



# Associated Baptist Press

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### Virginia Baptist board reorganizes for ministry

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- The Baptist General Association of Virginia will begin next year with a radically altered -- and smaller -- staff, should leaders approve a restructuring plan unveiled Sept. 12.

The Virginia Baptist Mission Board will vote Oct. 8-9 on a new staff alignment that implements the "Kingdom Advance" missions vision adopted by Virginia Baptists in a called convention session in May.

The plan groups staff positions around four emphases: empowering leaders; emerging leaders; glocal missions and evangelism; and courageous churches.

Virginia Baptist leaders coined the term "glocal" to encompass both local and global missions.

Kingdom Advance will expand Virginia Baptists' connections to global Christians. It creates several categories of mission workers in Virginia and the United States. It calls for starting new churches and rejuvenating existing ones, along with identifying and developing new leaders and empowering church leaders to carry out their ministries more effectively.

"This new way of staffing our board will help us accomplish the goals of Kingdom Advance," said John Upton, executive director of the mission board. "It will position us to reach the people of our state for Christ."

While not a part of the Kingdom Advance philosophy, the new staff structure eliminates 11 employees -- three professional and eight support positions -- because of reduced contributions. Three of the support-staff jobs being cut are currently vacant.

The BGAV competes for funds in Virginia with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia convention, which formed in 1996. The Southern Baptist Convention recognizes both groups.

A proposed \$5 million BGAV budget for next year cuts spending by \$200,000.

"We will not let financial considerations shape our vision, but the vision has to live in the context of financial realities," Upton said.

The restructuring plan emphasizes partnership with congregations, associations and Virginia Baptist agencies and institutions. "Partnering is the foundational piece of this whole design," Upton said.

It eliminates age-based specialists for youth and children, reassigning those responsibilities within the new structure. It expands the role of campus ministers beyond working with students to "scouting" for emerging leaders in youth groups, churches and other organizations.

Upton said much of the board's work would be done in partnerships. For example, ministry to senior adults could be done jointly with the Virginia Baptist Homes. Other models will be developed for other ministries.

The mission board's executive committee approved the restructuring plan unanimously Sept. 10. If ratified by the full mission board, the process of matching individuals with positions would begin in January.

Upton said he has asked all current BGAV staff to "discern their call and ministry with Virginia Baptists."

"It is critical that everyone on the board staff feel that their commitment is to carrying out this ministry," he said. "I hope over the next few months that the staff will pray about their role in the new structure."

Messengers to the BGAV annual meeting, scheduled Nov. 8-9 in Virginia Beach, will be asked to endorse the Kingdom Advance strategy and budget, but will not vote on staffing.

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-- EDITOR'S NOTE: This is condensed from a story on page one of the Sept. 19 Religious Herald. Bob Allen contributed to this version.

## **Steven Curtis Chapman concert tour spotlights adoption, Bible translation**

By Trennis Henderson

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Steven Curtis Chapman's 25-city "Live Out Loud Tour" isn't the typical contemporary Christian music concert.

In addition to performing hit singles from "Magnificent Obsession" to "Fingerprints of God," Chapman turns the spotlight on his advocacy for adoption and Bible translation.

Chapman's longtime support of adoption took on a new dimension two years ago when he and his wife, Mary Beth, adopted a six-month-old daughter from China. Shaohannah joined three older siblings: Emily, 16; Caleb, 13; and Will Franklin, 11.

Adopting Shaohannah "was the most profound experience spiritually, emotionally in my life and my family's life," Chapman said. "We want to encourage and challenge as many people as we can to experience this as well."

Chapman, the Dove Awards' five-time Male Vocalist of the Year, used his fame and influence to establish a foundation called "Shaohannah's Hope Assistance Fund."

Inadequate finances are "one of the biggest stumbling blocks for a lot of people" interested in adoption, Chapman said. The fund helps meet that financial need.

"We have been able to help several families already, and their children, now who are in loving Christian homes."

Bible translation is another top priority for Chapman. He credits the book, "Through Gates of Splendor," about five missionaries murdered by tribesmen in the jungles of Ecuador in 1956, with igniting that concern.

"When I finished this book I knew I will never be the same," he said. "This has really left a mark on my soul and on my life."

After the five men were killed, Elisabeth Elliot, the widow of Jim Elliott, and Rachel Saint, the sister of Nate Saint, eventually went to live among the same tribe. They helped translate Scripture into their language and led many of them to faith in Christ.

Saint's son, Steve, also became a missionary to the tribe years later, ministering and living among the very people who had killed his father.

Chapman told the story, using songs to narrate a multimedia presentation that included photos and film clips taken by the five missionaries a few days before they were killed.

As the segment closed during his recent concert in Louisville, Ky., Chapman introduced special guest Steve Saint.

"God never wastes a hurt if we'll trust him to write his story with our lives," Saint said. He shared how Mincaye, one of the men who killed his father, had become a Christian and now is known by Saint's family as "grandfather." Saint then introduced Mincaye to the crowd.

"A long time ago, I didn't know anything about God's carvings," Mincaye said in his native language as Saint translated. Explaining that he and other tribesmen "were living angry and hating," he added, "We had never known how to know the Creator."

Mincaye said missionaries began to teach his tribe that God "sent his Son down here to make a trail."

Describing the conversions of many of the tribesmen as "an incredible story of transformation, of forgiveness, of redemption," Chapman said: "God just wove this thing together, the whole tour. It's really been incredible to see how God has done all that."

Chapman said other influences on his ministry in recent years include the school shooting five years ago at Heath High School -- his alma mater -- and the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The 1997 school shootings in his hometown of Paducah, Ky., left three teenage girls dead.

"Those kinds of things had a tremendous impact on me at several different levels," he said. "Obviously it awakened all of us to the reality of just how uncertain our world is around us. If this could happen at Heath High School, it could happen anywhere."

Chapman said his song "God Is God (and I am not)" is among his responses to "foundational shaking tragedy."

"My response is I don't have any guarantees about tomorrow; I don't have any guarantees about anything other than I trust that God is truly the one in control. He can even take those things that are terribly evil and use them for good and work them together for good.

"That's the anchor I have found in the midst of those times," he said. "Those anchors become more sure when you walk through those kinds of tragedies."

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