


PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING
WESTERN RECORDER

January 16, 2001
Vol. 175, No. 2

FOR THE RECORD

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Do you have the time it takes to help your church make changes?

By Shannon Baker
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—Leading a church to change requires a slow pace and a long-term commitment from staff, two pastors recently told a group of seminary students.

"You must go slow," said Hal Mayer, co-pastor of Flamingo Road Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. "You will kill a church if you are transitioning too quickly."

Mayer and co-pastor Dan Southerland lead a church that grew from 300 people in attendance to more than 2,500 people. The church also established or helped plant 21 missions, resulting in more than 7,500 people attending 22 congregations.

Speaking together at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the two described changes at their church and offered seven ideas to help pastors and church leaders seeking to help a church change.

"If you don't have time to transition a church over four to five years, then do not lead that church," Southerland said. "It is immoral to lead change and then leave the church."

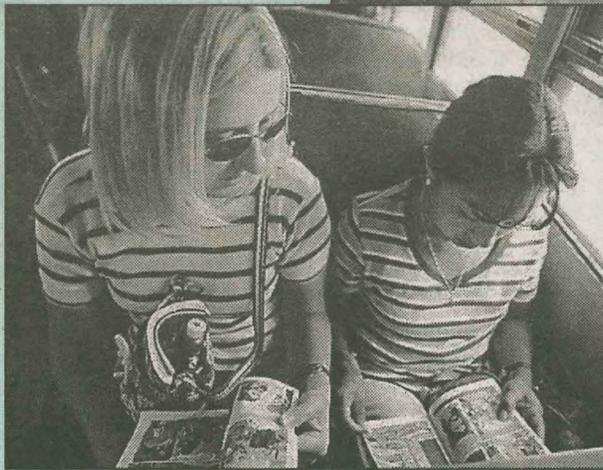
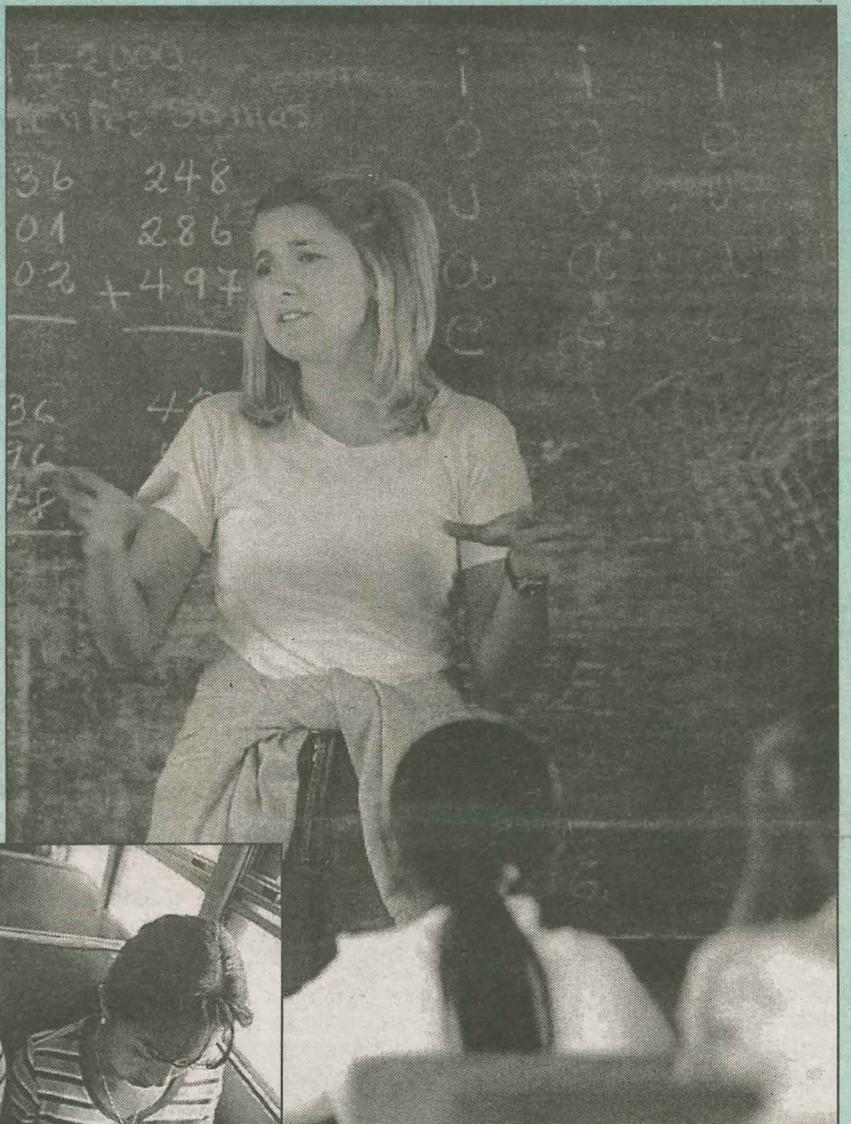
Because he knew it would take time to change the church's dynamics, Southerland said he made a 20-year commitment to Flamingo Road after more than six months in prayer.

Most staff people don't stay
□ See *Pastors: Changing ...*, page 6

Guatemalan gospel

Crystal Hensley, a native of Smith, in Southeast Kentucky, is serving as a two-year Southern Baptist missionary to Guatemala. ■ **Right:** Hensley volunteers several mornings each week teaching morals classes in small schools where overworked teachers love the help.

■ **Below:** In afternoons she takes the bus to remote neighborhoods where she shares the gospel door-to-door. The parents often are willing to listen when their children recognize Hensley as their teacher. On the ride, she sits with Guatemalan missionary Shení Orozco and they read the "Understandable Bible" together. Missionaries developed the Bible translation as a comic book, written on the third grade level, when they learned that many families had a Catholic Bible but could not read it. (International Mission Board photos by Denise McGill)



Missionaries: Yugoslavia's changes create ministry opportunities

By Brittany Jarvis
SBC International Mission Board

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (BP)—Yugoslavia's turbulent change in government has created new missions opportunities as well as the need for new missionaries, according to officials with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

In late September, Yugoslav citizens voted out strongman Slobodan Milosevic as president, replacing him with Vojislav Kostunica. When Milosevic balked at leaving office, the resulting demonstrations left political buildings charred.

Kostunica's new government has aligned itself with the Orthodox Church, but it also appears to be extending more religious freedom to Baptist work, said Southern Baptist missionary Ben Hanna.

"There is an urgent need for missionaries to move to Serbia to share the love of Christ and see churches started," Hanna said.

Most of the missionaries' work among the Serbs currently takes the form of prayer. Hanna reports that prayer-walking teams from Bosnia are interceding for God's work in Serbia. An extensive prayer network also has been established to pray that barriers to the gospel be removed.

"True change will come when believers cover the land with prayer and love," Hanna said.

In March 1999, Milosevic "led Serbia into its fourth war in a decade and the worst economy in Europe," Hanna said. "We cried as we saw NATO bombs fall around our friends and fellow believers on Easter Sunday."

When the smoke cleared, Serbia was scarred from 30,000 bombing sorties in eight days. During the bombing, Southern Baptist workers distrib-

uted food to the region's most needy people.

"The aid told the believers there, 'We love you. We have not forgotten you,'" Hanna said.

After the fighting, Southern Baptists continued to meet the needs of Serbia through three relief projects. In one project, emergency food and stoves were given to more than 3,400 families. The Baptist church in Nis distributed food packets and stoves provided by the IMB. The church saw worship attendance grow from 70 to more than 600.

Texas Baptist Men also have pitched in by committing to provide 10,000 winter coats for children.

Those acts of love are changing popular opinion about Baptists in the country. The government used to hold

a cautious opinion of Baptists, which was fueled by anti-Baptist propaganda produced by Orthodox Church leaders.

Hanna said many Serbs equated Baptists with Bill Clinton, whom they blamed for the bombing of Yugoslavia.

And after living for numerous years under dictatorial rule, the people of Serbia are suspicious of any promises of hope.

"They don't put much stock in words, having had 50 years of communist rule, followed by a decade of lies and broken promises," Hanna said.

But as missionaries minister, Serbians are seeing that Christians and Baptists offer more than just empty promises, according to Jim Brown, a human needs consultant for the IMB.

"People are coming to realize who Baptists are, that Baptists care and Baptists want to share the love of Jesus with folks," Brown said.

□ More stories on page 7.

Baptists in Belgrade

Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, January 17

BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **LifeWay church division reorganizes.** Seeking to strengthen partnerships between churches and LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, LifeWay's church resources division is undergoing extensive restructuring. The division will be organized into four areas: church relations, solutions, capabilities and organizational performance. The leaders of the four major areas and nine groups will assume their new responsibilities in the coming months, with full implementation scheduled for Oct. 1, according to division president Gene Mims.

■ **Seminary launches collegiate ministry track.** Trustees of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary have approved a new ministry degree track for campus ministers. The master of divinity collegiate ministry track, an accredited three-year degree, includes a final year of study engaged in ministry on a college campus. The program is similar to the school's master of divinity church ministry track. "It's one thing to talk about ministry," noted Steve Lemke, seminary provost. "It's another thing to learn how to do it."

■ **Pastors.com expands Internet staff.** In an effort to serve 150,000 pastors in 117 countries, Pastors.com has hired web industry experts Dave Thoma and Mike Duggan. Thomas is Pastors.com's new director of interactive services and Duggan is director of technical services. The Web site was founded by Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Lake Forest, Calif., to train and support pastors, missionaries and other ministers around the world.

■ **Iowa Baptists elect executive director.** Jimmy Barrentine, leader of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention mission ministries team since 1991, has been elected executive director of the Baptist Convention of Iowa. Barrentine, elected Jan. 6 by the Iowa convention's executive board, will begin serving March 1. He previously served as a pastor, director of missions and international missionary to Paraguay. Barrentine succeeds Wyndell Jones who will retire at the end of March.

■ **Pennsylvania/South Jersey leader dies.** Henry Nash, president of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, died recently at age 62. Nash, an African-American pastor, was cited by convention leaders for his work among minorities. Nash was serving his second one-year term as convention president.

You know you belong to a mega-church when ...



Roberts elected Midwestern president

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP)—Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees have unanimously chosen Phil Roberts, an academician who specializes in missions and evangelism strategies, as fourth president of the Southern Baptist seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

Roberts, 50, is a native of Danville. A graduate of Georgetown College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, he will begin his job in mid-February.

His election at a called trustee meeting Jan. 8-9 concludes an almost 16-month search for a new leader following the forced termination of former President Mark Coppenger over conflict with faculty and administrative staff that trustees concluded diminished his ability to lead.

Roberts, who comes to the post from a vice presidency at the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, told trustees he has been a friend of Coppenger's for many years and "was saddened by the events that led to his departure" but is honored to succeed him.

"I believe seminaries are the lifeblood of the denomination," he said. "We value those who are bivocational and lay pastors, but in the final analysis, those who take seriously theological education and commit themselves to it are the ones that rise to the surface in leadership."

Roberts said he first met with the search committee nearly a year ago and then again in October. He and his wife prayed about accepting the position

over Thanksgiving and agreed to allow his nomination. "We have increasingly felt step-by-step that this is indeed God's will for us," he told trustees.

Board chairman Carl Weiser, pastor of Hyland Heights Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., also chaired the seven-member search committee that unanimously recommended Roberts. "The one thing on my heart and the search committee's was that we find God's man," Weiser said.



Roberts

Speaking with reporters after his election, Roberts described theological education as "an extension of the Great Commission."

The president-elect said he will continue the seminary's traditional emphasis on classical theological education, while also involving students in hands-on evangelism and missions experience.

He said he plans to teach courses, as he has in the past as a visiting professor at Midwestern. "I think it's very important for the president to be in touch with the lives of the students," he said.

Like his predecessor, Roberts holds conservative theological views but hinted that he might be more flexible than Coppenger, who drew criticism for strident attacks on women's ordination and ardent support for Calvinism.

Roberts said he agrees with the Baptist Faith and Message article on election, which he said is definitely not an "Arminian" position. (Arminianism is the school of thought opposing Calvinism.) However, Roberts added he doesn't "have any particular theological agenda" beyond the Baptist Faith and Message.

He also said he agrees with the Baptist Faith and Message view that only males are qualified to serve as pastors in a local church, calling it "the clear teaching of Scripture" and a doctrine shared by most mainstream Christians throughout history.

"I don't think that we have to shut down discussion on it," Roberts said, however, contrasting with an oft-repeated quotation from a Coppenger chapel sermon that labeled women preachers "a raging heresy."

Asked how his administration would handle a student application from a woman who felt strongly that she was called to preach, Roberts speculated that the seminary might "encourage her in her education, but not to be pastor."

Roberts has served since June 1999 as the North American Mission Board's vice president for strategic focus cities. He previously directed the former Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department.

Before that, he was professor of missions and evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., 1989-1994. He also was dean of the theology faculty at the Institute of Biblical Studies in Oradea, Romania. He was pastor of International Baptist Church in Brussels, Belgium, 1985-1989, and worked as an adjunct professor of evangelism at Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium.

He was assistant professor of evangelism at Southern Seminary from 1982 to 1985 and pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Wiesbaden, Germany, 1975-1978.

Roberts is the author of numerous articles and books including "Mormonism Unmasked" and "The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism."

'Memorize to evangelize,' college students urged

By Polly House
Baptist Press

DALLAS (BP)—A student evangelism specialist challenged college students to have God's Word "ready and hidden in your hearts" in order to answer others who ask questions about God or who challenge their beliefs.

Rollin DeLap, national missionary for student evangelism with the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, spoke to approximately 300 college students during a seminar in connection with the DestiNATIONS conference.

DestiNATIONS, meeting in Dallas Jan. 4-7, was a Southern Baptist missions conference jointly sponsored by the state Baptist conventions, LifeWay Christian Resources, the International and North American mission boards and Woman's Missionary Union. Approximately 2,700 people attended the four-day event, including more than 100 students from Kentucky.

Quoting Scripture passages to make his points, DeLap told students that memorizing Scripture is something God told us to do, not something He suggested we do.

"God said to hide the Scripture in your heart," DeLap said. "Memorizing is how we do that."

He asked the college students how

many of them could quote 15 Scripture verses from memory, including book, chapter and verse references. "If you have been a Christian five years," he added, "that would just be memorizing three Scriptures a year."

