



# WESTERN RECORDER

October 28, 1997  
Vol. 171, No. 42

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## New deacon structure focuses on gifts, not authority

By Joyce Sweeney Martin  
Staff Writer

Deacon boards and bored deacons would be things of the past if more churches switched to a spiritual gifts-based model for deacon ministry, according to several Kentucky pastors and deacons.

Ministry would replace administration and fulfillment would replace frustration. And the model would be biblical, say those who already have put such a program in place.

In the New Testament, deacons were care-givers whose ministry "was rooted in identifying the deacons' unique spiritual gifts and then using those gifts to meet specific needs within the church," says Vernon Cole, director of the church growth division of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. They were not a "board of deacon administrators," nor did they try to meet needs for which they were not gifted, he says.

They were servants, Cole says. Today's deacons can recover that servanthood role through gift-based deacon ministry, he says.

In gift-based deacon ministry, a church identifies its most pressing pastoral and ministry needs. Deacons use a spiritual gifts inventory to determine their spiritual gifts. Then based on their gifts, deacons form deacon ministry teams to meet those needs.

The plan puts the "right people in the right places for the right reasons," says Pastor Alan Witham of Hyland Baptist Church in Henderson.

Since Hyland's 12 deacons switched from the family ministry plan in 1993 to a gift-based ministry, Witham has seen significant changes in their attitudes as well as in the quality of ministry they perform.

"It has enabled them to serve in areas of ministry where they feel comfortable and gifted" rather than trying to meet every need, he says. Hyland's deacons serve the 830-member congregation through three ministry teams: hospital and crisis intervention, shut-ins and inactive members, visitors and new member follow-up.

"The deacons now have a real sense of fulfillment," Witham says.

Burlington Baptist Church's Pastor Terry Wilder has seen similar results since his church moved from the deacon family ministry plan a year ago.

Burlington uses seven ministry teams to meet the needs of the 715-member congregation: crisis follow-up, crisis intervention, evangelism/

outreach, hospital visitation, inactive members, new member follow-up and widows/shut-ins. Each team enlists church members to serve with the deacons as partners in ministry.

Now, rather than checking in on church members at random times, Burlington's 16 deacons "address needs when people need ministry the most," Wilder says.

The result, he says, has been "a good spirit and a sense of fulfillment" among the deacons—and "good ministry."

Deacon chair Jim Markesberry agrees.

"We deacons are ministering in fields we chose, not those assigned to us," he says. "When there is a need, we know who to call."

The role of deacon at Burlington Baptist is changing, Markesberry says. It's becoming "spiritual leadership and ministry."

■ Related stories, pages 8, 9

## What is a Deacon?

## 'Take 2 sermons and call me in the morning'

RALEIGH-DURHAM, N.C. (RNS) —Attending religious services regularly has the power to boost the immune system and lower levels of a bad blood protein in people over age 65, Duke University researchers have found.

"Those who go to church or synagogue regularly are physically healthier, mentally healthier and they have healthier immune systems," said Harold Koenig, a Duke University psychiatrist and a lead author of the study.

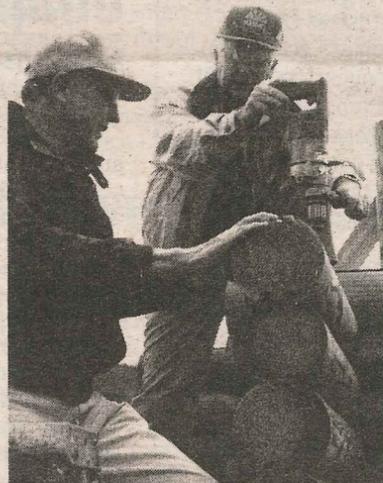
The researchers said that drawing, measuring and testing the blood levels of study participants for the presence of an undesirable immune system protein called interleukin-6, helped them determine the benefits of worship on the health of older adults, the Associated Press reported.

"This is the first study that I know that tried to look at the pathways to translate religiosity to medical outcome," said Marcia Ory, chief of social science research at the National Institute of Aging in Bethesda, Md.

Health benefits were most evident in participants who attended religious services at least twice a week.

Researchers said the positive results linked to worship remained even when they accounted for such factors as age, chronic illnesses, the ability to perform routine tasks and depression.

Study subjects who didn't follow the same worship regime didn't benefit from the positive results.



**LOG RAISING** Almost 200 volunteers from across the state traveled to Pulaski County Oct. 17 and 18 to build a log cabin for Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. *n Left: U.S. Representative Hal Rogers (right) and former KBHC President Eldridge Taylor drill into the logs. n Right: Barbara and Donnie Jett of Paducah (left) assist Gary Givan, pastor of Oak Hill Baptist Church in Sonora. The cabin will serve as the lodge for KBHC's wilderness camping treatment program. (KBHC Photos by Dannah Prather)*

## Innovation urged at multi-housing conference

By Suzanne Darland  
State Correspondent

CAMPBELLSVILLE—Churches of the future will look more like New Testament house congregations than mega-churches, a consultant told those attending a recent multi-housing missions conference.

Children's groups in a trailer park, parenting classes by an apartment complex pool and Bible studies in a high-rise's laundry room are examples of multi-housing assemblies, said Franklin Beam, a consultant with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Beam addressed a conference at Campbellsville University earlier this month, co-sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention. He recounted his own experiences leading apartment and trailer park ministries in Miami, Memphis and Texas and said the key to successfully reaching unchurched

people is to be caring and sensitive. "People perceive the church as being judgmental," he said. "Unless we give the perception of comfort and love, they can't hear the gospel."

Churches must focus on building relationships with residents and alleviating their fears about "the church down the road that just wants their money," he said.

For this reason, churches wanting to reach residents of apartment complexes and manufactured housing communities should listen for what residents want and need before offering a complete slate of activities, Beam noted. Residents might prefer exercise classes or after-school tutoring instead of parenting classes, he said.

In one Houston apartment complex ministry Beam oversees, gang members are becoming Christians because they see that church people genuinely care about them.

Instead of taking a traditional survey in an apartment complex, Beam said he prefers getting a resident's name and address with the answer to one question: "What would you change in your neighborhood?"

Beam works with management to solve problems mentioned, and residents and management alike are more likely to respond to such caring, he said.

By the year 2000, 50 percent of Americans will live in multi-housing communities, said Dottie Williamson, multi-housing ministries consultant for the South Carolina Baptist Convention. "Since the Christian community ministers to 4 percent of those who live in multi-family housing and to 40 percent to 50 percent of those who live in single-family housing, there's lots to be done."

Williamson told conference participants that youth groups which take

□ See *Bowling Green* ..., page 3

# BAPTISTS

## Poll: Less than a third of Baptists back Disney boycott

By Bob Allen and Greg Warner  
Associated Baptist Press

JACKSON, Miss. (ABP)—Less than a third of Baptists—including Southern Baptists—agree with the Southern Baptist Convention's boycott of the Disney Co., according to a recent survey.

Of those Baptists who support the boycott, about half (48.8 percent) have avoided buying Disney products, the survey found.

Researchers interviewed 610 randomly-selected adults representing a variety of Baptist groups and theological viewpoints.

The survey is one of the broadest studies yet to gauge reaction to the Disney boycott. Conducted by Southern Research Group of Jackson, Miss., for Associated Baptist Press, the telephone survey interviewed Baptists in the 14-state Southeastern region of the United States, where most of the 16 million Southern Baptists live.

The Disney boycott, approved by messengers attending the Southern Baptist Convention last June, is intended to pressure Disney to reverse policies that critics say benefit homo-

sexuals and detract from the company's traditional pro-family image. The boycott resolution, which passed overwhelmingly, urged Baptists to "refrain from patronizing" movies, theme parks and merchandise outlets from Disney and more than 200 subsidiaries.

Support for the boycott was weak in almost all groups surveyed.

Among those Baptists who said the Southern Baptist Convention best represents their point of view, 14.3 percent said they agree with the boycott and 15.8 percent strongly agree. But 26.7 percent said they disagreed with the boycott and 28.2 percent said they strongly disagreed.

Respondents who said their point of view is best represented by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate group, opposed the boycott even more often, with 81 percent against and 8 percent in favor.

The study also assessed support for the boycott according to theological positions, with more conservative respondents showing more support.

Only those Baptists who described themselves as "fundamentalists" voiced more support than opposition

to the boycott—45 percent to 43 percent, with 7 percent not expressing an opinion.

Among self-described "conservatives," 50 percent disagreed and 37 percent supported the boycott.

Among "moderates," 82 percent said they opposed the boycott, while 10 percent were for it. Those who described themselves as "liberal" opposed the boycott, 83 percent against and 5 percent for.

In an unscientific call-in poll sponsored by USA Weekend magazine this summer, an unusually high 107,000 readers who responded split nearly down the middle on the boycott. Just over half (50.5 percent) said they oppose the boycott, while 49.5 percent said they were in favor of boycotting Disney.

The SBC resolution that launched the boycott accuses Disney of "increasingly promoting immoral ideologies." Among offenses criticized by Southern Baptist leaders are a policy offering health-insurance benefits to the domestic partners of homosexual employees, allowing the continuation of "Gay Days" at theme parks and the distribution of R-rated movies through

Disney subsidiaries.

Also targeted is the Disney-owned ABC network, which introduced television's first lesbian leading character in an April airing of the sitcom "Ellen."

The Southern Baptist Convention joined the boycott, initiated in 1995 by Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, in June. Others who have joined the boycott movement include the 1.3 million-member Assemblies of God, the Prison Fellowship's Charles Colson, Concerned Women for America and James Dobson of Focus on the Family.

Disney stock dropped nearly 10 percent in the weeks immediately following the SBC boycott, to \$77.0625 a share. By Oct. 13, however, the price had rebounded to \$84.625—75 cents below a 52-week high set May 12.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission called the survey "a joke."

"My mail's running 20 to 1" in favor of the boycott, he said.

(With additional reporting from Religion News Service)

### BAPTIST BITS

■ **Harold Graves dead at 85.** Harold Graves, former president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., died Oct. 21 after a prolonged battle with heart difficulties. Graves served as president of the seminary for a quarter century, from 1952 until retirement in 1977. He guided construction of the campus in Mill Valley, moving the seminary from a single building in Berkeley, Calif. Graves previously served as pastor of Hempridge and Buffalo Lick Baptist churches in Kentucky.

■ **Southeastern adds more housing.** Construction is set to begin by mid-November on two seminary housing projects following action taken by Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's board of trustees Oct. 14. Trustees finalized plans for construction of nearly 200 seminary housing units to be built within about a two-mile radius of the seminary's Wake Forest, N.C., campus. The new housing units are scheduled to be completed and ready for lease by fall 1998.

■ **Golden Gate to offer Internet degree.** Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary could become one of the first schools in the nation to offer a

master of theology degree via the Internet under plans approved by seminary trustees Oct. 14. Pending approval by the seminary's accrediting agencies, the master of theology on the Internet will begin as a three-year pilot program in the fall of 1998. Designed to be completed in two to four years, the degree program will consist of courses totalling 28 semester hours, a thesis and weekly on-line dialogues among students and faculty on selected seminar topics.

■ **School seeks to generate 'Midwesterner.'** Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees dealt with recommendations at their fall meeting aimed at accomplishing the administration's goal of developing students with qualities which prepare them for service in the Great Plains/Midwest region and beyond. Trustees also learned of the development of an extension teaching site in Wichita, Kan., which will use interactive video and conference calling.

■ **Canadian Baptist foundation formed.** Several Canadian Baptist bodies have united to form the Cooperative Baptist Foundation of Canada, a new agency to assist in building a financial platform to support Baptist work in Canada.



"We're moshing to Zion—beautiful, beautiful Zion ..."

## CBF forms council to set chaplain endorsing policies

By Bob Allen  
Associated Baptist Press

ATLANTA (ABP)—The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship began a process to endorse chaplains for industry and the armed forces and launched networks to build influence among Hispanic and Asian communities at a meeting of the group's Coordinating Council Oct. 16-18.

The council also voted to advance \$50,000 to the CBF-affiliated Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va., and heard that last year the CBF spent more than \$500,000 over receipts.

The Fellowship appointed a "council on endorsement" to establish and administer policies and procedures for the endorsement and nurture of chaplains, counselors and other ministers in specialized settings.

Most agencies that employ chaplains require they be endorsed by a denomination or other official religious body.

Staff member Gary Baldrige said 85 people have contacted the Atlanta-based CBF about endorsement since the general assembly voted in June to become a commissioning body.

In other business, the council's networking ministry team approved part-time director positions for Asian and Hispanic Fellowship networks. Yoo J. Yoon, pastor of Glory Korean Baptist Church in Dallas, will direct the Asian network. Dan Rivera, retired president of Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary in San Antonio, Texas, was named director of the Hispanic network.

The financial figures for the 1996-97 CBF fiscal year showed the group spent about \$14 million while receipts provided \$12.8 million and special reserve earnings and other sources

provided another \$700,000. The \$500,000 shortfall was charged against CBF reserves.

Council members heard CBF gifts through the first quarter of 1997-98 were above the same period a year ago about 7 percent. Projected for the year, however, the total would not be enough to meet this year's \$14.3 million budget.

The \$50,000 advance to Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond was made because a cut in the Fellowship's budget last year did not allow Richmond administrators enough time to raise alternate support, said Ed Vick, budget committee chairman.

In other business, the Coordinating Council:

■ Approved a one-year employment extension for Keith Parks, global missions coordinator. Policies require that employment be reviewed annually for staff members age 70 and older. Parks, turned 70 Oct. 23.

■ Heard a challenge from Vestal to increase gifts for famine relief in North Korea.

