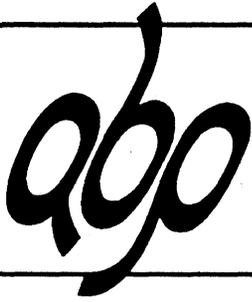


Nashville, Tennessee



Associated
Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626
Fax: 904.262.7745
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

September 30, 1999

(99-81)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Southern Baptist, Catholic leaders issue report on interfaith discussion
- Texas Baptist leaders elect Charles Wade as executive
- European Baptist group installs new leaders
- Dispute between church members reportedly behind fatal shooting
- Gun laws, access to mental-health care keys to ending violence, Clinton says
- Bauer denies rumors of extramarital affair
- Bill would boost protections for workers' religious practices
- Congregation hosts Christian 'nightclub' to reach teenagers
- Today's youth affirm call to discipleship

**Southern Baptist, Catholic leaders
issue report on interfaith discussion**

By Bob Allen

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Sixteen U.S. Catholic and Southern Baptist officials released a statement Sept. 23 describing where the two faiths agree -- and disagree -- about the Bible.

The statement, finalized in a meeting two weeks earlier in Washington, is the first report of annual conversations between representatives of the two groups that have been going on without publicity for five years.

The participants, appointed by the Interfaith Witness Evangelism Team of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board and the Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said the 1,600-word report is not a "confessional statement" either for churches or the participants. Rather, it is an account of topics the group has discussed, processes that have been followed and a clarification of terms used in the discussions.

Southern Baptist and Roman Catholic participants "share a great deal in our Christian faith concerning the authority and truth of the Bible," the statement says, but also have "serious differences."

According to the statement, "Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics believe in the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and we confess the full deity and perfect humanity of Jesus Christ."

Both groups "find these truths of faith in God's written Word, the Sacred Scriptures," but they view the Bible differently, the statement says. It continues:

In addition to disagreeing over the canon -- Catholic Bibles include a section called the Apocrypha not in most Protestant Bibles -- Catholics and Southern Baptists largely disagree over some issues of the nature and interpretation of Scripture.

Both groups define revelation as "God's free self-communication to the world" through nature, the human heart and the books of the Old and New Testaments.

"For Catholics, Jesus is the incarnate Word, is the revelation of God. Scripture contains revelation, while both Scripture and Tradition witness to revelation. Southern Baptists prefer to speak simply of Scripture as the revealed, written Word of God, which is inerrant."

Inerrancy is defined as "the conviction that the Bible is 'without error' in what it affirms," the statement says. "But there are different interpretations of what this actually means."

"For Southern Baptists, inerrancy means that the original biblical text was composed precisely as God inspired it and intended it to be [N]ot just the thought comes from God, but every word, every inflection, every verse and line, and every tense of the verb, every number of the noun, and every little particle are regarded as coming from God. Scripture is 'God-breathed,' and God does not breathe falsehood, so the text is faithful and true in all it affirms, including the miracle accounts, the attributed authors and the historical narratives."

"For Roman Catholics, inerrancy is understood as a consequence of biblical inspiration; it has more to do with the truth of the Bible as a whole than with any theory of verbal inerrancy."

For Catholics, infallibility is a "gift of the Spirit which belongs to the Church for faithfully expounding the deposit of faith." That infallibility can be exercised when the pope speaks "ex cathedra" in defining a doctrine regarding faith or morals.

Southern Baptists, meanwhile, traditionally have used infallibility and inerrancy as interchangeable terms applying to the Bible. "That is to say, the Bible alone never fails to be God's perfect word." More recently, the statement continues, infallibility "has been construed in a weaker and inadequate sense to mean only that the Bible accomplishes the purpose which God intended."

Catholics and Southern Baptists both hold that "God's revelation takes place in history and develops through the biblical tradition" but differ about what parts of the Gospels can be taken as historical.

"Southern Baptists interpret as historical all biblical events which are clearly intended by the sacred authors to be taken as such."

"Catholics believe that not all biblical narratives should be understood as historical, since the sacred writers also used narratives in a symbolic way to teach religious truths."