He challenged the students to begin memorizing one verse a week. "That's not hard to do. It doesn't take long to memorize a verse." He said the key to remembering a verse is reviewing the verse repeatedly.

With a box of 2x3-inch cards DeLap showed the students the verses he has memorized over the past 15 years.

"This is one verse a week, 52 weeks a year, for the past 15 years."

He told the students he was sure most of them had higher IQs than he did, so intelligence is not the most important thing. Rather, he said, most important are desire and commitment.

"We hear on our college campuses that everything is relative. Nothing is absolute," he said. "Listen to that statement. It sounds pretty absolute to me."

People have to decide what they will believe, DeLap said. "You have the Word of God, the absolute truth, available to you. ... There is nothing, absolutely nothing, more dynamic than God's Word."

He said that most Christians he knows want to memorize Scripture, but they fail to do so because they don't

have a plan for following through.

Voddie Baucham, an evangelist from Houston, and director of Voddie Baucham Ministries in Oxford, England, told the students that God has a purpose larger than any one person, but that the Spirit of God allows each Christian to participate in God's plan. Baucham also stressed the importance of taking the gospel to the world.

"It is estimated that there are about 1.8 billion people in the world who have never heard the name of Jesus," he said. "There's a reason that there is an urgency about the gospel, and that reason is that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father unless they come through Him."

In addition to attending seminars, students took part in hands-on mission projects. Taking to the streets of the Dallas and Fort Worth areas, students participated in block parties, trash clean up, surveys and cookouts.

"The thrust of the meeting was getting connected to God's heart so we would have a heart for the nations," said Keith Inman, director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention collegiate ministry department. "It was a reminder that God's heart is for the whole world and we are to be a people on mission."

With additional reporting by Brittany Jarvis

Urban pastor finds a rural fit with Carrollton church

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

CARROLLTON—With a tattoo on his chest and an urban background, pastor Chris White isn't the most likely candidate to spark growth in a small-town, Kentucky Baptist church. But appearances can be deceiving.

Not that the walls of First Baptist Church of Carrollton are bursting at the seams. Sunday school attendance remains static and budget matters still pose a challenge.

But nearly four years after he came to the seat of Carroll County, worship attendance is up about 50 percent. The church has added 70 new members, including 48 by baptism.

Equally significant is a new Wednesday night youth program that attracts up to 100 children and teens, most from non-church families.

Members also have been involved in an after-school reading project, a mentoring program and multiple mission trips throughout the U.S. and Canada since their new pastor arrived.

"Our philosophy is to get as deep into the community as possible," said White, who grew up just north of Chicago in a single-parent home. "I wanted us to be able to go to these places and stand up and live a redemptive life."

That became evident the first week-end of December, when a sixth-grader was accidentally shot by his brother on a hunting trip. Though the family didn't attend First Baptist, White and his staff knew them through school ties and the mentoring program.

When Youth Pastor Jay Montgomery and Music Minister Marvin Kiper—who coach a middle-school football team—showed up at their home that evening, the mother said, "I knew you'd be here."

"I would say a lot of it is long-term involvement in the community," Montgomery said of the growth. "It's taken three to four years to see the fruit of that. The church has gone out to the community."

One of the first steps was into Carrollton Village. Each Monday, up to 10 volunteers visit the apartment complex to help children with reading and homework.

In addition, half a dozen members, including the pastor, visit local schools once a week to mentor students during lunch or reading sessions.

Last summer the Baptist church sponsored its first "Days of Strength," a two-day wilderness camp for 11 fourth- and fifth-grade boys, most from outside the church.

Physical activities like hiking and rock climbing were supplemented with teachings on character. The church held a similar camp for five girls in November, with more than two dozen volunteers helping plan and implement the program.

"There was nothing easy about it," said White. "We had two fights in the boys' camp. But we've also had some of these kids baptized."

Area children also are invited into the church each Wednesday for after-school tutoring and Bible study. That leads to a 5 p.m. dinner, followed by recreation time before the evening pro-

grams for children and youth.

The effort takes so many volunteers that only a handful of adults are left for the mid-week Bible study, which the deacons lead. The pastor and his wife, Jennifer, are occupied teaching Bible stories and crafts to children.

White offered to direct that session after some middle-school students couldn't come on Wednesdays because they were babysitting younger siblings.

Teens in the church also are learning about reaching out. A group known as the "Timothy Team" started visiting a nursing home last year to read the Bible and pray with residents. A year-old praise band is planning to provide music for two youth rallies next spring.

"There's no way we could implement this program without the volunteers," Montgomery said. "Casting the vision and seeing the church full on Wednesday nights is creating a lot of excitement."

This all happened under the direction of a young staff. White is 36 while Montgomery recently turned 31, sandwiched around 35-year-old deacon chairman Roger Unker. Music minister Kiper is the graybeard at 49, but this is only his second church staff position.

Ironically, the senior pastor once contemplated quitting the ministry because of his first experience at a country church in southern Illinois. While the people were friendly, White labeled himself ineffective there, saying he didn't understand church operations or the rural setting.

He felt more at home at a trailer park outreach in LaGrange, where he

was pastor while in seminary. After graduation, he continued with the Rolling Hills Baptist Mission and directed multi-housing ministries for Sulfur Fork Baptist Association.

Working among lower-income people might have been what sparked White's present success, said former deacon chairman Don Garner.

"His main strength is he's willing to go into the districts most ministers won't go into," said Garner, a member since 1963. "He sees no class (distinctions) in the people he works with."

Others see a change in the atmosphere since early 1997.

"I would say it's a happier church," said Harold Hughes, longtime director of the church's Brotherhood. "It's more neighborly now. People get to know each other."

"People seem more excited and fired up, willing to try new things," Unker said. "Chris has taught me that you're never too old to learn about the Lord, and to open yourself up to God and love your family."

But White cautioned that nobody should envision First Baptist as a prosperous, problem-free place. Finances are a continuing battle and so is finding enough volunteers to fill open slots, he said.

Still, the congregation is optimistic about the future, which the pastor credits to prayer and a willingness to reach out and love others.

"Growing up, when a person took an interest in me it made a great difference," he said. "I know the power of one person loving another. We love what we do. It's been a joy."

"I know the power of one person loving another."

Chris White, pastor of First Baptist Church of Carrollton

Faith, Georgetown, cuts ties to SBC

GEORGETOWN—Faith Baptist Church in Georgetown is the latest Kentucky Baptist congregation to cut ties to the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Jan. 7 action capped a six-month process sparked by the SBC's adoption of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement. Members voted 162-13 to delete the SBC from a list of affiliations in the church's constitution.

"We look at this as a symbolic action in a sense," said Pastor Greg Earwood. "The SBC has moved to such a far conservative position that we cannot in good conscience be formally aligned."

Faith Baptist is at least the fourth Kentucky Baptist congregation to move away from SBC involvement since SBC messengers revised the denominational faith statement last June. First Baptist Church of Frankfort, Central Baptist Church in Lexington and Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville took similar action last fall.

A nine-member Kentucky Baptist Convention study committee currently is considering how the KBC should relate to the new faith statement. The committee is scheduled to release its recommendations in October prior to the 2001 KBC annual meeting.

Judge upholds state law requiring informed consent before abortions

LOUISVILLE—An attempt by the American Civil Liberties Union to overturn Kentucky's informed consent abortion law was rejected Jan. 5 by U.S. District Judge John Heyburn.

The 1998 law requires physicians to provide women specific medical and social information about abortion at least 24 hours before performing the procedure.

ACLU attorneys claimed the 24-hour waiting period would be an undue hardship on women seeking an abortion. Kim Greene, an attorney for one of the plaintiffs, said the likelihood of two medical appointments to comply with the 24-hour waiting period "creates hardship for those groups of women who have trouble making one visit to Louisville or Lexington in the first place."

ACLU leaders also opposed the law's provision requiring physicians to pay for state-published pamphlets to be given to the women. The plaintiffs charged the provision violates physicians' First Amendment rights "by compelling them to pay for and distribute ideological speech with which they disagree."

Citing a 1992 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a similar case in Pennsylvania, Heyburn concluded that the Kentucky statute is constitutional.

While "women have a right to choose to have an abortion before viability and to obtain it without the state imposing undue burden," Heyburn ruled that the

plaintiffs "have not shown a greater undue burden on women seeking an abortion in Kentucky" as a result of the 1998 law.

"The state may pass a law aimed at decreasing the number of abortions so long as the law strives to reach this goal by influencing the woman's choice," he wrote, adding that "a waiting period law of this kind had a legitimate purpose and does not strike directly at a woman's right to choose."

Addressing the ACLU's First Amendment argument, Heyburn wrote that "the requirement that physicians pay the cost of the state pamphlets does not offend the First Amendment of the Constitution."

Heyburn's ruling also lifted a stay of the law's enforcement which had been in effect throughout the case.

Greene said ACLU officials were "extremely disappointed in the ruling." She said ACLU leaders have not yet determined whether they will appeal the ruling.

Sen. Katie Stine (R-Fort Thomas), the primary sponsor of the measure when she was a member of the Kentucky House of Representatives, said she is "absolutely ecstatic" about the ruling.

Calling the law "a good consumer safety measure," Stine added, "By learning about abortion and having all the facts, I think ultimately more women may decide not to have this procedure."

BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ **Western Kentucky evangelism conference planned.** Caldwell-Lyon Baptist Association will sponsor the 15th annual Western Kentucky evangelism conference Feb. 5 at Southside Baptist Church in Princeton and the fourth annual youth evangelism conference at Calvary Baptist Church in Princeton. Speakers for the evangelism conference will include Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Tom Atwood, a Mississippi pastor and former professor at Mid Continent College; and youth evangelist Dan Moran. Registration is free for the evangelism conference, which starts at 9:30 a.m. The youth evangelism conference will start at 6 p.m. Last year's youth event drew more than 500 people and resulted in 130 spiritual decisions, according to Director of Missions Rick Reeder. For more information, call Reeder at (270) 365-9919 or Southside Baptist Church at (270) 365-5510.

■ **Dixon writes missions curriculum.** Mike Dixon, vice president for religious life at Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, has written "Leading Baptist Men on Mission," a curriculum from the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. The text touches on such topics as leadership development, forming strategic partnerships and lists resources and how-to guides.

■ **Campbellville recognizes black leaders.** Campbellville University recently honored two Kentucky Baptist pastors for their leadership among African-Americans. Walter Johnson, pastor of Jacob Grover Baptist Church in Summersville, received the first African-American Community Leadership Award. T. Vaughn Walker, pastor of First Gethsemane Baptist Church in Louisville, received the President's Reconciliation Ministry Award. The awards were presented in conjunction with the school's campus dialogue on race.

WESTERN RECORDER

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

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

Western Recorder is published weekly by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253, except for one week in July and December. For general information, call (502) 244-6470. Fax: (502) 244-6474. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

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POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to: Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253.

To register change of address: Send the mailing label from page 1, along with your new address, to the subscription department at the Western Recorder address.

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Cloning Jesus? Beware of Internet hoaxes

By Lacy Thompson
Louisiana Baptist Message

This, you really will not believe—or then again, maybe you will. After all, it came from the Internet, so it must be true, right?

Anyway, an effort apparently is under way to clone Jesus in time for the 2000th anniversary of His birth. Or is it?

The www.clonejesus.com Web site states: "Our intention is to clone Jesus ... by taking an incorrupt cell from one of the many holy relics of Jesus' blood and body that are preserved in churches throughout the world, extracting its DNA and inserting into an unfertilized human egg, through the now-proven biological process called nuclear transfer. The fertilized egg ... will be implanted into the womb of a young virginal woman ... who will then bring the baby Jesus to term in a second Virgin Birth."

The goal is for Jesus to be born on Dec. 25, 2001, the Web site notes. The site offers a post office box address for people to send contributions.

But is the story real or a hoax? Frankly, in the wild, wild setting of the World Wide Web, each person becomes the judge—and that is causing problems.

Consider the following stories, some of which date back to before the Internet, all of which have gained wide and enduring circulation thanks to the Internet.

Are they hoaxes (urban legends) or not? William Shakespeare actually worked on the King James translation of the Bible. This can be confirmed by the clue he placed in Psalm 46. If one counts down 46 words from the start of the passage, the word is "shake." Counting 46 words up from the end of the passage, after dropping the "Selah" phrase, the word is "spear."

What did you decide—true or fake? More importantly, how did you decide? Unfortunately, many people use very low standards for evaluating stories.

For some, it just comes down to who sent it. If it comes from someone they know, then it must be true. If it comes from someone in a position of authority, then it must be true. And if it comes from a Christian group or leader, then it simply has to be true.

As a result, a new term has arisen—Christian urban legends—to refer to circulating stories that have no basis in fact but are used to confirm biblical accounts in some way or to rally Christians to a cause.

However, promoting and perpetuating such "legends" hurts Christian credibility with the world. It threatens to make them look ridiculous and paranoid.

And most importantly, it gives people one more reason to dismiss Christians and refuse to listen to their witness.

That is why it is critical that Christians learn to be discerning, to take the time to think logically about a tale, to make the effort to check facts.

Ironically, the very tool that is providing for the rapid spread of hoaxes

also offers a chance to debunk them. An Internet search provides several Web sites that offer critical looks at hoaxes, including some from a religious perspective.

For instance, upon checking various sites after hearing the above stories, a person would have found that: Apparently, the www.clonejesus.com Web site is religious satire aimed at promoting a book. Indeed, the material presented on the Web site is part of the book.

The story of Shakespeare and the King James Bible raises troubling questions. For instance, is it even possible that biblical scholars would have allowed a playwright to be involved in their work? Also, how does one explain the fact that the Great Bible translation of 1539 (before Shakespeare's time) has the two key words in the exact same position?

The Proctor & Gamble tale has circulated in various forms for years, with no evidence found to substantiate it. Proctor & Gamble also has taken successful legal action against those who insist on perpetuating the story.

The news article quoted in the Harry Potter Internet hoax actually was a spoof story that appeared on a satirical Web site known as The Onion.

Everything in it was fabricated in an attempt to parody the fears some religious groups have voiced about the Harry Potter books. Unfortunately, the article now is being circulated as a genuine news item.

And if you already have mailed your check to the Clone Jesus Project address, maybe you better get to the bank and stop payment now.

