



WESTERN RECORDER

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FOR THE RECORD

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Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, February 6

You've got mail, but are you losing the personal touch?

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

ERLANGER — Like 90 percent of the ministers in America, David Wallace uses electronic mail in his professional and personal life.

But for Wallace, a staff member at Erlanger Baptist Church, the efficiency of e-mail communication never will replace face-to-face conversations.

"One of the frustrations I have with e-mail is if I have something sensitive to discuss with a church member, I'm afraid the printed word will not convey personal feelings," said Wallace, who this month will conclude 17 years at Erlanger to become an associate pastor in Cincinnati.

"So I will call someone or have lunch with them," he said. "In personal conversation you can have all the color and depth that e-mail doesn't. Being an authentic person requires human touch and being with other people. Jesus ministered through human touch and conversation. He did miracles by touch."

Kentucky Baptists returning to New York for food team

NEW YORK—Kentucky Baptist disaster relief volunteers will head back to New York this month to serve meals for firemen and other relief workers cleaning up lower Manhattan after the Sept. 11 attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center.

Kentucky Baptist disaster relief volunteers initially were called up to help in New York immediately after the attacks, and remained in force until Oct. 4.

More than 300 Kentucky volunteers cooked thousands of meals each day for emergency workers during those several weeks, serving 4,000-5,000 meals daily at peak operation.

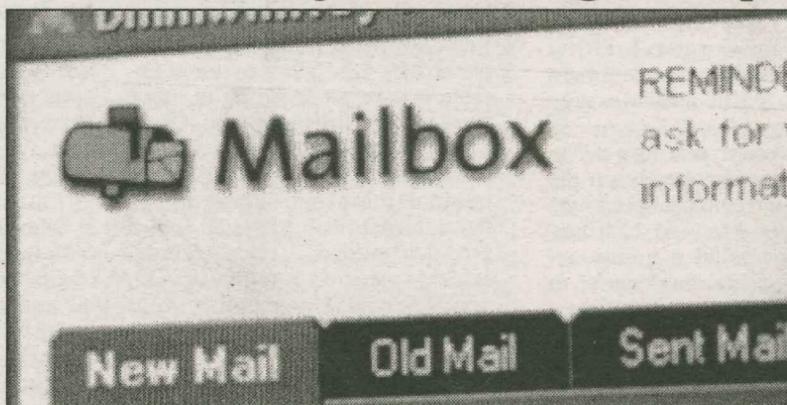
The 17-person crew will be the first full group of Kentucky Baptists to return to New York since the Kentucky Baptist disaster relief unit stood down in October.

The volunteers will serve Feb. 20-28, working two nine-hour shifts each day at a Salvation Army-operated kitchen located on Staten Island.

Southern Baptists have served in New York continuously since Sept. 11, providing a number of services including emergency feeding, child-care, showers and apartment clean-up.

Southern Baptist volunteers are scheduled to help staff the Staten Island kitchen through March, according to Larry Koch, disaster relief coordinator for the Kentucky Baptist Convention. This team is the only one requested from Kentucky, but that could change if volunteers are needed past March, Koch added. "I'm keeping a list of those who express an interest just in case."

For more information about disaster relief, contact the KBC Brotherhood department toll-free in Kentucky at (888) 254-5720.



E-MAIL ENIGMA More people are communicating through the Web, but Christian professionals and others are now debating how e-mail and other Internet-based dialogue is affecting people socially and spiritually.

Wallace's comments reflect one side of an ongoing discussion within religious and professional circles over how e-mail and other Internet-based communication affects people socially and spiritually.

Part of the problem in assessing the situation is a lack of studies about it, according to a past president of the

American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

But James Wyrzten of New York said he believes e-mail fosters more human interaction, not less.

He recalled how a 15-member e-mail group helped him wade through personal difficulties two years ago. By using e-mail to exchange reports in

advance, members of a professional association can spend more time in periodic, face-to-face meetings discussing personal issues, he said.

"I think I get closer to people," the counselor said. "I don't think it replaces human contact, but it allows me to connect with them more often. I can talk with a friend in Oregon and see how his cancer is; I don't think I would have done that as often by phone. I think part of spirituality is being connected."

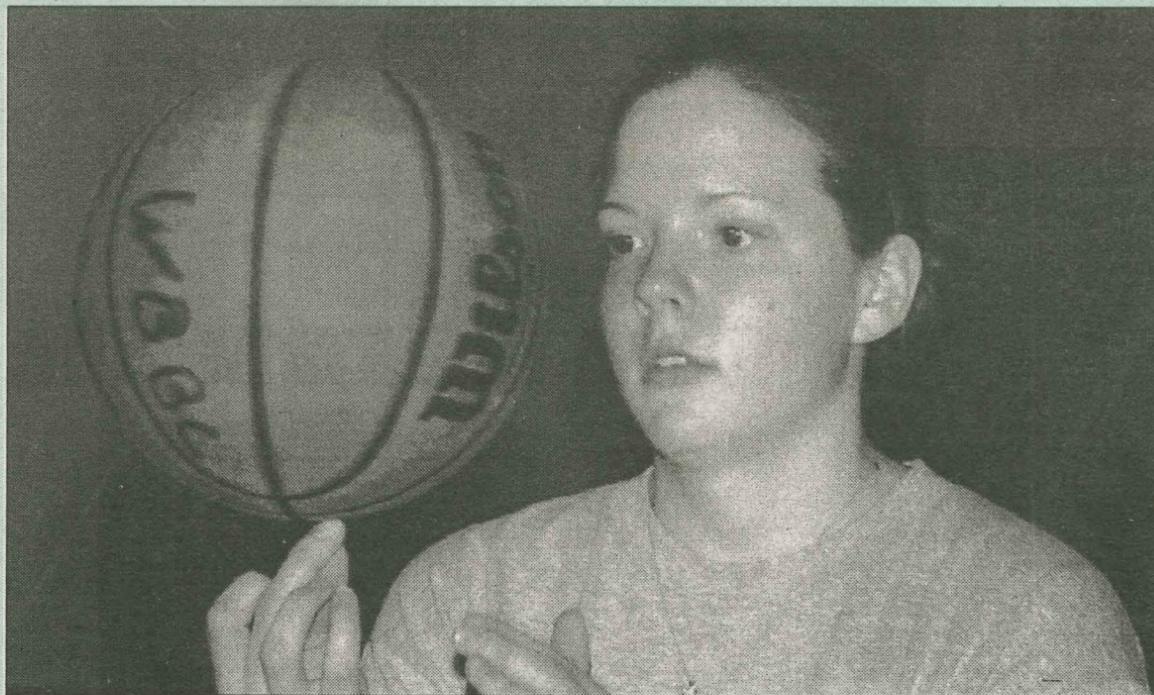
But Suzanne Coyle, director of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children's Cornerstone Counseling, said people must learn to balance electronic and human conversation.

Noting that many mental health professionals are debating the ethics of counseling through the Internet—something she opposes—Coyle said the main question is how e-mail is used.

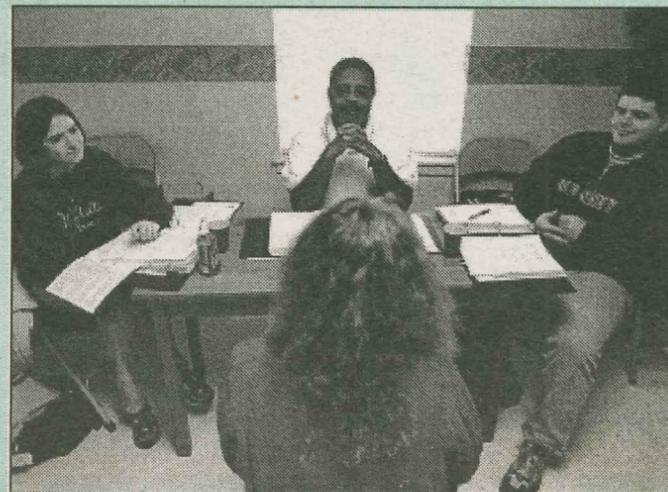
"It depends on what kind of relationship you want it to be," she said. "If you just want information, e-mail is fine. If you want more, it's better to

See Church leaders, others ..., page 6

Adventures in missions



College students from throughout Kentucky were in Louisville last weekend to explore summer ministry opportunities. Some students, already selected for overseas work, met their teammates for the first time. Others were applying for a variety of positions, from creative ministry teams in Kentucky to helping Southern Baptist missionaries from California to New England. Kentucky Baptist Student Unions will send 37 students overseas. Another 89 Kentucky BSU students will serve in Kentucky and throughout the United States. ■ Above: Kandace Belcher, a student at the University of Kentucky, auditions for Son Bound, a six-person collegiate sports ministry team that will perform throughout the commonwealth. ■ Right: Amy Davis, a student at Morehead State University, interviews with Mikel Robinson, BSU director for Kentucky State University, and BSU student leaders Tara Woodall of the University of Kentucky and Bobby Lewis of Eastern Kentucky University.



IMB president urges missionaries to sign 2000 BF&M

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

"Signing this affirmation protects you from charges of heresy behind your back."

IMB President Jerry Rankin

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP)—Reversing an earlier policy, Southern Baptist International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin is asking the board's 5,100 missionaries to affirm the Southern Baptist Convention's 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement.

Trustees voted a year ago not to require missionaries already on the field to endorse recent changes to the Baptist Faith and Message. Last January, trustees upheld a traditional practice of requiring missionaries to work within parameters of the statement even if they disagree with minor points. Leaders said at the time that policies in place for preventing and dealing with aberrant theology already provided adequate safeguards for doctrinal accountability.

A year ago, Rankin decried "time-consuming processes and restrictive policies" that might hinder missionary appointments.

"By what criteria should anyone be deprived of hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ?" Rankin asked at the time. "By what justification can any people group or nation be denied the opportunity to know of God's love and Christ's saving power?"

In a letter sent last week to missionaries, however, Rankin cites ongoing controversy about the issue and is asking missionaries to read and affirm the current version of the Baptist Faith and Message.

"Failure to ask for this affirmation is creating suspicion that there are IMB personnel whose beliefs and practices are inconsistent with those represented by Southern Bap-

What if missionaries don't sign?

In Jerry Rankin's letter last week instructing Southern Baptist missionaries to sign an affirmation of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message, he wrote, "I cannot overemphasize how important your cooperation is in order for us to move forward in fulfilling the Great Commission."

For those with questions about affirming the revised faith statement, the International Mission Board president added, "Your regional leader is prepared to follow up with you personally concerning your questions or personal clarifications."

But what if some missionaries decline to sign the statement? Is it a

requirement for continued missionary service?

IMB officials offered no clear signals what the next step would be.

"I don't think Dr. Rankin expects hardly anybody out there to register a concern," said IMB spokesman Mark Kelly. For those who do have concerns, he added, "regional leadership will help sort out the issues."

Last May, an IMB regional leader who declined to sign the 2000 faith statement when other administrators were doing so resigned from his leadership post.

Bill Phillips, who had been regional leader for IMB work in West Africa, said he had a personal con-

viction against signing such a document. He added, however, that he affirmed the Baptist Faith and Message "as a Baptist statement of doctrine for life, work and leadership."

Despite resigning his leadership post, he was allowed to remain a missionary. But that took place before Rankin's latest instruction to missionaries.

"There's no ax being held over anybody's head," Kelly said. "Our belief is a missionary can talk with trusted regional leadership and together they can sort out the issues and make a decision that missionaries are comfortable with."—Trennis Henderson

tists," he wrote.

"While we believe this is unfounded, we do not need an issue such as this to generate needless controversy, erode support and distract us from the focus on our task at such a critical time of opportunity around the world."

The 2000 version of the statement, which has sparked ongoing debate, specifies that the pastorate is limited to men and removes a provision in the 1963 statement on the Bible that the criterion for interpreting Scripture is Jesus Christ.

Rankin said those aren't "major changes" but are among "appropriate responses to contemporary issues and challenges that have emerged" since the 1963 statement was adopted.

"To assist our board in assuring Southern Baptists that all those who serve with the International Mission Board and (are) supported by the con-

vention affirm and support the current Baptist Faith and Message, I am asking that you sign the attached form indicating your affirmation and return it to your regional leader."

An attachment asks missionaries to respond yes or no to the statement, "I have read and am in agreement with the current Baptist Faith and Message." The form asks anyone replying "no" to cite any area of difference.

By signing and dating the form, the missionary also affirms, "In accountability to the International Mission Board and Southern Baptists, I agree to carry out my responsibilities in accordance with and not contrary to the current Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention."

Rankin said neither trustees nor the SBC required him to ask personnel for the affirmation but the board is aware of the action and supports it.

"I cannot overemphasize how important your cooperation is in order for us to move forward in fulfilling the Great Commission," Rankin told missionaries.

"We who have chosen to serve with a denominational mission agency are expected to be doctrinally accountable to those who provide our support and send us out," he added. "There should be no reticence in our willingness to express agreement with what the SBC has adopted."

Rankin said willingness to endorse the statement would protect missionaries "from charges of heresy behind your back while you are overseas and cannot defend yourself" and "disarm those who may be trying to use the BF&M to divide Southern Baptists." It will "also clearly communicate to overseas Baptists and Great Commission partners what we believe," he added.

SBC leader rejects CP partnership with new Missouri convention

NASHVILLE (ABP)—The Southern Baptist Convention likely won't accept church gifts channeled through a new Baptist state convention proposed in Missouri, says Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee.

A group tentatively called the Baptist General Convention of Missouri had asked the Executive Committee for permission to collect funds on behalf of the SBC through the Cooperative Program.

But Chapman says while the SBC already recognizes competing state conventions in Texas and Virginia, it wouldn't be in the SBC's best interest to do the same in Missouri.

In a letter to former MBC Executive Director Jim Hill, a leader of the proposed new convention, Chapman said he could find "no compelling reason" to recommend that the Executive Committee depart from its regular practice of working with a single state convention to collect funds in Missouri.

"We do not wish to send mixed signals to the churches in Missouri, nor do we wish to harm the work of the Missouri Baptist Convention or the Southern Baptist Convention," Chapman wrote.

In an open letter responding to Chapman, leaders of the proposed

convention pointed out that in Virginia and Texas, historic relationships with established state conventions did not stop the SBC "from developing a new relationship with the new conventions established in these states during recent years."

The Executive Committee recognizes breakaway conventions in Texas and Virginia started by conservatives, while still receiving funding from larger, established conventions in those states. Unlike those groups, the proposed Missouri body is being led by moderates.

Chapman said in his letter that the SBC is comfortable with the direction and leadership of the existing Missouri convention.

"Yours is the first-ever request for affiliation we have had from a group of Baptists with sentiments I would be hard-pressed to interpret as in 'friendly cooperation' with the purposes of the work of the Southern Baptist Convention," Chapman wrote.

Citing the strong Cooperative Program giving record of churches expected to affiliate with the new convention, the Missouri group's leaders responded, "These churches have been and continue to be loyal Southern Baptists. It is absurd

to imply that they are not in 'friendly cooperation' with the purposes and work of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Chapman concluded his letter by stating that "the interests of the Southern Baptist Convention will not be served by establishing a partnership with another regional convention in Missouri."

The Missouri leaders' open letter responded, "While the SBC leadership has chosen not to acknowledge or cooperate with the Baptist General Convention of Missouri, we will cooperate with the SBC." The statement said the new convention will encourage churches interested in supporting SBC work to send that portion of their CP gifts directly to the SBC Executive Committee.

