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Gen-X drawn to mix of old and new worship styles

By Victoria Moon

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- What does the church of the future look like? According to some church leaders, it mixes sixth century liturgy with alternative rock, monastic visual images with high technology and early Christian traditions with postmodern culture to create a blend that is drawing a whole new generation of people to the church.

"Something is definitely beginning to happen, and God is doing something new," said Dieter Zander, founder of ReImagine, a non-profit evangelism/church-planting group in San Francisco. "What's going on seems odd to the church because it's outside the lines of what the church has been doing." But several observers insist that even the most traditional of churches can't afford to ignore this blend of ancient traditions and today's technology.

While many churches won't adopt all aspects of this movement, the trend can be instructive to any church, regardless of style and location, they say, especially if they're seeking to reach teenagers and young adults.

According to Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission, 5,000 "Generation X" churches focusing on alternative, postmodern worship have been planted in the United States, and church-planting experts say the numbers are increasing steadily.

In Louisville, Ky., the Sojourn Community is an example of a new church coloring outside the lines of mainstream congregations.

Senior Pastor Daniel Montgomery said Sojourn began last year in an attempt to reach people who were falling through the cracks in more mainstream churches.

"Our focus is those with a postmodern mindset, the 'cultural creative,'" he said. "People who tend to reject hedonism, materialism and cynicism. They are crying for something authentic." Sojourn mixes

postmodern, narrative-style sermons with film clips, and traditional liturgy with alternative rock and iconography to create a unique worship experience that is attracting 80 to 100 people a week since the church's inception last September.

"For example, we recently had a baptism service where we dimmed the lights and used a DVD player to show images of icons from the classic Russian film "Andrei Rublyov" while the baptism was going on," Montgomery said.

"Our musicians can rock out, but at the same time we use a lot of the traditional hymns. And we may use film clips from films like 'American Beauty' to illustrate a point in a sermon, yet we follow the traditional liturgical calendar."

In Lynchburg, Va., senior pastor Jim Baucom of Rivermont Avenue Baptist Church started a Celtic worship service on Sunday mornings for the young adults in his church who were craving a different style of worship from what was offered in the church's regular contemporary-style service.

"A lot of the folks who have come into the church have been left with a hunger for a more contemplative worship experience," Baucom said. "In particular, the Gen-Xers who have come in to the church have asked for something very traditional, and they don't mean Second-Great-Awakening Baptist. They mean ancient." At the service, worship leaders wear traditional medieval vestments, the service is candlelit and Celtic Christian prayers, poetry and imagery are mixed with guided silences and a brief sermon.

"The elements of Celtic Christianity we use come primarily from the sixth century, from Saint Patrick," Baucom said.

"It's a tradition that's very Trinitarian and evangelistic," he added.

"We're incorporating elements of Celtic Christianity in a form appropriate to our culture now while not sacrificing what's most important from our Baptist heritage." Despite its conservative theology and ancient history, however, Baucom said Celtic Christianity offers many elements that appeal to today's young adults.

"It offers a multi-sensory religious experience, and focuses on the mystery of God," he said. "A lot of the people who come to our service don't want to think God is all-knowable. They want something that will capture the enormity of who God is." The Celtic service draws between 150 to 200 worshippers every Sunday, and Baucom said he isn't surprised to see that many are also not Gen-Xers.

"We get a lot of senior adults as well, many of Scotch-Irish descent who grew up in simple, agrarian types of environments and are drawn to the simplicity of the Celtic service," he said.

In fact, all those interviewed noted that the one generation missing from these postmodern services and churches is the baby boomer generation, who still attend mainstream services in high numbers.

"Many of the mega-churches we know today, as well as contemporary worship and the praise and worship-style choruses, were born of the 70s and the Jesus Movement," said Zander, former pastor of New Song Church in Covina, Ca., considered by many to be the first Gen-X church in the country.

"That movement took off and captured a whole generation -- the baby boomer generation. So they are off the church radar screen on this," he added.

Smaller churches find it easier to adapt their style than mega-churches, which have the constraints of size and budget, he added.