Then, make up your mind, once and for all, not to fall for any more unverified tales, new or old—not even the one about the hitchhiker who offers a word of witness to the driver and then vanishes from the moving car—not even if I claim it happened to my cousin's best friend's brother-in-law.

Lacy Thompson is associate editor of the *Louisiana Baptist Message*

COMMENTARY

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Pursue creative ways to work together

"We are laborers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

In addition to the Greater Louisville Billy Graham Crusade, June 21-24, and the Kentucky Baptist Convention launch of a three-year emphasis on evangelism mentioned in my column last week, there are a number of other new opportunities for working together under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The KBC staff has been working together on five major concerns identified at a January 1999 retreat. The entire staff, including secretaries, has been involved in cluster groups focused on authentic spirituality, leadership development, intergenerational issues, transition and change, and reaching young adults.

The findings of these groups already have influenced the nature of ongoing work. Each group also has recently been in the process of reporting their findings to staff and a number of directors of missions. Varied approaches to meeting the challenges churches face today will continue to be shared

in the Western Recorder, on the KBC Web site and through conferences as requested.

I am grateful that the staff has been willing to take on added responsibility in order to become a learning organization. Cross-team and department training has enhanced the awareness of church needs and the effectiveness of the staff in consulting with churches.

Another opportunity for working together is coming through efforts to strengthen the working relationship with associations. It is the goal of our team leaders to visit every association this spring to get feedback on KBC ministries and discover additional ways we can work together for kingdom growth. Also, the KBC information services department will begin work with associations in updating technology services as needed.

The KBC staff also will launch a two-year pilot process to discover ways to assist congregations in transformation. Equally important to knowing



Bill Mackey

STEWARDSHIP

Have you been losing money on investments?

By Don Spencer

Are your retirement funds invested in stocks? Do you have money in a stock mutual fund? Do you own stock in a company?

If you answered yes to any of these, you probably have been

concerned about financial losses in 2000. I've had calls from people who lost as much as \$40,000 in their retirement account last year.

Stock market corrections and bear markets are no fun but are a natural part of investing. How you react to market declines plays a crucial role in your long-term investment success.

You should remember three important things about market declines:

■ No one can consistently predict when market declines will happen.

■ Most market declines are relatively brief, and, for long-term investors, relatively painless. History shows that long-term stock investors still come out ahead but the pain sometimes has been greater.

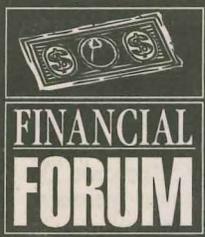
■ Successful market timing during a decline is extremely difficult because it requires two near-perfect actions—getting out at the right time and back in at the right time. Few people are successful in doing one of these consistently. Even fewer can do both.

A common mistake investors make is to lose patience and get out of stocks near the bottom of a downturn. Many people will see their 2000 losses and decide to get out of stocks. Generally those same people will sit on the sidelines as stocks go back up only to move back into stocks as they approach their highs. Their financial results suffer significantly because both moves have been at the wrong time.

A common adage states that two things drive the market—fear and greed. Taking that concept a step further, individuals must realize their personal decisions about investing often are driven by their own fear and greed.

It's easy to talk about the market being driven by fear and greed but more difficult to apply that to our personal experience. As hard as it may be, avoid that temptation. Investing in stocks should be based on long-term goals. Don't change your long-term investment strategy based on short-term market events.

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



Effective conflict resolution is vital part of a healthy marriage

Q: What is a major predictor of divorce? How can couples, especially premarital couples, overcome that factor and prevent divorce?

The top predictor of divorce is how conflict is resolved, according to Scott Stanley of the PREP Institute in Denver. The question is not if you will have conflict or even how often. The ability to do conflict resolution well is one of the most important factors in the potential success or failure of a marriage.

If you are dating someone with whom you've never had a conflict, then you just haven't been dating that person long enough. There's also a good chance that one or both of you are hiding something from the other person.

There are certain inevitable stages in a relationship. During the "falling in love" stage (anywhere from 18 seconds to 18 months), you feel that the object of your love likes everything you like and vice versa. Where there are differences, you view them as cute or even exciting. This is why it is helpful to reach the conflict stage of the relationship before you marry. This explains why dating for at least two years is a good idea before making a lifelong commitment.

When you reach that level of the relationship, begin premarital counseling, even if you are not engaged. This will give you a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the other person in a safe environment. Part of this process should be spent working on conflict resolution skills.

These skills help you move beyond the "blame game" to a partnership in problem solving. The counseling process also is a great place to practice communication skills. Assertiveness and listening skills are needed for a marriage to function well and avoid the stalemate that sours marriage and often leads to divorce—*James Stillwell*

Q: How can parents who both work handle the demands of parenting?

Parenting is hard work in and of itself. When both parents also work outside the home, they must work even harder within the home to fulfill parental responsibilities. Here are several ideas to help working parents handle the demanding double duties of parenting and working:

■ **Limit activities.** Be careful not to over commit yourself and your children. Recognize the real limits of time in light of your work schedule. Don't shortchange your commitment to church.

■ **Watch your schedule.** Guard against letting it disrupt your child's need for regular rest, regular meals and down time. Don't force your children to follow an adult schedule. It can produce stress and fatigue.

■ **When faced with difficult time choices, always try to give priority to your children.** Look for ways to be together. Make a special effort to be present for significant school and church activities, ball games, recitals, etc. Plan ahead and arrange your schedule so you occasionally can volunteer to help. Never forget that to a child, love is spelled t-i-m-e.

■ **If at all possible, try to see that one parent is available to help your children get off to school each morning and one is at home when children get in from school.** Afternoons are especially critical time in terms of emotional needs.

■ **Find adults who support you.** Parents who both work need partners to help raise their children. Choose these partners carefully. Look for good role models who share your beliefs and values, and who will reinforce them when they are responsible for your children.—*David Garrard*

Family Forum writers are Suzanne Coyle, associate director of Cornerstone Counseling for Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children; David Garrard, minister to children at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville; Jon Rainbow, a clinical gerontologist and professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Wade Rowatt, director of the St. Matthews Pastoral Counseling Center in Louisville; and James Stillwell, minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington. Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253 or e-mail us at wesrec@ntr.net.



'Reality' TV: How should Christians respond?

Beware: A new round of "reality" television is headed your way.

After the phenomenal success of last year's "Survivor" experiment, networks are scrambling to produce even more bizarre and intense "reality" shows. "The Mole," "Temptation Island" and, of course, "Survivor 2" are among the genre's latest creations.

Ironically, each of the shows is far from reality. Produced in a controlled environment with carefully selected players and contrived rules, the shows create false realities that influence how players act and react toward one another.

Even more troubling from a Christian perspective, these fake reality shows are based on such motives as greed, deceit and seduction. Not exactly inspirational family entertainment.

The show that has generated the loudest outcry from the religious community is Fox's "Temptation Island." The show, which Newsweek labeled "the raunchiest reality show yet," involves four unmarried couples in committed relationships being tempted to cheat on one another. Glamorous seducers including a former beauty pageant winner, a bartender, a former Playboy model and a massage therapist.

Fox officials claimed they had "learned their lesson" after their disastrous experience with last year's "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?" Apparently not.

The Parents Television Council, a bipartisan group that supports positive, family-oriented television, is calling for viewers to protest the airing of "Temptation Island." Emphasizing that the show seeks to "break up relationships for fun," council founder Brent Bozell described it as "another example of how America today views the pain of others as cheap entertainment."

Southern Baptist Convention President James Merritt has joined the protest. In a Jan. 8 letter to Fox executive Gail Berman, Merritt described "Temptation Island" as "absolutely the lowest and most debased level of television programming" in TV history. "I believe

the Fox Network can do better, should do better and must do better," he wrote.

As offensive as the show's premise is, there remains a fine line between targeted moral concern and rampant rhetoric that sometimes does more harm than good. Prior to last week's "Island" debut, Newsweek noted that religious protests against new shows "almost always guarantees big ratings."

According to Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, "Blasting the program may get amens from the choir and nods of agreement from those in the pews. But it will do little to strengthen families, build communities of discernment and advance a healthy understanding of fidelity."

So what's the other option? Noting that controversy surrounding the show "offers a teachable moment," Parham said church leaders can take the opportunity to "discuss the church's role in the public square."

"Raise the question about why Fox affiliate stations in the Bible Belt have encountered passive concern from the faith community about 'Temptation Island,'" he suggested.

"Ask why community business leaders, who are people of faith, spend their marketing funds sponsoring such programs. Encourage a dialogue about ways believers can express their values."

Parham said the show "affords faith leaders an opportunity to be real leaders through a proactive and positive discussion about low-fidelity television and high-fidelity faith."

Perhaps the best response is a combination of approaches. Individual Christians must be willing to stand on personal convictions and voice our concerns—particularly toward media decision-makers in influential roles. But we also must be careful that our walk matches our words.

Our clear responsibility, as Jesus demonstrated, is to be "in the world but not of the world." That's reality worth viewing—and living.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Trio of editors led Kentucky Baptists' earliest journalism efforts

By Jack Birdwhistell

The early history of Baptist journalism in Kentucky is sketchy at best, confusing at worst. Papers were begun, endured, died and merged before finally becoming the regular publication known as the Western Recorder. Names of these journals and exactly where and for how long they were published often are imprecise.

In those early years, however, three Baptist leaders in the state worked to keep alive a Baptist journal of news and opinion: Spencer Clack, George Waller and Uriel Chambers. Each has an interesting story.

Spencer Clack, according to Tennessee records, was born in east Tennessee in 1792, the year of Kentucky statehood. As a young adult, he found his way to Jessamine County, Ky., where he married. By 1825 the young family had moved to Bloomfield, where Clack set up a "school of high grade" and affiliated with the Baptist church. Known as a "man of learning and culture," he was elected clerk of Salem Baptist Association and in

1826 published a history of that early body of Baptists.

He apparently also preached regularly at the church in Bloomfield. Here he and George Waller published the Baptist Register, later the Baptist Recorder, the pages of which were filled with denunciations of teachings of Alexander Campbell. Around 1832, Clack moved his family west to Missouri, where he and his wife both died in a cholera outbreak. In the words of Kentucky Baptist historian J.H. Spencer, Baptists had lost an "able preacher, writer and ... a most excellent teacher."

Clack's co-publisher, George Waller (1777-1860) was less "bookish" and more partisan than Clack. A native of Virginia, Waller had come to Kentucky as a lad of seven. The Waller name would figure prominently in Kentucky Baptist life for decades. About 1803, young George became pastor of Buck's Creek Baptist Church in Shelby County, where he remained in service for 45 years. At various times he also was pastor at Burks Branch, Little Union, Elk Creek, Harrods Creek, and briefly, First Baptist Church of Louisville.

Waller was a firm opponent of Campbellism and a firm advocate of a state Baptist convention for Kentucky, both views which he expressed in his publications.

About 1830 the Baptist paper published by Clack and Waller merged with one published in Frankfort by Uriel Chambers, an attorney and member of a prominent Georgetown family. Chambers' Baptist Chronicle and Literary Register, later simply the Baptist Chronicle, then the Cross and Baptist Banner (I told you this was confusing) continued the battle against Campbellism, which was becoming strong all over Central Kentucky.

After his paper merged with a Baptist journal in Ohio in 1837, Chambers became more involved in the tangled struggle between Campbellites and Baptists over Georgetown College. In the early 1840s, he moved his family to Texas, where he died soon thereafter.

Each of these men used journalism to aid the Baptist defense against Campbell's attacks and to encourage Kentucky Baptists to join together and cooperate for common causes. We'll discuss these topics in future articles.

Ira "Jack" Birdwhistell is a professor of religion at Georgetown College



KENTUCKY

Adoption specialist urges Christian response to pregnancy

By Dannah Prather,
Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children

LOUISVILLE—Many Christians might want to think they are immune from such things as unplanned pregnancies, but Barbara Lee knows that's not the case.

Lee is director of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children's pregnancy and adoption services.

For nearly 25 years she has offered assistance and guidance to birth parents, families and prospective adoptive couples who face heart-wrenching questions.

While not immune to unplanned pregnancies, Christians can respond in a way that honors God, she said.

"Too often women and couples faced with unplanned pregnancies choose abortion as the solution," Lee said. "I am so encouraged when people, especially Christian families, respond differently."

The Southern Baptist Convention has designated Jan. 21 as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

According to the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, 46 million abortions are performed each year worldwide, or

about 126,000 daily. In the United States, approximately 1.37 million abortions take place annually.

Lee recalled the story of "Patti," a single college student who became pregnant. Patti's boyfriend left her, and she didn't know how her family would react to the pregnancy.

"She knew she needed to make an adoption plan for her daughter," Lee said, "but (Patti) was uncertain how her family would respond to letting go of a grandchild or niece."

As a new Christian, Patti's No. 1 priority was finding her baby a Christian home, Lee said. "She wanted to participate in the search and she wanted a couple that currently had no other children."

The adoption service coordinator provided information, profiles and photos of prospective adoptive parents for Patti to consider. The coordinator also involved Patti's family in the process and they eventually supported her in the adoption plan.

"We found a couple who had been praying for a family for a long time," Lee said. "They had experienced the pain and loss of numerous unsuccessful pregnancies. The two families got

to know each other and appreciate each other. A situation that could have ended tragically instead brought two families together. When the time comes, this little girl will know she had many people, including her birth mother, who loved her and wanted the very best for her."

Most referrals to KBHC's pregnancy and adoption program have roots in the church community, Lee said. "It is not easy to address a moral dilemma such as an unplanned pregnancy, but we are called to respond in a Christ-like manner and to do what is best for the child, and to support the baby's family, too" she said.

"If we are living out this conviction we can have a positive influence on non-believers who are facing a similar crisis," she added. "It may not be someone from within our church or family, but there are women in our communities, our co-workers, our friends, who are facing these life-or-death questions. We have an opportunity to steer them in the right direction. Based on our referrals, we know there are people who are doing just that."

KBHC's pregnancy and adoption services works with birth parents and prospective adoptive parents throughout the commonwealth, Lee said.

Service coordinators help birth parents obtain services such as prenatal care, housing and other material assistance. KBHC also explains all aspects of adoption to birth parents so they can make an informed decision about the future of their child.

"While many birth parents want to be involved in selecting adoptive parents for their child, we also provide closed adoptions where the birth and adoptive parents do not have contact," Lee said.

Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children has several adoption education opportunities scheduled for 2001. Among them is an adoption information workshop in Louisville.

