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**Ad campaign has message for those seeking a sign from above**

By David Briggs  
 Cleveland Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND (RNS)—As the images of cartoon camels and rugged cowboys take their forced ride into the cigarette advertising sunset, some of them are being replaced on billboards by a little divine conversation.

About 30 outdoor advertising displays have been put up in recent weeks around Greater Cleveland in a public-service campaign from Eller Media Co. in Parma, Ohio, that tries to attract motorists' attention with one-liners from God.

Full of catchy slogans such as "Let's meet at my house Sunday before the game" and "Tell the kids I love them," the "God Campaign" is designed to replace road rage with spiritual reflection.

How are you going to scream profanities at the crazy driver in the next lane when God is looming over you with this billboard-sized warning: "Don't Make Me Come Down There."

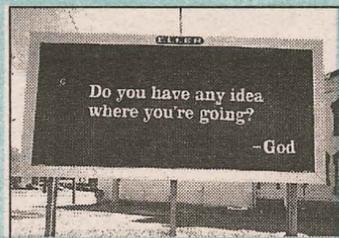
The campaign is already a hit on some streets. In interviews, passers-by at one of the locations praised the billboards, one with the message, "We need to talk" and the other saying, "Do you have any idea where you're going?"

"I think it's great," said Sher-ae Landrum, 54. "Everybody should think about God ... because about the only thing we have going for us now in this day and age is God."

The Northeast Ohio campaign is part of a national effort that began with an anonymous donor walking into the Smith Agency in Broward County, Fla., last spring to fund an advertising campaign promoting God. The South Florida agency's campaign was picked up by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America. Association members have donated more than 10,000 advertising displays around the country.

David Yale, vice president of public affairs for Eller Media, said the public service billboards

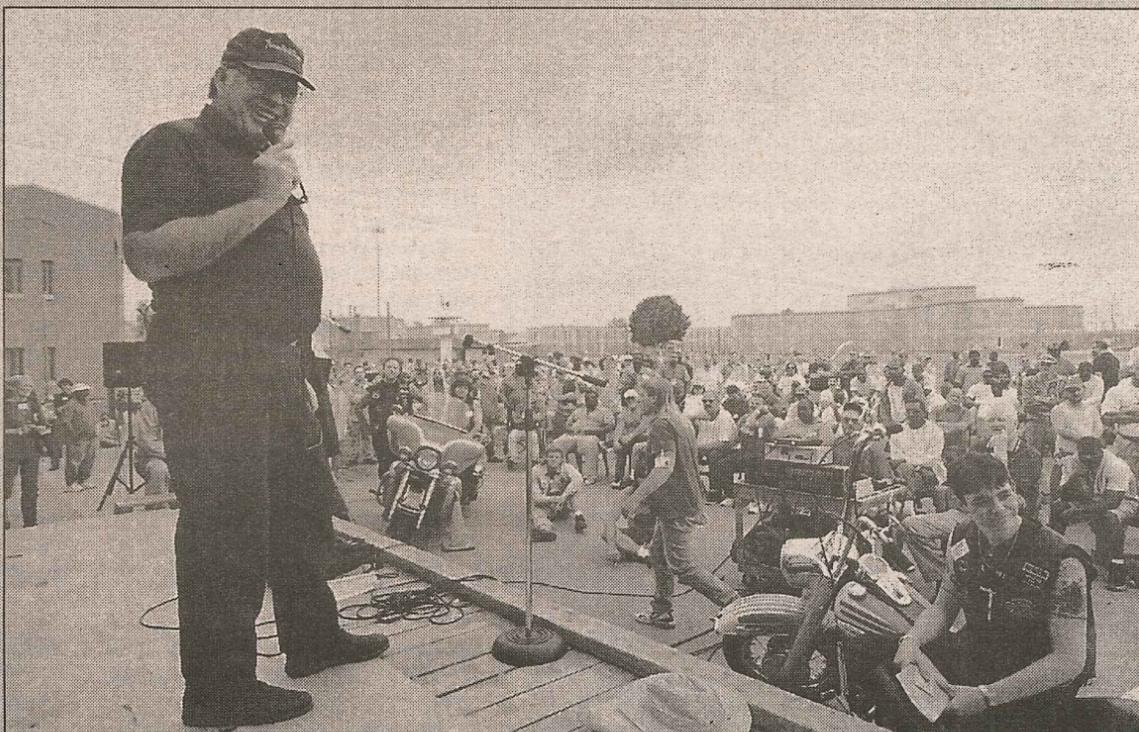
See Campaign has ..., page 10



**GET THE MESSAGE?** An anonymous sponsor wants motorists to think about God. (RNS photo)

Moving? See page 4 (0525)

**'I was in prison ...'**



**WEEKEND OF CHAMPIONS** More than 1,000 Kentucky inmates made Christian decisions as a result of Bill Glass' "Weekend of Champions" events in eight prisons May 12-14. ■ Above: Glass talks to inmates. ■ Below: World champion weightlifter Paul Wrenn lifts more than 550 pounds. (Photos by Ron Kuntz)

**Bill Glass, 'Champions' visit Kentucky inmates**

By David Winfrey  
 News Director

LA GRANGE—Seeing the zeal Bill Glass has for prison ministries—like the one he led earlier this month in Kentucky—one might never suspect his initial reluctance toward what he now calls America's greatest mission field.

But if he hadn't been shamed into taking his Christian witness into an Ohio prison 27 years ago, he might never have discovered his most effective venue for leading people to Jesus Christ.

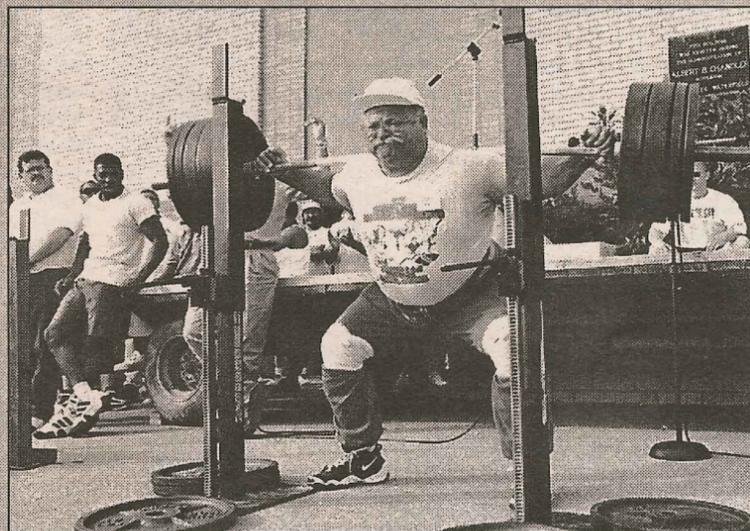
He might never have developed a process that has trained more than 17,000 laypeople to share their Christian faith.

And the 1,094 inmates who made Christian decisions in eight Kentucky prisons May 14-16 might never have heard a message that connected with their needs.

"We don't know of anywhere in the country where there's a greater home mission field than in the prisons," said Glass, a former Pro Bowl defensive lineman for the Cleveland Browns.

Glass, who will visit 350 prisons worldwide this year, has an enthusiasm for prison ministry that rivals his former passion of sacking quarterbacks. But such was not the case nearly three decades ago.

Glass said he knew he wanted to be in vocational ministry ever since his days at Baylor University in Texas, when his notoriety as a football player got him invited to Texas churches to share his testimony. "My



testimonies got so long that pastors kept saying, "Well, you might as well take the whole sermon."

After college he attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, attending the spring semester during the off-season of his pro football career. "I'm the only guy that ever crammed three years into six."

It was during his pro career that he began to do citywide crusades. Glass modeled them after Billy Graham's preaching events, except in smaller cities, mostly throughout Ohio. It was a member of his crusade board of directors who convinced him he should take his message to a much-neglected part of the population.

Gordon Heffen, then president of Goodyear Bank in Akron, Ohio, had

been a counselor at Glass' citywide crusades. He and other members of his church also were trying to help ex-cons and found more than 5,000 former prisoners their first jobs on the outside, mostly in the tire business, Glass said.

"And they took a survey among those inmates they got jobs for and they found virtually no success cases," Glass said. "They decided that inmates needed a moral and spiritual fiber if they were going to stay out of prison."

Heffen encouraged Glass to take his citywide crusade program into the prisons, but Glass was uninterested. A straight-laced athlete, Glass had entered a prison only once for a Fellowship of Christian Athletes program, "and it was a really bad

See Glass: Ministry wins ..., page 6

# BAPTISTS

## BAPTIST BITS

■ **NAMB's president has acute neck, back pain.** Bob Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board, has been experiencing nearly debilitating neck and back pain for more than six weeks and might require surgery. Doctors are to decide in early June if they should operate on his back, where three protruding discs are pressing on nerves, causing numbness in his left arm and hand. Reccord has canceled all travel and works mostly at home.

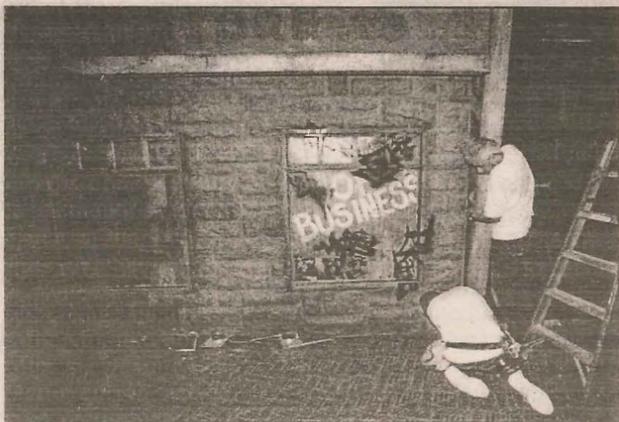
■ **Protest expected at SBC.** Fred Phelps, the anti-homosexual agitator who stages protests and demonstrations claiming God hates homosexuals, is expected to bring his signs and placards to the Georgia Dome outside the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting. "Those contributing to the SBC are guilty of gross sin and promoting Sodomy," Phelps claims in a press release. He supports his claim by noting that President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore are members of Southern Baptist churches and that individual churches have made stands affirming homosexuals.

■ **SBC event includes slain student's family members.** The father and brother of one of the students slain at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., will speak at a contemporary Christian concert June 12 and a June 13 worship service in Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park. The events, organized by the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists, will feature Daryl Scott, father of Rachel Joy Scott, and his 16-year-old son, Craig. Rachel Scott was among at least three students shot for answering "Yes" when asked by two classmates if they believed in God.

■ **Georgian to be nominated for SBC vice presidency.** Frank Cox, pastor of First Baptist Church of Doraville in metro Atlanta, will be nominated for first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, according to James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga., and chairman of the SBC Executive Committee.

■ **Briscoe to speak at ministers' wives conference.** Jill Briscoe, executive editor of *Just Between Us*, a magazine for ministry wives, will be the keynote speaker for the Southern Baptist ministers' wives conference and luncheon in Atlanta, June 15 at noon in the Georgia World Congress Center Ballroom. Tickets cost \$10 before the convention or \$12 at the convention. To order tickets, write Diane Newell, 8649 Autumn Green Drive, Jacksonville, Fla., 32256.

■ **Civil Rights tour planned after Atlanta SBC.** The Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention is scheduling a civil rights tour from Atlanta to Birmingham and back June 17 after the SBC annual meeting in Atlanta. The event is designed to highlight the convention's resolution on racial reconciliation, passed during the last SBC meeting in Atlanta. The tour costs \$35. For more information, call (800) 475-9127.



**MISSIONS VISION CENTER** Brook Nichols (standing) and Bill Loren of Ad Infinitum put final touches on an abandoned storefront in a scene from the North American Mission Board's Vision Center. The center is scheduled for grand opening June 16-17 during the SBC annual meeting in Atlanta. The decaying inner-city neighborhood illustrates the vast spiritual needs in the nation's cities. The center also illustrates the many ways Southern Baptists are meeting needs through the hope found in Jesus Christ. (BP photo by Gibbs Frazier)

## Kentuckians appointed to SBC agency boards

NASHVILLE—Eleven Kentuckians have been nominated for election or re-election as trustees of Southern Baptist Convention agencies and institutions.

Also SBC President Paige Patterson has named four Kentuckians to serve on committees related to the convention's annual meeting in Atlanta, June 15-16.

Nominees for trustee boards will be voted on during the annual meeting. They are:

■ Steven Boyd, pastor of Simpsonville Baptist Church, for a second term on the SBC Executive Committee.

■ Ray Werline, pastor of Cuba Baptist Church, nominated for a second term as Annuity Board trustee.

■ Bill Patterson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Henderson, nominated to replace James Garland of Paducah as International Mission

Board trustee.

■ David Butler, pastor of Springdale Baptist Church in Louisville, to replace Gary Southard of Ashland as North American Mission Board trustee.

■ Timothy Mathis, pastor of First Baptist Church of Danville, replacing Mark Bond, pastor of First Baptist Church of LaCenter as North American Mission Board trustee.

■ Rick Hatley, associate pastor of Central Baptist Church in Winchester, replacing Kent Workman, of Hopkinsville, as LifeWay Christian Resources trustee.

■ John Boone, a member of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, replacing Michael Harris of Elizabethtown as Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee.

■ James Hannah, a member of DeHaven Baptist Church in LaGrange, replacing Stanley Willett

of Louisville as Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee.

■ J. Barrett Hyman, a physician and member of First Baptist Church of Shelbyville, nominated for a second term as Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee.

■ Bob Swift, pastor First Baptist Church of Mayfield, nominated to a second term as trustee for Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

■ Jerry Johnson, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, nominated as chairman for the SBC committee on order of business.

Those appointed for service on SBC committees are:

■ Charlie Jones, of Carter Creek Baptist Church in Greenville, and Timothy Mathis, appointed to the SBC committee on committees.

■ Rick Hatley, appointed to the SBC credentials committee.

## North Carolina compromise plan takes another step

ASHEBORO, N.C.—The General Board of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention has approved a shared-leadership plan it hopes will ease a long-standing division between moderates and conservatives in the state's largest Protestant group.

The plan, approved overwhelmingly May 18, now goes to the entire 1.2 million-member convention for a vote this November.

If approved, it would mark a turning point in Baptist history. So far, no other state convention affiliated with the national Southern Baptist Convention has been able to overcome theological and political differences by structured, shared leadership.

The plan calls for a new method of electing both convention officers and general board officers. The proposal would significantly increase the likelihood that representatives from the two largest groups in North Carolina Baptist life—currently moderates and conservatives—would share in leadership.

The plan calls for officers of the convention and the board to be

electd from the convention floor in alternating years. When convention officers are to be elected, one vote would be held for president. The top two vote-getters would become president and president-elect. They would serve for two years. In the second year, the president-elect would become president and the president would become past president. The same process will be used for vice president.