■ Began its budget-development process for 1998-99. The finance committee will use a "zero-based" process in developing the budget proposal, said Vick.

In his report to the council, Vestal said he would ask committees planning upcoming general assemblies to adopt themes for the next three years on spirituality, community building and global missions.

Vestal described the request as "kind of a three-year plan that gives us direction and helps us rally our resources and our thinking in a direction that I think will be helpful."

Next year's general assembly is scheduled June 25-27 in Houston.

(With additional reporting by Baptist Press)

## Campbellsville classes help ease pain of losing jobs

By Stan McKinney  
Central Kentucky News-Journal

Bonnie Stanbery and Rita Underwood now look back on Dec. 19, 1996, as the day their lives changed for the better.

Both worked at Fruit of the Loom until that day, when their jobs were eliminated.

"It was a blessing getting laid off at Fruit of the Loom," Underwood said. "It's been a blessing."

Stanbery and Underwood took advantage of programs for displaced workers and returned to school. Both are enrolled at Campbellsville University.

Recently, they plus Debbie Nelson, Sherry Foley and Kim Bailey talked to about 50 employees who lost their jobs at Fruit of the Loom and are considering returning to school.

"I thought there wasn't anything other than Fruit of the Loom," Nelson said, "I thought we had to have the money. Going back to school worked out wonderfully."

"It was like a dream come true," Stanbery said. "I got to go to school. When the opportunity came, I took it."

Stanbery said she was concerned at first about returning to school after several years absence from a classroom. But the teachers have been "exceptionally helpful" and so have her fellow students.

"You are not too old to go to school," Stanbery said. "If you want to do it, you can make it."

Kim Bailey's situation was some-

what different. While his wife was in the hospital in January 1996, Bailey left her to go on company business for Ingersoll-Rand in Mississippi. Four days later, his job was eliminated.

"I had no advance warning," Bailey said. "I walked around with my bottom lip dragging on the ground for several months. I enjoyed unemployment. When it ran out, I knew I had to do something."

That "something" turned out to be returning to school.

Bailey said he saw an advertisement in the Central Kentucky News-Journal about classes at Campbellsville University and opportunities for displaced workers. He hadn't lost a job at Fruit of the Loom, but he still qualified for the program.

"There was a lot of apprehension about whether I could fit in, if I could do the work or if I could make the grade," Bailey said.

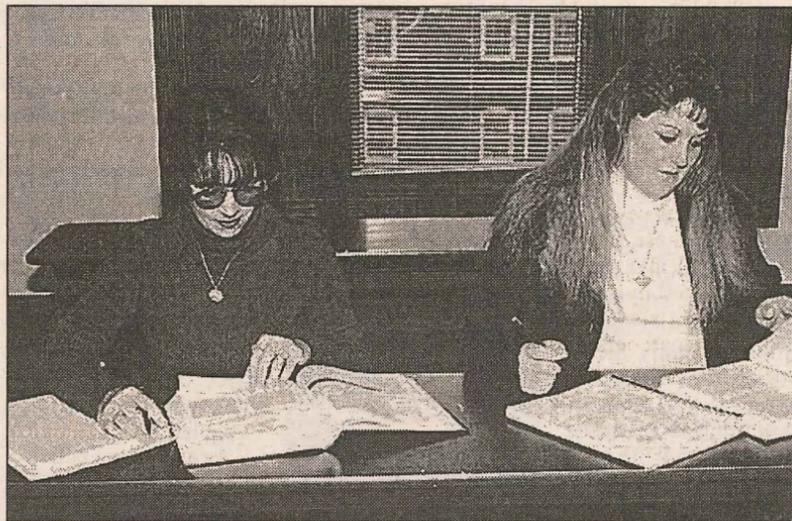
An eight-hour day at a factory is tougher, Bailey said.

"There has been a lot that has really made me feel good," Bailey said. "I really enjoy going to school."

Bailey said he initially resisted the idea of going back into a classroom.

"But I couldn't pass up the opportunity when someone was going to give me \$18,000 to \$20,000 for two years," Bailey said. "There are no guarantees of a job waiting for you, but going to school enriches your life. It's been a wonderful opportunity."

Added Foley: "I didn't really like (high) school and really didn't want to go back. ... I feel like I have a life



**HITTING THE BOOKS** Rita Underwood (left) and Bonnie Stanbery study for one of their classes at Campbellsville University. About 100 displaced workers are currently enrolled in Campbellsville. (Central Kentucky News-Journal photo by Stan McKinney)

now. I'm happier than I have ever been."

Displaced workers who have returned to school often study together.

"We all encourage each other and pat each other on the back," Foley said. "All of the students accept us as one of them. The teachers are great."

Age and experience, Bailey said, are two of the most important qualifications anyone can bring with them to school.

"I look at this like a job," Bailey said. "I don't get paid, but I don't have to spend eight hours a day doing it either."

Going back to school is "not like

setting sleeves" because you're making something for yourself that you get to keep, Stanbery said.

"You go home feeling good about yourself."

Money to return to school is available through two programs.

One is for those who lose their jobs through no fault of their own and need training to obtain work in the area.

Also, the Trade Adjustment Act provides money to train or educate people who lost their jobs due to foreign imports or jobs being moved out of the country.

(Reprinted with permission from the Central Kentucky News-Journal)

### BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ **Campbellsville** University will sponsor a speaking tour by Russian author and historian Ludmilla Selezneva Oct. 28-13. Cities in which she will be speaking include: Lebanon, Lexington, St. Catharine, Danville, Bowling Green, Frankfort and Louisville. For more information, call (502) 789-5211.

■ **Larry Lindsey**, a Moscow coordinator for the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership with Russian Baptists, has had successful surgery on his collapsed lung and is recovering in Paducah. Lindsey and his wife, Joy, hope to return to Moscow in a couple months.

## Prolific ministry tells inactives they're wanted

By Joyce Sweeney Martin  
Staff Writer

HENDERSON—When Lillie Powell agreed to be outreach director for her Sunday school class at Hyland Baptist Church in October 1996, she thought all she'd need to do was send a few cards and make some phone calls to class members. Instead, her cards and calls totaled 2,881 last year.

Powell did focus on class members for a few months, but "something just kept pressing on me that there's more I needed to be doing," she said.

So she talked with her pastor, Alan Witham.

"I told him that the Lord was leaning on my heart to try to get inactive people back in church," she said.

Witham was thrilled.

With worship attendance running about one-third of church membership, there were plenty of church drop-outs to be reached, he said.

Powell was thrilled, too. Because of severe arthritis and chronic heart problems, she often is unable to leave her home. And even though she lives with constant pain, she said she knew God still had something for her to do.

"I could sit up and be on the phone and I could pick up my pen and write something special" to church members who need to "get back in the family," the 66-year-old woman said.

Within a few days, Powell's ministry was underway. The church provided her a list of inactive members and postage. She called and followed

up with postcards.

As word spread, members started telling about specific needs of people who had dropped out of church or who were shut-in.

Powell began a list of those people and their specific needs.

It wasn't long before Powell was averaging 80 to 90 cards and calls each week.

And it wasn't long until inactive members began showing up at church.

One man whom Powell called and invited to the church's 1997 Easter program not only came, but weeks later rededicated his life to Christ and returned to active church life.

When Powell tried to reach one young man by phone, she reached his wife—who was not a church member—instead. The young mother said she and her husband could not come to church because their 3-year-old baby was hospitalized with serious heart problems.

Shortly thereafter, when the baby was transferred to a Louisville hospital for surgery, Pastor Witham went to visit the family.

Upon returning to Henderson, the family came to church. The father immediately rededicated his life to Christ; the mother joined the church at a later time. Today she teaches a Sunday school class, Powell said.

"It's really made a difference in our church," Witham said. "Lillie has a real concern for people and she has reached several inactive members who no one else has been able to."



**IN TOUCH** Lillie Powell's cards and calls last year to help Hyland Baptist Church with outreach totaled 2,881.

While several inactive members have returned to church, there are many more on her list who will need long-term care, Powell said.

For example, one man whom she has been writing for almost a year has made no overt response.

"I've almost run out of something to write him," she said.

So recently she tried humor. "I don't know who is the most stubborn—you or me. I keep writing and you keep ignoring. Why don't you concede and make my day and come to church?" she wrote.

"His wife told me he read the card and smiled," Powell said.

With each card goes a prayer, Powell said. "I ask the Lord to make the recipient ... respond to what I'm asking," she said.

"When they get that card, I want them to feel as good about getting it as I do about sending it," she said. "I want them to know they are wanted."

## Multi-housing ministry meeting touts opportunities for service

Continued from page 1

an annual summer missions trip instead should look around their own towns for apartment complexes in which to invest their money and their lives.

Youth groups could provide monthly children's activities instead of going away for a week each year, she said. Other possible activities include teaching a Sunday school class or collecting school supplies.

Ministering in apartment complexes takes no special skills, Williamson said, just a willingness to love others. She described a variety of ministry experiences she's witnessed, including single women who lead Bible studies in hotel rooms and youth who tell Bible stories while Brotherhood members fix bicycles. "They just shared themselves," Williamson said.

Conference leaders called for churches to be inventive and innovative in their approach to ministry, looking for ways to reach out. Beam said baptism could take place in a complex's swimming pool or hot tub instead of at the sponsoring church.

"Offer the candidates invitations to give to their friends and relatives; make a VIP section so they can sit right down front." At one such baptism, he said, several who were watching, beer in hand, realized afterward that they needed to become Christians and accepted a call to Christ when church members mingled with the crowd.

Beam urged churches to get multi-housing parents involved as they reach through children's ministries back to the families. When parents sit in on children's activities, they hear the gospel, too.

"Missions is not about reaching 500 with lots of programs," said Will Sipes, pastor of Brookhaven Mission in a trailer park in Lebanon. The four-month-old ministry has reached a number of children and adults with innovative ministries. "It's about catching a little boy who's falling apart."

# OPINION

## WESTERN RECORDER

P.O. Box 43969  
Louisville, Ky. 40253  
(ISSN 0043-4132)

**MARK WINGFIELD**  
Editor

**DAVID WINFREY**  
News Director

**MAURI SMITH**  
Marketing & Business  
Manager

**C.R. DALEY**  
Editor Emeritus

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

Western Recorder is published weekly by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, Ky. 40253, except for one week in July and December. For general information, call (502) 244-6470. Fax: (502) 244-6474. Send e-mail to CompuServe 102667,1300, and the Internet, wesrec@ntr.net. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

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## Christian leader

I met Paul Debusman soon after coming to Southern Seminary in January 1966. I knew him not personally but well for the next five years. Debusman was always the epitome of an authentic Christian leader, with the grace and demeanor of what I came to see as his calling: a servant in true measure.

Although he was part of the administration of the seminary, he never left the impression with those of us who were students that gave him any special authority, unlike so many members of our present administration. He always made us preacher boys feel that he was just waiting for us to come by so he could help us find what we needed, or learn what we must, or get wherever it was God was calling us to go. You always felt that Jesus had put him there just for your sake.

And I believe that was the case. Now, like his Lord, he too has found that honesty and Christian virtue are too often repaid with betrayal and mean spirit. I will not attempt to express my own disappointment in this matter with what I once called with great pride and emotion as "my seminary." But I am quick to pray for men of God who behave otherwise. Debusman deserves better from the institution to which he has given his adult life. God have mercy on those who have so mistreated this kind and gentle servant of God.

Victor J. Payne  
Charlotte, N.C.

## Love and support

I first met Paul Debusman when I went to Southern Seminary in 1969. I quickly discovered that he was a person of strong commitment to Christ and to the seminary. In the many times I was around him, I never heard him say anything derogatory about another individual. I also discovered that in

his field of library work he devoted himself to complete accuracy. We've been fortunate to have a man of his caliber to serve us for so many years. I affirm my love and support to Debusman and his family.

David Royalty  
Joelton, Tenn.

## A few more questions

In his letter to the Western Recorder (Oct. 7, page 6), "What does Mohler believe?" John Stone White asked some questions concerning Al Mohler's beliefs which I have long wanted to ask. Also, there are a few more which I would add to the list.

As a declared believer in Calvinism, the basic theology of which is the principle of election, Mohler evidently considers himself one of God's elect. If so, how does he know for sure?

Also, how does he interpret John 3:16; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 16:31; and Romans 10:9-13?

Dee Hooks  
Bowling Green

## Turn to Christ

The world is changing daily. Wars and rumors of wars abound. Politicians and government heads try to legislate what is right and what is wrong.

The human condition is in constant turmoil with itself. When a human has to decide between right or wrong, good or evil, love or hate, the action that takes place is monumental. The choice taken will determine the individual's destiny in life. Very often, the decisions we make today will determine the future not only for us, but life will be what we will harvest in the autumn of life.

When faced with choices and dilemmas of life, there is only one place to turn, and that is to Christ. All other places that we might turn to in time of change and trouble will fail, but Christ will never fail. When human effort fails, God's perfect plan takes over.

John Mark Roberts  
Murray

## Deacons, not elders

In the Greek, deacon means servant or slave. The servant or slave does not sit in a position of authority but rather carries out the will of the ones who do. In this case the elders. It is the job of the deacons to do the chores such as help to the needy, distribution, etc.

And yes, a woman can be a deacon or deaconess. A deacon or servant has no authority.

The elders, on the other hand, are the ones in position of authority. It is their responsibility to be shepherds, overseers of the flock, protectors of the sheep. It is husbandry. And no, a woman cannot be husband over man. That is against nature itself.

