PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

WESTERN RECORDER

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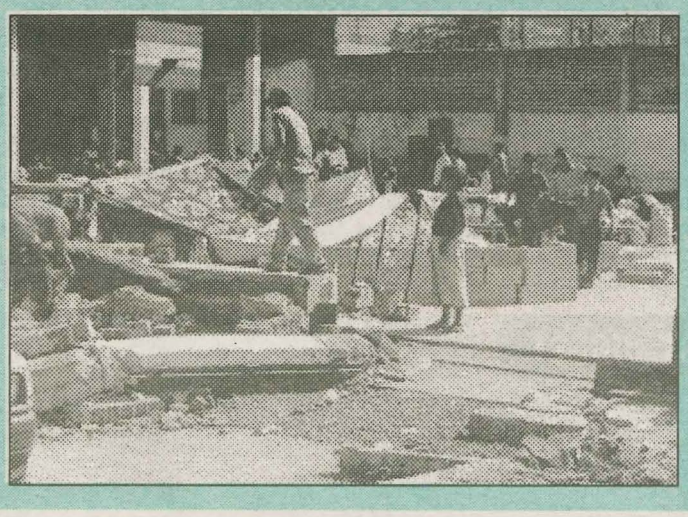
FOR THE RECORD

'Continue to pray'



Southern Baptists and other faith-based relief teams are rushing to assist El Salvador after a Jan. 13 earthquake. Central America's smallest nation suffered a 7.6-magnitude quake killing at least 675 Salvadorans and six people in neighboring Guatemala. The powerful quake also reduced a sizable part of the nation to a jumble of mangled buildings and mud-buried homes. "Continue to pray as we evaluate how to participate in relief efforts and minister to human and spiritual needs," asked Southern Baptist missionary Pam Grumbles. ■ **Above:** *Residents of Comasagua reach out for relief aid at a distribution point after supplies were delivered by road to the town which had been cut off for three days. The town was one of the worst hit by the earthquake.* ■ **Left:** *Survivors inspect the damage around a playground (World Vision photos by Cecilia Ceron via RNS)*

Graham crusade is Kentucky's first in 30 years

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

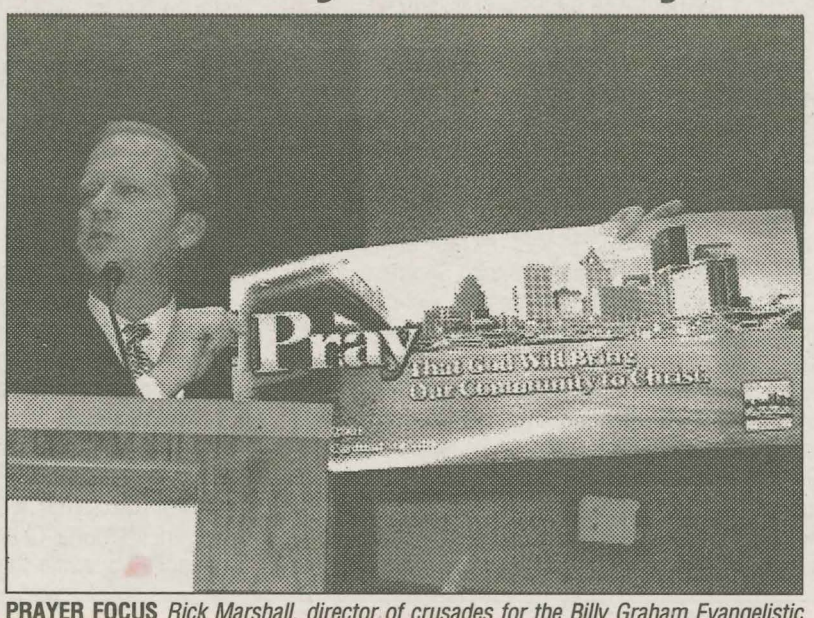
LOUISVILLE—Evangelist Billy Graham is returning to the Bluegrass State to lead a crusade for the first time in 30 years.

Plans for this summer's Greater Louisville Billy Graham Crusade officially were launched last week at a rally in downtown Louisville. The June 21-24 crusade is one of only two crusades the 82-year-old evangelist has scheduled for this year. The other one will be held in October in Fresno, Calif.

The four-day crusade will be Graham's first crusade in Kentucky since a 1971 event in Lexington. He previously held a monthlong crusade in Louisville in 1956 and also preached at a youth rally held in conjunction with the 1964 Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting.

The Jan. 17 crusade kickoff event

❑ *See Graham crusade ..., page 6*



PRAYER FOCUS *Rick Marshall, director of crusades for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, displays a poster urging prayer for the 2001 Greater Louisville Billy Graham Crusade. The evangelistic event will be held June 21-24 in Papa John's Cardinal Stadium in Louisville.*

Churches face hard decisions after receiving high gas bills

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

OWENSBORO—Franklin Skaggs' final month as pastor of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church coincided with the Daviess County congregation's worst fiscal disaster.

The problem wasn't related to the pastor's financial management. The church's natural gas bill hit $636 for December, more than double its winter average of about $250 a month.

In addition, the church faces a $90 bill to heat its empty parsonage to 55 degrees.

"I retired Dec. 31 and one of the men I talked to (after that) said, 'Man, sakes alive, we've got to do something quick and decisive,'" he said. "One of the things they're going to do is use the educational building on Wednesday night, where they won't have to heat the sanctuary."

Squeezing into smaller spaces, canceling Sunday or Wednesday night services and installing automated thermostats are among conservation measures Kentucky Baptist churches are using to cope with natural gas price increases.

Though the hikes are part of a nationwide trend, that is of little comfort to pastors and directors of missions across the commonwealth. They use words like "sticker shock" and "unbelievable" to describe the situation.

"It's one thing to have a jump, but the prices are tripling," said Harold Pike, pastor of South Side Baptist Church in Covington.

The church's customary winter power bill of about $1,600 zoomed to $3,500 in January, plus $1,300 for its new activity center. By comparison, last March the previous establishment in that building—a bar—got its last power bill: less than $200.

"Our utility company is saying, 'If you keep it at 65 degrees, it will save 20 percent,'" Pike said. "We're doing that in Sunday school classes and the sanctuary. But we can't do it in day care. That's not warm enough for babies."

In Eastern Kentucky's Three Forks Baptist Association, most churches are running behind budget, making it tough to deal with rate increases, said Ray Cooper, director of missions.

"It appears they've been going up at least 100 percent from last year," he said. "The churches here are small and also poor, so they are really having a struggle. I'm waiting to see if it will cut into missions."

A spokesman for Louisville Gas & Electric, which serves Kentucky's largest city, attributes skyrocketing bills to increased demand coupled with lower supplies.

"It's all over the nation," Doug Bennett said. "In the past natural gas has been relatively cheap, so there haven't been incentives to look for it. Gas is

❑ *See Higher gas bills ..., page 3*

Eleven state conventions partner for 'Northeast Impact'

"We still have not impacted the tremendous population centers of America."

Charles Barnes, Impact Northeast coordinator

By Ferrell Foster
Baptist General Convention of Texas

DALLAS (ABP)—Tall buildings glisten like jewels along the coastline, while lush hills and mountains stretch inland for hundreds of miles. It is the northeastern portion of the United States, and it is home to millions of unchurched people and relatively few Baptists.

Baptists in the South have cast their eyes in that direction by entering a multi-state partnership that is seeking to bring more spiritual light into the region.

"Impact Northeast" has united six "support conventions" in the South—Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia—with five "impact conventions" in the Northeast—the District of Columbia, Maryland/Delaware, New England, New York and Pennsylvania/South Jersey. Together, they are making a concerted effort to expand the Baptist witness in the Northeast.

"The Northeast U.S.A. is so critical for the evangelization of America because easily over one quarter of our population lives there and vast portions of those people don't know Christ," said Don Sewell, director of Texas partnerships for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention, although not a formal part of Impact Northeast, has been involved in ministry to the Northeast for several years through a missions partnership with the Baptist Convention of New England.

Calvin Wilkins, director of the KBC partnership missions department, said Impact Northeast complements what Kentucky Baptists are seeking to do in partnership with Baptists in New England.

"There's enough work for everybody to do and then some," Wilkins said. "The emphasis being placed on the northeast region of our country and particularly the large cities is long overdue. We believe that anything that is accomplished will be productive and beneficial for the churches up there."

Only 1 percent of the population in the Northeast is Baptist, said Charles Barnes, coordinator of Impact Northeast in Annapolis, Md. "We still have not impacted the tremendous population centers of America," said Barnes, who recently retired as executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.

Barnes was talking about New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Washington and the many other cities of the region.

Those cities and the countryside that surrounds them make up "the most unchurched 25 percent of the American population" said Steve Seaberry, equipping coordinator for Texas partnerships.

Sewell said individual state convention partnerships provided the "seedbeds" of concern that led to Impact Northeast. The 11-convention partnership started in 2000 but has been slow to gather steam. It lasts through 2007.

Impact Northeast is a "very expansive and ambitious partnership," Sewell said. "This partnership is a new paradigm. Impact Northeast draws from the very best resources of all these conventions to address church growth and leadership needs in any of those five impact conventions."

David Waltz, executive director of the Pennsylvania/South Jersey Baptist Convention, said there is excitement among Baptists in the Northeast just knowing that there are people in the South who care.

"It's sometimes overwhelming to see the great need" in the region, and it can be discouraging, he said.

"We need lots more churches," Waltz added. "There are entire counties with no Southern Baptist work" in Pennsylvania/South Jersey, including one such county with a population of 100,000 people.

"We have the strategies in place," Waltz said. "We just need the resources, the people."

With additional reporting by Editor Trennis Henderson

Baptists in Northeast cite similarities, diversity

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (ABP)—Baptists in the Northeast will quickly tell a Baptist from the South that things are different in that part of the world—not necessarily better or worse, just different.

The Northeast itself has differences from region to region as one travels southward from New England to New York, then to Pennsylvania and Maryland; while Washington, D.C., has its own culture. But still there are similarities.

"It's not a foreign land," but it is a different culture, said David Lee, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware.

There are "not many Baptists," said Tom Schenk, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, near Pittsburgh. That can make ministry difficult. "People don't have an evangelical mindset. They're not used to Baptists being so strongly oriented to reaching out to people."

As a result, many Baptists throughout the Northeast talk about the importance of "relational evangelism," building enduring friendships as a means to conversion.

"It's very relational here," said Tommy Kennedy, pastor of Cross Point Fellowship in Harrisburg, Pa. "People want to get to know you."

Just being a Baptist can cause problems in reaching out to the unchurched. "The name Baptist itself is looked down on here," said Kirk Strawbridge, a semester missionary at the University of Pittsburgh.

Carl Anderson, director of missions for Keystone Baptist Association in south central Pennsylvania, agreed. He added, however, that while people in the South think there is little receptivity to the gospel in the North, "I've yet to have a door slammed in my face."

Lisa Hoffman, a semester missionary from Louisville working in Boston, has been pleased with the opportunity to serve there. It may be cold outside during the winter, but "it's not a cold place as far as people go," she said.

As for Baptist life itself, common themes surface in talking to ministers—great need for both prayer and financial resources.

"Land is almost all gone," Charles Barnes, coordinator of Impact Northeast, said regarding the Baltimore-Washington area. "And it is very, very expensive."

While much of the Northeast is largely secular today, it is not a region without its own Baptist and Christian heritage. The first Baptist church in the continent was started in Rhode Island some 350 years ago, and the Great Awakening of the 18th century centered in that part of the country.

Many in New England are probably not aware of their Christian history, said Michael Dean, international ministries coorinator for the Greater Boston Baptist Association.

Baptists from the South who minister in the Northeast for short or long spans will have to cross cultural boundaries, said Robert Cochran of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention. "They will discover that God crosses with them."

BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **Powell named Truett Seminary dean.** Paul Powell, who retired in 1998 as president of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board, has been named dean of Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary. Powell was appointed by Baylor President Robert Sloan as the third dean of the six-year-old seminary. He will begin his new role Feb. 26. Baylor officials recently said they hope the 250-student seminary will double its enrollment in the next few years. Truett is one of three schools designated to benefit from Texas Baptists' reallocation of budget funds last fall.

■ **Southwestern faculty sign statement.** Nearly all faculty members at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, have signed the 2000 version of the Baptist Faith and Message, according to Scotty Gray, vice president for academic administration. Seminary President Ken Hemphill said faculty members have until March to sign the revised document. Gray added that all full-time and adjunct faculty must sign the statement in order to teach. Although no full-time faculty members have refused to sign the statement, Gray acknowledged that a small number of adjunct faculty members have declined to do so.

■ **Reccord unveils new agency theme.** Bob Reccord, president of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, launched the agency's new five-year theme Jan. 11, "On Mission Together for Kingdom Growth." Reccord said NAMB's focus is twofold: communicating the "greatest message ever given" and equipping and mobilizing churches to accomplish the "greatest mission ever undertaken." He said the new theme is designed to reinforce with Southern Baptist constituencies that "we're stronger together than we are separately."

■ **W.Va. exec joins Mid-America faculty.** Jere Phillips, executive director of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists since 1995, has resigned to join the faculty of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis. Phillips, 49, will begin his new role Feb. 1 as associate professor of practical theology and director of the practical missions office and denominational relations office.

■ **Historical society donations up.** Bolstered by a nearly 19 percent increase in donations, the Southern Baptist Historical Society finished 2000 in the black, according to Charles Deweese, the group's executive director. Deweese said contributions accounted for 60 percent of the society's annual income of $170,000. Since the 1997 dissolution of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission as part of Southern Baptist Convention restructuring, the society has functioned as an independent organization.

■ **Southern offers annual hymn sing.** Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's school of church music and worship will host its fifth annual community hymn sing Feb. 6. The program, which offers participants an opportunity to sing favorite hymns of the church, will be at 7:30 p.m. in Alumni Memorial Chapel on the seminary's Louisville campus. Tom Bolton, interim dean of the music school, will direct congregational singing.