In alternate years, a president, president-elect and two vice-presidents of the general board would be elected by convention messengers in the same manner and would serve for two years. Previous board membership would not be required for election to those offices. All eight elected officers would serve on the general board's executive committee, which conducts much of the convention's business and hires convention employees.

Currently, state convention officers are chosen at the annual meeting in separate elections for each position, while the general board elects its own officers. In both cases, officers are elected for one-year terms,

though second terms are customary.

Greg Mathis, pastor of Mud Creek Baptist Church in Hendersonville, and David Crocker, pastor of Snyder Memorial Baptist Church in Fayetteville, presented the recommendation on behalf of the Commission on Cooperation, a task force composed of both conservative and moderate representatives. The commission was mandated by convention action in November 1997, with Crocker and Mathis as co-chairs.

Board members voted decisively to affirm the plan and recommend it to the convention in November. Three of the board's 120 members voted in opposition.

The plan's backers say it is a compromise that might stave off the divorce that has torn the Texas and Virginia state conventions into two separate organizations. Since conservatives took over the national Southern Baptist Convention in 1979, Baptists in some states have waged bitter fights over the control of independent state conventions.

Until 1995, North Carolina was governed by moderate presidents with an overwhelmingly moderate general board. Since then, it has elected conservative presidents who have appointed conservative members to the board.

Leaders within the convention hope the plan will allow the two groups to focus on evangelism and outreach, two areas where they agree. Both groups concede they will not be able to smooth over other differences such as the interpretation of Scripture and church leadership roles for women.

The proposed change includes a sunset clause calling for its automatic expiration after six years unless continued by convention action. Proponents have recommended a six-year trial period to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.

In coming months, Crocker, Mathis and others will promote the plan through statewide listening sessions designed to hear concerns and explain the proposal in more detail.

From Baptist Press and Religion News Service reports



"Congratulations on your new baby.  
Don't forget its instruction manual."

## New director seeks to boost Jonathan Creek's visibility

By Ken Walker  
State Correspondent

HARDIN—With his wife on board as marketing director, the new director of Jonathan Creek Baptist Assembly hopes the West Kentucky camp will no longer be one of the state's best-kept secrets.

Dave Hill said many Kentucky Baptists—including some near the camp—aren't aware of the 100-acre facility, which features nearly a mile of shoreline along Kentucky Lake. Waterfront recreation will be available for the first time this summer, one of several changes being overseen by the new director.

"My vision is to continue to improve what we have so it will be an exciting place to come to camp," said Hill, who recently replaced Deward Hurst. "Our mission is to create an environment where people can come to know God or more fully experience him."

Jonathan Creek's nine weeks of children and youth summer camps

begin the last week of May. In addition to those Monday-Friday sessions, this year the facility will host church retreats on weekends.

Greeting the campers will be a new, 50-foot-high alpine tower. The climbing tower offers varying degrees of difficulty and is good for team building and other group exercises, Hill said.

A new boat dock is planned to be completed by the end of this month. No rental boats will be immediately available, but the director said equipment will include three jet skis, canoes, paddle boats, a water trampoline and maybe a pontoon.

A new 70-by-90 basketball court with four goals was completed in mid-May, and two sand volleyball courts are being refurbished.

"We're trying to brighten the place up and give it a fun atmosphere," he said. "We want to have a good place with good food and clean facilities so

people can concentrate on getting closer to God."

A 1982 graduate of Murray State University, Hill credits a divine experience with drawing him back to the area. He spent the past 16 years in computer services with General Electric in Louisville. But after studying the Experiencing God discipleship course at Cedar Creek Baptist Church, he asked himself whether he wanted to spend another 25 years in the same occupation.

Answering, "No," Hill said he realized he preferred to do something more rewarding on a day-to-day basis as well as helping others enjoy themselves and strengthen their faith.

"I think God was working on me, preparing me and putting it in my heart to do something more fulfilling than sitting in a cubicle all day," he said. "Looking back, I can see where God was preparing me for this. For

years I had questioned whether God was leading and how you can know his will."

In mid-August, a new associate director will join the staff. Jason Ellerbrook currently works with Crosspoint and Centrifuge, youth summer programs operated by LifeWay Christian Resources.

Ellerbrook's primary responsibility will be planning new youth camps for the summer of 2000. "Crossings at the Creek" will aim at reaching unchurched youth in grades 7-12 and will replace the church-operated youth camps during June and July of next year.

Rusty Ellison, the director of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies, said he hopes Hill and Ellerbrook will build on Hurst's leadership of the past decade.

"With what we offer at Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek, Kentucky Baptists will have an unparalleled camping experience at both ends of the state," he said. "These camps will complement each other."



Hill

## Kentuckians going to Oklahoma disaster

OKLAHOMA CITY—A nine-member Kentucky Baptist disaster relief crew is helping with clean-up efforts after the recent outbreak of deadly twisters that struck Oklahoma City.

The Kentucky chainsaw crew is removing trees and limbs from yards, driveways and streets, said Larry Koch, disaster relief associate for the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Removing the debris will give victims and relief crews access to homes and businesses damaged by tornadoes.

"They will make it possible for us to get back to some sense of normalcy," said Gerald Peters, volunteer coordinator for the Oklahoma Baptist Convention.

The crew will remain in Oklahoma for at least the next two weeks, according to Koch.

Crew members include Terry Shinkle of Burlington; George Shanks of California; Rodney Howe and Gary Hutchinson of Dry Ridge; Bernard Randall of Monticello; Jim Cannady of Brandenburg; Sturgeon Leathers of Bardstown; and Paul and Barbara Sharp of Louisville.

## Harrodsburg family finds foster care to be a call to ministry

By Dannah Prather  
Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children

HARRODSBURG—For 13 years, Hilary and Gina Claypool lived without sticky palm prints on the walls, toy-cluttered rooms, fidgety bottoms at the dinner table and a chorus of "whys" interrupting their conversations.

Some couples might call that peace and quiet, but to the Claypools, it was a void.

When they moved from Virginia to Kentucky so Claypool could attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, they did not yet know that God had another mission in mind for them—as treatment foster parents with Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children.

"My husband was called to preach," Mrs. Claypool said. "This is my call to ministry."

Claypool became pastor of Deep Creek Baptist in Harrodsburg, com-

mutated to Louisville for classes, and the couple managed to go through 10 weeks of training for foster parent certification. When their first foster child was placed, "things changed overnight," Claypool said.

Training had given them an idea of what they might encounter taking care of children who come from backgrounds of physical or sexual abuse, or neglect. "So many kids need special help, special treatment because of where they come from. It saddens us," Claypool said.

Problems could be those common to many children, such as attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities. Teaching kids to properly express anger, frustration and fear can be a big part of a foster parent's work.

The members of Deep Creek "are prayerfully involved in what we're doing with the kids," Claypool said. "They offer support and overlook some of the behavior problems they might not see in other kids in the con-

gregation."

"I have gotten such support through encouragement," Mrs. Claypool said. "I know there are people praying for my children every day."

The response of the Deep Creek congregation is an example of why Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children has set a goal to have at least one foster family in each Southern Baptist church in the commonwealth.

"We are very proud of the training and support our employees provide our foster parents," said Bill Smithwick, president of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. "But we know there is no substitute for the positive influence of a loving church family in the life of a foster child. That same church family can be an incredible resource for foster parents, too. Family foster care is a ministry, and we need and want our churches to be a part of it."

The sacrifice and mission drive the Claypools, but they said there are great



FOSTER PARENTS Hilary and Gina Claypool with their foster son.

rewards. "It's a blessing," Mrs. Claypool said. "You have to have the Lord with you every day, but you get a lot of love back."

For information about family foster care, call (800) 456-1386.

## BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ **KBHC to open Genesis Home.** Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children will host a celebration open house June 5 for its Genesis Home in Mayfield. The new facility is a 15-bed residential treatment facility for girls who are victims of abuse. Local churches raised more than \$75,000 for the building. The celebration will be 11 a.m.-2 p.m., with a dedication service at 11:30 a.m. The center is located at 4747 Old Dublin Road. For information, call (502) 623-6144 or (800) 456-1386.

■ **Georgetown gets new scholarship.** Georgetown College recently established a scholarship in honor of Ted and Ginny Sisk, of Lexington. Ted Sisk was pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington for 25 years. The scholarship will be awarded to qualified students who are preparing for lifelong Christian service.

■ **Clear Creek establishes scholarship.** Kenneth and Frances Clendaniel were recently honored for establishment of the Clendaniel Scholarship at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College. The scholarship offers financial assistance to Clear Creek students from Tennessee. Clendaniel was a member of Clear Creek's faculty from 1958-1970.

■ **Georgetown students recognized.** Georgetown College students recently earned a \$2,000 award given to the top 104 organizations to participate in last October's Make A Difference Day event. This is the third year Georgetown College has participated in the event and the second time Georgetown's students received a \$2,000 award. On Oct. 24, 1998, more than 225 students from Georgetown College helped 23 low-income

families. The students organized games, puppet shows and skits for more than 74 children while 30 parents attended a resume-writing workshop and a cooking class that emphasized nutrition. The college will donate \$500 to God's Pantry and \$1,500 to the Scott County Family Resource Center.

■ **English tutoring class offered.** Campbellsville University will host a conversational English tutoring class July 15-17. The class is designed to train tutors who will offer language skills ministry to internationals. Tuition costs \$220. For more information, call (270) 789-5251.

■ **Bill Murray to speak at Taylor County event.** Bill Murray, son of self-proclaimed atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair, will be the guest speaker for a prayer summit June 7

at 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church in Campbellsville. The summit is a preparation event for Bill Glass Ministries' "Central Kentucky Celebration for Christ," Sept 12-19. For more information, call (270) 465-0770.

■ **Mid-Continent plans Chapel of the Martyrs.** Mid-Continent College President David Jester recently announced that the school will build a Chapel of the Martyrs to honor Christians who are killed for their faith. "It is time that we recognize that more Christians have died in the 20th century (for their faith) than in all the previous centuries," he said. The chapel would include an honor hall and a community auditorium for worship, programs and concerts. The school is seeking an endowment for the chapel. For more information, call (800) 232-4662.

## WESTERN RECORDER

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

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## A Jewish response

Jesus was a good Jew. When asked which was the greatest commandment, he replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (might). The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, both from the Hebrew Bible.

These teachings of Jesus are accepted by Jews all over the world because it condenses the Torah into the simple essence of Judaism. That is, God created man in his own image; therefore, by loving one's fellow man, one is loving God.

Jesus loved Judaism.

That is why he was critical of those whose outward practice of Judaism was not heartfelt inwardly. Certainly, his criticism was justified, but just as certainly, there were Jews in his day who were true to the teachings of the Torah, just as there are today.

When Jews for Jesus missionaries approach Jews for conversion, they cite passages from the Hebrew Bible to support their Christian ideas—in particular, the idea that sin can only be forgiven through the blood of Jesus. The Jew does not take issue with the Christian worship of Jesus as a way to God, but he does take issue with Jews for Jesus claiming that the Hebrew Bible supports such ideas, which it does not.

What Jews and Christians do agree on are the teachings of Jesus—that is, loving God and one's fellow man. If Christians were to truly understand that what Jews worship is the same as what Jesus himself worshipped, then

perhaps there would not be such a great missionary zeal to convert Jews. If we can achieve at least that much understanding of one another, then we will be that much closer to the messianic age.

David Marwil  
Lexington

## Stop the bombing

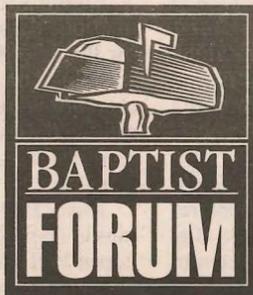
Because I am a Christian who loves my country I must voice my strong objection to the U.S. (NATO) war against Serbia. While I understand the popular sentiment that "we've got to do something to curtail Milosevic," in fact we are doing the wrong thing—politically and spiritually.

It is clear that Milosevic is using the Yugoslav army and Special Police to commit genocide against the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosova, just as he has done in the past. The answer is not to kill more innocent people ("collateral damage") to punish Milosevic for his killing of innocent people.

This tactic has not brought peace to the Balkans nor stopped Milosevic's reign of terror; it has made a bad situation worse. The military strikes have been a terrible waste of material and human resources for NATO, Serbia and Kosova, and have politically bolstered the repressive and unpopular Milosevic.

Jesus taught us "those who live by the sword will die by the sword." Violence always begets more violence. Violence may suppress the rage temporarily, but only loving, patient initiatives can transform long-held hatred into genuine peace.

I urge Christians of all stripes, who



## FAMILY

### Find financial inspiration, not just information

By Jeremy White

From analysts on the cable

money channels to the Oprah Winfrey Show, you can find plenty of financial information. What we often need,

however, is financial inspiration instead of more information.

Success with financial matters usually depends on conquering the emotions of the moment and the attitudes of the heart. Where do you go for financial inspiration? Don't read the latest New Age, mystic guru. My recommendations include the following (besides this column, of course):

■ The Bible, especially Proverbs and Jesus' teachings.

■ Other Christian financial writers and teachers.

■ Financial testimonies from older relatives and friends who have successfully managed money.

I enjoy collecting quotes of financial wisdom from various sources and reflecting on them. May some of my favorite quotes from others inspire you, or at least convict you if you need conviction:

■ "If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free; if our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed. We are bought by the enemy with the treasure in our own coffers."—Edmund Burke

■ "If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area of his life."—Billy Graham

■ "The money you intend to save draws no interest."—Anonymous

■ "Money is not required to buy one necessity of the soul."—Henry David Thoreau

■ "We are not to judge thrift solely by the test of saving or spending. If one spends what he should prudently save, that certainly is to be deplored. But if one saves what he should prudently spend, that is not necessarily to be commended. A wise balance between the two is the desired end."—Owen D. Young

■ "Fools can make money. It takes a wise man to tell how to spend it."—English proverb

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant in Paducah. See his free weekly financial tip on his Internet Web site at [www.consultcpa.com](http://www.consultcpa.com).



## Good job, Cedarmore

Please allow me to express my appreciation to the new managers of Cedarmore and all of their crew of dedicated workers. I didn't even know who was in charge at Cedarmore until I attended the directors of missions workshop with my husband this week.

Cedarmore certainly has taken on a new look with Jack and Shirley Ellerbrook in charge. They must be the "workingest" couple who ever set foot on Cedarmore soil.

From the moment we entered Cedarmore at their beautiful and neatly groomed residence, we were amazed at the freshly mowed lawns and fields and the cleanliness of the beautiful Boone Lodge.

Soon it was time for the evening meal, and what a delight it was—but no wonder, with both Ellerbrooks and their cheerful crew of gloved kitchen workers who served three meals and three snacks per day.

We took a tour of Cedar Crest and Camp Rabro. They both appeared to be ready for the youth and their counselors who will soon be arriving for their weeks of fun and devotion.

