

WESTERN RECORDER

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

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FOR THE RECORD

Baptists
Iraq attack survivor: "God is hugging me." Page 2.

Editorial
Make certain to encounter the risen Christ. Page 5.



Annie Armstrong
Meet missionary Debbie Wohler. Page 6.

Church signs
What are you telling passersby? Page 7.

Holy Land
Christians expect quiet Easter. Page 10.



Books
Lexington author sees theology in Dr. Seuss. Page 13.



At Easter, cross imagery takes on sharper meaning

Elizabethtown—Like in many churches, the cross is front and center these days at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

Walk into the sanctuary, and you see a 30-foot-tall replica of the cross.

"When you walk in, it just strikes you," said Pastor Billy Compton, who has just finished preaching a four-Sunday sermon series titled "Love on the Cross."

Compton said the recent movie "The Passion of the Christ" has given Christians an even greater appreciation for the cross as the symbol for their faith. "I think Protestants will have a new sense of the significance of the cross in Jesus atoning for our sins."

But during the early years of the Christian Church, the cross was absent.

□ See Cross imagery ... Page 12

Soak a City



More than 500 youth attended the recent "Soak a City" youth evangelism three-day event in Mt. Washington. The program, organized by the Kentucky Baptist Convention's evangelism team included skating and bike stunts by Chaos on Wheels and messages by comic and illusionist Brock Gill. The Mt. Washington event was one of four scheduled throughout the commonwealth this year. Above: Chaos on Wheels member Luke Hastay of Minneapolis rides at the Extreme Park in downtown Louisville. Team members rode at the park to attract youth to the evening events. Right: Brock Gill invites onlookers to tie him up with ropes during an impromptu performance at the Extreme Park. (KBC photos by Brenda Smith) Stories on page 3.



Agencies tackling hard questions about missionaries' safety

By Ken Camp
Texas Baptist Standard

Dallas (ABP)—When missionaries answer what they believe is Christ's call, a growing number also might hear echoes of the martyred German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer who wrote 60 years ago: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."

Risk has been inherent in missions from the first century to the 21st century, observers note. But others—including some mission-sending agencies—are asking hard questions about what it means to count the cost of discipleship.

"The easy spots to do missions have all been done. We're left with working in some hard spots now," said Bob Klamser, senior associate for security with the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies.

The growth of Islam and the rise of militant Muslim extremists par-

ticularly make this a more dangerous world for Christian missionaries, Klamser said.

"Missions personnel are in greater danger today than at any time in recent history," he observed.

Within one week in mid-March, four Southern Baptist humanitarian aid workers were killed and another critically wounded in a drive-by shooting in Iraq, and two Americans serving with the African Inland Mission International were shot to death in Uganda.

In the past 15 months, terrorists have killed eight Southern Baptist International Mission Board workers, and the shooting in Iraq was the deadliest tragedy in the board's history.

"If the number of missionary deaths are increasing, it is because the world is becoming more dangerous, and missionaries are everywhere," IMB Executive Vice

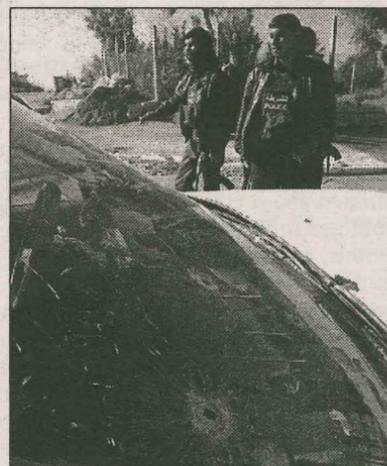
President Clyde Meador said.

Danger is nothing new for missionaries, IMB spokesman Mark Kelly added.

"Missions has always been a dangerous enterprise," he said. "In 1845, it was shipwrecks and malaria. Today, it's bandits and car wrecks. There simply aren't any safe places, even here in the United States. While safety is important, every missionary decides as part of obeying the missions mandate that it is better to serve God where He calls than it is to disobey and remain where it is 'safe.'"

Former IMB President Keith Parks, who went on to become coordinator of Global Missions for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, noted the IMB's current position is consistent with its historic policy.

"Running risks has been a constant part of missionary his-



IRAQ ATTACK The March 15 attack on Southern Baptist workers in Iraq has many mission agencies once again facing issues regarding safety. "No part of the world was ruled out because of danger, difficulties or hardships," former International Mission Board President Keith Parks said. (RNS/Reuters photo)

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, April 7.

□ See Missions agencies ... Page 8

Soak a City mixes missions with evangelism

By David Winfrey
News Director

Mt. Washington—More than 90 people made first-time professions of faith during the three-day "Soak a City" youth evangelism conference last week in Mt. Washington.

The event, March 31-April 2, was the first of four regional events coordinated by the Kentucky Baptist Convention and churches in the host cities.

Each morning, more than 60 students took part in worship at First Baptist Church of Mt. Washington, according to Todd Parish, one of the KBC organizers for Soak a City.

Throughout the day, the students performed mission and service projects and invited people to East Bullitt County High School for "Freedom Experience," the evening program featuring illusionist Brock Gill and BMX stunt team Chaos on Wheels.

"What we've done all day is invite people to the Freedom Experience to hear the gospel," said Tim Cinnamon, youth pastor for Kings Baptist Church in Mt. Washington.

"It's kind of like three events in one," said Parish, who also is the director for Campbellsville University's Kentucky Heartland Outreach ministry. "You've got the youth conference, you've got the youth missions experience and then you've got the crusade at night."

In the last evening show, Brock performed his "water coffin" stunt.

Bound in chains, he submerged himself into a water-filled coffin and proceeded to escape from the locked and chains while an audience of approximately 500 people watched through windows cut in the side of the coffin.

After emerging, Gill compared the coffin on stage to the spiritual coffin inhabited by people who don't know Jesus.

Just as in the Bible Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, God can do the same for those who are spiritually dead, he added.

"There's no way out of the spiritual coffin unless you surrender to Jesus," Gill said.

About 30 people responded to the invitation before Gill performed his last trick, riding throughout the gymnasium on a motorcycle while blindfolded.

Many of the youth who had worked on mission projects during the day became spiritual counselors to those who responded to the evening message.

"It's not kids coming to an evangelism conference," Parish noted. "It's kids doing evangelism at a conference."

Underwater witness

Brock Gill using illusions to illustrate gospel at Kentucky evangelism events

Louisville—With just a lungful of air between himself and death, illusionist Brock Gill manages to wriggle out of several pounds of heavy chains and free himself from a water-filled coffin.

The "water coffin" is just one of many tricks the 29-year-old illusionist and comic has up his sleeves.

Gill, the featured speaker at Kentucky Baptist Convention's "Soak a City" youth evangelism events this year, has mastered the typical and the bizarre.

Making a woman disappear? Check.

Card tricks? Of course.

Riding a motorcycle through an audience with a bag covering his head? No problem.

Gill performs for more than 100,000 people at 200 events each year, ranging from small performances to school assemblies to showcase events for thousands of fans.

He and stunt BMX team Chaos on Wheels performed last week in Mt. Washington for three nights as part of the "Soak a City" regional youth evangelism event. Gill and Chaos will perform at three more regional events later this year in Pikeville, Ashland and Franklin.

Gill's skills are all the more remarkable because of his late start as an illusionist. Gill did not develop an interest in illusions (he'd prefer we not use the term "magic") until he was 22, while on a two-year break from college.

"A friend of mine took me to a magic shop," he recalled.

"Right after I bought the first trick or two, God started dealing with me about what to do with my life. I really felt like He was saying for me to use illusion as a ministry.

"I didn't think it was a good idea," he added. "Now, I think that it's a real creative way to reach people, but then I never saw how you could use it."

Close calls and thrown money

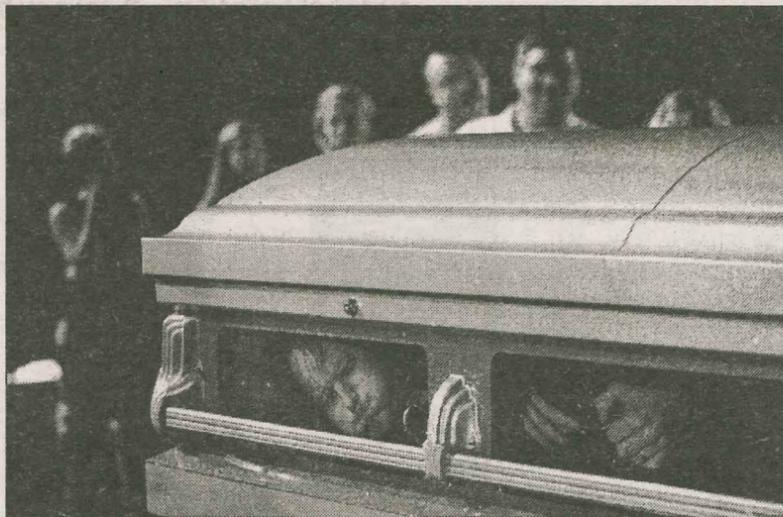
Gill returned to college, and within six months had booked his first show as an illusionist.

"The week before the first show I learned some tricks, put a show together and started doing it and I've been doing it ever since."

Since graduating from East Texas Baptist University in 1999, he's been on the road with his show, which



FREEDOM EXPERIENCE After breaking free from the water coffin, Gill compares a real coffin to a spiritual coffin. (Photo by David Winfrey)



WATER COFFIN Struggling to get free from chains and locks in a water-filled coffin is just one of many stunts Brock Gill performs in the Freedom Experience, an evening that mixes the BMX bike team Chaos on Wheels and Brock's illusions to share the gospel with people who might not attend church. (Photo courtesy of Brock Gill)

has grown to include custom-built illusions.

His water coffin illusion is a relatively new addition. Has he had any close calls?

"Last week," he said last Friday. "The first chain. I had one around this wrist. I couldn't get it off. And I really got in a bind.

"Everything was wrong about it," he explained. "I didn't panic, but I was really worried there for a while."

Working slow and steady he worked free, he said. "I ended up getting cut. I cut my face and stuff trying to get out. It was just rough."

But not all of his illusions are as intense.

Recently the crowd took him a little too seriously.

Tied up with ropes and working to get free, "I make the comment, 'If I can't get out, if I get into a bind, encourage me. Cheer, clap, throw money.' Well they took me literally and started hurling money, coins. It hurt."

In fact audience members threw money at two shows in a row, he added.

"It was kind of funny because it was a lot of money," he said. "We picked up nearly 50 bucks in change. But it hurt."

His wild tricks and fast wit make him popular with youth, but the Louisiana native also uses the illusions as a metaphor for life.

"Sometimes we live our life as illusions. We don't see the reality of it. The reality is sometimes we chase after things that aren't real. We chase after these dreams, money and fame and things that really aren't going to get us anything," he said.

"My life was an illusion the first 15 years of my life," he explained. "I thought I was saved. I thought everything was great but I saw an illusion. It wasn't real. I had religion but no Jesus."

Reaching the unchurched

Randy Record, an organizer for the Soak a City events, said Gill can connect quickly with youth and then share the story of Jesus.

"He has fun with them and he shares the gospel through it," Record said.

Gill said his show and the Chaos

BLUEGRASS BURGEO

Georgetown College recently received a \$1 million gift from alumnus and trustee emeritus Don Cawthorne to endow four scholarships for the school's Center for Commerce, Language and Culture. "Cawthorne Scholars" will receive four-year partial-tuition scholarships to Georgetown.