■ **CBF seeks volunteers for China.** The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is seeking teachers and colleges students to participate this summer in volunteer projects in China. A three-week cultural exchange program is available June 14-July 5 for students. Volunteers also are needed to teach conversational English to Chinese teachers and students July 6-Aug. 5. For more information about volunteer opportunities, contact David or Ann Wilson at (517) 835-1536.

■ **Educators group chooses leader.** Lawrence Klempnauer has been named executive director of the Baptist Association of Christian Educators. Klempnauer retired at the end of 2000 after serving 20 years as Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's vice president for student services. He will be responsible for administrative needs of the educators association which meets annually and publishes a bimonthly journal.

KENTUCKY

Cold winter, higher gas prices squeeze ministry centers

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

PIPPA PASSES—Lawrence Baldridge always had hoped of organizing a revolving fund that could help low-income residents of southeastern Kentucky with such financial crises as the current utility rate hikes.

But few recipients can repay loans, meaning Caney Baptist Center has no funds available to help residents struggling to cope with huge natural gas bills.

Among them is a member of Caney Baptist Church, who told him she has no way to pay her $500 gas bill, which is about double any previous invoice.

"She may cut the gas off and use electric," Baldridge said. "We just don't have any funds to help people. We've had several requests. Every winter there are some, but not as many as this year."

Elsewhere around the commonwealth, other community ministries are seeing similar problems. While she doesn't have much data yet, Sandra Williams of Elkhorn Baptist Association said she sees indicators that high utility costs are having an impact on Lexington residents.

Williams has been getting five calls a week asking for help lately, compared to two a week last winter. At one of its weekly feeding programs recently, the association distributed 577 sack lunches, up from 250 a year ago.

"Part of that is because people are spending money on utilities," she said. "We serve quite a few homeless, but a lot of these people are working or trying to work and can't make ends meet."

But the help the association can offer is limited. Its guidelines allow for $100 per family per year to help pay rent and utility bills.

In West Louisville, Baptist Fellowship Center allows a maximum of $50 in assistance for a family every three months. Director William Blackford said that is a bare minimum of the help needed.

What is disturbing, he said, is that many requests for assistance are coming from people who have jobs but don't make enough to meet their needs.

"With welfare reform we have to deal with the working poor," he said. "The thing of the working poor is a major issue. The idea is if you work, you can take care of yourself. With the high percentage of single-parent homes, that can be devastating."

At East Louisville Community Ministries, director Robert Peters hasn't seen a large increase in requests for help with utility payments.

But he expects that to change as soon as other resources, such as assistance from federally-funded programs, run low. His agency provides a maximum of $300 a year for rent and utilities, although customarily granting about half that sum.

"We're getting an increasing number of calls, but normally people wait until they hit the limit," he said. "People will wait until they get (bills totaling) over $300 and get a cut-off notice."

Utility bills are hitting the ministries hard, too. The Baptist Fellowship Center's $2,600 bill this month is more than double last January's. Blackford saw his bill double at home, too.

"I felt overwhelmed," he said. "I was overwhelmed when I looked at the fellowship center's bill and at my own bill. But as far as heating bills, what God has said is, 'I'm going to be with you.'"

Higher gas bills forcing churches to make tough decisions

Continued from page 1

increasingly used to generate electricity, and we've had the biggest boom in peacetime history, so that has an impact."

Bennett said LG&E's gas supply costs make up the largest portion of bills. Its filing last November sought a 50 percent increase for supply costs, which he said simply are passed along to consumers.

"That has been complicated by December being the coldest month on record," he said. "The previous December was very mild."

Despite more moderate temperatures in January, an additional increase is probable. LG&E recently filed for a yet-to-be-determined supply cost adjustment, effective Feb. 1.

The director of the stewardship department for the Kentucky Baptist Convention said the impact of utility costs might not be felt for a couple of months but adjustments are likely.

Doug Strader said he's concerned that congregations pinched to pay heat bills might trim Cooperative Program contributions, which he said will have a domino effect throughout the convention.

"They don't want to, but it's not something right at hand like the light bill or the pastor's salary," said Strader, whose own church just received a $6,000 utility bill. "Churches are going to have to cut somewhere. I don't know how they're going to do it."

Sometimes the solution calls for even more money. At South Side Baptist, Pike recently purchased five kerosene heaters. He said he also hopes to replace three old furnaces in the activity center with one, energy-efficient unit.

Churches with the resources should investigate computer-controlled thermostats, according to the pastor of Olivet Baptist Church in Paducah.

Tommy Tucker said Olivet installed half a dozen programmable units in 1989, which has kept its utility costs at 1989 levels despite an increase in space. The church also installed a new boiler last year for its sanctuary, the most expensive area to heat.

"We've done a pretty good job in managing our money," he said. "Because we have the different units, we can program them for one or two sections at a time and not heat the whole building."

Energy-efficient doors are another wise investment, said Charles Blair, director of missions for West Kentucky Baptist Association.

He said New Hope Baptist Church in Clinton installed new doors at the entry area into its main building, helping reduce heat loss.

Another West Kentucky Association church, Burkley Baptist in Arlington, has combined its Sunday program. It wraps morning and afternoon services around a fellowship meal. By finishing earlier, the church reduced its heating and energy requirements.

"We are counseling folks to cut back to 65 degrees," Blair said. "A reduction of space used and only heating the auditorium from Saturday night until the end of the Sunday morning service will help."

The director of missions for Northern Kentucky Baptist Association suggested inspecting for gas leaks.

Rick Robbins said he found the association's office building had several leaks. The utility employee who checked the center told him such leaks are common because joints and pipes get brittle with age.

Robbins said churches should lower thermostats, take conservation seriously and make sure doors and windows are sealed properly.

"We absolutely are very wasteful people. One of my pet peeves is the church is shut down 164 hours a week. That's not very efficient," he said.

Congregations also can investigate a payment method used by home owners called "budget billing" to avoid unpleasant surprises.

While set monthly payments aren't always available for commercial accounts, LG&E's Bennett said that in many cases churches can go on a budget plan. Or there's the possibility of deferred payments, he said.

Another way of meeting the challenge is to make the problem known to members, said Kevin McCallon, pastor of First Baptist Church in Paducah, where the latest gas bill was double last January's bill.

"I don't think anybody can be prepared for that kind of increase," he said. "If you explain what the problem is and let it be known there's a need, people tend to respond to that. Baptist people respond and know the Lord depends on them to make good choices with the money He's giving them."

Liquor opponents win two West Kentucky wet-dry votes but lose another

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

GRAND RIVERS—Pastor Mark Gill sees a philosophical divide in this Kentucky Lake community of about 350 people.

Some people want it to stay like Mayberry, the fictional home of TV's Andy Griffith. Others want it to become another Pigeon Forge, Tenn., home to Dollywood and other tourist attractions, said Gill, pastor of Grand Rivers Baptist Church.

Both groups went to the polls Jan. 16 to vote on a measure to allow liquor sales "by the drink" in four restaurants. Alcohol opponents carried the day, winning the vote 150-85.

"(Our side) wanted to keep it wholesome," said Gill, who acted as spokesman for a citizens group. "But our main concern was to oppose it in a way that wouldn't divide our community."

Grand Rivers was one of three West Kentucky communities that cast wet-dry votes last week. The elections occurred under a state law that permits local referendums on liquor sales in restaurants. The restaurants must seat at least 100 people and derive 70 percent of revenues from food sales.

Neighboring Calvert City also rejected alcohol sales, although by a narrower 544-480 count. Residents of the Meadows precinct in Morganfield passed a measure to allow sales at Breckenridge Golf and Country Club. The vote was 63 to 40.

Two more votes are scheduled Jan. 30 in Somerset and Burnside.

Last Friday, Pulaski County Circuit Court Judge Daniel Venters denied a motion for an injunction against the votes. It was filed by Jeff Trapp, attorney for the Temperance League of Kentucky.

The league also is challenging the constitutionality of the legislation that permitted the votes and has appealed a similar case to the Kentucky Supreme Court. The court has not yet ruled on whether it will hear the appeal.

Trapp also is hoping the legislature will reconsider the referendum option.

"I'm aware that a bill is being introduced to repeal the law," he said. "It will be introduced in the House, where the prospects are good, but in the Senate they're iffy."

Many alcohol opponents have been dismayed that the local option elections have been held, but Gill said Grand Rivers' vote had a positive impact by sparking community participation in government.

Meeting weekly for two months, Citizens for a Dry and Wholesome Community erected about 200 yard signs, distributed literature and led a voter registration drive. On election eve, the group sponsored a prayer march that attracted about 125 people.

The issue also raised awareness that more citizens must get involved in the town, where only six people ran for six council seats in the last election, he said.

"There hasn't been a lot of interest," the pastor said. "But now the citizens group wants to come together once a quarter for a potluck dinner."

Gill added that he's grateful the vote is over, saying tempers frayed as the campaign drew to a close. The issue is divisive in every community, he said, with some advocates taking it personally when liquor opponents vote against allowing a business to increase its sales.

"As best you can, stay focused on the issue," he advised others who might face similar votes. "You're voting on the legalization of the sale of alcohol, and there is a moral right and wrong."

BLUEGRASS BURGOO

■ **Kentucky Baptist** Homes for Children's Cornerstone Counseling center in Oldham County recently relocated and has added a new counselor. The outpatient Christian counseling center is now located in the old Ballardsville Baptist Church building at 4901 S. Hwy. 53. Mike Clark is the counselor for the La Grange office. Clark previously was the clinical coordinator and marriage and family therapist for New Life Clinic of Louisville, a counselor for the Ohio Valley Counseling Center in Louisville and pastoral counselor for two Baptist churches in Louisville. For more information about the Oldham County office, call (502) 225-0011.

■ **Campbellsville** University will host visitation days for high school seniors Feb. 4-5 and March 4-5. For more information, contact the school's office of admissions at (270) 789-5312 or toll-free (800) 264-6014.

OPINION

WESTERN RECORDER

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

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BAPTIST FORUM

Disagree in love

Christ said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." As a church we have taught the teachings of the Bible from the beginning. We fellowship in Christ as a family of God, but do we come to church and educate each other in the Word of God and not live it ourselves?

As a young Christian, I am forced to watch most church life from the sidelines. Most youth are actively involved but our age makes it difficult to participate in high committees and organizations. Though I stand on the sidelines, I see the way people address issues concerning the church.

Division in Southern Baptist ideology and that of other church communities has been apparent too long. As a young member and a Christian of growing faith, I am appalled at the actions of both parties. The newsletters and papers do nothing but shatter the names of people and churches.

Even in disagreement, Christians should act in love through conflict.

The church is a house of God, not a place for battle over disagreeing opinions. Southern Baptists and other church communities are making church a political place. If the church families continue the power grapple, it will destroy them.

During the Great Schism of 1378, the priests ran the church and the government. The church wanted too much power and made the house of God an arena for power struggle. This struggle eventually resulted in the Protestant Reformation.

People today can learn a lot from history but don't take advantage of it. By living in fear and hatred of one another, we not only set bad examples for others but make spectacles of ourselves by being cruel to people we should be kind and Christ-like to.

Jenny Goodhue
Louisville

Eternal impact

I choose to be a Southern Baptist because I believe we have the best way of sharing Christ with the world and that Southern Baptists have stayed true to what the Word of God says.

However, I am distraught over the public battles that have been waged within our denomination. It is causing us to lose sight of the battle we must win, the battle for souls to build the kingdom of Christ. Our discussions take energy, time and passion away from our purpose. I am certain that Satan is thrilled with our disagreements. At a time when religious freedoms are being lost, our little skirmishes seem very petty.

Let me share an example of what this has done to the kingdom of Christ. My in-laws don't know Christ. We have witnessed to them for more than 10 years.

Recently, my father-in -law has become quite interested in Southern Baptist faith, not as a matter of salvation but for the sheer controversy. His city newspaper gives him plenty of reason to doubt that we know anything about salvation. He loves to confront us about these topics and he is completely closed to attending our church when he visits us. Instead of being able to share the gospel with my in-laws, we constantly are brought into arguments over what our denomination is doing.

Maybe for those heavily involved in the discussions about the Baptist Faith and Message, one family's eternity is not as important as who wins. I just have to think that my in-laws are not the only lost people in the world who see our arguments and have these thoughts. I fear for the future and where we as Baptists are headed. I fear that we are building walls of conflict rather than building the kingdom of Christ.

Regina Kinslow Schrock
Madisonville

Resist creedalism

To maintain credibility in the era of "postmodernism," Baptists must refocus on the believer-priesthood concept and the church's mission. Recent actions in state conventions regarding the fundamentalist/Calvinist-revised Baptist Faith and Message constitute denominational lockstep/creedal approaches that Baptists should resist, instead formulating personal systems of belief based on individual study and prayer.

A good point of departure is the difference between salvation and reconciliation, terms usually taught as synonymous. Salvation, an "earth thing" appropriated by believers consciously accepting Christ as Savior, governs their mode of living and giving. Reconciliation, a "forever thing" actuated by Christ's death, applies to everyone.

The notion that God, though responsible for the existence of all humans, will "elect" or otherwise redeem only an elitist number is logically and biblically unsound, as is even the possibility God will burn people or souls alive for one second, much less an eternity. To believe that Jesus died for just some is to trivialize His work of redemption and accuse God of outright eternal discrimination and cruelty.

Even though current Baptist hierarchy insists the believer's major responsibility is "witnessing/saving people from hell," Christ's major concern was saving their lives on earth. He outlined the church's mission in His wrap-up of believers' responsibilities: Love and respect God, love neighbor as self.

Paul said eternal life is a free gift (Romans 6:23), meaning no strings attached and for all people (Colossians 1:19-20). Believers must reexamine terms such as hell, perish, death, saved, condemnation, etc., for their symbolism and meaning. Because of judgment, eternity may not be the same for all, but it's not designed for torture.