Because of that view, Catholics support the "historical-critical" method to interpret the Bible, which seeks to discover the "literal sense" -- or what the author intended to convey -- through form criticism (analyzing Bible passages by identifying them as various literary forms) and similar methods.

"Southern Baptists prefer to speak of the grammatical-historical method in which these tools are employed with a commitment to biblical inerrancy."

The statement finally addresses using the term "fundamentalist" to describe groups like Southern Baptists. The word originally referred to an early 20th century movement among Protestants in response to liberalism but later came to be viewed as "strongly separatist," the statement says. "Outsiders came to identify fundamentalism with anti-intellectual literalism and to extend the term to conservative non-Christian groups, such as 'Islamic Fundamentalists.'"

"Because of the pejorative connotations, the Associated Press Stylebook appropriately suggests, 'In general, do not use fundamentalist unless a group applies the word to itself.'"

One Catholic participant said the report would help dispel erroneous perceptions that Southern Baptists and Catholics have of each other.

"We're the two largest Christian denominations in the United States," Jeffrey Gros, associate director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Religious Affairs, told Catholic News Service. "To say together how we talk about one another and about our common Bible is important progress."

"It should also lay the common ground for witness together and help those already engaged in Bible study in local situations," he added.

Baptist participants in the conversations include Mark Coppenger, former president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Timothy George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School; William Gordon, Interfaith Witness Evangelism associate at NAMB; Don Kammerdiener, executive vice president at the International Mission Board; Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; Paige Patterson, SBC president and president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Phil Roberts, director of NAMB's Interfaith Witness Evangelism Team; Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington and Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

-30-

Texas Baptist leaders elect Charles Wade as executive

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) -- With 12 dissenting votes, a 200-plus-member Executive Board elected Arlington pastor Charles Wade as executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"I reach out my arms to all who care about Texas and want to do God's work in Texas," Wade, 58, told the group moments after his election Sept. 28.

During discussion, two board members said they wish the search committee had instead nominated someone who remained neutral in Baptist politics over the last 20 years.

Wade, however, who was elected as a moderate candidate to the state convention presidency in 1995 and 1996, said he wants to work with all Texas Baptists to advance the gospel.

"I will work to help increase our sense of shared vision," he pledged in brief comments made after his election. "I hope to help every Texas Baptist church and every Texas Baptist be alert to God's presence."

Others who spoke in favor of Wade's nomination as the state convention's top paid executive also predicted he would strive to work with all Texas Baptists.

When Wade was the convention's president, he went out of his way to be fair, said Debbie Chisolm, minister to students at Royal Lane Baptist Church in Dallas. She served on the committee on order of business during that time.

"I was absolutely amazed that somebody who was involved with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship ... could be so fair, so open," she said. "He made sure every voice was heard."

Search committee Chairman Bill Brian of Amarillo said Wade told his committee Texas Baptists deserve to have a leader who has clearly stated a position. "I don't know how you can witness what's happened (in Baptist life) and not say something," Brian quoted Wade as telling the committee.

Wade expanded on that comment during a news conference shortly after his election.

"I think people of conviction need to speak up," he said. "But as long as we're willing to work together and embrace one another," there doesn't have to be a rift. "I'm not looking to cut anyone out," he said.

Wade is a former member of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Coordinating Council and was co-chairman of the CBF general assembly held in Fort Worth in 1992. He also has served on the executive committee of Texas Baptists Committed since 1983.

Texas Baptists Committed is a moderate Baptist organization that has sought to keep the BGCT from coming under political control of conservatives who took over leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979.

Two Executive Board members said Wade's identity as a well-known moderate should disqualify him for the executive director's position, although both said they had nothing against Wade personally and praised his ministry as a pastor.

Burlie Taylor of Pearsall said he equally would have opposed the nomination of someone identified with Southern Baptists of Texas, the conservative wing of the BGCT that recently split off to form a new state convention.

"I do not believe involvement in what is going on on either side of Texas Baptists is going to bring reconciliation," Taylor said.