"Small churches have the freedom to ask 'What if we try being who we are where we are? What if we try ministering where we are?' "Mega-churches have a lot of pressure to continue being mega-churches," he noted. "Part of what happens in a mega-church is they have to continue playing to people's needs to garner the numbers and financial support they need to stay huge."

Ed Stetzer, director of the Church Planting Center for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, agreed that smaller churches have the advantage if they want to start reaching the postmodern generation.

"If a small church is strictly traditional, for example, they can skip the contemporary phase and go straight to the ancient phase," he said.

"It's harder to make the shift from mainstream traditional to contemporary than it is to make the jump from traditional to ancient/modern, because the ancient worship style incorporates elements familiar to many traditional worshippers."

While Stetzer, who currently is writing a book about postmodern church starts, said he believes the church of the future will include this ancient/future worship and outreach, he does not think it will completely replace traditional and contemporary worship.

"Now contemporary worship is becoming the new traditional worship, and it was radical 20 to 30 years ago," he said. "I don't know what worship will look like 100 years from now, but I do think this new style of worship will come alongside of what is already there, but not replace it."

But that doesn't mean churches that won't host ancient-future services should ignore the trends of postmodern worship, Stetzer added.

"I think that to reach young adults, traditional churches no longer need assume that they must rush into a contemporary service with a music band and matching light show," he said.

"So many traditional churches are, ironically, well prepared to reach a generation searching for historic roots -- but only if the churches are willing to explain their traditions and engage inquisitive young adults in dialogue about the value of those traditions and their applicability to real life."

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--Victoria Moon writes for the Kentucky Western Recorder

Church sponsors museum to meet postmoderns

By Victoria Moon

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Hidden among the tattoo parlors, piercing salons, trendy restaurants and alternative music stores in the Highlands district of Louisville, Ky., is an art gallery that is taking the idea of "seeker service" to a whole new level.

The gallery, Aslan's How, is the evangelistic outreach ministry of Sojourn Community, a young, postmodern church.

"We believe that the arts need to be cultivated and fostered," said Daniel Montgomery, pastor of Sojourn.

The fledgling church, which is supported by the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, opened the gallery in November 2000 as a way to build bridges within the community.

"We are trying to build a non-sectarian venue with this," Montgomery said. "This isn't a Christian art gallery. It's an art gallery run by Christians." Despite the distinction made by Montgomery, hints of the gallery's Christian leanings abound. Its name is taken from C.S. Lewis' classic children's allegory, "The Chronicles of Narnia." The gallery's first exhibit was "The Florence Portfolio: Sacrifice," a group of 20 etchings by six artists with Christians In Visual Arts.

"We had a good response," Montgomery said.

Though the gallery had no shows for the past two months, it has planned six months of continuing exhibits throughout the spring and summer. Future shows range from Jewish artists to a collection of works by members of the Sojourn congregation.

"This is essentially an evangelistic outreach," said Montgomery. "We are trying to build bridges with our community by connecting to them where they are." Besides the art exhibits, Sojourn members also use the gallery to host film and philosophy discussion groups that are designed to attract non-Christians.

"We have people from New Age, Roman Catholic, Unitarian backgrounds, you name it," he said. "We discuss everything from 'Citizen Kane' to 'Magnolia', and we always ask 'What are the spiritual implications of this film?'" With the Christian and secular equally blended together, Montgomery admits it is hard sometimes to know where to draw the line at deciding something is "too secular" for their particular evangelistic vision.

"We have a hard time setting limits sometimes," he said. "There isn't another place like this as far as we know, so we don't have a frame of reference for this." The blurred boundaries have resulted in some distrust by both Christians and non-Christians.

"Some Christians have an idea of what evangelism should look like, and some non-Christians already have an idea of what Christians are like," he said. "What we want is to break down barriers on both sides, and by breaking down the stereotypes allow new life to emerge."

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'Ancient-future' faith: What is it?

By Victoria Moon

LOMBARD, Ill. (ABP) -- In the music world, a group called "Ancient Future" is making a splash with a sound that blends modern rock and jazz with ancient tribal rhythms from Africa, Asia and South America.

In the world of the church, proponents of "ancient-future" faith are making a splash with a theology of worship that blends early Christian practices with a postmodern culture.

Ancient-future faith, according to Robert Webber, founder of the Institute for Worship Studies and professor of worship at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Ill., blends first-through-sixth century traditional worship with the culture and practices of today.

