

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

WESTERN RECORDER

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FOR THE RECORD

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Study: Society's attention toward religion declining

By Elaine Fletcher
Religion News Service

JERUSALEM (RNS)—Islam will become a major force on the American religious scene, presenting new challenges to Christian and Jewish institutions that traditionally have dominated society, according to a study on the impact of religion in America.

Overall, however, the influence of traditional religious institutions is declining as Americans increasingly perceive religion as a personal quest rather than a binding social force, said the report commissioned by the New York-based Inter-religious Information Center.

The center released its report earlier this month in Jerusalem during a conference on religion and the media.

"This presents a foremost challenge to clergy, who are still talking in archaic biblical terminology and have not learned how to adapt to modern ways of communications," said Gunther Lawrence, executive director of the center.

"Clergy must begin meeting their congregants not only in churches and church schools but in social functions and in museums—in places where people really congregate today," he said. "The Internet is adding another dimension. Still, religion is something that deals with the human heart, and when you deal with the human heart you need a one-to-one relationship."

Lawrence led the five-day conference on religion and the media in the new millennium.

The recent study, authored by Kenneth Briggs, a former New York Times religion writer and now adjunct professor at Lafayette College in Easton, Pa., asked journalists around the nation to interview 16 leading religious thinkers, as well as grassroots believers, about what they saw as emerging trends in religion.

Briggs found wide agreement among the scholars about the rising influence of religions that have a more recent history in the United States than Christianity and Judaism. Although Christians remain in the majority in the American population, non-Christian immigrants from Asian and Middle Eastern countries are challenging this hegemony as they introduce Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and other traditions into the mainstream.

"No longer do large contin-
□ See Islam growing ..., page 7

Church starts try to win back lost ground

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

LOUISVILLE—With 2,400 Kentucky Baptist churches—seemingly one on every corner—one might question why Alan Witham was hired to help start more.

In fact, Kentucky's ratio of Southern Baptist congregations per resident is nearly 3.5 times higher than the national average.

But Witham, armed with a stack of statistics and a corps of church starters, insists a closer look at Kentucky yields a much different picture.

"Not only are we not keeping up with the population growth, we're declining," said Witham, the new church planting strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention. "We're the most plateaued and declining of the old-line (traditionally Baptist) states."

For example, resident membership decreased from 556,000 in 1990 to slightly more than 523,000 by 1997. While there was an average of 6.6 people for every Kentucky Baptist in that earlier year, seven years later the ratio had risen to 7.5.

To counter this trend, the Kentucky Baptist Convention is joining a growing national denominational emphasis on church planting. Last year the Southern Baptist Convention started a record 1,747 new churches, an increase of 258 compared to 1998. The goal for this year is 2,000 new congregations.

The growth of interest in church starts also is reflected by the number of academic centers devoted to church planting. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary opened its center in the

fall of 1998. Today there are at least 13 in various denominations throughout the United States and Canada.

"There are church planting movements all over the world and they are picking up in the U.S.," said Richard Harris, vice president of the church planting group for the SBC's North American Mission Board.

The growth isn't just among Southern Baptists, Harris added. "They are present in most evangelical denominations. Even Catholics and Episcopalians are starting to emphasize church planting."

"New church starts are historically and statistically more effective at reaching the lost," said Ed Stetzer, director of Southern Seminary's church planting center.

An assistant professor of church planting, Stetzer said he has encountered a much greater positive response on campus than he expected.



Why plant churches?

There already are 64 full- and part-time interns working through the center's Nehemiah Project for church starting. They are in the midst of a five-year plan that has set a goal of starting 200 new churches in Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Nor is the interest restricted to seminarians. NAMB continues to launch "contextual leadership centers" across the country aimed at training laypeople for church planting and ministry. It plans to start another 35 during 2000, boosting the total to 145.

While the popular image for church starts is one of casual dress, contemporary music and a direct preaching style, Harris said that isn't necessarily the case. He estimates half of new churches use a blend of hymns and praise choruses, and a mix of other contemporary and traditional practices.

Nor are they all suburban, middle class enclaves. Last year just 40 percent of Southern Baptist church starts were primarily Anglo. The rest were in various ethnic or African-American communities.

"We have everything from cowboy churches to bikers to bluegrass to contemporary to traditional," Harris said. "There's so many models it's hard to say" which is dominant.

Nationally, Southern Baptists are trying to reverse the same trends Witham cites in Kentucky. In 1900 there were 27 Southern Baptist churches for every 10,000 people in America. By 1996 that figure had decreased to 11.

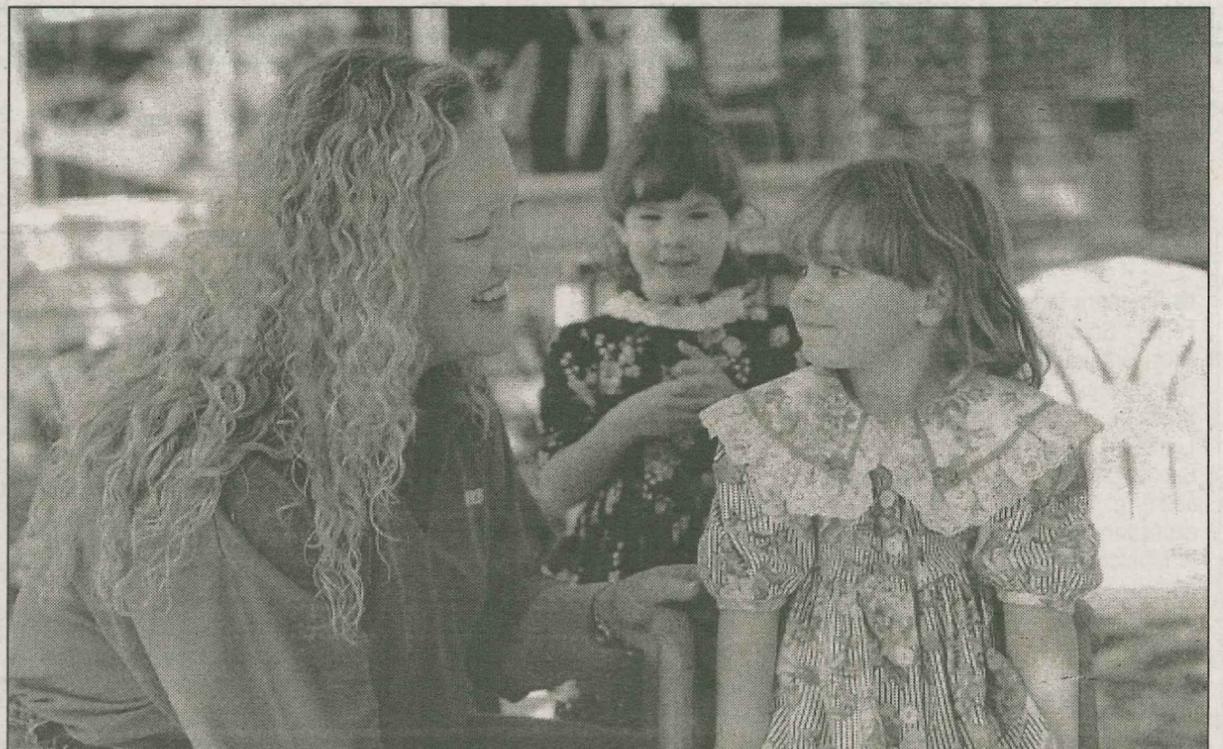
Nationally, if the convention reaches its goal of 50,000 congregations by December, there will be one Southern Baptist church for every 5,700 Americans. NAMB has a goal to reduce that ratio to one Southern Baptist church per 3,226 people by 2020.

In Kentucky there is one Baptist congregation for every 1,633 residents, but Witham said Kentucky Baptists still have cause for concern. Last year 29 churches were started, a drop from 61 starts in 1998.

Witham, who joined the KBC staff in January, said he doesn't know why the figures were down. But he already is working with 23 people, plus 13 interns, in various stages of congregational development, to reverse the numbers.

"This is definitely a growing area of interest," he said. "I sense God is raising up a number of church planters throughout the state."

■ More stories on pages 8-10.



MISSIONARY Sheila Mitchell, director of DaySpring Villa, a Baptist women's shelter in Sand Springs, Okla., stops to talk with two sisters. Mitchell's work is among the ministries profiled as part of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. This year's national goal is \$47 million. **Story on page 11.** (NAMB photo by Kent Harville)

Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, March 22

SBC messengers offered options for Disney-free vacations

"We're not going to do Disney. We felt like some alternative was appropriate."

Jack Wilkerson, SBC convention manager

ORLANDO, Fla.—Planning to attend this year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Orlando? Also planning to honor the SBC's Disney boycott?

Finding other acceptable family theme parks may be more challenging than it appears. The SBC's Web site (www.sbc.net) has a link to The Orlando Experience, which bills itself as an information site for "family-friendly vacations."

The Orlando Experience's Web site touts an assortment of theme park-related vacation packages for messengers and their families who will be attending the SBC annual meeting in Orlando. The agency's primary clients are Christian schools, church groups, choirs and orchestras and organized youth groups.

Noticeably absent from the lists of promoted central Florida attractions are the Walt Disney theme parks. And that is no oversight, said Doni Keene, a spokesman for The Orlando Experience. "It's a matter of supply and demand," he said. "The market we serve primarily expresses interest in attractions such as Universal Studios.

"Our market niche is the Christian community," Keene added. "We have tailored our offerings to coincide with the requests we receive and they center on Universal and Sea World."

Ironically, however, Sea World is owned by Anheuser-Busch and Universal's parent company produces a

number of R-rated movies each year.

SBC convention manager Jack Wilkerson said some concerns have been voiced about such connections but added there also is a positive side to supporting such parks. He said Sea World and Universal officials have been very open to Christian groups reserving space to present evangelistic programs in their parks.

Wilkerson, the SBC Executive Committee's vice president for business and finance, said the primary goal is to provide Baptist families enjoyable vacation options.

"We're not going to do Disney," he emphasized. "We felt like some alternative was appropriate. The only other alternative was to do absolutely nothing."

Keene said his firm's discounted ticket prices reflect the fact that places like Universal Studios have an interest in attracting Southern Baptists, noting that up to a 40 percent discount on some ticket packages is available to Universal Studios and the adjacent Islands of Adventure.

Wilkerson said the SBC has no formal connection. "We've just making a hyperlink to their (Web) site available," he noted. "There's no relationship other than seeking to provide vacation information."

Messengers to the 1997 SBC meeting in New Orleans adopted a resolution that drew national attention. It

noted, in part, that The Disney Co. was "increasingly promoting immoral ideologies." The resolution also urged Southern Baptists to exercise moral stewardship by refraining from patronizing Disney enterprises such as its theme parks and theme stores in malls.

Since that day many have debated the impact of the resolution. Supporters of the action, who were joined by Focus on the Family, the Assemblies of God and other religious groups, point to continued depressed sales of Disney-themed consumer products and home videos in the company's most recent fiscal quarter as evidence that the boycott is having an effect on the company. Yet in the same period Disney theme parks and resorts reported healthy operating profits.

Trustees of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission anticipated the concern some Southern Baptist families might face in traveling to Disney's backyard and passed a resolution last September urging "messengers to support our convention's boycott of the Disney corporation's theme parks."

Acknowledging the 2000 convention site might tempt some convention-goers and their families to make the short drive down the interstate to Disney attractions, the trustees' resolution noted that the 1997 SBC resolution on Disney had not been rescinded.

It was "Gay Days" and Disney's decision to extend domestic partner benefits to its homosexual employees that first triggered concerns over the direction The Disney Co. was heading.

Coincidentally, the annual Gay Days event, held at Orlando World and other venues in the Orlando area in early June for the past 10 years, will have just concluded when Southern Baptists arrive in central Florida. "Gay Days 2000," scheduled for May 30-June 8, will attract more than 100,000 visitors in what its Web site calls "a total LesBiGay vacation experience."

Members of the SBC Executive Committee declined to take action last year on three motions referred from the 1998 SBC annual meeting to move this year's convention to another city.

The Executive Committee said it believes messengers visiting Orlando will "meet the challenge presented by worldliness that the Southern Baptist Convention has met in other convention cities," including Las Vegas in 1989 and several meetings in New Orleans.

Last year's Executive Committee action also cited antipathy that "the faithfulness of Southern Baptists to Crossover Orlando (evangelism projects) and the refusal to patronize the Disney organization will be a profound testimony for the cause of Christ to Orlando, Florida and the nation."

With reporting by Editor Trennis Henderson and Baptist Press

Patterson urges teen participation in SBC annual meeting in Orlando

Issuing a call for Southern Baptist teens to become more involved in the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, SBC President Paige Patterson has written an open letter encouraging their participation.

Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., suggested that each Southern Baptist church "consider the possibility of electing one interested, spiritually minded teenager as a messenger to this year's convention in an effort to begin the passing of the torch to a younger generation." The 2000 SBC annual meeting will be held June 13-14 in Orlando, Fla.

Patterson said he also is "asking God that the number of churches represented at the convention through their mes-

sengers this year might actually double over last year's participation."

SBC messenger enrollment has dipped significantly in recent years. During the past three years, annual enrollment has averaged fewer than 11,000 messengers. By contrast, more than 20,000 messengers attended the 1994 annual meeting in Orlando. Attendance peaked in Dallas in 1985 with 45,519 registered messengers.

Patterson said this year's convention theme, "Partners in the Worldwide Harvest," will offer participants "the greatest insight into what is happening in the international mission scene that has ever been provided to audiences on this side of the great oceanic divides."

More information about the annual meeting is available at www.sbc.net.



BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **Southern to host preaching seminar.** Former Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines will headline a one-day preaching seminar March 27 at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Vines, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., is the author of "Power in the Pulpit," a book on expository preaching. Seminary President Al Mohler will present the opening lecture on "The Priority of Preaching in a Post-Christian Age." For information, call (502) 897-4011.