Baptist Seminary of Kentucky recently received a \$50,000 gift from Calvary Baptist Church in Lexington, designated for the school's Franklin Owen Chair of Pastoral Studies. Owen was pastor of Calvary before serving as executive secretary-treasurer of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Upcoming events

Soak a City youth evangelism events will be held in the following cities later this year:

■ Pikeville, June 10-12.

■ Ashland, Sept. 4-6.

■ Franklin, Oct. 8-10.

For more information, click on www.kybaptist.org/kbc/welcome.nsf/pages/yessoakacity

on Wheels team are ideal for attracting unchurched people in an entertainment-driven society. "We're reaching a lot of people who would never come to church," he said.

"I can get people into a building to hear the message; most churches will never see those people," he added. At most shows, he noted "50-90 percent of the audience is unchurched."

Gill said he hopes Kentucky Baptists will pray for the three remaining KBC regional youth evangelism conferences.

"We need prayer. There's so many physical needs that go into this."

Gill attributes spiritual warfare for the "crazy things" he's accustomed to encountering, from missing equipment to power outages and previously reliable equipment suddenly failing.

"It's all because we're reaching people and the devil doesn't like it," Gill said. "I believe the amount of power that you have is the amount of prayer that you have."

Compiled from reporting by News Director David Winfrey and KBC communications assistant Kasie Secrest

BLIND RIDE Gill ended his show last Friday at the East Bullitt County High School by riding a motorcycle while wearing a blindfold and a bag over his head. (Photo by David Winfrey)



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

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Help protect marriage

Marriage. What part of this concept don't the Democratic Representatives of Kentucky understand? God instituted marriage. His plan was for the man and woman to live as one in a holy union for life, to reproduce, populate the earth and to worship and give honor to Him.

I believe most of our representatives agree with this description. But they have failed to be as aggressive at defining and protecting marriage—and prohibiting civil unions—by blocking and suppressing Senate Bill 245 known as the "Marriage Amendment." Civil unions are a stealth-like provision to afford the same privileges of marriage to same-sex couples or other groups.

Subsequent to the Marriage Amendment tussle, the Democrats claim their version of the bill is stronger. This is political double-speak. The change leaves the acceptance of civil unions wide open.

The original question for voters in November was very simple: "Are you in favor of amending the Kentucky Constitution to provide that only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be a marriage in Kentucky, and that a legal status identical to or similar to marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized?"

It seems the Democrats want to hold on to power and will sacrifice the sacred institution of marriage, suppress the November vote or pass an amendment that may very well be struck down by the courts.

Some of our legislators are not looking out for your family or your moral values. Let's encourage our leadership in Frankfort to stand up for what is right. Give them a call on the message line at (800) 372-7181 and ask them to pass SB 245 in its original form. If each representative received about 1,000 calls before they reconvene on April 12-13, the last chance to act, they might get the message.

*Rick Reeder
Princeton*

Protect minority rights

First, let me make it clear that I am a born again Christian and an ordained deacon in my local church. I believe in Christ crucified, risen and coming again. I reject liberal theology and the social gospel. I believe that the only way a person can be saved is by having a personal life-changing encounter with the living Jesus.

I, along with many other Christians (not just Episcopalians but also Methodists, Presbyterians and Southern Baptists) believe that a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage is a very bad idea. We tried codifying moral laws in a constitutional amendment at the time of prohibition. That turned out to be a disaster we have never lived down.

In a democracy the majority rules, but the majority doesn't get to do whatever it wants. The majority must protect the rights of minorities and those who disagree with them or the democracy ends after the first election.

There are areas in the U.S. that are majority Muslim. Should they be allowed to enact constitutional amendments to prevent women from appearing in public without a head covering? Fortunately we have safeguards in place (court system) to prevent the majority from abusing their power.

I am surprised that some Christians want to discourage same-sex couples from making a commitment to be faithful to one partner. We certainly don't want to encourage them to be promiscuous.

I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. But the Bible is only true if it is interpreted correctly. Clearly, the Bible is opposed to homosexuality, but the Bible contains two kinds of law: God's immutable, unchangeable law and ancient Jewish law. It is only through careful study, much prayer and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit that we can correctly interpret the Bible.

*Steve Falkenberg
Richmond*

CBF, SBC are separate

Regarding recent letters from an alliance in my church (March 9 issue) and John C. Huffman (March 30 issue), I suggest that we consider what Daniel Vestal and others have said regarding separation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship from the Southern Baptist Convention. Following are excerpts from three articles, including sources and dates of publication.

"The chair of the BWA Membership Committee, Ian Hawley, announced at the Friday, July 12, meeting that the committee believes the CBF application can be recommended to the General Council for acceptance in 2003. However, 'we consider it is necessary for the CBF to affirm publicly that they have separated themselves from the structures and organization of the Southern Baptist Convention'" (Baptist World Alliance Information Service, July 24, 2002).

"Daniel Vestal, CBF Coordinator, expressed appreciation to the committee. 'I am pleased and deeply grateful for the integrity of the committee,' he said. 'The CBF will cooperate in all ways to fulfill this request so we can join. We want to participate in the world body'" (BWA Information Service, July 24, 2002).

"The BWA's membership committee said it would recommend membership if the CBF separated from the SBC. Daniel Vestal, the coordinator of the CBF, said it was highly likely that the CBF would declare its separation from the Southern Baptist Convention, although the relationship of the CBF to the SBC still remained to be worked out" (Ecumenical News International, Aug. 9, 2002).

"Daniel Vestal, executive director of the Atlanta-based fellowship, said his organization declared itself a separate group in 2002. Baptist World Alliance officials had said the fellowship must prove it has separated from the Southern Baptist Convention" (Fort Worth News, July 16, 2003).

*Cordell Day
Owensboro*



STEWARDSHIP

Proper insurance can protect your earning power

By Don Spencer

Almost everyone reading this probably has medical insurance, automobile insurance and home owners' insurance. If you have a family, you probably have life insurance. Too often, folks tend to forget to insure one of their most valuable earthly assets—their earning power.

For a young adult, the odds are much higher of having a period of disability before age 65 than of dying before age 65. Death of a family's primary "bread winner" can be tragic. In death, the family can deal with their grief and then, with God's help, move on with their lives. If a primary wage earner should suffer an extended period of disability, the financial impact can be worse than death for the family. The least that person can do is protect (insure) his or her earning power.

We call it disability insurance but it is really income insurance since it insures a certain level of income if one becomes disabled. In shopping for disability insurance, there are several key factors to consider:

- How is disability defined—your own occupation or any occupation?
- Will benefits be paid for partial disability or must it be total?
- Is the benefit affected by Social Security or worker's compensation benefits?
- Is there a waiver of premium when one is disabled?
- Are there any exclusions?
- Is there a difference in determining disability due to illness vs. injury?
- Are there rehabilitation benefits?
- How long is the waiting period before benefits begin?
- Does coverage extend past age 65?
- Is there an adjustment in coverage due to cost of living?
- How does the policy treat two periods of disability for the same illness/injury?
- Are there other enhancements to the policy?
- How do costs compare?
- What is the company's record of service to its customers?

There are numerous variations in plans available. As always, be a smart shopper. Compare several plans before making a decision. Above all, don't delay or overlook having disability insurance. Make sure you have protected your earning power.

Don Spencer is a certified financial planner and directs the Kentucky Baptist Convention's annuity department

Gratitude for ministers of the gospel

"The Passion of the Christ," produced and directed by Mel Gibson, has had a profound impact on millions of people and will continue to do so. After having seen the film recently, I have to count myself among them.

I had read so much about the pros and cons from various perspectives that I thought the personal impact on me when I saw the film would be lessened. Also, I always have felt that the spiritual agony of the Passion far exceeded the physical. After all, none of us can begin to imagine the depths of the agony Jesus experienced in bearing God's judgment for the sins of all humanity.

However, the early scenes in the Garden of Gethsemane captured me when the movie portrayed the agony of Jesus over His imminent death and atonement for our sins. The director effectively depicted Jesus' spiritual agony before the physical pain began. Immediately, I

was thrust into personal introspection in evaluating my relationship to Jesus Christ.

Few of us have the capacity to imagine even the depths of the physical suffering that Jesus experienced. We won't soon forget what we saw depicted in the film, however.

As much as I admire Mel Gibson and what he has done, there is another group that I admire even more—local ministers who proclaim the gospel every Sunday. Every day they are involved with God's people in discovering how to live out the gospel.

Recently, I have had the privilege of observing the commitment of several pastors to local congregations.

David Daugherty, pastor of Clear Fork Baptist Church in Rockfield, has been involved in leading ministries with Warren Baptist Association and has a great vision for Clear Fork. Laypeople are involved, mission trips have been conducted and

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION



Bill Mackey

staff added in order to focus on the coordination of growth ministries.

Mark Payton, pastor of Shively Heights Baptist Church in Louisville, has led the congregation to fulfill its dream for a family ministry center. The sanctuary has been remodeled, along with a new entrance and welcoming center. Worship is dynamic with projection of songs of praise and sermon outlines. Shively Heights is a racially integrated fellowship composed of warm and welcoming people.

Mark and Mary Driskill minister at Emmanuel Fellowship in Jackson, a new congregation. This church is meeting spiritual, physical and emotional needs through personal ministry, Bible study groups and informal but meaningful worship services that are responsive to the needs of the members.

Please join me in expressing gratitude to God for local church ministers who live and share the gospel every day of the year. It will encourage them if you will frequently express your gratitude!

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

Easter offers opportunity to aid children's spiritual growth

Q: As our family prepares to celebrate Easter, how can I help make Easter meaningful to my child?

With a little intentional planning on the part of parents, Easter can be a spiritually significant experience in the life of children.

PARENTING

Holy Week provides an opportunity to talk with children about Jesus' suffering. Younger children will not need to have all the gory details in order to understand that this was a hard week for Jesus. Children will sense the unfairness of it all and probably will ask why so many bad things happened to someone so good.

The simple explanation is that all of us do, say and think things that are not pleasing to God, and that Jesus took the punishment we deserve. Children can understand this truth, and conversations such as these can help build developmentally appropriate awareness of their sin and their need for a Savior. As Holy Week unfolds, children can begin to understand that suffering and celebration go together.

While it might be difficult to lift the celebration of Easter to the excitement level of Christmas in the eyes of a child, parents should seek to make a big deal out of Resurrection Sunday. Create family traditions around the holiday. Attend a sunrise service, plan a family gathering, color and hide eggs while talking about the meaning behind the colors, make pretzels and talk about prayer, make a special gift to missions.

Give your child a special Easter gift. Your local Christian bookstore will have something appropriate. See secular decorations as springboards for conversations about the real meaning of the celebration. Above all, let children see the significance of Easter in your own life.—David Garrard

Q: Our families and morals are declining at an accelerated rate. There is widespread discussion and debate about a constitutional amendment to preserve marriage between a man and a woman. What are the best ways to strengthen marriages?

Hot-button issues tend to distract from the real roots of marital breakdown. In many years of working with people who are in the throes of divorce, I see that the problem of individuals leaving their spouses to enter same-sex relationships, while real, is a very small percentage of what is going on in divorce-land.

MARRIAGE

Much more prevalent are issues such as immature marriage partners, marriage-breaking financial debt, marital infidelity, spousal and child abuse, unkind and destructive communication, lack of commitment and the rat race of materialism. The greater need is to take a more proactive approach in dealing with these ills that plague our families in the real world.