David Stubblefield of Greenville, added, "I believe it would be wiser to choose someone who is not so identified with one side."

During the news conference, Wade was asked whether his election should be interpreted as a signal to the SBC or other groups outside the state about what to expect from Texas Baptists in the years ahead.

"I don't think any message needed to be sent," he replied. "It has been clear for some time that Texas Baptists are free and independent. ... This is no different from where we've been as Texas Baptists for the last 10 years."

Brian described the congregation Wade has led 23 years, First Baptist Church of Arlington, as "legendary among Texas Baptists" for its outreach through Mission Arlington, a comprehensive ministry that touches about 3,000 people each week in 200 locations, mainly in multi-housing complexes.

During Wade's tenure, the church has also launched Hispanic, Korean and Chinese missions that now are self-supporting churches and currently sponsors a Thai mission.

Michael Bell, a prominent African-American pastor, endorsed Wade's selection.

"I salute the wonderful choice made by the committee," said Bell, pastor of Greater St. Stephen Baptist Church in Fort Worth. "Charles is big enough and broad enough to lead all Texas Baptists into the 21st century."

Rudy Sanchez, a prominent Hispanic pastor in Dallas and member of the search committee, made the formal recommendation for Wade's election. During the same meeting, Sanchez became the first Hispanic to be elected chairman of the Executive Board, an event Wade praised during the news conference.

Wade's wife, Rosemary, is a teacher in the Arlington Independent School District and active member of First Baptist Church. They plan to continue living in Arlington. Their current home is about 25 miles from the Baptist Building, not far by commuting standards in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. The Wades have a son, three daughters and seven grandchildren.

He will preach his last sermon as pastor of First Baptist Church Nov. 14 and will become executive director-elect Nov. 15. Following a transitional period, he will assume full authority as executive director Feb. 1.

On a related issue, the Executive Board approved a recommendation of the BGCT Administrative Committee that the man Wade is replacing, Bill Pinson, assume the unpaid position of executive director emeritus after he retires Jan. 31. The state convention will provide office space, a part-time secretary and limited benefits such as health insurance.

With some 2.7 million members, the Texas convention is by far the largest of the 42 state and regional groups affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Last fiscal year the BGCT gave more than \$16.5 million to the SBC's Cooperative Program unified budget and another \$19.3 million in designated gifts.

The 18-member search committee nominated Wade from a field of more than 30 candidates. He was not the group's first choice, however. The committee initially offered the nomination to another moderate Texas pastor, Phil Lineberger of Sugar Land, who accepted but later withdrew.

European Baptist group installs new leaders

By Martha Skelton

HAMBURG, Germany (ABP) -- Bulgarian Baptist leader Theodor Angelov has been installed as the eighth general secretary of the European Baptist Federation.

Angelov, 60, pledged to preserve Baptist heritage, stand for human rights and seek to build bridges of reconciliation at his installation service, held in conjunction with a Sept. 23-26 meeting of the Federation's council.

Angelov was elected to the post last fall to succeed Karl Heinz Walter, who is retiring. With the transition in leadership, the EBF will also move its offices from Hamburg, Germany, to Sofia, Bulgaria, effective Nov. 1.

Angelov has been pastor of Sofia Baptist Church and president of the Baptist Union of Bulgaria since 1991. He was EBF president from 1995 to 1997.

Also installed at the meeting were the Federation's new president and vice president.

The new president, Ole Jorgensen of Denmark, began his two-year term by urging European Baptists to resist separatism. "After World War II, we had to learn to walk together," he said. "The wall fell and we had to learn to walk together."

He urged Baptists to fight the temptation to respond to uncertainty by withdrawing into a fundamentalist mindset. "The Lord we believe in is bigger ... than any group or nationality," Jorgensen said, adding the EBF should rather focus on Christ and its "walk together."

Gregory Komendant, 53, president of the All-Ukrainian Union of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists, was elected vice president of the Federation. As vice president, he will ascend to the presidency after Jorgensen leaves office in the fall of 2001.

