



WESTERN RECORDER

NEWSPAGE
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Many churches reporting vacation Bible school growth

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

SCOTTSVILLE—Many Kentucky Baptist churches are crediting vacation Bible school curriculum with helping them increase both attendance and professions of faith this summer.

Pastors and VBS directors throughout the state reported an enthusiastic reception to the "Wild and Wonderful Good News Stampede," published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The theme made it easy to find decorations—many hauled in saddles and scattered hay inside their buildings—and appropriate attire, they said.

They also praised the literature, contemporary Christian music, unusual refreshments and rotating to "cor-

rals" for various activities.

Fifteen children accepted Christ as their personal Savior at Scottsville Baptist Church, compared to two in 1996. Pastor Floyd Price credited increased response to the excitement stirred by the Western props.

"It heightened the interest," said Price, president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. "It's been a dynamite experience, like a revival for our church."

Scottsville Baptist concluded its early-June VBS with a fair and rodeo featuring pony rides, stick-horse barrel races and "cactus juice" for refreshments.

Two days later, the church's "Good News Stampede" musical attracted a crowd of 300, or 50 more than average Sunday morning attendance.

Associate Pastor Mike Williams of Lone Oak First Baptist in Paducah said this year's VBS enrolled a record of nearly 800 students. Seventeen children became Christians, and most have been baptized.

"The only thing I'm concerned about is how we're going to match it next year," Williams said. "Our preschool department enrolled 59 children in the 3-year-old class. It was a phenomenal year."

He said he was touched to watch a 3-year-old unchurched boy overcome his initial fright within a few minutes and attend every session.

In Lincoln County, Fairview Baptist Church of Waynesburg saw a 50 percent attendance increase when it moved VBS to the Lincoln County fairgrounds in nearby Stanford.

The event included simulated ro-

deo events and rides on horses provided by several church members. Four of the 128 enrolled accepted Christ and two rededicated their lives to him, according to director Danny Bertram.

He said the reception was so enthusiastic that Fairview has talked to several other churches about co-sponsoring next year's event.

"Almost everyone made comments through the week like, 'Why didn't we do this years before?'" Bertram said.

First Baptist Church of South Shore had a 50 percent increase in enrollment, with 18 professions of faith. Pastor Phil Haney said eight were baptized, while some joined other churches.

"There was a good evangelism

□ See Churches say ..., page 9

Kentuckians' name choices getting biblical

FRANKFORT—A biblical name has made an unexpected leap forward to become the most popular name given to newborn girls in Kentucky last year.

Hannah leaped from sixth place in 1995 to first place in 1996, with 448 girls given that name, according to the Kentucky Department for Public Health's Vital Statistics records. As recently as 1994, Hannah wasn't even in the top 10 girls' names in Kentucky.

In recent years, biblical names that once were given commonly to newborns have been surpassed in popularity by more contemporary names like Ashley, Brittany and Taylor.

Those contemporary names are still popular, but last year they took a back seat to Hannah, the name of a biblical character who became mother to the Old Testament prophet Samuel after years of being barren.

One other biblical name made last year's list of the 10 most-popular names for newborn girls in Kentucky. Sarah was the name given to 382 girls.

Trendy names are still the most popular for boys in Kentucky, with Austin the most frequently chosen. However, several biblical names remain in the top 10 for boys, including Jacob (second), James (553), Matthew (fifth) and Joshua (ninth).

A biblical theme runs through some of the more unusual names chosen by Kentucky parents of newborns last year as well: Mercy, Missionary, Heavenly, Blessed, Deacon, Glory, Nazareth, Israel, Judah, Corinthian, Jericho and Genesis.

Kentucky even was the birthplace of a Samson and a Delilah last year.



KENTUCKY CHANGERS Teenage volunteers from across the state worked on housing rehabilitation projects in Frankfort and Pike County recently through two annual Kentucky Changers projects. Story on page 8. (Photo by Kathy Bentley)

Teen spirituality high, but commitment low

By David Winfrey
News Director

OXNARD, Calif.—The spiritual beliefs of America's early teenagers closely mirror those of adults, although youth rarely talk to their parents about such matters, a Christian researcher recently reported.

George Barna reported that 88 percent of teens say they're Christian, slightly higher than the 84 percent of adults who define themselves as Christian.

But responses indicate many youth are identifying with a cultural Christianity, not a biblical Christianity, Barna said.

Teens and adults also responded similarly that religious faith is very

important to their lives; 82 percent and 87 percent respectively.

"In many ways, teenagers are the mirror image of adults when it comes to religious beliefs and attitudes," Barna wrote in his newsletter, the "Barna Report."

"This is particularly striking because we also discovered that teens and their parents spend little, if any time discussing what they believe related to faith," he wrote.

Barna said teens absorb much of their religious perspective through "spiritual osmosis," a mixture of observation, conversation, instructions, media exposure, family tradition and peer pressure.

Meanwhile, commitment levels by those who call themselves Chris-

tians is low, Barna wrote.

Of those who call themselves Christian, only 35 percent said they are "absolutely committed" to the Christian faith. And about one-quarter of all teens said their faith makes a "huge difference" in how they live.

Biblical literacy was lacking among many teens polled. While 64 percent said the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings, 51 percent said all people will experience the same outcome after death, regardless of their spiritual beliefs.

"The theology presently embraced by teens is still in transition, but it leans heavily toward a cultural Christianity rather than a biblical

□ See Barna: Most teens ..., page 7

BAPTISTS

Calvinist speakers defend 'limited atonement' belief

"Our Lord died particularly for the sins of his elect people, accomplishing their salvation from beginning to end—and for no one else."

Fred Malone, pastor of First Baptist Church of Clinton, La.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—Despite differences of opinion with modern-day Southern Baptists, Calvinists should not be ashamed to preach about their belief in the "limited atonement" of Jesus Christ, a pastor said during the 15th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference.

The annual conference of Southern Baptist Calvinists, held July 22-25 at Samford University, seeks to promote the theology held by some early Southern Baptists.

Calvinism is a theological system based on the works of the 16th century reformer John Calvin. It has gained renewed attention in recent years because two presidents of Southern Baptist Convention seminaries—Al Mohler and Mark Coppenger—subscribe to and teach its tenets.

Among Calvinism's most controversial beliefs is limited atonement, the assertion that the atonement for sins effected by Jesus' death on the cross was limited only to those God chose "before the foundation of the world" to be saved. According to this belief, God also predestined some people for damnation; they have no hope of gaining eternal life because they are not among God's elect.

This notion runs directly opposite

the prevailing "whosoever-will-may-come" belief of most contemporary Southern Baptists. The predominant view among Southern Baptists for most of the 20th century has been that God's gift of salvation made possible through Jesus' death and resurrection is available to all who will put their trust in Jesus. According to this view, all humans are capable of accepting God's gift if only they will.

In a message at this year's conference, Fred Malone, pastor of First Baptist Church of Clinton, La., defended the doctrine of limited atonement.

"Our Lord died particularly for the sins of his elect people, accomplishing their salvation from beginning to end—and for no one else," Malone said. "There is not one moment of suffering, not one drop of Jesus' blood that was wasted. His redemption actually accomplished the atonement for those whom he represented."

Malone cited several passages of Scripture to support the doctrine, such as Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

"A husband loves his wife; he chooses her above all women," Malone said. "He is not to love all women

the same. The Lord Jesus Christ loved the church, the given ones, and gave himself up for her."

Malone acknowledged several biblical passages seem to deny that Christ died only for the elect.

"No one denies that these passages are in the Bible," Malone said. "We have wrestled over these passages. We have studied. We have prayed. We have wept, some of us, (and) made life decisions that affected our family and our entire future, based upon our conscience held bound to the word of God as we understand it."

"We do not claim to have all the answers on all of these passages, but neither can we cut out ... a multitude of other passages in the Bible," which teach limited atonement, such as Matthew 1:21, John 10, Romans 5 or Acts 20:28, Malone stated.

He noted some passages—such as John 4:42, 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:14—indicate Christ is the Savior of the world.

"But it is fitting with the rest of the Scripture that 'the whole world' means Jew and Gentile—from every tongue and tribe and nation and people for whom Jesus died," Malone explained.

Phil Newton, pastor of South

Woods Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., said Christians should see God as both righteous and just—even when considering that God has predestined only particular people for salvation.

"We are to rejoice in the fact that when God saves a sinner, he does it out of his righteousness and justice," Newton said. "When God damns a sinner for eternity, he does it in his righteousness and his justice. We are to rejoice in this Lord. ... In salvation and in damnation, our God reigns in righteousness and justice."

This year's Founders Conference also took a slap at the Walt Disney Co., but not in the same way as the SBC's call for a boycott.

Bill Ascol, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., criticized church leaders who look to corporate giants like Disney for ideas on how to improve a church.

He chided Southern Baptist pastors who have sought training at Disney University, a professional development conference center at Disney World in Orlando, Fla. Disney University provides courses in quality service, customer loyalty, leadership and people management.

Based on Baptist Press reports

BAPTIST BITS

■ **More to NAMB.** The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has named additional staff: James Dotson, associate editor of the Georgia Christian Index, will become news and information specialist. Thomas Hammond, evangelism pastor at Hebron Baptist Church in Dacula, Ga., will be director of church evangelism. David Lee, a missionary in California, will be director of ministry evangelism. Len Taylor, minister of students at First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., will be director of student evangelism. Mike Ebert, director of publications for the Christian Coalition, will be director and editor-in-chief of publishing. Harry Lewis, pastor of Immanuel Southern Baptist Church in Ridgecrest, Calif., will be a regional coordinator. Wayne Rhodes, a computer consultant from Virginia Beach, Va., will be Internet director. A NAMB news release did not provide background information for three others named: Doug Metzger, director of strategic focus cities unit; Carol Baker, missions opportunities/events manager; and John Yi, Asian church planting associate.

■ **Golden Gate called model.** Church consultant Lyle Schaller said in a recent seminar that Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., is the nation's leading example of how to do theological education in the 21st century. "Golden Gate is committed ... to the idea of decentralizing, and more particularly, classes will be taught by practitioners who meet the criteria for academic respectability," Schaller said. Golden Gate is one of six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries. Schaller made the comments during a July 16 seminar at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

■ **Methodists inquire of Disney.** On the heels of the Southern Baptist Convention's boycott of the Walt Disney Co., the United Methodist Church's Board of Pension and Health Benefits has asked Disney to respond to questions about its policy of providing health benefits to partners of gay and lesbian employees.

■ **Record shoots for 'impossible' goal.** The Southern Baptist Convention's goal of baptizing half a million people annually by the year 2000 is "an impossible task for us" but not for God, Bob Reccord said during home missions week at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center. Reccord, president of the new North American Mission Board, announced he has set a goal of Southern Baptist churches baptizing 1 million people annually by the year 2005.

■ **Church discipline called for.** A church history professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has called for a renewed emphasis on church discipline among Southern Baptists. Greg Wills, assistant professor of church history, wrote about the topic for his doctoral dissertation and has published a book on the topic. Wills said modern-day Baptists could learn from the way pre-Civil War Baptist churches enforced discipline on their members.

■ **Opinion split on Disney boycott.** A nationwide poll sponsored by USA Weekends magazine found 49.5 percent of respondents favor the Southern Baptist Convention's boycott of the Walt Disney Co., while 50.5 percent do not. The 107,000 respondents represented the largest reader response to a USA Weekends poll this year, the magazine reported. The unscientific poll was conducted primarily by asking readers to call an 800 number.

Drake convicted; work goes on

BUENA PARK, Calif. (ABP)—Despite a court order July 30 to halt his work with the poor, outspoken pastor Wiley Drake was still feeding and sheltering the homeless that evening at First Southern Baptist Church in Buena Park, Calif.

Court process servers tried unsuccessfully a day earlier to serve Drake, 53, with a preliminary injunction barring him from allowing poor people to sleep in cots at his church or in cars on church property.

Drake said on the morning of Thursday, July 31, that he was not trying to avoid the court papers, but that all day Tuesday he was being interviewed by, "one radio station after another," and that a limousine came for him late Tuesday afternoon to go to Los Angeles for a CBS News interview.

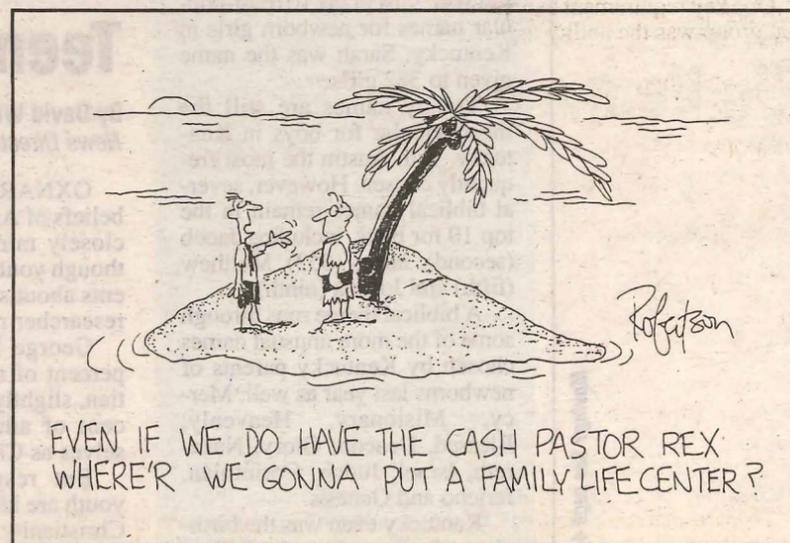
The process server arrived about the same time Drake was going from his office to the limousine. "I was in a hurry," Drake said. "I never saw a process server."

