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**Children are 'forgotten mourners,' veteran social-work teacher says  
By Mark Wingfield  
Associated Baptist Press - www.abpnews.com  
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WACO, Texas (ABP) – Although Helen Harris has years of experience as a hospice worker and social worker, she learned an important lesson about grieving by taking her 10-year-old daughter to a funeral home.

The young girl, after walking by her grandmother's casket, was overcome with grief and began sobbing. An older woman, apparently desiring to be helpful, came to the girl and spoke directly into her face: "Stop that crying! You just stop that crying!"

After assuring the girl that her grandmother was in a better place with Jesus and she ought to celebrate the homegoing rather than grieve the loss, the woman concluded with a fully loaded message: "Jesus doesn't want you crying."

That was it for Harris, who teaches in the Baylor University School of Social Work. She laid aside her own pastoral counseling demeanor and told the woman to leave them alone.

They knew the grandmother was in a better place, and they knew she was free of pain, Harris explained. But they also knew that they were sad for themselves and that they needed to cry.

The experience with this woman who thought she was offering help with her stoicism illustrates common misunderstandings about how children grieve, Harris said during a breakout session at the recent Hand in Hand Conference for church social workers.

Children, she said, often become the "forgotten mourners" at the time of a death. "They are expected to play and go to school while the adults grieve." Yet children need to be allowed to grieve themselves, she advised. Grieving children need to receive information appropriate for their age level, and they need to be prepared for what they will see and hear, she said. "When kids don't know, they speculate. And what they speculate is always worse than reality."

Children should be included in the care-giving directed toward a grieving family, and they should be included in family rituals related to death and grief, Harris advised. "Children need a cultural context in which to grieve."

Children, she noted, are more perceptive about what's going on around them than most adults realize. She cited another observation by her daughter, who examined the church prayer list and asked: "How come the only way people get off the list is by dying?"

Parents and other adult care-givers should understand that children may grieve in bursts of emotion, events she compared to sudden cloudbursts of rain followed by sunny skies. This is normal behavior for children, she reported.

However, children may need special attention from adult family members and friends because they will not find a natural connection and support for grieving among their peers, Harris said.

She also warned against using trite phrases that easily confuse children, phrases like "asleep in Jesus," "God took her" and "God needed an angel."

Among both children and adults, grief is a journey rather than a defined task, Harris said. Grief is like a hand held in front of the face and then slowly moved away. At first, all the person sees is the hand. But as the hand moves away, other things begin to come into focus. The hand, or grief, still is visible, but it loses dominance over time.

Those who seek to comfort the bereaved should not attempt to apply stages of grief like an algebra formula, Harris warned. People will experience the stages of grief differently. She urged taking into account the age of the bereaved, the person's relationship with the deceased, the circumstances of the loss, the degree of change experienced in day-

to-day affairs, the type of support available and how the grieving person has handled crisis in the past.

Grief, she said, takes time – not just six weeks or six months or even a year. "Uncomplicated mourning" may last two to three years, she explained, and "complicated mourning" may span up to seven years. "Grief continues for a lifetime through major life milestones."

Grief, Harris said, is hard work. But it's also necessary in order to achieve a healthy perspective again, she added, comparing grief to the lifesaving but sometimes painful impact of an automobile airbag in a crash.

"Experiencing the pain will make you feel worse for a time. But you've got to go through the pain. There's no way over, under or around it."

Churches face many options for ministering to grieving people, Harris concluded. "What's not an option is to ignore this. When it's not happening, people are sitting on pews grieving. Maybe they're leaving the pews."



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## **Missionary couple challenges IMB's grounds for termination**

**By Mark Wingfield**

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark. (ABP) -- "We cannot resign. We are guilty of no misconduct or false teaching and have been accused of none," missionaries Rick and Nancy Dill told International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin in a letter April 18.

The Dills, the first Southern Baptist workers to enter East Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall, are among 31 missionaries who recently received letters from Rankin about their refusal to sign an affirmation of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. Rankin announced a May 5 deadline to either sign, resign or be fired.

The Dills, whose situation was the subject of a recent USA Today story, currently are on a leave of absence and serving as missionaries-in-residence at Ouachita Baptist University. That they received the letter from Rankin was no surprise to the Dills. Earlier they received a phone call from IMB Executive Vice President Avery Willis informing them they could not return to their place of service in Germany without signing the faith statement as requested by Rankin last year.

