

FOR THE RECORD

Kentucky Baptist churches fired fewer pastors last year

Baptists
The Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee will evaluate changing the convention's name. *Page 2.*

Hall of Famer
Former NFL star Raymond Berry says his notoriety has allowed him to share Christianity with others. *Page 3.*

Editorial
Reflections one year after the Promise Keepers "Stand in the Gap" rally. *Page 5.*

Resources
Family Forum asks, "Should I make my child get dressed up for church?" *Page 6.*

Church identity
A survey finds that pastors and members often differ greatly in their perceptions about the church. *Page 9.*

Clinton
Two of the president's spiritual advisers speak about what they're doing. *Page 9.*

World
A dozen Chinese house church leaders have taken the surprising action of publicly criticizing the government for persecuting their congregations. *Page 11.*

Books
Reviews include Max Lucado's "Just Like Jesus" and "The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis." *Page 13.*

LOUISVILLE—Fewer Kentucky Baptist churches fired their pastors in 1997 than the previous year, but don't expect that trend to continue for 1998.

Last year, 50 Kentucky churches fired ministers, according to the Kentucky Baptist Convention's minister-church support division. (Ten were bivocational; 40 were full-time.)

That's a 46 percent drop from 1996, when 92 Kentucky Baptist ministers were fired. (Thirty-eight were bivocational; 54 were full-time.)

Division Director Guy Futral is at a loss to explain the drop. "I wish I did have some guesses about it," he said. "It's just anybody's guess as to why it is."

And Futral said he already is hearing from churches that the number

likely will be back up at the end of 1998. "I wouldn't expect things to be down again. It's not something we've seen that's just going wonderfully."

Last year's drop followed a national trend among Southern Baptist churches, according to statistics from LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

According to LeaderCare, a ministry of LifeWay, 892 pastors were removed from their leadership roles in Southern Baptist churches in 1997. That was a 29 percent drop from the 1,259 forced terminations reported in 1996.

The number of full-time pastors who were fired dropped from 818 in 1996 to 607 in 1997. Instances of bivocational pastors forced to leave

their pulpits declined from 441 to 285.

That survey also found that while the number of firings dropped, the reasons for firings have not changed in recent years.

"The top reason for firing pastors is still one of control—who is going to run the church," said Norris Smith, a consultant with LeaderCare.

"Following that, in order of frequency, are poor people skills on the part of the pastor, the church's resistance to change, a pastoral leadership style that is too strong and a church already in conflict when the pastor arrived," he said.

Other reasons cited by churches include a weak pastoral leadership style, the pastor's administrative incompetence, declines in attendance,

pastoral conflict with other staff, sexual misconduct, a tenure perceived as too long, ethical misconduct related to finances or other dishonesty, disagreement over doctrine and rapid growth.

Smith said while no dominant factor emerges in analyzing reasons for the decline, state church-minister relations directors and LifeWay's LeaderCare consultants offered several contributing factors, listed in no particular order of importance:

■ Better training for church pastor search committees.

■ The use of intentional interims helps conflicted congregations to heal.

■ The number of seminars on the subject of church conflict has increased.

□ See Fewer pastors fired ..., page 3

Fewer teens say they are having sex

ATLANTA (RNS)—After 20 years of steady growth in the rate of sexual intercourse among teens, more teenagers are refraining from sex, a federal study has found.

The proportion of U.S. high school students who have had sex dropped 11 percent during the 1990s, the study reports. Young people also are less likely to have multiple sex partners and more likely to use condoms, the Washington Post reported.

The decrease marks the first time in the 1990s that fewer than half of the country's high school students said they have had sex.

According to the survey, which was produced by the Centers for Disease Control, slightly less than 49 percent of young males reported that they had sexual experience, down from more than 57 percent in 1991. Slightly less than 48 percent of girls reported sexual experience, down from 51 percent.

The study sought to measure the degree to which high school students are at risk of becoming pregnant or of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS.

It found that nearly 57 percent of sexually active young people had used a condom the last time they had intercourse, compared with about 46 percent in 1991. In the same period, the number of sexually active youth stating they had four or more sexual partners in their lifetime lowered from close to 19 percent to 16 percent.

Janet Collins, an author of the study and a CDC psychologist, said the figures "certainly reinforce that something important is turning around here, and it's heading in the right direction."

But she and other researchers warned that teenage pregnancy is still more common in the United States than in other industrialized countries. Annually, 1 million teenagers become pregnant and there are 3 million cases of sexually transmitted diseases among teens.

Video taped in Kentucky to help kids learn the Bible

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

LOUISVILLE—If a purple dinosaur can teach kids manners, then a yellow bear should be able to help children learn about the Bible.

At least that's what Leslie Burke hopes will happen in Kentucky with the help of Benny Beloved.

The bright yellow and orange, life-sized bear is the centerpiece of a new children's video the Louisville businesswoman expects to release in October.

"Benny Beloved's Mystery Party" is a 45-minute production, about half of it featuring biblically-based songs.

Scripture-based lessons will include the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31), prayer requests (Matthew 7:7), God's love (Ephesians 3:18), God's power available to believers (Mark 9:23) and the gospel message (John 3:16).

A longtime member of Lyndon Baptist Church, Burke said the idea for the video originated with her efforts to memorize new Bible verses a year ago.

The practice originated in her childhood through her grandmothers, one of whom who was married to a Baptist pastor.

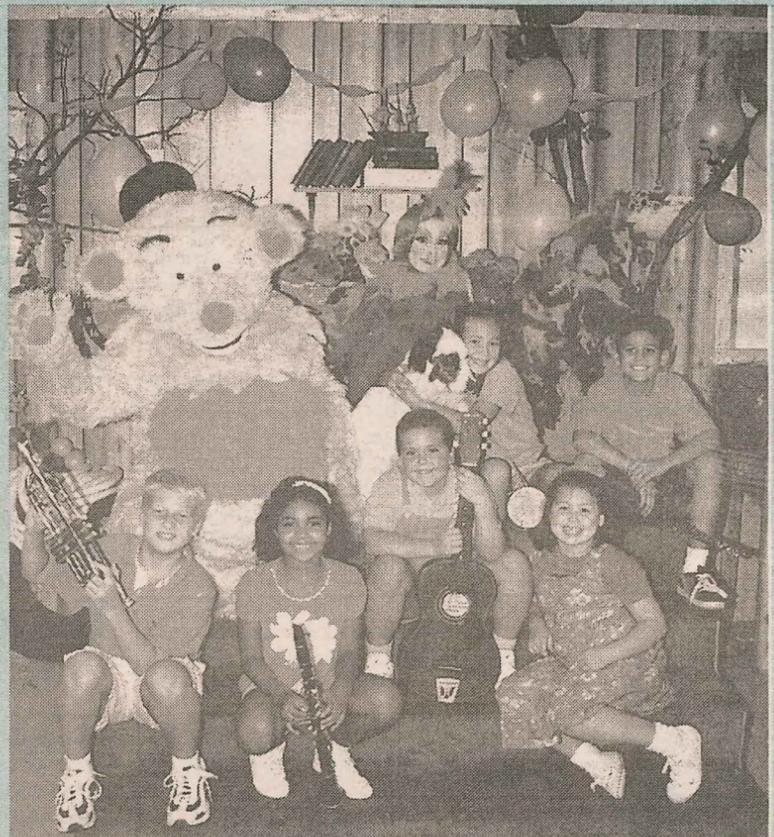
"I was joking that if I could write some cute little songs, I could remember the Scriptures better," she said. Soon after, the idea for a singing bear came to her as she was cleaning house.

She even named the character from the Bible after noticing a reference in Deuteronomy 33:12, "About Benjamin he said: 'Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long.'"

The theme song for the first video is "Jesus Loves Everyone."

"What I want Benny Beloved to stand for is love, compassion and kindness," she said. "That's one of the qualities I want kids to have."

The story line revolves around an



BENNY BELOVED Leslie Burke developed the idea of a bear that teaches Bible lessons after she was trying to learn Bible verses. "What I want Benny Beloved to stand for is love, compassion and kindness. That's one of the qualities I want kids to have," she said.

alligator, giraffe and other animals who are invited to a party at Benny's "cubhouse." The cast includes about 45 children, some of whom attend Kentucky Baptist churches.

While an experienced entrepreneur, Burke never had filmed a video before. Her partner in the venture, Carla Quinn, also is a member of Lyndon Baptist.

Burke credits God with leading them to the right videographer, people to coordinate costume design and others who helped with filming.

Her sister, Robin Burke, a secretary in the Kentucky Baptist Convention's student department, directed the video. Leslie Burke wrote the script and music, while Quinn han-

dled many logistical details.

Initially, the pair plan to distribute the products through direct marketing to churches and advertising on a Louisville cable TV channel.

The group has designed a web site (www.bennybeloved.com) that contains a kids' pledge, monthly missions activities and suggestions to carry out Benny's teachings.

"I think it has an overall positive presentation," she said. "It gives children an opportunity to know the Bible and learn its message at a younger age."

More information about the project and their products is available from Leslie Burke at (888) 493-9616.

Moving? See page 4 (0929)

BAPTIST BITS

■ **Bob Ballance**, pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, has been named editor of *Baptists Today*, an independent national newspaper serving the Baptist community. Ballance, 40, is a former North Carolina pastor. Beginning with the October issue, the newspaper's board of directors has executed a management agreement with Smyth & Helwys Publishers, and the paper will be operated from the publisher's headquarters in Macon, Ga.

■ **The Alliance of Baptists** has become an endorsing entity for all chaplains except those in the military. That was among the many actions taken during the group's board of directors meeting Sept. 17-19 at First Baptist Church in Washington. The board authorized a four-member endorsement committee to oversee implementation. To be endorsed, a candidate must be an individual member of the Alliance and provide all the materials requested in the application to the satisfaction of the committee.

Executive Committee to evaluate SBC's name in February

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

NASHVILLE (ABP)—Leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention have opened discussion on possibly changing the name of the nation's largest Protestant denomination. The SBC Executive Committee, meeting Sept. 21-22 in Nashville, postponed consideration on two motions related to renaming the convention, giving staff time to research whether there is sufficient interest to warrant a full-blown feasibility study on the matter.

One motion made at last summer's SBC annual meeting in Salt Lake City calls for a feasibility study on changing the name of the convention, with a recommendation to come at next year's meeting. Another pending motion asks directly that the convention change to a specific name, the Baptist Convention of North America.

Both motions were referred to the Executive Committee. A subcommittee discussed the issue at length before recommending in a plenary session that no action be taken on either motion, affirming a 1974 study which found that most Southern Baptists were against changing the convention's name.

But Blaine Barber, a pastor in Michigan, noted the seven people conducting the 1974 study were Southerners and that the convention's demographics have changed in 24 years. He substituted a motion asking the Executive Committee to postpone consideration of the matter until February.

The Executive Committee approved Barber's motion to postpone action until its February meeting. In the meantime, Executive Committee staff will gather information "to see if there is the foundation for a feasibility study," said Augie Boto, vice president for convention policy.

Among issues that will be considered in the staff study is what impact the Southern Baptist name has on the convention's work, particularly in areas outside the Bible Belt. During discussion in the administrative subcommittee, Executive Committee members from the North and West said the regional designation is a hindrance to them.

Others said the Southern Baptist name is a plus, citing recent publicity about convention stances including the Disney boycott and a declaration that wives ought to submit to the spiritual leadership of their husbands. Background information provided to Executive Committee members observed that the term Southern Baptist has become "a virtual icon of moral conservatism, belief in the historicity of the entire Bible and missionary zeal," particularly since the "conservative resurgence" leadership changes during the 1980s.

Some members suggested that negative attitudes toward Southern Baptists probably stem more from opposition to the convention's beliefs than to the name. They suggested a name change would be expensive and would have minimal impact on the SBC's image.

Others said they were concerned that if the SBC were renamed, another group might co-opt the "Southern Baptist" designation. One member mentioned the prospect of confusion that would occur should the rival moderate group Cooperative Baptist Fellowship change its name to Southern Baptist Convention.

The Executive Committee's legal counsel said changing the convention's name would be more complicated than the relatively simple process of renaming several convention entities two years ago. Chartered in Georgia, the SBC is exempt from regulations governing other corporations because its charter predates the state's current non-profit act. Should the SBC

change its charter, however, it would be required to meet current regulations, including requirements that it have a board of directors and members, the attorney said.

Currently the convention has no central board of directors; entities are governed by separate boards of trustees. The Executive Committee functions for the convention between annual sessions, but its powers are limited. The convention proper is composed of the "messengers," elected by local churches, who attend the annual meeting.

Founded in 1845 in a split with Northern Baptists over slavery, the original name proposed for SBC was the "Southern and Southwestern Baptist Convention." While still strongest in the Deep South, the convention has since World War II expanded aggressively into "pioneer" or new-work areas including all 50 states, Canada and U.S. territories.

Baptists in the North long ago removed the regional reference from their convention name, renaming themselves the American Baptist Convention in 1950 and changing the name again in 1972 to American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

Southern Baptists have considered similar action several times. SBC motions on the subject were referred to the Executive Committee in 1974, 1983, 1989 and 1990. In 1974, the convention established a "Committee of Seven" to explore the issue. Among those serving on that committee was C.R. Daley, then editor of the *Western Recorder*.

The committee issued a report at the 1975 annual meeting recommending that the convention's name not be changed, citing factors including opinion polls which found that "the vast majority of Southern Baptists are strongly against any name change."

But Barber said he reviewed surveys used by the 1974 committee and concluded they were biased toward

Southerners. The committee relied mainly on a mail survey sent to 959 people, Barber said. Of the 487 people who returned the survey, 93.5 percent were from the South.

In other action at the September meeting, the Executive Committee:

■ Declined to recommend a name change for the Cooperative Program, the convention's unified budget. A motion at last June's convention proposed renaming the unified budget the "Cooperative Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention." The Executive Committee voted against the change, citing "widespread acceptance and recognition" of the current name among Southern Baptist churches.

■ Asked the Council of Seminary Presidents to study a motion from last summer's convention requesting an amendment to a statement in the "Baptist Faith and Message" that describes Scripture as "truth without any mixture of error." The motion, by Rick Henson of Louisiana, proposed adding the words "in every area of which it speaks" immediately after that phrase.