As it is, our deacons vote on matters of church business, and thus direct how things will go and in doing so become not deacons, doers of chores, but elders, directors of the flock. In essence, we do not have any deacons but rather elders whom we call deacons.

In a recent letter to the editor, one man wrote of Phoebe as being the pastor (elder) of the church at Cenchrea. Phoebe was not a pastor, but rather a servant, or deaconess. His confusion is readily understood in our mixing and matching of these two divergent terms.

In Scripture we find examples of female deacons but not female elders and for good reason. There were none.

It is simply how our God and Creator has ordained things to be. He, not I.

Our aforementioned letter writer wrote of all who would share this view as being ignorant, selfish, unjust, prejudiced and bigoted. If prayerfully using all Scriptures and Scripture alone as my basis and these things are said of me, then so be it.

Chuck Estridge  
Williamstown

## More from 'Stand in the Gap'

I attended "Stand In The Gap" with three other men from my church. That day was a holy ground experience. God made his presence known in the noise and in the silence.

Casey Ross  
Louisville

"Stand in the Gap" was one of the greatest spiritual experiences I've ever had. A million-plus people worshipping the Lord. We all got a little glimpse of heaven.

Brad King  
Liberty

In my 20-plus years since I accepted Christ, I have never been asked to literally get on my face before God. It has struck me since then that that is exactly what Christ wants. We can only get on our face if change is taking place in the heart. The solution to "librarians being fired because they offer an opinion personally" and "pastors being fired once every six hours" is men on their face before him. This

is where the battleground lies, in my heart, demonstrating my willingness to humble myself and to be obedient to whatever he wants for me.

Mike Lewellen  
Bowling Green

The pending expectation of what God would do throughout the multitudes was very exciting, and to know that what we pledge as Promise Keepers would be pleasing to him—to be better husbands, fathers and Christians and to be the spiritual leaders that God first commanded us to be.

I felt like all these men were my brothers. We sang together in unison and felt the presence of God's Spirit in every man's voice. The love of God became a common bond between each and every one of us.

Bob Crosby  
Bellevue

Many pastors see Promise Keepers as no more than an emotional experience that the men will lose as soon

as they return home. I would challenge these pastors to take a second look. PK's main thrust at all its events is for men to return home, supporting their pastors and church and to get involved in a weekly men's Bible study.

I encourage all pastors to help facilitate these men into roles in their church where they can become involved, also to help organize these weekly Bible studies if none are presently in place. Without this mentoring help from a supporting pastor, these men can flounder in their newfound commitments.

J. Kelly Estes Jr.  
Paducah

As we approached the escalators descending to the subway, the men below ground began singing "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty" The singing was like a fuse, beginning underground and quickly spreading above ground and around the streets of Washington.

Jim Lowe  
Pleasureville

## SINGLES

### Coping skills for grieving singles

By James Stillwell

**Q.** Whether it be the death of a spouse, death of a close friend, a divorce or the end of a significant, long-term relationship, single adults' life experiences are often accompanied by significant

stress. Please suggest some "coping skills" for dealing with the losses of life.

**A.** When hit with troubles that

life throws in our direction, we often find ourselves paralyzed by stress. Remembering that God calls us to be "transformed by the renewing of our minds," we may need to be aware of patterns of negative thinking.

Let me suggest that you seek out support groups and friendships where your thoughts and feelings can be expressed. As you're able to come to the point where you can say, "Here's a bad situation, now what am I going to do about it?" You'll find possibilities that would not otherwise present themselves.

Be careful not to disqualify the positive things in your life. Allow people to express their care for you. In your grief and sadness, allow for the possibilities of growth and learning. Things were not perfect before, so don't make an idol out of the past. Seek to discover those areas in your life where you may need to "let go."

Be gentle with yourself. Rather than overwhelming yourself with "should," be happy when you accomplish one or two things each day. Keep a "done" list rather than dwelling on a "to do" list. Be gentle with others. Avoid labeling. Remember, failure is an event, not a person.

God uses the "stuff" of life to grow us to become more like Jesus (see Romans 5:3, 8:29, James 1:2). It is natural and necessary to go through the feelings of sadness that accompany loss. However, the darkest depths of depression can be avoided. Lean toward the positive so that you will not become stuck on the negative. Through committing the details of your situation to God, his peace will pervade your life, giving you the power to face anything through the strength of the one who dwells within you (Philippians 4).

James Stillwell is minister with single adults at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington.

Send your questions about children, teens, marriage, singles or aging to "Family Forum," Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, Ky. 40253.



## HE SAID/SHE SAID

### We are family, but does that mean we have to look alike?

#### SHE SAID



Alison Wingfield

Some of our memorable family dramas center around the boys' struggle for individuality. As twins they bounce back and forth between depending on each other and desiring independence.

Last spring, Luke announced that he did not like how Garrett looked. When I unwisely told him that Garrett looked just like him, Luke immediately put on his baseball cap to be different. He wore it continuously for months, taking it off only to get his hair washed.

Garrett's latest bid for independence is the Great Cereal Struggle. Luke's normal fare for breakfast has been Grape Nuts while Garrett favors Cheerios. Our whole household recently was thrown into upheaval when Luke said he wanted Cheerios for breakfast one day. You would have thought Garrett was mortally wounded the way he carried on.

"But I want Cheerios," wailed Garrett.

"You can have Cheerios, too," said I.

"Not if Luke's having them. I don't want the same thing as Lu-u-uke," he sobbed dramatically.

We have gone around and around with him, trying to explain that it doesn't matter if Luke eats the same thing, and that he's only depriving himself by not eating what he wants.

The Great Cereal Struggle still is not resolved. We hold our collective breath every morning, waiting to see if Luke will ask for Cheerios.

Despite these interesting interludes, it is amazing how well our twins do get along. We're now reaping the benefits of enduring the twin baby days. The boys are generally the best of friends and can keep each other well-occupied for hours without needing Mom or Dad as a constant playmate.

While we emphasize that each boy is unique and different, at the same time I try to tell them how special it is that God made them twins.

#### HE SAID



Mark Wingfield

If you've grown up watching those Doublemint Gum commercials, you might think all twins love to look and dress alike. Don't believe everything you see on TV.

We have some friends with fraternal twin girls who several years ago started having separate birthday parties because the quest for individual identification was so strong.

Being identical twins, our boys are less competitive than many fraternal

twins. However, as Alison explained, we do have our moments. Right now, the Great Cereal Struggle has overshadowed the long-running Great Clothing Struggle. Dressing alike may be cute for twin babies, but many modern twin children don't think it's so cute. After all, our culture puts a heavy emphasis on individual expression.

Garrett won't wear what Luke's wearing, and vice versa. Problem is, most blue jeans look alike. We've become masters of describing the finer points of blue jeans construction, pointing out every minute difference in hopes of getting two boys dressed and out the door to school.

Seems to me that a lot of people look at Christians as a massive group of twins. Every believer is expected to look alike, act alike, dress alike and speak the same twin language. But that's as unfair as expecting Luke and Garrett to be the same person on the inside just because they look the same on the outside.

Christians have experienced the same rebirth on the inside, but come in all varieties on the outside. We have the same Father and we are born again through the same Spirit, but we are not pushed through a gospel cookie cutter. God's much more creative than that, making us into unique expressions of his common love.

## Truth-telling is antidote to suspicion

Ever wonder why the "X-Files" has gathered such a following on TV? Ever wonder why so many people are convinced the government covered up an alien landing at Roswell, N.M.? Ever wonder why 35 years after his death we still debate who really killed John F. Kennedy?

The most direct answer is "suspicion." We have become a culture driven by suspicion. We're not just cynical; we're suspicious of everyone and everything.

While the roots of our culture of suspicion lie with federal government, this modern mindset has branched out to other areas of life as well. We are increasingly polarized in our social discourse, and even within our religious life.

Reaction to the recent Promise Keepers "Stand in the Gap" assembly in Washington illustrates this point perfectly. Many commentators, feminists and partisans of the Religious Left were convinced this event would prove to be a narrow-minded demonstration for the Religious Right. Not finding any such evidence among those gathered on the National Mall in prayer, these critics now have turned their suspicions into prophecy. "Just wait. In time you'll see Jerry Falwell was behind this," a critic recently told me.

Maybe in the future Promise Keepers will take a political turn. I hope not. But until real evidence exists for such accusations, why must some people be so suspicious they can't see the good many have found?

Before we dismiss such persistent critics as intolerant and misguided, however, consider one thing. Leaders of the Religious Right at times have sneaked through back doors to bring about noble ideals by less-than-noble means.

Those who have been slashed and burned in the past are among the most vocal prophets of doom about Promise Keepers. But it is no wonder; after you've been run over by a speeding truck with its headlights off, you intuitively suspect that every vehicle rumbling down a dark road presents the same kind of danger.

The problem is we've had numerous hit-and-run causes running rampant through our society, our denominations and even our churches. Abuses by those on both the right and the left have created a society of victims with painful memories that spur them to greater suspicion.

### Read, Jane, read

My friend looked frustrated. "I never cease to be amazed at the different ways people interpret the Bible. I sometimes spend hours reading various commentaries and dictionaries preparing to teach. I'm no scholar or theologian, but I get the feeling that some of the people I read either don't like or trust the Bible, while others are all too eager to preach me a sermon. And then, to top it off, our class's discussion of the text often goes in a completely different direction. What gives?"

There are three general ways the Bible is interpreted. The first approach is minimalistic. It is characterized by ignorance. It claims that either we can't know or can't be sure. The whole process of interpreting the Bible—or any other document, for that matter—is a subjective one because all writing, even historical writing, is selective and arbitrary, because a text is inherently fluid and can mean many different things simultaneously, and because

the task of interpretation is reader dependent (there are as many different interpretations as there are readers).

A second approach is equally suspicious. But, as compared to claims of ignorance, this approach is characterized by arrogance. It understands the text, but then claims we know better than the text and, more arrogantly, whatever the text says must be updated, revised or outright suppressed. Much of the Bible, this approach says, should be revised in light of the latest scientific discoveries, current cultural awareness or our "superior,"

non-mythological, modern world views.

A third, and much more sympathetic approach, is characterized by humility. An interpreter must suspend judgment, enter into the world of the text, explore and enjoy that world for all its worth. Examples of this process can be found in what happens to us when we watch a movie on the big screen or how we can become lost in

The applications are numerous:

■ Religious conservatives who in a few instances have been wrongly limited from the free exercise of religion in public schools now see atheism looming behind every textbook and every school board.

■ Southern Baptist moderates who have been brutally disenfranchised from their denomination often see a conservative takeover behind every issue in the local church. If talking about evangelism or singing praise choruses is associated with conservative churches, many moderate churches hold fast to the opposite extreme out of fear.

■ Women who have been horribly abused by Neanderthal-minded men see all males as a threat; and men who have been stepped on by the most radical form of feminism see all aggressive women as a threat.

■ Pastors who have been fired or abused by unhealthy congregations may see all lay leadership as dangerous; congregations that have suffered under dictatorial or immoral pastors may keep too tight a reign on all future pastors.

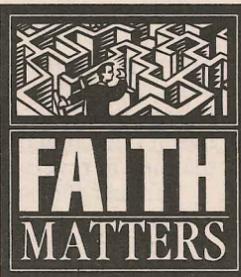
The more this cycle goes on, the more polarized we become on a greater number of issues, and the deeper the suspicions grow. It becomes almost impossible for objective truth to get a hearing. Every issue must be viewed in stark blacks and whites driven by all-or-nothing language.

Granted, not everyone falls to the two extremes. And it is to this middle ground we must look for reconciliation, for truth to triumph over suspicion.

The problem is that too many people camped out in the middle have abdicated the responsibility to speak truth in the past. Blatantly wrongful acts were ignored because of a fear that by speaking out a person would be labeled with the side crying foul. The silence of the middle majority has allowed terrorists on both sides of issues to create victims and in turn breed new reactions and suspicions.

If we are to rise above our culture of suspicion, non-partisans must find the courage to be witnesses to the truth, regardless of which side it falls on. When the middle majority keeps its mouth shut, propaganda from the extreme minorities wins the day—and keeps suspicion in business.

— Mark Wingfield



## School district enters religious dispute

FORT MYERS, Fla. (RNS)—The Lee County School Board in Fort Myers, Fla., has approved an elective Bible-history curriculum, prompting a dispute about the role of religion in the public-school setting.

The board voted 3-2 on Oct. 21 to permit the courses.

It is the latest arena in which there has been a disagreement about the role of religious teaching, which is now offered in about 18 percent of the nation's school districts.

"The Bible should not be a banned book in our culture. It's been treated as if it were asbestos," said Jay Sekulow, a lawyer with the American Center for Law and Justice, a conservative group founded by religious broadcaster Pat Robert-

son. "I think you have pretty broad pockets of support for ... courses in the Bible. It's not just the evangelical community pushing it," he said.

But Lisa Versaci of People for the American Way vigorously opposes such curricula.

"They're teaching the Bible as if it were historical fact," she said. "By doing that, you're teaching schoolchildren there is only one faith. It's not everyone's reality, and it can't be taught that way."

Sample items from the proposed curriculum for the Fort Myers school district require students to identify historical events mentioned in the Bible and trace their implications for the next generations, USA Today reported.

The approved curriculum includes the New Testament. However, school chief Bruce Harter had proposed that the Resurrection and other parts of the New Testament be dropped from the curriculum to assure its ability to withstand a legal challenge.

With the classes scheduled to begin in January, 125 of the Lee County School District's 13,500 high school students have signed up to take the courses.

Wayne Perry, school district spokesman, said most people were surprised that the curriculum caused controversy.

"Only 125 kids ... what's the big deal?" he said. "The big deal, of course, is religion vs. history, and that's been the focal point."