James L. Clark
Lexington

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Kentucky Baptist missions involvement

"And ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Kentucky Baptists continue to be involved in international partnership missions in many ways. Our convention currently has international partnerships with Baptists in Poland and Tanzania and with the English-speaking churches of the European Baptist Convention. For interested volunteers, there are opportunities in evangelism, vacation Bible school, starting new churches, Bible conferences, door-to-door witnessing, outreach in schools, medical missions, construction, Experiencing God seminars, ministries, teaching workshops, worship services, student ministries and many other ways to be involved.


Bill Mackey

Churches can receive brochures and lists of available partnership projects from the Kentucky Baptist Convention partnership missions department by calling (502) 244-6462 or (888) 254-5724 or by sending e-mail to Calvin_Wilkins@kybaptist.org. Information also is available on the KBC Web site at www.kybaptist.org.

KBC volunteers have done much to assist Baptist work in the partnership areas. But there is much more that needs to be done.

In Poland, KBC Coordinators John and Jan Strimple have expressed gratitude for the volunteers who have served in the past but are concerned that many needs are unmet. Volunteers currently are needed for projects in the following areas: English language and student evangelism (March-April), evangelism and construction (March 6-19), construction (March 20-April 2 and April 3-16).

Larry and Joy Lindsey are on-site coordinators in Tanzania. They gained experience in Russia as coordinators and God has been gracious to enable them to serve again. The people of Tanzania are so receptive to the gospel that hundreds might be saved in one week of ministry. In Tanzania, volunteers are needed for the following projects: Construction and vacation Bible school (March 7-23), prayer walk (March 28-April 13), evangelism and discipleship (May 16-June 1) and prayer walk (May 16-June 1).

Kenneth and Marianne Brown are the new coordinators for the European Baptist Convention partnership. They are located in Germany, but will coordinate projects with 22 countries. The 67 churches and 10 missions are all English-speaking.

Most projects will involve smaller teams. More than one-third of the churches are without pastors at any one time so long-term supply pastors are needed. The initial projects in Europe include: Family life conference (March 27-April 3), musical crusade and evangelism (March, May and July) and construction (April 16-27).

Church leaders are encouraged to:

- Secure information about the international partnerships.
- Pray about opportunities where you can serve.
- Consider involving your church in a project.
- Consider a church-to-church partnership.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

CHURCH

FINANCIAL FORUM

New year offers stewardship growth options

By Doug Strader

I am thankful that we have a new year for many reasons, but one reason is that it gives us an opportunity to start over. I like new beginnings because it offers a fresh start, allowing us to leave behind those things that did not work out the way we planned. It also offers us the opportunity to try something new. It gives us the chance to grow, to get outside our comfort zones and to color outside the lines.

The beginning of a new year is a wonderful time to challenge Christians to commit to being better financial stewards. Some of the ways to accomplish the goal of developing better financial stewardship include:

- "Successful Christian Financial Management" is a one-day event that challenges people to be better stewards of their resources by becoming more responsible for the way they handle their money. This one-day seminar has been used all across the Southern Baptist Convention to change the way people use their money. You can call our office to get more information about this seminar.
- "Managing Your Money for the Master" is another small-group resource that can be used for six weeks to challenge Christians to use their money according to God's plan. This resource could be used to begin small groups after hosting the one-day seminar mentioned above. This resource is available only from our office. Call our office for more details.
- LifeWay has released a new resource titled "Jesus on Money," which consists of three six-week studies. Each six-week study focuses on a different stage in life and explores how our needs, habits and attitudes must change accordingly. These studies can be purchased through LifeWay Christian Resources.

Many churches have learned that January and February are good months to have a church-wide financial stewardship emphasis. With fewer activities on the church calendar, church members are more likely to respond to a financial stewardship emphasis. Our office has several financial stewardship resources that could be used in such an emphasis. For information, call our office at (888) 254-5708 or e-mail at douglas_strader@kybaptist.org.

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

OPINION

Identify strengths, weaknesses to improve marital relationship

Q: My wife and I resolved to improve our marriage in the new year. It's almost February and we're in the same rut. How can we improve our relationship?

The first step in improving your relationship is to identify if you mainly want to deepen strong points of the marriage or to shore up some weaknesses in the relationship. Many times partners assume that the other one wants the same things out of the marriage. So having an open conversation about what each partner wants from the relationship is essential.

FAMILY FORUM

Any motivation to improve a marriage is enhanced by focusing on the strengths in the relationship. What are the points of the marriage that keep both partners in the marriage? What do you learn of value from the other person? What do you genuinely like about your partner? Marriage partners are more likely to work on a marriage if they each feel appreciated by their partner.

The next step in improving a marriage is to reflect honestly on the rough spots in the relationship. Reading books together about marriage can be a starting point for discussion. Attending marriage enrichment weekends is another option. An additional possibility is to attend counseling sessions with a certified pastoral counselor or other Christian counselor who is licensed or certified. A third person often can give a couple insights that are more objective than thoughts from either partner.

As Christians, we are exhorted to "strive for the high mark that is our calling in Christ." Certainly, God ordains marriage for our personal joy and spiritual edification. A new year that emphasizes growing closer together in Christ will be a year of spiritual growth. Blessings on your journey.—*Suzanne Coyle*

Q: Like many divorced dads, I recently had my 13-year-old daughter and 15-year-old son for a week over the Christmas holidays. While I enjoyed them, it was awkward and embarrassing at times. I quickly ran out of things to talk about and was at a loss for something fun to do. My new wife and her son felt left out as it was. We went to a movie, to my church and watched too much TV. I see them once or twice a month for Saturday afternoon, but I just don't know what to do or say around them. Help!

Children need parents to love, appreciate and spend time and provide for them. Teens also need parents to join their world and to enjoy their interests. It sounds like you love your teenagers. I hope that you tell them with words, hugs, time and gifts. They also need you to do things for them. Help them get their plans accomplished. Take them to their activities, parties and places that interest them. Ask them ahead of time what they want to do.

Most teens are not "big" on just sitting down to talk with parents. Find activities to do while you talk. Play board games; participate in sports together; work on a project; make a second-family photo album; or go to a musical presentation together.

Work at understanding your children. Ask them about their friends, activities, music, church and dreams. When they begin to share, listen in a focused style. Give them your undivided attention. Look at them when they talk. Do whatever it takes to signal that you want to know them better. You are at a disadvantage because they are not with you day in and day out. Make the most of your time to be acquainted with them as unique individuals. Nurture them in faith, hope and love.—*Wade Rowatt*

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.

Graham visit sets stage for spiritual harvest

What a tremendous way to launch a new century of ministry. Billy Graham's decision to lead a crusade this summer in Louisville sets the stage for one of the most spiritually significant events possible for the benefit of Louisville and the surrounding region.

Graham, one of the most respected religious leaders in modern history, has faithfully and effectively proclaimed the gospel for more than 50 years in hundreds of crusades around the world. His sense of God's timing to lead his first crusade in Kentucky in 30 years indicates a combination of spiritual need and spiritual readiness among people throughout the greater Louisville area.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

Trennis Henderson

Coming on the heels of recent ministry efforts led by Promise Keepers, Tony Evans and Franklin Graham, the June 21-24 crusade promises to build on that momentum throughout the Christian community and beyond.

During last week's official kickoff event announcing the crusade, Al Mohler emphasized that the crusade offers "a great opportunity for unity in our community." Mohler, chairman of the crusade's executive committee, said leaders are praying that "a great harvest will come out of this crusade."

While that is a worthy goal, Graham spokesman Sterling Huston said the crusade team is "unable to import a crusade to Louisville. He told area Christian leaders that the team's goal is to "come to partner with you."

The challenge is for Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and numerous other denominations to set aside differences and work together for the spread of the gospel without worrying about who gets the credit. Huston, director of North American ministries for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, said the key is to "model the kind of unity that the Christian witness should give to the outside world."

Rick Marshall, the Graham association's director of crusades, said prayer is the most essential ingredient in crusade preparation. "Wherever God's people gather, we need them to pray," he urged. "We need God to do in and through us what we cannot do for ourselves. But we must pray."

With Graham's advancing age and fragile health, there is little doubt that this will be his final crusade effort in Kentucky. That's all the more reason for Christians to band together to pray, work, witness and invite unbelievers to hear God's message shared by God's servant.

Spiritual fields are ripe for harvest in Louisville and beyond. Plan to be an active part of the 2001 Greater Louisville Billy Graham Crusade.

Recorder staff working to correct church page glitches

It's not quite the Y2001 bug, but the new year has ushered in some technological challenges for the Western Recorder and other non-profit periodicals across the nation.

New postal regulations and glitches in related software, combined with normal holiday-related delays, have contributed to a series of production and delivery delays and errors. For the Western Recorder, these problems have most directly affected delivery of church newspage editions.

With dozens of Kentucky Baptist churches and associations partnering with the Recorder to produce, print and mail their customized editions each week, delays reduce the timeliness and usefulness of the newspage information.

We apologize to our church page subscribers for this inconvenience. The Recorder staff is working closely with the postal service and other sources to correct the problem as quickly and efficiently as possible.

In the meantime, we appreciate your patience. We look forward to serving all of our readers with the quality and timeliness you deserve.

Early Kentucky Baptist journalists counter rise of 'Campbellism'

By Jack Birdwhistell

As we noted last week, the rise of Baptist journalism in Kentucky coincided with the beginnings of the movement in American religion known as Campbellism, after its founder, Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). In fact, the appearance in Kentucky of Campbell's monthly journal, the Christian Baptist, in the early 1820s, was a primary factor in the beginnings of Kentucky Baptist journalism.

WESTERN RECORDER 175th ANNIVERSARY 1826-2001

Alexander Campbell, like his father, Thomas, had been raised among the Presbyterians. Arriving in the United States from Ireland, the Campbells settled in the area that is now western Pennsylvania/West Virginia. Moving away from the Presbyterians, especially on the idea of predestination and the practice of infant baptism, Alexander Campbell briefly associated with the Baptists of the region, becoming known as an able debater and writer against the Presbyterians and the Methodists.

Visiting Kentucky in the early 1820s, he became a hero to many Baptist leaders in north central and central Kentucky. Ministers such as Philip Fall of Louisville and "Raccoon" John Smith of Mt. Sterling were especially impressed. Yet when the Christian Baptist began to appear in the commonwealth, readers discovered that Campbell also had some strong criticisms of the ways of the Baptists.

In his attempt to restore "pure New Testament Christianity," Campbell varied with the Baptist of his era in several ways:

- Many Kentucky Baptists had a Calvinistic/predestinarian leaning—Campbell did not agree.
- Baptist doctrine in those days was spelled out in a long and complex document known as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. In any case, Campbell opposed all such "man-made creeds."
- Among the Baptists of that era, when individuals were converted, they were required to relate their "experience" of conversion before the church, which would then "vote" on whether the experience was valid. Campbell denounced this process, claiming that a simple statement of belief in Christ was all that was necessary, followed immediately by baptism by immersion.
- Although Campbell and the Baptists were almost alone among Christians of their day in practicing baptism by immersion, Campbell clearly felt that the act of baptism itself was extremely important in salvation. His later followers insisted (as some do today) that it was necessary to salvation.
- Campbell also disagreed with Baptists gathering into associations, organizing schools and missionary societies and any other practice that he felt was not explicitly spelled out in the New Testament.

The struggle in Kentucky between the followers of Campbell and the traditional Baptists continued for nearly a decade. By the time the dust had cleared in the early 1830s, nearly one-third of the Baptists in Kentucky had affiliated with "Christian" churches. Georgetown College, founded by Baptist leaders in 1829, had come within a hair of becoming a "Campbellite" school.

Early Baptist journalists Spencer Clack, George Waller and Uriel Chambers had published their papers in an effort to combat Campbell's writings. In fact, for most of the rest of the 19th century, the Baptist papers in Kentucky carried on a running debate with the "Campbellites," even though Baptist defections to the Christian Church movement largely were in the past and Baptists had been influenced by some of Campbell's ideas.

Jack Birdwhistell is a professor of religion at Georgetown College

Graham crusade is state's first in 3 decades

Continued from page 1

at Louisville's Kentucky International Convention Center attracted nearly 400 area pastors and lay leaders from several denominations. Al Mohler, chairman of the crusade's local executive committee, extended a formal invitation for Graham to conduct the Louisville-area event.

Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, described the crusade as "a great opportunity for unity in our community."

Noting that Christian leaders began a prayer effort 28 years ago "to pray for Billy Graham to return to Louisville for a crusade," Mohler added, "Twenty-eight years is a long time to pray. ... We need to pause and ponder how significant it is that God laid Louisville on Dr. Billy Graham's heart."

Looking toward the June crusade, Mohler said, "We are excited, we are focused and we are hopeful. Our prayer is that a great harvest will come out of this crusade."

Sterling Huston, director of North American ministries for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, accepted the crusade invitation on behalf of Graham.

Huston said the Graham crusade team is returning to Louisville "as servants of the church. We come back with a sense of privilege and a sense of partnership."

Huston cited Graham's ongoing health problems, including Parkinson's disease and a build-up of fluid on the brain. He said medical treatment last summer at Mayo Clinic allowed Graham to lead a successful crusade last fall in Jacksonville, Fla.

"I encourage you to pray for him but pray with a positive outlook," Huston said. "The hand of God is upon him but he credits it to the prayers of God's people."

Rick Marshall, director of crusades for Graham's evangelistic association, said crusade coordinators "need to mobilize 15,000 to 20,000 volunteers even before the crusade begins."

Sharing details about training seminars and other pre-crusade preparations, Marshall said, "We are an organization of volunteers. We have a job for everybody."

He said organizers will coordinate up to 100 pre-crusade events ranging from witness training classes to prayer meetings and choir rehearsals.

During an interview after the meeting, Huston noted that the five-month preparation time prior to the crusade is significantly shorter than the team's typical nine-month schedule.