■ **Southeastern breaks ground.** Leaders of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

in Wake Forest, N.C., broke ground March 14 for a global evangelism training center. Completion of the 21,200-square-foot facility is scheduled for March 2001. The seminary's Center for Great Commission Studies will be housed in the facility along with a 115-seat auditorium, church planting programs and faculty offices.

■ **Fellowship giving increases.** Midyear giving totals to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship are up 13 percent this year, boosted by designated gifts for refugee relief. Gifts to the Fellowship's general budget were up 10 percent through the first six months of the fiscal year, said

Gary Skeen, coordinator for finance and administration. CBF ministries received \$4.04 million between July and December of 1999, compared to \$3.61 million for the same period in 1998. The largest increase came in designated gifts, which grew 43 percent from \$792,946 to more than \$1.14 million. The increase is primarily because of money earmarked for Kosovo refugee relief ministries in Albania, Skeen said.

■ **Midwestern senior professor dies.** Lavell Seats, senior missions professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., died March 16 at age 84. Seats, a former missionary to Nigeria,

taught missions at Midwestern since the seminary's founding in 1958. He served as dean of students and registrar from 1958 to 1983. He also had been pastor of churches in Kentucky and Missouri.

■ **HomeLife editor resigns.** Jon Walker, editor of HomeLife magazine since 1996, has resigned effective immediately. Noting that "I'm not sure yet what God has in mind," Walker said he plans to pursue other interests. HomeLife is a monthly family magazine produced by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. The magazine, founded in 1947, has a national circulation of 460,000.

Alcohol foes gain victories in two House votes

FRANKFORT—The defeat of one alcohol-related bill and House approval of another one spelled good news for alcohol opponents last week. Abortion opponents were unsuccessful in a key measure they were supporting.

House Bill 912, introduced by Rep. Jodie Haydon (D-Dist. 50), sought to weaken restrictions on local option elections for liquor-by-the-drink sales. The measure quickly was pushed through the House of Representatives committee process, but was halted on the House floor.

After amending the bill to include liquor sales at hotels and motels as well as restaurants, legislators defeated the bill March 14 on a 42-42 tie vote.

Claude Witt, executive director of the Temperance League of Kentucky, warned that the proposal could have impacted up to 90 counties throughout the state. He and the Kentucky Baptist Public Affairs Committee urged defeat of the measure.

Haydon and other supporters of the bill indicated they will continue to seek ways to revive the plan.

In a second alcohol-related issue, House members approved a bill March 16 that would lower the legal blood-alcohol content for drivers from 0.10 to 0.08.

Witt targeted that issue at the beginning of the session as a major piece of legislation to pursue. He noted that the stricter guideline also is gaining support on the national level.

The bill (HB 366) is sponsored by Rep. Rob Wilkey (D-Dist. 22). It passed the House 91-5 and was forwarded to the Senate with just over a week left in the 2000 session to consider new legislation. The Senate failed to pass a bill in 1998 with a similar provision.

Other aspects of the bill in its current form include outlawing open containers of alcohol in a vehicle and confiscating the license plates of second-time DUI offenders.

In other action, House leaders apparently have derailed a piece of legislation supported by abortion opponents.

House Bill 378, sponsored by Rep. Joseph Fischer (R-Dist. 68), would define an unborn child as a person and allow parents to sue for wrongful death if someone's actions led to the unborn infant's death.

Although the bill does not address abortion or an expectant mother's actions, critics of the bill claimed the measure's goal was to undermine abortion rights.

House leaders declined to allow a floor vote on the bill. Instead, they assigned it to a second committee, leaving insufficient time for the bill to gain consideration in both legislative chambers before the session ends.

Kentuckians among top Acteen leaders

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—Two teenagers from Murray and Franklin have been selected by Woman's Missionary Union for this year's National Acteens Panel and Top Teens, respectively.

Amy Travis joins five other Acteens nationwide for the National Acteens Panel. Travis, a member of First Baptist Church of Murray, is a senior at Calloway County High School.

Travis, 17, was a member of the Kentucky Acteens Panel in 1998 and was a Top Teen last year.

In her essay to the selection committee, Travis said her most meaningful Acteen activity was being a member of a 1995 witnessing team at a pre-Olympic soccer event in Birmingham, Ala.

"It was often difficult to talk to strangers, but I know that God wanted me to be brave and to try to lead others to Him. It was often discouraging because some people were unwilling to listen or were in a hurry," she wrote. "Witnessing became easier with practice and taught me that it wasn't hard to share my faith when I felt so strongly about it."

As a panelist, Travis will serve as a page at the national WMU annual meeting June 11-12 in Orlando, as well as the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Orlando June 13-14.

Kentucky Acteens supervisor LaRaine Dail said selection committees for the panel and Top Teens look for significant involvement in Acteens, church and school. "They have to go all out," Dail said.

Additionally, selection for panelists and Top Teens is based on written testimonies and recommendations by a



ACTEENS State Acteen panel members are (from left) Lauren Gover, Sarah Harris, Suzie Ledford, Amber McDuffee, Melissa Miliken and Shannon Riggs.

candidate's pastor and Acteens leader.

Melissa Milliken is among the 20 teenage girls named as national Acteen Top Teens.

Miliken, 17, is a member of Middleton Baptist Church and a senior at Logan County High School. She has participated in several missions activities, including trips to LaGrange, Pikeville and Nashville.

"Acteens has allowed me to participate in mission projects around my community and see how God and I make a great team working together for His will," she said. "If I had not had Acteens as a part of my life, then I would probably still have to

say that I have never been on a mission trip."

Panelists will be featured in the May/June 2000 issue of Accent magazine, the magazine produced for Acteens by WMU. Top Teens will appear in the

July/August issue of Accent, and teens from both groups will write for the magazine throughout the year.

Miliken also is a member of the 1999-2000 Kentucky Acteens advisory panel. That panel is responsible for helping plan the state Acteens conference, scheduled for April 7-8 at Cumberland College in Williamsburg.

Also on that panel are:
■ Lauren Gover, a member of First Baptist Church of Somerset and a student at Somerset High School.

■ Sarah Harris, a member of Fairview Baptist Church in Ashland and a student at Fairview High School.

■ Suzie Ledford, a member of First Baptist Church of Somerset and a student at Somerset High School.

■ Amber McDuffee, a member of Bellview Baptist Church in Paducah and a student at Lone Oak High School.

■ Shannon Riggs, a member of Rough River Baptist Church in Hardinsburg and a student at Breckenridge County High School.



Travis

Lexington pastor: Church in accord after walkout

By David Winfrey
News Director

LEXINGTON—The pastor of Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Lexington said he is wholly reconciled with a deacon who led about 200 members out of a Sunday worship service recently.

According to a Lexington Herald-Leader article, Deacon Lewis Marcum took the podium Feb. 27, told the congregation that Pastor Russell Howard was preaching heresy and asked deacons who agreed with him to come forward.

About 10 of the church's 35 deacons rose and left with their supporters, about one-fifth of those attending.

In an interview with the Western Recorder, Howard said disagreements arose due to "a collision of two viewpoints that were not being sufficiently dialogued about."

Disagreements arose concerning the conservative church's traditional Landmark theology, including issues of church history, communion and baptism.

Regarding church history, Howard said he recently had spoken about the beginning of Baptist history in the early 1600s.

"Mr. Marcum and others are very passionate about the perpetual history of faithful churches from the time of Christ forward. What we needed to see is that those two viewpoints do not con-

flict with one another. They abut," Howard said.

"One speaks predominantly to our history from the end of the New Testament era until the emergence of the modern movement that labeled itself Baptist arising in the early 1600s," he said. "The other point of view speaks to the fulfillment of Matthew 16:18 in a perpetually existing body of people adhering to New Testament faith throughout even the darkest of the Dark Ages."

Regarding the Lord's Supper, Ashland Avenue traditionally has held "closed communion," limiting participation to members of that church. Howard said the practice is rooted in a desire to have "an appropriately disciplined and defined fellowship at the Lord's table, and that zeal really is commendable."

But Howard advocates "close communion," permitting participation by visitors of similar faith. For support he cites Acts 20, which he said shows Paul and traveling companions worshipping and taking communion at the church at Troas.

Regarding baptism, Ashland Avenue previously has rebaptized anyone who came from non-Baptist churches. Howard said that should be considered on an individual basis.

Howard said he and Lewis were on the platform the next Sunday after the walkout to sign an accord on the nature and history of the church.

"In fact, we had people join our church that morning. Baptist church spats can certainly go other ways," he said. "There are still discussions to be had and things to be ironed out, but generally speaking I think we've bumped over that."

"I feel pretty good about it," Marcum told the Herald-Leader. "It will take time for the wounds to heal, but we have come to an agreement where we didn't agree. Hopefully we can get back on track."

Howard also has met with 11 laymen to develop a second resolution on baptism and communion. "They tore into it and made some great changes and made some other changes that I would not have made, but I called them together to help me with consensus, not to mirror image my viewpoint."

Howard said the issue has reminded him to respect viewpoints with which he disagrees and to remember the metaphor likening pastoral leadership to the role of a shepherd.

"I've also learned that the Spirit of God and the Word of God will do a profound work among the people of God," he added.

"Just teach the Word and let the Spirit of God do what He does," he said. Too often church conflicts can become fights among egos, he said. "When a church forgets who the real enemy is and turns to bite and devour itself, the real enemy cackles."

BLUEGRASS BURGOO

■ Senior adult conferences will be held in five areas throughout Kentucky this spring.

Sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention, the events will feature Louisville magician David Garrard and KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey. Locations are:

■ April 25 at Bellevue Baptist Church in Owensboro.

■ April 27 at First Baptist Church of Hopkinsville.

■ May 11 at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington.

■ May 16 at First Baptist Church of Whitesburg.

■ May 18 at Campbellsville University.

Preregistration two weeks before each conference costs \$7 per person. Registration at the door or after the deadlines will cost \$10. Lunch will be provided. For more information, call (502) 254-4719 in Louisville or toll-free (888) 254-5704.

■ Randy Sprinkle, a prayer strategist with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, will be the featured speaker for MissionsFest, March 25, at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College. The conference also will include information from more than 23 missions opportunities and conferences on topics ranging from urban missions and deaf ministry to Kentucky Baptists' partnership with Tanzania and Poland. For information, call (606) 337-3196.

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

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God created in our image?

By William Perkins

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)—A reasonable person might think that the phenomenal success of family-friendly network television shows and movies such as "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" "Touched By an Angel," "Babe" and "Toy Story" would be a sign to the American entertainment industry that the people of this country are hungry for entertainment that doesn't insult their values and ridicule their morals.

In an industry that lives and dies by overnight ratings and box office sales, it would seem someone might notice the figures family-friendly shows are rolling up day after day and realize people are more interested in such fare than in the cultural sewage that passes for sophisticated entertainment today.

Is anyone listening in Hollywood? Not at NBC, apparently.

Recently, NBC began to broadcast the weekly series "God, the Devil and Bob," a dreadful piece of adolescent cartooning that depicts God as a hip, foul-mouthed beer drinker who commiserates with his buddy and apparent co-equal, Satan.

Chums God and the devil make a friendly wager to pin humanity's survival on an aimless Detroit autoworker named Bob Alman.

The pilot episode has something to offend just about everyone in the mainstream of American life—a coarse and vulgar father, a lying teenage daughter, a disaffected young son, and a wife/mother who is shown reading a book titled, "Why We Don't

COMMENTARY

Kill Our Children."

Believers in God are equated with UFO enthusiasts. A cigar-chomping evangelist schemes to make money off Bob's revelation from God while receiving a sensuous massage from a buxom young woman in his luxurious office.

Here's a sample of the humor: God calls Bob at home but Bob refuses to pick up the telephone. The answering machine comes on with the familiar beep to leave a message and God says, "Bob, don't screen your Maker!"

Here's a sample of the serious side of the show: At one point Bob rails at God, "You call yourself a loving Father? You're more like a deadbeat dad!"

Here's a sample of the show's theology: When Bob frets over the direction his children are taking, God says,

Nourish preaching

Fred Craddock, who came late to the fray as a mentor for me, was fond of saying that "preaching should be nourished with Scripture."

Contrary to a current idea that the typical church-goer is not interested in the Bible, and that the biblical text is of little interest to her or him, however, it is apparent that in growing churches the use of Scripture to document propositions set forth in sermons is of primary importance. Now, more than ever before, the person in the pew seems eager to know what the Bible itself has to say about it.

Proof-text preaching is pejorative in the opinion of some, and by others

has been even scandalized with some justification, perhaps. Sometimes, if used at all, passages are uprooted from the context, and made to say something foreign to the text.

However, a strong case can be made for a correct exegesis of Scripture to authenticate and substantiate the opinions of the preacher. Spiritual authority is borrowed; is not an inseparable quality

"I made a deal with Lucifer a long time ago. I get them until they're 12 and he gets them until they're 20."

That's a lot of sacrilege packed into 30 minutes. The pilot episode was so bad that a number of NBC network affiliates around the country refused to air it.

One of the great dangers of shows like "God, the Devil and Bob" is the compulsion too many of us apparently feel to create God in our image, instead of the other way around.

Is God a glib dude in cool sunglasses who hangs out in the neighborhood bar and drinks only light beer, or is He the great I Am who sits on a heavenly throne of light encircled by an emerald rainbow (Revelation 4)?

Are God and Satan long-time pals, or are they at continual war with each other for the souls of men (1 Peter 5:8)?

Christians have ready answers to such deep mysteries, and it's time we began sharing those answers with a lost world.

Can Hollywood be turned around to the truth? Can America be turned around with the truth? It will be a daunting task, but remember that all things are possible through the true God we serve—and He's not the television version. Let's get busy!

William Perkins is editor of the Mississippi Baptist Record

intrinsic to the preacher by virtue of a seminary degree, but always resides

outside the preacher in Scripture energized by the Holy Spirit. In this sense, then, it is possible for Scripture to become "the sword of the Spirit."

As one in the pew who enjoys sharing in the "divine encounter" of preaching, let me add a word of encouragement to all who "nourish preaching with Scripture."