## Past candidate Forbes says he's staunchly anti-abortion

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Republican Steve Forbes, whose run in the 1996 presidential election was derailed by religious conservatives, is now courting his former adversaries with a new message of moral revival and an anti-abortion platform.

The millionaire president and editor of Forbes magazine, unveiled his agenda—Fourth Great Awakening—before a standing-room-only audience at the Heritage Foundation Oct. 21 in Washington, D.C.

Just a year ago, Forbes' wavering stance on abortion launched the Christian right into opposition against him. This time around, Forbes, in an apparent campaign for the presidency in 2000, told the crowd, "Life begins at conception and ends at natural death." He said he opposes abortion with exceptions for rape and incest and when the mother's life is in danger.

"I think we must recognize the deep emotional distress and trauma of the victims of incest and rape," he said.

Conservative religious leaders are only one target of Forbes' newly-fashioned strategies, his advisers said.

He also will use Americans for Hope, Growth and Opportunity, an organization he founded, to launch a series of radio spots on a wide range of topics including drug abuse and abortion.

## 'Date rape' added to Halloween Hell House

DENVER (RNS)—A date rape scene has been added to a controversial Halloween production in Arvada, Colo. Hell House, an annual event, shows sin scenarios on stage in rooms at Abundant Life Christian Center in Arvada. The Halloween production uses lighting, sound, scenery, smells, costumes and graphic scenes including abortion and souls from hell to scare people from sin.

Hell House attracted more than 14,000 people in its first two years.

Associate Pastor and Hell House director Keenan Roberts said he chose the scene to address victims and perpetrators.

"I've counseled several ... high school girls who have been raped on dates," said Roberts, who noted that the scene implies date rape, but does not show rape or nudity.

"I know it's happened to an incredible percentage of people. There are a lot of walking wounded out there."

Roberts said while he hopes the scene will help rape victims heal, it also has a message for perpetrators.

"People have to honor other people's rights," he said. "The Bible says we have no right to defraud anyone and rape is defrauding."

## Leaders blame courts for 'disordering liberty'

WASHINGTON (BP)—A cross-section of religious, public policy and academic leaders have signed a statement warning that the American court system is aiding the "disordering of our liberty."

In the statement, published in the October issue of First Things magazine, 46 signers say: "The great threat to the American experiment today is not from enemies abroad but from disordered liberty. That disorder is increasingly expressed in a denial of the very concept of moral truth."

First Things is a monthly journal published by the Institute on Religion and Public Life, a nonpartisan organization that seeks to promote a religiously-informed philosophy for society.

Signers said the American courts have played a major role in this "disordered liberty" by frequently exercising power "without the consent of the governed."

"The founding principle of self-government has been thrown into question. Already it seems that people who are motivated by religion or religiously inspired morality are relegated to a category of second-class citizenship."

The document says the most obvious example of the courts' abuse of power is the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision, which erased the abortion laws of all 50 states in declaring the Constitution includes a right to abortion.

Subsequent high court rulings that have harmed the people's ability to govern themselves, according to the statement, are:

■ Planned Parenthood vs. Casey, the 1992 decision that strengthened legal protection of abortion.

■ Lee vs. Weisman, the 1992 ruling rejecting a junior high graduation prayer by a Jewish rabbi.

■ Romer vs. Evans, the 1996 opin-

ion overturning a state amendment banning laws granting civil rights status to homosexuals.

The document says the signers oppose the idea America should be declared a Christian nation. "We do not seek a sacred public square but a civil public square," it says.

Signers normally identified as conservatives included: Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; Gary Bauer, Family Research Council president; Chuck Colson, Prison Fellowship president; and John Cardinal O'Connor of the Archdiocese of New York.

A number of signers, however, are not usually identified as conservatives. They included Ron Sider, Evangelicals for Social Action president; Vinton Anderson, presiding bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; and Richard Mouw, Fuller Theological Seminary president.

## Military official creates stir with plans to preach at chapel

WEST POINT, N.Y. (RNS)—The second-highest ranking civilian official of the Pentagon announced he will deliver a series of sermons on faith and values at the main chapel of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

But the plans of Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre, a devout Lutheran, have created controversy because some critics believe the homilies represent an inappropriate crossing of the line of church-state separation.

"The point is you have a government official who, by virtue of his position, has demanded to have a pulpit in a church," said Robert Geehan, who was a chaplain at West Point from 1984 to 1993.

"No government official can demand to be a preacher in a church," he said.

West Point officials at first recommended he speak in the school's main auditorium, where he could reach a wider audience. But Hamre said he wanted to speak in the Cadet Chapel because his message

has a religious focus.

"There's a huge dimension to people's lives called their spiritual lives, their religious lives and I'm going to talk to that," Hamre told the Washington Post.

Hamre, who attended Harvard Divinity School before changing career plans and becoming a defense expert 20 years ago, does not believe he is crossing any line between church and state. "I look at that just in reverse," he said.

"If I had gone up and said I want to bring the entire student body together in an auditorium, and then made them listen to a sermon, then I would absolutely agree I'd be violating the church-state thing," he said. "But to go up to the chapel and to talk only to those who sought to go to a church that day, I don't think that is a violation."

Col. Dayton "Mike" Cramer, the U.S. Military Academy's top attorney, said he saw no legal grounds for objection once it was clear no one would be required to attend.



Dr. Tom Elliff



Dr. R. Albert Mohler



Dr. Harold Cathey

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of the

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**Dr. Harold Cathey**, Missionary to Uganda, West Africa

**Bro. L. C. Gray**, Pastor-Evangelist, Owensboro, Ky.

**Dr. Mike Routt**, Pastor of Rosehill Baptist Church, Ashland, Ky.

**Dr. R. Albert Mohler**, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

**Dr. Tom Elliff**, Pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Oklahoma; President of The Southern Baptist Convention

Conference will begin at 11am Est (10am Cst) this year

Richard P. Oldham President; Jerry L. Tooley, Vice President; Charles T. Gresham, Secretary

# NATION

## NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Liberty has "new lease on life."** Liberty University has a "new lease on life" following a dramatic reduction in the school's debts, according to a spokesman for Jerry Falwell, the school's chancellor. An anonymous Christian businessman purchased all of the school's outstanding bonds. So the university, whose debts had reached a high of about \$110 million in 1991, now has a debt of just \$10 million.

■ **Orthodox Patriarch visits America.** Welcomed with all the pomp reserved for a pope or a visiting head of state, Bartholomew I, ecumenical patriarch of the Orthodox Church, arrived at Andrews Air Force Base Oct. 17 from Istanbul to begin a month-long American tour. An ethnic Greek who resides in primarily Muslim Turkey, Bartholomew's ancient see of Constantinople was once the cradle of Christianity. Now it is just a vestige of its former glory in present-day Istanbul, with only a few thousand Christians.

■ **Gore criticized for defending "Ellen."** In a speech to the Hollywood Radio and Television Society, Vice President Al Gore supported the controversial television

show "Ellen," saying it forces America to look at sexual orientation more openly. Conservative critics were quick to jump on Gore's remarks. Randy Tate, executive director of the Christian Coalition, accused Gore of "craven pandering to Hollywood" and called Gore's support of a lesbian character "way out of the mainstream."

■ **Doctor's murder conviction upheld.** The U.S. Supreme Court upheld a lower court's rulings handing down the murder convictions and death sentence of a former minister who killed a doctor and his bodyguard outside a Pensacola, Fla., abortion clinic. Without comment, the justices discounted contentions that Paul Hill was incorrectly permitted to act as his own trial attorney. Hill, 43, disavowed the appeal filed in his behalf and has said he welcomes his execution.

■ **New Christmas stamp issued.** Sano di Pietro's Madonna and child will be this year's traditional Christmas stamp. Starting Oct. 27, the Italian painter's 15th-century "Madonna and Child With Saints and Angels" will be sold, the Postal Service announced. In the painting Jesus

sits on his mother's lap, holding a bird and looking at an angel. The image, whose painter was also known as Ansano di Pietro di Mencio, hangs at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

■ **Campaign: No "sweatshop gifts."** As the holiday season approaches, a broad coalition of religious, human rights and labor groups is calling on American consumers to "shop with their consciences." The Holiday Season of Conscience was kicked off Oct. 4-5 to promote awareness of child labor and sweatshop abuses under which many imported products are manufactured. The Holiday Season of Conscience campaign is endorsed by more than 120 organizations including many Christian denominations.

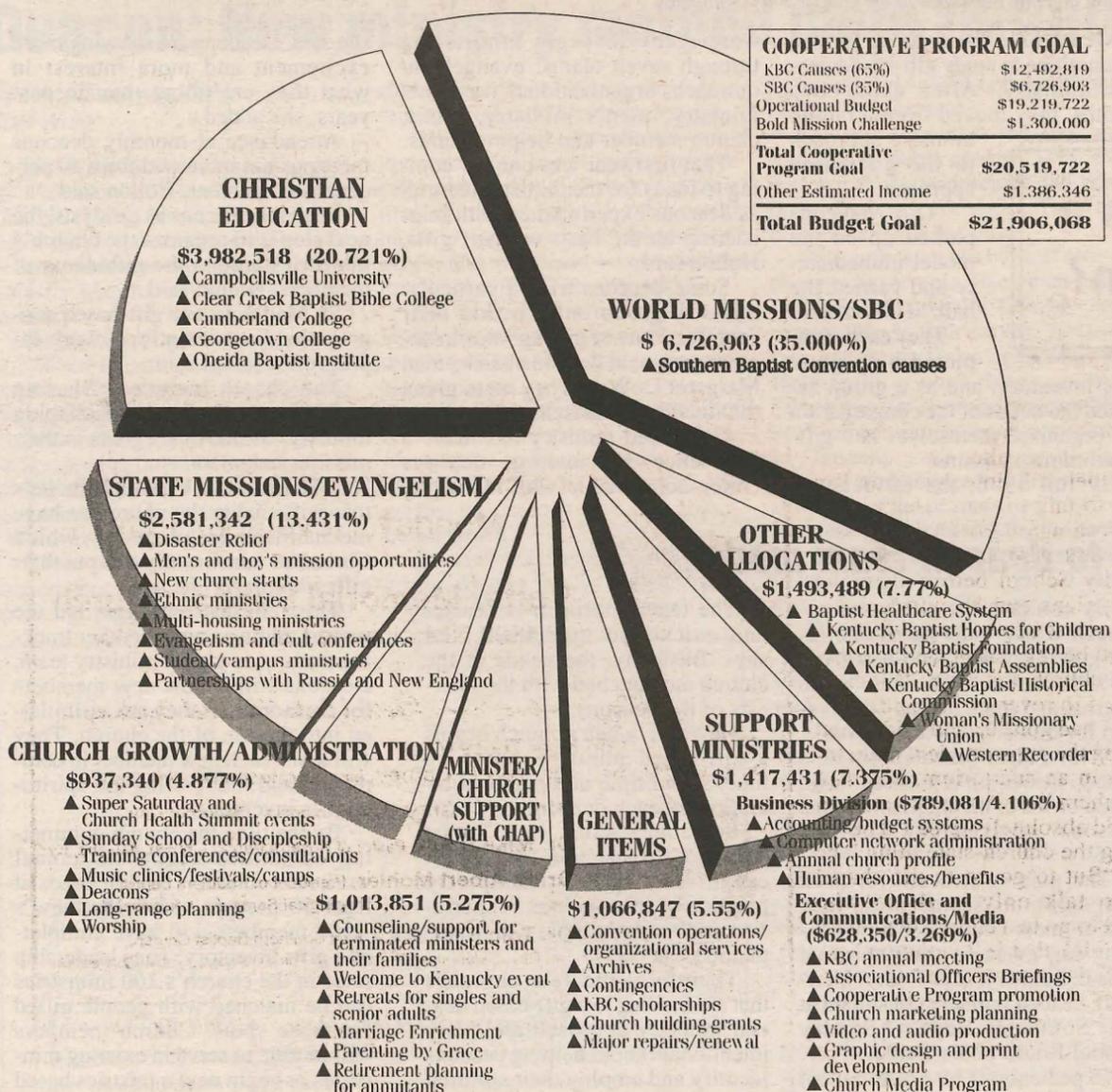
■ **Evangelicals in on poverty discussion.** The Center for Christian Leadership at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and Evangelicals for Social Action, based in Philadelphia, have been named co-sponsors of a new initiative designed to add evangelical scholarship to discussions and writings on the issue of poverty. "We want a book that provides concrete

proposals for how both government and non-governmental agencies can best address the needs of the poor," said David Gushee, director of the Union University center.

■ **Leader's wife pleads guilty to arson.** Deborah Lyons, wife of the president of the National Baptist Convention USA, pleaded guilty Oct. 20 to first-degree arson in a case that led to controversy for her husband, Henry J. Lyons, and the nation's largest black Baptist denomination. Mrs. Lyons was sentenced to five years probation, given 200 hours of community service and ordered to have an evaluation for alcohol and psychological treatment.

■ **Report hits hate on the web.** A new report by the Anti-Defamation League says the group has identified about 250 sites on the World Wide Web that preach hate and seek to recruit members for neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic and racist groups. "Shrewd bigots of all kinds are rushing to use the enormous power of this new communications medium, and we must match and surpass," said Abraham Foxman, the ADL's national director.