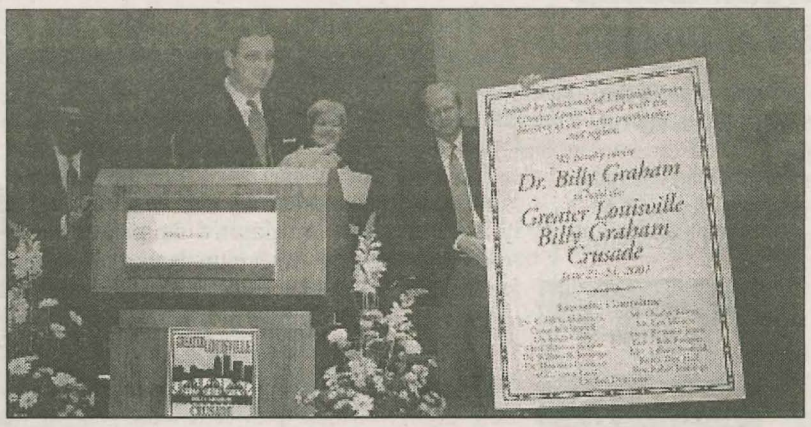
Although "everything has to happen in a shorter period of time," he added, "it can be an advantage because everyone is focused. It creates intensity and spiritual impact."

Citing the diversity of denominations and individuals working to support the crusade, Huston said, "Everyone in spiritual leadership has some individual identity. What you're seeing here is people transcending differences to be united around something central to the gospel."

Bill Mackey, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, is among area leaders serving on the crusade's general committee.

He described the June event as "a timely opportunity for the greater Louisville community to have a memorable experience with Dr. Graham and the Graham crusade."

"Few people impacted the 20th century the way he did," Mackey said. "It's going to be a spiritual benchmark for the coming generation to have lived through and been a part of a Billy Graham crusade in the greater Louisville area."



OFFICIAL INVITATION *Louisville-area Christian leaders formally extended an invitation last week for evangelist Billy Graham to lead a crusade in Louisville June 21-24.* ■ **Above:** *Al Mohler, chairman of the crusade executive committee, announces the event as Graham crusade director Rick Marshall displays the invitation.* ■ **Left:** *Christian vocalist Larnelle Harris of Louisville performs during the kickoff event.*

Pre-crusade events feature prayer, training

- Jan. 25: Pastors' prayer organizational meeting.
- Feb. 5-13: Crusade information seminars.
- Feb. 17: Student leaders breakfast.
- March 5-10: Evangelism & discipleship seminars.
- March 31: Children's pastors and leaders & Love-in-Action leaders briefing.
- April-May: Christian life & witness classes.
- May 5: Materials distribution day.
- June 5: Adult choir rehearsal.
- June 21-24: Greater Louisville Billy Graham Crusade.

For meeting times and locations, contact the crusade office at (502) 412-0977 or e-mail info@LouisvilleCrusade.org.

Franklin Graham steps in for dad at inauguration

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Evangelist Franklin Graham took the place of his father, Billy Graham, and gave the invocation at the swearing-in of President-elect George W. Bush because the elder Graham is ill.

Larry Ross, Billy Graham's spokesman, said last week that the elder evangelist is undergoing medical tests as doctors determine how best to treat the build-up of fluid on his brain.

"Tests that were conducted last week and over the weekend revealed that the shunt inserted this summer to treat normal pressure hydrocephalus is not functioning properly," Ross said.

Graham has had a role in eight presidential inaugural events, including giving the invocation and benediction at the 1989 inaugural ceremony of Bush's father, George Herbert Walker Bush.

"I consider it a great privilege to have been invited by President-elect Bush to participate in his inaugural ceremony," the elder Graham said in a statement. "I love and respect his entire family very much, and regret that I am not able to join them for this special occasion."

In addition to giving the invocation at the swearing-in on Saturday, Franklin Graham preached the sermon at the inaugural prayer service on Sunday at the Washington National Cathedral.

Ross said the elder Graham had been invited to speak at the cathedral service but had declined "to conserve his energy."

"Obviously, of course, he's disappointed that he can't be in Washington on this special occasion, not only for our nation, but for the Bush family with whom he's had a warm friendship for many years," Ross said. "At the same time, he and his wife Ruth ... are very proud that their son Franklin can offer the inaugural prayer in his place."

Kirbyjon Caldwell, an African-American pastor who leads Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston, gave the benediction at the swearing-in. Jan Painter of the non-denominational Eagle's Nest International in Louisville, offered a prayer at an inaugural breakfast.

Other participants at the cathedral service included Greek Orthodox Archbishop Demetrios; Roman Catholic Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Washington; Pentecostal minister Jack Hayford, founding pastor of the Church on the Way in Los Angeles; and contemporary Christian singer Michael W. Smith.

Observer finds inspiration in Grahams' relentless dedication

By Ken Garfield
Charlotte Observer

FIRST PERSON

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)—The more that Billy and Ruth Graham fight on for their faith, the more poignant it becomes.

The more they struggle to fend off the cruel advance of age, the more inspiring it is to watch them promote a crusade, create a Christmas card or instruct their PR people to help get their message across.

It's one thing to stand up for Christ when you're young and strong. It's something else when life's constant companions are pain and your Bible.

Often now, news about America's best-known evangelical couple combines the latest on their ministry and health.

Billy Graham, 82, returned to the Mayo Clinic recently for more surgery for fluid on the brain. After updating his precarious health, the latest news release was quick to mention that Graham "is looking forward to ministry opportunities in 2001."

Ruth Graham, 80, is in a wheelchair at home in Montreat in the North Carolina mountains after five hip replacement procedures. Family and friends tell me she's in constant pain and sometimes gets a bit confused. Yet recently, a marketing group called on her behalf to promote a Christmas card she sketched last summer to raise money for the Ruth and Billy Graham Children's Health Center in Asheville.

This isn't a matter of two aging warriors desperately trying to cling to the spotlight, even if Billy Graham likes nothing better than to spend an hour on national TV with Larry King.

This is a matter of two aging warriors desperately trying to keep up the crusade that has defined their lives, and the lives of the millions of people they have touched.

I recently chatted by phone with Ruth Graham about the Christmas card, which was inspired by her sketch of a box under a tree that opens to reveal the true gift of the season.

She told me she has a "Don't ask, don't tell" policy about her poor health. She reads her Bible every day; it lay in her lap as we spoke. And she believes she'd go nuts if she didn't have something to do for God.

"If I didn't have a project," she said, "I think I'd die of boredom. I can't imagine anything more boring than sitting in discomfort and pain and doing nothing."

Her advice to those who wake up to illness or anguish every morning:

"Get your mind off yourself and on other people."

Years from now, the history books will talk about the fire that marked the prime of Billy Graham—how this electrifying preacher and his wife wowed the world for Christ.

I'll choose to remember the Grahams well past their prime—how a faltering preacher and his ailing wife refused to let doctors and wheelchairs keep them from delivering a message that goes well beyond Christianity. This message is one that people of all faiths and even no faith can embrace:

Never give up.

Garfield is religion editor at The Charlotte Observer. Used by permission of The Charlotte Observer.

Murray ministry praying for teachers & medical staff

By Victoria Moon
Staff Writer

MURRAY—Doctors and teachers are finding out about the power of prayer through the efforts of volunteers at First Baptist Church of Murray.

That's because the church has approximately 150 members praying for local professionals as part of its "Medical Mondays" and "Teacher Tuesdays" ministries.

"A fellow member of my church who is a teacher came up to me after a church service and said Tuesdays were not a problem for her anymore since she knew we were praying," said volunteer Judy Ingersoll.

The programs are the brainchild of Wendell Ray, pastor of First Baptist Church of Murray. While a minister at First Baptist Church in Gulf Breeze, Fla., Ray developed the idea of small groups of people praying a specific day for local teachers. Church members grew excited about the idea, and the Florida ministry grew.

"Even though I've left that church, the ministry's still going strong there and people are still praying," Ray said.

When he came to First Baptist last August, Ray brought the idea with him, and three months later "Teacher Tuesdays" was born.

According to Deborah Plummer, prayer ministry coordinator for First Baptist, more than 300 names of teachers and administrators in the Calloway County school district were gathered through phone calls to the administrative offices of the two school districts in their area.

"We got a really good response," she said. "A lot of teachers were very, very grateful we were doing this."

Each teacher and administrator was sent a letter telling them who is praying for them, when and why.

Volunteers, called "intercessors," were assigned two to three teachers' names and pledged to pray for the needs of those teachers every Tuesday. Plummer, a school administrator herself, developed a specific prayer guide for intercessors to be aware of the needs and concerns of educators.

"It's a private commitment on our parts," said Ingersoll, who coordinates the "Medical Mondays" ministry as well as serving as an intercessor on Teacher Tuesdays.

Medical Mondays, started this month, is an extension of the Teacher Tuesdays idea. Ingersoll collected the names of doctors, nurses and medical staff in the county.

"Because of privacy laws, it was harder to gather names of the medical personnel," Ingersoll said. "The doctors' names are published in a directory, so we knew we had their names, but had a harder time getting names of nurses, pharmacists and medical staff."

Finally, church members drafted a letter they sent to the general medical community telling of their ministry plans and asking for names of people who wanted to be added to their prayer list.

"We got 150 to 200 names out of that," Ingersoll said. "Our number of people to pray for multiplied by three when we were done."

As on "Teacher Tuesdays," volunteers pray every Monday for two or three medical personnel. Letters are sent to those being prayed for telling them who is praying for them and why. Those with special needs are encouraged to call the church office and let church staff know of specific requests.

"We've had some nice messages back from some doctors," Ingersoll said. "The comments in some of those letters have been a real blessing to me."

Though both ministries are relatively new, they already are reaping big rewards both in the church and in the community.

"There are two benefits about this ministry for the church," Ray said. "One, it gets people to regularly pray through assigning them people to pray for. Two, it gets people in the church out into the community and out of their comfort zone. It broadens their ministry.

"We also are rebuilding the image of what church is in this community," he added.

Ingersoll said she's seen the effect on those she prays for firsthand.

"I had one of the people I pray for call me on the phone with a specific burden, and we prayed about it right there on the phone," Ingersoll said. "I truly believe in the power of prayer."

"I have seen the Lord move in a very mighty and specific way through prayer," Plummer said. "This is a faith-work we are doing, a faith-gift we are giving to our community."

"It gets people in the church out into the community and out of their comfort zone."

Wendell Ray, pastor of First Baptist Church of Murray

Baptists sending help to persecuted Indonesian Christians

INDONESIA *Christian demonstrators protest last year outside the provincial governor's office in Ambon City, Indonesia. Christians repeatedly are asking why the government offers them no protection from deadly attacks by well-equipped Muslim "jihad" warriors, backed by elements of the Indonesian military. (IMB file photo)*

By Brittany Jarvis
SBC International Mission Board

AMBON CITY, Indonesia (BP)—The mournful horn echoes in the still air at 4 a.m.

The call to prayer resounds off bullet-pocked walls and empty buildings. The Christian remnant in this Indonesian village awakens to cry out to God for peace.

The Christian call to prayer has been sounding every night since the conflict between Muslims and Christians erupted in Indonesia's Maluku Islands in January 1999. More than 4,000 people have been killed and as many as 500,000 people displaced in this religious and political war.

Jim Brown, the human needs consultant for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, recently traveled to the Maluku Islands. While there, his team tried to assess how Southern Baptists can help refugees—and gather evidence that the fighting is being fueled by an outside group.

"Our ambassador said the only way the international community would do anything would be if they were able to prove outside influence with this jihad war," he said.

A breakthrough for Christians came in late December when Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid acknowledged the influence of Islamic extremists and condemned the fighting.

"There is an effort by Islamic extremists to convert Christians to Islam in the Malukus," Wahid said during a speech at a mosque in Jakarta. "This is not right."

The Laskar Jihad paramilitary group has taken most of the responsibility for inciting the violence. They maintain a Web site designed to recruit Islamic extremists who are willing to force Muslim villages in the Malukus to attack Christians.

In areas where Christians and Muslims have lived peacefully side by side for decades, jihad warriors demand Muslim villages join in the fight or risk being attacked.

"This jihad is setting friends against friends and neighbors against neighbors," Brown said. "Their whole philosophy is to eradicate Christians from Indonesia—to kill them all or get them to convert."

More than 200 Christians on the island of Kasiui have been held captive in a mosque since Dec. 6. Military personnel and other Christians have been unable to win their release.

Prisoners in the mosque who do convert have been forced to participate in the Islamic washing, adopt a Muslim name and wear Muslim clothing. The men, and some women, then are circumcised.

The Indonesian military is present on the island of Ambon, and humanitarian groups like Mercy Corps and Doctors Without Borders are providing water and food for both Christians and Muslims.

The International Mission Board is partnering with other evangelical Christian groups to begin construction of temporary housing for the thousands of refugees.

"I was real encouraged with the church community in Ambon and how they were tackling this problem of refugees," Brown said. "They accepted the refugees as if they were part of their own family."

The temporary housing will be constructed on Ceram Island, where 11,000 people have taken refuge. A team of volunteers from California will build barracks during the day and show the "Jesus" film in the evenings.

The IMB will underwrite the costs for the barracks using money from its general relief fund. The board also will use Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund resources to meet critical food needs and provide agricultural assistance.

Brown compares the religious cleansing taking place in the Malukus to the ethnic cleansing that occurred in Kosovo.

"In Kosovo, there was no outside influence pushing Serbian leaders to do this (cleansing)," Brown said. But in the Malukus, "the U.S. Embassy keeps telling us we need to make sure it's an outside influence that is initiating all this.

"I keep thinking, 'Why? It's taking place right now. It has been going on for at least two years. And evidence of it exists all throughout the Malukus,'" he continued. "It is only going to stop when either the international community says enough is enough, or when the Laskar Jihad finally accomplishes its main objective of ridding the Malukus of all Christians."

