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Vol. 178, No. 4

FOR THE RECORD

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Survey: Teens not as hostile to church as stereotype says

Chapel Hill, N.C. (RNS)—American teens are not as hostile toward organized religion as researchers once thought, according to a recent study conducted at the University of North Carolina.

The National Study of Youth and Religion found that about two-thirds of American 12th-graders say they do not feel alienated from organized religion.

Only 15 percent said they feel hostile toward established religion, while another 15 percent said they have no feeling about religion at all.

"Contrary to the popular stereotype of teen rebellion against organized religion, the majority of 12th-graders surveyed do not appear to be negatively disposed toward religion," said Melinda Lundquist Denton, project manager for the study.

Findings are based on data from a larger study, "Monitoring the Future," a series of nationally representative surveys on topics such as the political preferences and social lives of adolescents.

The study found that black youths are less likely to be alienated from organized religion than teens of any other race.

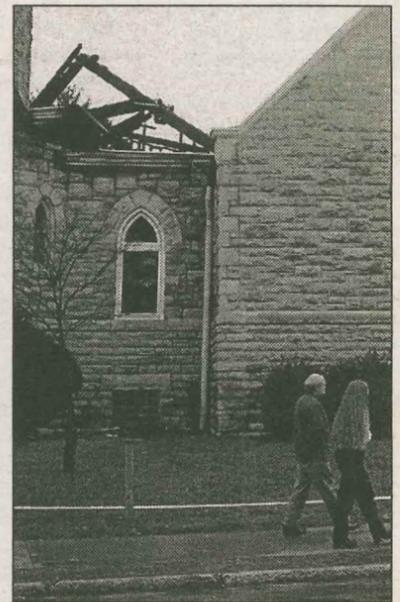
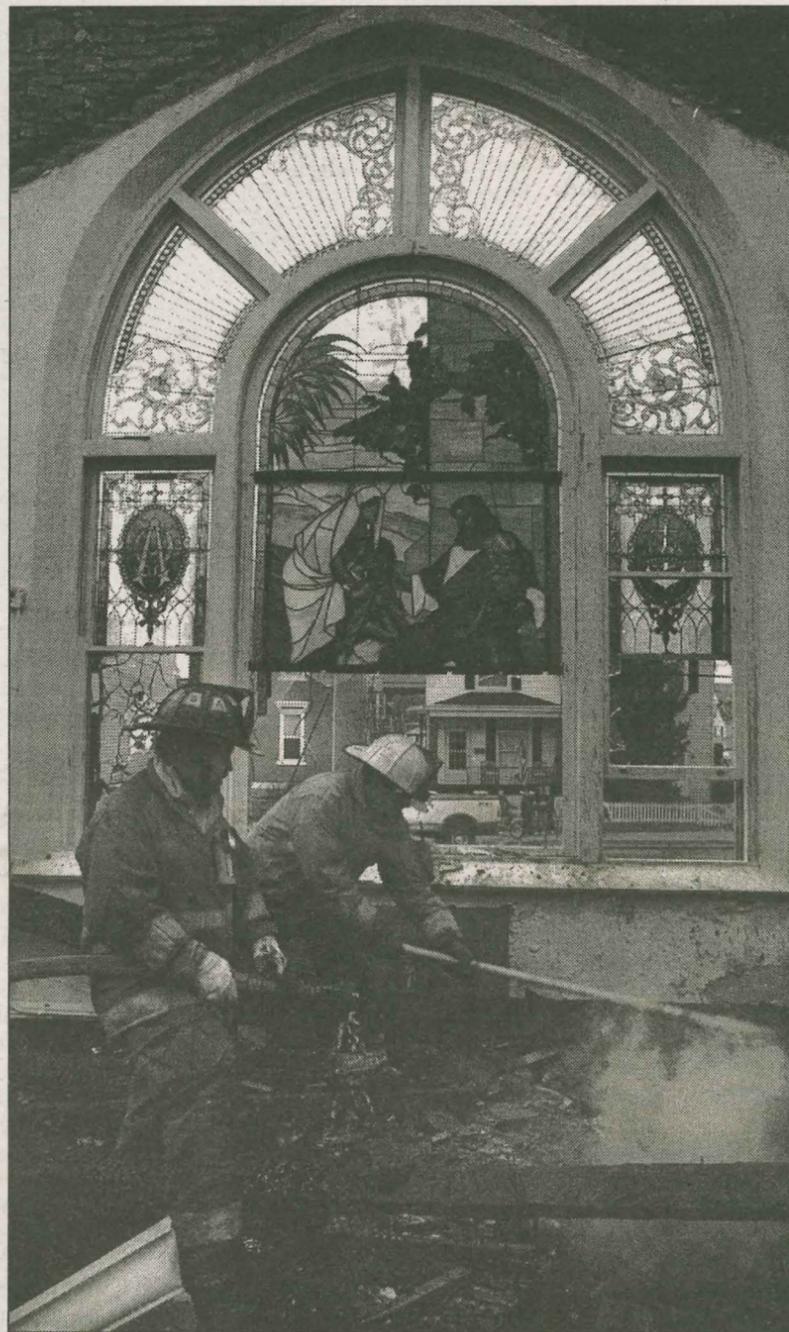
Nearly 70 percent of black teens surveyed said their religious views were very similar or mostly similar to those of their parents, and more than 64 percent give money to religious organizations or anticipate doing so in the future.

Female respondents were more likely than males to support organized religion, with 47 percent saying they currently donate money to religious organizations or plan to in the future, and only 16 percent saying they never expect to. Almost 45 percent of females said they want more social influence for religious groups in America.

The study also found that the numbers of teens who said they are alienated from religion have hovered at about 15 percent of the population since studies began in 1976.

The four-year National Study of Youth and Religion surveyed about 2,000 adolescents and will continue through 2005. The study can be accessed at www.youthandreligion.org.

Church fire



A morning four-alarm blaze Jan. 16 totally gutted the historic building of First Baptist Church of Dayton in Northern Kentucky. Members are meeting in a local YMCA building as they look to rebuild. "The church is not a building; it's the people," Pastor Allan Daigle said. **Left:** Firefighter/paramedic Brent Schafer (left) and Capt. Mark Seeger both with the Bellevue-Dayton Fire Department search for hot spots in the rubble of the collapsed roof. **Above:** Three people walk by the 109-year-old building, where burned roof rafters were visible. **Story on page 3.** (Cincinnati Enquirer photos by Glenn Hartong and Ernest Coleman, reprinted with permission.)

Pastor offers ideas for surviving spiritual lows

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

Lexington—Just as more people die descending Mount Everest than climbing it, pastors and their families must be prepared for the inevitable valleys that follow spiritual highs, a former Kentucky pastor said last week.

Speaking at the annual "Shepherding the Shepherd" conference, Jan. 15-17 in Lexington, Brad Johnson noted that the most vicious storms originate with low pressure systems. So, too, leaders must avoid getting blindsided by spiritual lows, he said.

"Life is not even," said Johnson, senior pastor of Calvary Community Church in Westlake Village, Calif. "Life is a series of ups and downs, highs and lows, good and bad."

Johnson noted that Daniel, Jo-

nah and Jesus drew closer to God because of setbacks or attacks.

The church at Ephesus had known highs, but in Revelation 2: 2-5 Jesus admonishes them for forsaking their "first love," Johnson added.

"The problem could be called a heart drift," Johnson said. "Ever experience heart drift? One moment your heart is pulsating hot and the other moment it's cold. It happens all the time in relationships with husbands and wives."

The two characteristics of fresh love are an insatiable desire to know the other person and a willingness to invest heavily in the relationship, Johnson said.

"You go to the restaurant and price is no object—'Honey, order anything you want,'" Johnson said. "Go to the mall and he tells her,

'Buy anything you want.' Years later they're at Taco Bell using coupons."

Likewise, he said feelings of discouragement and separation from God come from slowly letting a personal relationship wither in small ways.

Johnson drew three instructions Jesus gave to the church at Ephesus for renewing relationships:

Remember what used to exist. Johnson asked conference participants if they could remember seasons of devoted service and an insatiable desire to learn more about God. God also remembers those times, he said.

"Don't be so busy working for God that it destroys the work of God within you," Johnson said. "This is supposed to be about a love relationship, about intimacy with the very One who made you."

See Former Kentucky ..., page 6



Brad Johnson

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, January 28.

WMU leaders affirm BWA ties despite SBC proposal

"We will maintain our historic relationship with the women's department of the BWA because it is the right thing to do."

Joy Bolton, Kentucky WMU executive director

By Greg Warner
Associated Baptist Press

Birmingham, Ala. (ABP)—Woman's Missionary Union, the women's auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, came out in support of the Baptist World Alliance Jan. 12, breaking ranks with the Southern Baptist leaders who want to withdraw SBC membership and funding from the worldwide organization.

Echoing the sentiment of many international Baptist groups, the WMU Executive Board issued a call for unity among the world's Baptists. Some observers fear the planned SBC split from BWA will divide Baptists worldwide into two competing camps, since the SBC has announced plans to start an alternative organization.

In its statement of support for the Baptist World Alliance, WMU said it also will continue to promote and support the annual Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer offering, which provides the only funding for BWA's women's department.

"We need each other"

"As members of the body of Christ, we need each other—to pray for one another, to encourage one another, to learn from one another, and to stand together in one accord

as a strong and bold witness to a lost world," said Wanda Lee, national WMU executive director, who also serves on the BWA Executive Committee.

Joy Bolton, Kentucky WMU executive director, was among participants at the national WMU gathering. Citing SBC leaders' proposal to cut ties to BWA, Bolton said, "We grieved because of our relationship with women around the world through the women's department of the Baptist World Alliance.

"Kentucky women have supported the Baptist Women's Day of Prayer for many years," Bolton added. She said Kentucky WMU leaders attending the meeting "felt strongly that we could not now turn our backs on our sisters. ... We cannot abandon a relationship grounded in prayer."

In December an SBC study committee called for Southern Baptists to withdraw from the 99-year-old Baptist World Alliance over allegations of liberalism—allegations strongly denied by BWA leaders and many of its 211 affiliated Baptist unions. Support for the plan from within the SBC has been muted. The plan will be presented to the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 16-17 and, if approved, to the Southern Baptist Convention in June. It would end all

SBC funding of BWA—until recently, \$425,000 a year—as of Oct. 1.

The Southern Baptist Convention, with 16 million members nationwide, is the largest member of the Baptist World Alliance, which represents 47 million Baptists worldwide.

During a retreat near WMU's Birmingham headquarters, the group's executive committee affirmed the 93-year relationship between WMU and the BWA women's department, which WMU helped form in 1911. Many of the leaders told how relationships built through the Baptist World Alliance changed their lives, according to a WMU news release.

WMU urges courage, compassion

In addition to unity and reconciliation, the WMU leaders encouraged prayer for Baptists "to have a strong, bold and credible witness; for wisdom, discernment and courage to do God's will; for a spirit of humility; for compassion for all people; and for comfort and relief for those who are persecuted for voicing their convictions," the release said.

"It is through fellowship with Christ and other Christians that we experience personal growth and develop a deeper understanding of the needs around the world," Lee added. "In the context of our missions task,

it is through this fellowship that we become more effective as we grow in our passion and a sense of urgency to be light in a dark world."

With approximately 1 million members, Woman's Missionary Union is considered the world's largest Protestant women's mission organization. The 116-year-old organization educates and involves women, men and children in Christian missions. Although not under the control of the SBC, WMU raises much of the money Southern Baptists spend on missions. In 1993, WMU declined the SBC's request to surrender its auxiliary role and become an agency of the SBC.

Like WMU, approximately 40 Baptist unions worldwide have some form of women's organization that relates to BWA's women's department, which functions as an auxiliary to the BWA.

"In light of the proposed action by the SBC Executive Committee, WMU leaders felt that we had to let our sisters around the world know of our continuing love and concern for them," Bolton said. "We determined that we will maintain our historic relationship with the women's department of the BWA because it is the right thing to do."

With additional reporting by Editor Trennis Henderson

Annie Armstrong gifts set record but fall 7 percent short of goal

Birmingham, Ala. (BP)—Southern Baptists set another record in giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions in 2003, but the offering still fell short of its goal, according to Robert Reccord, president of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board.

Record announced Jan. 10 during the annual meeting of Woman's Missionary Union's Executive Board that Southern Baptists gave \$49,650,279 last year to the annual missions offering.

"The 2003 Annie Offering was 1 percent over the previous year," Reccord said. "Considering the economic downturn we've experienced, that's quite remarkable. The influence of WMU across North America is what helps Southern Baptists focus on the mission, the missionaries and the offering that supports them. On their behalf, thank you."

The year-end total was nearly 7 percent short of the \$53 million national goal, however, and continues a trend of stagnant and, in some cases, declining mission offerings among Southern Baptists.

"We are so thankful for the faithfulness of Southern Baptists to give at an increased level last year," Reccord said, "but we simply are unable to keep up with skyrocketing costs such as health insurance which is going up 14 percent per year. Although mission offerings have generally increased annually, when adjusted for inflation they have been flat for 20 years."

