

Kentucky Baptists nominated for SBC positions

Indianapolis—

Several Kentucky Baptists are among people appointed or nominated to serve on Southern Baptist Convention-related boards and committees.

Nominees include:

Kevin Hamm, pastor of Valley View Baptist Church in Louisville, SBC Executive Committee.

Norman Coe, associate pastor of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, International Mission Board.

James Hannah of Westport, second term on Southern Baptist Theological Seminary board.

Claude Royston, pastor of Christian education at St. Stephen Baptist Church in Louisville, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary board.

Corey Abney, pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Waddy, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary board.

Kentuckians appointed by SBC President Jack Graham to serve on the SBC Committee on Committees are:

Adam Dooley, pastor of Red House Baptist Church in Richmond.

Wesley Noss, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Versailles.

Offering prompts IMB to fund 200 more missionaries

By Mark Kelly
SBC International Mission Board

Nashville (BP)—An “extremely promising” outlook for the 2003 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering convinced trustees of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board to send an additional 200 workers overseas this year.

During their April 26-28 meeting in Nashville, board members also elected a new vice president for overseas operations, voted to consolidate eight of the board’s regions of work into four and appointed 76 long-term missionaries for overseas service.

The consolidation proposals were approved on divided votes and prompted a call for a third-party mediator to help resolve differences. Board chairman Doug Sager responded by urging board members to “be people of integrity” and to avoid operating with “deceptions and untruths and accusations.”

David Steverson, IMB vice president for finance, told the board that projections for the 2003 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions look “extremely promising.”

With one month to go before the books close, the offering stands at almost \$127 million—about \$19 million ahead of the previous year’s pace. Steverson said he believes the final total May 31 will exceed the base goal of \$133 million.

Trustees adopted a recommendation from their finance committee to add \$13 million to the 2004 budget, including an additional \$5 million to send 200 long- and short-term missionaries who would not otherwise have been appointed because of restrictions imposed in 2003.

Another \$4 million was allocated for capital expenditures such as missionary housing and vehicles. The remaining \$4 million was added to missionary support, a move made necessary because missionary attrition has been lower than expected this past year. It appears, Steverson said, that missionaries who were planning to retire, resign or complete terms decided to stay when



TESTIMONY Troy and Tracey Lewis of Dallas recount their call to missions during an International Mission Board appointment service in Nashville. They were among 76 missionaries appointed April 27. (IMB photo by Bill Bangham)

they heard last year that new missionaries were being delayed due to lack of finances.

The IMB was forced to limit appointments and cut stateside staff in June 2003 because income from churches was not keeping pace with growth in the number of missionary candidates. Receipts for the offering appear to be running more than 18 percent ahead of the same period last year.

“Eternal perspective”

IMB trustees appointed 76 long-term overseas workers in an April 27 service at Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville.

Rankin challenged the new missionaries to imitate Abraham, who followed God even though he didn’t know where he was going; to be like Moses, who rejected the comforts and riches of Egypt to identify with his people; and to emulate the heroes of faith who refused to shun suffering and death because they valued God’s purpose even more than their own well-being.

Trustees elected Gordon Fort, regional leader for IMB work in the southern Africa region, to fill the position of vice president for overseas operations. He succeeds Avery Willis

who retired in February.

After a unanimous vote, Fort asked board members to pray for him and his wife, Leigh Ann, “as we wrap up 20 years of ministry on the field and come back to live and work in the United States.”

Reconfiguring regions

During their April 27 plenary session, trustees adopted several recommendations intended to streamline and sharpen the focus of the IMB’s overseas structure:

■ Electing Tom Williams, regional leader for the Western Pacific region, as the new regional leader for the Western Europe region. Williams succeeds Eddie Cox, who resigned to join the board’s stateside staff as director of the International Prayer Strategies office.

■ Voting to consolidate the board’s Western Pacific and Southeast Asia and Oceania regions into one Pacific Rim region. They also voted to elect Don Dent, the current leader in Southeast Asia and Oceania, to lead the combined region.

■ Voting to consolidate the board’s Eastern Africa and Southern Africa regions into one Eastern and Southern Africa region. They also voted to elect Jon Sapp, the current

leader in Eastern Africa, to lead the combined region.

Both consolidation ballots were taken on voice votes with a handful expressing opposition.

Trustee R.G. Wilson of Clinton, Okla., then brought a motion from the floor to consolidate four other regions into two, unifying the Middle America and Caribbean Basin regions, merging the Western South America and Eastern South America regions and transferring Venezuela and Colombia from the Middle America and Caribbean region to the new South America region.