Our challenge in dealing with hot-button issues is to maintain integrity by providing answers that address the fundamental issues of justice to those outside the norm of biblical and societal paradigms. We must not be mean-spirited. What would Jesus do? He always approached those on the "outs" of Jesus with compassion and care.

We should strongly affirm the sanctity of male/female marriage, but always without rhetorical violence or unfairness toward those with whom we differ.

Churches help strengthen marriages when they provide a comprehensive approach, a "net" of marital education for people all across the life cycle. Only a comprehensive view of strengthening marriage by example can turn the tide of family breakdown in society. One becomes an obstacle to the marriage cause when he or she attempts to carry biblical values into the political arena while falling far short of the ideal in one's own life, and while lacking a healthy dose of humility and a sense of one's own brokenness.—James Stillwell

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Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253 or e-mail wesrec@earthlink.net.



Make certain to encounter the risen Christ

It's Easter season once again. After almost 2,000 annual celebrations of Jesus' miraculous resurrection, what new can be said or done?

The answer is as obvious as Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ." His graphic blockbuster is a testimony to what creativity and conviction (along with \$30 million) can accomplish. While the film vividly interprets Christ's suffering and death, many viewers were disappointed that the resurrection scene occupied only a few brief seconds.

But then how much screen time is needed to communicate Christ's eternal triumph over the grave? His victory was complete the instant He conquered both physical and spiritual death.

Even more significant than seeking fresh insights from "The Passion" is returning to the timeless New Testament accounts of that first Easter morning. While many families' Christmas traditions include reading the poetic narrative of Jesus' birth recorded in Luke 2, it's easy to breeze through our festive Easter celebrations without consciously encountering the historic Christ of Scripture.

As you prepare to celebrate Easter, take a few moments to read and ponder the powerful biblical account of Jesus' resurrection:

"The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how His body laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While

they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you, while He was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, to be crucified and on the third day be raised again." Then they remembered His words.

"When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ...

"So when they met together, they asked Him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?'

"He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

"After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.

"They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.'" (Luke 23:55-24:10, Acts 1:6-11)

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

In Madrid, a banner of hope

By Jan Johnsonius

Madrid, Spain (BP)—The sun was already setting as I made my way through the sea of bodies, umbrellas and banners. The light rain that had greeted me as I surfaced from Madrid's underground metro system was growing bolder, as were the thousands upon thousands of Madrillenos who were determinedly marching down Goya Street toward Plaza de Colon, where they would be met by what has now been estimated to be literally millions of their fellow citizens in this capital of their city.

All were marching under one cause, in what Spaniards call a "manifestacion"—to put a voice, feet and physical presence to their protest against terrorism in the wake of the bombings of the Madrid commuter train system the day before. The attack left 202 people dead and more than 1,300 injured.

They were mourning and grieving, but they were also angry. Very angry. It did not matter to them that this march from Goya to Plaza de Colon and then on to the Atocha train station (the site of the major attacks) would take them five hours in the pouring rain. Or that they would be freezing cold, wet and numb from holding their banners of outrage high in the biting wind and driving rain.

They were a people on a mission. But it was a mission with no sign of God in sight. Just banners cursing the terrorists, chants of vulgarities.

Yet it was not a mean crowd by any standard. They were extremely polite and kind to one another, even in the sardine-like conditions. And it wasn't just your usual crowd of rebellious youth who were protesting. There were grandmothers

and grandfathers, small children, babies, people in wheelchairs, on crutches, young and old, rich and poor. They shared a common bond of seeing their Madrid family brutally attacked by terrorists. In spite of the politeness, however, they shared a common rage, and it was evident all around me.

I had met up, miraculously, with the evangelicals of Madrid who sensed God's calling to be there at that place, at that time, to bring a voice of hope in a sea of hopelessness and anger. We had practically reached Plaza de Colon when I heard shouts as several young seminary students from the Baptist seminary in Madrid found us in the burgeoning millions. In their arms they carried a large banner. It took at least four men and women to hold the banner high by its makeshift poles, seeking to raise the message above the teeming and angry throng.

As I walked behind the banner, one hand holding my umbrella and the other supporting the unfurled message, I read it to myself, "Jesu Cristo dijo, Bienaventurados son los que trabajan por la paz." "Jesus Christ said, Blessed are those who work for peace." In that crowd of

rage, anger and swirling epithets, it stood out in stark contrast.

The masses behind us would come up, asking what it said, for they wanted to make sure they did not find themselves behind a banner whose cause they did not support. As we answered, most nodded politely and made their way under the banner to move ahead. Few were willing to walk behind the words.

About three hours into the march, as had been the pattern all evening, a stocky man in his 60s walked around us to see the front of the banner and read it to himself. But as the message registered for this man, a smile grew across his rain-streaked face, and he turned to the young seminarian holding the nearest support pole. "Thank you," he said with deep gratitude. "You are the only one proclaiming the name of Christ!" And with that, he quietly slipped behind the banner.

He was one man in a crowd of millions. And so it is in the angry, hard soil of Madrid, and of Spain. Among the teeming millions who walk the streets of this capital city, few are those willing to proclaim the name of Christ, to lift Him up and stand behind His Word. But in that night of anger, frustration and hatred, a banner for Christ was held high. His name was proclaimed. A voice of hope was crying out in the wilderness.

And I realized even more why God has me where He has me. For such a time as this.

Jan Johnsonius is a missionary in Madrid with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Mountaintop moments

Missionary serves residents & visitors in Tahoe City, Calif.

By Lee Weeks
SBC North American Mission Board

Tahoe City, Calif.—After more than two decades as a missionary in Lake Tahoe—known as “America’s Year-Round Playground”—Debbie Wohler remains as passionate as ever about the mission to which God has called her.

“Often in Scripture, it looks like it’s the small things—you know, the salt, the light, the yeast, the seed in the soil—that add up to big things,” said Wohler, who serves in the scenic resort area that hosts 12 million visitors each year. “I think a lot of times we want to see the big things without having done the small things.”

Wohler is among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. This year’s national goal is \$54 million.

Among the “small things” Wohler values are children. Her schedule includes serving through First Baptist Church of Tahoe City, which offers a before- and after-school program and childcare services several weekday mornings and evenings. She also leads a children’s day camp during the summer, and from Christmas through Easter she serves as a chaplain for six ski resorts.

“I wonder what God is going to do in these kids’ lives, and they’re still babies,” she said. “They’re barely walking, but I begin to dream and hope and pray for these children.”

“Jesus said if you want to come into the Kingdom that you need to come like a child,” she said. “I actually think the best years are ahead because there has been a ton of seed planting.”



MOUNTAINSIDE DEVOTIONAL Southern Baptist missionary Debbie Wohler leads a ski slope chapel service near Lake Tahoe. Wohler, a missionary for more than 20 years, serves as chaplain for six ski resorts in the area. She is among the missionaries whose work is being highlighted for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. The national goal is \$52 million. (NAMB photos By Gibbs Frazier)

Her face lights up as she talks about the children who grew up under her ministry and now are taking the gospel throughout the world in places such as China, Yemen, Amsterdam, Africa, Mexico, Spain and Moldova.

“I want to raise a generation of people who love God and who serve God,” Wohler said. “I want to teach them how to pray, minister and not be afraid to talk to people about Jesus and what’s happened in their heart.”

Summer missions lasts a lifetime

Wohler, who grew up in Fairfield, Ill., first came to Lake Tahoe in 1975 as a summer missionary while in college. After graduating from seminary, she served as a chaplain for two years at the Olympic Training Center in Squaw Valley, Calif., before

returning to Lake Tahoe as a career missionary.

Tourists visit the area each year to play in the region’s 600 inches of snow, or to camp, boat, hike or bike around the lake’s 72 miles of shoreline. Local casinos provide around-the-clock entertainment.

Each year, about 700 families participate in at least one of the children’s ministries offered through First Baptist, which averages 125 people in attendance each Sunday.

“Every church could be doing what we’re doing,” Wohler noted. “We’ve taken care of their kids and loved their families,” she said. “And as a result we’ve seen moms and dads, and boys and girls come to know Jesus. My goal is to strengthen the family so that the family can come to know Christ.”

Despite the allure of this scenic resort town of 2,000 year-round residents, life for many in Tahoe City is far from the idyllic lifestyle some would imagine. Much of her ministry is to local residents.

“It’s very difficult to survive here financially as a working person,” Wohler said. “Sometimes you have to work two and three jobs.”

Many residents are transient, staying for only two or three years because they can’t afford to live in a town where the least expensive house sells for \$300,000 and a gallon of milk costs about \$4, Wohler said.

Plenty of opportunities also exist to minister to tourists.

“What I’ve found is that when we genuinely love people and meet their needs, whether it’s childcare or skiing, or whatever their need is, they’re very open to a relationship with us, and then a relationship with Jesus Christ,” Wohler said.

International tourists also give her and her team of volunteers—along with summer and semester missionaries—an opportunity to make a worldwide impact. “The world comes to Lake Tahoe and that’s why I’m here as a missionary.”

The fruit of her ministry comes through dozens of professions of

faith each year—as well as the lives of volunteers and other ministry workers. “We’ve been able to have a lot of influence on people who then leave and go to other places, so we kind of see ourselves as a training station,” she said.

Creative communication

Ministering in a resort town, Wohler has learned to be resourceful in sharing the gospel in an area where there is always something entertaining to do indoors or outdoors.

“We try to do fun things with the kids because I really believe that Jesus used attraction rather than promotion,” Wohler said. “I believe a lot of times the church gets stuck doing really boring things.”

In the summer, Wohler leads the children in her childcare programs on hikes to see God’s handiwork in waterfalls or beaches while basking in a beautiful climate that boasts 80-degree days with low humidity.

And in the winter, she takes the gospel to the ski slopes.

“Some of the best opportunities come after our outdoor worship service when riding chair lifts and while skiing around before and after the service helping people who are having a hard time skiing,” she said. “Once people are exposed to Christians who are vibrant and passionate and loving and kind, they are open to hearing about the gospel.”

Wohler said she draws strength and inspiration for her work from the people God has called her to serve and from Southern Baptists who support her by praying and giving sacrificially to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

“I have felt supported, and cared for, and encouraged beyond belief,” Wohler said. “And that makes all the difference. These boys and girls, these young people, these adults are hearing about Jesus Christ because of Southern Baptists’ support of the missions offering for North American missions.”

The big picture

Resort ministries provide a Christian witness at a place and time when individuals are free from usual concerns and are often more receptive to the gospel.

The North American Mission Board supports about 30 resort missionaries and their spouses across the United States and Canada, and works closely with hundreds of others involved in local resort missions.

For more on resort missions—including ideas for how your church can get involved—visit www.namb.net/evangelism/specialministries.

CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

Missionary Debbie Wohler talks with a boy participating in the children’s ministry of First Baptist Church of Tahoe City, Calif. “I want to raise a generation of people who love God and who serve God.”



ANNIE
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FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

Making a statement to all

Does your church sign attract or repel neighbors who drive by?

By Mary Bradley
Religion News Service

Lancaster, Pa. (RNS)—When Pete Beckary moved to Lancaster County from upstate New York in 1998, he was amazed that many churches posted inspirational messages on their roadside signs.

But Beckary found it sad that people's hectic lifestyles prevented them from stopping to read the thought-provoking tidbits, so he gathered some of the best into a book titled "Lancaster County Signs of Faith: Church Signs from Central Pennsylvania."