■ Declined to recommend a change in the way resolutions are handled at the SBC annual meeting. Gustave Elowitz of Houston made a motion at the Salt Lake City convention asking that all resolutions submitted to the SBC resolutions committee but not included in the committee's report be brought to the floor for a vote. A subcommittee recommending against the change said such a process would "unduly encumber" the convention.

■ Altered the Executive Committee's process for developing the annual Cooperative Program budget, which is recommended to messengers at the SBC annual meeting. Instead of reviewing budget allocations each year, the committee will move to two-year budgeting, creating anticipated surpluses to be used for new missions projects.

Georgia convention seeks to define membership

ATLANTA (BP)—A committee has proposed amending the constitution of the Georgia Baptist Convention to exclude from membership churches that affirm homosexuality or that practice "charismatic" worship.

Because there are those "who preach another gospel" it is time for Georgia Baptists to expand requirements for member congregations to be "in harmony and cooperation with ... this convention," said Augusta pastor Frank Page, a member of the membership committee established by the convention's executive committee. The membership committee had been asked to consider how the convention should respond to churches that affirm homosexuality and encourage charismatic expressions.

Page said the proposed action clarifies "what it means to be a New Testament church—a Georgia Baptist church."

In presenting the committee's report, chairman Gerald Harris, a Marietta pastor, admitted to "a certain amount of fear and trepidation." He said the committee was "not here to throw stones, but to lift up a standard

of righteousness."

Currently membership in the state convention and messenger representation at convention annual meetings are tied only to voluntary contributions to missions causes and being "in harmony and cooperation with the work and purpose of this convention."

The proposed amendment would further stipulate that "a cooperating church does not include (one) which knowingly takes, or has taken, any action to affirm, approve or endorse homosexual behavior." The proposal also calls for the exclusion of any congregation that "separates itself from historic Baptist tenets through non-biblical worship practices and theology which encourage members to speak in tongues or participate in the practice of 'being slain in the spirit,' or engage in worship practices that are divisive and disruptive and which exclude themselves from the scriptural expression of faith."

When questioned by fellow executive committee members about biblical texts that address the authenticity of glossolalia (the biblical word for speaking in tongues), those proposing

the amendment emphasized that the words "encourage members" distinguish between individuals using a God-given spiritual gift and congregations emphasizing such expressions as being essential or pre-eminent.

"If it is the gift of God, it needs no encouraging," Page said.

Executive Director Robert White said the proposed amendment "is the convention trying to help associations" in dealing with difficult and divisive issues. He said the concerns being addressed had nothing to do with diverse worship styles and local church autonomy, but extreme situations involving affirmation of homosexuality and charismatic expressions often associated with the "Toronto blessing" movement.

The amendment would put the executive director in the forefront in dealing with congregations in question. Charges could not come from individuals, but must arise from official action of an association, the GBC executive committee or the convention itself. White said his first goal would be to hopefully "restore" the church.



Twin missionary kids find a home at Georgetown

GEORGETOWN—They are typical freshmen at Georgetown College. They enjoy spending time with friends, they attend sports events and they are unsure about what they want to study.

But Emily and Keely Brandon are different, not only because they are identical twins, but also because as missionary kids they have spent half their lives moving from country to country.

The Brandons and their parents, David and Cathy, have served through the Southern Baptist International Mission in Burundi, Africa, for the last eight years. Before that, the family spent a year in Joue les Tours, France, where the parents attended language school.

Once again, Emily and Keely have packed their bags and moved. But this time they didn't bring their parents or younger sister with them. The girls arrived in Glendale July 19, just one day after graduating from high school in Kenya.

Their next stop was the campus of Georgetown College on Aug. 19, as they prepared for freshman orientation.

Is it tough to be so far from home?
"We don't really get homesick be-

cause we are used to being away from our family for months at a time," Emily said. The girls attended a boarding school in Kenya. "But it is hard when I realize I may not see my family for a year or more," she added.

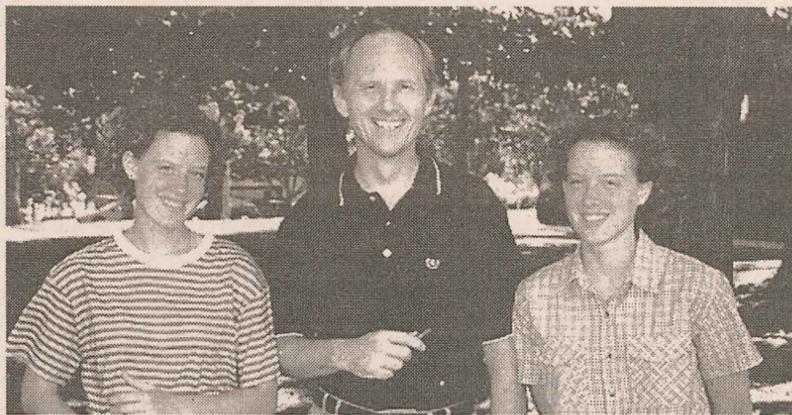
Even though Emily and Keely are away from their parents, there are people on Georgetown's campus whom they call family. Ken and Beth Perkins, former East African missionaries who are now missionaries in residence at Georgetown College, were the twins' guardians while they attended school in Kenya.

And their uncle David Forman is an associate professor of graduate education at Georgetown. Forman said he hopes he and his wife, Donna, can provide a home away from home for the girls.

Emily and Keely agree that they miss many things about East Africa. They miss the cultural diversity of the area as well as the various types of food. "We really miss the fresh fruits and vegetables that we had in Africa, not to mention the spicy Indian food," Keely said.

Both girls also agreed that people from Burundi are much more relaxed than people from the United States.

"If you were to invite someone to



TWIN FRESHMEN Missionary kids Emily (left) and Keely Brandon are attending Georgetown College, where their uncle David Forman is an associate professor. (Georgetown photo)

your home for dinner at 4 p.m., they may show up an hour early just to visit," Emily explained. "People in America are too focused on time and schedules. It seems like you have to make an appointment if you want to be a part of someone's life. The value of relationships doesn't seem to be nearly as important here."

When asked what they like about going to school in America, Emily said, "We really like meeting new people, but we have done that all our

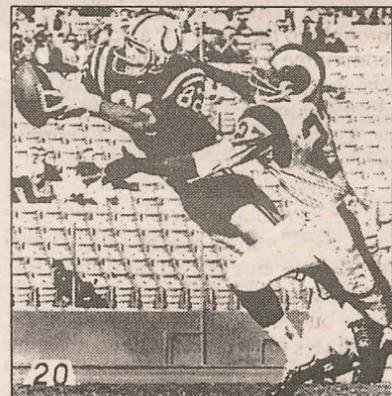
lives."

Keely said she was glad to be somewhere she could get good ice cream. "We have ice cream in Africa, but not the good kinds like butter pecan."

Beth Perkins said that she and her husband, Ken, are delighted that Emily and Keely have come to Georgetown College.

"We are hoping to attract many more missionary kids to Georgetown in the future," she said.

Hall of Famer: Recognition gives opportunities to witness



RAYMOND BERRY The Hall of Famer will speak at the Brotherhood department's convention Oct. 2-3 in Bowling Green.

LOUISVILLE—Success comes not only to the biggest and the best but to those who persevere.

Raymond Berry should know. Now an NFL Hall of Famer, he carried only 150 pounds on his six-foot two-inch frame as a member of his Paris, Texas, high school football team. Later, he started only one season at Southern Methodist University and scored only one touchdown during his college career.

But during 13 years as a wide receiver for the Baltimore Colts, he caught 631 passes, fumbling just once his entire career, and was part of two world championship teams.

His persistence also led him to an AFC East Division title, an AFC

championship and a Super Bowl appearance as a coach.

"I was not a superstar," admitted Berry, who will share his experiences Oct. 2-3 at the Kentucky Baptist Convention's annual Brotherhood Convention at Greenwood Baptist Church in Bowling Green.

Berry said an important byproduct of his public notoriety has been the opportunity to share his Christian faith.

Using the influence well is not always easy though. As both a player and coach, Berry said he found his thoughts and actions were on constant display.

"I was identified as a follower of Christ in a non-Christian environ-

ment," he said. The public observed not only the victories but every conflict, disaster and defeat along the way.

"On Saturdays and Sunday morning before game time, the stress reached its peak," Berry said. "But by game time, it was gone."

He said he relied on prayer to sustain him during the most stressful times as a player and coach. "I then saw for the first time it was [God's] grace at work," he said. "I learned that for him to be at maximum power, I had to be at maximum weakness."

For more information about the 1998 Kentucky Brotherhood Convention, contact the Brotherhood department of the Kentucky Baptist Convention at (888) 254-5720.

Oates Institute offers conference through Internet

LOUISVILLE—It's a conference you can attend in your pajamas.

In a new twist made possible by the growth of the Internet, the Wayne Oates Institute is preparing to host its first-ever "on-line" conference Nov. 9-15.

The Oates Institute, based in Louisville, has offered several traditional conferences in the past, where participants have come together in person to hear presentations and ask questions.

The same type of presentations will be a part of the on-line conference. Participants also will be able to ask questions, according to information in the center's newsletter. The difference will be that they can attend the conference on their own timetable and without leaving their homes or offices.

Participants will pay a conference registration fee of \$50 to gain access to the proceedings via the Internet. Then, over a one-week period they will be able to download and read

comments by 20 keynote presenters.

The topic of the conference is "Hope as a Dynamic for Healing," with content aimed at helping health care providers, counselors, pastors and others involved in the connection of health care and faith.

In addition to the 20 formal presentations, the keynote figures also will be scheduled for periods of live conversation via the Internet. In these "real-time" conversations, participants from all over the world will be able to ask presenters questions and get immediate answers.

The conference also will have its own form of hallway conversation, with discussion forums in which participants may post questions and comments for other participants to see and respond to.

Even the exhibit hall, a staple of traditional conferences, will translate to the Internet, with a group of exhibitors offering information about their products and services on-line.

Keynote presenters for the conference include Jann Aldredge-Clanton of Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas; Bill Amos, director of pastoral counseling at North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem, N.C.; Dan Bagby, professor of pastoral care at Baptist Theological Seminary of Richmond, Va.; Hardy Clemens, pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville, S.C.; James Hyde, associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Louisville's Medical School; Andy Lester, professor of pastoral theology at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas; Kay Shurden, associate professor of psychiatry at Mercer University Medical School in Macon, Ga.; and Myron Madden, retired professor of psychiatry at Louisiana State University Medical Center in New Orleans.

Information about the conference is available on the Internet at www.oates.org or by telephone at (502) 459-2370.

BLUEGRASS BURGEOO

■ Georgetown College reported a rise in all categories of enrollment this fall. The total number of undergraduates is 1,356, up from 1,301 in fall 1997. The number of first-time freshmen also was up, at 408 compared to 394 last year.

■ A conference to help ministers and other visitors to nursing homes will be held Oct. 15 in Louisville at 7 p.m. Topics will include residents' rights, what residents want and need and how to get help if a resident is not in a good situation. The conference, sponsored by the Kentucky Association for Not-for-Profit Homes and Services for the Aging, will be at Nazareth Home. Registration is required, but free. For more information, call (502) 635-6468.

■ The 20th Annual Community Hunger walk will be held Oct. 11 in Louisville at 1:30 p.m. The event is organized by the Kentuckiana Interfaith Community and is sponsored by Baptist Hospital East. For more information, call (502) 587-6265.

Fewer pastors fired in 1997

Continued from page 1

■ Churches are using more mediators than ever before to guide them in solving problems.

■ Feedback from ministers who have participated in a personal and professional growth seminar and career assessment indicates healthier ministers making healthier responses to conflict.

■ Leaders give high visibility and awareness of problems, causing ministers and churches to seek help before resolution becomes impossible.

■ The strengthened role of church-minister relations directors creates a safety net for ministers to seek help before problems become unmanageable.

■ Deacon training in recent years has included an increased focus on responding effectively to conflict.

■ Directors of missions continue to ask for training in conflict management skills.

People interested in resources can contact Guy Futral of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's minister-church support division at (888) 254-5702. Information also is available from LeaderCare at LifeWay Christian Resources, (888) 789-1911.

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

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Great cosmic muffin

I am not a Calvinist. Yet I find myself defending the words and positions of a Calvinist more and more to this publication. Interesting! I find, however, that when one rightly puts forth the Scripture, they should be upheld regardless of their handle.

I am speaking here of your attack on Al Mohler for admonishing Immanuel Baptist Church in not practicing proper church discipline with Bill Clinton. If Pastor Horne had done his job as described in Scripture, perhaps we would not be faced with an impeachment. As it is written, "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

I am sure this clarion call is not to Immanuel Baptist Church alone but to all the churches to simply do the word of God. Why is there so much resistance? Hopefully, we all get our understanding of the nature and character of God from the Scriptures. Unfortunately, I think many of us only read one side of the scroll. Anything, including Scripture, that does not line up with this false myopic image is either ignored or passed over as "interpretation."

Many read only of his love and mercy. In doing so, God the Father and his Son are viewed as nothing more than the great cosmic muffin. Those pastors who have refused to obey the word in their charge of overseeing the flock will have to give an account to God. And the God they will be trembling before will bear no resemblance to the great cosmic muffin.

Chuck Estridge
Williamstown

Money, sex & power

The root cause of our country's current tragedy is the way we unwisely use money, sex and power. Richard Foster, Quaker theologian and author, writes about money, sex and power in his book "The Challenge of

the Disciplined Life."

"Throughout history, and in our own experience, money, sex and power seem inseparably intertwined," he writes. "Money manifests itself in power. Sex is used to acquire both money and power. And power is often called 'the best aphrodisiac.' We could discuss at length the interlacing connections.

"There is, for example, an important relationship between sex and poverty: sex is the poor man's holiday and the poor woman's disaster. Note also the connection between power and wealth: power is frequently used to manipulate wealth, and wealth is used just as frequently to buy power. And on it goes. The truth is that it is not really possible (or even desirable) to unravel all the intricate ways money, sex and power intertwine."

During this painful time in our nation's history, we should be learning that all of us fall far short of what God created us to be. Neither the Democratic nor Republican party is morally superior to the other. Money used wisely to serve the common good of humanity is part of God's grand design. Money used for selfish reasons to unjustly dominate others leads to corruption and all kinds of problems.