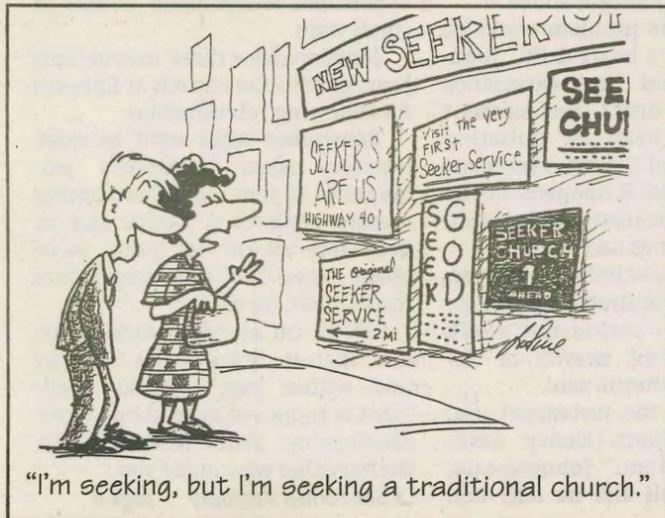
Inflation for 2003 was nearly 2 percent—twice the rate of the missions offering increase. Over the past three years the offering increased only 2.5 percent while the inflation rate was about 6 percent. Reccord said NAMB is unable to fill hundreds of missionary positions as a result.

"Right now, NAMB and our state convention partners have 181 vacant missionary positions in the U.S. and Canada. We are also unable to fund nearly 100 semester missionaries and more than 100 summer missionary positions because of the lack of gifts," he said. "We have nearly stopped enlisting missionaries, because we have 48 missionaries approved and ready to serve but no funds to send them."

The 2004 offering will be promoted in churches between the March 7-14 Week of Prayer for North American Missions and Easter on April 11. The 2004 goal is \$54 million, although the offering has met the national goal only twice in the past 20 years.

"The influence of WMU across North America is what helps Southern Baptists focus on the mission, the missionaries and the offering that supports them."

Robert Reccord, North American Mission Board president



BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **NAMB chaplaincy head named.** Pete Sharber, a longtime Georgia pastor and former military chaplain, has been named director of chaplaincy for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. Sharber, 64, joined the NAMB staff this month after serving as pastor of First Baptist Church of Hazlehurst, Ga., since 1989. He previously served 11 years as an Army chaplain in Georgia, New York and Germany. As NAMB's director of chaplaincy evangelism, Sharber will provide ministerial support and resources for more than 2,400 Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplains. He is a graduate of Mercer University in Macon, Ga.; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and Drew University in Madison, N.J.

■ **Pastors' Conference candidate announced.** Terry Fox, chairman of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, will be nominated in June as Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference president, according to former Pastors' Conference President Stan Coffey. Fox, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Wichita, Kan., is a former trustee of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

■ **Illinois Baptist leader arrested.** Charles West, secretary of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in 2002, is scheduled to appear in court next month on a charge of soliciting a prostitute. West, pastor of First Baptist Church of Bethalto, Ill., for 26 years, also is a former president of the Illinois Baptist State Association.

West was arrested by police after soliciting an undercover officer in a carwash parking lot in Alton, an Illinois suburb of St. Louis. He resigned his pastorate two weeks after his arrest.

■ **Moderate Baptists loosen ties.** Moderate Baptists in North Carolina began Jan. 23 a process of rethinking their participation in the state convention. No action was taken to separate from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, even though moderates have been shut out of the convention's elected offices for almost a decade. But in breakout sessions, an estimated 500 participants heard about ways to fund and affiliate with Baptist organizations outside the state convention, such as the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and American Baptist Churches U.S.A. Convention leaders are "in dialogue more fervently than before" about how to assist all churches, said state convention executive director Jim Royston.

■ **Former Michigan executive dies.** Fred Hubbs, the first executive director of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, died Jan. 3 in Orlando, Fla. He was 80. Hubbs, former director of missions for Motor Cities Baptist Association, served as state convention executive director from 1957-1970. He was elected first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1966. He was a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

'Absolutely heartbreaking'

Blaze destroys historic Northern Kentucky sanctuary

By Denise Wilson & Roy Wood
Kentucky Enquirer

Dayton—The roof fell in, but the congregation didn't. The windows were shattered, but the spirits stayed whole.

And the soul will rebuild.

Fire raced through the 109-year-old First Baptist Church of Dayton Jan. 16, ravaging the town's oldest standing church.

Plumes of thick smoke rose above the Ohio River shoreline as 50 to 70 firefighters battled frigid temperatures and the raging fire that officials said appeared to start in the roof of the structure built in 1895.

The efforts of firefighters from five agencies and a firewall kept the fire from reaching the gym and an office area, but the sanctuary was lost.

"What do we do now?" asked one woman as she hugged Allan Daigle, pastor of the church for just over four years.

"We come back stronger than we were before," Daigle said back as if he was looking down from the pulpit on Sunday.

The church would begin to rebuild as soon as the smoke cleared, he said.

The stubborn blaze began a little after 10 a.m. and quickly burned through the roof, shattering stained glass windows in the church. Firefighters had to break some stained glass windows themselves to let the thick smoke out so they could see.

Daigle spent much of the day comforting church members and citizens from the surrounding neighborhood, many of whom had close ties to the church.

The church contained a lot of memories, both for members and the community, Daigle said.

"The church is not a building; it's the people," he said. "But you had a lot of memories here. This is a very tight community and we are a tight church."

One of those people with fond memories is Randy Pollitt. The 44-year-old has lived in Dayton his entire life, but didn't come to the church until his daughter, Leslie, asked him to try it about five years ago.

City landmark

So taken was he by the church and its members that Pollitt decided to be baptized and was remarried to his wife of 22 years, Susie, at the church.

Pollitt said he and Susie were married by a justice of the peace, but his wife had always wanted to have a formal church wedding. So one Sunday after services, with the pastor's permission, he went up in front of the congregation and proposed to his wife.

"This is absolutely heartbreaking," Pollitt said of the fire. "It's just terrible. That place has a lot of memories for everyone in Dayton.



FIREFIGHTING Dayton firefighters work on the last of the fire at First Baptist Church of Dayton in Northern Kentucky. The early morning blaze started while part of the building was being repaired by roofers. The original part of the church interior was all but destroyed. (Cincinnati Enquirer photo by Tony Jones)

It's hard to watch."

Dayton, with a population of about 5,900, is a town that has weathered the rising and receding waters of the Ohio River and the rising and receding fortunes of a rivertown.

First Baptist Church, along with the high school and the Watertown marina, is one of the landmarks in town.

Sara Finley came to the church about a year ago and now helps out with Sunday school and daycare. She stated emphatically that she was "saved" by the church and will do everything she can to help rebuild it.

"The Lord will see us through this," she said. "This is tough, but we are a strong church."

William Naish, who has lived across the street from the church for 30 years, called it the gem of the residential neighborhood.

"It was the talk of town. They just reworked that big stained-glass window in the front. It's a shame. It was a beautiful church inside," he said.

Naish said he enjoyed attending various functions there and friends' weddings.

Looking out his front window the morning of the fire, Naish saw smoke pouring out the north side of the building, but couldn't make out the location of the fire.

"It looks bad. Everything is caved in," he said.

Virginia Ferguson, who has lived near the church for 40 years, said the smoke already was thick when she first smelled it and looked out her window.

"It really is a bad one. It spread so far. When I first smelled the smoke, I didn't think it was going to be that bad. But when I went to my front door all I could see were the flashing lights from the fire trucks.

"I'm just really broken-hearted," said Ruth Richardson, a church member who came to the blaze from her home in Bellevue. "But this is only a building. The Lord will carry us through."

About 50 people normally attended the church, she said.

Michael Comer, pastor of St. Bernard Catholic Church about a block away, said losing the old church is "like losing a member of the community."

Close call for firefighters

The fire started in the roof, said Bellevue/Dayton Fire Chief Dennis Lynn. "When we pulled up, we had a lot of fire up in the attic and the ceiling."

Capt. Chuck Enzweiler was one of the first on the scene.

"Workers reported that they saw light smoke and they first thought it was just steam. They took a break, came back a little time later and that's when they noticed the fire," he said. "The fire was probably burning quite some time before it was noticed."

Enzweiler said there were no injuries, but firefighters had some close calls. "When the roof caved in and all that fire shot up, we had guys on the interior, so we were very fortunate. All their training kicked in."

Lynn said the church's roof did collapse although some things outside the main church were saved. "The objective when we got here was to try and put it out, but it didn't happen.

"But we did protect the gym and another building with all of the offices in there. All the records and that are protected."

Sanctuary a total loss

The church itself is a total loss, Lynn said. The damage estimate is about \$500,000, but that figure will

probably rise. "The two remaining buildings are OK. They didn't even get any fire or smoke damage."

Lynn said about six fire agencies, including Bellevue/Dayton, Newport, Fort Thomas, Cold Spring and Southgate were involved in fighting the fire.

Kathy Winburn said her 12-year-old daughter Samantha, a seventh-grader at Dayton Middle School, would be disappointed to hear about the fire because she has basketball practice in the church's gym every weekday.

The gym is often used by Dayton's middle and high schools when the other gyms are in use, Winburn said. "They've got so many time conflicts down at the high school that they don't have no time for the middle school to practice. So they rented this gym out so they could practice here.

"The church has been here a long time. It's sad," she said as her eyes filled with tears while watching thick smoke billowing from the church.

Patty Pratt, 74, of Fort Thomas has been a member of the church for 64 years. She teaches Sunday school to fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders every Sunday.

"I don't know where we're even going to be Sunday; I've got a feeling that we'll be somewhere," she said.

Pratt said she was getting her hair done at her hairdresser's shop in Fort Thomas when someone called to tell about the fire Friday. Watching the fire made her "physically ill," she said.

"I wanted the sanctuary to still be there and it's not," she said with tears running down her face. "I prayed that it wasn't going to be this bad."

With additional reporting by Bob Driehaus and Luke Saladin of the Kentucky Enquirer. Story reprinted with permission.

BLUEGRASS BURGEO

Mid-Continent College and the school's alumni association will host its annual alumni conference March 4 at Trace Creek Baptist Church in Mayfield. Speakers will include LaVerne Butler, president emeritus of Mid-Continent; and Ronnie Stinson, pastor of Trace Creek Baptist Church. For more information, call the school at (270) 247-8521.

Cumberland College recently received a \$28,500 grant from the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Foundation to be used for financial aid. Students with financial need who have demonstrated a commitment to service are eligible. The Sullivan Foundation offers financial aid to small private colleges, primarily those located in Appalachia.

Howard Beaman, director of the Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems, is urging Kentucky Baptists to continue to circulate petitions opposing expanded gambling in the commonwealth. The petitions call on state leaders to "reject any attempt to expand gambling in any form," adding that signers "will look with disfavor on any legislator who supports or votes for any expansion of gambling in any form." Beaman hopes to present petitions with several thousand signatures next month to Gov. Ernie Fletcher and General Assembly leaders. Individuals can request copies of the petition by contacting Beaman at (502) 635-0002 or by e-mail at hbeau@kentuckyleague.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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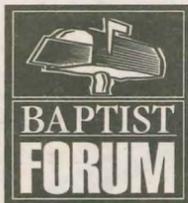
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Expand BWA support

Information shared in the Jan. 6 issue of the Western Recorder regarding the recommendation that the Southern Baptist Convention withdraw from the Baptist World Alliance serves Kentucky Baptists extremely well.

As Baptists, we believe in collective decision-making, and only by knowing the facts can we make valid decisions. Here's hoping the larger body of Southern Baptists will not let secondary prejudices of a small group override the convention's making the right decision.

I pray that Kentucky Baptists will affirm the BWA by increasing its symbolic financial support to an effective enabling amount.



Les Hill
Lexington

Maintain BWA ties

A decision by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee to recommend that the SBC withdraw complete funding support for the Baptist World Alliance would be tragic. Should that happen, my prayer is that convention messengers will vote it down and restore full support.

Historically, Southern Baptists have placed high emphasis on the absolute authority of the Bible, evangelism/missions, local church autonomy, the priesthood of all believers, religious liberty and the separation of church and state. We have celebrated our "unity in diversity" and have respected differences of opinion on issues that were subject to interpretation. These same kind of Baptists make up the member bodies of the BWA.

The BWA is a beautiful example of global Baptist witness and cooperation. It has modeled servant leadership in its service to Baptist bodies now numbering more than

200. I have been personally involved in the BWA for many years, serving on the General Council, commissions and committees. Charges that the BWA is influenced by liberalism are patently false. Baptists may disagree on certain issues like the ordination of women or on methodology, but we do not disagree on essential doctrines.

SBC messengers should prayerfully ask: How will this decision impact global gospel witness? What difficulties will this create for missionaries who relate to national Baptist bodies (conventions)? Do we realize how much of our witness to the world

will be harmed because we cannot work together? What would Jesus think about this as a response to His prayer "that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe (John 17:21)? Why should the global Baptist family be further fragmented? Why should we have to reinvent the wheel by establishing another global Baptist fellowship?

I plead with fellow Southern Baptists to keep our historic relationship with the BWA in place.

James D. Williams
Retired President
SBC Brotherhood Commission
Memphis, Tenn.

Don't be deceived

Judge Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson did not "cause ... a division among Christian brothers and sisters." They led in a restoration.

Based on his Jan. 20 letter, Hal Shipley evidently refuses to realize that the sowing of discord, and the origin of hurt within the Southern Baptist Convention, emanated largely from seminary professors and presidents who led in a departure from the historic beliefs of "God's good people in our SBC." In the past 20 years, scores of Southern Baptists moved to conservative Baptist or to non-Baptist churches,

at least in our area, to find the spiritual food they had known in previous times.