Willis insisted this would not constitute "termination," however. But Rankin's latest letter makes it crystal clear: "If I do not hear from you regarding one of these options by May 5, 2003, I will be recommending that the board take action to terminate your service in their May meeting."

Rankin told the Dills and other missionaries that failure to sign the controversial faith statement or to resign on their own initiative would "undermine the integrity and credibility of the IMB."

The Dills asked Rankin why that is so. "The answer is simple," they then wrote. "It is not possible with integrity to terminate missionaries who are guilty of nothing but years of faithful service and having a deep sense of love for God's Word."

Rankin has insisted that missionaries must sign the revised faith statement to remain "accountable to Southern Baptists."

"To which Southern Baptists are we being accountable?" the Dills asked in response.

"The truth is that Southern Baptists have not required missionaries to sign the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Alabama, our home state, acknowledged all three statements of faith (versions of the Baptist Faith and Message). Texas, our partner state for the last three years, rejected the 2000 version outright. ... Even the trustees of the IMB have not required missionaries to sign. To whom are we not acting accountably? Who is actually requiring us to sign?"

Rankin has said non-signing missionaries are guilty of advocating "positions contrary to what Southern Baptists confess to believe." Again, the Dills asked, what positions have they held that are contrary to Southern Baptist beliefs?

"Is it that we believe God's word must be supreme in our lives and that it is wrong to make a man-written document the test for our faith and calling?" they asked Rankin. "Or would Southern Baptists disagree that Christ is Lord of Scripture and that we must understand the word of God first and foremost through his love, his teaching, his death and his resurrection?"

The only possible point of contention, they report, is their belief "that God can call whomever he chooses to serve wherever, whenever and however he so chooses." That runs counter to the new Baptist Faith and Message's declaration that women may not serve as senior pastors.

"Is a different understanding of Scripture in this matter really grounds for dismissal?" they asked Rankin.

Critics of the SBC's revised faith statement, including many in the Baptist General Convention of Texas, have faulted it for placing greater authority in the Bible than in Jesus, for demanding that wives "submit" to their husbands, for mandating that churches not hire women as pastors, and for weakening the traditional Baptist understanding of the autonomy of the local church and the priesthood of all believers. Critics also have charged the faith statement is being used more like a mandatory creed than a voluntary statement of shared beliefs.

IMB spokesman Mark Kelly said the missions agency has no response to the Dills' letter other than what had been reported previously in a news release about the deadline for missionaries to sign or lose employment.

IMB trustees meet May 6-8 in Framingham, Mass.



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## **Christian band Switchfoot makes honest music about life changes**

**By Lacy Elwood**

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WACO, Texas (ABP) – Surfing, for Tim Foreman, is like all great things in life – you've got to make time for it.

Foreman doesn't get in a lot of surfing these days, at least not as much as he once did. As the bassist and one of the founding members of the Christian rock band Switchfoot, his time is now spent on the road, playing at clubs and colleges across the nation.

Foreman has never had to make time for music. He grew up in San Diego alongside older brother Jon, the group's guitarist and lead vocalist. After Tim's high-school graduation, he joined Jon and drummer Chad Butler to form Switchfoot. Because the brothers grew up surfing every day and competing on the weekends, they took their love of the sport into their love of music. They named their band after a surfing term.

"To switch your feet means to take a new stance facing the opposite direction," Jon Foreman told the Web site JesusFreakHideout.com. "It's about change and movement, a different way of approaching life and music."

And Switchfoot, which has both Christian and mainstream fans, certainly approaches life in a way that is different from many bands. Look past their laid-back attitudes and casual appearance, and the honesty of Switchfoot's message shines through. "We've never hidden who we are. And we've always been up front with where we're coming from," Jon Foreman said. "We have honest songs that show an honest struggle with faith."

Foreman said Switchfoot's songs are honest because they come from the "fires that burn the brightest" inside him, the questions and struggles he faces in his own life. He says the band's newest album, "The Beautiful Letdown," is almost a diary of his life.

One such song, "24," was written the day before Jon turned 25. Wanting to sort through the voices in his head, Foreman reflected on the struggle between his life decisions and an ultimate decision to become something new – in Foreman's theology, perhaps, switching feet.

"The Beautiful Letdown" itself is also a "switchfoot" of sorts for the seven-year music veterans. The album's release followed several changes for the band, including a Grammy nomination, a change of record labels, and the addition of a fourth member, Jerome Fontamillas on keyboard.