If we as individuals love God with all of our being, God will give us the power to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. If there is to be a new emphasis on moral values in America, it must begin with soul-searching thought and dialogue on the critical issues of money, sex and power.

Paul L. Whiteley Sr.
Louisville

Beliefs on view

Like the faculties of Southern and Southeastern seminaries I would like to recognize Mark Wingfield. Thank you for printing Al Mohler's recent commentary regarding President Clinton's home church in Little Rock, Ark. It has helped me to more fully under-

Who's the sinner?

There comes a time in the life of a country where her sins are so evident and horrible that her citizens must repent. The failure to do so will result in judgment and destruction. I believe we have come to this point in our history.

An honest evaluation of our society reveals that we value power more than honor, greed more than integrity, pleasure more than discipline, things more than people, deception more than truth, convenience more than commitment, violence more than peace, material more than spiritual, revenge more than reconciliation, pride more than humility, criticism more than compassion, the temporary more than the eternal, expediency more than faithfulness, self more than others and Satan more than God.

We are all guilty, from the highest level of our government to the most sacred positions in our churches and to the streets and alleys of our towns and villages. Truly, all of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

What are we to do? We have only two choices: Continue down our sinful path which leads to weak-

ness and destruction or throw ourselves at God's mercy and repent.

Will God hear our cry of repentance and help us? Yes. As a matter of fact, he is eager and ready to respond to our plea for mercy.

How do I know this? I've read 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

If asked to name the person in America today who most needs to humbly re-

pent, turn from his wicked ways and experience God's amazing grace, who would you suggest?

If you mentioned our president, you would be wrong. For sure, he needs to repent. However, he should not be at the top of our list. We should be at the top of our own list.

Lord, may the despicable and horrible sins of another remind us of our own humanity and unworthiness and move us to repent, seek your face and find your healing grace.

Bob Browning, pastor
First Baptist Church of Somerset

stand Mohler's view of a Baptist benchmark—autonomy of the local church.

Monty Carter
Easley, S.C.

Thanks, Gideons

I am one of your missionaries in Morogoro, Tanzania, about 10,000 miles from Kentucky. I want to thank Kentucky Gideons and the churches that support them for the great work you do.

I have been visiting a man in the large hospital here in Morogoro. He was on a bus that hit a truck, and his leg was broken. He has been in traction for five weeks and will be in the

hospital approximately three more weeks. I have gotten to know the men in the beds around him during this period of time. When they get a little better, they are so bored. There are no TVs, magazines, books, newspapers or anything to read in these wards.

Today when I went to the hospital, I was so happy to see the Gideons had been there. Every bed had a very nice Swahili large-print Gideon New Testament. I explained to one of the patients from John 3 the meaning of being born again using one of the New Testaments. I know these will be a blessing to many and I just wanted to say thank you.

Carolyn Dixon
Morogoro, Tanzania

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Cooperative Program value

In recent weeks, I have seen the value of the Cooperative Program up close.

At Campbellsville University, I saw a large number of students from Brazil. Last summer, 60 Baptist Brazilian teachers spent two weeks at Campbellsville in continuing education. Campbellsville University plans to start a University Center in Brazil, which will strengthen the Baptist work and ministry. Cooperative Program funds support Campbellsville University and the missionaries in Brazil.

On Sept. 16, 67 missionaries were appointed at a commissioning service conducted as a part of Global Missions Week at Southern Seminary. Gerald and Shelia Murphy, pastor and wife from Munfordville Baptist Church, gave credit to participation in the Russian

partnership as a key factor in their call to missions. Again, the Cooperative Program, as well as Kentucky-only gifts, provided funds for the partnership.

While in Louisville, the International Mission Board president, Jerry Rankin, and eight to 10 board leaders spent the afternoon with KBC and WMU staff. They listened to our concerns and shared their vision to work with Southern Baptists in reaching all people groups with the gospel. Their new initiatives and networking with other Christian groups brought renewed hope that all people groups can be reached. The most exciting news is that people group leaders are developing their own church extension plans.

It is gratifying to know that Cooperative Program funds and Lottie Moon Christmas offerings (over \$100 million for the first time) make reaching all people groups a possibility.



Bill Mackey

On a recent Saturday morning, my wife, Kay, and I visited Oneida Baptist Institute. God continues to bring gifted teachers and workers to train more than 450 students. Bud Underwood, president, introduced us to a couple from New Mexico who recently retired as high school math and elementary teachers.

They will fill vital roles in ministry to students. Others are giving up large salaries to serve at Oneida, where the average salary is \$6,000, plus housing and food. I met a student whose father is a pastor in South Carolina. Because

of Oneida, a student, a pastor and family, and a church ministry have hope. The Cooperative Program and Kentucky-only gifts are being used by God through Oneida to change the lives of 450 youth. The miracle of Oneida continues.

During August, six Super Saturday training conferences were attended by almost 2,400 church leaders eager to receive training. Again, cooperative giving made possible these conferences.

These are just examples of thousands of mission workers, ministries, projects and services in Kentucky and beyond that are provided by the generous giving of Kentucky Baptists. We thank God for record Cooperative Program giving by Kentucky Baptists this past year, exceeding the previous year by \$1,122,950 (6 percent)—the largest increase in 15 years.

Bill Mackey is executive secretary-treasurer of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

HE SAID/SHE SAID

It took 3 trips to the airport, so we all played the blame game

HE SAID



Mark Wingfield

This week's column originally appeared in the Recorder's Sept. 24, 1996, issue. Alison believes the moral is still true.

Some friends (who shall remain nameless but have consented to let us air their dirty laundry) recently asked for a ride to the airport on a Monday morning. They were willing to go to the airport about two hours early so I could drop them off on my way to work.

Turns out two hours was barely enough for this trip to the airport, which normally takes about 15 minutes. As I was helping them unload at the curbside check-in, they discovered they hadn't loaded the baby's stroller.

A brief skirmish occurred on the sidewalk. Was it her fault, because she insisted on packing some the night before and some in the morning? Or was it his fault, because he broke the morning routine by taking the car out to get bagels? Or did the fault lie with both, since they had talked about the stroller while drifting off to sleep that night but neither had gotten up out of bed to put the stroller with the luggage?

So, we left mother and baby at the airport with the luggage while father and I traveled back to their house to get the stroller. No problem; they had plenty of time to spare.

After we arrived at the airport the second time, apologies were lavished profusely upon me and I departed for work. Unknown to me at the time, that was not the last trip to the airport that morning for our friends. They soon discovered that his wallet had been left at home. And, due to the fact that U.S. airports have become police states due to security concerns, he couldn't get on the plane without a photo ID.

They were too embarrassed to call me again, so they called another friend, who drove out to the airport, picked him up, took him back to the house again and then drove him to the airport a third time. Having started out two hours early, he ran on the plane just in time for the flight attendants to close the door behind him.

It just doesn't pay to be early.

SHESAID



Alison Wingfield

The focal point of this story, however, is how easy it is to blame each other when something goes wrong.

In the case of our friends, he blamed her for the wallet fiasco, because if she hadn't wanted bagels that morning, he wouldn't have taken his wallet out of his carry-on and tossed it in the car to get the bagels. This break in routine (the bagels), was all her idea, he says, and therefore the left-behind wallet must also be her fault.

Let the witness for the defense point out, however, that she says she was ready to go to the airport, and was preparing to go out and get the bagels herself when he offered to go get them for her. She didn't force him to get in the car and go get them.

But I hesitate to take sides.

It is easy to make fun of our friends' follies, but Mark and I often find ourselves placing blame on each other when things go wrong. Our natural tendency is to want to find a scapegoat on which to take out our frustrations rather than accept responsibility, or to realize that sometimes bad things just happen, whether we like it or not.

Of course, if I had been taking them to the airport, none of this would have happened. They wouldn't have had to go early, and, as an experienced kid-traveler, I would have asked about the stroller. So, I guess we can all blame Mark.

Promise Keepers: Reflections 1 year later

One year ago this coming weekend, more than 1 million Christian men packed the National Mall in Washington for the largest Christian gathering in history, the Promise Keepers "Stand in the Gap" rally.

The event drew national media attention befitting a terrorist bombing, although the verdict was split as to what kind of explosion had taken place on that sunny October day. Some thought the Promise Keepers rally was about to usher in the millennial reign of Christ; others thought it was ushering in a new era of male domination and wife beating.

From the vantage point of a year later, here are a few loose observations about the significance of Promise Keepers and "Stand in the Gap":

■ *How would life in America be different today if Bill Clinton, Dan Burton, Henry Hyde and other politicians had been Promise Keepers?* One of the foremost principles taught by Promise Keepers is respect for the marriage vows and sexually purity.

We know now that while men from across America were convening on the National Mall focusing on strengthening their commitments to God and family, our president was convening intimate sessions of indiscretion and infidelity in the national residence.

Further, we know that a large percentage of the American population was more troubled by a million men gathering to pray and praise God than by the president's behavior. What further evidence is needed to demonstrate the timely necessity of the Promise Keepers message?

■ *Some men connected with Promise Keepers more than others.* Although Promise Keepers has attracted men of all backgrounds, races and socio-economic standing, its largest draw has been among men of average means and education.

And, not surprisingly, even among those who have become Promise Keepers, the message has produced more fruit in some homes than others. Some men have been to Promise Keepers three or four times with little visible change. But others have been transformed by one rally.

■ *Success can be dangerous.* After the "Stand in the Gap" rally, Promise Keepers took the unexpected step of opening its regional rallies in 1998 to all men free of charge.

This about-face plan to rely solely on donations to

fund what had quickly become a massive para-church organization created havoc. Early in 1998 Promise Keepers laid off all its national staff for a period of time until finances stabilized.

The fact that Promise Keepers could make such a change and survive it demonstrates the flexibility many para-church organizations have that denominational structures do not.

■ *No one can stay on the mountaintop forever.* The out-of-nowhere success of Promise Keepers and of the "Stand in the Gap" rally elicited an instinctive desire to create an insti-

tution.

Christians (and Baptists especially) react to successful events with an automatic desire to cast them in bronze, like a baby's first shoe, and then fawn over them for years to come. We want to institutionalize things, create new multi-level programs complete with guidebooks, study books, leaders' books and learners' books.

While certain elements of this institutional mindset have taken root with Promise Keepers, attempts to form local Promise Keepers chapters and meetings have not been as successful as the national movement. A vital ministry has developed in many places, although far less visible than the national or regional rallies.

The current status of Promise Keepers, seeking to move beyond regional rallies next year to focus on local meetings and support, is a wise move. The impact of Promise Keepers on individual men has been much more important than efforts to keep a high-profile program going.

This is partly due to the realities of life in the 21st century, but it also reflects a biblical reality. Recall the gospel story of Jesus, Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration. Seeing Jesus in a glorified conversation with Elijah and Moses, the disciples' first reaction was to put up tents and make camp. But Jesus told them that was not to be. Remembering the message of the event after returning to the valley was more important than hiding out on the mountaintop enjoying the view.

So it has been with Promise Keepers. One year after the Washington rally, the memory lingers and the mission continues, but it is effective only when lived out in the daily actions of ordinary people walking through the valley of life.

— Mark Wingfield

The heart is deceitful ... who can understand it?

By Bob Lowery

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

The creation narrative in Genesis says that when God surveyed all he made, his conclusion was that it was "very good." Shortly thereafter, sin entered the world. From that day, things have never been the same.

Atrocities fill the news. A gun is randomly fired from a passing car and a young life is ruined. Stories of assaults, rapes, robberies and other heinous acts that one person commits against another fill the pages of the daily paper. When we think nothing can shock us, evil sinks to a new low. A crazed gunman takes babies hostage in a daycare center, a federal government building is bombed, a retiree's life savings is stolen, and we are reminded of the wickedness of the human heart. Who can understand it?

The Bible uses "heart" to describe the center of the decisions and actions of a

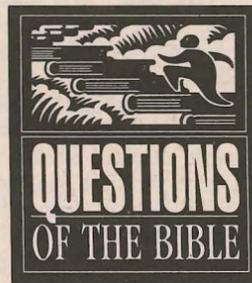
person, both good and bad. With the heart, man believes. With all our heart, we are to love and serve. On the heart, God writes his law.

But there are two basic problems with a human heart.

First, it is "deceitful above all things." It can never function as God intended. It can never lead you to the ideals that God has established for your life. Our best efforts are never enough to make us what we should be, and thus we continually miss

the mark. Like a mislabeled fountain, the heart pours out filth and corruption, while pretending to be pure and good. We hide the hate that lives in our hearts with flattery, we pretend to be one thing while knowing all the time we are something else.

Second, it is "desperately wicked." It has a fatal flaw; it is infected with a fatal virus that results in it being fit only for death. And that is what Jesus did for us at Calvary. The only thing the sin nature was fit for was death, and so Jesus put it to death.



Amazingly, some believe man is inherently good. They want us to believe that in the heart of every person there is a seed of good that can be nurtured and loved to the point that it becomes a person worthy of God's love.

Winston Churchill said: "While men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. Under sufficient stress—starvation, terror, warlike passion or even cold intellectual frenzy—the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up."

So where do we find the answer to the heart that is wicked beyond our ability to understand? It is not found in education, government, reform or social activism. It is not found in human effort. We find it only in the One who promised in Ezekiel 36:26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."



Bob Lowery is pastor First Baptist Church of Central City

RESOURCES

This week's questions:

■ Could my parents' divorce affect my ability to form relationships?

■ Should I make my child get dressed up for church?

Q. Could my difficulties in forming relationships have anything to do with the fact that my parents divorced when I was young?

Yes, it's likely to have had an impact. Children need good models and the best possible co-parenting in order to learn to do relationships well. Children need to know that they are loved. Whenever one parent denigrates the other in the presence of the children, pain and loss result.

You may have felt powerful enough to bring your parents back together and powerless when it didn't happen. Control may then have become an issue for you.

When we get into relationships, the "original pain" of childhood often comes to the surface. The help of a caring Christian counselor or support group can prevent the past from controlling your present and your future.

Only God is the perfect parent. He is "Abba," the intimate, nurturing God, who loves you with an everlasting love. Develop a clear picture of the difference between God and the parents who fall short of that ideal.