John Huffman
Louisville



PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Thank you, Kentucky Baptists

"And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you" (2 Corinthians 9:14).

I want to thank God for the grace of giving He has given to Kentucky Baptists. During the past three years Kentucky Baptists have demonstrated record giving for mission causes in Kentucky and beyond.

Gifts through the Cooperative Program in Kentucky exceeded the budget by 7.9 percent (\$797,429) from September 1999 to February 2000, and 6.5 percent (\$667,921) over the same time last year. Special offerings are exceeding last year as well. This is a wonderful way to begin the new millennium in support of missions and world evangelism. Praise God!

This word of thanks is about more than dollar signs and percentages though. It's really about lives—the lives of students at Campbellsville, Georgetown, Cumberland, Clear Creek and Oneida; the lives of chil-

dren in the care of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children; the lives of hundreds whose ministries across Kentucky your giving makes possible.

But that's not all. There are 10,000 missionaries who say "thank you" for sharing with the world. There are more than 10,000 seminary students who say "thank you" for the opportunity to prepare for ministry in the 21st century.

Those who benefit from Kentucky Baptist Executive Board ministries also say "thank you." Due to your faithfulness, new initiatives have been funded in evangelism, new work, communications, Internet ministry, young adult outreach, leadership development, international student outreach, Mission Service Corps, high school outreach and others. It is gratifying to see how God is at work among His people.

It is significant that this exceeding graciousness in giving is occurring during the 75th anniversary of the Cooperative Program. I hope your church already is planning to have a

special celebration using the free materials being offered through the convention. This historic milestone gives us all an opportunity to give God the glory.

A special part of the celebration is an opportunity for us to give something significant besides money. "Operation Cooperation" blood drives and promotional fun runs are being planned all across our state for Sept. 10-23 (centering on Sept. 16) as a way for us to celebrate by giving the gift of life to our communities. After all, the Cooperative Program is the lifeblood of Kentucky Baptist missions and ministry so what better way is there to celebrate than by giving something that is so special and so needed?

Call the KBC communications/media department at (502) 254-4731 or toll-free at (888) 254-5713 to find out more about how you can be involved. Information also is available on the Internet at www.kybaptist.org/operationcooperation.

God is the greatest giver. May this "surpassing grace" continue to grow among us.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

GIVING

Charitable giving at death can aid Baptist causes

By Laurie Valentine

There are a variety of ways to make gifts to Baptist causes at your death.

The most common way is to include a bequest to your church or other Baptist cause in your will or living trust.



Bequests can take the form of a gift of a specific amount or asset, or a gift of all or a portion of the residue of your estate.

Naming your church or other Baptist cause as beneficiary of a life insurance policy on your life is another way to make a charitable gift at your death.

If you own the policy at the time of your death, the value of the life insurance will be included in your taxable estate, but your estate will be entitled to charitable estate tax deduction.

If you transferred ownership of the policy to the charitable cause at least three years before you die, the value of the policy is not included in your estate in determining death tax liabilities.

You also can make charitable gifts at death that will provide benefits both to your family and Baptist causes.

One way to do that is to make a bequest to charity directing that a charitable gift annuity be established for your spouse, child or some other individual.

This type of gift provides the non-charitable beneficiary (your spouse, child, etc.) with an annuity for life. The annuity amount will depend on the age of the annuitant at the time of your death.

Bequests establishing charitable remainder trusts or charitable lead trusts are other ways to use a single gift at death to benefit both non-charitable and charitable beneficiaries.

Charitable remainder trusts provide a designated stream of income to one or more non-charitable beneficiaries for life or a term of years, with the remainder passing to your church and/or other charitable causes when the non-charitable beneficiaries' interests end.

Charitable lead trusts provide an income stream to charity, with the remainder then passing to non-charitable beneficiaries.

Accomplish God's purposes for distribution of your possessions at death by including a gift to one or more Baptist causes in your estate plan.

Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation

Working out marital differences can teach kids resolution skills

Q: Is it OK for children to see their parents fighting?

It probably depends to a great extent on the degree of fighting involved and how the fights are resolved.

It does appear that children suffer when parents do a lot of fighting in their presence, particularly if children are put in the middle or pressured to take sides. If the couple is physically or verbally aggressive, children might learn inappropriate methods of resolving conflict or become fearful for the safety of their parents or themselves. Obviously this is destructive and should never happen.

At the other extreme, if children never see their parents fight, they might develop an unrealistic view of marriage (possibly believing that couples who love each other never fight) and miss out on valuable learning opportunities. Children can learn a great deal about how to make relationships work through watching their role models air their feelings, talk out issues, cooperate and compromise.

Therefore, it is probably unwise to shield children from all marital turmoil or to expose them to too much in ways that are inappropriate. Rather, an argument now and then in which the parents work out a solution that is acceptable for each spouse might help children see some of the realities of married life while observing commitment and healthy conflict resolution.—*Susan Howell*

Q: The last time I visited my mother I noticed she had numerous prescriptions in her medicine cabinet and they were in disarray. I asked her about her medications and she could not give me an informed answer about her medication status. What can I do to help her?

Most pharmacists now have computerized records for their customers. These computer programs track each customer's medications and warn of any drug interaction side effects that may occur. If possible find a pharmacy that has this option and fill all the prescriptions there.

Watch for old prescriptions. Throw away old prescription medicines after recording the prescription number and name of the medicine.

Also, check on over-the-counter drugs and make sure the pharmacist knows about their usage.

Many older people have difficulty scheduling and coordinating the various medicines they take. They see several doctors for multiple health issues.

One way to keep track of numerous medications is to purchase a pill organizer. They come with many options for daily and weekly scheduling. Most drug stores have these organizers and depending on your mother's schedule requirements, you should be able to find an appropriate container. You may need to assist in filling the scheduled slots each week and refilling low quantities before the next filling.

Also try a medication chart that illustrates and lists the name of each drug, what it is for, the color and shape, directions and cautions, and times for taking each prescription. Make the chart with your mother's help. Keep it current and visible for inspection.

Any system that fits your mother's needs should be helpful. But a system is beneficial only if she uses it carefully. The time you spend creating and following through on the system will pay off, not only in time and relieving anxiety, but also in helping keep your mother healthy longer.—*Jon Rainbow*

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.



California vote affirms traditional marriage

While the secular media rushed to crown George W. Bush and Al Gore as the surviving contenders for this year's presidential race, many other news items virtually were lost in the shuffle of the extensive primary coverage.

Among the major political developments of recent weeks was California voters' March 7 passage of Proposition 22. Known as the "Limit on Marriage" initiative, Proposition 22 legally defines marriage as only "between a man and a woman." The measure closed a legal loophole that would have forced California to accept homosexual marriages from other states.

For better or worse—and often it's worse—as California goes, so goes the country. California culture typically is a trendsetter in areas ranging from entertainment and technology to fashion and lifestyles. For 60 percent of California voters to affirm the traditional definition of marriage is a significant development in 21st century America.

California's action stands in sharp contrast to a bill approved last week by the Vermont House of Representatives. That measure allows homosexual couples to form "civil unions" with the same rights and benefits of married couples. The 76-69 vote in the Vermont House came despite citizens in more than 50 Vermont communities voting this month against granting legal benefits to homosexual couples.

An amendment to the bill does specify that the term "marriage" still refers solely to the union of a man and a woman. The amended bill now goes to the Vermont Senate for consideration. If the measure becomes law, Vermont reportedly will have gone further than any other state in recognizing same-sex couples.

In the battle to preserve the traditional understanding of marriage, advocates of Proposition 22-type legislation often are labeled by opponents as gay-bashers or homophobic. While many evangelical Christians and other supporters of traditional family values oppose homosexuality for theological and moral reasons,

that is not the primary motivation for affirming the biblical institution of marriage.

The scriptural foundation for marriage can be traced back to Genesis 2:24, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." That passage, quoted by both Jesus and the apostle Paul, offers an unambiguous definition of marriage.

Southern Baptist messengers affirmed that view of marriage in the 1998 family amendment to the Baptist Faith and Message statement. Despite the controversy and confusion over the amendment's exclusion of Ephesians 5:21's teaching on mutual submission, other portions of the article provide a clear understanding of biblical marriage.

"God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society," the statement declares. "Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the

woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race."

While it's doubtful many California voters had such a comprehensive view of marriage in mind when they cast their votes, it's refreshing to see individuals take a stand for traditional values.

The fact is that God's plan for marriage is violated not only by homosexuality, but by adultery, abuse and other relationship-shattering attitudes and actions.

God calls Christians to a higher standard. "Let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself," Ephesians 5:33 counsels, "and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband."

While most marriages have a long way to go to achieve that level of commitment and sacrifice, Proposition 22 is a positive start.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Literacy aids physical, spiritual needs

By Becky Carnell

"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (James 2:14-17)

This passage of Scripture applies to any physical need a person may have. Suppose a brother or sister cannot read or cannot speak English. That is where literacy missions ministries can make a difference in the lives of those who need help and who need Jesus.

1959 was a historic year for Kentucky Baptists. That is the year that the very first adult reading and writing workshop was held at Clear Creek Bible College in Pineville. The need for tutors for adult non-readers in Eastern Kentucky was the beginning of literacy missions for

Southern Baptists everywhere.

1990 was the year of our last national census, which identified the 50 least educated counties in the United States. Twenty-three of those 50 counties—almost half—are in Kentucky.

Now in the year 2000 a new census is being conducted. Will the figures be improved for Kentucky? I am not sure.

In 1997, a task force on adult education and literacy in Kentucky found that 40 percent of the state's working age population (ages 16-64) is at literacy level 1 and 2. Level 1 is grade level 0 to 5.9 (no or virtually no literacy skills). Level 2 is grade level 6 to 8.9 (low levels likely to impede people's advancement). Fourteen percent of the population (346,000 people) is at level 1. Twenty-six percent (631,000) is at level 2.

The task force report states that "adult literacy is perhaps the most serious pervasive disease that threatens the Commonwealth's capacity to reach its goals for the 21st century. Yet Kentucky has no statewide strategy to combat the problem."



50 Issues FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Kentucky Baptists can be part of the solution. If you can read, you have the skill needed to help. To discover how to use that skill to teach others, the Kentucky Baptist Convention offers a 16-hour workshop to train adult reading and writing tutors. The workshop also equips volunteers to organize a ministry and teaches ways to share your faith, including using the Bible to teach reading.

Why should churches be involved in literacy? Because Christians have a special book that non-readers cannot share with us. That book is God's love letter to us, the Bible. People who cannot read must depend on others to tell them what the Bible says. People who cannot read usually are not found in church pews on Sunday morning.

I don't believe God gave us our many beautiful church facilities with so much classroom space to be used an average of only twice a week. If organizing a literacy ministry is not possible for your church, consider opening your church doors to community-based literacy classes. The church can be a vital part of a community as it reaches out to help those in need.

Becky Carnell is a literacy consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.



Court upholds school prayer decision

The appellate court ruled that the policy recognizes the "crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion" and private speech that may contain a prayer.

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (RNS)—A federal appeals court has ruled a Florida school system's policy permitting prayers at graduation ceremonies—if students vote to have them—is legal.

The decision issued March 15 by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals affirms a policy created by the Duval County schools in 1993.

The appellate court ruled that the policy recognizes the "crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion" and private speech that may contain a prayer. Thus, the court decided the policy is constitutional, Associated Press reported.

"The total absence of state involvement in deciding whether there will be a graduation message, who will speak or what the speaker may say combined with the student speaker's complete autonomy over the content of the message convinces us that the

message delivered, be it secular or sectarian or both, is not state-sponsored," the court ruled.

The decision was hailed by supporters of school prayer and criticized by opponents.

"I am elated with this victory," said Mathew Staver, president and general counsel of Liberty Counsel, an Orlando, Fla.-based legal defense organization that represented students who wanted to include a religious message or prayer at graduation ceremonies.

"Students do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or freedom of religion when they enter the graduation podium," he said.

The national director of programs for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes also welcomed the decision.

"With all the challenges facing students and educators today, the court's decision to uphold student-initiated prayer reinforces a positive influence

in our schools," said Milt Cooper of FCA, which is based in Kansas City, Mo.

Critics of the decision said they hope it will be considered and overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.

"We are disappointed that the full panel has declared that a majority could impose their will on a minority and compel others to listen to prayers that are offensive to some," said Phil Baum, executive director of the New York-based American Jewish Congress.

Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists, said the decision allows children to be used as a "faith shield" to exploit a captive audience.

"We are disturbed by the court's refusal to acknowledge the obvious differences between private and public religious expression," said Johnson, whose organization is based in Parsippany, N.J.

Religious groups back Scouts in gay firing case

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Religious groups, including a Southern Baptist agency, are urging the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn a lower court's ruling that said the Boy Scouts of America must accept an openly gay New Jersey scout leader.

The Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Family Research Council, American Center for Law and Justice and the U.S. Catholic Conference, the social policy arm of the nation's Roman Catholic bishops, have filed "friend of the court" briefs before the Supreme Court hears the case, Boy Scouts of America and Monmouth Council vs. James Dale, on April 26.

The religious groups contend that the ruling violates the right of private

organizations to recruit leaders who share their views.

James Dale, an openly gay scout master, sued the Boy Scouts after they dismissed him, saying his sexual orientation was incompatible with the organization's standards. The New Jersey Supreme Court said the Boy Scouts violated the state's anti-discrimination law in firing Dale.

The brief, filed on March 10, said the issue was not about gays and lesbians but instead about the rights of a private organization to determine its own standards and who will represent those standards.

"We believe ... that private associations may not be ordered to retain a leader who has acted contrary to an association's mission and purpose,"

the brief said. "This principle finds application in both common law and constitutional law, for to penalize a private institution for terminating a leader who acts contrary to the institution's moral code offends the First Amendment."

Richard Land, president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said earlier this month the Boy Scouts case could set a dangerous precedent for churches and other religious groups.

