



WESTERN RECORDER

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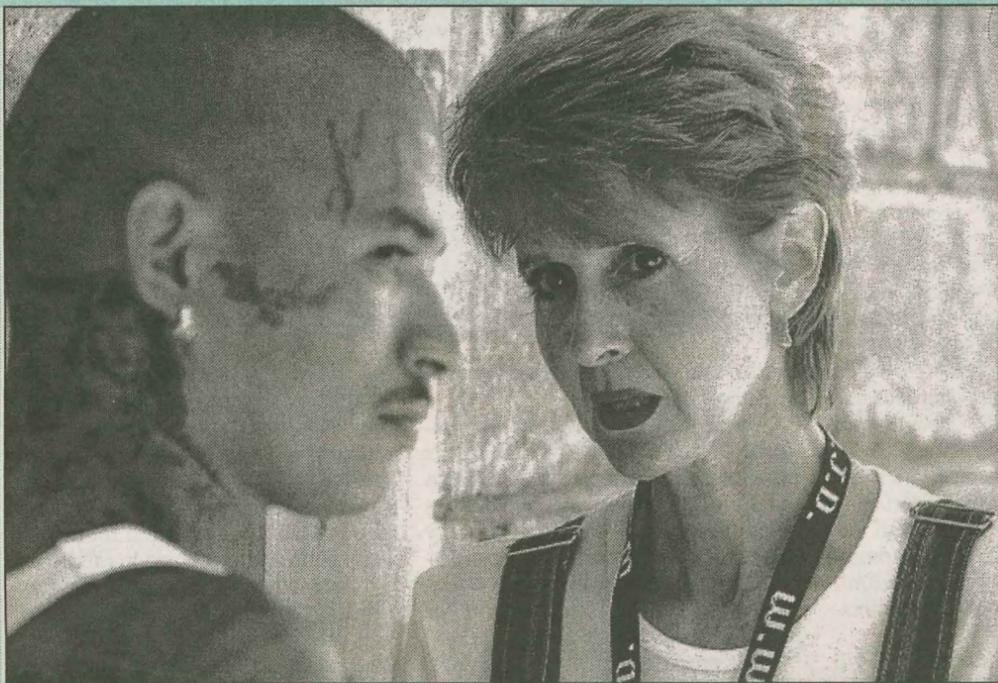
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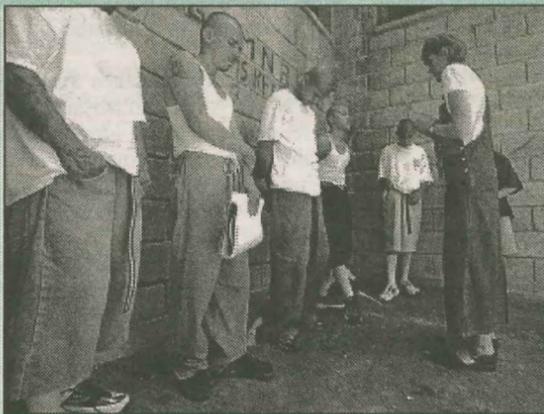
Nation

Statement on Jews and salvation likely to raise controversy. *Page 13.*

Love knows no bounds



From the city streets to death-row prisons, Southern Baptist missionary Amy Johnson refuses to let fear keep her from taking the message of God's love through Jesus to young gang members in Honduras' capital city of Francisco Morazan. ■ Above: Johnson visits with a tattoo-branded gangster who faces daily threats from rival gangs, police eager to exterminate street gangs and an increasing number of armed civilian vigilantes. ■ Right Johnson prays with Honduran prisoners who expect to die young. A gang-related killing happens almost daily in the country. "I decided that if I live to 35, I'll think about leaving the gang," one gangster says, "but I doubt I'll live that long." (Story on pages 8-9)



Click & preach: PowerPoint a popular tool for visual sermons

By Matt Young
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Point, click, point and click ... and then preach.

More and more ministers are using Microsoft PowerPoint to infuse long sermons with multimedia moxie.

"It's what Jesus would do today. He'd be using media because He was a cutting-edge communicator," said Tim Eason, a self-proclaimed "media missionary" who trains ministers and church members to use PowerPoint computer software and other visual media in worship services.

Initially released in 1987 for businesses to design graphic-oriented presentations, PowerPoint is beginning to take hold in churches across America, increasingly to accompany sermons.

In Kentucky, Larry Brannin estimates he gets at least a call every month from someone wanting to add PowerPoint to a worship service. As media specialist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Brannin taught courses on PowerPoint during last year's Super Saturday training events.

Every class was full, he said. "We are also going to teach it this year in the Church Health Summit," he said, referring to a KBC event in October.

"People used to receive a message from stained glass," he noted. "Now we use PowerPoint as the new medium for communication in worship."

Seminaries offer more proof that PowerPoint is growing in popularity and influence. At Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, more emphasis has been placed on teaching pastors how to use the software in recent years, said Ken Boyd, executive director of information technology. "It really helps people to engage in and track (the points) of the sermon."

"I think (PowerPoint) is going to be standard for any young preacher to know," said Rickey Honea, founder of Powerpointsermons.com and pastor of College Heights Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas.

According to Eason, who will publish a book in April called "Media Ministry Made Easy," churches also have become big customers for the projectors needed to display PowerPoint electronic slides.

The use of PowerPoint in churches has its roots in contemporary worship songs that came into vogue in the 1970s, he said. By the 1990s, new contemporary worship songs were coming out so frequently that overhead projectors were needed for congregations to see and sing the lyrics. As video projectors became more affordable, mid-size churches bought them and realized they could use them for other purposes, most recently to enhance sermons.

□ See Pastors using ..., page 6

So what?

Research finds Sept. 11 didn't improve Americans' spirituality



PRAYER VIGIL Americans had a heightened openness to faith after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, such as this prayer vigil at New York's Bellevue Hospital. But the openness was short-lived according to a recent study. (BP photo by Jim Veneman)

VENTURA, Calif. (ABP)—Last year's terrorist attacks had no lasting impact on America's religious practices, according to pollster George Barna.

About half of Americans surveyed by the Barna Research Group said their faith was important in helping them deal with events of Sept. 11.

One fourth of all adults said it was the "single most important resource" they have relied on, and 23 percent said their faith was "one of several important resources" that helped them deal with the tragedy.

Church attendance spiked for several weeks after Sept. 11, but it was a short-lived revival. By November, attendance levels were no different than before the attacks.

The Barna Research Group found little or no change in the last year over the percentage of Americans who read

their Bible regularly (41 percent), attend church (43 percent) or pray (83 percent). The percentage of unchurched Americans remained constant at 33 percent.

Some theorized that the attacks might serve as a spiritual wake-up call for Americans, leading to a religious revival. But Barna said he found no statistically significant change in religious practice in the past 12 months.

Just 12 percent of Americans said the terrorist attacks had any impact on their religious faith.

"I was among those who fully expected to see an intense spiritual reaction to the terrorist attacks," said Barna, an evangelical Christian. "The fact that we saw no lasting impact from the most significant act of war against our country on our own soil says something about the spiritual complacency of the American public."

Since Sept. 11

Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, September 11

BAPTISTS

Seminary faculty endorse revised faith statement

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Seven new faculty members at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, took part in a new document-signing ceremony during the seminary's annual convocation Aug. 29.

The seven professors signed a leather-bound book containing a six-page history of the school's adherence to the faith statements of the Southern Baptist Convention.

By signing the book, the faculty symbolically were signing the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement, seminary officials said. All faculty members agree to teach "according to and not contrary" to the faith statement before they are employed.

"Southwestern cherishes its confessional nature," said seminary president Ken Hemphill, "because it gives us clear parameters for doctrinal integrity without impinging, in any way, on academic freedom."

Two professors lost their jobs at Southwestern last year after they refused to sign the revised Baptist Faith and Message.

Texas Baptist leaders propose global missions network

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

DALLAS (ABP)—Texas Baptist leaders are proposing creation of a world missions network to help churches and individuals sponsor missionary work across the United States and around the world.

The network would be established as a not-for-profit affiliate of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. It would not replace existing relationships with mission boards of the Southern Baptist Convention, but would augment them with "fluid and flexible structures" that are church-driven and responsive to changing needs, according to the proposal.

"Texas Baptists are proposed in a bold new vision, not recreating what already exists through traditional missions-sending agencies," said Charles Wade, BGCT executive director. "This world missions network would create a way to connect churches and institutions with needs, opportunities and resources."

The world missions network is the centerpiece of a 25-page report by a 24-member missions review and initiatives committee. The BGCT administrative committee gave its preliminary approval at an Aug. 29-30 meeting in Dallas.

The BGCT executive board will vote on the proposal Sept. 24. If approved, it will be presented for final action by messengers to the state convention Nov. 10-11 in Waco.

Sharp disagreements between leaders of the BGCT and SBC in recent years have led some to speculate that the state organization might begin appointing its own national and international missionaries. The report stops short of that, but it does suggest Texas Baptists will take more initiative in setting their own worldwide missions agenda.

"Anybody who wants to come to the table can do so, but they can't set the menu for everyone else," said Clyde Glazener, pastor of Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth and

BGCT revises CP giving form—again

DALLAS (ABP)—Citing a desire to "move beyond this fight" over designated financial gifts, leaders of the Baptist General Convention of Texas approved changes to a form it sends to churches to record the amounts they contribute to the state convention.

The new form removes a controversial cap on the amount of BGCT funding for Southern Baptist Convention seminaries. It also ends funding restrictions against the SBC Executive Committee and Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade said the change is intended to simplify the form and to help Texas Baptists "get away from this controversy."

The new form increases the percentage of church gifts remaining in Texas in the BGCT Cooperative Giving Budget from 67 percent to 79 percent. Churches may channel their 21 percent earmarked "worldwide endeavors" to the SBC, CBF or BGCT world missions, including the new missions network. As before, churches can choose instead a designated giving option, in which they set their own percentage distributions between BGCT and global missions.

ERLC President Richard Land responded, "It's always better to not be singled out for complete defunding, but the Baptist General Convention of Texas' decision to move to a so-called cooperative

giving budget that allocates 79 percent to BGCT causes and only 21 percent to all causes beyond Texas is hardly designed 'to get away from this controversy,' as Charles Wade puts it.

"If the BGCT really wants to move beyond the controversy, they ought to go back to promoting the Holy Spirit-inspired Cooperative Program of giving—the way Southern Baptists have done it so successfully for more than three-quarters of a century," Land added.

Noting that "churches will do what they want to do," Wade said the change "allows us to present a plan which, hopefully, we won't have to visit again in the near future."

chairman of the missions review and initiatives committee.

The report faults the SBC International Mission Board for asking its missionaries to affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message and for its "New Directions" missions strategy that some complain diminishes cooperation with national Baptist conventions and de-emphasizes support for institutions and meeting human needs.

The proposal calls on the BGCT to "find ways to enable missionaries" who refuse to affirm the Baptist Faith and Message as a matter of conscience.

The report also takes aim at the SBC North American Mission Board for its decision to no longer appoint ordained women as chaplains and for attempting to control the spending of funds it gives to the District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

It urges Texas Baptists to adopt a new cooperative agreement with NAMB that recognizes the state convention's right to reallocate funds to accommodate jointly funded state missionaries who object to signing the Baptist Faith and Message.

The report doesn't call for sever-

ing ties with those agencies, however. It instead pledges to "work closely with existing Baptist agencies," including the two SBC mission boards, the Baptist World Alliance and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and also with BGCT-affiliated ministries and institutions involved in missions.

The study committee affirms relationships that exist between the CBF and various groups, associations, churches and individuals in Texas. Citing "certain political facets of the relationship of the CBF with various Baptist bodies," however, the committee recommends that the BGCT continue to work with CBF on projects but not enter into a formal relationship.

CBF Coordinator Daniel Vestal said he had several discussions with subcommittees of the task force, which he described as "cordial."

"I never expected this committee to recommend a connectional relationship with CBF like they've had in the past with the SBC," Vestal said. "I had hoped for and am pleased with their recommendation that BGCT find ways to partner with CBF. We already partner with Texas Baptists in a num-

ber of ways."

Jerry Rankin, president of the SBC International Mission Board, questioned the need for the new network. "Southern Baptists in Texas already have—in the International Mission Board—an excellent network for personalized involvement," Rankin said in a statement.

"Rather than diverting missions gifts to create and maintain a new institution that duplicates work already being done by other entities, we encourage Southern Baptists in Texas to stand by their missionaries and press forward with them in taking the good news of salvation to a lost world."

"Texas Baptists need a world vision that recognizes missions as the responsibility of every church and every Christian," the report states. "Churches increasingly want to own that vision, but they also want a collective vision of what Texas Baptist churches can do together."

Partial funding for the new network would come through Texas Baptists' Cooperative Program funds along with direct gifts. Some done through the network would be funded directly by churches.

Land questions Islam's commitment to peace

NASHVILLE (BP)—Despite the claims by its adherents that Islam is a peace-loving religion, Southern Baptist Convention leader Richard Land is asking for proof.

"Where are the peaceful followers of Islam?" asked Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "And why aren't they condemning the radical fanatics within their midst who are perpetuating crimes against humanity in the name of the Islamic religion?"

Christian churches are being attacked in Pakistan, and Christians are being slaughtered in Indonesia—all at the hands of Muslim extremists, Land said Aug. 24 on his syndicated radio program, "Richard Land Live!" Land said 11 Pakistani Christians are jailed in Pakistan under the nation's harsh blasphemy laws. Two of the men are slated to die by hanging because they refuse to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ, he added, citing reports from the Compass Direct news service.

"Richard Land Live!" is a caller-driven, midday talk program that airs three hours each Saturday over the Salem Radio Network.

The Muslim government of Sudan is practicing an Islamic war of genocide, a jihad, against all the Christians and animists in the south, Land told radio listeners. "In the name of Allah, they have killed over 2 million of the nation's non-Muslim population, bombing hospitals and other relief centers."

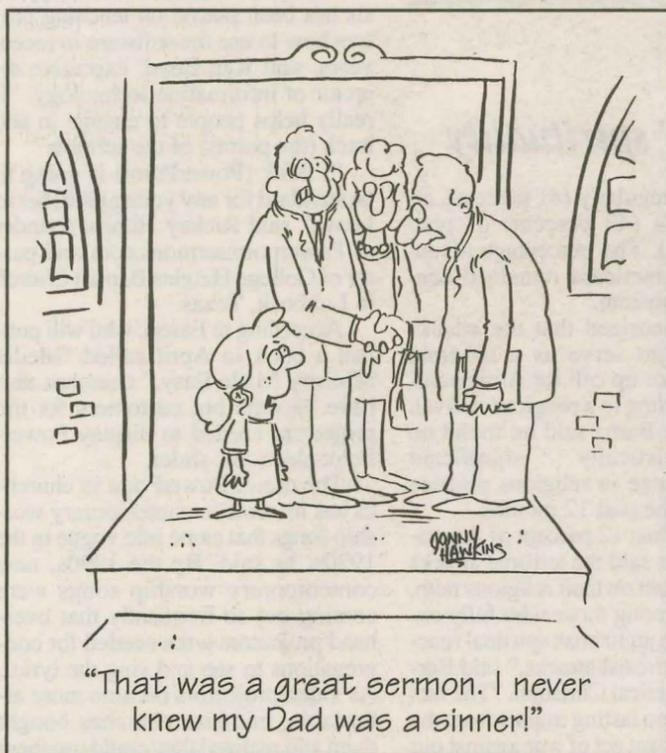
Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, there has been much discussion about whether this "vicious violence" represents true Islam or whether it is just an aberration within that religion, Land added. "So where are the peaceful Muslims protesting the violence and mayhem that is being waged in their name? Where are the protesters from the so-called peace-loving followers of Islam in the U.S.?"