The trim, 160-page pocket-size book has 137 catchy phrases along with a corresponding passage from the Bible for reflection.

The signs range from such thoughts as "The Christian Life Doesn't Get Easier/ It Gets Better" to "God is a Little like Alka Seltzer/ Oh, What a Relief He Is!"

"A lot of these phrases are challenging and enlightening. They are meditations that might help you slow down and think," Beckary, 39, said.

Beckary speculates that these meditation markers are so popular in central Pennsylvania because

of the area's deeply rooted convictions.

"This is a unique little pocket of population. It's very evangelical in a sense. There's respect for the land, an old-fashioned way," said Beckary, who works for a public accounting firm in Lancaster.

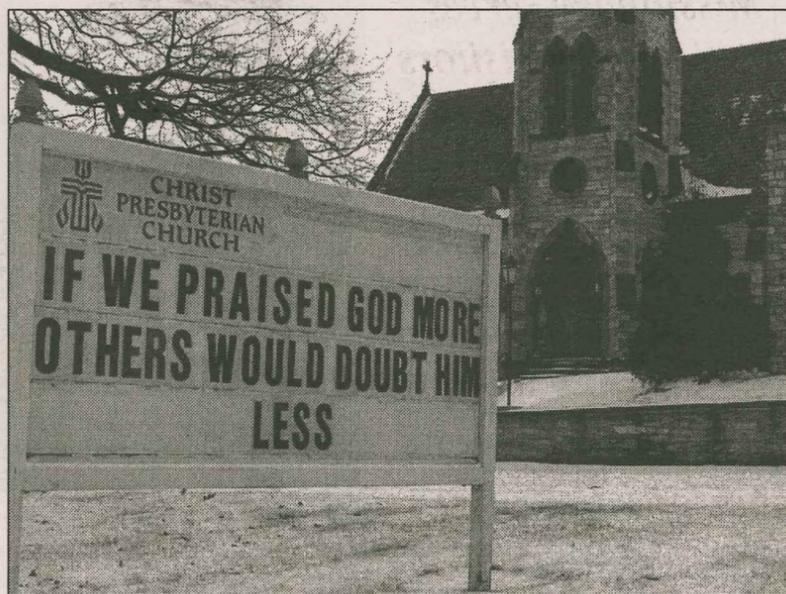
Baughman Memorial United Methodist Church in New Cumberland, has put inspirational messages on its sign for 15 years, said church secretary Nancy Fink.

Karen Nick, Baughman Memorial's director of Christian education, said the message board "spurs conversation. It makes people think a little. It's a great place to put a thought out there."

These signposts of faith have been around for a while, said James DeLong, pastor of St. Matthews Evangelical Lutheran in Lebanon, Pa. He served in Delaware County at the time of the Arab oil embargo in 1973-74 and recalled seeing this message on a church sign: "There's no inflation on the wages of sin."

Making signs more effective

David Claassen, pastor of Mayfair-Plymouth Congregational Church in Toledo, Ohio, has created a checklist



A WORD OF ADVICE The sign at Christ Presbyterian Church in Lebanon, Pa., provides an inspirational message to those driving by. (RNS photo by Chris Knight)

for church leaders to post endearing and effective messages on their signs:

■ **Placement.** Churches should make sure new signs meet the local government's zoning restrictions for sign size and placement. Working within those guides, new signs should be placed where it is most visible from the road but near enough to the church building so people know it goes with the church.

■ **Lighting.** In the winter months, especially, be sure the sign is lit during the busy drive times of dawn and dusk.

■ **Lettering.** Two common mistakes churches make is having lettering that's too small or trying to cram too many words onto the sign.

The entire message should be readable by a driver traveling the average speed of that road's traffic.

Outdoor sign company J.M. Stewart Corp. offers a free sign-planning guide that contains the formula for letter size in relation to the sign's distance from the street and average traffic speed. To order the guide, call (800) 237-3928.

■ **Purpose.** Does the church want the sign to inform members or nonattenders? Because more nonattenders will see the sign, Claassen recommends using the church bulletin, newsletter and in-house bulletin boards to reach members and using the outdoor sign to attract others.

With additional reporting from Net Results magazine (www.netresults.org)

Church sign rules of thumb

Pastor David Claassen offers these tips for church signs:

■ **Advertise only events likely to draw nonattenders.** This might include special Easter or Christmas services or cantatas or maybe a fund-raising event that's open to the public. Sunday school teacher appreciation dinners or regular baptism services probably won't interest the average unchurched neighbor.

■ **Change the message frequently.** Claassen recommends at least once a week. People develop a habit of looking at the sign if they know it regularly has a new message.

■ **Use a different message on each side of the sign.** Most people take the same route to and from a destination. Two different messages doubles the communication.

■ **Thoughtful messages gain interest.** People enjoy an inspirational phrase or statement that makes them think, Claassen noted. Avoid negative messages. Some of the best ideas can come from personal reading. Jot down phrases that can be shortened later and adapted to the sign's limited space.

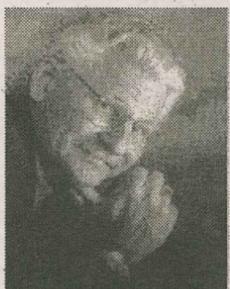
■ **Advertise church events sparingly.** By keeping most messages inspirational, the church activity ads will have more impact. People are more attracted to signs that give something rather than those that ask for a response, Claassen said.

■ **Identify one person who can change the sign on a regular basis.** Changing the sign's message in inclement weather requires dedication. As with any volunteer position, staff should regularly affirm the ministry Claassen said. Make sure positive comments about the sign are communicated to the signkeeper. Reprinted with permission from the August 1997 issue of Net Results magazine (www.netresults.org)

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Over 30,000 people have attended his workshops. He has authored over 40 books on worship and the Church, including *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* and *Renewing Your Worship!* and a complete audio and video series based on his *Renewing Your Worship* workshops. He is also a regular contributor to numerous magazines, journals and newspapers.

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Missions agencies balance staffs' calling & safety

Rankin: Recent attacks haven't deterred other mission workers

By Steve DeVane
North Carolina Biblical Recorder

Cary, N.C. (ABP)—The deaths of four Southern Baptist workers in Iraq March 15 has not deterred others headed to the country, according to the head of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

Jerry Rankin, speaking March 25 during the funeral for slain workers Larry and Jean Elliott of North Carolina, said he has talked with a young couple who will be going to Iraq in a few weeks. The couple told him they wished they could leave that day.

"We want to take up the baton," Rankin said the couple told him. "We want to be worthy of the example they set."

The Elliotts and two other workers were killed in a drive-by shooting. Another was seriously injured. The attack was the most deadly tragedy in 157 years of Southern Baptist missions history and brings to eight the number of IMB missionaries and workers killed by terrorists in the past 14 months.

Rankin said in an interview after the service that the IMB continues to adjust its security measures in wake of the deaths.

After three IMB workers at a Baptist hospital in Yemen were murdered by a terrorist in December 2002, the IMB asked its 5,000 workers to be "more security sensitive," he said. "The fact is there is no place in the world without danger. There's no place you can guarantee safety. The motivation for any missionary is not their own safety."

A colleague who was working with the Elliotts told Rankin that Larry Elliott repeatedly said he loved his work in Iraq. "This is what I've lived my life for," the worker quoted Elliott as saying. Rankin said the Elliotts had decided long ago that the cause of Christ was worth living for and dying for.

Continued from page 1

tory. Both missionaries and mission board staff have had the spirit of taking the gospel to the whole world, no matter where it leads, no matter what it costs," Parks said.

In addition to the "perennial threats" of "hostile governments and antagonistic religions," missionaries always have been subject to health risks and other dangers, he noted.

"No part of the world was ruled out because of danger, difficulties or hardships. Missionaries have served with courage and faith in spite of war, personal threats, stonings, burning of church houses, kidnapping, rape, imprisonment, house arrest and many other forms of danger," he said.

Missions, not martyrdom

The IMB always has encouraged its workers to exercise "sanctified common sense" regarding risks, Parks said.

"Missionaries were urged not to court martyrdom. Each family had total freedom to follow the Lord's leadership in staying or leaving. Each family was to follow its own leading without judging how others were led," he said.

That's consistent with the example of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, said Bill Tinsley, staff leader for WorldconneX, the missions network launched by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"There are times when Christians should seek safety as Paul did when he was lowered over the Damascus wall in a basket. But there are other times when Christians must walk into the center of the most dangerous circumstances, as Paul did when he made his final return to Jerusalem. No one should require another to risk their life. And we should always be prudent about the risk we incur, while being obedient to the Spirit of Christ," Tinsley said.

Parks agreed, adding that he finds it ironic that few people who ask whether missionaries should be allowed to serve in dangerous places ask the same questions about military personnel.

"Why is this true? Is it easier to justify the loss of life to protect our American way of life than in extending the Kingdom of Jesus Christ?" Parks asked. "Many do not recognize we are in a spiritual war. It appears American Christians tend to use our cultural standards of safety, comfort and success rather than Jesus' high-risk, self-denial standards."

The slain and injured IMB workers traveled to Iraq to assess the need for water purification and other humanitarian aid projects, not plant churches or preach.

Even so, they were Americans serving in a Muslim country occupied by United States troops.

Risky places, not people

For the IMB, those are risk-assessment factors that must be weighed in deciding whether board-appointed personnel should serve in an area. But they are not insurmountable hurdles.

"Our approach is to focus on all the people groups of the world, and risk is a characteristic of a place, not



SAYING GOODBYE Family and friends offer final farewells last year during graveside services for Kathleen Gariety in Milwaukee, Wis. The International Mission Board worker and two of her colleagues lost their lives in an attack by a lone Yemeni gunman at Jibla Baptist Hospital on Dec. 30, 2002. (BP file photo)

a people group," Kelly said, noting the board is not likely to change its policy based on the incident in Iraq.

"It's not clear that anything could have been done to prevent this attack," Kelly said. "It's doubtful the attackers even knew they were Christian aid workers."

Two European humanitarian aid workers were killed in a drive-by shooting in another part of Iraq the day after the five Southern Baptists were shot.

"Every effort is made to ensure the safety of Southern Baptist workers, but there are always possibilities that you just have to leave in the hands of a sovereign God," Kelly said.

U.S. military involvement would be reason enough for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to keep its personnel out of a country, said Gary Baldrige, co-coordinator of Global Missions.

"We will not have anyone in places where the United States is oc-

cupying a country, mainly because it is too easy for them to be seen as agents of the U.S. government rather than who we are," Baldrige said.

In some parts of the world, the best way to strengthen a Christian witness is by supporting national groups or personnel from countries who may be more welcome than Americans, he noted. The Fellowship's missions philosophy emphasizes indigenous leadership and values international partnerships, he added.

When to go, when to leave

Mission-sending agencies face at least two hard decisions: whether to send personnel into potentially dangerous locations and when to pull them out of places when safety risks outweigh any potential benefits.

"There is no one best way to make those decisions," Klamser noted. "The world is just too varied."

The IMB has longstanding poli-

cies in place to evaluate risks, Kelly noted.

"A strategy coordinator considering options for getting the gospel to a particular people group would factor safety issues into a decision about sending personnel to various areas where members of that people group live," he said.

"Leadership at both the regional and administrative levels would be involved in a decision to seek personnel for a particular place. A candidate has to express interest in going. And, of course, a trustee committee has to agree that God is indeed at work in sending a worker to the place."