KBHC also is participating in an adoption information fair Feb. 18 at the University of Louisville's Shelby Campus.

For information about adoption through KBHC or its programs, call (800) 928-5242.

"If we are living out this conviction we can have a positive influence on non-believers who are facing a similar crisis."

Barbara Lee, director of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children's pregnancy and adoption services.

Western Recorder partnering with Iowa convention

The Western Recorder recently added another state Baptist convention to its list of newspaper partnerships, while suspending printing of another state Baptist paper.

Beginning this month, the Western Recorder will publish the monthly newspaper for the Baptist Convention of Iowa. Meanwhile, leaders of the Baptist Convention of New England have suspended printing of its monthly paper in the face of financial constraints.

Since 1992, Kentucky's weekly Baptist newspaper has worked in cooperation with smaller-staff conventions outside the Southeast, helping produce their monthly newspapers. In many of these conventions, the executive director also serves as editor. The arrangement reduces the workload of staff while providing a high-quality publication.

Wyndell Jones, executive director for the Iowa convention and editor of the 3,037-circulation Iowa Baptist, said he is excited that the

partnership will provide readers with "the additional view of the world along with a greater approach to Iowa news."

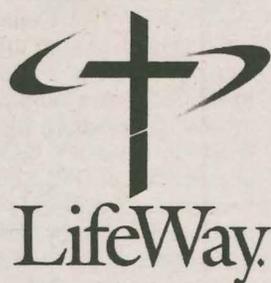
"We have discussed this partnership for several years and feel that the time is right," he said. "We are very excited about the new partnership and are very impressed with all from (the Western Recorder) staff who we have had contact with thus far."

The addition of Iowa and the loss of the New England paper leave the Western Recorder with five partnerships. In addition to Iowa, the Western Recorder works with the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey, Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention, Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention and Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention.

Partnership Editions Editor Joyce Martin said New England officials hope to resume publication in the near future. "They hope that they would be able to return to production within two years."

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MAKBWR

RESOURCES

Pastors: Changing church requires long-term commitment

Continued from page 1

long enough to affect change, he added. "When you first come to a church, especially right out of seminary, most of your members are older than you are, and they have all been there longer than you have. But if you stay at a church long enough, you get to a place where you are older than they are and have been there longer than they have been."

Southerland said he came to Flamingo Road when he was 33 years old. At that time, the median age of the congregation was 51 years old. Eleven years later, the median age is 33 years old, and he has been there longer than 90 percent of the congregation.

"That's called power and authority to lead change," Southerland said. "You don't get that by moving from church to church. You get that by going somewhere and staying where you are."

Among the significant changes made during the past 11 years at Flamingo Road have been changes in worship style and structure, they said. The church shifted from traditional worship to contemporary and from a program-driven, deacon-led church to a purpose-driven, staff-led church, they said.

They said the past 11 years have

taught them key lessons on leading a church through change, particularly in moving from being a church that was designed to meet the needs of mature Christians to one designed to reach the non-Christians:

■ **Every church should continually be in transition.** "If you are following a creative, active God, then you are in the creative process of transitioning all the time," Southerland said.

Mayer added: "If we think that we are in the business of doing Sunday school at 9 in the morning and worship services at 11 and we are locked into that, then we are going to miss the next generation. ... That is not the business we are in. The message is the business that we are in."

■ **Every church leader should be continually in transition.** "The difficulty in most churches today is that the leader won't transition. It takes a crisis or a catalytic leader to bring about change," Southerland said.

He shared how Marian, an elderly leader in the church, came to him after he taught a lesson about why the church was using contemporary music.

He said she told him, "I don't like the music. It's too loud, it's too obnoxious, and I miss the hymns. But if this music will help this church reach my

grandkids for Christ, then I will support you all the way."

"She was a church leader willing to be in transition," Southerland said, and three months later the church saw her grandson accept Jesus as his personal Savior.

■ **Two main issues in successful transition are preparation and pace.** Concerning preparation, Southerland said, "Doctrine matters, but so does the attitude behind the doctrine. You've got to do the preparation before reaching out to people."

Mayer noted that Flamingo Road's membership covenant clearly relays that if someone is living in an immoral lifestyle then the church won't baptize him or her. "We raise the bar (for membership) but at the right place," he said. Up to that point, visitors are lovingly taught what the Bible says.

Concerning pace, Southerland said, "The goal is not to kill a church, but to bring it to life in a fresh new way."

■ **Create a climate of change in the church.** Pastors who go to conferences and come back to implement change without a climate of change will fail, Mayer said. "Lead one change at a time, very slowly and carefully. Then when you have completed that one change, then you begin on

the new one."

Southerland continued, "You can't change a dozen things at a time. (But) by the fourth or fifth slow change, you have created a climate for change."

■ **Most staff people do not stay long enough to effect change.** A commitment of time is necessary, Mayer said, noting that most pastors are not viewed as true leaders until their seventh year in a pastorate.

■ **The key elements in any transition are purpose, target and strategy.** Mayer explained, "Purpose is what you are about. 'What is it God has called us to do?' Target is 'Who are we going after with this?' Strategy is 'How we are going to do it?'"

Southerland said most churches start with programming, which is strategy, but the focus first must be on what God has called the church to do, then the strategy can be developed.

■ **Transition is more of a process than about a final product.** "It's not about a destination. Life is about a journey," Mayer said. "Don't wait to do ministry until after you get out of seminary."

"As long as we are on this earth, it is about change," Southerland added. "As long as we are leading God's church, it is going to be about change."

"If you are following a creative, active God, then you are in the creative process of transitioning all the time."

Dan Southerland, co-pastor of Flamingo Road Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.



Discovery Youth Week 2001

Cedarmore Baptist Conference Center

*New registration date: February 1, 2001**

Youth "GET HOOKED" on various trends, pastimes, types of entertainment and types of spirituality. More and more youth are prone to dabble in the occult, cult, witchcraft, satanic worship and are intrigued by divination stones, contacting the dead and casting spells.

"GET HOOKED" as Discovery 2001 unmasks those lies that entice youth and encourages teens to know, understand and accept the truth about spirituality-Jesus Christ.

I John 1:1-2a says "From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen!" (The Message)

Just as John and the disciples experienced Jesus Christ first-hand, youth will have opportunities through Bible study and worship to "GET HOOKED" on the truth, hear testimonies of fulfilling fellowship in Christ and meet the Jesus who brings real joy!

Youth Camp Pastors 2001

June 11-15

Randy Record, *Youth Evangelism Strategist*
Kentucky Baptist Convention

June 18-22

Tim Colovos, *Youth Pastor*
Hillvue Heights Baptist Church

June 25-29

Jon Bishop, *Pastor*
Hurstbourne Baptist Church

July 2-6

Bill Houpt, *Associate Pastor/Min. of Youth*
Hillcrest Baptist Church

July 9-13

Jamie Ward, *Associate Pastor*
Buck Run Baptist Church

July 16-20

Jay Hardwick, *Youth Minister*
Shelbyville First Baptist Church

July 23-27

Steve Payne, *Minister to Students*
Lone Oak Baptist Church

July 30-August 3

Joe Ball, *Minister of Education & Youth*
Edgewood Baptist Church

Information has been mailed to church offices. For more information, contact the KBC Creative Ministries Department at (502) 244-6465 or toll-free (888) 254-5714.

Send reservation requests for Cedarmore to: Cedarmore Baptist Conference Center, PO Box 37, Bagdad, KY 40003.

***This deadline is new, so please take notice:**

- ◆ Reservations postmarked February 1, 2001, will be given preference.
- ◆ Those postmarked prior to February 1 will be treated as a February 2 postmark and others received on a space-available basis.
- ◆ Only those postmarked February 1 are likely to get their choice of dates as many of our weeks fill with first-day reservations.
- ◆ Reservations will be accepted by mail only.

MISSIONS

Yugoslav ministry finds needs growing, resources scarce

By Tobin Perry
Baptist Press

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (BP)—As the Serbian people face their first winter with a new democratically elected government, evangelicals are scrambling to minister to a nation left nearly bankrupt, according to a key evangelical ministry based in Belgrade.

Jasmina Totic, co-director of Bread of Life, a ministry that has focused on refugee aid during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, laid out a plan to meet the physical and spiritual needs of more than 15,000 Serbian families this winter. The Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund is among Bread of Life's sources of support.

But Bread of Life has received only a few offers of outside help for the plan, Totic wrote in the ministry's newsletter.

"We are putting our trust in God and find ourselves continuing as written in Haggai 'giving careful thought' about our past and future," wrote Totic, a member of First Baptist Church of Belgrade.

The organization's winter ministry plan includes monthly distribution of food and hygiene items, one-time distribution of stoves and clothing, ongoing programs for children and home care visits for residents with special needs.

Since a democratic election knocked the nation's longtime despot Slobodan Milosevic out of power in October, the new government has discovered large budget holes for basic needs like electricity, food and pensions.

And the West has been caught unprepared to offer quick help, according to an article in the New York Times.

Serbian officials say they need \$500 million in energy, food, medicine and pension aid to get through the winter.

Milosevic spent most of the country's reserves trying to survive the fall election, according to the Times.

Totic said the events of the past year have "brought Bread of Life to a crossroads." The Serbian people are expecting a dramatic change in the condition of their everyday life, but the government has been left with nothing but an empty storage room by the previous government, Totic wrote.



WINTER NEEDS Jasmina Totic, co-director of Bread of Life, a ministry that has focused on refugee aid during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, is seeking to meet the physical and spiritual needs of more than 15,000 Serbian families this winter. (BP photo)

Baptists in Belgrade

"We believe the people of Serbia will soon become disillusioned and desperate," Totic stated. "As Christians we find ourselves facing a strategic task this winter to help fill the 'basic needs' gap that is widening with every minute. This is not only crucial because of the immense needs but also because it will be a brief opportunity to grasp the disheartened and present them with Christ's love."

Totic also said the new government is trying to decide between establishing a state church or follow the rest of Europe and establish laws guaranteeing more religious freedom.

She calls the country's peaceful situation delicate.

"For the moment it is calm here, yet we consider our present condition fragile," Totic wrote. "We hope that you, our friends, will join us in prayer for the efforts of our new government and the people of Yugoslavia."

Bread of Life began in 1992 after Totic quit her administrative job at a meat-packing plant in Belgrade and moved into a room in First Baptist Church to begin planning refugee ministry strategies with co-leader Beba Varga from Croatia.

The ministry can receive donations, made out to SBC World Hunger Fund/Bread of Life, mailed to Office of Finance, International Mission Board, Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.



Decade of upheaval opens doors for Baptist witness

By Brittany Jarvis
SBC International Mission Board

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (BP)—Through a decade of political turmoil, Southern Baptists have offered hope and help to refugees in Yugoslavia, laying a foundation of goodwill with both authorities and the people.

Now missionaries say the opportunities to share God's love through Christian ministry are increasing as Yugoslavia's government moves back into the world community.

In 1990, the Southern Baptist International Mission Board began assisting the Bread of Life ministry in Belgrade and the Love Your Neighbor work in Nis.

In just the last two years, the board has provided \$400,000 to both ministries, said Jim Brown, an IMB human needs consultant.

The ministries provide food and stoves for refugee families, and they hope to begin job skill training and agriculture projects for the families. Many of them have been forced from their homes three or four times, Brown said.

Some of the refugees "went from a home with five or 10 acres to a one-room building that used to house pigs and cows," Brown said.

But despite their circumstances, Brown said Christian refugees do not express bitterness or anger. On a recent trip to Serbia, he often heard refugees say, "God has turned Serbia upside down to get the people's focus back upon God and on who He really is and how He loves us."

The human needs ministries have increased

Baptists' reputations in the cities of Belgrade and Nis. Brown said a Baptist pastor in Nis named Cedo organizes Love Your Neighbor and has formed unique relationships with medical authorities, city officials and the new mayor.

City officials in Nis have offered the use of city property so Baptist work with the Kosovar refugees can expand further.

Because Baptists have met the physical needs of refugees, people are more receptive to hearing the gospel, Brown said. In fact, the Bread of Life ministry has reached enough people in the city that dozens of churches could be started among the new Christians. But the people need leaders, church planters and discipleship leaders to mobilize the believers, he said.

The effect of the ministry also is spreading into other countries. When the refugees return to their homelands, they take the message of Jesus Christ with them. Brown compares the movement to the early church depicted in the Book of Acts.

"The church in Jerusalem was persecuted and it spread out," he said. "This war has created a similar diaspora."

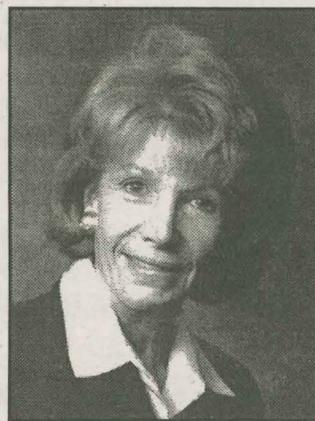
"I'm reminded of Romans 8:28," Brown said. "God is still in control. The people who have seen the refugees in Serbia have seen the hand of God in real ways."

Donations for relief work can be sent to Office of Finance, Serbia Relief, International Mission Board, Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230. For more information about overseas volunteer opportunities, call (800) 888-8657 or visit the Web site www.imb.org/vim.

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Bill offers loan aid to religious groups

WASHINGTON (ABP)—One of a plethora of bills introduced in the opening days of Congress seeks to bolster the ability of religious institutions to secure capital resources to carry out their work.

The Faith-Based Lending Protection Act, introduced Jan. 3, would amend the Federal Credit Union Act, according to a statement made by its sponsor, Rep. Edward Royce, R-Calif.

Royce said that under the measure, loans to nonprofit religious organizations would be exempt from the lending caps that prevent federal law imposes on credit unions.

"Each year credit unions loan millions of dollars to nonprofit religious organizations, many located in minority and/or lower income communities," Royce said.

Without legislative action, he said, "these religious institutions will find it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to secure the necessary funds under favorable terms to allow them to continue their work."

Poll finds Americans wary of mingling religion & public life

NEW YORK (RNS)—Most Americans believe religion can have a positive impact on individual behavior, but they are leery of mingling religion with public life, according to a national survey released last week.

About 70 percent of the 1,507 people randomly surveyed by telephone in November said religion—most said any religion would do—should have a greater influence on society. The poll was sponsored by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan public policy research group.