Land said he has been told that many Muslims are afraid they would

be targeted for violence themselves if they criticized the actions of fanatical followers of Islam. "That's even worse," he said. "How can you call it a peace-loving religion if even in this country moderately minded followers of Islam are afraid to speak out because their family might be physically attacked by their brethren?"

"Their silence is deafening," Land declared. "There is not a country in the world where Muslims are in the majority that they don't severely restrict the freedom of religion of every other faith. They seek to impose their religious beliefs on everyone else at the point of a sword or the barrel of a gun. They kill people who disagree with them or who dare to convert to another faith."

"I'll take Islam as a peaceful religion seriously when I see followers of Islam in America protesting and condemning suicide bombers, anti-Semitic hate speech, and genocide in the Sudan," Land said.



Gambling issue prompts KBC to drop chamber membership

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

LOUISVILLE—Greater Louisville Inc.—Louisville's metro Chamber of Commerce—is on record supporting legislative efforts to expand gambling options at Churchill Downs.

Instead of expansion, however, the net result has been a reduction—of one—in the chamber's own membership roll.

Kentucky Baptist Convention officials informed members of the KBC Public Affairs Committee last week that the state convention is dropping its 40-year membership in Greater Louisville Inc. The KBC action comes in response to the chamber's endorsement of legislation allowing video lottery terminals at Kentucky racetracks.

In a letter to chamber president Steve Higdon, KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey said the state convention "cannot be involved in supporting the expansion of gambling in our state."

While some people believe "the current economic conditions make gambling expansion an attractive short-term fix to our problems," Mackey added, "We believe the benefits touted by the gambling industry are more imagined than real."

"Gambling tends to hurt most those who can least afford it," Mackey wrote. "Furthermore, the increased social costs of dealing with gambling addictions and squandered paychecks more than offset any benefits. Our government should be engaged in activities that strengthen society, not weaken it as gambling does."

Mike Bosc, the chamber's vice president of media relations, said chamber leaders "don't expect our members to agree with us on every single issue."

Describing the group's gambling endorsement as an issue of "economic development and economic competitiveness," Bosc added, "We have not endorsed across-the-board gaming. This is a very specific issue for a signature industry in Louisville."

Howard Beaman, executive director of the Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems, said his organization applauds the KBC's stand.

"I think it speaks volumes," Beaman said. "Our leaders, whether they're in churches or denominations, have to stand up and be counted."

As gambling proponents continue to push for expanded gambling in the state, he added, "People out there in our churches who are Christian businessmen will have to stand up and take a stand on it."

Educator, missions leader D.M. Aldridge dies

By David Winfrey
News Director

LEXINGTON—Educator, church starter and literacy missions supporter D.M. Aldridge had told Tony Hough several years ago that he wanted Hough to preach at his funeral.

Hough, director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention extension ministries department, playfully asked his mentor once what he should say when the time came.

"He did not hesitate for even an instant. 'Tell them I was a missionary,'" Hough recalled.

Hough got to say exactly that last week. Several hundred people gathered at Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington to pay their last respects to Aldridge, who died Sept. 2 at age 82. But to many, the statement was redundant to the life he dedicated to missions and training pastors.

Born in Gallatin County, Ill., Aldridge graduated from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1946. Shortly afterward, he headed to the mountains of Eastern Kentucky where he taught at Clear Creek Mountain Preacher's Bible School under president and founder L.C. Kelly.

In 1950, Aldridge left Clear Creek to become president of Magoffin Institute, a mountain school supported by the former Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and established to educate the children of Breathitt County.

Five years later, he returned to Clear Creek as Kelly's successor as president.

"It was just a natural thing, it seemed, when L.C. Kelly was gone, for D.M. to be the heir apparent," said A.B. Colvin, retired missions director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention and historian for most things pertain-

ing to Kentucky Baptists.

"He took the best of what was there and added a great deal to it," Colvin said. "I can't think of anyone else who could have done it."

Among Aldridge's accomplishments during his 28-year tenure was leading the school to offer a four-year baccalaureate degree. The school was renamed Clear Creek Baptist School.

Under his leadership, yearly contributions grew 20-fold and the school's endowment grew 300 percent, according to Bill Whittaker, current president of the school, which now is named Clear Creek Baptist Bible College.

A quote by Aldridge is inscribed on a plaque anchored to the administrative building that bears his name: "Clear Creek has been built around three fundamental ideas: The Lord alone calls someone into His service, the Bible is true and we teach our students to believe it and live by its teachings."

Aldridge also saw to it that students got to practice what they were learning. The Home Mission Board once honored him for pioneering "in-service training," getting students experience in street preaching and other disciplines, Whittaker said.

While president, Aldridge supported the launch of Southern Baptist literacy missions. Lillian Isaacs, the wife of Clear Creek professor John Isaacs, is credited with developing literacy as a Christian ministry. As she and her husband began to expand their ministry, Aldridge offered Clear Creek as the host for the first Southern Baptist literacy missions conference. Aldridge's wife, Kay, caught the enthusiasm for literacy missions, teaching adult literacy and English-as-a-second-language courses until her death in 2000.



Aldridge



WELCOME WEEK Cumberland College student Selma Russo takes a parachute flight simulator ride during Welcome Week festivities at the school, Aug. 23-30. The week begins with move-in day for freshmen and continued with a variety of activities for all the school's 1,700 students. (Cumberland photo by Tim Branstetter)

BLUEGRASS BURGEOO

■ **Campbellsville** University will host high school juniors and seniors for its annual fall preview day Sept. 21. Students and families can tour the campus, meet Campbellsville President Mike Carter and faculty as well as attend workshops on financial aid opportunities and other admissions information. The day will conclude with the Campbellsville Tigers football game against the University of Virginia-Wise. For more information, call the admissions office toll-free at (800) 264-6014 or e-mail: admissions@campbellsville.edu.

■ **A fire damaged** Cumberland College's intramural gymnasium building Sept. 2, according to officials of the school. An estimated \$50,000 worth of damage was limited primarily to a stairwell and surrounding areas, said spokeswoman Shawn Powers. The fire, which was discovered at 1:15 a.m., was extinguished within five minutes after Williamsburg Fire Department arrived. No official cause for the fire has been determined, though officials are investigating the area's electrical system.

■ **Clear Creek Baptist Bible College** will host its annual campus revival, Sept. 17-20. Dan Garland, leader of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's evangelism growth team, will be the speaker. For information, call (606) 337-3196, ext. 111.

■ **Correction:** An incorrect e-mail address was listed in the Aug. 27 issue for Scott Kilgore, chairman of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's mission study committee. To send suggestions by e-mail to the study committee, contact Kilgore at skilgore@lhbg.org.

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

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Vines affirmed

We, the members of the Executive Board of Greenup Baptist Association, affirm the ministry of Jerry Vines and his recent sermon delivered to the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in June.

Vines was accused of making bigoted and hate-filled remarks when he said that Mohammed was a "demon-possessed pedophile," and an apology was demanded from Muslim and Christian groups alike. Was Elijah bigoted when he challenged the false prophets on Mount Carmel? Was Stephen hate-filled when he preached his first (and last) sermon in Acts 7? What about Jesus when He pronounced His "woes" upon the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-33)? Are His remarks to be considered bigoted and hate-filled rhetoric?

Since Vines' remarks are documented by Islamic sources (the Koran and the Hadith), we conclude that those who are decrying his statements also are telling us that one's personal character doesn't matter. The Bible affirms time and again that character does count and personal conduct does matter. ...

Baptists always have been champions of religious liberty and would never deny anyone's right to be a Muslim, but we also reserve the right to follow the command of our Lord to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). While we acknowledge that we live in a pluralistic society, it does not follow that Baptists believe that all religions are the same, nor that there are many paths to God. As Baptists we believe and preach the words of Jesus Christ who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). ...

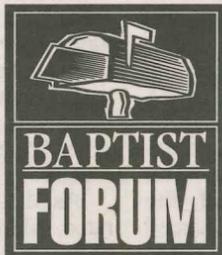
It is understandable that Muslims are upset at Vines' remarks, but we

maintain it is not unloving to proclaim the truth and point our hearers to the One who is the truth, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Greenup Baptist Association
Executive Board
Floyd Paris, moderator
Stan Williams, clerk*

'Detrimental' shift

In response to E.B. Self's Aug. 27 letter, I would encourage him to read most any book by Herschel Hobbs or E.Y. Mullins for an explanation of traditional Southern Baptist interpretation of the priesthood of the believer and soul competency.



I understand that the new breed of scholars controlling what Southern Baptists believe has all denominated these two giants of our denomination but they still are highly respected by a large percentage of Christians.

Hobbs gives a detailed explanation of both these terms in his 1971 book, "The Baptist Faith and Message." The idea that one may believe anything or nothing and still be considered a Christian is never expressed or implied in any reasonable understanding of this Baptist distinctive.

Hobbs clearly states: "The priesthood of believers grants to every Christian the right to read and interpret the Scripture for himself as he is led by the Holy Spirit. But said interpretation must be in harmony with the overall teachings of the Bible. And it must adhere to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, for the Holy Spirit neither contradicts Himself nor denies God's revelation in His Son."

Sadly and to our detriment this principle has been stricken from what Baptists may believe. We are no longer permitted to use Jesus as the criterion for interpretation. We must rely on what a group of elected officials at a convention that lasts a few days tells us is the correct interpretation.

We have come to a point where exclusion is the operative word. ... Rembert Truluck, in his book "Steps to Recovery from Bible Abuse," emphasizes that when religion is based on exclusion of people or ideas, Jesus leaves and goes home (Luke 4:14-30).

Southern Baptists did not wait for Jesus to leave. We kicked Him out when we denounced the priesthood of the believer and soul competency before God.

*Tom Miller
Covington*

'Once upon a time'

Once upon a time, the leaders of the church declared that not only was the earth flat, but the planet was the center of the universe. And all God's people said, "Amen."

The leaders of the church announced that the only way to God was through church membership and the sacrament of baptism. And all God's people said, "OK."

The leaders also allowed that women were not only inferior to men but were the source of all sin in the world. And all God's men said, "Right."

The leaders maintained that some races were blessed and some were cursed and that slavery was ordained by God. And all God's children in positions of power said, "Right on!"

The leaders observed that the poor would always be with us. And those who had much said, "Exactly."

And the leaders even proclaimed that those who did not believe were better off dead. And believers beat their plows into swords and their pruning hooks into spears and rode off to war.

But on the night before He died, Jesus spoke to the disciples: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." And on the next day as He was dying, Jesus pleaded, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

*Buddy Revels
Louisville*

GIVING

Bonds can help fulfill charitable giving options

By Laurie Valentine

Stock values are dropping, interest rates are falling and the economy is taking a long time to recover. While some people have experienced reductions in the value of their estates as a result of these events, you might be one of the fortunate ones who actually has experienced some growth in estate value if you own U.S. Treasury bonds, corporate bonds, municipal bonds or mortgage-backed securities.

You now might be faced with the situation that the fixed income portfolio is out of balance compared to the rest of your estate. You need to diversify, but don't want to pay the capital gains taxes that will be incurred if you sell some of those assets.

If this is your situation and you desire to make a gift for the benefit of one or more charitable causes, consider using U.S. Treasury bonds, corporate bonds, municipal bonds or mortgage-backed securities to make your gift.

If you have owned the bond at least one year and one day, your charitable income tax deduction is based on the bond's current market value, not what you paid for it. Your gift of the bond is not a sale, so you do not have any capital gains tax liability. When the bond or other cause to which you gift the bond sells it, there also is no capital gains tax owed since the recipient organization is tax-exempt. As a result, the full value of the gifted bond will be available to support the mission and ministry of the organization.

Bonds also can be used for life income giving.

In exchange for your gift of an appreciated bond, a charitable gift annuity can be issued that will pay you a fixed payment each year for life and ultimately benefit the charitable causes you designate. The payment you will receive will be based on the market value of the bond at the time you give it and the suggested payout rate for someone your age.

You also can fund a charitable remainder trust with a gift of one or more appreciated bonds. The trust will pay you and/or others an income stream for life or a term of years, with the remainder passing to the named charitable beneficiaries at the end of the trust term.

Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Precious memories

In Eastern Kentucky during the 1970s, "Precious Memories" was a popular song among Old Regular Baptists. I love this song as well and can especially relate to it as I have grown older and built many precious memories of my own.

My thoughts were drawn to Middlesboro recently when my wife, Kay, was asked to speak for Women's Day. I had another speaking engagement that day so Kay traveled with Gretna Miller.

We served with Gretna and her husband, Truett, who was pastor of First Baptist Church of Middlesboro, back in 1966. I was fresh out of Southern Seminary and was called to serve the church as associate pastor.

Truett and Gretna took us into their lives and circle of friends as if we were their own children. It was a wonderful learning experience for me in the church.

During the three years I served in

Middlesboro my career could have been diverted from pastoral ministry but a very special layman, Crawford Blakeman, gave me great counsel. I wondered at the time, but he was so confident. I know now how right he was. I have known only a few laymen who could read their pastor and encourage him the way Crawford did.

Our oldest daughter, Anonda, was born prematurely in the Middlesboro hospital. She developed respiratory distress syndrome and her condition was very serious for 72 hours. But the churches prayed for her on Sunday and she came home

on Tuesday.

We felt like she was a miracle baby. The two resident pediatricians who cared for her had just returned from a seminar on the very problem our child was experiencing, and understood the latest treatment.

Now Anonda considers it an answer to prayer that she is expecting her



Bill Mackey

own first child in December! Anonda and her husband live in the Philadelphia area where she is volunteer children's director for a new church in addition to her full-time job.

Another event that has pushed my thoughts back to Middlesboro and Bell County has been the death of Dr. D.M. Aldridge, former president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College. While he was a college student, God gave him a vision for training mountain pastors and he fulfilled that vision.

Truett Miller loved the ministry of Clear Creek and led the church to strongly support students who served local churches. Through Truett, I met Dr. Aldridge and learned to value and respect the wisdom and integrity of this godly leader. Dr. Aldridge's recommendation was one that led the pastor search committee at First Baptist Church of Whitesburg, to consider the young associate at Middlesboro. I later had the privilege of serving as a trustee at Clear Creek.

I praise God for precious memories!

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

'Couple stewardship' can help enhance marital relationship

Q: My husband and I disagree about saving money. I say it is important for us to save enough money for our children's college education and our retirement. He thinks we need to use our money for church and charitable giving now as well as for having some fun. How can we resolve this conflict?

Many couples joyfully accept differences between themselves before marriage. However, during marriage, these differences often can become a source of pain.

The situation you described occurs not only over spending money but other marital situations as well. A friend once told me, "Greg and I drive each other crazy. I want to finish the household chores first, but he wants to go see a movie and then work."

You and my friend have something in common. You both believe in delaying pleasure until responsibilities are fulfilled. The problem is that you're married to individuals who prefer to enjoy life now. Sometimes these become opposing views. The result is that neither perspective is valued by the other person.

The resolution lies in developing "couple stewardship." Both of you need to respect each other's viewpoint. Certainly saving time and money is important. At the same time, Christ wants us to enjoy some of this life in the present.

You and your husband likely would benefit from sitting down and discussing what things in life are most important for you in your marriage and faith. Then you will be better able to come up with a unique approach for your stewardship as a couple.—*Suzanne Coyle*

Q: How can I encourage my soon-to-be teenager by acknowledging the significance of his 13th birthday?

While there is nothing magical about the 13th birthday per se, your question touches on the important issue of how we recognize and celebrate the move from childhood to young adulthood.