Drake and his church were found guilty July 28 of four counts each of misdemeanor building code violations in Orange County Superior Court. An appeal is planned, and sentencing is set for Aug. 22.

After the injunction was served successfully on Drake Wednesday afternoon, his attorneys gave the process server an appeal to stay the order, which allows Drake to maintain his homeless ministry pending an appeal.

Increased publicity thanks to the food and clothing donations to the church. On Thursday, a woman who claimed to be a direct descendant of both Mayflower Pilgrims and a Declaration of Independence signer picketed in front of Buena Park city government offices in support of Drake.

The church was expecting a larger-than-usual worship crowd Sunday, Aug. 3, including reporters and some of the jurors who found Drake guilty in the trial.



KENTUCKY

KBC hires Sunday school & Brotherhood directors

By Mark Wingfield
Editor

ELIZABETHTOWN—Darryl Wilson and Randy Foster were named to key staff positions with the Kentucky Baptist Convention July 31 in a rare special-called session of the KBC Executive Board.

Wilson, 38, will be the KBC's Sunday school director. Foster, 54, will be the state Brotherhood director. Both were elected without opposition.

Eighty-six Executive Board members attended the called meeting, held at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

KBC President Floyd Price explained that the special session was necessary because "we have two crucial leadership positions that are ready to be filled." Without the called meeting, those positions could not be filled until November, when the Executive Board is next scheduled to meet, he said.

Wilson, the new Sunday school director, has been minister of education and administration at Eastwood Baptist Church in Bowling Green since 1992. Previously he served Third Baptist Church in Owensboro; Living Hope Baptist Church in Bowling Green; First Baptist Church of Pendleton, S.C.; and Alton Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg.

Wilson is a past president of the Kentucky Baptist Religious Education Association and has been used as a religious education consultant by the KBC and several Baptist associations.

He holds the bachelor of arts degree in religion from Belmont University in Nashville and the master of divinity in Christian education degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

Wilson and his wife, Yvonne, are the parents of two children, Jonathan, 9, and Jordan, 7.

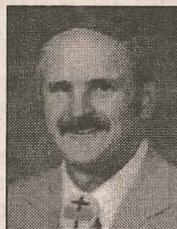
In his new position, Wilson succeeds longtime KBC Sunday school director Chip Miller, who last year became a church consultant working directly with Vernon Cole, director of the church growth and administration division.

Cole said the search that led him to recommend Wilson for the position began with convening a cross-section of Kentucky Baptists to give input about what skills they believe are essential for the job.

One key requirement expressed by that group was the ability to be flexi-



Wilson



Foster

ble, Cole said. "You don't go in with a cookie cutter and say, 'This is how you do ...' anything, let alone Sunday school."

Cole said Wilson is well-prepared to meet this challenge because of his varied background of ministry experience in churches with different styles and needs.

Among the questions board members asked Wilson, one person wanted to know how he would advise churches desiring to use literature other than that produced by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Wilson responded that churches shopping around for literature is "just a fact" in today's church culture. Churches are using "a multitude of literature" from a variety of sources, he said.

"The important thing is that the Bible is our real literature and people are our main concern," he said.

Foster, the new Brotherhood director, has been a Southern Baptist home missionary in Jackson Hole, Wyo., since 1978. His primary responsibilities have been in Christian social ministry and resort missions.

In his ministry there, Foster has supervised about 1,000 youth and adult volunteers who have served terms of 10 weeks or longer as summer missionaries, semester missionaries and Mission Service Corps workers. He also has coordinated the volunteer ministries of hundreds of church groups.

In his family's 19-year ministry in Jackson Hole, he has either begun or helped with numerous ministry efforts. He currently serves as chaplain for the Jackson Hole Ski Area and Snow King Ski Resort.

Foster is a certified disaster relief worker and has served in several Baptist disaster relief ministries.

He has been heavily involved in Brotherhood work in Wyoming and Colorado and has been used as a national speaker for Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union events.

Foster has planned and supervised

numerous camps, including Brotherhood Challenger camps, sports camps, Baptist Young Men's Adventure Week, Camp Angel Tree for children of prison inmates and others. He established and for 15 years has led a Royal Ambassador program in a local church. He also established and has led a Challenger program in a local church.

Foster also has participated in a variety of foreign missions projects, has worked with Promise Keepers groups, helped begin a Habitat for Humanity chapter in his community and has been involved with lay renewal efforts.

He has experience with other human needs ministries, such as emergency shelters, food assistance, literacy training and foster care. His wife, Anne, is director of a crisis pregnancy center in Jackson Hole, and he serves on that center's board of directors.

Foster also has extensive experience with wilderness programs such as trail rides, backpacking trips, climbing, fishing and hunting.

Foster holds the bachelor of arts degree from Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss., and the master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary.

He and his wife are the parents of four boys: Andrew, 24; Eric, 21; James, 17; and John, 15.

In his new role, Foster will succeed Bob Simpkins, who resigned from the KBC staff earlier this year.

Larry Martin, KBC missions and evangelism division director, described Foster as uniquely qualified to lead Kentucky Baptists to a higher level of Brotherhood involvement and ministry.

He especially cited Foster's extensive experience in working with volunteers, noting that Kentucky Brotherhood really is a ministry network of volunteers.

He also said Foster is "an excellent listener" who will not go into churches with preconceived ideas about what they should do. Rather, he will listen to churches and help them find ways to fulfill God's leading in their own settings, Martin said.

Martin said Foster's previous experience relating to Woman's Missionary Union as a home missionary would serve Kentucky Baptists well as Kentucky Brotherhood and Kentucky WMU seek more ways to work together.

KBC could have 'banner year'

ELIZABETHTOWN—The Kentucky Baptist Convention should end its fiscal year Aug. 31 with a "banner year" in Cooperative Program giving, Jim Hawkins told the KBC Executive Board July 31.

Hawkins, interim executive secretary-treasurer, gave a brief report during the called meeting at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

"It is possible we will have the highest record of giving through the Cooperative Program in one year," Hawkins said.

He noted, however, that Aug. 31 falls on a Sunday this year, which means the end-of-the-month contributions most churches make to the Cooperative Program won't be counted in the current year, since the KBC may only count in this fiscal year contributions postmarked Aug. 31 or earlier. He suggested some churches might want to mail their August Cooperative Program contributions before the end of the month to ensure they get counted in this fiscal year.

Hawkins also reported that a record number of Kentuckians have served as volunteer missionaries this year and that this has been "a banner year for God's intervention in the lives of Kentucky Baptists" in many other ways.

"Our Lord is stirring our churches from the mountains to the Mississippi," he said. "We agree that the Bible is God's profound word. We agree the Baptist Faith and Message is bedrock theology. We agree Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior and our model for Christian behavior, the only model. We agree that God has called us into the world to share Jesus and to give love and mercy and justice. We agree we can accomplish more when we cooperate.

"Then it is clear we agree on those things which make it possible to cooperate and do God's work. Let's stop pounding on the disagreements and start pumping up the discipleship," he said.

Martin explained one change in the expectations of the Brotherhood director, noting that Foster will not be the primary leader for disaster relief work. Before he began searching for a new director, Martin said, he made a commitment that the department would be structured differently, giving someone else this key responsibility.

In the past, "when we had a major disaster, most of our other work either has slowed down or come to a stop," Martin said.

The Brotherhood director needs to be free to keep all aspects of Brotherhood work going, while someone else gives detailed leadership to disaster relief, he said.

In introductory comments to the board, Foster described himself as a missionary at heart who is "connected very much to the heart and mission of Brotherhood." What Brotherhood ultimately is about is missions, he said.

Challenge gift offered for children's homes capital campaign

SOMERSET—Local volunteers for the "Building A Brighter Future" campaign will be working this month to match a \$150,000 challenge gift that could push the drive over its \$2.65 million goal.

The capital campaign is raising funds to improve services for children and families in a 25-county area through Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. Recently, an anonymous donor agreed to match dollar-for-dollar up to \$150,000 received by the campaign in its closing effort.

To date the campaign has raised \$2.3 million. With the challenge gift,

volunteers need only to raise an additional \$200,000 to reach the \$2.65 million challenge goal. Campaign volunteers already have reached their initial \$1.8 million goal, and the campaign is scheduled to end Sept. 1.

"We are excited about the opportunity this donor has provided to double the impact of the gifts to help children," said Somerset businessman Oscar Hornsby, campaign chairman. "The people of this area have already been tremendously responsive and I'm confident that they will come through to push us over the top."

Added Cy Waddle of Somerset,

honorary campaign chair: "It has been great to be a part of this campaign and I am thrilled to see us getting this close to the final challenge goal."

Funds from the campaign already have been used to construct a new 16-bed children's shelter in Bronston. Construction is now under way on a classroom and administrative building for KBHC children's programs in Southern Kentucky.

Still to come on that same site is a 24-bed lodge for the agency's wilderness camping treatment program.

In addition, the campaign will fund an endowment for KBHC's Corner-

stone Counseling ministry which serves southern Kentucky through a London-based hub.

The campaign funds also are being used to expand the agency's foster care program with workers based in London as well as services designed to help families on the brink of having children removed from home.

A London-based after-school reporting center to provide additional care and support for children in need also will be funded.

More information about the campaign is available by calling (800) 456-1386.

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*Earnestly contend for the
faith which was once for
all delivered to the
saints.—Jude 3*

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Oppose boycott

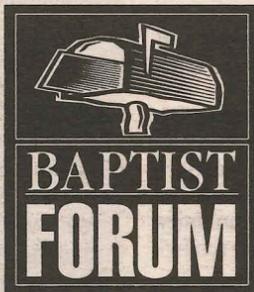
The recent resolution calling for the boycott of the Disney organization has resulted in much discussion among our congregation. Most of the general public assumes that all Southern Baptists agree with the resolution, therefore we wish to express our opposition to the boycott.

Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds." Christians must uphold certain values and standards. Our Lord said, however, that he did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world. The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son (Luke 15) were told by Jesus in response to criticism that he had welcomed and eaten with sinners.

We believe if the resolution was intended to promote certain values, it has become lost in a cloud of condemnation. In a society where non-believers are skeptical of the church, the resolution to boycott has drawn negative attention toward Southern Baptists and the evangelical community. The action taken by the convention is contrary to the forgiving spirit of Christ

and works against our congregation's vision of "Working Together with God's Gifts to Meet the Needs of the Whole Person."

We wish to clearly state our opposition to this boycott which, if successful, could result in the loss of employment to families dependent upon the Disney organization for their livelihood.



We also believe that the opportunities of wholesome family entertainment provided by Disney and its subsidiaries far outweigh the negative. A resolution that is supposedly intended to promote family values could actually have a detrimental effect on families.

We admonish all Southern Baptists to remember the words of Christ, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. Everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

*The deacons and congregation of
Melbourne Heights Baptist Church
Louisville*

Wisdom of God

Paul has certified the gospel he preached was not after men but by the

revelation of Jesus Christ. Yet each week we propagate the understanding gained from the many translations, helps, the wisdom of the wise and benevolence to those we deem our equals.

The fruit of the week is the abundance of iniquity in our time such as 5-year-olds killing each other, and 12-year-olds replenishing the earth, drug use, satanic delight and, worse, a conversion to the "isms" (conservationism, modernism, liberalism), ever learning with a judgmental attitude. My religion is better than yours. The question is, have the Scriptures been wrested by the isms?

To those who wish to engage Fallwell, Robertson and Ralph Reed, it tickled my conscious to remember Roman 14:4.

When we abandon what our creator meant us to be and abrogate to a political action, it is to deny John 3:16.

As Christians, we are God's workmanship created in Jesus Christ unto good works and by his Spirit, the wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.

The word of God and the Holy Spirit will germinate a new life, by faith, that will hear what the Spirit saith unto the church.

*O.M. Rector Jr.
Monticello*

When do we crawl into God's lap?

By Tom Ehrich

My broken wristwatch is being repaired. I have no idea of the time as I awaken at my father-in-law's farm in southern New Hampshire on the first day of summer vacation.

The golden glow across fields of timothy looks brighter than usual. I must have slept late.

Vacation routines come smoothly. While coffee brews, I set up my laptop computer on the kitchen table. While the family sleeps and sunlight envelops this 220-year-old farm house, I write. This is peace.

Around nine, the kitchen door opens, and 5-year-old William enters the room and climbs into my lap. We snuggle. The peace of solitude gives way to the peace of the morning hug.

This blessed routine started 18 years ago, when I took the early-morning shift with baby Nathanael. Every morning since then, I have listened for a wakeup cry, little feet on the stairs, a study door opening, or here at Grandpa's, the brass latch whose clank signals a child's arrival.

I wonder if God has these same routines with us. I wonder if God learns the sound of our approaching feet, or our restless stirring in the night watch when our defenses crumble, or the welling up of our grief, or those few moments when we accept being a child and needing a hug.

God told his people long ago that

he had no desire for grand gestures. "I despise your solemn assemblies," God said. "Do you think I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?"

Elaborate sacrifices, a multitude of slaughtered animals, finely tuned liturgies, pageantry and parades, gloss and sheen—they mean nothing to God. Scripture suggests God waits for the sound of approaching feet: a sacrifice of thanksgiving, a penitent heart, a soul crying for freedom, a hinge creaking and a small head poking shyly around a corner.