2 Timothy 3:13-17 warns believers about "deceivers and being deceived." "Deceivers" are headed for trouble. The "holy Scriptures are able to make (us) wise." I hope Hal Shipley has only been deceived. There's hope for anyone who has been deceived, and takes Jesus' words literally: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17).

Donald MacDonald
Louisville

Political agenda

Pat Robertson's revelation that God told him George W. Bush would win reelection in a "blow-out" in November reeks with presumptuous arrogance (Western Recorder, Jan. 13 issue).

It is possible President Bush might achieve a resounding victory on Election Day, or he may suffer a crushing defeat. God is neither a Democrat nor a Republican, and I find it hard to believe God talks directly to fundamentalist Pat Robertson.

Robertson has about as much credibility as Jerry Falwell, who in the 1980s, said Ronald Reagan was America's greatest president since Abraham Lincoln. Falwell also said Nobel Peace Prize recipient Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa was a phony. Robertson and Falwell are false prophets who mislead their followers.

I don't believe God tells anybody who is going to win a political election. Members of the clergy, especially, should not be saying in public what Pat Robertson said. Robertson's statement suggests that God wants President Bush to be reelected. We take God's name in vain when we use God to further our selfish political agendas.

Paul L. Whiteley Sr.
Louisville

Shepherding conference is powerful experience

The recent Shepherding the Shepherd conference in Lexington was a powerful experience for pastors and spouses again this year.

It was a privilege to be present and to observe the wonderful work of God's grace in renewing relationships and enabling Spirit-filled worship.

If the Kentucky Baptist Convention could do only one or two events for pastors, Shepherding would be near the top of the list. It doesn't help to know all the latest methods if the pastor and spouse are not growing in their relationship to one another and to God.

The Saturday morning plenary session was given to worship through Scripture, praise and testimony. I observed a number of pastors with their handkerchiefs in their hands wiping tears and so did I. It was the conclusion of three days of renewal for the front-line individuals in spiritual warfare.

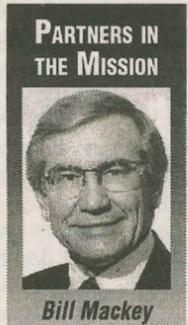
The beneficiaries are not just these ministering couples, but also

their children and every family touched by the ministries of their churches. It is my conviction that when we strengthen the primary caregivers and spiritual leaders in the communities, everyone is blessed and the well being of the communities is enhanced.

I am so grateful for Tommy Smith, the CEO of the Baptist Healthcare System, and for the six hospital presidents who help fund Shepherding the Shepherd for pastors and spouses. This conference would not be possible without their support.

Kentucky Baptist Convention President Eugene Siler is also chairman of the Baptist Healthcare System board of trustees. Judge Siler was present when this Shepherding partnership was first presented in 1998.

Kentucky Baptists provide half of the expenses plus the staff to plan and conduct the event. But because of the partnership with Baptist Healthcare, participants pay only



FAMILY

'Giving while living' provides blessings, benefits

By Jeremy White

When financially able, many older parents may choose to give money to their adult children. These gifts can provide blessings that reach beyond material values.

Family vacations that otherwise would not have been possible can become an affordable reality. Your help may open the door for a number of your grandchildren to attend private Christian schools.

Giving while you're living can also reduce your estate taxes. If your children are heirs any-

way, why not give some now when they need it and give less to the government later?

One of the best things about giving money to your children or grandchildren is the opportunity you get to watch them use it to enrich their lives—an opportunity you would otherwise miss if you waited to distribute your assets through your estate.

Perhaps one of your children feels called to be a missionary. Would a financial gift from you now help him or her make the vision a reality? Likewise, your generosity toward your children, exercised with wisdom, can open doors and alleviate financial burdens when it comes to things like starting a business, buying a first home or funding your grandchildren's college education.

Unfortunately, lifetime giving also means you have to watch them make mistakes. While you need to be ready to offer financial guidance and advice when your kids ask for it, you must also remember that they can learn from their failures.

We all learn more from our failures than our successes. I suspect that Peter was a better apostle after his denial of Christ than he would have been had he not experienced that tremendous failure. He most certainly was more teachable and humble afterward.

The best time for your children to fail is while they are young, and you are available to counsel them. And you can be comforted to know that even though mistakes were made with the money you provided, fewer mistakes probably will be made with the larger amounts you may leave at death.

Aim to bless but not significantly change your adult children's lifestyle or incentive to work.

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant in Paducah



How can abandoned wife and children forgive ex-husband?

Q: My ex-husband had an affair, divorced me and abandoned our family when the children were very young. The children are teenagers now and still have not forgiven him. How can I help them?

To what extent does the children's lack of forgiveness parallel your own experience? Have you forgiven your ex-husband or are you still bitter about what happened? Are you continuing to take opportunities to criticize him and play the victim? Do you still desire to hold this over him or against him, or to consider yourself better than him due to his sin? If so, then consider these things for yourself and for your children:

■ Forgiveness should not wait until negative feelings abate.

■ Forgiveness need not depend upon the remorse of the offender.

■ Forgiveness is less an act than a discovery about what Christ has done.

■ Forgiveness does not mean condoning the offender's behavior.

■ Forgiveness does mean making the decision not to continue to hold the offense against the other.

Sit down and talk with your children about their actions, attitudes and feelings. Help them realize that justice is giving people what they deserve. If God were only perfectly just in dealing with people, we would all go to hell, for the Scripture states, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Mercy, however, is not giving people what they deserve. According to Titus 3:4-5, "When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy."

Grace is giving us what we do not deserve. "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). When God offers us His forgiveness and eternal life, He expects us to humbly extend our forgiveness to others. Encourage your children to consider what might be concretely different if they decided to forgive their father.—Scott Wigginton

Q: I heard recently about the "Positive Aging Act." What does this legislation involve and how will it affect senior citizens?

The "Positive Aging Act" (H.R. 2241) was introduced last fall in the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation is designed to enhance access to vital mental health services for older Americans through mental health outreach to primary care and community-based settings.

People age 65 and older currently are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, and nearly 20 percent experience some type of mental disorder. It is estimated that up to two-thirds of older adults with a mental disorder do not receive the services they need. The Positive Aging Act will address the mental health needs of older adults by:

■ Offering competitive grants to projects that integrate multi-disciplinary mental health programs into primary care settings to create a collaborative health care model for older adults.

■ Establishing competitive grants for public or private mental health service providers for older adults that deliver those services where older adults reside, such as senior centers and assisted living communities.

■ Designating a deputy director for older adult mental health services responsible for developing and implementing initiatives to address the mental health service needs of older adults.

By reaching out to primary care and community programs, mental health providers will be able to overcome potential stigma and offer needed services in everyday settings.—Jon Rainbow

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Baptists belong together because of Christ

On Jan. 14, 1904, the editor of the Baptist Argus, a paper that later merged with the Western Recorder, proposed that Baptists of the world gather to form an alliance of Baptists worldwide. This eventually led to the formation of the Baptist World Alliance in 1905 in London. It is therefore an honor to accept the invitation of the editor of the present-day Western Recorder to write this guest editorial.

Thousands upon thousands of Baptists around the world will gather in Birmingham, England, July 27-31, 2005, to celebrate the centennial of the Baptist World Alliance. All Baptists are invited to this birthday celebration of the BWA.

With the proposed withdrawal of the Southern Baptist Convention from the BWA, many are wondering what kind of celebration it will be. It will be a joyous time, a wonderful time of fellowship, praise and inspiration under the theme, "Jesus Christ Living Water!" And Southern Baptists, no matter what the decision, are invited to join with brothers and sisters from around the world to celebrate the unity we have in Christ.

That's why the theme for the centennial has been "Together in Christ 1905-2005." In a time when the world is separated by terrorism, ideological conflict and national and sectarian movements, as Baptist Christians we must be a model of that unity for which Christ prayed. You are a part of the BWA. Plan to attend the world congress in 2005. You are all welcome.

When Baptists first came together in 1905 to form the BWA, they were aware of Paul's injunction in I Corinthians 1:10, "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."

The theme of so much of the Pauline epistle is a call for unity. Romans 12:16 commends, "Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited." Philippians 2:1-2 appeals to us all, "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." That is what the BWA is all about:

Together in Christ, we do evangelism. I have just come from Cuba and what a joy to experience the movement of the Holy Spirit, creating new house churches across the country. Since 1995 there has been an increase to 2,500 house churches, in addition to 2,000 churches and missions.

Together in Christ, Baptists are witnessing in a wonderful way to Christ's perfect gift of salvation! What a joy to see thousands of young men and women come to faith in Christ. They are part of the BWA. Do not desert them. They need your love and support.

In 1990 there was only one Baptist church in Moscow; today there are 52. Do not desert

the Russian Baptists who for so long suffered from religious persecution. Indeed, we belong together because we belong to Christ.

Together in Christ, we help the needy. In cooperation with Hungarian Baptist Aid, Baptist World Aid has helped earthquake victims recover in Iran and India. BWAid gives food to the starving in Mozambique and Ethiopia. Baptist World Aid has helped flood victims in China, hurricane victims in Honduras, projects to help women in India, street children in Brazil. Do not desert your brothers and sisters in these countries. They need your help, your fellowship and your love. Indeed, we belong together because we belong to Christ.

Together in Christ, we defend persecuted Christians. The BWA is defending the religious freedom of a pastor who is imprisoned today in Turkmenistan. Through the United Nations and in contact with governments, the BWA protests religious persecution of our brothers and sisters in difficult places.

Often parts of the former Soviet Union have imposed strict laws prohibiting the free exercise of religion. The BWA defends the right of Baptists to pray and worship without hindrance from the state. Do not desert Baptists suffering from lack of religious freedom in many countries in the Middle East and Asia. Do not desert those suffering for righteousness' sake. Indeed, we belong together because we belong to Christ.

Together in Christ, we fellowship. The BWA congresses and youth conferences, seminars and council meetings are opportunities to fulfill the biblical mandate for fellowship: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Who will ever forget when, at a BWA congress, one of the first Baptists from Albania confessed, "I did not know I had so many brothers and sisters." As Baptists gather, we can sing for joy, "What a fellowship, what a joy divine."

Indeed, biblical fellowship is suffering with those who suffer from religious persecution, crying with those who cry at the great injustices of evil systems of government, holding hands with those who face a lonely and oppressive future, rejoicing with those who rejoice over newfound freedom—and the story goes on.

From 1950 to 1980, Billy Graham was always one of the main speakers at the BWA World Congress and he often began by saying, "Yes! I support the Baptist World Alliance."

Come to England in 2005 and have real Christian fellowship in Jesus' name. Indeed, we belong together because we belong to Christ!

Millions of Baptists will celebrate BWA Day on the first Sunday of February. Join hands with your brothers and sisters as your local congregation unites in prayer and praise for that unity which alone comes from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Indeed, because we belong to Christ, we belong to one another. Thanks be to God!

Denton Lotz is general secretary of Baptist World Alliance, the global organization of 211 Baptist conventions and unions



Denton Lotz

Couple gives communication keys to resolve conflict

"We have to be reminded to treat the other person better than yourself."

June Bullock

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

Lexington—Couples seeking a better marriage can start by kicking the television set out of their bedroom, a speaker told pastors and their spouses during the "Shepherding the Shepherd" workshop last week.

Pulling the plug on the bedroom TV is one way couples can daily create at least 15 minutes of uninterrupted communication, leading to more intimacy, Dave Bullock said.

"The news is still the news the next day," said Bullock, pastor of fine arts at Elmbrook Church in suburban Milwaukee. "To stay up 35 minutes for a three-minute weather report is ridiculous.

"Wives are saying, 'Be with me. Talk with me.'"

Bullock and his wife of 32 years, June, emphasized couples' needs to overcome differences in background and emotional make-up.

"Everyone has conflict," Mrs. Bullock reminded the audience. "The best marriages learn not how to get rid of conflict, but to resolve differences. Unity is more important than saying, 'I'm right.' That's a hollow victory."

Using themselves as an example, the Bullocks recalled an incident when Bullock invited a dozen people to stop by one evening, but didn't tell his wife.

She discovered the get-together by accident when someone called, asking what refreshments to bring. She recalled being upset because she looked and felt stupid.

"I didn't do that again," Bullock



LIGHTER MOMENT Greg Smith, pastor of New Cut Road Baptist Church in Louisville, and his wife, Pamela, listen to a speaker at the Shepherding the Shepherd conference, Jan. 15-17 in Lexington. About 270 people attended the conference.

added as the audience laughed.

That was only one of many conflicts they've had to resolve. Mrs. Bullock said she constantly must remind herself that marriage's foundation is meeting the other person's needs, regardless of the response.

"We have to be reminded to treat the other person better than yourself," she said. "The needs of this man come before what I need."

This means shedding tendencies both genders display. Mrs. Bullock suggests women avoid sharpening their tongues during disagreements and men resist the urge to get distant or aloof.

But both said three key qualities can resolve conflict:

Honesty. Noting that Ephesians 4:15 says to speak the truth in love, Mrs. Bullock said the degree of love in a marriage is connected to honesty.

"When we married, we weren't good at communicating," she recalled. "Our method of disagreement was pouting."