Thank God for the Cedarmore complex and the Ellerbrooks and crew. May Kentucky Baptists continue to support and patronize this beautiful place on God's green earth.

Lois Shepherd  
Russell Springs

## PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

### Vacation Bible school

Vacation Bible school is one of the most effective means churches have of reaching people for Christ.

Consider these national statistics from vacation Bible school reports in 1997:

■ 94,000 decisions for Christ.

■ 3 million enrolled.

■ 3,000 commitments to church-related vocations.

■ 70,000 prospects enrolled in Sunday school.

There are additional values for vacation Bible school in Southern Baptist Convention churches:

■ It is the single largest outreach event.

■ 25 percent of baptisms result from vacation Bible school.

■ More people have come to know Christ through vacation Bible school than any other single event.

Despite the above, however, Dan Garland, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's evangelism growth team leader, has concluded from research that many KBC churches are not using vacation Bible school as an effective outreach and evangelism tool. Far too many churches didn't

report even one profession of faith.

Dan has requested every pastor to schedule a time during vacation Bible school to share the gospel with older children and youth and conduct individual follow-up counseling on conversion, baptism and discipleship. The

vacation Bible school materials have resources to help leaders present the gospel in an understandable way for children and to leave the initiative with the child. Teachers should work closely with the pastor to assist with conversion counseling and follow-up.

As a pastor in Eastern Kentucky, I experienced the effectiveness of vacation Bible school in outreach and evangelism. Mission Bible schools were used to launch four mission churches. Lives were changed as the mother church and five mission schools enrolled 2,261 boys and girls one summer with about 100 registering decisions for Christ. This summer will mark 27 years of vacation Bible school outreach at First Baptist Church of Whitesburg. Local college students serve as summer workers, guest mission teams provide addition-

al personnel and the mother church provides transportation and refreshments.

Consider the following in planning your vacation Bible school:

■ Plan it at a time when unreached children will be available.

■ Publicize it in creative ways. The best enlistment will be parents and children bringing friends and neighbors.

■ Train all workers to be effective in relational evangelism. Have greeters in the parking lots to get acquainted with parents.

■ Plan your evangelistic emphasis and follow-up. The "Sharing God's Special Plan With Children" materials are excellent for parents and workers to lead children to make genuine decisions for Christ. Be sure counselors and workers are prepared to follow up with those who make decisions.

■ Conduct a mission vacation Bible school or backyard Bible club in your community or adjoining unchurched community. Children deserve an opportunity to know Jesus.

May the children and families of your community be enriched by the love of Jesus and the compassion of your church for children.

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



Bill Mackey

## Should parents make their teenagers get a summer job?

**Q. My 16-year-old daughter does not want a summer job. She says school was work and the summer is for play, watching TV and sleeping late. Should I make her go to work?**

Yes, at some level she needs to get a job. She might not need a full-time employment situation, but teenagers grow as they learn the basics of being effective, productive and considerate workers.

Some life lessons are best learned early: Be on time. Work as a team. Listen to your superiors. Learn to offer suggestions in the correct channels. Give as good as you get. Work out disagreements before they get out of control. Clean up your own mess; Mom or Dad can't always bail you out. There is joy and pride in a job well done. Customers can be difficult people, but are the focus of business success. Money earned is more meaningful than money found or received as a gift. Saving and budgeting are necessities. Giving from money earned brings more satisfaction. Jobs can contribute to society. Workers have to plan playtime.

If your daughter does not need the money or just can't find suitable employment, then insist that she volunteer. Hospitals, nursing homes, community agencies and churches need good, unpaid helpers. She can learn job skills as a volunteer.—*Wade Rowatt*

**Q. I have a friend who just told me he is a homosexual. Can he be "converted?" Is there a place for him in the church?**

Probably no area has caused as much grief and confusion within the body of Christ as this debate. There are those who engage in the oxymoronic practice of "Christian hate," devoid of compassion, filled with vitriol and contempt. One place to begin any discussion with a homosexual might be with an apology for those within the body of Christ who lack Christ's central characteristic, love.

It is rarely helpful on any issue to be simplistic, whether one is on the "right" or on the "left." This applies equally to those who would reinterpret Scripture so as to condone homosexuality. Bringing integrity to this issue affirms both God's ideal and his strong love.

For those struggling with the complexities of homosexuality, Richard Foster, in his book "Love, Sex and Power," states that three options exist:

■ **"Conversion" to heterosexuality.** This is a highly debated concept. Some "successes" exist, but one might find that even after much fervent prayer and effort, such a choice is still elusive.

■ **Celibacy.** This is clearly a biblically grounded and advocated position.

■ **Homosexual practice.** Such practice is not condoned in Scripture. Practitioners can best be reached for God's kingdom with compassion, not hatred. Jesus had a way of finding people where they were and leading them to where they needed to be. Your friend might find that an accountability group would be helpful in choosing the celibate way. Southern Baptists' LifeWay Christian Resources has support group materials available for sexual brokenness. The strong compassion of Christian friendship will go much further in helping fellow life-strugglers than any stance of superiority, apathy or hate. Be like Christ and you will help your brother or sister to do the same.—*James Stillwell*

*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; Jon Rainbow, a clinical gerontologist and professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Wade Rowatt, director of the St. Matthews Pastoral Counseling Center in Louisville. Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, Ky. 40253 or e-mail us at wesrec@ntr.net.*



## Events show effects of spiritual vacuum

By Charles Midkiff

I think any person who takes life seriously cannot help but be disturbed by the continuous calamities we meet as a people and a nation.

Our county finds itself engaged in a conflict in Kosovo. How can anyone justify the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Serbs against the Albanians? At the same time, we have such mixed emotions about our involvement in NATO's bombings. Bombing is bad enough without the mistakes that occur that hurt and kill innocent people.

In Littleton, Colo., 12 students and a teacher were gunned down by two high school boys, who obviously had carefully planned to eliminate fellow students and teachers. Then they took their own lives. It was no accident. How long will it continue? What has gone wrong in American family life?

The governor of our commonwealth has asked our legislators to consider the placement of 12 to 14 land-based casinos in Kentucky to counter the economic drain riverboat casinos are causing our state. Funds from the casinos would be used in the protection of our woodlands. With the addition of the casinos, we could be so proud of our state having three legalized avenues of gambling—para-mutual betting, the lottery and land-based casinos. What a trio of which to be proud! Cheap taxes for a poor state. Governor Patton, we need leadership from you.

The story goes on and on. The events of Kosovo (ethnic cleansing and the ambiguity about our own response), Littleton and now the prospects of casino gambling all speak of the condition of a lack of morals and ethics. They have been greatly relaxed and in too many places totally surrendered.

When God is removed from the center of our lives, a great spiritual vacuum occurs. Nature abhors a vacuum, and things rush in to fill the empty space. Morally and spiritually all the wrong things rush in—ethnic cleansing, murder, greed, lust, selfishness, immorality

and all the things that destroy when God is not given his rightful place.

There is no easy way for God to be in the center of our lives. He comes by grace, and we have to accept his grace. We have to give our all to him and live by his power and grace each day. He only gains the center when we accept his free gift of salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ. Then the work comes. When work time comes, he promises to enable us to live the godly life by the power of his spirit. He did not say it would be easy, but he did promise us the victory.

How does God enable us to fill the vacuum? Living the Christian life does not just happen; it is for the most part very intentional. It means I will walk with Christ. I will commune with him in prayer, read from his word and meditate on his will for me, today. I will be faithful to the church, my church, in attendance, in support and in the giving of myself to its worldwide ministry in the name of Christ, today. I will be a good parent, recognizing my child as a gift from God. I accept the full responsibility and will do all within my power to rear my child in a Christian home and to live before him or her as a devoted follower of Christ, today. I will give honest, faithful and competent work in my vocation, today. I will seek to be honest, truthful, professional and kind in all my dealings, today. The list goes on and on, but the point is made that we intend to live the godly life and that we do it every day.

I would not be so naive as to give easy answers to great complexities and questions in life. I do know there is no shortcut to living the Christian life. There is no such thing as cheap grace. When we leave life to chance, the vacuum comes and the Kosovos, Littletons and casinos raise their ugly heads to curse us. When the vacuum is not permitted to form, God is honored and his people are blessed. By his power and grace, may we be blessed.

*Charles Midkiff is pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville*

GUEST EDITORIAL

## Why have you forsaken me?

By Bill Shoulta

*"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?" Psalm 22:1.*

The three-letter word is the most asked question in the world, "Why?" Most people know Psalm 22:1 as one of the seven last statements of Christ from the cross. Some say we should never question God. But Jesus taught us to ask, seek and knock.

Now, in gasping anguish, the suffering Servant calls upon Scripture. The Psalm as quoted in Matthew's Gospel shows both the human and godly nature of Christ. Other statements from the cross are addressed intimately to the Father, but this particular question sums up the pain and cruelty of the crucifixion. In our humanity, we identify with the physical pain and limitation of the one "who became flesh to dwell among us." He was truly man!

When a body is ravaged with cancer or heart disease, when a baby is

born helplessly with a spinal defect, when a child is stolen away by an accident or school shooting, we ask, "Why?" It is an expression of frustration, confusion, hurt and anger wrapped up into one little word. More than anything else, it cries out the abandonment we feel when our circumstances move beyond human control and understanding.

In the most unfair moment of history, Jesus sought understanding. He did not curse God nor did he abandon God. He turned to God. He

quoted the first sentence of a Psalm that began with the words, "My God." In the moment of greatest need, Jesus quoted Scripture. A complete reading of Psalm 22 sounds like a first person experience of a crucifixion. It speaks of pierced hands and feet, thirst, mockery and the casting of lots for clothing. No wonder he quoted this Psalm, for it was the final chapter of his life.

A continued reading of Psalm 22 tells of one who knows, in the midst of his own suffering, that the sovereign God does not abandon his chil-

dren. God never has, and God never will. The answer to the question is found in verse 24, "For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help."

Those who waited anxiously at Golgatha knew the Psalm. They learned it in their Jewish upbringing and recited it in their temple worship. It is likely that the followers heard Jesus give new meaning to this passage as he taught them about the Scriptures. Were they surprised that Jesus cried out with a loud voice the very question that was repeatedly spilling from their hearts to their lips?

In his book "Till We Have Faces," C.S. Lewis states, "I ended my first book with the words 'no answer.' I know, now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face, questions die away. What other answer would suffice?"

The question "Why?" died at Calvary. The answer came to life in the garden.

Christ himself was the answer to the question. He was truly God!

*Bill Shoulta is pastor of Melbourne Heights Baptist Church in Louisville*



# KENTUCKY

**"We don't know of anywhere in the country where there's a greater home mission field than in the prisons."**

*Bill Glass*



**GROUP PRAYER** One reason the "Weekend of Champions" is successful, Glass says, is because counselors spend three days with inmates, eating meals and spending time in the recreation area and the prison cells. (Photos by Ron Untz)

## Glass: Ministry wins non-Christians & teaches evangelism

*Continued from page 1*  
experience."

But Heffen was relentless.

"He was saying things like, 'If you really believe what you say you believe then you'd try it where it's really tough. The truth is that you're really gutless because you don't really have the courage to do that,'" Glass recalled. "I finally came to feel because of his bantering and pushing that if I didn't try it at least once I was really gutless."

Shamed into preaching in a prison, Glass said he assembled "the meanest, toughest group" of platform speakers he could find to join him. Among them were Paul Anderson, at that time known as "the world's strongest man," and Jim Houston, a teammate from the Browns. "I got judo and karate experts and all kinds of big tough athletes to go with us with the idea that if we got in trouble and had to we could fight our way out."

The program for that first event is still the basic outline for his Weekend of Champions.

First, organizers avoid the prison chapel and take their message directly into the recreational yard. "I knew that very few inmates go to chapel, like 5 percent," he said. "But when we went outside on the prison yard we found we had more like 95 percent attendance."

Second, speakers avoid church talk. Promotional material avoids words like "crusades," and promotes the world-class athlete speakers and clinics for football or weightlifting.

Third, the events bring in laymen counselors who are prepared to talk about their faith. For three days, the counselors are free to go anywhere in the facilities with the prisoners.

Glass admits that when he entered that first prison in Marion, Ohio, he was frightened. "Not frightened that I would get hurt; frightened that I would be ineffective and it would be a fiasco."

Instead of failing, the group recorded hundreds of spiritual decisions. Counselors were excited about the results, but Glass was just relieved to be done. "I thought, 'Well, I've done it. I've met the challenge, but I'm not going to do it anymore.'"

What he didn't know was that the grapevine among prisons was in full swing and word of his success was spreading across the country. "We had a hundred invitations within a month to do prisons," he said. "We had governors of states call us and say, 'Do every prison in the state.'"

Glass said he finally began to realize that prison ministry met his two evangelistic passions. "I wanted to preach to a lot of lost people. You have a lot of lost people in prison, believe it or not. And secondly I wanted to see Christians learn to share their faith," he said. "And even though I really didn't want to go into the prisons, I came to realize slowly—you know, I'm a lineman, I'm a little slow—I began to realize that this was right in the center of both of my passions."

In 27 years of prison work, Bill Glass' ministry has been in more than 2,000 prisons and trained 17,000 counselors. Last year the ministry recorded more than 40,000 spiritual decisions, "and this year it looks like it'll be over 50,000 decisions for Christ in the prisons."

Among his guest speakers are some of the best known names in sports: Former Dallas Cowboy quar-

terback Roger Stauback, former Green Bay Packer defensive lineman Reggie White, and former Chicago Bear defensive lineman Mike Singletary. The Joe Gibbs racing team has loaned a car that is driven into the yard. Even Michael Jordan participated during his college career, Glass said. "I'm hoping, now that he's retired, he'll start coming with us."

Along the way, Glass has collected hundreds of stories to illustrate the impact the weekends continue to make.

■ The Georgia prison they visited where weekly disciplinary incidents dropped from 50 to 17.

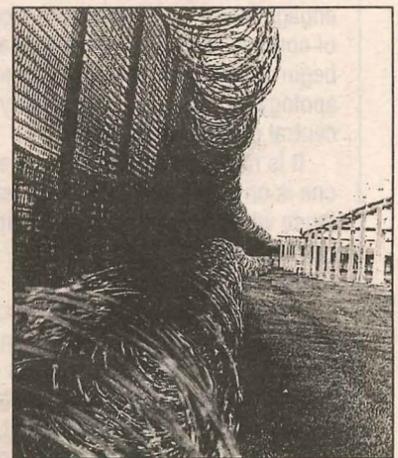
■ The independent fundamental premillennialist separate Baptist church in California that first avoided Glass' citywide crusade but became his biggest supporter there because one member became a prison counselor. That member eventually attracted 30 other members who became prison counselors and shared their faith regularly.

■ The insurance salesman who learned to share his faith as a counselor and committed to not sell a policy without also witnessing about Christianity. The next year he led 150 people to Christ.