Among the 254 elected officials surveyed, 74 percent agreed they would be more likely to vote for candidates who use religion to make decisions about policy.

But more than half—63 percent—said they would be less inclined to support candidates who rely on guidance from church leaders about legislative policies.

Nearly half—44 percent—of all respondents believed churches and religious groups that offered social programs such as helping the homeless or drug addicts should receive federal funding "even if these programs promote religious messages."

Twenty-three percent supported government funding of such programs

as long as "these programs stay away from religious messages." Thirty-one percent believed "it's a bad idea for government to be funding religious organizations."

Still, respondents were wary of combining religion and public affairs. Roughly six in 10 survey respondents said the personal religious beliefs of deeply religious elected officials should not influence their votes on issues such as abortion and the death penalty.

Religious officials should instead compromise with their counterparts who support differing viewpoints, the respondents said.

Survey participants were equally wary of bringing religion into the classroom. About 52 percent of respondents stated that "school prayer embarrasses and isolates students whose religion is different or who are not religious at all."

About 53 percent of both evangelical Christians and the general public said public schools should permit a moment of silence.

But just 6 percent of the public supported a Christian prayer mentioning Jesus, and 20 percent supported a prayer that mentioned God but no religion in particular.

Bush getting legislative wish list from religious conservatives

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Conservative Christians have given their legislative wish list to the incoming Bush administration, hoping he'll deliver on top public policy goals after evangelicals solidly backed George W. Bush's bid for the White House.

Janet Parshall, a spokeswoman for the conservative Family Research Council, said one of Bush's top priorities should be a ban on what opponents call "partial-birth abortion." Congress passed a ban twice, but President Clinton vetoed both bills. Bush has said he will sign a ban, even though the Supreme Court struck down a Nebraska ban last year.

Other policies Parshall wants to see are tax relief, including an end to the marriage penalty and death tax, as well as a stronger military defense, continued opposition to same-sex marriage and hate crimes legislation.

Parshall said she is confident Bush will carry through on his promises to the religious right, even though he faces a narrowly divided Congress.

"Just because he says he will work across the aisle doesn't mean he will abandon his core beliefs," she said.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said he also wants a late-term abortion ban as well as a federal panel to oversee biomedical research and tougher enforcement of anti-obscenity laws.

Land said the country's electoral process also needs serious reform and urged Washington spend part of the federal surplus to help states buy more accurate and easier-to-use voting machines.

Promise Keepers lists 2001 conference schedule

DENVER (RNS)—The closest that Promise Keepers' conferences will come to Kentucky this year will be Nashville, Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio, according to a schedule released last week.

Last year the organization held its first two-day regional conference in Kentucky, filling Freedom Hall in Louisville.

The ministry estimates that nearly 200,000 men and boys attended its 16 conferences last year.

The conferences are scheduled at the following locations and dates: April 28 at Grand Forks, N.D.; May 19 at Rapid City, S.D.; June 8-9 at Jacksonville, Fla.; June 15-16 at Baltimore; June 22-23 at Chicago; July 13-14 at Columbus, Ohio; July 20-21

at Auburn Hills, Mich.; July 27-28 at Providence, R.I.; Aug. 24-25 at Nashville; Sept. 7-8 at Indianapolis; Sept. 14-15 at San Jose, Calif.; Sept. 21-22 at Kansas City, Mo.; Sept. 28-29 at Charlotte, N.C.; Oct. 5-6 at Houston; Oct. 12-13 at Tacoma, Wash.; Oct. 19-20 at Anaheim, Calif.; Oct. 26-27 at Nampa, Idaho; Nov. 9-10, Oklahoma City.

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Utah governor to sue over missionaries.** Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt filed suit Jan. 10 to challenge the U.S. census for not including more in its count than 14,000 Mormon missionaries working overseas, possibly costing the state a congressional seat. If Utah wins, North Carolina would lose the seat it just gained, Associated Press reported. The U.S. Census Bureau counts diplomats, military personnel and other federal employees and dependents living overseas temporarily, but does not include missionaries.

■ **Court allows Mormon temple.** In a much-watched case pitting neighbors against a new church in town, the Mormon temple in Belmont, Mass., won a key U.S. Supreme Court victory in its four-year legal battle. On Jan. 9, the court, without comment, refused to hear the neighbors' argument that their rights had been violated by the construction of the prominent—and they say somewhat gaudy—temple in their backyard. The move left intact a unique Massachusetts law exempting religious buildings from local zoning restrictions.

■ **Nonprofit mailers: Enough is enough.** Citing the financial burden that will be placed on the nation's churches, charities, hospitals and educators, the Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers has issued a statement saying "enough is enough" after the Jan. 7 U.S. postage increases. "The increase in postal rates will drain valuable and necessary resources from America's churches and charities at a time when the Bush administration looks to the nonprofit community to provide the nation with more programs and services," said a statement from the organization. On average, nonprofit periodical postage increased 7.2 percent.

■ **Presbyterian seminary cuts Christian education degree.** Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary has voted to cut its Master of Arts in Christian Education degree after only 13 students graduated from the program since it was started in 1988. The school currently enrolls 264 students. Instead of the separate education degree, the seminary will offer a special focus in education as part of the Master of Divinity degree. The program was cut after the Association of Theological Schools, which provides accreditation, recommended the move unless the school could boost enrollment.



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WORLD VIEW

■ **Intruders kill Tanzanian pastor.** Tanzanian Baptist pastor Gaiton Zimulinda was murdered Jan. 6 by six men who broke into his home in Dar es Salaam. Southern Baptist missionary Brad Veitch reported that the intruders beat, stabbed and shot Zimulinda in front of his wife and children. Noting that the men called the pastor by name, Veitch said, "At first appearance it would seem robbery. The fact they called him by name and did not take anything much ... of value has caused questions" about the killers' motive. Zimulinda, who moved to Tanzania in 1958 to escape tribal killings in Rwanda, was pastor of Sinza Baptist Church.

■ **Bible society aids fire victims.** Workers at the International Baptist Society in Holland mobilized to minister to injured and bereaved victims following a New Year's Eve fire that gutted the second floor of a restaurant in Volendam, Holland. The fire killed 10 people and injured 70. Bible society director Geert Oosterhuis and his staff spent four days translating, editing, typesetting and printing a Dutch translation of the Scripture booklet, "When Your Whole World Changes" to distribute to people affected by the fire. "For the 30,000 inhabitants of Volendam, the scars of this disaster, visible and invisible, will likely last a long time," Oosterhuis said. "It is our prayer that this booklet will provide spiritual solace and comfort to many of those most affected by the tragedy."

■ **Muslim converts face death penalty.** The supreme leader of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan has announced that Muslims who convert to other religions—and those who seek to convert them—will face the death penalty. During an address Jan. 8 on Taliban-run Radio Shariat, Mullah Mohammad Omar said Christians, Jews and other religious groups are targeting Muslims for conversion. He also announced that those who seek books and other material that promote "wrong beliefs" or are found to be offensive to Islam will be imprisoned for five years.

Religious persecution escalates in Myanmar

LONDON (BP)—A sizeable Christian community among the Karen people group in Myanmar (formerly Burma) is facing abuse at the hands of the country's military regime, according to Newsroom-Online, an Internet news service based in London.

Newsroom-Online reported that the British human rights group Christian Solidarity Worldwide recently sent a team to Myanmar to document abuse claims.

Observers cited "widespread use of forced labor, involuntary relocation, military offensives against civilians, threats and intimidation, and destruction of crops and livestock," based on firsthand testimonies of refugees in Thailand, trips into the Burmese jungle and evidence from recent military defectors.

Such crises "have all combined to force tens of thousands of Karen and Karenni (another people group in Myanmar) to flee from their homes and homelands," the human rights team reported.

They said many of the people are living in the jungle with temporary shelter, insufficient food and virtually no medical care.

A third minority, the Shan, reportedly also have been targeted. Myanmar's population of nearly 49 million includes 8 million Karen, 1 million Karenni and 7 million Shan, Newsroom-Online reported.

"Independent monitors of the southeast Asian nation say more than 30,000 Karen have died since 1992 as

a direct or indirect result of government military action," the news service reported. "More than half a million members of the three ethnic groups are internally displaced. Many are in the jungles without adequate supplies, trying to elude government soldiers, who have shoot-to-kill orders. More than 200,000 have fled to neighboring Thailand as refugees."

Among the Karen are an estimated 10,000 baptized believers who are Baptists and an overall Baptist community of 50,000, according to 1999 figures reported by the Baptist World Alliance.

About 30 percent of the Karen people and most of their leadership are Christian, partly as a result of British and American missionary activity in the 19th century, according to the London-based human rights group Jubilee Campaign.

An international day of prayer and fasting for the Karen, Karenni and Shan was held Jan. 7.

Newsroom-Online recounted that Stephen Dun, a Karen who grew up on the border with Thailand, told the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus last February that many of his people also face religious persecution in the mainly Buddhist country. In addition to the Karen, about half of the Karenni are Christians, while the Shan mainly are Buddhists or animists.

A directive of the predecessor of the current military regime, the Burmese Socialist Peoples Party, called for eradication of Christianity, Dun testified. One of the points of a direc-

tive said, according to a translation, "Christianity must be destroyed by peaceful means as well as violent means."

Dun said the Burmese military has destroyed many churches. "It is common practice for the military, when it enters a Karen village, to dismantle the church and use the materials to rebuild (Buddhist) monasteries," Dun said in his testimony.

Pastors have been "forced at gunpoint to help destroy their own churches and build pagodas, then forced to bow down and worship them," he added.

Wilfred Wong of the Jubilee Campaign told the news service that the Karen, Karenni and Shan now "are specifically facing genocide at the hands of the Burmese military, and they desperately do need more awareness about their situation."

Describing their plight, Wong said, "The numbers of internally displaced are escalating; the atrocities are not getting any less. The shortage of food for the internally displaced is as bad as ever."

Wong said he believes the Myanmar regime's repression of Karen, Karenni and Shan civilians fits the definition of genocide set by the 1948 United Nations convention.

In April, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights censured Burma for a "continuing pattern of gross and systematic violations of human rights, including extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions, particularly in areas of ethnic tension."

Investment performance

We have received the returns for the year that ended Dec. 31, 2000. Our manager reported the equity performance relative to the S&P 500 benchmark was the best in the 21-year history of the firm. Furthermore, he reported our equity fund performance was the best among all of the firm's 100-plus clients. The reason was the decision of the Foundation board in 1998 to add a mid-cap component to its equity fund. Previously, the equity fund had been invested 100 percent in large-cap companies.

A large-cap company is one whose total market capitalization is \$30 billion or more. Market capitalization is the market value per share of the company's stock times the total number of shares outstanding. A mid-cap company is one whose total market capitalization is between \$500 million and \$30 billion.

Here's the good news for all of our institutional investment clients and the beneficiary organizations of our endowment and trust funds. This includes churches, associations, educational institutions, children's homes, hospitals, missions-related organizations, camps and assemblies and individual life-income beneficiaries. For the one-year period, our equity fund had a +6.3 percent re-

turn vs -9.1 percent for the S&P 500.

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Our fixed fund, which consists of high-grade fixed income securities also performed well. The one-year annualized returns were: +12.7 percent vs the bond index at +11.9 percent. The three- and five-year annualized returns were right on the index for both periods at +6.3 percent.

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

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MUSIC

Velasquez wants to be 'Crystal Clear' about God's impact

By Cecile Holmes
Religion News Service

HOUSTON (RNS)—In her music and her manner, singer Jaci Velasquez projects the fresh-faced aura of the classic girl next door.

Somehow this youthful Christian diva, who had a hit CD by the time she was 16, brings the best of pop, Latin and Christian contemporary music to her work without relinquishing the faith that got her started.

Her latest recording "Crystal Clear" was released last fall to strong reviews and even stronger sales.

But success hasn't changed Velasquez's orientation. She continues to hold fast to her values and her perspective.

"I want it to be crystal clear to people that I am who Christ has made me to be, and I'm attempting to follow in His footsteps," she said.

The sultry images associated with some young singers don't fit Velasquez's style and substance. She draws upon her musical and ethnic roots, integrating Latin rhythms into her performances.

"I think I am more the girl next door—the type that guys, girls and their parents can listen to," she said. "As a role model, I would hope to be someone to inspire young women to live out their dreams. To be everything that they can be and then some."

Achieving those goals takes time, effort and faith, she said, advising fans to "believe in yourself" and "be true to who you are as a person."



JACI VELASQUEZ The vocalist said she wants others to recognize Christ's impact on her life. "I would hope to be someone to inspire young women to live out their dreams." (RNS photo)

Long before Velasquez had become a public singing sensation, her gifts were apparent to her family. She was born in Houston to David and Diana Velasquez. Her father, a traveling evangelist and singer, often had his family sing back-up vocals.

Family lore says Velasquez's parents realized she had rhythm when as a baby she snapped her fingers in time to music being played in a nearby room.

Her "solo debut" came when she was 3. Her family was at a small church singing when the pastor shushed the worshipers. They listened as a power-

ful little voice belted out the hymn from the nursery.

Nine years later, her big break came when the family band was performing in Houston. A local pastor alerted a talent manager to "the bright new talent" he had discovered in Jaci Velasquez. Within two years, Velasquez was signed to Myrrh Records. She now records for Word Records, its sister label.

By age 16, Velasquez had a hit CD, "Heavenly Place," to her credit. It spent 83 weeks on Billboard's Heatseekers chart. In 1998 she released her second CD, "Jaci Velasquez." In 1999, in honor of her grandparents and her Hispanic heritage, Velasquez released "Llegar a Ti," her first Spanish language recording.

Her first three albums sold more than 3 million copies worldwide. In the past year, she has been named "Female Vocalist of the Year" for the second consecutive year by the Gospel Music Association and received her first Latin Grammy nomination.

Velasquez said she believes "doors have been opened" for her to bring a Christian message to a Latin audience. Yet she also reaches out to young people of diverse races and nationalities.

She has been a guest columnist for Campus Life magazine and is national spokesperson for the True Love Waits campaign, which urges young people to sign pledges promising they won't have sex before they marry.

"I try to let my records reflect who I am," she said, "because songs are soundtracks of life."

Christian music sales down

NASHVILLE (RNS)—Sales of contemporary Christian and gospel music decreased for the first time in five years, but mainstream retail stores saw their largest increase ever of such sales.