About 350 Missouri Baptists representing more than 100 churches met Jan. 17 to lay groundwork for the new state convention. The new group is scheduled for official launch in April.

Chapman said new state conventions were formed in Texas and Virginia "only after the original state conventions had corrupted the historic meaning of the Cooperative Program" by establishing channels to allow churches to bypass funding of the SBC.

Charles Wade, executive director of the

Baptist General Convention of Texas, called Chapman's view "disingenuous."

"The Cooperative Program historically was built on mutual trust and shared vision, not a contractual arrangement," Wade noted. He said the SBC "cut that nerve of trust and vision" when it "deliberately excluded a sizeable number of supporting churches."

"The BGCT has made every effort to build trust by recognizing that churches have choices and by honoring the right of churches to give in a way that reflects their convictions," Wade added.

Meanwhile, Chapman also recently mass-mailed churches in Texas reminding them that recent changes to the BGCT's Cooperative Program budget reallocates funds that previously went to the support of SBC seminaries, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and Executive Committee.

Chapman's letter urges Texas churches "to stay with the traditional Cooperative Program" but welcomes "questions and comments" from churches that want to consider sending gifts directly to the SBC Executive Committee.

The mailing also included information about how Texas Baptist churches could give through the conservative Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

KBHC plans major drive to cut reliance on state funds

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

LOUISVILLE—Facing changing child care strategies, reduced referrals from the state and an ACLU lawsuit still working its way through the court system, the Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children is looking toward the future.

KBHC President Bill Smithwick has announced plans to launch a multi-million-dollar fundraising campaign in an effort to reduce or eliminate the agency's dependence on government funds. The state of Kentucky currently provides approximately three-fourths of KBHC's annual budget of nearly \$20 million through contracts to help pay for client services.

Smithwick told Kentucky Baptist Convention messengers last November, "We'd like to raise enough money in the next three to four years that we can tell the state, 'Keep your money. We'll still serve your kids.' That's our goal."

In a December report to the KBC Executive Committee, Smithwick and institute board's agencies and announced the agency's "intention to openly begin the process of a national capital campaign" beginning in January.

Citing the KBHC's public stand for "traditional family values" and the impact of the lawsuit filed over the 1998 dismissal of a lesbian employee, Smithwick told the committee, "In light of our now national prominence, we feel compelled to take full advantage of it" through a

national fundraising campaign.

While KBC policies prohibit convention agencies from directly soliciting Kentucky Baptist churches, Smithwick said the agency will inform churches about "our goal of financial independence" without requesting additional church contributions.

In January, KBHC leaders began mailing informational letters to selected individuals across the state in an effort to gauge response to a broader campaign.

Recounting details of the ACLU lawsuit and recent reductions in state referrals, Smithwick's four-page letter notes that the agency closed one of its cottages last summer on the Glen Dale campus.

"Unless Kentuckians who care step up to the plate now—when it really matters—it is likely that other facilities or services will have to be cut," he wrote, urging supporters to do "something tangible and meaningful in the battle over whose values shape the care for vulnerable kids."

Smithwick said a preliminary study indicates that a regional or national campaign "is something KBHC can do and should do."

Noting that "there is a lot of work to do before the campaign proper begins," he said staff members plan to do 12 to 18 months of organizing and public relations before moving to the campaign's next phase.

Part of the goal is to help supporters understand "who we are and what the ministry is like today," he said.

With a reduced number of children in residential care and more children being served through foster care and counseling services, "it's much different and a lot more effective than it was," he added.

KBHC workers served approximately 3,000 children last year, including more than 2,000 who received assistance through 22 Cornerstone Counseling centers across the state. Smithwick said current out-of-home services include 125 children in residential care and 135 in foster care.

"The agency's not like it was 20 years ago with a big Spring Meadows campus and Glen Dale campus," he explained. "The trend is moving away from residential services to community-based services."

Smithwick said KBHC's primary goals for seeking financial independence are that "there would be no strings attached to government money to impede what we do" and that "we can decide for ourselves how we will serve the families and children."

"Right now we're limited to what the state wants to purchase—residential care and foster care," he said. "If we have our own operating resources, we could do more with follow-up and aftercare."

Even if referrals from the state decline further or cease, Smithwick said, "If the resources are available, there will be no problem getting referrals from a lot of different sources across the state" such as schools, courts and private referrals.

As plans for the campaign unfold,

"there's no doubt in my mind that our stand for traditional family values has cost us," Smithwick noted. "When you stand up today against the political correctness of the homosexual agenda, there are consequences; you're a target."

In response, he added, "The general message is that I'm looking for people who believe children ought to be taught first and foremost traditional values rather than the politically correct message of our culture. We're having to stand tall against the giant ACLU. We're looking for people who want to stand with us in this battle."

Tom Townsend, KBHC's vice president for development and communications, said the overall fundraising effort could last five to six years with a primary focus in Kentucky and the southeastern U.S.

Providing endowment and income to replace more than \$15 million annually from the state is an overwhelming endeavor, Smithwick acknowledged. "We're talking about a goal that is so big that it will only happen if God does it. People may think we're crazy but we believe we've got to try to do something."

"It's too early to set a dollar amount," he said. "Our objective is to replace as much of the public monies with permanent endowment so that when the time comes, we can operate completely independently of public money."

"If we don't serve these children and families, other people will," he added. "But they are not going to serve them from the Christ-centered core and base that we are."

"When you stand up today against the political correctness of the homosexual agenda, there are consequences."

KBHC President Bill Smithwick

Jonathan Creek director Melber excited about possibilities

By Leigh Landini Wright
The Paducah Sun

FAIRDEALING—When David Melber quit his job at Falconite Industries in Paducah four years ago to enter the ministry, he thought it was the end of his love of fishing and the outdoors.

"Sometimes I almost feel guilty about being here," Melber says of his new job as director of Jonathan Creek Baptist Assembly overlooking Kentucky Lake. "So many of the things I love to do, we do here at the camp. It's just a real blessing. When we left secular work to go into the ministry, financially speaking, I thought we'd never be able to do what we enjoyed. But God has allowed us to enjoy the lake and the outdoors."

Melber, 34, worked for a year as coordinator of the Christian Outreach Center at First Baptist Church of Paducah. People asked frequently about his seminary plans. "About six months after being at First, I really felt like God had impressed upon my heart that the seminary was a step He was leading us to take. At the time, I didn't feel a specific calling to be a pastor or a youth minister. I felt a calling to the seminary."

Melber and his wife, Tera, sold their house in Lone Oak, packed their belongings and two children, Alex and Kelly, now 7 and 5, to attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Tera was eight months

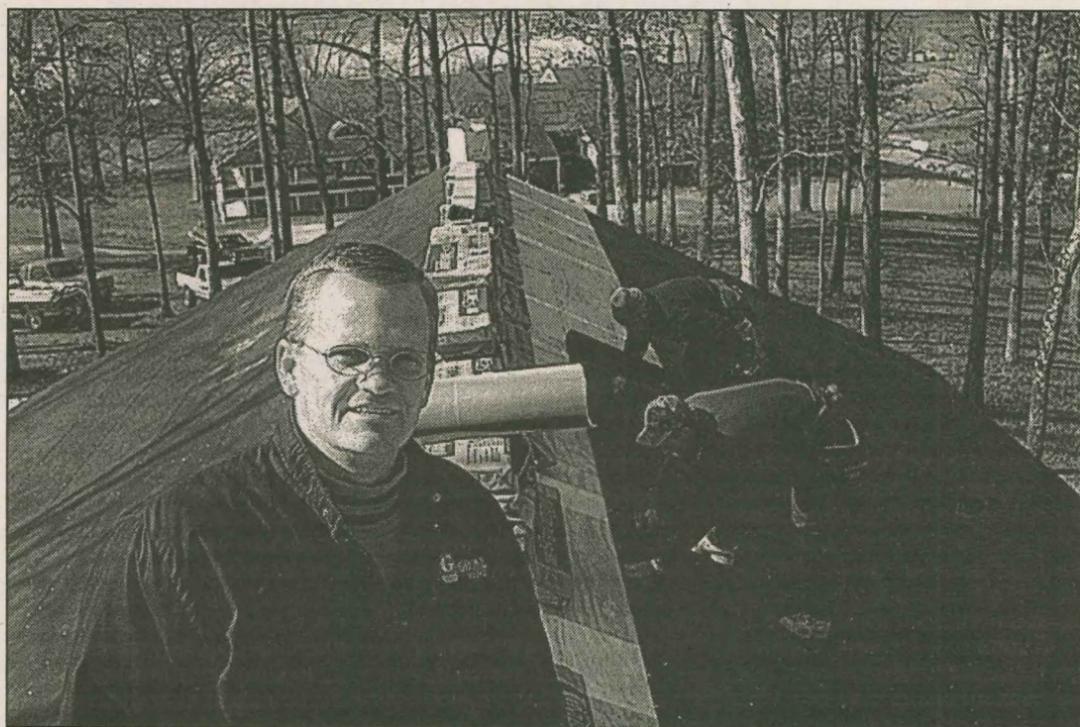
pregnant at the time with Jonathan, who will be 3 next month.

They settled in Baghdad, Ky., where he worked at a Baptist camp, and later moved to Louisville. As graduation neared, Melber wasn't sure of his calling. "In my own mind, pretty much the only other thing was to go overseas. We had explored North Africa and the Middle East. We think there is a good chance that we will serve overseas, but we felt that at this time, God was telling us not to go just yet."

Melber then found out about the Jonathan Creek assembly camp, back in western Kentucky. Beyond the homecoming, Melber is excited about the scenic setting and the opportunities. For 10 weeks in the summer, 275 to 300 teenagers descend on the camp weekly for nature adventures with the Bible.

Melber, who recently was ordained as a Baptist minister at First Baptist Church of Paducah, also hopes to combine his love of the outdoors with Christianity to reach fishermen and hunters. He wants to organize an evangelistic event for the thousands of coonhunters who come to the area in late October for the hunting dog world championships. "We want to offer events that will take advantage and draw Christians and non-Christians to this setting and have an impact for eternity," he said.

Since the Kentucky Baptist Assemblies took over the Jonathan Creek



facility four years ago, it has developed the lakefront property, adding boat slips and a beach.

"When you read in the Bible the parable about using the talents that you've been given, the same applies to the camp. We have been given by God's grace, not only the facilities, but the land on Kentucky Lake. If you had to buy that today, we simply would not have this. I think we need to make

the best use of it, not only to glorify God but to draw others in," Melber said.

By spring, the camp will have two more lodges with eight private rooms and bathrooms each, and a 400-seat worship and multi-purpose center/gymnasium. The camp currently has one lodge with six private rooms and a 43-room hotel-type building.

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GREAT OUTDOORS
Jonathan Creek Camp and Conference Center director David Melber stands atop one of the buildings under construction at Jonathan Creek. (Paducah Sun photo by Lance Dennee)

WESTERN RECORDER

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

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How's your contentment level?

By Larry Burkett

GAINESVILLE, Ga. (BP)—Christians are used to hearing the word stewardship. The word stewardship means management, and biblical stewardship involves commitment and contentment.

Who does all this stuff belong to?

The Bible says that God owns all things. Yet few Christians really seem to understand what it means to be a manager of what God owns. The first requirement for a person to be a good steward of his or her life is to be a proper manager of the provisions God has made for him or her. This requires a commitment to God and to the lordship of Christ.

God also wants us to be contented. Jesus said that personal choice and discipline are necessary for contentment. "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24). Are you making the right choices?

If you've been seeking a commit-

ted life of contentment, you might want to consider the following choices in order to live contentedly. It's not a foolproof plan, but if you'll get started on this strategy you'll be way ahead of 90 percent of those you know.

■ **Set a goal to become debt-free.**

Our market-driven culture isn't available to help you here and your friends might think it's impossible to become debt-free, but it's not. The goal is well worth your effort. And those skeptical friends might just want to know how you were able to do it.

■ **Establish a reasonable standard of living based on conviction, not the convenience of income.** God has no universal Christian financial plan. Nevertheless, you can decide to stop spending 105 or 110 percent of what you make.

■ **Acquire the giving habit.** Don't stop with 10 percent. God wants us to be involved with the needs of others. When you become debt-free, you'll quickly discover that it releases more of the money God has put under your control for kingdom use.

COMMENTARY

Never too old

Your "Straight from the Editor" editorials are the first things I read each week. The Jan. 22 editorial, "Ministry keys: inreach, outreach, preach," was especially eye-catching and interesting.

In fact, I took my Western Recorder and shared it with my Sunday school class. We all liked it and we decided you are describing some characteristics of our class also. So we decided to respond to your question: "What kind of Sunday school class do you attend or lead?"

First, may I say your class is a role model. I teach the Golden Rule class at Kings Baptist Church in Taylorsville. We major on many of the things

your class does. We are a class of love. We share hugs, words of encouragement and support, both spiritual and emotional, in times of family crisis. We focus on Bible study in class each Sunday.

We are senior adult ladies, very active. We keep two large boxes in our classroom ready to fill with food or clothing for needy families in the community. We keep two baskets on the desk. We put extra offerings in each for world hunger and mission funds for Lottie Moon, Angel Tree, etc.

Two years ago we had a beautiful wooden wall plaque made with brass plates to slip in as we have a class

■ **Set firm priorities.** Many Christians are discontented. Strangely, they're not discontented because they aren't doing well but because others are doing better than they are. God's Word tells us to be "content with what you have" (Hebrews 13:5).

■ **Develop a thankful attitude.** Doesn't it seem strange that some Americans could think God has failed them materially? No matter what their income level, instead of being grateful many people complain and compare themselves to others and forget to be thankful for what they have.

■ **Reject a fearful spirit.** Don't always be asking "What if?" Even dedicated Christians can become frozen with fear over not having enough because they wonder "what if" about things like unemployment, retirement, economic collapse and so on.

■ **Seek God's will for you.** Get alone with God and get into His Word. Learn what He wants for you and then apply biblical principles of stewardship in your life.

How's your commitment and contentment level? Ask yourself: Just how much is enough?

Larry Burkett, a Christian financial counselor, is president of Christian Financial Concepts

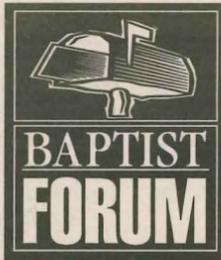
member die. We have the name and date of death engraved. At the top is engraved "The Glory Roll." At intervals, we have a moment of silence in their honor.

Your interesting article inspired and encouraged our class. Thank you very much not only for this particular article but for many others. God bless you.

Pray that we will keep faithful until Jesus comes and our names appear on the Glory Roll.

We never get too old to serve God, do we?

Jennie Arnold, teacher
Dorothy Jenkins, assistant teacher
Taylorsville



PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Establishing staff priority concerns

After five months of research and study, the Kentucky Baptist Convention staff recently established five priority concerns for focus. The priorities were formalized during a two-day retreat in January but were based on work that had been completed earlier.

Research examined in developing these five priority concerns included demographic information from the 2000 census; summaries of listening sessions with associational leaders and more than 400 church leaders; and Annual Church Profile data. Experts in various fields guided staff in analyzing the data.