"I don't think he would have done that if he hadn't come to one of the weekends," Glass said. "He got into a good fishing pond, he learned how to fish and then he became a fisherman."

Glass says his ministry not only makes a difference in the lives of inmates and counselors. He says it is the only real medium to stem crime in the country.

"Eighty percent of all crime is committed by ex-cons, so if you're going to impact the crime problem in



this country, the way to do it is in the prisons," he said. "And the only way to have a real, genuine change of heart is through Jesus Christ."

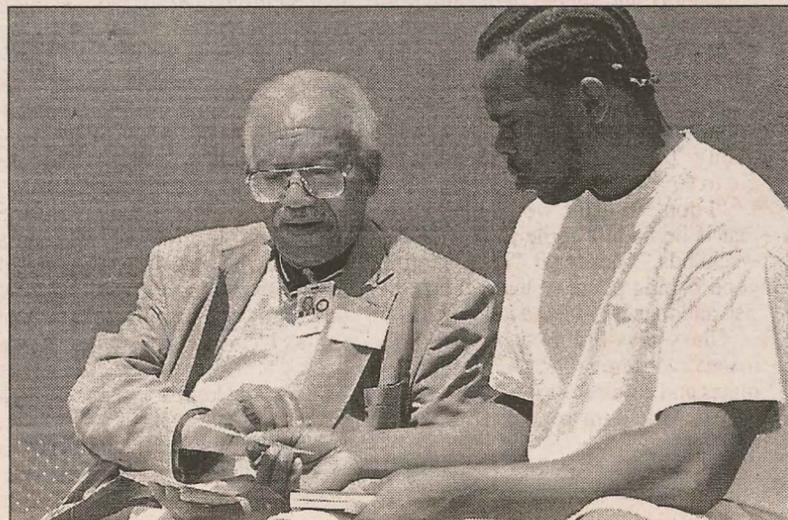
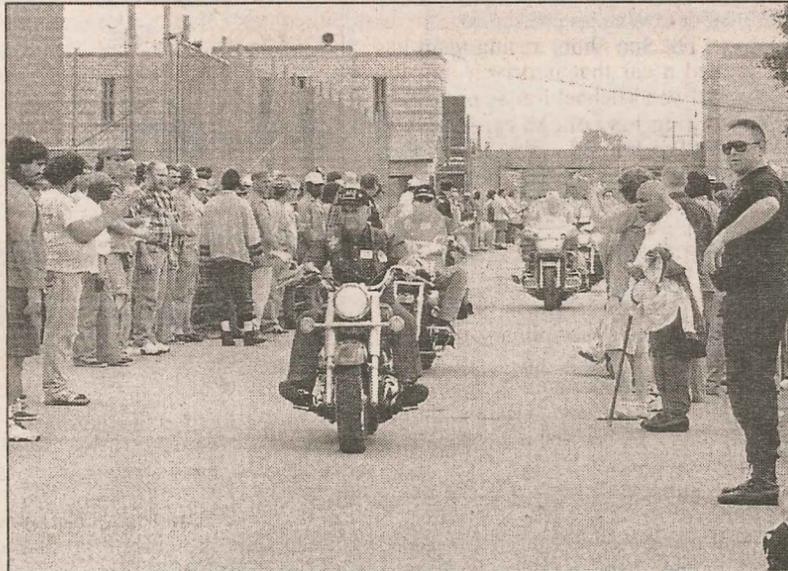
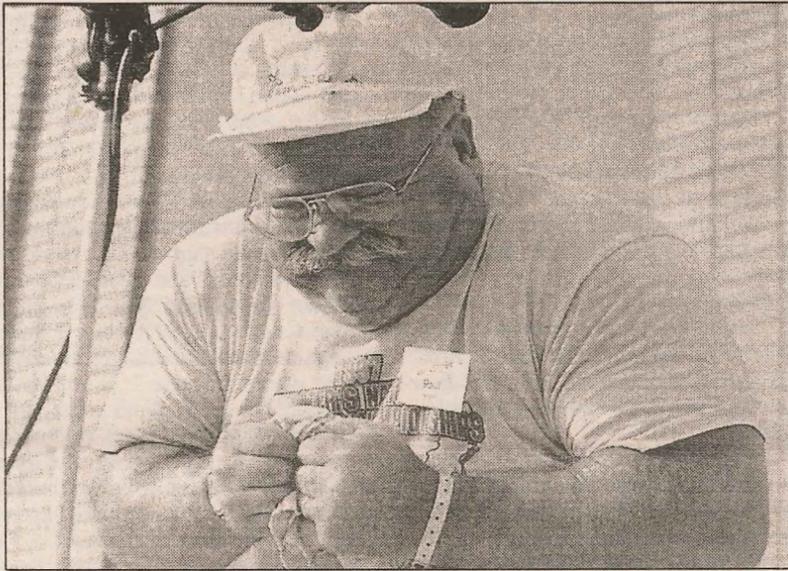
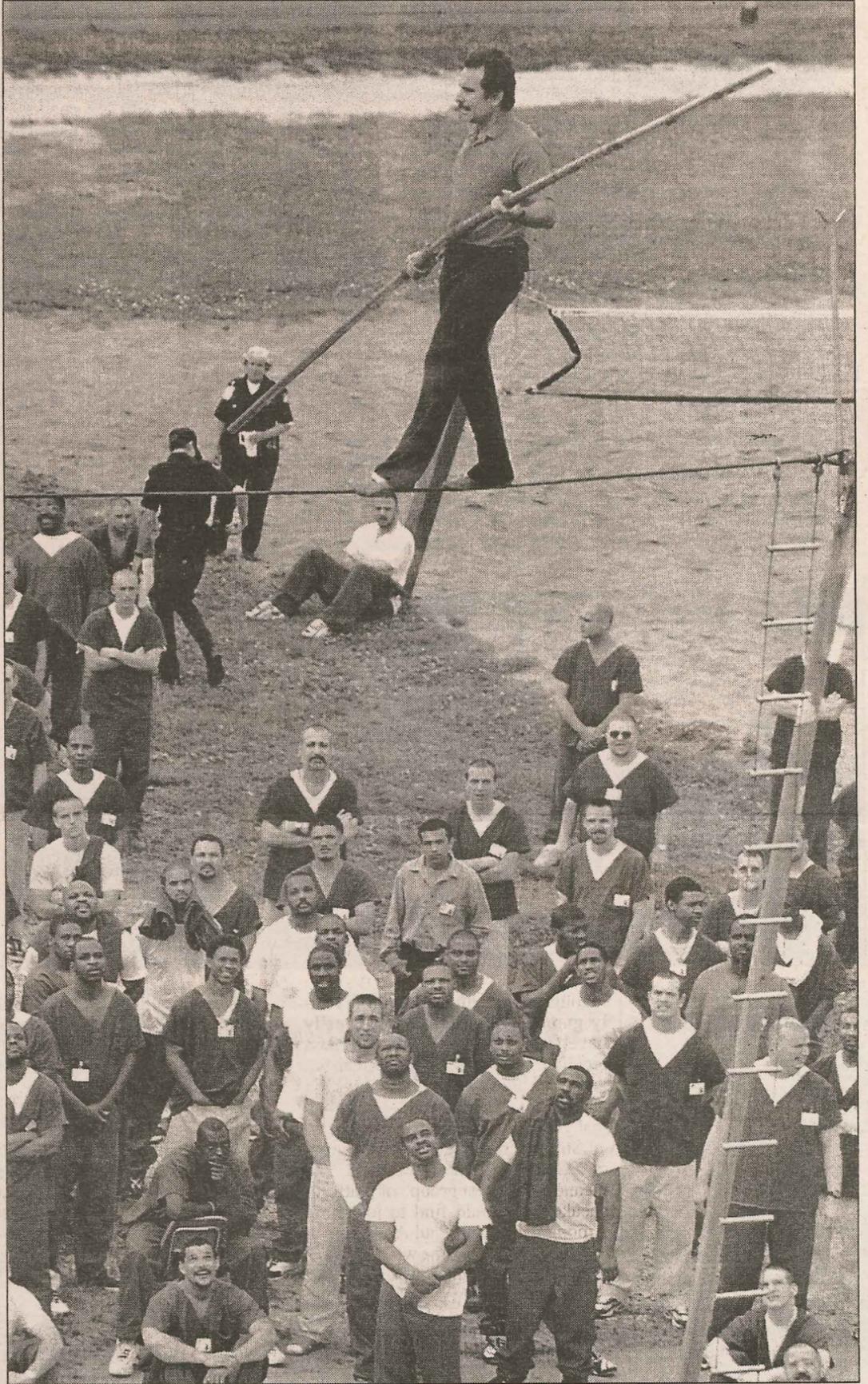
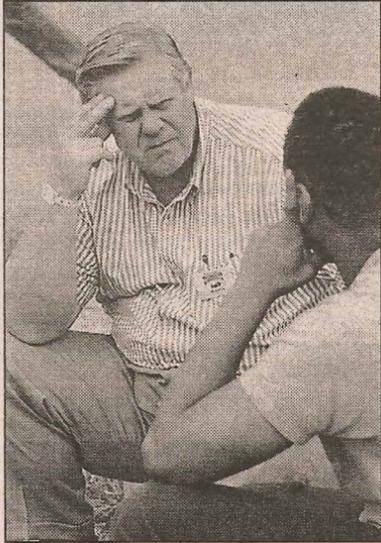
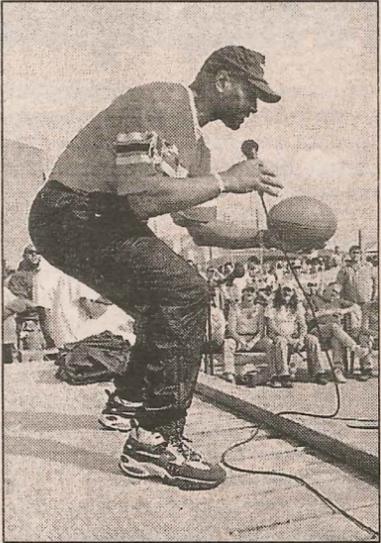
If an inmate makes a commitment to Christ and receives proper follow-up, "all the statistics that I can read say that recidivism drops from 80 percent to 10 percent."

Chaplain Bishop Carter III of the Blackburn Correctional Complex praised the Kentucky weekend for the relationships it builds. "The inmates understood that these people cared," he said.

Carter said he already has started a four-week discipleship program for inmates who made commitments during the weekend. "If I can get them tied to the church and all that it represents, I can get them not to come back."

The weekends draw counselors from many states, but about one-quarter of those at this event were Kentucky "rookies," said Jim Dent, a Kentucky Baptist and former prison chaplain who served as state liaison.

# KENTUCKY



**KENTUCKY WEEKEND OF CHAMPIONS** Ron Kuntz has photographed nine Olympic games, 37 Kentucky Derbies and the famous 1974 "Rumble in the Jungle" boxing match in Zaire between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. But Kuntz says he'd rather spend a weekend in prison than just about anything. "There are many things that I've done in my life, but the most important thing has been going into the prisons," said Kuntz, a counselor and photographer for the Bill Glass Weekend of Champions ministry. The ministry leads to divine appointments and changed lives, said Kuntz, who has been nominated four times for a Pulitzer Prize. "It's always amazing at how our people seem to be fitted in with that person that God wants us to visit." He shot these photos during the recent weekend ministry in Kentucky, May 14-16. ■ **Above:** Tino Wallenda of the Flying Wallendas family, tells inmates life is like walking a tightrope, requiring the proper focus. ■ **Top left:** Former Atlanta Falcon running back Lynn Cain speaks to inmates. ■ **Top middle:** Counselor Jack Wheatley of Louisville listens to a prisoner. ■ **Second from top, left:** Strongman Paul Wrenn bends a nail with his bare hands. ■ **Second from bottom, left:** Christian bikers ride into prison. ■ **Bottom:** Counselor Robert Walker of Elizabethtown counsels an inmate.

# MOVIES

## Professor: Star Wars' Lucas a storyteller, not a theologian

By Marv Knox  
Texas Baptist Standard

WACO, Texas (ABP)—The Star Wars saga contains themes of a spiritual quest, but its message is not essentially Christian, contends Baylor University religion professor John Wood.

"Episode I—The Phantom Menace," the fourth installment in the Star Wars series, premiered May 19, 22 years after filmmaker George Lucas began chronicling a story from "long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away."

For more than two decades, moviegoers, critics and theologians have explored parallels between Lucas' vibrant mythology and the Bible's account of God's battle against Satan.

"The main parallel is such a general thing: There is this cosmic struggle between good and evil," said Wood, who teaches a "Christianity and Films" class.

"One reason folks identify with Star Wars is we know there's a struggle in our hearts between good and evil," he explained. "But we like to see it in cosmic terms—a gigantic transcendence far beyond the individual level. When you see it in cosmic terms, the good guys always win."

On that level, the Star Wars saga agrees with the Bible's assurance that God will triumph over Satan at the end of the world, Wood noted. "For a long time, it looks like evil will triumph, but ultimately good will win out."

Despite that, Star Wars is fundamentally flawed, from a Christian standpoint, because of the method by which good prevails, Wood said.

"Where the problems start for Star Wars is that evil is always overcome by violence," Wood said. "Non-violent confrontation won't work, because the evil forces are so intransigent. The way you defeat evil is to annihilate it. Violence is the only

way."

Wood said that is not the Bible's viewpoint. "The way God overcomes evil is by redeeming it."

The New Testament teaches that a loving God overcame evil by sacrificing his only Son, Jesus, to save the souls of "whosoever" believes. That sense that salvation is available to everyone is another point of contrast between the gospel and Star Wars, Wood said.

"In Star Wars, the Force (a supra-human power) is only for a few elite, the Jedi Knights," he said. "Some people try to make parallels between the Force and the Holy Spirit or the power of God."

"In Star Wars, only the Jedi warriors have that Force. But the Christian faith says God's Spirit is available to everyone. There's elitism in Star Wars."

Furthermore, Star Wars' violence perpetuates its elitist structure, he added. "In the Star Wars conflict, you use violence to maintain the hierarchy—protect Princess Leia, preserve the Jedi Knights. You don't have biblical egalitarianism, that God's love is for everybody."

Wood said he appreciates Star Wars even though it misfires on Christian themes, because he considers Lucas a storyteller and not a theologian.

"Lucas never claimed he was writing anything more than a fairy tale," Wood said. "But it touches all of us because of its cosmic scope."

In an interview for Time magazine, Lucas told journalist Bill Moyers: "I don't see Star Wars as profoundly religious. I see Star Wars as taking all

the issues that religion represents and trying to distill them down into a more modern and easily accessible construct—that there is a greater mystery out there.

"I would hesitate to call the Force God," Lucas continued. "It's designed primarily to make young people think about the mystery. Not to say, 'Here's the answer.' It's to say, 'Think about this for a second. Is there a God? What does God look like? What does God feel like? How do we relate to God?' Just getting young people to think at that level is what I've been trying to do in the films."