The two have developed and matured enough trust to be vulnerable and open, Mrs. Bullock said.

"Making a commitment to honesty in a relationship requires trust," Bullock added. "I can say anything and I know she loves me."

Affirmation. Everyone loves to hear good things about themselves, Mrs. Bullock said, noting that she likes to pass on her husband's compliments about their son.

She said she also rejoiced when a member of their church's praise band called her a "Proverbs 31 woman."

Likewise, couples constantly must compliment each other to outweigh negative, hurtful remarks that tend to stick in everyone's mind, Mrs. Bullock said.

Forgiveness. Citing Ephesians 4:32, Bullock said forgiveness is not optional, but God's command. One of his favorite Scriptures is Psalm 15 because it talks about intimacy with God, Who keeps His promises even when it hurts.

"You can't do it just when you feel like it," Bullock said. "There's stuff (in marriage) that's like a clogged artery. The sooner you can deal with it, the sooner you can get back to a right relationship."

Repairing damaged feelings so a marriage can thrive is vital in a time when church members and others are desperate to find good role models, he added.

Noting that three of the five people in his church's staff come from broken homes, Bullock recalled his surprise when an employee called the Bullocks his mentors.

"You have an opportunity to model (marriage) for a whole generation," Bullock said. "Not because of you, but in spite of you, because of Jesus. You love your spouse—more than the church, more than your job."

Former Kentucky pastor offers ideas for surviving spiritual lows

Continued from page 1

Repent. That simply means recognizing when one's current state isn't right and re-ordering priorities, he said.

Do the works done previously. "That means taking one step at a time when you don't feel like doing it," Johnson said. "Whoever said this was supposed to be about feelings? It's all about obedience. This is all about really becoming like Jesus, whether you're in a high or a low."

Following God through the valley calls for a series of choices, he added, all headed in the right direction.

By making these small steps, God uses the Holy Spirit to form Christ's character in His followers, Johnson said.

He reinforced the lessons with a personal experience that affirmed God's care for him and his family.

Johnson recalled being unhappy while on vacation in Hawaii in 2002.

Then on staff at nationally-known Saddleback Valley Community Church, Johnson said he was battling exhaustion from his far-flung travel schedule.

In addition, friction with two co-workers amid a challenging staff reorganization had Johnson questioning whether he was making a difference in people's lives.

Walking along the beach with his wife one afternoon, he saw a sign advertising a Sunday morning worship service at a restaurant.

Johnson said the Holy Spirit told him, "You need to go."

He returned wearing sunglasses and a cap pulled low so he could avoid interaction and "go through the motions" before returning to his hotel.

But he was surprised by the sermon topic: "Dealing with Depression." The pastor based it on a tape he had ordered from Saddleback two years earlier—of one of Johnson's sermons.

"It was tough to hear my own sermon preached back to me," Johnson said. "I sat and listened and the best I can tell you is over that teaching time God took His Word and He helped me. It was like the Holy Spirit saying, 'You've given other people this medicine. Now take it yourself.'"

God showed the depth of His care through that experience, Johnson said, and his mental outlook and emotional health immediately turned upward.

"The thing I can tell you about God is He is not a fair-weather God," Johnson said. "He's not just there in the highs, He's also in the lows. Even when life gets messy, His love for you is never in question."

In an interview after his workshop, Johnson said discouragement is widespread today among both pastors and church members.

Pastors often struggle with the same issues he did, Johnson said: fatigue, troublesome transitions or relationship problems.

"I was talking to a guy yesterday who said he had already had 10 conversations with pastors who said, 'Man, I'm just looking for another place to go.' That's typically how pastors respond: 'I'll just leave and start over.' Then they stay somewhere two or three years, get discouraged and leave again."

A primary obstacle facing laypeople is placement in the wrong service position at church, Johnson said.

When churches need volunteers, they tend to grab whoever's available, whether that person is wired for that ministry or not, he explained.

Helping people find the best place

of service for their gifts and abilities can reduce the discouragement that results from such "mismatches," Johnson said.

One of four plenary session speakers during the Jan. 15-17 event, Johnson was a familiar face to many attendees.

He began preaching 21 years ago at Springfield Baptist Church. Before moving to California, he was pastor of Living Hope Baptist Church in Bowling Green.

Next year's session, Jan. 13-15, will feature author Henry Blackaby; Jay Wolfe, pastor of First Baptist Church of Montgomery, Ala.; and Mike Whitson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Indian Hills, N.C.

"That's typically how pastors respond: 'I'll just leave and start over.'"

Brad Johnson

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Protesters mark 31st anniversary of Roe vs. Wade

By Jennifer Flowers
& Amanda Mantone
Religion News Service

Washington (RNS)—Thousands of anti-abortion activists gathered in the shadow of the White House last week to protest the 31st anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade decision legalizing most abortions.

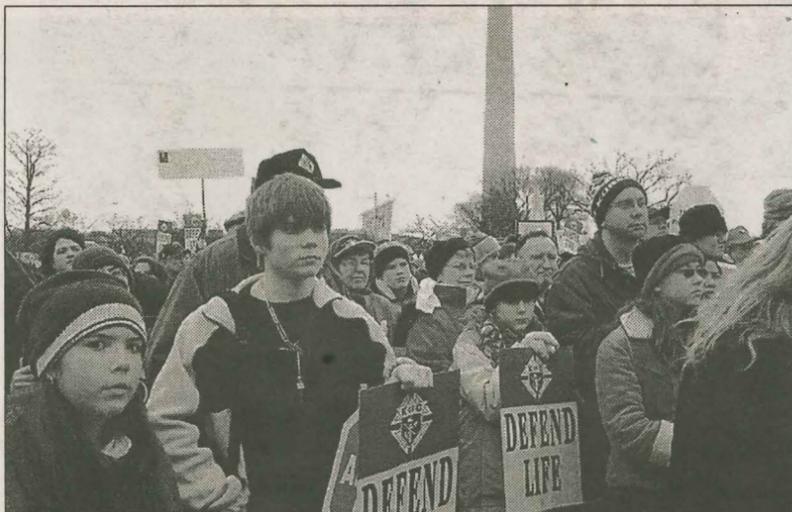
"We are here today to say to Washington officialdom and the whole world that Roe vs. Wade must be overturned," said Nellie Gray, president of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund.

Tens of thousands of people, including religious leaders and members of Congress, participated in the annual event, held Jan. 22.

President Bush greeted the crowds by telephone from Roswell, N.M., and reminded them that he agreed with their stand.

"Each of us has a special dignity, a place and a purpose in this world," the president said. "And in the Declaration of Independence, our founders stated this self-evident truth: The right to life does not come from government; it comes from the Creator of life."

After the more than hour-long ceremony, the crowd headed down Constitution Avenue toward the Supreme Court. Some marchers carried posters of fetuses and signs that read "Stop



MARCH FOR LIFE Tens of thousands of people participated in the annual March for Life Jan. 22. Protesters listen to speeches near the White House before marching to the Capitol to protest the 1973 Roe vs. Wade ruling. (RNS photos by Jennifer Flowers)

Abortion Now" and "Pro Vida Sin Excepciones."

Before and after the march, youth rallied and worshippers prayed at related gatherings.

Nearly 15,000 Catholic demonstrators gathered in the MCI Center before the march Thursday morning for a Youth Rally and Mass for Life.

Groups—one of which had as many as 900 members—came from as far away as Texas and Alabama to attend the day's events.

Groups on the other side of

the issue also spoke out, with Planned Parenthood organizing protests in at least 25 cities.

Legislative agenda

At the National Press Club, representatives of several anti-abortion groups held news conferences to express their views.

The National Right to Life Committee urged the Senate to join the House of Representatives in support of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act.

On Wednesday, the House

Judiciary Committee approved the act, also known as "Laci and Conner's Law," which would hold criminals accountable for two deaths in the murder of a pregnant woman. Currently, 28 states recognize unborn children as human victims of violent crimes, but the law does not apply to federal crimes outside those states' jurisdictions.

Supporters of legal abortion claim the bill treads on territory that would threaten a woman's right to abortion, but National Right to Life Legislative Director Douglas Johnson said that is not the case.

"The bill explicitly provides that it does not apply to any abortion to which a woman has consented, to any act of the mother herself—legal or illegal—or to any form of medical treatment," Johnson said.

National Right to Life speakers also said President Bush's ban on "partial-birth abortion" is in danger of being thrown out if a Democrat is elected to the White House and appoints a "pro-abortion" justice to the Supreme Court. The committee supports overturning Roe vs. Wade in favor of legislation that would allow abortion only in cases where the mother's health is in danger, with no "partial-birth abortions" allowed under any circumstance.



"The right to life does not come from government; it comes from the Creator of life."

President George Bush

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SBC's Chapman: 'Passion' could become next 'Jesus' film

Nashville (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention leaders who attended a December screening of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" praised the film's potential power to grip non-Christians.

"I have been unable to erase from my mind the scene of the beating given Jesus by Roman guards," said Morris Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

"It was gruesome. It jarred my sensibilities."

Chapman said he is praying that "Passion" would become to audiences in the United States what the "Jesus" film has become to people all over the world.

"In my opinion, God may well transform this film into a mighty witnessing tool for reaching people in America who may never have been reached in any other way," Chapman said.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, called "Passion" the most moving experience he has ever had as a moviegoer.

Gibson shared his testimony after the screening and explained that he was convinced God wanted him to bring the gospel to the big screen in such a way that the average person would have an opportunity to see what Jesus had done for him.

James Draper, president of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, said it is obvious that the film is Gibson's passion, and he does a remarkable job with it.

"This is a movie that Christians need to see to be reminded of the price paid for our salvation, and it is a movie that Christians need to use to introduce these truths to those who have not yet met Jesus Christ."

Jewish leaders criticize 'Passion' after screening

By Kevin Eckstrom
Religion News Service

Orlando, Fla. (RNS)—After months of concern that an upcoming movie on the death of Jesus would revive anti-Semitism, last week two prominent Jewish groups gave two strong thumbs-down to Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ."

In separate rebukes, officials from the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League accused Gibson of blaming Jews for the crucifixion, despite promises that he would "soften" the story to be sensitive to Jewish concerns.

"Its portrayal of Jews is painful to watch," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, who viewed the film "in stealth mode" at a conference in Orlando, Fla.

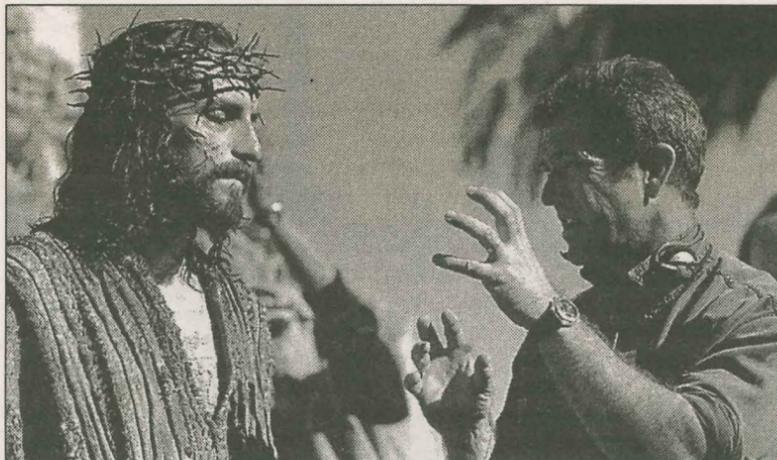
Foxman said that despite Gibson's assurances, the film portrays Jews as an unsympathetic "blood-thirsty" mob intent on killing Jesus.

"We respect Christians who come to see it," Foxman said, according to a story in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper.

"At every single opportunity, Gibson's film reinforces the notion that the Jewish authorities and the Jewish mob are the ones ultimately responsible for the crucifixion."

"Offensive stereotypes"

David Elcott, the interreligious affairs director for the American Jewish Committee, saw the film at



PASSION Director Mel Gibson (right) talks with Jim Caviezel, who portrays Jesus in "The Passion of the Christ." The \$30 million film is scheduled to be released Feb. 25.

Willowcreek Community Church outside Chicago and said the film is a "disturbing setback" to Christian-Jewish relations.

"The film reasserts offensive stereotypes about Jews that Catholic and Protestant leaders have overwhelmingly rejected," he said.

Gibson's \$30 million film has received wide acclaim from evangelical Christian groups and conservative Catholics who have been invited to private screenings.

An Associated Press report from the Orlando screening said the invited clergy had to sign a form promising not to speak negatively about the film.

But Gibson has refused to show

the film to his Jewish critics and staunchly defended charges that either he or the film is anti-Semitic. Last year, the film's marketing director said Foxman had been "dishonorable" in his critiques.

A spokesman for Gibson's Icon Productions film company said a response to the Anti-Defamation League and American Jewish Council was being prepared, but could not say when it would be released.

Gibson's religious history

Gibson belongs to a small conservative Catholic sect that does not accept the Second Vatican Council, held from 1962-1965, that made overtures to Jews and formally

dismissed the view that Jews were responsible for Jesus' death.

Foxman said the film "time and time again" shows Jews as inflicting "enormous suffering" on Jesus, especially Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, while the Roman authorities who executed Him are sympathetic, almost reluctant.

"Had Gibson portrayed this as his interpretation, his version, fine," Foxman said. "But he's not. He's portraying it as the gospel truth, the historic truth, as fact."