Outgoing president David Coffey of Great Britain said "bad news" remains on the continent in that old hatreds and animosities continue, religious freedom is under attack and most Europeans live "in spiritual darkness."

However, he said there is good news in the vitality and variety of Christian witness going on in many areas of Europe.

"There is ample evidence that the Kingdom of God like a dynamic mustard seed is secretly growing," Coffey said. ... "Let us enter this new millennium with a renewed commitment to serve in partnership with the missionary God who longs for the peoples of Europe to come to a knowledge of his saving purposes."

-30-

Dispute between church members reportedly behind fatal shooting

By Mark Wyatt

FRESNO, Calif. (ABP) -- A member of a Southern Baptist church in Fresno, Calif., is charged with fatally shooting a fellow church member Sept. 29 as the victim helped prepare a Wednesday-evening fellowship meal.

Virgil Turner, 44, a well-liked member of First Southern Baptist Church, died at the scene of multiple gunshot wounds. Witnesses said Turner was helping in the church kitchen when the shooting occurred. No one else was injured.

Fresno police identified the accused killer as Steven James Knee, 29, also a member of the church. Knee was arrested several hours after the shooting when police stopped his car for running a stop sign.

A motive was not immediately established, but a witness said the two men argued before the shooting. A church member said Turner and Knee had been in conflict for some time but did not specify the nature of their dispute. Turner was unarmed.

Church members on hand for the weekly fellowship meal heard gunfire erupt just after 5:30 p.m.

"Bang, bang, bang -- six of them right in a row," church member Orval Reed told The Fresno Bee. One witness told a local television station, "It sounded like a loud cap gun."

Holly Smith, a member of the church and news assistant for The California Southern Baptist newspaper, was just outside the church kitchen when the shooting occurred. Smith said Knee spoke to her as he entered the church fellowship hall and walked toward the kitchen.

A short time later, Smith said, she heard one gunshot, then another, then several more in rapid succession.

Smith said Knee then "walked calmly out of the building, dropped the gun in the grass, got in his car and drove away."

Ed Kuffel, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, was at the church office in another building when he learned of the shooting.

"When I got there and walked into the kitchen, which is where Virgil was shot, his son, Scott, was cradling him in his arms. He died in Scott's arms," Kuffel told The California Southern Baptist.

Kuffel said he was thankful it happened away from the fellowship hall, where a crowd was gathering at the time.

As news of the killing spread, expressions of concern began pouring in from across the nation, Kuffel said. Among the messages recorded on Kuffel's telephone answering machine was one from Bob Reccord, president of the Southern Baptist Convention North American Mission Board.

"That was a real blessing," Kuffel said. The pastor expressed appreciation for the outpouring of prayers and concern.

"There's a lot of intense ministry ahead of us and we're not going to be able to do it without prayer," he said.

The morning after the fatal shooting, Kuffel took part in the nationally televised "Cope" program on Southern Baptists' FamilyNet cable television network. He was a guest on the program which also featured Al Meredith, pastor of Wedgwood Baptist church in Fort Worth, Texas, where a gunman killed seven people Sept. 15 before killing himself.

Kuffel said revival services scheduled to begin Oct. 3 at the Fresno church would proceed as planned. "We need it more now than ever," he said.

The victim was a student at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. Turner enrolled in the seminary's diploma of theology program at the Southern California campus in Brea in 1998.

"We are saddened by the loss of such a wonderful servant of God," Bill Crews, seminary president, said in a prepared statement Sept. 30. "Bro. Turner continually brought encouragement, delight and inspiration to his classmates and to the staff of the seminary's Southern California campus. We pray comfort for the Turner family, his church family and that God may be glorified in such a difficult time as this."

A spokesman said the seminary planned to hold three prayer meetings at the Brea campus the day after the shooting, when Turner normally would have been attending classes.

In addition to his son, Scott, Turner is survived by his wife, Lisa, and an infant granddaughter, Haley.