Religious storytellers have been grappling with those themes for millennia, Wood asserted.

For thousands of years, people of faith have dealt with the reality of good versus evil, he explained. "Evil is real in the world, and evil is going to be defeated. Otherwise, you have total despair—if you don't believe good is going to win out."

The theme particularly is resonant with one American film genre—the Western, Wood said.

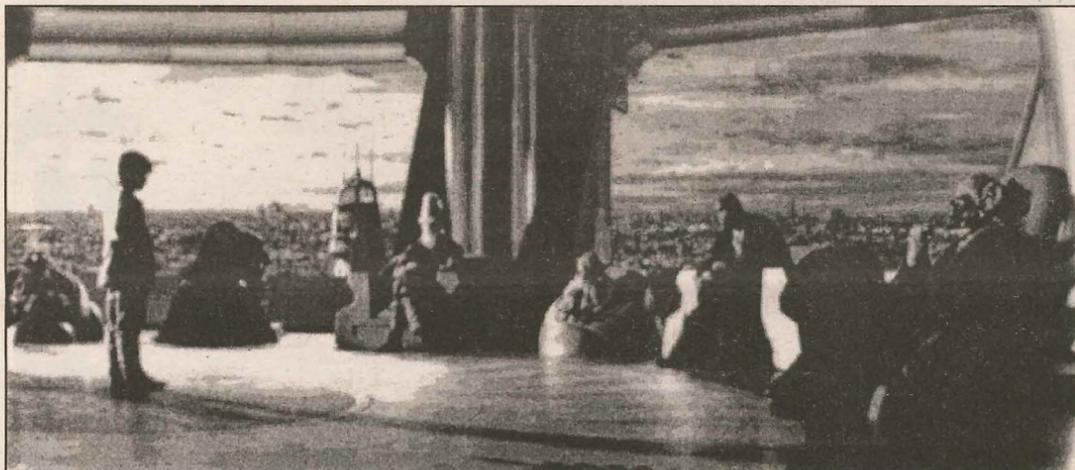
"In that sense, Star Wars is nothing new," he added. "Star Wars just puts it in cosmic terms. It's bigger than saving the town or a village. It's saving the whole universe."

And that theme is as old as humankind, Wood stressed. "It follows back as far as we can go," he said. "Everyone wants to describe how all this meanness and evil got here and what's going to be the final outcome."

"People have struggled with that from the beginning of time," Wood said.

Long, long ago.

**PHANTOM MENACE** Baylor University religion professor John Wood says that while the Star Wars films are flawed from a Christian point of view, they show the classic struggle between good and evil in a larger than life setting. (RNS photo)



## Special effects & spiritual questions overshadow classic good-vs.-evil story

By Phil Boatwright  
Baptist Press

HOLLYWOOD (BP)—The long-expected prequel to "Star Wars" has finally arrived.

And let's face it, just about everybody who grew up admiring the exploits of Han Solo and Luke Skywalker is going to want to see this latest in the series.

It should make an enormous amount of money, perhaps the biggest take yet in Hollywood history. But is it any good?

Well, yes and no.

In 1977, George Lucas put a spin on the old-fashioned western, placing the action in outer space rather than Tombstone.

Using spaceships that completely filled a cinema screen, and a villain every kid in America wanted to defeat in battle, Lucas made Star Wars the most popular good-versus-evil franchise of all time.

But along with laser sabers and hover cars, Lucas included the most important elements to any movie that wishes to live on in cinema history—characters you care about and a compelling story. That's what I was waiting to see in "Star Wars Episode One, The Phantom Menace" (rated PG).

Also, I hoped Lucas would resist the incessant use of gratuitous sex or profane language common in most films of the '90s. Gratefully, that element of Lucas'

storytelling ability remains consistent with the first three episodes. There is no sex. No misuse of God's name. And no crudity. I applaud Lucas for proving a story can be told without offending the senses.

Now, for the bad news.

Although special effects have been an important element in the Star Wars series, the past three productions didn't rely on state-of-the-art gimmickry and editing alone to hold our attention.

Not so with Phantom. The wizardry of the Industrial Light & Magic studio has replaced actors with special effects as the stars of the film.

The look of "Phantom Menace" is—and I don't mean this as an adolescent colloquialism but as its true meaning—awesome. Truly, no expense has been spared. But it's so laden with wondrous detail, while the acting is so deadly dull, you get the impression director Lucas spent all his time and energy focusing on the look of the film, not quite leaving time to motivate anything possessing a heartbeat.

And then there is the narrative. True, if you're 11, who cares about narrative? Besides, they figure it out by the fourth or fifth showing. For those of us, however, who will probably only sit through it once, the clearest synopsis I could come up with

is this:

The bad guys are taking control of the universe, while the Republic, whoever they are, are unprepared and nearly defenseless, even though they have the mighty Jedis on their side. Darth Vader is introduced as a prepubescent, and we meet Queen Amidala, the future mother of Luke and Leia. There really isn't much of a story here. Just a few lines here and there

to separate the battle sequences.

Is it too violent? I have a theory about that. Much of the violence in this series is akin to the Saturday morning matinee B westerns. The action serves as a release to the tensions of everyday life. In these films, the good guys eventually beat the bad guys. Justice is served. In a way, I think that is a healthy discharge.

But I must say, the producers of this latest edition come awfully close to crossing the line. It's still much like a video/computer game, where the goal is not to defeat wrongdoers, but to extinguish anything that comes into view. Still, I don't think "Phantom Menace" will scar any young ones.

What should be discussed by concerned parents is the conception of young Anakin Skywalker, the future Darth Vader character. At one point, his mother

### REVIEW

confesses that the boy was the result of an immaculate conception. This, of course, causes members of the Jedi council to wonder if the child is the "chosen one," the future savior of the galaxy.

In the past, I have defended the Star Wars mystical proponents. Many people had problems with the continuous reference to the Force, but after reading interviews with George Lucas and examining the series, I didn't believe there was an attempt to lead young people into occultism or Eastern philosophies. I believed, and still maintain, that these movies are parables concerning good versus evil.

However, this latest development of proclaiming a movie warrior to be of virgin birth may cause some to think the film's creator is trifling with the significance of Jesus Christ and his entrance into human form.

My suggestion: Parents, if you are allowing the kids to attend, you should view this film with them. Make sure they understand the difference between the film's "Force" and the real Force, Jesus Christ.

Phil Boatwright, a Baptist layman, is the editor of *The Movie Reporter*, a monthly film guide, and can be contacted at (805) 495-0914 or at [www.moviereporter.com](http://www.moviereporter.com)

## Pastors, ethicists pay more attention to end-of-life issues

By Kathi Wolfe  
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Many pastors and ethicists feel about assisted suicide advocate Jack Kevorkian as the Internal Revenue Service does about tax evaders. They believe his involvement in assisted suicide is illegal, unethical or, at best, misguided.

At the same time, however, they grudgingly acknowledge that Kevorkian, sentenced last month to 10 to 25 years in prison for giving a lethal injection to a man with Lou Gehrig's disease, has not only raised the assisted suicide issue but also helped spotlight the equally important ethical question of how the nation cares for the terminally ill.

And that's all to the good, they say. "Kevorkian has raised to the forefront of public consciousness ... end-of-life issues," said M.C. Sullivan, chief operating officer of the Midwest Bioethics Center in Kansas City, Mo. "Unfortunately, the debate has been very polarized. The focus should be on improving end-of-life care. But people think the only options are either dying a miserable death—in horrible pain—or enlisting the aid of a Kevorkian."

Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, honorary chair of Last Acts—a coalition of more than 300 organizations and individuals working to improve end-of-life care—wrote in a recent USA Today opinion piece that the assisted suicide debate "has put in the public eye ... people's very real fears about dying: fears that the medical system will not respond to their pain and suffering, fears that no one will really listen to their needs and anxieties."

Susan Tolle, director of the Center for Ethics in Health Care at Oregon Health Sciences University in Port-

land, said the debate on assisted suicide "has been a wake-up call for doctors, family members and clergy. In the past we haven't done the best possible job (of caring for terminally ill people)."

But the good news, Sullivan said, is that most people don't need to die agonizing deaths. In recent years, physicians, nurses and other health care professionals have begun providing palliative care to terminally ill patients.

"Once a diagnosis of terminal illness has been made, there comes a moment when patients, working with their doctors, decide if they want their care to be redirected from aggressive, curative treatment to palliative or comfort care."

The hospice movement, which developed in this country in the 1970s, was the impetus behind the field of palliative care. Hospices don't try to cure terminally ill patients; they help people to die in comfort in a non-hospital setting.

"Palliative care addresses the suffering of the patient," said Sullivan, who is a nurse, attorney and ethicist. "It involves pain management as well as helping people with the emotional, psychological, social and spiritual components of their suffering."

Gary Reiter, a palliative care specialist at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Mass., recently received a \$450,000 grant to improve end-of-life care for terminally ill kidney dialysis patients. He said he is particularly concerned with helping people explore the meaning and spirituality of both their lives and their pending deaths.

"If I just address their physical needs, I won't be addressing their whole problem," he said. "That means caring for their psychological, social and spiritual well-being."

He recalled a recent visit to an 82-

### Resources

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Spurred on by the assisted-suicide debate, a fusion of spirituality and end-of-life care is gaining momentum across the country.

■ **Aging With Dignity**, a nonprofit group in Tallahassee, Fla., has developed a living will called "Five Wishes" that asks people to describe what type of spiritual comfort they'd like at the time of their death.

The document, written in reader-friendly English, is not legally valid in Kentucky but could still serve as a guide. It encourages people to talk about what kind of care they want to receive at the end of their lives.

"Five Wishes" asks people not only what type of medical treatment they'd want if they became terminally ill—when or if they'd want life support systems turned off, for example—but also what type of spiritual support they'd find helpful when they're dying.

A copy of the document can be ordered from Aging With Dignity, Box 11180, Tallahassee, Fla., 32302.

■ **The Hospice Foundation of America** has produced an eight-page brochure for

congregations, titled "Living with Grief at Worship: A Practical Guide for Faith Communities."

The foundation also has available "Clergy to Clergy" audio tapes to help clergy learn more about how to care for dying people and their families.

And the foundation produces a monthly letter that includes a column on spiritual issues related to dying. For information, call (202) 638-5419 or visit the Web site, [www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org).

■ **Last Acts**, a coalition of organizations and individuals working to improve end-of-life care, has issued a "blueprint" calling on health-care providers and clergy to meet terminally ill people's physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Ira Byock, author of "Dying Well" and a Last Acts member, said at a news conference unveiling the blueprint that "as long as there is life, we can treat people with medically excellent care, but also tender loving care."

The coalition also produces a quarterly newsletter. For information, call Shawn Zelman at (703) 827-8771 or visit the Web site, [www.lastacts.org](http://www.lastacts.org).

year-old patient in a nursing home. "He was on dialysis and had gangrene in his right foot. He'd decided not to have it amputated. I didn't come in and talk to him about how his foot felt—did it hurt? Was it tingly? That wasn't the most important initial stuff."

"Instead, I talked to him for 30 to 40 minutes about what his life had been like. About what being in the service was like. About what his marriage and job were like. Stuff about who he really is," Reiter said. "That was as important as talking to him about where the tingling was."

People can't talk about dying without talking about religion, Reiter added. "Death is at the center of religion.

Awareness of death gives meaning to people's lives. When someone asks, 'Why must I die?' the next question is, 'How shall I live?'"

Ironically, few clergy have had training in providing spiritual care to people who are dying, said Kenneth Doka, a Lutheran minister and senior consultant for the Washington, D.C.-based Hospice Foundation of America.

Doka, who is also a gerontology professor at the College of New Rochelle (N.Y.), said he was "not knocking seminaries. They have a limited amount of time to teach an infinite number of things. But they should look carefully at the work they're doing on death and dying."

## Religious liberty act proposed again

WASHINGTON (ABP)—A bill designed to increase protection for religious freedom was introduced May 5 in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Religious Liberty Protection Act would limit the power of state and local governments to interfere with religious practices. Government would be required to have a compelling reason before burdening any religious practice and would have to use the least-restrictive means of accomplishing that aim.

The bill before Congress is similar to a 1993 law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled part of that law unconstitutional, saying Congress exceeded its authority in attempting to impose the law on all 50 states.

Unlike the 1993 law, the new bill would be enforced largely through Congress' powers regulating spending and commerce.

It also has a separate provision that would protect churches, synagogues and other houses of worship from burdensome zoning laws.

### NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Court to decide nudity dispute.** The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide to what degree indecency laws can be used to bar nude dancing. The high court announced it will review a ruling by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court striking down an Erie, Pa., statute that made it illegal to appear in public in a "state of nudity." A trial court invalidated the statute, saying it was too broad in restricting expressive activity. After a state appeals court reinstated the statute, Pennsylvania's top court also struck it down, saying that it unconstitutionally restricted freedom of expression.

■ **Porn link ousted divinity dean.** Harvard Divinity School's dean was forced to resign last fall after pornography was found on his computer. Harvard University asked Ronald F. Thiemann to resign for "conduct unbecoming a dean" after President Neil L. Rudenstine was alerted about the matter, Associated Press reported May 19. The explicit material allegedly was

found last fall after the former dean requested additional disk space on a school-owned computer at the office in his Harvard-owned residence, the Boston Globe reported, citing unidentified sources. The material was not child pornography, the sources added.

■ **Academies seek freshmen.** The directors of Baptist student ministries at the United States service academies are seeking information about incoming Baptist freshmen. Anyone wishing to make contact can reach Bill Blackwell at West Point, (914) 534-3944; Dwain Gregory at the U.S. Air Force Academy, (719) 599-9094; Kirk Ritchey at the Naval Academy, (410) 263-0963; and Thom Thornton at the Coast Guard Academy, (860) 437-1652.

■ **Organists host conference.** The Region IV American Guild of Organists will host its annual convention June 27-30 in Knoxville, Tenn. For more information, call Karen Bunn at (423) 579-5906.

## Commission plans to recommend collegiate sports gambling ban

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A gambling commission that is finalizing a national report plans to recommend a ban on legalized gambling on collegiate sports.

A majority of the nine-member panel said gambling threatens the integrity of college athletics and decided to call for a ban in a report that is scheduled to be completed June 18, Associated Press reported.

During its recent meeting in Washington, the commission made several recommendations to Congress, the gambling industry, and state and tribal governments.

Those recommendations include:

■ Native American tribes currently running casinos should use portions of the revenue to help diversify their finances and reduce dependence on gambling.

■ State lotteries and other kinds of governmental gaming should ban aggressive strategies targeting youths or poor neighborhoods.

■ Casinos should post the odds of winning and warnings about the risks of gambling.

James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, a Colorado-based conservative Christian ministry, and a member of the panel, let some of his proposals die without debate. One was a proposal to have casinos establish daily, monthly and annual loss limits for frequent players. "There's no sense fighting battles when you don't have enough support to win."

