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Holy laughter: What role does humor play in Christianity?

By Craig Bird
FaithWorks Magazine

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP)—We know Jesus wept, because the Bible tells us so. But did He laugh? For centuries, Christians said "No."

As early as the 4th century, church leader John Chrysostom declared that Jesus never laughed. Artists through the centuries overwhelmingly followed the Catholic saint's lead. Medieval paintings portray God's Son sometimes as serene, but always sober.

And Christendom's sense of humor didn't improve much over the next millennium. The Council of Constance in the 1400s consigned to hell any minister or monk who spoke "jocular words such as to provoke laughter." Well, actually, the council said, "Let him be anathema," which is a decidedly non-jocular way of saying the same thing.

Even the Bible seems to frown on levity. "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep," Jesus says in Luke 6:25. "Let your laughter be turned into mourning," adds James 4:9. "Sorrow is better than laughter," observes Ecclesiastes 7:3, "for when a face is sad a heart may be happy."

It's little wonder that many people have the stereotype of Christians as joyless, dour types whose greatest fear is that someone, somewhere, might be having fun.

But, as any preacher who ever warmed up a congregation for a sermon with a good clean joke can testify, that isn't the whole story.

Bible scholars say Holy Scripture often uses humorous puns to make a point, but many are lost in translation.

After God tells Abraham that Sarah
□ See Holy laughter ..., page 9

Bread of life



MOVE OVER, POKEMON The logo on this vendor's bread wrapper qualifies the buyer to redeem the wrapper for a prize—one of 14 Bible stories and Bible verse memory cards in the Sereer language. As bread vendors in Senegal travel from village to village—and as Sereer people pass the Bible stories among themselves—the gospel is reaching hundreds of people otherwise isolated from Christian witness. (BP photo by Sue Sprenkle)

Bread wrappers spreading gospel in Africa

By Sue Sprenkle
SBC International Mission Board

NDIAGANIAO, Senegal (BP)—An 8-year-old boy waits impatiently, peeking around his mother's skirt, as she buys a loaf of French bread. When he sees the merchant wrap it in newsprint with a large picture of bread on it, a huge smile breaks out.

He grabs the newsprint from his mother and runs through the crowd-

ed, open-air market with his mother close behind. Cutting through a vegetable stand and then dodging some stray goats, the two arrive at a crowded table.

The boy pushes his way through the crowd of people and proudly says to the man sitting at the table, "Here's my paper. I am here for my prize." His mother quickly adds that they want prize number four.

Songo Faye looks up the family's

name, enters the redeemable newsprint in the record book and hands them their prize—a single Bible story written in their own language, Sereer. There are more than 1 million Sereer speakers in Senegal and Gambia. Most have little or no access to the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

"The Sereer want to know about God and Jesus," Faye says. "The
□ See Bread wrappers ..., page 11

West Kentucky time capsule provides lessons in preservation



80-YEAR-OLD SECRET Two deacons from Bandana Baptist Church look at a strongbox they will place behind the church cornerstone later this summer. Members recently discovered a time capsule behind the cornerstone while doing research for the church's centennial. (Photo by Keith Todd)

By Keith Todd
State Correspondent

BANDANA—What began as a research project ended with a treasure hunt.

When Bandana Baptist Church in Ballard County prepared for its centennial celebration last year, Marge Whipple was asked to delve into old business meeting minutes to compile a church history.

But buried in the records was a surprise: unknown to current members, a time capsule was sitting behind the church building cornerstone, waiting to be unearthed.

"Until we found the reference we didn't have a clue there was a time capsule in the building," Whipple said. "It was a complete surprise."

Deacons assessed that the cornerstone could be removed without damaging the building, and about 100 people turned out on the Saturday in October when excavation began.

"It took us forever to get that stone out," Whipple recalled. "And when we removed it, there wasn't anything there."

Still, volunteers kept digging. Bandana youth group coordinator Susan Bodell was among those who helped. "By the time we got back behind there, a lot of people had lost interest and left. We only had about 20 who waited around to see what was behind the cornerstone," she recalled.

The crew was about to give up, but a late arrival took another look. While feeling around in the space, members heard what sounded like broken glass in the bottom.

They found a broken glass container and a few sheets of paper that had fallen out.

Founded in 1900, the church building, which burned in 1922, Whipple said. "When they gathered for the dedication of the current building they had everyone sign a piece of paper." The
□ See West Kentucky ..., page 6

BAPTISTS

Baptists share food, God's love in Angola

By Sue Sprengle
SBC International Mission Board

KUITO, Angola (BP)—Tired and weary, the woman smiles as she holds up the ragged piece of cloth. The Baptist minister smiles back and dishes a few cups of rice into it.

The woman quickly folds and wraps the cloth around the precious gift, but grain after grain falls through the threadbare cloth to the ground. She bends and picks up every piece of rice she can find. It's been a long time since her family has eaten rice, and nothing will go to waste.

Missionaries Eddie and Janice Ray said their hearts broke as the food was distributed to the 500 families registered for a Baptist relief project through local churches in Kuito, Angola.

"The people there are so hard off. It's just hard to live for them," said Ray, who coordinates the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's work in Angola. "When we handed out the food and clothes, you could see how grateful the people were. They would just light up."

Angola's 26-year civil war rages on, leaving thousands of casualties behind. Increased attacks by both government and rebel forces have sent refugees flooding into the town of Kuito—as many as 3,000 a day.

The United Nations reports that

more than half of Angola's people have been dislocated by the war. Entire communities walk for days and even months, dodging land mines and bullets, to reach the safety of Kuito.

Twenty-two months of shelling and street fighting have wrecked Kuito. Even though the attacks ended eight years ago, still-hidden land mines keep people from rebuilding. Families live in bombed-out buildings, while students meet in a crumbling school building.

Seventeen tons of food, Bibles and clothing—purchased with Southern Baptist hunger and relief funds—were flown in to help relief agencies already taxed by the overwhelming demands.

Many families go for days without anything to eat.

"These people don't have anything to take care of themselves with. Their clothes are just ragged threads," Mrs. Ray said. "The cloth of the women's shirts and the men's shirts were so bare that the beans and rice were passing through them to the ground."

When their villages were raided, many people left with only the clothes on their backs. As a result, clothes are a prized commodity in this area of Angola.

"I saw faces that were so tired," Mrs. Ray said. "Despite that, they just stood there in line with hopes of getting something. These people are liv-

ing a hard life. They are weary."

Angola has been at war since 1961, although the civil war officially began when the country was granted independence from Portugal in 1975. Many Angolans have never known a time of peace.

IMB missionaries evacuated the country in 1992 due to the severity of the fighting. One missionary couple returned in 1993 and stayed until they retired in 1997. Four missionary families replaced them in the capital city of Luanda in 1998.

Relief agencies have been trying to help the people for years, Ray said, but Angolans cannot help themselves until they can return to their fields. Efforts to rid farmland of land mines have been stepped up, and some areas are now cleared for cultivation.

After the land mines are removed, the Baptists of Angola plan to launch another major relief project: supplying hoes and seed to help Angolans living in the countryside become more self-sufficient.

"These people have nothing, not even a hoe," Ray said. "They were forced to leave everything behind. They are willing to work. They just don't have the means to get started."

"Our goal is to help them, both spiritually and physically. The best thing we can do for them is help them to help themselves."

Mo. Baptist nominating process sparks debate

By Mark Wingfield
Texas Baptist Standard

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP)—An effort by the Missouri Baptist Convention's nominating committee to impose new guidelines for selecting trustees of the state convention's agencies and institutions has been questioned by the convention's top executive.

The chairman of the nominating committee said his goal is to end the "good-old-boys network" he believes has controlled the convention in the past.

In April, the nominating committee announced adoption of three new guidelines to be used in selecting individuals for service on convention

boards and committees. According to the new rules:

■ No individual may serve on more than one board or committee at the same time.

■ No church may have more than two members serving on Missouri Baptist Convention boards or committees at the same time.

■ All nominees for election or reelection must be fully supportive of the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The guidelines have never been approved by convention messengers in annual session. And that concerns Jim Hill, executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention. A front-page article in the May 3 Word & Way newspaper quoted Hill as questioning

whether the new guidelines are appropriate.

By imposing its own guidelines without convention approval, Hill said the nominating committee has given itself the authority to remove trustees from agency boards who were elected to those posts by the full convention.

Hill said the committee is preparing to remove duly elected trustees who are eligible to serve second terms according to convention bylaws.

"I do not believe it is appropriate for the nominating committee to utilize rules that have not been approved by the convention, and I believe their decision to do so will widen the division in our convention," Hill said.

"My conviction is that the rules are an effort to accelerate a political process at work within our convention," he added. "By their decision not to renominate individuals eligible for a second term of service, the nominating committee is able to create additional vacancies for new trustees."

The nominating committee chairman, however, defended the committee's work in a separate article in the same issue of Word & Way. He denied the guidelines are politically motivated.

Chairman Jack Purvis acknowledged that recent successes by an effort called Project 1000 have given fundamentalists control of the nominating committee.

"A lot of folks have been fearful of us being in control of the nominating committee," he said. Purvis said his goal, however, is "to make sure in the future that we will not be accused of being guilty of what has been done in the past 30 years—a good-old-boys network that kept rotating the same people" from board to board.

SBC plans range from vp candidacy to on-site childcare

NEW ORLEANS—With the 2001 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting less than a month away, convention leaders are finalizing plans for the June 12-13 event.

Convention-related details released last week range from information about officer elections to committee appointments to childcare registration.

The two-day SBC meeting will be held in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans. It will be preceded by the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting, Crossover evangelistic emphasis and other convention-related activities.

In 1996, the last time the SBC met in New Orleans, there were 13,706 registered messengers. That compares to 38,403 messengers—the third highest total in SBC history—when the annual meeting was held in New Orleans in 1990.

Ted Stone, a trustee for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, will be nominated next month for SBC first vice president by fellow trustee Ralph Pulley, a member of First Baptist Church of Dallas.

Stone, a crusader against alcohol and drug abuse, is the only announced candidate for the position. He had walked across the country three times to draw attention to his anti-drug campaign.

A member of Grace Baptist Church in Durham, N.C., Stone has served on the SBC Committee on Committees and the Credentials Committee. He also serves on the board of visitors at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Current SBC President James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga., is expected to be elected to a second one-year term without opposition.

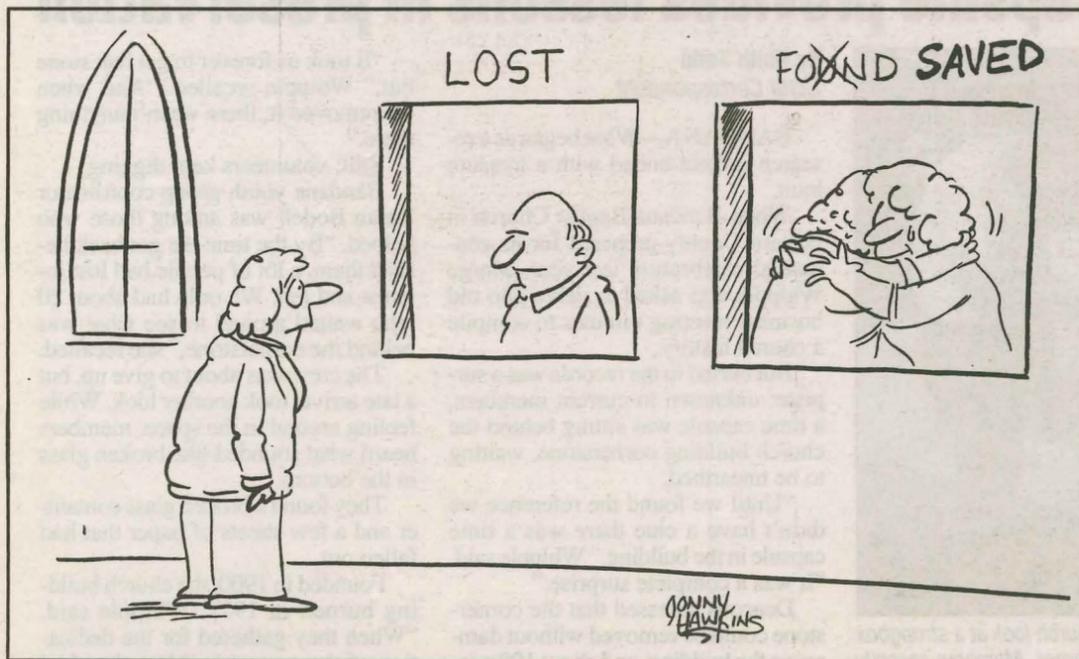
Merritt has announced his appointments to the 2001 SBC Credentials Committee and Tellers Committee. Robert Steele, pastor of New Salem Baptist Church in Kennesaw, Ga., will chair the Credentials Committee. Michael Rice, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Ashland, will serve on the 25-member committee.

Merritt named Voddie Baucham, itinerant pastor of Sagemont Baptist Church in Houston, as chairman of the 15-member Tellers Committee.

Preschool childcare during the SBC meeting will be available on a first-come, first-served advanced registration basis. Registration forms are available on the Internet at www.sbc.net or by calling Lana Horne at (504) 466-5137.

Five childcare sessions will be available on Tuesday and Wednesday at a cost of \$5 each per child.

Based on reporting by Baptist Press



Conservative, moderate leaders plan strategies for KBC

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

RUSSELLVILLE—Conservative and moderate leaders in Kentucky are gearing up for this fall's Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting in Murray.

The conservative Kentucky Baptist Laymen's Network is holding an informal series of regional meetings across the state, including a recent informational meeting at Green Ridge Baptist Church near Russellville.

Mainstream Baptists of Kentucky, a moderate group that formed earlier this year, has announced plans to host a series of meetings in late May and early June.

The laymen's network, led by Louisville layman John Michael, endorsed a slate of conservative candidates for KBC office last year. All three candidates supported by the network fell short in their election bids.

Messengers to last year's KBC an-

nual meeting also took issue with members of the network distributing campaign-related newsletters outside the convention facility. Messengers approved a motion barring on-site distribution of campaign material at future KBC meetings.

Michael, president of the laymen's network, has sent mixed signals about whether he plans to honor the convention action. He initially said he would abide by the motion. Since then, however, he has adopted a "wait and see" attitude, noting that he doesn't "feel technically or procedurally bound" by the messengers' action.

Promotional material for the May 8 meeting at Green Ridge Church stated that the network is designed to "help defend our convention from outside influences which would tend to undermine our work and witness for Christ."

"When people are informed with the truth," the material added, "they can do what is necessary to keep liberal unbiblical influence from our Ken-

tucky Baptist Convention."