"The paradigm of the classical or ancient Christian era was that of mystery, community and symbol," he writes in "Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World." "The postmodern paradigm is rediscovery of mystery, community and symbol."

Webber says this breaks down into a more active role of the congregation when it comes to participating in worship, creating a multi-sensory experience with banners, pageantry, movement and reciting classic Christian creeds and prayers.

Many church planters and worship leaders working with postmodern congregations agree with Webber's assessment.

"Many people today are looking for a more sensual worship, and by that I mean a worship that engages all the senses," said Dieter Zander, co-author of the book "Inside the Soul of a New Generation." "The Reformation stripped away everything that would distract from the central message," he said. "They removed the icons, the tactile elements of worship so hearing the message was the only sense engaged."

"Young people today surround themselves with sensual experience, and that is how worship was meant to be," he added. "Things that are not dependent on words, using the things that God has put around us-- these things need to be brought back into worship."

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Prof lists 10 commandments for postmodern U.S. churches

By Victoria Moon

LOUISVILLE, Ky.--Ed Stetzer, director of the Nehemiah Project church-planting center at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Ky., has compiled 10 rules for successful postmodern churches and worship services:

-- Be unashamedly spiritual. "Many postmoderns are open to the spiritual," Stetzer said. "People are tired of the modern belief that everything can be answered by science and reason. They are open to something mystical and spiritual".

-- Promote incarnational ministry. "Authenticity is essential," he said, "Postmoderns are looking for persons who are genuine and transparent." Too often, postmoderns feel they're meeting an alien culture when they encounter evangelical Christianity, he added. "It is not the job of the unchurched postmodern to enter our culture. It is our job to invade theirs (become incarnate) with the unchanging truth of the gospel."

-- Worship experientially. Stetzer pointed out that authenticity is valued above technique in churches reaching postmoderns. "A dynamic worshipping community becomes a powerful apologetic to a generation open to the spiritual but not knowing how to connect with the Spirit. Postmoderns want to experience God, not just see a show about him."

-- Preach narrative expository messages. "Jesus frequently used narratives or stories in his preaching, and often the story was the point," Stetzer said. "Preaching biblical stories connects to a culture that sees stories as a source of truth."

-- Appreciate and participate in ancient patterns. "Postmodern leaders are spellbound by the ancient-future faith of the past," he said. "There is a new interest in ancient things: Gregorian chants, Celtic Christianity, ancient art, etc. The church can embrace those that promote biblical truth."

-- Experience visual worship. Paintings, banners, candles and other imagery can help share the gospel message, he said. "In the postmodern age, truth can be expressed in images illuminating biblical truth."

-- Engage in service. Churches can connect with postmodern Americans by offering them an outlet for their passion to serve, Stetzer said. "Genuine faith always expresses itself in ministry," he added. "As postmoderns see that faith produces service, the validity of the faith is proved. A wonderful outlet for this is to engage postmoderns in mission work."

-- Connect with technology. "Technology is no longer an option in postmodern culture. It is part of the culture," he said. Churches trying to reach postmoderns not only will use technology in worship, but they also will promote community through that technology, such as the Internet.

-- Live community. Community is a central value in most effective churches reaching postmoderns," he said. This is good news for the church; community is central to its mission. With a culture eager for genuine community, the church of Christ can offer community with people and with God."

-- Promote team-based leadership. Leadership in the postmodern context tends to be dramatically different than it was in other models, Stetzer said.

"In the modern context, the leader was penalized for transparency.

Leaders who shared their struggles frequently regretted it later as it became an example in future arguments," he said. "In the postmodern era, struggle is more valued."

-- EDITOR'S NOTE: The following books offer information about the ancient-future trend of Generation X worship or general trends about reaching postmodern Americans:

-- "Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World" by Robert Webber.

-- "Liturgical Evangelism" by Robert Webber.

-- "The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West ... Again" by George G. Hunter III.

-- "Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century Church" by Leonard Sweet.

-- "An 8-Track Church in a CD World: The Modern Church in a Postmodern World" by Robert Nash Jr. and Loren Mead.

-- "Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality" by Philip Newell.