Initially there were many individual areas of concern that surfaced from the research but this list was narrowed to 10 by the end of the first day of the retreat. All 10 were dynamic concerns, which made the decisions very difficult, but by the end of the retreat, there was a clear separation between the following five and the rest:

■ **Church health.** A major con-

cern from the Annual Church Profile data was that about 70 percent of Kentucky Baptist churches are not experiencing numerical growth. Focusing on church health enables us to zero in on intangibles such as relationships, commitment to the truth of God's Word, passion for the mission and assimilation, as well as revitalization and numerical growth.



Bill Mackey

■ **Evangelism/discipleship.** All research and study pointed to the need to reach all age, geographic, cultural and economic groups for Christ, with focus on metro

areas. One group needing special attention (as indicated by the listening sessions) is disadvantaged individuals. Sunday school outreach needs attention as well as Bible studies that disciple. The challenge is to find innovative ways (technology, servant evangelism, etc.) to reach and disciple people through strengthening current churches and developing new models that fit local needs.

■ **Leadership development.** This

area is crucial because it relates to all the rest. The needs include helping leaders discover God's vision, understand their own strengths and help their churches through transitions.

■ **Family concerns.** This was a major area of concern exposed by all of the research, especially the demographic data. Challenging groups to reach will be unmarried mothers who are in their 20s and early 30s, underemployed young single males who do not feel accepted and the aging population.

■ **Worship/spirituality.** This is an immediate challenge in many churches due to adjustments in worship styles, especially music. The Church Health Summit II (Oct. 11-12 at First Baptist Church of Bowling Green) will focus on worship as well as many other concerns. Helping leaders with transitions; technology, innovation and relationships will be a major focus.

During February, the KBC staff will determine the process for following up on these priorities. These are significant concerns that will call forth our best under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

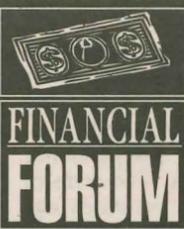
Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

CHURCH

Timely questions can help churches fulfill 2002 goals

By Doug Strader

We have now completed the first month of the new year. How well is your church fulfilling its goals for the year 2002?



There are still 11 months left, but before long you will be asking your-

self where the year has gone. These questions might give you a little motivation to help fulfill your financial stewardship goals for the year:

■ **What are you doing to help your people know how to manage their money?** This is a need among all generations, but especially the younger generations. Many people have a problem with credit card indebtedness and do not know how to get out of debt. They need help and so do many of their friends. You could use a money management seminar as an outreach tool while also ministering to your members.

■ **What have you planned to help do stewardship education for the entire congregation?** There are several good educational pieces on the market. We have some in our office that we would be glad to preview for you, or you can find good materials from other sources. Many people who are members and regular attenders of your church have never had any stewardship education classes or seminars.

■ **What are you doing to make the offering time in your worship services more meaningful?** The time of the offering should be one of the highlights of our worship because we are making our offering to God. We also have resources available that can assist you in making the offering time more worshipful.

■ **Do you have good stewardship testimonies lined up for the near future?** Christians need to hear words of encouragement from their fellow Christians. They also need to be challenged by fellow Christians in their stewardship commitments.

■ **Have you planned to use drama to highlight stewardship themes throughout the church year?** Drama presentations can be a very useful tool to highlight stewardship themes.

These suggestions are just a sampling. Use your own imagination and the input from church members to find many other ways to highlight financial stewardship and in the process help meet some of the goals you set for the new year. If we can help, give us a call at (888) 254-5708. Doug Strader is director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's stewardship department

Teens face emotional impact of physical, spiritual changes

Q: My sweet and loving child is about to become a teenager. What changes should I anticipate?

We typically think of pre-teen and early teen years as being marked by the biological phase known as puberty. Physical changes occur amid uneven growth spurts. Sometimes young people exhibit skin problems and they often are awkward physically as coordination lags behind growth. Picture a fast-growing puppy and you begin to get the idea.

You also might notice a roller coaster effect in emotions as well as some retreat from the opposite-gender parent and gravitating more toward the same-gender parent. Intellectual changes might be noted by a shift from concrete to more abstract thinking and an interest in questioning things they previously seemed to take for granted.

Social changes typically include an increased reliance on peers for emotional support and influence and the desire to have some input into curfew and limit-setting with parents. If you find your child wanting to play his version of "Let's Make a Deal," you'll know he is making an important transition.

Spiritually, young people often begin to move from the "borrowed faith" of parents and other adults as they begin to ask questions and challenge beliefs that once seemed settled. Don't be surprised if your "sweet, loving child" begins to test your willingness to allow him or her to think independently.

As all these changes occur and you feel anxious, remember to think instead of react. You are not alone. In Luke 2, you will find an interesting story about a missing 12-year-old Jesus whose mother asks Him after her "anxious search" of Jerusalem, "Son, why have you treated us like this?" (Luke 2:48). If Mary was anxious about the parenting of the Son of God, why should it be any different for us?—*Scott Wigginton*

Q: I'm a single adult interested in volunteer mission work with other single adults. Any suggestions?

Stephen Felts, in his book, "Start a Revolution," makes the case for single adults gathering together around the needs about which they feel passionate, and seeing themselves as a ministry team God can use to meet that particular need. With the variety of spiritual gifts God brings together in any particular setting, mission work can happen in "your own backyard."

One option is a larger scale, more organized approach to missions, in which you meet single adults from all across the country, have a meaningful mission experience and make a difference in the lives of people in need. One example of such missions ministry is called House Calls.

Originally created by the former Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as the adult version of World Changers, it became its own entity a few years ago with the reorganization of Southern Baptist Convention agencies. House Calls has two aspects to its mission: to create meaningful mission experiences for single and senior adults and to make a difference in the lives of people living in substandard housing.

While Habitat for Humanity is structured to build houses "from the ground up," House Calls works with people living in existing housing. By bringing together 75 to 100 single adults from across the nation, House Calls offers a unique ministry experience. Work projects are conducted throughout the day, worship services are held every night and there is at least one afternoon and evening set aside for group recreation.

This year's U.S. projects are in Nashville and Alexandria, La. For more information, call (888) 421-4408.—*James Stillwell*

Family Forum writers are Suzanne Coyle, 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; James Stillwell, minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington; and Scott Wigginton, director of LifeCare Counseling at Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville. Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253 or e-mail us at wesrec@ntr.net.



Let faithful missionaries fulfill their call

One year ago, Southern Baptist International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin urged trustees to avoid "time-consuming processes and restrictive policies" that might hinder missionary appointments.

"By what criteria should anyone be deprived of hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ?" he asked. "By what justification can any people group or nation be denied the opportunity to know of God's love and Christ's saving power?"

Those were significant, insightful questions at the time. Twelve months later, they still are.

Unfortunately, Rankin's view apparently has changed on the subject. After his remarks last year, trustees decided against requiring missionaries already on the field to sign the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 revision. They determined that their established policy of requiring missionaries to conduct their work "in accordance with and not contrary to" the SBC faith statement was sufficient.

With the extensive screening process missionary candidates undergo, trustees seemed comfortable that missionaries under appointment had sufficiently demonstrated their faith commitment and theological views. In fact, among more than 5,000 missionaries serving overseas, only one has been dismissed in recent years over doctrinal concerns.

If the system is working that well and countless people around the world are gaining "the opportunity to know of God's love and Christ's saving power" through the ministry of Southern Baptist missionaries, why change it? Why add another bureaucratic requirement to the list of commitments missionaries already have made?

Apparently to quell any concerns among convention leaders who have established themselves as the faith statement enforcement police.

In a letter sent last week to missionaries, Rankin referenced last year's action, noting that "our board felt that these policies and actions provided adequate accountability to the SBC and expressed confidence and

trust in our missionaries." So what happened to that confidence and trust?

Explaining that the response to the 2000 revision "has continued to generate controversy throughout the convention," Rankin told the missionaries, "Failure to ask for this affirmation (of the 2000 statement) is creating suspicion that there are IMB personnel whose beliefs and practices are inconsistent with those represented by Southern Baptists."

While Rankin said he believes such suspicions are "unfounded," he added, "Signing this affirmation protects you from charges of heresy behind your back while you are overseas and cannot defend yourself."

Keep in mind this is not a question of missionaries' doctrinal integrity. These are the same Southern Baptist missionaries who typically are held in the highest esteem for their willingness to leave family, culture, comfort and safety in order to answer God's call to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world.

It's deeply troubling to believe that failing to sign a revised, fallible, man-made document would produce charges of heresy against such dedicated servants of God. Sadly, however, Rankin's words are no doubt accurate in the SBC's current political climate.

Obviously, the easiest path for all missionaries would be to sign the affirmation and go about their work. For some, however, accepting the 2000 statement as "an instrument of doctrinal accountability" becomes an issue of creedalism. For others, the failure to preserve the 1963 statement's language affirming Jesus Christ as the criterion for interpreting the Bible is an unacceptable omission.

Rankin told missionaries there were no "major changes" in the revised statement. Yet the greatest change of all may be the shift to lockstep doctrinal interpretations rather than trusting the integrity of proven, faithful missionaries.

Why allow administrative demands to become "restrictive policies" that hinder the spread of the gospel?

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Why does God allow tragedies like Sept. 11?

By Rick Landon

Tragedies create anxiety and insecurity: "Could this happen to me?" To deal with such anxiety, we strive to make sense out of tragedies. Therefore, Christians ask, "Why did God permit this to happen?"

My family faced this "Why?" question all of my life. At an early age, my younger brother was diagnosed as mentally retarded. For generations my family has been devoted Christians and faithful church members. So why did God permit such a tragedy and especially in a family such as ours? Through the years, many well-intentioned people have suggested answers. Many answers were thoughtful, some were ludicrous, but all were inadequate.

The most helpful responses have been from folks who have had to deal with this question on a personal level. They didn't have quick answers. They didn't feel they had to defend God. They could say, "I don't know."

Upon meeting a blind man, Jesus' disciples asked why this man was born blind. Jesus didn't really answer their question. Rather, He said the man's

blindness would work for the glory of God (John 9:1-41.) That is a fine theological answer unless it is your child who is blind, and then it feels inadequate.

One helpful resource is Leslie Weatherhead's little book, "The Will of God." He speaks of God's intentional, circumstantial and ultimate will. He writes, "Because of human folly and sin, because man's free will creates circumstances of evil that cut across God's plans, because our oneness with the great human family means that the evil among other members of it may create circumstances which disturb God's intention for us, there is a will within the will of God, or what I call 'the circumstantial will of God.'"

Why did God permit the tragedy of September 11? I don't know. Is God somehow responsibly involved? I answer, "Yes and no."

"Yes" in granting humankind's free will, God created the circumstances that permit us to make decisions that affect others for good or bad. I also answer, "No," God did not create the tragedy of Sept. 11. Individuals who gathered themselves

around a belief system chose to plan and carry out the tragedy. They are the responsible ones.

Are we, therefore, completely innocent? No, all of us have contributed to the collective evil in the human family that has resulted from self-centered and evil choices down through all of the humankind generations. As a result of this collective evil, we live with consequences, many of which are tragic.

When Jacob faced a life crisis, he wrestled all night with the angel (Genesis 32:22-32.) Wrestling with God about tragic, life-changing questions is never easy, pleasant nor something you seek or wish on others. However, the result of Jacob's struggle was a strange blessing—a blessing that altered his nature (his name was changed) and left a noticeable mark (a limp). God's response was neither a quick nor easy answer but rather, new meaning and purpose.

Perhaps, the deeper question isn't "Why?" but "Who is God, even in the midst of life's tragedies?"

Rick Landon is director of the Interfaith Counseling Center in Lexington

Got questions?

Fax your "Question of the Day" to (502) 244-6474; E-mail: wesrec@kybaptist.org.

Church seeks to combine high-tech with high-touch

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

WIRED CHURCH
Saddleback Valley Community Church in California uses the Internet to better communicate with its members and visitors.

LAKE FOREST, Calif.—When Brad Johnson left Kentucky two years ago for Saddleback Valley Community Church, he vaulted to the forefront of Christendom's communications revolution.

Led by pastor and best-selling author Rick Warren, the church is known for innovations that have seen

the congregation mushroom from a handful of people to about 16,000 people at six weekend services.

Such growth makes it impractical for Warren to mail letters when he wants to inform members about important issues, said Johnson, a teaching and missions pastor at the Southern California church.

Now, such communication happens with the flick of a button. Similarly, Johnson uses e-mail to keep in touch with church members, as well as old friends in Bowling Green, where he was pastor of Living Hope Baptist Church.

But electronic letters are only one aspect of the church's Web-based outreach. Through its Web site, leaders of home-based cell groups can add or delete names of participants. Members can check on cell group meetings and activities.

For the estimated 20 percent of attendees who don't have e-mail, Saddleback maintains several computers on a patio outside the sanctuary, with helpers demonstrating how to retrieve information.

The church also broadcasts its worship services over the Internet, allowing members who are traveling to keep in touch, Johnson said.

Web broadcasts also let prospects view a service before visiting, exposing them to the gospel before they darken the church door.

"It is a method, one of several hooks we drop in the water," Johnson said. "Four weeks before Easter, anyone who logs on will see a list of Easter services, can discover how to become a Christian, and they can indicate if they made a decision to do so."

"If they did, within 24 to 48 hours they will get phone contact from someone at the church. For this area, that's very personal. We used it last Easter and at Christmas."

In addition, the staff has designed

an "e-invitation" for use during those two holidays. The church sends members a greeting card that they can customize and e-mail to friends.

As for worries that electronics eliminate the human touch, Johnson said Saddleback's experience has been overwhelmingly positive.

"The same concern was voiced by Christians when the telephone was invented," he said.

"People worried that we'd all stay home and just talk to each other over the phone. But there's something in the human spirit that demands human contact. Technology hasn't prevented that from happening, and I don't think it will."

Indications are that the Internet revolution is gaining steam. A report issued last year by Barna Research Group forecasts that in the coming decade more than 10 percent of America's population will rely on the Internet for their entire spiritual experience.

Some of those people will be individuals who haven't had a previous connection with a faith community, but millions will be people who drop out of a physical church in favor of the cyberchurch, according to president George Barna.

Barna said that virtually every dimension of the faith community will be influenced by online faith developments.

"We will have an explosion of self-produced and self-marketed worship music as an outgrowth of a sophisticated and affordable digital technology that turns an artist into a full-fledged recording company," he said.

"Within churches, we will see e-mail broadcasting, theological chats, online meetings, broadcasts to congregants who are immobile, live Web-casting of mission trips via Webcams, and (round-the-clock) ministry training," Barna added.

Barna also forecasts that about 45

percent of Protestant churches will have a Web site by May of 2002, and half of the rest won't add one. That means a third of all Protestant churches are expected to ignore the Internet the next five years, the report said.

Despite statistics showing swelling numbers of computer users accessing the Internet for spiritual information, the principal author for a report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project said it is difficult to measure the depth of those inquiries.

Issued in December, the study backed by the Pew Charitable Trust said more than 3 million people per day use the Net to retrieve religious or spiritual material, a 50 percent increase over the previous year.

Research fellow Elena Larsen said more people use the Internet to get spiritual information than to gamble, trade stock, bank online, place on-line phone calls or use Web auction sites.

But Larsen said it is difficult to determine exactly what kind of information people are seeking or how long they investigate a particular site.

Nor does she believe that technology will send people on a spiritual quest. Social scientists identify certain beliefs, such as political party affiliations, as "sticky," meaning they are resistant to change, she said.