## Kentucky Baptist Mission/Ministry BUDGET 1997-1998



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# CHURCHES

## Gift-based deacons are model for whole congregation

By Joyce Sweeney Martin  
Staff Writer

### What are spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are abilities God gives each Christian to be used to do the work of the gospel through the church. The following list is a commonly-used compilation from the three primary New Testament passages which name spiritual gifts: Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:11-13 and 1 Corinthians 12-14:

#### ■ Relational gifts:

Voluntary Poverty  
Encouragement  
Shepherding  
Hospitality  
Missionary  
Celibacy  
Giving  
Mercy  
Helps

#### ■ Organizational gifts:

Administration  
Apostleship  
Leadership  
Handiwork  
Mercy

#### ■ Communication gifts:

Evangelism  
Teaching  
Writing

#### ■ Worship gifts:

Intercession  
Preaching  
Music

#### ■ Revelatory gifts:

Discernment  
Exhortation  
Knowledge  
Martyrdom  
Prophecy  
Wisdom  
Faith

LOUISVILLE—For St. Matthews Baptist Church, a gift-based deacon ministry was the intentional first step toward getting all church members to use their spiritual gifts in ministry.

Pastor Les Hollon said the church was ready for that vision when he introduced it as their new pastor in August 1994.

"St. Matthews was open to spiritual and church renewal and immediately saw spiritual gifts as one way to reach those goals," he said.

Spiritual gifts, he said, "are God-endowed abilities for the uniquely effective purpose of gospel work by Christians."

Even before Hollon was called as pastor, conversations with deacons and other church leaders revealed a "curiosity and openness" about refocusing the church around Christians exercising their spiritual gifts, Hollon said.

The window to move toward a gift-based congregation opened quickly, he said.

Two weeks after Hollon arrived at the church, the deacons asked him to teach about spiritual gifts at their annual retreat.

"They had a desire to make a difference, and if God had already endowed Christians with a way to make that difference, they wanted to know about it," Hollon said.

Several Sunday and Wednesday evening Bible studies helped more members of the congregation understand Hollon's heartbeat.

Then that fall and the next spring, he preached four Sunday morning sermons about spiritual gifts, culminating in distribution of spiritual gifts inventories to the entire congregation.

As new people joined the church, each person was asked to complete an inventory to help them determine their spiritual gifts.



**SPIRITUAL GIFTS** Charles Conley (right) a deacon at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, talks with new members Kevin and Kay Faulkenberry about how to discover and use their spiritual gifts. A number of Kentucky Baptist churches have gone to a gift-based strategy for deacon ministry. With that strategy, deacons are tested to learn what their spiritual gifts are, and deacon teams are formed around different ministries to the church and community.

### What is a Deacon?

Meanwhile, the deacons formed a committee to study gift-based deacon ministry. After about two months, they moved from a family ministry approach to the gift-based approach.

"Our deacons picked up on the model immediately and carried the ball," Hollon said.

They each completed a spiritual gifts inventory, and as a group assessed the needs of the congregation and organized themselves into gift-based ministry teams.

By fall 1996, the 60 deacons

were ready to begin ministering through seven teams: evangelism/outreach, organizational, women's ministry, men's ministry, crisis, church member and helping hands.

That first year was one of "coming to focus for the ministry teams," as deacons experimented with ministering on the basis on their gifts, Hollon said.

Some deacons tried a particular ministry group only to find their "comfort zone of gifting" was in another area, said deacon chairwoman Margaret DeWitt. They were given the freedom to switch, she said.

Gift-based ministry has made a difference by making deacons "more comfortable with ministry,"

she said. Deacons are showing more excitement and more interest in what they are doing than in past years, she added.

Attendance at monthly deacons meetings has increased from 40 percent to 66 percent, Hollon said.

With the deacons as catalysts, the next step is to organize the church's ministries around the giftedness of members, Hollon said.

St. Matthews as a gift-based congregation is an intentional work-in-progress, Hollon said.

The church included "Sharing our spiritual gifts for world-shaping ministry" as one of six goals in their mission statement.

"We now must develop models that will enable the church to have mechanisms in place by which Christians consistently can put their gifts into place," he said.

This fall, deacons again led the way by adding a new member tracking team as an eighth ministry team. Deacons will follow new members for six months as they are assimilated into the life of the church. They will assist each new member in completing and interpreting the spiritual gifts inventory.

By the time the church nominating committee begins its annual work next summer, Hollon hopes at least 50 percent of St. Matthew's 1,500 members will have completed a gifts inventory. Then leadership roles in the church's 100 ministries can be matched with people gifted for those spots. Church members will be able to serve in existing ministries or begin new ministries based on their understanding of their spiritual gifts.

### Many churches going to deacon team model

By Joyce Sweeney Martin  
Staff Writer

Most Southern Baptist churches that are moving away from management or family ministry models for deacon ministry are choosing a team approach and not a spiritual gifts approach, say two deacons' ministry consultants.

But that may be a mistake, says Vernon Cole, church development director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

While short-term results may be similar, without an intentional emphasis on spiritual empowerment, the team-based approach "can run out of steam quickly," he says. Then ministry becomes draining, he adds.

By contrast, the gift-based approach which calls forth "the inner giftedness that God has given to each person," provides "more internal and more lasting" motivation for ministry, Cole believes.

With a team-based approach, a deacon serves on a ministry team based on his or her inclinations and personal choices, not spiritual gifts.

The guiding concern for most congregations seems to be how best to meet needs, not how deacons can exercise their spiritual gifts in ministry, says Robert Sheffield, deacon ministry consultant at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

Expediency is also a dominant factor, Cole adds.

The team approach is "easier and quicker to implement," he says. Basically, the needs of the church are matched with the interests of the deacons.

However, when a church begins a gift-based ministry, someone must spend time and personal attention on each deacon.

Someone, Cole says, must "make the translation from biblical gift language to contemporary practice." Gifts such as "exhortation and martyrdom have to be explained," he says.

Therefore, the few churches that are moving to a gift-based deacon ministry approach are "very intentional" about helping deacons identify and employ their spiritual gifts, both men agree.

# CHURCHES

## Pastor: Gift-based strategy keeps focus on needs

By Joyce Sweeney Martin  
Staff Writer

HENDERSON—Pastor Dan Garland remembers well the first deacons' meeting he attended at Zion Baptist Church. The main topic of discussion was why the church secretary had spent \$5.62 on calendars when she could have gotten them donated.

Now, almost seven years later, Zion Baptist deacons wouldn't even think of asking such a question in a deacons' meeting, he said.

Today, they focus on how church members are doing and how deacons can address members' needs.

Zion's 33 deacons have become "ministers, not administrators," Garland said.

The change came easily, he added.

After spending eight years trying to minister through a plan that assigned several church families to each deacon, Zion's deacons felt overloaded, overwhelmed and trapped in an unworkable plan, Garland said. Furthermore, deacons' meetings were filled with church business minutiae.

With 20 to 30 families assigned to each deacon, most were "frustrated and fatigued" from trying to do too many things for which they had neither the burden nor the gift, he said.

"They were asking if there was anything out there (for deacons) that is working," Garland said. "They wanted to serve."

After talking with other pastors, Garland recommended a gift-based ministry model based on the caregiving role of deacons in Acts 6 and an understanding of spiritual gifts.

Instead of overloading deacons with multiple responsibilities, deacons were asked to minister out of their God-given strengths, Garland said. Plus, deacons were deployed "where the needs of our church are," he said.

Tasks that had been a part of the non-functioning family ministry approach became the bases for six pastoral ministry groups: hospital, crisis intervention, new member follow-up, widows and shut-ins, evangelism-outreach and inactive members. Each deacon indicated his top two ministry group preferences and was assigned to a ministry group by the chairman of deacons and pastor. Each group is trained in their respective ministry area and reports at monthly deacons' meetings. Each deacon chose a "yokefellow" from the congregation to minister alongside him. Deacons have the option of changing groups each year.

"It was like a breath of fresh air," Garland said. Although it took time for the deacons to see themselves as ministers, the plan gave them "a handle on how to help," he said.

Deacon chairman Don Holder agrees.

Serving out of a gift-based model helped him feel "more comfortable and more willing to go" meet the needs of church members, Holder said.

Before, "we were forced into meeting needs," he said. "Whoever was at the top of the deacon list made whatever visit was needed, even if he was uncomfortable with it."

Now, "we listen to the Holy Spirit to discover what need to fill," Holder said.

Holder heads up the hospital visitation team—a perfect way to exercise his spiritual gift of mercy, he said.

While most of the deacons "wouldn't necessarily use spiritual gifts terminology," they do talk easily about how the Holy Spirit led them to the ministry they perform, Holder said.

The system is practical too, Garland said.

As the church has grown from 450 members in 1990 to about 1,200 to-

day, the deacons have adapted to meet changing needs. For example, three years ago, "In Touch," a group that focuses on staying in touch with the church's lay leaders, replaced the inactive members ministry group which the group felt was no longer needed.

The emphasis on gift-based servant ministry has spilled over into the church as deacons "set the tone" for Zion to be a ministering congregation, Garland said.

Three years ago, youth and adult Sunday school class members completed a six-week spiritual gifts study before accepting leadership roles in the church. Members began additional non-deacon-led ministries, including a jail ministry, a drug rehabilitation ministry, a crisis pregnancy ministry, a family ministry council and a hospice ministry. They started projects such as a free gift wrap service in the local mall at Christmastime and a free flower giveaway at K-mart at Mother's Day, Garland said. Other members got involved in Kentucky Baptist partnership mission trips to Boston and Russia, he said.

This year, every adult and youth Sunday school class will be asked to name a representative to serve on one of the deacon pastoral task teams.

At Zion, the operative question is becoming, "What is God saying to you about ministry in the church?" Garland said. And the deacons are leading the way.

### What is a Deacon?

### How does 'Gift-based deacon ministry' work?

■ A church identifies its most pressing pastoral and ministry needs.

■ Using a spiritual gifts inventory, deacons determine their spiritual gifts.

■ Based on their spiritual gifts, deacons form deacon ministry teams that address those particular needs.

## Deacon: New ministry method more fulfilling for members

By Joyce Sweeney Martin  
Staff Writer

FRANKFORT—In his eight years as a deacon at Memorial Baptist Church, Gilbert Newman has experienced the shift from an administrative deacon board to the deacon family ministry plan to a gift-based deacon ministry.

He prefers the gift-based plan.

"When I first became a deacon, I would go to deacons' meetings and we would spend most of our time talking about church administrative issues and reviewing financial reports which would be presented a few days later to the entire church body," he said. "We weren't serving people."

Even when Memorial Church moved "one step away from a board" to assigning each deacon several

church families to serve, consistent ministry still didn't happen, he said.

"We were lucky if the deacons visited each (assigned) family once a year, and usually that wasn't at their time of need," he said. "We could have 17 families with (immediate) needs, and we would be out visiting the one that didn't have a need."

But when Pastor William Carter led the deacons to adopt a gift-based model four years ago, things changed, Newman said.

Most of the deacons—and most of the churches' members—were ready for deacons to be care-givers, Carter said. A few deacons, however, still wanted the deacons to be an administrative board.

Some church members still wanted the deacon family ministry plan with one deacon assigned to each fam-

ily whom they could consider "their deacon," Carter said.

For three months, the deacons studied a possible change. They and the church staff addressed the concerns of church members. Then the deacons adopted the plan.

"We embraced our biblical role—deacons as servants," Newman said.

Now, Memorial's deacons are comfortable in their service, because they see themselves as gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve, Newman said. "We know our spiritual gifts are biblical and are the source of our ministry," he said.

And, while some church members still think of the deacons as a board of business managers, that too is changing as they experience the deacons' shepherding and mercy gifts, Carter said.

Newman agrees.

"I can see the people feeling like their needs are being met," Newman said.

It's not unusual for church members to come to Newman with their needs and feel comfortable when he calls in the appropriate team of deacons to help, he said.

After experimenting with several ministry teams, Memorial's 18 deacons settled on four teams, Carter said. Each deacon also selects a fellow church member—often his wife—to serve with him as a "yokefellow."

Ministry teams are:

■ **New members and homebound team.** Each new member is visited within a week of joining the church. Team members visit homebound church members and those in nursing

### A recent history of Baptist deacons

■ **A board of deacons.** In the 1920s, many Southern Baptist pastors followed the lead of First Baptist Church in Nashville and placed a deacon on each church committee. "In deacons' meetings, pastors could get instant report on the total church life," says Vernon Cole, director of the church growth division of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

■ **The deacon family ministry plan.** In the 1950s, Howard Foshee of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board sought to move deacons from administration to ministry with "the deacon family ministry plan." The plan assigns several church families to be served by a single deacon.

■ **Team-based deacon ministry.** In the 1980s, some churches moved to a team-based deacon ministry. With a team-based approach, a deacon chooses to serve on a need-based ministry team based on his or her inclinations, interests and abilities.

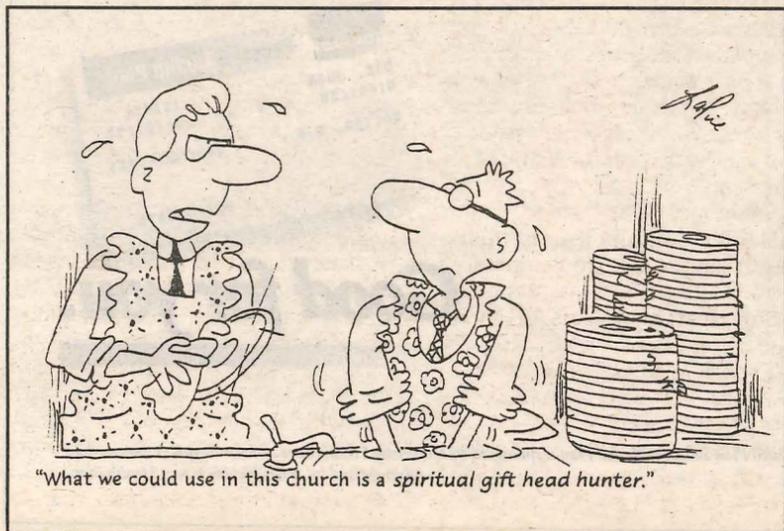
■ **Gift-based deacon ministry.** Comfort with spiritual gifts—and the rise of baby boomers who insist their ministry through the church must be meaningful outside its four walls—have coalesced to create the right time for the rise of a gift-based approach to deacon ministry, Cole says.

homes.