Proposals to consolidate those regions had been discussed the previous day in three regional committees. The committees reported they had not yet come to a consensus about the proposals.

The trustees voted for the additional consolidations on a show of hands by a margin of 43 to 29. Rankin said the question of who will lead the combined regions will be addressed during the board’s May meeting in Atlanta.

Reflecting concern about the close votes on the consolidation proposals, John Adams, chairman of the trustee orientation committee, brought a motion to secure a third-party mediator who could assist trustees in identifying and resolving the differences among them.

After a 40-minute discussion, Sager asked the orientation committee to withdraw its motion and allow a prayer committee he was appointing to address the concern.

Sager urged board members to hold a high standard for their conduct as trustees.

“We have to be people of integrity. We must not speak ill of our brother outside of his presence. We must not circulate things that are divisive. We must practice biblical integrity in going to individuals, and if we can operate on that basis, I really don’t think we need a mediator,” Sager said. “But if we operate with deceptions and untruths and accusations, we will not be able to accomplish the work of God the way He wants us to.”



BAPTIST DIGEST

Widow honors McDonnall’s life. Six weeks after the attack that killed David McDonnall and three other Southern Baptist International Mission Board aid workers in Iraq, Carrie McDonnall stood with the aid of a walker before a gathering of colleagues, family and friends at a memorial service for her husband. “We have come to celebrate my husband’s life,” she told those gathered in the chapel at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Seminary President Paige Patterson awarded a master of arts in missiology degree posthumously to David McDonnall.

Telg, IMB worker in Africa, dies. Keith Alton Telg, a Southern Baptist International Mission Board representative in northern Africa, died May 3 in London. He was hospitalized April 23 with a severe headache. The cause of death is

expected to be determined by an autopsy. Telg, 32, and his wife, Michelle, have two sons, Kevin, 6, and Kyle, 3. A native of Texas, Telg and his wife were appointed by the IMB in 1998. They previously served two years through the IMB’s International Service Corps. Telg was a graduate of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Indy pastor nominated for office. Mark Stephen Hearn, pastor of Northside Baptist Church in Indianapolis, will be nominated as Southern Baptist Convention second vice president during the SBC annual meeting June 15-16 in Indianapolis. He will be nominated by Charles Sullivan, retired executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana. John Hays of Jersey Baptist Church near Columbus, Ohio, previously was an-

nounced as a candidate for second vice president. Other announced nominees include Bobby Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Fla., for president; and Gerald Davidson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Arnold, Mo., for first vice president.

Bivocational ministers meet. The Southern Baptist Bivocational Ministers Association gathered April 22-24 in Nashville, celebrating the theme, “Beyond the Walls and Into the Marketplace.” James Draper, president of LifeWay Christian Resources, spoke about work that really lasts, noting that bivocational ministers share a perspective unlike those who work only in the Kingdom world. During the meeting, LifeWay introduced a free e-newsletter for bivocational ministers called “Today’s Bivocational Pastor” available at www.lifeway.com/newsletters.

Sivells elected KBC strategist for W. Kentucky

Bagdad—The Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board elected Ronnie Sivells last week as KBC church development strategist for Western Kentucky.

Sivells currently is pastor Southside Baptist Church in Princeton. He previously was pastor of Cantoz Baptist Church and East Cadiz Baptist Church and also served several years as a vocational evangelist.

Sivells attended the University of Kentucky School of Banking and Mid-Continent College in Mayfield. He is a former KBC second vice president.

The board's administrative committee also approved three other positions:

Patrick Whyte was named campus minister at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. Whyte, who served the past year as interim campus minister, is a graduate of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

Rod Ellis was named part-time contemporary praise and worship consultant in the KBC's worship/music department. Ellis, pastor of worship and arts at Memorial Baptist Church in Frankfort, is a graduate of Georgetown College and Southern Seminary.

Monica Merrifield was named part-time international campus minister at the University of Louisville. Merrifield is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and is a student at Southern Seminary.

Board paves way to sell KBC properties

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

Bagdad—A pair of votes last week by the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board helped set the stage for the potential sale of two Kentucky Baptist-related properties.

Board members approved a plan by the KBC Properties Study Committee to put the Baptist Building facilities in Middletown on the market for up to two years.

They also voted to release the KBC's right of first refusal and related restrictions on more than 780 acres of land at Cedarmore Baptist Conference Center. The partial release, which is limited to property never used by Cedarmore for facilities or programs, would give Kentucky Baptist Assemblies' board of directors greater flexibility in selling the undeveloped tracts of land.