"I believe that religious beliefs are also quite sticky," Larsen said. "People can change or revise their religious beliefs over time, but it would be very difficult to isolate an 'Internet effect' in the role."

Still, Johnson said Internet usage trends mean Kentucky Baptists should prepare for the future.

"Ten years ago people who jumped on the Internet were seen as speculators, people jumping on a passing fad," he said. "Now my mom and dad have their gas company as their Internet service provider. This is something that is here to stay."

The screenshot shows the Saddleback Church website with a navigation menu at the top (HOME, CONTACT, GROW, SERVE, SHARE, WORSHIP, LEARN, PURSUE) and a sidebar with categories like CHILDREN, YOUTH, COLLEGE, SINGLES, BARE & TRUE. The main content area features several articles with images and headlines, such as "THE SPACE BETWEEN OURSELVES AND OUR LIMITS", "A CELEBRATION OF NEW BIRTH", "SADDLEBACK'S SPECIAL STARS", "MAKE A COMMITMENT TO GROW IN 2002", "HAPPY NEW YEAR!", "OUR LIFE-LONG JOURNEY HOME", "YOUR GIFT TO GOD THIS CHRISTMAS", "HOW TO KICK THE HOLIDAY BLUES", "MY TRAIN RIDE WITH GOD", and "LEARNING TO LOVE". There are also sections for "Life Perspectives Online Classes", "Discover your Life Purpose", "REGISTER FOR SADDLEBACK events", "DAILY DEVOTIONAL", and "JOBS @ Saddleback Church".

Church leaders, others debate Internet's impact on personal contact

Continued from page 1

have more alternatives for communicating."

The desire for more human contact led the vice president of one Kentucky company to place limits on e-mail usage, which he said has improved the office climate.

"We send e-mails back and forth and take 20 minutes when five minutes of talking could have solved the problem," said David Dearie of Brown-Forman.

Along with casual dress, last summer Dearie declared Fridays an e-mail-less day for 26 employees. Offenders are fined \$10.

The executive said that when he introduced the idea at a corporate conference, he received a standing ovation.

A newspaper article in late December about the practice has generated more than a dozen calls and letters.

"It struck a nerve," Dearie said. "The idea of coming in and having a morning cup of coffee has been lost. Everyone heads for their computer terminals. It's like we've all become e-mail junkies."

Even supporters of e-mail's efficiency and its ability to establish far-reaching



contacts admit it can go too far. But many Christians think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Vicki Hollon, executive director of Louisville's Wayne Oates Institute, uses the Net to circulate institute publications, continuing education courses and other efforts to foster dialogue among the religious, medical and social communities.

Hollon observed that letters once were considered a personal way of communicating, with electronic writing a new form of an old practice. Her worldwide interchanges include talks with her daughter, who is studying for a master's degree in Scotland.

E-mail users tend to eliminate judgments based on race, income, weight and facial features, she added.

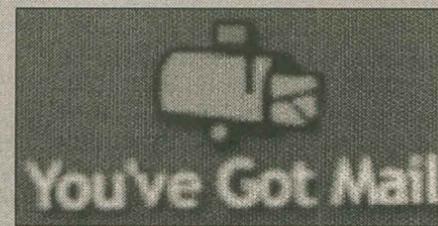
"E-mail is very much high touch," Hollon said. "There's nothing inherently personal about being face to face. If we're not sharing out of our heart, we can have very poor interpersonal communication."

Steve Ayers, pastor of Hillvue Heights Church in Bowling Green, said he saw how e-mail can foster closer human contact when he did doctoral studies several years ago at Drew University in New Jersey.

His study group met solely online, while another group attended traditional classroom sessions. When everyone gathered on campus for a two-week summer session, the electronic group interacted more often than classroom students, he said.

Web-based video conferencing also enables him to conduct staff meetings when he is traveling. Even when everyone is in town, Ayers commonly sees young staffers checking hand-held computing devices for messages.

He admits to using e-mail more than



the telephone, but warned that ministry can't be done solely through the Internet.

"It doesn't replace human interaction," said Ayers, whose church has grown from a few dozen members to more than 4,000 in the past decade. "The church should say, 'We are the place where you can come for human contact.' We use technology to enhance the ministry, not drive it."

In addition, the question of losing touch in the Internet age should prompt Christians to ask themselves what they are doing to create more interaction with the world, Ayers said.

"Maybe (we) need to have a church-less Sunday every once in a while and go see what people are doing," he suggested. "The church was isolated from the world before e-mail existed."

Christianity with an attitude

Duke's darling, Hauerwas jolts Christians from comfort zones

By Yonat Shimron
Religion New Service

RALEIGH, N.C. (RNS)—At a recent forum at Duke University, a group of 200 students gathered to hear Stanley Hauerwas, one of the nation's preeminent Christian thinkers, talk about his writings and answer questions.

A Duke Press spokesman introduced a 730-page collection of Hauerwas' writings; notebooks flew open and pens scratched.

Then Hauerwas, the divinity school's cantankerous star professor, was asked about the events of Sept. 11.

In trademark fashion, he shot back with the equivalent of a theological one-liner: "People say Sept. 11 changed the world," Hauerwas said in his nasal Texas twang. "That is false. Thirty-three A.D. forever changed the world."

An audible "ahh" swept the room as the audience, mostly divinity students, straightened to hear what he would say next.

The statement was typical of Hauerwas and not only for its aggressive certitude. It really does sum up his beliefs. For 30 years, Hauerwas has taken it upon himself to recover a distinctively Christian way of talking.

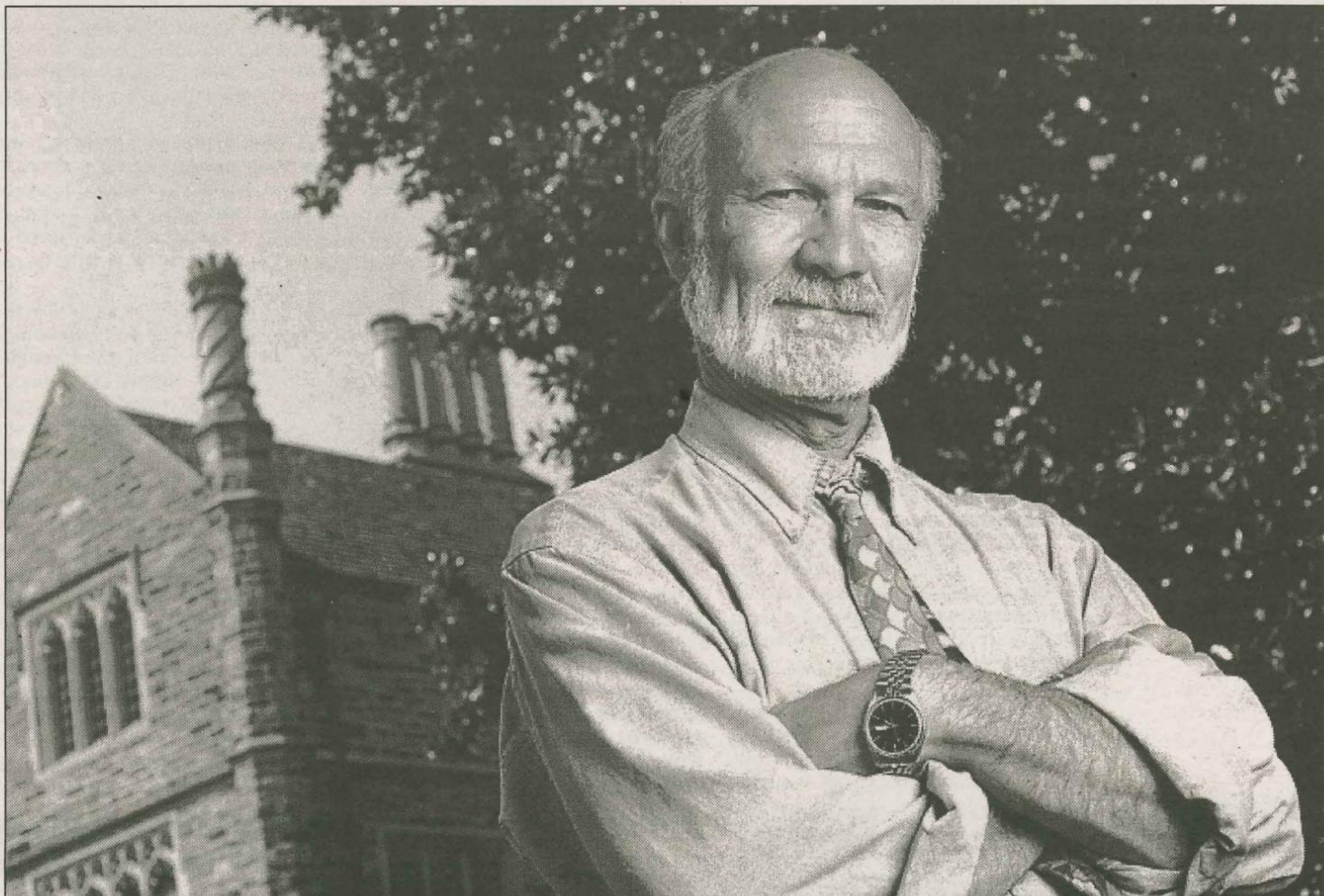
He's not embarrassed to talk about Jesus in public, and he's not afraid if he occasionally sounds like a fundamentalist street preacher.

This bald and bearded professor has made a name for himself in Christian and academic circles with his efforts to jolt Christians out of their complacency and force them to confront what he thinks is the radical message of the Gospels.

For too long, Hauerwas believes, Christians have equated going to church with being good citizens. He wants to show them the two could not be more different. In his view, Christian loyalty should be to Jesus, not to American democracy or market capitalism.

At 61, Hauerwas is considered the most prolific and influential theologian working in the United States, a man who has reconfigured the landscape of Christian ethics. His 22 books have been translated into such languages as German and Japanese. He is sought after worldwide—traveling out of town on average once a week. Last September, he was crowned "America's Best Theologian," by Time magazine.

"He's someone whose work has influenced a whole generation of thinkers," said Jean Bethke Elshtain, a professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago divinity school. "He's someone you can't safely afford to ignore. His impact is undeniable."



Hauerwas is a complex person. He sees Christians as a holy people set apart from modern society, but he himself is known for rough language. He is a man of humble beginnings who takes pride in his blue-collar heritage, but he feels most comfortable at a white-collar school.

His theology is equally difficult to define. He is best known for his scathing criticism of both political and theological liberalism. To him, the two are different but equally destructive in promoting the idea that people are best served when allowed to chase after their desires in an endless and meaningless fashion.

Yet it would be misleading to define him as a conservative. He is a pacifist who believes nonviolence is the only way to stop the cycle of an eye for an eye.

As for the war in Afghanistan, Hauerwas thinks it's unbecoming for Christians to celebrate military victory. The proper Christian response to war, he thinks, is mourning. "Drape the sanctuary in black," he said, "and mourn that we've had to kill."

Even those who have never read his writings know Hauerwas for one thing: He is a religious scholar who swears like a sailor.

At Duke Divinity School, proud of its Methodist affiliation and steeped in Southern niceties, that is bad manners. But Hauerwas feels no urge to quit swearing. Just as he calls on Christians to speak the language of their faith, he thinks he should be able to speak the language of his upbringing. The son of a bricklayer who never went to college, Hauerwas keeps an arsenal of choice expletives to remind him of his roots.

They escape his mouth most often when he feels people are being pretentious, a trait he particularly hates at church.

If he stands out for his language, that suits Hauerwas' contrarian disposition just fine.

Christians, he thinks, should be odd. As the title of his most accessible book suggests, he wants Christians to live like "Resident Aliens"—a holy people removed from the dominant culture and dedicated to following God.

In a Hauerwasian world, Christians would live in community, take communion each Sunday, disclose their salaries to one another and learn the virtues by apprenticing themselves to saints—people who are good at living the Christian faith.

While Hauerwas' fans find this argument refreshing and exciting, others in religious and academic circles aren't as persuaded.

Critics accuse him of not studying the modern world closely enough.

"I don't think he works hard enough at figuring out what our society is really like before criticizing it," said Jeffrey Stout of Princeton. "He's too quick to assume our society is basically an expression of an incoherent version of liberalism. If his criticisms of our society were right, it would be impossible to explain the virtues of the police officers, firefighters, jet passengers and others who risked their lives to save strangers on Sept. 11."

But then, he asks, why aren't firefighters and police officers paid the kind of salaries that would signal society values their work?

Hauerwas was born to lower mid-

dle-class parents in the Dallas suburb of Pleasant Grove. Their home contained two books: The Bible and a collection of Mark Twain.

When he was 7, his father took the boy out on the job and began teaching him to lay brick. By 16 or 17, he was working alongside his dad. That experience probably was the most formative in Hauerwas' life. Years later, it would help him develop the idea that character is formed by apprenticeship.

Hauerwas, who never was ordained, seized on academic life with a passion. His career took off at Notre Dame, where he spent 14 years teaching. He arrived at Duke in 1984; by all accounts, the university has been good to Hauerwas and vice versa.

Yet despite the distance he has traveled, in some ways he never has left Pleasant Grove. Hauerwas believes people are formed by the story they grow up hearing. That story, if clearly told, provides them the skills to negotiate life. To remind himself where he came from, he has hung a level and a trowel that belonged to his father on the wall of his office.

Yet despite his argumentative nature, there is little spiteful about Hauerwas.

He speaks with awe of God's creation, punctuates his conversations with a bellow of a laugh and believes Christians should be "as happy as mockingbirds."

At the Duke forum, he spoke of unbelievers and sounded his battle cry:

"It's better to die for a worthy reason than out of boredom. We're all going to die anyway. Let's die going down with the colors."

STANLEY HAUERWAS
The Duke University Divinity School theologian is considered one of America's most important Protestant theologians.
(RNS photo)

Colson challenges Christians to evangelize Muslims

"The God of Muhammad is not the God of Jesus Christ. Gently and lovingly, we've got to let people understand this."

Charles Colson, author and founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries

By Jeffrey MacDonald
Religion News Service

BOSTON (RNS)—Predicting "great clashes" between evangelicalism and Islam, one of evangelical Christianity's leading figures recently urged thousands of Christians to renew efforts to convert Muslims. "What I want is for all Muslims to see the love of Christ in stark contrast to what happened on 9-11," Charles Colson told a crowd of 2,500 evangelicals.

"Let's not forget that (alleged shoe bomber) Richard Reid was a product of aggressive Muslim activity in the prisons," Colson added. "It's essential that we evangelize and seize this moment that is a moment of opportunity."

When asked to elaborate, Colson defended the cause.

"The Muslim is lost, as is the Mormon. They're fair game for evangelism, as is the Jew. I would say there should be more of a push now to reach Muslims. One would hope they'd be reconsidering their faith."

Colson's words at Congress 2002, where 9,500 New England evangelicals held worship and workshops Jan. 24-26, stand out as a rare-

ly spoken sentiment in the aftermath of Sept. 11's terrorist attacks. Some Christian leaders have instead discussed Islam as a great world religion, worthy of closer study and possibly acceptance in the name of tolerance.

Southern Baptist Convention leaders, including SBC President James Merritt and International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin, also have urged prayer for the conversion of Muslims to Christianity. They promoted a day of prayer for Muslims in December, noting that "we see the opportunity increasing for Muslims to come to Christ."