If at all possible, go through the forgiveness process with your parents. Christ taught the process of confronting someone in order to win them back. A counselor or support group will give you the strength to pursue

this when you are ready. Such reconciliation is vital for your own emotional and spiritual health. Regardless of the outcome of such an exchange, you may want to seek out an older individual who can serve as the mentor that you may never have had.

It is necessary to develop a vision of hope for the future. If you woke up tomorrow and found a perfect world, what would it look like? Pursue your dream. You can, with God's help, and with the help of others, learn to form successful relationships that both glorify God and satisfy your soul. — James Stillwell



Q. Should I make my child get dressed up for church?

Surely wars have been fought over getting children dressed for church. Cock your ear on any Sunday morning, and you can probably hear it happening in your own neighborhood if not in your own home. Society's trend toward dressing down has complicated the picture.

It is true that how we dress has absolutely no bearing on how God feels about us. How we dress also should have absolutely no bearing on whether or not we are welcome at church. At the same time, most parents understand that clothing communicates and dress affects attitude and behavior—especially in children.

Schools certainly understand, which is one reason why most have dress codes of some sort, and many even require uniforms.

Dressing up a bit for Bible study and worship provides a great way for boys and girls to say, "God, you are special. I respect you. You deserve my best." It gives one way to say, "This day is different from the rest of the week."

Teach children that clothing should be appropriate to the occasion as well as functional. Clothes can be neat and clean without having to be the latest style. From a practical standpoint, Sunday and Wednesday evenings are usually more casual than Sunday mornings.

More and more boys and girls are coming to church dressed for the playground. Many children even wear casual clothes to special events like choir programs and recognition services when they are going to be front and center. We would dress up for a president or a queen. Does God deserve anything less? — David Garrard

Family Forum writers are David Garrard, minister to children at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville; James Stillwell, minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington; Susan Howell, assistant professor of psychology at Campbellsville University; Wade Rowatt, director of the St. Matthews Pastoral Counseling Center in Louisville; and Al Shackelford, editor of Mature Living magazine. Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, Ky. 40253 or e-mail us at wesrec@ntr.net.

CHURCH

Tips for church budget time

By Doug Strader

It is that time of year when most churches are either involved or getting involved in planning the budget for the next year. This is one of the most important times in the life of the church.

Many church members have been robbed of the blessings of being good stewards, because their church never challenged them to develop good stewardship habits. The good economic situation in most areas should be indicative of record giving in our churches.

Here are suggestions to challenge your members to grow in their stewardship development:

■ **Begin with prayer.** Prayer is the first and most important strategy for church budgeting and promotion. When we do only what we can do with our resources, we only get what we can do. When we let God do what only he can do working in and through us, then we are successful.

■ **Teach biblical stewardship principles.** Teach: (1) What is biblical stewardship? (2) How do you get started tithing? (3) Does stewardship involve more than money and possessions? (4) Is stewardship a process, or are good stewards born?

■ **Listen to the people.** Have a Sunday evening dinner and listen to the people share their vision for the church. Let the people "buy in" to the budget process so it is their budget. Make sure the budget reflects the vision, goals and dreams of the people.

■ **Develop the budget around missions.** Emphasize the fact that we are giving money to support missions and ministry. Each mission and ministry should reflect the people's vision.

■ **Find an innovative way to present the budget.** Sometimes churches do an excellent job of developing the budget, but fail to excite the people when it is submitted for church approval.

■ **Promote the budget.** After you present the budget to the church for approval, have a budget promotion to enlist the commitment of members to support the budget. The stewardship services office at LifeWay in Nashville has a catalog that offers several suggestions. They also produce a yearly planning piece called "The ABCs of Church Budgeting and Promotion." The KBC stewardship office also provides suggestions and materials to help promote your budget.

Doug Strader is director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's stewardship department.



Churches have lots to learn about AIDS

By James Dotson
SBC North American Mission Board

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—Many Christians still have a lot to learn when it comes to dealing with AIDS, according to a victim of the disease who faced rejection at her church several years ago.

Through awareness and education efforts designed to confront the issue before it becomes a problem, however, she said fear and distrust can be replaced by compassionate ministry and support.

Ann Hummert of St. Louis shared her story during "Jericho '98: A Missions Festival to Change Your World" at Glorieta (N.M.) Conference Center. Hummert said she noticed in 1990 she was not recovering from cold and flu viruses as easily, and testing revealed that a gang rape three years earlier had left her infected with the HIV virus that causes AIDS.

The news was devastating.

"I have never felt so alone, so horribly, unbelievably alone," she said. "I could be in a crowd of people and felt like I was the only one."

Like many would do in the same situation, she asked her Sunday school class to pray with her. The class also promised to keep her condition confidential, but the promise did not hold for long.

Two weeks later, she said, she was sitting in a pew in church when a man argued with his wife about where they should sit, finally explaining why they could not sit near Hummert in their usual spot.

"He points to me, and he says in a voice loud enough for our whole sanc-

tuary to hear, 'That woman has AIDS.' And the secret was out. ... Somebody in my class had betrayed my confidence," she said. "I felt like I had no one else I could trust. I walked out of that church in tears, devastated that someone could let me down."

Later, she went to her pastor and suggested that an AIDS awareness presentation might be of value to the congregation, and she gave him a stack of information and a contact. The pastor agreed it would be a good idea, she said, but nothing ever was done. She eventually talked with him about the issue again. It was then that she realized the reaction in the church sanctuary was not an isolated case.

"He said, 'You know, Ann, you have to expect reactions like the one you got.' I thought, 'Since when do I have to expect reactions like that from my church family?'" she said.

"Even though the words were not voiced clearly, I felt him saying to me, 'I think you'd be happier if you found another church.' And I knew it was him who would be happier if I would find another church. But what could I do? I could not stay in a church where they would not even try to understand me."

For two years, she could not bring herself to go into a church again. But then a friend who also had AIDS told her about a church where she could be accepted.

She began attending Hanley Road Baptist Church in St. Louis, and finally she worked up the courage to allow the pastor to share her story at a Wednesday night prayer meeting. This time, the response was different.

"One of our elderly deacons stood up in the back of room and said, 'Hon-

ey, if you think you're going anywhere you're nuts. You're going to stay right here where we can take care of you.' I knew I was home."

She continued, "I belong to a church where it takes me 40 minutes to walk down a hallway because I get mobbed by kids running up to hug me. ... That's the kind of church God wants us to be."

Since that time, Hummert said she has decided to make at least some good come from her condition by using it as a springboard for educating others about AIDS and the needs of AIDS patients.

"I keep hearing AIDS is a gay disease," she said. "Granted, it started in the gay population. But I get frustrated when I hear people say they get it because they deserve it. Even those who get AIDS from a gay lifestyle don't deserve it."

There are a number of things churches can do to minister to people with AIDS, beginning with simply educating members about how the disease is and is not transmitted, she said.

Prayer committees can be formed to pray for those with AIDS and their families, and abstinence-based education efforts should be directed toward youth. They are one of the largest groups dying from AIDS today, she said, because they believe they are invincible and often do not get tested until they develop their first AIDS-related illness.

For more information on dealing with AIDS in the church, contact Fred and Lavada Loper, national medical missionaries for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, at (405) 528-7688.



"I felt him saying to me, 'I think you'd be happier if you found another church.' And I knew it was him who would be happier if I would find another church."
Ann Hummert

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Missouri Synod gets victory.** A federal appeals court has refused to consider rehearing a case pitting the Federal Communications Commission against the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in a dispute involving the FCC's minority hiring rules. The ruling became an issue in 1990 when the NAACP filed a petition against Synod-owned radio stations claiming they had not adequately sought out minorities when hiring. The NAACP asked the FCC not to renew the stations' licenses. After several years of hearings and litigation, a three-judge panel of the appeals court ruled in favor of the stations.

■ **Salvation Army gets \$80 million gift.** The Salvation Army has received an \$80 million donation from McDonald's heiress Joan Kroc. It is the largest single donation in the Salvation Army's 120-year history. The gift will pay for construction of a Salvation Army community center in San Diego, Kroc's hometown. Major Donald Bell, the Salvation Army's local commander, said because of the donation, "our vision for stronger families and revitalized neighborhoods will now become a reality for our community." The Salvation Army is both a conservative Christian church and a social service agency organized along military lines of authority.

■ **Mormons oppose easing liquor laws.** The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is opposing efforts by Utah hospitality and tourism industry officials to ease liquor regulations in the state. The Utah Hospitality Association recently had encouraged the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission to review the state's liquor laws because they have not undergone any major changes for about 10 years, Associated Press reported. Utah has some of the strictest liquor laws in the country. About 70 percent of Utah's population belongs to the Mormon Church, which strongly opposes alcohol use.

■ **Challenge to suicide law rejected.** A U.S. District Court judge has rejected a challenge to Oregon's doctor-assisted suicide law, saying critics lacked legal standing to renew their failed lawsuit. The law, passed by Oregon voters in 1994 and legally affirmed in 1997, permits terminally ill people to acquire lethal drug prescriptions. Critics had argued that the law creates a "stigmatic injury" to those who are terminally ill by making their lives less worthy than others. The judge said he had to dismiss the opponents' effort because the appeals court ruled a plaintiff must have an actual injury to challenge the law.

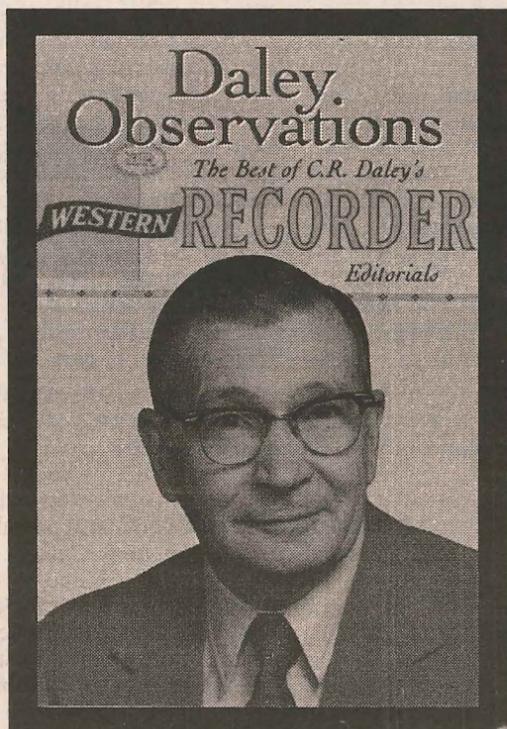
■ **Taxi fined for church discounts.** A taxi company owner in San Antonio, Texas, has been fined \$100 by the city for charging only half-price fares to take people to church. Vincent Thompson, owner of Alamo City Taxi, offered the lower rates to anyone attending church on some Sundays in July and August, Associated Press reported. But city officials said providing discounts only to churchgoers could be unconstitutional. They also said the 50 percent cut in fares could be too large a discount under city rules which limit taxi discounts to 20 percent as a means of avoiding price wars that could force smaller companies out of business.

■ **Companies to help black churches.** A consortium of security systems manufacturers plans to donate more than \$1 million in materials during the next few years to help prevent damage to black churches. The Security Industry Coalition announced its plans in September to work with the Congress of National Black Churches. The congress has helped rebuild churches that were burned during a spate of arsons in recent years. The coalition hopes to have security systems installed in 50 churches by year's end.

■ **Presbyterian candidate named.** Frank Diaz, who served two years as interim executive director of the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has been endorsed to stand for election as the denomination's next moderator when the denomination's General Assembly meets next June in Fort Worth, Texas. Diaz, 65, entered the Presbyterian ministry after a long career in business and joined the national staff of the mainline denomination in 1989. The moderator, who serves a one-year term, presides at the church's general assembly and spends much of the year on the road serving as the church's top spokesman.

■ **Coats named Statesman of the Year.** Sen. Dan Coats, R-Ind., has been honored as the 1998 Christian Statesman of the Year by the D. James Kennedy Center for Christian Statesmanship. Coats received the award Sept. 16 at a presentation in Washington. It is designed to honor a person whose public and private conduct is framed by a set of principles not compromised for political or personal gain. Previous recipients of the award are Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., and Roy Moore, an Alabama circuit court judge. The interdenominational, non-partisan center offers spiritual outreach to members of Congress and their staffs.

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Bill Marshall

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Specialist: Help violence victims navigate grieving

By Russell N. Dilday
Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

"Jesus resisted dramatic solutions. God works best in small victories, small in the sense that we almost cannot comprehend they are victories at all."

Brooks Faulkner, senior coordinator for LeaderCare at LifeWay Christian Resources

FORT SMITH, Ark. (BP)—How can pastors and other counselors help victims of violent crimes?

One key, according to Brooks Faulkner, is to recognize the stages of grief that follow violence in order to help guide victims through the process.

Faulkner, senior coordinator for LeaderCare at LifeWay Christian Resources, spoke to about 40 school administrators, law enforcement personnel, church staff, chaplains and laypeople during a "Church Dealing with Random Violence Conference" held at First Baptist Church of Fort Smith, Ark.

While recognizing the grief stages is important, "the greatest comforting words you can use ... and the most difficult words for them to believe are 'God will provide,'" Faulkner said.

He said that in dealing with grieving victims, counselors can expect to see a normal pattern of responses.

"First, we run into shock, despair and helplessness, then guilt and fear," he explained. Often, that is followed by "hostility toward the doctor, the minister, the family and even God."

Next, many victims or survivors experience a period of "restless activity," he said. "The behavior works its way out in ways we can't comprehend. In the stages of grief ... it's a part of our behavior pattern that helps us get over grief. Usual activities also lose their importance."

Faulkner said later stages of grief show themselves through "identification with the deceased" such as "continued work on projects of the deceased." He said the final stage, hopefully, is a gradual hope and adjustment.

Faulkner urged participants to keep in mind the "practical aspects of pastoral counseling" such as maintaining a practical spirit—"it's not a time to make light jokes or comments"—and to avoid preaching or asking leading questions.

Counseling also requires "good common sense," he said, citing the need to develop patience and to look for small victories, not dramatic solutions. "Jesus resisted dramatic solutions. God works best in small victories, small in the sense that we almost

Counselor: 'Some questions have no answers'

FORT SMITH, Ark. (BP)—Listeners sat riveted as Joe Williams told of his 18 days spent ministering to rescue and recovery personnel, helping workers and coordinating ministry volunteers in the wake of the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

But notepads and pens were lowered and the audience grew silent as he told about seeing the bodies.