Rabbi James Rudin, the senior interreligious affairs adviser for the American Jewish Committee and a columnist for RNS, who saw the film last week, said he is particularly concerned about a scene taken from the Gospel of Matthew—which was not in earlier versions of the film—in which the Jewish mob shouts, "let His blood be upon us and upon our children."

Elcott said Gibson still has time to make changes before the film's debut. He also said Gibson's version of events is a challenge for Christians who have worked to heal centuries of anti-Semitism.

"It isn't just about Jewish-Christian relations alone," he said in an interview. "The name of God is being invoked for enormous violence and hatred in the world, and our goal ... is to mobilize as many people as possible to speak the name of God for goodness and justice."

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Worship will be led by Thomas Bolton, dean of the School of Church Music and Worship and Professor Carl Stam and will feature the musical talents of many of the students and faculty of Southern Seminary.

For more information, call 897-4115. This event is FREE and open to the public.



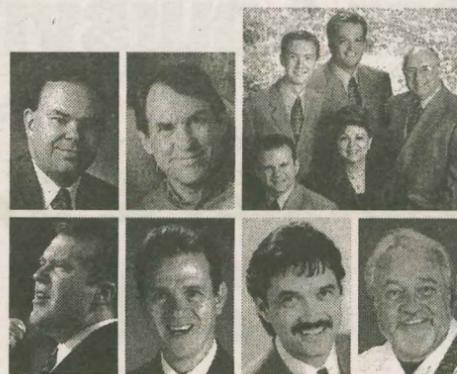
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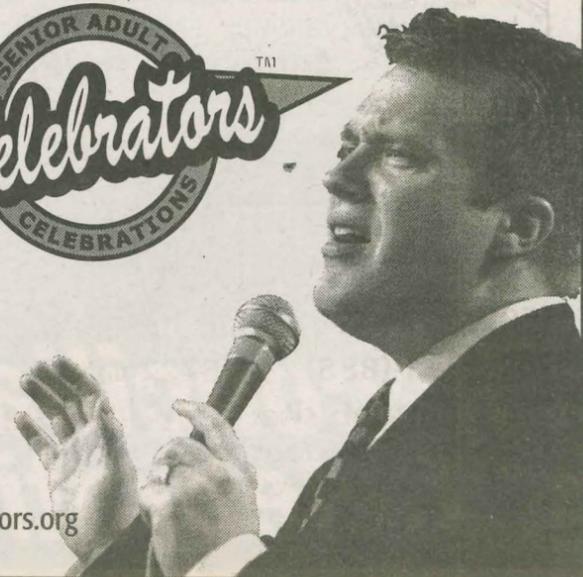
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New Christian ecumenical group forming

By Kevin Eckstrom
Religion News Service

Houston (RNS)—Organizers of a fledgling coalition of evangelical, Catholic, mainline Protestant and Orthodox Christians said the group should be up and running by May 2005—the first time most U.S. Christians have come together around a common table.

The new group, Christian Churches Together in the USA, will assemble Christian bodies that for a half-century have not been able to overcome deep theological and political differences.

"Never before in the history of the United States has this broad and widely representative group of churches come together in this way," said a statement issued earlier this month after a meeting of more than 50 church leaders near Houston.

It was the fourth time the group had met since talks began in Baltimore in September 2001.

"It gave everyone there more of a sense that this really could happen and that this really should happen," said Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America and chairman of the group's 15-member steering committee.

The group would be comprised of representatives from five church "families"—Roman Catholic, evangelical/Pentecostal, historic

(mainline) Protestant, racial/ethnic churches and Orthodox.

Officials said they expect to have the required 25-member groups representing all five "families" on board by next spring. Participants at the Texas meeting "identified and achieved consensus on all major issues" for the group's structure.

Granberg-Michaelson said the body would have a "very, very minimal infrastructure" with a skeleton staff. "People don't want to set up another bureaucracy," he said.

The nation's Catholic bishops, whose endorsement is key to the group's viability, were presented with a membership proposal last fall and are expected to consider joining at their annual meeting in November.

Southern Baptists absent

Missing from the new group, however, appears to be the nation's largest Protestant denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, who sent observers to last year's meeting but did not participate in the Houston meeting.

Southern Baptists typically have been reluctant to join ecumenical groups—they never have joined the 36-member National Council of Churches—and appear on the verge of withdrawing from the Baptist World Alliance.

"They are very welcome," said

Ron Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action, who has worked as a liaison to wary evangelical groups.

CCTUSA participants would have to agree by consensus to admit new members.

Officials hope to attract more interest from historically black churches that have been willing to join ecumenical groups but traditionally have taken a less active role.

Relationships before statements

Leaders were careful to lower expectations on what the group could accomplish, given deep differences in individual polity, doctrinal beliefs and a history of frosty relations between some groups.

The first step, Sider said, is for groups to simply get better acquainted, and find ways to work together. But do not expect policy statements or press releases on hot-button social issues, he said.

"It's right that we will, in the early period, not be doing any significant activities in the area of outreach beyond the church," he said.

Several topics that could be addressed, however, include global poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Christian-Muslim relations, the rise of Latino populations in all churches and the needs of Christian churches in the growing South, officials said.

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Salvation Army gets major McDonation.** The Salvation Army has received a gift of more than \$1.5 billion from the estate of McDonald's heiress Joan B. Kroc for the development of community centers across the country. Kroc died in October after a short battle with cancer. Her gift is considered one of the largest charitable donations ever received. Half the money will build the centers and the other half will be placed in an endowment from which the interest will be used for operating funds.

■ **Covenant marriage to be highlighted Feb. 15.** Supporters of the covenant marriage movement have designated Feb. 15 as Covenant Marriage Sunday 2004. Advocates said they hope 50,000 congregations worldwide will celebrate marriage as a covenant relationship during their worship services that day. For more information on the covenant marriage movement, call (800) 311-1662 or visit www.covenantmarriage.com.

■ **Poll's religious indicators rise slightly.** Religiosity among Americans is on the rise after hitting an all-time low last year, according to the Gallup Poll of religious indicators. The index compiles survey answers about religious preferences into a comprehensive score, with a maximum of 1,000 points. The 2003 score of 648 was a seven-point jump from 2002. The poll's highest score was 746 in 1956. The 60-year index surveys Americans on seven measurements of religious practice, including church attendance and the ethical standards of clergy.

■ **Outlooks for nonprofits improves.** A rising stock market and surging economy have many of the nation's 1.2 million nonprofits feeling optimistic again, although it could take months, even years, before they see big financial benefits. "Nobody is singing 'Happy Days Are Here Again' yet, but they've stopped singing the Chicken Little tune that the sky is falling," said Diana Aviv, president of Independent Sector, a national coalition of nonprofits and philanthropy-minded corporations.

Bowling Green Accommodations

Special rates, if provided, are listed. When making lodging reservations, please mention Kentucky Baptist Convention and verify rates.

Holiday Inn University Plaza
(Headquarter's Hotel)
1021 Wilkinson Trace
270-745-0088
\$79 Flat Rate / R
Cut-off date 1/29/04

Hampton Inn
233 Three Springs Rd
270-842-4100
\$59 Flat Rate / CB

Baymont Inn and Suites
165 Three Springs Rd
270/843-3200
\$49 Double; \$54 King / CB

Drury Inn
3250 Scottsville Rd
270-842-7100
\$67.99 Flat Rate
CB (Hot Quick Start Breakfast)
Cut-off date 2/9/04

Legend: R=Restaurant
CB=Continental Breakfast



Hillvue Heights is located on the south side of Bowling Green. From I-65, take Exit 20 onto the William Natcher Parkway, heading north toward Bowling Green/Owensboro. Get off at Exit 4 toward Bowling Green. Turn right onto Nashville Road (Hwy. 31W). Hillvue Heights is .4 miles on the left.

For more information or to register, contact:
(502) 254-4737 or

Toll Free 1-(888) 254-5722 (in KY)

Visit our web site: www.kybaptist.org

Kentucky Baptist Convention
Church Development - Evangelism Growth Team
For childcare information, call Nancy Turner at 270.842.0012.
Pre-school aged children must register by February 6.

Special emphasis for **WOMEN** on 2/24!
Choice of 2 workshops (\$5) or workshops and lunch (\$10) with guest speaker **Lori Salierno**. Reserve your lunch today!
Pre-registration/Coffee 8:00 am
Sessions 9:00 am-1:30 pm



Rick Ousley
Senior Pastor
The Church at Brook Hills
Birmingham, Alabama



Charles Lowery
President and CEO
Lowery Institute for Excellence, Inc.
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Build a Bridge BE A WITNESS

Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference
February 23-24, 2004
Hillvue Heights Baptist Church
3219 Nashville Road / Bowling Green, Kentucky
www.kybaptist.org/evangelismconference
Monday/1:45 pm pre-session music / 2pm session begins
Conference is FREE and pre-registration is not required!



The Evangelism Conference is made possible by the Cooperative Program.



The Olson Bunch

Missionaries looking at returning to field after combining massive families

"Others can see how God is faithful to us, and it encourages them."

Dan Olson

By Stacey Hamby
Baptist Press

Kearney, Mo. (BP)—Dan and Christy Beaty Olson are crazy in love with each other. They have to be, they say, to raise eight children together.

Both former Southern Baptist missionaries were widowed in their early 30s with four children each. Today they are a present-day "Brady Bunch."

"God has provided someone we're each crazy about," Christy said. "We had to be extra crazy about each other to raise eight children!"

The Olsons say they are living examples of how God can bring something good out of tragedy.

Both were serving with their spouses as representatives in Northern Africa and the Middle East.

From grief to joy

Lisa Olson, Dan's first wife, died suddenly on May 31, 2001, of myocarditis, a virus that inflames the heart.

Charles Beaty, Christy's husband, died in October 2001 after a long battle with lung cancer—a rare condition for someone so young.

For several months, Dan and

Christy grieved separately. Dan and his children lived in Oregon with his mother for a while before moving to Florida to take a position as director of the Great Commission Network Center at Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon.

Christy and her children were living in Kearney, Mo., near her family. Though they had known about each other previously, they did not meet until June 2002 when Christy vacationed in Florida.

"Our stories were so similar," Dan said. "We met and compared stories and started sending long e-mails to each other just talking about losing a spouse, being a single parent of four kids and just how to handle all this.

"I was hoping I'd meet a young lady with a heart for missions and for my kids," he said. "God ... also gave me someone who understood what it meant to have a spouse die and who had four kids herself."

Christy said God had been preparing each of them for their meeting. "We were both longing for someone again, but we never thought it would happen. Our feelings for each other took us by surprise. Yes, we had all this stuff in common, but we wanted to feel something, and we did. I never thought I would feel that way again."

Dan proposed to Christy on her birthday Sept. 14, 2002, and they married Nov. 23, 2002, in Christy's home church in Kearney.

"Charles and Lisa would have wanted us to be happy," Christy said. "This is good and right. We can keep their memories alive, especially for the kids."

Working through the complexities

Blending the family continues to be a work in progress, they said. The children, who range in ages from 2 to 11, call Christy and Dan "Mom and Dad." The couple also say they have "eight children, and they're all ours." But each parent is sensitive to issues that arise with the children, such as them occasionally saying they miss their Mommy (Lisa) and Daddy (Charles).

"We don't feel like we have to hide Charles' and Lisa's pictures," Christy said. "We answer the kids' questions about heaven and try to help them understand. We say your first mommy or your first daddy is in heaven. The older children decided they were brothers and sisters from the beginning."

The year the 10-member family has spent together in Kearney has



DINING ROOM DYNAMICS Supper time can be chaotic at the Olson house. Serving up food for a 10-member family is an ongoing challenge, but Christy plans in advance by making up menus and shopping for several days' worth of groceries at a time. (BP photos by Stacey Hamby)

been a good time for the family to blend and to prepare to return to the mission field. "We both have been very focused overseas," Christy said. "It's where we still have that strong pull. We want to be effecting change in areas that don't have access to the gospel."

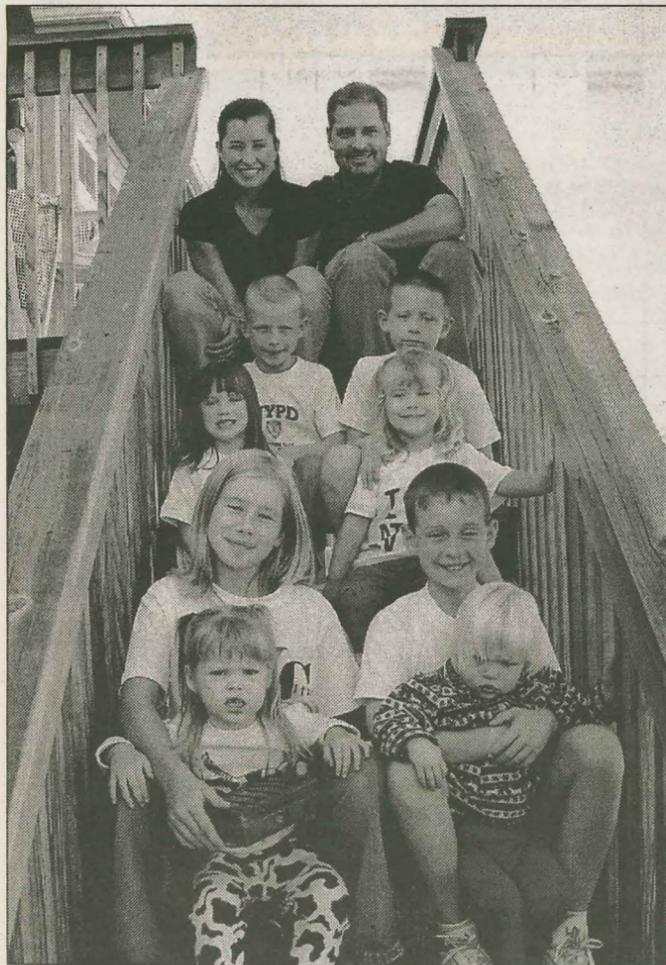
Dan, who has been serving in missions mobilization for the IMB, and the family will be going to Richmond, Va., to the missionary learning center in preparation for their assignment, which cannot be disclosed because of security rea-

sons. They said the whole family is excited about their future.

