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## **Family amendment, new Texas convention top Baptist editors' ranking of 1998 news**

By Bob Allen

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- A family amendment added to the Southern Baptist Convention's official doctrinal statement led a ranking of top news stories in 1998 by Baptist editors.

In an informal survey conducted by Associated Baptist Press, editors ranked the June adoption of a family amendment to the "Baptist Faith and Message" as the top story of the year.

The family statement, the first amendment to the "Baptist Faith and Message" since its adoption in 1963, captured widespread attention in national media with its call for wives to "submit graciously" to their husband's "servant leadership." The statement, written by a seven-member committee appointed by the SBC president, also affirms the family as "the foundational institution of human society" while criticizing divorce and rejecting homosexual unions.

Coming in at second in the editors' rankings was the November constitution of a new conservative state Baptist convention in Texas alongside the moderate-led Baptist General Convention of Texas. Leaders of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention said they would be more loyal to direction of the conservative-led Southern Baptist Convention than the 2.5 million-member BGCT, which has exerted greater autonomy in response to disagreements with SBC leadership.

Reaction to President Clinton's admission he had an "inappropriate" relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky came in third in the editors' ranking. Several SBC leaders urged Clinton to resign in light of the scandal. One leader, seminary president Albert Mohler, sparked a debate on local-church autonomy when he criticized Clinton's home church, Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., for failing to exercise "biblical discipline" against its most famous member.

The election of North Carolina seminary president Paige Patterson as SBC president and Congress' rejection of Ernest Istook's Religious Freedom Amendment tied for fourth in the survey.

Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., was one of two men generally credited with engineering the "conservative resurgence" which gradually gained control of the nation's largest non-Catholic faith group beginning in the late 1970s. Twenty years later, he was elected by acclamation to the convention's highest post June 9 in Salt Lake City.

The Istook amendment, which would have allowed religious practices that courts have ruled violate the First Amendment's requirement of the separation of church and state. The proposal won a majority in a June 4 vote by the House of Representatives but fell short of the two-thirds vote required to amend the Constitution.

Rounding out the editors' rankings of the year's top ten stories were:

6. A mandate that current faculty at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary must sign the new family amendment to the "Baptist Faith and Message." Professors at the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, have long been required to pledge to teach in accordance with and not contrary to the doctrinal statement. Seminary administrators announced that present and future faculty must also abide by the first amendment to the statement since its adoption in 1963. While most professors agreed to the requirement, some reportedly disagreed with the new statement's theology and felt it violated their original contract to require them to sign an additional statement. Three professors announced they were leaving the seminary, citing the new requirement as a factor in their decision.

7. Republicans and the Religious Right suffered a surprising setback in November elections, losing seats in Congress and key state elections. Many observers had expected gains by the GOP in light of President Clinton's sex scandal and other problems plaguing top Democrats.

8. A number of current and former missionaries joined the China Christian Council in denouncing the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's "dual-track" approach in China. In the past, Southern Baptists in China worked with full communication with the nation's official Protestant body. In recent years, however, the IMB has moved into more work with China's unregistered "house" churches without informing the China Christian Council or government officials.

9. Jerry Falwell, a prominent independent Baptist, has often attended the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting as a visitor. This year, he attended as a messenger for the first time. Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church earned the right to be represented at this year's meeting after giving \$10,000 to Southern Baptist causes through a new conservative state convention in Virginia. Despite the new alignment, Falwell said the church has no intention of abandoning the Baptist Bible Fellowship, a 1.5 million-member independent Baptist group based in Springfield, Mo.

10. Passage of a bill in Congress protecting churches against having members' tithes and offerings seized under federal bankruptcy laws.

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## **Wake Forest divinity school gets grant for black professor**

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (ABP) -- Wake Forest University's divinity school has received a \$200,000 grant to hire an African-American professor in preaching.

The three-year grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund will cover salary, benefits and other expenses for a professor to teach preaching courses, recruit students and develop relations with black churches, school officials announced.

"The great tradition of the African-American pulpit provides an important resource for shaping all Christian preaching," said Bill Leonard, dean of the divinity school scheduled to open this fall at the Baptist-affiliated university in Winston-Salem, N.C. "All of our students, and the entire Wake Forest University community, will benefit from such an appointment."

Leonard predicted the new professor of homiletics, or the art of preaching, will be appointed this spring and begin work in August 2000.

The new professor will join an already-diverse core faculty which includes a Benedictine monk.

