipulation of the will of Mr. Beeson," said Bill Nunnally, Samford's director of information services.

Since 1989, Gallaway has been editorial director of discipleship resources at the United Methodist Church's General Board of Discipleship in Nashville, Tenn. He holds degrees from the University of Texas, Regent College, Candler School of Theology and Emory University.

The Beeson School currently enrolls more than 200 students in master of divinity, master of theological studies and doctor of ministry programs.

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-- Greg Garrison contributed to this story.

## **Billy Graham broadcast expected to reach to 2.5 billion**

MINNEAPOLIS (ABP) -- Evangelist Billy Graham has announced plans for a prime-time television broadcast aimed at reaching 2.5 billion people in every country of the world.

The effort, scheduled April 14, would present the gospel message to more people in one day than ever before, the evangelist said.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association will broadcast the Global Television Series during prime time. Graham will preach in an evangelistic program that will be aired in 42 languages on national television in more than 160 countries.

British pop singer Cliff Richard will host the telecast, which will include a cameo testimony appearance by former President Jimmy Carter.

For most viewers, it will be the first exposure to a Graham crusade. "I believe this will have a far greater impact than anything we have done before," Graham said.

Last year's satellite transmission of a Graham crusade in Puerto Rico reached an estimated 1 billion viewers.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Baptist church offers to buy failed megachurch property**

DALLAS (ABP) -- A Baptist church in suburban Dallas has voted to try to buy a landmark property of a charismatic megachurch that fell into bankruptcy.

Lake Pointe Baptist Church in Rowlett, Texas, voted Jan. 7 to offer \$4.6 million for building and property of the Church on the Rock. The 222,000-square-foot building, located prominently on Interstate 30 east of Dallas, originally cost about \$14 million and would cost \$21 million to build today, said Steve Stroope, pastor of the Baptist church.

The purchase now must be approved by bondholders of the Church on the Rock in Rockwall, Texas.

Lake Pointe Baptist Church is an innovative church that uses contemporary worship services aimed at unchurched young adults. It averages about 3,000 in weekly attendance.

Church on the Rock was formed in the 1980s. From a nucleus of 13 families meeting in the back of a roller-skating rink, the church's founding pastor, Larry Lea, built a megachurch that drew 7,500 worshipers in its heyday 10 years ago. Currently, the church's average attendance is about 750.

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-- By Ken Camp

## **Arafat tries to calm fears of pilgrims in Bethlehem**

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (ABP) -- In a message two days before Christmas, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat told Christian pilgrims in Bethlehem that Jesus was "a Palestinian revolutionary."

The pro-Christian speech in Manger Square, near the traditional site of Jesus' birth, was aimed at calming fears about oppression of Christians in Muslim-led Palestine, according to Ecumenical News International.

Speaking to the crowds celebrating their first Christmas in Christ's birthplace since the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the town, Arafat also referred to Jesus as "savior" and "messiah." Muslims recognize Christ as a prophet and also honor his mother but reject the designation "Son of God."

Arafat's wife, Suha, an Eastern Orthodox Christian, accompanied the leader to Roman Catholic ceremonies in Bethlehem on Dec. 24. She also attended an afternoon Protestant service at the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem.

According to ENI, some observers believe Arafat is willing to stand up to Islamic fundamentalists who could pose a threat to local Christians.

Arafat, president of the Palestinian National Authority, proclaimed to pilgrims and residents that Christmas Day would be recognized as a national holiday in Palestine. Some of the first Palestinian postage stamps depict Christian holy sites.

However, a small, right-wing group of expatriate Christians in Jerusalem, who have set up an organization called the International Christian Embassy, had urged visitors to boycott Bethlehem Christmas observances "to protest Muslim oppression of Christians in the Middle East".

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-- By ABP staff

EDITOR'S NOTE: The election of Ike Reighard as senior associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, postponed Jan. 7 because of inclement weather, will be Sunday, Jan. 14.

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