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Sudanese Christian's courage fuels escape from atrocities

By Jennie Martin

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Torn from his family, severely beaten and forced to live and work in subhuman conditions, Rol Deng has seen religious persecution first hand.

And he wants American Christians to know and pray about their fellow believers in Sudan who he says are being killed or sold into slavery because of their faith.

Deng and his family now live in Kansas City, Mo. His war-torn homeland of Sudan is ruled by Muslim extremists who oppose Christianity.

"There is no work unless you are Muslim," Deng said in an interview. "The government keeps track. They want to send you to religious training to be Muslim. If you say no, then there is no job."

Civil war has raged in Sudan since 1983. More than 2 million people have died during the war, which pits Arabs in the north against Africans in the south. Tensions are rooted in attempts to impose Islamic values on all Sudanese people.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees reports that an estimated 300 Sudanese die each day of war-related causes, including disease and famine.

For Deng, life forever changed one day in 1990. The government sent militia to his village of Arkeyna. Before they left, the whole village was burned, and his father was killed.

Deng, his sister, his mother and three brothers were taken as slaves. A scar running up the side of his leg is a reminder of the beating he endured that day.

In anguish, Deng was forced to ride a camel with other village survivors after the town was razed. That day was the last time he saw his mother and his brothers.

His sister, Ayal, a toddler then, stayed with him. For the next two years, he was forced -- at gunpoint -- to care for cows in the middle of a field, the climate cold and rainy.

"I had to sleep with the cows," he said. "I had no blanket. I ate with the dog. I lived like an animal for two years."

Eventually, Deng and Ayal escaped their captors by following railroad tracks. Heading north to avoid an increased militia presence in the south, they went in search of a city.

When they came to Babanis, Sudan, they hurried into a church, looking for help. The preacher there told them not to leave. He hid them until he secured tickets to Khartoum and some money for the two.

From 1992 to 1996, Deng and Ayal lived as outcasts outside Khartoum in an area for displaced people. While there, he learned English. Also, it was during this time that Deng met and married Adut.

With only a cardboard shelter to sleep under and the food being designated for Muslims, Deng grew weary of not being able to provide for his family. He knew Christians were forbidden to go into Khartoum, but he was desperate to find work.

While traveling on the road, he was arrested by security forces. The plan was to train him for three months to be a soldier, and then he would be forced to fight.

"I couldn't do that," Deng said. "I couldn't kill my own people." He escaped and returned to his family. But that was only a temporary solution. He knew he would be found and killed.

The only thing to do was to try to escape to Egypt. Through contact with a relative who worked for the government, Deng, Ayal, his wife, Adut, and their daughter, Adeng, were able to secure money for immigration.

Then, with the help of a security officer who was a secret Christian, they were taken to a boat in the middle of the night. They traveled by boat and then by train to their destination. The officer, who risked his life to save theirs, directed them to the boat and asked them not to look back at him, or ever to mention his name.

Deng found factory work in Abbiasa, Egypt, a place that was friendly to the refugees. But it was difficult to earn enough to support his family, which now included a son, Dut, and another daughter, Amou.

With assistance from the Red Cross, the family came to the United States as refugees on July 21, 2000. The Dengs, along with fellow Sudanese Christians in the Kansas City area, worship in their native language of Dinka at a Nazarene church.

While these refugees from Sudan are grateful to finally live in a country where they can be free to worship Christ without fear, they still carry the scars of their faithful persistence.

Dr. Joseph Resendiz, an internist at Samuel U. Rodgers Community Health Center in Kansas City, sees a large number of Sudanese patients. He said they frequently have multiple complaints, mostly stemming from years of oppression in their home country.

"Many of them, both men and women, have virtually been slaves," Resendiz said. "They have told me of widespread beatings, hard labor, rape and torture that characterized their tenure as slaves.

"It is hard to believe that slavery exists in this day and age. In our country, we fight for guns and drugs and money. Over there, they fight for their faith."

Some groups, such as Christian Solidarity International, attempt to aid Sudanese Christians by buying back those sold into slavery.

But Deng said such efforts are often futile. Solders make up an amount they want for a slave. The freed slaves are taken south, often only to be recaptured. The buy-back effort, Deng says, simply puts more money in the hands of the captors.