Leading the five-member faculty will be Phyllis Triple, associate dean and professor of biblical studies, who formerly taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Other professors include Frank Tupper, professor of theology; Samuel Weber, associate professor of early Christianity and spiritual formation; Alexandra Brown, visiting professor of biblical studies; and James Dunn, visiting professor of Christianity and public policy.

The divinity school is scheduled to open this fall with students from a variety of denominational backgrounds. The school will offer a master of divinity degree, and is expected to grow to about 150 students within three years.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Israel detains, deports members of U.S. cult**

JERUSALEM (ABP) -- Israel deported 11 members of a Denver-based doomsday cult Jan. 4 while holding three others suspected of plotting violence near holy sites in Jerusalem in hopes of speeding Christ's return.

A special Israeli security force called the "millennium unit" rounded up 14 members of the "Concerned Christians" cult in raids of two homes in suburban Jerusalem Jan. 3. The eight adults and six children were among 78 members of the group who disappeared last fall after selling homes and packing up their belongings.

Police said group members planned to provoke a shootout by opening fire on officers in Jerusalem's Old City believing violence would prompt Jesus' return to Earth. The section contains holy sites including Temple Mount, site of the ancient Jewish temple destroyed in 70 A.D. Some Christians expect Jesus to return there to inaugurate a 1,000-year reign called the millennium before the end of the world.

The cult's leader, 44-year-old Monte Kim Miller, was not among the arrested members, but he has claimed he will die on the streets of Jerusalem and be resurrected in December.

Israel expects 4 million Christian tourists in 2000, twice the usual number, in observance of the 2000th anniversary of Jesus' birth. While the vast majority plan peaceful visits, tens of thousands of pilgrims view Christ's return as imminent. The interplay between Christians with differing apocalyptic views and how Israeli officials handle the situation could determine whether millennial ceremonies are peaceful or violent, said Richard Landes, a director of Boston University's Center for Millennial Studies.

"If you handle it badly, it's like shaking nitroglycerin," he told Associated Press. "It will blow up in your face."

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-- By ABP staff

## **Christian leaders protest attacks on churches in India**

NAGPUR, India (ABP) -- Christian leaders in India denounced a series of attacks against churches and Christians during the Christmas holidays, calling on the government to protect the nation's Christian minority.

Incidents in the Dang region of Gujarat in northwestern India included the burning of churches and attacks on priests and pastors. At least seven people were reportedly treated for gunshot wounds after an armed mob of 500 attacked a church and looted nearby shops in the village of Vaki.

The attacks were prompted by militant Hindus who accused missionaries of forced conversion of Hindus. Christian leaders deny those charges.

India's prime minister criticized the attacks Jan. 4 but stopped short of calling for a ban on radical groups suspected of orchestrating the violence.

About 2.3 percent of Indian's 960 million citizens are Christians, while more than 82 percent are Hindus.

The National Council of Churches in India, based in Nagpur in northern India, called on the government of Gujarat to ensure "an immediate halt" to violence and threats against minorities. The NCCI said Indian Christians are not satisfied with the government's response.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Generation X views missions as hands-on proposition**

By Andrew Black

(ABP) -- In the season-opening episode of the ABC sitcom *Dharma and Greg*, the free-spirited and idealistic Dharma, daughter of 1960s hippies, learns that the young woman checking her groceries at the supermarket is pregnant, single and unable to take care of her child. Dharma immediately agrees to help her, then tries to convince husband Greg to adopt the baby.

Greg's initial response -- and that of his conservative, country-club parents -- is shock. They later show some sympathy for the "check-out girl's" predicament but, they point out, there are "organizations set up to handle this kind of thing."

Greg: "I'm sorry, Dharma, but you can't help every human being on the planet."

Dharma: "Yeah, but, Greg, you can help the ones that are right in front of you."

That theme may become the mantra for social involvement in the next generation. Dharma and many other twenty-something Americans are part of a growing trend toward social action that is hands-on and close to home.

Confounding the popular stereotype of "Generation X" as lazy, cynical and not interested in solving problems, new research suggests this generation may merely be looking for new ways to serve others. There is indeed apathy toward big programs, big ministries, big ideologies and big solutions. But there is growing eagerness to work together to address problems on a more manageable level.

For Sally Sarratt, 24, that meant spending two years in New York City as a volunteer, mostly teaching English to international students at Columbia University.

"I feel like I can invest in one person's life at a time and can make a difference in that life," says Sarratt, originally from Spartanburg, S.C., who served in New York as a missions volunteer of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. "In New York the needs are right in front of your eyes."