"God continues to say, 'I'm going to take you to the next level of faith,'" Dan said. "Others can see how God is faithful to us, and it encourages them. God takes us down different paths of suffering, and we've just got to trust Him that He's working behind the scenes and that He's going to bring it to a point to glorify Him."

Christy added, "When something really bad happens, God can bring something really, really good."

AN EVEN TEN The Olson family, from lower left, clockwise going up: Julia, 3; Amanda, 11; Mary Ann, 5; Alexandre, 7; Christy; Dan; Paul, 8; Ashleigh, 3; Philip, 11; and Abigail, 2.



Every Baptist Church in the World, an Offering for the Baptist World Alliance



The Baptist World Alliance is a fellowship of 211 Baptist Unions and conventions comprising a membership of more than 46.5 million baptized believers. This represents a community of approximately 110 million Baptists ministering around the world.

Baptist World Alliance Day

February 1, 2004

Here is a special opportunity to help Baptists around the world through the Baptist World Alliance.

Every year Baptist churches around the world have an opportunity to give an offering for the Baptist World Alliance. Your support will enable the BWA to:

- ◆ UNITE BAPTISTS WORLDWIDE
- ◆ LEAD IN WORLD EVANGELISM
- ◆ RESPOND TO PEOPLE IN NEED
- ◆ DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS

For many churches February 1, 2004 will be BWA Sunday, a time to celebrate our unity as Baptists. We need your support for this offering for the future of the BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE.

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Help your local church prepare for this offering. Please share your pledge of support with us today!

Please send your Baptist World Offering to:

Baptist World Alliance
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Phone: +1-703790-8980
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Baptists Together In Christ ... in Justice, in Evangelism, in Aid, in Fellowship



The Princess Foundation

Public Invitation! Free Event!
Refreshments will be served!

Friday January 30, 7PM

Nolin RECC Building, Elizabethtown

Come see what we are all about!

"Making the world a better place,
one child at a time!"

Retreating from life's hectic pace

Assemblies offer settings for vision and planning

In the hectic schedule of life, do you ever wish you could be away from a phone, without cell phone service and without Internet communication?

While this might sound unappealing or even scary, it can be amazingly refreshing and, to be honest, just a whole lot of fun.

Very seldom do we as employees make the most of what our camps have to offer. Simply put, we overlook the many benefits that the properties offer because

we take them for granted. We see them day after day and literally live on the properties, but we can forget how special they are as places of spiritual and physical renewal.

This past week our leadership group experienced the true meaning of retreat, and best yet, it was at no cost because we stayed at Cedarmore.

Imagine being in a rustic log cabin with many windows and the crackle of a blazing fire within a large stone fireplace. You are gathered with co-workers, but you see them as family. The

environment is filled with excitement as future plans, hopes and dreams are discussed with passion and anticipation. In spite of the exciting atmosphere, you are amazingly relaxed because you can focus totally on your purpose and on those around you.

For nearly three days, this was my experience at Cedarmore's Cedarcresc Service Building, a name that certainly does not capture the beauty, serenity and tranquility of the experience that we all enjoyed.

I said many times during those days, "Whenever we get together for a planning retreat, I want to come here again to Cedarcresc."

As you seek to find "retreat" from the hectic world in which we live, take the risk to be "cut off" from all distractions.

Only when our focus becomes sharp can we find our true purposes in God and clarity for our mission on this earth.

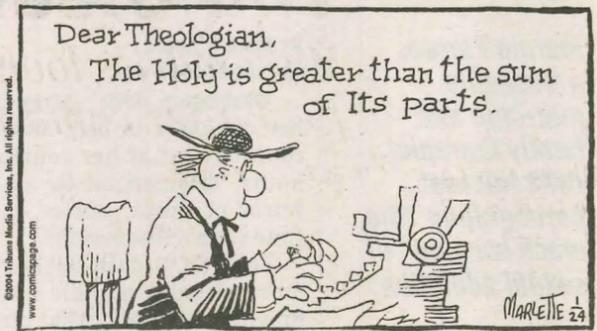
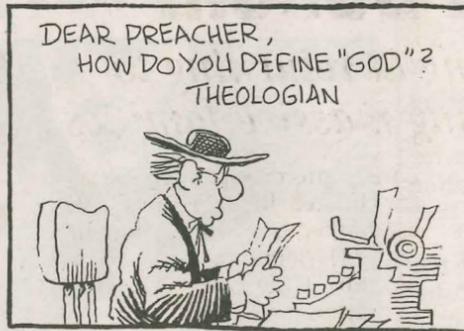


David Melber

David Melber is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies. Contact him at 3043 Beal Road, Hardin, KY 42048; phone (270) 354-8355.

Kudzu

Doug Marlette



For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Bible Crosswords

Janet Kennedy

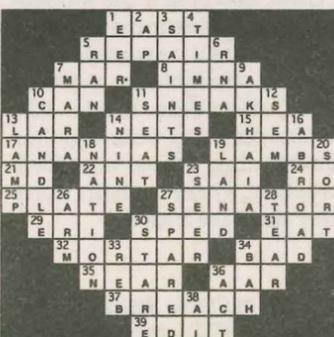
Across

- 1 "Though they be red like _____, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18)
- 6 "Thou shalt also make a laver of _____" (Exodus 30:18)
- 10 Omissions excepted, abbr.
- 11 A long period of time
- 12 "And thou shalt make a veil of _____, and purple" (Exodus 26:31)
- 13 Lead, chem. symbol
- 14 Upper case, abbr.
- 15 Association of American Railroads, abbr.
- 16 Californian city, abbr.
- 17 "Lydia, a seller of _____" (Acts 16:14)
- 19 Academy, abbr.
- 20 _____ out: barely making a living
- 22 Kiloliter, abbr.
- 23 Elevated railroad
- 24 "And in the place of the boil there be a ... spot ... somewhat _____" (Leviticus 13:19)
- 28 Consumed
- 29 Actress McGraw
- 30 "They had on their heads crowns of _____" (Revelation 4:4)
- 32 Base hit (baseball), abbr.
- 33 "A dove ... her feathers with _____ gold" (Psalm 68:13)
- 34 6, Romans num.
- 35 "He ... saw a publican, named _____ ... and said unto him, Follow me" (Luke 5:27)
- 38 A liquid adhesive
- 40 "Of the tribe of _____ were sealed twelve thousand" (Revelation 7:6)
- 42 "The same came therefore to Philip, ... saying, _____, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21)

1	2		3	4	5		6	7	8	9
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42	43			44		45		46		47
48						49				50
51					52					53

- 44 "Lie down in _____ pastures" (Psalm 23:2)
- 47 Bear, Sp.
- 48 Estimated time of arrival, abbr.
- 49 "Neither knoweth _____ man the Father, save the Son" (Matthew 11:27)
- 50 Uncooked
- 51 "But let your yea be yea; and your _____" (James 5:12)
- 52 But
- 53 "Let not the _____ go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26)
- 18 "Though they be _____ like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18)
- 21 An interjection of surprise
- 23 And, Lat.
- 25 "One _____ is with the Lord as a thousand years" (2 Peter 3:8)
- 26 Able, suffix
- 27 "Peter said, _____ and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee" (Acts 3:6)
- 28 Those who give counsel
- 30 "I saw seven _____ candlesticks" (Revelation 1:12)
- 31 "_____ no man any thing, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8)
- 32 "He made for the altar a _____ grate" (Exodus 38:4)
- 36 Southern state, abbr.
- 37 "I will pass through ... removing ... all the _____ cattle among the sheep" (Genesis 30:32)
- 38 "Yea, _____ hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not" (Hosea 7:9)
- 39 Repulsive to the eye
- 41 Jacob's brother
- 43 Independent T.V. Authority, abbr.
- 45 Take food
- 46 Empire state, abbr.
- 12 Sound of sheep

Last week's solution



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Is adoption an option?

If you are considering adoption, join us for the **Louisville Adoption Fair**. Take advantage of free workshops where you can learn more about the adoption process.

1-4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 1

**University of Louisville
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At www.WESTERNRECORDER.com:
Poll Question: How did your church last show its love for its pastor?

Today's pornography not just snaring men anymore

Marnie Ferree, a Nashville marriage and family therapist, calls Internet pornography "the crack cocaine" of sexual addiction.

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

Washington (RNS)—After putting her daughter to bed, Maggie, 42, routinely sat at her computer for hours, mesmerized by an online world of erotic stories and real-time sexual discussions.

Beth, 33, usually clicked on the most visually graphic sites, disproving the theory that only men are enticed by pornography.

"A lot of people don't realize this happens with women too," said Beth, who, along with Maggie, asked that their last names not be revealed.

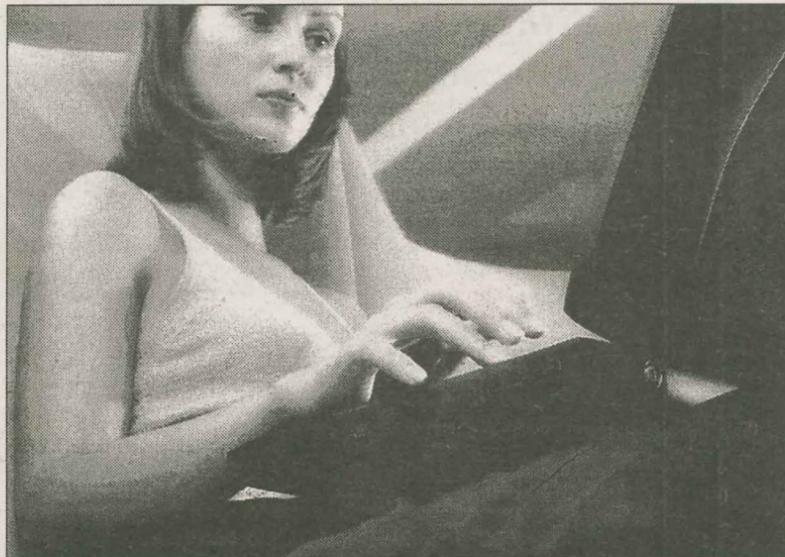
The myth began long ago, perhaps because women rarely were seen walking into seedy adult bookstores or asking for plastic-wrapped magazines kept behind convenience store counters.

But in recent years, the accessibility, affordability and anonymity of the Internet has made pornography undeniably attractive to millions of women. While some women simply find it exciting, others have battled addictions.

Nearly one in three visitors to adult Web sites is a woman, according to Nielsen/NetRatings, the industry standard for measuring online audiences.

From a study of the Internet use of 40,000 panelists at home and work, Nielsen estimated 9.4 million women in the United States accessed such sites last September.

Julie Neff, 29, of Mukwonago, Wis., said Internet pornography "is pretty much an adjunct to my regular sex life."



ONLINE ADDICTIONS? A Nielsen study estimates as many as 9.4 million women access Internet pornography monthly. Today's Christian Woman magazine found 34 percent of readers responding to a survey said they had accessed porn on the Web. (©Corbis photo illustration)

She estimates she views it less than an hour a week, and is open about it with her boyfriend.

Attracting evangelicals

Others say it can lead to problems. There is some evidence that Internet pornography is luring even women whose values oppose it. Some speculate a forbidden-fruit factor can make it tantalizing for religious women in particular.

The editors of Today's Christian Woman, an evangelical magazine, had heard anecdotes of church-going women getting hooked on pornography, so they conducted a survey asking readers of their online newsletter if they had inten-

tionally visited porn sites. Thirty-four percent said they had.

"Apparently online sex addiction isn't just a male problem anymore," the magazine's editors wrote in the October issue, which suggested Internet filters and other pornography-avoiding tips.

While the frequency of female pornography "addiction" is difficult to measure, psychologists agree that some women, as well as men, do engage in destructively compulsive behavior fueled by the Internet.

Maggie said she began exploring pornography to try to understand what it was that captivated her ex-husband.

Soon, she was spending up to 30 hours a week surfing the Internet for arousal.

She realized she had a serious problem when she couldn't wait for her daughter to go to sleep so she could get on the computer.

"The light went on that I preferred porn to spending time with my child."

"Crack cocaine" of sex addiction

Marnie Ferree, a Nashville marriage and family therapist, calls Internet pornography "the crack cocaine" of sexual addiction.

"On the Internet, I can be whoever I want to be. I can look however I want to look," said Ferree, author of "No Stones: Women Redeemed from Sexual Shame."

"It's a totally false environment that's about objectification and deception," he said. "And that's not going to be satisfying in the long term."

The interactivity of the Internet makes it especially appealing to some women, said Al Cooper, a staff psychologist at Stanford University and the author of "Sex and the Internet: A Guidebook for Clinicians."