Colson, a Watergate criminal whose conversion launched a career of promoting Christianity, uses magazine columns, 16 books and his Prison Fellowship Ministries in 88 countries to reach millions.

Amid widespread calls for more acceptance of Islam, Colson's call to evangelize Muslims in particular presents another option for Christians, but one that not all evangelicals find comfortable.

"Everyone needs Jesus. I don't think we should be trying to reach any one group," said Janah Trent of Kittery, Maine. "I think we should be evangelizing everyone at any time."

Evangelism, or spreading the Christian message so others come to believe, has always been a focus of this 42-year-old annual event but has suffered a diminished profile in recent years.



Colson

Organizers in 1969 renamed New England's "Congress on Evangelism" simply "Congress," and have kept the obscuring truncation ever since. The sponsoring organization changed its own name in 1996 from the Evangelistic Association of New England to Vision New England in order to "overcome the old stigma."

This year, in a cultural climate shaped by terrorism and spiritual searching, evangelicals at the meeting said they feel more confident in general to pursue the Great Commission of spreading faith in Christ.

"Certainly people are more open today than they were a year ago to hear and discuss," said Kathy

Brooks of Manchester, N.H. Inspired by more television interviewers' asking celebrities about their faith in God, for instance, she said, "I think the time is here."

Bob Robinson, Monica's husband, said he went on his first evangelism trip in October to the Bronx and was shocked by the reception his group of 100 volunteers received. None of the 205 people they talked to were resistant, he said, and 108 signed professions of faith.

"I'm a little braver now," Robinson said. "God put me in that position and showed me I can do that. I'm starting to step out of my comfort zone."

Going beyond comfort will be a necessity, Colson told his audience, as Christians confront popular rhetoric about how everyone worships the same God and all paths lead to the same source.

"We (Christians) are confronted with two great challenges: secular naturalism at home and now Islam," Colson said. "In the years ahead, we will see great clashes of evangelicalism coming head to head with Muslims. ... The God of Mohammad is not the God of Jesus Christ. Gently and lovingly, we've got to let people understand this."

Cell discovery has potential to transform cloning debate

WASHINGTON (BP)—The discovery of a stem cell in adults that reportedly has remarkable powers could prove a watershed in the contentious debates over cloning and human embryo research.

A researcher at the University of Minnesota claims to have found a stem cell that "can turn into every single tissue in the body," according to a report in a recent issue of *New Scientist* magazine.

A confirmation of the discovery would mean cells from a person's body "could one day be turned into all sorts of perfectly matched replacement tissues and even organs," *New Scientist* reported.

A validation of the finding also would undercut the campaign by some researchers, patients' rights groups and politicians for human embryonic stem cell experimentation as well as human cloning for research purposes. Both procedures result in the destruction of the embryos.

"If this discovery proves to be true, this will be genuinely splendid and revolutionary news," said Ben Mitchell, a biomedical consultant for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

University of Minnesota researcher Catherine Verfaillie discovered the cell in adult bone marrow, and extensive research has been conducted, according to *New Scientist*.

The experiments indicate the cells, called multipotent adult progenitor cells, have the same versatility as embryonic stem cells without at least one drawback. The adult cells can develop into numerous types of tissues—muscle, cartilage, bone and liver—and different types of neurons and brain cells, according to *New Scientist*. Unlike embryonic cells, they do not appear to form cancerous masses when injected into adults, according to the report.

Though the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission opposes embryonic stem cell research, it supports the use of stem cells from sources that don't harm humans or embryos, such as placentas and adult bone marrow.

The isolation of stem cells provides hope for producing cells and tissues to use as replacements in treating a variety of conditions, including Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, heart disease and diabetes.

Council action halts ACLU Satan-related suit against town

INGLIS, Fla. (RNS)—The threat of a suit against the town of Inglis, Fla., seems to have dissipated after the town's commission declared that the mayor acted alone when she proclaimed that Satan was banned from the municipality.

In swift action Jan. 28, the commission decided that the proclamation was the work of an individual and not a town official because it was never authorized, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported.

Mayor Carolyn Risher used town stationery to declare: "Be it known from this day forward that Satan, ruler of darkness, giver of evil, destroyer of what is good and just, is not now, nor ever again will be, a part of this town of Inglis. Satan is hereby declared powerless, no longer ruling over, nor influencing, our citizens."

The American Civil Liberties Union, after learning about the proclamation from town resident Polly Browner, had threatened to sue, believing that the posting of the proclamation at entrances to the town was unconstitutional.

But after the commission vote, Gary Edinger, an attorney with the ACLU chapter in Gainesville, Fla., said, "This takes care of it nicely."

Almost 100 supporters of Risher's action packed the Town Hall for the standing-room-only meeting.

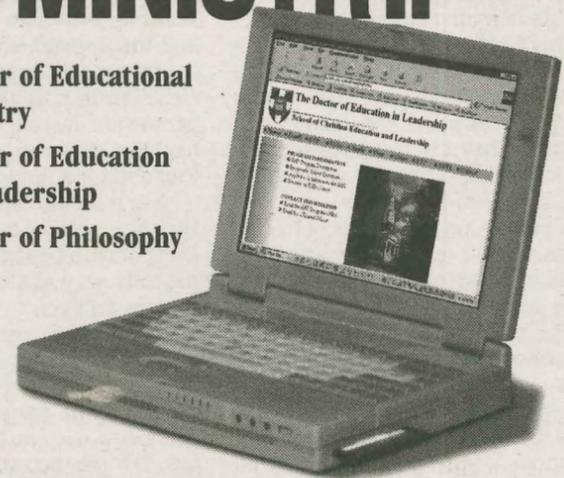
"The ACLU makes me sick," Glenda Townsend, a 50-year-old retiree, said into a microphone. "Evil will abound when good men do nothing. It's time to stand up, America."

The controversy began on Halloween, when the mayor was inspired to write the proclamation after attending a church cookout.

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Israel turning to evangelicals for grassroots support

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Solidifying its relationship with American evangelicals, the government of Israel has launched initiatives that include expenses-paid trips to the Holy Land and strategy sessions with the Christian Coalition and other conservative groups.

The objectives: to revive Israel's sagging tourism industry and strengthen grassroots political and other support in the United States. The target audience is America's estimated 98 million evangelicals, but especially a subset of that group, Christian Zionists.

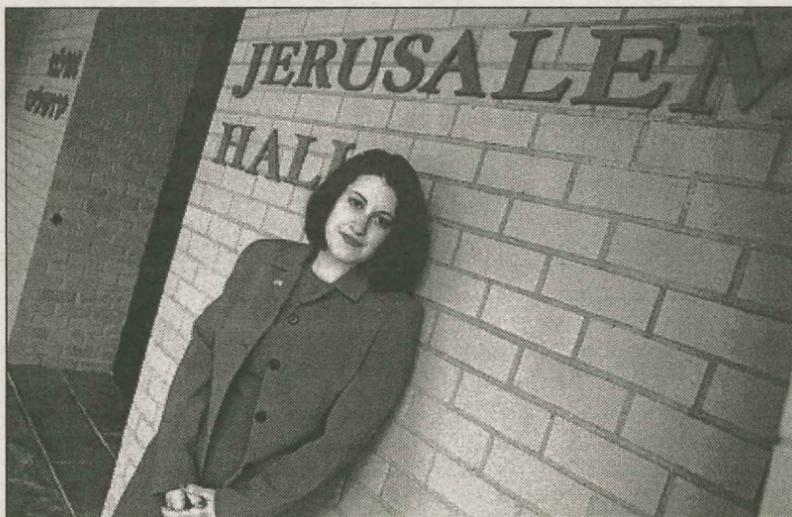
These Christians believe that Jews are God's chosen people who have a divine deed to their contested land, in accordance with a covenant described in Genesis.

But Christian Zionism is about more than private belief. It's "anything for Israel" theology has the potential to affect American foreign policy in the same way that the Christian right has influenced domestic issues through political pressure.

"If I felt the administration or anyone in Congress was moving away from support of Israel, believe me, I'd encourage people to pick up the phone and tell their legislators, 'Don't you dare!'" said Janet Parshall, who hosts a weekday show syndicated on evangelical radio stations across the country.

Israel considers American evangelicals a vital constituency.

"Are we increasing our efforts this year? Yes," said Rami Levi, Israel's New York City-based tourism commissioner for North America.



EVANGELICAL EMPHASIS Shari Dollinger, officer for interreligious affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, is organizing a series of monthly meetings at the embassy's Jerusalem Hall to increase grassroots support among evangelical Christians. (RNS photo by Tyrone Turner)

"But we've been increasing our efforts for many years. What we know is evangelicals are very supportive of Israel. They see all of Israel—not just our tourism, but our economy, our national interest—as a love. It's their spiritual belief that that is the way it has to be. We can always rely on them."

The number of visitors to Israel plunged 55 percent in 2001, compared to the previous, record-breaking year, according to The Jerusalem Post. The drop is blamed on fear of terrorism and other violence.

In a marketing plan dated December 2001, TouchPoint Solutions, a Colorado Springs, Colo., consulting agency hired by Israel's Ministry of Tourism, describes how to reverse that trend by appealing to American evan-

gelicals. Highlights include:

- Persuading the top 30 evangelical Zionists, through face-to-face meetings, to visit and promote Israel. Those named in a separate TouchPoint document, titled "Who are the Christian Zionists?", include religious broadcaster Jerry Falwell, Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson, Texas pastor John Hagee, best-selling author Tim LaHaye and Parshall.

- Sending a letter to the largest 100,000 evangelical churches and a postcard to another 350,000, directing them to Israel's tourism Web site, GoIsrael.com.

- Conducting "Israel Solidarity Days" in 100 cities, beginning with Colorado Springs, from Feb. 24 to March 1. Publicly, prayer ceremonies will focus on Israel and its biblical

importance. Privately, local evangelical leaders will be urged to make "solidarity trips" to Israel. Some will have their trip expenses paid by Israel.

"The idea is to sell the sellers," said TouchPoint President Butch Maltby, adding that the multimillion-dollar marketing plan has been agreed upon in principle, with certain aspects dependent on funding by the Knesset, the Israeli parliament.

Maltby described tourism as more than an economic matter. "It's also a political tool. Every person that comes to Israel becomes an ambassador to Israel. Every tourist becomes a public relations person."

The blurring of the lines among piety, politics and public relations was evident at a Jan. 8 meeting at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. Two representatives from the Christian Coalition were among 18 evangelical leaders attending.

Each participant received "Why Christians Should Support Israel," written by Richard Booker, a Texas-based Christian minister. The booklet quotes Genesis 17:7-8 in its argument that God made an eternal covenant in which He gave "the land in which you are a stranger," modern-day Israel, to Abraham and his descendants.

Jews and Muslims both see Abraham as their patriarch. But Christian Zionists contend that Muslims are the descendants of Abraham's illegitimate son, Ishmael, who doesn't share in the promise of land. Jews are seen as the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's legitimate son.

Thus, only Jews are regarded as holding a rightful claim to the land that has been a source of international conflict ever since Israel became a state in 1948.

"What we know is evangelicals are very supportive of Israel. ... We can always rely on them."

Rami Levi, Israel's tourism commissioner for North America

Legal and religious leaders explore faith and death penalty

By Bob Smetana
Religion News Service

CHICAGO (RNS)—Beth Wilkinson wasn't the most well-known speaker at "A Call to Reckoning," a recent conference on the death penalty sponsored by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

Speakers at the conference last month at the University of Chicago included U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, Cardinal Avery Dulles, Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating and former Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill.

Wilkinson was, however, probably the only speaker at the conference who had asked a jury to sentence someone to death.

Wilkinson, a former federal prosecutor, gave the closing arguments at the sentencing hearing of Timothy McVeigh on June 12, 1997. "Serve justice," she told jurors. "Speak as the moral conscience of the community and sentence Timothy McVeigh to death."

Describing herself as a "struggling supporter" of the death penalty, Wilkinson told the more than 400 people in attendance that she had been opposed to the death penalty when she was in college. Her views changed while she was serving as federal pros-

ecutor in New York state. "I started to see true evil," she said. "I saw people that I thought justified the death penalty as moral punishment."

Still, Wilkinson said, she had not been part of a death penalty case before McVeigh's trial. She faced her own conflicted feelings about the morality of the death penalty while writing her closing arguments two days before the sentencing hearing.

"Not until June 10, did I really confront my own moral questions and compass," Wilkinson said, "and prepare to stand there and ask 12 jurors to execute another human being."

As McVeigh's execution approached this fall, Wilkinson said she wondered if she would feel any moral conflicts about her role in his death penalty.

"As it turned out," she said, "I felt nothing for McVeigh. I felt for the victims, but I felt nothing for McVeigh."

But Wilkinson said she is concerned that the death penalty is applied unfairly. Because of that, she is co-chair of the Constitution Projects Death Penalty Initiative (www.constitutionproject.org), a group that has recommended reforms in the death penalty process. Their findings were recently published in a booklet called "Mandatory Justice."

Most of the speakers at the conference argued that the death penalty could be justified on moral grounds. Dulles gave an overview of Roman Catholic teaching through history, which supported the right of the state, as an agent to God, to impose the death penalty.

The most contentious segment of the conference came during a panel discussion among Scalia, Simon and Wilkinson, led by Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne.

Scalia, a Roman Catholic, said he disagreed with the position, reflected in "Evangelium Vitae," a 1995 message from Pope John Paul, that the death penalty was immoral.

Instead, he said, two millennia of Catholic teaching support the morality of the death penalty. "I have given this new position careful consideration and I have rejected it," he said. "I do not feel that the death penalty is immoral."

Scalia argued the "more Christian a society is," the more likely it is to see the death penalty as moral. "Abolition (of the death penalty) has taken hold in post-Christian Europe more than in church-going America," he said. "For believing Christians, death is no big deal. To the nonbeliever, to deprive a man of his life is to end his existence."

Several members of the audience challenged Scalia on his views. One said that the death penalty was immoral because it was applied unfairly.

"You want to have a fair death penalty," Scalia replied. "You kill, you die. Period. And my court said that's not a good idea."

Simon also challenged Scalia on the morality of the death penalty, arguing that Christian teaching on moral matters has changed over the centuries. "There is no condemnation of the death penalty in the Bible," he said. He also pointed out that "there is no condemnation of slavery in the Bible" either, "yet we have not found slavery to be moral."

Simon also said the death penalty system was flawed. Since 1976, he said, 12 people have been executed in Illinois, while 13 people have been released from death row and exonerated. Simon said the lives of white murder victims are seen as more valuable than black victims' lives.

"In Florida, a murderer is four times more likely to receive the death penalty if the victim is white," he said. "In Illinois, they are 4.8 times more likely to receive the death penalty."

"The question is not whether the death penalty is moral," Simon said. "The question is, 'Is it wise?'"

"The question is not whether the death penalty is moral. The question is, 'Is it wise?'"

Former U.S. Sen. Paul Simon

NATIONAL NOTES

■ Soldiers' Muslim garb rule changed.

The U.S. Defense Department has changed its policy regarding whether female members of the military in Saudi Arabia have to wear a head-to-toe garment—traditionally worn by Muslim women—when leaving their base. The military instructions now state that “wear of the abaya in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged.” The action came after Air Force Lt. Col. Martha McSally sued Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to get the policy overturned, saying the previous policy violated her constitutional rights to freedoms of religion, speech and equal protection.