Although Sarratt says she is called to a career in missions, she's not plotting global strategies and is more comfortable working with individuals and small groups. She says young adults are well aware of global needs, and are often overwhelmed, but they want most to make a difference in the lives around them.

"It's a hands-on generation that wants to be a part of that work."

"New York in particular is overwhelming," she says. "But the only way you can make a difference or make an investment is in individual lives -- not in things or institutions, but in people."

A new survey of 18-to-30-year-olds by Washington-based Public Allies concludes that these baby busters are developing a new approach to service and leadership -- one that puts people before programs, places value in direct action, and appreciates diversity.

Instead of joining political parties or special-interest groups, young adults are more likely to serve as volunteers or to become mentors to children. For Christians putting their faith into action, this means emphasizing ministry that meets physical needs and evangelism that's based on building relationships.

According to the survey by Public Allies, a youth-leadership and community-involvement organization, more than two thirds of young adults said the most effective way to bring about change is by "practicing your ideals in everyday life" (68 percent).

The same percentage said they had been involved in their community in some way in the past three years, most by volunteering in schools, hospitals, neighborhood centers or church agencies.

Other ways to bring about change, the respondents said, are making friendships with people of other races, volunteering to "help others in a direct way," and voting in elections. Fewer responded that religious activities were effective and fewer mentioned "volunteering for a political or social cause."

Research by Independent Sector, an organization that encourages volunteerism and philanthropy, suggests baby busters volunteer as often as the builder generation and almost as often as baby boomers.

Why is history's most globally aware generation so locally focused?

"The world has become so accessible that it becomes overwhelming," says Doug Pagitt, manager of the Young Leaders Network for Leadership Network, a Christian think-tank in Dallas that focuses on the future church. As a result of this global-village overload, the idea of social change on a global scale "has lost some of its attractiveness," he says.

But there are other deeper reasons as well.

Young adults widely reject the notion of inevitable social progress, says Pagitt. There is a loss of faith that science, human effort and reason will continue to make life better for everyone -- a concept leftover from the Enlightenment but rejected by post-modernism. Baby busters aren't buying it. "They realize this baby ain't getting any better," Pagitt says. "They say, 'I know I'm not going to change the world out there, but I can make a difference here.'"

And young adults look for hands-on involvement because, more than their predecessors, they prefer to learn from experience, Pagitt says. While earlier generations most often learned concepts first, then put them into practice, baby busters want the experience first. Learning takes place during and after the experience, as it is interpreted and understood.

In that setting, the role of the leader is not primarily to impart knowledge but to help interpret the experience. That explains the cult popularity of talk-show hosts like Oprah Winfrey, says Pagitt. "They become the poets that help other people interpret their experiences."

Rose Berger, intern coordinator for Sojourners in Washington, D.C., has seen a change in the young adults who come to serve in the evangelical group's social-justice and anti-poverty ministries. The once-clear distinction between evangelism and social action is disappearing among recent interns, she says.

"There is much more of an integration now from what in the past has been evangelism focused solely on spiritual salvation and social action which served others but didn't have the strength of meeting spiritual needs," Berger says. "Now when young people come to our program, it's all one piece."

Jimmy Dorrell of Waco, Texas, has seen the shift too. Dorrell is director of Mission Waco, a Christian organization that provides tutoring, after-school programs, job training and other services to 1,000 of the city's needy each week -- staffed largely by students from nearby Baylor University. He says those students are learning to see Christian ministry in holistic terms.

In traditional church culture, Dorrell says, neither conservatives nor liberals are doing social ministry and evangelism. "Traditional denominations are still stuck in old theology. Their younger members don't live there anymore."

Mission Waco's 150 volunteers do not hide their Christian faith, Dorrell says, "but we are relational in our witnessing."

While Christians have long been divided over the best way to demonstrate their faith -- by word or deed -- those in Generation X are less likely to get hung up on the issue, say their leaders. "If you're talking about Jesus while you're building a house, which are you doing?" argues Bart Campolo, who directs KingdomWorks, an inner-city volunteer mission program.

GenXers are generally less interested in propositional witnessing or counting conversions. But they are very interested in the spiritual and physical welfare of their friends and neighbors.

Half of the young adults surveyed by Public Allies said that "community, looking out for each other" is a more important value than "individual responsibility and self-reliance."