Williams, chaplaincy and community ministries specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and chaplain for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Oklahoma City, was one of three leaders sharing insights during a "Church Dealing with Random Violence Conference" at First Baptist Church in Fort Smith, Ark.

The program also featured Brooks Faulkner, senior coordinator for LeaderCare at LifeWay Christian Resources, and Norris Smith, conflict mediation consultant for LeaderCare at LifeWay.

Faulkner said that for counselors dealing with grief after a violent incident, "some questions have no answers."

"There is a myth that prevails in our churches that goes, 'I know God let this happen to you because

he knows you are strong enough to handle it,'" Faulkner said. "To decipher the tremendous mystery of the holy is not ours to do."

Counselors also must communicate to victims that "all events and happenings are not connected" and that victims "must not assume blame for bad things," he said.

The "real question" to ask in a post-violent situation, Faulkner said, is, "What am I going to do about it?"

Faulkner urged participants to look for the biblical model of reaction to violence. "There must be healing. Everyone is in need of healing one way or another. Healing is a pastoral function that aims to overcome some impairment by restoring a person to wholeness."

Sharing his personal testimony of responding to tragedy following the Oklahoma City bombing, Williams said he discovered "we do not know what God is preparing for us."

"You and I are part of a nation on edge. We're nervous," he commented. "We live in communities where there is fear that our community will be the next headlines on the evening news. In a general sense, all of us are victims of random violence, with primary or secondary victims."

"When the violence happens,

what then?" he asked. Citing his part in the response to the Oklahoma City bombing, he noted, "We talk a lot in the chaplaincy about the ministry of presence. It's not a matter of what you say but for them to know you are there. We spent three and half days as they brought bodies and body parts out. I'd never seen the magnitude of the bodies we were exposed to during those three days. I lost five good friends in the bombing. Four of them were members of the church I was a member of and had been a pastor of."

Williams said ministry to emergency workers is just as important as aiding victims. "When rescue and recovery arrives on a scene ... their first sight might be bodies and other people bending over those bodies weeping and crying."

The conference drew participants from a variety of disciplines.

Susan Yates, Woman's Missionary Union director for the local Baptist association, came to gain more insight for the 1998-2000 WMU "Project Help" emphasis on violence. "This was a kick-off for information, to give us a shot in the arm for needs, a supplement for information we already have from the WMU plans," she said.

cannot comprehend they are victories at all."

He said other necessary practical aspects include staying in touch with one's own feelings, being "a priest" (hear confession but point them to God) and maintaining "a spirit of quiet hope."

To develop these skills, he said, ministers must:

■ Develop controls. "Understand your own clay feet and stay in touch. One way you get ready for violence that has not yet occurred is to stay in touch with people who have the skills in your community. Know where to turn."

■ Develop compassion, not simple sentimentality. "Recognize the hurdles of being compassionate to depressed, hostile, suspicious, manipu-

lative, withdrawn, dependent and apathetic persons."

■ Develop the power to wait. "Courage to speak is not nearly so important as the patience to not speak."

■ Develop technical skills, and know people. "Find out where the resources are in our churches and hospitals," Faulkner said.

■ Start on solid ground. "If the relationships with our spouse and children (are) seriously shaky, withdraw from the counseling relationship as gracefully as possible. You will find yourself finding the same faults in the counselee as you find in your fami-

ly."

■ Learn to express feelings discriminately. "Unbridled candor is irresponsible. Avoid jumping on their case."

■ Remember that the primary problem is almost always secondary. "When the question is asked, 'Why did God let this happen to me?' it could be, 'Is God punishing me for what I have done?' Listen for the melodies and not simply the words."

"An intimate and confidential trust during grief is a cry for help," Faulkner added. "The truth is, they are searching for someone they can trust because they have never dealt with this level of grief before."

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Bill on teen abortions stalls

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Proposed legislation making it a crime to take a minor across state lines for an abortion to avoid parental involvement laws stalled in the Senate Sept. 22.

"The likelihood that we will be able to continue with respect to this legislation during this Senate session seems very unlikely," said Sen. Spencer Abraham, R-Mich., sponsor of the bill.

Sixty votes were needed to end debate and proceed to voting on the bill. But the vote to cut off debate only garnered 54 votes, Associated Press reported.

In July, the House voted 276-150 for a similar bill that would make it a crime for any person other than a parent or legal guardian to take a minor to another state for an abortion to circumvent parental notification and consent laws.

The White House and some Democrats had wanted exemptions for relatives and friends who would have faced fines and a year in jail for aiding a minor.

Church description? Depends who you ask

By Marv Knox
Texas Baptist Standard

VENTURA, Calif. (ABP)—The idealistic portrait American pastors paint of their churches blurs when colored by reality, according to two new surveys conducted by the Barna Research Group.

Most pastors of the nation's 324,000 Protestant churches say their congregations are "evangelistic," "theologically conservative," "evangelical," "seeker-sensitive" and "consistently engaged in serving the needy," a survey showed.

But a poll of church members revealed the majority to be theologically moderate, non-evangelical, believer-sensitive and isolated from the needy.

"Protestant pastors showed a surprising degree of similarity in their characterizations of their churches," said George Barna, a religion researcher.

For example, about four out of five pastors said their churches were evangelistic (84 percent), theologically conservative (79 percent), evangelical (79 percent) and consistently involved in serving the needy (84 percent).

Fifty-eight percent of pastors

claimed their churches were seeker-sensitive. Far fewer claimed to be fundamentalist (36 percent), liturgical (35 percent), Pentecostal (20 percent), charismatic (19 percent) and liberal (13 percent).

Most pastors (54 percent) said worship service attendance had increased, by an estimated 12 percent, in the past year. Only 6 percent said attendance had declined.

But the reported average weekly adult attendance actually declined by 9 percent, Barna said. Average U.S. church attendance fell from 100 to 91. The average church operating budget dropped 15 percent, from \$123,000 to \$105,000.

Pastoral perspectives on revival also are at odds with lay views, he added. Fifty-four percent of clergy said America is experiencing revival. But only 12 percent of adults "provided a definition ... of revival that can be considered accurate," he said.

Four factors could explain the discrepancy between church attendance and pastors' estimates, Barna said.

They include widespread discussion of revival and the pastors' desire to participate; poor tracking of attendance; sporadic attendance, which causes pastors to overestimate how

often individuals actually attend; and discrepancy between church membership and attendance.

The distinction between the pastors' descriptions of church theology and members' beliefs is easy to explain, Barna noted.

"Ask a pastor about the theological perspective of [the] church, and you'll get their personal theological leaning," he said. "They assume the views they preach are the views their people accept. However, we find that adults often are quite skeptical of teachings and ideologies and often treat the views of their pastor as just one more view to consider."

Pastors overestimate their church's ministry to the poor, Barna reported. That's primarily because they "may accurately claim that their church is engaged in community service ministry" when only a few church members actually do the ministry, he said.

Clergy and laity should discuss church identity, theology and ministry, Barna said. "The more we can all deal from a basis of common vision, shared expectations and accurate knowledge about what the church is and is not doing, the more likely it is that we will be effective in seeing people's lives touched and transformed."

Clinton's spiritual advisers discuss their role

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Two ministers who are offering spiritual counsel to President Clinton said they are working on healing the president's soul as he deals with his admitted sins regarding an inappropriate relationship with a former White House intern.

"I am concerned about a man whose soul is in mortal danger," said Tony Campolo, a sociology professor at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pa., on ABC News Sept. 23.

The president sought spiritual help from Campolo and Gordon MacDonald, senior minister of Grace Chapel in Lexington, Mass., earlier this month.

"You have about 30 seconds to discern the genuineness of this," MacDonald said, Associated Press reported. "God help you if you hang up on a person in genuine need."

The ministers said they have regular meetings with Clinton.

"We're not just going to walk in and do a 15-minute 'How do you do, and here's a verse of Scripture; a verse a day will keep the devil away,'" Campolo said. "We will not let him off that easily."

Both of them spoke of confronting Clinton.

"We have gone to the bottom of this matter," MacDonald told ABC.

Campolo said their discussions had prompted the president to yell at them.

"We can tell you about a time when we've come on so strong that he ended up yelling at us," Campolo said. "That's not an easy thing, you know, to have the president of the United States yelling at you. ... That's when conversations become real, isn't it? That's when they become real."

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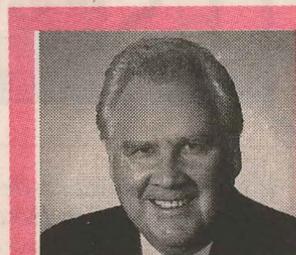
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Baptists take ministries to bombed embassy countries

Violence growing against Christians in Indonesia

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Christian churches in Indonesia are facing an escalating "epidemic" of violent attacks, the human rights organization Freedom House has reported.

According to the Washington office of the organization, newly compiled evidence shows that between 1995 and 1997, 131 Christian churches were burned to the ground, destroyed by riots or closed by government authorities.

But in the first seven months of 1998, 83 churches and schools were attacked.

Freedom House said the violence against the churches appears to be distinct from the well-publicized attacks against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia because the majority of churches targeted were not those of predominantly ethnic Chinese congregations.

The rights group, which lobbies on behalf of persecuted Christians abroad, said most of the violence in the predominantly Muslim nation was the result of rioting mobs.

"Political observers are missing this story," said Paul Marshall, a senior fellow at Freedom House. "They are noting only economically motivated anti-Chinese violence. This certainly exists also, but attacks on churches started escalating in 1995, two years before Indonesia's economic collapse.

"Most of the attacks are on non-Chinese and mixed-ethnic congregations," he said. "For example, the churches burned by mobs in Central and West Java on July 27 and July 31 were Javanese and Batak, not Chinese."

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)—A month to the day after the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, new ministries are under way to victims of the explosions.

Three Southern Baptist counselors from Oklahoma are set to arrive Sept. 21 to train pastors, laymen, seminary students and victims from local churches to handle the trauma that blast victims are experiencing.

"I think most of the counselors were involved in the Oklahoma City bombing, so their input here is invaluable," said Jon Sapp, leader of South-

ern Baptist International Mission Board work in eastern Africa.

IMB missionaries living in Kenya also are making a difference. Jim Keene, a physician from Rochester, Minn., had just begun an International Service Corps assignment at the time of the bombings and he's been in the thick of things ever since.

Keene is working closely with USAID and non-governmental organizations to coordinate the massive relief that continues to pour into Kenya.

While some early media reports

emphasized complaints that American victims of the bomb received better emergency attention than Kenyans, aid agencies "are working hard together to get relief to those who need it most while they recuperate," Sapp said.

Keene also is working in cooperation with the Kenya Society for the Blind to provide canes and equipment needed by those who recently lost their sight.

"We know by name 18 victims who are totally blinded and more than 50 with eye damage such as loss of

sight in one eye," Sapp said. "Dr. Keene and Connie Burton, also with the Kenya mission, are working with the society to find ongoing help for these people."

Another Kenya missionary, Bob Allen, is working with Nairobi Baptist Association to discover any Baptist church members who are victims or friends of victims of the catastrophe.

Southern Baptists willing to help victims of the bombing may contact the IMB's eastern Africa office at (804) 219-1730.

Uzbekistan puts tight limits on most forms of religious expression

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan (RNS)—A new law in Uzbekistan makes it illegal for anyone except a government-certified member of the clergy to talk about religion one-on-one in the mostly Muslim central Asian republic.

The new law, which took effect Aug. 15, also bans private religious instruction and churches with fewer than 100 members. Church leaders who fail to comply with the law face criminal charges that could lead to heavy fines and detention in labor camp prison, according to the Human

Rights Without Frontiers.

The government also ruled illegal any existing religious organization that failed to register with the government by Aug. 15, the human rights group said.

The law—which also is aimed at curbing the spread of fundamentalist Islam—makes Uzbekistan the latest of the former Soviet republics to clamp down on religious expression. Much of the impetus for the curbs has been a backlash against foreign groups that have flooded the republics with missionaries since the collapse of the So-

viet Union and the ensuing liberalization of entry requirements.

Many of the foreign missionaries have connections to American and European Protestant denominations and other sects. However, in Uzbekistan, fundamentalist Muslim missionaries from the Middle East also have concerned the secular government.

The new law was passed by Uzbekistan's parliament May 1, but religious groups were not informed about the decree's unwieldy registration process until six weeks before the

deadline. To register, churches needed to complete mounds of documents and have them signed by government officials, most of whom were vacationing during the registration period.

According to Human Rights Without Frontiers, the nation's deputy minister of justice told a group of Baptist leaders earlier this summer, "After Aug. 15, you are zero."

The nation's 15,000 Protestants are preparing a campaign to protest the inevitable closure of most—if not all—of their churches.

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China house churches call for persecution to stop

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

ZHENGZHOU, China (RNS)—A dozen people gathered secretly in the upper room of a two-story house. All of them had been imprisoned, some several times. One man said he had been released only five days earlier.

Their sole crime, they said, was leading underground, unregistered—and therefore illegal—Christian “house churches” in the People’s Republic of China.

These leaders, saying they represent millions of Chinese Christians who worship out of view of the government, have written a seven-point appeal chronicling what they say is government mistreatment and asking for reforms. The document is believed to mark the first time Protestant house church leaders have gathered publicly to state their grievances to China and the world.

Their handwritten appeal to the government, drafted recently during a two-day period, is not a carefully worded diplomatic communiqué. Instead, it’s an impassioned statement of radical faith, calling on the communist regime “to admit to God’s great power” and to release fellow Christians from prisons or work camps.

“We have been persecuted so long, we just have to fight the last fight,” said Zhang Rongliang, a peasant with a cell phone attached to his shorts. “We can’t keep silent anymore.”

Critics of China’s religious policy said the appeal shows a growing per-

secution of Christians and the need for Western intervention. Others, including a Chinese government spokesman, said the document did not reflect the increasing freedom in China.

The appeal, written in Chinese and given to two American journalists, highlights the stark contrasts between two types of churches in China.

Those in registered, government-approved churches say this is a golden era for religious freedom in communist China, evidenced by standing-room-only worship services and the printing of millions of Bibles in Chinese.