■ Land criticizes media. The head of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission recently said the media is failing to note American Taliban member John Walker Lindh faced a major trauma at age 16 when his father divorced his mother and declared his homosexuality. Saying that might have forced Lindh “off his rails and toward becoming a Muslim fanatic,” Land accused the media of suppressing anything that might damage the homosexual agenda. “If his father was a fundamentalist Christian, you’d know it by now,” he said. “Can you imagine what it would be like for a 16-year-old boy to discover that his father was a homosexual? ... Don’t you think it might cause you to question everything in your life?”

■ Watchtower charged in abuse case.

A Sacramento, Calif., woman has filed suit against the headquarters of Jehovah’s Witnesses, claiming the denomination has tolerated child abuse by its elders and disciplined victims instead of those committing sexual abuse. Erica Rodriguez, 23, charged that when she reported to denomination officials that she had been abused by an elder on a weekly basis from the time she was 4 until she was 11, she was told to be silent and to let the situation be resolved within the organization. When she announced she would contact the police, she was warned that she might be disfellowshipped from the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

■ Islam school course draws fire. A middle-school course on Islam taught in California has become a point of controversy. One parent filed a complaint against the San Luis Obispo school district, claiming that the schools do not give as much instruction time for teaching other religions. In that district, students pretended they were warriors fighting for Islam. In a second district, students read verses from the Koran and studied Islamic proverbs. Ken Connor, president of the Washington-based Family Research Council, called the classes unfair. “Anything that smacks of Christianity is systematically excluded in the classroom, but everything else like Wicca to Islam is welcomed.”

■ Judge: Judo bow not religious.

Bowing to a picture of the founder of judo before a match is not a violation of an individual’s religious freedom, a federal judge ruled last month. U.S. District Judge Robert Lasnik rejected the argument of three judo contestants who said the customary bow violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act because it discriminates on the basis of religion. Jim Bregman, president of the U.S. Judo Association, said, “It’s clear the bow in judo is simply a respectful act, like a handshake in wrestling.”

■ Jews protest lingerie store. A neighborhood coalition of Jewish groups on Manhattan’s liberal Upper West Side are protesting the imminent arrival of a Victoria’s Secret lingerie store, saying it is inappropriate for an area populated by families and young children. The loose-knit New York Westside Coalition has been holding demonstrations outside the store. The group says some of the store’s ads are “lurid and ‘neo-pornographic.’”

■ Eastern College now a university. Eastern College, a school in St. Davids, Pa. affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, USA, has become Eastern University. The change follows the recommendation of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools based on the number of its graduate programs at the school, where author and popular Baptist speaker Tony Campolo teaches.

■ Bush signs law on adoption. President Bush last month signed legislation aiming to build stronger families by encouraging adoption, helping children leaving foster care and providing mentors for kids with imprisoned parents. His action expands the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program by providing additional resources to states to help promote adoption and strengthen parental relationships. It also will help provide benefits to young adults who are “aging out” of foster care. Bush said his budget for next year will propose \$505 million in funding for the program, a \$130 million increase. “Government cannot love a child, but it can support those who do,” Bush said.

■ Faith-based plan back to ‘square one.’ Two key senators are hoping to revive President Bush’s stalled “faith-based initiative” soon. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., and Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., both say compromise will be needed to forge an agreement between Congress and the White House to increase aid to religious groups that provide social services. “We’re back to square one,” said Santorum spokesman Robert Traynham. “We’re certainly going to work in a bipartisan fashion to try to press Mr. (Majority Leader Tom) Daschle for a date sooner rather than later.” Both senators welcomed a report last month by an independent group that found 29 areas of “common ground” on expanding the role of faith-based groups.

Our estate planning goals

As a matter of integrity, I would never ask you to do what I had not already done. My wife and I have just completed another review of our estate plans, and we made several changes not only in our wills, but also in other estate planning documents. Since we last made changes, one of our children has become an adult, the sizes of our estates have grown and we needed to make some changes in the way assets had been titled. If you have not reviewed your estate planning documents in the past three years, let me urge you to do so. You may not need to make any changes, but it is a good idea to give your overall plan a review at least every three years.

As we prayerfully considered the changes we needed to make, these were the goals we established for ourselves. At the top of the list we wanted to honor the Lord through Baptist causes. We took into consideration our entire estates, including life insurance and retirement plan assets. We used retirement plan assets for the charitable component of our estate plans due to the unique tax savings opportunities of using those versus other assets.

Another goal was to provide for

each spouse and our children under every conceivable circumstance that might occur, including distributions to our children at different age intervals in their lives.

We made sure we had designated, informed and instructed the individuals and institution that would serve as fiduciaries, including primary and alternate executors, power of attorneys, trustees, healthcare surrogates and guardians. We incorporated incapacity plans as well as distribution at death plans. We prepared a detailed net worth statement so we could minimize any death tax considerations.

In order to assure an orderly and cost efficient transition at the time, we have kept good records and let our fiduciaries know where to find them when needed. Finally, we used this occasion as another opportunity to teach our children our convictions about Christian estate stewardship.

Call Laurie Valentine toll-free for help. She is available at no cost. She was most helpful to us in getting prepared for our attorney to draft the documents.

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

KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

On message and in focus

You have elected me to be your president. It is an honor, a responsibility and a privilege. I promise to listen to all Kentucky Baptists and not to dishonor the office.

In a one-year term one doesn’t come in with a lot of innovative programs and bright ideas. However, I do hope to keep us united, on message and in focus on what we are all about.

Unity of doctrine is important. Doctrine was important to Paul. He wrote several New Testament books chock-full of doctrine. Yet he would say, “I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Let us keep on message concerning missions and evangelism. Kentucky Baptists have been the model for many other states on how to do partnership missions. We’ve been at it for almost 20 years now. Because we have learned and experienced how to do missions in other settings, we also have become better at evangelism in our own church locales. Let us keep on doing it and even more.

It is time that churches become more concerned about the welfare of their pastors and other staff members. There are many ministers who

have little or no annuity or health insurance. All of our career missionaries, both international and domestic, have good annuity and health coverage and they should have. Yet we neglect the “local” missionary—the pastor. Churches should pay an amount equal to at least 10 percent of salary for the staff for annuity and provide health insurance.

On message and in focus also has to do with our Baptist schools and colleges: Campbellsville, Clear Creek, Cumberland, Georgetown, Mid-Continent and Oneida. (While Mid-Continent doesn’t receive Cooperative Program funds, it is a Baptist college in Kentucky and deserves our support.)

I am a debtor to our Baptist colleges. We have not increased our matching funds in decades while the cost of going to college has increased four-fold. If we are to keep our educational institutions, it behooves us to support them. We must do more.

May our Father help us to keep on message and in focus this year.

Harold Greenfield is president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention which sponsors this column. Contact the KBC at Box 43433, Louisville, KY 40253-0433; (800) 266-6477; www.kybaptist.org

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



Harold Greenfield

Study: Basic cable TV raunchier than broadcast

LOS ANGELES (RNS)—Prime-time programs on basic cable in 2001 were far raunchier than prime-time programs aired on broadcast networks in 1999, the Parents Television Council has found.

In a study released last week, the council reported that the rate of sexual content on the analyzed cable programs in 2001 was equal to the broadcast rate in the fall of 1999—3.6 instances per hour.

But the findings in the foul language and violence categories on cable in 2001 (13.3 instances of foul language per hour and 4.7 cases of violence per hour) were much more frequent than on the broadcast shows in 1999 (5.0 instances of foul language

per hour and 1.3 cases of violence per hour).

Overall, the combined rate of sexual references, use of coarse language and instances of violence totaled 21.7 instances per hour on basic cable, compared to 9.8 instances on broadcast networks. (Some of the figures may have been rounded.) The fall 1999 broadcast network figures were the most recent compiled by the council.

Comedy Central's "South Park" was cited as the worst series, with a combined average of 126 offensive instances per hour. Two shows on MTV, "Undergrads" (73.2) and "Celebrity Deathmatch" (66), ranked second and third.

"The study clearly reveals that the cable industry is eclipsing the broadcast networks' ability to crank out offensive programming in prime time," said Brent Bozell III, founder and president of the Parents Television Council, which promotes responsible entertainment.

"The PTC will continue to loudly voice the concerns of our more than 700,000 members to the sponsors, cable networks and local cable systems that support exceedingly offensive and vulgar material."

Analysts for the council reviewed 33 basic-cable series, amounting to more than 100 hours of programming, that were broadcast in the spring and summer of 2001.

Poll: Students more liberal on homosexuality, death penalty

LOS ANGELES (RNS)—Today's college freshmen are more supportive of same-sex relationships and less likely to back the death penalty than their predecessors were, a new UCLA study shows.

A record-high 57.9 percent of freshmen in the fall of 2001 said they believed that same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status. That percentage is an increase from 56 percent in 2000 and 50.9 percent in 1997.

One-fourth of entering students supported laws forbidding homosexual relationships, compared to 27.2 percent in 2000. In 1987, half of the students surveyed agreed with such laws.

Researchers found that 32.2 percent of freshmen support ending capital punishment, an increase from 31.2 percent in 2000 and the highest score since 1980.

"In short, what we have been seeing in the past few years is a broad-based trend toward greater liberalism on practically every attitudinal question in the survey," said Alexander Astin, education professor at the University of California at Los Angeles and founding director of the survey.

A record high of 15.8 percent of freshmen reported that they had no current religious preference, compared to 14.9 percent in 2000 and 6.6 percent in 1966. An all-time high of 12.4 percent of incoming students said their fathers have no religious preference and a record high of 7.8 percent said their mothers had no religious preference.

Researchers also found a decline in the percentage of students who pray or meditate at least once a week—from 67.7 percent in 2000 to 65.7 percent in 2001.

The survey, conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, included 291,064 incoming college students at 421 of the country's higher education institutions.

Barney's owner suing creator of Larry the Cucumber

ALLEN, Texas (RNS)—The company that originated Barney the purple dinosaur has sued the creator of VeggieTales characters Larry the Cucumber and Bob the Tomato, saying a verbal agreement was not upheld.

Lyrick Studios, based in Allen, Texas, has charged that Big Idea Productions of Lombard, Ill., abruptly ended a deal first initiated in 1997 that allowed Lyrick to handle manufacturing and distribution of some of Big Idea's products, the Dallas Business Journal reported.

Lyrick, writing in documents filed Jan. 4 in U.S. District Court in Dallas, contends the agreement is binding despite the absence of a

written contract. Company officials hope the court will stop Big Idea from ending the contract or order it to pay damages "for irreparable harm to its business reputation."

Lyrick officials stated their company would receive as much as \$30 million during the remaining six years of the agreement.

"We vigorously defend what we believe to be our contractual right," said Sue Beddingfield, senior vice president of marketing.

Big Idea CEO Terry Botwick declined to comment to the Dallas publication.

According to the suit, after Lyrick was purchased last March by London-based HIT Entertainment and became

its U.S. headquarters, Big Idea requested that Lyrick continue its work with the company. The Texas company responded with a letter detailing plans to continue with the agreement.

The business journal said Botwick allegedly said in a Jan. 3 phone discussion with Lyrick officials that Big Idea had entered into a new agreement.

Beddingfield declined to comment on why Lyrick had not worked harder to obtain a written contract.

Lyrick signed a contact last year with PBS to broadcast "Barney & Friends" through 2007. Big Idea plans to feature VeggieTales characters in a movie later this year titled "Jonah—A VeggieTales Movie."

Founders Day

By Robert Dunston

On Monday, Jan. 21, Cumberland College celebrated its annual Founders Day. The occasion provided an opportunity for us to celebrate the past and look toward the future.

Harold Carter was the special speaker for the morning chapel service. Carter has served as pastor of New Shiloh Baptist Church in Baltimore since 1964 and is a renowned preacher, speaker and author.

Carter earned doctorates from St. Mary's Ecumenical University in Baltimore and from Colgate Bexler Hall/Crozer Seminary in Rochester, N.Y.

In recent years he has spoken at Promise Keepers rallies in Charlotte, N.C., and Indianapolis.

Carter has written several books. His first book, "The Prayer Tradition of Black People," remains a standard resource in black spirituality. Many churches use his book, "Building Disciples in the Local Church," to renew their congregations spiritually.

His book, "America, Where Are You Going?" serves as a vital call to our nation to examine its direction in light of the Chris-

tian faith.

Carter's timely message focused on the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He reminded us that King's commitment to civil rights grew out of his commitment to Jesus Christ and biblical theology. Carter encouraged us to continue to work through love rather than violence.

Working together, he said, we can build a better, stronger and more godly nation.

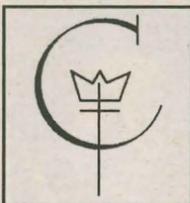
Cumberland College first opened its doors in January 1889 seeking to provide a quality education immersed in Christian values. As we enter 2002, we share the same commitment our founders did.

We continue to provide the best liberal arts education while encouraging our students to grow in their Christian faith while they serve others.

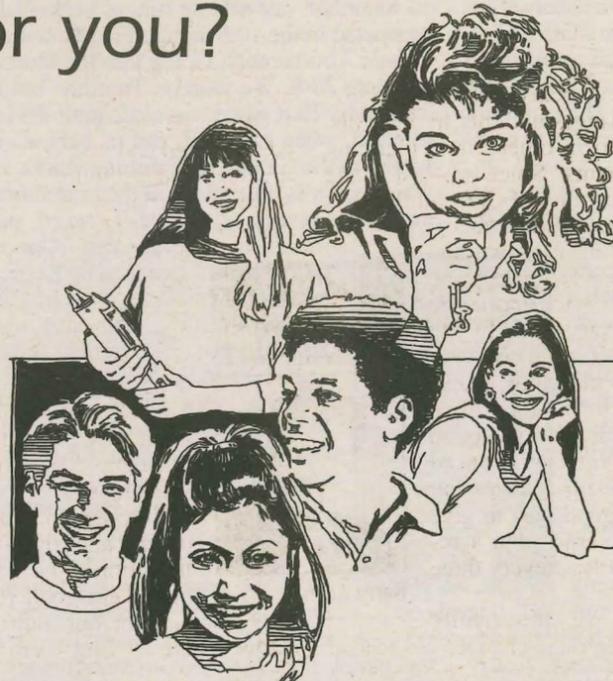
Carter's sermon reminded us of those who have gone before us and pointed us to the Guide for our life and the Source of our strength.

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

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



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School voucher debate returns to Wisconsin where it started

MADISON, Wis. (ABP)—The long battle over "school choice"—giving public money to private schools—is revving up again in the state where it began.

A group of taxpayers has asked the Wisconsin Supreme Court to review its 1998 decision upholding expansion of a school voucher program in Milwaukee.

Four plaintiffs in the original lawsuit are asking the state's highest court to overturn its decision allowing expansion of the program to include religious schools. They claim one of the justices deciding the case had a conflict of interest, violating their right to due process.

The justice, Jon Wilcox, voted with the 4-2 majority upholding the voucher program in 1998. A year earlier, however, Wilcox received contributions from pro-voucher individuals and groups in a re-election campaign against a voucher opponent.

Wilcox's campaign organization and its manager recently settled another lawsuit with the state elections board, which had charged the campaign with illegally coordinating resources with pro-voucher forces in order to win the election.

The original plaintiffs claim Wilcox should have known that he had received campaign contributions from pro-voucher groups and removed himself from the case.