Still self-reliance was valued most highly by 38 percent, which convinces Washington Post columnist E. J. Dionne that GenXers see the relationship between community and self-reliance as both/and rather than either/or.

"After the social gyrations of the past 30 years, this may be a generation in search of balance," Dionne wrote in a recent column. "You might call it maturity."

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-- Andrew Black is a paralegal for the U.S. Department of Justice and a free-lance writer in Dallas.

## **Profile: Teacher reflects on inner-city experience**

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Kevin Kinkade, 25, teaches and coaches junior high football at a private Christian school in Fort Worth, Texas. He spent his first two years after college teaching junior-high math in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. The assignment was part of Teach for America, a program which places college graduates in public schools in low-income areas.

Beginning in high school, Kinkade worked in neighborhood centers, mentoring programs, Young Life and other organizations. He learned about Teach for America and decided to apply at the last minute before he was to graduate from college. He is still considering medical school, but the brief detour was definitely worthwhile, he said.

"People asked me, 'If you're going to do this, why not be a missionary? Why join this secular group?' I was nervous about going to New York. When I drove in, I was scared to death. But I felt I was doing God's work. I knew it was where I was supposed to be."

Washington Heights is the poorest congressional district in America, and every one of the students in Kinkade's school came from families living below the poverty line. One of the most difficult aspects of his job was reporting cases of child abuse to authorities, he said.

Despite the trying environment, Kinkade enjoyed the chance to be involved with his students. On one occasion, he was able to take a group of students out of the city on their first-ever camping trip. "I miss teaching in public schools," he said. "They were good kids in bad situations."

Kinkade said he was most thankful for the close friendships he developed in New York with people from very different backgrounds in the incredibly multicultural and cosmopolitan city. Coming from a much different environment in Texas, he said, the diversity was a challenge at first. "You've got to have an open mind ... . Why shut a door to someone when I don't have to?"

He realized that he was being watched very closely by friends and fellow teachers, as well as his students. "A lot of people saw a very different kind of Christian than they pictured. I didn't shove the gospel down their throats or tell them they were going to hell. I tried to care about them. I mourn for these people and I want for them to have a happy life, and to know the peace that Christ gives."

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-- By Andrew Black

### **Profile: Former lawyer now ministers in New York**

NEW YORK (ABP) -- Street lawyer. Student. Tutor. Food-pantry volunteer. Thirty-three-year-old Steve Harris is many things to the people in New York's garment district.

Not long ago, he was practicing law in Kansas City, Mo. While thinking about what he wanted to do for the rest of his life, Harris decided teaching was the best investment of his time.

He moved to New York City to pursue a graduate degree in education and mathematics. He was offered use of an apartment owned by Metro Baptist Church, an inner-city congregation.

In exchange, he uses his expertise in immigration law to help the illegal aliens in the surrounding garment district. He also works in the church's food pantry and homework center.

Harris welcomes the renewed emphasis on hands-on ministry among young adults. "People forget that when Jesus gave a sermon, he also fed the poor. ... You don't need a theology degree to feed people or hand out clothes."

Some volunteers who come to work at Metro Baptist get frustrated at the lack of visible results in a short visit, Harris said. But receptive audiences and quick conversions are just "not the way religion works in New York." A desire to show unconditional love is needed more than anything, he says.

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-- By Andrew Black

### **Profile: Woman reached by urban ministry gives back**

OAKLAND, Calif. (ABP) -- Towanda Tilson spends much of her time doing what she calls "social work without the paperwork."

She is spending a year in inner-city Oakland, Calif., doing volunteer ministry. She shares a house with five other young adults, all volunteers in a Christian program called Mission Year, which places small groups of young people in urban areas to minister and learn more about the needs of the inner city.

Tilson, 25, spends the week in a local elementary school as a classroom assistant. She tutors students after classes. Saturdays are spent getting to know her neighbors and learning about their needs.

The volunteers share their Christian faith with their neighbors. But that is not always, or even mostly, a matter of words, Tilson says. Overt methods like passing out tracts sometimes make people defensive.

"Just sitting and talking to a person about simple things is important," Tilson says. "They'll grow closer to Jesus as they grow close to you, hopefully. They need someone human who knows where they are."

Tilson herself became a Christian through the witness of mission volunteers from Washington state who were serving in her hometown of Philadelphia. After graduating from Eastern College near Philadelphia in 1995, she served as a social worker for two years. While caring for foster children, she discovered "if there was just someone in their life to let them know how important they are, they wouldn't get caught up in the system and make wrong choices, which happens a lot to foster kids."