"Most Southern Baptists understand that what we allow a government entity—in this case the New Jersey Supreme Court—to do to the Boy Scouts today, they may very well try with religious organizations and churches tomorrow," Land said.

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Survey mixed on evolution & creation.** A leading liberal watchdog group released a poll stating 83 percent of Americans want evolution, not creationism, taught in U.S. schools, but large numbers agree creationism also belongs somewhere in the classroom. While the polling data, from People for the American Way, clearly suggests wide support for teaching the theory of evolution, a significant number of people said they also support creationism being taught in classrooms. A full 79 percent of respondents said the belief that God created the world belongs in schools.

■ **Religious leaders push to end violence.** A broad coalition of religious leaders joined Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo in calling for laws to end a deadly streak of gun-related violence in America. Speaking in Washington March 15, Protestant, Jewish and Catholic leaders called on Congress to put gun safety above political maneuvering. Jim Wallis, editor in chief of the evangelical Sojourner's Magazine, said, "Guns are not the only issue, but when guns are everywhere, who can be so ignorant as to say that guns aren't linked to violence?"

■ **Decision of Bible-quoting judge upheld.** The Ohio Supreme Court has upheld a 51-year prison sentence imposed by a judge who quoted a Bible verse when punishing a man for the rape of a young girl. The state's high court decided in a 7-0 ruling that Hamilton County Judge Melba Marsh did not violate the due process rights of James Arnett, who pleaded guilty in 1997 to raping an 8-year-old girl. During sentencing, Marsh quoted Jesus' saying that one who offends a child would be better off if "a millstone were hanged around his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

■ **Evangelical group allows dual links.** The National Association of Evangelicals recently changed its bylaws to permit denominations that are members of ecclesiastical groups other than the NAE to hold dual membership with the evangelical organization if they are willing to commit to the NAE's statement of faith and mission. The National Council of Churches' Bob Edgar said the two organizations, which have had an antagonistic relationship for more than 50 years, recently have experienced "a softening of the sharp conflict" between the more liberal NCC and more conservative NAE.

■ **Adventists sue over use of name.** Leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have asked a federal judge to block a Florida "breakaway church" from using the group's name after the West Palm Beach, Fla., congregation launched ads denouncing Protestants and Catholics. Leaders of the denomination say the Florida congregation, the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists, violated a 1980 trademark agreement on the name "Seventh-day Adventist." Seventh-day Adventists worship on Saturdays. The Florida church ads likened Catholics and Protestants to Satanists and pagans for worshipping on Sunday.

■ **Burger King revamps 'offensive' ad.** After protests from American Muslims, Burger King has agreed to revamp a radio ad for its new bacon cheddar Whopper that featured a character named "Rasheed" who greeted his "brothers and sisters" with "peace." Islamic law prohibits the eating of pork products, and Muslims routinely greet each other with the phrase "peace to you." Muslims also refer to each other as "brothers" and "sisters." Burger King Vice President Robert Doughty said the new character is named "Soloman" and addresses his "friends."

Vermont House becomes first to approve 'civil unions' for gays

MONTPELIER, Vt. (RNS)—The Vermont House of Representatives, in a historic vote March 16, agreed to permit homosexual couples to form "civil unions" giving them the same rights and benefits afforded married heterosexual couples.

The bill, which passed by a vote of 76-69, is expected to receive approval from the state Senate by the end of April. The legislation also has been supported by Democratic Gov. Howard Dean.

If it becomes law, Vermont will have gone further than any other state in recognizing couples of the same sex, Associated Press reported.

"This certainly is groundbreaking," said Peg Byron, education director for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a gay advocacy group.

"I think it really sets a moral as well as a legislative example for the rest of the country," she said.

State lawmakers adopted an amendment making it clear the term "marriage" continues to refer solely to the union of a man and a woman.

Opponents to the bill consider it an assault on morality and traditional marriage.

"This bill is not about the civil rights of a minority," said Roman Catholic Bishop Kenneth Angell in a statement. "This bill is about a minority imposing their concept of morality upon the morality of the majority."

The legislation is being considered after the state Supreme Court ruled in December that it was unconstitutional to deny same-sex couples the benefits of marriage.

That court let the Vermont legislature determine whether gay marriages should be allowed or some kind of domestic partnership should be created.

Under the bill, homosexual partners could apply for a license from town clerks and have their civil unions "certified" by a judge, a justice of the peace or a member of the clergy.

Approximately 300 state benefits or privileges available to married couples also would become available to same-sex couples in areas such as medical decisions, property transfers, inheritance and taxes.

Couples could file a joint state income tax return, but federal taxes—along with Social Security and immigration rights—would not be recognized by the federal government.

Islam growing in American society while religion in general declining, study says

Continued from page 1

gents from the churches march boldly under the banner of a 'Christian America' to the drumbeat of 'Onward Christian Soldiers.'" Briggs said in his report. The public square of the future has mosques and various kinds of temples along with its array of churches and synagogues, he said.

"Institutions themselves would appear to be in some peril," Briggs added, identifying mainline Protestant churches as the "big losers" in the future potpourri of spiritual practices merging in mainstream America, partly because they express a "wishy-washy" theology that confuses their participants.

"In order to capture followers ... religious groups must exhibit a clear set of beliefs and expectations. ... These traits would appear to favor Christian evangelicals, Catholic traditionalists and ultra-Orthodox Jews, among others," the study said

of the Jewish and Christian future.

Focusing on social issues, meanwhile, seems to be out of step with the individualism of religious seekers in today's America, Briggs said.

With a few notable exceptions on the religious right, religion today is largely "devoid of the kind of social activism—some would call it prophetic call for justice—that brought religious groups together around civil rights and the anti-Vietnam War movements in the 1960s," Briggs said.

"That is to say that there will be marginal resistance, but nothing to indicate that the great maxims of religious faith will motivate America to turn from the way it does business," he said. "Instead, there is the widespread assumption that religion will, in the main, bless the set of economic and political assumptions—the importance of the bottom line, the protection of the nation's military interests, the end to welfare and the like."

Paducah affiliate and others pull 'God, Devil, Bob'

PADUCAH—The NBC affiliate in Paducah is among at least 17 stations to pull the plug, at least temporarily, on "God, the Devil and Bob," a controversial animated sitcom that features a beer-drinking Deity who has a girlfriend.

Paducah's WPSD channel 6 didn't air the show last week and was scheduled to not show it this week. The station intends to review the show for objectionable material, according to Dan Steele, WPSD's operations and program manager.

"We have not completely closed the door on it," he said, noting that last week's show probably wouldn't have been as objectionable as the premier. "We don't know at this point whether we're going to pull the plug for good or not."

Steele estimated the station has received 250 calls concerning the show, and only about 10 percent were positive.

The sitcom, which debuted March 9, has created a nationwide uproar among Christians and other religious groups who claim the program is blasphemous. Five NBC affiliates refused to air the March 9 pilot episode.

In a press statement, NBC said it considers the show entertaining and hopes affiliates eventually will reconsider airing the show. "It was never our intention to offend anyone," the network said in a statement.

South Bend, Ind.'s WNDU, which is owned by

the University of Notre Dame, told Associated Press that it wanted to air the program after "Saturday Night Live," at a time when fewer children would be watching. The network declined.

According to Variety Magazine, "God, the Devil and Bob" has generated more preemption than the ABC police drama, "NYPD Blue."

Executive Producer Harvey Myman told Variety he was troubled by the affiliates not airing the show. "I hope it doesn't have much of an impact on our numbers because I don't think it should be a show that goes quietly away."

In the series opener, a somber God, portrayed as an old, bearded hippie wearing a T-shirt and sneakers, considers destroying the world, which appears unworthy of salvation.

He uses an autoworker named Bob to prove him wrong. The show also features a version of Satan with a British accent and a disdain for ballroom dancing.

Ultimately ratings, not protest, might decide the show's future. The show hasn't fared well in its first two showings.

"Our decision may be moot depending on whether it improves in the ratings nationally," Steele said.

With reporting by News Director David Winfrey and Baptist Press writer Todd Starnes

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Dean Dennis Williams

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CHURCHES

New churches take time, talent, resources

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

LOUISVILLE—While the Kentucky Baptist Convention is working to increase church starting throughout the commonwealth, officials also are taking steps to make sure they succeed.

During the 1990s, Southern Baptists averaged 1,400 church plants each year. Most of these are missions, a term used to describe a congregation before it constitutes as a self-supporting church. Meanwhile, a majority of these works started have yet to become constituted and self-supporting churches.

Concerned with this statistic, local and Southern Baptist Convention officials are taking a long look at who is starting churches as well as the support, planning and resources they need to succeed.

Using a profile developed at Fuller Theological Seminary, prospective Kentucky Baptist church planters undergo a four-hour assessment to make sure their personality is conducive to church starting.

Alan Witham, the state's new church planting strategist, said that among the qualities sought are a strong sense of vision, personal motivation, persistence, a commitment to church growth, team-building skills and spouse support.

"Not all pastors can be church planters and not all church planters can be pastors," said Ed Stetzer, a church planting professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

The state convention also will host two training seminars this year, covering such subjects as strategy, planning and forming prayer support teams.

Witham outlined several basic steps in planting a church, beginning with a sense of God's call and a need to pray for the target area. Others include:

■ Seeking a sponsoring congregation or a church that will act as a partner with the work.

■ Developing a core group to reach out to the unchurched.

■ Collecting demographic data to gauge residents' needs and personal tastes.



Why plant churches?

■ Surveying residents to develop a profile of the community and learn who doesn't attend church.

Publicity is another key. These often-unconventional congregations use such modern methods as direct mail, telemarketing, advertising and Web sites.

They also pursue a different audience.

"When we start churches we're not looking for those who go to church," Stetzer said. "We train our people to be intentionally evangelistic."

This includes surveys asking if respondents attend a church. If someone answers, "Yes," planters stop collecting information and don't encourage them to come, he explained.

Historically, pastors in the targeted

area have opposed new churches, said Richard Harris, director of church starting efforts by the SBC North American Mission Board. But, that mindset is breaking down amid increasing awareness that these new churches don't represent a threat to established congregations, he added.

Officials at NAMB said planters face three key challenges—finding adequate resources, staying focused on core values and mission, and coping with feelings of isolation and loneliness.

But Stetzer encourages people interested in starting a church to not be intimidated by the challenges.

"In reality, it's easier than people make it out to be," said Stetzer, who started five churches in New York and Pennsylvania before moving to Louisville. "At first, you just bang a lot of shoe leather and knock on doors."

Doug Bunch agrees. The pastor of the new, contemporary-flavored People's Church of Central Kentucky in Bardstown often works 80 hours a week in his new role.

Formerly the owner of a trucking business, Bunch was accustomed to long hours. But he said starting a church from scratch is the most formidable task he has faced.

"You take so much for granted," he said of his prior experience. "The phones are there, the paper cutters, copy machines and staff. It became very annoying to do everything here. Everything takes twice as long as you think it will, the newsletter, programs or whatever. It's an immense amount of work."

But Stetzer said it is rewarding. "Sometimes it can be lonely," he said. "How do you find that beginning core group? But we've found that later on—relationally—pastors of these churches are very fulfilled."

Bardstown pastor says extra work is worthwhile

BARDSTOWN—The People's Church of Central Kentucky has no building, a basement office and sometimes has its worship services pre-empted by community events at Nelson County High School.

But if you ask pastor Doug Bunch whether the inconvenience and long hours are worth it, he points to the results. The church baptized nine people in January and 10 more converts are preparing to take that step.

"That answers the question," said Bunch, who previously was pastor of three other Kentucky Baptist congregations.

He found the inspiration to start a new work at the deacon-pastor-spouse retreat at Cedar-moore Assembly last year. Bowling Green Pastor Brad Johnson, who since has moved to California's famed Saddleback Community Church, urged the audience to ask God to reveal great things they could do for His kingdom.

Bunch wrote, "To build a great evangelistic church" and then had a sleepless night thinking about that goal. He liked the idea of a contemporary model aimed at reaching people ages 30 to 50. But at age 45, he didn't consider himself a prime candidate to lead it.

He eventually sought help and found two congregations willing to sponsor a church in the Bardstown area.

"This wouldn't have happened if there weren't such a big push in the denomination and the concept that starting new churches was a way of reaching people," he said. "I got energized by the (idea) of meeting people where they are."

Along with two interns at Southern Seminary's church planting center, Bunch canvassed the area to generate interest. Last August, the core group held its first monthly preview service. Those sessions paved the way for its launch Jan. 2.

The first service attracted 165 people. Although attendance has since tailed off to 90, about 110 people have expressed interest in joining the congregation.

Sunday mornings feature a contemporary worship style with a praise band and five-member vocal team. In place of evening services, people meet for Bible study and other activities in homes and other venues.

But the goal of People's Church is the same as any other, the pastor said—to win converts to Christ and make disciples.

"If you're not committed to long hours and laboring against tough odds, don't do this," he said. "If you're committed to this, it's exciting."—Ken Walker

Pastor led Logan County plant 'by accident'

RUSSELLVILLE—Michael Juett wasn't planning to become pastor of a church plant when he started traveling from Bowling Green to Logan County to lead a Bible study.

So how did it happen?

"One hundred percent by accident," says Juett, pastor of Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Logan County.