Gun laws, access to mental-health care keys to ending violence, Clinton says

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- At a White House breakfast with religious leaders, President Clinton said more needs to be done to protect children in the wake of school shootings and the recent shooting at Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Clinton told about 100 religious leaders Sept. 28 there is more to getting ready for the year 2000 than fixing computers. He said giving children back their childhood would help make America's "spirit Y2K ready."

He pointed to Alexis de Toqueville's statement that "America is great because America is good."

"Now, can we say America is good enough if we still have the highest murder rate in the world?" Clinton asked. "The rate of accidental shooting deaths for children under 15 in the United States is nine times higher than the rate for the other 25 industrialized nations in the world combined," he added.

Thirteen children die every day in this nation from gun violence, Clinton said. But because "they die in ones and twos, in tough neighborhoods and difficult streets, sometimes they're not the lead story -- sometimes they're not any story on the evening news."

Clinton said America doesn't do enough to keep guns away from criminals and children, to deter children from violence or to intervene in the lives of people who are disturbed, angry and mentally ill.

The faith community can play a major role in protecting children from violence, Clinton said. He said churches can support common-sense gun legislation, participate in the administration's campaign against youth violence and form community partnerships to help people who need it.

Clinton said he discussed the idea of early intervention with the pastor of Wedgwood Baptist Church, where eight people recently died from gunfire, including the deranged gunman. "I'm convinced a lot of these people are known to be profoundly disturbed by others well before they go out and kill people," Clinton said.

At the beginning of the breakfast, which Clinton holds with religious leaders once a year, the president revisited issues from last year's breakfast where he openly discussed his regret over an improper relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. The events surrounding the relationship led to his impeachment in the House of Representatives, but he was acquitted in the Senate.

"Last year was one of the most difficult years in my life," Clinton told religious leaders. He expressed thanks to three ministers -- Philip Wogaman, Gordon MacDonald and Tony Campolo -- "who have kept their word to meet with me over the last year -- both to help me and to hold me accountable."

Clinton said the work is "interesting and not always comfortable, but always rewarding." He said, "I have been profoundly moved, as few people have, by the pure power of grace -- unmerited forgiveness through grace -- most of all to my wife and daughter, but to the people I work with, to the legions of American people and to the God in whom I believe."

The president also touted initiatives to combat religious persecution around the globe and to reduce debt of the poorest nations. Recently, Clinton and other leaders from the leading economic powers agreed to forgive a large portion of the debt owed by many poor countries.

But leaders of Jubilee 2000 -- a global movement of religious and humanitarian leaders seeking debt relief -- said the agreement did not go far enough.

"Now that we have advocated this and gotten everybody else to agree to it, we have to pay our fair share," said Clinton. "So I hope all of you will help us pass the legislation through Congress to do that."

He also addressed how government should work with religious groups. He said there will always be honest differences about "what is the proper relationship between church and state," but there seems to be "a kind of emerging consensus about the ways in which faith organizations and our government can work together."

Clinton has said he opposes sending government money to "pervasively sectarian" organizations, such as churches, which is allowed under welfare-reform legislation. Even before welfare reform it was permissible for government money to go to religiously affiliated groups that do not advance religion.

Clinton specifically pointed to faith-based groups that have worked in the administration's welfare-to-work initiative and to groups that receive funding from AmeriCorps. "I don't think that's a violation of the Constitution's Establishment Clause, and we sure have helped a lot of people out there," he said.

-30-

Bauer denies rumors of extramarital affair

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Family values advocate and Republican presidential candidate Gary Bauer denied an extramarital affair with an aide, seeking to end rumors that Bauer said were spread by a rival GOP candidate's organization.

"These rumors and character assassinations are disgusting, outrageous and sick," said Bauer standing by his wife of 27 years and their children.

Bauer, a graduate of Baptist-affiliated Georgetown College in Kentucky, said he has never violated his marriage vows. "I have not had any physical contact with anyone in my campaign or out of my campaign other than my wife," he told a room of reporters.

According to the Associated Press, Bauer's former national campaign chairman Charlie Jarvis warned Bauer he was spending too much time with a female aide, and it created a bad appearance. Jarvis now works for the Steve Forbes presidential campaign.