Since individuals demonstrate varying levels of maturity at different chronological ages, let me emphasize the importance of paying attention to where your son is in the process of maturing. The timing of what I will suggest in this column (and the next one) will be critical for gaining the most out of the experience both for you and your son as you seek to "train up your child according to his bent" (Proverbs 22:6).

One very meaningful way to acknowledge and celebrate a son's (or daughter's) "graduation from childhood" is through a mutual agreement and establishment of "rites of passage" that will serve as "memory stakes" that he nails down in time. These carefully crafted markers build confidence even as he is reminded of his burgeoning competence as a contributing member of your family and the family of God. Awareness of competence most often gives rise to the kind of healthy confidence that recognizes both strengths and limits.

In helping construct rites of passage, the parent or adult caregiver must remember the words of Ecclesiastes that to everything there is a proper time. For many people, it is quite appropriate to focus on the year following the 12th birthday and leading up to the 13th. For others, it might be the year beginning with the end of elementary school and the first year of middle school. For others, rites of passage might be more effective later, perhaps linked with getting one's driver's license.

My next column will address in more detail the issues of constructing rites of passage and enjoying that experience with your young person.—*Scott Wigginton*

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.



Lessons learned amid hurt, hope, healing

Millions of Americans will pause this week to reflect on the terrible events of Sept. 11.

For many, it will be a time of quiet reflection in memory of the victims. Countless prayers will be voiced for the physical, emotional and spiritual healing of survivors and family members. It also will be a time of patriotism, celebrating America's commitment to stand firm in the wake of overwhelming tragedy.

With dozens of books, hundreds of hours of television coverage and thousands of articles recounting the stories of Sept. 11, the nation is awash in remembrance. For some people, the first anniversary symbolizes an opportunity for new beginnings; for others, it brings to the forefront agonizing memories and fears that remain a painful part of daily life.

As Americans gradually move toward individual and collective recovery, it seems fitting to reflect on lessons we've learned over the past 12 months:

■ *Remember the frailty of life.* Cancer, heart attacks, car wrecks and other tragedies occasionally bring death to loved ones and remind us of the frailty of life. When New York's twin towers collapsed the morning of Sept. 11, that reminder was multiplied thousands of times. Coupled with the attack on the Pentagon and the plane crash in Pennsylvania, the terrorist attacks claimed the lives of more than 3,000 innocent victims in the span of a few hours.

"There is a time for everything," Ecclesiastes 3 tells us, including "a time to be born and a time to die." That time can come without warning for any of us, no matter what stage we are in life.

From a Christian perspective, Sept. 11 offers a vivid reminder of the importance of sharing a clear gospel witness with those around us. It's a matter of inviting them to gain the assurance of eternal salvation through

Jesus Christ amid the uncertainty of earthly life.

■ *Respect diverse beliefs.* Public debate among Christians, Muslims and Jews seems to have heightened in our post-Sept. 11 world. For Christians, the truth remains clear: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes through the Father except through Me," Jesus declared in John 14:6.

In our pluralistic society, however, religious freedom includes the right to accept—or reject—the claims of Christianity. While Christians must hold fast to the truths of Scripture, we also must defend the right of others to espouse differing views.

Despite claims to the contrary, respecting other religious beliefs is not the same as endorsing them. We have a far greater opportunity to lead others to the truth through sincere dialogue and relationships than through shrill accusations and alienation. It's our role as followers of Christ to be faithful witnesses and trust the Holy Spirit for the results.

■ *Recognize true heroes.* More than 500 firefighters, police officers, emergency workers and military personnel lost their lives Sept. 11. In New York, hundreds of rescue workers bravely streamed into the burning, crippled World Trade Center as thousands of office workers rushed to safety.

Many athletes, actors and musical artists are celebrities—often gifted and talented in their respective fields—but they aren't heroes. True heroes embody the words of John 15:13, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

As we mark the first anniversary of Sept. 11, Christians hopefully will remember the lessons learned amid pain—and renew our commitment to make a positive difference for the cause of Christ as our nation continues to hurt, hope and heal.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

NFL Bible knowledge—just for fun

By Doug Mendenhall
Religion News Service

The National Football League kicked off its regular season last week. Its fans need help. Well, that kind, too, but I meant they need help finding new excuses to feed their spouses.

So here's a new tactic: "But, honey, I have to watch the game to increase my Bible knowledge. After all, it's Sunday."

Perhaps your longsuffering spouse will buy that argument, given this supporting evidence.

Below are the number of biblical references to each NFL team. I consulted both the New International and King James versions, and listed the greater of the two.

■ *Chiefs, 336 references.* Not an Indian among them, but lots of priests and army captains.

■ *Rams, 167.* Beware: They usually end up dead and burned.

■ *Saints, 98.* Romans mentions "Saints, given to hospitality." Which describes New Orleans' usual play.

■ *Lions, 84.* David was called Lion of Judah. Today he probably would have been an NFL quarterback.

■ *Eagles, 34.* Fast, fierce and enduring. But not kosher.

■ *Chargers, 19.* An archaic word in the King James Version that means a fancy bowl or platter, like the one John the Baptist's head was served on.

■ *Giants, 19.* Mostly lived in Gath, home of Goliath, a famous middle linebacker who lost in a stunning fourth quarter upset.

■ *Colts, 17.* The one Jesus rode into Jerusalem got more cheers than Indianapolis typically gets in a season, even with young hoes like Edgerrin James.

■ *Bears, 16.* Usually mean, sometimes deadly.

■ *Ravens, 12.* Proverbs warns one will peck out your eyes if you sass your parents. Good football imagery.

■ *Raiders, 7.* They attacked out of Moab every year.

■ *Redskins, 6.* Surprised? Part of the Israelites' tabernacle was ram skins dyed red. (Of course, they'll have to kill the Rams first.)

■ *Steelers, 4.* Two references mention a steel bow broken by strong hands—a portent of bad things for Kordell Stewart's passing?

■ *Falcons, 3.* The KJV uses the word "vultures." Make of that what you will.

■ *Browns, 3.* Mostly animals. Jacob, for example, got to sort his fa-

ther-in-law's herds and keep the spotted ones and the speckleds and the browns.

■ *Jaguars, 0.* If a leopard is close enough, count eight. Fast and mean, except when they lie down with the goats—about midway through the playoffs.

■ *Texans, 0.* If the Houston expansion team had taken the traditional franchise name, it could have racked up 203 references to oil and moved ahead of the Rams on this list. Having lived in that state, I imagine many Texans are shocked to learn that the Bible does not mention them.

■ *Titans, 0.* If this team had kept the name it had in Houston ...

■ *Cowboys, 0.* Another Texas team the Bible pointedly does not mention.

■ *Other zeroes:* Patriots (change to New England Zealots, get four references); Dolphins (nor porpoises); Bills (nor buffalo); Jets (but four biblical names begin with Jet); Bengals (nor generic tigers); Broncos (but plenty of horses); Cardinals (nor red birds); Seahawks (but three regular ol' hawks); 49ers (unless you count the 49th chapter of a few Old Testament books); Packers; Vikings; Panthers; Buccaneers.

During halftime and beer commercials, pull out your Bible and check my scoring. Maybe you'll learn something.

RESOURCES

Pastors using PowerPoint to add visual sermon support

Resources

■ Kentucky Baptist Convention Media Specialist Larry Brannin, (502) 254-4731 or toll-free (888) 254-5713.

■ "Worship Evangelism" by Sally Morgenthaller.

■ "Digital Storytellers: The Art of Communicating the Gospel in Worship" by Len Wilson and Jason Moore.

■ "The Wired Church: Making Media Ministry" by Len Wilson.

■ www.churchmedia.net

■ www.powerpointsermons.com

■ www.usingpowerpointinchurch.com

■ PowerPoint pros can find tips and tricks at www.microsoft.com/office/using/tips/archives/ppttips.asp.

Continued from page 1

PowerPoint is "the poor man's way to financing a multimedia presentation," said Honea, especially when projector prices are cheaper than ever.

Brannin estimates churches can get into PowerPoint and other visual software for approximately \$5,000-\$10,000. Systems are more expensive when churches have to "retrofit" a system and projecter into their existing design, he added.

Churches usually call Brannin to ask technical questions about PowerPoint and other software and hardware needs. But he's quick to encourage church leaders to consider more than just the technical issues.

"It's more than just an expensive songbook," he said, referring to the practice of displaying contemporary music choruses on a screen.

"What I want them to go away with is, it's more than just words on a screen. It's a ministry, and they don't want to go into this thinking it's going to be just a boardroom experience.

"People are looking for experiential worship, and media helps people have that experience," he added.

In addition to preaching outlines and song lyrics, Brannin encourages worship teams to use pictures and video clips to illustrate sermon topics and metaphors. "If a pastor is preaching about Jesus being a bridge to man, then there should be a picture of a bridge up there."

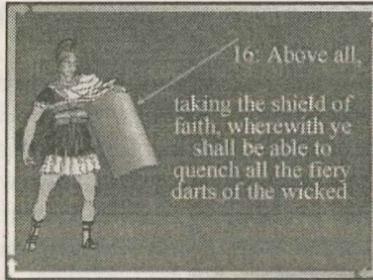
Len Wilson, a cofounder of Midnight Oil Productions, agreed.

"Visual communications have fundamentally altered how we relate to the world and to each other," said Wilson, whose company helps churches incorporate videos, PowerPoint and other digital communication into their services.

"The culture at large no longer thinks in propositions, as in the modern age, but in metaphors," added Wilson, author of "Wired Church." "The church is just now barely grasping this change."

But not everyone agrees that wired sermons are the answer to maintaining the attention of congregations.

"Using an overhead projector or a PowerPoint presentation with the sermon draws the attention of the audience to the screen and away from the preacher," Wayne McDill, professor of preaching at Southeastern Baptist



POWERPOINT A growing number of pastors are using PowerPoint software and projection screens to enhance sermons. This slide was used to support a sermon based on a passage from Ephesians.

Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., wrote in a recent Preaching magazine editorial. "The presentation is no longer basic oral communication, with its power to engage the audience."

Some church members said they find the presentations distracting. "Tech is great, but it's not something I would want while worshipping the Lord," said 23-year-old Brooke Evans, who attends Episcopal services in Washington.

But PowerPoint and other visual communication is only natural in a culture that no longer is word-only-based, advocates said.

Honea's Web site proclaims, "Practically every aspect of our life is touched by the 'tube.' This attention-deficit generation has little patience with outdated lecture methods."

Today, Baptists use PowerPoint for sermons the most, Eason said, followed by United Methodists. But many other denominations are embracing the technology, including Presbyterians, Nazarenes and Catholics, he added.

With additional reporting by News Director David Winfrey

PowerPoint's 'seven deadly sins'

NASHVILLE (BP)—Squinting viewers, rainbow wording and boring slides are among the "sins" communicators must avoid when they use PowerPoint, according to a discipleship specialist.

Steve Williams, a discipleship specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, said he welcomes the technology that allows speakers to reinforce their messages visually.

People remember 30 percent of what they hear and 70 percent of what they see and hear, he said.

Last year Williams outlined what he called the "seven deadly sins of PowerPoint."

"These are the things that will most assuredly kill your presentation faster than anything," Williams told discipleship leaders. "And they are the seven things I see most often."

While PowerPoint can help audiences better understand a message, an ineffective presentation is a waste of money for the computers, software, projectors and screens, Williams said.

"Many newer (PowerPoint) users are so excited about what it will do, they try to use every trick they learn in every presentation they create. When they do, the medium often obscures the message."

The seven sins are:

■ **Wimpy contrast.** Too little contrast between the text and backgrounds make messages hard to read. "The greatest contrast is white text on a black background or black text on a white background," Williams said.

■ **Rainbow wording.** Using too many colors doesn't work either, he added. "The brain tries to figure out why are there so many colors, and if it's doing that, it's going offline."

Two text colors per slide usually are enough to look good and be readable. Three different text colors are enough for an entire presentation, he said.

■ **Blah, blah, blah.** Too much text makes a slide look cluttered and hard to read. "Use the five and 10 rule. Limit each slide to about five lines of text that can be read in about 10 seconds."

■ **Squinting audiences.** Text that is too small makes readers strain to read it. "This will distract them and cause them to miss hearing the point," Williams said.

■ **PowerPoint "shootout."** Too many bullets (such as the squares beside each sin in this article) makes a presentation predictable and boring, Williams said. "Bullets are great if used sparingly and wisely, but I've seen presentations where the number of bullets used reached the regurgitating stage."

■ **Animation fatigue.** Transition effects are the animation that move a new slide into view. Too many of these can disorient the viewer, Williams said. "PowerPoint 2000 gives you 60 or 70 effects, but they shouldn't all be used in one presentation."

■ **"You're getting sleepy."** Using boring slides can put the audience to sleep, Williams said. "I've described a lot of excesses when creating slides, but under-doing it can be as bad as overdoing it."

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT!



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BAPTISTS

Attacks brought new workers, exposure to disaster relief

By James Dotson
SBC North American Mission Board

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)—Within hours of the Sept. 11 attacks in New York and Washington, Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers were rolling.

Volunteers cooked meals for victims and recovery workers, cared for children and otherwise did the jobs they had done so many times before.

By the time those emergency efforts finally concluded in late July, the response had shaped the entire Southern Baptist disaster relief network more than any single response since Hurricane Andrew in South Florida 10 years ago.

New ministries had developed, demonstrating the importance of flexibility, including an expanded chaplaincy response, opportunities for cleaning up apartments and even impromptu efforts like distribution of the stuffed Teddy bears that flooded the city as expressions of love and support from around the world.

But the biggest long-term impact has come from the new awareness of disaster relief efforts among Southern Baptists and the nation at large.

"There has been a significant increase in the number of people volunteering for training," said Mickey Caison, national coordinator of Southern Baptist disaster relief and adult volunteer mobilization coordinator for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. "We usually have about 2,500 volunteers participating in training in a year, and this past year we saw about 5,000."

Kentucky saw similar responses, according to Larry Koch, the Kentucky Baptist Convention Brotherhood coordinator for disaster relief.

"Since the 9-11 event, we've had 26 (disaster relief) training sessions, ... and we've had over 650 new volunteers," Koch said. "Normally we'll do three to six trainings per year and average about 20 people per training."

The 319-day response in New York and Washington was the longest sustained emergency relief effort in the disaster relief network's history—eclipsing in duration even the massive response following Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Mobile kitchen units operated by state conventions and associations provided the bulk of the response force in both New York and Wash-

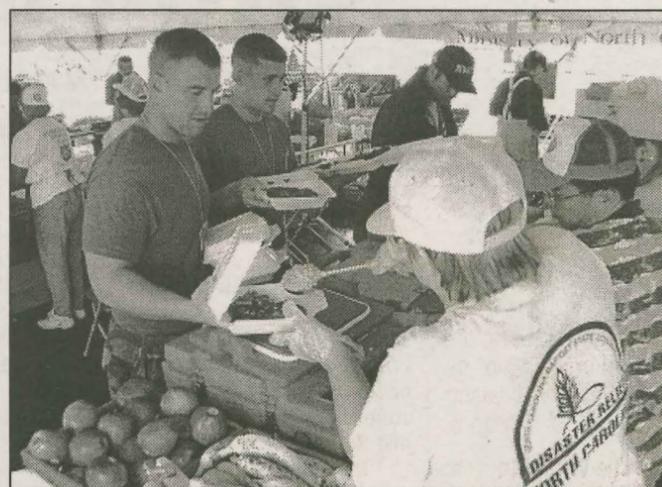
ington, along with support structures such as communications units, show-er units, even a laundry unit to keep volunteers supplied with clean clothes. Later the mobile kitchen efforts were consolidated with Salvation Army operations, with Southern Baptists partnering to supply volunteers.