For more information about conditions in Indonesia, contact the IMB's human needs office at (804) 219-1675. Financial contributions may be sent to International Mission Board, General Relief Fund—Ambon, Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.

Baptists and other Christians respond after killer quake

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador—Southern Baptist missionaries and other Christian workers moved quickly to meet human needs after a 7.6-magnitude earthquake Jan. 13 in El Salvador.

Using Southern Baptist emergency funds, missionary Mark Grumbles and a layman in San Salvador began delivering tarpaulins to families left without shelter after the quake.

A massive mudslide engulfed as many as 500 middle-class homes in the Santa Tecla suburb of the capital, San Salvador, when the quake hit at about midday on a Saturday.

At least 682 people, including six in neighboring Guatemala, are believed to have died, but authorities expect the death toll to rise as search efforts continue.

More than 500 people are unaccounted for. About 2,500 people were injured, and nearly 45,000 people have been left homeless or evacuated from their homes.

At least 40,000 homes were damaged or demolished during the earthquake. Survivors in neighboring towns were left without food and water after roads were blocked or swept away by landslides.

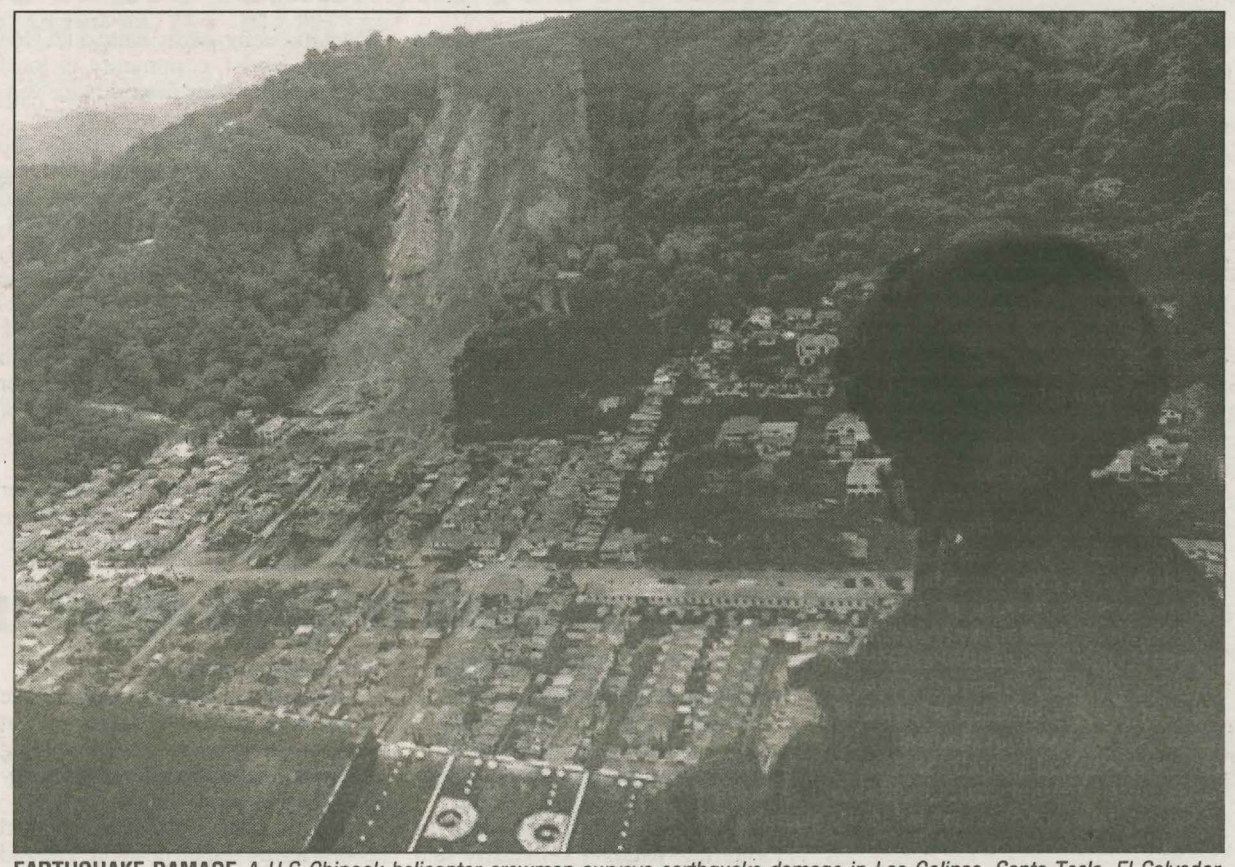
The quake was centered off the Pacific coast, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. It was felt across El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras and as far north as Mexico City.

Up to 500 aftershocks, some of them powerful, hampered the efforts of hundreds of emergency workers and volunteers.

"The earthquake lasted 50 seconds. The house was shaking and things were falling out of the cabinets and off the shelves," Southern Baptist missionary Pam Grumbles said. "We were literally afraid the house would fall."

Foreign aid began flowing immediately from the United States, Mexico, Switzerland, Spain and Venezuela, and relief experts said most people's immediate needs for food and water would be met, according to news reports.

Southern Baptists were scheduled to send a four-person evaluation team into the country Jan. 22, said Jim Brown, human needs consultant for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board. The team is expected to compile recommendations for long-term projects like rebuilding church buildings and cleaning up homes and neighborhoods.



EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE *A U.S Chinook helicopter crewman surveys earthquake damage in Las Colinas, Santa Tecla, El Salvador, Jan. 17. The Jan. 13 7.6-magnitude quake caused the landslide shown on the mountain, burying homes and people. At least 675 Salvadorans and six people in neighboring Guatemala were killed as a result of the quake. (Reuters/RNS photo)*

The $5,000 in emergency funds sent immediately to missionaries soon will be exhausted, Brown said. Requests for more assistance are expected.

Baptist churches in the towns of Santiago de Maria and Berlin had opened their kitchens to feed neighbors who needed help, Brown said.

Mrs. Grumbles emphasized the need for prayer. "Continue to pray as we evaluate how to participate in relief efforts and minister to human and spiritual needs."

Specific ways Southern Baptist volunteers can help will be outlined after the evaluation team returns to the United States Jan. 25, Brown added.

More than a dozen other faith-based aid agencies also have galvanized forces to meet needs.

Action By Churches Together has collected $50,000 to provide shelter for those left homeless. Among the organizations that make up Action are Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the United Methodist Committee on Relief and Lutheran World Relief. The latter organization also is distributing items such as food, blankets and mattresses to about 3,300 people in the cities of Santa Tecla and San Salvador.

Quake victims also will be able to seek shelter under 1,000 temporary emergency shelters that World Vision plans to build.

World Vision also plans to deliver 3,500 pounds of items such as water purification systems and collapsible water containers, while International Aid, a Michigan-based Christian relief agency, intends to distribute items such as food and personal hygiene kits, medicine and medical equipment to disaster victims.

Samaritan's Purse, headed by Franklin Graham, the son of evangelist Billy Graham, said it plans to donate food, water, temporary shelter and medical help to quake victims, and Catholic Relief Services already has committed $250,000 in aid items such as plastic sheeting, potable water, blankets and basic food supplies.

About $25,000 has been raised by the American Baptist World Relief Office and the nondenominational group One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. Baptist World Aid, the relief arm of the Baptist World Alliance, is sending two emergency grants of $5,000 each to the Baptist Association and the Baptist Federation of El Salvador.

Also lending a hand to quake victims are B'nai Brith International, the Christian agency Global Action, and World Relief, the international assistance arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, which spearheaded a project to build 5,000 earthquake-resistant homes in El Salvador after a 1986 earthquake that killed 1,500 people.

Compiled from reports by Baptist Press and Religion News Service

How to help

Agencies often report that donating money is the best way to help disaster victims so that the money may be used to purchase the most needed items.
Often these can be obtained locally which saves the cost of shipping and also helps to rejuvenate the local economy. Among the agencies currently working in El Salvador are:

■ Southern Baptist International Mission Board. Mail contributions earmarked "General Relief Fund—El Salvador Earthquake" to Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230. The agency's Web site address is www.imb.org.

■ Samaritan's Purse, the Christian relief agency led by Franklin Graham. Contributions can be mailed to Box 3000, Boone, NC 28607. The agency's Web site, www.samaritanspurse.org, also has information about its work in El Salvador. Donations also can be made through the agency's toll-free phone number, (800) 528-1980.

■ Baptist World Aid, the relief arm of Baptist World Alliance. Contributions, earmarked for Central American Relief, can be mailed to Baptist World Aid, c/o Baptist World Alliance, 6733 Curran St., McLean, VA 22101-6005.

Ugandan's faithfulness reaps spiritual rewards after kidnapping

JINJA, Uganda (BP)—A father's faithfulness after his two sons were kidnapped opened the way for scores of people to come to Christ in Kitgum, Uganda.

Simon Nono's two sons were among six children kidnapped when anti-government rebels invaded his village in northern Uganda.

His other three children were beaten to force the family to surrender its money. The entire village was robbed, both of possessions and children.

But even after the attack, Nono remained faithful to God's calling on his life. Following the invasion, he continued to attend classes at Uganda Baptist Seminary, requiring him to travel a full day south to Jinja for the three-week term.

"Simon showed his faith in God by coming to UBS despite the family's losses," said Jack Frost, a Southern Baptist missionary who serves as the seminary's principal.

Nono's classmates were so moved by his family's devotion that students collected money for him. A Baptist hunger relief program also was relocated from Lira to a village near Nono's home.

Because Nono's village is part of a large protected camp, Kitgum district government officials helped distribute the nine tons of food that arrived. When an evangelistic message was shared after the food distribution, 60 people prayed to receive Christ as their personal Savior.

"The government officials were so moved by the events they gave the new believers a school for the new fellowship to meet in," Frost said.

Another 34 people became Christians when Ugandan Baptist pastor Jasper Dongo returned to preach for the new fellowship.

And Nono's devotion was rewarded, Baptist leaders said. His two sons eventually escaped from the rebels and were reunited with their family.

The youngest brother escaped from the rebels a day after being taken captive; his brother did not escape for another month.

Rebels have kidnapped thousands of young Acholi and Langi boys and girls during the last 15 years, Frost said. The children are kept as the soldiers' slaves. Some children are sexually abused.

Rebels often use terror tactics to brainwash the boys to fight their own people. If the children refuse, they are maimed or killed.

"Pray for peace in northern Uganda and for this crime against humanity to be stopped," Frost said. "Pray for the love of God to change people's lives and to give them hope."

NATION

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Religious leaders urge end to death penalty.** Virginia religious leaders, including Christians, Muslims and Jews, have joined to call for an end to the death penalty in the state. "As leaders in our respective traditions, we call upon the legislators and the governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia to abolish the death penalty," the leaders said in a statement released last week. Signers included United Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal, Muslim, Jewish, Quaker, Unitarian, Church of the Brethren and Presbyterian leaders as well as Roman Catholic and Baptist death row chaplains.

■ **Senator: Let religious groups handle foreign aid.** Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, says he wants all U.S. foreign aid channeled through private charities and religious groups. Under the Helms proposal, the Agency for International Development, the nation's primary foreign aid office, would be eliminated and its humanitarian and relief budget of roughly $7 billion a year would be given to a quasi-government foundation which then would make grants to private and religious groups. A spokesman for Gen. Colin Powell, Bush's secretary of state, was noncommittal about the proposal.

■ **Focus on Family suit challenges transit authority.** Focus on the Family has filed a federal lawsuit against a Florida transit authority, arguing the Christian ministry's free speech rights were violated when it was barred from advertising a conference about homosexuality and youth. At issue is the Colorado Springs-based group's purchase of 10 ads on Tampa-area bus shelters last February. The posters promoted Love Won Out, a one-day conference "addressing, understanding and preventing homosexuality in youth." A private advertising company that has a contract with the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority yanked the posters, citing concerns over their content.

■ **Supreme Court rejects Indianapolis church's appeal.** Last week the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a ruling obliging an Indianapolis church to pay $6 million in back taxes on employee paychecks and fines. Members of Indianapolis Baptist Temple said after the ruling they expect federal marshals to soon seize their church property. Without comment, the court refused to accept the church's argument that its religious freedom exonerates it from having to withhold Social Security, Medicare and income taxes for workers.

Church's .com name: Stunt or cutting edge?

GRAPEVINE, Texas—Drawing attention to its new beefed-up Internet site, a Dallas-area mega-church has tacked dot.com onto its name.

Signs on the buildings of Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas, will read: fellowshipchurch.com, as will all the printed materials, said Preston Mitchell, pastor of spiritual development.

The congregation, which has a weekly attendance of about 12,000 people, will debut its new Web site Feb. 15. Mitchell said it would be one of the best church Internet sites in the nation.

"We think this is going to be a wonderful ministry tool," senior pastor Ed Young Jr. told the Dallas Morning News. "To us, dot.com stands for dot.community: community with God through Christ, community in local venues, community in worldwide venues. It's all about community."

From it's beginning, Fellowship Church has been on the edge of trying new approaches to reach people, said Carol Childress of the Leadership Network.

"They're crazy for God. What else can you say?" said Childress, a researcher for the Dallas-based network for innovative churches and church leaders. "This is yet another step for them in seeking to take advantage of the opportunities that the Internet provides for ministry."

Young recounted to the newspaper that Fellowship Church leaders were brainstorming about the church's Internet site when he pondered aloud, "We ought to just put dot.com everywhere—on the letterhead, on the building."

"He was just kind of joking around," Young said, "and we go, 'Wow.'"

Among the innovative strategies utilized by the church has been painting its name—and, now, its new dot.com name—on the rooftop in 25-foot bright-blue letters to catch the attention of travelers flying in to the Dallas metro area.

"Jesus said to His followers right before His ascension, 'Go,'" Young told the Dallas Morning News. "Maybe today He'd also say, 'Go online.'"