Total sales of Christian and gospel albums reached 44 million units by the end of 2000, a 6 percent decline from 1999, when sold units totaled 46.9 million.

The Christian Music Trade Association, the Nashville trade organization announcing the findings, attributed the sales decrease to the lack of new studio releases in 2000 from some of the industry's top-selling artists.

"There's a shift," said Tricia Whitehead, spokeswoman for the trade association. "More Christian music was bought at mainstream stores. Last year (1999), more Christian music was bought at CBA stores."

CBA, formerly known as the Christian Booksellers Association, is the trade association of Christian retailers. Whitehead said statistics show a 38 percent drop in Christian music sales at Christian stores from 1999 to 2000.

Mainstream retail stores sold 23.1 million units of contemporary Christian and gospel music in 2000, a 9.2 percent increase over 1999 sales.

Mainstream sales totaled 50.4 percent of the total Christian music sales, with Christian retailers scoring 47.2 percent of the total sales. Sales via Internet and television and direct-mail advertising comprised another 2 percent of the total sales.

"Mainstream retail once again experienced this year that contemporary Christian and gospel music sells," said Frank Breeden, president of the Gospel Music Association and Christian Music Trade Association. "That this increase occurred even without new studio albums by some of our typically top-selling artists demonstrates that the market for this music continues to grow and to find new audiences."

Aubrey ministers in New Orleans

By Robert Dunston

Cumberland College sophomore Kristen Aubrey, the daughter of Nathan and Donna Aubrey of Louisville, invested her summer of 2000 serving Christ in inner-city New Orleans. She ministered through Carver Baptist Center.

Aubrey's primary responsibility was to assist with a day program for children. After devotions each morning at 8:30, the children's program began at 9. Workers divided the children into three groups based on school grade level and then rotated each group through three classes: reading and math, Bible study and writing, and music and crafts.

Aubrey taught children phonics and manipulative math. The children learned much in all their classes, she said. The program's goal was to help the children review what they had learned and give them a good start when school began again in the fall.

Various youth groups came during the summer to help with the program. Most of the youth worked with music, crafts and Bible study, but some were placed in classes to assist teachers.

Every Friday the children took a

field trip to a local park where they ran and played. The workers then took the children to lunch at a fast-food restaurant with a playground. A sign posted in the playground encouraged adults to play with their children, so Aubrey joined right in. The children were delighted.

The summer began with 30 children involved in the program. By summer's end 50 children were coming daily.

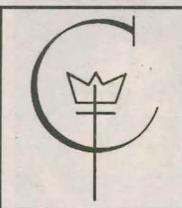
Aubrey also taught a class for preschoolers and a class for teenagers. The teenagers came in the evenings and spent two hours at the center playing games, having devotions and building friendships.

Aubrey, a psychology major and religion minor at Cumberland College, developed a passion for working with children, especially inner-city children, during the summer. She also grew in her personal faith, learning to depend upon God for everything.

We appreciate her service for Christ and know God will continue to use her in a great way.

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

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50 years later, Lewis' Narnia still enchants kids, adults

"People won't write the books I want, so I have to do it for myself."

C.S. Lewis

By Steve Rabey
Religion News Service

NEW YORK (RNS)—Once upon a time—and long before Harry Potter—a childless, bookish British bachelor created a series of best-selling and wonder-inducing children's books featuring now-familiar literary elements like witches, magic and battles between good and evil.

The time was 1950 and the writer was C. S. Lewis, an instructor of English literature at Magdalen College Oxford who was known best for scholarly works of literary criticism and popular books on Christian theology.

Lewis' "Chronicles of Narnia" surprised his academic peers but wowed readers of all ages, including an American youngster named Douglas Gresham.

"I was fascinated by the books and enthralled with Narnia itself," says Gresham, who would become Lewis' stepson in 1956 after his mother married Lewis in a slow-blooming romance explored in both Lewis' "Surprised by Joy" and the acclaimed 1993 film, "Shadowlands."

Today, Gresham is a consultant to The C.S. Lewis Co., which oversees the legendary literary legacy of the prolific author, who also wrote volumes of poetry and science fiction before he died on Nov. 22, 1963—the same day John F. Kennedy was killed.

Many people share Gresham's fascination with Lewis' work. Every year, readers around the world buy an estimated 2 million copies of his books, with the Narnia series accounting for about half of these sales.

Over the past year, publishing giant HarperCollins has done everything it can to make sure people keep buying and reading Lewis, issuing new editions of six of his most popular theological works, including 1942's "The Screwtape Letters" and 1952's "Mere Christianity."

The company also released new 50th anniversary full-color editions of all seven Narnia books, featuring Pauline Baynes' original cover art and introducing inside illustrations recently colored by the artist.

Lewis, who grew up near Belfast, Northern Ireland, said he wrote the Narnia series because they were the kinds of stories he would have enjoyed when he was a child.

Children have been devouring them ever since. Like the Harry Potter books, they make for exciting reading. In addition, youthful Narnia characters like Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy—who appear in "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" and other volumes in the series—are both lifelike and likable.

Adults enjoy the stories but also are attracted to the allegories Lewis weaves out of Christian themes of sin and redemption. For example,

Narnia's talking lion king Aslan is seen as a symbol for Christ, complete with a sacrificial death and resurrection, while the White Witch is a Devil figure.

Lewis loved myth and fantasy, as did fellow Oxford professor J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien wrote the best-selling "Lord of the Rings" trilogy and joined Lewis for meetings of the Inklings, a small group that regularly met in Oxford pubs to drink, smoke, share recent compositions and heatedly debate theology and literary theory.

Hailed for his depth of intellect, Lewis argued that it was not the mind but the imagination that allowed people to receive spiritual truth. And his fantastical stories were designed to baptize readers' imaginations.

Many readers, including Gresham, believe Lewis' substantial literary talent and skill were aided by divine inspiration. "I believe that while he was the writer of the works, their true author was the Holy Spirit from whom all wisdom comes," says Gresham, author of 1988's "Lenten Lands," which is one of about 50-plus books written about Lewis.

Lewis has also inspired numerous international groups and reading societies dedicated to his work. Among the best known is the Redlands, Calif.-based C. S. Lewis Foundation, which is dedicated to "celebrating the life and legacy of C.S. Lewis and to encouraging a renaissance of Christian scholarly and artistic expression." The



For more information

- Visit www.narnia.org to learn about the Chronicles of Narnia series.
- Visit www.cslewis.org to learn more about the C.S. Lewis Foundation.

foundation organizes literary conferences and events in the United States and England.

And although Lewis wasn't a card-carrying evangelical, evangelicals have been some of his most devoted fans. The magazine "Christianity Today" even called Lewis "our patron saint."

As with other saints, however, there is disagreement among those claiming possession of Lewis' holy relics. Both Wheaton College in Illinois and Westmont College in Santa Barbara, Calif., claim ownership of the wardrobe described as the threshold to Narnia.

Stan Mattson of the C. S. Lewis Foundation deems both pieces of furniture from Lewis' Oxford house to be official—if imperfect—relics.

"Neither are to be confused as being literally 'the wardrobe' described in the Chronicles, which is depicted as having a mirror on its face, which neither of them do," Mattson says.

But there's no debating Lewis' long-lasting literary legacy, which remains the true source of his veneration.

I thought I did, but I didn't

We all know how easy it is to forget to do something. Most of us do not want to admit we simply forgot. I don't know about you, but a greater problem for me is to think I have done something, only to find out I really haven't.

I don't know how many times my wife has asked me about a certain event or some critical detail, only to get a reply similar to this: "I told you several days ago all about this." I have a wonderful wife. She simply smiles and normally will respond, "I know you think you told me, honey, but you didn't."

For many years I would really press the issue, insisting that she was the one who had forgotten, not me.

Now that I am a little older and more aware of my own deficiencies, I am less inclined to place the blame on her or anyone else. I must say, though, there still are times when I am sure I have done something, only to have those around me tell me I haven't.

Just before Christmas I was reminded again that I have not always done what I think I have. I was cleaning my desk at home. Before becoming president I did a lot of my paperwork at this desk. I use the desk very little now. As I was clearing the desk of unwanted paper and other items, I noticed what appeared to be a check among some papers. When I unfolded the paper, I was surprised to find that it was in fact a check. It had been written to me in the summer of 1994, just before I became president.

I will say that 1994 was an extremely difficult year for my family and me. Previous president Barkley Moore passed away Jan. 25. My father passed away two weeks later, in February. Then in March my oldest son was admitted to the intensive care unit at the Baptist hospital in Corbin. In April

his first child, and our first granddaughter, was born. This granddaughter passed away six months later. In May my mother passed away. All of this time Oneida was without a president. So it is a little understandable that this check was not a priority in my life when it was misplaced.

I had to chuckle a little last week when I received a certain check in the mail. This check had been written in September 1994. The person wrote me this note on the back of the check: "I was dumb-

founded when I found this check that I had written in 1994. I'm replacing it, but just wanted you to know that I wanted to remember Barkley Moore. What happened that I misplaced it and didn't mail?" Remembering the check I had found just a few weeks earlier, I fully understood how those things can happen.

It does make one wonder how many times we think we have done something, when in reality we haven't. Or how many times do we plan to do something and do not follow through?

How long has it been since you have visited our campus? If you have not been here for three years or longer, you may be surprised to see so many changes; new buildings, new daycare, new housing for our faculty and staff, new pews in our chapel and much more. Spring is a beautiful time to plan a visit. Come by yourself, get a Sunday school class to come with you, travel with a Women's Missionary Union group or simply get a van load from your church to come.

Don't put it off, you might forget.

Reprinted from *Western Recorder*, Feb. 11, 1997

W.F. Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, P.O. Box 67, Oneida, KY 40972. www.oneidaschool.org; e-mail: president@oneidaschool.org

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Serving a great God in Russia

Berea student Rick Neff was one of four students on a December mission team to Novgorod, Russia.

"As I prayed to be ready to respond to opportunities, as I felt the last thump of the landing gear return to position beneath us and as I took a final look at the sunset that quickly disappeared behind the starboard wing, I felt the security of Deuteronomy 31:6, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' I serve a great God!" Neff testified.

"God protected my family while I was in Russia," he continued. "He watched over my church family. Ministry monies to go were provided. Our travels were safe. Souls were saved. Bibles and creation materials were distributed. The illnesses were minor and the Christian fellowship of kindred minds was major."

Neff said his most unusual experience occurred during a visit to the local vocational/technical training school to meet students during their lunch break.

"We carried the Bibles and materials to the second floor hallway and began singing, preaching and distributing," he said. "The school director angrily made us leave, but we went outside to the school en-

trance where many students, local residents and some who got out of a car came to receive a Bible.

"Many listened to our witnessing of Jesus, and within an hour all our supplies were gone. Threatened by the call of local authorities to remove us from the area, I experienced the boldness that Paul described many times," Neff said. "I serve a great God!"

At the adult hospital in Novgorod, Neff shared his testimony, and Peter, the assistant pastor, preached. Neff remembered, "A staunch Russian Orthodox visitor repeatedly interrupted us. I prayed that the obstacle to the gospel would be removed. Elijah, another church worker, asked the visitor to take a walk so he could listen to her objections and tell her about

the ministry for Christ. Peter continued to preach, and two patients prayed to accept Jesus as their Savior. In the hallway a listening visitor stopped me and asked, 'to pray for this Jesus, too.' I serve a great God."

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

BOOKS/TV

Preachers tempted to criticize 'Island'

NASHVILLE (BP)—With a name like "Temptation Island" and a premise of real-life singles trying to break up committed relationships, what's not to protest?

Southern Baptist Convention President James Merritt has joined a host of religious leaders blasting the six-episode show on the Fox Network, which debuted last week.

In a Jan. 8 letter, Merritt asked Fox executive Gail Berman to reconsider airing the show. "I want to ask you to go to the depths of your heart and honestly ask this question: 'Is this the best Fox Network can do?'"

The Parents Television Council has appealed to religious leaders to protest to the Fox network over the show.

Meanwhile, Baptist ethicist Robert Parham suggested congregational leaders should resist the predictable urge to attack the "offensive and exploitative television show."

Instead, Parham said the show offers teachable moments for church members to discuss topics ranging from sexual temptation to the church's role in the public square.

"Raise the question about why Fox affiliate stations in the Bible Belt have encountered passive concern from the faith community about 'Temptation Island,'" he suggested. "Encourage a dialogue about ways believers can express their values."

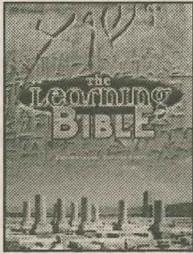
The Learning Bible: Contemporary English Version. *American Bible Society, 2000. 2093 pages. \$39.95. ♦♦♦♦♦ (out of five)*

In 1995, the American Bible Society released the Contemporary English Version of the Bible. The goal was to provide a text of Scripture that was faithful to the meaning of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts of the various books of the Bible, as well as to provide a translation that could be understood easily when read aloud or silently. Understanding, according to the translators, is achieved when there is a convergence of the accuracy and clarity of the text with its appearance.

With *The Learning Bible*, the American Bible Society has achieved the last of its goals in issuing this new translation: "The Learning Bible is designed so that you won't have to leave your chair in order to get the information you need to understand what's going on in the Bible." One might be tempted to conclude that the Society is overreaching.

But "The Learning Bible" is an impressive work. While the notes, articles and helps do not assume that the reader is familiar with the Bible, they do not insult the biblically literate reader. The breadth and depth of helps are impressive. Throughout the text, the reader can take advantage of notes and mini-articles that provide insight into geographical, historical and cultural contexts of particular passages.

All of this is accomplished within the Society's general policy of providing Scripture resources that are as free as possible of interpretive bias. This fact alone sets this study Bible apart from the field. *Jim Holladay*



Seize the Day with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dare to Journey with Henri Nouwen, and Resist the Powers with Jacques Ellul. *Charles Ringma. Piñon Press, 2000. \$8 each. ♦♦*

Introducing modern-day Christian readers to the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Henri Nouwen and Jacques Ellul is an important and difficult task.

All three men's texts are essential to understanding the Christian faith in a post-modern context. Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran minister who was executed by the Nazis for his work to overthrow Hitler during World War II. Nouwen was a Catholic priest who

spent the better part of his life caring for seriously handicapped residents in the Daybreak L'Arche Community in Canada. Ellul was a French Reformed politician and professor who wrote prolifically on Christianity, culture and socialism.