Childcare units also set up stations in relief centers, allowing victims and their families to file paperwork knowing that their children were being lovingly cared for.

Chaplains were mobilized not only to care for the stressed recovery workers, but also just to mingle with grieving crowds surrounding impromptu memorials that sprung up around Manhattan. Later, some of the largest public response came when Southern Baptists used their experience in cleaning out homes to offer a cleaning service for apartments in the immediate area, with 643 apartments cleaned.

The final numbers signal the scale of the commitment. Volunteers from 32 state conventions participated, contributing 20,842 "volunteer days"—defined as one volunteer working one day. A total of nearly 1.29 million meals were prepared, and 842 children were served in childcare centers.

With the large number of new po-



tential volunteers, Koch said one of the challenges is keeping them enthusiastic.

"Unfortunately for a lot of people, once the glamour has worn off, a lot of people never respond, but at least we've given them the opportunity," he said.

Koch estimates that 90 percent of those who do participate in a disaster relief project will want to work on another project. "You really want to help people."

With additional reporting by News Director David Winfrey

ON-SITE SERVICE Teresa Page, a disaster relief volunteer from a mobile kitchen unit, serves workers at Camp Unity—the compound on the Pentagon's south parking lot set up to provide relief, comfort and food for those responding to the Sept. 11 terrorist attack. (BP photo by James Dotson)

Since
Sept.
11

Kentucky Baptist leaders will gather to both experience and study worship through "Journey Into Worship," a Church Health Summit created to help church members experience a variety of worship styles, ideas and approaches to worship and return to their churches with fresh ideas to discuss as it relates to their church.

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Little Mom

Missionary Amy Johnson has become a woman of peace in Honduran prisons

By Chris Turner
SBC International Mission Board

FRANCISCO MORAZAN, Honduras (BP)—An exposed bulb dangles from the ceiling by a black wire and throws its harsh light around the cramped cinder-block room.

Tattooed bodies crowd the space or stare in past the heavy steel door.

This cell's location is deep within the bowels of a Honduran prison. All of the young men present are gang members. Most are killers, rapists or both.

At the center of this sea of inked flesh sits Amy Johnson, a perfectly postured, fair-complexioned redhead.

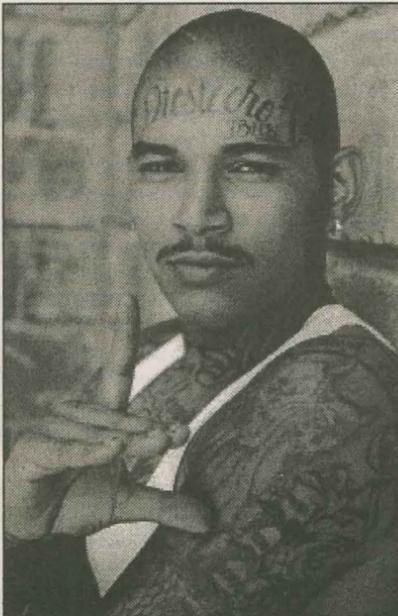
Her soft voice forces the prisoners to lean in to hear her. Her sincere smile melts their callused hearts, and her deep-penetrating brown eyes reach beyond their hardened exteriors to their souls.

They call her Mamita, translated, "Little Mom."

"She makes us feel like we are not forgotten," says Danny Boy, a prisoner and the leader of one gang. (Most gang members use nicknames.) "People treat us like animals, but not her. She listens to us, and we respect her a lot."

Johnson, 47, a Southern Baptist missionary, always teaches gang members Bible stories in the six prisons she visits throughout the week. But it's not the Scripture she teaches that is the basis for her ministry. It's the Scripture she lives. She introduces gang members to Jesus and helps them get to know Him better.

"It's not telling a person they have value; it's showing them," she says. "You can't tell a person Jesus loves them but never do anything for them. You have to show them what the love of Christ looks like."



MARKED MAN Honduran prisons house young men with bodies permanently marked with insignias of pride and hate—a lostness that Southern Baptist missionary Amy Johnson seeks to alleviate. In the nation's capital, Francisco Morazan, an estimated 250 gangs involving 10,000 youth run the streets.

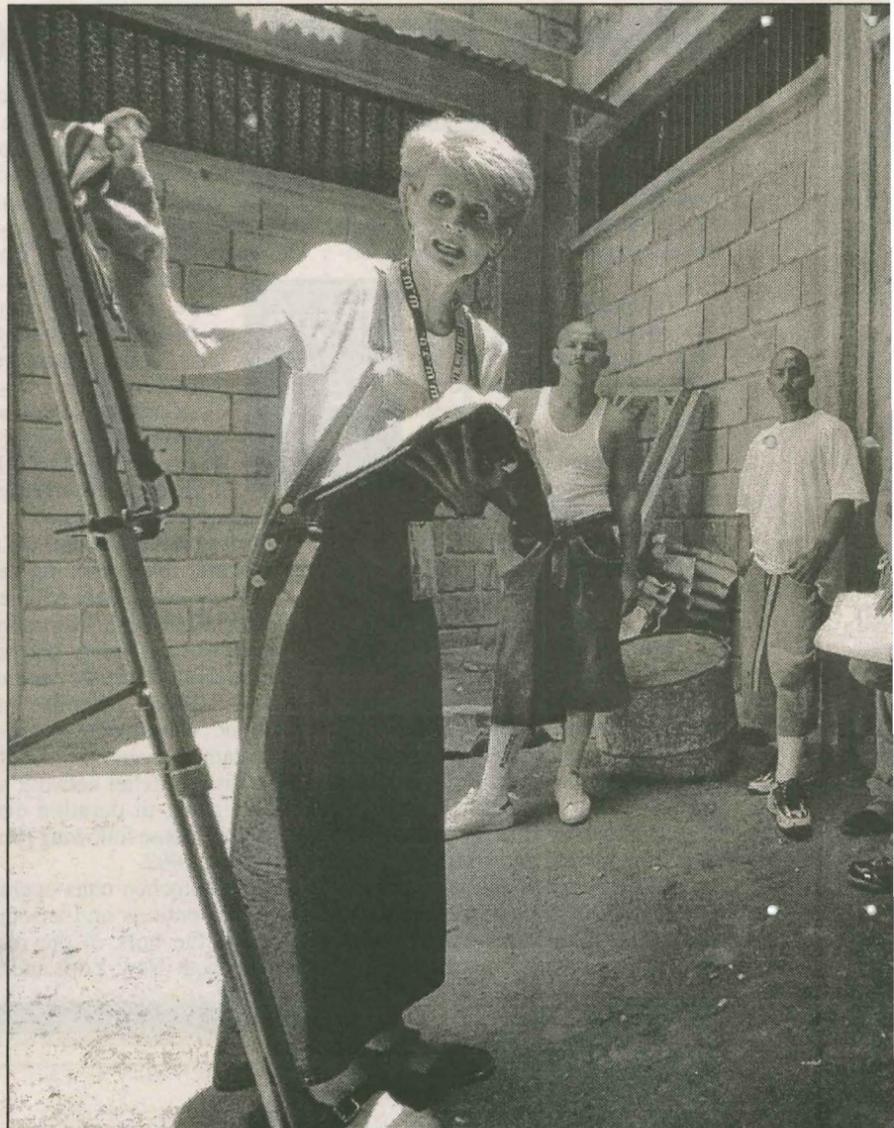
Sunday: Women's prison

Johnson passes through the security gate and starts up the covered walkway. At first sighting, young women ages 16-19 mob her.

All are gang members.

Johnson compliments their hair, asks how their week has been and asks about their families. She then gently places a small teddy bear in her basket. She'll deliver it tomorrow to one girl's boyfriend who is serving time in another prison.

The small band pulls Johnson toward the meeting room like young



LIGHT IN THE CELLBLOCK Inmates listen attentively to Southern Baptist missionary Amy Johnson as she leads classes into Honduran cellblocks to teach principles of faith six days a week.

children excitedly pulling their mother to see a picture they've just colored. Everyone wants to touch her.

Johnson sets up her flannel board and removes her big Bible from her small backpack. Chairs are gathered. Today's lesson is from Acts: Ananias and Sapphira. The lesson on deception and theft hits close to home.

The lesson ends, and one by one, the girls ask to meet privately with her. Johnson never knows what situations will arise, but she always prepares herself through prayer, asking God for wisdom in what she says. Today she needs it.

"I have AIDS," says the teenager standing before her, head lowered in shame and despair. Her life is over. The gang might take it, or the disease, or she might take her own life. Both cry; Johnson embraces her. Johnson knows unconditional love is the girl's only hope.

Monday: National prison

It is incredible artwork, really, considering the canvas is skin.

One tattooed body after another streams out of the cellblock as Johnson strolls from daylight, past a huge portrait of the Virgin Mary standing vigilant at the entrance, and into the dimly lit maze of cinder-block rooms that serve as cells.

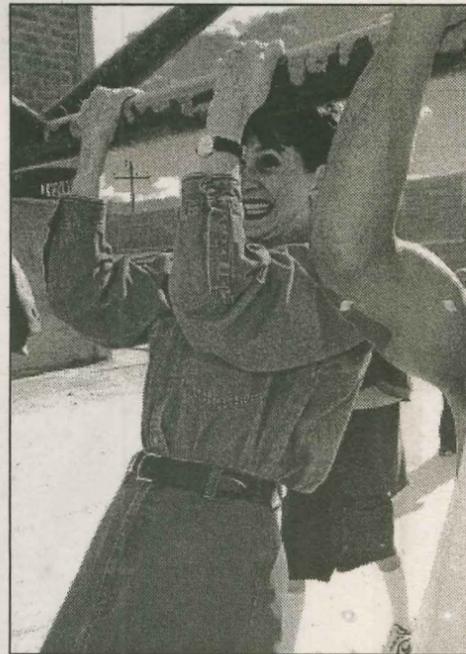
Facial tattoos are common, and Johnson long ago overcame the shock of seeing the large, blocked "666" that stretches from one temple to the other of some of the inmates.

Nearly all of these guys are in their late teens or early 20s. Most boldly

admit they doubt they'll ever see 30.

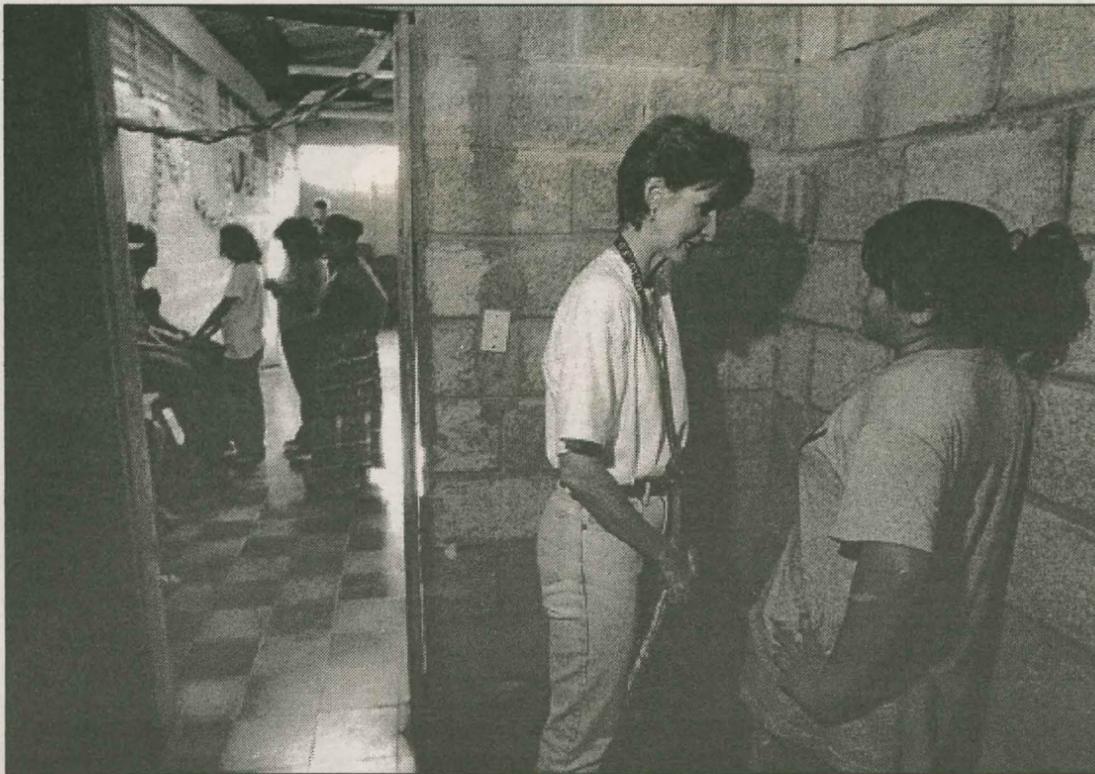
Johnson settles into one of the cells and reads a letter from the girlfriend of one of the gang members. Those gathered lean in to listen. There is something awkward about someone so hardened struggling with the love issue that plagues almost every adolescent in suburban America. He seeks motherly advice from Johnson. His own mother won't come to see him.

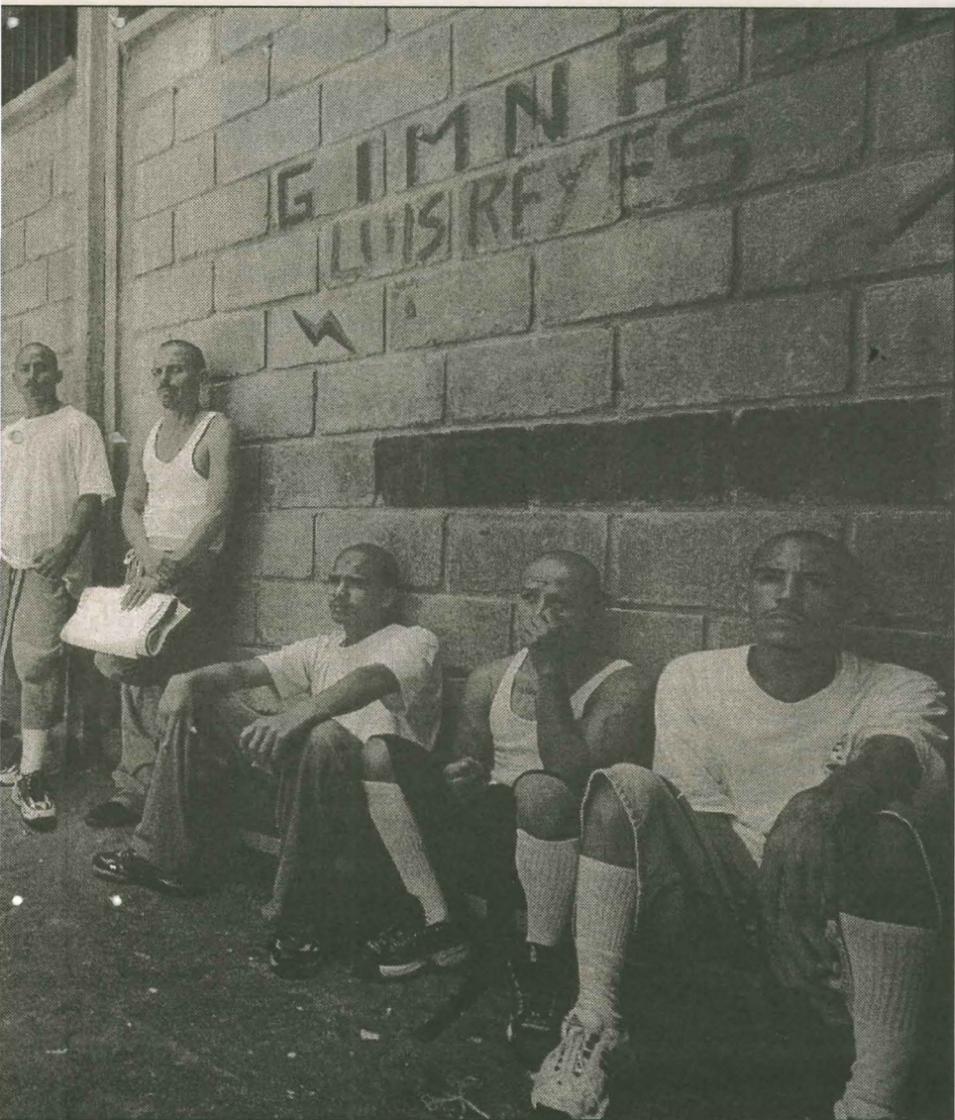
"So many of their families either won't come see them or can't get here to see them," Johnson says. "Some of



A TOUCH OF LEVITY Missionary Amy Johnson brings a smile to the faces of inmates in the prison area. Her example breaks the barriers that separate

CELLBLOCK FRIEND
Johnson visits an inmate in a women's prison in Honduras. She has become a parental figure to many prisoners she visits.