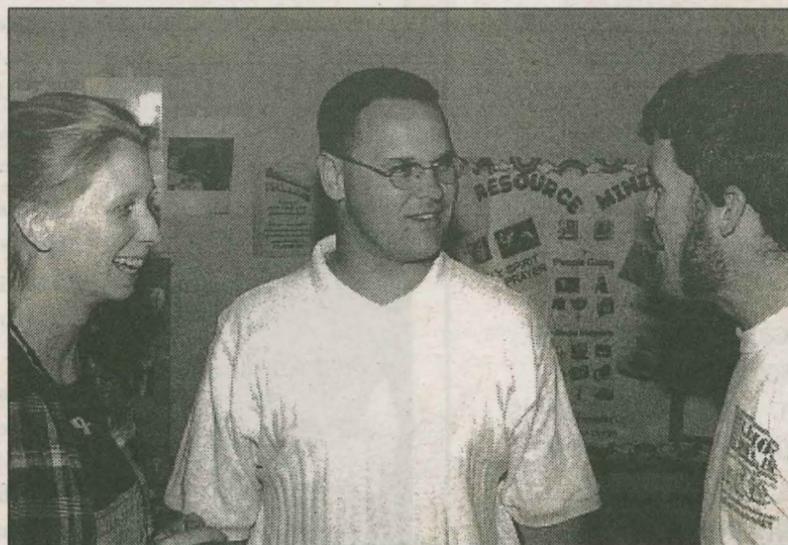
Four years ago the sponsoring church, Hillvue Heights in Bowling Green, was attracting scores of people who drove 30 miles or more from Logan County to attend worship.

Juett, who then was associate pastor at the Bowling Green church, was part of a rotating group of people assigned to drive to Logan County for a Wednesday night Bible study. There, members had begun talking about their own church.

When Hillvue Heights of Bowling Green's pastor asked if he was interested in taking the lead at the Russell County site, Juett initially said no.

But he said God later gave him a burden for the people in that area. "I just thought they deserved a fair shot."

Today the church has more than 275 people attending worship at a local high school, and 22 people have become Christians since Christmas, he says. "We've already blown the myth out of the water that we're only going to be here a year and a half and then



CHURCH STARTER Michael Juett (center) says the key to the growth at Hillvue Heights Baptist Church of Logan County has been the desire to see people get connected to God.

go out."

Juett, 31, says he is energized by the people who are being transformed by the Christian faith. "I can't count the number of drunks that have gotten saved."

Logan County has a reputation for lawlessness, he adds, and at least two crystal methamphetamine labs have shut down as a result of people becoming Christians, he said. "There's just something about watching somebody

walk up and lay a crack pipe on the altar."

Juett says the key to the church's growth has been the genuine desire to see people get connected to God.

"By and large, no matter where you go people are generally the same in these respects: They long to be loved, they seek acceptance and they're all born needing Jesus," Juett says. "The third one gives you the first two."—David Winfrey

For more information

■ Alan Witham, Kentucky Baptist Convention, (502) 245-4101 or (888) 254-5708; witham@kyonline.net.

■ North American Mission Board's Web site: www.namb.net. Includes extensive information on church planting, including free church planter management software for recognized planters and partners.

■ Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's church planting center. Director Ed Stetzer also maintains a Web site: www.newchurches.com. His e-mail address is estetzer@sbts.edu.

■ Clear Creek Bible College's Nehemiah Project Center, Ron Perry, (606) 337-3196; e-mail address is rperry@saintmail.net.

■ Mid-Continent Bible College will be hosting a church planting center, but no director has been announced. For more information, call (888) 957-5268.

CHURCHES

Paducah church planter: 'You see the Lord working every day'

PADUCAH—Although Four Rivers Church doesn't meet until Easter, more than 100 people already have pledged to attend the first worship service at Farley Elementary School.

In the meantime, a core group of 15 people is meeting for Sunday evening Bible study in various homes and shares the anticipation of pastor Brad Henson.

"This is the most exciting thing I've ever been part of, in which you see the Lord working every day," said Henson, a recent graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. "I absolutely love it."

A native of the area, Henson said he felt led to get involved in church planting through a mentor he met while in seminary. When the man told him, "You're the kind of guy God could use to start a church," Henson began praying.

Later, on a family visit, he drove through Paducah's south side. Despite the presence of many families and subdivisions, he felt the area was being overlooked by other churches. Henson said he sensed God's direction to plant a church there and secured a one-year contract to rent space at the elementary school.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention

and Hillvue Heights Baptist Church of Bowling Green are helping sponsor the congregation. Hillvue also is offering prayer support and training for future church leaders.

David Brown, a senior at Mid-Continent Bible College, also is on staff at Four Rivers.

Henson said that gathering supporters to form Four Rivers has strengthened his faith. One member of the core group is a restaurant manager, who Henson met when visiting the restaurant to talk to another employee.

A new resident of the city, she said she read about Four Rivers in the Paducah Sun newspaper and felt God telling her to get involved in the church.

"That's just one of many stories," Henson said. "God is bringing people together. When I came to Paducah, I thought I would have to train 20 to 30 people from the ground up. But I found there were several people God had been speaking to, just like He had me. It was clear we were to work together."

"This entire process caused me to trust God much more than I did before," he said. "What's happening is a group of people are joining what God is doing, not trying to do something for God."—Ken Walker

Lawrenceburg church letting God do the hard stuff

LAWRENCEBURG—Jeff Eaton doesn't argue that church starting is hard work, but he has one bit of advice: Let God do the heavy lifting.

Eaton, 39, loves to tell the story of Hope Community Church's sound system as an example of God's work in the new congregation.

Eaton resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church of Lawrenceburg almost two years ago with a plan to start a new congregation with an emphasis on reaching non-Christians.

On the church's first Sunday in August 1998, 310 people attended. It has since grown to a weekly attendance of approximately 600 people. While the church attracts mostly young adults and Baby Boomers, it didn't start out with that strategy, Eaton says. "Our motto is, 'Who do you reach? Anyone with a pulse.'"

Back to the sound system. The church, which meets in a Lawrenceburg high school, needed sound equipment but had no way to pay for it.

A Louisville businessman offered to sell \$40,000 worth of microphones, speakers, mixing boards, amps and other sound

equipment for \$22,000. "He needed a tax write-off. We needed a sound system," Eaton recalls, but the price still was too steep for the congregation.

Members committed the matter to prayer, Eaton says, telling God the church was His and expressing confidence that God could provide if He desired.

Within weeks, a man came to the church office with a gift of 1,000 shares of stock, which sold for \$22 a share.

Eaton says God worked in a similar way when the church needed a trailer to move its sound equipment.

An anonymous donor left a 16-foot-long "Cadillac of trailers" sitting in the church office parking lot with a piece of notebook paper taped to the back that

read "To Hope Community Church."

"I'm just standing back and watching God work," Eaton says. "When you find out who God is, then what He can do is not an issue. It's a done deal."

Eaton adds that the hardest work of church starting is not up to him. "Jesus said He would build it, and He's the best church planter I've ever known."—David Winfrey



Eaton



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For full camp descriptions, costs and registration forms, find us on the Internet: www.kybaptist.org/brotherhood.htm.

Or call the Brotherhood office: 888-254-5720 or 502-244-6489



CHURCHES

Church planting movement key to reaching Kenyans

Fellow missionaries thought Clay Coursey was crazy when he said God gave him a vision for starting 100 churches among the Giriama in three years.

By Sue Sprengle
SBC International Mission Board

MALINDI, Kenya (BP)—The 14-year-old boy spotted a group of strangers walking down the country path. His curiosity was piqued when they stopped to talk to a man.

The boy hid behind a mud-packed home and listened as the visitors spoke of God's love.

As Kenyan pastor Samuel Katana explained that sin separated people from God, the teenager hung his head in shame. When Jesus' sacrifice on the cross entered the picture, he stepped from his hiding place and quietly took a seat next to the pastor.

"I am a sinner. I need to be forgiven," he said as tears streamed down his face. "I believe. You must tell my mother."

The teenager led Katana by the hand to his home. In his excitement, he blurted out the "good news" before the pastor could speak. His mother accepted Christ as her personal Savior on the spot.

As Katana was leaving, the teenager's father came running after him, yelling, "I am ready." The mother had been so excited that she had gone to tell him about Christ's love.

This family became the first members of Bethany Baptist Church,

which meets under a mango tree outside Malindi, Kenya. Katana may be only 33, but he has helped start five churches among his own people group, the Giriama.

"It feels good to work doing what God commanded Christians to do," the pastor said. "The Giriama are open and receptive to the gospel right now. Our goal is to start enough churches so that everyone is within walking distance of a church."

While that may sound like a hefty goal, it has, in fact, become reality. When Southern



Why plant churches?

Baptist missionaries Clay and Pat Coursey began working in the Malindi area 25 years ago, they envisioned a time when the Giriama would plant the seeds of Christ among their own people.

That time has come.

Pastors like Katana and local Christians have caught the vision and taken over the work of starting churches and discipling believers. With their work complete, the Courseys will retire in August with no Southern Baptist missionaries replacing them.

Tax-motivated giving

Our nation's tax laws encourage charitable giving. Even the IRS stated in one of its publications, "Our federal government recognizes that donations to religious, educational, charitable, scientific and literary organizations have contributed significantly to the welfare of our nation; and the tax laws are designed to encourage such giving."

Having said that, it is important to remember charitable giving in America preceded all of our current tax systems. Many charitable organizations were created and continuously funded through generous outright gifts, bequests and life income gifts before the establishment of the modern federal income tax in 1913, the estate tax in 1917 and the federal gift tax in 1935.

I am pleased to acknowledge in my experience with those who have given through the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, the primary motivation to give was not the tax savings opportunities. Instead, the primary motivation was the desire to be involved in changing peoples' lives in the name of Christ through the missions of one or more of their favorite Baptist organizations, including their churches. Another primary motivation was the desire to leave a lasting legacy of their Christian testimonies

through the ongoing ministries of their Baptist family.

Further evidence that charitable giving is not motivated primarily by taxes are the statistics related to bequests via wills. Bequests continue to be, by far, the largest source of planned gifts to charitable organizations. Very few bequest donors receive any tax benefits from their gifts.

There is no income tax deduction for a bequest, no capital gains tax avoidance and no estate tax savings for most. Only 8 percent of the estimated 180,000 people who died and left charitable bequests last year filed estate tax returns and used charitable deductions to reduce the size of the taxable estate.

Having said that, taxes can, and do, play an important role in the size, the

form and the timing of gifts. The mission of the foundation is to facilitate the making of gifts by simplifying the process and by ensuring that each person is maximizing the financial and tax savings opportunities available. Please give Laurie Valentine and me the privilege of facilitating your motivation to give.

Barry Allen is president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, 10605 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40223; (888) 254-5701

KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

Local churches and their members will plant new churches. The main goal is to disciple local believers to take over the ministry of the missionaries.

Thirty years ago, 87 percent of the Giriama practiced traditional African religions such as ancestor worship and black magic. Most never had heard of Jesus Christ, let alone seen a Bible.

Because of the small response to the gospel among the Giriama, fellow missionaries thought Coursey was crazy when, in 1974, he said God gave him a vision for starting 100 churches among the Giriama in the next three years. At the time, there were only six Baptist churches and very few Christians.

The couple worked hard after the revelation, visiting homes and sharing Christ with more zeal than ever. Ten more churches were started out of their effort, but few lasted.

"That's when Pat and I discovered we were not good church planters," Coursey said. "Every church we started collapsed. Every church that one of the Giriama had a direct hand in starting seemed to flourish."

A new strategy developed. Four graduates from the Baptist Seminary of East Africa in Arusha, Tanzania, teamed up with Giriama elders to evangelize area villages.

The teams traveled through the countryside giving testimonies and teaching the Bible. More than 180 churches were started in the first year. Ninety of those churches survived and

still thrive today.

By 1977, the 100 churches God had promised had been planted and were in the beginning stages of laying a firm foundation. The Courseys were convinced that each new church start needed to begin with local leadership instead of dependence on them.

"Our churches grew up with an indigenous mentality of taking care of themselves," Coursey said. "From the very beginning they took the lead role, and we were there to educate, encourage and support."

A series of church-planting seminars in 1984 caught the interest of 28 congregations. That year, more than 20 new churches were started by the seminar participants. Now many churches consider themselves grandparents and even great-grandparents of other churches. This past summer alone, more than 120 churches were started by local congregations along the east coast of Kenya.

Through the years, the Courseys have seen many changes—a massive evangelism movement in the 1970s and a church-planting movement in the 1980s. The highlight for the couple, however, came recently when the churches appointed a committee to study possibilities of evangelizing other areas and even other countries.

"In that meeting, I saw them turn from looking only at themselves and their people to looking at the world," Coursey said. "That's what it is all about—reaching out to those who do not know Christ."



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MISSIONS

Missionary helps women in need find hope in Christ

By Dana Williamson
Oklahoma Baptist Messenger

SAND SPRINGS, Okla.—When a woman is a victim of abuse and jobless, is responsible for a child and might be pregnant again, it's hard for her to see that God has a plan for her life.

Yet that's precisely the objective of Southern Baptist North American missionary Sheila Mitchell and DaySpring Villa, a Baptist women's shelter in Sand Springs, Okla.

"The first goal of our shelter is that women meet Jesus and follow Him," said Mitchell, director of the center. She and her husband, Todd, are among the missionaries whose work is featured this spring to promote the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

In its 20-year history, the shelter has seen nearly 10,000 women and children come through its doors. Of that number, nearly 900 have accepted Jesus as their Savior.

Mitchell said about half of the women who come to the shelter have been abused.

"For some women, everything is hopeless," she noted. "We teach them that not only is this a place of peace and security where they can put their lives back together, but there is a permanent place of peace and security in Heaven for those who trust in Jesus."

The shelter can accommodate 55 women and children, but the average at any one time is around 38. Average length of stay is 18-20 days.

"As long as the women are working



MISSIONARY Sheila Mitchell, director of DaySpring Villa, a Baptist women's shelter in Sand Springs, Okla., picks up children from the school bus stop. In its 20-year history, the shelter has served nearly 10,000 women and children. Of that number, almost 900 have become Christians. (NAMB photo by Kent Harville)

on goals and obeying rules, they can stay," said Mitchell. "Every resident must attend Bible study and worship services, and every resident has a chore."

Each woman selects her goals with the help of a counselor. It may be that she needs a job, or must work on her spending habits. She may want to establish a home, be a godly parent or break the cycle of abuse, drug or alcohol addiction.

"One of the things we strive to do here is teach the women how to have a home, what they need to do to get into a home, and to prepare themselves to live in that home," Mitchell said.