## Campaign has message for those seeking sign from above

### Looking for a sign?

The following quotes, attributed to God, are part of an anonymous "God Campaign" that has gained momentum among billboard companies:

■ Let's meet at my house Sunday before the game.

■ What part of "Thou Shalt Not ..." didn't you understand?

■ Loved the wedding, invite me to the marriage.

■ That "Love Thy Neighbor" thing ... I meant it.

■ Will the road you're on get you to my place?

■ Big bang theory? You've got to be kidding.

■ Need directions?

■ Have you read my #1 best seller? There will be a test.

■ Don't make me come down there.

*Continued from page 1*

will be rotated around the region during the next six months as space is sold for displays now featuring the God campaign and other spaces open up. The billboards generally will remain in one spot about 30 days.

Some of the displays are taking space formerly used by cigarette advertisers, which are now banned from billboards.

The slogans attributed to God are fairly generic, so the campaign can embrace most of the major faiths in the United States and is nondenominational within Christianity.

Although advertisers sometimes shy away from religion for risk of offending people, Yale said Eller Media decided to become involved with the God campaign because, "This is strong. This is positive. It's something we could do."

To attract attention, the campaign uses some gentle humor with signs such as "Keep using my name in vain and I'll make rush hour longer" and "Loved the wedding, invite me to the marriage."

For those heading down the wrong road of life, other billboards have God saying, "You think it's hot here?"

Some people said the one-line sayings in white over a black background could have used more of the traditional advertising juice of color pictures, sensational claims and indirect promises of wealth or success to attract attention.



**GOD CAMPAIGN** What began in Broward County, Fla., has spread since being picked up by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America. Association members have donated more than 10,000 advertising displays around the country. (RNS photo)

"Really nobody pays any attention to stuff like that," said Jo Ann Jackson, 33, as she looked up at the billboard that said only, "We need to talk—God."

But Patricia Porter, 41, looked up at the same poster and called it "a blessing."

"People ... need to talk to him," she said. "God is the answer."

Jerry Rugley, 27, said, no matter what, it is better to have billboards with messages from God than ones from cigarette makers. Not everyone, however, will be swayed by the billboards, he said.

"Some people may just see a sign," he said. "Those that are aware of their religion, it's thought provoking for them."

### Thanking Deward Hurst

On May 1, after more than 10 years of dedicated service, Deward Hurst retired as director of Jonathan Creek. I have not had the chance to publicly express my appreciation, so this column provides me with such an opportunity.

Deward came to Jonathan Creek more than a decade ago, and during that 10-year period provided able leadership to the place. As most of you know, and all of you should know, this was during a period in which funds were tight, so Deward had to "make do" to a great degree. For all practical purposes, he led Jonathan Creek by himself, working long hours, long weeks and, as he would probably tell you, long years. In his own words, he figures he "put in 17 years in 10."

Camp and conference ministry is very demanding, even under the best of circumstances. There is little way around the long hours. When guests are on the property, the director is on call to answer even the smallest questions and to solve the smallest problems. Our directors (at both Jonathan Creek and Cedar-moore) live on the properties as well, so it is hard to "get away."

But Deward went the extra mile and stayed the course. Under his

leadership Jonathan Creek held its own, even with challenging financial constraints that were necessary. So now Deward moves into "retirement." Retirement for Deward means he is able to serve many churches in West Kentucky as he is in great demand as an interim or supply pastor/preacher.

He and his wife, June, are living in Reidland, near their grown children. So it is our prayer that God will bless them both and provide to them a much-deserved, long, fruitful and enjoyable time in the years ahead. We will always be thankful for the role Deward played. Because he was a faithful servant and steward of God's gift of Jonathan Creek, we have great and exciting opportunities

ahead.

Deward Hurst is another example of faithful Kentucky Baptist Convention servants who so give of themselves serving Kentucky Baptists all across the state. To God be the glory as we conclude one era and move ahead into an exciting new millennium.

*Rusty Ellison is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies, Box 37, Bagdad, Ky. 40003. Call (502) 747-8911*

### KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



Rusty Ellison

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### Religious persecution council urges moral responses

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A State Department advisory panel on religious freedom has urged the White House and Congress to raise the issue's profile, including providing adequate funding for a newly established independent commission to monitor religious persecution abroad.

In its final report, issued May 17, the State Department Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad also said U.S. attempts to promote religious liberty in foreign nations should rely on "incentives" rather than embargoes and other such measures "likely to impose or increase human suffering." Such incentives might include economic assistance.

The committee, which included former Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry, has been replaced by the 10-member U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom created last year by congressional passage of the International Religious Freedom Act.

The report emphasized that any White House response should be "moral" and in proportion to the extent of the problem. Reflecting the general position of some Christian and other religious groups, the report warned against the use of economic embargoes that hurt innocent civilians—including those already being persecuted.

"Embargoes and similarly sweeping measures are not advisable, except in response to the most grave ongoing injustice, and only on the condition that the basic human needs of innocent civilians continue to be met," the report said.

The 65-page document noted that funds for the new commission were not specifically appropriated in the act that created it. "With the many budget cuts already in place at the State Department, it is important that Congress demonstrate its full commitment" to religious freedom abroad "by providing the funds necessary to accomplish the work it has mandated," the report said.

**REAL  
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### Day of beginnings

By Robert Dunston

Saturday, May 15, proved to be an exciting day at Cumberland College for students, parents, faculty and staff.

The day began with our annual commencement at 10 a.m. Graduates and faculty entered the O. Wayne Rollins Center to the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance." A total of 246 students walked across the stage to receive their diplomas. Of this group, 178 students had completed their graduation requirements while 68 will complete their requirements either in the summer or the fall.

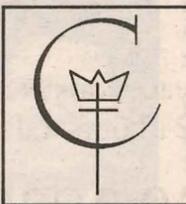
The morning contained many special moments. Tony Pursley, a bachelor of music graduate, provided beautiful special music for commencement singing "Jesus Loves Me" and "Climb Every Mountain." Sam Ballou, one of our trustees, had the honor of presenting diplomas to our two Russian students, Ena Borkova and Irene Davydova, whom he had sponsored.

The Honorable Sara Walters Combs provided an inspiring and challenging charge to our graduates. She encouraged them to leave tracks that others could follow for the glory of God and his purposes.

For the many parents, grandparents and friends in attendance, the most special moment was when their student walked across the stage to receive his or her diploma. Flashbulbs flashed and video cameras rolled.

At 2 p.m. the Gatliff Chapel was the scene of a beginning for another group of students. The Honorable

**CUMBERLAND  
COLLEGE**



Sara Walters Combs spoke to the Bert T. Combs Scholars who will be entering Cumberland College this fall. Forty-nine young people received full-tuition scholarships named in memory of Bert T. Combs, Cumberland College alumnus and former governor of Kentucky. Mrs. Combs spoke to the

young people and their relatives and friends about her late husband and challenged them to make a difference as he had done.

What a wonderful day. Saying goodbye to students whom we have come to know was difficult, but we know they are ready for their next steps. Saying hello to new students was exciting as we sensed their enthusiasm in furthering their education at Cumberland College.

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



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## Missionaries report inroads among Kosovar refugees

**"Many doors are opening, and the people seem to trust us in ways you would think would take months or years to happen."**

*Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionary Arville Earl*

**By Robert O'Brien**  
*Cooperative Baptist Fellowship*

SKOPJE, Macedonia (ABP)—While NATO bombers fly noisily above Macedonia toward Kosovo, missionaries are using the Bible to quietly change lives below.

Baptist missionaries based in Macedonia are using the gospel to soothe fears among the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees fleeing horrors in Kosovo.

Three Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionary families have emphasized prayer, listening and Bible study while using donated money and goods to provide food, clothing, bedding, medicine and hygiene products. The group had received more than \$107,000 in donations by mid-May for refugee relief.

For four hours, missionaries Arville and Shelia Earl recently listened as 18 members of an extended refugee family gathered around them in Gostivar, Macedonia, to share their stories of terror.

Then, gradually, family members began to ask their new friends questions about Christianity. "That was a wonderful opportunity, because Muslims don't normally ask questions like these—and certainly not of Christians," Earl said.

One family member asked for a Bible, saying he had long searched for meaning in life but still had not found answers.

"He was excited to get a Bible in his own language and began reading

the book of John," Mrs. Earl said. "What an open door! We pray that the Holy Spirit will guide him to truth."

The Earls had moved 30 miles to Gostivar from Skopje, Macedonia, less than two months before NATO began bombing the Yugoslav army in Kosovo.

"Many doors are opening, and the people seem to trust us in ways you would think would take months or years to happen," Earl said.

A man named Mejzin said he knew something was different about the Earls the first time he met them. "I want you to know," the man told them, "that if you have to leave your house, you have another home to come to—ours."

The Earls are now on a May 8–June 29 home assignment in the United States.

Meanwhile in Skopje, CBF missionaries Rick and Martha Shaw and Darrell and Kathy Smith said they were finding the same kind of response from refugees.

The Shaws, using Bibles from the United Bible Societies, began what they believe to be the first regularly scheduled Bible study for ethnic Albanians in Macedonia.

Over a period of several months, it has led to Rick Shaw baptizing at least two refugees and involving a growing number in church. A newly arrived refugee, overcome with gratitude, went to church with the Shaws on Easter Sunday to thank God for bringing him and his entire family safely out of Kosovo.

### Want to help?

Agencies still are collecting money for refugee relief. Ways to help include:

■ Send a check designated for "Kosovo relief" to the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's General Relief Fund, Office of Finance, Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230. To volunteer, call Michael Hester, IMB director of volunteer efforts in Europe, at (804) 219-1530.

■ Churches can send money designated for "Kosovo relief" to the Kentucky Baptist Convention office, and it will be forwarded to the International Mission Board.

■ Send a check designated for "Balkan appeal" to the Baptist World Alliance's Baptist World Aid fund, 6733 Curran St., McLean, VA 22101.

■ Send a check designated for "Albanian refugees relief" to the Co-

operative Baptist Fellowship, Box 450329, Atlanta, GA 31145-0329. Call Marie Moore about volunteer opportunities, (770) 220-1631.

■ For refugee sponsorship, contact the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board's immigration office at (770) 410-6343, or send e-mail to rrobinson@namb.net. Money to assist refugee sponsorship in America can be sent to NAMB at 4200 North Point Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30022.

■ The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is calling for clothes and toys for refugees in America to go to Raritan Valley Baptist Church in Edison, N.J. For information, call (732) 287-5442 or send e-mail to rvalleybc@aol.com.

■ Call Samaritan's Purse, (800) 665-2843.

"The Bible is a brand new book for all the people in our Bible study," Shaw said. "Eliza, a Kosovar refugee whom I baptized in December, loves this book. She has read the New Testament now three times, underlining passages and verses that she likes, doesn't like, or doesn't understand."

Another woman, Liria, an ethnic Albanian from Skopje, made a profession of faith in Jesus about three months ago, Shaw continued. She finds study aids in the Bible translated into her native tongue "very helpful," he said.

The missionaries, though strained to the limits of their endurance, have done what they can for the overwhelming flood of refugees.

"We can't do everything, but we can sit and listen to their story, hold a child, try to meet their physical and spiritual needs, and express our sympathy and compassion," Earl said.

"We believe the best thing you can do for us is to pray for God's sovereign will to be accomplished and that he will use (these events to) draw people to salvation through Jesus Christ," Shaw said.

### Class of 1999—Eric

Each year I ask our seniors to write a short essay entitled "My Oneida Experience." I ask them to tell me why they came to Oneida, what they think about chapel, who has helped them the most while here and what their plans are after graduation. During the next few weeks I want to share portions of their essays with you. The first essay is from Eric:

"I ended up at this school for a couple of reasons. ... I could not handle drugs and school work, so my grades slowly slid downhill. ... The first month of my sophomore year, my parents found out I was doing drugs and drinking. They grounded me for that entire year. My parents told me that if my grades didn't improve to at least a 2.0 in every class, they would make other arrangements for my education. "I decided to call their bluff. They'd never send me away! ... I lost! I now realize the emotional toll it took on them to make this decision. ... But they stood firm in their resolve to help me. They even told me that all they could do was to put me in a place where I could start over and make better decisions, but the choice was up to me.

"When I first came to Oneida, I absolutely hated this place. Then it began to grow on me. One day during fall revival I was sitting in Chapel listening to the preacher. ... It seemed he was talking about my life. ... Soon the service was over, and I was talking to Mr. Spencer, my soon-to-be mentor. I made my profession of faith that night.

"After that night things started getting better. ... I tried harder in school to get my work done. ... I tried to stay out of trouble. I began to realize that the rules not only applied to others, but to me as well. Two weeks later I was baptized and became

a small group leader in our Baptist Student Union.

"I wish I could say that this made me a perfect student and a perfect dorm resident, but I can't. But it did make me want to try harder, and I did. ... Mr. Klingler sort of became a dad who I didn't argue with (at least not all the time). ... The next person who has made a difference to me is Mr. Brown. When I first met him, I disliked him a lot, as well as everyone who tried to tell me what to do! I feel Mr. Brown is the best adult friend I've ever had.

"The final person is more than a teacher. He's a friend, a father, a mentor. ... He helped open my eyes and see things differently. He also opened up a world inside my head with a flood of knowledge. ... Thank you Mr. Stockton for making my world better and for giving me a new joy in books and stories.

"Besides an education, knowledge of God, and many new friends, the most important thing I have gotten from Oneida is life's experience and maturity. I came here a little lost kid who wanted to run away. I'm leaving here a person who will go back home and take responsibility for my actions and decisions. This is the school that I hated. Now ... I'm sorry it is time to leave.

"One of the things I like here is the daily chapel services. The messages can give you a feeling of peace and make you strong enough to make tough decisions.

"I want to tell the people who have made the most difference to me, ... Thank you! Thank you all!"

*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

### Senior memories

Three of our seniors came from Maryland, recommended by 1973 alumnus Vernon Ball, who saw them graduate.

Jason and Bonnie Ball remember sledding during the blizzard of '96. The power went out, and a group stayed up until 4 a.m. playing Monopoly. They later designed a Clear Creek version of the game. Bonnie was recognized for the highest academic standing among female students. Jason is enrolled at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Adam Chanin said he learned "the value of faithfulness, obedience and discipline." He also met and married Audrey. His parents attended graduation, made more meaningful because Adam's father recently trusted Christ. The elder Chanins worship in a messianic Jewish congregation in Maryland.

Northern Kentucky resident Keenan Braden started his first ministry position the Sunday after graduation. He is youth minister at Harlan Baptist Church. "When I look at the whole picture, all of Clear Creek is fond memories," Keenan said.