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's administration increasingly is assuming most of the responsibility for deciding when missions personnel should pull out of unstable countries or stay away from dangerous places, Baldrige noted.

The decision to stay in a potentially dangerous situation or leave the country "traditionally has been the individual missionary's call, but increasingly that's become our decision," Baldrige added.

Klamser, who has worked 20 years with a variety of evangelical missions groups, noted: "The first reaction of agencies is to want to centralize those kinds of decisions at headquarters, but there needs to be a partnership between headquarters and the field level."

Sometimes the decision to stay is best made by personnel in the field; at other times, when communication is restricted, the decision should be made elsewhere, he said.

What makes missions dangerous?

From his perspective of 50 years of missions involvement, Parks outlined several factors that make the current situation regarding missionary danger different than the past:

Globalization and the risk of
Continued on page 9

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'Missions has always been a dangerous enterprise'

Continued from page 8

terrorism. "The capability of terrorist groups and individuals to send information, money, personnel and other resources all over the world rapidly and the inability of nations to control this or be held accountable have increased violence and danger for everyone," he said.

As a result "danger is more widespread and less predictable" than in the past, he added.

"After the Bali bombing in Indonesia, some missionaries were urged to go to Singapore. They felt safe and stayed in Indonesia. Soon after, a terrorist attempt in Singapore was thwarted. Where are the safe places? New York? Madrid?" he asked.

Targeting people from the industrialized Western Hemisphere. "It is very possible that some missionaries killed recently were simply identified as Westerners," Parks said, adding that others have been killed by random acts of violence.

Klamser agreed, pointing out sometimes "targeted violence" is aimed against American Christians in particular and sometimes against Westerners in general. "And missionaries are involved in those spots more often."

Religious extremists. "Religions are more militant on a broader scale than they were in previous times," Parks said.

"This kind of violence is not localized nor just aimed at missionar-



HOMETOWN HERO Last year Bill Hyde's hometown—Shellsburg, Iowa,—paid tribute on its welcome sign to the missionary who was killed in a bomb blast in the Philippines. (BP file photo)

ies. At least 160,000 non-American Christians will be martyred this year in more than 50 nations."

Redeployment of career missionaries. Policy changes in some missions agencies, such as the IMB, have led to some long-term missionaries being transferred to new places to meet current agency objectives.

"Previously, most missionaries were in familiar environment, speaking the local language and dependent on local persons for advice and even advocacy. This is not true to the same degree today. Missionaries in new circumstances are more vulnerable," Parks said.

Increased short-term and volunteer involvement. Parks affirmed the role of volunteers and short-term workers in missions, but he added that their presence on the field creates the "potential for increased deaths."

Overseas volunteers through the Kentucky Baptist Convention are encouraged to mix calling with common sense, according to Calvin Wilkins, associate director for the KBC partnership missions department.

"God's going to protect us up to a degree, but He expects us to use our smarts," said Wilkins, who has trav-

eled to Brazil, Russia, Poland and other countries with KBC teams.

KBC volunteer teams generally travel to sites that have been scouted out in advance, he noted.

IMB officials disagreed with the idea that more volunteers equates with greater risk.

"The rising number of volunteers does not seem to be working out to an increased risk. Many volunteers go without connection to or direction from a sending agency. For those who do, the agency seeks to give guidance and training as appropriate," Meador said.

Short-term workers need long-term preparation and orientation, Parks agreed.

"Growing up with a typical American perspective does not equip people to live wisely in other cultures. Spiritual commitment and religious zeal are not enough to avoid serious problems," he said.

The world is a more dangerous place for missionaries than it was a few decades ago, but that doesn't mean Christians should retreat from the calling to missions, Parks said.

Missions strategies should be reviewed constantly and changed when needed, but the biblical mandate for missions remains unchanged, Parks concluded.

"Some things are worth dying for," he said. "And obeying Jesus Christ is at the top of this list."

"Some things are worth dying for, and obeying Jesus Christ is at the top of this list."

Keith Parks, former president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board

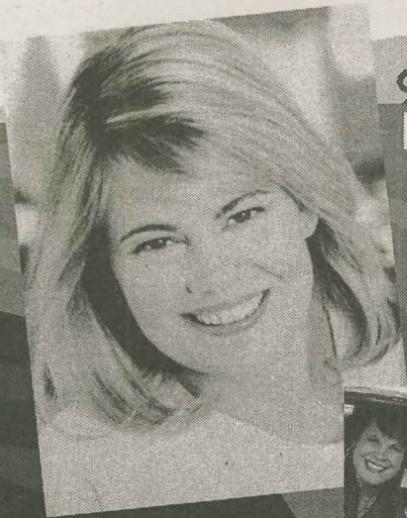
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Holy Land residents expect quiet Easter this year

By Michele Chabin
Religion News Service

Jerusalem (RNS)—Holy Land residents are hoping for a quiet—though not too quiet—Easter week.

"We're praying that there will be many pilgrims but no attacks," says Atalla, the proprietor of Salem Souvenirs, one of dozens of souvenir shops that line the Via Dolorosa, or Way of the Cross, the path where Jesus is believed to have walked from the Court of Judgment to Golgotha, the site of the Crucifixion.

Peering through his shop's narrow doorway at the nearly empty pedestrian square beyond, Atalla, who declined to provide his last name, explains why optimism is in short supply these days, even with Easter right around the corner.

"We live day-to-day. The political

situation being what it is, we don't know what will be in a half-hour. We're not expecting to see so many tourists for Easter," the Christian merchant says with a deep, weary sigh.

Things weren't always this precarious. Millennium excitement capped off by Pope John Paul II's historic visit to the Holy Land in 2000 prompted more than 2 million Christians to visit their faith's birthplace that year.

Uprising's impact

Since the start of the uprising, however, only the adventurous have traveled to the Holy Land, the majority of them on organized pilgrimages.

"Those who come tend not to be the big spenders," laments Ibrahim Zaarour, whose souvenir store adjoins Atalla's, next to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. "Inshalla (God willing), things will improve during Easter."

Privately, tourism professionals express the hope that the runaway success of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" will motivate Christian believers to visit the Holy Land.

Without specifically mentioning the film or the interest it has generated among Christians around the world, Raphael Ben-Hur, deputy general director of Israel's tourism ministry, happily notes that Easter

bookings are up 30 percent over the same period last year.

If the current pace of tourism continues, Ben-Hur says, 2 million tourists will visit Israel by the end of the year, compared to only 1 million in 2003. In 2000, a record 2.6 million visitors were recorded.

Despite the continued violence between Israelis and Palestinians, Ben-Hur predicts that Bethlehem, in the West Bank, will remain open to visitors.

In the past, when fighting raged in the Bethlehem area, the Israeli Army sometimes prevented civilians from passing through the Jerusalem-Bethlehem checkpoint and visiting the Church of the Nativity in Manger Square.

"Currently there is no security reason to prevent tourists from crossing the border," Ben-Hur says. "In fact, we are encouraging groups to go to Bethlehem. But of course the army has the final say," he adds after a pause.

Regardless of the degree of enmity between Israelis and Palestinians, officials from both sides have made a point of cooperating during Easter and Christmas to ensure that all pilgrims who wish to visit the holy sites can cross the checkpoint in a safe and efficient manner.

The Palestinians, even more than the Israelis, need tourists to keep their battered economy afloat. Hundreds of families in the Bethle-

hem region, most of them formerly employed in tourism-related businesses, have emigrated, and the exodus continues. Today, nearly all of Bethlehem's hotels are shuttered, as are a great many of the stores that hugged Manger Square.

Increased security

Those adventurous enough to celebrate a Holy Land Easter should expect to have their purses and other bags frequently searched by security guards. Those wishing to enter the Western Wall Plaza or Temple Mount, both in the Old City, will need to pass through metal detectors.

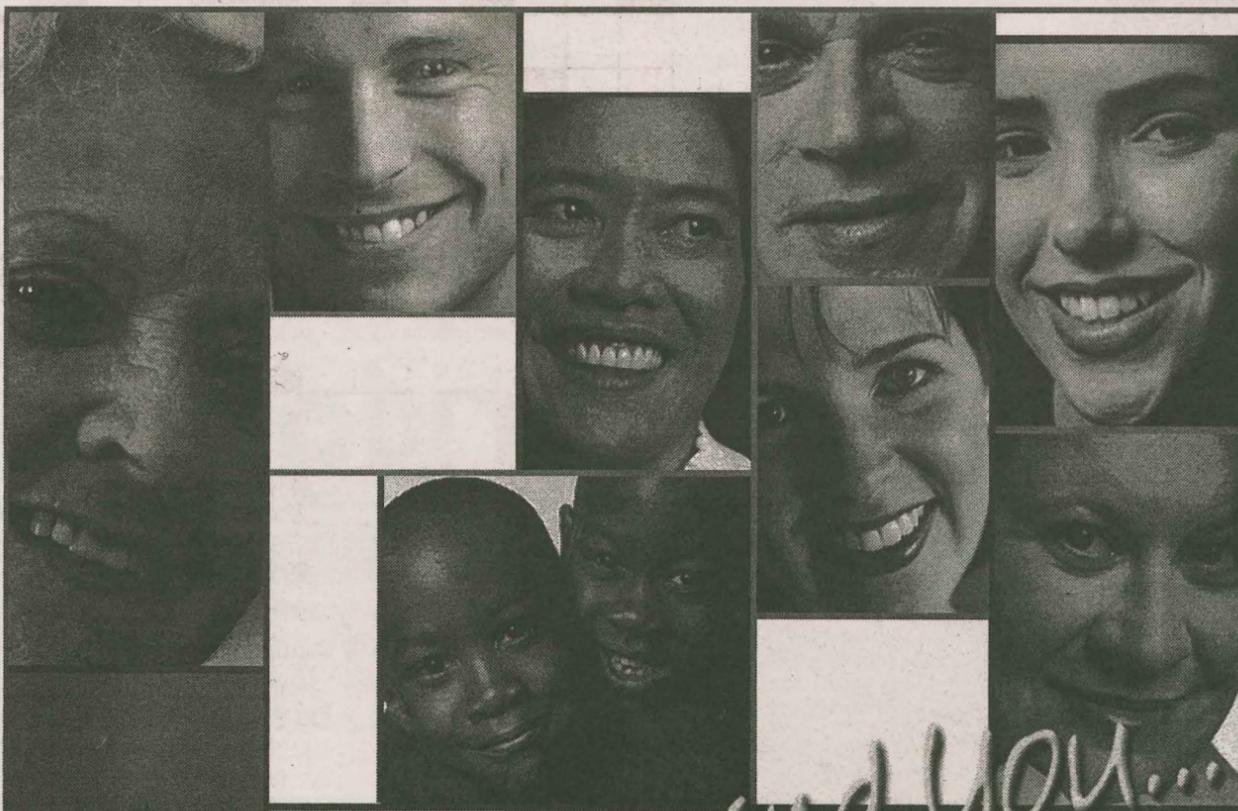
Pilgrims who have made the journey say the joy of being where Jesus lived outweighs the small inconveniences.

"It's so emotionally powerful to stand right where He stood over 2,000 years ago," says Christine Prince, an evangelical Christian shopping for scarves in a little store on Christian Quarter Road, a few hundred feet from the Via Dolorosa.

Prince, a Livermore, Colo., native on her first-ever visit to the Holy Land, admits that friends and family back home worried about her safety.

"People say, 'Aren't you afraid?' But honestly, it's as safe, safer, than walking down any street in the United States."