During the regional meeting, which attracted nine people, Michael said his concern is that "the liberal/moderate element in our state is going to continue to prevail until such time as the conservative/evangelical pastors and conservative/evangelical laypeople get together and say, 'No, we're not going to let you do that.' That's the bottom line for us to take our state back."

Michael said the meeting's small turnout is not a concern for network leaders. Noting that the group has held "a handful of meetings" across Kentucky, he added, "We've had various results all over the state."

He said the group has organized the state into four districts with two regions each. Leaders also are seeking to identify supporters on the associational and local church levels.

"We're a young organization," he said. "It's one thing to have a structure and a game plan. It's another thing to fulfill it. ... This is more like a process

than an event."

Host Pastor Robert Tarrence said the laymen's network affirms the inerrancy of Scripture and the 2000 version of the Baptist Faith and Message. He said the group opposes such issues as homosexuality and women serving as senior pastors.

"I want to hold onto the state of Kentucky," Tarrence told the group. "If the moderates get their way, they will turn this state convention into something I can't support."

Herb Booth, chairman of the moderate Mainstream Baptists group, said his organization's goal is to encourage enough like-minded messengers to attend the KBC annual meeting Nov. 13-14 and influence the outcome of the presidential election.

The series of Mainstream Baptists meetings will begin May 29 in Erlanger. Leaders will discuss how individuals can be involved in the group and how they plan to prepare for the KBC annual meeting.

BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ The Kentucky Baptist Convention's Sunday school department will offer state certification training for childcare teachers and directors in June. The training will be offered in three locations: June 2 at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville; June 9 at Calvary Baptist Church in Lexington; and June 23 at First Baptist Church of Bowling Green. Pre-registration costs \$15. For more information, call (502) 254-4730 or toll-free in Kentucky, (888) 254-5709.

■ Kentucky Baptist Assemblies has closed its Louisville office. The cost for the Louisville office was outweighing the benefits, according to President Rusty Ellison. The agency will maintain a Louisville phone number. That new number is (502) 499-8655.

Relationships help University of Louisville's BSU gain recognition

By Tim Beauchamp
Kentucky Baptist Convention

LOUISVILLE—When you live out your faith, people notice.

That's what students involved in the University of Louisville's Baptist Student Union say they discovered this past school year as the group was recognized as the school's Outstanding Student Organization of the Year.

The BSU program was selected from among 11 finalists by the university's student life office. The BSU also received the Outstanding Technology Initiative Award and had a student BSU member receive the Humanitarian of the Year Award.

The 1,600 hours of community service logged by BSU members and "E-Seeds," a weekly e-mail devotional, were keys to the recognition, according to campus minister Angela Girdley.

The driving force behind the BSU's organizational and technological excellence is a commitment to building re-

lationships, said Girdley, a 12-year campus minister veteran.

"At the beginning of the year, I challenged our student leaders to think about people, not programs," said Girdley. "I wanted them to focus on people and making relationships that would impact an eternity."

International campus minister Tommy Johnson said he sought to build relationships through "E-Seeds." The e-mail devotional, which targets international students, received the school's technology initiative award.

"When I came to the BSU three years ago, I didn't know anything about e-mail," Johnson recalled. "But I felt that something needed to be done in order to reach these students and share the truth of God's Word with them."

Each week, "E-Seeds" is sent to 225 students from 37 nationalities on 18 campuses and five countries, including China, Japan, Korea, India and the United States. Some students continue to receive the devotional after gradua-

tion.

Johnson said "E-Seeds" breaks down the language barrier that exists among international students.

"International students have time to translate and think about what they are reading and what they want to say," Johnson said. "This allows me to have dialog with them in a meaningful way that is sometimes hard to do in person."

BSU's commitment to volunteer ministry was demonstrated throughout the year, as members traveled during breaks to mission projects in Chicago; Charleston, S.C.; and Panama City, Fla.

Valarie Hubbard, 18, a member of the freshman leadership team from Paducah, said her missions experience led to more ministry work. "Going on this mission trip inspired me to do more mission trips with the BSU."

BSU students also volunteered locally and one University of Louisville BSU student was recognized for his community service.

Lloyd Browning, a sophomore

from Louisville, was recognized by the university as Humanitarian of the Year for his work at the Cabbage Patch Settlement House, a nonprofit organization seeking to help inner-city kids through after school programs.

"I try to hang out with the kids and develop relationships. Most of the time we play a lot of basketball," Browning said. "I try to be a Christian role model for the kids at the center."

Browning, 20, also was involved in Conversation Café, a BSU ministry for teaching conversational English to international students.

Girdley and student leaders already are planning for the next academic year's ministry opportunities. In the meantime, Girdley said she's proud of the group's accomplishments.

"I am really thrilled about all the recognition that our students are receiving for their ministry efforts," she said. "Our leadership team has done a wonderful job maintaining focus and ministering to others. I can't wait to see what next year holds for us."

Morehead students find deeper meaning spending time with children

By Carla Redden
Morehead State University

MOREHEAD—Each Thursday night during the school year, Morehead State University students are giving parents a break while teaching their children about God.

Carrie Clifford, an elementary education major, leads the Parents' Night Out effort.

Clifford says the program originated about six years ago as a way to reach out to others and to provide a service for parents.

Parents' Night Out takes place at First Baptist Church in Morehead from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. each Thursday.

As coordinator of the weekly event, Clifford organizes Bible lessons and Christian fellowship activities for the children.

She arranges for special guests to visit with the children. Clifford also organizes craft projects and provides snacks each week.

During a typical Parents' Night Out, Clifford said, children begin with "group time" at 6:30 p.m. The children are paired up and have the opportunity to share thoughts and feelings with each other or talk about certain issues.

"Then, we'll have a Bible lesson, followed by a lengthy discussion while the kids talk about the lesson and the meaning behind it," Clifford said.

After working on a craft that corresponds with the lesson, Clifford plans for the children to play games that might also go along with the lesson.

Clifford has recently invited several athletic teams to Parents' Night Out.

"We've had athletes from the baseball, softball and golf teams come talk about their sports and play with the kids," Clifford says.

Other guests who have come to Parents' Night Out include nutrition specialists, musical bands and revival teams.

Clifford says she directs 10 to 14

children each week, but would "love to have 30 every week."

The children's ages range from 18 months to 9 years old.

"The best thing about Parents' Night Out is that the kids get three hours of Christian fellowship, hearing about God and getting to know Him better," Clifford said.

"They (the kids) have good Christian friends there."

Clifford said the experience of being coordinator of the event has taught her to trust God.

"I have learned He has to help for me to do my best and I will fall if I have to do everything myself," she said.

Clifford also finds the experience relaxing.

"It's a happy place and it is nice to get away from the stress of school and focus on God," she said.

Clifford especially enjoys the evenings when the children come to Parents' Night Out excited. "It's great

when they come in, pumped up and ready to do."

Clifford's roommate, Meghan True, said she also finds meaning in Parents' Night Out.

"I love kids, and I love being able to share God with them," she said.

George Carter, a math and communications major, said Parents' Night Out provides a good influence on the lives of the children involved.

"It's a good opportunity for kids to have fun with each other," he said. "For the most part, we try to teach them they can talk to God when they need Him and we show them that God is real."

The service is available for any parent involved with the university, including faculty, staff and students. The only requirement for participation is that each child must be potty-trained, Clifford said.

Carla Redden is editor of *The Trailblazer*, Morehead State University's campus newspaper, where this story originally appeared

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

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The future of missions looks bright

By Jerry Rankin

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The year 2000 was a historic marker for missions advance. Remember Bold Mission Thrust? This ambitious effort by Southern Baptists to reach all the world with the gospel was targeted for completion in 2000.

The AD2000 and Beyond Movement had challenged evangelicals to complete the Great Commission by the turn of the century by planting a church among every nation and people group in the world. That goal was elusive, but Great Commission Christians saw tremendous progress that probably would not have been realized without that intriguing target.

Now that 2000 has come and gone, what does the future hold? While the global scene in the 21st century looks pretty dismal, prospects for missions advance have never been brighter.

Missionary candidates are seeking appointment in record numbers. More than 30,000 volunteers participated in

short-term projects overseas last year. Southern Baptists are praying, giving and going more than ever before.

Innovative strategies are providing access to places traditionally closed to a missionary witness. Sociological research and computerized databases give us a more accurate report on global evangelization and a better handle on our missions task.

Even as the harvest accelerates, resulting in increased baptisms and church growth, unreached people groups are being penetrated with the gospel. In 1900 fully half the world was untouched by a Christian witness. It is estimated now that less than 25 percent still have no access to the gospel.

Several years ago researchers identified about 2,000 ethnolinguistic people groups of at least 10,000 people who were some of the world's least reached.

That list is down to 1,596, and among these, more than 500 have a church with at least 100 believers. An-

COMMENTARY

Take a vacation this summer—or else

By Mitch Martin

Do you have vacation plans this summer? I hope so. I know many of us neglect our health and families because we work too much. Even though we are working for God, we all need time for rest.

It has been said that our ultimate stewardship is of our health because if we lose our health, we lose everything—including our opportunity to serve. And be sure of this, when it comes to taking care of your health, no one else will do it for you.

I heard a story about a former preaching professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Professor Brown shared with his class Mark 6:31, "And Jesus

said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.'" A young student shot his hand in the air and protested. "Professor

Brown, Jesus never took a vacation." The wise professor said, "The truth of your claim is highly debatable. Nevertheless remember this, when Jesus died He was the Son of God. When you die, you'll just be another dead preacher."

One idea I have heard recently is to have a personal day of retreat each month. I've not yet done that, but I think it is a wise plan. One of the biggest challenges in ministry is to be proactive rather than reactive. That is why we need times to get away, reflect on our mission and make sure our calendars reflect our values.

COMMENTARY

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

In honor of godly mothers

Proverbs 31:10-31 describes a worthy woman as trustworthy, proactive, a self-starter, hard-working, giving, alert to needs, noble and praiseworthy. Many of us owe a great debt to godly mothers who have sacrificed so much for us. Often there has been physical risk and pain in order for us to be here.

As we reflect on the recent celebration of Mother's Day, I want to express heartfelt gratitude for godly mothers. My mother has been in a care facility for about 10 months. It

was a painful adjustment to give up her home of 64 years. Her home was a place of ministry. Her GA groups spent much time having fun at her home, learning and conducting mission activities. For many years she took the warmth and hospitality of her home to homebound individuals as she visited to teach the Sunday school lesson and collect church offering envelopes. Hun-

dreds of meals were delivered during times of need.

But I am most grateful for her legacy of faith. Her first child died of the mysterious crib death at three months, which caused her great grief. Having processed her grief, she promised God that if He would permit her to have another child she would dedicate that child to Him. She did not share this with me until one year after I had surrendered my life to vocational Christian service. I treasure this legacy of faith more with each pass-

ing year.

After seminary training, Kay and I moved to Middlesboro to serve as associate pastor with Truett Miller. Truett and Gretna welcomed us into their home as though we were their children. Gretna was there for Kay when our first daughter was born. When I spoke to the "Live Longer and Like It" group banquet recently at Central Baptist Church in Winchester, Gretna



Bill Mackey

other 554 people groups have church-planting teams in place, and a consortium of evangelical agencies has committed to adopt and target every remaining people group by the end of this year.

Four years ago the International Mission Board had missionaries in 126 countries working among 338 people groups. By the end of 2000, our personnel were working among more than 1,000 people groups and strategic population segments in 153 countries.

Even the increased persecution so rampant throughout the world is evidence that the gospel is multiplying and bearing fruit (Colossians 1:6). Successful evangelism efforts invariably will bring opposition, but spiritual momentum cannot be deterred. Persecution in places where believers are being harassed and intimidated is feeding the growth of the church.

We have found that it is the power of the gospel—not methodology and strategy or the conditions encountered among a people and culture—that draws people to Jesus Christ.

Jerry Rankin is president of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board

One preacher took a vacation trip and when he returned a little old lady scolded him. "Young man, the devil never takes a vacation," she declared. "I know," the preacher said. "And if I never took a vacation, I'd be just like him!"

I have discovered that I need to reserve vacation time months in advance. If I don't, my calendar will fill up with less important things. I also have discovered that I need to reserve family times. Although my children are now teenagers, they still spell love T-I-M-E.

Right now would be a good time for all of us to look at our summer calendars and make sure that we have reserved times to relax and be with those we love.

Mitch Martin is missions and leadership development consultant for the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention

was seated at the head table with us. It was a joy to say "thank you" again.

Our second daughter was born in Whitesburg. Bonnie Griffie, who never married, was there to assist Kay and our girls for 10 years. She shared her loving care of children each Sunday in the church nursery and during the week with four or five children including our youngest, Beth. Thank God for a heritage of loving care.

In 1989, Kay and I sponsored a Brazilian student, Dorine, who received a full scholarship to Furman University. After tenure with Chase Bank in Brazil she returned to the U.S., met and married a man from Bristol, Tenn. Following the death of her mother, she has reached out to Kay during the births of her two daughters. Kay spent 10 days with them in early April to assist with childcare.

I thank God for a legacy of godly women who have touched our lives in such positive and redemptive ways.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

FAMILY

Summer reading list offers tips for personal finances

By Jeremy White

Looking for some helpful summer reading options? Here is my recommended reading list for improving your finances:

■ *Best Overall Book:* The Bible. Can

you imagine having at your disposal the financial insight of the wisest and richest man, Solomon? Or sitting at the feet of Jesus, the greatest teacher, as He discusses attitudes toward possessions, stewardship and seeking God's Kingdom? The Bible has this and more for all levels of money management.

■ *Best Books for Budgeting and Basic Money Management:* "Family Financial Workbook" by Larry Burkett. Get your financial life on track with this easy-to-read workbook. It includes budgeting helps, checklists, hole-punched blank forms and a CD-ROM. (Perhaps a bit biased, I was hired by Burkett as a writing consultant to update and revise this book.)

"Financial Peace" by Dave Ramsey. This best-selling book propelled Ramsey and his radio show to fame because of its practical, hilarious and humble financial insight.

■ *Best Books for Financial Motivation:* "The Richest Man in Babylon" by George Clason. When providing debt counseling to clients, I require this as homework. Through a very readable story line, this classic provides the age-old secrets to managing money successfully.

Honorable Mention: "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" by Robert Kiyosaki.

■ *Best Fiction Book with Financial Lessons:* "The Testament" by John Grisham. If you want more entertainment than "how-to" finance books, read this engaging thriller. You will find excellent financial and moral lessons and a rare positive portrayal of Christianity in secular media.