This is when we do honor to God. Not when we make lavish display. Especially not when we fight over every detail of that display: which gender may lead it, what rules govern participation in it, what aesthetic preferences will guide our language and music. Do we think God has suddenly developed an appetite for solemn assemblies? Do we believe God puts creation on hold while self-will battles self-will, and self-important committees argue over punctuation?

We do honor to God when we start the day knowing our need of God's lap.

Church life nowadays seems filled with arguments and parades. Well-meaning people work long hours trying to do the work they believe church requires. They argue over sex. They argue over language. They argue over the place of women. They argue over leadership. They argue over Scripture.

Then they parade, hoping, it seems, that the excellence of a good

parade will heal the wounds just opened in debate.

But when do we crawl onto God's lap? When do we know our need of God? When do we shyly submit? I think it's happening now, and denominations don't see it.

While denominations track membership statistics—looking for justification in an upward trend line or explaining away a downward line—and fight over right opinion, believers are doing faith work on their own. Congregations functionally withdraw from their denominations. Even at the local level, traditional church structures stir little enthusiasm.

It is a time of deconstruction, a shifting of focus away from arguments and parades. People are buying faith-related books, forming small groups, participating in meta-movements like Promise Keepers, and attending classes rather than committee meetings.

This moment is frustrating to those who still want to argue and plan parades. But the stress of modern life has overwhelmed old ways of doing church. What I see are people lifting the latch on a door, and like my 5-year-old son, looking for a lap to crawl into. Not to hide—old structures may have been a hiding place—but to gather strength for growing. That need for God has nothing to do with budgets or sex battles or any of the earnest causes that splinter our churches.

Nor, I believe, does God have anything to do with those divisions. It seems God listens for the sound of approaching feet, not strident voices claiming right opinion. (RNS)

Tom Ehrich is an Episcopal priest in Winston-Salem, N.C., an author and former Wall Street Journal reporter. E-mail him at journey@interpath.com.

MARRIAGE

Hot buttons connected to childhood homes

By John Lepper

A cartoon shows two robots standing before a marriage counselor. Numerous buttons are plain to see on both robots. The marriage counselor says: "You really know how to push each other's buttons."



As humans our buttons are not so visible but just as real. Seen or not, most

couples know how to push one another's buttons. Intuitively we know what our mates like and what bugs them.

On our worse days we play power games and push each other's hot buttons. On other occasions we push each other's warm buttons. We know those things which our mate finds pleasing.

Interestingly, our emotional buttons have invisible wires connected to our childhood and to the home in which we grew up.

Harville Hendrix says we are attracted to someone who has both positive and negative characteristics of our parents or other primary caregivers (see his book "Getting the Love You Want"). For some strange reason, we are particularly attracted to someone with the negative traits of our parents. We don't always notice this because the process takes place on an unconscious level.

We are driven by an unconscious desire to find someone similar to our parents because we believe they can heal our childhood wounds—sort of pick up where our parents left off. The honeymoon is over when we realize this desire is a fantasy and can't be achieved by our mates.

All of us grow up with childhood frustrations and/or wounds. Things that frustrated us as we related to our parents often are the very things that frustrate us as we relate to our spouses.

Was your mother intrusive? If so, you likely were unconsciously attracted to someone who is intrusive. Was your father rather aloof? Perhaps you were attracted to a mate who sometimes can be aloof. Chances are you relate to an aloof or intrusive spouse in the same way you related to an aloof or intrusive parent.

Our hot buttons are real. Frustrations with a spouse are not to be ignored. Becoming conscious of how past frustrations influence our current relationships can help us grow as individuals and as couples.

John Lepper is director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's family ministry department.

HE SAID/SHE SAID

If life were picture-perfect, we'd still forget to load the film

SHESAI



Alison Wingfield

Don't you ever wish time would stand still? Oh, to capture those rare moments when nobody's fussing or fighting or fuming and you're all laughing and having a good time.

I guess if all our moments were like that we wouldn't cherish them so much.

When you get right down to it, attitude makes all the difference in the world. We know things aren't going to be perfect, and if we would just learn to go with the flow and not let things get to

us, then we would find laughing and cherishing times together to be the norm and not the exception.

Somewhere along the parenthood trail, I've lost that attitude. I'm trying to find it again. The optimist I used to be struggles with the pessimist who has discovered that life is not a bed of roses (it took me awhile). Poor Mark has to deal with a nag sometimes.

At the same time, every family needs a realist. And Mark does not fit that bill. For example, every time we sit and figure finances, he always has the rosier viewpoint. Since I'm the one in charge of the checkbook, I have had to throw some heavy doses of reality his way.

Now I just have to figure out how to be a realist and an optimist at the same time.

HESAI



Mark Wingfield

Just for the record, in the first years of our marriage, I was the one who kept the checkbook while Alison wore the rose-colored glasses. I will gladly attest that ignorance is bliss, and I'm happy to be free of the checkbook duty so I can look at life in a more blissful state.

The problem with this contentment stuff is all those catalogues, magazines and movies. It seems like these three things more than anything else paint the pictures our minds store away to

represent what a perfect life ought to be.

We want our houses to look like those featured in the magazines. We want our bodies to look like those of the models photographed for the catalogues. And we want all the ups and downs of life to lead to a happy and romantic conclusion in about two hours, just like in the movies.

Even though in our heads we know the photographs are airbrushed and the houses are decorated specifically to be photographed and the movies are full of Hollywood magic, in our hearts we see more.

For years I've carried around in my mind an image of idyllic fall weekends spent at some rural cabin with friends, reminiscent of the better aspects of "The Big Chill" and other such movies.

Every fall comes and goes and I realize we've experienced nothing remotely resembling that image. Even if we had the cabin, several little things stand between reality and fantasy, not the least of which are children, money and time. You've got to admit that real life's a lot more like Erma Bombeck or Dave Barry have reported it than like what Madison Avenue or Hollywood show us.

There aren't many moments in real life when nobody's fussing or fighting or fuming. And whenever such a rare moment occurs, I inevitably come up with some reason to fuss or fight or fume myself.

In reality, it's hard to enjoy the "Kodak moments" of life as they happen. They always look better on film after the passage of time.

Perhaps the answer is to filter our cameras and glasses with the advice of the Apostle Paul, who said: "I have learned the secret of being content in every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

Who's got it right: Tilton or Bakker?

He's baaaaack!

No, this is not an announcement of the Second Coming of Christ. Rather, it's a notice that one of the most pesky thorns in the body of Christ is coming around again.

Bob Tilton, the undisputed king of name-it-and-claim-it/health-and-wealth theology, is back on the airwaves in several major markets around the United States. And he hopes to expand to a cable system near you soon.

You'll remember Tilton as the televangelist who was exposed by ABC's "Prime-Time Live" in 1991. The ABC report quoted people who said Tilton kept donations sent to him in the mail while filling trash dumpsters with unopened prayer requests from the same mail bags.

Of course, Tilton's primary spiel on his "Success-N-Life" program was for viewers to send him money and prayer requests, and he would pray with a positive answer from God guaranteed. He preached about the need for "seed faith," which meant the more money people sent him, the greater blessings God would grant them in return.

Not since the Catholic church sold indulgences in the Middle Ages has anyone come up with such a sacred cash cow tied to a rotten doctrinal post.

While Tilton's viewers sacrificed to make cash contributions to his ministry in hopes of gaining greater favor with God, he lived in the lap of luxury, receiving the benefit of lavish houses and expensive cars owned by his "ministry." Not to mention his \$400,000 annual salary.

That all came crashing down after the "PrimeTime Live" report.

Tilton has been engaged in years of litigation, both as plaintiff and defendant.

In February of this year, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear Tilton's charge that the ABC report had portrayed him in a false light. A lower court judge had thrown out his libel case, ruling that Tilton had not proved the ABC report to be false.

But now he's back on the air. And what's most amazing is that he appears unrepentant for anything that happened in the past. His seriously flawed theology (if

indeed his motives are theologically based) has not changed.

Tilton makes an interesting contrast to Jim Bakker, another televangelist casualty. Bakker was sent to prison for selling his "PTL partners" more time-share space at Heritage USA than he actually could accommodate. While he was in prison, his wife divorced him and Jerry Falwell cannibalized his kingdom.

After hitting bottom, Bakker took time to reflect upon the health-and-wealth theology he preached and taught. He wisely came to the conclusion that he had misled his followers. "I Was Wrong" is the title of his recent autobiography.

In prison, he studied every word of Jesus recorded in the Bible. He concluded that the prosperity gospel is "at best an aberration and at worst 'another gospel' contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Here's what Bakker says: "My previous philosophy of life, out of which my attitudes and actions flowed, was fundamentally flawed. God does not promise that we will all be rich and prosperous, as I once preached. When I really studied the Bible while in prison, it became clear to me that not one man or woman—not even prophets of God—led a life without pain. God does promise that he will never leave us or forsake us, no matter what trial or pain we must go through."

He also says: "As the true impact of Jesus' words regarding money impacted my heart and mind, I became physically nauseated. I was wrong. I was wrong! Wrong in my lifestyle, certainly, but even more fundamentally, wrong in my understanding of the Bible's true message. Not only was I wrong, but I was teaching the opposite of what Jesus had said."

Bakker learned his lesson the hard way, but as a result presents a beautiful portrait of God's redemptive power. His confessional autobiography reminds us of the importance of self-reflection and the strength of humility.

As for learning about theology, who should Americans trust more: the televangelist who unapologetically fought his way back on the air or the televangelist who admits he was wrong?

— Mark Wingfield

EDITORIAL

Prophet, Messiah, Lord

By Carey Newman

"I sometimes get confused. Last night the evening news contained a report about how a group of biblical scholars are using some ancient documents to paint a new picture of Jesus.

According to them, Jesus was nothing other than a traveling philosopher who offered catchy one-liners about how to live in the Greco-Roman world." My friend looked at me and asked, "How does this square with the Gospels and traditional portraits of Jesus?"

The first thing to be said in response to some of the exaggerated claims made by a minority of scholars is that the Gospels still are the primary guide for understanding Jesus. Other ancient documents to which scholars sometimes appeal are either (a) dependent upon the Gospels (and very poor imitations) or (b) hypothetical reconstructions (and really do not exist as a document, except in the minds of these scholars).

The Gospels have stood the test of time and of scrutiny. But what picture of Jesus do they give us? A wandering philosopher? A social quipster? A revolutionary? A magician? No. The Gospels tell us about a prophet.

Jesus prophetically announced that the story of Israel—indeed, the story of the world and every human—had reached the climactic moment in his ministry. Jesus prophetically invited his listeners to become followers through repentance (from their revolutionary zeal) and faith (in the fact that God was working

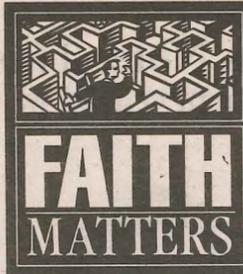
out his purposes through him). Jesus prophetically welcomed those who did respond by offering them forgiveness of their sins (on the basis of his own authority and not through Temple sacrifice). Jesus prophetically challenged those who experienced forgiveness to live as a renewed people (to be pockets of true Israel within Israel). Jesus prophetically summoned some of his followers to be special helpers and associates (particularly the

70 and the 12). Jesus prophetically predicted a catastrophic day of destruction for those who refused to repent and believe, and a day of vindication for those who did.

But Jesus was more than just a prophet; he lived and died as the Messiah. Jesus was living out the intended destiny of Israel. Jesus finally clashed with those who were in power, not because their religion was an outward religion and his of the heart but because he was offering an alternative way to be Israel. Jesus was thus crucified for both his politics and his theology—politics because he promoted a non-violent response to Rome and theology because he was resolutely living out a vocational calling as Messiah.

The Gospels also tell us that Jesus' deeds and words were so provocative that it earned him the accusation of "blasphemer"—the claim of being one with God. He was not only crucified for his prophetic boldness and his messianic deeds; he was crucified for his oneness with God.

I told my friend to sleep well and to follow the Jesus of the Gospels, for they are trustworthy accounts of who Jesus was. *Jesus was prophet, Messiah and Lord.*



CLASSIFIED ADS

Magazine charts Mormons' growth

The Mormon church is a \$30 billion empire whose tenets are less suspect than in the past, says Time magazine. In this week's cover story, "Mormons, Inc." Time states that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a gross income of \$5.9 billion annually, and is growing in America by 4.7 percent per year. "In a country where religious unanimity is ever less important but material achievement remains the earthly manifestation of virtue, their creed may never face rejection again," it says. Next year's Southern Baptist Convention meeting will be in the Mormon Church's headquarters city, Salt Lake City.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of education/outreach, First Baptist Church, Mayfield. Send resumé to: Pastor Bob Swift, 118 West South Street, Mayfield, KY 42066.

FOR SALE: Baby grand piano, \$3,000. Call Greg Harry at Cecilia Baptist Church, (502) 862-4228.

SEEKING: Meta Baptist Church is presently in the process of searching for a full-time minister of youth and music. Send resumé to: Search Committee, Meta Baptist Church, 8807 Meta Highway, Pikeville, KY 41501.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music, 15 to 20 hours per week. Experience will be rewarded. Our church has very talented accompanists. Experienced applicants send resumé to: Personnel Music Minister Search, Lynn Acres Baptist Church, 5007 Southside Dr., Louisville, KY 40214-2298.