"We see women all the time who may not feel that attractive, but they get 20 guys going after them at a time in a chat room, e-mailing them instantly," Cooper said.

"That's affirming to a woman, and it's hard to match when your husband is in the next room drinking a beer, maybe asking you if you're going to exercise next week" because he thinks you're overweight.

Students and staff working together

Student government boosts dialogue, problem solving

By Michael Spencer
Oneida Campus Minister

Oneida Baptist Institute's Student Government Association has been a part of campus life for almost a decade.

Representing both dormitory and day students, SGA is one way students can make a positive contribution to their boarding school experiences. Our SGA has a legacy of success, and proves that staff and students can work together to solve problems and improve the school environment.

Though SGA has faculty sponsors, meetings and events are run by students. It is open to any high school student who will attend faithfully and who wants to make a positive contribution to campus life. In the early years of SGA, students wrote their own constitution, which is still used today. Six-time

SGA President Roy Lowdenback—recent student government president at Georgetown College—led SGA in challenging students to learn about leadership and positive problem solving. Today, under the leadership of Josh Bryant, SGA has more than 30 members and hosts more events than ever before.

SGA sponsors an annual luau, "spirit week," weekend movies, a culture fair, a talent contest and a "Most Eligible Bachelor Pageant." But SGA's most important job is behind-the-scenes work with administration.

Students bring to SGA problems they observe on campus. They debate solutions and identify administrators with whom to communicate. SGA recently met with food service personnel. They

learned how Oneida Baptist Institute plans menus and uses donations. Students also made constructive suggestions about responding to changing student interests in food, such as increased vegetarianism among young people.

OBI is fortunate to have administrators like Dr. Underwood, principal Dan Stockton, and dean of students Judy Lawson, who will work with SGA. Their offices are open to SGA, and they sometimes attend meetings.

While SGA can't make rules, they can help faculty and staff understand students' points of view. Often, communication with SGA has helped a rule be implemented, changed or better applied.

And of course, students always are grateful when SGA succeeds in getting "perks," such as fruit juice in the drink machines and new snack machines in the dorms.

Students participating in SGA learn about leadership and gain valuable insight into the operation of a ministry. Those who have been loyal SGA members recall the value of that experience on college applications, and in some cases, how it laid the groundwork for future leadership opportunities.

OBI's Student Government Association is another positive activity available to a young person you may know who needs Oneida. SGA shows that students and staff can work together to make a Christian boarding school a positive experience. OBI is a school where students don't just have a place; they also have a voice.

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

California duo prepares for ministry

Couples trades West Coast sun for E. Kentucky snow

Second year student Patrick Smith and his wife, Jennifer, were involved with group home ministry in California and Ohio.

"We had a group of six teenagers, not ready for foster care because of violent unsociable behavior," Jennifer said. "With a psychiatrist we did clinical care that helped them get into foster homes. The well-being of our new daughter took us in other directions. The Lord led us to Ohio working with children who had more predictable behavior."

One of their "Ohio children," now 18, shared Thanksgiving with the Smiths at Clear Creek. At Sydney (Ohio) Baptist Church, the Smiths heard about Clear Creek through an admissions tape.

Patrick, who is preparing for youth evangelism ministry, worked for a year as youth and children's minister at Lynn Camp Baptist Church, near Corbin. He had the joy of seeing children come to Christ through vacation Bible school.

"I grew up with an atheistic, abusive father," Patrick said. "That experience has deepened my commitment to help children and teenagers in problem families."

Patrick and Jennifer met in high school and were baptized and married at First Baptist Church of Fresno, Calif. Patrick received an early call to ministry but resisted until a broken shoulder brought his discharge from the Marine Corps. "The Lord does break you!" he said.

Jennifer never thought she would be the wife of a minister. How's she handling it? "With a lot of prayer," she said. "Talking with other ministers' wives also helps. I have to be aware of church expectations and how to best use my God-given talents for ministry."

Jennifer is donor management secretary in the development office, processing receipts

and letters. "The job is wonderful. I enjoy the personal link with those who support the college," she said. Although far from their families in the San Diego area, the Smiths enjoy campus life, even the winter snow. They have two children, Samantha, born in 2001, and Jonathan, born in 2003. They and their Alumni Hall neighbors look forward to better weather and barbecue picnics near the creek.

Bill Whittaker is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, Pineville, KY 40977; (606) 337-3196

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Commentary on Song of Songs underscores intimacy in marriage

By Jeff Robinson
Baptist Press

Louisville (BP)—The Old Testament book Song of Songs celebrates the joys of physical love between a husband and wife, Daniel Akin states in a new commentary.

Akin is co-author of the commentary along with David George Moore, who is founder and president of Two Cities Ministries.

The volume, which is part of the Holman Old Testament Commentary series published by Broadman & Holman, also covers Ecclesiastes, which Moore handles.

Akin recently was elected president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. He previously was dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

"The Song of Songs is an important part of the Bible because it displays the beauty of human love in freedom and spontaneity," Akin writes. "Its neglect has been the church's loss. At a time when marriages are struggling more than ever to survive, its recovery and study would be a significant move forward."

"The speakers in this beautiful Song are dramatic and captivating throughout. The highly figurative phrases of the work have caused much disagreement concerning interpretation, but it is best to understand the Song as the dialogue between two lovers with all their feelings and emotions for each other."

Readers of the Song of Songs—which is also called Song of Solomon—must take interpretation of the book a step further, Akin wrote. While it applies to a love relationship between two persons, the message of Song of Songs also illustrates the love union between the believer and Christ in His redemption, Akin asserts.

Akin also wrote "God on Sex:

The Creator's Ideas About Love, Intimacy and Marriage" last year, a book that is similar to the commentary in focus.

The commentary demonstrates how particular passages are directly applicable to the contemporary husband-wife relationship. For example, in applying Song of Songs 2:10-14, Akin poses a question to the husband: "Is he tender with his words?" Akin lists three things one might listen for in a potential lifelong spouse: praise, particulars and passion.

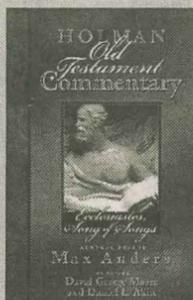
In the same passage, Akin unpacks the importance of husbands and wives carefully choosing their words during conversations with each another.

"How we say things can be as important as what we say," Akin writes. "A kind attitude and a tender tone will foster receptive ears on the other end. For the third time Shulammitte referred to Solomon as her 'beloved,' her 'lover.' With gentleness and tenderness in his voice, he spoke and she listened."

Akin uses 3:6-11 to describe God's attitude toward a Christian's wedding day. Contrary to the extravagance and human-centeredness of most modern weddings, Akin argues that the day is to be God-centered. A great wedding will be a celebration, should contain a promise of protection, a pledge of commitment and the approval of others, he says.

"Marriage, after all was (God's) idea," Akin writes. "He has a plan. Marriage can be different when we invite the holy Trinity to honor the wedding and direct the marriage. Our expectations, hopes and dreams can and will be radically altered and transformed, and all for the better."

The commentary concludes with a teaching outline, an example of a marriage covenant and discussion questions.



The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-earth. Ralph Wood. Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. 169 pages. \$13.95. ♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

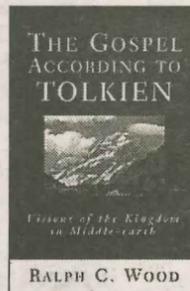
"In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." From that modest beginning we have come to our own similarly modest conclusion: Christians are called to be hobbit-like servants of the King and His Kingdom. Frodo and Sam are first in the reign of Huvatar because they are willing to be last and least among those who 'move the wheels of the world.'"

With those words, Ralph Wood, professor of theology and literature at Baylor University, concludes his examination of the way the gospel peeks through the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien.

Would Tolkien approve of this treatment of his life's work? It's hard to say. He was a devout Christian, and his faith influenced the way he saw the world and the machinations of humanity. At the same time, he never wanted "The Lord of the Rings" or any of his other stories to be seen as allegorical treatments of another story, not even the gospel. So, is Wood overreaching?

One word of warning: Do not come to "The Gospel According to Tolkien" unless you are willing to engage in some rigorous intellectual work. While Wood's writing is far from academic, it does call on the reader to be, or get familiar with Tolkien and the gospel. Far from leading the reader in a straight line from the story of Middle-earth to the gospel, Wood engages us in a journey through myth, metaphor and language. Rather than an overt proclamation of the gospel, Wood helps us see how Tolkien's fantastic tales of Middle-earth open us to the possibility of hearing the gospel.

Serious fans of Middle-earth will find Wood's exploration intriguing. As the foundation of a discussion group, or an individual read, Wood's book could serve as a way to get people thinking and talking about the gospel. *Jim Holladay*



but in each new chapter about a different book of the Bible, he shows the Good Book's everyday relevance by highlighting three or four common needs and explains how the Bible addresses those needs.

Madeira is a retired missionary, and part of this book's power comes from his multi-cultural perspective. Madeira has no theological or social ax to grind, and what he writes is useful for any serious student of the Bible.

This book is going to be hard to find in book stores because it is published by a missionary society. Book store owners/managers would do well to add this book to their stock (and book store discounts are available).

Ordering information is available at www.wmausa.org and (800) 230-5265.

The book is not copyrighted, and readers are encouraged to copy and distribute any portion of the book. Volume discounts from the publisher make this book a great resource for Bible studies for small or large groups. As a resource in a church or school library it can serve as a valuable study aid.—*Wayne Hager*

Shoulda Coulda Woulda: Live in the Present, Find Your Future. Les Parrott. Zondervan Press, 2003. 201 pages. \$16.99. ♦♦♦

Regret. Guilt. Shame. The first two of the three emotions can serve a positive, though limited purpose in our lives. The third is definitely toxic and needs rooting out as soon as it rears its ugly head.

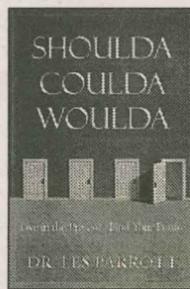
In his practice as a counselor and professor of clinical psychology, Les Parrott has dealt with people whose lives are mired down because of three infamous questions: "If only ...," "I should have ..." and "What if ..."

Too much focus on any one of these robs us of the joy of living in the present and blinds us to the opportunities of the future. Parrott believes we need to deal with the past and learn lessons from it, but ultimately leave it alone and live in the present. He writes this book to offer insight into the danger of all three emotions, as well as practical steps to move beyond them.

The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with defining and putting regret in its place. The second deals with the toxic aspects of regret: guilt and shame. Here he explores real and fake guilt, as well as shame.

The last part offers suggestions about how to live without regret, and ultimately guilt and shame. Is Parrott suggesting we never should experience shame or guilt? No, but he does believe that once felt, they should be acknowledged, dealt with and left behind.

The book has a series of self-tests, which are helpful in determining one's attitude toward regret, guilt and shame. Each chapter concludes with a series of reflection questions that make excellent gist for journaling. One weakness: he hints at helping us deal with regret over unfulfilled dreams, but never quite gets there. *Jim Holladay*



Gospel music sales fall more than 5 percent in 2003

Nashville (RNS)—Gospel music sales increased in the second half of 2003 but ended the year down 5.2 percent over the previous year.

The Gospel Music Association said Nielsen SoundScan reported 47.1 million albums sold in 2003 compared to 49.6 million in 2002.

At the midyear point, sales had declined by 10.4 percent.

"With the overall economy showing very positive signs of growth, and with the tide slowly reversing on the piracy issue, we have every reason to be confident going into the new year," GMA President John Styll said.

Pop gospel was the most popular style of music sold, with 19.4 percent of sales. It was followed by black gospel with 17.9 percent, rock with 14.9 percent, and praise and worship with 11.1 percent.

"There are still challenges ahead but the outlook is brighter, and

more importantly, we know that gospel music is having a strong impact in every segment of our society," Styll said.

According to the GMA, the top-selling gospel albums in 2003 were:

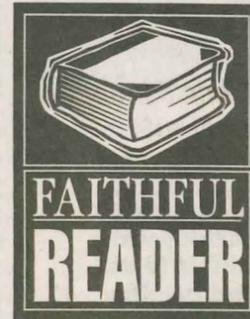
1. "Worship Together: I Could Sing of Your Love Forever" by various artists.
2. "Almost There" by MercyMe.
3. "Wonder What's Next" by Chavelle.
4. "Stacie Orrico" by Stacie Orrico.
5. "Offerings II: All I Have to Give" by Third Day.
6. "WoW Worship Yellow" by various artists.
7. "Beautiful Letdown" by Switchfoot.
8. "Payable on Death" by P.O.D.
9. "WoW Gospel 2003" by various artists.
10. "Rise and Shine" by Randy Travis.

The Purposes of Scripture in Your Life. Gene Madeira. World Missions Associates, 2003. 382 pages. \$19.95. ♦♦♦♦

The book's subtitle is "A User-Friendly, Culturally Relevant Bible Handbook for Lay People and Bible Study Teachers." The goal of the book is to raise the functional literacy of people in the pew and to expose non-church goers to a concise summary of the Bible.

Other books exist that try to do the same thing. Madeira's work is unique for what it includes in its organization. There is the standard section dealing with purpose, theme, scope, application, etc.