■ *Best Financial Book Targeted for Women:* "Women Leaving the Workplace: How to Make the Transition from Work to Home" by Larry Burkett. This niche book discusses the financial and emotional aspects of women making the transition from working outside the home to becoming a full-time wife and mother.

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant in Paducah. He presents financial seminars and workshops at churches and conferences.



FINANCIAL
FORUM

What's the ideal summer vacation? Take time to discuss dreams, goals

Q: Summer is almost here and I'm looking forward to a vacation. But every summer we spend our vacation with my wife's parents. They are great people but I'd like to have some time away with my wife. What can I do?

It sounds like you and your wife need to take some time for a long conversation. It might be that your wife has just gotten into the habit of always visiting her parents. Or she might feel responsible for checking to see how they're doing.

Of course, another possibility is that she doesn't want to spend time alone with you. She may feel that she's not entitled to that much free time. Or she may have some unresolved anger toward you that blocks her wanting to be closer to you.

As you can see, too many possibilities exist to assume anything. You, on the other hand, want to spend time alone with your wife. Is this summer vacation to make up for no regular "together" time during the year? Or do you really yearn for some extra time to get closer to your wife?

The other people involved, of course, are your wife's parents. She might need to have a conversation with them about the matter. They might encourage you two to spend time alone together.

Occasional weekend visits throughout the year with your in-laws might meet needs for both them and your wife. Again, a conversation about the needs of all parties involved is important. Hopefully, discussing the issue openly will help you and your wife reach a positive solution.—*Suzanne Coyle*

Q: I recently heard about an intergenerational arts program. That sounds like an excellent program for churches to meet the needs of people in diverse life stages. Where can I get more information?

Intergenerational creative arts programs are an effective way to build community among the young and old. In seeking to meet social and educational needs across generational lines, the programs can help strengthen mutual understanding and appreciation among participants.

Through visual arts, drama, music, dance and oral history, individuals can share experiences, practice new skills, cooperate, gain respect and practice teamwork. Creative expression also fosters self-esteem, pride, joy and a sense of accomplishment.

An example of a model program is Mill Street Loft in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Mill Street Loft's Multi-Arts Educational Center is designed to offer a variety of arts and enrichment programs year-round to people of all ages and abilities.

Among Mill Street Loft's key intergenerational programs, Project ABLE (Arts for Basic education, Life skills and Entrepreneurship), begun in 1994, is an arts-driven job skills training program for economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth. The intergenerational aspect involves blind older adults from a retired senior volunteers program. Youth are trained in age and disability awareness as well as oral history interviewing. An intergenerational music program also has brought together a diverse group of older adults and at-risk youth.

Adapting these and other intergenerational project ideas can provide a significant ministry outlet for churches seeking to strengthen family and community ties among people of all ages.—*Jon Rainbow*

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.



Baptist associations play vital ministry role

The single most important ministry unit in Southern Baptist life is the local church. Contrary to the top-down structure of hierarchical denominations, Baptist energy and effort ideally flow from the grassroots level of local congregations to the support structures of associations, state conventions and the national convention.

According to "Baptist Polity—As I See It," a Baptist classic by longtime Southern Baptist Convention leader James Sullivan, "All churches are at the top level; all organized Baptist bodies (district associations, state conventions and the national body, the Southern Baptist Convention) are at a lower level in the denomination's organizational chart, and these are of equal importance in our cooperative endeavors."

Even on the "equal importance" level, however, Baptist associations play a crucial, hands-on role in the ministry efforts of many congregations. The fact that the association typically is the closest geographical Baptist entity to the local church makes an ongoing impact in countless congregations, particularly among many small, rural churches and those with bivocational pastors.

As a result, many churches take time to celebrate Associational Missions Week each year. This year's emphasis, set for May 21-27, highlights the theme, "The Baptist Association: Changed Lives, Caring People."

Here in Kentucky, the state convention's 2,500 churches are organized into 75 associations stretching from West Kentucky Association on the Mississippi River to Pike Association in Eastern Kentucky.

Each association draws on local church involvement and support to provide ministry efforts, mission projects, training conferences and other resources tailored to the context of a specific region. Directors of missions work closely with elected leaders and volunteers to respond

to a variety of needs on the local church level and beyond.

The local Baptist association has been described as "a family of churches." As in any family, cooperation is a key element in the success of associational ministry.

While families don't always see eye to eye on every issue that comes along, a healthy, properly functioning family does band together for the common good. On the associational level, that sense of family is expressed through cooperation that pursues mutual goals for the cause of Christ.

Specific ministry projects coordinated by Kentucky Baptist associations range from mission centers for low-income families and multihousing ministry efforts to summer camp programs and new church starts. Many of the projects allow congregations of all sizes to work together in efforts that otherwise might never be accomplished.

Associational Missions Week is an excellent time for churches to renew their commitment to working together as a family of churches. It is an opportunity for church mem-

bers to learn more about the work of the association, affirm what is being accomplished and discover ways to become personally involved.

Churches that consider themselves too big or too busy to support associational mission efforts often miss the blessing of what it means to be part of an extended family.

As churches in associations throughout the state highlight Associational Missions Week 2001, this year's emphasis is a timely reminder that local Baptist associations are comprised of caring people who are committed to helping produce changed lives. That is a ministry focus worth celebrating this year and every year.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Kentucky Baptists face challenges of the Great War

By Duane Bolin

The advent of the automobile changed American society after the turn of the century. In the early 1900s, thousands of Kentuckians left the Bluegrass for Henry Ford's Rouge plant in Detroit to make Model T's and later Model A's. Back home, the automobile made Kentuckians more mobile and accelerated the move from the farm to the city.

Kentucky remained largely a rural state, however, with rural or small town traditional values. For Kentucky Baptists, articles, sermons and editorials in the Western Recorder reflected a strong heritage of faith and practice.

If the automobile symbolized the transition into a modern age, then World War I fostered a sense that technology and imperialism had gone awry. David Lee, a Western Kentucky University historian, has suggested that the Great War "added to a sense of disorientation. For the first time in history, American troops were sent to Europe to fight. ... Moreover, warfare itself had been reshaped by the Industrial Revolution. ... The lengthening casualty lists from the Western front brought to life the enduring specter of the in-

dustrial age, machines turning on their creator to dominate or destroy mankind."

Despite the horrors of the war, Kentucky Baptists generally supported President Woodrow Wilson and the war effort. The war proved to be a turning point, however, for H. Boyce Taylor, the influential pastor of First Baptist Church of Murray and the architect of the newly created cooperative budget plan.

Elected moderator of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky in 1917, the year of America's entry into the war, Taylor "was conspicuously absent from the presiding officer's chair" when messengers "overwhelm-

ingly passed a strong resolution supporting the war" at the annual meeting that year. Taylor was less than convinced that support for the war meshed with his interpretation of Scripture, particularly his reading of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

For other leaders in Baptist life, Germany's rising militarism presented "a philosophical challenge that had to be met." For A.T. Robertson, a renowned Greek scholar and theologian at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Germany presented the

choice between "Kaiser or Christ, Napoleon or Jesus, Corsica or Galilee." Robertson believed that Germany, by "exalting brute force" and scorning "Christian love, kindness and compassion," left Christians "with no choice but to fight for their faith."

Whatever the degree individual Kentucky Baptists supported the involvement of the United States in the war, it was evident that the war had brought change and that the end of the war was the beginning of a new era. Robertson wrote that "the old world passed away when Belgium took her stand in front of the Kaiser's hosts. Modern history began on that date."

The war's end also marked a new era in the cooperative efforts of Kentucky Baptists. The cooperative budget plan adopted by Kentucky Baptists in 1915 developed after the war into Southern Baptists' Seventy-five Million Campaign.

At war's end, however, the optimism following the Allied victory was tempered with a realization that Kentucky Baptists faced a new world. Modernity would present new challenges for the editors of the Western Recorder and for all Kentucky Baptists in the years ahead.

James Duane Bolin's book, "Kentucky Baptists, 1925-2000: A Story of Cooperation" recently earned an Award of Merit from the Kentucky Historical Society



Archivists hope you won't bury these time capsule tips

"If you have 8-track tapes, what good are they without an 8-track tape player?"

Kentucky Baptist Convention Archivist Cheryl Doty

LOUISVILLE—Time capsules aren't an exact science, but churches should follow some rules if members want items to be well preserved, archivists say.

An airtight, fireproof container and proper packaging materials are two keys, according to Cheryl Doty, archivist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

"If you are putting your items in something, make sure it is airtight and it won't rust," Doty said. "If there is any dampness you're going to have to be careful that it won't rust."

Glass containers run the risk of breaking or melting in a fire, she noted. "Finding a fireproof box would be the best thing, probably, then maybe sealing around it with something."

Kentucky archivist Glen McAninch said the choice of paper for printed materials is an important element for a time capsule.

"Make sure it is low-acid paper," said McAninch, branch manager for technology analysis and support with the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. Rag content paper is a good choice, but it is getting harder to find, he said. "A high quality bond paper would be appropriate. Use one with a low acidity content paper."

Doty and McAninch offered a variety of suggestions for time capsules, including:

■ **Photos.** Black and white photos don't fade as much as color, McAninch said.

"Color photos are going to fade within 10 to 15 years," he said. "Institutions that have very highly valued photos do color separations so that those individual colors will hold up over a longer time. ... That's just not practical for a church or smaller organization."

Archival quality photo sleeves can be purchased easily to preserve photos, Doty added.

"Photos should have information on the back, so you can identify the people and the event in the photos. Without information they are just lost. Write in pencil if you can," she said. If a pencil won't write on the back of a photo, use a ball point pen and write around the edges of the back. Be careful not to make an indentation. When you put it in a sleeve, you can put information on a piece of paper and insert it in the sleeve with a photo or artifact.

■ **Packaging and storage.** Doty recommends that each artifact be enclosed in a polyethylene or Mylar bag, or in a box to ensure that dissimilar materials are isolated from each other. Avoid folding paper because folds can cause breaks as documents age, she said.

Metal objects should be free of visible corrosion and in sound physical condition. Resist the temptation to polish or apply protective coatings, Doty said, because their long-term effectiveness is often unknown, especially in a closed environment.

Metals can be degreased with acetone to remove fingerprints, which can

cause corrosion, and then handled with clean cotton gloves, Doty said.

Even clasps should be carefully considered. When Bandana Baptist Church uncovered its 80-year-old time capsule, a staple had rusted away, leaving a stained hole in the three-page document.

"Remove all staples," she advised. "Paperclips, unless they are stainless steel or plastic, should be avoided. Never use rubber bands. They deteriorate and leave marks."

■ **Temperature and humidity.** A consistent temperature and humidity is the most important factor for preservation, Doty said, but that usually is not a problem for items buried in a cornerstone or underground.

"Ideally, under controlled conditions your humidity should be 45 to 55 percent, and a temperature around 55 to 65 degrees," she said. "When it comes to general storage of historical documents, we tell people not to store documents in basements and in attics. Unfortunately, that is where most people store stuff."

■ **Originals or copies?** Laminating is a popular way to preserve items, but Doty said it is among the worst things for a historical document.

"Laminating pretty much destroys the historical value, but if you send an original off to have it properly preserved that would cost a fortune. I would just make good clean copies so when the original does deteriorate I would have a clean copy. It wouldn't

be the original, but it would maintain the historical value of the information."

Rather than trying to preserve old newspapers in their original form in a time capsule, Doty advised making good quality copies that will be on new paper and therefore last longer.

"You don't want the newspapers mixed in with anything else because the acid in the newspaper will cause other materials to deteriorate," she added.

■ **Electronic files.** McAninch does not advise placing computer files in a time capsule. "The technology will change. I wouldn't think that any technology you put in there now would be readable in 50 or 100 years."

Doty agreed. "If you have 8-track tapes, what good are they without an 8-track tape player?"

■ **Church history primer.** Doty noted that it's easy to get excited about writing a history during church centennials, time capsule burials or other important milestones. But a church history is more easily compiled a little at a time, she said. She said she advises churches to appoint a historian who can actively keep up with month-to-month activities.

"I would like to see everyone start writing history, even if it is just a little something each year. Keep a binder with articles or maybe a program from an activity and add something each month or year. If your church has been around for decades, talk to older members and see what they remember."

West Kentucky time capsule provides lessons in preservation

Continued from page 1

signatures and a one-page description of the event were sealed.

Bodell was assigned to keep the document and make copies. She put it in her van and headed home. Later that day, a church member came by to see the document.

Bodell was amazed to find that it already was deteriorating from exposure to the air. "When we pulled it out of the cornerstone it looked brand new. But, just within a few hours it was getting brittle and wrinkled up. You could almost see the paper turning brown and wrinkling right in front of your eyes. I realized we needed to get it copied immediately. I jumped into the van and headed to town," she said.

After copying the document, Bodell had the original laminated to keep it from deteriorating further. "I know that was probably not the best thing to do, but I feared if we didn't laminate it, the document would just turn into dust," Bodell said.

Examination of the remains of the broken jar revealed that it probably was a doctor's medicine jar that could be tightly sealed. All that remained was the lid.

The document generated excitement as current members found names of relatives and people they knew on the list. A detailed examination found only two people who attended the 1922 dedication are still living. Both are in poor health and could not provide much detail about the event.

The surprise find prompted church leaders to assign the church youth



RESEARCH PROJECT Youth from Bandana Baptist Church review items they will place in a time capsule later this summer. Church leaders say they are impressed by the items youth suggested be buried.

group the task of preparing another time capsule to be placed back in the cornerstone. The time capsule will be replaced later this summer after vacation Bible school in July.

"We thought with the youth being the future of the church that we would allow them to choose what to put back into the time capsule," Bodell said.

First graders to high schoolers brainstormed what might be interest-

ing for people to pull out of the time capsule 50 or 100 years from now. They came up with some innovative and thoughtful suggestions.

"They've worked on it for almost a year now. They came up with photos of all the Sunday school classes. We collected newspaper articles about the church, photos of church activities. They wanted to include some WWJD bracelets to represent current Christian

culture, as well as the FROG bracelets. They wanted to put in some prices of everyday products such as a postage stamp, a hamburger, a gallon of milk, things that are pertinent to this time period," Bodell said.