SEEKING: Bivocational minister of music and/or youth. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Trinity Baptist Church, 3900 Lafayette Road, Hopkinsville, KY 42240.

SEEKING: Growing church seeks full-time worship leader. Forest Park Baptist Church, Bowling Green, KY 42101. (502) 843-3419; Fax: (502) 843-3434.

SEEKING: Audubon Baptist Church is currently seeking a part-time minister of youth. The church seeks a mature Christian who is committed to youth ministry. Anyone interested should send a resumé to: Audubon Baptist Church, 1046 Hess Lane, Louisville, KY 40217, or call the church office at (502) 635-6750.

SEEKING: Interim director of missions to administer new paradigm for missions in the fast-growing Shelby Association. Twenty hours per week; creative, catalyst, communicative. Send resumé to: Steve Boyd, P.O. Box 56, Simpsonville, KY 40067; (502) 722-5246.

NEEDED: Mothers day out director for two-days-per-week program at Rockford Lane Baptist Church. If interested, or for more information, contact Ron Abrams, pastor, at (502) 447-2591.

AVAILABLE: Experienced moderate leader, director of missions, minister of education, etc. Salary of no importance. Particular interest in assimilating new members, discipleship training/Lifeway materials, special ministry projects used as outreach, lead teams, etc. Bivocational; must be within driving distance of Elizabethtown. Want to talk? Write: Available, P.O. Box 7, Cecilia, KY 42724.

SEEKING: Wonderful opportunity for minister of music and youth at a well-established Southern Baptist church with a large family life center. Qualified persons with experience please send resumé to: P.O. Box 3705, Highway 266, Corydon, KY 42406.

SEEKING: Louisville church seeks full-time children/preschool minister. Experience required; generous salary and benefits. Send resumé to: P.O. Box 1066, Louisville, KY 40222-1066.

SEEKING: Nicholasville Baptist Church is searching for a full-time minister of youth. Send resumé to: Search Committee, Nicholasville Baptist Church, 131 South Main St., Nicholasville, KY 40356.

SEEKING: Part-time music director to lead choir and congregational music, Blackjack Baptist Church. Small salary. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 555, Franklin, KY 42135.

SEEKING: Middle Creek Baptist Church in Hodgenville, Ky., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 3595 Carters Bro. Road, Hodgenville, KY 42748.

FOR SALE: 20 adult choir robes, royal blue, good condition. Call (502) 695-4608 or 695-3771.

EMPLOYMENT: Assemble products and crafts at home. Good weekly income. Free information package; call (800) 583-5019, ext. 265.

SEEKING: FBC, Troy, Mo., located in rapidly growing Lincoln Co., is seeking minister of youth and education. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, 800 Cap Au Gris, Troy, MO 63379. Attn: Youth/Ed. Search Committee.

SEEKING: Preschool teachers. Fern Creek Baptist Child Development Center is currently looking for preschool and parents day out teachers for the 1997-98 school year. Hours are MWF, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. for preschool and TT, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. for parents day out. We offer competitive wages, a friendly environment and other benefits. Please contact Debbie Gorbandt or Linda Barnes at (502) 239-0316.

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SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Mt. Sterling, Ky., is seeking a full-time minister of youth/music. Applicants should send resumé to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 324, Mt. Sterling, KY 40353.

Conference on Cults

Monday, August 25, 1997 • 7:00–9:15 p.m. (EDT)

Georgetown Baptist Church, 207 South Hamilton St., Georgetown

Tuesday, August 26, 1997 • 7:00–9:15 p.m. (EDT)

Cedar Creek Baptist Church, 7709 Bardstown Rd., Louisville

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Ministry looking for a few hundred thousand good men

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Tears form in Dale Schlafer's eyes when he thinks about the possibility of hundreds of thousands of Christian men gathered on the National Mall.

"My heart has been for revival of the church," said Schlafer, a Presbyterian pastor-turned-event organizer. "The church is sick. We need God to change us."

Schlafer is vice president of Promise Keepers' "Stand in the Gap: A Sacred Assembly of Men," an event planned by the evangelical men's ministry for Oct. 4 in Washington.

The six-hour afternoon session will feature a profusion of prayers in which the men gathered will seek forgiveness for the wrongs they've committed against other people and God.

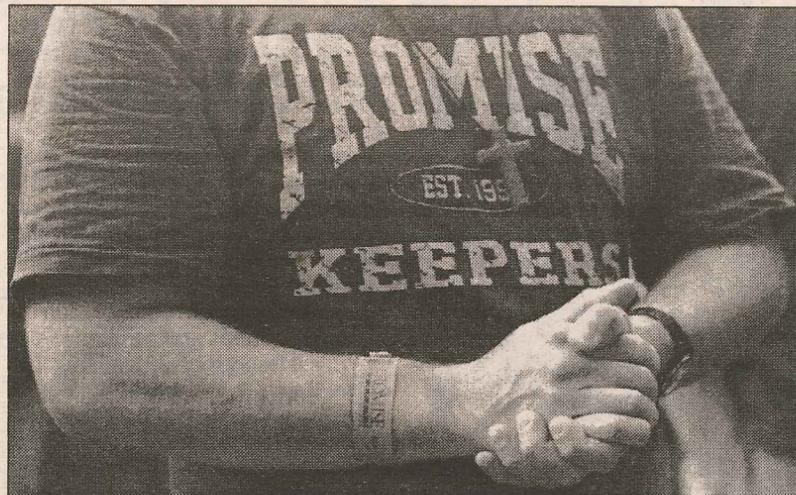
Schlafer explained the church's "sickness" to men gathered at a recent Promise Keepers' regional conference in Washington.

"Four thousand churches close their doors and die every year," he said.

The United States—better known for sending Christian missionaries abroad—today is the "number two missionary-receiving country in the world," he added.

Promise Keepers founder Bill McCartney, addressing the stadium crowd via a Stand in the Gap promotional video, said: "The time has come to tell the truth about our failures and once again offer ourselves to God."

The upcoming "sacred assembly" in Washington promises to draw a cross-section of the evangelical men's movement—from members of the Christian Motorcyclists Association to Native Americans setting up teepees on the stretch of lawn between the U.S. Capitol and



DC TALK Plans by many to go to Washington have hurt stadium rallies attendance, and Promise Keepers' bottom line. (RNS Photo)

the Lincoln Memorial. Atheists have vowed to protest from the sidelines.

But Stand in the Gap also presents some financial challenges for Promise Keepers at a time when the organization is coping with a drop in attendance at some of its 19 regional conferences.

As Schlafer sees it, the Denver-based organization has close to a \$30-million shortfall, when the \$10 million budget for Stand in the Gap is included. Promise Keepers has raised about \$3.7 million for the assembly.

"People think we're a money machine," said Schlafer. "We really aren't. ... We live by revenue from the conferences."

Promise Keepers officials have consistently declined to estimate the number of men they expect to attend Stand in the Gap, but a registration kit for the event estimates that between 500,000 and 1 million will be there.

Attendance at Stand in the Gap will be free, but Promise Keepers charges \$60 to attend a regional conference.

The drop in conference attendance—down by more than a third, as of a couple of weeks ago—has prompted some cost-cutting measures, said Steve Chavis, Promise Keepers' national spokesman. He expects the ministry's spending projections of \$117 million for this year will be reduced by about \$30 million.

Schlafer said a survey of Promise Keepers' constituents indicate 47 percent of those who chose not to attend a conference this year plan to go to Stand in the Gap instead.

Mel Brown, project manager for Stand in the Gap, said it is incorrect to think white men are calling black men to the Mall or vice versa.

"It's God calling," he said. Brown, an African-American, said he feels no pressure to meet Promise Keepers' goal of 300,000 people of color at the event.

However, he admitted he would be disappointed if African-Americans—a great number of whom live in the Washington region—do not show up in substantial numbers.

In addition to their hopes for a

Mission statement

Promise Keepers officials say they hope to achieve the following mission and goals through their Stand in the Gap event Oct. 4 on the National Mall in Washington:

Mission: To gather a diverse multitude of men in the name of Jesus Christ to confess personal and collective sin so that we may present to the Lord godly men on their knees in humility, then on their feet in unity, reconciled and poised for revival and spiritual awakening.

Objectives:

- To humbly call the church to repent to God and each other for our sin of corporate disunity and move toward biblically based racial reconciliation.
- To exhort and assist the church to call Christian men to personal repentance, revival, growth and evangelism.
- To present to the Lord before this nation a diverse and unified group of Christian men to participate in a sacred assembly.
- To motivate, educate and equip local churches to significantly influence their world.
- To encourage and facilitate ongoing relationships among diverse groups of Christian men within the context of the local church.

wide array of U.S. Christians, Promise Keepers officials have invited representatives from 187 countries to attend Stand in the Gap in keeping with their recent focus on expanding their movement internationally.

While the event is designed for men, there are plans to broadcast the assembly via satellite and cable hookups to interested churches across the country so women, children and men unable to attend can still see it.

"This sacred assembly could have not just an impact on the men but could ... impact the church of Jesus Christ," predicted Schlafer.

Barna: Most teens identify with cultural, non-biblical Christianity

Continued from page 1
Christianity," he wrote.

Two-thirds of teens believe in the God described in the Bible, but one-third believe in another notion of God, Barna wrote. Among the responses:

■ 11 percent said God is a "state of higher consciousness."

■ 9 percent called God the "total realization of all personal, human potential."

■ 7 percent said there are many gods, each with its own power and authority.

Barna noted that while most teens refer to themselves as Christians, only 32 percent answered questions about their faith in ways that indicate they've had a "born-again" experience.

"Also, it appears that age 15 is a major time of questioning prior assumptions about core faith elements," Barna wrote.

Even those who commit to Christ earlier re-evaluate that commitment

at age 15, he wrote. "It is one of the last major windows of opportunity we have to influence people with the good news about Christ."

Jewell Nelson, an associate in the KBC Sunday school department, said to achieve better educated and committed teens, parents and churches should start early.

"We don't need to start with youth. We need to start with preschool," she said. "Good age-appropriate Bible teaching in the preschool and children's ministries builds a strong spiritual foundation for youth."

Children ages nine through 12 are especially open to biblical answers to spiritual questions, she said. "These are the ages when concrete thinking lessens and reasoning increases."

"If good teaching begins here, teen years are more secure, though questioning and re-evaluating can be a significant part of faith development and growth."

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Human cloning ban closer.** The House Science Committee approved legislation to permanently ban the use of federal funds for research on human-embryo or human cloning. The measure would make permanent President Clinton's recent executive ban on such use of federal funds.

■ **Episcopalians apologize to homosexuals.** The Episcopal Church apologized publicly to gays and lesbians for their past treatment by the church and approved a three-year theological study of same-sex unions. During the 2.4 million-member church's 10-day triennial General Convention, delegates approved an apology to gays and lesbians "for years of rejection and maltreatment by the church."

■ **Huge fine levied in priest's abuse case.** The Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas was ordered to pay \$119.6 million in damages for covering up for an ex-priest accused of sexually molesting altar boys. The verdict is reportedly the largest cash penalty ever in a priest molestation case. A state District Court jury also urged the church to confess its wrongs in the case.

■ **AMA backs late-term abortion ban.** The nation's most powerful organization of physicians has come out in favor of a federal ban outlawing a specific late-term abortion procedure that has galvanized the abortion debate this year. The American Medical Association's 475-member House of Delegates voted to support a decision by its national board to back congressional efforts to ban what opponents of the procedure call "partial-birth" abortion. The AMA represents 292,000 doctors, about 40 percent of U.S. physicians.

■ **Judge approves New Era agreement.** A bankruptcy judge has approved two agreements that will return about \$61 million to charities and non-profit groups that were victims of the collapse of the Foundation for New Era Philanthropy. U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge Bruce Fox approved agreements that will partially reimburse 150 groups who invested in a New Era double-your-money scheme that turned out to be fraudulent. The groups losing money ranged from small Christian colleges to major metropolitan museums.

KENTUCKY

Kentucky Changers invade Frankfort & Pike County



HARD WORK This was the third summer for Kentucky Changers missions projects. ■ Above left: Students rehab the side of a home. ■ Above right: a teenager carries scaffolding bars. ■ Right: Volunteers place a new roof on a home. (Photos by Katny Bentley and Ray Acree)



FRANKFORT & PIKE COUNTY—Kentucky Changer volunteers recently completed 24 construction jobs during two weeks of missions, worship and fellowship.

About 100 teenagers worked on seven projects in Frankfort June 28-July 5, according to Ken Forman, director of missions for Franklin Baptist Association.

Projects included roof replacement, porch repair, construction of wheelchair ramps and painting.

"Local leadership are realizing that we as Baptists, and youth who care, are willing to put our lives on the line," Forman said. "They were quite impressed that youth would be willing to pay \$140 to come work."

In Pike County, 256 youth and adult supervisors completed 17 work projects July 19-26, said construction coordinator Harold Moore.

This is the third year for Kentucky Changers, and participation was greater than the two past summers, said

John Lott, associate director of Kentucky Baptist Brotherhood.

Kentucky Changers was patterned after the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission's World Changers program and was designed to be an alternative for those who couldn't afford to travel abroad, Lott said. Kentucky Changers is a program of Kentucky Brotherhood.

Spiritual growth is emphasized as much as the construction projects. Youth have a morning prayer time, lunch time devotion and an evening worship service, Moore said.