Compiled from reports by Associated Baptist Press and Baptist Press

Study: Judge's religion might influence rulings

HOUSTON (ABP)—A judge's own religion might influence how he or she rules in cases involving religious liberty, and the amount of that influence varies by denomination, according to a recent study.

Researcher Barbara Yarnold of Florida International University said her findings show federal appeals court judges who are Baptist or Catholic are more likely than other judges to take "pro-religion" positions in cases involving the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Yarnold's findings are reported in the September 2000 issue of the Review of Religious Research. Her study analyzed 1,356 federal appeals court decisions between 1970 and 1990 in cases dealing specifically with either the First Amendment's free-exercise or establishment clause. She compared religious affiliation of judges with the outcomes of these cases.

Rulings that favored religious activity or expression were coded as "pro-religion," while cases that disallowed religious activity or expression were coded as "anti-religion."

"Baptist and Catholic judges were more likely to render decisions that were pro-religion in cases involving religious liberties than were other judges," Yarnold explained.

Judges of all faiths were inclined toward a pro-religion position, Yarnold said, but only the Baptist and Catholic judges stood out with strong statistical significance.

"Being not religious did not make a significant difference in the outcome, since the non-religious still, in general, adopted a pro-religion position," she added.

Yarnold theorizes that Baptists and Catholics may be bent more toward affirming religious practice because of the minority status and persecution these religions have endured in the past.

Whether the findings of this study are good news or bad news depends entirely upon one's perspective, Yarnold said.

"To those who tend to be more concerned with free exercise by this country's many religions, this outcome may be perfectly appropriate," she said. "To those who are more concerned with the non-establishment mandate of the First Amendment, these results may be troubling."

Pigs, cock fights and preaching

KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES

Rusty Ellison

I have just returned from Cebu City in the Philippines where my family and I spent New Years with our daughter Angie, who serves as a Southern Baptist Journeyman missionary in that city. We had a marvelous trip and gained a better understanding of Angie's ministry. I also was blessed to preach at her church while we were there.

The church Angie attends in Cebu is Family for Christ Fellowship. Our first Sunday there, the church met in a market/restaurant of sorts; a storefront church in the truest sense. As the pastor preached, within 15 feet of the pulpit, a group of men were greasing a pig, preparing to roast the pig for New Years. What a sight! The pastor shared with me that they hoped it would be the last Sunday they met in this facility. And, as he hoped, the following Sunday we were in the new location. As we arrived at the church that Sunday, we walked up three flights of stairs to the top of a large building open on the third floor. It was a nice setting, looking out over Cebu, a city of about 1 million people. I thought about how much better this was than the storefront, with the constant distractions. Here it also was cooler because there was a breeze blowing through the large openings in the building.

However, shortly before I was to preach, Jodi, our youngest daughter, was singing, and there was this loud clatter of sorts. People began to shout loudly right below this third floor location. I couldn't get up and see what was going on. I just thought it would stop soon. But it didn't. It turned out to be a cock fight that was well attended. Loudly attended. However, we proclaimed the gospel in spite of the distractions, and I rejoiced that God had given us the opportunity to minister again on the other side of the world. When we arrived back in the States, I had an e-mail from a good friend in Trinidad asking for help with their camping program. Amazing! The opportunities to minister around this world are greater than ever before! Is God calling, urging you to respond to missions opportunities that He is providing for you? Follow His lead. You'll be blessed. Your life will be changed. And the burden you feel for lost people around the world will burn in your heart.

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

Researchers: Churches offer communities 'sense of place'

By Mark Wingfield
Texas Baptist Standard

HOUSTON (ABP)—Churches can aid their communities by offering a needed sense of "place," researchers reported during the fall meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Houston.

"Time and memory are increasingly dislocated. Neither has a position in the world," said researcher Nancy Eisland of Atlanta. "Many people today don't have a historical sense of the long-term. They desire a sense of collectiveness and yet don't have the time to contribute to it."

Various studies of communities have found that churches help create historical memories for residents, Eisland and the other researchers said. These memories may be based in aspects of the church buildings or in the experiences shared in those buildings.

But there is "both a gift and a danger" in promoting a church's historical memory, Eisland said. Dangers arise when the sense of historical place impedes progress or when communities undergo change that the church doesn't embrace, she noted.

"What people project is that God was in the perfection of the past when in fact God may be in the possibilities of the future," she said.

And churches often remain in buildings that are not ideally located for current members or require intensive maintenance, said Gaynor Yancey, a social work professor at Baylor University.

Yancey and Ram Cnaan of the University of Pennsylvania recently collaborated on a national study for the Partnership for Sacred Places of historical churches meeting in buildings constructed before 1940.

A primary question of the research, Yancey said, was "What are congregations doing in these communities that requires them to stay in this building?" And the answer, she reported, is that churches are providing vital community services.

Ninety-three percent of the 111 congregations studied were providing at least one community service program in their buildings, and the rest were providing space for others to offer community service programs.

"Congregations with older buildings host 76 percent of their communities' programs," Yancey reported. "The groups benefiting most are youth and children." This sense of place—and the accompanying commitment to serve a community—is stronger than the economic forces that otherwise might drive a church away, she said. Twenty-one percent of these historic church buildings need major repairs, averaging $225,000 per congregation.

It is in the best interest of community leaders to ensure that these congregations continue to feel their sense of place, Yancey said. "If these congregations aren't there, who will provide these services?"

Ashcroft nomination divides religious leaders

WASHINGTON (ABP)—While the Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission urged support last week for John Ashcroft as the next U.S. attorney general, other religious leaders questioned the former senator's commitment to separation of church and state.

Responding to criticism by liberal interest groups including People For the American Way and the National Organization of Women, ERLC President Richard Land wrote senators urging confirmation of the nomination by President-elect George W. Bush.

"On behalf of the vast majority of over 16 million Southern Baptists nationwide, I urge you to support the confirmation of Sen. John Ashcroft," Land said to lawmakers.

But religious leaders from a variety of faith groups said in a press conference that senators should question Ashcroft about his commitment to upholding the separation of church and state.

Welton Gaddy, executive director of the Interfaith Alliance, called Ashcroft—a devout Pentecostal Christian—"a man of deep and abiding faith," and said he respected Ashcroft's faith commitment.

Gaddy said he had "grave concern," however, about Ashcroft's ability as attorney general to uphold and fully enforce the constitutional rights of "faith groups that he clearly judges to be wrong and in need of correction."

Gaddy said the Interfaith Alliance is taking no stand on the nomination for now but might oppose Ashcroft depending on how he answers questions regarding religious liberty.

Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, questioned whether Ashcroft "is up to the job."

"It's important that the attorney general of the United States be committed without apology and without reservation to the separation of church and state," Walker said. "Sen. Ashcroft's record reveals a hostility to and a lack of understanding of that cherished principle."

Meanwhile, the head of Texas Baptists' Christian Life Commission described Land's endorsement on behalf of Southern Baptists to be "out of bounds."

Phil Strickland, who heads up the social concerns agency for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said the CLC speaks to Baptists on issues but does not presume to speak for them.

"It seems incredible to me that anyone would claim to represent a majority of 16 million Baptists on any issue, much less the appointment of John Ashcroft as U.S. attorney general," Strickland said. "I am saddened that the head of the Southern Baptist ethics agency has claimed to speak with an authority that no Baptist should claim."

The BGCT, the largest of the autonomous state conventions affiliated with the SBC, last fall defunded the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission—along with reducing funds for SBC seminaries and Executive Committee—over policy differences.

Land said that while the ERLC does not endorse candidates for elected office, it has in the past taken sides in confirmation hearings because individual Baptists don't have an opportunity to vote directly and therefore need someone to advocate their views before lawmakers.

Riggs serves in Bosnia

By Robert Dunston

Cumberland College religion major and senior David Riggs, son of Don and Cathy Riggs of New Haven, W. Va., spent two weeks in Bosnia during the summer of 2000. He served as part of a construction team.

The team stayed in a missionary house in the Studt community and performed construction work at three sites—one site in Sarajevo and two sites in the Studt community.

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE

David worked at the Sarajevo site putting a second story and roof on a house. Many of the houses had roofs that were severely damaged during the war.

Riggs's day began with devotions at 7 a.m. After devotions the teams left for their work sites and worked until lunch. After lunch they worked until 4 p.m. and then returned home to clean up and have supper.

In addition to construction, Riggs helped with a Kids Club program held each evening for two hours. Kids Club featured Bible study, crafts, recreation and refreshments. The ages of the young people ranged from 5years old to 17 years old.

One day the volunteers threw a birthday party for the 10-year-old girl whose home they were repairing. Team members had pooled their funds and bought her a bicycle. She was thrilled! From then on team members saw her everywhere riding her bicycle.

Riggs believes he received as much or more love than he gave. One little boy came in one night and snuggled in close to Riggs during part of the Kids Club program. He certainly saw God's love in action.

Riggs experienced some health problems in Bosnia and had to have minor surgery, which kept him on crutches for part of his time there. He found his lack of mobility to be frustrating as he tried to work in construction, but he came to realize he could serve in other ways that were just as valuable.

Riggs's experience reminds us God can use us in His service. While we might not always be able to do what we planned to do, God can use us to make a difference in His kingdom.

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

Return to sanctity

Sanctification is one of those churchy words most of us hear but might not understand. That we are set apart at salvation to be used by God as He sees fit is not an easy concept to grasp.

Knowing what the Bible says about the topic, I turned, as I often do, to Webster's Dictionary to see the scholar's take on it. The first definition was pretty close to the scriptural definition. While I was there, however, I found an interesting second definition of the word "sanctity." It was on my mind since Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is observed in many churches across the country this month. Anyway, the second definition of sanctity I found is: "a sweet odor once said to have been exhaled by some saints before or after death, hence obvious signs of reputation for saintliness."

HOMES FOR CHILDREN

Bill Smithwick

Now I'm not going to get bogged down in the saint issue. Plenty of people more schooled than I can take that on. But I was struck by the imagery of a sweet fragrance coming from the body of the sanctified. These vessels of flesh, bone and blood carry plenty of smells I would never consider sweet, yet the Bible says the death of believers, who are called saints in that passage, is "precious" to God. It seems logical that a beautiful smell would accompany something "precious." We are made in His image. We should never cease to be awed by that.

"Sanctity of human life" means life is sacred, protected, honored, holy, inviolable, set apart. Our world has gotten so far away from this truth. Babies are choices now. When our elders cease to be comfort and company to us, some people figure the old folks must be suffering in indignity so perhaps it's best to give them a little boost to the hereafter.

There is much work to be done to shine God's light in this dark area of our society. Join me in prayer that this year our new president will sign into law a ban on partial-birth abortion. This would be a step in the right direction, the direction back to the truth of sanctity. I think that, too, would smell sweet to our God.

If someone you know is facing an unplanned pregnancy, tell them to call KBHC at (800) 928-5242.

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

Sweet: 'Millionaire' points to where culture is going

"Everything is becoming participatory, except the church."

Author and educator Leonard Sweet

By Ferrell Foster
Baptist General Convention of Texas

DALLAS (BP)—Two television game shows provide clues about where American culture has been and where it is headed, according to author and educator Leonard Sweet.

"Jeopardy," which is rational and word-based, shows where culture has been, said Sweet, Dean of Drew University's theological school in Madison, N.J.

But "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," which is "based on a totally different framework," shows where culture is headed, Sweet said.

"It's not designed to be a game show. It's designed to be a game experience," said Sweet, author of such books as "Soul Tsunami" and "Post-Modern Pilgrims."

Sweet was speaking to student ministers during DestiNATIONS, a Southern Baptist missions conference Jan. 4-7 in Dallas.

"Jeopardy" is a product of modern culture, Sweet said, whereas "Millionaire" is what he called "high-modern," or a transition toward "postmodern."

Sweet said "Millionaire" illustrates the importance of "EPICtivity," a word he has made up built around an acronym for Experiential, Participatory, Image-based and Connective. Those words provide the keys for ministry in a postmodern world, he said.

At the beginning of "Millionaire," the lights go down and the music comes up, Sweet said. The show, like a praise service in church, puts the action back-to-back. "You have to have momentum, ... movement, ... crescendo."

It is all part of creating an experience, one in which the audience, a friend and a computer participate through "lifelines" used by the contestant.

"Jeopardy" is about "who is the smartest," Sweet said, while "Millionaire" is about how well contestants use their lifelines. "It's not a dumbing down," he said. "It's a drawing in."

"Millionaire" also is built on an image, he said. "The image of a million bucks is powerful in this culture," and host Regis Philbin is made into the very image of a millionaire, he said.

When the contestant gives an answer, Philbin always asks, "Is that your final answer?" The question connects with something inside viewers, Sweet said. Greed drives contestants onward, he said; but "deep down, we know that there are final answers."

Sweet described each element of EPIC:

Experiential. In the modern world, reason reigned supreme, he said. But today people, while not repudiating the rational, have moved to embrace the experiential, as well, he said, explaining that the new emphasis on experience expands on the rational.

Participatory. Postmodern life also has seen a transition from the representative to the participatory, Sweet said. "Everything is becoming participatory, except the church," he said. "This is a karaoke culture," where people don't want to just watch and listen, he said; they want to be part of the show.

Image-based. Images are supplanting words in the new culture, Sweet said. Seminaries teach ministers to exegete words; but the world now thinks in images, not words, he said. "These images are living in your head," he said, noting that the gospel is "image based," because Jesus is the image of God.

Connective. Connective represents a transition from the merely individual, Sweet said. Postmodern culture is combining the individual with the communal and creating something that has never been seen before, he said; it involves a stronger individuality while recognizing that the individual can only flourish in the communal.

"The significance of this ... and the excitement of it," Sweet said, is that churches must return to the "Jesus method of communication," in which He used parables to communicate His message.

"Twenty-first century ministry is much more like first-century ministry," Sweet said. And it needs to be geared toward experiences.