Put in context, these complex men witnessed dramatic events that shaped our modern culture. They wrote important texts on the struggle of living as authentic Christians under the weight of wars, politics, technology, human suffering and the Information Age.

That said, these three daily devotional books are a nice introduction to the writings of the three men for anyone looking to simply begin exploring their works.

Readers looking to explore the works of these three men more seriously, however, will be sadly disappointed. The brief, daily readings are more Ringma's thoughts on these men's

words than an actual introduction to their works.

The best thing about these books, perhaps, is the brief timeline chronicling the major events of each man's life and the excellent bibliography at the end. To grasp the depth and importance of these men, a serious reader might start with Ringma's bibliographies rather than his devotionals. *Victoria Moon*

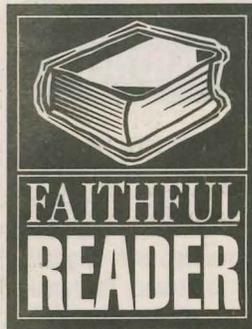
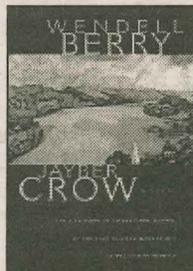
Jayber Crow: Barber, of the Port William Membership, as Written by Himself. *Wendell Berry. Counterpoint Press, 2000. 363 pages. \$25. ♦♦♦♦♦*

In his new novel, Kentuckian Wendell Berry again writes of life in the fictional town of Port William. But to say fictional does not mean to say the town is not as real as where you and I live. Berry brings such depth and character to his writing that you expect to see a sign for Port William off I-64.

In this book we learn how Jayber Crow became the barber in Port William and then read with fascination as he tells us his life story.

In the course of telling his story, Crow explores at least three important themes of Christianity: community, the love of God for us and our love of neighbor. Crow's, or Berry's, exploration of these themes comes in the framework of a story filled with vivid images and memorable characters.

Berry's novel is a testament to a vanishing lifestyle. Jayber Crow's story awakens in us the hope that such love and faith as existed in Port William can still exist in our world. Plain and simple, this is great storytelling. *Wayne Hager*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C.; Jim Holladay, pastor of Lyndon Baptist Church in Louisville; and Victoria Moon, librarian for Deer Park Baptist Church in Louisville. They welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: jwhager@surry.net, docholladay@juno.com or sdmoon@gateway.net.

Former Baptist author hopes book sparks dialogue on women in ministry

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

ORLANDO, Fla. (ABP)—The issue of women ministers is not a liberal vs. conservative issue according to the author of a book advocating the empowerment of women in ministry.

Lee Grady, who grew up as a Southern Baptist and whose parents are still Southern Baptists, insists the issue is more a matter of faithfulness to biblical teaching.

The author of "Ten Lies the Church Tells Women" said he suspects Southern Baptists of all stripes will dismiss at least some of his beliefs because of his charismatic leanings. But he hopes his book will cause Southern Baptists to rethink the denomination's stance on female pastors.

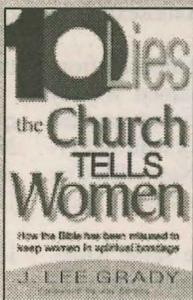
"I want people to talk about it instead of sweeping it under the rug," he said. "I hope men and women read it and go to their pastor, recommend he read it, and say, 'We need to discuss this issue.'"

The editor of the charismatic-oriented magazine, *Charisma*, Grady argues that most traditionalists refuse to recognize the contribution of ancient female leaders like Deborah and the prophetess Huldah in the

Old Testament.

Nor will they acknowledge that women like Priscilla and Phoebe were New Testament church leaders, he writes.

The same goes for the SBC's heritage. Grady asks where the convention would be without women like the legendary Lottie Moon.



Likewise, contemporary teachers like Beth Moore and Kay Arthur represent valuable voices needed to lead a modern-day revival, he writes.

"I hope seminarians and thinkers within the SBC will explore issues and claims that are in my book," said Grady, who recently was ordained by

the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. "I want women catapulted into leadership in the SBC who are Spirit-led. If it's someone like Beth Moore, that's wonderful. I think she's a prophetess to the nation."

In his book Grady spells out a case against male domination in three primary areas:

■ The silencing of women in church, based on 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

Grady points to the heart of that passage, verses 34-35, and argues that Paul actually was quoting from a letter by

some anti-female church leaders.

A Greek symbol at the beginning of verse 36 signals that the preceding statement was quoted, Grady writes. That explains why those two verses seemingly contradict everything Paul previously said about all believers participating in the New Testament church, Grady states.

■ That women will be saved through bearing children, one interpretation of 2 Timothy 2:13-15.

While scholars disagree on the passage's interpretation, Grady said some believe the Greek text points to the coming of the Messiah through the Virgin Mary. He suggests the verse on childbearing could be translated, "But women will be saved through the bearing of the Child (Jesus)."

■ The belief that women should obediently submit to their husbands.

While this appears in Ephesians 5:22, and was cited in the SBC's 1998 revision of the Baptist Faith and Message, the author argues that making a man the boss in marriage misconstrues Christ's teaching.

Jesus taught that a true leader in God's kingdom is a servant, he says. So if a man is called to lead a family, his leadership must be Christlike—leading from a position of meekness, not prideful

superiority or tyrannical domination.

The Greek word for submission is in a tense that refers to a self-imposed stance, Grady says. Thus, his book states that true submission is a choice, never something one person demands or imposes on another.

"We want to impose our cultural views on the Bible instead of reading it through the lens of the culture it was written in," he said in an interview. "In the first century women were viewed as chattel, property like cows and goats."

"For Paul to say, 'Husbands love you wives as your own body' was a revolutionary concept," he said. "The whole thing of Ephesians 5 is (they) are equal."

Grady insisted that advocacy of women in ministry doesn't lead a church or denomination to embrace more liberal stands on other issues. Many theological conservative groups ordain women but don't support homosexual ordination or abortion, he said, adding that evangelicals must learn to separate such issues instead of lumping them into one category.

"I'm not taking sides with theological liberals in the SBC," he said. "Probably both sides will dismiss my views because of my charismatic views. But this isn't a matter of agreeing with conservatives or liberals, it's a matter of agreeing with the Word of God."

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ A speedy adjustment for International Service Corps workers Robert and Bethany Kaczmarek and Lorie Looney and journeyman Tracy Strawbridge who arrived in Silesia, Poland, this month.

■ Wisdom for the missionary journeyman who has begun a Bible study with college students in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

■ David Bunch, interim executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ **BENTON**—Zion's Cause Church has called **Bob Morgan** as pastor. Morgan previously served at Casky Church.

■ **DRY RIDGE**—Dry Ridge Church called **Brent Raitz** of Brandenburg as associate pastor and youth education minister. **Willie Ailstock** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Bethlehem Church called **Frank James** as minister of education. James previously served at Melbourne Heights Church. **David Hughes** is pastor.

Broadway Church will host a retirement dinner for Pastor **Ron Higdon** and his wife, **Pat**, Jan. 26. Hig-

don has served 20 years as pastor of Broadway. For reservations, call (502) 895-2459.

Cloverleaf Church will host **Lordsong** in concert Jan. 20 at 7 p.m. For information, call (502) 367-0218. **Geoffrey Lacefield** is pastor.

Nancy Dobbs, administrative assistant at West Broadway Church, retired after serving more than 35 years. **Skip Alexander** is pastor.

A memorial service for **Ken Chafin** will be held at Walnut Street Church Jan. 28 at 2 p.m. in the sanctuary. For information, call (502) 589-5290. **Robert Long** is pastor.

■ **ONEIDA**—**Susan Gregory Boswell**, 84, died Jan. 1. Boswell was the retired bookkeeper for Oneida Institute and widow of Kentucky pastor **James Boswell**. Her funeral was Jan. 8 at Oneida.

■ **TAYLORSVILLE**—Kings Church will host the **Journeymen Quartet** in concert Jan. 21 at 7 p.m.

■ **WORTHVILLE**—Worthville Church called **Mark Bissonnette** as youth minister.

What's going on?

Send your happenings to Shirley Wooton for Mountains to the Mississippi. Mail: Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. Fax: (502) 244-6474. E-mail: shirley_wooton@kybaptist.org.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Kimball piano. Spinnet; plays well; cabinet in good shape; \$1,000. Call (270) 737-6645—leave message if no answer.

OPPORTUNITY: Men and women: help us make a difference while giving your family financial assistance. Our associates are making \$100-plus an hour. Sell our Christian products to customers, schools and churches. Direct sales and home parties, 50%; fundraisers, 10%. Call today for your free info packet: (800) 839-2506. Ask for Christine. www.legendsofffaith.com.

SEEKING: Part-time music minister. Primary responsibilities include: sharing in worship planning and leadership; conducting sanctuary choir; and overseeing volunteer-staffed children's music ministry. Please send resumé to: Albany First Baptist Church, 110 W Cumberland St., Albany, KY 42602, Attn: Music Committee, or call (606) 387-5909.

SEEKING: Minister of students and activities. Southern Baptist, energetic, three years full-time or part-time experience, earned seminary or divinity school degree. Send resumé and references to: Mike Alldredge, search committee chairman, Golden Springs Baptist Church, 3 Robertsdale Road, Anniston, AL 36207.

SEEKING: Ballardsville Baptist Church, a growing, mission-minded congregation, seeks applications for a full-time position from a person who senses a call to minister to youth and children. Bachelor's degree a minimum requirement; seminary a plus. Experience in youth and children's ministry. Seeking organized, people-oriented individual as a minister to youth and coordinator of children's programs. Compensation package negotiable. Send resumé to: Search Committee, Ballardsville Baptist Church, 4300 South Highway 53, Crestwood, KY 40014.

SEEKING: LaCenter First Baptist Church is seeking a minister of music/senior adults. Please send resumé to: Personnel Committee, FBC, PO Box 239, LaCenter, KY 42056.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Emmanuel Baptist Church in Carlinville, Ill. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Emmanuel Baptist Church, 117 W 2nd South, Carlinville, IL 62626.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Ludlow is seeking a motivated worship and praise leader to help transition from traditional to blended service using the best of old and new. This individual will be responsible for incorporating instruments, praise teams and drama into services, as well as developing music programs for children through adults. Experience is required for this challenging and exciting full-time position. Please send resumé to: First Baptist Church, 400 Linden St., Ludlow, KY 41016.

SEEKING: Full-time self-motivated DOM for two associations in Northern Kentucky, serving 39 churches in four counties that are predominantly in rural bedroom communities between Northern Kentucky, Lexington and Frankfort. Send resumé and references to: Denny French, Chairman of Search Committee, Rt. 1, Box 210-A, Warsaw, KY 41095, or e-mail: dsfrench@worldnet.att.net. Phone: (859) 567-2652.

SEEKING: East Cadiz Baptist Church of Cadiz is seeking a part-time minister of music. Send resumé to: M/M Search Committee, East Cadiz Baptist Church, 407 Third St., Cadiz, KY 42211.

SEEKING: Farmdale Baptist Church, 5610 U.S. Highway 127 South, Frankfort, Ky., is seeking three part-time positions: children's minister, youth minister and organist. Send resumé to church in care of Personnel Committee.

Clinton takes sermon spotlight at Washington worship service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—President Clinton preached the sermon at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington on Jan. 7, thanking the congregation for its support of his worshipping there and pondering his future Christian commitments.

"I thank you all for your prayers and your welcome to all of us in the storm and sunshine of these last eight years," the president said, referring to his family.

He said the congregation helped "remind me that no matter what was going on in Washington, D.C., at the moment, there was a real world out there, with real people and real hearts and minds. ... You cannot imagine the peace, the comfort, the strength I have drawn from my Sundays here."

The president touched on how his Christian commitment will be challenged as he makes the transition from the White House to the status of former president.

"I will try every day to remember, as apparently for the first time in my life I will be able to earn a sizable income, that Christ admonished us that our lives will be judged by how we do unto the least of our neighbors," Clinton said.

Clinton said he was not saying "goodbye" to the congregation, but that the election of first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton as a Democratic senator from New York marks "the beginning of a new chapter in our lives with Foundry."

Clinton congratulated the congregation for its work on the issues of homelessness and world peace and for its inclusion of gays and lesbians and people of all races and nationalities.

He thanked church members "for your constant reminder, in ways large and small, that though we have all fallen short of the glory, we are all redeemed by faith in a loving God."

He also thanked the church's senior minister, Philip Wogaman, for his support.

"Most of you know that for more than two years now, he and two other minister friends of mine have shared the burden of meeting with me on a weekly basis," Clinton said. "It has been an immense blessing to me and to my service as president."

In an interview, Wogaman said it was not a rejection in any way of Clinton's Southern Baptist roots to make the Methodist church his home. Among other things, it was the desire to be at a place he could attend with the first lady, who is Methodist, and because of the church building's proximity to the White House, he noted.

Wogaman said there are many "fine Southern Baptist churches and pastors who are not in harmony with the right-wing agenda of its leadership." Wogaman said he honors the heritage of Southern Baptists exemplified by former SBC president and former congressman, the late Brooks Hays.

Speaking of Clinton, Wogaman added: "In my mind—with the exception of his lapse—he exemplified the best of the Baptist tradition, too. He's a good man. When all the smoke clears ... he's going to go down as one of the really good American presidents ... and he's not through with his life yet."

With additional reporting by Associated Baptist Press

Former Golden Gate staffer, new pastor identified as man missing for 17 years

DALLAS (BP)—A former employee at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary might have a lot of explaining to do. Depending on whom you ask, the man is:

■ The new pastor of a self-described evangelical church to homosexuals in Dallas.

■ A Church of Christ minister from San Antonio, Texas, named Wesley Barret "Barre" Cox who was reported missing in 1984 and has a wife and 17-year-old daughter near Nashville. Cox was declared legally dead seven years later.

■ A person with the same name, birthday and Social Security number of a Texas Panhandle rancher who was audited by the IRS in 1987 and 1989 and received FBI advisories to note in his credit files that someone was using his Social Security number, according to a Jan. 11 article in the San Antonio Express-News.

The individual, known as James Simmons at Golden Gate, received a farewell party at the Southern Baptist-affiliated seminary Jan. 5.