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-- By Andrew Black

## **Making diversity work the key to future leadership**

By Andrew Black

(ABP) -- What counts in leadership? Among young adults, the message is clear: Collaboration works; authority is overrated. Diversity is strength; sameness is useless.

For a generation that sees the world differently, it's little wonder that leadership is being redefined. In a world that offers plenty of choices but few easy answers, you can't waste time trying to resolve differences before deciding to work together.

Previous generations viewed leadership as a gift -- some had it; most didn't. In the new world, however, "leadership is everybody's business," says Chuck Supple, president of Public Allies, a Washington-based group that promotes leadership and community involvement.

Leadership "is not about a position of authority. It's a practice, something everyone's capable of doing," Supple says. "The necessary skills are collaborative, rather than directive or charismatic."

In a survey commissioned by Public Allies, 18-to-30-year-olds said the most essential qualities for leadership are "being able to see a situation from someone else's point of view" and "getting along with others." Personal integrity, empowerment and collaboration also ranked high. Authority, persuasiveness and charisma were at the bottom of the list. Leadership, in the view of young adults, is "bottom up" not "top down," the researchers concluded.

What institutions will be most helpful in solving future problems? The survey respondents said schools and colleges will be most important. Grass-roots collaboration will be effective, and partnerships between business, government and non-profit groups will help. But government, religious groups, non-profits and the media will -- working alone -- help little.

The emphasis on collaboration makes sense from a group of Americans that has grown up in a culture enamored with diversity and pluralism.

But collaboration and diversity present a challenge to Christians, who have to bridge gaps between denominations and other groups that don't normally cooperate.

For Bart Campolo, however, theological differences aren't nearly as daunting when viewed "at street level," that is, face to face among the drug addicts, the homeless and others encountered in hands-on ministry. Campolo directs Mission Year, a Christian program that sends young adults to minister in urban settings.

At "street level," he says, everyone focuses on the core of the gospel, and theological differences matter little. "I always thought someone had to agree with me to have a viable relationship with God," he admits. But hands-on ministry convinced him that's not the case. "A lot of your stereotypes and easy answers go out the window."

Ginger Elliott, 23, is a Christian who works as a "volunteer coordinator, office manager, accountant and all-around go-to person" in Habitat for Humanity's Greeley, Colo., office. The job is her two-year assignment with the U.S. government's AmeriCorps program, which places young people in public-service positions, often in exchange for college tuition assistance.

At Habitat, Elliott says, she has seen a shared commitment to service unite diverse volunteers. For example, two Lutheran churches with theological disagreements worked together to build a home. "Non-Christian volunteers are seeing what faith can accomplish."

"The whole mission of Habitat is so biblically based," Elliott says. "Every day I'm living that out." The most rewarding part of her job, Elliott says, is working with the families that benefit from Habitat houses. She says she feels a sense of ministry in even the mundane chores.

In Waco, Texas, Jimmy Dorrell is pastor of Church Under the Bridge, a fellowship which meets under an interstate overpass and includes many homeless people, college students, and others from the community. The church is led largely by volunteers -- Baptists, charismatics, Episcopalians, Methodists.

Grass-roots ministry can be messy, Dorrell concedes.

"It's frustrating for organized people to work with us," he says. "We never have enough people, time or money. But there are always plenty of jobs to do."

"We talk a lot about how we're an organism, not an organization," explains Dorrell, who also directs Mission Waco, a Christian organization that provides social services to Waco's needy. "We have to be able to grow and to move where the needs are."

Chuck Supple of Public Allies admits getting diverse groups and individuals to work together is a challenge -- particularly when crucial religious differences are involved. But he is hopeful: "There are fundamental values people hold, and we should be able to put what divides us aside for the greater challenge."

The Christian church, he says, has much to offer GenXers. "Their priorities are profoundly spiritual -- service, relationships, making a difference in the lives of others, especially those from a different background. All these require spiritual depth and maturity."

But Dorrell of Mission Waco is concerned about a lack of spiritual depth among many young adults. While they are serious about hands-on ministry, their commitment is "not rooted real deep biblically and may not last," he says. "To get them past that into a lifestyle of Christian social action, we're not there yet."

Campolo likewise sees a weakness in the new style of leadership. "What's frightening to me is that there is a real dearth of genuine leaders," he worries. "Someone has to make things happen."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: These articles appeared previously in ABP's FaithWorks magazine and are used with permission. Photos are available on request.

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