But many in the house church movement, including the leaders at the secret gathering, say they have no freedom and are severely persecuted. They fear the worst is yet to come.

Both house churches and registered churches have grown exponentially in recent years as the Chinese people try to fill the vacuum left by a fading communist ideology with a variety of philosophies, including Christianity.

The numbers of Christians these leaders represent is impossible to verify. But they said they represented at least 15 million Christians. For the most part, the house church movement has been a faceless network of loosely connected people who are mostly unknown to the West.

The leaders in the secret meeting set out to change that after a morning prayer session. All but one of them were peasants with elementary school educations.

Among other things, the document:

■ Asked authorities “to release unconditionally all house church Christians presently serving in labor reform camps.” The camps are used to punish and re-educate dissidents.

■ Called for “a dialogue” between the house churches and the government “to come to mutual understanding.” The document gave no hint as to what common ground might be, emphasizing instead the need for the government to recognize the house churches.

■ Requested a clear definition of “cult” to prevent authorities from unjustly making arrests on grounds that house church Christians are cult leaders. In March 1997, authorities arrested Peter Xu Youngze, leader of the Born Again Movement, calling him a cult leader. The movement claims 3 million followers.

Of perhaps more significance, however, was the group’s decision to identify itself publicly.

“The fact that it was done, rather than what is in it, is what’s important,” said Paul Marshall, author of “Their Blood Cries Out,” an investigation of religious persecution around the world.

Although the appeal did not ask for U.S. intervention, Zhang said China “fears the American government” and that he hopes the United States will take up the house churches’ cause.

“We want direct pressure,” Zhang said, “even if the persecution gets worse in the short term. We want the

outside world to know what’s happening to us and that we’re holding on to our faith.”

Shen Cheng-en, associate general secretary of the China Christian Council, a government agency, warned against making too much of the document.

He said there might be government crackdowns against some house churches, particularly in rural areas where local authorities tend to make their own rules. But he denied nationwide repression. “The policy of the central government is to ensure religious freedom. It’s written in the constitution. If there is persecution anywhere, it’s unlawful and illegal.”

“I really think this protest is an act of desperation,” said Nina Shea, director of the Center for Religious Freedom at Freedom House, a human rights organization based in Washington. “What this is really about is they want the West to know.”

But Nelson Graham, president of East Gates Ministries in Arlington, Wash., and the son of evangelist Billy Graham, said the house church leaders represent a very small minority of Christians in China.

“This declaration reveals a great level of political naiveté,” said Graham, whose organization works with the Chinese government, registered churches and house churches. “If anything, it will simply increase the level of scrutiny placed upon the house churches. It’s very unfortunate, a rather blunt instrument that does not foster dialogue.”

Chinese reports drop in executions

LONDON (RNS)—Last year, China, the world’s most populous nation, reported executing more of its citizens than the rest of the world combined. Still, the 3,000 executions reported in China for 1997—more than eight per day—represent a 31 percent drop from 1996, human rights monitors said recently.

But Catherine Baver, a China specialist for London-based Amnesty International, said the 1997 execution figure “represents only a fraction” of the real total.

“We need more openness on the part of Chinese officials,” she said. “What have they got to hide on this matter?”

Baver said state-run media reports, a major source for her group’s estimates, often do not provide accurate counts of executions.

A Supreme People’s Court judge told U.S. businessman John Kamm, who also lobbies the Chinese government on behalf of prisoners, that the drop in executions can be attributed to a new criminal code and sentencing guidelines that went into effect Oct. 1, 1997.

The code narrowed uses of the death penalty for theft, which accounts for nearly a third of all criminal cases in China, a nation of more than 1.1 billion people. Only bank robbery and theft of cultural relics now are punishable by death, Kamm said, citing the judge.

Facts on the death penalty in China are hard to come by because the new sentencing guidelines as well as the total number of executions are considered state secrets.

Brooke Andrew

By Robert Dunston

Cumberland College student Brooke Andrew, the daughter of Ron and Della Andrew of Cincinnati, worked in Ocean City, Md., this past summer.

She previously had been to Ocean City twice, once after high school graduation and once with her church on a mission trip. This time she went as a summer missionary through the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Andrew’s team engaged in all types of resort ministries including backyard Bible clubs and servanthood ministries. Her specific core ministry assignment was at Treasure Beach Campground, an RV park.

The campground had a worship service in which she and the other leaders dressed in frontier clothes and led in “old time” worship.

During the summer, Andrew worked with youth mission groups to provide backyard Bible studies and caring ministries to those at the campground. In the evenings she and the groups planned beach events such as Frisbee football, provided free dinners for the lifeguards and led Bible studies called “Search.” Often the Bible studies

provided opportunities for in-depth discussions as individuals struggled to apply faith in everyday life.

One unique opportunity for Andrew was working with an artist who created sand sculptures. She and others helped prepare the sand for the artist who then sculpted a cross and various biblical scenes.

Andrew and her fellow missionaries used a local community center for many of their activities. The activity director was not a Christian, but Andrew was able to build a relationship and share the Christian faith with her in word and deed.

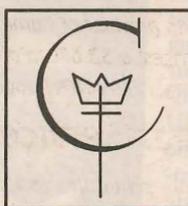
The relationships she built were a high point of the summer for Andrew.

She and three other student missionaries lived with the local pastor and enjoyed being part of the local church. She realized with joy that her summer’s work was focusing on and serving God. “I was thrilled,” she said.

Andrew, a social work major, plans to attend seminary after graduation and then pursue a call she has had since sixth grade: missions. We know God has wonderful plans for her.

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

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In a Southern Baptist church, verses like the ones above often are quoted, preached, taught and indelibly pressed on every believer’s heart, mind and pocketbook.

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Bill Smithwick

MISSIONS

Baptists kept ministering after everyone else left

AIQUILE, Bolivia (BP)—One of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded in Bolivia devastated the Quechua Indian cities of Aiquile, Mizque and Tora four months ago.

For a few days, world attention focused on the area and many relief agencies flocked to the scene. Ninety days later, people still were in dire need, but most of the foreign aid had ceased. Many people had a tent and some blankets to shelter them from the Andean cold—but little else.

That's when Southern Baptist missionaries and their Bolivian co-workers brought food, veterinary assistance and spiritual hope to an isolated area where many residents had never heard the gospel message of God's love.

Immediately after the earthquake, "there were so many international agencies trying to help the people that there were plane crashes on the small air strip in Aiquile," said Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary Malcom Massey. "Goods went to waste for lack of a distribution plan."

Massey and IMB missionaries Toby and Cindy Hoover and Bolivian High teamed with Bible Society and Bolivian Baptist volunteers to visit the quake victims.

They said they knew Southern Baptists were praying for the effort.

"We certainly felt your prayers for our safety as we traveled on treacherous dirt roads, at times climbing to nearly 10,000 feet above sea level," High said.

The roads, destroyed by the quake in places, have just been reopened.

The missionaries helped distribute food

bags, along with packets of Christian literature including New Testaments, Bible story books and school notebooks with Bible verses.

Hoover, a veterinarian, vaccinated 269 dogs and cats against rabies and treated pigs for parasites so they can gain weight and provide more meat in the future.

"We visited people in the tent camps and our hearts were touched listening to their stories of the terrible night, of being thrown about like dolls, of never seeing friends again, of the walls that open and close as the earth continues to move," Massey said.

Each night, the missionaries showed a Quechua-language version of the "Jesus" film, an account of the life of Jesus from the Gospel of Luke.

"For most, it was the first time to hear the gospel story in their own language," Massey said. "Many thanked us and promised to think and talk about what they had seen and heard."

"In one tent camp, a young Quechua woman named Mercedes came to Toby Hoover the morning after we showed the film and asked how to accept Jesus as her savior and lord," Massey said. "She prayed to receive Christ."

An unusual evening thunderstorm in Mizque halted the showing in the middle of the film, High said.

"But God had plans for a larger audience to see the film," he said. "The following evening, we obtained permission to show the video on the local television station."

"We plowed a lot of ground and sowed many seeds," Massey said.

Pastors, be our guest October 15 for Pastor Appreciation Day at Southern Seminary



Dr. Stephen Olford, Founder of the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching. Dr. Olford is widely acknowledged as one of America's premier expositors of Scripture.

10 a.m. - Seminary Worship Service, Alumni Memorial Chapel

Preacher: Dr. Stephen Olford

Special Music by

Seminary Choir and Orchestra

11:30 a.m. - Pastor Appreciation Luncheon, Heritage Hall

Speaker: R. Albert Mohler, Jr.,

President, SBTS

"The Ministry of the Word:

Preaching as the Heart of Our Calling"

2 p.m. - Heritage Hall

Dr. Stephen Olford

"The Recovery of

Expository Preaching"

3-4 p.m. - Heritage Hall

Open Forum with

Dr. Stephen Olford and Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

Reservations for complimentary luncheon requested by October 13.



The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

2825 Lexington Road · Louisville, KY 40280
1 800 626-5525, ext. 4121 · www.sbts.edu

School is off to a good start

Our fall revival, which normally takes place about four or five weeks after school begins, is a critical time on our campus. Often we can have a sense of the spiritual mood of our student body by the results during the revival. In the past two weeks I have shared some really positive experiences we've had in chapel and in our Baptist Student Union.

Our fall revival took place last week. The evangelist always brings a message each day in chapel as well as in the evening service. I would like to share about a student who accepted Christ as Savior last week.

"Peggy" (not her real name) is an adopted child from another country. We were told Peggy had some problems bonding with one of her new parents, that she wanted to be the boss and she wouldn't follow rules. There were also major academic problems at school. Because of situations beyond her control, she could not attend school the first 11 years of her life.

After being adopted and entering school here in the States, she and her parents discovered she was woefully behind academically. The school Peggy was attending did not help her develop academically. After much frustration and searching, her parents heard about Oneida. Peggy enrolled here in January as a middle school student in our tutoring lab.

It did not take long for our tutoring staff to discover just how far behind she was. They knew it was going to be a long, uphill struggle academically. Peggy had a tremendous desire to advance to the next grade at the end of the school year. Though she put forth reasonable effort, we knew she would not be ready to advance.

When she went home for spring break in

March after only being here two months, her father wrote us this letter: "We noticed amazing changes in Peggy when she was home for the spring break. She was very polite and generally courteous ... which Peggy attributed to the fact that she prayed each night that she would not be angry the next day.

"Mrs. Nichols (the tutoring lab director) has made tremendous strides with Peggy in the tutoring lab. Peggy has impressed everyone with her new ability to read.

"While home, Peggy volunteered at a local volunteer, Peggy volunteered at a local home, Peggy volunteered at a local home, Peggy volunteered at a local home. She repeatedly says that Oneida Baptist Institute is the right school for her. I am incredibly pleased that she is flourishing in your environment. Thank you for giving this young lady a new chance at life."

Though we couldn't promote her to the next grade this fall, we did put her into some regular classes with tutoring the rest of the day. We still have a long way to go, but we believe she may be ready for high school in two years. She probably still will need some tutoring

then but will be able to do reasonably well considering all the obstacles she has had to overcome.

During the revival Peggy gave her heart to Jesus. She is an example of the tremendous opportunities awaiting a Christian school that will open its doors to boys and girls who are not Christians. We not only had the privilege of leading her to Christ, but now we have the opportunity to help her grow spiritually as well as academically.

(To be continued next week.)

W.F. Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, P.O. Box 67, Oneida, Ky. 40972. www.oneidaschool.org

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Thanks to the BSU

Twenty students recently gathered at Kelly Hall for the kick-off of another year of Baptist Student Union work. BSU is usually identified with schools that are more traditional. With our larger number of single students, the program offers an opportunity for leadership development and missions involvement. KBC student department leader Ralph Hopkins reviewed BSU work and challenged council members to become involved.

Council members shared their hopes for the program. Advisor Donna Lister, director of our child development center, told of how BSU blessed her life. The group enjoyed contemporary Christian music accompanied by electronic keyboard. I shared my testimony with a focus on BSU involvement.

As a student at Western Kentucky University, I became involved in BSU under the ministry of Roy Briggance. Revival teams and summer missions brought spiritual growth, new friendships and certainty of God's call to ministry. My assignment to the Philippines was last on the funding list for 1964 student mission projects, but Western Kentucky BSU gave enough to ensure my trip. That summer

marked a turning point toward missions that led to appointment as a missionary in 1983. It was in BSU that I came to know Rebecca Howard better; she was on the council and sang in the choir. We married in 1966.

Our years in Murray, 1976-82, were richer because of Murray State University BSU. Current Campus

Minister Keith Inman was a student during part of that time. One of our trustees, Tim Langford, was student body president. Many students attended Sunday Bible study and filled the front center section of First Baptist Church's sanctuary. The church gave \$42,000 to purchase land for a new BSU facility.

BSU blessed my life again through the involvement of our son

John Mark. Inman never gave up on him. John Mark eventually became very active in the Murray State BSU, a member of two Son-Share teams, state BSU vice-president and on the Centrifuge staff for two years. BSU was a factor in his surrender to ministry and in meeting his bride-to-be, Jessica Higdon.

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

BOOKS

Counseling People with Cancer. Jann Aldredge-Clanton. Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. 157 pages. \$17. ♦♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

Shock. Denial. Fear. Anxiety. Hopelessness. This may sound like the feelings of a person diagnosed with cancer. While this is true, I too battle these emotions when ministering with a person facing that diagnosis.

This book is not intended to help counselors deal with their emotions, but Aldredge-Clanton's excellent treatment of the subject gives the minister the resources to enter the pastoral relationship with confidence.

In this confidence, the minister is more likely to get a grip on his or her own reaction to the person with cancer.

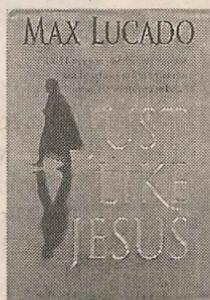
Aldredge-Clanton's book is full of practical insights into helping people cope with the diagnosis and experience of cancer. Systematically she leads the reader to understand the range of responses to the diagnosis of cancer. The first chapter on the life-shattering diagnosis of cancer is a must for those who enter into ministry with cancer patients.

Her ample use of quotes and other case studies brings the reader into the lives of people touched by cancer. A significant contribution is her focus on the use of sacred images and stories in the ministry relationship. The coping and healing power of Bible stories and God images is at the foundation of each chapter.