The Forbes campaign has denied spreading the rumors.

Bauer said he called a press conference at a luxury hotel in Washington, D.C., after concluding he was the subject of a gossip column in a recent issue of The New York Daily News, which read: "What presidential candidate is praying that a former secretary doesn't go public with her claim that he's been having an affair with a twenty-something woman?"

Jarvis did not say Bauer had an affair but told the AP that Bauer spent "hours and hours and hours behind closed doors with a single young woman" who works on his campaign staff.

-30-

Bill would boost protections for workers' religious practices

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Backed by a broad coalition of religious groups, a bipartisan group of senators has reintroduced legislation that would require employers to accommodate workers' religious practices unless doing so imposes a clear burden on the business.

U.S. Sens. John Kerry, D-Mass., and Sam Brownback, R-Kan., told reporters they were reintroducing

the Workplace Religious Freedom Act because American workers should not have to choose between their religion and their job.

The senators said the measure is needed because the U.S. Supreme Court has watered down civil-rights protections Congress previously passed to protect religious workers.

In 1972, Congress amended the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to require companies with more than 15 employees to accommodate the religious practices of workers unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship on the employer.

But five years later, the U.S. Supreme Court made it easy for employers to get around the requirement by ruling that even the most minimal burdens constitute an undue hardship.

Kerry said the legislation is simply an attempt to write into law the intent of Congress' previous efforts to protect religion in the workplace.

"The Workplace Religious Freedom Act will re-establish the principle that employers must try to accommodate the religious needs of employees," Brownback said. "This legislation is carefully crafted and strikes an appropriate balance between religious accommodation, while ensuring that an undue burden is not forced upon American businesses."

The measure is supported by the Coalition for Religious Freedom in the Workplace, which includes 37 Jewish, Protestant, Sikh, Muslim and evangelical organizations. Baptist groups in the coalition are the Baptist Joint Committee and the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Richard Foltin, legislative director and counsel in the American Jewish Committee's Office of Government and International Affairs and chair of the coalition, noted that members of the diverse coalition have "sharp differences on a broad range of public-policy issues."

But he added that the groups "are united on a fundamental principle -- that no employee should be forced to choose between obedience to his or her faith and keeping a job."

Brent Walker, general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee, told reporters there is little question about Congress' authority to enact the law, because it is not a case of "second-guessing" the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution but of simply amending a statute it passed earlier.

Religious groups and lawmakers have been seeking to restore protections for religious workers since 1990.

The measure's chances of moving in this Congress are uncertain, but Kerry expressed some optimism that Congress could be convinced to pass a law that simply restored the intent of its 1972 legislation.

Foltin said he is "glad the chief sponsor is optimistic" but noted that backers of the measure "have a lot of work ahead of us in addressing concerns of business owners who are always concerned about more regulation."

-30-

Congregation hosts Christian 'nightclub' to reach teenagers

By David Winfrey

JEFFERSONTOWN, Ky. (ABP) -- "You want to go where everybody knows your name."

The theme popularized by the TV show "Cheers" has taken hold at a Southern Baptist church in Kentucky which sponsors a Christian "nightclub" aimed at building authentic relationships with teens.

"I've seen just about every creative idea you can imagine, but it always goes back to developing relationships with kids," said Darryl Glass, youth minister for Jeffersontown Baptist Church in metropolitan Louisville.

Glass, a youth minister for 13 years, has led the church to develop the Uptown nightclub in its basement every Friday night. The club is based on a model he used at a Methodist church where he previously worked.

About a year ago the church transformed 6,000 square feet of its basement into "Uptown," painting walls and installing sound equipment, amusement games and creative lighting.

This summer it shut down for six weeks for a facelift. Additions included a larger dance floor, professional lighting, fog machine and 60-inch television.

The club has been attracting more than 200 youth each Friday night since reopening two months ago, said Glass and Pastor Sanford Hill. Uptown attracts more than 60 new faces each week, they added.