Volunteers at Pike County got a surprise. Kentucky Gov. Paul Patton visited an evening assembly to welcome them to Pike County and to share his testimony, Moore said.

Forman said the impact of Kentucky Changers extends beyond just the houses that were rehabilitated. "We're still going to see the benefit and the impact of this as time goes on."

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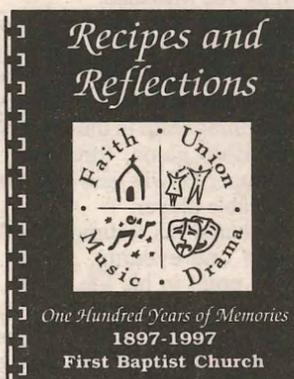
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Baptist convention to host Kentucky State Fair exhibit

LOUISVILLE—Kentucky Baptists are taking Noah's Ark to the Kentucky State Fair this month.

An exhibit sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention will feature a stylized replica of the world's best-known boat in honor of the victims of the 1997 floods and the disaster relief volunteers who helped them. The exhibit theme will be "Today is Yesterday's Promise," said Monty Carter, KBC communications director.

During the February and March

floods, Kentucky Baptist disaster relief units served more than 163,000 meals through relief stations across the state.

The KBC exhibit will be located in the East Exhibit Hall.

Exhibit features include photos of disaster relief efforts, rainbow face painting for children, free rainbow sun visors for children, free puzzle and cartoon handouts for children and a drawing for a Louisville Stoneware Noah's Ark item.

Churches say vacation Bible school participation increased

Continued from page 1

emphasis in the material," he said. "There seemed to be more opportunities to sow the word of God.

"Our teachers had a lot of fun with it, too. They had individual class cookouts, where they took kids out to roast wieners, and one had a hay ride."

First Baptist included a hands-on missions emphasis during the week, with children bringing pennies and other coins to fill a large urn. The effort generated \$192 for Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children.

Oakland Avenue Baptist Church in Ashland used a different approach. Instead of counting its coin offerings for a class competition, it weighed them. The tally of nearly \$1,000 was sent to a Southern Baptist missionary couple from Ashland now serving in Uganda.

Phil Duncan, minister of music, education and youth, said the record offering typified VBS excitement. Enrollment and attendance were up nearly 10 percent and about 350

turned out for closing-night ceremonies.

Ashland Avenue used a unique schedule, extending from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Duncan said teachers asked for the longer session three years ago to allow more time for Bible teaching.

Besides attracting plenty of volunteer help, people already are asking about next year's theme, he said.

Minister of Education Sue Huston saw similar enthusiasm at First Baptist Church of Paris. The church reinstated its kick-off parade, invited an African-American congregation to participate and sponsored a free, mid-week spaghetti supper and open house.

It proved so exciting that one boy who is a star baseball player in Bourbon County skipped a game to attend VBS, Huston said. Three children made professions of faith during the week, and four more have since then.

"I think the curriculum has been really good the last couple years," she added. "We liked (last year's) Olympic theme, but we're not glued to a particular one."

West Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville used a daily Western-theme newsletter to keep participants abreast of activities. Director Cathy Mattingly said that was well received, as well as a kickoff "pony party" with free rides. The week concluded with the "Wild West" musical, which will be repeated in the fall after children's choir resumes, she said.

In Middletown, contemporary Christian music and the cowboy theme made Lakewood Baptist Church's VBS the best ever, said Pastor Lee Warf.

"We hope to see more of this kind of material," he said. "With the different corrals, people seemed to form relationships and bond more. The worship got kids fired up. The songs were good."

Even in the inner city, the Wild West was a major attraction.

Southside Baptist Church of Covington obtained two horses for its week-ending carnival, allowing children to take rides around the parking lot while organizers dished out meals from a wagon.

"Our inner city kids who were never exposed to horses or anything like that loved it," said Pastor Harold Pike. "The kids and each teacher took a ride; we took pictures and made a big deal out of it."

BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ R.T. Kendall of Westminster Chapel in London will be the featured speaker for an evangelism rally in Greenup Baptist Association Aug. 14. Kendall will speak at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. at Oakland Avenue Baptist Church in Catlettsburg.

■ Georgetown College recently added three new staff members. Jake Bell, former principal in Lexington and former supervisor of basketball officials for the NAIA Mid-South Conference, was hired as athletics director. Mike Calhoun is the new director of leadership development, responsible for fundraising for athletics and leadership programs. Clair Hunter, former basketball coach and athletics director at Midway College, was hired as assistant athletics director.



"In the midst of two pastor's illnesses and deaths, we have learned to accept God's will. We have grown through these difficulties."

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Football missions team teaches sacking & salvation

By Mike Creswell
SBC International Mission Board

SHOW AND TELL Larry Morris (holding football) and Brice Butler work with players attending a clinic on American-style football held in France. International Mission Board missionary Rod Boatwright has been coaching football teams in the city of Nancy in northeastern France as a way to build relationships and share the gospel. (BP photo by Mike Creswell)

VITTEL, France (BP)—When Scott Case picked up a football, 38 French football players watched closely to see what he did with it.

After all, Case played for the Dallas Cowboys in the Super Bowl two years ago—the man knows football.

But during a five-day football clinic in the scenic northeastern French city of VitteL, the brawny players saw another side of Case—a Southern Baptist who takes his Christian faith as seriously as football. And by the time the last whistle blew at week's end, seven of the French players had committed their

lives to Christ.

"Many others were touched and will probably make decisions later," said Rod Boatwright, a missionary who's starting a new church nearby in the outskirts of a larger city, Nancy.

Boatwright is one of three dozen missionaries the Southern Baptist International Mission Board has assigned to France. He has been coaching American-style football as a platform for witnessing and contacting many French people.

Case, who played 10 years as starting strong safety for the Atlanta Falcons before joining the Cowboys, was one of eight volunteers leading the workshop.

Hard-hitting practice scrimmages with lots of coaching suggestions filled the days; the volunteers used evenings and off-hours for Christian witnessing.

The French players listened closely to every word: Clearly these Americans knew about football.

Volunteer Tom Pridemore, for example, played eight years with the Atlanta Falcons. These days he runs a utility construction company in Cumming, Ga. He still holds a record—the longest interception return in Falcon history, a 102-yard run-back of a ball thrown by Joe Montana.

Larry Morris is a 13-year National Football League veteran who played with the Los Angeles Rams, Chicago Bears and Atlanta Falcons. He played for the winning team in the 1963 NFL championship game, forerunner of today's Super Bowl—and was voted most valuable player.

Case shared his testimony before the group one evening, saying he reached a point in his life where his athletic ability could no longer serve as a crutch. He told of kneeling on a muddy dirt road in the rain and giving control of his life to Christ. The husky players listened in attention as Boatwright translated the story into French.

Getting a Super Bowl ring was a lifelong dream, Case told the men. "But when you die, you can't take it with you. Having Christ is bigger than the Super Bowl," he said.

"The whole purpose of this is to see people come to know the Lord," said volunteer coach Lee Kaltenbach, who was captain of Clemson University's football team in the 1960s and coached high school football for 25 years. One hulking player wept softly

as Kaltenbach told him solutions to life's problems could be found in Jesus Christ. It was the first time the man had heard such a message.

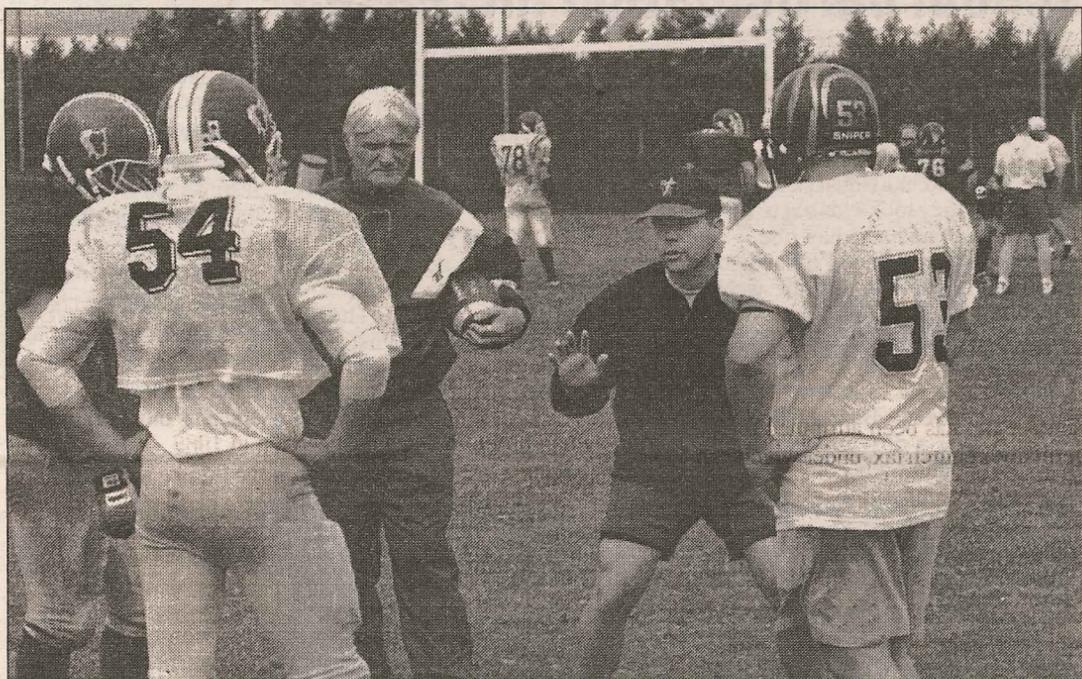
"These French athletes had the impression the NFL was surrounded with drugs, steroids, etc. We did not fit the image they had of us. Ultimately some became open and inquired about the gospel," Pridemore said.

Mike Darby, a former tight end for Georgia Tech and now a banker, said he was shocked when he pulled out his Bible on a train and other passengers sitting near him got up and moved away. Darby, who speaks some French, said, "They seem to keep religion separate from the rest of their life. Football and religion don't mix. Their family and religion don't mix."

Boatwright said he was elated by the football camp's results and attributed its success to prayer. His wife, Donna, was featured in Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union publications as missionary of the week in April. They received about 500 letters from GAs, Acteens, WMU groups and churches.

"I responded to each one and asked specifically for prayer for this camp. I think this prayer support from those little GA girls and others who wrote to me was crucial in the camp being a success," she said.

Boatwright's dream is to get four young men experienced in football to serve as short-term missionaries in France. "I could place them with different football teams in northern France tomorrow," he said. The object, he said, would be to win people to Christ and start new churches, using football as a way to get a hearing for the gospel.



Expert: Russian provinces will likely curb religious freedoms

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A religious freedom expert says religious expression in Russia is likely to be further limited, despite President Boris Yeltsin's recent veto of proposed legislation favoring "traditional" Russian religions over other faiths.

Lawrence Uzzell, Moscow representative of the London-based Keston Institute, which monitors religious life in the former Soviet Union, said the long-term threat to religious pluralism in Russia comes not from the Yeltsin-led central government, but from the vast republic's many regional jurisdictions.

At a briefing, Uzzell noted that one-fourth of Russia's provincial governments already have instituted laws that to some degree restrict religious freedom. In every case, said Uzzell, the restrictions are largely designed to protect the Russian Orthodox Church from other groups viewed as foreign imports—including evangelical Protestant churches, Roman Catholicism, Mormonism and a variety of sects.

The Russian Orthodox Church claims 80 million followers, more than half of Russia's population of about 150 million. Uzzell said even non-believing Russians tend to view the church as synonymous with Russian culture, prompting them to defend it from real or perceived threats.

Uzzell said national legislation restricting the operation of non-traditional religions is unlikely to be approved because of Yeltsin's personal inclination toward religious freedom, Russian constitutional safeguards and Moscow's current need to appease the United States and other foreign economic benefactors.

Evangelicals, cults gaining appeal in Europe

By Steven Heilbronner
Religion News Service

GRAZ, Austria (RNS)—The activities of evangelical Christian groups and "cults" were on the minds of traditional European Christians assembled last month to forge a united front on religious issues in the post-Cold War era.

"New religious movements," as they are called, are gaining steam across Europe and are considered a threat to established churches.

Germany's recent decision to put the Church of Scientology under surveillance—claiming it is a business and not a religion—is just one example of how Europeans are grappling with the growing appeal of non-traditional groups, some of which are led by messianic figures or embrace doomsday scenarios.

"Sects are increasingly competing with Orthodoxy in Bulgaria," said Dimitrina Merdianowa, a professor of religion at Sofia University. "The only way out of this trend is the revitalization of the Orthodox Church to address modern societal concerns."

Many of the religious leaders attending the Second European Ecumenical Assembly linked Pentecostals with such groups as Jehovah's

Witnesses in a category they call "Christian movements." Further, they distinguish those from "cults," which they consider far more insidious and often having nothing to do with true religion.

Most of the leaders at the assembly also said they believe a positive relationship is possible with non-traditional Christians as long as they accept the Trinity—the orthodox Christian belief that God is comprised of the Father, Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit.

"They don't have to cross every 't' and dot every 'i,' but there is a body of belief that we have to embrace," said George Carey, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury.

Still, many leaders are clearly anxious about the rising appeal of evangelicals in Europe and the diminishing power of the Roman Catholic Church and mainline Protestantism.

"The challenge of these new religious movements is (to strengthen) our own renewal ... more than in the past," Carey said.