She said some people have never been taught how to clean a room, how to keep a house clean or how to keep children clean. So there are times the staff teaches basic skills that most people take for granted.

Mitchell said DaySpring Villa has a twofold ministry: to minister to women and children in crisis, but also to teach others to minister.

Between 75 and 150 volunteers work at the shelter each month, and the house staff includes semester missionaries, long-term volunteers appointed by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board.

"If you want experiences in minis-

try, come to DaySpring Villa, because we are dealing with people's lives that are hurting," Mitchell said. "If we don't teach those who come behind us how to minister, then who are going to be our missionaries 20 years from now?"

She said one of the needs she has seen over the years is a shelter for younger teenage girls, which requires a separate residential child-care license.

"We get calls every month from girls who are under 18, and legally we cannot shelter them without their mothers with them," she noted. "These are girls who either are pregnant or who have already had a child and chose to keep the child."

Mitchell noted that when DaySpring moved into a larger facility five years ago, a wing was set aside for an adolescent pregnant and parenting program.

"But the timing has not been right for us to be able to open that, because it does require additional staffing and additional funding," Mitchell said. "We tell young girls, 'don't get an abortion,' but what are we doing to provide a place for them to stay once they've had the child?"

She said her vision is to provide a small residential program where such girls can learn how to be the godly mothers they should be, so their children will not be caught up in the cycle and one day be a resident in the women's shelter part of the program.

In the meantime, the ministry continues to reach women and children, to help them see that no matter how hopeless a situation is, there is always hope with Jesus Christ.

Missionary Sheila Mitchell and DaySpring Villa are supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. This year's national goal is \$47 million.

Campus revival

By Robert Dunston

March 6-8 was campus revival time at Cumberland College. Services began with our Monday morning chapel service and continued on Monday through Wednesday evenings.

Wesley Paul, a 1988 graduate of Cumberland College, preached our services. Paul is a native of Bangalore, India, but has lived half of his life outside his home country. After his graduation from Cumberland College, Paul received a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctorate in pastoral care and counseling from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Paul recently founded the Wesley Paul Evangelistic Ministry, which seeks to minister on both local and global levels. He leads crusades in the United States and in Third World nations. One of his primary goals is training Third World ministers to evangelize and disciple more effectively so the gospel can change the lives of more people.

Dana and Sean Cordell served as worship leaders for the revival services. Both are students at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina, where Dana

is completing a bachelor of arts degree in biblical studies and Sean is pursuing a master of divinity degree. Both serve as youth ministers at Open Door Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C.

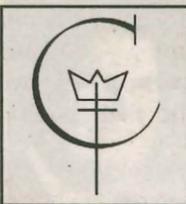
God's presence was evident in each service. Paul's sermons combined scholarship, spiritual insight and evangelistic urgency. The thoughtful and praise-filled music provided by the Cordells blessed each person who attended.

Many people responded to God's call by rededicating their lives to His service. Several students accepted Christ as their personal Savior. We know God will continue to bless through the renewed dedication and excitement the revival brought.

At Cumberland College, we believe Christian worship is crucial for teaching and living the Christian life. Each semester we have a campus revival, and each semester people's lives are changed for eternity. We praise God for His presence and work in our midst.

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

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



Unexpected cold fronts

This time of year, it's easy to get ahead of ourselves.

A few days of unseasonably warm weather, and we're putting away the sweaters and gloves and planning this year's vegetable garden or big landscaping project. Just as soon as we get in the springtime mood, however, a cold front blows in reminding us that winter isn't through with us just yet.

Patience is sometimes the hardest lesson for any of us to learn, and we often have to learn it more than once. I'd also be willing to speculate that we need it most when we are blindsided by life—by things that sting almost as much as a bitter wind from an unexpected cold front.

That happened to Becky. She and her dad were making great strides in reconciliation. It seemed that in no time, her home situation would improve enough that she could leave residential care. Spring was on its way for Becky and her dad.

Then the tragic news came that Becky's dad had been killed in an accident at his job site. Talk about being blindsided. That was something no one expected—not Becky, her dad, her peers at the shelter or our staff. Words fail to communicate how devastating this cold front

was for those involved.

In a sense, our staff, Becky and her peers got the sweaters and gloves back out of the closet. They wrapped themselves in God's love and the love they had for each other and they grieved.

Not only were they grieving the loss of Becky's dad, who had been a regular visitor at the shelter and

was known to everyone, they were grieving the loss of the future we all thought Becky and her dad were going to have together. The goals she set when she came into our care had changed in an instant.

You helped provide the staff to counsel Becky and her peers through the loss. Long before the accident, a local church had provided Bibles to all the girls. With the help of

staff, they went to God's Word to find solace and hope. Together, they weathered the cold front and Becky patiently waited, again, for spring.

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

HOMES FOR CHILDREN



Bill Smithwick

MISSIONS

Zambia missionaries praise God for safety during ambush

Missionary Steve Taylor said he was able to roll out of the way of the vehicle when, while leaving, the final assailant tried to back over him.

By John Loudat
New Mexico Baptist

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (ABP)—A Southern Baptist missionary family was car-jacked in Zambia last month, another reminder of the dangers missionaries face around the world.

The attack on church planters Steve and Shirley Taylor and their daughter, McKelvey, happened in Lusaka, Zambia, Feb. 17 in the driveway of the Baptist guest house.

In a message from the Zambezi River Valley, where they serve, Taylor recounted the incident in an e-mail to prayer partners, family and friends.

"Upon our return (from dinner) at about 8:40 p.m., we pulled into the drive ... and blew our horn for the guard to open the gate," Taylor wrote. "At the same time, we saw a vehicle pull directly behind."

Four men jumped from the other vehicle, carrying automatic weapons, Taylor said.

"Two of the men were at my window yelling for me to open the truck, and another man was aiming a rifle at my family on the passenger's side," he wrote.

When the men threatened to kill the family, "I realized there was only one thing to do," Taylor stated. "I had to surrender the truck."

Taylor's wife and the couple's 9-year-old daughter complied with the attackers' order to get out of the truck and lie on the ground face-down, and Taylor was pushed to the ground by a

man with a gun to the back of Taylor's head.

The man took Taylor's wallet, and the other three attackers jumped in the family's truck and drove away.

Taylor wrote that as the man who had taken Taylor's wallet was getting back into his car to leave, "For some reason known only to the Lord, I shouted, 'At least let me have my wallet back. It only has pictures of my grandbaby inside.'"

"Much to my surprise, he threw it at me and jumped into the car," Taylor said.

The missionary said that when his face was in the gravel, he had forgotten about the cash and credit cards he also had in the wallet.

"If I ever meet that thief again," he stated, "I'll be sure to tell him I was mistaken about the wallet containing only baby pictures."

Taylor said he was able to roll out of the way of the vehicle when, while leaving, the final assailant tried to back over him.

In the e-mail, Taylor then told his readers about ways they could pray.

"Please pray for McKelvey," Taylor said first, noting that the experience was "very traumatic for her, as you might imagine."

Taylor also requested prayer for their ministry, which not only lost a new mission vehicle but a substantial amount of cash hidden in it for emergencies, as well as groceries and ministry items they had purchased earlier in the day.

"Please pray that we can either

recover this vehicle or replace it right away," he wrote.

Taylor also asked for prayer "that we will be able to maintain the right 'attitude' during these days of recovery."

"Satan invents many schemes to discourage us," Taylor explained, "but we have learned that it is the Lord's desire for us to take the fight to the evil one. We want to be a part of God's faithful force, storming 'the gates of hell' to rescue the souls of men."

Not forgotten by Taylor were fellow missionaries serving throughout the world, many in "very dangerous places."

He also requested prayer for the

conversion of the thieves, noting that the truck was full of gospel tracts and books. "Pray that the Lord will use those tools to reach people who otherwise would neither hear nor listen."

Taylor said that he and his family are praising God for the peace He gave them during the robbery, as well as the fact that the robbers tossed back his wallet and did not notice his wife's purse that she dropped beside the truck in the bushes. It contained their personal and ministry money for the next month.

The Taylors are grateful that they weren't physically injured and for other missionaries who ministered to them after the attack.

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'Change is good'

I don't watch much television, but I do enjoy some of the commercials. There is one that I'm sure you've seen. A well-known cartoon character, B.B., and a big-time basketball star, M.J., are doing a commercial for long distance phone service. At one point the cartoon character says, "Change is good."

Change is good, and spring is a time of change. I took a walk last Saturday morning around our campus. The routine for our students is different on Saturdays, and I knew I would be able to see a lot of activity that does not take place on weekdays. It makes the students feel good to be seen and recognized for their various activities.

Students already were busy in the chapel building. One was mopping the floors, one was cleaning the two restrooms and a third boy was cleaning outside around the chapel. I could see other boys going to their various Saturday morning activities. It appeared some would have preferred to still be in bed.

I drove to the farm to see how the new agriculture center was coming along. Work began early last fall. A generous friend of the school was providing men and materials for the main structure, while another generous friend and others were providing materials and manpower to finish the inside work.

As I stepped out of the building, I saw two young men grinding corn to be fed to the pigs. One of the boys has been here quite some time. The other is relatively new. While I was watching, I overheard a conversation between a girl who works on the farm and an assistant farm manager about some pigs. It was obvious that everything was well under control, so I headed back to the other side of our campus.

I made my way to the athletic field where three teams were practicing. The track team was doing various exercises before they ran. We have several fine runners on our team, and we give most schools a run for their money. One of our best runners is a senior, so we will miss her very much next year.

I then made my way to the softball field where about 20 young ladies were practicing. The head coach, a 1991 Oneida Baptist Institute graduate, was

showing the girls how to catch ground balls. I smiled as I noticed some of the girls who were wearing cheerleader uniforms the previous week, now scrambling around in the dirt trying to catch a ball. Another coach was teaching girls how to catch fly balls.

Nearby was another group of 20 or so young men who make up our baseball team. It was easy to tell they had not been practicing long. They were a little rough around the edges, even though I noticed there were a score of experts providing plenty of advice for every less-than-perfect play. Most boys take athletics very seriously, so errors were given plenty of

attention by the "experts" on the sideline. Another, much smaller group of middle school boys was practicing hitting skills on the band field. Patience does not come easy to many of us, but it is especially difficult for middle school boys. They have little patience for themselves or others.

Yes, change is good. Many of these students were not involved in our winter sports program, but with the coming of spring, change is in the air.

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

Standing on holy ground

Joan Foley, organist at West Corbin Baptist Church, recalls her experience at Clear Creek Springs summer camp:

"Traveling to Clear Creek Baptist Camp in 1948 was not an ideal trip. The weather was hot. The roads were dusty, the car had no air conditioning and the trip took an entire day from Evarts. J.S. Aiken was the pastor of Evarts Baptist, and his daughter was my very best friend. She encouraged me to go to summer camp. She was about 14 and I was about 12.

"When we got to Pineville, I began to feel much better. Then we had to turn off the main road onto another long, dusty, gravel road to the camp. The scenery was beautiful, but the eye of the beholder was much too homesick to appreciate it.

"After we settled into our dorms and met our counselors, everything seemed to improve. We stayed busy with arts and crafts, Bible study and services in the meeting hall each evening. The best part of the day was our free time and swimming in the creek that was so cold.

"The dorm was extremely drab. Above our bunk beds hung a naked light bulb that glared when turned on. In the center of the room and at

the end of the rows of beds, there was a wash stand with a tin pan to catch cold water from only one faucet. We had a bucket and dipper for drinking.

"One morning while I was at the wash stand, my counselor asked me if I had ever accepted Christ as my personal Savior. I still react with the same thrill I had then. No one had ever spoken to me directly about being saved, although I had been brought up in the church. So, around 6:30 that summer morning I accepted Christ.

"The entire camp became brighter! I couldn't wait to share my experience with my friends. Neither could I wait to get home—not because of being homesick, but wanting to share with them my salvation. That night in the large meeting hall, I walked forward on the invitation to make my profession public.

Today, whenever I have the opportunity to visit the college, I always think that I should remove my shoes, for surely I am standing on holy ground."

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

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

BOOKS

Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America. Ron Sider. Baker Book House, 1999. 266 pages. \$11.99. ♦♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

For nearly three decades, Ron Sider has challenged the social ethics of Christians. His consistent call has been to care for the people on the margin of society as much as Jesus did.

In "Just Generosity" Sider provides a detailed analysis of the condition of those in poverty in America. In usual Sider style, there are plenty of charts and statistics. Sider's focus is on the structural inequities of the current welfare system and the condition of the poor people who must navigate it.

After his thoughtful analysis, Sider provides a stimulating section he titles, "A Holistic Biblical Vision for Empowering the Poor." Here he provides the biblical foundation for justice and proposes a comprehensive strategy for cooperation between government, business, the faith community and educational institutions. Sider contends there is a necessary role for each.

In the third part, Sider takes on the role of poverty policy strategist. He proposes detailed corrections of current policy and offers entirely new policies. Sider's suggestions do not put him in any one political camp. His guiding principle is justice, and this leads him to challenge every political perspective.

Guiding the book is Sider's passion to put Christian faith into practice. Sider calls for nothing less than a spiritual transformation of America—both people in poverty and those who have the resources to end it. In an election year, Sider's book should be required reading for all Christians so we may get beyond political rhetoric and consider how best to respond to our neighbors like Jesus did. *Wayne Hager*

A Journey Toward Servant Leadership: The Learning of Love. William Turner with Delane Chappell. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000. 173 pages. \$20. ♦♦♦♦

William Turner comes from a family of major American industrialists. His grandfather, W.C. Bradley, founded two major corporations. When Turner was a young boy, his grandfather anointed him to head the family's empire. Turner, who is the former chairman of the W.C. Bradley Company, lives in Columbus, Ga., and is chairman of the executive committee of Synovus Financial Corporation, treasurer of the Bradley-Turner Foundation, chairman of the Pastoral Institute and an active Methodist layman.

"A Journey Toward Servant Leadership" is Turner's personal testimony about how his faith in God has directed the way he led several highly successful corporate enterprises. The book chronicles the influences on his life from his childhood to the present, each chapter describing particular stages or movements of his life.