...ary Amy Johnson's stories of redemption. Using a flannel board for the semiliterate, she turns darkened week.

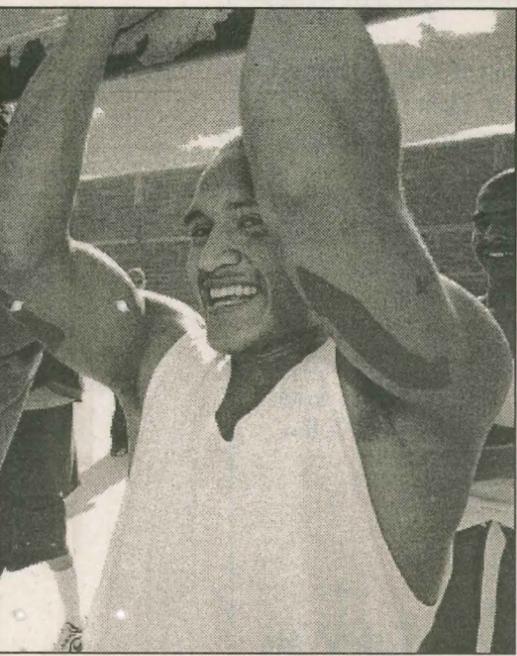
see 30. their parents won't pay the fines to get them out because they'd rather have them alive in prison than dead on the streets." Those

Whatever she said helped because the two are laughing and smiling as she leaves the cell more than an hour later.

"A lot of what I do is just listen," Johnson says. "They just want someone to take an interest in them."

Tuesday: Juvenile prison

The 15-year-old boy with bandaged arms can't wait to see Johnson.



...y Johnson brings light and levity into a prison's recreation ers that separate young inmates from the gospel.

He rushes to meet her and, at first opportunity, pulls her to the side. He whispers something; Johnson smiles and pulls him close in a hug. He accepted Christ as his Savior two nights ago.

His journey to the cross wasn't easy. The bandages are from when a rival gang captured him and tried to burn his gang's tattoos from his arms. He's lucky to be alive. He's even luckier to be in jail. Jail provided the chance for him to hear about Jesus.

"He started coming to the Bible stories and told me he wanted to get out of the gang," Johnson recounts. "He changed the way he dressed and asked me for a Bible. I'm just so excited about his decision."

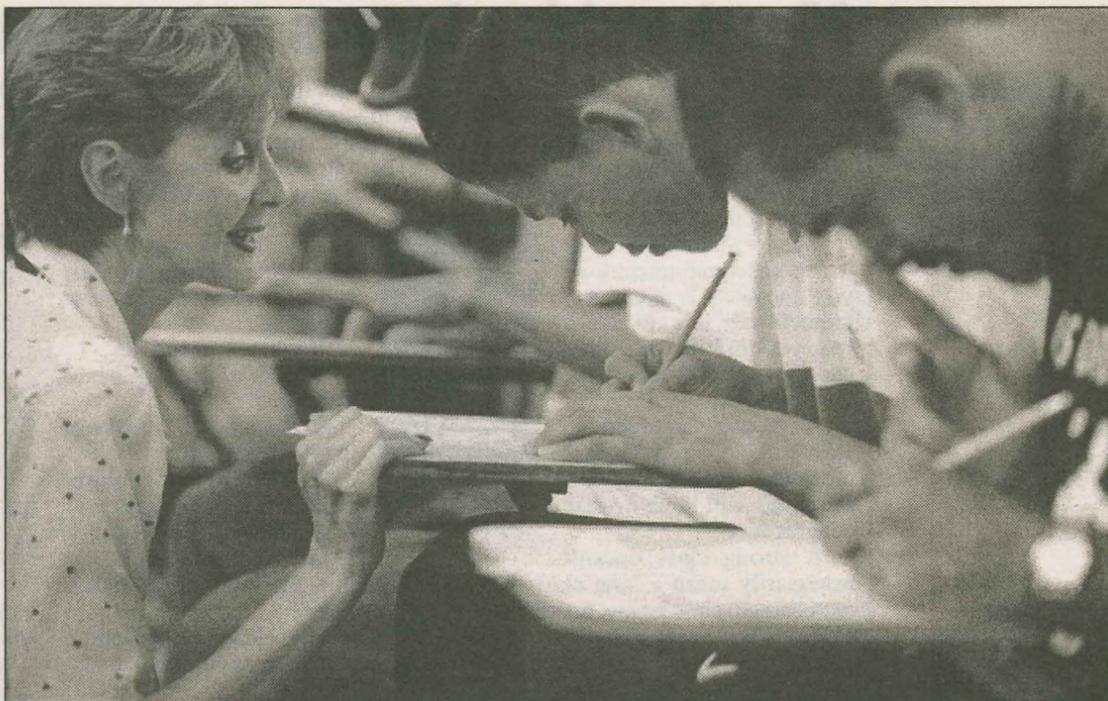
Johnson finishes the story—Noah's Ark—and a few guys gather around her. The new believer has brought several friends to Johnson. She gives them each a short lesson plan, and they work through the blanks. One boy asks for a Bible.

"I will give you a Bible when you learn to read," Johnson says, and turns to the others in the group. "It is your job to teach him to read. You have to help him learn to read so he can read the Bible for himself."

They promise to, and tell her they've formed a new gang—a Bible study gang. The boy with the bandages is the leader.

Wednesday: Comayagua prison

Stepping through the cage into the prison yard is like buying a ticket to a three-ring circus.



Salsa music blares from an assortment of speakers as a man shouts to be heard above the noise. He's selling lottery tickets. Another man sitting in a hammock tosses crude comments in the direction of some female guests. Others are begging spare change, possibly to buy a cigarette at one of the many concession stands lining the narrow, outdoor passages in the prison's maze. The smell of deep-fried whatever lingers in the air.

Johnson draws stares as she greets the two muscular young men who are waiting for her. Both were members of a gang. One's nickname was Satan. Now he goes by his first name. Johnson has a picture of Satan; shaved head, scowling face, a lot of attitude. That was before. Now he smiles constantly. The difference is Jesus in his heart.

The man, who asked not to be identified for security reasons, is not the only one. Of the four groups Johnson will teach in this prison, three groups are former gang members.

"The reason we are out is because Amy shared Jesus with us," he says. "What she teaches us is that there is hope."

Behind enemy lines

The week continues, and prisons are revisited. Johnson takes one day to plan for the coming week, and prayer is the foundation on which every day is constructed. Tears often splash her lesson plans as she pleads with God on behalf of one gang member after another. There is an urgency in her voice that equals the urgency of their situations. Life is cheap in their world and often meets a violent end. Ten people with whom Johnson has worked either were murdered in prison or when they got out.

"They just don't see their lives as valuable," Johnson says. "They see it as an honor to die for the gang. They believe so much in their cause of destroying their enemies. For me, the most difficult thing is knowing that they will spend eternity in hell if they don't accept Christ before something happens to them."

Johnson sees their faces—faces like the popular gang leader who sat in many of her classes. She shared the gospel with him, and every time he politely refused the invitation to give

his life to Christ. He was murdered after he was transferred to another prison. Johnson grieved with the gang members.

Seeing so many lives wasted is discouraging. Satanic rituals and pacts are common practice. One prisoner's nickname is "Lucifer," and he prides himself on being "Satan's right-hand man."

But Johnson tells them that God desires for them to experience spiritual freedom, even if physical freedom from prison never comes.

"This is not something to take lightly," Johnson says. "Before I ever got to Honduras to do this, the Lord showed me it wasn't going to be easy. When you are in Satan's territory, he doesn't like it. I spend a lot of time seeking God. I don't dare go into the prisons without being covered with the blood of Jesus."

For security, Johnson relies on her Bible. She can't say which is her favorite verse, but flips through one brightly highlighted page after another in Jeremiah. Through the "weeping prophet's" writing, God promises His presence to Johnson. In return, Johnson gives her life completely to Him.

"I guess I see myself before the Lord as a handmaiden," she says. "I want my life to glorify Him."

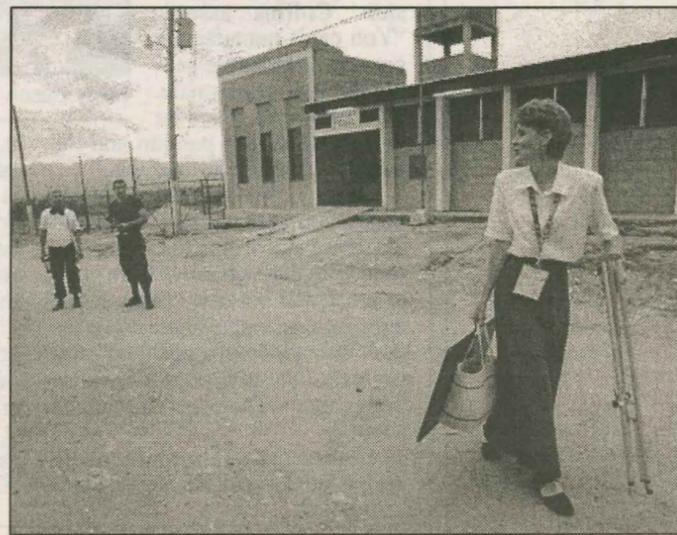
And even in the most hostile of spiritual environments, gang members not only hear that Jesus loves them, but also see Him every week in the form of a slender redhead with gentle eyes and a warm smile.

"SATAN" MEETS NOAH

Connecting the dots with a boy nicknamed "Satan," missionary Amy Johnson directs inmates in a drawing exercise during a lesson on Noah's Ark. Her elementary methods and disarming personality expose innocent facets in hardened characters.

HER MISSION FIELD

"This work is not something to take lightly, and I always knew it wouldn't be easy; the Lord made that clear," missionary Amy Johnson says. "But I never regret that I came."



RESOURCES

Membership classes gain commitments from new members

A membership class sets the tone and expectation level for everything else that follows.

LAKE FOREST, Calif. (BP)—I believe the most important class in your church is the membership class.

A membership class sets the tone and expectation level for everything else that follows.

The very best time to elicit a strong commitment from your members is at the very moment they join. If little is required to join, very little can be expected from your members later on.

A strong membership class will build a strong congregation. A weak membership class will build a weak congregation.

A strong class doesn't necessarily mean a long class. The membership class here at Saddleback Valley Community Church (Class 101) is just four hours long and is taught all on one day, but it produces a high level of commitment in our membership. Those who chose to join our church know exactly what will be expected of them as members.

For a number of reasons, I believe the senior pastor should teach this class, or at least teach a portion of it. The opportunity to see the pastor's vision for the church, feel his love for the members and hear his personal commitment to care, feed and lead them is important to new members.

Some churches have a membership class but they cover the wrong material. They fill the class with material on spiritual growth or basic doctrine. These subjects are vitally important,

but they are more appropriately covered in your new believer's class and Christian doctrine class.

These are both essential classes that should be separate from the membership class. Don't confuse them with your membership class. Your membership class should answer the following questions:

- What is a church?
- What are the purposes of the church?
- What are the benefits of being a member?
- What are the requirements for membership?
- What are the responsibilities of membership?

- What is the vision and strategy of this church?
- How is the church organized?
- How can I get involved in ministry?
- What do I do next now that I am a member?

If you are a church that targets the unchurched, you need to include a clear explanation of salvation in your membership class because you will have many people who want to join your church who aren't even believers yet! We always explain that trusting Christ is the first requirement for membership and we see people saved in every membership class.

There are many elements you can use in your membership class to keep it interesting and interactive: video clips, a notebook with fill-in curricu-

FIRST PERSON



Rick Warren

Understanding your passion and ours

In his recent bestseller, "Good to Great," Jim Collins writes about understanding our passions. Collins writes about companies, but I believe the book relates just as well to ministries, including our ministries at Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek.

Collins' book is an in-depth look at companies that have gone from good to great. What do they have in common? What are the differences? Collins asks the question and I rephrase it ministerially: "Can a good ministry become a great ministry and if so, how? Or is the disease of 'just being good' incurable?"

With regard to passion, Collins asserts, "You can't manufacture passion or motivate people to feel passionate. You only can discover what ignites your passion and the passions of those around you."

What lights your fire? What makes you want to shout and pound the table? According to Collins, the ministries that will move from good to great will not say, "Okay folks, let's get passionate about what we do." Instead, companies (and ministries!) "should only do those things that we can get passionate about."

Collins uses an example from the business world. Kimberly-Clark

made the shift to paper-based consumer products "in large part because they could be more passionate about them. As one executive put it, the traditional diaper products are okay, but they just don't have the charisma of a diaper."

At Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek, we are passionate about reaching the young generation in Kentucky and around the world for Christ. That's what drives us, fuels us, motivates us, stirs us, keeps us awake at night, makes us pound the table. We are presented with many different opportunities for ministry, many of which we have to turn down because they don't fit in with what we can do well and what we are passionate about.

In Kentucky Baptist Assemblies' ministries, we're certainly not great yet, but our prayer is that such will come to pass. We don't want to be good, we want to be the best in the world at what we feel passionate about. That's right, the best in the world. Why not?

To God be the glory. May He ignite and stir your passions and ours as we all strive to work together to reach this young generation.

Rusty Ellison is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies, Box 43364, Louisville, KY 40253-0364. Call (502) 499-8655

KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



Rusty Ellison

Membership class outline

Below is the structure for the membership class offered at Saddleback Valley Community Church:

- Our salvation**
 - Making sure you are a Christian.
 - The symbols of salvation (baptism and communion).
- Our statements**
 - Our purpose statement: Why we exist.
 - Our vision statement: What we intend to do.
 - Our faith statement: What we believe.

■ Our values statement: What we practice.

Our strategy

- A brief history of Saddleback.
- Who we are trying to reach (our target).

■ Our life development process to help you grow.

Our structure

- How our church is organized for growth.
- Our affiliation.

■ What it means to be a member.

■ What is my next step after joining?

lum, small group interaction and a good meal together.

Be sure to include a lot of stories that personalize the history, values and direction of your church. At Saddleback, we even include a quiz at the end of each class, testing the new members on how well they can state the purposes of our church and other important concepts.