"Postmoderns collect experiences like modernists collected things," he said. "People are hunting for and starving for experiences. They're starving for an experience with Christ, but church is the last place they expect to have it."

'Just want to let you know'

THIS IS ONEIDA

W.F. Underwood

Our students have returned from their Christmas break. We know that it will take a week or two to get them settled back into the Oneida routine.

While they were home for the holidays, I received a list of the students who earned honor roll status during the second quarter. I could not believe my eyes when I computed the percentage of students who were on the honor roll. Last year during the second quarter, I was very pleased when 45 percent of our students were on the A or B honor roll. I was just as pleased again this year when the same percentage was on the A or B honor roll.

In addition to the students who returned from the holidays, we normally enroll about 40 to 50 new students during January. Whether new students come in August or in January, it is just as difficult to make the adjustment from living at home and having their own rooms to living in a dormitory environment.

Let's not forget the parents and grandparents. They get just as homesick as students and do not always deal with the separation very well. Some time ago one such parent sent me an e-mail. From time to time I read the letter as a fresh reminder of the anxiety parents have. The e-mail was titled, "Just want to let you know":

"As you know, a parent's decision to entrust their child into someone else's care—especially a distant boarding school—is not an easy one. The mere thought that our daughter ... is now 735 miles from her bed each night reminds us of the emptiness we must now somehow fill. Besides my 22-year-old son ... she is our only child.

"How will the space be filled in her absence? We trust the Lord, whose compassionate hand helped us discover Oneida on the Internet, will reassure us that placing (our daughter) at Oneida was and will remain the best possible choice for her. This Sunday's tour and your staff's smiling faces went a long way toward that reassurance. Dedication and love is contagious, and it showed everywhere we visited on campus.

"The (dorm) girls ... welcomed her with smiles and promises to help her overcome her homesickness. This ... eased our minds."

"Although I am far from a biblical scholar ... I do know that good works are not the key to salvation. However, (your) good works at Oneida hold open salvation's door.

"(Our daughter) had already professed her faith and accepted Christ's invitation to baptism. Too, she is one of the most loving and selfless young girls I've ever known and, although she is my stepdaughter, I accept her as every bit my own. After all, a parent is almost obligated to love a child born to them; I have 'chosen' to love ___, who came to me through remarriage. So it is no small thing that I tell you that we appreciate your work at Oneida and trust that you have our daughter's best interest in mind.

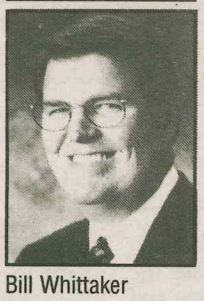
"Thanks for the reassuring Sunday (and) for the hard facts about ... homesickness."

During the next few weeks we will have several homesick students and parents to work with. Only a parent or grandparent who has gone through the process of trusting a child to the care of others can understand fully the feelings of those who do.

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

Answering the call to missions

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Saved at age 10, Regina Maynard became involved in church as she went through school.

"At age 22 the Lord began to speak to me about full-time Christian service. I struggled with it about two weeks. When I told my pastor, he wasn't surprised. He had sensed God's leadership in my life," Regina recalled. "About six months later I shared the decision with the church. The role of women in ministry is very important. Although God has not called me to preach, God has called me toward missions."

Since Regina surrendered to the call of God on her life, the standard joke from church friends has been, "Are you going to Zimbabwe?" Recently she attended a missions banquet with a friend. They took seats at an empty table and were joined by a gentleman. Regina asked where he was from and he replied, "Zimbabwe." How ironic! Through the table conversation about his work in Africa, and the opportunity to meet other international and home missionaries, the Lord began to confirm His leadership into missions. "I'm praying about His specific direction; there are so many exciting possibilities," Regina said.

What about the mission awareness at Clear Creek? "Many of our classes are very mission-minded. I have professors who have been international missionaries," she said. "When I've tried to run away from His call, the Lord used them to lovingly draw me back and clearly show His direction."

As a member of First Baptist Church of Belfry, Regina commutes each weekend to Pike County to teach the college and career class. She serves on two church committees. On campus she works as a computer services assistant. "When I started I could only turn the computer on and usually tear it up. I've learned so much and am blessed to have this job. I left a job as manager of a sports store, so the Lord provided needed financial assistance as I know He has for so many people on campus."

What's it like as a single in a school where most students are married with families? Regina commented: "Being among couples that have Christ in the center of their homes, through such things as dinner invitations and fellowships, I have gained a better understanding of what God intended for marriage."

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

Survey finds Bible is America's favorite unopened text

By David Gibson
Religion News Service

MINNEAPOLIS (RNS)—About 92 percent of Americans own at least one, and the average household has three. Two-thirds say it holds the answers to the basic questions of life, and the new president took a solemn oath on it.

It is the Bible, also known simply as "the Good Book," and it remains unrivaled as the world's all-time best seller. It also is widely hailed as the underpinning of America's values system.

And yet Americans are showing themselves to be remarkably ignorant of biblical basics. One Gallup survey, for example, shows that fewer than half of Americans can name the first book of the Bible (Genesis), only one-third know who delivered the Sermon on the Mount (many named Billy Graham, not Jesus), and one-quarter do not know what is celebrated on Easter (the Resurrection, the foundational event of Christianity).

The Bible, it seems, is the book that everyone wants to read but few do.

"It's the real dumbing down of America in that sense," said Andy Dzurovcik, pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Clark, N.J. Dzurovcik, a pastor for 28 years, recently made his own small effort to encourage Bible reading, posting this adage on the church's outdoor sign: "A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to a person that isn't."

But such people are increasingly rare. While polls show a sturdy minority of Christians, perhaps 15 percent, participate in Bible studies, and while at least 20 million Bibles are sold each year in addition to tens of millions that are distributed free, Bible reading is declining.

Another recent Gallup Poll showed that the number of people who read the Bible at least occasionally has dropped to 59 percent from 73 percent in the 1980s.

And that makes things tougher for pastors who say that, compared with a generation ago, they have to spend far more time explaining common Bible stories to listeners instead of teaching what the stories mean for their lives.

"Biblical illiteracy is rampant even though so many people seem to be getting into the Word," Dzurovcik said. "The Bible is the best-selling, least read and least understood book."

Or as George Gallup, the nation's foremost religion pollster, has put it: "We revere the Bible but we don't read it."

Worse, Gallup said, the percentage of people with a college education has more than tripled since 1935 "but the level of biblical knowledge appears to have hardly budged."

The evidence from Gallup and several other surveys, many by publishing houses, makes that clear.

For example, despite the talk about how important the Ten Commandments are to the moral health of American society, six out of 10 Americans can't name half of them.

And a 1997 Barna Organization poll showed that 12 percent of Christians think Noah's wife was Joan of Arc, while 80 percent of born-again Christians believe it is the Bible that says "God helps them that help themselves."

Actually, Ben Franklin said that.

This biblical illiteracy is especially confounding to religious leaders, given the ubiquity of the Bible in American life.

Gideons International annually distributes more than 45 million Bibles—an average of 86 per minute, better than one every second.

A National Bible Week survey prepared by Zondervan Publishing House of Minneapolis, the world's largest publisher of Bibles, shows that gift-giving is the top reason (49 percent) for purchasing a Bible. Another survey bore that out with the finding that most Bibles (71 percent) were originally received as a gift.

So what's the problem?

According to a survey by Tyndale House Publishers (named after the 16th century Englishman who was burned at the stake for translating the Scriptures into the vernacular for the common folk), 64 percent of Americans don't read the Bible because they're too busy.

The other big obstacles seem to be the daunting size of the Bible and its dense language.

A large majority—80 percent—say the Bible is confusing. Little wonder, since most of the time people read the King James Version, still the favorite Bible by a 5-1 ratio.

But the most widely read contemporary translation, the New International Version, representing half of all Bibles sold today, is written at a seventh-grade reading level.

Last March, Tyndale launched an edition simply called "The Book," the fruit of a seven-year project by 90 scholars to render the Bible into "understandable English."

The Tyndale launch was combined with a $7 million biblical literacy campaign, underwritten by televangelist Pat Robertson, to convince Americans "that Bible reading is cool."

Will the simplification campaign work?

Joan Begitschke, director of marketing for Tyndale, said that in the short time since its release, "The Book" has become the third-best-selling edition, after the King James and the New International Version.

Americans affirm Bible's relevance

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (RNS)—Eighty-six percent of Americans believe the Bible is relevant today, but two-thirds of them think their local newspaper is easier to read than the holy book, a survey has found.

The survey, commissioned by Zondervan Publishing House, found that 80 percent of respondents believe the Bible can address most or all of today's problems. More than half of the adults surveyed said the Bible is likely to be more accurate than a history book or a local newspaper.

"We were energized and somewhat surprised to learn that such a large majority of Americans said that biblical lessons can significantly impact their lives," said Tom Mockabee, executive vice president and publisher of Zondervan Bible Group, a division of the Christian publishing company based in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Although the poll showed a majority of respondents believe in the relevance of the Bible, the survey also found that many have trouble understanding the holy book.

Eighty percent of respondents said the language of the Bible could be confusing and 81 percent said modern translations make the Bible easier to use and understand. They cited the biblical stories about creation and the dreams of Joseph as ones that are difficult to read.

Debate rages among researchers: How many Americans really go to church?

By Mark Wingfield
Texas Baptist Standard

HOUSTON (ABP)—If you want to start a polite fight, put a group of religious researchers in a room and ask them to discuss why traditional polling methods consistently overstate Americans' church attendance.

Just such a conversation occurred at the recent annual meeting of the Religious Research Association in Houston. Three panelists presented their theories on the subject, and then the audience got to chime in.

Among those in the audience, of course, were other researchers who had published different theories on the same problem.

While some researchers see the issue cutting to the very core of social research of all kinds, not everyone even agrees there is a problem.

Hardly anyone had even suggested a problem existed until 1993, when a trio of two Southern Baptists and a Catholic took the unprecedented step of actually counting heads in every congregation in a small Alabama county one Sunday.

That research by Kirk Hadaway, Penny Long Marler and Mark Chaves rocked the world of religious research because it called into question the results of Gallup polls that have been taken for decades.

Gallup studies have shown a consistent pattern of church attendance in the United States throughout the 20th century, hovering above 40 percent for both Protestants and Catholics. Those results were obtained through phone surveys in which participants were asked if they had personally attended a church or religious service in the preceding seven days.

The research by Hadaway, Marler and Chaves reported much lower rates of church attendance—20 percent for Protestants and 28 percent for Catholics—based on the actual head counts.

Their explanation: People interviewed on the telephone about church attendance tend to paint a rosier picture than reality because it is socially desirable to say you attend church regularly. In research terms, this is called a response bias.

And in this case, if response bias is the culprit, it is so big that it indicates a problem for all kinds of surveys, said Larry Iannaccone, a professor at Santa Clara University in California. "We might as well give up on all survey-based research."

Like many others, Iannaccone has his own theories of what's gone wrong: "This isn't a sign of response bias. It's just a sign of us researchers being stupid."

He contends the basic Gallup question and others like it are flawed or the results gathered are misunderstood.

"If I claim to attend church every week, what do I mean?" he asked. "That I never get sick? That I never go on vacation? That I never oversleep? ... No, I mean I go whenever I reasonably can."

It is possible, Iannaccone suggested, that people give answers to the Gallup question based on their customary habit, realizing there are "excused absences" for things such as vacations, church mission trips, illness and business trips. "Dedicated attenders probably miss 15 to 20 weeks for reasonable reasons."

Yet another warning was sounded by Sean Everton, a graduate student in sociology at Stanford University. He presented an analysis of how church attendance varies dramatically according to seasonal patterns.

His analysis shows Easter Sunday is the highest day of church attendance nationwide, with three other special days nearly tying for second place—Palm Sunday, Mother's Day and Thanksgiving.

Everton also documented a pattern of low-attendance Sundays generally following high-attendance Sundays.

The basic cycle in America shows church attendance dropping off each spring, bottoming out in summer, then picking up again by September, leading to the peak days of Thanksgiving, Advent, Palm Sunday, Easter and Mother's Day.

"The seasonal effects of church attendance are very clear," he reported. "Religious holidays and special-event Sundays attract more people."

This understanding of the seasonal cycle of church attendance sheds light on the polling problem, Everton said, by demonstrating that it makes a difference when the polling is done.

That difference was highlighted by Bob Woodberry, a graduate student in sociology at the University of North Carolina. He compared the results of research based on time-use surveys from two periods of time.

Other researchers have published data suggesting church attendance has declined precipitously, based on records individuals have been asked to keep of how they use their time. The problem with this research, he said, is that one of the most prominent case studies uses data from one year that falls during the Palm Sunday/Easter Sunday period, while data for the second year does not include those high-attendance Sundays in the sample.

The bottom line, he said: "If you look at comparable data, you find no decline in church attendance on time-use surveys."

The problem, though, is that the level of church attendance indicated on these time-use surveys turns out to be around 30 percent—still 10 points below the results obtained by the traditional Gallup question.

PEOPLE

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:

■ Members of Oldukai Baptist Church on the shores of Lake Manyara, Tanzania, as they construct a building. Most of the materials must be transported by ox cart. "Pray that their energy and cooperation in the project will be a light of witness to the surrounding villages," a missionary writes.

■ Give thanks for the safe arrival of George and Dorothy Hayner of Texas to serve as interim pastor and wife of the international church in St. Petersburg, Russia.

■ Give thanks for a children's ministry recently begun in the International Baptist Church of Bremen, Germany.

■ Hope International Church in Rotterdam/ Capelle, The Netherlands, needs a building in which it can meet. The church must vacate its current quarters by the end of February because the building has been sold.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ CAMPBELLSVILLE—Saloma Church will host a building dedication Jan. 28. Services begin at 11 a.m. Featured speakers will be **James McKinley,** president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and **Michael Carter,** president of Campbellsville University. For information, call (270) 789-0082. **John Chowning** is pastor.