HOLY LAND TRADITION
Pilgrims carry a wooden cross down the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem's Old City on Good Friday. The Via Dolorosa, or Way of the Cross, is the path that many people believe Jesus walked from the Court of Judgment to Golgotha, the site of the Crucifixion. (RNS photo by Miriam Sushman)



Cooperative Program Sunday is April 18 - but you can emphasize CP at anytime!

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1. CP SPEAKERS BUREAU

Speakers can customize a CP-oriented message for a worship service, a workshop, a missions fair or a finance committee presentation.

2. KBC WEB SITE

www.kybaptist.org/cpmissions

- Free downloads of videos and other materials
- Free CP material resources
- Explanation of the Cooperative Program
- Cooperative Program history
- Examples of how CP works
- CP budget goals

3. CP PROFILE

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CP Missions promotion relates to the Resources/Stewardship major impact factor of the Kentucky Baptists Connect emphasis.

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To schedule a CP speaker or receive a free CP giving profile for your church, or to learn more about CP Missions, contact:

Phone: 888.254.5713 / 502.254.4731

E-mail: cpmissions@kybaptist.org

Web Site: www.kybaptist.org/cpmissions



Cross imagery takes on sharper meaning at Easter



CRUCIFIX Historically, Protestants have used the empty cross as their image, while Catholics have preferred the Crucifix, which features Jesus still on the cross.

Continued from page 1

Images of the tortuous device might have been too painful for many believers to behold, so the first Christians used the fish—not the cross—to symbolize their new faith.

About 2,000 years after the implement was used to crucify Jesus, the sacred symbol evokes strong feelings among believers. While today everything from sweatshirts to stained glass windows is emblazoned with the emblem, many Christians care deeply about how the cross is rendered.

Albert Kennington of Trinity Episcopal Church in Mobile, Ala., keeps both the empty cross, common in Protestant circles, and the crucifix, traditional among Roman Catholics, in his office.

Cross or crucifix?

If a person focused only on the empty cross, Kennington contends, it's possible "to forget the cost of the sacrifice of love so great, love so amazing, so divine. I think it can get antiseptic, clean, painless, sentimental. Those are the dangers there.

"I think the potential is there if it is only the crucifix that is looked upon that it is possible to forget that the story did not end there."

Arlyn Sturtz, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Mobile, Ala., said an empty cross is placed on the altar there at all times except Lent. During the liturgical season of prayer and meditation, he replaces it with a crucifix.

"I just like the contrast to emphasize again the sacrifice that He

made, the sorrow, the repentance that we experience in the Lenten season," Sturtz said. "It was our sin that caused His death."

History of the cross as illustration

According to The Catholic Encyclopedia, the "undisguised cross" first appears in the early years of the fifth century. About 200 years passed before a realistic image of Jesus was depicted on the cross; several hundred more years went by before Jesus was portrayed as a suffering Savior.

Reticence to illustrating Jesus on the cross was twofold, according to some accounts. First, some members in the early church considered such images idolatrous. Second, many believers wished to place the emphasis on Jesus' Resurrection rather than His Crucifixion.

While the crucifix eventually was embraced by Catholics, who believe that images of God offer opportunities for education and inspiration, most Protestants have favored the empty cross.

"Part of the Protestant Reformation was a suspicion, really, of icons and any pictorial depictions because of the fear of idolatry," said Cynthia Crysdale, associate professor and associate dean of the School of Theology and Religious Studies at Catholic University of America in Washington.

"Just in general there's a kind of Protestant ... suspicion of it that it degenerates into superstition and idolatry of some kind."

Severns' Valley's Compton said Protestants simply take the message

of the cross one step further. "We don't leave Jesus on the cross," he said.

"For my faith perspective, that lacks one more step," he said. "Good Friday led to resurrection Sunday."

But Christopher Viscardi, chairman of the theology department at Spring Hill College in Mobile (a Catholic school), offers a different perspective. He said Jesus' suffering and death wasn't simply an historical incident, but an ongoing event.

Guidelines for art and architecture issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops echo such theology, stating that the crucifix "draws us into the mystery of suffering and makes tangible our belief that our suffering when united with the Passion and death of Christ leads to redemption."

Viscardi said the process of

redemption is not like building a new library. "It is something that transcends human history and time," he said. "The Kingdom of Christ, while it has been completed in God's time, is still being worked out in human time."

Protestant perspective

But Cecil Taylor, dean of the School of Religion at the University of Mobile, noted the Protestant perspective of the empty cross and redemption.

"If you still have a figure on the cross, it's pointing in the wrong direction," Taylor said. But an empty cross, "reminds us that He is no longer on the cross. The work that He did was finished and complete on the cross."

Compiled from reporting by Kirsten Campbell for Religion News Service and New Director David Winfrey

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'A sixth grader who absolutely hated math'

Graduating student went on to take the hardest courses to prepare for life

The Oneida ministry is unique in many ways. We provide a ministry here in our village and county, but our sphere of influence goes much farther. We serve students from across Kentucky, throughout the U.S. and around the world. This week, I want to tell you about a young man who was raised just a few counties from our campus. "Ricky" (not his real name) came to Oneida in the sixth grade. His older brother was here, and Ricky thought it would be nice to go to school with him.

There were no home issues; Ricky got along well with his parents. There were no problems at school. His grades were good. Some people believe that the only students who enroll in our school are "problem children." When I ask people to define "problem child," I receive a variety of answers. It is true that some of our students are challenging. However, it is also true that most students enroll for reasons other than negative behavior. Ricky simply wanted to go to school with his brother, who has since graduated.

Each spring I ask the senior class to write essays for me titled, "My Oneida Experience." It gives them an opportunity to reflect on their years at Oneida Baptist Institute. I would like to share some of Ricky's essay with you: "I've been here so long I don't remember much about my 'time' before Oneida. I barely remember when I first got here.

"I don't think I would be the same person if I had stayed in my old school. ... Since I have been in high school, I have been in most of the hon-

ors and AP (advanced placement) classes the school offers. I probably would not have been in these classes if they were bigger. (Our average class size is 11.) The 'small school' environment helps me learn much better.

"I never would have thought, as a sixth grader who absolutely hated math, that I would have taken the highest math classes Oneida has to offer. AP calculus will scare most people away and traumatize some who will run away screaming. I have learned that math is a necessity in life and I may as well take the best (Oneida) has to offer.

"The single most important thing I have gained from being at Oneida is responsibility. I had to ... be on time every day, know what I had to do and when it was due. I even took it upon myself to begin the resident adviser program. ... I try to help anyone ... if they are doing badly in school or if they are homesick. Also, I decided to earn the Commonwealth Diploma, which requires me to take additional and more challenging classes. I have enjoyed most of my seven years of being at OBI and I'm glad to have come here. ... I am ready to face my future knowing that I have had a good education and have learned many life lessons that will help make me a success."

Ricky has been a wonderful student. His attitude is always good, he gets along with his peers and he is never a problem in any way. Your Father's Day offering gifts provide financial assistance to Ricky and many others just like him!

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Mission to Belarus

Staff & students lead classes, clinics in Grodno

After years in student ministry and work at the Baptist Sunday School Board (now Lifeway Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention), Bob Hartman now leads an international outreach focused on developing churches in Belarus, an Eastern European country that formerly was part of the Soviet Union. A team of six from Clear Creek worked with Bob in Belarus, March 7-13.

The history of Belarus is marked by persecution and domination by other countries. The collapse of the Soviet Union has stirred many residents to seek new direction and hope. In a population of 10 million, it is estimated evangelicals number 50,000, with only 15,000 Baptists.

"The people are very open to the gospel. Jesus can provide the hope they seek," student James Wilcox said. Old Testament professor John Ditty and students Kelly Wilder, Kenneth Rutherford and Wilcox worked at the Baptist church in Grodno. About 300 people attend the church, located six miles from the Polish border.

"Grodno is a four-hour drive from the capital of Minsk," James

said. "Four hours dodging potholes big enough to swallow an SUV. We stayed in the church and used three rooms for teaching." Two church members translated for classes in computer and English as a second language. "Several church members attended, and the pastor was excited to see many new faces," James said. Street witnessing

is illegal. "The two classes in apologetics taught by Bob Hartman made it easier to respond to questions," James observed. The team also ministered in two orphanages. Campus nurse Bonnie Young and volunteer physician Joann Corum conducted medical clinics in schools and hospitals in Minsk.

Baptist churches in Belarus face a growing crisis. The government has implemented restrictive measures requiring church registration. Without registration, a building permit will not be issued. The Baptists have decided not to register. James Wilcox hopes to return to Belarus in March 2005, this time with his wife MaryAnna. "The fields there are very ripe," he said. "We pray the door will remain open."

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Green eggs and God?

Lexington pastor's book shows how noted author teaches biblical lessons

By Bob Smietana
Religion News Service

Lexington (RNS)—When he was a student at Duke Divinity School, James Kemp studied the great theologians of the Christian faith—the Apostle Paul, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther and John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church to which Kemp belongs.

But his favorite theologian was the one he first read at the public library in Lexington—Dr. Seuss.

His favorite theological work? "Horton Hatches the Egg."

"It is the first book I remember reading or having read to me," Kemp recalls in his new book, "The Gospel According to Dr. Seuss."

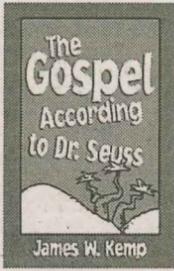
Since its release in February, "The Gospel According to Dr. Seuss" has already sold more than 14,000 copies, and has headed into a second printing. It got a boost in early March, when Barnes and Noble bookstores featured it as part of a national celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2.

During his 15 years as a Methodist minister, Kemp often used Dr. Seuss's stories as illustrations in his sermons. For example, Horton the elephant,

who keeps his promise to sit on a bird's egg



James Kemp



till it hatches—despite ridicule from those around him—is a model of faithfulness of Christians, Kemp states. "In the face of challenges, persecution and ridicule," he writes, "Horton remains faithful 'one hundred percent.'"

Each chapter focuses on a single Dr. Seuss book, and was condensed from Kemp's old sermons.

Seuss' lessons

"The Cat in the Hat Comes Back" becomes a story about the "restoring power of Jesus Christ." "Yertle the Turtle" a lesson about greed. "Green Eggs and Ham" a parable about embracing change and "The Sneetches," one about overcoming discrimination.

Two chapters focus on "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas," one about materialism and another about loving difficult people. Kemp sees a parallel between the Grinch and the biblical story of Jesus and Zacchaeus. Jesus treated Zacchaeus, a despised tax collector, with

respect, Kemp states, and completely changes his life.

"If we are to follow

Jesus," he writes, "we too must learn to recognize and love people, who, like the Grinch are miserable and difficult because they are in so much pain."

In an e-mail interview from his home in Lexington, Kemp said he likes Dr. Seuss as theologian "because Jesus told us to come as a child, and Dr. Seuss makes us look at things through the eyes of a child."

Kemp, 48, suffers from severe multiple sclerosis, a condition that forced him to retire from the ministry in 1996. "The Gospel According to Dr. Seuss," is the third book he's written since then.

The first, "Who Says I'm Dead?" deals with his struggles with MS, which has made him a quadriplegic. The title comes from an incident in 2000, where Kemp's bank accounts were frozen after the federal government mistakenly decided he had died. A 2002 book focused on ideas for children's sermons.