With one out of three people hearing a diagnosis of cancer at some point

in their lives, the responsible parish minister must be more informed about this disease than the average parishioner. "Counseling People with Cancer" provides the minister with an excellent guide to being ambassadors of God's grace during one of life's most dreaded moments. *Wayne Hager*

Just Like Jesus. Max Lucado. Word Publishing, 1998. 223 pages. \$19.99. ♦♦♦♦



Max Lucado has found a formula that works. In addition it sells a lot of books. Each of Lucado's books are filled with illustrations and stories and speak simply and directly to the reader.

As a pastor, Lucado has heard many people say, "I am just the way I am and I cannot change." Lucado

affirms that God loves us just the way we are, but he adds that God is not content to just leave us as we are. God's relationship with humanity is one in which God seeks change in us. The pattern for this change is for us to be made just like Jesus.

In his chapters Lucado explores the heart of Jesus and how God works to give us the same heart. Each new aspect of Jesus' heart is an answer to some of the ways that we say we cannot change.

If you are looking for a deep theological discussion of how God works in our lives, then Lucado's book will not fill the bill. But he does accomplish his goal of persuading the general reader that part of being in God's family means expecting, experiencing

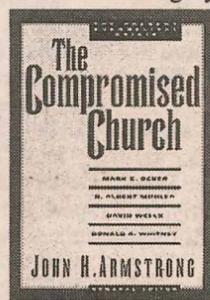
and welcoming change in our lives. *Wayne Hager*

The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis. Edited by John Armstrong. Crossway Books, 1998. 330 pages. ♦♦♦♦♦

According to the various contributors to "The Compromised Church," the evangelical church has squandered its inheritance in riotous living. Like Esau, evangelicals have traded their birthright for a mess of porridge called cultural relevance. The only solution to this crisis is a wholesale return to a Puritan/fundamentalist view of ministry and the church.

David Wells sets the context for the essays which follow in an introductory article titled "The Word and the World." He contends "... the character of contemporary evangelicalism is changing because of its unwitting entanglement with a culture that ... has the power to eviscerate the doctrinal substance of faith." The crucial question, he believes, is "how to engage the culture without losing one's soul."

The 14 chapters that follow seek to identify those places where evangelical churches have compromised the essence of the gospel and their identity. Issues such as the authority of Scripture, the Lord's Supper and baptism, church discipline, every-member ministry and the Puritan contribution to evangelical ministry are discussed with a call to the evangelical church to embrace, or re-embrace, the fundamentalist vision.



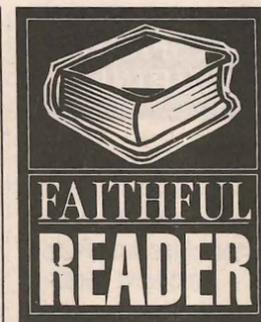
A delicious irony is found in Stephen Wellum's discussion of baptism. He argues that evangelical churches have developed a "low baptismal consciousness." Wellum insists we must recapture the true and essential meaning and significance of Christian baptism.

The irony is that Wellum is willing to relegate the questions of the proper timing for baptism and the proper candidate for baptism to the category of secondary issues. Recognizing that fundamentalists of different reformed traditions disagree on these secondary issues, he asserts that we can maintain both the practice of believer's baptism and infant baptism within the same understanding of the true meaning of baptism.

Another glaring irony for Baptists is found in the chapter "Evangelical Ministry: The Puritan Contribution." The author uses John Bunyan as his source for describing the essence of a puritan model for ministry. I am not sure Bunyan, as a jailed Baptist minister, would be complimented.

This book is an important read for all Baptists. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Al Mohler not only contributes a chapter, he endorses the whole by lending his name to the front cover.

Though addressed to the whole evangelical community, the book clearly defines the direction current SBC leadership would take us. The case for a fundamentalist/Puritan vision for the church is presented clearly and concisely. *Jim Holladay*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C., 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@surry.net

Popular end-time books ask, 'When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be where?'

By Steve Rabey
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—With his packed 747 cruising high over the Atlantic, pilot Rayford Steele's thoughts turn to seducing perky senior flight attendant Hattie Durham. But when Hattie approaches, she's distraught.

"People are missing," she tells Rayford. "Their shoes, their socks, their clothes, everything was left behind."

Before long, Steele, Durham and passenger Buck Williams, a globe-trotting journalist, begin to realize millions of people from all walks of life and all corners of the globe have vanished without a trace.

Experts attribute the mystery of the missing masses to UFOs, or terrorists.

But as the central characters in this fictional drama wind their way through burning neighborhoods and wreck-strewn, corpse-lined highways, they confront an unambiguous theological message: "The Rapture had taken place. Jesus Christ had returned for his people." Among the unraptured are liberal preachers, pew-sitting churchgoers, newspaper editors and other skeptics.

So begins "Left Behind," a fast-paced, end-times novel co-authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins that has sold 750,000 copies, spawned a mini-industry of related products and inspired thousands of readers to prepare for meeting their maker.

"We are using fiction to teach biblical truth," said LaHaye, who came up with the idea for the novel more than a decade ago. Jenkins, an accomplished writer who has penned more than 130 books, brought the project to life when the novel was published in 1995.

"What we hear from readers is that they have fallen in love with the characters and want to know what happens with them," Jenkins said.

"Reading them really gave me a practical, down-to-earth picture of what the end times are going to be like, which was kind of frightening," said Sandy Grimes of Colorado, who says the book inspired her to have heart-to-heart talks with her husband and son. "It is calling me to do what I'm supposed to do, which is share the good news of Christ."

Christians have long anticipated the culmination of human history.

In the first century, St. Paul instructed the Thessalonian believers "not to become easily unsettled or alarmed" by prophecies about "the day of the Lord." Paul also warned against predicting "time and dates," but detailed predictions have been a staple of both publishing and preaching for centuries.

The creation of the nation of Israel in 1948 sent the end-times industry into overdrive. Hal Lindsey's "The Late Great Planet Earth," which appeared in 1970 and was the best-selling nonfiction book in that

decade in the United States, ushered in a brave new era of pop millennialism. Today, there are dozens of apocalyptic books, both fiction and nonfiction.

Theologians debate a variety of complex and conflicting end-times scenarios, all based on interpretations of St. John's prophetic book of Revelation, with its dramatic portrayals of Christ's thousand-year reign.

The "Left Behind" series is based on a pretribulation, premillennial approach, which says faithful believers will be "raptured" from the earth before a seven-year period of tribulation, which comes before Christ's millennial reign. This approach certainly offers the best dramatic opportunities, and the authors have exploited these possibilities at will.

Book two in the series, "Tribulation Force," follows Steele, Durham and Williams as they struggle to survive in a post-rapture world. "Nicolae," book three, focuses on the one-world reign of the Antichrist. And the recently released "Soul Harvest" describes life amidst earthquakes, divine judgments and worsening conditions.

The authors don't see any connection between the Christian concept of the millennium and the rapidly approaching year 2000, but Tyndale House Publishers in Wheaton, Ill., expects a downturn in sales after Dec. 31, 1999.

Some Christian leaders are concerned

about the booming popularity of books with a pretribulation bias.

"Evangelical Christians differ on some points that are on the edges of theology," said James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Kennedy, a posttribulationist, considers LaHaye "a friend and a good Christian," but thinks LaHaye's belief that saints will be taken before the tribulation leaves people "unprepared if bad times come," adding, "I believe that it is better to get one's theology from the Bible than from novels."

Such concerns haven't slowed sales of "Left Behind," which went to the top of the Christian best-seller charts soon after it was released three years ago.

Tyndale asked LaHaye and Jenkins to expand the concept into a trilogy, and then a seven-book series. Now, new books in the series are scheduled to come out every six months, which isn't fast enough for some rabid readers.

The first four titles are disappearing out of bookstores nationwide, selling a combined 2 million copies.

Co-author Jenkins, who helped Billy Graham write his popular memoirs, "Just As I Am," has had his share of best-sellers. But he said he is confounded by the success of the "Left Behind" books.

"They went from being brisk sellers, to best sellers, to amazing, to phenomenal," he said. "I've run out of adjectives. It's been a fun ride, and I feel humbled to be along."

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ A new church recently started in the Moscow suburb of Marina.

■ Anne Albritton as she ministers in orphanages around Tambov, Russia.

■ Lori Milburn as she teaches English around Tambov, Russia.

■ Raja Kandanada, minister to Asian Indians in Boston.

■ Follow-up to the ministry of Newton Creek Baptist Church in Kevil in Lewiston, Maine, this summer.

■ The ministry of Theiss Jones this fall at Washington Baptist Church in Vermont. Jones, from Temple, Texas, is helping the church prepare its Christmas musical.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ **CUMBERLAND**—Central Church will host revival Oct. 1-3. **Dave Hammond**, pastor of Faith Church in Myra, will be the evangelist.

■ **ELIZABETHTOWN**—Severns Valley Church called **Dennis Phelps** as associate pastor. Phelps was at Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. **Lora Wade** has been hired as education/records secretary. **Billy Compton** is pastor.

■ **FRANKFORT**—**William Carter**, pastor of Memorial Church, announced his retirement effective Dec. 1. He will be available for supply, interim and revivals. Call (502) 695-4972.

■ **HENDERSON**—The Gaithers' Homecoming Concert Oct. 9 at 6:30 p.m. will be at Roberts Stadium. Call Wayne Eastham at (502) 826-4952 for more information.

■ **HODGENVILLE**—**Phillip Brumfield** was called as pastor at Ovesen Heights. He comes from Shiloh Church in Hopkinsville. Ovesen Heights celebrated its 40th homecoming Sept. 20. Former pastor **James Jackson** delivered the message.

■ **JAMESTOWN**—**Louis Shepherd** resigned as pastor of Mt. Vernon Church. Shepherd is available for supply. Call (502) 866-6503.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Broadway Church will host a continental breakfast Oct. 11 at 8:45 a.m. for **Ed and Teri Tarleton**. The Tarletons are missionaries on furlough from Russia.

Cameron Mills will speak at Clo-

verleaf Church Oct. 8 at 7 p.m. For more information, call (502) 367-0218.

D.E. Adams will present a church music concert at Crescent Hill Church Oct. 4 at 6:30 p.m. Call (502) 896-4425 for ticket information.

Highland Church recently ordained as deacons **Eugene Bell, Phil Collier, Keith Eiken, Mary Jackson, Grundy Janes, Tom Lee, Susan Pierce, Chris Sanders** and **Dan Zoeller**. **Joe Phelps** is pastor.

Ruth Thomas, retired foreign missionary and seminary teacher, will speak at Hurstbourne Church's women's dinner, Oct. 1.

Lyndon Church will present "Mold Me Ministry" with **Judy and Carlo Elmer**, Oct. 4 at 6 p.m.

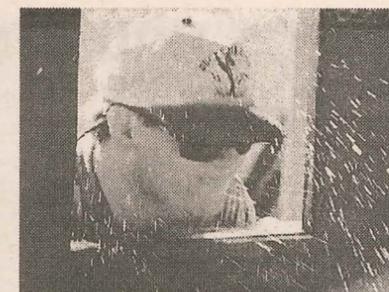
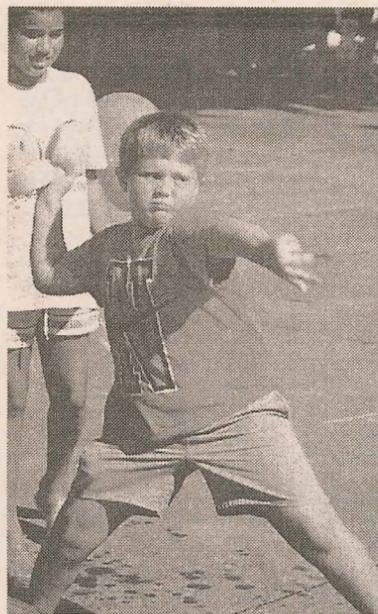
Walnut Street Church recognized **Shelby Bailey** for her service as records secretary for 24 years and **Jan Noland** for 10 years as administrative assistant in family ministries. **Bob Long** is pastor.

West Broadway will have **Ed Erwin** and the sanctuary choir from First Church of Shelbyville on Oct. 7 for a Wednesday night revival. Call (502) 491-1920 for information.

■ **MAGNOLIA**—**Charles Pollard** was called as pastor at Magnolia Church. He comes from Advance Church in Henderson.

■ **OWENSBORO**—Beuna Vista Church has called **Judy Bruntz** as music director.

■ **WHITLEY CITY**—First Church ordained **Boyd Rowe** to the gospel ministry.



BLOCK PARTY About 250 people attended the recent block party hosted by High Street Baptist Church in Somerset. "We're just trying to connect with the community and say, 'We care for you,'" said pastor **Chris Platt**. The event, held Sept. 12, included free food and music by the church youth praise team. Various groups in the church sponsored booths for games, face painting, a cake walk and cookie decorating. ■ **Left:** Illusionist **David Garrard** of Louisville, performs magic for some kids. ■ **Above left:** A boy takes aim at a wet sponge-tossing booth. ■ **Above right:** Deacon **Neal Shoemaker** was among the sponge throwers' targets. ■ **Bottom right:** Members of the church Girls in Action group paint faces and hair.

CLASSIFIED ADS

NEEDED: Full-time HVAC technician. \$8.49/hr. Outstanding benefits: 12 holidays, two weeks vacation. Generally 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Six months experience required. Apply in person to Southern Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Carver Building, Room 201. (502) 897-4721.

SEEKING: The Genesee Baptist Association, Flint, Mich., is receiving resumés for the position of associational missionary. Nominations for this position may be mailed to Chairman Roy G. Adams at either of the following: 10158 South State Road, Goodrich, MI 48438; 74577.3650@compuserve.com; or Fax: (810) 238-9069. Please include cover letter. Nominations are being received through Oct. 21, 1998.

SEEKING: Bivocational pastor for rural Harrison County church. We have three services weekly with an average Sunday morning attendance of 65.

AVAILABLE: Tickets for Gaither homecoming concert in Evansville, Ind., Friday, Oct. 9. Artist circle seats: \$13.50 each, or travel by air-conditioned, restroom-equipped motor-coach: \$36 per person (includes ticket and travel). Call (502) 225-0335.