Merdianowa delivered a more ominous warning, saying the growing appeal of evangelical groups and "cults" could "shatter the (traditional) churches themselves."

While Carey noted the "Christian

landscape of Europe has been crisscrossed by missionaries for centuries," most European countries are struggling with how they can protect their religious heritage and remain faithful to democratic freedoms.

The growing appeal of evangelical and non-traditional Christian groups are an annoyance to traditional European religious leaders. But they are far more concerned about what they consider a more pernicious threat to their churches—cults that celebrate individualism, mysticism or are organized around a single charismatic leader.

No event shocked and awakened traditional European religious leaders to the presence of such groups more than the mass suicides in 1994 and 1995 of 69 followers of the Swiss Order of the Solar Temple in Switzerland and Canada.

In Germany, the government has opened an investigation into the activities of the Church of Scientology, claiming it is not a legitimate church but a cult bent on gaining power and wealth.

"Freedom of religion is not a license for doing anything," said Paul Zulehner, a theologian at Vienna University. "That's why the German parliament is investigating the Scientologists. They have every right to."

Scientology still sect, says French official

PARIS (RNS)—A top French government official says the Church of Scientology will continue to be regarded as a sect, not a religion, despite a court ruling that referred to the controversial group as a religion.

Under French law, religions are non-profit groups and broadly tax-exempt, but sects are not.

On July 28, an appeals court ruled that "the Church of Scientology can rightfully claim to be a religion." The opinion was part of a judgment that acquitted nine people and reduced sentences for six others who had been convicted of manslaughter and fraud.

Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement of the Socialist-led government, however, said Wednesday he was "the only one with the authority to recognize religious associations" and he would not recognize Scientology as such, Reuters reported.

"We have never had the idea of recognizing the Church of Scientology as a religious association," Chevènement said. The public prosecutor in Lyon, where the trial of the Scientologists took place, had appealed the court ruling, accusing the judges of exceeding their powers.

"Did the Lyon appeals court have the power to define a religion?" Chevènement asked. "I don't see the point. Because that has no legal value, it has no judicial consequences."

WORLD VIEW

■ **Beijing dismisses report.** The Chinese government dismissed as "irresponsible" a State Department report that Beijing persecuted Christians and members of other religious faiths. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Tang Guoqiang said "a few Western countries, including the United States, lack the necessary understanding about China's religious situation," Associated Press reported.

■ **Christian agency leads relief.** The Christian relief organization Mercy Corps International has taken the lead in mobilizing global help for famine-stricken North Korea. The group played a pivotal role in the Clinton administration's recent decision to provide 100,000 metric tons of corn to North Korea, more than doubling its previous commitment of emergency food aid. The food shortage reportedly has intensified in recent months with growing death among children.

■ **Yeltsin defends veto.** Russian President Boris Yeltsin has defended his veto of legislation that would have restricted the operations of "non-traditional" religions, saying a democracy "cannot encroach upon the interests of minorities for whatever seemingly noble motives." In what was interpreted as a nod toward supporters of the bill, he said he understood the Russian Orthodox Church's concerns and agreed

the church should be protected from "radical sects."

■ **Cardinal opposes child tax.** Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala, head of the Roman Catholic Church in Uganda, has promised he will fight a proposed "tax on children" which the Ugandan government is reportedly considering as a means of discouraging parents from having more than four children. Wamala said the idea of slowing the nation's population growth was being imposed on Uganda by outsiders from developed countries.

■ **European churches in flood.** Second Baptist Church of Wrocław, Poland, is among Baptist churches damaged by recent floods in Europe. Leaders fear the church's heating system is completely ruined, making the building useless in fall and winter. About 10 Baptist churches in the Czech Republic have been damaged.

■ **Trial memberships considered.** In an effort to combat falling membership, the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church is drawing up proposals for "trial memberships" as a means of encouraging people to become involved in the denomination. Much of the decline in membership has been attributed to Germany's church tax, under which members are taxed by the government to support the church.

Journeymen embark on 2-year task to make eternal difference

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Two years can seem like an eternity, especially for young people recently graduated from college. Often careers are begun, weddings are planned and momentous decisions are made during this time.

For 82 young adults commissioned July 20 as the first class of journeymen under the renamed Southern Baptist International Mission Board, the next two years will be a time when they seek to make a difference for eternity.

They come from colleges and universities across the United States. Some have seminary degrees and some are considering missionary service. Others are unsure of their future.

They will work as English teachers, language students, youth ministers, evangelists, church planters and in a variety of other positions. But they all share a desire to serve God and spread the gospel around the world.

All soon will be away from their natural environment and making the transition to another culture. Many will serve in unstable and newly opened areas. Tim Berry of Royal, Ark., decided to forego seminary to serve in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; he and five others will join six journeymen already working in the nation.

Twenty-three journeymen will serve in the "Last Frontier," among people groups with little or no access to the gospel.

To prepare for their assignments, journeymen spend four weeks at the IMB's Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va. They attend classes on spiritual formation and cross-cultural ministry, while learning more about their specific assignment and region. They develop a network of new friends who can identify with their unique concerns.

Nearly 3,000 young adults have participated in the journeyman program since its inception in 1965.

The addition of this class increases the number of journeymen currently on the field to more than 200.

A great conference

By Robert Dunston

Our 1997 pastor/staff and family conference was held July 21-23. Everyone who attended received a blessing from the speakers and musicians and from the opportunity to fellowship with fellow ministers.

Billy Compton, pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, preached sermons designed to encourage and challenge those in ministry and their families. His words and genuine, caring spirit refreshed all participants. God used Compton to minister to his fellow ministers.

John Lepper, director of Kentucky Baptist Convention's family ministry department, led several workshops helping ministers and their families understand their roles and cope with the stress of ministry. His wife, Connie, helped him lead participants to share their experiences in ministry and family life and to discover ways to serve God better by being what he created them to be.

Mike Robinson, assistant professor of philosophy at Cumberland College, provided an excellent overview of the 1998 mid-winter Bible study, which focuses on Jesus' parables unique to the Gos-

pel of Luke. His expositions brought home the truth and power of Jesus' teachings for us today.

Sherry Clark, choral music and speech/drama teacher at Walton-Verona High School in Walton, did a wonderful job of inspiring the participants through music. Sherry and her husband, Bill, both graduates of Cumberland College, used instrumental and vocal music to lift our hearts in worship and to draw us together as a fellowship of Christians.

We all need times when our spirits can be refreshed and recharged, and our conference was one of those times. The conference brought old friends together and helped people make new friends. Families also enjoyed the opportunity to be together away from the typical stresses of daily life.

Next year's pastor/staff and family conference is scheduled for July 20-22. As conference leaders are confirmed, you will read about it in this column. In the meantime, mark these dates on your calendar and join us for a time of renewal and blessing.

Robert Dunston is chairman of the religion department at Cumberland College, 6000 College Station Dr., Williamsburg, Ky. 40769

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



Why Do People Fail to Prepare a Will?

"My net worth is too small."

"I'm too young to think about a will."

"I can't afford it."

"I don't want to think about dying."

These are just some of the reasons people give for failing to draw up a will. However, failing to make estate plans may cause unnecessary frustrations, delays and expense for the

loved ones of those who do not plan properly.

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BOOKS

Louisville pastor's book offers practical ethics for ministers

LOUISVILLE—For all their theological training, ministers often emerge from seminaries unprepared for the practical aspects of their job, says a Kentucky Baptist pastor who has written a book on ministerial ethics.

Ron Sisk, pastor of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, said his book, "Surviving Ministry," is designed to help pastors and others develop ministerial ethics based on Scripture and Baptist principles.

"For most ministers, the real issues have to do with, 'How do I take care of my family life and still be in the ministry?' 'How do I deal ethically when I'm negotiating with a prospective church?' 'How do I work out my own leadership of a congregation?' he said.

In one half of the book, where he addresses personal ethics, Sisk said he is particularly satisfied with his writing on balancing professional and family time. "I felt good about giving ministers permission to take adequate time for themselves and their families."

One topic in the professional half of the book addresses matters of authority. "We have a strong authoritarian movement among many pastors today," he said. "Biblically it's difficult to find much justification."

Sisk said ministers must earn authority through servanthood, following Christ's model. "It is something which is given by others, not something which is a right of office," he said. "The model of Jesus is, 'The one who would be first among you should be servant of all.'"

Sisk said some seminaries are getting better at helping students with the practical issues related to their future jobs, but "it's pretty erratic."

"Translating academics into practical usefulness has never been easy and never will be," he said. "It's the difference between teaching a surgeon how to do an appendectomy and the surgeon confronted with his first inflamed appendix. Sooner or later, you have to do it yourself."

Surviving Ministry. Ron Sisk. Smyth & Helwys Publishing Co., 1997. 180 pages. \$14.95. ♦♦♦♦ (Out of five)

If Ron Sisk could have picked the title for this book, I doubt he would have chosen this one. At first glance, the title gives the impression Sisk seeks to counsel ministers who are facing career-threatening situations. Ministers in trouble will benefit from his reflections on ministry, but the book is aimed at a much broader audience.

Using the case study method, Sisk looks at the ethical dimensions of the private and public spheres of ministerial life and practice. Six "critical issue areas of ministry" are addressed: vocation, spirituality, stewardship, authority, shepherding and prophecy. Though those topics have been addressed by others, I was constantly surprised and challenged by the direction Sisk took. For example, in the chapter on stewardship, the issue of money and tithing is not addressed. Rather, Sisk focuses on how a minister balances the demands of family and church, the need for personal, physical and emotional well-being, and the need to negotiate limits on the amount of time spent doing the job of ministry.

In the chapter on spirituality, Sisk addresses the thorny issues of discerning and adjusting to appropriate public constraints on personal activities, as well as how to deal with conflicts in matters of principle. In every chapter he does a good job of weaving biblical material with contemporary application.

I would recommend this book for a wide variety of audiences: persons strugg-

ling to discern whether God is calling them into vocational ministry; church staff members who have grown stale; deacons, church personnel committees or others who have some role in working with ministerial staff; seminary students; and, yes, ministers in trouble. *Jim Holladay*

A Faith to Meet our Fears. Charles Bugg. Peake Road, 1997. 80 pages. \$10.95. ♦♦♦♦

After reading this collection of sermons, there is no question Charles Bugg is a skilled preacher.

Each sermon is introduced by a brief Scripture passage. Bugg moves quickly to focus on the Scripture and its application. As you read the sermons you hear the voice of one who is convinced of the power of the biblical narrative to address the real needs of people today. The text is not an afterthought but is the central thought. In his use of engaging personal illustrations you realize Bugg has lived the sermon already.

Bugg preaches both to the person in the pew as well

as to other preachers. Frequently, he speaks directly to the preacher in himself, and thus to the preachers listening in on his sermons. Each of Bugg's messages is marked by simplicity. Yet, the messages hold profound truth which for some reason has often escaped the reader. From forgiveness, to change, to divorce, to perfection, to wonder, Bugg addresses the human experience and the need for faith.

Charles Bugg is also a teacher. As an appendix, Bugg includes a chapter titled

"Preaching that matters." In the closing pages, Bugg summarizes his approach to preaching, defines biblical preaching and shares his method of interpretation. In a brief number of pages, Bugg presents what is bound to be a whole semester of a preaching class. Just like his sermons, the preaching lecture is simple, but in reality the lesson can take a lifetime to implement. *Wayne Hager*

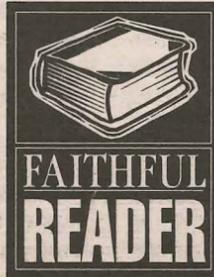
Baker Handbook of Single Adult Ministry. Edited by Douglas Fagerstrom. Baker Books, 1997. 360 pages. \$22.99 ♦♦♦♦

This book is a collected work of 35 authors who belong to the Network of Single Adult Leaders. As such, they are well acquainted with the subject matter, as well as the challenges, of single adult ministry. The 45 articles are divided into seven categories exploring the world of single adult ministry. Subjects include community service, retreats, prayer, dating, marriage, volunteers, etc.

For the most part, the authors' practical approaches feel more at home in upper-medium to large size churches. This is not to say the articles do not spark thought for any situation, but those in a small church situation will almost always need to make adjustments. One article, thankfully, addresses single adult ministry in the small church.

As with any collected work, the articles are not of even quality. It is good to witness the variety of perspectives in doing the ministry, but at times you long for the consistency of one author from article to article.

The handbook is a good place to begin as a resource for single adult ministry. As a reference book, it should refer you to other resources for each of the subject matters. As hard as it might try, no handbook can be the only source for single adult ministry. *Wayne Hager*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Midlane Park Baptist Church in Louisville, and Jim Holladay, pastor of Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville. Holladay and Hager welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: docholladay@juno.com or jwhager@juno.com

How much does a person need?

"Dad, if you had as much money as Bill Gates, would we live in a bigger house?"

With that, my 13-year-old, Glen, presented me the opportunity (a) to bear witness to him of my stewardship convictions and (b) to test the integrity of those convictions.

The Russian novelist Tolstoy wrote a story titled "How Much Land Does A Man Need?"

It was the story of a simple peasant who had lived on someone else's land until he heard an estate was going to be divided and sold to the peasants. Excited, he went to extraordinary lengths to gain 20 acres for himself.