Signed to Christian music pioneer Charlie Peacock's re:think label in 1997, the band later found themselves under Sparrow Records, which bought out the smaller label. Sparrow, they discovered, was "not in the same market as we are now," so the group started showcasing their work for other interested record companies.

"The Beautiful Letdown" was already completed, the group said, when a deal with Columbia Records came along, a deal the band's members easily joke about.

"We went on 'Star Search,'" Tim says, "and we lost."

"And then," Jerome adds, "we went on 'American Idol,' and we lost."

"Yeah," Jon laughed, "they [Columbia] decided to give us a scholarship."

In reality, the decision to join Columbia was "just right at the time," Tim Foreman said. "We never wanted to be in a position of trying out for something, because that comes along with the pressure to change who we are." With Columbia buying the new album already completed, the band was able to make all of the creative decisions on their own.

"The Beautiful Letdown" is a creative mixture of songs drawing on the band's personality. The name of the album itself derives from one of Jon's many literary influences, philosopher Blaise Pascal.

"Pascal said [that] to look at humanity and ignore darkness or beauty is an approach that's not honest. To be honest, you have to wrap your arms around both darkness and beauty," Jon Foreman said. "It's a dirty album; it's a shining album. It recognizes there's a hope deeper than wounds."

The honesty of their album also reflects their strong faith. For Jon Foreman, "The Beautiful Letdown" mirrors the idea that "your hands are ripped away from all the things that the earth has established."

"When all those things are stripped away and all that remains is who you truly are, that's where the kingdom of heaven lives," Foreman told Christianity Today. "Christ didn't come for the people who have their hands on the money. He didn't come for the people who didn't need a doctor. He came for the sick, the poor, the broken, the losers and the ugly jerks. He came for you and me, and that act is basically the beautiful letdown."

The band members, who describe their music as "just rock and roll," admit they've come a long way since their first album, "Legend of Chin," debuted in 1996. "Our first album was a 19-year-old looking at the world around him the best that he could," Tim Foreman said. "Now, it's a 26-year-old looking at the world. It [the new album] reflects the lessons he's learned, the hard and the easy, the peaks and the valleys. And now we have Jerome, and you can definitely [see] his fingerprints on the new album."

"The Beautiful Letdown" gives new fans a little peek at the Switchfoot of old with the inclusion of the group's "calling card" song, "Dare You to Move." This is the third album on which the song has appeared. After its debut on the group's 2000 album "Learning to Breathe," it appeared as part of the soundtrack to the 2002 Christian-message movie "A Walk to Remember."

The song is popular with Switchfoot's Christian fans because of its strong message: "I dare you to move. I dare you to lift yourself up off the floor. I dare you to move like today never happened.... Maybe redemption has stories to tell. Maybe forgiveness is right where you fell.... Salvation is here."

The band wanted to be sure that message from the song's chorus would be heard by anyone picking up a Switchfoot CD for the first time.

Jon says the new album is more forthright about faith than the group's earlier releases. However, he says, being labeled a Christian artist and songwriter sometimes feels like a box placed around him. On Switchfoot's most recent tour, the group decided to step out of that box and explore their rock-and-roll roots, playing mostly in mainstream rock clubs like Los Angeles' The Roxy and Austin's Stubb's.

"It's not where you play but who you are," said Switchfoot's lead vocalist.

Their current national tour, which ends in early summer, takes the group mostly into small clubs. But those "little shows" can make a difference, Jon said.

"Sometimes in life, we look toward the next big thing, like the big final for college students. We think that if we can just get to that last big thing, that last final, we can start living again. But we fail to realize that life happens in between the big things. Sometimes, after the final's finished, you're still not living. Musicians tend to place immense amounts of importance on big shows or big records or big deals. But the point is that the little shows are the ones that matter, and what happens behind the scenes is just as important."

"Life is short. Live well," he advises.

And for Switchfoot, that means surfing, a little rock and roll and sticking to their faith.

## **Theologian says 'turning off the noise' helps families find sacred moments**

**By Mark Wingfield**

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WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Those who pay attention may see spiritual truths in the everyday occurrences of family life, says theology professor Wendy Wright.

Wright called Christians to "prayerful attentiveness" as she delivered the Barbara Chafin Lectures in Family Ministry at Baylor University. The lectures were given during the annual "Hand in Hand Conference" for church social workers.

Identifying the Spirit of God at work in the chaos of family life requires occasionally clearing away the noise, said Wright, who teaches at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. "You can't pay attention if the space is filled with other things. ... You have to turn off some of the noise."