Writing with help

For a time, Kemp wrote using a computer with speech recognition software. His speech has declined so that the computer no longer can recognize him, so he dictates his writing to his mother, who acts as his secretary. His wife, Barbara, interprets for Kemp during interviews.

He said he wrote the book to show that people with great limitations can still be productive, as long as they have the right support system. He said he relies on his faith, family and church friends to help him keep going, despite his circumstances.

Hope is another theme Kemp finds in Dr. Seuss. One of his favorite characters is the Cat in the Hat, "because through him we see that something good can come out of bad circumstances, we are never hopeless."

That's the overall message of the book, he adds.

"There is always hope," Kemp said. "There is always hope in the unlimited richness of God. Most of our problems are trivial."

Pop culture gospel

Since the release of "The Gospel according to Peanuts" by Robert Short in 1975, a number of similar books have combined spirituality with pop culture. There's been "Gospels According to" the Simpsons, Tony Soprano, J.R.R. Tolkien, Harry Potter, and even "The Gospel Reloaded" that tied into "The Matrix" movie phenomenon. And then there's the 2003 spoof, "The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal."

Linda Peavy, associate publisher for Judson Press, Kemp's publisher, said the book connects with readers because so many of them grew up reading Dr. Seuss.

Kemp's book will appeal to people because it "is a joy to read," she said.

"But also because it contains insights that will change their lives for the better," she added. "Hopefully, they will see Dr. Seuss' stories in a whole new light."

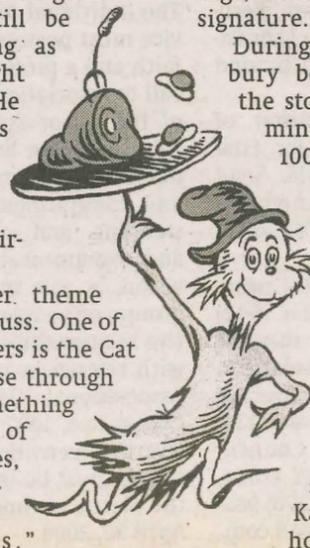
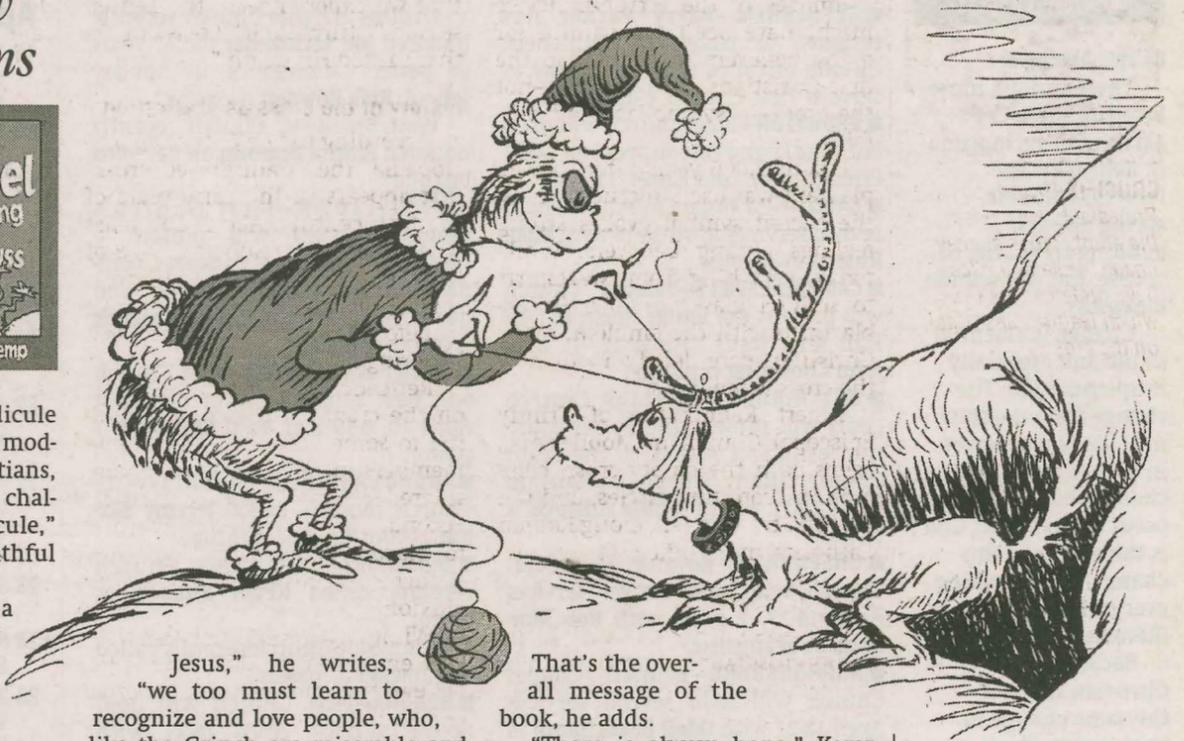
Kemp said he enjoys the attention the book's success has brought him—"I've always liked attention," he admitted, and that it allows him to continue his ministry.

He's even done a few book signings, with his wife stamping his signature.

During a signing at a Cokesbury bookstore in Lexington, the store sold 75 copies in 15 minutes and had to order 100 additional copies. But the signings will be limited, Mrs. Kemp said.

The physical toll is just too much for her husband's limited stamina.

Still, he hasn't given up on being a famous author. "One of my lifetime goals was to be on the best-sellers list," he told the Kansas City Star, "and I hope I can do that."



HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

By Skip Alexander

There is not a more beautiful patch of earth than springtime in Kentucky: the forsythia blooms, spring flowers, budding trees and, of course, our not-so-blue bluegrass.

Change is essential in life and especially in spiritual life. The change from death to new life one observes in nature mirrors the change that needs to occur in every life. God is the source of this change, "I am making everything new." (Revelation 21:5 NIV).

Becoming a Christian is about the same change in one's heart. There is the death and new birth that occurs. This week you might get the opportunity to talk with someone about this new birth; or perhaps you need to experience this new birth. You can by remembering and responding to these three simple steps:

■ **Begin by recognizing the change that needs to occur in your life because you have sinned.** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

■ **Believe that God has provided new life for you in Jesus Christ.** "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

■ **Receive this change in your life today, knowing that when you "confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"** (Romans 10:9).

As you take in all the beautiful changes occurring in nature this spring, remember the need for spiritual change in your life.

Skip Alexander, pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church, is second vice president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BETHLEHEM**—Barry Parker has resigned as pastor of Bethlehem Church effective the end of May to serve at First Church, Clio, Mich.

■ **BRONSTON**—First Church will present "The Living Last Supper" on Good Friday, 7 p.m., and Easter, 11 a.m.

■ **CADIZ**—New Hope Church will hold revival services April 16-18 with Mike Rust as evangelist.

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Saloma Church will present the Easter musical, "All Hail King Jesus," April 11, 11 a.m. John Chowning is pastor.

■ **DRY RIDGE**—Dry Ridge Church choir will present the Easter musical "Jesus, Son of God" at the Grant County High School auditorium April 10-11, 6 p.m. Willie Ailstock is pastor.

■ **GREENVILLE**—Roland Memorial Church will hold revival services April 18-23, 7 p.m., with Bob Morrison as evangelist.

■ **HARRODSBURG**—Bruners Chapel Church will hold revival services April 18-21 with Odell Beauchamp as evangelist. Greg Humpert is pastor.

■ **LEXINGTON**—Cane Run Church recently called Adam Willis as youth pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Melbourne Heights Church recently honored John and Wanda Eaton on their 50th anniversary.

Ormsby Heights Church recently honored Joe Sacksteder for 27 years of perfect attendance in Sunday school. Rick Bowden is pastor.

West Broadway Church recently honored Elmira Brannin on her 90th birthday.

■ **MIDDLETOWN**—First Church's sanctuary choir will present a "Tenebrae" service of darkness, commemorating Jesus' suffering and death, April 9, 8 p.m. Leslie Hancock is music minister.

■ **MOUNT WASHINGTON**—First Church will host a men's prayer breakfast April 10, 8-10 a.m. Paul Chitwood is pastor.

■ **NICHOLASVILLE**—Nicholasville Church recently called Jeremy Sexton as youth/music minister.

■ **SOMERSET**—Buck Creek Church recently called Kevin Bullock as pastor.

Sunnyside Church recently called Ted Towner as pastor.

■ **SONORA**—First Church will hold revival service, April 18-21 with Ron Davis as evangelist. James Hill is pastor.

■ **TAYLORSVILLE**—Little Mount Church recently called youth minister John Mark Tittsworth as pastor.

■ **WADDY**—Pigeon Fork Church recently called interim pastor Ray Cummins as pastor.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April

15-16 Quarterly prayer meeting for spiritual awakening, Gasper River Association, Morgantown.

16-18 All-State Children's Choir—East, Cedarmore.

16-17 EXALT state Acteens conference, Campbellsville Baptist Church.

18 Cooperative Program Sunday.

18-24 MissionsFEST, Prestonsburg.

21 Kentucky Baptist men's chorale concert, Clifton Baptist Church, Louisville.

22 Kentucky Baptist men's chorale concert, Southern Baptist Seminary chapel, Louisville.

22 Kentucky Baptist men's chorale, women's chorale and orchestra combined concert, St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville.

23 State Children's Bible Drill, First Baptist Church, Russell.

23 State Children's Bible Drill, Calvary Baptist Church, Lexington.

23-25 All-State Children's Choir—West, Jonathan Creek.

23 Kentucky Baptist men's chorale concert, First Baptist Church, Barbourville.

24 Regional Keyboard Festival, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

24 State Children's Bible Drill, St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville.

24 Kentucky Baptist men's chorale concert, First Baptist Church, Frankfort.

25 Kentucky Baptist men's chorale concert, First Baptist Church, Shelbyville.

26-27 Church Secretaries Conference, KBC building, Louisville.

27 Senior Adult Celebration, Third Baptist Church, Owensboro.

29 Senior Adult Celebration, Edgewood Baptist Church, Nicholasville.

30 State Children's Bible Drill, Lone Oak First Baptist Church, Paducah.

30 State Children's Bible Drill, Beacon Hill Baptist Church, Somerset.

May

1-2 Baptist Men on Mission equestrian trail ride, Mammoth Cave National Park.

1 State Children's Bible Drill, Greenwood Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

1 State Children's Bible Drill, First Baptist Church, Madisonville.

6 Start-A-Class Tour, Crittenden Baptist Church.

11 Senior Adult Celebration, Scottsville Baptist Church.

For more information, call (888) 266-6477 or visit www.kybaptist.org

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FOR SALE: Large, three-manual Allen church organ (1990). Draw knobs and multiple commercial speaker cabinets; like-new condition. Replacement cost today: \$90,000 and up; will sell for \$35,000; buyer to remove. Call (606) 324-1632.

FOR SALE: Religious books (thousands). Send e-mail for list: dudley@dam.net. Evangelist Bill Dudley, 1116 Lacy Drive, Lebanon, MO 65536. (417) 532-2665.

SEEKING: Full-time minister with youth and young adults. Trinity Baptist is affiliated with CBF and SBC; our multi-racial spiritual family includes exceptionals and foster families. See www.yourtrinity.com for job description. Submit resumes by April 15 to 1675 Strader Drive, Lexington, KY 40505. Fax: (859) 254-6795.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor. Resumes accepted until April 18. Lancaster Baptist Church, 201 Richmond Street, Lancaster, KY 40444.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of youth and young adults for First Baptist Church, Taylorsville. Send resumes to: First Baptist Church, PO Box 446, Taylorsville, KY 40071, Attn: Charlotte Nedros.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister (paid position; grades 6-12) for Mexico Baptist Church in rural western Kentucky. Also seeking a part-time music minister. Average Sunday school attendance: 135. Send resume to MBC Youth Council, 175 Mexico Road, Marion, KY 42064, Attn: Brent Highfil, or call (270) 965-2149. turnerchandler@hotmail.com.