Soon he discovered owning 20 acres was not as satisfying as he expected; he wanted more. So he sold the 20 acres and purchased 200 acres in another place. The same pangs of dissatisfaction set in. He discovered another opportunity where the chief of a region would sell him all the land he could walk around in one day with the condition he had to return where he started by sundown.

At sunrise he set out to encircle all the land possible. With so much at stake he did not stop to eat, drink

or rest. Anxious to acquire as much as possible he failed to measure the time and distance.

As the sun began to set he realized how far away he was from the starting point. Fear gripped him. Because of his greed, he might lose it all. As fast as he could he ran, and as the last beam of sun disappeared he staggered back to the starting point. He had acquired an immense tract of land, but having overtaxed his heart, he fell to the ground and died on the spot.

The story ends with the question of the title, "How much land does a man need?" In this case, only a plot six feet long, three feet wide and four

feet deep—enough to bury him. Glen, the answer to your question is, I hope not. Even though it would be tempting, I have learned seeking to satisfy my deepest hungers with possessions does not work.

*Ecclesiastes 5:10-11
James 1:9-11*

Barry Allen is president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, 10605 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40223.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

Y'all come, you hear?

Imagine opening up your house and family to friends and strangers to tour, look in the closets and ask lots of questions. The closest most of us get to such an invasion is when our house goes on the market. Not a fun time.

Not so for Child Care Days. Every year at Glen Dale and Spring Meadows children's homes, the front, back, closet, kitchen, bathroom and even barn doors are opened for everyone to walk through and ask as many questions as they want. It is a chance to meet our kids, staff, dogs, goats and anyone or anything else that will stand still. If you missed the open houses at Glen Dale and Spring Meadows, just give us a call, and we'll set up a tour just for you.

We want you to visit, get to know us better and find ways to become involved in our exciting ministries.

Yes, exciting. There is nothing more exciting than watching children begin to love, forgive, trust, have faith in God, build self-confidence, make better grades, become involved in new activities and smile. Our programs are holistic.

We address the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of our young people and families. When children leave our care, they have the opportunity to carry with them three vital, life-changing, irrevocable gifts: salvation, education and positive self-esteem. Exciting? If such

doesn't move your heart, well—as they say—we won't go there.

A wonderful advantage in doing missions through KBHC is that you don't have to go too far to participate. Some worthy mission trips take you out of state and out of the country. With us, you won't have to get a visa, (we don't even take Visa), get shots, suffer jet lag or road numbness.

For details on the KBHC facility nearest you, call (800) 456-1386 and we'll help arrange a tour for you, your church, mission group, Sunday school class—whatever.

And, if you really want to, you can even look in the closets.

Bill Smithwick president of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, 10801 Shelbyville Rd., Middletown, Ky. 40243. Call (800) 456-1386. KBHC's Internet address is: <http://www.iglou.com/kbhc/>

HOMES FOR CHILDREN



Bill Smithwick

RESOURCES

ANNUITY

Is your church a good employer?

By Don Spencer

One element of a church being a responsible employer is that it properly structures its minister's financial support. Churches often look at the total cost of a "lump-sum package" and ask the minister to "divide the package up." Several problems exist with this approach:

■ **False perception.** Members get an inaccurate understanding of true compensation. Most ministers receiving "lump-sum" pay packages are getting 25 percent to 35 percent less real pay than church members think.

■ **False expectation.** It is unrealistic for a church to assume ministers can correctly structure financial support.

■ **Increased risk.** Unless a financial support plan includes adequate life and disability insurance, the minister, the minister's family and the church are running a greater financial risk.

Rather than having a lump sum package, a church should structure the financial support plan as a responsible employer. This can be done in four steps:

■ **Set adequate amounts to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses incurred to "do the job."** Ministry related expenses should be reimbursed on an accountable basis.

■ **Determine a policy about protection coverages to be included in the plan.** Include:

■ Adequate contributions toward retirement.

■ A social security equivalent. Ministers are self-employed for Social Security purposes, but a church can provide an amount equal to the employer portion of Social Security to help a minister pay the higher self-employment rate.

■ Amounts to provide adequate insurance.

■ **Set compensation appropriate for the church and community.** Make sure this is suitable for the minister's experience and training and for the congregation's expectations. If the minister is full-time, make sure real compensation (salary and housing) is adequate to meet basic family needs.

■ **Total the amounts and re-evaluate as needed.** Does your church structure its minister's financial support or provide a lump sum amount? If you're not sure, find out. Your KBC annuity department can provide tools to help structure financial support.

Don Spencer is a certified financial planner and directs the Kentucky Baptist Convention's annuity department.



Attorney: Church lawsuits getting creative

By Lynne Jones
SBC North American Mission Board

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—Lawsuits against churches are growing in number and getting more creative, according to an attorney, who said churches should take preventive measures to protect themselves.

"Damage lawsuits against churches, with creative new tort causes of action, have risen dramatically," said Randy Singer, an attorney from Norfolk, Va.

Cases of church discipline and abuse were among those Singer reviewed during North American Missions Week conference last month at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

"Disciplined church members may retaliate with defamation suits, claiming damage to their reputations," Sing-

er said.

But churches should not be intimidated from properly implementing church discipline as long as the congregation has a fair process in place, Singer said. "The process should be supported by appropriate scriptural references and should give the accused church member an opportunity to be heard before an impartial fact-finding person or committee."

Singer added the process should be discreet; communication about church discipline should be straightforward; and it should be done in a church setting.

In matters of abuse, Singer said, "Lawsuits against pastors and churches by abuse victims have dramatically increased in recent years," he said.

To protect itself from liability, a church should take necessary preven-

tative measures. "Perform reasonable background investigations before hiring staff members or child-care workers and make sure you're systematic about it," Singer said. "Obtain favorable references; require an interview, including questions about any prior criminal record; perform a criminal background check; and develop a detailed application." Churches also should keep an updated file of "ineligible persons," he said.

In addition, churches should develop a "two deep" method to prevent one adult from being alone with children, Singer said.

"Churches should also develop policies to safeguard against counseling abuses, such as limits on time of day and/or place of counseling and installing windows on office doors," Singer said.

"Damage lawsuits against churches, with creative new tort causes of action, have risen dramatically."

Attorney Randy Singer

Plan has Ten Commandments covered in schools

By Marv Knox
Texas Baptist Standard

PAMPA, Texas (ABP)—A Texas Baptist layman is working to get the Ten Commandments into schools, one student at a time.

William Rasmussen wants to distribute book covers with the Ten Commandments printed on them.

"God has put on our hearts to help our kids out," said Rasmussen. "We're tired of the same problems in the public schools that have been going on for quite a while. The best way to establish moral values in our children is to expose them to the Ten Commandments."

Constitutional restrictions prevent public schools from posting the commandments, he acknowledged. But that doesn't mean students can't display them on the covers of their books.

Lyndon Glaesman, Rasmussen's pastor, said the book covers could multiply the number of times students see the Decalogue.

If the commandments could be posted, they'd appear, at most, one time per room, Glaesman said. But with book covers, "they could be carried 25 to 30 times in the classrooms," he said.

"It's a great idea. I believe this is in the mind of God."

Rasmussen said he hopes to get the project going nationally and has talked with several national contacts.

He's been interviewed by American Family Radio and the USA Radio Network, he said. He's also received support from Concerned Women of America and the American Family Association, he said.

Other national radio and television programs have expressed interest, and

sample book covers have been presented to denominational leaders and Christian musical artists, he added.

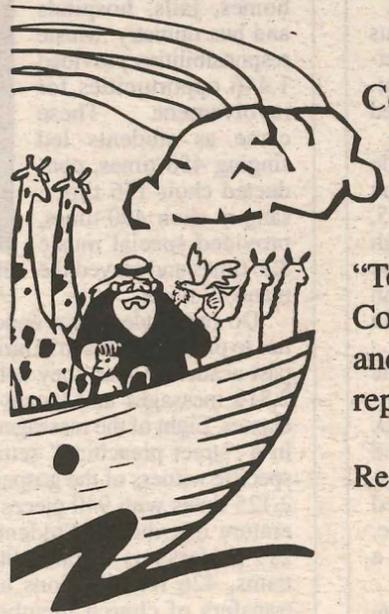
Rasmussen's family has printed 2,000 prototype covers. Plans call for local congregations to print the covers for their students, he said, unless a sponsor underwrites mass publication.

Schools won't be involved in production and distribution, and covers will be circulated and promoted solely by students. Consequently, the covers should be protected by the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech, said Brent Walker, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee. "I don't foresee any constitutional problems," Walker said.

"Our schools are not religion-free zones," Rasmussen noted. "The book covers would be presented in such a way that the kids can either accept or reject the idea."

Constitutional restrictions prevent public schools from posting the Ten Commandments, but that doesn't mean students can't display them on the covers of their books.

Noah's Ark... at the Kentucky State Fair?



Come visit your Kentucky Baptist exhibit in the east wing at the State Fair Aug. 14-24!

"Today is Yesterday's Promise," the Kentucky Baptist Convention's booth theme, honors '97 flood victims and disaster relief volunteers. Featured are an Ark replica and special activities for children.

Register to win a Louisville Stoneware Noah's Ark plate.

See you in Louisville!

PEOPLE

PRAYER PARTNERS

Pray for these specific needs related to Kentucky Baptist partnerships with Russia and New England:

■ Kentucky construction/evangelism teams in Khimki, Tikhvin, Oryol and Udomlya, Russia, this month.

■ Russian interpreter Olya Polyutova.

■ Ministry to internationals at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge.

■ Mark Bryant, as he leads church planting efforts in Maine.

■ Iglesia Bautista Casa de Oracion in Worcester, Mass., as the Hispanic church seeks to raise \$600,000 to purchase land and build a building. The 160-member congregation has met in rented facilities for 10 years.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Ann Tatum

■ CADIZ—South Union Church will celebrate its centennial anniversary Aug. 31. An all-day program is planned. A time capsule will be buried during the afternoon service.

■ LOUISVILLE—Louisville Baptist Deaf Church has moved from Bethlehem Church to Deer Park Church, 1733 Bardstown Rd. Sunday school is at 9:30 a.m., worship 10:45 and mid-week service at 6:30 p.m. Call (502) 459-3454v/tdd, for more information. Tim Bender is pastor.

■ MADISONVILLE—First Church called Kenneth Townsend as pastor July 20. He previously was pastor at Calvary Church in Greenwood, Ind.

He will begin his new ministry Sept. 1.

■ MC DANIELS—Rough River Church celebrated its 10th anniversary Aug. 3. George Tichenor is pastor.

■ MARION—Mexico Church will celebrate its 75th anniversary Aug. 10. Former pastor Mike Littrell will be the guest speaker. The Victory Way Quartet will perform following the fellowship luncheon. For more information, call (502) 965-4059. Rodney Groff is pastor.

■ RICHMOND—Unity Church celebrated its 14th anniversary July 26.

■ RUSSELL—Chris Johnson resigned as pastor at First Church to

become leadership development consultant in the discipleship training department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville. He began his new ministry Aug. 1.

■ WADDY—Pigeon Fork Church called Cindy Nordan as music director. Nordan began her new ministry Aug. 3. Doris Riddle, receptionist/administrative coordinator at Kentucky WMU, resigned as music director July 27. Riddle was honored with a church-wide luncheon following the worship service.

■ WILLIAMSBURG—Pleasant Hill Church will celebrate its annual homecoming Aug. 17. Speakers will include Pastor Burley McFarland, Janus Jones and Larry Day. An all-day event is planned.

Jellico Creek Church is now worshipping in its newly remodeled sanctuary. Jimmy McKiddy is pastor.

Pastor reaches settlement with guilty plea

WILMINGTON, Del. (RNS)—An African-American United Methodist pastor in Delaware has pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct in exchange for the dropping of more serious charges against him in a March case of alleged police brutality.

Lawrence Livingston, pastor of Ezion-Mount Carmel United Methodist Church in Wilmington, was charged last March with resisting a police officer, aggravated menacing and disregarding both a red light and a stop sign. He claimed the arresting white officer beat him, maced him and pulled his weapon during the traffic stop.

Black Methodists for Church Renewal, a caucus in the United Methodist Church, was among groups that protested what they considered excessive force by police in the incident.

But Livingston decided to enter a guilty plea of disorderly conduct on July 18. He also was fined \$100, reported United Methodist News Service.

"It was important to me not to plead guilty to the four charges," Livingston said. "Disorderly conduct is a much lesser charge."

He believes he has agreed to "a good compromise" and said he now

understands Delaware law better.

"Once an officer says you are under arrest, a person has to comply even if he or she thinks his or her life is in danger," Livingston said.

Livingston's supporters were disappointed with the outcome of the situation, but they said they hoped he can move on with his four-year ministry at the Wilmington church and his life.

"I feel victorious because I know God is not through with us yet," said Livingston. "We are not through talking about police violence and building solidarity in the community."

Nuns learning to use Internet

MUNSON TOWNSHIP, Ohio (RNS)—Sister Mary St. Mark Florence isn't getting much sleep these days, thanks to her late-night surfing of the Internet.

Florence is one of a number of Sisters of Notre Dame who are double-clicking big time this summer, taking computer courses and going on-line.

About 250 sisters from Florida, North Carolina, Virginia and Ohio are taking basic and intermediate computer courses at the Notre Dame Education Association in Munson Township, Ohio, the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported.

At least one computer—with Internet and e-mail capability—is to be placed in every Sisters of Notre Dame convent.