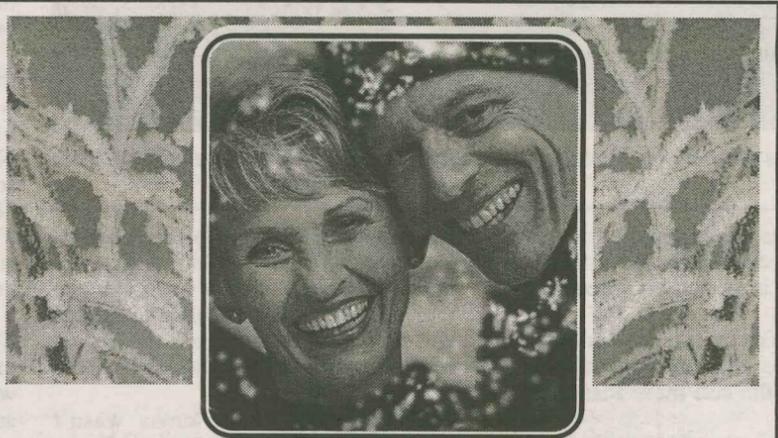
I believe completion of a membership class should be required for membership. People who are uninterested or unwilling to learn your church's

purposes, strategy and the meaning of membership are failing to demonstrate the kind of commitment membership implies.

If they don't even care enough to understand the responsibilities of membership, they cannot be expected to fulfill them after joining. They should not be allowed to join.

There are plenty of other congregations to join that offer a meaningful membership.

Rick Warren is pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Lake Forest, Calif.



Join us for Light Up Your Holidays 2002

This December 3-6 senior adults can be part of a delightful event that captures the wonder and beauty of Christmas. Light Up Your Holidays, scheduled at two locations, features inspirational messages and music, as well as exciting local attractions.

The Ridgecrest, North Carolina, location features the Candlelight Christmas Tour and Dinner at the Biltmore Estate near Asheville. To register, write LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center; P.O. Box 128; Ridgecrest, North Carolina 28770; or call 1-800-588-7222.

The Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, site includes Colonial Patriots in costume telling Christmas stories, holiday dining with time-period entertainment, and a tour of this historic area. To register, write Light Up Your Holidays 2002; LifeWay Events Registration, P.O. Box 24001; Nashville, Tennessee 37202; or call 1-800-254-2022.

Don't delay! Your senior adults will experience "Joy... For the Journey" through this memorable holiday event.

For more information about events, visit LifeWay on the Web at www.lifeway.com and click on the "Events" link.



SMILE

Opening a new school year

By Robert Dunston

Cumberland College opened the 2002-03 academic year with a variety of activities for students, faculty and staff.

On Aug. 28, new students joined together for a convocation led by David Austin Sky. Sky, a masterful storyteller, encouraged students to make the most of their college years. His use of humor and his obvious commitment to students communicated his message effectively to everyone in attendance.

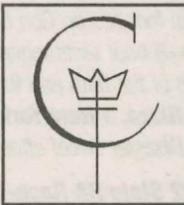
On Aug. 29, Cumberland College hosted the Lexington Philharmonic. George Zack and the excellent musicians of the Philharmonic presented a concert featuring patriotic selections and show tunes.

The Philharmonic set up under the portico of Cumberland College's Grace Crum Rollins Fine Arts Center. Students, faculty, staff and community members brought lawn chairs and blankets and spread out across the college's quadrangle for an evening of inspirational and beautiful music.

On Friday evening, Aug. 30, the Cumberland College family joined together for a picnic. Good food and fun games created a time of relaxed fellowship.

On Sept. 2, Cumberland students, faculty and staff assembled in Gatliff Chapel to begin the new academic year with worship. Cumberland College President Jim Taylor welcomed the new students and introduced the new faculty and staff. Melinda Etter, daughter of Cumberland College music professor David Etter, provided special music.

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



Harold Greenfield, retired director of missions for Caldwell-Lyon Baptist Association and current president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, brought God's message to us. Using the image of an eagle, he encouraged us to live steadfastly under God's guidance.

Events like these draw all of us at Cumberland College together as a family and help us stay centered in Christ as we begin a new year of learning and service.

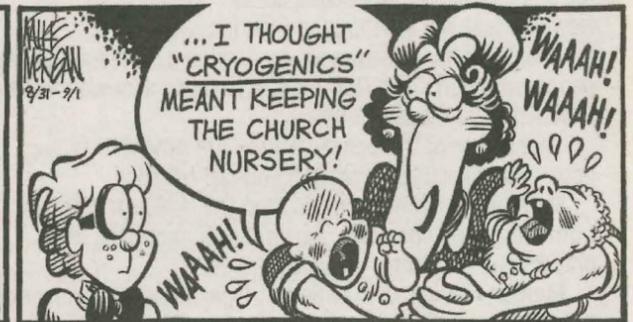
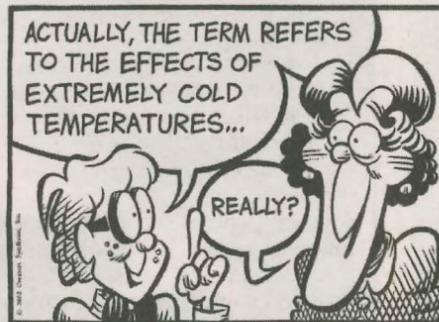
Robert Dunston is chairman of the religion department at Cumberland College, 6000 College Station Dr., Williamsburg, KY 40769

Kudzu



Doug Marlette

For Heaven's Sake



Mike Morgan

Bible Crossword

Across

- 1 Person who makes perfume
- 8 "Ten women shall _____ your bread in one oven" (Leviticus 26:26)
- 11 Any person
- 12 "The noise of the stamping of the _____ of his strong horses" (Jeremiah 47:3)
- 14 Inspector General, abbr.
- 15 Edible Japanese plant
- 16 Eggs
- 18 Near, abbr.
- 19 "No man putteth a piece of _____ cloth unto an old garment" (Matthew 9:16)
- 20 Temporary route
- 23 Teacher's helper, abbr.
- 24 Physician, abbr.
- 25 "Take thee a _____ razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head" (Ezekiel 5:1)
- 26 Four, Romans num.
- 27 South Vietnamese coin
- 28 Short for potassium nitrate, Br.
- 31 "He shall sit as a _____ and purifier of silver" (Malachi 3:3)
- 35 "There shall be weeping and _____ of teeth" (Matthew 8:12)
- 36 "This do ye; _____ your beasts, and go" (Genesis 45:17)
- 37 Island nation, abbr.
- 38 Too much of a drug, abbr.
- 40 Therefore
- 41 Putting threads together to make fabric
- 45 Impersonal pronoun
- 47 Current of warm water that affects the weather (2 words)
- 49 Paul's occupation
- 53 Peach state, abbr.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12	13		
14			15			16			17
18			19			20		21	22
23			24			25			
26					27				
28	29		30		31	32		33	34
35							36		
	37						38		
39		40			41	42	43		44
45	46				47				48
49		50	51	52					53
54						55		56	

- 54 Dorcas's occupation (Acts 9:39)
- 55 "Come unto _____, all ye that labour" (Matthew 11:28)
- 56 "In the beginning _____ created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)

- 22 "Take I pray thee ... And he _____ him, and he took it" (Genesis 33:11)

Down

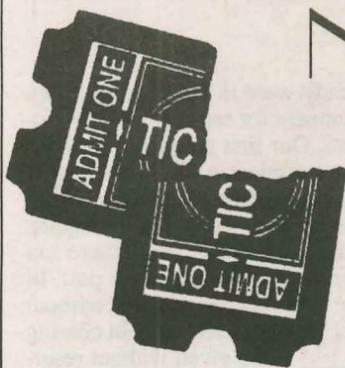
- 1 Coloring with a brush
- 2 "Grave upon it, like the _____s of a signet" (Exodus 28:36)
- 3 Track transportation, abbr.
- 4 Sinks below surface of water
- 5 "Is a candle brought to be put _____ a bushel?" (Mark 4:21)
- 6 Cat's cry
- 7 "Peter knocked ... a damsel came to hearken, named _____" (Acts 12:13)
- 8 Noah's occupation (2 words)
- 9 Flying soldiers, abbr.
- 10 Dorothy's state, abbr.
- 13 "Shepherds ... keeping watch _____ their flock by night" (Luke 2:8)
- 17 Tax enforcement organization, abbr.
- 21 Old English, abbr.

- 25 Overheat
- 29 Flaps
- 30 Extremely high frequency, abbr.
- 32 For example, Lat. abbr.
- 33 Northern continent, abbr.
- 34 "Though they be _____ like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18)
- 38 Like a sheep
- 39 Glove
- 41 "We will eat our own bread, and _____ our own apparel" (Isaiah 4:1)
- 42 Antlered animal
- 43 Musical term to indicate "animated," abbr.
- 44 "There was _____ room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7)
- 46 Hot or cold beverage
- 48 A son of Zilpah (Genesis 35:26)
- 50 Nickel, chem. symbol
- 51 Total loss, abbr.
- 52 Southwestern state whose capital is Jefferson City, abbr.
- 53 "_____ ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19)

Last week's solution

1	P	H	A	R	I	S	E	S	7	B	O	N			
2	U	J	P	A	E	11	L	E	V	I	T	E			
3	14	B	R	O	G	A	N	D	A	B	B	I			
4	16	L	A	S	S	T	17	18	E	C	L	G			
5	19	I	N	T	E	20	R	E	U	M	A	H			
6	22	C	I	A	S	24	25	26	R	E	27	O	B		
7	28	A	N	T	S	29	C	A	R	E	S	O			
8	30	N	E	E	31	P	E	Z	32	33	E	M	U		
9	34	S	35	36	A	B	L	A	T	E	R				
10	38	39	40	41	P	L	E	R	N	N	N				
11	42	E	S	S	A	Y	43	44	45	N	D	I	T	E	
12	47	A	S	H	N	A	H	48	49	A	O	R	T	A	S
13	50	S	E	A	S	A	O	51	52	E	E	L	S		

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A new video from
Kentucky Baptist
Homes for Children!

Just in time for the Thanksgiving Offering season, call 1-800-456-1386 or contact KBHC by e-mail at info@kbhc.org to request your free copy of the six-minute video produced by Pat Summerall Productions. Find out more about the work of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children and how you can be part of our ongoing ministry to children and families.



Great for Sunday School
classes, missions groups
or entire congregations!

Atheist fighting 'under God' pledge goes after congressional chaplains

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The atheist who made legal news when he asked an appeals court to remove "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance now is trying to have chaplains removed from the U.S. Congress.

Michael Newdow, a Sacramento, Calif.-based lawyer and emergency room doctor, filed suit in federal district court in Washington during the last week of August, claiming that it is unconstitutional for taxpayer-funded chaplains to minister to lawmakers and pray in Congress.

"If congressmen want to go to church, (then) walk down the block like other Americans do and go to church," Newdow told The Washington Post in an interview.

"Don't get my government engaged in it. There are some people who don't love God Almighty. That's why we have an Establishment Clause."

That clause of the Constitution's First Amendment bars government establishment of an official religion.

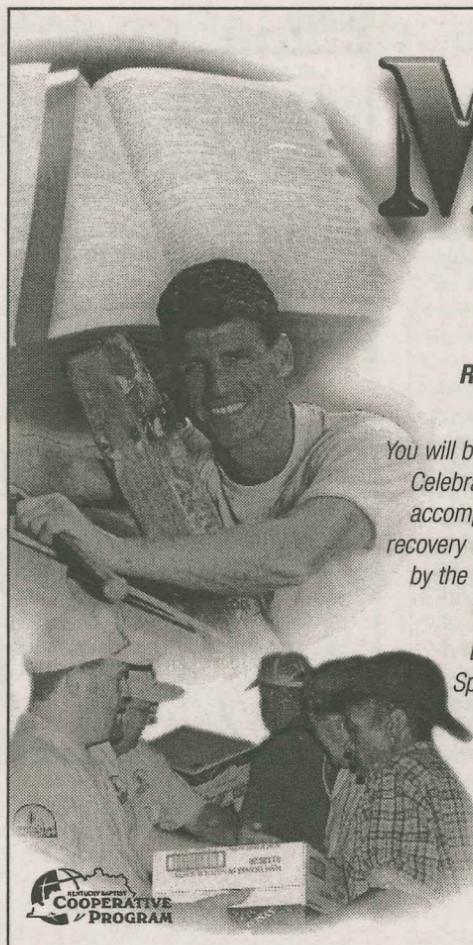
Newdow wants the court to stop the House and Senate from employing chaplains, who counsel members, lead prayers and have other religious duties.

Morgan Frankel, deputy Senate legal counsel, is convinced the chaplains will remain on the job, based on a 1983 decision by the nation's highest court.

"The Supreme Court has thoroughly examined the history of the congressional chaplaincies and determined they are completely consistent with the Constitution," he said. "We anticipate the same result in this case."

Newdow was successful in his last church-state case, when the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in his favor in June that the phrase "one nation, under God" was unconstitutional. The ruling has been appealed.

The pledge lawsuit originally was filed on behalf of Newdow's daughter, but the girl's mother has said the girl is a Christian who didn't mind saying "under God."



CELEBRATE THE MISSION

Saturday, October 5, 2002 at 9:00 a.m.
First Baptist Church, Lawrenceburg, Kentucky

This one-day celebration will be focused on God's efforts to Reclaim, Restore and Reconcile the world through men, women, children and youth from Kentucky Baptist churches.

You will be challenged to live out the Mission that God has called you to participate. Celebrate in a worship experience focused on God and how he uses people to accomplish amazing tasks. You will hear testimonies from volunteer relief and recovery workers, front line warriors of the faith and those who have been changed by the Gospel. Hear from Heidi Rizzo, a New York City Police Officer who accepted Christ following Disaster Relief efforts in New York City.

Don't miss out on the 2002 State RA Race-Off! Winners of the Spring 2002 regional RA racer events will compete for the state title. All other kids interested in participating can participate in an open RA race event for the open title.

A limited number of box lunches will be provided for a cost of \$3, register today on-line to reserve yours.

For more information contact the Brotherhood Department: 888-254-5720 (toll free KY), 502-244-6489 or by e-mail: dwayne.doyle@kybaptist.org



Visit our Web site www.kybaptist.org

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Just like the old days

Ah yes, how often we remember days long gone and how things once were. Come to think of it, some of those long gone things need to stay long gone. But I miss some of the things we did in the days of my youth.

Two weeks ago, our farm manager reinstated an old Oneida tradition—a morning farm work detail. Very few young people have any appreciation for having chores to perform. Even many of us who remember our days on the farm can't deny that we were often less than enthused about our responsibilities. Oh, we look back with pride when we tell our children and grandchildren about the chores we did. And we like to brag a little about how hard we worked. But at the time not many of us could have said we were happy to do those chores.

I know I like to brag about my days on the Oneida Baptist Institute farm. I smile when I tell people that three other boys and I got up at 4:30 every school-day morning, quickly ate our breakfasts and left the dining room by 5.

No, it was not uphill both ways, but the four of us had to carry three empty milk cans nearly a mile to the farm. Did I mention that it was a long, dark walk? There were no night security lights. Well, there were the moon and stars; they did help a little.

That was the easy part. Then we began the hard part—feeding the livestock and milking the cows. Then there was the really hard part: carrying three full milk cans a mile back to the kitchen. Maybe this brings back a few memories for you, too.

Anyway, two weeks ago students once again began working on the farm before school. They do not have to get up at 4:30 a.m., and they don't have to walk a mile. We now have a swinging

bridge across Goose Creek that reduces the walk to about a quarter of a mile. But they do have to get up earlier than most other students and be at work by 7 a.m.