Deng is passionate about informing Americans of the plight of Sudanese Christians. "We are dying for Christ," he said. "Jesus Christ died for us, and that is why we are dying. We need Christian brothers to find a way to unify to help Sudan. Pray for us."

-- EDITOR'S NOTE: Jennie Martin is a correspondent for Word&Way. For more information about Sudan, contact Samaritan's Purse at 828-262-1980; Christian Solidarity International, toll-free 888-676-5700; or Freedom House, 202-296-5101. Their Web sites are www.samaritanspurse.org, www.csi-int.ch and www.freedomhouse.org.

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970 teens accept Christ in multi-church crusade

By Mark Wingfield

TYLER, Texas (ABP) -- One of the best-known drug users at a school in Tyler, Texas, now leads a prayer group there.

The boy was among 970 teenagers accepting Christ during a citywide youth revival that brought together 140 churches of multiple denominations in a unified evangelism effort.

Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Bible churches, Church of Christ and non-denominational churches joined together to support "Fish the Planet," a four-day youth revival that extended into nearly a week.

"I've never seen anything like it," said R. J. Holt, one of the event's organizers and youth minister at Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Tyler.

"I just pray that I get to see this again in my lifetime." Now, Holt and other youth ministers in the area are working overtime to follow up with each of the 1,300 teenagers who registered spiritual decisions, including the 970 who professed new faith in Christ.

In an unprecedented spirit of cooperation, ministers from various Christian churches have laid aside turf considerations and are referring teens to other churches where they are likely to find the best personal match, Holt said.

"There is more than enough for everybody," he explained.

Amid the follow-up work, Holt and other event organizers are getting calls from parents they've never met. "I don't know what's different about my kid, but thank you," the parents often say.

The results of "Fish the Planet" are visible in numerous ways -- not only in the observations of parents who wonder what has happened to their children, but also in continuing morning prayer gatherings around school flagpoles and in the trash dumpster at Tyler's Oil Palace coliseum.

Each night of the youth revival, six 55-gallon barrels were placed near the platform, and teens were invited to throw away anything that would stand in the way of serving God fully. Holt said he saw teens throw away marijuana, cocaine, bongos, pornography, CDs, pirated software, even teddy bears.

"Every night, kids filled them with stuff they wanted to throw away," he said.

The unusual events in Tyler began Feb. 23 with 30 churches working together for a citywide DiscipleNow emphasis. DiscipleNow is a youth discipleship program in which teens spend a whole weekend in small groups in homes of church members. Small-group activities are supplemented with large-group activities at the host church.

In this case, however, the participating churches banded together to create big events for all the small groups from each church to do together. Evangelist Ken Freeman, who also led the "Fish the Planet" crusade the next week, was part of the DiscipleNow event.

The combined youth groups also did community service projects, cleaning every public park and school campus in the city.

On Saturday night, Feb. 24, 1,800 Tyler youth participating in DiscipleNow came together for a rally. They studied a simple evangelistic program called "Sharing Jesus without Fear," and then each teen was encouraged to go find a friend to bring to the "Fish the Planet" rally starting Sunday night.

Holt said his church got a preview of what was coming that Sunday morning when 19 youth made professions of faith during morning worship at Colonial Hills. Seeing those youth and the friends who had brought them to church lined up across the front of the worship center was "amazing," he said.

Sunday night, the first night of "Fish the Planet," about 2,500 people attended the crusade. Attendance swelled each night, with 6,000 present Wednesday night, what was scheduled to be the final night. Adults were asked to give up seats for teens, and even those who were on hand as counselors had to make way for the overflow crowd, Holt said.

Because of the response, the crusade was extended two more nights.

Holt and the event's other organizers -- Don Allensworth of Green Acres Baptist Church and Cody Bishop of Sharon Baptist Church -- structured each night's service to be mainly preaching. They were concerned, he said, that too many Christian youth events now devote most of their time to worship music and not enough to teaching and preaching.

Freeman turned out to be the perfect speaker for such an event, Holt said. "I've never heard anybody hold attention like he did." During the daytime, Freeman spoke in nine area high schools and middle schools, with an emphasis on making good life choices. He told about his own struggles with family problems and drugs. A theme of the presentations, Holt said, was "if you listen to bad voices, you'll make bad choices." At the evening crusade, Freeman spoke more explicitly about how he overcame trouble through faith in Jesus Christ.