Yet, Turner hopes to do more than simply tell his life story. He hopes to pass along a view of servant leadership he believes is not only biblical, but achievable in today's corporate culture. He is particularly proud of the fact that as a direct result of the leadership principles he advocates, Fortune Magazine named Synovus Corporation "The Best Place to Work in America."

The true strength of this book is not in the writing or in the pithy little "Thoughts While Passing Through" that conclude most chapters. The potency is in the story itself. I was impressed with the degree to which Turner, sometimes more successfully than others, attempts to live every facet of his life as a con-

sistent witness to the "spirit-filled love" of God. *Jim Holladay*

The Myth of Christian America; What You Need to Know About the Separation of Church and State. Mark Weldon Whitten. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1999. 122 pages. \$12. ♦♦♦♦

The presidential primary season already has shown that religion still plays a part in American politics.

For Baptists, one of the most important issues of religion is the issue of church-state separation. But there appears to be more confusion about this topic now than at any recent time. In this book, Mark Whitten presents a well-reasoned and carefully researched study of church-state separation.

Whitten explodes the idea that America was established to be a "Christian" nation. He also rejects the idea of a "secular America," devoid of the influence of any religion. Whitten encourages us to seek a nation which is the result of the checks and balances of both of these views. What Whitten really does is explore the tension that always has existed between those who advocate absolute separation and those who espouse unlimited free exercise of religion. He does so with cases from the Supreme Court and the writings of political leaders and interpreters throughout our history. Whitten calls for wisdom in this and other areas of political disagreement. His wisdom is embracing a creative and constructive tension between the extremes on either side of the issue. He says we do not have to choose between the two, but can, and must, live with both.

At points in the opening chapters, Whitten's argument against the myth of a Christian America is so strong that he, in all likelihood, will lose you if you

hold this view of American history. But if you will stick with him, you will see he is not embracing a liberal or a conservative position, but rather a thoroughly Baptist one. *Wayne Hager*

The Micah Mandate: Balancing the Christian Life. George Grant. Cumberland House, 1999. 256 pages. \$10.95. ♦

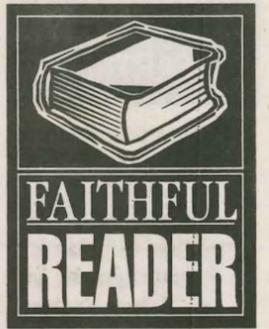
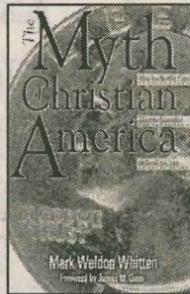
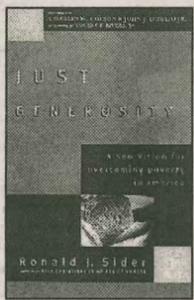
I really wanted to like this book. For most of my life, Micah 6:8 has provided an outline for directing my walk with God. To discover a book devoted to revealing the dimensions of this deceptively simple verse was not only a rarity, but held promise for stimulating reading during Lent.

Unfortunately, George Grant's book was a huge disappointment. He took a verse, which describes the richness of one's walk with God, and turned it into a ponderous prescription for "balancing the Christian life."

Grant's intention is admirable. He proposes to examine Micah 6:8 by means of a word study on the three key concepts: justice, mercy and humility. Then he hopes to demonstrate how the "Micah mandate" can help us heal a fractured culture and a fractured church by restoring a sense of balance in the spiritual life of God's people.

Occasionally Grant offers a stimulating insight, such as when he states that God "does not require a gift. Instead, He requires the giver." On the whole, however, these points were few and far between, lost in the constant social criticism. His writing style is too ponderous for the subject matter.

I was so disappointed that I stopped reading the book halfway through and skimmed the rest. And that's too bad, because the subject matter deserved better. *Jim Holladay*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C., and Jim Holladay, pastor of Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville. Holladay and Hager welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: docholladay@junio.com or jwhager@surry.net

Three new Bibles seek to reclaim heritage of African biblical characters

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Biblical characters are a familiar part of the lexicon of American pop culture, surfacing in everything from catch phrases ("What Would Jesus Do?") to animation ("The Prince of Egypt").

Less well-known are some other characters from the Bible.

African characters.

Like Rahab, the woman who hid the spies Joshua sent into Canaan, an ancestor of both King David and Jesus.

Like Apollos, an evangelist who worked alongside Paul in Corinth.

And Hagar, the slave who bore Abraham's son, Ishmael.

Or Zipporah, the wife of Moses.

"It's important for blacks to see black culture doesn't start with the slave trade," said Cain Hope Felder, professor of New Testament language and literature at Howard University's divinity school in Washington, D.C.

"Many blacks have long believed they have been born with no significant history traceable back to biblical days, but black civilization goes all the way back to ancient

Greece, ancient Rome and the ancient Nile valley," Felder said. "We're a part of the biblical story."

In the past year and a half, three Bibles highlighting the role of Africans in biblical history have hit bookstores—the "African American Jubilee Bible," the "Children of Color Storybook Bible" and, most recently, the "Women of Color Study Bible" released in January.

Readers are thirsty for more, said Mel Banks, founder and president of Nia Publishing, which co-published the "Women of Color Study Bible" along with World Bible Publishers.

Those three works joined a growing field of Bibles shining the spotlight on the black presence in biblical history. "The African American Heritage Family Bible" appeared in 1996, following "The Children of Color Holy Bible," the "African-American Devotional Bible" and "The Original African Heritage Study Bible."

"We're just now producing African American Bible scholars—male and female—who can go to the texts themselves and see how we have been excluded," said Felder, who earned a

doctoral degree in biblical languages and literature at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary. Felder is also editor of the "African American Jubilee Legacy Bible" which debuts this month. "If a person wants a story told, they have to tell it themselves. We ourselves had to write the scholarly literature."

Weaving lessons in ancient and modern black history among Scripture, the Bibles are as much historical education as spiritual edification, offering maps of biblical Africa and articles on a range of topics from the history of black denominations to the martyrdom of ancient African Christians and stories of black women who preached in the United States and Europe during slavery.

"In the 'Jubilee Bible' we included articles that correct some of the misinterpretations of Old Testament texts, particular the text of Ham which legitimated for some in the white community the institution of slavery," said Fred Allen, who helped compile the "African American Jubilee Bible." "We included other articles that were about the schisms in the predominantly white

churches that led to the birth of black denominations.

Bibles such as the "Jubilee Bible" and the "Women of Color Bible" not only educate readers about a long-neglected past, they also play an important role in bolstering readers' sense of self as they encounter a part of African and black

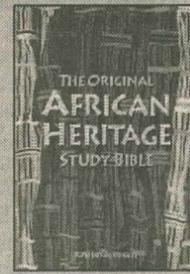
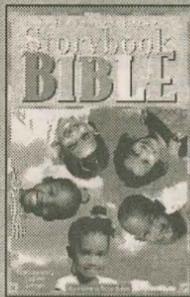
American history never taught in the classroom, said Diane Ritzie, editor of the "Jubilee Bible."

"We wanted to reconnect today's young people with the strength and beauty of their foremothers and forefathers," she said.

That new-found sense of self can be a powerful agent of change, Felder said. "Many people have put down the holy Koran and picked up the Bible because they could see themselves for the first time in the biblical story."

People of black ancestry are not the only ones who can benefit from discovering the black presence in the Bible, he added.

"This Bible will not just help blacks, but everybody who is ignorant of black culture and civilization," said Felder. "We want to celebrate the fact that we all have a place in the ancient story."



PEOPLE

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ Missionaries Doug and Karen Lehman, the newest members of the team working with the Wazaramo people in Tanzania. The Lehmans currently are studying the people's language and culture.

■ A string of recent church plants along the eastern edge of the Dodoma region of Tanzania that were started through the efforts of Tanzanian pastors.

■ Misty Arkebauer, a missionary journeyman working with missionary Susan Carison in student ministry in Warsaw, Poland. Arkebauer arrived in Poland this month.

■ A couple to work with youth in a multi-cultural setting in Winthrop, Mass. Dick May is the church planter in Winthrop.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ ALEXANDRIA—Area Baptist churches will host the John Jacobs Power Team crusade April 12-16, 7 p.m. nightly at Campbell County Middle School. For information, call **Charles Overton**, pastor of Pleasant Ridge Church, (606) 635-3077.

■ CADIZ—Oak Grove Church called **Michael Jones** as pastor.

■ COLD SPRING—Cold Spring First Church hosted a reception for **Charles and Gwendell Mitchell** in celebration of 50 years of marriage and ministry. They were given a trip to the Holy Land. Mitchell is minister of pastoral care. **Larry Davis** is pastor.

■ LEXINGTON—Central Church called **David Adams** as minister of education and youth. Gerard Howell is senior minister.

■ LOUISVILLE—Broadway Church will host a stress management seminar featuring **Lynn Gant** March 26, 5:30 p.m. For supper reservations and/or child care, call (502) 895-2459. **Ron Higdon** is pastor.

Carlisle Avenue Church will hold revival services April 9-12 with **Hershael York** as evangelist. For infor-

mation, call (502) 897-3872. **Shawn Merithew** is pastor.

Shively Church will host a women's health fair April 8, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. For registration information, call (502) 367-9155 by April 3. **Mark Howell** is pastor.

■ PADUCAH—Friendship Church called **Jason Brown** as pastor beginning March 12. Browning previously served as pastor in Du Quoin, Ill.

■ PROVIDENCE—Second Church called **Fred Harrison** as pastor beginning March 12.

■ WEST PADUCAH—Harmony Church called **Thomas Starks** as pastor. Starks previously served in Dexter.

■ WHITESBURG—First Church will hold revival services March 26-29, 7 p.m. nightly with **Bill Combs** as evangelist. **Tony Brown** is pastor.

■ WILLIAMSBURG—The home of **Keith Decker**, director/coordinator of CedaRidge ministry, was destroyed by fire March 16. The South Union-Mt. Zion Baptist Association is collecting a love offering at Box 432, Williamsburg, KY 40769.

Family of daughter taken for abortion settles lawsuit with school officials

PHILADELPHIA (RNS)—The parents who charged that a Pennsylvania public school guidance counselor helped their daughter get a secret abortion have settled their lawsuit with him and the school district.

The American Center for Law and Justice, which represented Howard and Marie Carter of the Philadelphia suburb of Hatboro, announced the settlement March 15.

Under the terms of the settlement, the Hatboro-Horsham School District will issue a directive declaring that school district employees cannot encourage students to get an abortion or help them obtain an abortion.

In their lawsuit, the parents had charged that their daughter, then 17, was assisted by guidance counselor William Hickey in getting an abortion in New Jersey. Pennsylvania law required consent of a parent or a judicial exemption for a minor to undergo an abortion while New Jersey did not require parental consent.

"We are very pleased with the outcome of this case and are confident that this settlement agreement

will prevent future occurrences of the outrageous conduct exhibited by school officials that was the basis of our lawsuit," said John Stepanovich, senior regional counsel for the ACLJ.

Stepanovich said he hopes the new policy will "protect other families from having a pro-abortion government wedge driven between parent and child at the time they need each other most."

As part of the settlement agreement, Hickey and the school district agreed to pay the Carters \$20,000. The settlement states that the payment "shall not be construed as an admission of wrongdoing by defendants."

The Carters, whose daughter graduated from high school in June 1999, said in a statement that they hope their now-settled lawsuit will help other families.

"If even one girl is encouraged to turn to her parents instead of a New Jersey abortion clinic—and if even one baby lives because of this policy—then it was worth the fight," they said.

CLASSIFIED ADS

NEEDED: Join mission team returning to rural mountain village in Ecuador, July 19-31. Seeking dentists, optometrists, physicians, translators and laborers. Contact Tim Scott at (606) 223-7441 or doctimscott@hotmail.com.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Corbin seeks a full-time minister of music to give leadership to a comprehensive church music ministry. We are seeking a candidate who is creative in worship planning, compassionate in pastoral care and competent in vocal and instrumental church music to serve on a ministry team of three full-time staff members. Our worship follows the Christian calendar, and our music style may be described as predominantly traditional with a history of appreciation for variety and creativity. Our current music program consists of an adult choir, a graded choir program and a handbell choir. FBC is affiliated with both the CBF and the SBC. The successful candidate will possess a graduate degree in music from an accredited university or ministry, as well as commensurate experience. To apply, send resumé to: Lynne Robinson Huff, Music Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 401 North Laurel, Corbin, KY 40701.

SEEKING: Main Street Baptist Church of Alexandria, Ky., seeks full-time minister of youth/recreation. For job description and salary info, please call (606) 635-5725. Please send resumé to: Youth Search Team, Main Street Baptist Church, 306 West Main St., Alexandria, KY 41001.

SEEKING: Rineyville Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of pastoral care and music. Church is located in a rapidly growing rural community five miles west of Elizabethtown. Direct all correspondence and inquiries to RBC, PO Box 197, Rineyville, KY 60162, or Rineyville Baptist@msn.com.

SEEKING: Part-time activities assistant. Dependable, compassionate individual to assist in implementing recreational program. Apply in person: Meadowview Health & Rehab Center, 9701 Whipps Mill Road, Louisville. (502) 426-2778.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for First Twelve Mile Baptist Church, California, Ky. (eight miles south of Alexandria). Send resume to Linda Winkler, 8 Raintree Drive, Melbourne, KY 41059-9612.

SEEKING: Part-time children's minister for Farmdale Baptist Church, 5610 U.S. Highway 127 South, Frankfort, Ky. If you feel God is calling you to this area to work with children, send resumé to: Ms. Bryan, 530 Alfa Drive, Frankfort, KY 40601.

SEEKING: Resumés are currently being sought for position of pastor. Please send resumé to: Edgewood Baptist Church, 212 Sanderson Drive, Hopkinsville, KY 42240, Attn: Search Committee. Fax to (270) 886-7359, or e-mail to edbc@commandnet.net.