■ **Hospital/crisis team.** Team members visit church members who are hospitalized or have experienced death in their immediate families.

■ **Prayer/evangelism team.** Team members run a 24-hour-a-day prayer chain and meet for prayer prior to Sunday worship services. They also make soul winning visits.

■ **Outreach/inreach team.** Team members make personal visits to every church guest within seven days of the visit.



## Grenade fails to silence Turkey Christians' witness

GAZIANTEP, Turkey (BP)—A grenade last month was intended to destroy a Christian book stand and intimidate the small Christian community in Gaziantep, a city in southeastern Turkey.

While it did kill a 4-year-old boy and wounded 25 people, it also brought together local Christians with their Muslim neighbors—and allowed the book stand operator to proclaim his faith on national television.

Authorities said they believe members of the little-known radical Islamic religious group Vasad, or "Center," are responsible for throwing the grenade during the annual Gaziantep Industrial Trade Fair.

But any efforts to silence the gospel were unsuccessful. Wounded by the grenade and lying on a stretcher, Ibrahim Dogan, manager of the bookstand, repeatedly cried out, "Rab Isa!" which translated means "Jesus is Lord." His proclamations were shown numerous times during national television reports on the blast.

The effects of the attack also reached well beyond Gaziantep and touched many Christians in Turkey.

"We view the incident with sadness and believe the bomb was tossed at people with different beliefs, as well as at tolerance and friendship," said Isa Karatas, a spokesman for the

Independent Protestant Churches of Turkey.

So far, police have arrested 24 members of Vasad and seized other bombs and bomb-making equipment. The group reportedly was angered that a Christian establishment was included in the fair. Book stand workers were threatened before the attack, according to the Compass Direct news service.

A bomb expert reportedly told the local Gaziantep television station it was a miracle the military fragmentation grenade didn't kill 50 or 60 people because it exploded in the air.

Upon examination, Dogan was found to have received no serious injuries aside from a badly mangled finger. "It is amazing. It's a miracle that he's still alive," said Dogan's co-worker. "The bomb went off right behind him."

Others say the miracle was this: More than 500 New Testaments were sold during the first five days of the fair—more than the Christian book stand has sold in the last five years.

Immediately after the blast, Muslim citizens of Gaziantep were at first angry at the Christians. But after the shock wore off, many Muslims supported the Christians and condemned the attack. It also was condemned by Turkey's president and prime minister. Relations between Muslims and Christians in Gaziantep continue to improve as both attempt dialogue.

## WORLD VIEW

### ■ Moscow protest turnout small.

About 500 protesters rallied in Moscow Oct. 7 against the new Russian law regulating religious expression amid reports the law already is affecting religious freedom negatively. Lawrence Uzzell, Moscow representative of the Keston Institute, a London-based group that monitors religious freedom in the former Soviet republics, said holding the rally on a work day and rumors the protesters might be attacked were responsible for the small crowd.

### ■ Underground leader detained.

After 17 months in hiding, Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, 65, a prominent leader of the underground church movement in China, has been detained by the government, a U.S.-based Catholic organization has reported.

### ■ Ex-officials apologize.

South Africa's former foreign minister and former police minister recently apologized to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission for not investigating charges of police brutality against political opponents or stemming white supremacist activity.

### ■ Red Cross sorry for silence.

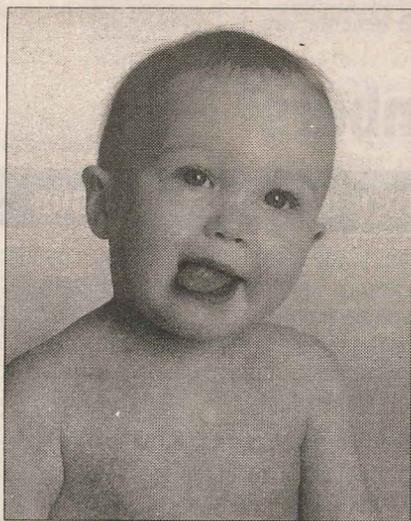
The International Red Cross said Oct. 7 the organization committed a "moral failure" when it didn't respond aggressively to the Holocaust. Archivist George Willemijn said the organization "kept silent with regard to the Holocaust. And I would say that this is the heart of the moral failure."

### ■ Cambodia OKs some abortions.

The Cambodian parliament ruled Oct. 6 to legalize abortion by a licensed health professional during the first three months of pregnancy. The new law states that those performing illegal abortions will be fined to prison terms of up to 10 years.

### ■ Abortion anniversary marked.

"Unconditional respect for human life is the foundation of a civilized society," Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, said in a pastoral letter marking the 30th anniversary of Britain's law easing access to legal abortion. Last Sunday, abortion opponents concluded a weekend of marches, vigils and prayer services condemning the law.



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# MISSIONS

## Missionaries dump committees to focus on evangelism

By Mark Kelly  
SBC International Mission Board

DAKAR, Senegal (BP)—Quips about the Southern Baptist penchant for creating committees, like lawyer jokes, would be funnier if they weren't so true.

But what do you do when committees get in the way of something important, like helping people become Christians and starting churches?

Southern Baptist missionaries in three countries of West Africa faced that dilemma this past year—and the solution they chose foreshadowed the approach International Mission Board leaders would later select to revitalize the board's entire global missions ef-

fort.

Like most of their colleagues elsewhere in the world, Southern Baptist missionaries in Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau invested large blocks of time to keep the gears of their mission organizations grinding.

Four times a year, they packed up their families and traveled to week-long meetings with their colleagues. Ministry work was suspended while committees made decisions as arcane as whether to replace a worn-out vehicle and as important as the country's mission strategy and budget allocation. Frustration with the cumbersome committee structure ran high.

"We were busy maintaining the structure while the Mandinka went to

hell," said Karen Austin, who serves in the Gambia with her husband Chris.

So, late in the spring of 1996, missionaries in each of the three countries decided to dissolve their old mission organizations and realign themselves in a radically different manner.

While they had traditionally focused on developing ministries within a specific country, the missionaries elected instead to divide into teams committed to taking the gospel to specific ethnic people groups.

Administrative decisions were handed off to "facilitators," while decisions about missionary strategy would be made by team members familiar with a people group's needs.

"It was obvious the old system was

not going to get the job done," said Gary Inman, former business manager and treasurer for Southern Baptist missionaries in Togo who recently transferred to Senegal to work as business facilitator for the missionary team focused on the Wolof people group.

"After 25 years of work, there were only 25 Christians among 3 million Wolof," he said. "We don't know exactly where this process will take us, but we're excited about it."

Added Larry Verlander, who manages the finances for workers in all three countries: "The single most important thing is that evangelists and church planters will be able to focus more on evangelism and church planting."

**"We were busy maintaining the structure while the Mandinka went to hell."**

Missionary Karen Austin

## Pastor wouldn't let ministry opportunity pass his church by

By Kristi Hodge  
Florida Baptist Witness

CLERMONT, Fla. (BP)—As pastor Danny Davis was driving to church one Sunday, he realized a mission opportunity was passing the church by—literally.

Athletes in training for a triathlon competition were running and biking down Montrose Street, where First Baptist Church of Clermont, Fla., is located.

"The Lord just laid it on my heart right then that we needed to do something to reach out to those athletes," Davis said.

The church hosted a pre-race pasta dinner for triathletes and their families the night before the Florida Challenge Triathlon in Clermont, Sept. 21.

Church members, ranging from teens to senior adults, served 400 dinners in the church's Christian life center.

With Christian music playing in the background, they cooked and served the meals and extended Christian hospitality to guests. Gift packets including printed material that included an explanation of Christianity.

The pre-race meal is a long-standing tradition, but this was the first time it was sponsored by a Christian organization, Davis noted. Many triathletes expressed appreciation for making them feel so welcome, he said.

With the success of this first effort, church members already are talking about hosting an event next year for Clermont's premiere race of the season, the Great Floridian Triathlon, in October.

## Complete Gypsy Bible to be published by next year

By Robert O'Brien  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

PARIS (ABP)—A complete Bible in the Romani (Gypsy) language will roll off the presses sometime next year, completing a joint project of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionaries and the United Bible Societies in the United Kingdom.

"It will be the first authorized translation of the complete Romani Bible to appear, and it's the next logical step in the Scripture ministries of the Fellowship's Gypsy team," said T. Thomas, a CBF missionary based in Paris.

Printing of the complete Bible follows the first printing of a Romani New Testament in 1995, in a joint venture of Virginia Baptists, CBF and the UBS. That printing helped pave the way for new ministry opportunities among 40 million Gypsy people scattered across several continents, Thomas said.

The United Bible Societies and CBF decided to

move ahead with the publishing and distribution of a complete Bible as the initial printing of 3,300 copies of the New Testament began to run low.

Text will come from the only surviving copy of a Romani Old Testament housed at the University of Cambridge library.

Scanning the existing Old Testament into a computer should begin in November, Thomas said. "After that, it can be proofread and printed." Missionary Keith Holmes, a member of the CBF Gypsy team, already has experimented successfully with scanning some chapters.

"Though few funds are currently allotted to this project, we feel that once the word is out interest will grow and the necessary resources will be found," Thomas said.

"This is another turning point in sharing the gospel with the Gypsy people of the world. Now, when people ask, 'When can we have the rest of the Bible in our language?' we can say, 'Soon, very soon.'"

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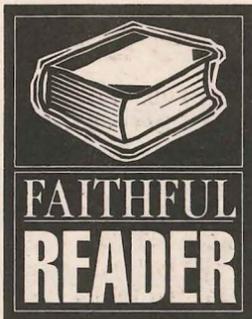
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# BOOKS



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

**What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?** *N.T. Wright. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997. \$14. ♦♦♦♦ (out of five)*

In his latest book, Tom Wright is addressing all those who would claim that Christianity is the invention of its greatest missionary, not a true and faithful witness to Jesus Christ. Wright is passionate in his defense of Paul as a faithful witness to Jesus Christ, not a person on his own mission.

As with all of Wright's books, this book is crisp and intelligent. There is not needless pursuit of scholarly questions, but adequate acknowledgment and exposition.

Wright first establishes the world of Paul. He puts Paul squarely in the world of first-century Judaism, and he defines this world differently than most have grown up hearing in Bible study notes and Sunday school lessons. Following the lead of Ed Sanders, Wright pictures Paul's Judaism not as a religion of law but one of grace. Jews sought to keep the law out of gratitude for being a covenant people by God's grace, rather than keeping the law in order to be worthy of God's salvation.

Wright carries this basic assumption forward to address what Paul "really" said about justification and the cross, and to summarize what Paul's gospel really was if it was not "Get saved by Jesus." Wright presents Paul's understanding of the gospel as the "announcement of Jesus' lordship, which works with power to bring people into the fam-

ily of Abraham, now redefined around Jesus Christ and characterized solely by faith in him."

You may not always agree with Wright's conclusions, but the journey is one of great reward and pleasure. *Wayne Hager*

**Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders.** *Charles Olsen. The Alban Institute, 1995. 189 pages. \$15.75 ♦♦♦♦*

Charles Olsen believes the table around which the governing boards of churches, church-related institutions and non-profits gather should be a "locus for both individual and corporate spiritual formation."

Rather than drudgery, serving on a governing board (or any other committee for that matter) should be viewed as "worshipful work" that is an extension of the Christian calling given to us all.

The model he presents in "Transforming Church Boards" describes "the individual board member ... no longer ... as a political representative, but a spiritual leader. ... The meeting is no longer seen as a litany of reports and decisions held together by 'book-end' prayers, but as 'worshipful work.'"

Olsen proposes that the agenda of church boards and church-based organizations should more closely resemble an order of worship than a 'to-do' list. He suggests when decisions

are made, the group should stop and give thanks. At those moments when conflict or tension is elevating, the board should stop and seek God's direction.

While most of our churches do not have governing boards, much of what he presents could apply to many of our committees.

While the paradigm is exciting, the book suffers from a lack of coherence and clarity at points. *Jim Holladay*

**Speaking of Christianity: Practical Compassion, Social Justice and Other Wonders.** *Robert McAfee Brown. Westminster John Knox Press. 1997. 161 pages. \$14. ♦♦♦♦♦*



Robert McAfee Brown is one of our most compelling writing theologians. He always challenges the status quo and brings the reader to a place of new understanding— if he or she

wants to change.

The breadth of material in this book and the range of topics are staggering. Topics range from war to sex to earthquakes. The book encourages Christians to look at all aspects of their lives and apply their religion. Hence, the wide ranging material.

Brown is a leading expert in liberation theology and that perspective shines through all his writing. If you want to be comfortable with where you are in your Christianity, do not read Brown. If you want to

be challenged, rush to read this latest work. *Wayne Hager*

**Don't Rush the Lord! A Pilgrimage to God's Purpose.** *Kenneth MacHarg. William Carey Library, 1997. 88 pages. \$8.95 ♦♦♦♦*

Written in the style of an extended testimony, "Don't Rush the Lord!" tells Ken MacHarg's story of accepting and living out God's call to world missions. In the middle of an often rambling style, the reader will find any number of thought-provoking gems.