Holt estimated that nearly 40 percent of all the middle school and high students within a 30-mile radius of Tyler attended at least one night of the crusade.

"God did what we never thought would happen," he said.

The modern-day miracle in Tyler was preceded by a scheduling miracle.

Organizers of "Fish the Planet" began planning in November, far too late to book a youth evangelist like Freeman, who normally is scheduled at least 18 months out.

But Holt, Allensworth and Bishop were convinced Freeman was the person they needed. So they picked a date as they met together and prayed.

Later that morning, Allensworth called the person who schedules Freeman's crusades.

Allensworth was told that earlier that morning, about the time the Tyler trio had been praying, a first in Freeman's ministry had occurred. Two churches in different locations called the same morning to cancel engagements with Freeman. The two dates that had just opened up were the front end and back end of the same week.

And that week was the very week the Tyler churches wanted Freeman to come preach at "Fish the Planet." That, Holt said, was the first sign that something bigger than they could imagine was about to happen.

News briefs from Associated Baptist Press

By ABP staff

Baylor center receives Lilly grant

WACO, Texas -- Baylor University's Center for Family and Community Ministries has received a \$664,661 Lilly Endowment grant for two projects.

The grant will fund a book series and resource guides on family ministry, to be produced in conjunction with Louisville Presbyterian Seminary in Kentucky.

"This is an exciting opportunity to strengthen the ministry of congregations with families by providing them with resources grounded in the developing research on families and faith," said Diana Garland, professor of social work at Baylor and director of the Center for Family and Community Ministries. (ABP)

Texas newspaper adds development post

DALLAS -- The Baptist Standard, the only Baptist state newspaper not receiving Cooperative Program funding, has hired its first development director.

Michael Morgan, a veteran administrator, will help the paper launch a fund-raising program beginning in mid-April. Morgan has since 1996 been assistant dean at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Morgan's election follows an almost yearlong search. The Standard's board of directors authorized the new job in an effort to strengthen the paper's finances and fund future expansion. (ABP)

Longtime seminary prof R. Othal Feather dies (corrected)

FORT WORTH, Texas -- R. Othal Feather, who taught education administration 28 years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, died March 25. He was 97.

He also served as a minister of education with churches in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Texas. He was an Army chaplain during World War II and served on special assignments by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in the Middle East, Japan, Hong Kong, Africa and South America. He was a frequent writer in professional journals in areas of outreach education and personal evangelism. He authored two books. (ABP)

Youth minister fatally shot

SHAWNEETOWN, Ill. -- A part-time youth pastor, who had recently turned his life around and was studying to become a teacher, was murdered March 5.

Jimmy Joe Byassee, a 31-year-old truck driver, was fatally shot in the driveway of his home as he returned from work. Police charged his stepson, 21-year-old Jarred Dobbs, with murder. The motive was unclear, but Dobbs' mother said he is mentally ill and has a history of drug abuse.

Byassee's death devastated the 200-member First Baptist Church of Shawneetown, Ill., where he had been part-time youth minister for about a year while studying at a nearby college to become a junior-high teacher.

Byassee, who was baptized as a Christian at age 14, had spent much of his life addicted to drugs and alcohol and wanted to model a better life for youth.

"He felt such a burden to work with youth because he'd been in all this drug and alcohol stuff," said his widow, Brenda, who is the church pianist.

"He wanted to keep them from that. The Lord planted that burden on his heart."

More than 900 people showed up for visitation at a local funeral home and 400 came to his funeral. (ABP)

Richmond seminary adds 2 to faculty

RICHMOND, Va. -- Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond has added two new faculty members. Trustees of the Virginia school recently named Richard Vinson as dean of the faculty and professor of New Testament and Greek and Phyllis Rodgerson Pleasants as professor of church history.

Vinson comes from Averett College in Danville, Va., where he is dean of arts and sciences and associate pastor of West Main Baptist Church. Pleasants most recently was visiting professor at Wake Forest University. Before that she taught at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and Prague, Czech Republic. (ABP)

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