I see the dozen or so middle school and high school boys walking most mornings. There is usually a little smile on my face as I think of my mornings on the farm and the lifelong experiences these boys will gain from this adventure. Just think about the smiles they will have years from now when they tell about their mornings on the farm.

These days there are no cows to milk and no eggs to gather, but there are more than 200 hogs to feed. The cows in the feed lot need to be fed, and we normally have a dozen or so calves that are being bottle-fed. Other students are busy helping with additional chores, including some mechanical work on our farm equipment. They seem to really enjoy their experience, and to my knowledge, no one has dropped off of the morning crew yet.

But the real test will come when it gets cold—really cold! I can remember those January and February mornings quite well. We did not have the type of warm clothing available today. There were mornings when I decided I wanted off the morning crew because of the cold. There was only one reason I did not quit: I was the only senior. How would it have looked if the only senior on the crew could not take it? It was peer pressure, pure and simple. If it had not been for peer pressure, I would have quit. I hope these boys are tough enough to see it through to spring.

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

Thanks, Dr. Aldridge

My introduction to D.M. Aldridge came in 1969 while I was a pastor in Bowling Green.

A Clear Creek alumnus, Don Burnett, moved near our church and we became friends. He remembered some students had it rough, and he planned to take a pick-up load of frozen turkeys to them for Christmas.

Our church gave some funds, and for two years I journeyed with Bro. Don to Pineville. Dr. Aldridge welcomed us with much appreciation and treated us royally. After Burnett's death, I asked Dr. Aldridge if I could continue the turkey project in memory of Burnett. He strongly encouraged me and thus began my relationship with Clear Creek.

Each Christmas while I was in Sturgis and Murray I brought turkeys and preached in chapel. I usually attended the state convention alumni dinner. On Turkey Day 1980, Dr. Aldridge presented me a framed print of Clear Creek's historic creek-side stone cottage by Pineville artist Mason Combs; I was declared the school's only honorary alumnus.

He announced his retirement for 1982 and told me I should be the next president. He didn't know we

already were in the process of appointment for service in the Philippines. Our first meeting after I became president in 1988, he thumped me on the chest with his index finger and said, "You whippersnapper, you should have been there six years ago." During these past 14 years he has encouraged without interfering, prayed without ceasing and given without reservation. He was chair of the faculty/staff campaign for the Beyond 2001 Campaign.

Two weeks before Dr. Aldridge died (Sept. 2), he made a last trip to the campus. He wanted to see the renovated Kelly Hall—the location of classrooms when he was a professor (1946-50) and his presidential office during half of his 28-year tenure.

We shall all miss him. I will always be grateful for the confidence he had in me.

Dr. Aldridge once said, "The Lord alone calls someone to His service." He came to Clear Creek with the strongest of calls to fulfill the work of a missionary. He finished well. Thanks, Dr. Aldridge.

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Controversy expected for statement on salvation & Jews

By Jeffrey MacDonald
Religion News Service

CHESTNUT HILL, Mass. (RNS)—Rejecting a centuries-old hallmark of Christian teaching on salvation, an ecumenical group of Christian scholars has issued a statement saying Jews can be saved without coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

Several evangelical leaders criticized the statement, which is likely to raise debate between Christian groups about whether Jesus is the only path to salvation.

Claiming "Jews are in an eternal covenant with God," 21 members of the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations challenged the traditional Christian view of Jesus as savior for all humankind.

Because faithful Jews already are in right relationship with God, they said, "we renounce missionary efforts directed at converting Jews."

"We know there has been a long tradition of anti-Judaism within that Christian tradition," said Joseph Tyson, chairman of the scholars group—which currently is hosted by Boston College—and professor emeritus at Southern Methodist University. "It's based on certain misperceptions of history, and it's theologically in-

valid. ... We're convinced that a rethinking of Christian attitudes toward Jews is central, indispensable and sacred."

The 10-point statement, made public Sept. 5 and called "A Sacred Obligation," marks the latest in a series of attempts to bridge historic enmity and divisions between Christians and Jews. It comes in response to "Dabru Emet," a call from Jewish scholars in September 2000 for Jews to rethink their understanding of Christianity.

It follows also on the heels of an Aug. 12 statement in which Jews and Catholic bishops said attempts to convert Jews are "no longer theologically acceptable." That statement has drawn fire from conservative Christians, especially leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Last week's statement went beyond prior, more parochial efforts as this time thinkers from seven denominations joined the cause of questioning the doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus alone. Although Jews heralded the statement as a step forward for interfaith dialogue, evangelicals bristled at the apparent undercutting of a bedrock teaching.

"While that covenant (between God and Jews) is still in place, it in no way implies salvation," said James

Sibley, coordinator of Jewish outreach for the Southern Baptist Convention. "If it did, why would God send His Son to die this horrible death if it were not necessary?"

"Evangelical Christians cannot assent to a diminished universal significance of Jesus as both a Jewish and gentile Messiah and Savior," said Gordon Lewis, professor of theology and philosophy at Denver Seminary. "The Jews were the ones who needed the atonement (because) there aren't any, Jew or gentile, who live faithfully by the law. The law is fulfilled only in Christ, and only through the atonement can we who cannot keep the law be saved."

For centuries, Christians have taught that God's covenant with the chosen, Jewish people had been replaced by a new covenant with the church, that is, with all who believe Jesus is Son of God, Savior and Lord. Such an idea of one covenant "superseding" the other has faded from both Catholic and mainline Protestant teachings as Christians since the Holocaust have striven to argue that God has not abandoned the Jews. Last week's statement unfolds that shift's potentially vast implications for some Christian groups' teachings on salvation.

In applauding the statement, two Jewish respondents focused on one of the 10 points: "Christians should not target Jews for conversion."

Renouncing conversion efforts "is absolutely critical to the Jewish stance" in interfaith dialogue with Christians, said Rabbi Ruth Langer of Boston College. "It is virtually impossible to dialogue with somebody who seeks to annihilate who you are."

Other points in the statement further explored implications of affirming a valid covenant between God and Jews. Scholars said, for instance, "we affirm the importance of the land of Israel for the life of the Jewish people," noting that land has never been key to a Christ-based covenant with God. Signatories went on to say that "both Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live in peace and security in a homeland of their own."

The purpose of last week's statement, which can be read in full at www.bc.edu/cjlearning, is to stimulate conversation at local churches and seminaries, both nationwide and abroad.

According to Mary Boys, professor of practical theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York, the statement could spark conversations about what it means to be saved.

"While that covenant (between God and Jews) is still in place, it in no way implies salvation."

James Sibley,
coordinator of Jewish
outreach for the
Southern Baptist
Convention

New-found letter adds to church and state debate

ELKTON, Md. (ABP)—The discovery last May of an original letter from President Thomas Jefferson to the Delaware Baptist Association is creating a stir.

The letter, found in Elkton, Md., is valued at \$700,000. It predates by six months Jefferson's famous letter in 1801 to Baptists in Danbury, Conn., in which he introduced the metaphor of the "wall of separation" between church and state.

In the letter to Delaware Baptists, one of several composed by Jefferson thanking Baptist groups that had congratulated him on his election as president, Jefferson credits the "Almighty Ruler" for "happy consequences of our revolution."

Jefferson's letter goes on to list "the

establishment here of liberty, equality, of social rights, exclusion of unequal privileges civil and religious and of the usurping domination of one sect over another."

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the letter gives new insight into Jefferson's thinking, which he said "is not nearly as radical as the liberals try to make it."

"That is not a secular vision," Land told the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware news journal Baptist Life.

But Loyd Allen, a church history professor at McAfee School of Theology, says anyone thinking the letter reveals Jefferson as a "closet Chris-

tian" is going to be disappointed.

In an article for EthicsDaily.com, Allen said other writings by Jefferson rejected the divinity of Christ and denied the miracles, resurrection and the atonement.

"Some contemporary Christians apparently cannot comprehend how born-again Baptist Christians in (the) early 19th century ... could—after the election of a non-orthodox, non-Trinitarian, non-Bible-accepting, deist president—willingly praise that president because he vouched for the freedom of all consciences, believer and non-believer alike."

That, Allen said, points to "the loss of wise Jefferson's clear vision of the importance of a wall of separation between church and state."

Study: Charitable choice poses no threat to church or state

By Matt Young & Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A survey of nearly 400 faith-based organizations receiving "charitable choice" grants from the government has found the funding poses little threat to either church or state.

Only 6 percent of the faith-based organizations, both nonprofits and congregations, believe that accepting government contracts has threatened to undermine their religiosity, according to the study, released last week by the conservative Hudson Institute.

"Are these groups going to have to sell their souls to get Uncle Sam's money?" Amy Sherman, senior fellow at the institute, rhetorically asked her audience at the National Press Club, where the study was released. No, she said, "Only a very, very small amount of people are worried about that."

And 70 percent of the recipient organizations segregate public money designated for social service use from private funds for religious use. That means in most cases, the government is not funding religious practices, according to the institute, which is based in Indianapolis.

Others disagree.

"The segregation of funds offers no assurance of offering protection under the Establishment Clause," said Welton Gaddy, executive director of the liberal Interfaith Alliance in Washington. Gaddy, in a telephone interview, said while government money might fund strictly social service missions of religious groups, proselytizing could occur during those operations.

The "charitable choice" provision of federal welfare laws, enacted in 1996, requires the government to include faith-based groups in its social service contracts. President Bush has sought to promote more government

support for religious groups' social programs through the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

One such measure, already approved by Congress, provides millions of dollars in technical assistance to faith-based organizations helping those in need.

But Sherman warned faith-based organizations that the government could never completely fund their social work.

Among the findings:

■ 87 percent of faith-based organizations said contract funds had allowed them to serve more clients.

■ 76 percent said a contract had helped them expand an existing program.

■ 68 percent said a contract had aided them in creating a new program.

■ 42 percent of the faith-based contractors described themselves as evangelicals.

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Survey: Confidence in charities eroded.** Confidence in charitable organizations has decreased in the last year, with the number of Americans doubling who express no confidence in charities, the Brookings Institution reports. In July 2001, 25 percent of Americans said they had "a lot" of confidence in charitable organizations. That percentage dropped to 19 percent in August of this year. The percentage with no confidence jumped from 8 percent to 16 percent.

■ **Churches seek Middle East peacekeeping force.** A coalition of Protestant and Catholic churches has asked President Bush to deploy international peacekeepers to the Middle East to ensure calm between Israelis and Palestinians. Churches for Middle East Peace, a Washington-based lobby of mainline Protestant and Catholic groups, said the peacekeepers could help end "a humanitarian crisis of shocking dimensions." The peacekeeping force is central to a proposal offered by Arab nations that received tepid support from the White House.

■ **Persecuted Christians advocate dies.** Steven Snyder, an advocate for persecuted Christians across the globe and the founder and president of International Christian Concern, died Aug. 27. He was 54.

■ **Founder of Christian Men's Network dies.** Christian Men's Network founder and President Edwin Louis Cole died Aug. 27 in Grapevine, Texas. Cole, who traveled across the globe since 1980 to speak at more than 1,000 men-only events, was 79. A pastor, evangelist and business executive, Cole also was the author of 14 books, including "Maximized Manhood."

■ **Churches speak out against Iraq war.** Thirty-eight Christian leaders from the United States, Canada and Britain recently urged the United States to draw back from its move toward a potentially unilateral strike against Iraq. "As Christians, we are concerned by the likely human costs of war with Iraq, particularly for civilians," said the statement by leaders from such groups as the United Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Presbyterian Church (USA). "We are unconvinced that the gain for humanity would be proportionate to the loss." The leaders also said Iraq has a duty to end its threats to peace.

PEOPLE

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ Missionary strategy coordinators for Central and Far East Russia who are meeting in Khabarovsk, Russia, this week.

■ A group of five Texas Baptist women who are leading a vacation Bible school in an elementary school in Erfurt, Germany, this week.

Team members received permission to include a Bible story time each day, and this will be the first time most of the children will hear a Bible story, missionaries write.

■ "L," a deaf Christian in the Czech Republic, who is breaking barriers to become bold in her witness about her newfound faith in Christ.

■ An "Alpha" discipleship group that meets in the home of Baptist representatives Joe and Chair Vasquez in the Canary Islands.

Pray that group members will yearn for a personal relationship with Christ.

■ Baptist missionaries as they identify and develop Christian leaders who will be able to plant churches across Warsaw, Poland. "Please join us in prayer as we seek God's chosen ones whom He has called to carry the gospel into the wasteland of Warsaw," missionaries write.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by staff

■ ALEXANDRIA—Paul Broyles has resigned as pastor of Grants Lick Church to become senior pastor of Pittsburgh Church in Pittsburgh, Pa. ■ BAGDAD—Beechridge Church called Marshall Phillips as interim pastor. ■ CLINTON—Obion Church will hold revival services Sept. 25-29 with Harold Cathey as evangelist. ■ EDDYVILLE—First Church will celebrate homecoming Sept. 15 with Bill Tichenor as guest speaker. For information, call (270) 388-7693. ■ EVARTS—Yocum Creek Church called David Butler as min-

ister of youth.

■ FORT THOMAS—First Church called Bryon Cobb as associate pastor/youth minister effective Aug. 11. ■ HARRODSBURG—Harrodsburg Church will hold revival services Sept. 15-18 with Steve Ayers, pastor of Hillvue Heights Church in Bowling Green, as evangelist. ■ HENDERSON—Immanuel Church called Sam Newman as minister of music and education. Joseph Tricquet is pastor.

Wayne Eastman resigned as minister of music and senior adults at Zion Church to become associate

minister of music at First Church in Columbia, S.C., effective Sept. 15.

■ HUSTONVILLE—Tim Cochran resigned as pastor of Mount Salem Church to become pastor of Clyde Church in Clyde, Ohio.

■ LEXINGTON—Ken Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, will speak at Victory Church Sept. 15, 8:30 and 11 a.m. Mike James is pastor.

■ LOUISVILLE—Carlisle Avenue Church honored longtime member Opel Perkins on her 100th birthday Aug. 28. Shawn Merithew is pastor.

Fern Creek Church ordained Michele Crider and Barbara Miller as deacons.

Gethsemane Church will host

Michael Bright in concert Sept. 15, 2 p.m. For information, call Donna Parks at (502) 969-3191.

Parkland Church ordained Doyle Armstrong and Bill Johnson as deacons Sept. 8.

■ MAYSVILLE—Stonelick Church will hold revival services Oct. 13-16 with Joshua McFarland as evangelist.

■ MURRAY—First Church honored Debbie Settle for 30 years of service as pastor's secretary. Wendell Ray is pastor.

■ OWENSBORO—Macedonia Church called Steve James as pastor. He previously was pastor of Greensburg Church.

■ WICKLIFFE—Wickliffe Church called Matt Dillon as youth leader. Jerold Darnell is pastor.

Career missionary candidates undeterred by Sept. 11 attacks

By Tiffany Monhollon
SBC International Mission Board

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks haven't deterred Southern Baptists from career missions.

In fact, Southern Baptist International Mission Board candidates who work with people considering career missions report that interest in international missions is as high as it was before Sept. 11.

One year after the attacks, missions interest remains strong, said Kenn Shirley, who works with prospective missionaries in Alabama, Florida and

Puerto Rico. "What I have heard is an increased level of being serious about this calling to missions, perhaps even a bit somber," he said.

"We have even had some who have said, 'These events have helped me decide I want my life to count,'" added Jim Riddell, leader of the IMB's personnel consulting team.

Despite the apprehension many Americans feel about Muslim countries, candidates do not seem to be avoiding any particular people groups. Since Sept. 11, missions candidates have reserved 29 positions for service among Muslim people groups in South Asia, Central Asia, North Africa

and the Middle East.