Simmons, 49, had served as housing director at the Mill Valley, Calif., campus, earned two master's degrees and twice was elected president of the student government association in 1993 and 1994.

Arriving at Golden Gate in 1991, Simmons told of having had amnesia since being beaten and left for dead in the trunk of a car in a junkyard in Memphis, Tenn.

Simmons is slated to become the pastor of White Rock Community Church in Dallas Jan. 21, according to the church's Web site.

Associate pastor Dean Bishop was quoted by the San Antonio Express-News as saying he believes Cox will answer questions when he arrives in Dallas this week.

Golden Gate Seminary's vice president for public relations Cameron Crabtree said he and others on campus had known Simmons since 1991. Crabtree told the San Antonio Express-News that Simmons' references had been checked. "There was no reason not to give him a chance here."

Simmons did not tell anyone at Golden Gate the name or location of the church he would lead, except that it was "back east," Crabtree said.

The possibility of legal difficulty for Simmons, or Cox, could arise since identity theft is a federal crime. The San Antonio Express-News also reported that records show Simmons as using a second Social Security number while living in California the past 10 years.

Once tortured for faith, Iranian now ministers in U.S.

BURBANK, Calif. (BP)—Roubik Hoospianmer's life of ministry started when he was 14, passing out Bibles to Muslims on the streets of Tehran. Within hours he was arrested. But that didn't stop him.

The pastor, now 41, faced many obstacles in his efforts to share the gospel with his fellow countrymen before he left. Now he works in California as a social worker for Iranian and Armenian refugees, as pastor of three immigrant churches and as a television preacher with weekly programs in three languages.

By age 22 Hoospianmer had started his first church in Iran. Not long afterward, he was remanded by his civilian employer to one-year mandatory service in the Iranian army, keeping him from the church.

But he was booted out of the military after debating the merits of Christianity with the local mullah, or Muslim cleric, in the presence of many soldiers.

His civilian employer, the telephone company, sent him to the front of the Iran-Iraq war to repair cables, but after work he would bike 10 miles each way at night to town, where he searched until he found Assyrian Christians.

For seven years he and his wife grew a church in the war zone, enduring daily bombing, sporadic supplies of water and continual harassment.

Hoospianmer endured torture for his faith but finally decided to leave the country after attending the funeral of a Muslim-born pastor who had been killed, and seeing the blind widow and four young children. "This is Islamic law," he said. "Converts die, especially if they are a pastor who brings others to Christianity."

He arranged to give everything he had in exchange for refugee status in Germany for him and his family.

While there, he started three churches, but moved to California. "The Lord showed me in California 1 million Iranians," Hoospianmer said. "Here we can be more useful."

Today he has a plan to launch a training center where people called to work with Muslims can spend six months in ministry with him in Los Angeles. Daily infusion of the language and culture of the Middle East would help acclimatize missionaries so they are ready to start work when they reach their overseas assignment area, he said.

"My desire is to be a missionary in the United States for Southern Baptists to reach the Muslims," Hoospianmer said. "My elder brother died to reach Muslims. God has called me to live to reach them."

Numbers cruncher

Christian pollster helping churches face their future

By Ted Parks
Religion News Service

VENTURA, Calif. (RNS)—So churches don't answer the phone. Who cares?

George Barna does, passionately.

Released last summer, the discovery that it is "virtually impossible" to reach nearly half of the country's Protestant churches by phone made it to Barna Research Group's top-12 list of its year 2000 findings.

Founded in 1984, Barna's marketing research firm conducts polls on religious issues, then interprets the data for the consciences of the nation's evangelical leaders.

Barna's list included more somber findings than telephone snafus. Like the greater chance born-again adults will divorce than non-born-again. Or that born-again Christians are much busier keeping themselves entertained than devoting time to "spiritual activities."

What drives Barna is a passion for truth, even when the resulting religious picture is unflattering. His goal is to help church leaders "understand the context in which God has placed you to minister," he said. "We're just trying to help them understand reality."

Tucked into an out-of-the-way business park north of Los Angeles, Barna's professional surroundings mirror his own unassuming style.

"He's somewhat of an introvert," said Ron Sellers, a Barna employee from 1987 to 1992 before becoming president of Ellison Research, a Phoenix-based marketing company. Now in competition with Barna and his staff, Sellers was quick to add, "One thing I will happily do is vouch for their integrity."

Fresh out of Boston College in the late 1970s, Barna was working on political campaigns when he had his initial contact with polling. "Heck, I can do this," he said, eventually moving from managing races to conducting political polling.

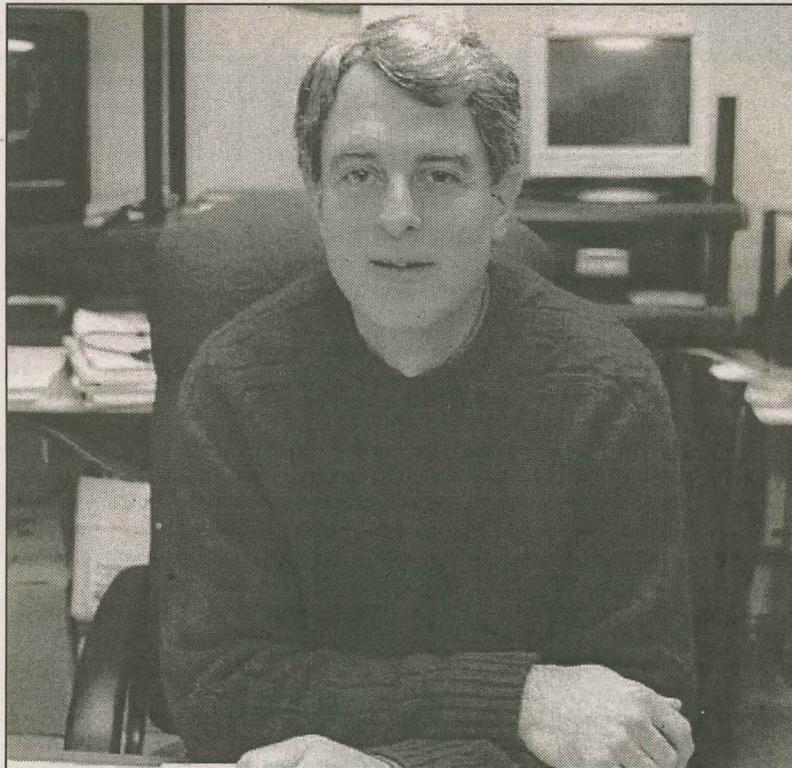
Barna's first experience connecting number-crunching with Christianity came when he was working at a marketing-research company in Los Angeles in the early 1980s. When the secular company was perplexed about the needs of a Christian client, the management remembered the "new kid" Barna was a believer.

"I kind of translated back and forth for the two sides," said Barna, adding that he himself was a newcomer to the Christian faith at the time. He recognized Oral Roberts' name, he said, mainly because he had heard Oral Roberts University had a good basketball team.

"I had seen Billy Graham on TV once, but assumed he was unique," Barna explained. "It was a whole new world for me to get to know."

While some people bring more traditional gifts to Christian ministry, "I just happen to have a fairly unusual tool that I'm bringing to the table."

Barna describes himself as a regu-



POLLSTER George Barna is an evangelical Christian with a passion for truth. His polling, he says, helps give churches an accurate representation of reality. "If that representation doesn't cast the church in a very positive light, then deal with it." (RNS photo by Ted Parks)

lar churchgoer, but prefers not to disclose which church he attends.

People who know Barna and his work see no conflict between the researcher's spiritual commitment and his quantitative objectivity.

To assume that accuracy requires researchers to jettison their value system is misguided, said Kevin Mannoia, president of the National Association of Evangelicals.

"Is there a conflict? Absolutely not," said Mannoia. "To assume that we have to not be a Christian in order to do an effective job of objectifying statistics is ... to separate identity from performance, and that's an exercise in futility. It's an impossibility."

Nationally known pollster George Gallup calls Barna very insightful. Noting that they are good friends, Gallup said Barna "really has a heart for helping the churches."

Seeing his work as primarily descriptive, not prescriptive, Barna said he hopes his findings will give a better sense of the U.S. population's spiritual attitudes and religious practices. By providing data about people's religious needs, then observing programs that effectively meet those needs, Barna wants to "short-cut the learning curve of a church leader."

"We're simply trying to open the eyes and sensitize the hearts of God's people to the opportunities that God has given to us," Barna said.

"My job is to give an accurate representation of reality," he added. "If that representation doesn't cast the church in a very positive light, then deal with it."

Barna's organization is split into two entities. Barna Research Group, a for-profit marketing firm, conducts "a lot of primary research on a variety of topics" for religious and secular clients. The firm also publishes findings on Americans' religious habits and releases them to the public.

The Barna Institute is the second

organization Barna leads. Supported by donors, the institute, created in 1995, explores one major topic a year, such as the state of the black church or the effect of the Internet on people's faith experiences.

"It's an attempt to do large-scale projects that Barna Research Group cannot afford to do," Barna said. The yearly findings are released first to supporters, who are privy to the information before its general dissemination.

The commitment to truth that propels Barna shows up in his willingness to let his company respond to its own changing reality.

"It's constantly evolving," he said. "We tend to develop the company around the people that God brings." The organization's young employees are "passionate about what this company can do," he said. Barna's role, he says, is to "stay out of their way."

The boss, at 46, is the only guy around over 27, commented Barna, whose interview attire included a plum-colored crew neck sweater and tennis shoes. The company has about 80 employees.

Despite his professional passion, Barna sees himself as much more than a researcher. He takes his wife and home-schooled six- and nine-year old daughters on the road for his church-seminar tours, the 2001 schedule including 45 stops across the country.

"I love playing guitar," he added, his musical tastes including rock, jazz and blues. Barna helped put himself through graduate school playing in bands but didn't get involved in a Christian band until moving to California after his studies.

A glossy guitar-shaped picture frame adorns his windowless, book-lined office, which he said was the second smallest in the company.

"If I couldn't be doing what I'm doing now and I could just do whatever I wanted," Barna quipped, "I'd probably be ... a musician somewhere."

Barna lists his least-impressive findings

At the end of last year, Barna Research Group released a list of its most discouraging findings. Here are the top five:

■ Born-again adults are more likely to experience a divorce than are non-born-again adults.

■ Although women are more active in church life than are men, their levels of participation are significantly declining.

■ Large proportions of the lay leaders in Christian churches hold a range of unbiblical religious views regarding the holiness of Christ, the reality of Satan, the existence of the Holy Spirit, the reality of the resurrection and the means to salvation.

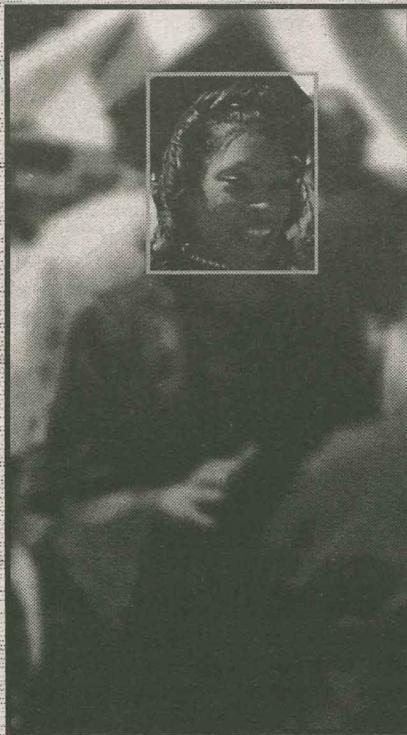
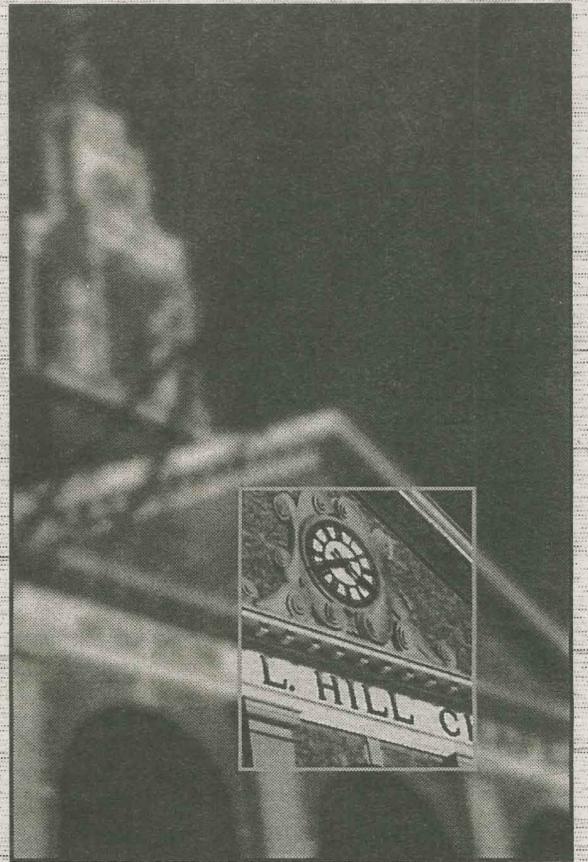
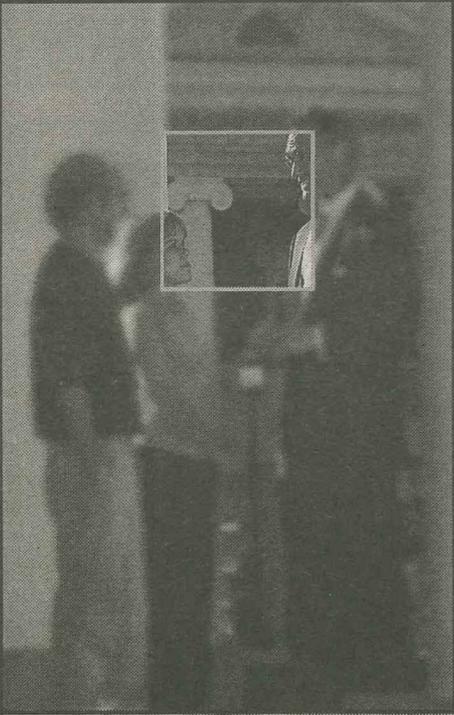
■ Desiring to have a close, personal relationship with God ranks just sixth among the 21 life goals tested, trailing such desires as "living a comfortable lifestyle."

■ Born-again Christians spend seven times as much time on entertainment as they do on spiritual activities.

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