"This has given more life to our church than anything," Hill said during a recent Friday night. Decked out in an orange shirt with the word "STAFF" in large letters on the back, he's one of the many volunteers who keep the adult to teen ratio at about 1-to-15.

"I never would have dreamed five years ago that we would be doing something like this," he added. "This was the first step of faith this church has taken in years."

Hill met Glass when they both participated in a trip to Israel and were assigned a room together.

Jeffersontown was without a youth minister for about a year before Glass came to the church. Glass said he took the job on the condition that he could organize a similar experience to what he already had done in Radcliff, Ky.

"It scares me to think about doing ministry without doing something like this," he said.

The club doesn't allow alcohol but has dancing. Glass said he realizes some Baptists oppose dancing. "I have a healthy respect for people who are more conservative than I am," he said. "If someone says they don't believe in dancing, I respect that. I just don't go along with that."

Hill said he answers potential critics by pointing to the number of new Christians the church has baptized. "I like our way of doing it better than their way of not doing it."

Hill acknowledged that some members were cautious about hosting a Christian nightclub. He added, however, that the results have been hard to argue with. "We've baptized more in the first six months of this year than we did all of last year, and it's all attributable to Uptown."

Hill and Glass call the nightclub a form of "passive evangelism," which they say works with youth. "If we were aggressive, I'd have 20 kids here," Glass said.

Hill agreed. "We just want to build relationships in the hope that we can share the gospel," he said. "The kids get to know us and say, 'This isn't what I thought church was.'"

Hill said he was impressed by a statistic that most Christians make a profession of faith in Jesus by age 14. "If that's when they're most receptive, that's when we need to go after them," he said. "What this church has done is say, 'We're going to do what it takes to create an atmosphere that will attract the kids.'"

Volunteers for Uptown, who get on-the-job training, are encouraged to show a large dose of love, Glass said.

"If you have to yell at a kid here, chances are you're just one of many adults who has yelled at them," he said.

"I tell them, 'Remember, these kids are yelled at all day, try something different,'" Glass added. "You can give a consequence to a kid and smile and love."

Hill points out that the success of the event has not been dependent on a large church. Jeffersontown Baptist averages 130 people in Sunday school and 150 people in worship. The youth group has about 40 people on the roll with an average attendance of 20, he added.

"You don't have to be in a megachurch to do something like this."

Glass said he wants to see more churches take this model and make it work.

"I don't want to be the only church that does this," he said. "I'll take my 300 kids and let other churches take their two or three hundred."

-30-

Today's youth affirm call to discipleship

By Pat Cole

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- School violence is changing the face of youth ministry, as teenagers come to church expecting discipleship and not entertainment, says one expert.

School shootings have "dramatically communicated to our students that faith is a life-or-death issue," said Richard Ross, youth consultant with LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

While many churches in the past have focused on entertaining youth and keeping them busy, that tendency is disappearing, Ross said. "A growing segment of our youth groups are coming to church expecting to be discipled and challenged to be radical in their commitment to Jesus Christ."

He predicted churches that remain content to simply entertain youth would eventually lose them to churches that call them to become serious disciples.

Ross and other experts say youth ministry should no longer be seen as just the responsibility of a specialized staff member. Whereas adult volunteers formerly helped a paid youth minister with his or her ministry, the trend today is for youth ministers to train and equip both youth and parents for evangelism, ministry and missions, Ross said.

Randy Record, youth-evangelism associate for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, agreed that youth ministers cannot carry the entire burden for ministry with teenagers.

"Youth ministers can't do it all," said Record. "We must have our students be youth ministers on campus. We must multiply ourselves."

In addition to traditional programs like discipleship training, youth evangelism and summer missions, youth's familiarity with computers can also be turned into a ministry tool, Record said.

"If the Apostle Paul were alive today and were a youth minister, I believe he'd be on a computer using e-mail," Record said.

Youth groups can also develop and maintain Web sites to share information about a church's youth ministry, Record suggested. Youth ministers can point their youth to Christian resources on the Internet and instruct them on responsible use of the Internet.

END