But an exciting addition is the summary section that addresses how the particular book of the Bible meets the reader's needs. This section goes beyond application but explicitly addresses common needs of 21st century people and how the biblical text speaks a word. Madeira does not get long-winded or preachy,



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C.; and Jim Holladay, pastor of Lyndon Baptist Church in Louisville. They welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: jcwhager@earthlink.net; or docholladay01@aol.com

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ **Missionaries in Bulgaria** request prayer for various Great Commission Christian groups trying to reach out to the Muslim community.

■ **Belgium missionaries** give thanks for a women's exercise class that recently began in an outreach center. Women from Belgium, several Hispanic nations and Russian-speaking countries are attending exercise classes and hearing from the Bible.

■ **Missionaries in Budapest, Hungary,** request prayer for opportunities to meet and witness to the 10,000 Serbians in the city. "Pray for us to learn more about the culture of Budapest Serbians so that we can more effectively minister to them," they write.

■ **New missionaries Bill and Cheryl Arbo,** who moved to their field of service in Porto Alegre, Brazil, last month. Pray for them as they adjust to their new home, continue language studies and begin their ministries.

■ **International Mission Board representatives Lynn and Glenda Terrill** request prayer for a group of 12 university students they have been holding Bible studies with.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BURLINGTON**—Burlington Church recently ordained **Jamie Crace** and **Jim Dickerson** as deacons. **Terry Wilder** is pastor.

■ **FRANKFORT**—Crestwood Church recently called **Rick Long** as minister of evangelism and discipleship. **Wallace Kent** is pastor.

■ **GLENDALE**—Gilead Church recently honored **George and Cynthia Slinker** on their 50th wedding anniversary. **Nathan Joyce** is pastor.

■ **HANSON**—Olive Branch Church recently called **Gary Taylor** as pastor. He previously was pastor of New Hope Church in Central City.

■ **LEBANON**—Central Church recently called **Mark Cundiff** as pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Beechmont Church will host a 12-hour benefit concert for **Roger Bennett** Jan. 31, 10 a.m. The concert will feature more than 25 vocalists and music groups. **Derek Yelton** is pastor.

Crescent Hill Church recently ordained **Barbara Allen, Steve Clark, Margaret Cole, David Cook, Lora Lee Diehl, Ron Horn, Betsy Lindsay, Marianne Taylor** and **Sharon White** as deacons.

Rockford Lane Church recently honored **Charlie and Doris Reeves** on their 60th wedding anniversary.

Joel Wayne has resigned as minister to students at St. Matthews Church.

■ **MONTICELLO**—Rectors Flat Church recently called **Carl Coffey** as pastor.

Lower Turkey Creek Church recently called **Bruce Tucker** as pastor.

■ **PIKEVILLE**—Meta Church recently called **Bill Staggs** as pastor.

■ **WILLIAMSTOWN**—Williamstown Church recently honored **Virginia Gilpen** on her retirement as a nursery worker since 1988. She was presented flowers and a watch from the church. **Steve Rice** is senior pastor.

Retired extension leader dies

Nashville (BP)—Ray Rigdon, who led the Southern Baptist Convention's Seminary Extension ministry from 1969-1988, died Jan. 16 in Nashville after a lengthy illness. He was 84.

Seminary Extension, founded in 1951, is a ministry of the SBC's six seminaries, offering diploma-level courses by correspondence, on CD ROM, the Internet and in more than 400 extension centers across the country. While not a degree program, Seminary Extension does award lay certificates and diplomas.

Under Rigdon's 18 years of Seminary Extension leadership, the ministry gained accreditation with the National Home Study Council (now the Distance Education and Training Council) in 1972 and became a

member of the National University Extension Association (now the National University Continuing Education Association) the following year.

Seminary Extension's current director, William Vinson Jr., noted that Rigdon "had a passion for training pastors without formal education and laypersons serving in ministry roles. Seminary Extension continues to follow his lead today."

Prior to his Seminary Extension work, Rigdon served as editor-in-chief for the Training Union department of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources). A graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, he served from 1948-49 as educational director for Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville.

Emeritus missionary dies at 84

Deland, Fla.—Former Kentucky Baptist pastor Samuel Shepard, an emeritus Southern Baptist missionary, died Dec. 22. He was 84.

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to Southern Baptist missionary parents, Shepard married another "missionary kid," the late Charlotte Green Shepard of Ogbomosh, Nigeria.

The couple was appointed by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board in 1975. He served in Portugal as a theological educator, church developer and pastor of several congregations.

After retiring in 1986, Shepard taught at the Baptist seminary in

Gweru, Zimbabwe, and the Baptist college in Fortescue, Barbados. He also served on the faculties of Boyce Bible School in Louisville, and in the Orlando, Fla., extension center of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He was a graduate of Furman University in Greenville, S.C., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Prior to missionary appointment, he served as pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Paducah and First Baptist Church in Erlanger as well as churches in Florida, Mississippi and Missouri. He also served as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

Emeritus missionary to Nigeria dies

Fargo, N.D.—Audrey Dyer, an emeritus Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria, died Dec. 28. She was 92.

Dyer, a native of Minnesota, was the first person employed by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board in 1961 as a missionary associate, a program for people ages 35 to 59 who possess skills for a particular job.

Dyer already had worked at the Baptist welfare center in Ire, Nigeria, for three years before becoming

a missionary associate. In 1972, she moved to Ogbomosh, where she was a nurse in children's health clinics conducted by the Kessey Children's Home. She retired in 1979.

Dyer was a graduate of Moorhead (Minn.) State College and held a midwifery certificate and a nursing diploma. Before her missionary service, she worked as a nursing instructor in New York; as a nurse-midwife in Wendover, Ky.; and for the county health department in Thomasville, Ga.

Earthquake survivors see 'God with us' in Alabama relief team

By Mark Kelly
SBC International Mission Board

Birmingham, Ala. (BP)—Survivors of a devastating earthquake in Bam, Iran, are seeing the love of God demonstrated through the work of Southern Baptist disaster relief volunteers from Alabama.

The words "Alabama Disaster Relief" provided the first witness to God's love as the team began unloading equipment and supplies, said team leader Larry Murphy of Enterprise, Ala.

Iranian helpers saw those words stenciled on the side of supply crates and saw in "Alabama" a combination of words in their own language: "Ala" sounds like their word for God, "Ba" like their word for "with" and "ma" like "us."

The Iranians translated "Alabama Disaster Relief" to mean "God with us' Disaster Relief."

"When I heard that, I just jumped and said, 'Yes!'" Murphy said.

The Alabama team was assigned the lead role in feeding operations in Bam, a key role in the wider relief response mounted by humanitarian organizations from around the world. A Baptist Men's team from Texas followed the Alabama volunteers into the heart of the ruined city. Baptist disaster relief volunteers from several other states plan to follow in the weeks to come.

The Dec. 26 earthquake killed more than one-third of Bam's 80,000 inhabitants. The tremor, which registered 6.6 on the Richter scale, reduced the entire city

to rubble. Tens of thousands of residents are homeless.

The Alabama volunteers supplied more than 900 meals a day to survivors living in a refugee camp outside the city. Plans are in place to increase that capacity so more than 2,000 meals a day can be provided.

Volunteers also are providing water and medical assistance and distributing sleeping bags, blankets, clothing and other goods. They have identified reconstruction needs, including the possibility of building an orphanage. More than 1,200 children have been left without any living relative. Other relief possibilities may include constructing a temporary school and earthquake-resistant houses or providing childcare and counseling.

The suffering being experienced by the city's residents is heartbreaking, volunteers said.

"The devastation here is far worse than I thought," said Henry Brady, 76, a disaster relief volunteer from Robertsdale, Ala. "Each time I had an opportunity to see the city or a neighborhood, I just broke down and cried. It brings up a lot of emotion of compassion and hurt, and you only wish you could have come sooner to help."

"We have the luxury of going home in 14 days," added Bob Ewing, 38, a volunteer from Saraland, Ala. "These people have to be here for the rest of their lives. It breaks your heart. It is impossible for us not to take things for granted until we live in a place like this."

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR RENT: Winter in Gatlinburg. Low daily rates. 2/2 condo. Walk to town. (251) 666-2175. pdiw@worldnet.att.net.

SEEKING: First Baptist, Sonora, is seeking a part-time youth minister to work with grades 7-12; some musical ability would be helpful. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, PO Box 187, Sonora, KY 42776. Fax: (270) 369-8867.

SEEKING: Full-time worship music minister for First Baptist, Mayfield, Ky. Average attendance: 500+. Blended worship style with worship team. Position will give leadership to graded music program, 65-member sanctuary choir, worship team and worship planning. Send resumé to: Pastor Bob Swift, First Baptist Church, 118 W South St., Mayfield, KY 42066.

SEEKING: Valley View Baptist Church in Vine Grove is seeking a minister of music (seminary and some experience preferred). For more information, visit www.valleyview-ky.org. Please send resumé to 501 Valley View Drive, Vine Grove, KY 40175, Attn: Music Committee, or e-mail to chris@valleyview-ky.org.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of recreation and activities for Kings Baptist Church. Please send resumé to: Personnel Committee, PO Box 380, Mt. Washington, KY 40047.

SEEKING: Secretary/administrative assistant for Green Acres BC in Louisville. Skills required: receptionist, file/financial clerk, computer experience (desktop publishing, MS Office, QuickBooks2003). Pay and benefits negotiable. Send resumé or application to GABC, 5189 Poplar Level Road, Louisville, KY 40219; e-mail: dpowell198@aol.com. For more information, call (502) 964-8165.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor. Apply to Liberty Baptist Church, c/o Joy Fletcher, PO Box 208, Russell Springs, KY 42642.

SEEKING: Broadway Baptist Church, a CBF affiliate in Louisville, Ky., is seeking an experienced minister of adult education and discipleship with an emphasis in developing small-group ministries and outreach. For more information, go to www.broadwaybaptist.org/search.htm, or write to the church c/o Education Search Committee, 4000 Brownsboro Road, Louisville, KY 40207.

TOUR: Alaska cruise. You are invited to join our Christian Life Tours group on a 7-day inside passage and glacier cruise June 4-11 with optional land tour. Enjoy Alaska with other Kentucky Baptists at the best prices. For brochure or to make a reservation, call (877) 557-0073 (toll-free). OK to leave message.



WATCHING AND WAITING Women and children at a village in northern Iraq watched patiently as men stood in line for the food distributed last month by volunteers from Kentucky. "Handing out the food was a very smooth process," said volunteer Josh Booth.

Scenes throughout Iraq

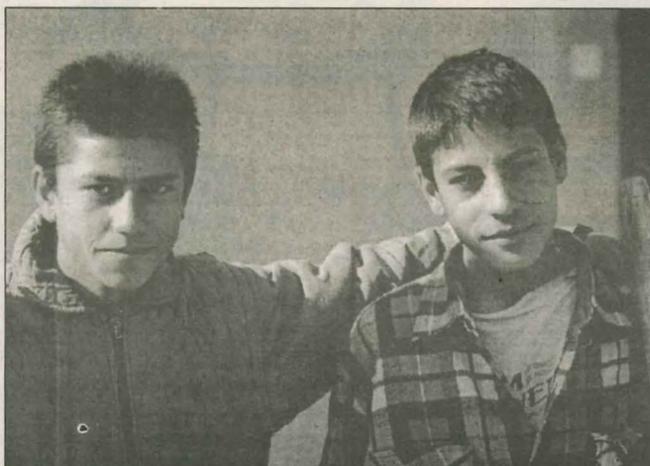
Last week's Western Recorder included a story about 10 Kentucky Baptist volunteers who helped distribute 26,000 pounds of food last month in northern Iraq.

This week, volunteer Josh Booth has shared more of his photos from the two-week trip, focusing on the people the workers met along the way.

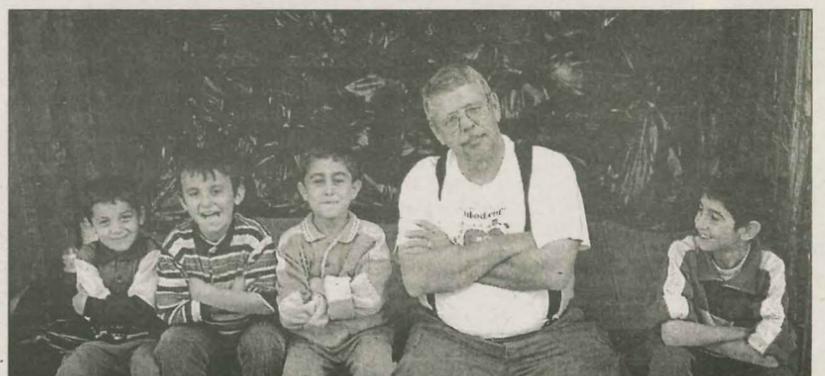
"Hospitality is a part of the Iraqi culture," Booth said. "Even though it seemed like they had nothing to give, they gave anyways. One of the groups of Kurdish people were so thankful for the food we brought, they brought out cold bottles of Pepsi and shared them with us."



FUN & GAMES Kentucky volunteer Robert Patterson hands out candy and toys to Kurdish children.



LOCAL HELP Two teenage boys who helped separate food into bags pose for a photo. "Everybody loved to have their picture taken," Booth said. "Many came right out and asked me, 'Hey mister, picture!'"



TAKING A REST Mike Moynahan of Lexington sits with four Kurdish children in front of the cargo truck filled with bags of food.

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