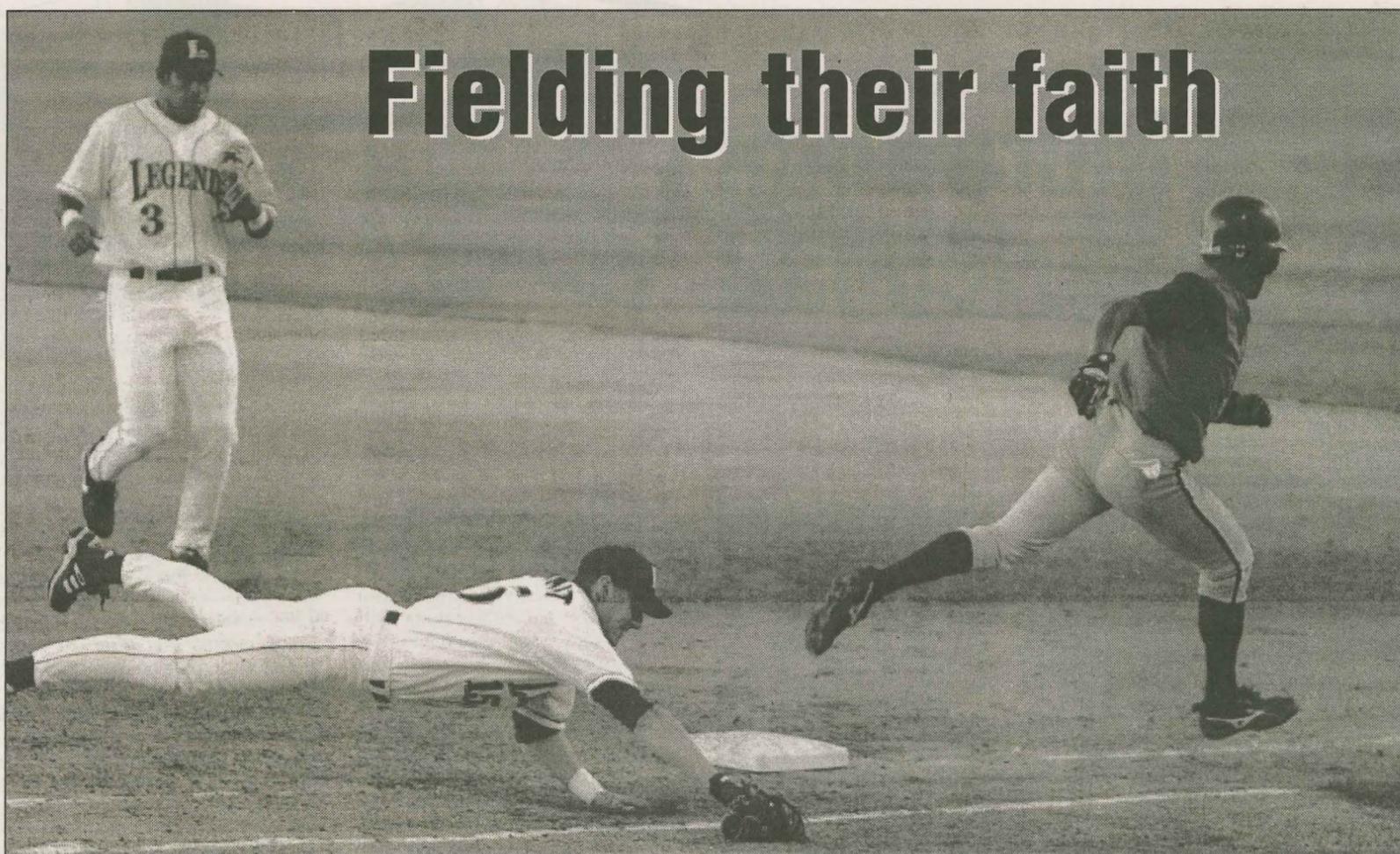
They also wanted to include a Bible for a somewhat unusual reason, Bodell added. "They thought that 50 or 100 years from now everything may be on computer and a printed book might be something unusual," she said. "I was impressed by their reasoning. We'll also be putting the original 1922 document back in there."

Members recalled that at a vacation Bible school in the 1980s they had buried a time capsule in the church yard. They decided to consolidate the capsules.

"Most of the kids were about 10 when they buried it and they're now in their 20s, married and have children of their own," Bodell said. "They had written about their lives and what they wanted to do when they grew up."

As the contents of the new time capsule were being prepared by the youth, adults were hollowing out a space behind the cornerstone for an airtight fire-resistant metal box.

"In 50 years some of these kids will still be alive. We're having the kids put down what they hope they'll be doing and maybe what they hope the world will be like in 50 years," Bodell said. "To put the new time capsule back in there we'll have to take the stone out again, so it's a pretty big project. The cornerstone is back in there temporarily. We'll have another ceremony to put it back."



Fielding their faith

"The gospel is all over this ballpark."

Volunteer team chaplain Chuck Ross

LEXINGTON LEGENDS First baseman Brian Schmitt makes a diving tag on a runner during a game last month at Applebee's Park in Lexington. Schmitt and several other players participate in a regular Bible study they credit with helping them keep their spiritual focus. (Lexington Herald-Leader photo)

Legends teammates find peace, perspective in Baseball Chapel

By Tom Lasseter
Lexington Herald-Leader

LEXINGTON—Before the gates open, and the contest begins, they find a quiet place.

Sitting around a small glass table, the men speak of the Lord, forgiveness, biblical passages and, of course, baseball.

About 5 1/2 hours prior to the first pitch, a small group of Lexington Legends players circle up for Bible study.

"The gospel," said volunteer team chaplain Chuck Ross, "is all over this ballpark."

On a team that will travel 12,910 miles this season, playing 140 times in 151 days, keeping up with anything is difficult. That includes worship. Enter Baseball Chapel.

During Legends homestands, Ross leads non-denominational Christian services in the dugout on Sunday mornings and a Bible study on weekday afternoons. And on Sundays when they're on the road, players can attend chapel held by the opposing team.

"With the schedule they have, the guys have a very, very tough time getting involved in a local church," said Craig Reynolds, who oversees chapel for the Houston Astros, the Legends' parent club.

For a young player, especially one away from home for the first time, the temptations are many, said first baseman Brian Schmitt.

While many their age are in a college classroom or starting a first job, Class A players are performing in front of thousands of people, dreaming of the major leagues and signing autographs.

"There's always the distractions, there's always someone who wants to take you out after a game," Schmitt said. "And there are still things I struggle with, everybody has their struggles."

The chapel services became a formal part of major-league baseball in 1973, and in the minors five years later.

Between the two levels, an estimated 3,000 players attend every week.

There's no exact figure for how many go to team Bible studies; Baseball Chapel's administrative office estimates the number to be somewhere in the hundreds.

In Lexington, so far it's been eight people at chapel, and four players at Bible study—Schmitt, catcher Danny Fatheree, and pitchers Anthony Pluta and Max Tremblay. They're joined by clubhouse manager Brett Cavins.

To start a meeting held in a luxury suite recently, Ross, who was drafted by the Milwaukee Brewers in 1975, floated a conversation starter.

"When I played in high school, I put up numbers all over the place," said Ross, who now works at the Lexington company he later co-founded, BACK Construction. "But once I started playing professionally, I feared the job. I forgot what I loved about the game of baseball, and played out of fear."

A few moments of silence followed.

Wearing his batting practice uniform, Fatheree shared a relevant experience.

After grounding out twice, Fatheree stood at bat during the ninth

inning against the Hickory (N.C.) Crawdads on April 27. With two outs and the team behind 4-3, Fatheree dug in.

"Then I got two strikes on me and the fear came in, the fear of failure," Fatheree said. "I thought to myself, 'Who are you doing this for anyway?' I said, 'Lord, let me relax here.'"

Not that he went consulting his higher power for help with baseball, Fatheree said. He was just trying to get centered, to calm down.

His single helped keep the rally alive.

Schmitt spoke up. "Fear is the enemy of faith." Everyone nodded.

At the table the next day, Tremblay said the purpose of the group wasn't so much to preach to teammates as to provide a good example. Pluta, he said, is someone who comes to mind.

Hearing that a child was in the hospital after being hit by a line drive, Pluta helped organize a team visit. Instead of just signing a ball, Pluta sometimes will take a young fan's baseball into the locker room and have everyone add their autographs.

"The kid got a half a million dollar signing bonus, he's 18 and he stays focused," Tremblay said. "When I was 18 I didn't care about anything other than beer."

The Astros' third-round draft pick last year, this is Pluta's first season of professional baseball. "You try to do what's right," Pluta said.

Speaking from her home in Las Vegas, Pluta's mother, Dee, said she gets a lot of comfort from knowing her son has a refuge.

"I'm just so glad that there're peo-

ple out there to remind him of the difference between earthly and spiritual treasures," she said.

With all the money and being so far away from home, Pluta could have strayed from his Eastern Orthodox upbringing, she said.

Unlike other places he's played, Tremblay said, no one on the Legends has made him feel alienated for being so open about his faith.

Last year he pitched in an independent league, populated by a lot of older players, and there, Tremblay said, he was the recipient of remarks like, "You talk about religion over Thanksgiving dinner, not at the ballpark."

But with both Legends CEO Alan Stein and Manager J.J. Cannon supporting chapel, the mood in Lexington is considerably different.

"Here guys ask questions, it's not something we hide," Tremblay said. "You stand up for what you believe in, right?"

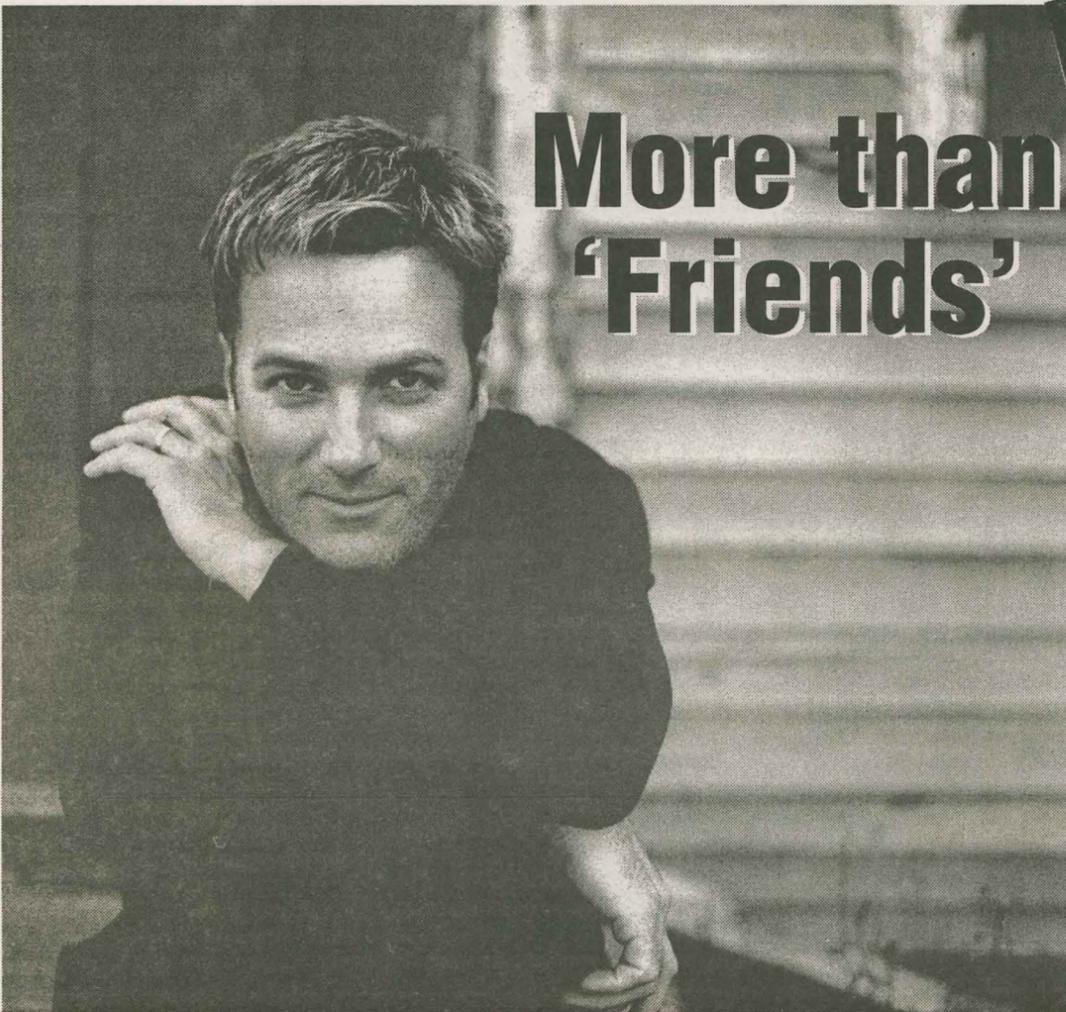
Later that afternoon, with teammates warming up on the sidelines, Schmitt walked out to center field and took a seat on the grass. It's a quiet ritual he does before each game.

The first baseman looked at the sky. He wasn't thinking about his swing, or what last night's hits did for his batting average.

Schmitt was praying.

"There's a lot of pressure in the game, but it is a game and you have to keep things in perspective," said Schmitt, 21. "Before you get caught up in everything, it's good to remember where you came from. The Lord is always there to humble you."

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More than 'Friends'

WORSHIP LEADER
Michael W. Smith is one of five leaders for a new church in Franklin, Tenn. It is one of many ventures Smith has embarked on in recent years in addition to his music. He recently released his 14th recording, "Freedom," inset. (Photos courtesy of Reunion Records)

Michael W. Smith seeking influence beyond pop music

By Kevin Eckstrom
Religion News Service

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (RNS)—In the rolling hills outside this genteel Southern town, more than 400 people have gathered under a big white tent. In minivans and muddied pickup trucks, some have traveled from across the state to check out the hip, informal church that meets on a 200-acre farm.

Over near the pair of horses stands the farm's quiet, unassuming owner, dressed in blue jeans and a windbreaker. He cracks his signature smile, wraps a friend in a bear hug and heads into the tent for church.

When he bounces up on stage and takes a seat at the keyboard, people stop their chattering. They crane their necks to see. Most know him as Michael W. Smith, an enduring gospel icon who continues to mint gold records. But inside the tent, he's just Michael. Pastor Michael.

Here at New River Fellowship, a church he and his wife, Debby, started two years ago in the nearby barn with two other families, Smith is worlds away from the screaming fans, the grueling concert schedules, the creative pressures of the music industry.

Inside the tent, it's just "Smitty," his music and his God. If he had his way, that's exactly how it would stay.

After leading the crowd in a short worship set—the same song he sang for President Bush at his inaugural prayer service—Smith takes the micro-

phone and begins a heart-to-heart talk, reflecting on this newest phase in his career.