SEEKING: Executive director. Ministries United in South Central Louisville (MUSCL) is currently accepting applications for its executive director's position. Bachelor's degree with experience is required; MSW or MDiv is preferred. Experience in administration and working with a board is helpful. Position requires someone able to work with a diverse population. Duties include: planning, designing and implementing programs; networking with community churches, business and civic groups and governmental organizations; supervising and supporting staff; acting as liaison with funding sources and administering grants. Salary is \$25,000 to \$27,000 plus benefits. Interested applicants need to send a resumé to: MUSCL Search Committee, 1207 Hart Ave., Louisville, KY 40213. Deadline for submission is April 1, 2000.

SEEKING: Bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Search Committee, West Covington Baptist Church, 1003 Highway Ave., Covington, KY 41011.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth and music to guide the youth ministry and overall music ministry. Send cover letter and resumé to: FBC of St. Charles, 136 Stoddert Ave., Waldorf, MD 20602, Attn: MYM Search.

SEEKING: Full-time staff member to work with music, youth and children in growing church. Dry Ridge is in a growing area and has great potential in all three of these areas. A church patronage is available if desired, and salary will be determined by experience, qualifications and need. If you are interested, please inquire by telephone: (606) 824-5501 or 824-9229, or send resumé to: Dry Ridge Baptist Church, 19 Broadway, PO #14, Dry Ridge, KY 41035.

SEEKING: Individuals with secretarial experience and computer application skills to work in temporary services. Contact: Administrative Services Dept., Kentucky Baptist Convention, Louisville, Ky. Phone: (502) 244-6468.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music and youth. Please send resumé to: First Baptist Church, PO Box 506, Hindman, KY 41822, Attn: Search Committee.

SEEKING: Pastor of lay ministries and pastoral care to coordinate, supervise and provide leadership and encouragement to all lay ministries of the church. Also, to provide training and serve as a resource for ministries whose responsibilities are to provide care for those with various spiritual, emotional and physical needs. Send resumé with references to: Personnel Committee, Living Hope Baptist Church, 1805 Western Ave., Bowling Green, KY 42104. For church profile: www.lhbg.org.

SEEKING: FBC, Bronston, Ky., is prayerfully seeking applications for pastor. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, FBC, 401 Highway 790, Bronston, KY 42518.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music and education. Comprehensive benefits package. Experience preferred but not mandatory. Send resumé to: Pleasant View Baptist Church, 1834 U.S. 70E, Morganton, NC 28655, or fax to (828) 437-2103.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor. Send resumé to: Piney Grove Baptist Church, PO Box 1563, Corbin, KY 40701, Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time secretary/office assistant. Self-starter to assist with desktop publishing (newsletters, flyers, brochures, programs, etc.) and other clerical work. Responsible for bulk mailings several times a year. Salary plus benefits (health and life insurance, retirement). Knowledge of Southern Baptist churches helpful. Send resumé and samples of publishing work to: Brenda Price, Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, PO Box 436569, Louisville, KY 40253-6569.

SEEKING: Allen/Monroe Association has an opening for director of missions. Resumés will be accepted until April 1. Please send resumé to: Doug Cain, 3541 Finney Road, Glasgow, KY 42141.

DIRECTORY: One of America's most respected church directory companies is now offering a professionally done pictorial directory for your church that allows you to keep your membership roll, pictures, committees and other information in one book, and it can be kept up-to-date. For more information, call Jim Hensley at (800) 500-6526, ext. 777.

FOR SALE: RENA DA 300 direct address printer (top-of-the-line in barcode printers). Like new. \$800. Call the Temperance League of Kentucky at (502) 635-0002.

Church building-turned-bar once again a place of hope

ALTOONA, Pa. (BP)—Every time Paul Johnson steps inside the small brick building of Eighteenth Street Community Church in Altoona, Pa., it is a reminder of God's saving grace.

Years ago, the neon-lit bar that formerly occupied the building was a favorite stopping place for Johnson at the end of the day, within walking distance between his home and work.

Most everyone in the small, western Pennsylvania factory town knew the building originally had been a church named for St. Barnabas, as evidenced by its cornerstone from the early 1900s.

Other than the cornerstone, the building seemingly had no reminders of its religious heritage. That is, until Johnson became a Christian and uncovered some long-standing secrets.

One day while standing outside the local community center, two blocks down from the bar, Johnson encountered a pastor who challenged him to get his life together.

"I cursed him," Johnson recalled, "but his words stuck in my mind. I went to his church to see if he was on the level. And there he was, preaching the Word. I felt bad because of what I had done, but I felt good because his words were speaking to my heart."

Johnson became a Christian and cleaned up his life. He still stopped by the bar on his way home—not to drink, but to pray.

Standing outside, he placed his hands on the cornerstone of the building and prayed for the people he knew inside to find new life in Christ like he had. He prayed that the building one day would be a church again where the down-and-out could find hope.

The radical change in Johnson's life attracted the attention of many people in the bar who saw him praying outside, including the owner, who gave Johnson the building when the bar closed down. Johnson's prayers were answered.

The neon Miller Lite sign in the front window came down, and one flashing the message "Jesus Loves You" went up.

Inside, renovation eliminated the bar area and opened up space for seating. In the process, workers uncovered something that made them stare in amazement. Behind the layer of wall paneling where the bar counter had been was a set of stained glass windows, perfectly intact along the length of the wall.

"It was nothing short of a miracle—a sign from God," Johnson said.

"I had been coming here for years, sitting at this bar and, unknowing, facing the stained glass windows of a church," Johnson said. "Once the Lord opened my eyes to see what the church had looked like before, it made me know all the more it could be a church again."

The building's stint as a bar has opened the door for the church to minister to the needy in the community. Johnson tells passersby still expecting

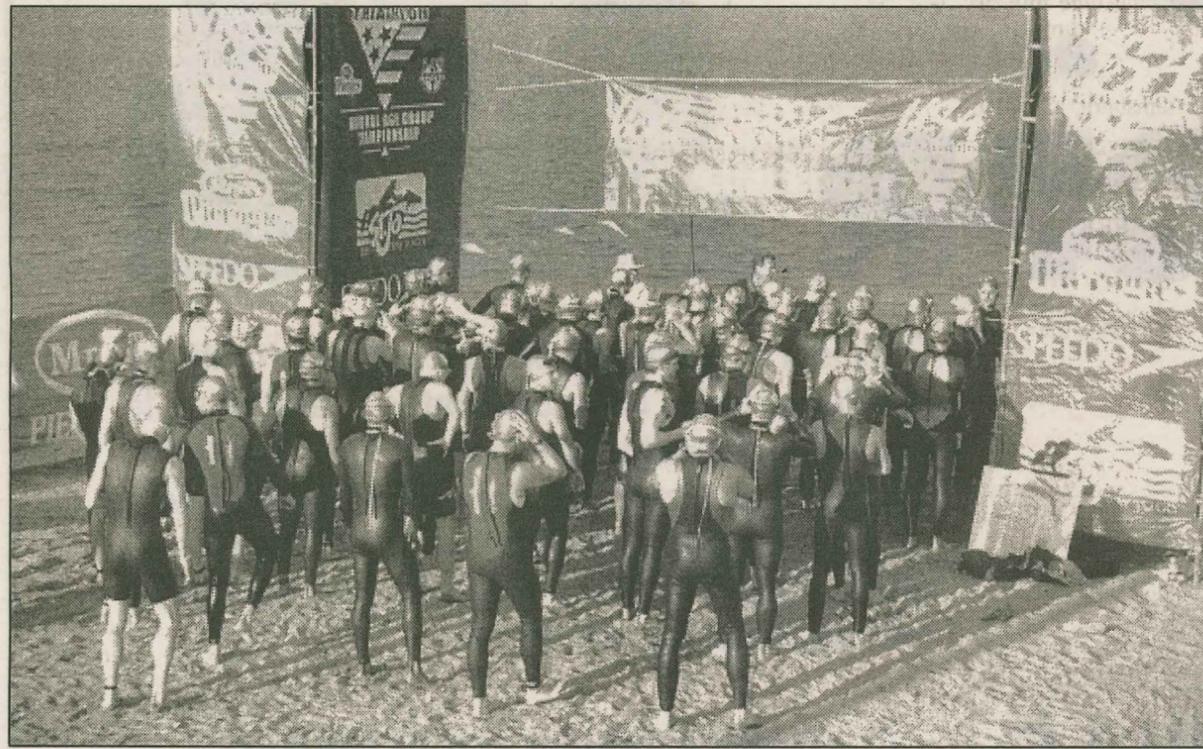
to see a bar there that the location now offers the "new wine" of life in Christ.

After he became a Christian, Johnson started preaching to a group gathered in Altoona's Penn Alto Hotel, which had deteriorated into a center of crime and disrepair. Johnson reached out to the homeless and jobless, those with drug addictions and prison records, letting them know they were never too far gone to receive God's grace.

The hotel congregation, now organized as Eighteenth Street Community Church, is a mission of First Southern Baptist Church of Altoona. The church has formed a ministry to help people with drug and alcohol problems.

"The Lord challenged us and we challenged the people that God would raise a church out of this ministry," Johnson said. "People have told those we minister to that they can't make anything out of themselves, but we say you can be what God wants you to be. I'm a prime example of that."

The neon Miller Lite sign in the front window came down, and one flashing the message "Jesus Loves You" went up.



MINISTRY FIELD Triathletes wait for the start of the swim race during this year's U.S. National Championship, held in Clermont, Fla. First Baptist Church of Clermont is planning a ministry to athletes. (BP photo)

Church reaches out to triathlete community

CLERMONT, Fla. (BP)—The central Florida town of Clermont is emerging as an international destination for triathletes, and First Baptist Church of Clermont already is planning to minister internationally without leaving home.

A triathlon is a race that includes three disciplines: swimming, cycling and running.

Already the site of more than seven triathlons yearly, Clermont soon will be home to the USA Triathlon National Training Center. The center is moving from the Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center after the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia.

Florida Baptist layman Jeff Duke is director of the center and is overseeing its construction on a 155-acre site. The campus will include the new South Lake Hospital, community education center, aquatic complex, athlete dormi-

raries and fitness center, in more than 100,000 square feet of facilities.

"Central Florida is an ideal location for races because of the topography of the region," Duke explained. "Also, even though central Florida is a world tourist destination, Clermont is in a rural area and provides the space we need."

The national championship and the world championship qualifying triathlons have been held in Clermont and almost every race draws more than 1,000 competitors.

Most races are held on Sunday mornings, with the awards presented after the event. While waiting on the official results, athletes usually recover from the grueling events on the shore of Lake Minneola.

First Baptist Church, of which Duke is a member, has formed a team that plans to minister during the lull between

the race and awards ceremony.

"We want to have live music, refreshments and testimonies in a relaxed, casual atmosphere," said Pastor Danny Davis. "We want it to be a celebration."

The new ministry has international implications because the rapidly emerging sport is the only major sport without an organized Christian ministry.

Duke moved to Clermont three years ago from Tallahassee, Fla., where he served on the staff of Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He said he's excited about the possibilities presented by the new ministry, and he has found a kindred spirit in his pastor.

"When I first talked with Danny about this, I told him that this might have to happen at 11 a.m. on Sunday, exactly during church," Duke said. "His first words were, 'That's OK. Where do you think Jesus would be?' That is unbelievably thrilling."

Church lets light shine while neighbors want to pull the plug

By Stacey Hamby & Art Toalston
Missouri Word & Way & Baptist Press

ST. CHARLES, Mo. (BP)—First Baptist Church of Harvester in St. Charles, Mo., is letting its light shine, stirring varying reactions.

Since last spring, three 4,000-watt white beams have shot into the nighttime sky, merging at the top as a "steeple of light."

"It's like a spire that any church would have to call attention to the fact that this is a house of God—except that ours is a light," said Ron Beckner, First Baptist's associate pastor for education. "We use it as a representation of the Trinity—one beam each for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are one in God."

The church received approval from the planning commission of the local jurisdiction, the city of St. Peters, and from the Federal Aviation Administration before installing the lights on the roof of its new atrium. Some neighbors nevertheless have complained that the light interferes with their view of the stars.

The light shines from dusk to midnight four nights a week, when the church has activities.

Apart from complaints, Beckner said, the overwhelming response has been positive.

"It's become a point of identification for us in the community," he said. "People say to us, 'You go to the church with the light.' Or they pull into our parking lot just to look at the light."

Some area residents, however, have taken their complaints to city officials. "We've received about five to 10 complaints," St. Peters director of planning and development Julie Powers said. "We've also received calls from people who say it's a good thing."

Powers sent a letter to the church asking for the light to be restricted to two nights a week.

The church responded saying they will continue to do what they originally said, she said, "and that is operate it on the nights of services."

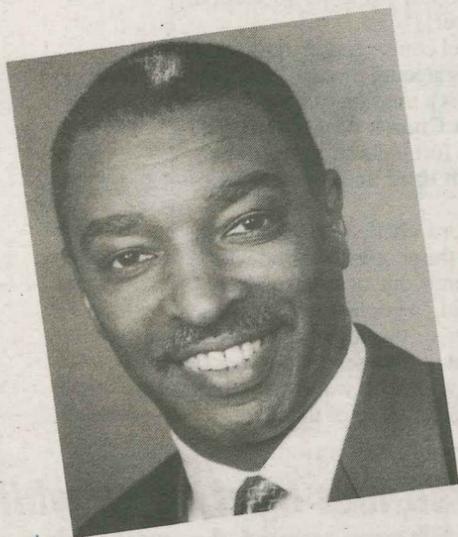
Beckner noted, "We are following our agreements with the city and the FAA, but if, for example, there's a reason not to have the light on so people can see a meteor shower or an eclipse, then we'd be happy to turn it off."

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1 John 3:16



Buster Soaries

and

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Dr. Soaries is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Lincoln Gardens, New Jersey. His progressive ministry has helped the church increase in membership by 3,500 people. The church is now one of the fastest growing African-American churches in the United States.

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