The KBC property in Middletown includes the Baptist Building built in 1956, a major addition built in 1978 and a separate annex built in 1996 that houses the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, Western Recorder and Woman's Missionary Union offices.

KBC officials previously considered selling the property in 2001 and constructing a new facility, but those plans failed to materialize when a developer's effort to lease the current facility was unsuccessful.

KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey explained at the time that a primary motivation for relocating was the high cost of needed renovations in the 1956 facility.

Jerry Dooley, chairman of the 2001 building renovation workgroup, said repair or replacement of heating, air conditioning, plumbing and other infrastructure needs could reach "\$2 million to \$3 million over the next decade."

Based on those concerns, as well as recent KBC staff restructuring, the Mission Board's Mission Study Committee proposed last year that a Properties Study Committee be established to review the work of previous building study committee, study the current condition and occupancy needs of the KBC facilities and make recommendations to the Mission Board.

The 15-member study committee, chaired by Mike Melloan of Owensboro, proposed last week that the KBC facilities be listed with a commercial realtor for up to two years. The committee also will work with the realtor to consider either property on which to build or existing facilities to purchase.

The board approved the proposal, with the understanding that if the property sells, the committee would develop a plan for relocation subject to the board's final approval.

Seeking Cedarmore solution

The proposal to release the KBC's right of first refusal on unused property at Cedarmore was recommended by the Mission Board's Agencies and Institutions Committee at the request of the Kentucky Baptist Assemblies board. The proposal also lifts the restriction that the property be used only for religious purposes.

David Melber, president of the assemblies, noted that "we've been challenged for a number of years about how financially Cedarmore can work."

Explaining that Cedarmore has suffered an average net loss of \$469,000 each of the past six years, he said approximately one-third of the assemblies' income during that time has been used to cover that loss.

Citing "a backlog of maintenance," Melber said camp officials

"have to address a significant amount of that over the next couple of years."

Such action "is something we've got to do quickly so we won't lose this property or the property at Jonathan Creek," he added. "Losing the camps to retain property we do not use would not be good stewardship."

Similar concerns have been expressed over the past decade. The Mission Board voted in 1994 to establish a committee "to develop a plan to terminate the ownership and management responsibility of Cedarmore."

In 1995, KBC messengers voted instead to establish a separate entity to own and manage the camps, leading to the establishment of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies.

Facing declining camp attendance and growing maintenance and financial needs, the assemblies' proposal calls for selling up to 783 acres of Cedarmore's 1,344-acre property. That would leave 561 acres that includes all of the camp's developed areas and a surrounding buffer zone.

Melber said projected income from the property sale could range from \$750,000 to more than \$3 million, depending on the price per acre. Income would be used to repay debt on recent renovations, recreation upgrades, construction of worship and conference facilities, program and staff support and other needs.

"All the money would be used directly to preserve Cedarmore and Cedarmore alone," Melber told board members. "We are a ministry and a business. It is not an either/or; it is a both/and."

Board members approved the proposal on a voice vote with slight opposition.

Romanian work spurs Louisa church to broaden missions vision

Continued from page 1

about church planting and evangelism his son was doing after visiting Romania on a college mission trip.

Chuck later married a woman from Romania, and in 1999 the elder Price joined his son's effort.

The discussion led to a trip to Romania by First Baptist's associate pastor, David Maynard; his wife, Rody; and member Paul Leibe. The trio gave the younger Price and his wife a break from their duties and helped start a church in a Gypsy village.

Since then, 40 members of First Baptist have taken trips overseas—most lasting two weeks—to start other churches and assist the Prices. They also purchased two apartments for visiting mission teams.

On Feb. 15, the church commissioned the Maynards for full-time service in Romania, two days before they left for Europe.

Maynard will serve as an administrator of Faith Bible College in Iasi. His wife will teach English classes and start Woman's Missionary Union groups in neighboring villages.

"We'll be equipping pastors to go to villages and start new churches," said Maynard, who also recent-



HOSPITALITY Members of First Baptist Church of Louisa and Romanians gather for dinner. The church is helping start a Bible college in the Eastern European country.

ly worked as a church planter for Greenup Baptist Association. "We're a cross-cultural ministry aimed at equipping (Romanians) to share the gospel in their language."

For the Maynards, the endeavor is a step of faith. They went with no salary guarantee, having sold their home and using the proceeds to pay off the loan and buy an apartment in Romania.

They aren't sure how much it will take to establish the college, although Maynard estimates it will cost between \$65,000 and \$75,000.