Dan Howard returns to his

home state of West Virginia as pastor of New Hope Church in Berkeley Springs. His fondest memory is the moment he was on the roof of the new classroom building and "after working many hours on the building cupola, I saw it raised and set in place." The two-ton structure holds eight beautiful faceted-glass scripture windows.

"I survived! I was quad-vocational—family, church, school, work," Barboursville native Steve Mayle said. "I had preached for six years and seen many converts, but I found myself in more counseling situations and felt grossly inadequate. I will always remember the help from brother Baird."

The Mayles had two children while on campus. Daughter Leigha suffered a seizure while Mayle was at work. "My wife, Tammy, went to get help, and Mrs. Rice moved the business office as one helpful team to get (Leigha) to the hospital and treated." Steve is pastor of Jenkins First Baptist.

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

#### CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

## Missionary using sports to take gospel to Brazilians

By Trennis Henderson  
Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

SAO PAULO, Brazil (BP)—Spend five minutes with David Hammond and you'll probably hear him use the word "vision" repeatedly.

Hammond's current vision involves reaching thousands of youth and adults with the gospel of Christ through sports ministry.

Based in the sprawling metropolis of Sao Paulo, one of the largest cities in the world, Hammond and his wife, Aimee, have been serving as Southern Baptist missionaries to Brazil since 1984.

In a city with an estimated 250 basketball clubs, 250 tennis clubs and more than 1,000 soccer clubs, "I'm trying to give a vision to the Baptists here to get involved in sports clubs and become missionaries through friendship evangelism," Hammond explained.

Accepting God's call to ministry at age 18, Hammond discovered he could combine his interest in sports and ministry. "In college, I majored in physical education because I loved sports. My calling wasn't to be a pas-

tor but to minister."

Adding theological training to his sports background, Hammond took his first mission trip to Brazil in 1979.

Serving with a sports team from Texas, "we had a great opportunity for witnessing," he recalled. "That was when God called me into missions."

But the vision of a widespread sports ministry in Sao Paulo took years to unfold. Hammond's first assignment in Brazil was urban evangelism, an opportunity which resulted in his becoming director of evangelism for the state of Piaui. He and his family later moved to Sao Paulo where he continued his involvement in evangelism.

During his first several years on the field, "we would periodically have one or two sports teams come down from the States," he said. "But it was so new in Brazil, we weren't making much headway in using it as an evangelistic tool."

Noting that the hundreds of thousands of youth and adults involved in sports throughout Sao Paulo were "a mission field we weren't reaching," Hammond said, "That was my vision—seeing good people who were

lost and Baptists weren't doing anything about it."

Sharing his burden for an active evangelistic sports ministry, Hammond said Brazilian Baptist leaders urged him to "go for it," and his fellow missionaries adopted his plans as a top ministry priority.

The Hammonds targeted Cidade Tiradentes, a huge housing complex with two sports centers and one small Baptist congregation. Tiradentes was built in the early 1980s to relocate people from inner-city slums, he said. "The people who live there feel like they have been marginalized or neglected by the government."

With high unemployment, drug use and crimes rampant in the area, Hammond sought to use such tools as basketball and soccer to make an impact.

Hammond works in one of the sports centers and hosts sports evangelism teams from the States. "Several kids have made professions of faith. One of the boys who accepted Christ is now the assistant to the coach out here."

Adilson Sales de Araujo, a former professional basketball player in Sao

Paulo, is the coach of the team Hammond has helped the past few years.

"David has been a big help to us, providing transportation and uniforms for the kids," Adilson noted. "He's been a big influence on the behavior of the young boys who come here, sharing with them the word of God and telling them about Jesus."

"Many of the kids we work with already have been lost to the community of drugs and crime," the coach said. "We've found that basketball really draws the boys. David comes in during this time and is able to share the gospel with them."

In addition to the sports ministry at Tiradentes, Hammond and his 14-year-old son, Philip, are active in a sports club near their home where they play tennis and witness to parents and coaches.

Explaining one of their goals is to reach the tennis instructors with the gospel, Hammond said, "If you reach these guys who have influence over hundreds of kids, I don't have to win them all; the coaches can start influencing the kids. They will be the missionaries, and then I can go to another club."

**"If you reach these guys who have influence over hundreds of kids, I don't have to win them all; the coaches can start influencing the kids."**

*Southern Baptist missionary David Hammond*

## Southern Russia violence threatens churches

By Frank Brown  
Religion News Service

MOSCOW (RNS)—When it comes to religious freedom in Russia, the world's attention often is focused on government restrictions on minority faiths. But in volatile and lawless southern Russia, threats to religious freedom take the much more brutal form of murder and kidnapping.

In the Russian Caucasus, for example, Baptist leader Alexander Samoshkin said he has essentially given up one congregation where in the space of six months one pastor was beheaded and another kidnapped.

"I can't even go there myself. They would grab me right away," said Samoshkin of the 100-member Baptist church in Grozny, capital of Russia's breakaway republic of Chechnya.

The last pastor in Grozny was Alexander Kulakov. About a week after he was kidnapped in mid-March, a member of his congregation saw Kulakov's severed head on display at the city's market. Kulakov had taken over leadership of Grozny Baptist Church from Alexii Sitnikov after Sitnikov was kidnapped in October. Sitnikov's abductors have kept silent, and it is not known if he is alive.

Samoshkin said he was at a loss to explain the abductions but dismissed ransom as a motive because no such demands were made. One explanation, Samoshkin said, is that the two pastors were targeted by extremist Wahhabis—puritanical, ultra-conservative Muslims who often are blamed for terrorist acts in Chechnya.

"If the Wahhabis did it, it is because they don't want other faiths in Chechnya," said Samoshkin of the predominantly Muslim republic of 1 million people which has adopted Islamic law.

Although Chechnya is by far the most chaotic and lawless part of the

Russian Caucasus, other regions, too, are dangerous for religious workers whose families are sometimes perceived as reliable ransom payers. In Samoshkin's home congregation, the 600-member Central Baptist Church in Vladikavkaz, the youth leader, Vladimir Kartiyev, was kidnapped. His abductors recently sent his mother a videotape of her son and a demand for a \$100,000 ransom, Samoshkin said.

"There is no way we will find that money," Samoshkin said.

Other Christian denominations also have suffered in the wave of kidnappings that has swept up businesspeople and government officials as well. During a two-day period in late March, two elderly Russian Orthodox priests serving in the republic of Ingushetia were kidnapped from their parishes, one in the midst of leading a service. No ransom demands have been made for either man, leaving church officials perplexed.

"If the reason was ransom, it is odd, because these priests are old and poor. One is 73 and the other is 69," said Yevgeny Bronsky of the southern Russian diocese where the kidnappings occurred. "We think they were kidnapped as part of some sort of provocation. I don't see a religious reason. It is either politics or banditry."

After the double kidnapping, two more Russian Orthodox priests were dispatched to the area. On April 6 one of them was kidnapped, Bronsky said. The other priest continues to work in the area but has police bodyguards.

Bronsky said that while there are no plans to send another priest to replace the most recent abductee, the church was committed to maintaining a presence in the region and encouraged parishioners to continue getting together and praying.

While the 80-million-member Russian Orthodox Church is by far

Russia's most powerful and privileged, in the predominantly Muslim and strongly independent Caucasus area it is sometimes perceived as a tool for Moscow to maintain control over the region through ethnic Russian communities. During Chechnya's war to gain independence from Russia, said Baptist leader Samoshkin, the Orthodox Church was frequently vilified by separatist leaders.

"The Chechens would treat us Baptists much better than the Orthodox during the war," Samoshkin recalled of the conflict that claimed tens of thousands of lives and destabilized the entire Caucasus region. "The Chechens called the Orthodox devil worshippers because they claimed the priests were blessing the war."

While few and far between, foreign missionaries in the Caucasus are easy targets for kidnappers both because they stand out and are much more likely to yield hefty ransoms than their Russian counterparts.

In the Russian republic of Dagestan, three Western missionaries were taken last year from the capital, Makhachkala. First, in January, a Swedish Pentecostal couple, Daniel and Paulina Brolin, were abducted as they walked along a city street. They spent six months in captivity in neighboring Chechnya, where many kidnap gangs are based, before being released after intensive negotiations by the Swedish government, which has refused to say if a ransom was paid.

In November, American missionary Herb Gregg was snatched from a Makhachkala playground. Officials with Gregg's missionary organization, The Evangelical Alliance Mission, or TEAM, said in April that Gregg was still alive and negotiations were continuing. He had been working in the area three years teaching English with his wife, Linda, who left after his abduction.

## Immediate answer to prayer is a jump-start for Ecuador church

QUININD, Ecuador (BP)—Only a few moments after Southern Baptist missionary Jim Hogg cried out for God to guide his failing church-planting efforts, Hogg found his answer at a street-corner food stand.

In September 1998, members of Nueva Esperanza Church and Hogg began trying to start a church in Quinind, a city south of Esmeraldas, using Bible studies and door-to-door visitation.

About the same time, the Christians developed a habit of grabbing a bite to eat at Jenaro's hamburger and chicken stand on a busy corner. Jenaro always was friendly, asking who they were and what they were doing.

One December night, following three months of dead-ends and failed Bible studies, Hogg walked off alone, crying and praying for God to show the believers where he was at work in the city.

"Five minutes later, I was talking to Jenaro, and God's answer hit me like a lightning bolt," Hogg said. Jenaro offered to host a Bible study in his home and suggested inviting his neighbors to attend. "I thought, 'Wow, God, that was fast! Thank you.'"

The new Bible study met at Jenaro's home for two months until one day Jenaro said: "We are going to start meeting in my mother's house. She is Catholic and has never allowed an evangelical into her home to teach the word of God."

Since March 13—the day Jenaro professed faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior—the Bible study has met in his mother's home. A meeting that began with eight people has grown to 40, including several children. And three people besides Jenaro have become Christians through the study.

"This is something only God can do," Hogg said.

Hogg began teaching basic studies on the life of Christ and the people whose lives were transformed when they encountered him. Next the missionary will teach on baptism and then hold a baptismal service. At that point, the group will form a church. Hogg said he hopes to train Jenaro as the leader, then leave the work next May with the church firmly established.

"This is a great call to prayer," Hogg said. "And, as always, this church is to start other churches. That is a truth I must plant into their hearts early and often."

# PEOPLE

## PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for these people and projects, which are part of Kentucky Baptists' partnerships with Baptists in New England, Poland and Tanzania:

■ **Urgent need:** Kentucky volunteers to lead vacation Bible schools in Poland July 6-19 and July 27-Aug. 8.

Call Kentucky Baptist Convention partnership office for information: (502) 244-6462 or (888) 254-5724.

■ Kentucky volunteers in Poland this month as they organize a prayer walk in the city of Rzeszow.

■ Three faculty members needed for the International Baptist Theological Seminary of East Africa in Kenya: an Old Testament professor, a librarian and an English teacher.

■ Students from Burundi who attend the International Baptist Theological Seminary of East Africa request prayer for the June peace negotiations in their country.

■ Tim Pittman, who moved from Mississippi in April to become pastor of South Wheelock Baptist Church and Sheffield Federated Church in Wheelock, Vt.

■ Haitian, Spanish, Greek and English-speaking Baptists in Quebec, Canada, who are part of the work of the Baptist Convention of New England.

## Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ **FRANKFORT**—Westview Church ordained **Alvin Adams** and **Raymond Schulker** into the deacon ministry. **Tom Hall** is pastor.

■ **GREENSBURG**—**Ty Clenney**, pastor of Greensburg Church since 1987, will retire June 20. A reception will be held June 13 at the church. Clenney will be available for interims, revivals or supply after June 27. He can be reached at (502) 932-4990 until June 27, (270) 618-4373 afterward.

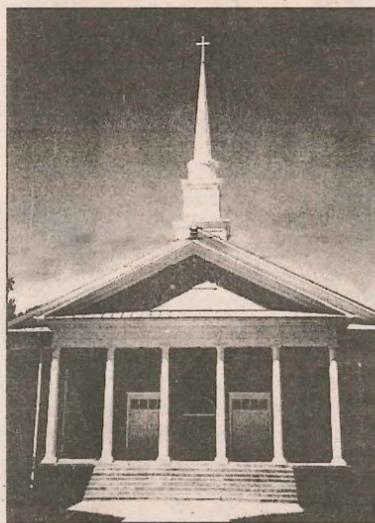
■ **INDEPENDENCE**—Hickory Grove Church sponsored "The Power Team" crusade recently. The team presented their message promoting academic excellence and clean living to more than 4,000 school children. In the evening services, 643 people made decisions. **Todd Toole** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Cloverleaf Church will host **Heavenbound** in concert June 4, 7:30 p.m. For information, call (502) 367-0218. **Geoffrey Lacefield** is pastor.

Rockford Lane Church will celebrate its 44th anniversary June 6 with an all-day singing and dinner on the grounds. For information, call (502) 447-2591. **Ron Abrams** is pastor.

■ **MT. WASHINGTON**—First Church will host the **Journeymen Quartet** in concert June 6, 6 p.m. **Travis Collins** is pastor.

■ **PRINCETON**—Donaldson Church recently held its annual spring revival with evangelist **Jeff Noffsinger**, from Greenville. Two professions of faith



**NEW WORSHIP CENTER** Oakland Baptist Church in Oakland will dedicate its new worship center June 6 at 1:30 p.m. The new facility will seat 610 people in the sanctuary and includes offices, classrooms and a fellowship hall. The project, which cost \$1.8 million, was aided by a successful "Challenge to Build" program, according to Pastor Tom Stokes. "We are rejoicing in what the Lord has done. I am thankful for the many who have worked hard to make this dream a reality," he said.

were made. **Alan McCutchen** is pastor.

■ **SHEPHERDSVILLE**—**Isaac McDonald** is interim pastor of Bardstown Junction Church.



**KENTUCKY AWARD WINNERS** Two students from Kentucky recently received special awards for academic excellence at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. ■ **Top:** Randal Morris, of Ekron, received the Ernest J. Loessner Scholarship as a student in the seminary's school of Christian education and leadership. ■ **Bottom:** Randall Tan was awarded the Broadman & Holman Outstanding Seminarian Award for scholarship, leadership and commitment to ministry.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**SEEKING:** Parents' Day Out teachers to work with preschoolers. Call Julia, (502) 452-9541, Buechel Park Baptist Church.

**SEEKING:** First Baptist Church of South Boston, Va., is seeking to fill a full-time position with primary responsibilities in youth ministry and additional emphasis in strengthening church families with children in the home. We are an innovative and inclusive fellowship averaging 240 in Sunday worship. FBC is affiliated with the Virginia Baptist Mission Board and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Resumes should be received no later than June 30. Please direct all correspondence to Vivian Anderson, c/o FBC, 815 N Main St., South Boston, VA 24592.

**SEEKING:** Data specialist—desktop publishing, including periodicals, and Web page maintenance, some secretarial responsibilities and light financial duties. Knowledge of MS Office necessary. Please forward resumé including salary requirements to: Human Resources, Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, PO Box 436569, Louisville, KY 40253-6569.