SEEKING: Associate pastor of music and worship; fast-growing area; prefer seminary grad in music. Send resumes and/or recommendations to: Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church, 2230 Lake Saint Louis Blvd., Lake Saint Louis, MO 63367; or e-mail to easterwood@infiniplex.com.

SEEKING: Forest Park Baptist Church is in search of a full-time minister of music/youth; seminary education and/or prior experience preferred. Interested applicants may send a resume to: Minister of Music/Youth Search, Forest Park Baptist Church, 520 Old Morgantown Road, Bowling Green, KY 42101, Attn: David Morrow; or e-mail: ForPrkBapt@aol.com.

SEEKING: Associational missionary for South Roanoke Baptist Association. We are a diverse group of 58 churches and 6 missions spread over eight counties seeking a visionary leader who will lead us to discover and fulfill the potential of God's ministry for our association. The individual for this place of service must possess a strong personal faith and a profound sense of God's call to associational missions. Some of the major strengths desired of this candidate are: exercises faith; demonstrates a mission motivation and commitment; has the understanding and ability to develop and communicate an associational vision; is able to relate to varying groups of people; and builds effective relationships. Send all resumes with references to: Rev. Steve Davis, Associational Missionary Search Committee, 1007 W. Arlington Boulevard, Greenville, NC 27834. All resumes must be in the possession of the search committee no later than April 30, 2004.

SEEKING: Part-time (1/2 to 3/4 time) youth minister for Immanuel Baptist, Henderson, Ky. Send resume to: Personnel Committee, 540 2nd St., Henderson, KY 42420.

SEEKING: Part-time director of children's ministry. Responsible for all aspects of providing ministry to children, elementary grades 1-5. Bachelor's degree in education preferred and/or combination of college degree and experience of three or more years leading children's programs. Ability to build and maintain effective working relationships and rapport with children, parents and staff is required. Compensation includes salary, vacation and pro-rated benefits. Position might be upgraded to full-time in the future. Send cover letter, resume, salary history and available starting date to: Richard Landers, FBC, PO Box 697, Richmond, KY 40476-0697; or via e-mail to: richard.landlers@firstbaptistnet.com.

SEEKING: Administrative assistant, Kentucky Baptist Foundation, Louisville: to provide administrative support for the president and trust counsel in these areas: will/trust administration, correspondence, trust/endowment management agreements, board/committee preparation/logistics, financial/general records maintenance and client/donor service. High school graduate; CPS desired; 5-8 years experience; skilled in Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint; thorough knowledge of general office practice/procedures; acceptable business English and math skills. For information/application, contact Laurie Valentine at (502) 244-6466 or laurie.valentine@kybaptist.org. Application period ends April 19.

SEEKING: Established, growing church seeks minister of worship for blended services as well as all-out contemporary worship. 20 hrs/week. Brad Chase, Crestwood Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky. (502) 695-2088.

SEEKING: Full-time music/education minister. Submit resume to: Elkton Baptist Church, PO Box 547, Elkton, KY 42220, or e-mail elktonbaptist@kih.net.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister for Union City Baptist Church. Send resume to Search Committee, 2502 Doylesville Road, Richmond, KY 40475.

SEEKING: Clear Creek Baptist Bible College announces a position on the faculty for an instructor in Christian Ministry. This individual must have an earned doctorate in Christian Education or have finished course work toward the terminal degree and complete the degree within one year. This position requires five years full-time ministry experience in a Southern Baptist-related ministry. Publishing record and/or college level teaching experience would be helpful. Experience and educational background will determine rank and salary. The New Hampshire Confession of Faith is the faith statement followed by the college. Send a resume, including a statement of faith and educational philosophy, to the Academic Dean, Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, 300 Clear Creek Road, Pineville, KY 40977. E-mail may be sent to: mhester@cbbcc.edu. Clear Creek Baptist Bible College is an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention with a mission to provide education to adults called into Christian service.

International mail-order brides

Are Christian soul-mate searchers looking for love in wrong places?

By Jennifer Flowers
Religion News Service

Los Angeles (RNS)—After countless flower bouquets, disastrous dates and perused personal ads, Jeffrey Hollis gave up on love in Los Angeles.

"I would ask a girl out and we would go out a few times, but she'd basically want to have sex on the second date," he said. "I mean, come on. Have some values. I was just looking for a nice Christian girl."

When it seemed hopeless that the Southern Baptist might find a woman who shares his religious and moral perspective, he discovered Hawaii-based Sunshine International, a business that provides images and addresses of women in Asia. After nearly 100 letters arrived in his mailbox, Hollis met Emelda, a Christian Filipino who became his wife.

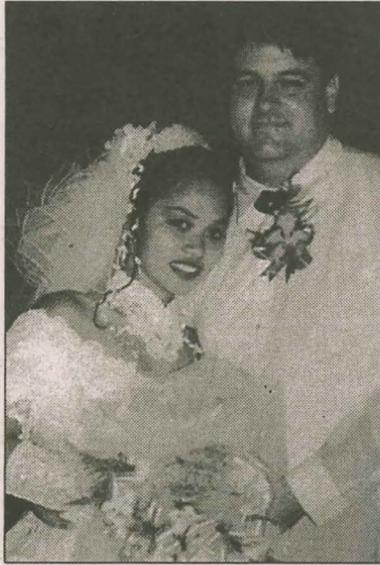
Many American men like Hollis say they use international marriage brokers to look for a wife who has the traditional values they feel are lacking in women at home. If things go as they did last year, the international matchmaking industry will make millions of dollars pairing thousands of American men with women from overseas.

Many people use the well-known term "mail-order bride" to describe these women, but marriage brokers call it pejorative, and women's immigration rights advocates have begun to shy away from that language.

"The most important thing to Asian ladies is to have a happy family," said Annie Tse, manager at Sunshine International, who said most of her male clients seek women in the Philippines, one of the few predominantly Christian nations in Asia. "Generally speaking, I would say the Asian ladies do have the traditional values. ... It's not like they'll become career-minded or materialistic."

5,000 brides each year

According to a 1999 Immigration and Naturalization Service



HAPPY MATCH When Jeffrey Hollis despaired of finding love in Los Angeles with a woman who shared his values, the Southern Baptist turned to a matchmaking company that helps Western men connect with Asian women. He met and married Emelda from the Philippines.

estimate, international matchmaking businesses pair 4,000 to 6,000 married couples every year in the United States. Immigrant women's rights groups say that number is too conservative, but governments and companies don't keep track of couples that met through a marriage broker.

More than 5,000 brides leave the Philippines each year for the United States, according to the U.S.-Philippine women's rights group GABRIELA Network.

Tse said many of her clients, like Hollis, put religion high on their list of compatibility factors. Sunshine International's site has a search engine that lets clients browse women by their religion, among other categories like height, education and nationality. Another company, Heart of Asia, runs a site that displays thousands of Christian women in Asian countries.

Chance for Love!

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Have you ever been to Russia? Let us help you to have an impression of what you will find in a Russian wife. The Russian woman likes to look pretty. She likes to dress well when she walks in the city street to her destination. She wears a dress and pumps, or a suit with a blouse and jewelry. She is concerned about her weight, her hair, how she presents herself. She thinks gym clothes are for the gym.

In Russia, she doesn't have a choice to stay home to take care of her husband, house, and children - for her, it is a dream. There, she willingly works to help her family to survive. Education is important, a good occupation is an asset. Many women know 2 or more languages and hold degrees from universities. Each Russian woman I know is willing to learn - to learn English, to learn about cultures, various cuisines, philosophies, politics, to learn in all aspects.

The Russian woman's attitude about herself is feminine. She expects to be treated as a lady, she is the weaker gender and knows it. The Russian woman has not been exposed to the world of rampant feminism that asserts its rights in America.



While clients of international matchmaking organizations believe they'll find women who share their values, many women's rights advocates say the industry is a recipe for disaster because it markets stereotyped images of the bride and the groom and creates a relationship built on false expectations.

"(Filipina ladies) are not the cosmopolitan women that threaten you with divorce each and every time they do not get their own way," says the Web site for Filipina Lady, another online matchmaker.

"These agencies train the men what to tell the women," said Ninotchka Rosca, founding chair of GABRIELA. "They understand that these women are looking for economic opportunities to help their families, so if the guy who is writing to a woman in the Philippines is a truck driver, the agency will tell him not to say that. Say you're in the trucking business to give the impression that he owns a fleet of trucks or something."

Lies and marriage

Sue, a Filipina who asked that her name be changed to protect her identity, joined Asian Experience at 30. She said most women she knew in the Philippines who signed up for international pen-pal services were looking for American husbands who'd give them economic stability, but she came from a middle-class family and had no financial problems. Instead, she was hoping to meet someone with whom she could start fresh and lead a stable family life.

"In the Philippines there are a lot of people to date, but at my age most people were married or they have live-ins or children," she said. "Sometimes I got jealous when I saw these people going to church with kids and a husband."

Sue accepted the proposal of a man who seemed perfect—he told her he had never been married, was childless and was buying them a new house. They married in the Philippines in 1987.

But when she arrived in Colorado two years later to join her husband, she spent her first morning trying to

get over the shock when a woman appeared at the door saying she was engaged to Sue's husband.

Things only got worse. Her husband started drinking before going to work. She found seven unsigned marriage contracts for other international women, including a Russian and a Korean.

Sue decided to end the marriage when, during a fight one night, her husband tried to strangle her.

"It's fun to have pen friends," she said. "I didn't realize I would end up marrying, and I didn't know until I came here that they call it 'mail-order bride.'"

Potential legislation

One of the biggest concerns among women's rights groups is that the international matchmaking industry is almost completely unregulated.

Last year, the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act was introduced in Congress. It would require businesses to disclose information on male clients, especially if they have criminal records that include domestic violence allegations.

Washington state Democrats Sen. Maria Cantwell and Rep. Rick Larsen introduced the bill after the high-profile case of Anastasia King in their state. King, a woman from Kyrgyzstan who met her husband through an international marriage broker, was murdered by him and an accomplice.

A 1998 report to the INS said more than 200 marriage broker organizations exist in the United States, and the number has grown since then with online sites.

"The fact of international marriages in which faith and religion or culture is a factor has been occurring for years," said Leslye Orloff, director of the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund's immigrant women program.

"International matchmaking organizations is the new factor, and I think the new danger here," Orloff added. "These are money-making organizations whose primary focus is to charge what they can to set up these relationships."

"WEAKER GENDER" A Web site service offering Russian and Ukrainian brides, Chance for Love (www.chanceforlove.com) asserts on its Web site that the feminine Russian woman "is the weaker gender and knows it" and that she "has not been exposed to the world of rampant feminism that asserts its rights in America." (RNS photos)

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WEB MATCHMAKER The Web site for online matchmaker Filipina Lady (www.filipinalady.com), which offers "attentive, young" Filipina brides, says women from the Philippines "are not the cosmopolitan women that threaten you with divorce each and every time they do not get their own way." Some Western men are looking toward Asia and beyond for wives with traditional values.

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