"Ya know, I thought I had lost my ever-lovin' mind to do something like this," Smith, said in his slow, West Virginia drawl. "If I knew everything that needed to be done and everything that comes with starting a fellowship, I probably wouldn't have done it."

Like most of his other ventures, Smith's church has been touched with success. He and the other four "co-pastors" do little in terms of advertising—word-of-mouth seems to take care of that.

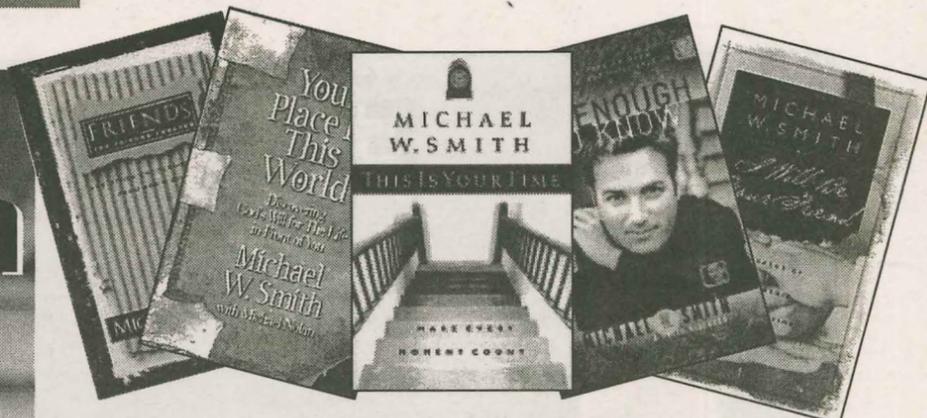
But the church, along with Smith's newest, well-received album, "Freedom," marks a dramatically different path in his nearly 20-year career. He admits he's still a pop singer at heart, with a certain fondness for Elton John

and Billy Joel, but now his steps are more deliberate, more strategic.

"I don't believe in mid-life crises, although sometimes I think I'm in one," Smith, 43, says. "But you reach a point halfway through your life when you realize it's not about me."

"I've been successful, it's been a good life, but my career comes way near the bottom, compared with my relationship to Christ, my wife and my kids."

After all the accolades, all the sold-out shows, Smith is looking for more. He wants to be sure people know him for more than "Friends," the sentimental song that shot him to stardom in the



OTHER TITLES In addition to his music, contemporary Christian musician Michael W. Smith has written at least five books, mostly targeting teenagers.

mid-1980s. He's looking to have an impact.

"It's almost like he woke up one day and thought, 'I've done it all, but there's got to be more to life than this,'" said Don Finto, former pastor of Nashville's Belmont Church and Smith's spiritual mentor for the past 20 years. "He knows what it's like to be successful, but that's not the key thing in his life. I'm sure at one point it was."

Smith's star began to rise nearly 20 years ago, playing backup for friend and gospel star Amy Grant. He eventually broke out on his own and has since sold more than 7 million copies of his 14 albums, recorded seven gold records and one platinum and won more than two dozen Dove Awards, the gospel equivalent of a Grammy.

At times, Smith was dismissed as a gospelized cross between John Tesh and Michael Bolton, a superficial, feel-good singer who penned catchy melodies. Still, he has remained the enduring star of contemporary Christian music, and one of the few to survive with his family intact.

Smith's fan base, many of whom are now married and having children of their own, was drawn from the heart of the Christian youth subculture. To them, Smith became what Billy Graham was to their parents—the most recognizable figure of what it means to be an evangelical in a secular world. Smith's music became the backbone of youth group retreats, concert festivals and the burgeoning Christian music industry.

Like the gospel industry itself, Smith has matured and refined his talent. He is taken seriously and recognized for his musical integrity. Looking back, he now laughs at the early tokens of secular success, like being named one of the "50 Most Beautiful People" by People Magazine in 1992.

"He is the biggest dreamer of any artist I've ever met, and his looks don't hurt him any," jokes Grant, who still tours with Smith for Christmas shows. "He's pretty easy on the eyes."

Over the years, his songs have been incorporated into church hymnals, shot to the top of secular music charts and helped build an enduring friendship with the Bush family, including a number of private trips to the White House.

"He's a musical prodigy," said John Styll, founding editor of CCM magazine who has covered Smith since he launched his solo career. "He's so talented. And people like him. They just like him."

Part of what kept fans coming back for more was Smith's humble, low-key style. And he seemed accessible. Some of his most popular songs were born in the emotional letters sent to him by fans.

"They see a guy who's not a hypo-

crite," said Bill Todd, who serves as the senior pastor at Smith's new church. "They see a guy who means what he says, they see a guy who's not going to judge nonbelievers, but he's going to befriend them in order to lead them to Christ."

"Freedom" marks a turning point for Smith—mostly because all the songs on the album have no words. It almost seems that after 20 years, Smith has nothing more to say verbally.

The album emerged after a dark professional night for Smith, convinced his creative energies had run dry. A string of tragedies—the death of friend and golfer Payne Stewart, the Columbine shootings, the death of another close friend—drained him emotionally and professionally.

Smith wrestled those feelings into "Freedom," writing what he called "the soundtracks to the movies in my mind." The result is a stirring, emotional score that flows from Smith's soul onto the record. "This is the most spiritual and powerful thing I've ever done," Smith says later, during a visit to his downtown studio.

Grant said Smith's real musical talent has been overshadowed by his voice, but underneath, she says he is a composer at heart.

"He's got great pitch, he can sing good harmony, he hears it, but you could get somebody selling dog flakes and have Smitty write the instrumentation for the commercial and you'd have people lined up for eight miles to buy dog flakes," she said.

Smith's next record is in the works, but his energies are, at least for now, focused elsewhere. He's mulling over a film company and working to resurrect Rockettown, a club for troubled youth in nearby Nashville. Together with AOL Time Warner Chairman Steve Case, he has raised \$4.5 million for the club.

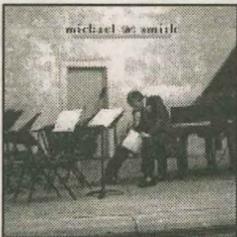
Smith said one thing that hasn't changed, and probably never will, is his desire to reach teenagers. "I don't want to stand before God one day and say, 'Oh, I thought someone else was going to rescue that kid,'" he said.

Smith tries not to get caught up in the "halftime" mentality, that the clock is ticking and he's running out of time. But what he's wrestling with is how to harness his popularity and the name he's made for himself to do something more, something larger.

But with his oldest son now 17, it's hard not to look back, reflect and look ahead. From time to time, he ponders his epitaph:

"Michael W. was a God-fearing man who loved his wife and kids well," Smith says, then pauses.

"And maybe he had an impact on culture."



ISSUES

Holy laughter: What role does humor play in Christianity?

Continued from page 1

will give birth to a son in the geriatric ward, according to Genesis 17:17, "Abraham fell on his face and laughed." But wait, here comes the punch line. The child's name shall be Isaac, which in Hebrew means "laughter."

"There is a real theological aspect here," said Mark Biddle, a professor at Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va. "Since we are created in the image of God and we have an innate sense of humor, could that mean God has a sense of humor too?"

Jesus apparently knew how to take a joke as well. Scholars say He used humor frequently in His teaching.

Jesus used "the weapon of wit and the saber of satire" in His running verbal battles with the religious power structure, according to Randall O'Brien of Baylor University, author of "I Feel Better All Over Than I Do Any Place Else."

"Humor was often the howitzer He used to shell the veneer of piety surrounding 'Fortress Pharisee,'" O'Brien noted. "Who couldn't help but laugh when Jesus exposed the arrogance of blindness of the religious leaders, calling them 'blind guides,' straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel ... cleaning the outside of the cup but leav-

ing the inside filthy ... and like tombs, whitewashed on the outside but rotting on the inside?"

Even entertainers like Garrison Keillor of "Prairie Home Companion" fame can see it. "Christ gives His followers a satiric sense of the world," Keillor said. The upended values of the parables—with the last becoming first—are proof.

But that's not the picture of Jesus that most often comes to mind. As Elton Trueblood noted so forcefully in his 1964 classic work "The Humor of Christ," many Christians resist acknowledging that Jesus did such things.

Trueblood's own journey to a laughing Jesus began years before. During family devotions, the famed Quaker theologian was "reading from the seventh chapter of Matthew, feeling very serious," when his 4-year-old son began to laugh. "He saw how preposterous it would be for a man to be so deeply concerned about a speck in another person's eye that he was unconscious of the fact his own eye had a beam in it."

His son's laughter, Trueblood admitted, "was a rebuke to his parents for their failure to respond to humor in an unexpected place."

"Christians have been stereotyped

as anti-fun, anti-laughter types who think it's spiritual to look like you've been sucking a dill pickle all day," said Gary Dyer, pastor of First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas. "And we probably brought it on ourselves. Laugh and the world laughs with you. Scowl and someone will ask, 'Are you a Baptist?'"

Baptists have had a few heroes of laughter. Two of the most popular in the last century were Jerry Clower and Grady Nutt, both products of Deep South Christianity.

Clower, "The Mouth of Mississippi," didn't equivocate. "There is only one place where there is no laughter," he was fond of saying, "and that's hell."

Nutt, a resident of Louisville and a regular on the television hit "Hee Haw," was billed as the Prime Minister of Humor.

Nutt contended that a humorless God "wouldn't have created ostriches—or Baptists." He described the words of a plaque he found at a gift shop in Gatlinburg, Tenn., "as true as any verse in the Bible: 'Laughter is the hand of God on the shoulders of a weary world.'"

Clower and Nutt arguably were two of the most influential Christian comedians—and the most commercially

successful—in recent history. Nutt died in a 1982 plane crash and Clower died of natural causes in 1998.

One comedian who has followed in their professional footsteps is Dennis Swanberg, host of "Swan's Place," televised nationwide to 27 million homes over the Odyssey Channel. Like Clower and Nutt, Swanberg is willing to poke righteous fun at the stodgy structures of Christianity. And while on staff at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas, he said his primary task was "to get all these preacher boys to lighten up."

Nick Foster, a humorist and Baptist pastor, was influenced by both Clower and Nutt. "My grandfather used to play his Jerry Clower records for me over and over and tell the stories himself," said Foster of Montevallo, Ala. "Then when I was a student at Samford University in the mid-'70s, Grady Nutt was our spiritual-emphasis speaker."

The truth-wrapped-in-humor approach resonated with Foster when he launched his own career as a humorist. Now in his sixth year as a pastor, Foster uses humor extensively in his preaching.

"Humor is disarming," he said. "It makes us deal with issues we wouldn't face otherwise."

Louisvillian and Christian comedian Grady Nutt contended that a humorless God "wouldn't have created ostriches—or Baptists."



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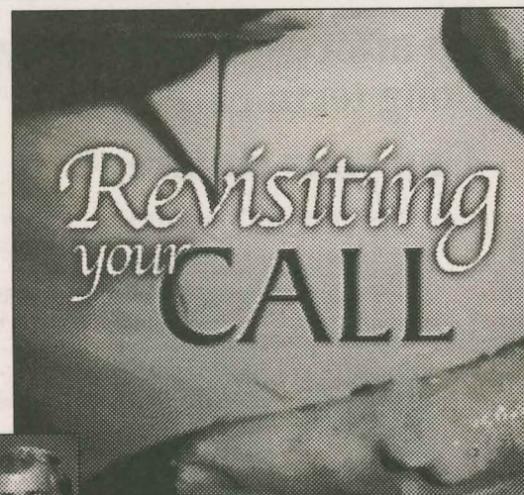
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NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Focus on Family facing \$2 million deficit.** The influential evangelical Christian organization Focus on the Family says it is facing a \$2 million budget deficit, prompting founder James Dobson to make what he calls an unprecedented request for more money. This is the second time in seven months Dobson has made a fund-raising plea, though his tone is more urgent this time. By the end of January, after his first request, Focus on the Family said donors had eliminated a \$2.5 million deficit that had been building since early 2000. That turned out to be a temporary fix.

■ **Arkansas Supreme Court rules fetus "a person."** The Arkansas Supreme Court has ruled that a viable fetus is a person in a wrongful-death lawsuit. The May 10 judgment overturned a circuit court ruling in which a judge decided in favor of a Pine Bluff, Ark., hospital and several doctors in a suit brought by a man whose wife and unborn child died during birth procedures. Chief Justice W.H. "Dub" Arnold cited a 1999 law that changed the definition of a person in the state's criminal code to include a living fetus at least 12 weeks old, Associated Press reported.

■ **Liberty University gets \$4.5 million donation.** "Left Behind" co-author Tim LaHaye and his wife, Beverly, have made a \$4.5 million gift to Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. Falwell, who announced the donation May 12 during the Lynchburg, Va., school's commencement, said it will be matched by an anonymous benefactor and used to construct a \$9 million Tim and Beverly LaHaye Student Center.

■ **Presbyterian leader calls for study of divisions.** The moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA) says the church needs a theological commission to find ways to overcome doctrinal and social differences and seek "a more excellent way." Syngman Rhee said a commission might help the denomination seek mutual understanding and help members "speak the truth in love." Presbyterians will meet June 9-16 in Louisville, and the meeting is expected to be dominated by such issues as whether gays should be ordained as pastors.

Court upholds high school graduation prayer

ATLANTA (RNS)—A federal appeals court has again decided that students in a Florida public school district can choose a member of their class to give a prayer or other brief message at high school graduations.

In an 8-4 ruling issued May 11, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals determined that the Duval County school policy remains constitutional.

The appellate court made a similar ruling last year, but was ordered to reconsider the matter after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a Santa Fe, Texas, policy permitting students to lead prayers before football games was unconstitutional.

Writing for the majority, Circuit Judge Stanley Marcus differentiated

between the policies in the two states. Santa Fe's policy permitted the principal or other school staffer to have a role in selecting the speaker and what he or she said while Duval County's policy forbids school employees from reviewing or censoring the two-minute student statements.

Since the policy itself does not call for an "invocation," however, and students vote up or down for a "message" rather than a "prayer," it isn't a state-sponsored prayer, the appeals court decided 8-4.

"The issue before us today is extremely narrow," the court ruled, "whether in light of Santa Fe we should alter our prior en banc decision in this case. We conclude that the an-

swer is no."

The majority said the Supreme Court had "every opportunity" to declare that the Constitution forbids all religious expression at graduation ceremonies and chose not to do so. "We could not invalidate Duval County's policy, on its face, without taking the very step the court declined to take," the judges said.

Four judges signed a dissenting opinion arguing that the intent of the Duval policy is to endorse prayer. Setting up a scheme to allow a student majority to decide whether to include a prayer "does not cure the problem of the policy's impermissible, religious purpose," the dissenting judges stated.