Families may find spiritual moments in reading together, sitting on a child's bed, spending time with a spouse at the end of the day, gathering around a kitchen table, visiting grandparents' homes or in a variety of other simple yet sacred places, she explained.

"We locate our sense of the presence of God in the ordinary fabric of everyday life. ... In ministering to families, one of the most powerful things we can do is to empower families to know themselves."

Welcoming a child into a family's life and eventually letting go of that child each illustrate spiritual disciplines that shape all of life, Wright continued.

"To welcome a child is not the same as welcoming a house guest," she explained. "To welcome a child is a radical throwing open of your life, allowing this person to be a central presence."

Welcoming a child also "causes us to decenter ourselves," she added. "Loving someone else ... calls me to hear, 'What does love demand that I do?'"

Taking an 18-month-old child for a walk illustrates the change in perspective an adult may experience, Wright said. Rather than the purposeful and utilitarian walk of adult, a young child engages in a "process of exploring" that may cause the parent to "see things again for the first time, ... to become aware of wonder again."

Likewise, by letting go of a grown child, parents may learn the power of trust in God, the theologian said. "We have to entrust them" [to the arms of God]. ... We learn a way of loving that trusts more deeply in what we cannot understand."

The Chafin lectures were established by the late Ken Chafin in honor of his wife, Barbara, who lives in Houston and is a member of South Main Baptist Church.

Wright, who is Catholic, is author of "Sacred Dwelling: A Spirituality of Family Life."



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**Cross-generational worship can build healthier churches, leaders say****By John Hall****Associated Baptist Press - [www.abpnews.com](http://www.abpnews.com)****April 22, 2003****Volume: 03-37-3549**

WACO, Texas (ABP) – Cross-generational worship means more than teenagers sitting next to senior adults on Sunday mornings. It means presenting a holistic picture of the body of Christ, according to two worship leaders who have tried it.

Churches need to include a greater variety of generations in their worship leadership to unite a congregation, said Terry York, associate professor at Truett Theological Seminary, and Gary Hall, associate pastor of worship and church ministries at Monterey Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas.

For years, churches have segmented worship experiences by generations, taking children out of the service at certain times and holding children's services and separate youth services, York said.

As a result, generational groups have begun expecting a worship service for their specific interests and are hesitant to integrate into larger worship services, York said at the recent Hand in Hand Conference for church social workers.

While worship segmented by generation may better reach certain groups of people, it costs the church its sense of "family and community." Congregations can move past generational and stylistic arguments and unite in worship that is meaningful for all, York said.

Generational cooperation allows each group to use its gifts to strengthen a congregation, York said. Generally, younger people bring hope to the congregation, while middle adults bring managing skills and senior adults contribute experience.

Hall, under York's supervision in Truett's doctoral program, started two worship-planning teams designed to encourage cross-generational worship during the Advent season at the Lubbock church.

The first group of eight people, ranging in age from 12 to 68, sought to include multiple generations in each service. The second team of 10 people, ages 11 to 70, evaluated the cross-generational inclusion by the first team.

People from multiple generations were used in prayer, Scripture reading and music presentation during the six-week project.

Hall said he was extremely pleased by the initial results. Generations are intermingling with each other during the worship services, more people volunteer to help with worship, and the services have more variety, he reported.

"It affected the church dramatically," Hall said. "The people began to understand we are all priests of Christ. They began to realize the whole congregation was responsible for meaningful worship."

Monterey Baptist Church has continued the teams beyond Hall's project and is looking to better tailor them to the needs of the church. The teams no longer meet every week but plan more services during their meetings. Sometimes they plan all the services that coincide with a sermon series.

York suggested rotating team members would promote diversity of ideas and perspectives while giving the teams continuity.

He urged churches that want to move toward cross-generational worship to establish two teams as Hall did and orient team members at one event.

However, York said cross-generational worship will not continue unless multiple generations also work together in church ministries such as a food pantry, clothes closet or a Sunday school class, he added.

"A church becomes more vibrant because they see other parts of the church body becoming healthy," Hall said.



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**Dunn recovering at home after bout with torn aorta****By Robert Marus****Associated Baptist Press - [www.abpnews.com](http://www.abpnews.com)****April 22, 2003****Volume: 03-37-3550**

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (ABP) -- James Dunn, retired Baptist Joint Committee executive director, says he is grateful to be home and making steady recovery progress after a heart condition nearly took his life in late March.