**FOR SALE:** New church storm windows, tinted for blocking out sunlight. Ten 49"x105" with bell tops, and four 41"x51-1/4". Will sell for half price: \$4,000. Lancaster Baptist Church, Lancaster, KY 40444. (606) 792-2781.

**SEEKING:** Pastor for Greensburg Baptist Church. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 105 Cardinal Drive, Greensburg, KY 42743.

**SEEKING:** Part-time music minister to coordinate music ministry, lead adult choir rehearsal, assist in worship leadership on Sunday mornings. Send inquiries or resumé to: Ms. Lorrie Alvey, Eminence Baptist Church, PO Box 134, Eminence, KY 40019-0134.

**SEEKING:** Rapidly growing Baptist church is seeking a full-time music minister who is experienced in leading choirs and congregational singing, and a full-time youth minister. Send resumé to: Mt. Elmira Baptist Church, 3644 Mt. Elmira Road, Shepherdsville, KY 40165, Attn: Pastor.

**SEEKING:** Full-time associate minister with primary responsibilities that include educational ministry, occasional pulpit supply and pastoral care ministry. Berea Baptist Church is a progressive congregation seeking a sensitive, compassionate minister with good communication skills. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Berea Baptist Church, 310 Chestnut St., Berea, KY 40403. E-mail: apike@mis.net.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for First Baptist Church, Junction City, Ky. Send resumé c/o Pete Kendrick, 175 Robin Drive, Stanford, KY 40484.

**SEEKING:** Calvary Baptist Church, Idaho Falls, Idaho, is seeking a full-time minister of music and youth—a mission-minded person for established work in a new-work area. Seminary preferred. Send resumé to: Calvary Baptist Church, 785 First St., Idaho Falls, ID 83401, or calvary@srv.net.

**SEEKING:** Northside Baptist Church is seeking a full-time associate pastor of youth and family ministries—seminary graduate with experience preferred. Primary responsibilities include providing leadership and assisting church organizations in planning, conducting and evaluating educational programs with an emphasis on youth and their families, as well as providing leadership in administrative and pastoral duties as the church and pastor may require. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Northside Baptist Church, 7600 Studley Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23116, or fax to (804) 746-7287.

**SEEKING:** Part-time church secretary. Send resumé Gethsemane Baptist Church, 10400 Blue Lick Road, Louisville, KY 40229, Attn: Personnel.

**SEEKING:** Administrative assistant. Excellent phone, computer and organizational skills, plus strong work ethic required. Experience with financial planning, investments, insurance helpful. Send resumé: Dan Hardt, Kentucky Financial Group, 6100 Dutchman's Lane, 8th floor, Louisville, KY 40205.

**SEEKING:** First Baptist Church of Walton is seeking applicants for the position of full-time pastor. Send resumé and current photo to: Search Committee, 47 South Main St., Walton, KY 41094.

**SEEKING:** Full-time director for child care center. Send resumé to: Burlington Baptist Church, PO Box 48, Burlington, KY 41005, Attn: Anetha Kjing.

**SEEKING:** Bivocational pastor for 100-plus-member north Hardin County Baptist church. Call (502) 234-9311.

**SERVICES:** Need training, seminar, retreat—parent-teen relationship, family meditation, leadership for men, conflict resolution, couples relationship? Call (502) 351-8855.

**SEEKING:** Minister of activities for church with Christian life center. Experience and/or seminary degree in recreation preferred. Send resumé to: Minister of Activities Search Committee, Campbellsville Baptist Church, PO Box 530, Campbellsville, KY 42719-0530; (270) 789-2092.

**SERVICE:** Bob's Pressure Washing and deck restoration—uses Thompson's Water Seal. (502) 448-6990.

**SEEKING:** Youth minister. Growing church. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, Idlewild & Hanson Street, Easton, MD 21601.

**FOR RENT:** 2-bedroom, 2-bath condo available for vacation rental, Sanibel Island, Fla. Large pool, tennis courts, bikes, canoe, kayak, screened porch, lovely secluded beach. Weekly rates May through mid-December: \$630. Call Pat Owen, (502) 895-8752 (home), or (502) 897-5079 (office).

**SEEKING:** High Point Baptist Church of Mayfield, Ky., is accepting resumé for a part-time minister of youth. Interested applicants should send resumé to: Minister of Youth Search Committee, High Point Baptist Church, 220 West Farthing St., Mayfield, KY 42066.

# MUSIC/BOOKS

## Like Caedmon, band trying to respond to God's call

By Cecile Holmes  
Religion News Service

HOUSTON (RNS)—The newest album from Caedmon's Call, a folk-rock band with Christian roots, displays a musical vision as wide as an open prairie.

Employing lyrics rich in meaning and veiled metaphor, the youthful group from Houston goes even deeper into spirituality and searching with its new album, "40 Acres." The music reflects that, resonating with deeper rhythms and more harmonic punch.

"I feel that the production and the songs themselves reflect our growth over the last few years," said 22-year-old singer Danielle Young.

Earlier albums stressed the group's openness. This one's lyrics reflect the certainty of people who see God moving in their lives, as in the song, "There You Go":

*There you go working good from my bad,*

*There you go making robes from my rags,*

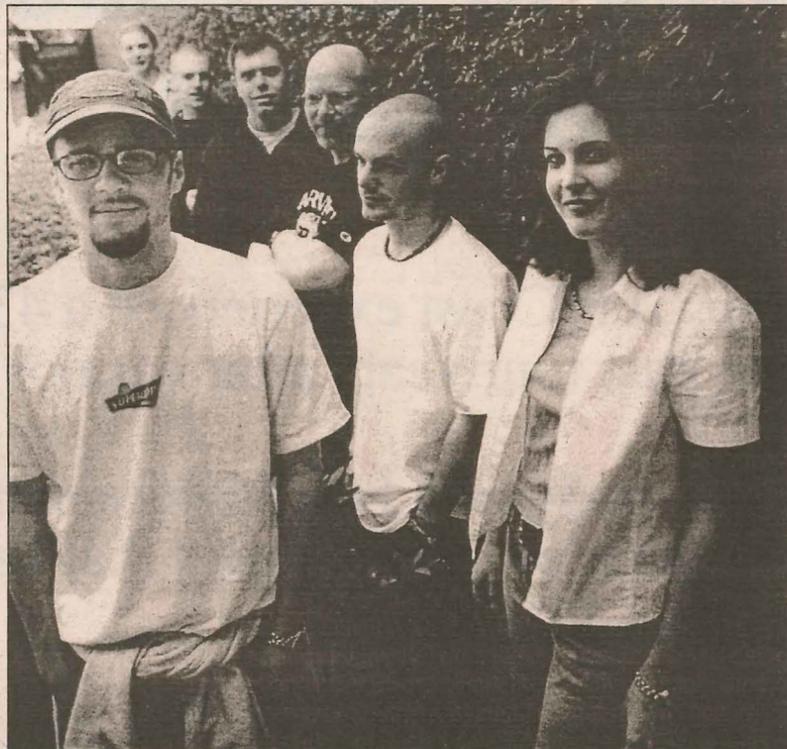
*There you go melting crowns from my calves,*

*There you go working food of all I have,*

*Till all I have's not that bad.*

Like Caedmon, the poetic character in the Old English poem Caedmon's Hymn and the inspiration for their name, the seven-member band wants to respond to God's call. Their music is their answer.

The new CD, "40 Acres," which hit stores in mid-April, is being marketed in both Christian and mainstream stores. Its title is a play on words, said 26-year-old songwriter Aaron Tate. After the Civil War, some freed slaves were allotted 40 acres and



**CAEDMON'S CALL** Band members say their latest album "40 Acres" is titled after the phrase, "40 acres and a mule," the allotment for freed slaves after the Civil War. The title is meant to refer to the new start God gives to new Christians. (RNS photo)

a mule to help them start a new life.

So the group took the words for their album, believing God gives each person what is needed to create new life, to find redemption.

Band members are hopeful this release will top their 1997 achievement with the self-titled Caedmon's Call, their major label CD debut. It sold more than 250,000 copies.

Asked about their music, band members and songwriters Tate and Derek Webb talk about seeking new insights and stretching spiritually in

writing the songs for the new CD. Other band members speak of a heartfelt intuition that God is calling them to make this music.

Hence, their name. According to legend, there once was a man named Caedmon who had no talent for singing. He ran when he had to sing, until he heard God telling him he must. Caedmon tried to refuse, but God insisted. So Caedmon opened his mouth and sang verses he had never before heard.

Singers and songwriters followed

Caedmon, but none could match his songs because they came through God's grace.

Drummer Todd Bragg, 27, sees themes of redemption running throughout many of their songs. "God is a very big God, and his redemption is very big," he said.

The band members met in high school. They played part-time until 1996, when they quit their day jobs to pursue music full time. Cliff and Danielle Young married in 1997. The band's manager, Michael Ottosen, is the couple's brother-in-law. Road manager Christie Bragg is Todd's wife.

Caedmon's Call tours year-round. Most of their 45 performances during the first four months of this year were on college campuses, including Harvard, Mississippi State University, Baylor University and Ohio State.

Being on the road can be tiresome, Webb said. But growing success has expanded his willingness to go with the flow.

"I've learned never to make plans," he said. "Occasionally I think that I can see what's around the bend and begin trying to get ready, but as sure as I do, I end up somewhere altogether different. In light of that, I suppose what's become important to me in the last few years is trying to be satisfied with whatever I'm currently doing."

Cliff Young, son of Ed Young, pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church, said the group's commercial success has helped him redefine contentment, as have changes in his personal life.

"I have learned that contentment in life is not based on how successful you are at what you do," he said. "Being content is not contingent on one's career path."

### Broadman books are Gold Medallion finalists

NASHVILLE (BP)—Four books published by Broadman & Holman Publishers of LifeWay Christian Resources are finalists in the 1999 Gold Medallion Awards Competition sponsored by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.

Three books are nominees in the devotional category. They are:

■ "Until He Comes: Daily Inspiration for Those Who Await the Savior" by Calvin Miller.

■ "Every Day Light: Water for the Soul" by Selwyn Hughes.

■ "The One Minute Bible: Men of Character" by Lawrence Kimbrough.

■ "What Would Jesus Do Today?" by Brian Shipman is a finalist in the youth category.

The winners in the annual competition will be announced July 10 during the association's convention in Orlando, Fla.

## 'Mitford' series author: Baptists might see themselves in Father Tim character

By Mark Wingfield  
Texas Baptist Standard

DALLAS (ABP)—If Baptist readers of the "Mitford" novels identify with Father Tim, an Episcopal priest and the series' central character, it may be because author Jan Karon has an affinity for Baptists.

A devout Episcopalian, Karon says she has a deep appreciation for Baptists' commitment to the Bible and faith-filled living.

After all, those are core attributes of characters in her five best-selling novels: "At Home in Mitford," "A Light in the Window," "These High, Green Hills," "Out to Canaan" and "A New Song."

Father Tim frequently quotes Scripture, both in the pulpit and out. (His dog, Barnabas, stops dead in his tracks when his master recites the Good Book.) And by words and deeds in the fictional village of Mitford, Father Tim frequently points people to Christ as their hope for redemption.

"If I have a theme in these books, it is one of redemption," Karon said.

Some might see this as a handicap in a publishing world dominated by murder mysteries, seamy romances and tell-all

biographies. But Karon has turned it into an advantage.

The faith-driven content of the Mitford series "has been received with thunderous applause," she said.

"People were starving to death to have that part of their being represented in fiction," she said.

While the first four Mitford books together sold 3.5 million copies and spent weeks on the New York Times bestsellers list, the fifth volume, released April 15, may be on track to do even better. In its first eight days, "A New Song" sold a half-million copies.

That's an amazing success for any novel but particularly for a series built around Christian values and characters.

The Mitford books are not considered "Christian fiction," a category that has been gaining in popularity. Yet devout readers readily identify with the characters in the novels who deal openly with questions of faith and commitment, service and duty, love and friendship.

Karon said that at age 6 she wanted to be a preacher and at 10 she wanted to be a writer. "Now I'm a writer writing about a preacher," she said, drawing her childhood

goals full circle.

Karon approaches her writing with the zeal of an evangelist. In "A New Song" she in effect turns preacher, penning words to a sermon by Father Tim. The topic of that sermon is the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

During a stop in Texas, Karon read that sermon as part of her speech to the Dallas Women's Club. She received a standing ovation.

"I want to talk about the Lord to as many people as possible," she said after the speech. "That's why I try to go to the big crowds."

She said her Christian faith is an integral part of her personal mission as an author. "I cannot and will not write without lifting up the Savior." If she were unable to express her spirituality in her writing, she asked, "Why bother?"

Of course, it's easier when your protagonist is a minister. But a minister is also the perfect character through which to view life in a small town, Karon said. "He gets to see everything, and we get to see everything, get to know everything."

Karon credits God for giving her the inspiration for the character. "I did not

choose Father Tim; Father Tim sort of chose me. God moved me in that direction."

Father Tim emerged from a twist in the plot line of Karon's own life. A advertising executive in San Francisco and New York City, she did not become a Christian until she was 42 years old.

"Father Tim's ministry is a ministry of grace, a very New Testament ministry," she said. "He allows people to be themselves. He never pushes himself or Jesus Christ on anybody. He is a man who simply loves his people into the kingdom of God."

In each book, Karon works in the plan of salvation and what Baptists call the "sinner's prayer," a commitment of one's life to God through faith in Jesus.

For readers who already are believers, the Mitford books provide a healthy dose of encouragement, Karon said. "People who know Jesus want to hear other people talk about it."

She said that's one reason her books have developed such a loyal following among people ages 10 to 90, both male and female. "There is no demographic" to the readership, she said, other than "they're the nicest people in the world."

# If Gambling is Expanded, Kentucky Loses!

**Crime:** The Mississippi Gulf Coast experienced a 43 percent increase in crime in the past four years after casinos arrived.

**Preying on the Poor:** A study of 1,800 Minnesotans in state-run gambling treatment programs found that half had yearly incomes of less than \$20,000.

**Economy:** A recent study in South Carolina found that while that state gets \$60 million from video gambling, compulsive gambling and other problems cost the state \$171 million.

**Now's the time to draw the line and say,  
"No more gambling Kentucky." Here's how:**

**Contact your legislator:**

Sen. \_\_\_\_\_  
Legislative Offices,  
Capitol Annex  
Frankfort, KY 40601

Rep. \_\_\_\_\_  
Legislative Offices,  
Capitol Annex  
Frankfort, KY 40601

or call (800) 372-7181

**Contact Gov. Paul Patton**

Gov. Paul E. Patton  
Capital Building  
Frankfort, KY 40601

or call (502) 564-2611

Temperance League of Kentucky  
2722 Crittenden Drive  
Louisville, KY 40209  
Executive Director Claude Witt