Past critic defends Ashcroft office Bible studies

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Attorney General John Ashcroft's daily Bible studies at Justice Department offices have become a hot topic in Washington these days.

The morning sessions have drawn criticism from staffers who do not share his Pentecostal Christian beliefs. But others familiar with the practice say it doesn't make them uncomfortable.

Between three and 30 people attend the sessions in Ashcroft's personal office or a conference room, the Washington Post reported.

"The purpose of the Department of Justice is to do the business of the government, not to establish a religion," said a Justice attorney, one of several critics who refused to be

identified by name. "It strikes me and a lot of others as offensive, disrespectful and unconstitutional. ... It at least blurs the line, and it probably crosses it."

Ashcroft, who declined to comment on the matter, said in a recent speech: "It is against my religion to impose my religion on people."

Top staffers say his practice is no different from numerous prayer sessions held in congressional offices.

A career lawyer in the department criticized the daily meetings as "totally outrageous" and a threat to career advancement and another lawyer called it "alienating."

But Shimon Stein, a department analyst and Orthodox Jew, said he

finds the meetings beneficial. "Growing up in the circle I did, I didn't have a chance to study other religions, so it's very educational for me," said Stein, the only non-Christian who regularly participates.

Even a regular critic of Ashcroft said he found nothing wrong with the meetings.

"The Baptist Joint Committee has been critical of Gen. Ashcroft's lack of appreciation for separation of church and state," said Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee. "But, his daily devotionals—even with other Justice Department employees—should not be counted among his church-state indiscretions."

Let the summer season begin

Wow! By the time you are reading this edition of the Western Recorder, our summer staffs are beginning to arrive at Jonathan Creek and Cedarmore in anticipation of a fruitful camp season.

While campers will not arrive for another couple of weeks, the program staffs get here early to prepare and train for the exciting summer ahead. These staffs for the most part consist of tremendously gifted college students from across the state and beyond.

From the time they arrive at Cedarmore or Jonathan Creek, the physical and spiritual challenges they face are significant. While I believe camp is one of the most rewarding ministries in which one can participate, the demands are great and the hours very, very long.

However, it's worth it to have the opportunity to see God work in the lives of so many young people as they experience Him in the camp setting. Many of you will come to Jonathan Creek or Cedarmore this summer with students from your churches and see what I am talking about.

During the next two-and-a-half months, we will host more than 5,000 students at Jonathan Creek

and Cedarmore. This number grows every year. I previously have told of the staggering statistic that nearly half of the decisions for Christ made by students take place away from the local church setting in a camp or retreat environment.

Even if you're not coming to camp this summer, you can participate in this vital ministry as you pray for the students, those who accompany them and our staffs at both places. It is only through the power of prayer and God's help that we can go as hard as we go for the entire summer. But the joy of seeing and being a part of hundreds of students coming to know Christ personally makes it all worthwhile.

And many, many more campers experience a clear call to vocational ministry, either at home or overseas.

Thanks for praying. Keep us on your prayer list. And I'll keep you posted and informed on what God is doing through this summer.

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MISSIONS

Bread wrappers help missionaries reach African villages

Continued from page 1

Bread of Life project is making it possible for many to hear."

A picture of a loaf of bread with the words "Bread of Life" adorns the front of the newsprint. The inside print instructs participants to go to their nearest distributor for a prize. The prizes are 14 Bible stories and Bible verse memory cards in the Sereer language.

Missionaries Phillip and Karen Brown developed the idea for the bread wrappers after seeing their own trash used as bread wrappers at the marketplace. The Browns have served as Southern Baptist missionaries in West Africa since they were appointed by the International Mission Board in 1997.

"They use anything they can find to wrap up the bread," Brown says. "I watched one guy sit down and read his bread wrapper. I asked him why he was reading a piece of trash. He answered that it had words on it, so it must be read."

The Bread of Life project is a natural fit for the Sereer, especially because custom requires a person traveling to town or market to bring something home that is not available in the villages—bread.

One million wrappers were printed and distributed to bread vendors, free of charge. Sereer evangelists and pastors staff the distribution booths at each market to give out the Bible stories and

witness to any who will listen.

Brown says the wrappers currently are being used in 10 markets, but because each vendor attends a different market every day of the week, almost all 160 Sereer markets are receiving the wrappers.

"This just amazes me how so many people from all over Sereer land are being reached by this," he says. "The first year Karen and I were here, we spent all our time driving to get to villages and didn't make it to half of them. With this ministry, we have reached almost every village and have seen more people than we ever thought possible."

Original plans called for printing Bible stories on the bread wrappers. But the Browns opted to use a redeemable prize system because of the Sereer's respect for Scripture.

"A Muslim wouldn't put the Koran on a bread wrapper; it would be degrading to God," Brown says. "We wanted this to reach everyone, so (we) invented a points and trading system."

After getting a bread wrapper, a Sereer redeems it for one of 14 Bible stories. The evangelists keep records on what Bible stories each person has read. The records allow them to know which villages are receiving the wrappers and returning for more. Each story also has a study sheet for each participant to fill out. When that is returned, more points are earned.

After all 14 lessons are completed, the participant has earned 50 points and the privilege of the "Jesus" film coming to his or her village. The evangelists

make the film showing a huge celebration and bring other Christians to the village to worship.

"We don't really know how many people are responding because we aren't keeping track of numbers," Faye says. "I would say hundreds and hundreds and hundreds."

"That one Bible story paper passes through 40 or 50 hands in each village several times before the next story makes it to them," he says. "The story on paper allows them to read it, think about it and understand it. We are reaching whole households at a time."

"I've heard many of the old men say, 'If this is truly God, why is it not in our language? Our God must speak Sereer or else how could He make us?'" Brown notes. "With all of our material in Sereer and the illustrations drawn by a Sereer artist, we are welcome anywhere we go."

Less than 1 percent of the Sereer are evangelical Christians while 15 percent are Catholic and 54 percent are Muslim. Missions researchers estimate 85 percent of the Sereer include animistic beliefs in their religious practices.

Evangelists teach and help the people understand that ancestors and spirits do not bring the peace they are searching for. One young boy read the stories and constantly spoke with the evangelists about the Bible. After months of quizzing the pastors, the boy announced that he and his family were ready to be baptized.

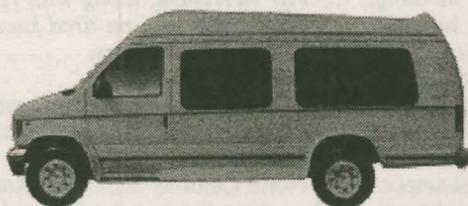
"You see, many are interested in God," Faye says. "We just need to take the Word to them."

After all 14 lessons are completed, the participant has earned 50 points and the privilege of the "Jesus" film coming to his or her village.

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Emily Shipp received the A.T. Siler Service Award. Shipp is the daughter of Douglas and Cynthia Shipp of Louisville and is pursuing a major in business administration and a minor in communication arts.

Shipp has served as director of the BSU praise band and has participated on Kentucky Son Teams during summers. In churches in Louisville she has touched the lives of many young people through leading discipleship training programs.

This summer Shipp will serve as an intern with a Christian entertainment agency. She is considering pursuing a vocation as a Christian worship leader and musical artist after her graduation.

Michael Irving received the T. E. Mahan Service Award. Irving

is the son of Michael and Sylvia Irving of Pompano Beach, Fla., and is pursuing a major in health education and a minor in religion.

For three years Irving has been a member of the Cumberland College wrestling team. This year he served as team captain and was a runner-up in the heavyweight division of the NAIA National Championship.

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



In addition to his service with the wrestling team, Irving has faithfully served in his local church, bringing his teammates with him for Bible study and worship each Sunday. His willing servant spirit has blessed many on the Cumberland College campus.

We congratulate these two dedicated Christian servants and pray God's blessing on them.

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

Part of the family

You will hear us at Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children talk a lot about the great need for foster families. That is because a family is a better place for a child than a residential home, even if that residential home is the very best. But as great as the need is for foster parents, there are other vital roles you can play in the foster care ministry.

The first is understanding. We say that foster parents love with completely open arms because they go into this ministry with the intention of letting their foster children return to their birth families. Reuniting birth families is the No. 1 priority of foster care. It is a tall order we have for foster parents to love and discipline children as their own with no guarantees. That the children will remain a part of their lives in the long run. These parents need your prayer support to be loving, consistent and totally devoted to these kids, seeking the very best for them and their birth families.

Another ministry you can have through foster care is as a part-time foster parent. Full-time foster families need a break, and KBHC is committed to giving those families a weekend each month when they can relax, regroup and, for those who

have biological children, spend quality time with them. We cannot do that without part-time foster parents. You have the same training and support as full-time parents, and it is a great way to discover whether foster care could be God's will for you on a full-time basis.

Your financial support of KBHC is also key. Recently, a foster care director received a thank-you note from one of her families. They were grateful for the food delivered to them by their foster care worker. That food came from your churches and Baptist associations given last fall through the Food Roundup.

The foster parent wrote: "There is a song titled 'I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.' Whenever I hear that, I

will be thinking of you and how glad I am to be part of His family." You, dear reader, are a part of that family and also that specific foster family blessed by your donations. For more information on KBHC family foster care, visit our Web site or call the number below.

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: www.kbhc.org

HOMES FOR CHILDREN



Bill Smithwick

Book offers rare glimpse of Ruth Graham's personal life

By Cecile Holmes
Religion News Service



Many of the anecdotes are insightful. Several are poignant. A couple are almost hilarious.

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The pilgrim was the second daughter born to medical missionaries when her journey began in 1920 in Quingjiang, China.

Her first diary was makeshift, constructed of wallpaper and stationery from her daddy's hospital.

Through the years, there would be many other journals. In them she recorded her thoughts and feelings while growing up in China, attending Wheaton College, marrying and raising children and facing the special challenge of being Mrs. Billy Graham.

In "Footprints of a Pilgrim," readers gain a rare glimpse into the private and the interior worlds of Ruth Bell Graham, wife and confidante of the world's most famous evangelist.

With an introduction by her daughter, Gigi Graham Tchividjian, this collection goes behind the scenes of life for a woman beloved by many for her humor, honesty, compassion and spirituality.

"If I marry Bill I must do so with open eyes. It won't be easy," she wrote while in college. "After the joy of knowing that I am his by rights—and his forever, I will slip into the background."

In this collection, some stories are familiar from previous books about this famous family. Others are newer tales. Nearly all are notable because Mrs. Graham, who turns 81

June 10, writes with clarity and courage. Her soulful poetry and readable prose tell us much about her interior struggles to accept God's call on her husband's life, especially when it came to the pressures of raising five children mostly on her own.

Through journal entries, poetry, letters, photographs and stories, the reader learns about: Billy's version of asking Ruth out for their first date, her opposition to his involvement in politics, how Ruth slept with Billy's tweed jacket in the bed during his early travels and son Franklin's tale of his mother locking him in the trunk of the car.

Many of the anecdotes are insightful. Several are poignant. A couple are almost hilarious.

"Mother's writing is very dear to her heart because she has spent many lonely nights sharing her thoughts and feelings, baring her soul with pen and paper," Tchividjian writes in the book's introduction.

This collection began as a reader's theater production of Mrs. Graham's life story told through her own words in poetry and prose. But both the play and the book almost didn't come into being.

Despite months of planning and organization, Billy Graham, his son

Franklin, and others were worried up to the first performance that it might not be well-received, that it might even embarrass Ruth Graham. As her daughter wondered whether she should cancel that first event, held three years ago in Asheville, N.C., Ruth Graham phoned her. She told her daughter to go ahead, but that didn't keep Ruth Graham from worrying.

"But when mother is upset, her head begins to itch, and after all that had transpired, it itched terribly," Tchividjian writes. "She couldn't get to sleep but remembered that she had something in one of the bathroom drawers for itching."

Ruth Graham got out of bed, found the medication and rubbed it on her head. The itching subsided and she fell asleep. "In the morning, she awoke only to find her hair standing straight up all over her head like a hedgehog," Tchividjian says. "She looked at the tube of itching cream and discovered that she had rubbed Preparation H all over her head. It took her three shampoos and an application of dishwashing liquid to get it out."

A professional touring group will be performing "Footprints of a Pilgrim" throughout the country this year and next. Plans are also in the works for a PBS special that would

air nationally.

In another tale in the book, Mrs. Graham tells of climbing in a dorm window at Wheaton College when a date brought her back long after the 10:30 p.m. curfew. She was restricted to the campus and never allowed to defend herself. Curfews seemed a minor threat to this daughter of missionary parents who, while growing up had confronted all sorts of terrors—from bandits to Japanese bombers.

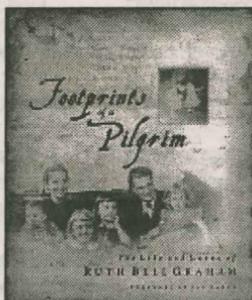
Her parents instilled an early love for reading in her, which shaped her natural affinity for language. She matured to embrace and practice a soulful Christianity.

Writing as a young mother, she pleads for patience, and in a later poem for a positive attitude in a hectic season:

"Christmas—a favorite of mine, and in these pressured days, I, too, would seek to be so blessed by Him, who still conveys His merriment, along with rest. So I would beg, on tired knees, 'God, rest me merry, please.'"

Graham's words move some of the most popular of the Christian world's writers.

North Carolina author Jan Karon, who writes the popular fictional series about an Episcopal priest in a picturesque mountain town, states in the book's foreword that Graham's work displays the hallmark of great poetry. "It is intensely personal, yet also distinctly universal."



Meet some of the class of 2001 (part 7)

"I'm not a bad kid, no juvenile delinquent or anything like that, just a regular ol' kid who was given a second chance."

This is how "Cody" began his senior essay. Cody came to Oneida repeating part of his freshman year. Though he has completed nearly three years of high school in two, his story did not begin very well. Like many young people, Cody made some bad choices. Already struggling, being suspended from school for three weeks because of a mistake in judgment did not help him academically. Prior to this incident, he was a rather well behaved student, liked by his teachers and no trouble at school. Cody came from a single-parent family, and the decision to come to Oneida was his. Part of his poor judgment came in the form of drugs. Cody had been using alcohol and some other drugs. While his mother knew about some of the drug abuse, she did not know about some of the other drug problems Cody was facing.