MacHarg, who for more than eight years served as executive director of the Kentuckiana Interfaith Community in Louisville, currently is a missionary with HCJB, a world-wide radio mission. Broadcasting from Quito, Ecuador, HCJB uses short-wave radio to broadcast a variety of religious-based programs in dozens of languages all over the world.

At one point, MacHarg tells the story of some native Brazilians in a village that never has had a missionary to present the gospel. Nevertheless, a fully-functioning church exists there. As he told the story, I could picture a group of Christians gathered around the radio, not only for news and inspiration, but also for Christian education and leadership training.

MacHarg's story provides an intimate portrait of missionary life. Particularly helpful was his portrait of the prayer needs of missionaries.

MacHarg's personal story gives an unusual glimpse into the joys, struggles and day-to-day life of those serving God through the world missions endeavor. *Jim Holladay*

## Ryan Stelk

By Robert Dunston

Ryan Stelk, the son of Warren and Terri Stelk of McMinnville, Tenn., served this summer in the Cochise Association in Arizona. His responsibilities during the summer were numerous and varied.

Stelk taught in seven vacation Bible schools, painted bathrooms at a ranchers' camp and did follow-up VBS visitation as well as door-to-door visitation. At one church, he even constructed a float for the Fourth of July parade and won the prize for best float. In another community he assisted in a baptism service in which the new converts were immersed in a horse trough.

Most of the churches in which Stelk worked were small, with only 10 or so regular members. Yet in the first vacation Bible school, 27 children accepted Christ as their personal Savior. Stelk sparkles as he talks about the children.

In one home where he stayed, a single mother was doing her best to raise a teenage son. She was thankful to have a good male role model for her son, and Stelk relished the experience, growing quite close to the family. While staying with them, the electricity went out and he and the son travelled 30 miles to

take a shower and bring back water for the needs of the home for the day.

Stelk said his summer helped him in two ways. First, before his summer missionary experience he had felt drawn toward youth ministry. Now he is certain God has called him to work with youth.

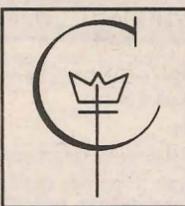
Second, Stelk learned how to share his Christian faith with confidence. "I know how to evangelize now," he said. "So I am looking for more opportunities. God has provided opportunities to present the plan of salvation since I've gotten back to college." Stelk has learned that when God calls people to do something, he gives them the strength to

complete their task. Stelk called his summer an adventure. He never knew what he might be called upon to do next, but God always helped him to accomplish what needed to be done, he said. Stelk learned the importance and excitement of missions work.

His excitement is contagious. We know God will touch many lives through Stelk's enthusiasm and dedication to Christ.

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

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



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# LEADERSHIP

## ANNUITY

### Six basic truths about investing

By Don Spencer

What is an investment? It is when you put your money to work for you.

Savings accounts and CDs are generally safer, however their return is usually less. An investment will have increased risk and volatility but will generally provide increased earnings. You need both savings and investments.

Here are six basic truths about investing.

■ *Most investments fluctuate in value.* Fear and greed often determine short-time values of stocks. Don't be overly concerned about short-term "ups and downs." Invest for the long term.

■ *Use time, not timing.* Even the experts rarely time the market correctly. Just when they agree on the direction of the market, it often moves the opposite way. Those trying to time the market often do the wrong thing at the wrong time. However, those who keep time on their side by investing for the long term, generally profit. Be patient. Do not overreact.

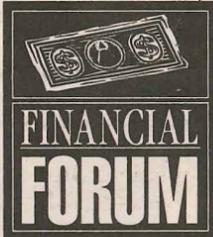
■ *Bank CDs and savings accounts will not make you rich.* It happens too often. A person puts his or her money in CDs or savings accounts to reduce risk. After taxes and inflation, the person ends up with a dollar amount that is lower in terms of real buying power. For the long-term, it is generally better to invest for growth to offset the effects of taxes and inflation.

■ *Your portfolio is more important than any single investment.* No one can expect every investment to grow dramatically. But, you expect reasonable growth from a total mix of investments, also known as your portfolio.

■ *It pays to diversify.* "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." Use a mix of investments with differing levels of risk. This reduces the volatility of one's total portfolio.

■ *Christians should invest their money.* Many of Jesus' parables deal with stewardship. Appropriate investing is a part of a Christian's total stewardship. (Matt. 25:14-30)

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



## Pollsters say surveys can help churches

NASHVILLE (BP)—Opinion polls can be an important tool for church leaders in their ministry and program planning, said officials with two national polling firms.

"I'm a big believer in survey research, even in a church or mission setting," said Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of the Gallup Poll, Princeton, N.J. "It's very useful for leaders to have an idea of the attitudes and opinions of the people they're trying to serve."

But in a church setting—unlike on a national basis—it may be better to do a census, which is a poll of the entire membership, Newport said. "That means every single person in the church receives a survey to fill out."

A poll of the unchurched also can be valuable to a congregation seeking to reach out to its community, said David Kinnaman, research director for Barna Research Group, Oxnard, Calif.

"The types of information a church might typically use would include understanding the background characteristics of people in a ministry area or the lifestyles and daily preferences of people in the community," Kinnaman said.

Particularly for a larger congregation, which might better be able to fund a representative poll of its community, opinion polls can be especially valuable, Newport suggested. "You can find out what the needs are of people who don't attend your church and how your church and its programs are perceived."

## Bisagno: Music the hottest issue in churches today

By Dan Martin  
Baptist General Convention of Texas

RIDGECREST, N.C. (ABP)—The tension between traditional services and contemporary praise and worship style is one of the most explosive issues in churches today, said Texas pastor John Bisagno.

The pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston told a recent conference at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in North Carolina that churches face two potential tragedies.

"The first is that we forget the great music of the hymns of the church and the other is that we try to resist the tidal wave of the new praise music that is here to stay."

Bisagno said the charismatic movement has "stolen" millions of Southern Baptists not with its theology but by appealing to people's hearts while many Baptist churches "bottle up" their emotions in worship.

"We have said 'no' to emotion and 'no' to expression, and finally that bottled-up expression and emotion have burst forth and there is a tidal wave of excitement in the new music that is everywhere," Bisagno said.

Bisagno, a longtime pastor and former music director, said solid teaching and exuberant worship are not mutually exclusive.

"I think we can go to a church where we have both sound doctrine and a good time. I am glad that we have discovered guitars and drums and 'getting with it,'" Bisagno said.

Bisagno said style is not as important as the content of worship.

Bisagno noted that King David "one day danced before the Lord." When his wife ridiculed him, the Bible says he stopped and told her: "You have no right to judge me because my worship is not unto you. It is from my heart and it is unto my God."

He quoted the author Elmer Towns, who said

"worship is an act which takes us from where we are to where we want to be and where God wants us to be; the communication is imperative, but the mode of transportation is not."

"Some people worship God in cathedrals with rich traditional tones of the organ and the classical music of Europe. They travel in a Mercedes," Bisagno said, borrowing Towns' analogy. "Others worship God in simple wooden churches with a steeple pointing heavenward. They sing the gospel songs of Charles Wesley and Fanny Crosby. They travel in a Ford or a Chevy."

Bisagno continued that some people worship with contemporary sounds of praise music with a gentle beat, "traveling" in a convertible sports coupe.

"But some worship God with the whine of a guitar and amplifiers to the max. These are the ones who travel on a motorcycle without a muffler."

"But they all arrive at the same destination if they all worship God from the heart."

The Houston pastor said "a pastor can do no greater service to his congregation than teaching them how to worship."

"I have wondered why, in the worship of the Bible, the Lord saw fit to preserve the words in the Psalms but not the music," he said. "Maybe it was because he knew that every generation would write its own music."

"And, you know, folks, things do change. If they didn't we would be singing Gregorian chants," he added.

"We are 180 degrees off base when we try to make music the issue of what is worship and what is not worship," Bisagno said.

The only test of worship in the Bible is Jesus' saying that people should worship God in spirit and in truth, Bisagno said. "If music were important, he would have mentioned it. Case closed."

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**SEEKING:** Part-time minister of music. Send resumé to: Search Committee, New Bethel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 100, Verona, KY 41092.

**NEEDED:** Area representative for finding and screening host families to host foreign exchange teenagers during their 10-month and 5-month stays in your area. AR is the contact person with local high schools and the contact person for the students and families. Excellent supplemental income opportunity for homemakers, teachers, retired people and anyone who enjoys working with teenagers and people. Need contact to start immediately as 5-month students arrive in mid-January. Call (800) 981-6801 today for application.

**SEEKING:** Campbellsville Baptist Church is now accepting resúmes for a full-time minister of students. Seminary degree preferred. Send resumé to: Search Committee, Campbellsville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 530, Campbellsville, KY 42719-0530.

**SEEKING:** First Baptist Church of Louisa, Ky., is searching for a full-time minister of youth. Send resumé to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 301 West Pike St., Louisa, KY 41230, or fax: (606) 686-3072.

**AVAILABLE:** For pastor or interim. Lewis Holloway, 2599 East Valley Road, Jasper, TN 37347.

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

**MEDICAL:** Diabetics with Medicare or insurance, get your diabetic supplies mailed to your home. Insulin-dependent only call: (800) 337-4144.

**SEEKING:** Minister of music/outreach for Northern Kentucky Southern Baptist church. Resúmes must be received by Nov. 15. Grant's Lick Baptist Church, 175 W. Clay Ridge Road, Alexandria, KY 41001. Call (606) 635-2444. Dr. Paul E. Broyles, pastor-teacher.

**TOUR:** 12 days Israel and Egypt including Mt. Sinai, March 28-Apr. 8. Only \$2,289 from your area. Call for brochure: (502) 247-8331. Jack R. Studie. Experience you can trust.

**WANTED:** Used handbells. Please contact Bagdad Baptist Church at (502) 747-8933. If no answer, please leave a message.

**SEEKING:** Youth minister at Fairlane Baptist Church in Grants Lick, Ky. Please contact Jim Macht at (606) 635-1973 after 6 p.m.

**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.

**SEEKING:** A well-established, dynamic, growing Southern Baptist church is seeking a full-time minister of youth and activities. Candidates with a Master's in Religious Education and previous experience preferred. Interested persons may submit a resumé by Oct. 31 to: Second Baptist Church, Youth Search Committee, 720 West Seventh St., Hopkinsville, KY 42240.

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

**FOR SALE:** Baldwin Interlude Organ. Like-new—includes bench and instructions; \$995. Great Christmas gift or nice organ for a small church. Springdale Church, 4601 Springdale Road, Louisville, Ky. (502) 228-7726.

# PEOPLE

## PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ The Baptist Convention of New England annual meeting, Nov. 6-7, in Portland, Maine.

■ An inter-denominational prayer conference led by T.W. Hunt which will follow the BCNE annual meeting Nov. 7 in Portland, Maine.

■ James Wideman, new associational missionary for Green Mountain Baptist Association in Vermont.

■ Former Georgetown College professors Jim and Ruth Heizer as they teach in Russia.

■ Missionary kids in Russia.

## Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Ann Tatum

■ CADIZ—Bill Hart, pastor at Rock Front Church, will be ordained to the gospel ministry at New Hope Church Nov. 9.

■ CUMBERLAND—Central Church will hold revival services Nov. 5-8. Dave Hammond, pastor of Faith Church in Myra, is speaker.

■ DAWSON SPRINGS—First Church called Randell Rogers as pastor. He previously was pastor at First Church in Gordonsville, Tenn. He began his new ministry Oct. 19.

■ ELKTON—Pleasant View Church recently called Will Stone as pastor. He was ordained to the ministry at Henderson Memorial Church in Hopkinsville.

■ FAIRVIEW—Bethel Church recently called Ron Hicks as pastor. He was ordained to the ministry at Henderson Memorial Church in Hopkinsville.

■ FRANKFORT—Immanuel Church will ordain Karen Dungan

and David Wicker as deacons Nov. 2.

■ GREENSBURG—Greensburg Church recently called Ben Martin as youth minister. He is a student at Campbellsville University.

■ HOPKINSVILLE—Henderson Memorial Church recently ordained Jerome Jones and Brian Embry as deacons.

■ LEXINGTON—Grace Church honored Minister of Music Aaron Reed on his 10th anniversary Oct. 12. Terry Freeman is pastor.

■ LOUISVILLE—Fern Creek/Highview United Ministries' adult day care center hosted an open house Oct. 23 to celebrate its seventh anniversary. Call Ron Loughry at (502) 239-7431 for more information on the center.

Louie Bailey recently celebrated his 13th anniversary as minister of music at Crescent Hill Church.

Gethsemane Church called Jim Stanifer as minister of discipleship. He began his new ministry Oct. 5.



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## Sunshine

Several years ago when I was still working in the dorms, a student asked me if I had checked his room recently. When I told him that I had, he seemed a little confused. He suggested that I check his room again, "very carefully."

I made a second trip to his room and looked for anything unusual. After school that day, this student came to me again and asked if I had found anything. I told him no and asked if I was looking for something large or small. This student assured me that if I checked the room "very carefully," I would surely find something that did not belong there.

I made my third trip to his room, and I saw something move on the bed. I quickly realized that the movement came from the tail of a puppy.

Students are not allowed to have pets in the dorms, but one of the boys in this room had successfully hidden this pup in his foot locker for several weeks. The student who tipped me off was concerned that he and the other boys in the room would get into trouble for having the dog.

I picked the little dog up and began to wonder what to do with it.

Space does not permit me to give all of the details of trying to find this puppy a new owner. I will simply tell you that I finally did what I had done many times as a kid; I took her home. My children were happy. My wife was not as enthused. I named this pup "Sunshine" because she made me smile and brought a lot of sunshine into my life.