Wisconsin Gov. Scott McCallum criticized the request for review of the 1998 decision. "School choice in Milwaukee is working," he said. "It is successful. It has helped so many children and their families. Why these people want to hurt economic-disadvantaged children is beyond me."

The Wisconsin case could become moot pending outcome of an Ohio voucher case currently before the U.S. Supreme Court. That body will review a Cleveland "school choice" program and may decide if such programs nationwide are constitutional. Oral arguments before the court in the Cleveland case are scheduled for Feb. 20.

Religious Freedom Commission unsure how to address N. Korea

By Robert Marus
Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (ABP)—Despite evidence of widespread human rights violations in North Korea, American officials are unsure about how to investigate them properly and disagree about how to respond.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom heard testimony Jan. 24 from witnesses with firsthand experience of the Communist regime.

Several witnesses described a systematic repression of religion. They included a North Korean defector who told of the imprisonment, summary execution and torture of Christians.

But witnesses disagreed on the proper U.S. response. Recommendations ranged from increased engagement with North Korea to further isolating the government and ratcheting up sanctions.

Witness Norbert Vollertsen, a doctor who spent a year and a half in North Korea as a medical volunteer, said he got special access normally denied to foreign visitors because he was given a special humanitarian award by the Korean government.

Though the government in P'yongyang often points to the fact that there are three church buildings—two Protestant, one Catholic—in the capital city, Vollertsen said he never saw any Sunday morning activity at any of them. Taking a tour of one

church where the person who said he was pastor boasted of 300-400 Christians in attendance every Sunday, Vollertsen said, "We found all the seats in the church full of dust—never used in the last months, maybe years."

Soon Ok-Lee, a former North Korean civil servant, provided the day's most graphic testimony. Sent to a "reform institution" for a crime she says she did not commit, Ok-Lee said she witnessed brutal mistreatment of Christians. Ok-Lee said prison guards regularly attempted to get Christian prisoners to recant their faith.

After hearing about the state of religious liberty in North Korea, commissioners heard conflicting testimony from policy experts regarding how the U.S. can promote human rights in the Asian country.

Jack Rendler of the U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea called ostracizing North Korea the wrong approach. "Isolation will not punish the governing elite of (North Korea) nearly as much as it will do further damage to the 23 million people of North Korea."

A former foreign policy adviser to the House Policy Committee disagreed, however. Chuck Downs said much humanitarian aid to North Korea is tightly controlled by the government and often does not make it to those in need. "The danger in providing aid to North Korea is that the United States will bear responsibility for prolonging the regime's survival."

Franklin Graham adds president to CEO duties at dad's organization

MINNEAPOLIS (RNS)—Evangelist Franklin Graham has been given an additional title by the board of directors of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Along with his role as CEO, Franklin Graham is now president, the association announced.

He succeeds John Corts, who retired in December after 35 years with the organization, including a decade as president and chief operating officer.

Franklin Graham, 49, the son of evangelist Billy Graham, also is president and chairman of Samaritan's Purse, an international Christian relief organization based in Boone, N.C.

Billy Graham, 83, continues as chairman and has plans for two evangelistic missions later this year—in June in Cincinnati and in October in Dallas. His son has festivals planned in five locations, starting with El Salvador in March and ending in Argentina in November.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, currently based in Minneapolis, announced in November that it would relocate its international headquarters to Charlotte, N.C., the birthplace of Billy Graham.

You win some ... and you lose some

We have been busy with a host of activities. On Friday our boys' varsity basketball team competed in the finals of the 13th Region Class A tournament. We had reached this level of competition only two other times in recent history. In 1990 we lost against Harlan High School. Then in 1992 our victory over Harlan gave us the right to compete at the Class A state level.

Now, 10 years later and for the third time, we again were facing a formidable Harlan team. Our team was coached by Larry Gritton Jr., an Oneida Baptist Institute graduate from the class of 1993. Larry Allen's father, Larry Gritton Sr., was our boys' varsity basketball coach from 1973-93. I recently told you about our school spirit and the benefits of competing in a smaller gym. Friday's game was a perfect example. I was impressed with the turnout of Harlan fans. While a substantial number of Harlan students attended, a much larger number of adults were there.

We did not have nearly as many adults there because most of our students' parents do not live nearby, but we had a lot more students in attendance. Nearly every seat was filled, and the fans of both teams were really excited. It was good to see competition in the stands as well as on the court. The game was close. The lead switched back and forth several times in the first three quarters. The point spread was never more than a few points until Harlan took a five-point lead with less than two minutes to go.

Harlan again came out on top. While our students were obviously disappointed, I was proud of the second place trophy. Our team is young and small, but we have come a long way since the

beginning of the season.

Saturday, our middle school basketball team competed in the 10th annual First National Bank Classic Tournament. Going into the tournament, we were 20-8. We won on Tuesday, but lost on Thursday. That game was close until the last two minutes, when two fouls put us behind. We returned to the Classic on Saturday with a victory, which gave us third place in the tournament. We ended the season with a 22-9 record, our best

record in several years. Our middle school team is coached by Kenny Gridler, an OBI graduate, class of 1986.

Our wrestling team also was busy last weekend. Two middle school students traveled to Northern Kentucky to compete in the junior high state wrestling tournament. Jesse, a seventh grader, placed second in the 98-pound class. Kyle, an eighth grader, placed third in the 150-pound class. Both of these boys are a great asset to our team.

The other wrestlers competed with 12 other schools in a tournament in Danville. Ben, a junior, placed fourth in the 189-pound class. Ben is also in the school choir, so he was up early Sunday morning to go with the choir to Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church in London.

Several students, including some choir members, have the flu and sore throats. I wasn't sure how many would be able to travel Sunday, but except for two students all made the trip. I could tell from the expressions on their faces that some were struggling with sore throats. It has been a busy weekend, with our share of wins and losses.

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

Remembering a visit to chained rock

Chasing a childhood memory brought Greg Webb to Clear Creek Bible College.

"My father was a Pentecostal tent revivalist, and we came to Pineville in 1973. He took me to the chained rock overlooking the city," Greg said "The trip remained a vivid memory, and I wanted to return ever since because it was one of the last things my father and I did together before he died."

In the fall of 2000, Greg, his wife, Donna, and son, Caleb, vacationed in Virginia, and on the way home decided to find the chained rock.

They were surprised that the drive to the rock took them through Clear Creek's campus, and on the return they stopped at the college bookstore. "The student worker gave us the school's Web site, and here we are," Greg said.

What's it like for the son of a Pentecostal preacher at a Baptist Bible college? "My father and I would have some differences doctrinally, but we would agree we both serve the Lord Jesus," Greg stated. "I'm not ashamed of my roots; there is much that we can learn from the Pentecostal holiness

people. They are expressive in worship and have a zeal for God."

Although reared as a preacher's kid, Greg did not come to know the Lord Jesus personally until age 25.

"I married a good Southern Baptist who drug me to church kicking and screaming, but there the power of the Holy Spirit pierced my sin-darkened heart and I came to know

Jesus in a great way,"

Greg recalled. His years of religion without a personal relationship with Jesus have made him more sensitive in the work of evangelism.

Donna met Greg through mutual friends in their hometown of Dyersburg, Tenn. She was 22 and he was 23. They married eight months later and recently celebrated their 10th anniversary.

The family has adjusted well at Clear Creek. Caleb, adopted when he was two days old and now two years old, has many playmates. Donna appreciates the children's resources in the library. She attends chapel with Greg and sings with the Clear Creek Singers.

When Caleb becomes a man we hope he will visit Clear Creek to chase a childhood memory.

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

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

A film to remember?

'Walk' to test if Christians will support the silver screen

By Marshall Allen
Associated Baptist Press

PASADENA, Calif. (ABP)—“A Walk to Remember,” a new movie creating a stir in Christian media, is breaking new ground not only in Hollywood’s portrayal of Christians on screen, but also in unprecedented recognition of the audience potential of the faith community.

The movie, released Jan. 25, stars 17-year-old multi-platinum recording artist Mandy Moore playing a Baptist preacher’s daughter. A known and open Christian character is the movie’s centerpiece.

Moore’s character, Jamie, is portrayed in a flattering light. She is prudent, smart and willing to live according to her faith, even if she’s made fun of for it. The audience is encouraged to emulate Jamie’s character and her life seems to be consistent with the Bible she carries.

For these reasons the movie, which is based on the novel by Nicholas Sparks (author of “Message in a Bottle”) is being marketed to Christian audiences like no release by a major studio ever before.

Producer Denise Di Novi said she had to show Warner Bros. statistical evidence that a large Christian audience exists before the studio would agree to make the film.

Executives hope Jamie’s character will attract enough Christians to bring in big box office profits. The studio certainly has gone to great lengths to get the word out to Christians.

“This is the broadest and largest campaign targeting Christians ever by



a major studio,” Di Novi said.

It remains to be seen whether the gamble will pay off among the audience normally drawn to Christian films, however. While “A Walk to Remember” clearly affirms Jamie’s beliefs, it never fully explains what those beliefs are.

Jamie carries a Bible with her to class, but the name of Jesus is not mentioned in the movie. Landon—the movie’s bad boy—is transformed into a better person. He gives the glory not to God, but to Jamie and the “faith” she had in him.

The publicity campaign included special screenings for Focus on the Family and Christian radio advertis-

ing. At the recommendation of a Christian publicist, several curse words were removed so as not to offend Christian audiences.

And in the boldest move to target the Christian audience, the studio sponsored a Bible study based on “A Walk to Remember.” About a month before the movie opened, the study was sent to about 10,000 youth pastors around the country, along with a movie promotion kit.

The Bible study promises to help leaders “integrate the movie into a solid, biblically based discussion that will reinforce your young friends’ faith in God, and their understanding of His transforming power.”

A surface reading of the material, however, reveals that the studio’s motives aren’t completely altruistic. The Bible study asks youth leaders to hang the “A Walk to Remember” movie poster that accompanies the study. A promotional trailer and information about ordering group tickets also are included.

To their credit, even if marketing suggests otherwise, the film’s makers don’t pretend it’s a Christian movie.

Di Novi said “A Walk to Remember” is not a Christian movie, but a film for young people with a Christian character. She said the first aim of the film is to be a hit and make money.

A WALK TO REMEMBER
Mandy Moore (left) stars as Jamie Sullivan, a Baptist minister’s daughter, in “A Walk to Remember.” Also pictured are Peter Coyote, who portrays Sullivan’s dad and Shane West, a bad boy who turns good through a friendship with Sullivan.
(© Warner Bros.)

Producer of ‘Walk’ says project breaks stereotypes of Christians in film

By Philip Boatwright
Baptist Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (BP)—Rarely does one find filmmaking linked to a religious experience, but producer Denise Di Novi insists that’s the case for her new Warner Bros. release “A Walk to Remember.”

“It was a different experience for me because I really felt guided to make this film,” said Di Novi, a veteran film producer whose projects have included “Little Women,” “Message in a Bottle,” “Edward Scissorhands,” “Batman Returns” and “James and the Giant Peach.”

Now, Di Novi has taken it upon herself to find ways of introducing three-dimensional Christian characters into her recent and upcoming projects. Last year she inserted a believer into the main set of characters on her primetime TV series “The District.”

Soon after, she came across Nicholas Sparks’ novel “A Walk to Remember,” wherein the central figure is also a dedicated Christian.

In her 40s, wife and mother of two and a dedicated follower of Christ, Di Novi said she feels strongly that the time is right for such a film.

“I’ve noticed in my church and in meeting kids that there is a new spiritual awakening with young people,” she said. “I think they are really searching and wanting to make a spiritual commitment.”

“But often teenagers don’t get support or guidance within our culture,” she added. “I felt this book (“A Walk To Remember”) was supportive of the commitment that kids are making.”

Resentful of the cliched portrayal of people of faith found in many films and TV shows, Di Novi devotes much of her

producing efforts to making both filmmakers and filmgoers understand that Christians are more than props to further a plotline.

“I think there is a stereotype that if you are a Christian you’re judgmental, you’re prejudiced against people who are not Christian,” Di Novi said. “I hope this movie breaks down some of that thinking.”

Asked if teens would come away from “A Walk to Remember” understanding what faith is, Di Novi responded, “Well, we were very careful about not hitting it too hard. I didn’t want the movie to feel like a Bible lesson. Hopefully, it’s a gentle message for kids who did not go to Sunday school and did not have Bible study.”

Di Novi points out that this is not a “church” film. It attempts to portray the

moods and attitudes of teenagers honestly, no matter their religious convictions.

“Although not everyone involved with the project was a Christian, there was a feeling of community that we were making a movie about faith and about spiritual commitment,” she said. “All of the young actors felt they were doing something important because so many movies that they perform in are derogatory or negative or demeaning to young people.”

She is enthusiastic that Christians will be seeing other dramas where they are placed in a positive light. “I’m finding television is a more open place for spiritual themes,” she said. “I have three shows in development. I don’t know which ones will reach the air, but they all have Christian characters and Christian themes.”

She also has film scripts with Christian themes or characters, but she’s not as sure they’ll see the big screen. “We’ll see. It’s a tougher road in the movie industry.”



Di Novi

CLASSIFIED ADS

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

By Bill Ellis

February and Valentine's Day bring thoughts of special relationships. In 10 years of campus ministry, I found students always willing to talk about relationships. As I worked with churches, I found that relationships continue to be an important topic throughout life.

A distinctive of the Christian faith is that our assurance of salvation is based on a relationship with Jesus rather than strict adherence to rules, leaders or writings. We are blessed with an incredible gift called our testimony.

Sharing this relationship is as close as your hand. Each finger can help relate the gospel message.

■ The universal "thumbs up" sign illustrates the good news of the gospel that God loves you and has a plan for your life (John 3:16, 10:10).

■ The index finger points to the fact that everyone has sin in our lives that separates us from God (Romans 3:23, 6:23a).

■ The middle finger reminds us of the central truth that Christ died for us (Romans 6:23b, 5:8).

■ The ring finger is a symbol of our eternal relationship with Jesus (Romans 10:9-10).

■ The pinky finger brings to mind that just a little faith placed in a big God can change life forever (Ephesians 2:8-9).

As you think about the relationships in your life this month, be sure to share the incredible news of a relationship with Jesus that is as close as your hand.

Bill Ellis is minister of education and discipleship at Crestwood Baptist Church in Crestwood

CRUISE: Adults from your church are invited to join a group of Kentucky Baptists on an Alaskan cruise. The cruise is on the brand new ship, Star Princess, and is scheduled for June 8-15 with an optional land tour. For more information or a brochure, call toll-free, (877) 557-0073. If necessary, leave message.

FOR SALE: Nineteen oak veneer pews, length: 11' 6", padded in gold cloth. Call (502) 543-8477 or 957-4480.

FOR SALE: New and used buses and vans. New 2001 Ford/Glaival 25-passenger demonstrator; new 2000 Dodge raised-roof van with wheelchair lift, \$28,200; 1996 Chev/Eldorado 30-passenger, low miles, loaded, \$34,900; 1995 Ford/MetroTrans Diesel 14-passenger, no CDL; 1993 Ford/Eldorado Diesel 25-passenger, high miles, \$5,900; 1988 Ford/Supreme 21-passenger with luggage rack, \$5,000. Call for details: (800) 582-7118.