A survey of the order's 472 sisters in four states showed few convents had computers, and those that did used obsolete equipment.

The sisters trained here are designated "power users" at each of their convents, and they help other sisters use the computer.

Sister Mary Brendon Zajac, assistant superintendent for curriculum for the Catholic Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio, said the use of e-mail alone will result in a huge cost savings for the order.

From the mail bag

From time to time I like to share letters we have received from friends. I hope you will be inspired and encouraged as we are.

This letter recently came from a 1938 Oneida graduate who lives in Ohio:

"I have read and re-read your May letter and the accompanying newsletter, which stimulated memories and events and the benefits I derived from the Oneida Baptist Institute experience.

"While at OBI (during the school years of 1934 through 1938) I had no insight into what was happening. In retrospect, I had no awareness that I was learning the work ethic and moral principals. I stayed on campus the summers of 1935, 1936 and 1937 doing the many work projects which the newsletter mentioned—including two of us carrying milk from the farm twice a day. I firmly endorse your present day work program."

These remarks were made in reference to a publication titled, "The work program: A time-honored tradition." It told how students are taught the importance of work and learn dignity, pride and skills.

True, during our early days the daily chores performed by our students were a matter of necessity. We simply had to have their help raising the gardens and doing other farm chores.

I cannot honestly say these chores are as critical today, but they are certainly needed. We still raise all our pork and beef. Every year, fresh vegetables are raised in our gardens. But more importantly, our students are taught the dignity of work. There are taught to do the job assigned to them, to do the job to the best of their ability and to get along with others. From the gardens to the dining hall, boys and girls from grades six through

12 have daily chores to perform.

This letter came recently from a lady who came with some other friends from Florida to do a week of volunteer work:

"I had meant to get this to you last week but just did not sit down and do it. Words could never express how very much we enjoyed being at Oneida. I am convinced that the people at Oneida ministered to us far more than we helped out.

"Ms. Eunice will never be the same. She would have stayed. You should have heard her when we spoke to the church about our trip. In fact none of us will ever be the same. We love all of you and Oneida is even closer to our hearts than before.

"We do pray that you will let us come back again. When we were getting ready to leave we said to Ms. Eunice we were going home, she informed us that she was home."

Volunteers continue to provide abundant blessings for us. Just 10 years ago volunteers numbered only 50 to 75, and came primarily from June through August. This year the number will be nearly 700. The first group came in March, and the last group is scheduled to come in October.

And this letter recently came in response to the Barkley Moore Offering:

"I am sending a modest check for your BMO. Although I only met Dr. Moore once and visited the OBI campus a few times, I sensed the presence of the Lord there and was very impressed with the great good that is done there in his name. Dr. Moore was a powerful influence and yet a humble man."

W.F. "Bud" Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, P.O. Box 67, Oneida, Ky. 40972

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Ministry preparation with practical emphasis

At Clear Creek every student completes a Christian service assignment each semester. These include staff positions and volunteer work in churches or community agencies. Each week, students submit a report to the assistant academic dean. The 1996-97 compilation indicates the impact our students have in the tri-state area.

Students made 3,126 visits with 2,199 of them in the home. Visitation also included nursing homes, jails, hospitals and bus ministry. Music responsibilities provided 1,446 opportunities for involvement. These came as students led singing 458 times, conducted choir 156 times, sang in choir 490 times, provided special music 326 times and played the piano 17 times.

Do our students get opportunities to preach and teach? During the past academic year, they delivered 2,318 messages and taught 1,670 classes. Eight of the messages came in a "street preaching" setting. A specific witness of the gospel came 2,125 times with 940 pieces of literature distributed. Students saw 219 professions of faith, 90 baptisms, 426 rededications and 66 transfers of church membership. Students traveled 436,544 miles to

fulfill ministry assignments.

A student's second year includes an internship with closer guidance from an experienced minister. Thirty-two students were assigned mentors. A fall mentor's workshop brought these leaders to campus.

Churches in need of a pastor or staff member contact our Christian service office. This office mailed

241 resumes. Most of these were in response to the search for a pastor. Within two months of graduation, 87.5 percent of our May graduates were placed in a ministry assignment; almost half of those also entered graduate study at a Southern Baptist seminary. One May graduate was appointed a missionary with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

Clear Creek exists to provide educational preparation for adults called of God into Christian service. One way we fulfill this mission is to provide a quality Bible-based education with an emphasis on practical Christian service. Yearly assessment statistics demonstrate Clear Creek students receive many opportunities for practical service.

Bill Whittaker is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, Pineville, Ky. 40977

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Church started growing with a sermon and tract

By Russell Dilday
Arkansas Baptist Newsjournal

HOPEWELL, Ark. (BP)—The story of Hopewell Baptist Church's growth through evangelism is simple: It began with a sermon and a tract.

The rural Arkansas congregation has recorded 35 baptisms since June 1996 and 35 other people have joined the church by letter.

Hopewell's love for evangelism is newly found. Pastor Sam Dunham said it began "about a year ago with a sermon on personal evangelism. I held up the blue 'Eternal Life' tract and told them, 'If you have the love of Jesus in your heart, you can use this tract to win people to him.'"

Dunham had grown to respect the tract, produced by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, when he was a pastor in Arizona. He recalled his friend, Nathan Pillow, evangelism

director for the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, had used the piece with success.

"Nathan led an old Hispanic man to the Lord and gave the man the tract," Dunham said during the sermon. "A few days later, he saw Nathan again and asked him for another copy. He had worn it out. He had led several people to the Lord and 11 followed him in baptism."

Following that sermon, Dunham said, several of the 30 church members in attendance asked for copies of the "Eternal Life" tract. He gave them all the church had in stock. They asked for more. The church had to reorder. In the past year, members have handed out more than 1,600 copies.

"It was our newest Christians" who got most involved, the pastor explained, "still walking in their first love."

Dunham, encouraged by mem-

bers' eagerness to witness, started a "lay evangelism school" with 10 members. "I wanted to give them a doctrinal basis. We started with Southern Baptists' Baptist Faith and Message statement of beliefs.

"You can teach people to win souls, but without a doctrinal base, they fizzle out." Eighteen members now have been through the training.

Pastor Dunham has remained focused on involving others in the church's growth. Greeting people at the front door of the church prior to a recent Sunday service, he told a visitor, "We need you and we've got a job for you in there."

Increased outreach has resulted in increased numbers and an increased need for space. The congregation has begun preparing an area for a multi-purpose center for classes and youth ministry.

In outreach efforts for youth,

Wednesday night activities regularly draw as many as 100 "Bridge Crossers," as youth are called. The adults provide "Bridge Builders" leadership.

Youth director Richard Brisco said Bridge Builders emphasize "sincerity and dependability—and trying to get the kids to Jesus Christ."

"There have been a lot of defeats" during witnessing efforts, acknowledged member Kent Decker, who also works with youth. "But there have been a lot of victories, too."

He described witnessing to a boy who had come one Wednesday night to pick up his sister from church. "He was sitting on the back pew and we witnessed to him. I asked him what would happen if he drove off from the church and was killed in a car wreck.

"He said, 'I'd go straight to hell,'" Decker said. "The next Sunday he gave it all up to the Lord. It was one of the greatest things I've ever seen."

Following that sermon, several church members asked for copies of the "Eternal Life" tract. In the past year, members have handed out more than 1,600 copies.

Faith leaders getting involved in labor issues

GEORGETOWN, Del. (RNS)—Priest Jim Lewis was a mystery when he arrived here three years ago to minister to Latino poultry workers. Company management heard he was in bed with the unions, and union members didn't know what to make of a charismatic, gray-haired cleric who talked of higher wages and safer plants.

"I said, 'Who are you really working for, the AFL or the CIA?'" recalled John Clough, now on the staff of Local 27 of the United Food and Commercial Workers union. "He said, 'The Episcopal diocese.'"

Not since Cesar Chavez and the farm worker movement in the 1960s have so many religious leaders embraced the rights of the poorest workers. Consider:

■ Protestant, Catholic and Jewish leaders have joined a United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO campaign to call for fair wages and better working conditions for California's strawberry workers.

■ Many religious leaders are part of coalitions working to eliminate sweat shops, child labor and poultry industry abuses.

■ In Detroit, Roman Catholic Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and retired United Methodist Bishop Jesse DeWitt were part of a coalition of religious leaders supporting striking newspaper workers.

■ The National Baptist Convention and the United Food and Commercial Workers are backing a discrimination lawsuit brought by black employees against Publix Super Markets.

■ Leaders of 18 denominations have formed the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice "to forge a new relationship between the religious community and labor organizations."

It's a bird. It's a plane. No, it's a flying nun

By Pamela Long
Religion News Service

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (RNS)—Dark figures threaten her from behind desert rocks. Blam, blam. She shoots, and bullets ricochet over the goons' heads as they flee.

Corrupt bureaucrats have engineered the death of her leader. She draws her sword—whoosh—and a severed head rolls on the tile floor.

Hired gunmen hold a friend of hers hostage until—hayyyiiiiiah—her flying kick scatters the mobsters like bowling pins.

Whenever Areala encounters an enemy or is threatened by sinister forces, she whips out a gun—or her rosary. She's the Warrior Nun, a comic book heroine her creator says is based on a group of New York City nuns who learned martial arts to defend themselves against violence.

The Warrior Nun series bristles with violence and sexual imagery. Creator Ben Dunn said the comics are designed to illustrate a "strong woman passionate about her faith."

But some Catholics find the imagery offensive and an insult to the men and women who have devoted their lives to serving the church.

The collection is produced by Dunn's Antarctic Press, and it competes in a growing comic book industry that has moved away from Donald Duck and the Archies. Today's comics are violent, often sadistic and sexually explicit, and bear names such as Vampirella and Spawn.

Part of this trend toward violent comic books includes a subgenre in which artists thrust religious figures and symbols into settings rife with criminals and demonic forces—and sometimes they're in league with the bad guys.

Preacher, for example, is a series about Jesse Custer, a small-town pastor possessed by an entity called Genesis, the offspring of an angel and a demon. Preacher's job is to find and confront God, who has renounced his sovereignty and left the helm of creation. Preacher is clearly an evil character.



But the Warrior Nun, said Dunn, was created as an antidote to negative religious comic characters.

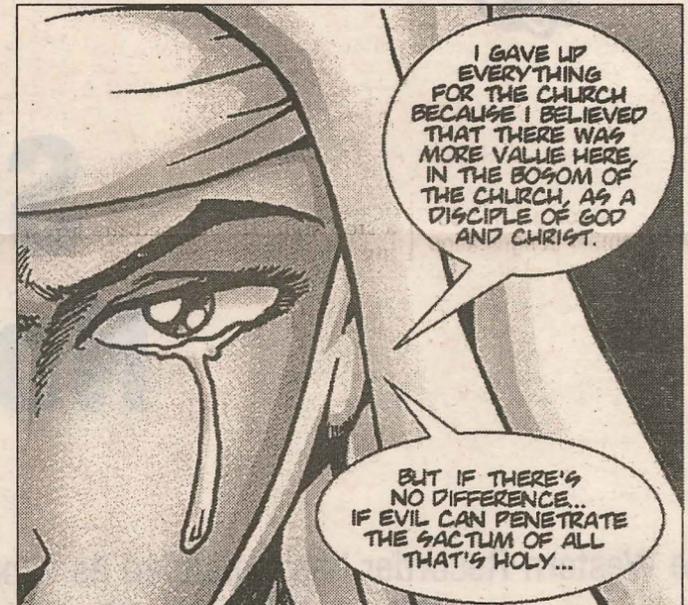
"I'm trying to portray a world in which nuns have had to become soldiers in defense of their faith," said Dunn in an interview from his San Antonio, Texas, studio. The books and their related action figures are for sale in specialty stores.

The concept of a pistol-packing nun may at first seem humorous and perhaps even awe-inspiring—a strong woman willing to fight for her faith. But some Catholics are disturbed by Dunn's imagery.

Some of Dunn's nuns sport traditional religious garb: floor-sweeping black or white gowns with matching veils.

But there's also a considerable amount of body-hugging leather, and the skirts are frequently split up to the waist, revealing leather boots and red underwear.

"Well, it's certainly not what nuns in my experience have worn. It's tasteless," said Sister Mary Louise Yeend, a Daughter of Charity and head of



pastoral care at a Mobile, Ala., hospital. "It's part of what's called 'adult entertainment,' but I question the character of an adult that would seek this out."

Sister Yeend said she's disturbed by the look of hatred on the faces of characters. "It's a determined look, but there's a lot of anger there."

Kathleen Riley, a religion teacher at a Mobile Catholic high school, said she's concerned about the image of nuns projected by the comic series, especially when fewer young women are choosing religious vocations.

"When you think about women like Mother Teresa that dedicate their whole life to the church, and you see this ... it's sad for those women ... to be portrayed that way," said Riley.

Dunn, the Warrior Nun's creator, attended Catholic schools through college and said he's disappointed that other Catholics find his work offensive. His aim, he said, was to portray the nuns he admired in school in a positive light: "They are powerful and beautiful, and dedicated to their cause, just like anybody else in life."

But Sister Yeend wonders about the spiritual state of the man who created the series: "We really have to pray for this guy."

NUN TOO PLEASED The Warrior Nun comic series has drawn the raised eyebrows of some Catholics. (RNS photo)



Six lines. No waiting.

The Western Recorder has expanded its capacity to receive church newspapers via modem on Monday mornings.

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