NEEDED: Bivocational music director at First Baptist Church, Sebree, Ky. For more information, please contact: FBC, P.O. Box 156, Sebree, KY 42455, or (502) 835-7811.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Parkway Baptist Church, 1915 N. Broadway, Lexington, KY 40505.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music/worship leader at Calvary Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn. Calvary is a conservative Southern Baptist church with emphasis in missions and college ministry. Prerequisites: Called to music ministry, five years or more experience as music minister or comparable education (seminary degree preferred but not required). Please send resumé to: Music Ministry Search Committee, c/o Calvary Baptist Church, 3200 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN 37923.

SEEKING: Associate pastor for Southern Baptist church in Frederick, Md. Responsibilities include coordinating the music ministry; directing the choir and congregational music; coordinating the youth program; working with adult youth leaders; and assisting the senior pastor with pastoral duties. Send resumé to: South End Baptist Church, 506 Carrollton Drive, Frederick, MD 21701, or email information to pastorkenstalls@frederick.md.com.

SEEKING: Beacon Hill Baptist Church is accepting resumés for pastor until Oct. 31, 1998. Please submit resumés to: Pastoral Search Committee, Beacon Hill Baptist Church, 274 Old Monticello Road, Somerset, KY 42503.

SEEKING: Youth minister. Please send resumé to: Stanton Baptist Church, P.O. Box 777, Stanton, KY 40380.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music. Send resumé to: Salvisa Baptist Church, Kirkwood Road, Salvisa, KY 40330.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, Carthage, Mo., seeks full-time minister of music. Seminary or equivalent degree/experience directing church music ministry. Send resumé with VCR tape and references to: Personnel Committee, 631 S. Garrison, Carthage, MO 64836.

SEEKING: Northside Baptist Church, Elizabethtown, Ky., is accepting resumés for position of part-time minister of music and part-time minister of youth/music. Church is located in a rapidly developing residential area. Please send resumé to: Search Committee, 1800 Pear Orchard Road, Elizabethtown, KY 42701.

SEEKING: Burkesville Baptist Church is seeking a part-time music and youth minister. We are a growing church in a large mission field with large number of youth and children. We have an established music program with excellent musicians. Please submit resumé to: Personnel Committee, Burkesville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 373, Burkesville, KY 42717, or call (502) 864-4105.

SEEKING: Full-time director of children's ministry to administer daycare program of the church and coordinate church's ministry to children and their families. Church encourages school teachers to consider God's leading into this opportunity of a career in Christian service. Address inquiries or resumés to: Southwest Baptist Church, 6401 Scanlan, St. Louis, MO 63139, Attn: Search Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for a small, South-central Kentucky church. Please submit resumé to: Pulpit Committee, Welfare Baptist Church 476 West Cumberland Ave., Jamestown, KY 42629.

SEEKING: Full-time director of missions for Sandy Creek Baptist Association. Please send resumé to: Chairman of the Search Committee John Sexton, Route 1, Box 106, Roodhouse, ILL 62082.

SEEKING: Peaks Mill Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky., prayerfully seeks a full-time pastor. Please submit two resumés to: Deacon Roger Combs, 203 Creekside Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601, and Trustee John Griffin, 8209 Owenton Road, Frankfort, KY 40601.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for small Eastern Kentucky church. Parsonage provided. Please submit resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 587, Jenkins, KY 41537.

Czech churches can't enforce 'Thou shalt not steal'

By Peter Smith
Religion News Service

LITOMERICE, Czech Republic (RNS)—Two photographs of a church in northern Bohemia tell the familiar story.

The first shows a resplendent, gold-leaf Baroque altar watched over by large statues of whirling saints. The second shows what happened after thieves finished ripping out anything they could carry.

There was nothing left but crumbling plaster and holes in the wall as yet another church fell victim to a ruthless trade in stolen art.

Czech churches have been under siege, looted by criminals of untold thousands of artifacts since the end of communism in 1989.

Statues, crucifixes, chalices, paintings, medieval manuscripts and even a heavy church bell have been looted. A stolen altar, recovered by police at a rural Czech cottage, was being used as a bar.

"It is the most serious problem we are facing since the so-called Velvet Revolution," said Josef Stulc, director of the State Office for Monument Care, who estimates the losses in the tens of millions of dollars.

The tide is turning, partly because of belated efforts to increase security, but mainly because the damage has been done. Outside a church near Prague, looted several times, a sign posted out of desperation reads: "There is nothing left to steal."

The 1989 democratic movement that ended communism also opened the nation's borders to the West, where there are plenty of willing sellers and buyers.

"During the whole Nazi and com-

munist eras, the number of stolen items was smaller than the number in the last eight years," said historian Jaroslav Macek, who is also spokesman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Litomerice in the northwest Czech Republic.

Churches aren't the only victims. Czech castles, museums and historic homes also have been looted. Some art thieves have concentrated on gravestones and outdoor statues in a land long renowned for religious Baroque artwork, police say.

There have been some successes in slowing the looting with improved security and cooperation among the church, police and art dealers.

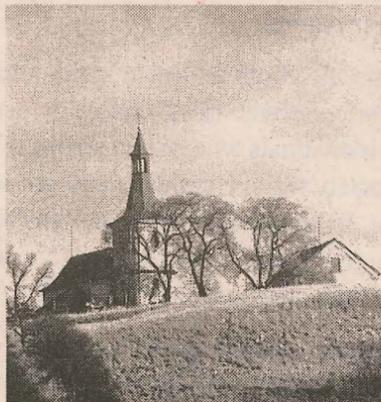
In July, police recovered art objects from Germany valued at \$11.2 million and stolen from various Czech sites. These included paintings, statues, an icon and a Torah scroll that was taken from the Jewish Museum in the city of Brno.

But the case is a rare bright spot in a dark story. Police still report about 500 cases of art theft each year. Stulc also said not all the art leaving these borders originated here. He said large-scale shipments of stolen icons from Russia and Ukraine also pass through.

The classic ingredients of crime—opportunity and motive—are all too ripe in this country.

A massive church-building program accompanied the Catholic Counter-Reformation in the 17th and 18th centuries. Immigrant Italian artisans turned this region into a Baroque treasure chest.

But many of the diocese's Catholics were Sudeten Germans, expelled after World War II in retaliation for their role in Nazi Germany's conquest of Czechoslovakia. After 41 years of



communist hostility to religion, the region's population is now only 21 percent Catholic, down from a pre-war 90 percent.

In spite of all of this, the churches had survived most of the turbulent century unscathed.

"If you compare the initial situation in 1990 versus East Germany or Poland, our own historic interiors used to be miraculously intact," said Stulc.

But vandals and then increasingly savvy art thieves began to see a market in artifacts from rural, unguarded churches.

At first, they just ravaged entire churches, taking anything they could carry. "It looked like a battle went over them," said Stulc. "They were really sacked."

About two years ago, however, international mafias began getting more selective. They would study churches and then tell their underlings to steal specific valuables.

The Catholic Church, aided by state grants, is installing security systems in religious buildings and is hiding many valuables in safes.

The Litomerice diocese also is ex-



CHURCH LOOTING
■ Left: An isolated church is an easy target for thieves in the Czech Republic. Untold thousands of artifacts have been stolen from Czech churches since the fall of communism opened borders to willing buyers. ■ Right: A coordinated effort by German and Czech police recovered objects valued at \$11.2 million. (RNS photos)

hibiting its treasures here and abroad to inform conscientious art collectors that many religious items may be stolen, said Macek. Other dealers, however, remain all too happy to sell such items.

Border officials intercept about 30 shipments of smuggled antiquities each year, still a drop in the bucket.

Many priests, moreover, may not know the value of the artwork in their churches and may not have time to care. Due to a priest shortage, most are busy tending several congregations single-handedly. At one church, a priest never bothered to learn how to use a newly installed \$4,500 alarm system.

"What I especially regret," said Stulc, "are cases such as when a Gothic Madonna from the 14th century, which was built for that church and survived for centuries, is stolen."

Such works were "sometimes a bit naive, a bit vernacular," he said, but they represent the region's unique style, and they have little relevance in some foreign private collection. "It is barbarous and it is irreversible, what has been done."

More religious leaders are working to resolve labor disputes

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Critics might say organized labor in the United States hasn't got a prayer. But the skeptics haven't spoken to Jim Lewis and other religious leaders who are blessing the new labor struggles.

The Episcopal priest is rallying churches in the mid-Atlantic region

behind the cause of low-paid poultry workers at a time when the labor movement is gearing up for an onslaught of organizing in the industry.

"We see it as a deeply moral question, a moral struggle," said Lewis, who heads the newly formed Delmar-

va Poultry Justice Alliance, based in Georgetown, Del.

Clergy and lay activists are turning up in union battles across the country, in greater numbers than at any other time in decades. They are praying on the picket lines with janitors, hotel workers, strawberry pickers and others who labor at the bottom of America's booming economy.

On the Sunday before Labor Day, workers and union officials were invited into the pulpits of dozens of churches across the country to speak on the link between religious faith and workers' rights.

Retired Bishop Jesse DeWitt of the United Methodist Church said he hasn't seen so many clergy of various denominations in the labor field since the California farm workers' crusade of the 1960s and perhaps the Depression, when he worked on a Detroit assembly line before entering the ministry.

He said economic trends such as the widening gap between the lowest and highest paid workers along with anti-union campaigns by employers have galvanized the traditionally pro-labor segments of organized religion.

"It's not that they're supporting unions alone. They're supporting workers, particularly low-wage work-

ers. It's a question of justice," said DeWitt, who lives in Ann Arbor, Mich., and serves as president of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice.

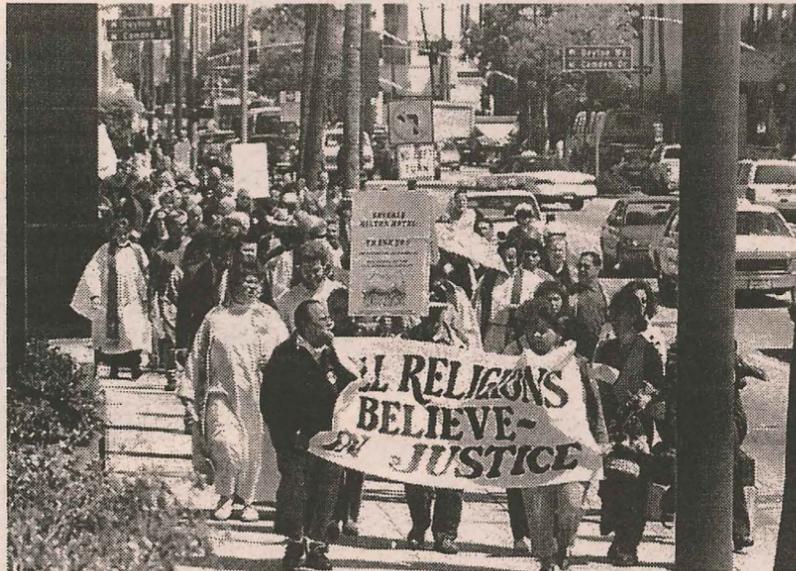
The clearest sign of a religious revival in labor's tent is the emergence of the interfaith committee, based in Chicago.

When it surfaced in early 1996, the umbrella organization counted a dozen local and regional interfaith coalitions dedicated to labor and workplace justice. Now there are more than three times as many, all affiliated with the national committee.

At least one opponent to this growing trend is David Kendrick, program director of the National Institute for Labor Relations Research, a Washington organization that opposes union shops. Kendrick noted that unions often use "coercion and violence," and clerics might squander their moral credibility by supporting union campaigns.

DeWitt admitted, "Sometimes unions are wrong. Sometimes the workers are wrong." He cited corruption among other evils.

But he said many labor struggles today are pitting the rich and powerful against vulnerable workers. "As spiritual leaders, we have to be on the side of the powerless."



LABOR MARCH Clergy join Los Angeles hotel employees in a union march. An interfaith campaign that began last spring helped win union contracts for approximately 2,000 hotel employees. It is one of the growing number of examples of religious leaders supporting labor movements. (RNS photo)

Partner Churches Needed!

Throughout their existence, Baptist churches have established a reputation for responding to meet the needs of the world by becoming partners with other churches and organizations and, therefore; combining their resources for the collective benefit of others. The need for partners in meeting the needs of global missions is perhaps greater today than ever before!

PARTNERSHIP 2000 provides Kentuckians with both an opportunity and a challenge to respond to the call for partners in global missions. Its opportunity focuses on a call to unity and dedication by churches and individuals who seek a stronger Christian witness to the world, a morally vibrant society for our children and grandchildren, and a future filled with hope and promise. Its challenge comes as PARTNERSHIP 2000 inspires us to a mature discipleship, giving ourselves sacrificially to institutions who are preparing individuals to address the physical and spiritual needs of the world.

We urge you to join us in a commitment to this challenge by becoming partners with Campbellsville University, Cumberland College and Georgetown College in this effort through assuring the future of Christian Higher Education in Kentucky. Each of our 2,374 Kentucky Baptist Churches, regardless of its size, or circumstance, can become a Partner Church by contributing to PARTNERSHIP 2000. Each church contribution is an investment that ensures future leaders the opportunity to receive the Christian education offered by Campbellsville, Cumberland and Georgetown.

Church-related colleges need college-related churches!

The missions of the Kentucky Baptist churches and these three colleges are interdependent. The success of each will depend on the success of the other. All are essential in responding to the global mission needs of the future by developing leaders in our communities and our churches, today.

Kentucky Baptist churches may join PARTNERSHIP 2000 in this effort as a Partner Church by giving prayerful consideration to making a contribution equal to ½ tithe per year for three years of the church's 1996 undesignated receipts. For each \$5,000 gift, a church will receive one \$1,000 scholarship certificate for a student from that church to attend either Campbellsville, Cumberland or Georgetown once that student has met the admissions requirements of the chosen school.

Perhaps the greatest risk in this endeavor is that not enough people will care enough—about quality, about learning, and most specifically, about Christian Higher Education. There is no way to know whether enough people believe that Christian Higher Education can make a significant difference in the world, and thereby enable it to do so through their financial contributions. But surely this is a risk worth taking.

**The needs are great –
and so are the opportunities**



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