Cody continued, "Before I came to Oneida, I wasn't doing too good in school. Well to be honest with you, I wasn't even going to school. Even when I was going to school, I wasn't putting any effort in, and I was failing everything. At my old school ... there were more drugs in the halls than there were on the streets. I wasn't any good at school, but I sure could party. That was about the only thing I was good at. I bombed my first year in the ninth grade and got kicked out of school my second year. I had no life, and I sure didn't have a future. One morning I woke up and I remembered my uncle telling me about a school.

"I called him and told him I wanted to go to

Kentucky, so the next weekend I packed my things and hit the road. I'm not going to lie, my first impression of Oneida wasn't a very good one. It was foggy because it was in the morning and the sun was just starting to peek through. It was coming over the hills and cutting through the fog, but it was still gloomy. I saw the buildings in the background, but my attention was focused on the high barb wire (security) fence. It mixed with the fog and wasn't a pleasant sight. The first thing I thought was that my family had tricked me and they were sending me to a boot camp. Now that I look back at it, I laugh. I wouldn't trade my experience here for anything. Where else could you do four years of high school work in two? When I came last year I was in the ninth grade and this year I am graduating. I also like how close you come to people while you are here. If you live in the dorm you see the same people every day, so you make friends.

"Dorm life can be fun. You make a lot of friends, and that is a necessity here. School is good too. ... The teachers are great. You get real close to them, and they are considered friends more than they are teachers. I like chapel. It gives you a chance during your day to come closer to God, plus you know it's almost time for lunch! It's weird, when I first got here I thought the school tried to push God on you too much. Now, since I have Bible class and a better understanding, I actually stay awake during chapel."

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Graduation memories

On May 11, 36 students received degrees at commencement exercises held at Binghamtown Baptist Church in Middlesboro. As each graduate walked from the congregation to receive his or her degree, we shared an accomplishment or fond memory.

Mark Ayers commuted from Morristown, Tenn., where he served five years as student minister at Mill Springs Baptist Church. Major accomplishments also included ordination and a mission trip to Russia.

Ken Clark, of Georgia, enjoyed a campus workshop at the child development center and mission trips to Alaska and Russia. Ken is engaged and plans to attend New Orleans Seminary.

Clear Creek's family emphasis was emphasized as six couples received degrees:

Brian and Tripp Evans, of Ohio, completed requirements last December and already have completed one semester at Southeastern Seminary. They remember Thursday night dinners at their house with "wonderful, goofy" fellow students.

Jimmy and Vanessa Garland, of Georgia, helped Fonde Baptist Church for 13 months. It is located about 15 miles "up the hollow."

Vanessa treasures her work with the children in campus mission groups. They will attend New Orleans Seminary.

Brian, of Tennessee, and Melody, of Kentucky, McKee came to campus single. At orientation Brian asked Melody if she could recommend a local church. "I invited him to my home church and the rest is history!" Melody said.

Rick and Dianne Neff, of Kentucky, traveled between Berea, Pineville and Russell Springs juggling responsibilities of church, school, family and a bivocational position. Rick is pastor of New Victory Baptist in Russell Springs.

Gilbert and Jan Potter, of Virginia, had their first child at Clear Creek, Christine, now 2. He was

volunteer chaplain at the Bell County forestry camp and she was Acteens leader at First Baptist Church of Pineville for three years. They will attend Southeastern Seminary.

Chris, of Tennessee, and Jessica, of Ohio, Wilbanks, met and married at Clear Creek. They served Calvary Baptist in Loyall as youth and children's ministers.

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

BOOKS/TV

You Are One of Us: Successful Clergy/Church Connections to Alzheimer's Families. Lisa Gwyther. Duke University Medical Center, 1995. 59 pages. \$4. ♦♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

My wife is classified by our church as a shut-in, but I can't leave the house without her. She goes with me everywhere. ... She is not shut in. We are shut out.

Ouch! Those words from a husband whose wife has Alzheimer's disease reflect the convicting, challenging, inspiring and informing nature of this guide to ministry with victims of Alzheimer's disease. Given to me by a church member whose spouse has Alzheimer's, this book opened my eyes to the challenges and opportunities for ministry to individuals and families caught in the downward spiral of the disease.

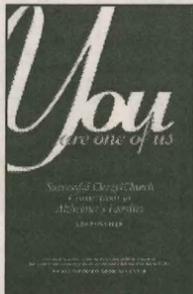
Though brief, "You Are One of Us" is a thorough and practical primer on the nature of the disease, its impact on the individual and his or her family and the important role that the church and clergy play. It even lists the things a visitor should and should not do or say in the presence of an Alzheimer's patient. I came away from reading the book with the realization that, even though there is no hope at present for those who have Alzheimer's, ministry with them is not hopeless. The possibilities are rich and endless, not to mention crucial for their families.

This resource should be a part of every pastor's toolbox, and it should be made available to deacon caregivers, Sunday school teachers and others in the church who have contact with or a concern for Alzheimer's families. For information

about obtaining copies, contact the Duke Family Support Program at (919) 660-7510 or the Alzheimer's Disease Education & Referral Center at (800) 438-4380. *Jim Holladay*

Baptism: The Believer's First Obedience. Larry Dyer. Kregel Publications, 2000. 92 pages. \$4.99; and **Surviving Grief: 30 Questions and Answers for a Time of Loss.** A. M. Brady Reinsmith. Judson Press, 2001. 102 pages. \$6. ♦♦♦♦♦

As a pastor, I am always on the lookout for printed material I can give to people with whom I am ministering.



I have found it is good for a person to go away from a conversation with something in hand that he or she can refer to later.

Sometimes the printed material can be the start of the conversation. These two books about baptism and grief are written to be put in the hands of laypeople who have questions and/or concerns.

Dyer's book is written for people preparing to be baptized or who are wanting to understand baptism better. The book advocates believer's baptism by immersion and, therefore, finds a welcome home among Baptists.

Dyer addresses the purpose, the mode and even the fears of baptism. This book can be helpful to those who are still sorting through their willingness to be baptized and be a welcome aid to the minister who is in conversation with them.

Reinsmith's book is a great book to put in the hands of the bereaved. Up until now, I have always recommended Westberg's book, "Good Grief." I now have another option.

The book covers the material thoroughly but not laboriously. The book's organization allows the reader to turn right to his or her own particular need in dealing with grief. *Wayne Hager*

How Do I Become a Christian? Muriel Blackwell. Illustrated by Betty Harper. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995, 2000. 48 pages. \$6.99 ♦♦

Muriel Blackwell wrote this book to be an informative, interactive guide to help a person know how to become a Christian, as well as to help someone who is a Christian become more confident in his or her faith.

One problem I had was trying to figure out what age audience this book targets. The illustrations indicate it is intended for children. On the back cover, however, there is an indication it is designed for people "8 and up." The writing style would suggest a younger audience, but the issues are addressed in such a way that they demand more abstract thinking skills. As a result of this lack of focus, I found the presentation somewhat confusing and unsatisfying. It never really answered the question "How Do I Become a Christian?"

In attempting to present abstract material in a concrete manner, Blackwell comes awfully close, in several instances, to misrepresenting the issue. For example, her discussion of repentance could lead one to believe that through an act of our own will we cleanse our own hearts. And her discussion of Jesus comes dangerously close to presenting Him as being separate from God, in form and essence.

Blackwell's book would be more

useful if she would clarify her audience and polish her theology. While there is nothing wrong with simplifying complex subjects, care must be taken not to misrepresent them in so doing. *Jim Holladay*

Winging It: Meditations of a Young Adult. Therese Borchard. Orbis Books, 2001. 157 pages. \$12. ♦♦♦♦♦

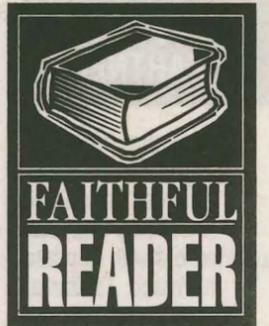
"Winging It" has 86 meditations that speak to the heart of a generation that often gets lost in the shuffle between Baby Boomers and Generation Y: the vague Christian wasteland of 25- to 35-year-olds.

Therese Borchard's devotions are filled with honest, funny insights into the daily lives of Generation X. It speaks to those among us who are married but have not yet started a family; those who are struggling to realize career goals and get established in their chosen profession; those who try to live out their Christian faith in a world of coffeehouses, Oprah Winfrey, dinner parties, U2, "Frasier" and "Saving Private Ryan." It is a book for those struggling to be in the world but not of it.

Borchard uses her daily life and quotes from sources as diverse as author Margaret Atwood, comedian Jerry Seinfeld and bishop Desmond Tutu to create one-page devotionals to help her readers on their daily walks. Not strictly feel-good inspirational, this book seems more to reflect the adage, "Life is hard, but God is good."

"Winging It" is an open, authentic look at Christianity in today's world and how each of us can make Jesus a normal part of our daily lives.

It's real-world faith, and all the better for its honesty. *Victoria Moon*



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

NAMB program shows viewers pro golfers' lives & testimonies

By James Dotson
SBC North American Mission Board

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—A new television program offers golf fans a personal look at some of the sport's top players, including the source of spiritual strength that keeps them successful even when their golf game is not.

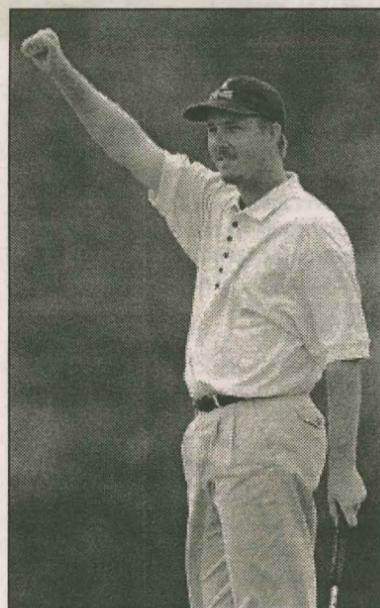
The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board has produced "Making the Turn" in partnership with Dallas-based VisionQuest Communications Group.

The show will be distributed to NBC network affiliates this week as part of the "Horizons of the Spirit" religious programming series.

"We take popular professional golfers and show glimpses of their personal lives, including some of the private struggles and challenges they've gone through," said Martin Coleman, production director for NAMB's broadcast communications group.

"We show how their faith in God is an essential part of their makeup, both personally and competitively. And as these players share their stories, the natural outgrowth of that is a description of how people can come to know Christ."

In the program, 1986 Master's



PAUL STANKOWSKI The pro golfer is one of many featured in a new television program produced by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board that will air on NBC affiliates beginning later this month. (NAMB photo)

champion Larry Mize, states: "The front nine goes out. You're heading out and there's no real destination. Well, once you make the turn, now you're headed back in. You know

you're headed home.

"Well for me, the front nine was prior to 1986. I was headed out. I really wasn't sure of where I was going. But once I made the turn and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, then I knew where I was headed. I know where I'm going and I have a great final destination."

Other golfers profiled in the special include Tom Lehman, Lee Janzen, Bernhard Langer, Paul Stankowski, Scott Simpson, Steve Jones, Aaron Baddeley, Craig Kanada, Rick Fehr, George Archer and Larry Nelson.

"Making the Turn" is the third collaboration between NAMB and VisionQuest and is similar to previous sports-theme productions "Driving Force" (auto racing) and "Hoop Heroes" (professional basketball). All three productions begin with professional athletes talking about the technical aspects of what it takes to succeed. Later, they discuss some of the adversities they have faced and the intense pressures of staying at the top.

Steve Jones, for instance, shares what it was like to be off the tour for more than two years after a motorcycle accident. The program details his first tournament back on the course, as Jones and Lehman pre-

pared for a two-man playoff to determine the 1996 PGA Championship.

"Tom Lehman suggested at the beginning of that round that they begin the day in prayer. He encouraged his friend that whole day ... and ended up losing to him," Coleman said. "You hear that story from both points of view: Lehman, the friend who encouraged Steve to keep trying, and Jones, the beneficiary of that loving gesture."

In the final segment, the golfers share how their surrender to Christ helped them "make the turn" in their own lives, and how that relationship has influenced their lives.

"I needed a Savior," Jones says of his 1984 profession of faith. "Jesus saved me from my life and gave me a new heart. He gave me peace and I was able to trade in all my junk for all His glory."

Larry Nelson, one of the longtime Christian leaders on the tour, says man was created to have a relationship with God. "That is the only way we are going to be truly happy," he said.

Ele Clay, television marketing associate for NAMB, said that while the special is made available to all NBC affiliates, individual stations decide when the show will be aired.

"I know where I'm going and I have a great final destination."

1986 Master's champion
Larry Mize

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ A larger building for the international church in Aviano, Italy.

■ A Tanzanian school teacher who is leading a weekly Bible study in Kiroko, a village in the Uluguru Mountains near Morogoro. Until a year ago, a Bible study had never been held in the village. "Pray that this teacher will be filled with the Holy Spirit in such a way that he will be able to understand the Scriptures and teach correct doctrine," missionaries write.

■ James and Dana Greer who arrived in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in April to serve as church planters. Pray that they will adjust to the culture and be able to learn Swahili quickly.

■ Angela Denton who arrived in Tanzania this month to work as an English teacher at Dar Baptist Academy in Dar es Salaam.

■ The International Baptist Church in Sofia, Bulgaria, and Pastor James Duke as they continue to search for property.

■ Javea International Baptist Church in Javea-Denia, Spain. More than 50 people now attend regularly and the church offers three Bible study groups each week.

■ Ron Huffman, director of missions for Western Connecticut Baptist Association. He and his wife, Pam, are Kentucky natives.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ CYNTHIANA—Union Church will host **Carroll Robertson** June 3 at 11 a.m. and in concert at 6 p.m. For information, call (859) 263-4388. **Arnold Kiser** is pastor.

■ HAWESVILLE—Blackford Church called **Sam Huff** as pastor.

■ LOUISVILLE—Bethany Church

will host **Greg Buchanan** June 3 at 10:30 a.m. and in concert at 7 p.m. For information, call (502) 452-2681.

Carlisle Avenue Church will celebrate its 90th anniversary June 3 at 10:30 a.m. Pastor **Shawn Merithew** and **Ferrill Gardner** will speak. Lunch will follow. An afternoon service will

Eubank volunteers participate in WMU's Atlanta ministry blitz

By Joe Westbury
Georgia Christian Index

ATLANTA—The Stone Mountain area just east of this state capital city received some sprucing up—and a healthy dose of the Good News—when Woman's Missionary Union volunteers from Kentucky and nine other states descended on the area April 27-29.

Nearly 160 individuals conducted a variety of programs, including weeding and planting flower beds as part of a city beautification project, conducting prayer walks and block parties, serving in ministry centers, performing light construction and visiting shut-ins.