"We continue to appoint people to areas dominated by Islam," Riddell said. "We have a number of people who were serving as two-year personnel and were relocated (last fall) who now have been appointed to return to their regions."

"Rarely do folks express fears concerning being attacked or hurt. There might be some concern over safety of children, but it is not an overriding concern," Shirley added. "The concerns we hear are much more in line with what most North Americans have: Schooling for their children, friends for their children, aging par-

ents and things of this nature."

Family members of prospective missionaries do seem more concerned about safety issues than they were before the attacks, he noted.

"Since Sept. 11, I just remind people that we are called to be obedient, not to be safe," Shirley said. "I said that before the attacks, but perhaps people are more ready to listen now."

"The realization seems to be that this is a much more serious task and it has to be done now," he said. "There is certainly an increased sensitivity to the shortness of time and that nothing in our lives or ministry is promised to us."

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR RENT: Condo on the beach at Redington Shores, Fla. One bedroom, 1.5 bath. Available Nov. 2002 through March 2003. \$1,600 per month; 11 percent Florida taxes, deposits and references required. Minimum rental: three months. (859) 371-8105.

FOR RENT: Gatlinburg getaway: 2-BR/2-bath, full kitchen; walking distance to parkway. \$65/night. Call for information: (251) 666-2175.

FOR RENT: Sanibel Island, Fla. Two-bedroom, 2-bath condo for vacation rental. Large pool, tennis courts, canoe, kayak, screened porch, lovely beach. www.sanibelcondo.net. Call Pat, (502) 895-8752.

FOR SALE: 25-passenger church bus. 1988 Ford chassis w/Goshen bus conversion. Rear AC; high-back cloth seats; rear storage compartment. In average condition. Mileage: 103,000. \$9,995. Day: (502) 223-8215; night/weekend: (502) 875-4299.

HEALTHCARE: Pre-existing conditions accepted. Non-insurance solution for hospitals, doctors, medications, vision, dental, hearing and more. Representatives needed. \$54.95/month per family. (888) 645-4559. www.healthplanprovider.net; www.braxtonenterprises.net ceo6660.

SEEKING: Loving, growing mid-sized mission/ministry-church seeks full-time pastor to lead the ministerial staff and church in reaching the lost, serving others and encouraging Christian growth. Seminary degree preferred. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 170 Madison Ave., Whitesburg, KY 41858.

SEEKING: Woodburn Baptist Church is accepting resumés through Sept. 18 for the full-time position of associate minister of youth and families. Salary will be based on education and experience. Located just south of Bowling Green, Woodburn Baptist Church is a growing moderate congregation with an average of 200 in worship. Please send resumés to: PO Box 38, Woodburn, KY 42170, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor. Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church is an active, rural church affiliated with NKBA and SBC. Send resumés/referrals to: Pastor Search Committee, PRBC, 5147 Lees Road, Alexandria, KY 41051.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, Russell, Ky., is accepting resumés for the position of full-time minister of music and worship. FBC Russell is a growing church with a blended style of worship (gospel, hymns, praise/worship, contemporary). The candidate must be able to plan and lead multiple worship services. Submit resumé to: First Baptist Church, Russell, PO Box U, Russell, KY 41169.

SEEKING: We are prayerfully seeking a full-time minister of youth. This would include grades 7-12. Please submit resumé to: Lancaster Baptist Church, 201 Richmond St., Lancaster, KY 40444.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of preschool/child development center director for Fern Creek Baptist Church. Send resumé to: FCBC, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291, Attn: Search Committee.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister/children's director. Send resumé to: Search Committee, Kelly Baptist Church, 7775 Madisonville Road, Hopkinsville, KY 42240. Phone: (270) 886-7399.

SEEKING: Full-time youth and music director. Responsibilities will be primarily with youth; music responsibilities will include Sunday morning and evening worship, Wednesday evening hymn service and one cantata a year. Pay and benefits commensurate with position. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church, 302 North Magnolia St., Tompkinsville, KY 42167.

SEEKING: Jamestown First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of students and associate pastor. Nestled on Lake Cumberland, JFB is seeking a minister who is called to reach students. Seminary educated with experience preferred. Exceptional financial package available. Serious inquiries only. Send resumé to: MSAP Search Committee, Jamestown First Baptist Church, PO Box 308, Jamestown, KY 42629, or e-mail: jfb-mdm@duo-county.com.

SEEKING: Full-time minister to youth/pastoral assistant for Thornhill Baptist Church in Frankfort, Ky. Job requires organizing and conducting a viable youth ministry in addition to assisting the pastor. Experience as youth minister preferred; college/seminary degree a plus. Send resumé to: Youth Search Committee, Thornhill Baptist Church, 1142 Holmes St., Frankfort, KY 40601. A full job description is available at http://users.dcr.net/~thbcchurch/.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church in downtown Ashland, Ky., is seeking an experienced associate to fill the position of minister of youth and children. The candidate should possess organizational and people skills, be energetic, self-motivated and will be responsible for the development, promotion and direction of programs for youth and children of all ages. Salary based on education and experience. Bachelor's degree preferred. Please forward resumé to: Minister of Youth and Children Search Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 787, Ashland, KY 41105-0787.

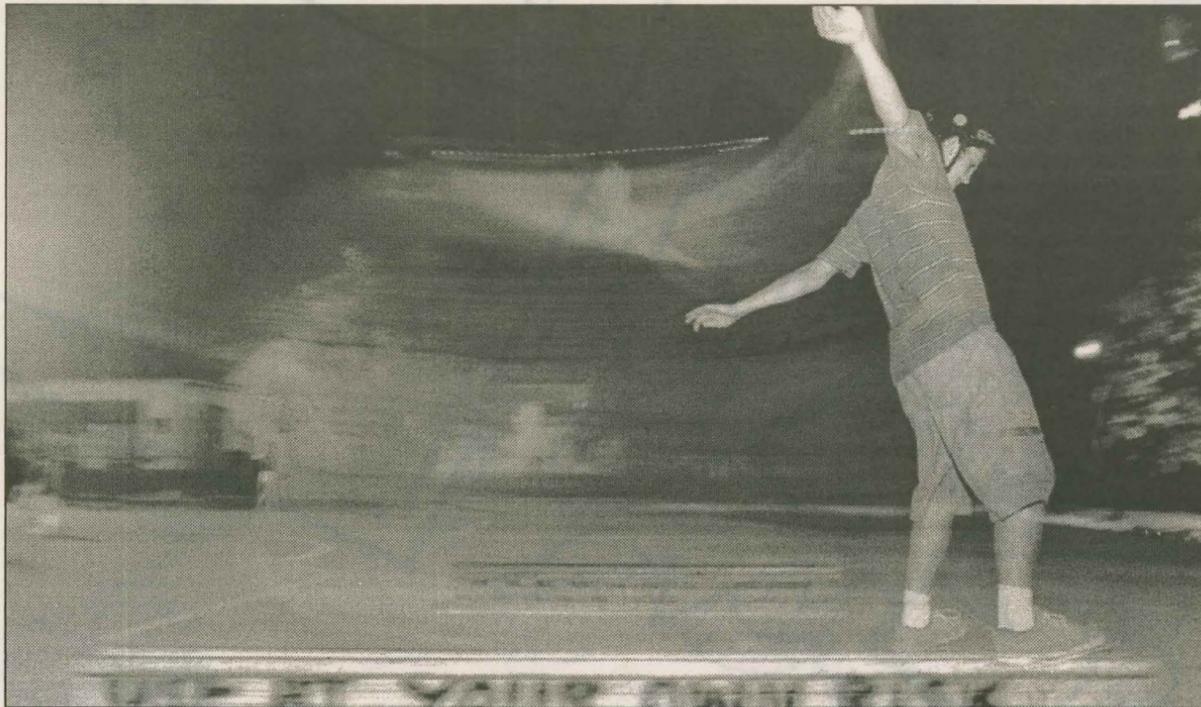
SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for Fern Creek Baptist Church. Send resumé to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291, Attn: Search Committee.

SEEKING: Growing church in Lexington prayerfully seeks a full-time minister of music and children. Responsibilities include leading worship through music, directing both adult and children's choirs, and overseeing children's education and recreation. Interested candidates should submit resumés to Search Committee, Chevy Chase Baptist, PO Box 22113, Lexington, KY 40502.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for High Street Baptist Church. Send resumé to: Search Committee, High Street Baptist Church, 102 Bourne Ave., Somerset, KY 42501.

SERVICE: America's Christian long distance. Free toll-free number; 4.9 cents/minute; 6-second increment billing; no contracts; online sign-up. www.talklongdistance.net, (888) 645-4559.

Rolling along



When Lexington, Tenn., outlawed skateboarding on city streets, First Baptist Church saw a perfect ministry opportunity, according to David Holmes, the church's minister of music and youth. "We took \$400 and had some of the youth from church help construct ramps. We use a building which houses buses, and every Thursday night we pull out the buses, set up the ramps and see how we can minister." Now youth, with the occasional green hair and tattoos, come to the church for skating, Holmes said. "Many of them have never been in a church. We start the night with a Bible study, and we're really seeing these kids accepting Christ."

Many church leaders losing faith in vans

By Yvonne Betowt
Religion News Service

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (RNS)—Judy Buchanan watched as the bus of 24 energetic teenagers and six adult chaperons pulled out of the Faith Presbyterian Church parking lot under a broiling noonday sun.

Her 15-year-old daughter, Megan, was on the bus destined for a weeklong mission trip to Reynosa, Mexico.

"I'm nervous about it," Buchanan acknowledged. "There have been so many accidents involving church groups recently, especially with vans. I probably would have let her go even if they had been going on vans, but I would have been much more nervous about it."

One of those accidents, in June, killed 10-year-old Jesse Brooks from Solitude Baptist Church in Albertville, Ala. Other church members were critically injured when their 15-passenger van crashed in Wyoming while returning from a mission trip to Montana.

Solitude Pastor Joey Cannady said the cause of the crash remains unclear.

"The van was so torn up, there really wasn't any way to determine the cause," Cannady said. "At this point, we're just saying it really doesn't matter. What's done is done. We're just trying to move on now. It's just amazing that anyone walked away from it."

For the past two years, the U.S. Department of Transportation has issued cautionary warnings about 15-passenger vans because of the increased number of rollover crashes, many involving religious groups.

Jeffrey Runge, administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Ad-



USING CAUTION Youth load into a minibus at Willowbrook Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala. Due to the cautionary warnings about 15-passenger vans, smaller buses are used more often for transporting people. (RNS photo by Robin Conn)

ministration, issued the latest warning in April. The warnings are causing many churches and religious groups to re-examine their transportation policies, finding themselves in a quandary about using their vans, whether for long-distance trips or simply a trip across town.

"NHTSA research has shown that 15-passenger vans have a rollover risk that is similar to other light trucks and vans when carrying a few passengers," Runge said. "However, the risk of rollover increases dramatically as the number of occupants increases from fewer than five to more than 10."

Homer McCall, pastor of St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church in Huntsville, said his church budgeted \$40,000 this year to buy a 15-passenger van but is now opting for something more akin to a minibus.

"We've had the same van since the

1980s, but we don't use it anymore on out-of-town trips," McCall said. "After hearing about all the safety problems with the 15-passenger vans, we decided not to purchase another one."

Rae Tyson, spokesman for the federal Department of Transportation, said churches should heed the warnings about vans but not overreact.

"The 15-passenger vans are probably the most economic means of moving people around, and if they are used wisely, there is no reason why they can't be used safely," he said.

Tyson cited two key safety components for using 15-passenger vans: using trained drivers and wearing seat belts. Tyson also said groups should not overload or put weight on the roof or back of the van, such as a trailer.

"There is nothing inherently unsafe about them, but they handle and respond differently (than a car), especially in emergency situations," he said.

Federal law prohibits automobile dealerships from selling or leasing anything larger than a 10-passenger vehicle to any public, parochial or private school to transport children to and from school-related events and functions. But dealerships can sell 15-passenger vans to churches for group transportation, even for youths.

Seat belts seem to make a difference.

Between 1990 and 2000, 424 people died in accidents involving 15-passenger vans in the United States. During that period, NHTSA found that 92 percent of occupants wearing seat belts survived even fatal single-vehicle accidents involving 15-passenger vans. In 2000, 80 percent of the people killed in 15-passenger van accidents were not wearing seat belts.

Groundhog Phil's new landlord could be Baptist association

PUNXSUTAWNEY, Pa.—Punxsutawney Phil's new landlord might be a group of Baptists.

Several Baptists in Pennsylvania are raising money in hopes of buying the property from which the world-famous groundhog Punxsutawney Phil emerges annually for a legendary prediction about the coming of spring.

The owners of a 93-acre sportsmen's club on which Gobbler's Knob—the groundhog's well-known residence—is located contacted Doug Pilot, director of missions for Conemaugh Valley Baptist Association, to gauge interest in buying the property. Club owners want to move farther into the western Pennsylvania wilderness.

When the Baptists decided to pursue a deal, they were asked to raise 5 percent of the \$530,000 asking price by June 20 in order to enter a 90-day sales agreement. The Baptists found their collection came up short, but the owners of Punxsutawney Sportsmen's Club extended the deadline.

Pilot said the association, based in Duncansville, Pa., would like to use a 3,100-square-foot building on the property as a church for a Bible study group that has grown from seven people to 17.

Also, the 93 acres could be used for a Southern Baptist camp/retreat center, according to the group. Pilot said Southern Baptist Campers on Mission could establish RV sites where volunteers could reach campers and also use the RV park as a center for a church-planting network within western Pennsylvania.

"There are at least 15 places in a 45-mile radius where we need to start a new work," Pilot said. The RV sites could be popular for visitors to nearby points of interest, including Jimmy Stewart's hometown, the Christmas tree capital of the world and Drake's well, the first oil well in America.

Thus far, the group has raised \$34,000. If the monetary goal is met by October, Conemaugh Valley Baptist Association will own and manage the site through an oversight/development board.

"As long as God keeps opening the door, we're going to keep walking through," Pilot said. "This is really one of those times when we talk about churches doing together what we cannot do alone. Churches are sacrificing. We need help from our brothers and sisters."

Pilot stressed that the group is not interested in purchasing the property solely because it's the home of Punxsutawney Phil, but the annual Groundhog Day festivities do present an incredible ministry opportunity.

Last year 43,000 people from around the world gathered there for Groundhog Day, he said, "and there was no evangelical witness present." He said they could change that by next Feb. 2 if they are able to purchase the property, which would continue to allow the Groundhog Day festivities as usual.

Pilot considers the annual observance, viewed by some Southern Baptists as a pagan event, to be as acceptable as other stories told to children.

"It's like Santa Claus or the tooth fairy or the Easter bunny or leprechauns," he said.

The site has had a reputation for alcoholic activity in celebration of Groundhog Day, but Pilot noted that alcohol possession on the grounds was made illegal five years ago.

"I see that as another sign that God wants us to do something with this," Pilot said. "He has already cleared that up for us."

Punxsutawney Phil's reputation already has been used on at least one evangelistic effort. The local Salvation Army has distributed T-shirts in the past reading, "Without a shadow of a doubt Jesus is Lord."

Legend has it that if the groundhog sees his shadow when it appears on Feb. 2, there will be six more weeks of winter. If not, an early spring is predicted.

Compiled from reports by Baptist Press and Religion News Service

SMILE!



Every week the Western Recorder brings you a Bible crossword to test your brain and Pulitzer Prize Award-winning cartoonist Doug Marlette's "Kudzu" to tickle your funny bone. Add to that the humor of "For Heaven's Sake" or "Church of the Covered Dish" and there's three good reasons to subscribe to the Western Recorder.