FOR SALE: GMC Motor Coach, model 4905. Great condition; capacity is 47 passengers with reclining seats; excellent AC; restroom and large luggage bays. The coach has been very well maintained, has new paint, is serviced and ready to drive anywhere. GMC coaches are very reliable, comfortable and inexpensive to operate. Price is only \$22,500. The coach can be seen at Gardenside Baptist in Lexington, Ky. Call (859) 277-7301 (ask for Dale Hanson), or (859) 278-7224 (ask for David Dale).

SEEKING: Minister of students and Christian activities. Full-time career position. Requires strong leadership skills and organizational skills. Experience preferred. Excellent compensation package. Respond to: Search Committee, Hurstbourne Baptist Church, 8800 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40222.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, Bowling Green, Ky., is seeking a minister to students. The church is located in the downtown area of Bowling Green near Western Kentucky University. The minister is to provide leadership and guidance to students and parents and assist the pastor in the development and coordination of a comprehensive educational, activity and outreach program to students. A seminary degree is desired. Salary open with benefits. For additional information, contact Steve Snodgrass, Youth Search Committee chair, (270) 781-2718, ext. 221. Church Web site is www.firstbaptistbg.org.

SEEKING: Finchville Baptist Church, located in Shelby County, Ky., is now accepting resumés from people interested in serving as youth minister. Candidates should display a dynamic Christian witness and a calling to minister to and with youth in grades 6-12. Tasks involved in the scope of the position include planning, coordinating, promoting and evaluating all facets of the church's youth ministry. Resumés or recommendations should be sent to the Youth Minister Search Committee, Finchville Baptist Church, PO Box 1, Finchville, KY 40022.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, Richmond, Ky., a church of approximately 1,400 resident members, is seeking a full-time church administrator. Applicant should be a current member of a Southern Baptist church and possess a bachelor's degree or higher, with appropriate training to manage business and fiscal affairs, supervise personnel and provide facilities management. Resumés and requests for a complete job description should be sent to Barbara Sowders, 710 Barnes Mill Road, Richmond, KY 40475-3516.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Tompkinsville, Ky., is now receiving resumés for full-time youth minister. Full-time duties include planning and organizing ministries to junior and senior high students. Position also would include organizing and implementing social activities for the youth in cooperation with Sunday school department and other organizations of the church. Please forward resumés to: First Baptist Church, 302 N Magnolia St., Tompkinsville, KY 42167. All resumés will receive equal consideration.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of recreation to schedule activities for new facility of a fast growing church. Must be self-motivated and have flexible schedule. Position possibly may become full-time. Degree in field preferred. Send resumé to: West Broadway Baptist Church, c/o Minister of Recreation Search Committee. Fax: (502) 499-9882.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for growing church in south central Kentucky. Please send recommendations or resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, 201 Greensburg St., Columbia, KY 42728.

SEEKING: The people of Valley Station Baptist Church are presently seeking an individual to serve as their part-time children's minister. This individual will be responsible for the planning and directing of ministry for children four years old through fifth grade. The children's minister also will work in conjunction with other staff of Valley Station Baptist in the overall leadership of church ministry. This position will require approximately 20 hours per week. Annual salary is \$12,500. For more information about this position, please contact Pastor Jerry Gifford at (502) 937-1730. Please send resumés to: Valley Station Baptist Church, 5415 Valley Station Road, Louisville, KY 40272, Attn: Dennis Sebastian.

SEEKING: Beacon Hill Baptist Church, Somerset, Ky., is accepting resumés for the position of full-time youth pastor and activities. Beacon Hill is a purpose-driven church located in one of the fastest growing communities in Kentucky with an average weekly worship attendance of 550. Responsibilities will include middle and high school youth, college and recreation ministry, including oversight of activities center and supervising youth and activity center interns. Please send resumés to: Personnel Committee, Beacon Hill Baptist Church, 274 Old Monticello Road, Somerset, KY 42503.

SEEKING: Full-time minister to children. Oklahoma City, metro church has a dynamic AWANA club, Sunday school and children's church. Contact Associate Pastor Scott Kinney, Trinity Baptist Church, Yukon, OK. (866) 354-4830.

SEEKING: Conservative Southern Baptist church is seeking senior pastor. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, 1604 Sherwood Drive, Bowling Green, KY 42103.

SEEKING: Associate minister of discipleship with main emphasis in youth. Active youth group of 50-60. Please submit resumé to: Versailles Baptist Church, 125 E Green St., Versailles, KY 40383, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, Leitchfield, Ky., is seeking a qualified person to serve as the associate pastor of a purpose-driven church and headmaster of a growing Christian school. Resumé should include experience and/or education in the areas of administration and pastoral ministries. Send resumé to Pastor Chris Butler, 106 East Walnut St., Leitchfield, KY 42754.

SEEKING: Part-time minister to children (ages 3-12) for church in northern Kentucky. Minister will work with 30-plus children and their families for 12-15 hours per week. If interested, send resumé to Rev. Denny French, Paint Lick Baptist Church, Route 1 Box 207, Warsaw, KY 41095.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Ashby Lane Baptist Church. Send resumé to: Robert Marquess, c/o church, 6617 Ashby Lane, Louisville, KY 40272.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth for Simpsonville Baptist. Average worship attendance: 350. Submit resumé by Feb. 17 to: Personnel, Box 56, Simpsonville, KY 40067.

SEEKING: Full-time, experienced pastor for a well-established Southern Baptist-affiliated church with a membership of approximately 300. The successful candidate will have graduated from a theological seminary, supports the basic belief of the Southern Baptist association, be willing to relocate and be able to furnish references upon request. Send resumé with work history to: Highlands Baptist Church, 2032 Parallel Road, Lexington, KY 40511, Attn: Search Committee.

SEEKING: Rineyville Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Located in a growing community near Elizabethtown, Ky., the church averages 230 in Sunday school attendance. About 300 in two morning worship services, and has a full-time director of children and youth ministries and a worship planning committee. See our Web page at www.homestead.com/Rineyville-Baptist. Please send resumé or questions to: Pastor Search Committee, Box 197, Rineyville, KY 40162.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music for Simpsonville Baptist. Average worship attendance: 350. Submit resumé by Feb. 17 to: Personnel, Box 56, Simpsonville, KY 40067.

SEEKING: Jamestown First Baptist Church, Jamestown, Ky., is presently seeking a full-time minister of students and associate pastor. This dual position emphasizing student ministry (1st-college) is a great opportunity for God's chosen one—competitive salary and benefits. Ministry experience and seminary education preferred. Send resumé with cover letter before March 10 to: JFB, PO Box 308, Jamestown, KY 42629, Attn: Associate Search.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of youth for Ovesen Heights Baptist Church, Hodgenville, Ky. Salary negotiable. Currently the church has 100 to 125 in Sunday school and 150 to 175 in Sunday morning worship. We have 10 to 15 in our youth program and are expecting a large increase in the next several years as young people come out of our AWANA into the youth program. Please send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Ovesen Heights Baptist Church, PO Box 253, Hodgenville, KY 42748-0253.

SEEKING: Children/family minister; individual who is passionate about relational ministry with children (birth through 6th grade) and their families. Minister will develop, coordinate and implement a dynamic inreach/outreach program for children and families. Seminary degree strongly preferred. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, 612 E 12th Ave., Bowling Green, KY 42101.

SEEKING: Full-time senior pastor for Thornhill Baptist Church in Frankfort. All communications should be directed to the Pastor Search Committee, Thornhill Baptist Church, 1142 Holmes St., Frankfort, KY 40601. (502) 223-7303. E-mail: thbchurch@dcr.net.

SEEKING: Organist for mid-sized, dynamic, growing church, Sunday morning worship services. For more information, please call Cedar Creek Baptist Church, (502) 239-2129.

SEEKING: Ormsby Heights Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., is receiving resumés for the position of minister of music. This position is full time with the possible addition of a second ministry area (education, missions, administration, etc.) to be determined by the candidate's interests, experience and skills. Ormsby Heights is a conservative church with a blended style of worship (gospel, hymns, praise/worship, contemporary) and a very strong interest in developing contemporary worship opportunities targeting young adults. Please send resumés to: Ormsby Heights Baptist Church, 2120 Lower Hunters Trace, Louisville, KY 40216.

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Police chief takes on YMCA over Harry Potter

PENRYN, Penn. (RNS)—A Pennsylvania police chief said he will not provide traffic control for a YMCA triathlon because he said the club promotes “witchcraft” with the popular Harry Potter series.

Fire Police Capt. Robert Fichthorn, head of the eight-member force in Penryn, Pa., questioned whether the YMCA was “serving the will of God” by reading the books in an after-school program.

“I don’t feel right taking our children’s minds and teaching them (witchcraft),” Fichthorn said. “As long as we don’t stand up, it won’t stop. It’s unfortunate that this is the way it has to be.”

The wildly popular children’s books by author J.K. Rowling have been condemned by some fundamentalist Christians, who say the story of the young wizard introduces children to the occult.

Local YMCA officials said the department’s unanimous decision will not affect the scheduled Sept. 7 race in communities west of Philadelphia. Township Supervisor Ronald Krause said the YMCA may have to hire police from another community to provide security.

The decision prompted outrage from a local grassroots progressive organization in Lancaster, Pa. Dustin Imhoff, a board member of the Alliance for Tolerance and Freedom, said the decision sets a dangerous precedent.

“What’s next?” he asked. “Once this group starts picking and choosing who they are going to help protect, what is to stop them from refusing to help someone who is Jewish whose house is burning, or a Muslim who is involved in an auto accident?”

Overseas missionaries commissioned

By Sue Ann Miller
Alabama Baptist

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Amid a flurry of colorful flags representing countries from around the world, 63 new missionaries joined the ranks of Southern Baptist overseas workers Jan. 22 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills, Ala.

A cold rain outdoors did not dampen the enthusiastic spirit of the nearly 3,000 people who gathered to experience the service and pay tribute to the appointees.

The two-hour celebration included music, testimonies and words of encouragement from International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin.

Reading from Colossians 1, Rankin challenged the new missionaries to catch the apostle Paul’s passion for missions.

“Paul’s passion was to present every man complete in Christ, because he knew Jesus was the only hope people had of being reconciled to God,” Rankin said. He warned the missionaries that they will be overwhelmed by the masses of people they see in congested cities.

“It will be easy to succumb to the temptation to say, ‘We’ll witness to as many as possible and hope some of them will be saved,’” he said. “I pray that you will go with the passion that all of them will know Jesus Christ.”

Rankin urged the new missionaries to hold on to Paul’s purpose—making Jesus known—and to remember that while there is a price to being obedient to Christ’s call, there also is the power of “Christ in you.”

In an emotional part of the service, all 63 missionaries shared brief testimonies about their call to missions. Though their circumstances differed, all expressed their willingness to obey the call to missions work.

Georgia native Karman O’Kelley told the congregation she was excited to be headed for service in eastern Africa. “God has laid the world before



WHO WILL GO? Avery Willis, vice president of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, tells the audience that vast multitudes of people have very little opportunity to hear the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

my eyes and His people upon my heart,” she said.

One new missionary and her husband said they will be returning to the region of the world where his grandfather was led to Christ by Southern Baptist missionaries. Another new missionary, who came to Christ in a refugee camp in Asia, will be returning as a missionary to that region.

The array of the missionaries’ jobs and responsibilities were as diverse as the people themselves. There was a representation of younger and older couples, as well as people with different ethnic backgrounds. From teachers to interpreters for the deaf, from a photographer to a midwife, all walks of life were represented.

Vast multitudes of people have very little opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, and they need someone to come tell them, said Avery Willis, IMB senior vice president for overseas operations.

As an illustration, he cited the work of a missionary couple in southern Africa who are working in a people group that has fewer than 10 Christians in a population of 550,000.

Speaking to a congregation that had a few members from that people group, Willis said he decided to preach on Jesus’ parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.

After the service, the missionary was deep in conversation with another



TELLING THEIR STORY Roy and Doris Burson of Fort Worth, Texas, share their call to overseas missions during a Jan. 22 missionary appointment service at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. (BP photos by Roy Burroughs)

er man he was discipling when a 10-year-old boy named Fernando came up and told him he needed to talk.

The missionary was busy and started to brush him off, but stopped himself and turned to the boy to ask him what he wanted.

“I am a lost sheep,” Willis quoted Fernando as saying.

“Fernando joined the fold that day,” Willis said. “There are many lost sheep in this people group. Someone has to go find them and tell them the story of Jesus Christ.”

Ministers go to adult video conference to urge people out of porn

By Bob Smietana
Religion News Service

CORONA, Calif. (RNS)—When Craig Gross and Mike Foster decided to go to Las Vegas for the 2002 Adult Entertainment Expo—the annual trade show of the X-rated film industry—they did something a bit unusual: They invited their wives to go along.

Gross and Foster were at last month’s show to promote their new Web site, www.XXXchurch.com. The site is designed to help people deal with their addictions to pornography, and to get people to leave the porn industry.

“When we first talked about going to the show, our wives said they were going with us,” Gross said. “It didn’t take us long to realize they were right. Being there for four days, your mind and your eyes could wander.”

While most of the booths at the trade show featured scantily dressed women or X-rated video footage, Gross and Foster relied on Christian

music and a banner that read “XXX church.com—the No. 1 Christian porn site” to get attention.

“We were looking for something that would combine the sacred and the seedy,” Foster said. “XXXchurch is memorable and it sticks in your mind.”

They also convinced Gross’ wife to dress in a bunny suit—though not the Playboy kind. Instead, she dressed as “Rex the Rabbit,” in a 6-foot-tall animal suit like those found at amusement parks. She wandered through the show, handing out fliers and posing for pictures with some of the more than 23,000 visitors there.

Gross said about 1,000 people stopped by the booth. More than one person asked if there were really naked women on the site. But most were curious to hear what Foster and Gross had to say.

“I haven’t talked to that many people one-on-one about my faith in the last six or seven years,” Gross said. “I don’t know if we converted anyone. But we spread the gospel and we prayed with people.”

Most people, Gross admits, were a bit taken aback to see a Christian group with a booth at the Expo. Especially a booth run by two ministers—Gross and Foster are on the staff of Crossroads Community Church in Corona, Calif.—and squeezed in between a booth selling gay-sex videos and one selling erotic cartoons.

The two ministers said they were careful not to get into arguments with people they talked with. Instead, they tried to convey that there is something more to life than what adult movies have to offer.

“Our message was one of hope and love,” Gross said, “and not one of judgment.”

The trip to the Expo ended with Gross and Foster becoming semi-celebrities. They were interviewed by a number of reporters and that exposure has paid off in interest in the Web site. Gross and Foster had hoped to get 100,000 visitors a month to the site, which offers information on staying away from porn and a “prayer wall” for people to share their struggles with

pornography. Instead, they say, the site has gotten more than 3 million hits in its first two weeks of operation.

The idea behind the site is to get people talking about “the dirty little secret” of porn, Gross said.

That’s something Christians don’t want to talk about, he added. “People have told us, ‘This needs to be addressed but I don’t want to be the one to do it,’” he said.

“Or they say, ‘We need to talk about this—but we don’t want to talk about it in church or on Sunday mornings.’”

Gross also made more than a few people uncomfortable when he told a newspaper he thought Jesus would be hanging around at the Adult Entertainment Expo if He were starting His ministry today.

“People say, ‘Jesus wouldn’t do that,’” he said. “But the people in this industry are really just normal people. They aren’t creepy. The stuff they are selling is wrong, but they are just real people who are lost and Jesus was all about reaching lost people.”



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