Twenty projects were completed during the three-day weekend, said Linda Hokit, director of Stone Mountain Ministries.

The Atlanta MissionsFEST, which pairs adults with ministry needs in selected locations, was the second such event sponsored by Volunteer Connection of WMU, SBC. Last year Charleston, S.C., was the first location to benefit from the ministry. Little Rock, Ark., and Philadelphia will host similar events in June and October.

Throughout the weekend the volunteers could easily be seen as they

ministered in their bright red, yellow, and blue Volunteer Connection t-shirts. They shared the gospel as residents stopped to ask them where they were from and what they were doing.

In addition to the ministry projects, the volunteers participated in two worship rallies. At the Thursday worship rally, Barbara Curnutt, Georgia WMU executive director-treasurer, summed up the reason for Baptist men and women to be on mission.

"There is a definite relationship between joy and servanthood," she said. "If indeed Jesus performed the role of a servant and if indeed He modeled an attitude toward life that was self-giving, we should do likewise. Jesus said, 'Look at me, watch what I do.'"

"We need to remember that a person who best honors God is a person who is prepared to stoop and serve. We are called to a life of obedience and fellowship with the suffering servant.

"We have been called to be servants, not celebrities."

There were plenty of servants in town for the weekend.

Over at Stone Mountain Cooperative Ministries, a team from Eubank Baptist Church in Eubank, Ky., performed general maintenance on the

include a historical video and special music.

■ MADISONVILLE—**Thurmon Harris** retired from Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Ohio County. He is now available for supply, interim pastorates and revivals. For information, call (270) 825-8178.

■ MT. WASHINGTON—First Church called **John Tappan** as minister of education beginning June 10. Tappan was previously in Chattanooga, Tenn. Also, First Church will

host **Larnelle Harris** of Louisville and **Reggie McNeal** of South Carolina June 10 in the 11 a.m. worship service. A banquet will follow. For information, call (502) 538-7361.

■ OAKLAND—Oakland Church will host **Reflections** and **New Horizon** from Campbellsville University in concert June 3 at 7 p.m. For information, call (270) 563-4011. **Thomas Stokes** is pastor.

■ STANTON—Stanton Church called **Bill Boldt** as pastor.



WMU VOLUNTEERS Members of Eubank Baptist Church drove seven hours in a van to participate in a WMU-sponsored ministry blitz near Atlanta recently. ■ Left: Veronica Tackette squeezes caulk into ceiling cracks at the Stone Mountain Cooperative Ministries building. ■ Right top: Frances McKinney, right, helps compile a monthly report for Angela Callahan, left, director of Stone Mountain Cooperative Ministries. ■ Right bottom: Curtis Ingram searches for plumbing leaks at the ministry building. (WMU photos by Joe Westbury)

aging building.

Veronica Tackette balanced herself on a 10-foot ladder as she gently eased caulking into ceiling cracks; Curtis Ingram, on his first mission trip outside Kentucky, repaired plumbing in the bathroom and kitchen; and Jewell

Habermehl was busy in the food pantry, helping to fill a box of canned goods for a family of four.

For information about the June and October MissionsFEST projects, call Volunteer Connection at (205) 991-4097 or visit www.wmu.org.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR RENT: 2-bedroom, 2-bath condo available for vacation rental, Sanibel Island, Fla. Large pool, tennis courts, bikes, canoe, kayak, screened porch, lovely secluded beach. Weekly rates May through mid-December: \$745. Call Pat Owen, (502) 895-8752.

FOR SALE: Solid oak church pews (padded seats and backs). For more information, call (423) 745-1394.

FOR SALE: Ten Commandments T-shirts for vacation Bible school, \$4. Call (888) 601-2345; <http://tencommandments.faithweb.com>. Also, Ten Commandments yard signs, \$2 wholesale.

FOR SALE: Beautiful solid cherry Baldwin console piano; excellent condition; \$2,500. (502) 223-0142.

SEEKING: Administrator of Christian growth and activities. Related education and experience preferred. Immanuel Baptist Church, 800 Rhodes Drive, Elizabethtown, KY 42701. Fax: (270) 769-0833; e-mail: ibcsearch@hotmail.com.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth and education for loving, growing church in Southwestern Kentucky. Seminary preferred. Please send resumé to: Elkton Baptist Church, PO Box 547, Elkton, KY 42220, Attn: Staff Search Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth for church committed to historic Baptist freedoms. Master's degree desired, preferably from a seminary. Highly competitive salary package. Send resumé to: Youth Minister Search Committee, Broadway Baptist Church, 4000 Brownsboro Road, Louisville, KY 40207.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of adult education for dynamic, fast-growing Southern Baptist church in Northern Kentucky. Strong organizational and management skills and a desire to be part of a strong ministry team are required. Please send resumé to: Florence Baptist Church, PO Box 456, Florence, KY 41022-0456, Attn: Karen Byrd, or e-mail to: tmjohnson@fuse.net.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, Shelby, N.C., is searching for a minister of education. Job focus: Responsible for leading the educational organizations of the church. Qualifications: Possess significant knowledge of Christian education and training systems; a degree in Christian education or master of divinity or equivalent experience is optimum. Candidates should submit resumé to: First Baptist, 120 N Lafayette St., Shelby, NC 28150, Attn: Pat Whatley.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Mt. Washington is seeking a full-time minister of children and preschoolers. Ours is a growing church in a growing community; present worship attendance averages more than 750. Qualified candidates should send resumé to: Personnel Committee, FBC of Mt. Washington, PO Box 315, Mt. Washington, KY 40047.

SEEKING: Full-time associate pastor/minister of youth. Position includes youth ministries and administrative duties. Resumé must include experience and/or education in areas of youth ministry and church administration. Applicant must be active member of a Southern Baptist church for the past three years or more. Please submit resumé to: Search Committee, Oak Ridge Baptist Church, 6056 Taylor Mill Road, Covington, KY 41015.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth. Send resumé to Gene McIntosh, Concord Baptist Church, 1945 Concord Lane, Hopkinsville, KY 42240.

SEEKING: Nursery worker for Wednesday and special services. Send resumé to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291, or call (502) 239-0316.

SEEKING: Christiansburg Baptist Church in rural Shelby County is seeking a part-time minister of youth. We are interested in someone who has a Christian desire to evangelize and disciple youth and children. Call (502) 461-7851 or (502) 747-8739. E-mail: montforth@msn.com.

SEEKING: Part-time bookkeeper (10 hours/week). Send resumé to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291.

SEEKING: Senior pastor. Church is located in one of the fastest growing areas in Northern Kentucky. We have daycare, family life center and average 550 in worship. Send resumé to: Pulpit Search Committee, Hickory Grove Baptist Church, 11969 Taylor Mill Road, Independence, KY 41051.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for East Hickman Baptist Church, an historic, rural church located four miles from Lexington, Ky. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 2125 Azalea Dr., Lexington, KY 40504.

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

PEOPLE

Homes for Children mourns loss of tie to agency's legacy

By Dannah Prather
Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children

LOUISVILLE—"Mother: deceased. Father: whereabouts unknown. Child's condition at time of entrance: skin and bones, rickets."

The words on the faded page tell the story of George Washington Lawson Jr.'s arrival to the Louisville Baptist Orphan's Home in 1928. He was a little more than eight months old.

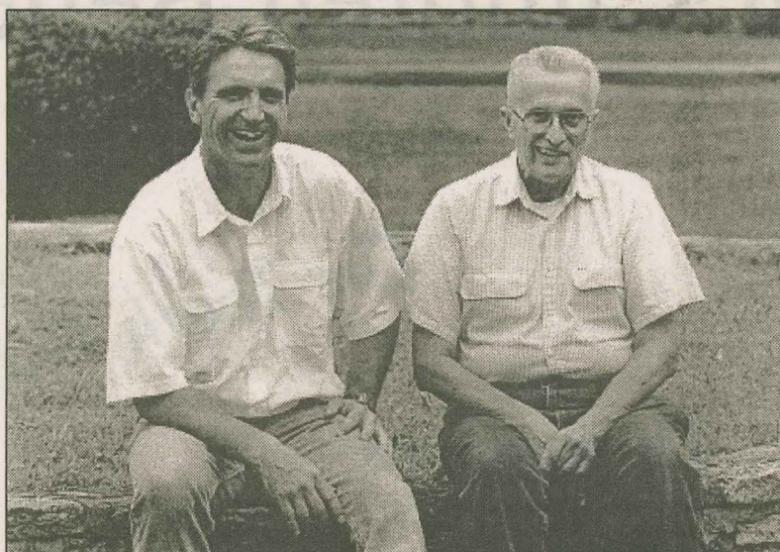
At the age of six, Lawson could say only a few one-syllable words. He never scored higher than 42 on an IQ test. He worked as a janitor at Spring Meadows Children's Home in Middletown.

Lawson never owned a car or a home. He never voted or took a cruise. He never married or had children.

Yet, at Lawson's recent funeral, the service had to be moved to a larger room because of the overflow crowd. Before the service ended, the mourners gathered around Lawson's casket and applauded the man to whom none were related by blood, but who shared the bond of a different sort of family.

"We've lost a tie to our past as an agency," said Mike Dixon, vice president of religious life at KBHC and Lawson's legal guardian. "It's a tribute to Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children that, for the last 72 years, George has been a part of who we are."

While other children at the Louisville Baptist Orphan's Home were adopted, placed with relatives or moved on to independence, Lawson stayed in the care of the Kentucky Baptist ministry which began in 1869.



LOST LINK George Lawson, right, shown here in a 1992 photo with Mike Dixon, was affiliated with Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children from his arrival as an infant in 1928 to his recent death. (Photo courtesy of Mike Dixon)

Efforts were made to enroll Lawson in the Kentucky School for the Deaf in Danville to get some help with his speech difficulties. Lawson spent some time in a class for the deaf in the Louisville school district, then a terse letter received at the home in 1937 stating, "We can do very little to help George."

"The school system gave up on George, but the home didn't turn him away," Dixon said. "We never said, 'We can't take care of George.'"

Dixon said Lawson brought out the best in people. "Whenever I was with George, my smile-o-meter would go up," he said. "I know I'd get an extra 10 or 15 smiles just by being with him.

And when I was with him, I was always interacting with someone because people just responded to him. He was an accepting, wonderful individual."

In 1949, the home moved from downtown Louisville to Middletown. Lawson worked and lived on the campus until his retirement in the mid-1990s. "No matter who the director or CEO was," Dixon said, "George always had his space."

J.D. Herndon, superintendent of Spring Meadows from 1959 to 1969 remembered Lawson as an asset to the home. "George was always busy doing what needed to be done, and there was something about him that people

responded to."

Kentucky Baptists met Lawson's material needs as individual donors, as the Spring Meadows Auxiliary and as KBHC staff members, according to Dixon, Herndon and Larry Dauenhauer, KBHC's former vice president for administrative services.

It was Herndon who wrote Selective Service on Lawson's behalf when he was drafted in 1961. It was Dauenhauer who helped manage Lawson's finances and purchased furnishings for his apartment. And, when Lawson retired, it was Dixon who became Lawson's legal guardian, overseeing Lawson's medical care and his move to the Baptist Towers retirement home.

"George is a symbol to me of what it's all about," Dauenhauer said. "The effort was well done. Kentucky Baptists were willing to look out for George when there was no one else."

The channel of blessing went both ways, according to Herndon and Dixon. "We always had George over for Christmas every year," Herndon said. "And he always had a present for each of our three daughters. Even after we left Spring Meadows, whenever he saw me he would always ask about my wife and our daughters by name."

The last eight years of George's life, most Saturdays would find him with Dixon and Dixon's daughter, Bri, who is mentally retarded.

"No matter who you were, George always told you how pretty you were," Dixon said. "And he would always tell people 'I'm older than you.' Who wouldn't want to be told they aren't the oldest one in the room? He reminded us all how young we could be."



SIGN OF THE TIMES An airline passenger at Louisville International Airport checks out a sign promoting the Kentucky Baptist Convention while he awaits his luggage. The signs in the baggage claim areas are part of a community showcase advertising program recently implemented by the airport which handles more than 3.1 million passengers annually. "We're excited about this opportunity to impact travelers with a positive word about Kentucky Baptists," said KBC Communications Director Robert Reeves. "These signs will enable us to reach the equivalent of three quarters of Kentucky's population in a year's time. As we rotate through a series of messages, we look forward to sharing God's love in a way that has a positive impact on the viewer." (KBC photo)



McDonald's draws fire from Hindus

SEATTLE (RNS)—McDonald's, one of the most potent emblems of globalization, prides itself on sensitivity to local cultures, customs and religions.

But back home, the Oak Brook, Ill.-based fast-food chain faces accusations of violating the religious beliefs of Hindus.

A class-action lawsuit for unspecified damages, filed in Seattle May 1 by Indian-American lawyer Harish Bharti on behalf of Hindu and non-Hindu vegetarians, claims McDonald's USA willfully misled customers by lacing its french fries with beef while stating they were fried in vegetable oil. Hindus, who number close to 1 million in the United States, regard the cow as sacred.

When word of the suit reached India, militant Hindu activists stormed a McDonald's restaurant outside Bombay, causing thousands of dollars in damage. McDonald's India said the activists "blindly overreacted" to news of the case, which is confined to the United States.

A statement from McDonald's, which announced in 1990 that its U.S. restaurants would use vegetable oil instead of beef tallow to cook french fries, said the company has never claimed its U.S. fries are vegetarian. Fries sold in India are prepared using no meat.

The list of U.S. ingredients cites "natural flavor," which the statement said includes a "minuscule amount of beef extract" used during the par-frying process at potato plants before the fries are shipped to various restaurants, where they are then cooked in vegetable oil.

The company has tailored its menu in many countries to reflect local dietary customs. Hong Kong restaurants feature curry potato pies and red bean sundaes, while the chain operates kosher outposts in Israel. Two restaurants in the Saudi Arabian city of Mecca, the holiest site in Islam, serve Muslim customers exclusively.

Who Do You Believe In? Who Do Your Children Believe In?

Santa Claus

The Tooth Fairy

Themselves

The Easter Bunny

Pop Culture

GOD

Cedar Crest:

June 18-22 (GA)

June 25-29 (GA/ Acteens)

July 9-13 (GA/ Acteens)

July 16- 20 (GA)

Mother/ Daughter Overnights:

June 22-23, July 2-3, July 6-7,
& July 13-14

Jonathan Creek:

June 15-16 (GA Overnight)

June 15-16 (Acteens Splash)

June 22-23 (Mother/Daughter)

Contact KY WMU for more
information at (888) 254-5726.