If you have been to our campus in the last six or seven years, you may very well have seen Sunshine hanging around the chapel building. She has learned that she will see a lot more of me there

than she will at home.

I have learned a lot from this old dog. She is always anxious to be with me and seeks my attention. When I do not readily acknowledge her presence, she will nudge my hand with her nose. I find God to be that way too; always seeking fellowship with me and wanting my attention. When I ignore God, he will also give me a little nudge to remind me he is there.

I also have seen, as every dog owner has, that when I give Sunshine a little affection she is very excited and happy to receive it. Likewise, God seeks my attention and is happy when I acknowledge his presence in my life.

I often wonder how many of our students "hang around" because they seek my attention. They want so much for someone—anyone—to notice them. They want to interact with me, and in fact crave for me to acknowledge them. And occasionally, if I do not take notice of their presence, they have to "nudge" me a little. The irony is that even though I try to show them my concern for their needs, I discover that I am

being as encouraged as they are. When I try to show a little kindness to them, they in turn brighten my day and give me a smile.

It is sad to think of how much time we spend away from God, not taking notice of his presence. He wants so much to make us happy and brighten our days if we will only give him a little of our time.

Please pray for our faculty, staff and for me, that we will find time in our daily routines for God and the students we are privileged to care for.

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

## THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

■ OWENSBORO—Buena Vista Church called Michael Rust as pastor. He will begin his new ministry Oct. 29. Rust previously was pastor at Blackford Church in Hawesville.

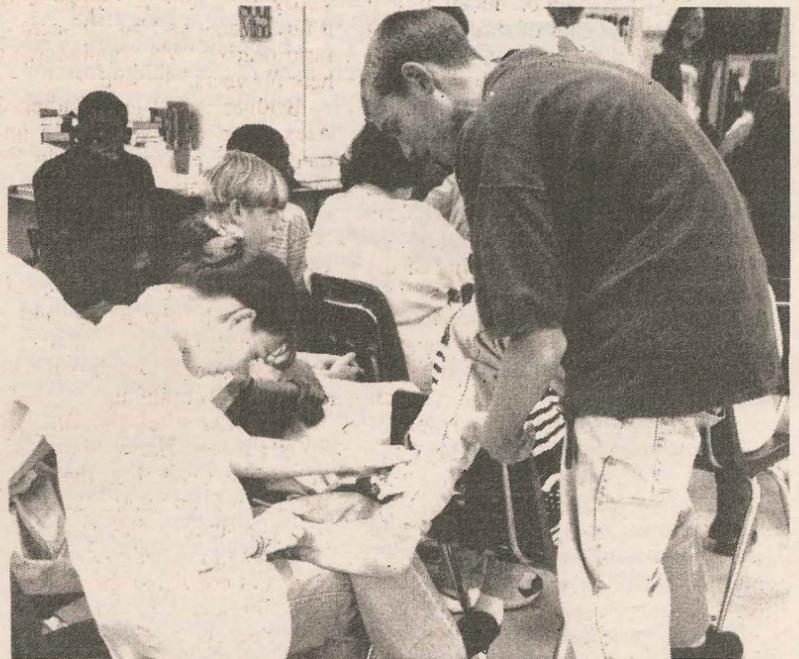
■ RADCLIFF—Stithon Church will present "Bible Blast" for children ages newborn through fifth grade Oct. 31, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., as an alternative to Halloween. Games and refreshments will be included. Call (502) 351-6055 for

more information.

■ RUSSELL SPRINGS—Welfare Church recently called Chris Blevins as pastor. He is a student at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College.

■ SUMMERSVILLE—Kevin Byrd recently resigned as pastor at Summersville Church.

■ VERSAILLES—Versailles Church ordained Mark Cunningham, Gary Dowell and Mark Parrott as deacons Oct. 12.



**FOOT SIGNING** Students at Oneida Baptist Institute participate in a "foot signing" game at a recent campus ministry retreat. Forty students made professions of faith in Jesus Christ during the fall revival at Oneida Baptist Church. The institute's campus ministry then sponsored a one-day follow-up retreat for new Christians. The retreat featured speakers on such topics as what it means to be "a new creation in Christ," spiritual warfare and daily Bible study.

## Work to make things work

The Kentucky Baptist Convention church growth division report on "The Healthy Church" states, "Congregations that are growing incarnationally are reaching out in ministry to people beyond their church doors."

Darrell Fletcher, a 1984 Clear Creek alumnus, demonstrates this as pastor of Green Valley Church in Lebanon, Va.

Some say the area has a "depressed coal economy" but the church has added 300 members in the last four and a half years. In 1993-94, 60 members stepped out on faith to build an auditorium valued at \$1.8 million. More than 500 people from four Southern Baptist Convention agencies and several states donated labor.

The church parking lot was transformed into a campground.

Pastor Fletcher attributes the growth to a "working of the Lord." Yet he quickly adds, "A church has to care for people. You have to be there." Church facilities are available without charge for community funerals and weddings. The church's Women's Missionary Union has six groups of five women that prepare meals in times of grief or hospitalization.

A men's group cuts and hauls wood. The church youth had a "True Love Waits" emphasis that impacted the local high school.

"Experiencing God" also helped transform our church," Fletcher said. He led the deacons through the study, and now seven deacon-led groups involve 60 people.

Fletcher's church is 30 miles from the dairy farm he operated when he said God called him to preach. He sold the cows, leased the land and moved to Clear Creek. Now he enjoys the land as a hobby. Church members include classmates and former high school teachers.

Fletcher remembers the evangelism emphasis during his days at Clear Creek. He said he is most grateful for the capable professors.

"The housing wasn't the best, but that isn't important," he said. "At Clear Creek I learned some things that will work, but we were also taught to work. Having an education and a degree will not make a church grow."

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

## CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

## What was 'intended for evil, God turned into good'

By Bruce Nolan  
Religion News Service

JOHNSTON STATION, Miss. (RNS)—Four and a half years after three teen-agers torched its predecessor in the middle of the night, members of Rocky Point Missionary Baptist Church dedicated a new, bigger church Oct. 5, built on donations and the volunteer labor of strangers from cities around the country.

Worshippers gathered in a new brick church filled with the aroma of fresh wood and fabric, its needle-like white steeple blazing in the clear afternoon sun. Air-conditioning made the familiar old paper fans obsolete; gleaming new lighting fixtures dangled from a cathedral ceiling of exposed timber.

Nearby, a section of scorched concrete slab was the only evidence arsonists had burned down the 100-year-old congregation's church. Rocky Point was one of two predominantly black churches set ablaze that night.

"What (they) intended for evil, God turned into good," Gary Knight, a Mississippi Methodist church official who helped in the rebuilding effort, told a crowd of friends and well-wishers who spilled out of the church and onto the red-dirt parking lot.

Rebuilding Rocky Point became such a project that at its completion, friends and well-wishers swamped the congregation of 50 or so. Outside the new building, tents shaded tables laden with potato salad, vegetables, cakes and pies to feed the more than 200

guests.

Many were from Asia Baptist Church in New Orleans, whose pastor, Zebadee Bridges, 71, grew up near Rocky Point and shepherded the reconstruction.

Bridges left Mississippi for New Orleans at 19 when boll weevils destroyed his family's cotton crop, he said. He still returns frequently to visit family and tend his 200-acre cattle farm nearby. "My people have been here for years," he said.

Bridges' great-grandfather, John Alexander, a slave, lies in an unmarked grave somewhere in Rocky Point's churchyard, he said. Alexander's children lie elsewhere under cedars and small oaks in the same yard.

Last fall, Bridges and a local pastor, Luther McEwen, got behind efforts to rebuild Rocky Point.

By that time the church had lost more than its building.

The year after the fire, Rocky Point's pastor, Henry Manning, died of a stroke. Leaderless, the congregation fell into an internal struggle that paralyzed the rebuilding project.

Meanwhile authorities arrested, tried and convicted three local teenagers for setting fire to Rocky Point. Two were sentenced to 37 months in prison; the third got 46 months because of a prior criminal record.

After the fire, church members hired McEwen as an interim pastor. They worshipped Sunday afternoons in the borrowed Collins Grove Baptist Church, but no rebuilding plans were under way.

Bridges said he learned on a visit last year that the congregation's plans to rebuild their church had broken down. Bridges and McEwen began making telephone calls.

Soon, he said, they tapped into the growing national response to aid dozens of Southern churches, most of them with black congregations, burned down during a four-year period. Authorities said the epidemic of arson appeared to be the product of people acting independently and only linked—in some cases—by racist animosities.

In time, strangers lined up to help Rocky Point.

International Paper Co. donated much of the lumber in the new church. The National Council of Churches provided more than \$43,000 and sent a representative from New York to the dedication ceremonies.

Neighbors contributed \$32,000 to an account at a local bank, including one donation of \$5,000 from the father of one of the arsonists, Bridges said.

More tangibly, teams of volunteers from around the country appeared during the summer to donate skilled labor.

An interfaith group of Christians and Jews from Philadelphia did much of the interior carpentry. Methodist work groups from Iowa and Louisiana painted and hung drywall. Their work was coordinated and the teams were housed for free at a nearby Presbyterian church in McComb, Miss.

At the ceremonies, Knight turned over a check for \$25,000 from a Meth-



odist relief agency. It appeared to be enough, Bridges said, to make the church debt free.

"It's been a struggle," he said before the service. "But they (church members) can take it from here. I told them, we've built you a church building. Now you have to build the church."

**REBUILT** Worshipers gather for the rededication of the Rocky Point Missionary Baptist Church in Johnston Station, Miss., which was built on donations and volunteer labor after the original 100-year-old church was torched by arsonists. (RNS photo)

## Groups keeping tabs on false aluminum collection rumor

By James Dotson  
SBC North American Mission Board

ATLANTA (BP)—Ever pulled the pop-tab off the top of an aluminum soft-drink can?

Thousands have—including church members—often in response to well-intentioned drives to collect the tabs for kidney dialysis or other causes.

The only problem is, there are no such programs, and recycling agents say church and civic groups interested in recycling aluminum for charitable purposes would be better off selling the entire can for more money and less effort.

Similar to the recurring rumors re-

garding the Procter & Gamble Co. logo or Madalyn Murray O'Hair's supposed efforts to halt religious broadcasting, the aluminum can-tab story has been recurring for years with no basis in truth, according to Reynolds Aluminum Recycling Company and the National Kidney Foundation.

The most popular version of the story goes that the tabs can be exchanged for time on a kidney dialysis machine for someone with kidney disease. "Many well-intentioned yet misinformed groups and individuals collected pull tabs only to find that there was no pull tab/kidney dialysis donation program," according to a Reynolds brochure. "It never existed.

Anywhere."

Kidney dialysis is actually funded for everyone by the federal Medicare program, said Jenni Palocsik, a spokesman for the National Kidney Foundation of Georgia.

In other versions, tabs are collected for chemotherapy or other medical treatments.

Among groups collecting tabs have been Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action—Southern Baptist missions education organizations that emphasize hands-on missions projects.

For groups considering collecting or currently collecting tabs, one alternative is to turn the project into a recycling drive for all aluminum prod-

ucts. The Royal Ambassadors "Opportunity Now" program, which raises money for Southern Baptist disaster relief efforts, suggests an aluminum recycling drive as one option.

"When the kids watch TV and they see relief efforts going on, they can say, 'I took part in that,'" said Ben Kelley, director of development for the North American Mission Board, who administers the program. Proceeds are distributed around the country as disaster relief needs arise.

Also, under the "Keep Tabs on Your Cans" campaign, Reynolds Aluminum Recycling Company will donate proceeds from aluminum donated at its centers directly to the National Kidney Foundation's local chapters.

## Churches build house for ministry to invisible victims of crime

ABILENE, Texas (ABP)—Criminals and their victims often grab headlines, but Baptists in Abilene, Texas, are preparing a ministry for the invisible victims of crime.

That ministry—a hospitality house for families of prison inmates—will also stand as a monument to the spirit of Baptists who cooperate at the grassroots level despite much publicized differences that have divided Southern Baptists.

The Abilene Hospitality House will include free use of 40 beds and cooking and laundry facilities for family members who visit inmates at two

facilities of the Texas Department of Corrections.

A \$100,000 gift last year from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship "encouraged our committee, helped us get started on the project and gave us credibility with foundations and donors," said Phil Christopher, pastor of First Baptist Church in Abilene and president of the hospitality house board of directors.

More than \$300,000 in other gifts have come since from foundations, churches, individual donors and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Support from people with differ-

ing views of Southern Baptist Convention and Fellowship causes has not divided Baptists in the Abilene Baptist Association, Christopher said. "We're all here to minister to those who need it, the least of the least," he said. "These people are often shunned. They feel overwhelmed by crime. If we can help just one child with self esteem, if we can break the cycle of crime in his or her life, it will all be worth it."

Families, mostly young women with small children, travel far, usually by bus and with little or no money, to visit a husband or relative.

Christopher envisions the hospitality house standing as a silent sermon in plain view of inmates out working in the fields. He wants them to see it "as a sign of hope and as a tangible expression of the love of Christ and of the community of faith."

That's already begun to happen. A prison choir came to the ground breaking in September and sang, "Bless This House."

"I went up to thank them," Christopher said, "but they replied, 'We want to thank you. People in the prison know what you're doing and we're grateful.'"

**Christopher envisions the hospitality house standing as a silent sermon in plain view of inmates out working in the fields.**

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*Todd Buck, Radio/Sound Technician  
4th year student  
Ketchikan, Alaska*



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