The 70-year-old Dunn went home from Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C., April 9 after two weeks in the hospital. He collapsed March 26 while with a colleague in the offices of Wake Forest University Divinity School, where Dunn serves as a visiting professor.

Quick discovery and diagnosis of the tear he suffered in his aorta, as well as the proximity of the only heart surgeon within an 800-mile radius who had expertise in aortic reconstruction, meant Dunn escaped with his life from a condition that often proves fatal.

"It's incredible -- the gift of another start on life when, by physical odds and sheer statistics I wasn't supposed to do it," said Dunn, reached by phone at his home on the Wake Forest campus April 22. "And frankly, it's scaring me, because obviously I've still got something to do."

Dunn said he is going through physical therapy because his body is "having to re-learn things that . . . most people's bodies know from muscle memory." Because of the aortic reconstruction, Dunn is dealing with fatigue and lack of mobility. After being unconscious for the first week after the attack, he said he is now able to walk for brief periods and should be driving again in about three weeks. He added, however, that he's "not exactly ready to go run a race."

Dunn said he has resumed some light work duties, including reading news and journal articles and briefing divinity school dean Bill Leonard, who is teaching Dunn's classes in his absence. He said he's hoping to be well enough to return to the classroom next fall.

A Texas native, Dunn served as executive director of the Washington-based BJC from 1980 until his retirement in 1999. He and his wife, Marilyn, maintain a residence in Washington, near the BJC's Capitol Hill offices. They are active members of Knollwood Baptist Church in Winston-Salem.

Dunn thanked those who have encouraged him with flowers and communications during his illness -- who range from food-service employees at Wake Forest to U.S. senators.

"It's just unbelievable the kinds of responses we've received," Dunn said. "Thanks, thanks for the fresh start, thanks for the memories, thanks for the prayers, thanks for the good thoughts, thanks for the opportunity that your prayers have given me to have another chapter to this existence."



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**These men leave pride outside the barn door**  
**By Anthony Wade**  
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ELBERTA, Ala. (ABP) – Inside the barn, men drag metal chairs up to tables, lean on oily workbenches and stand next to unused lumber. Outside, men sit or prop on pickup trucks, motorcycles or sedans parked on the grass.

On the third Thursday night of each month, at a 100-foot-by-60-foot barn on Frank Road in Elberta, Ala., about 200 men gather to talk about their faith. Some discover newfound faith in Christ. Others say they grow closer to the savior they've known for years.

It is hard to distinguish the well-to-do from the down-and-out. The men avoid titles and talk of financial successes, even though a luxury sedan was among the vehicles parked outside. The focus is on living a life in Christ and simple fellowship.

"It's a good place for men to bond," said Jeff Hilbert of Foley, who professed faith in Christ in February. "You can go outside and look around or come in here to the table and fellowship. It's just an extension of the church. But it's a lot more personable, a lot more manly."

"It's just worked out that it was something simple," said Charlie Stewart, who heads the nondenominational Men's Barn Ministry. Everyone's welcome. But pride and status are left outside.

The gathering, which grew out of a discipleship group, operates through a steering group of nine men from different denominational backgrounds.

"We had 34 men come when we were starting this [in] March 2001. Now, we have over 217," Stewart said. At any given meeting, he said, about 30 percent are first-timers.

"There are some pastors here, but you couldn't spot them unless you knew them," said Bill Waller.

"It's a tremendous ministry to several hundred men. One Thursday night a month, they have a meeting with some music, testimonies and guest speakers, and many people are getting saved," said Ed Lyrene, pastor of Mifflin Baptist Church in Elberta. "It's an interdenominational effort and a tremendous effort to reach a lot of men. Other barn ministries have branched out from this. And it is really making a unique appeal to men in the area."

They charge no fee to attend and don't emphasize money. "If somebody wants to give, we let 'em throw it in the bucket back there," Stewart said.

Waller said the meetings are casual, not well organized by design, and speakers are often impromptu, with various men among the attendees sharing testimonies and challenging other men to live deeper lives in Christ.

"We do not have a sermon after we eat," Waller said. "We have testimonials, after which we have prayer, not an altar call. If anyone feels that they want to go up and pray with the folks up at the front, they can. Each night we'll usually have five to 12 people get up and go accept Jesus."

"It's phenomenal, no professionals, music is just OK, no sermon per se, but God is moving," Waller said.

"It's astounding how people are pulled into this," said Bo Benedict. "I just love to come up here and be with these people."

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- Photo available from Associated Baptist Press.