■ COVINGTON—Latonia Church will host "A Night of Music" Jan. 26 at 7:30 p.m. to benefit Turfway Park Ministries. Guests will be **Gospelway Bluegrass Singers, Linda Vandyke, Cindy Holder** and **Gary Griesser.** For information, call (606) 431-8004. **James Abernathy** is pastor.

■ LEXINGTON—**The African Children's Choir** will be in concert at Immanuel Church Jan. 28 at 5 p.m. **Craig Loscalzo** is pastor

■ LOUISVILLE—**"Arancania,"** a quintet of school teachers from the Baptist Academy in Temuco, Chile, will be in concert at Lyndon Church Jan. 28 at 6 p.m.

Buechel Park Church ordained **Sally White** and **Jerry Bailey** into the deacon ministry Jan. 14. **Don Rogers** is pastor.

■ OWENSBORO—Bellevue Church called **Carla Vied** as children's ministry director. Vied also serves as Kentucky Baptist Convention preschool specialist consultant.

■ PADUCAH—Olivet Church licensed and ordained **Bryan Powell,** minister of youth and activities, to the ministry Jan. 7. **Tommy Tucker** is pastor.

■ WHITESBURG—Colson Church will host revival services Jan. 18-20 at 7:30 p.m. nightly. The evangelist will be **Dave Hammond** of Myra.

Sue Owen, wife of former KBC exec, dies

LEXINGTON—Sue Burch Owen, 91, the wife of former Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Secretary Franklin Owen, died Jan. 13. Her funeral service was Jan. 16 at Calvary Baptist Church in Lexington where Owen was pastor from 1954-72.

A graduate of Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Mrs. Owen was a schoolteacher and choir director at First Baptist Church of Cape Girardeau when she and Owen married in 1940.

She served as a Sunday school teacher, youth choir director and missions leader during Owen's pastorates in Georgia and Kentucky.

Bill Simmons, retired minister of education and administration at Calvary Baptist, described Mrs. Owen's life as "a marvelous pilgrimage of faith."

Remembering her as "a thoroughgoing Christian," Simmons said she "always shared her faith with any and all who came near to where she was."

In addition to her husband, she is survived by three sons: Franklin and Bill Owen, both of Lexington, and John Owen, pastor of First Baptist Church of Winchester. She also is survived by a sister and nine grandchildren.

Memorials gifts can be made to the Calvary Baptist building fund.

'Left Behind' star says film helps 'express what I believe'

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (BP)—Kirk Cameron appreciates the popularity the '80s sitcom "Growing Pains" gave him via the role of Mike Seaver.

But "it's been a far greater honor to play Buck Williams in 'Left Behind' than anything else I have done," Cameron told an audience near Nashville last week.

The lead role in the movie has given him an opportunity to express "what I believe in a very special way," Cameron said Jan. 16.

Cameron spoke during the first of several "Left Behind" concert-and-video events preceding the film's Feb. 2 opening in movie theaters nationwide.

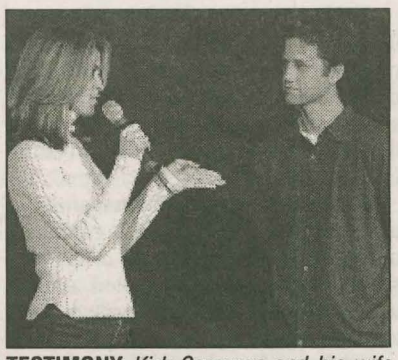
The event in Franklin, Tenn., attracted nearly 2,000 Left Behind enthusiasts from the Nashville area to meet Cameron, who plays a TV journalist in "Left Behind," and his wife, Chelsea Noble, an actress who also stars in the movie.

The evening also featured recording artists from the movie's soundtrack, including Bob Carlisle of "Butterfly Kisses" Grammy fame, Brian Duncan, SHINEmk and Joy Williams. First Baptist Church of Franklin hosted the event.

The movie, which as a video already has sold more than 1 million copies, is based on the "Left Behind" book series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. "The Mark," the eighth in the series, currently is on the nation's best-seller charts, moving overall sales of Left Behind books toward 25 million.

The "Left Behind" series explores various story lines involving the end times.

The concert-and-video tour was sparked by an Oct. 17 "Left Behind: 'A Night of Worship'" attended by more than 7,000 people at Prestonwood Baptist Church in north metro Dallas. Nearly 175 people recorded professions of faith in Christ that night.



TESTIMONY *Kirk Cameron and his wife Chelsea Noble share their testimony with more than 1,800 people gathered at First Baptist Church in Franklin, Tenn. (BP photo by Morris Abernathy)*

George King, general manager of Franklin-based Reunion Records, which was involved in the recording of the soundtrack, told The Tennessean newspaper in Nashville, "We originally thought the one show would be it, but we realized the film and the books have such drawing power that we wanted to share the message in a unique concert setting featuring highlights from the film, the musicians and the stars."

Cameron was quoted by The Tennessean as saying that people who have read the New Testament book of Revelation have "wondered what it all means."

"There's a possibility this stuff is going to happen," Cameron said, "so I hope the movie will make people take a look at how authentic their own faith is and consider the truths of the Bible."

CLASSIFIED ADS

Will Bush and Clinton attend the same church?

By Kevin Eckstrom
Religion News Service

GEORGE W. BUSH *The new president, shown here during last weekend's inauguration, has not yet said where he will attend church, although he has been issued an invitation from the pastor of the Methodist congregation where Bill Clinton has been attending. (RNS photo by Jan Naso)*

WASHINGTON (RNS)—They might not share the same views, but incoming President George W. Bush and outgoing President Bill Clinton could share the same church pew.

When George W. Bush was sworn in last weekend as the 43rd president, he became the first Methodist president in 100 years and only the third in history.

He replaced Bill Clinton, a Southern Baptist, who has attended Foundry United Methodist Church.

With his wife in the U.S. Senate, and Foundry Pastor Philip Wogaman as a spiritual counselor, Clinton is expected to still attend the church.

Bush has not said where he will attend church while at the White House, but Wogaman has extended the Bushes an invitation. United Methodist Bishop Felton May of the Washington-Baltimore area also has urged Bush to attend a Methodist church.

"The United Methodist Church includes wide political and theological diversity," May said in a statement. "There is room for all who seek to follow Jesus Christ. I am confident the president will be able to find a church that nurtures his faith and supports his family's spiritual life."

Bush was raised as an Episcopalian but joined the United Methodist Church when he married his wife, Laura, a lifelong Methodist. They are members of Highland Park United Methodist Church near Dallas and attended Tarrytown United Methodist Church in Austin, Texas.

Bush shares an almost eerie similarity with the two other Methodist presidents, Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley. Like Bush, Hayes won the White House in a hotly contested election in which he won the Electoral College vote but failed to win the popular vote.

McKinley first won in 1896 but was assassinated just a year into his second term, in 1901. An evangelical prayer group is praying that Bush, unlike McKinley, does not succumb to the fabled "zero year curse" linked to the deaths of seven presidents—each elected in a year ending in zero—before their terms ended.

The United Methodist Church is the nation's second-largest Protestant body with 8.4 million members in the United States, and about 10 million around the world.

These are good days for Methodists in Washington, with a number of high-profile members. Vice President-elect Dick Cheney is a Methodist, as well as Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., who used a Bible given to her by the church's General Board of Church and Society when she was sworn into office.

The number of Methodist members of Congress is up six following last year's election, with 39 Methodist Republicans and 26 Methodist Democrats.

Catholics lead Congress with 150 members, followed by Baptists, with 72. Methodists rank third on Capitol Hill.

As with any church member, it is unclear whether Bush's denominational affiliation will influence his policy making. Clinton was more often at odds with the Southern Baptist Convention than he agreed with it. And like most Americans, Bush operates in an age where personal piety often matters more than denominational dogma.

Indeed, Bush is at odds with official Methodist policy on a number of issues, from abortion—the church calls it a "regrettable option"—to affirmative action to an expanded missile defense system and gays in the military.

Bush, a self-professed born-again Christian, promises a big role for faith-based activism which will allow religious bodies to help in the delivery of social services, particularly in urban areas.

Evangelicals within the United Methodist Church say they are "encouraged" by having an ally in the White House, particularly with Bush's opposition to abortion.

"We feel some degree of optimism, in fact more than that, we feel positive about George W. Bush as president and that he will bring with him a wholesome concern for scriptural and family values," said James Heidinger III, president of the church's evangelical Good News movement.

Wogaman, who was also one of Clinton's three "spiritual advisers," said there is no "particular liklihood" that Bush will attend his church near the White House, known for its progressive stands on such issues as abortion and gay rights.

A dean of the church's liberal wing, Wogaman said Bush—like any political leader—will need to "transcend the particularities of his faith community, especially in a pluralistic country such as ours."

The same could be said for the Methodist church. With a huge ideological range, Wogaman said there is room for both conservatives like Bush and progressives like himself. What's more, he said following the spirit of the church may be more important than following the law of the church, particularly for Bush.

"You can faithfully be a Methodist without narrowly being a Methodist," he said.

When George W. Bush was sworn in last weekend, he became the first Methodist president in 100 years and only the third in history.

Vocalist sheds light on 'darkness of the soul'

By Stacey Hamby
Missouri Word & Way

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP)—There were some days when she didn't even want to get out of bed.

She read Scripture, but she had trouble believing it. She cried out, but she got no answer. The depression enveloped her like a "darkness of the soul."

But Christian musician Lynda Randle said that if she hadn't gone through two years struggling with depression, she might not have the depth of compassion she has for other people today. Part of her ministry now is through the songs on her latest contemporary Christian music CD, "Soul Shower."

"'Soul Shower' was born in the dark; it was born out of my bowels," said Randle, who lives in Kansas City, Mo. "It's hard to see in the darkness. The storm was so bad, I didn't know if I was ever going to get out of it."

That storm included the death of her father, a sister, a brother, two uncles and her best friend, all within two years. The loss of her father to cancer in 1998 hit her particularly hard.

"When I was a kid, I used to lie on his chest to hear his heartbeat," she recalled. "I could tell him anything. In December 1997, Dad went in for tests. He told me, 'Chubs'—he always called me that—'I've got stomach cancer.' In one month, he was gone."

The following months were some of the hardest of Randle's life, she said. "At one point, for about a week, I felt detached, like the world was moving around me. I had to pick someone up at the airport, and I remember thinking I didn't even want to go, because I was so scared. The fear of loss was so strong, I was afraid to be gone from my kids and afraid for my husband traveling."

Then one day last spring, she woke up and felt different. "After the intense prayers of God's people, the light came back on," she explained.

Reflecting on what the experience taught her, she said: "I learned that God uses pain to give us wings of flight. Satan can take that grief, which is very natural, and turn it into something bad, but God can use it for good."

Randle is riding high now with not only "Soul Shower" but also the release of her gospel music CD, "Timeless." Randle recorded "Timeless" in response to the demand of fans who heard her sing during Gaither Homecoming concerts.

But she is the first to admit that singing doesn't come naturally to her. "Growing up I sang in the choir. That was a given in our culture, whether you could sing or not." She grew up as one of seven children in Washington, D.C. Her brother is Michael Tait of Christian rock group dc Talk.

In high school, she ended up in a music class because another class she wanted was full. She started singing in contests and winning.

She went on to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., and sang on Jerry Falwell's television program. Invitations to sing in churches began arriving, and her career was on its way.

Today, she regularly tours the United States, singing her own blend of contemporary and gospel music.

Her husband is a youth minister and speaker who also has worked with the National Center for Fathers, based in Shawnee, Kan. They are members of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in Kansas City.

"I enjoy singing, but it's an effort for me to vocalize," she said. "But God called me to do it."

Christian publishers find children to be a growth market, analysts say

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Christian children's books have become a growth industry, according to Christian product analysts.

The popular combination of religious messages with the bright colors and large letters of children's literature is fueled, in part, by the desire to instill values at a time when reading to children is being emphasized.

"More and more religion publishers have expanded their children's divisions," said Elizabeth Devereaux, children's religion book review editor for Publishers Weekly.

"Children's products have become a very strong priority in our industry," added Nancy Guthrie, a spokeswoman for CBA, an organization for Christian retailers. She called Christian children's books a growing aspect of the $3.5 billion annual sales in the Christian retail industry.

From holiday stories to board books to age-appropriate Bibles, big companies and independent writers alike are taking advantage of the burgeoning market for the nation's youngest readers.

Divisions of Christian book companies such as Zondervan Publishing House in Grand Rapids, Mich., and Thomas Nelson Publishers in Nashville churn out 80 to 100 books with Christian—and sometimes Christmas—themes on an annual basis.

"The products that we're putting out there are just meeting the needs of the customers," said Kathy Bieber, director of marketing with Zondervan's Zonderkidz label. "They're wanting products that are fun and imaginative and are able to tell a biblical truth to the children."

Cumberland College Mountain Outreach Gift Day Helps Thousands In Whitley County

The 2000 Cumberland College Mountain Outreach Gift Day was a wonderful success, thanks to you and other friends like you!

Approximately fifty students and other volunteers manned the warehouse for eight hours and assisted 392 families representing 1,616 people. The crowd began arriving on Friday evening some fourteen hours before the doors were opened. By the time the opening hour arrived more than 180 people were waiting to get in the building.

The back room in the warehouse was stocked with toys and a limited number of persons were allowed in the room at any one time. Another area was set aside for children to play games and participate in crafts while their parents were in the warehouse.

Every fifteen minutes a ticket was drawn for a door prize which consisted of fifty-five bicycles, a color television, a computer with software and an exercise machine. One lady who won one of the bicycles cried when she explained that her son had been begging for a bicycle and that she told him there was no way they could ever afford one. There were many tears of joy shed on this special day.

In addition to clothing and toys, persons visiting the warehouse also found toiletries, books, shoes, household items and the list goes on. There was even hot chocolate available for all who wanted it!

For more information about how you can help with future Gift Days call (606) 539-4346.