The funds will come from First Baptist and several other churches in Kentucky and Florida.

Few congregations have planted churches at home and then in the uttermost parts of the world, Maynard said.

"The church is just excited about doing missions," he said. "They give more than anybody I've seen, with-out reservation. It's been pretty remarkable."

Leibe, who has made two trips overseas and plans to return later this year, said he has seen the Holy

Spirit act in dramatic ways in Romania.

Two years ago, as Maynard preached and others shared testimonies, Leibe said the Romanians and Americans present understood each other's messages despite the language barrier.

"On the way back to the church I said (to the other team members), 'Did you experience what I did?'" he recalled. "They all felt the power of the Holy Spirit like never before."

Leibe, who rededicated his life to Christ in 1999, said First Baptist had always supported missions financially and with prayer, but today more members are getting personally involved.

"I felt as God formed my heart He changed First Baptist's heart," said Leibe, who is a member of the church's missions committee. "It seems the more we support Romania, the more we get better off in other areas."

Frazier said he hopes that support continues to increase, noting that it will take a step of faith to establish a high-quality school in Romania. "That's why we call it Faith Bible College," he said. "It doesn't always match up with logic. It's the form God takes to cause us to go beyond ourselves."

Georgetown honors Henry with annual ministry award

Georgetown—Georgetown College recently presented its annual Ken Chafin Award for lifetime achievement in ministry to Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla.

Henry, a former Southern Baptist Convention president, is a 1959 alumnus of Georgetown. He received the award during the school's 2004 Pastors' Conference April 19-21.

Georgetown President William Crouch affirmed Henry "for the faithfulness you have exhibited in your work and for the inspiration you have been to thousands of people."

Crouch also announced that Georgetown is inaugurating a \$7,000 scholarship named in Henry's honor.

Henry's daughter, Kate Campbell, a composer and performer, presented a concert of gospel and country music after the award.

Henry, 66, has been pastor of the 12,000-member church in Orlando for 26 years.

During the pastors' conference, Henry spoke to ministers on the theme, "Finishing Strong." He noted that he has put in place a "transition process" that will lead to the selection of his successor at his longtime congregation.

Other speakers at this year's conference included Joel Gregory of Fort Worth, Texas, and Robert Parham of Nashville.

Andy Lester of Brite Divinity School in Texas and Hadden Robinson of Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Boston will be the featured speakers for next year's conference April 4-6.

Georgetown's annual Chafin Award is named for Ken Chafin, a longtime Baptist author, preacher and professor. Chafin was a Georgetown trustee who directed the Pastors' Conference until his death in 2001.

WESTERN RECORDER

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

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Should we aid & abet people in need?

By Judy Woodward Bates

Dora, Ala. (BP)—In the Book of Acts we read about the first deacons, who were appointed to ensure equal treatment for all the widows being cared for by the church.

Certainly the church of today, as did the early church, has a responsibility to help those of their flock who are unable to care for themselves. And just as certainly, we are to reach beyond the fold of fellow believers. Whichever the case, however—flock member or not—the primary responsible party is the immediate family.

Jesus denounced as hypocrites the Jews who were neglecting their responsibility to their parents (see Matthew 15:4-9 and Mark 7:6-13). Rather than use their money and possessions to help their mothers and fathers, some Jews declared their property "corban," that is, dedicated to the Lord.

This meant that at some undesignated point, these things were supposed to be given to the temple treasury in fulfillment of this vow. Ignoring God's command to honor their parents, they used a manmade loophole to shirk their God-ordered duties.

So the church picked up where the family help left off or was simply unavailable. But like sharks to blood, the church's willingness to aid others also attracted freeloaders. The Apostle Paul reminded the church at Thessalonica that he had established this rule from the get-go: "If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Meaning what? Able-bodied people were not to be allowed to cut into the provisions set aside for the unable.

All that having been said, if Jesus decried people ignoring their financial and filial obligations, and if Paul forbade wasting church resources on the unwilling but able, then what should today's churches' stand be concerning open-handed benevolence?

Should we offer food, clothing and even shelter to the needy—the operative word there being "needy"? Absolutely. We are, in the name of Jesus, to compassionately reach out to people in trouble. But we are to do so responsibly and intelligently.

How? Consider a few suggestions:

FIRST PERSON

A church that loves

The commentary in the May 4 issue of the Western Recorder titled "Structure your church to grow, not plateau" was very interesting, but I feel that it may place undue pressure on pastors of small churches.

As the pastor of a small, rural church in the Elizabethtown area, I have surrendered my dream of having a large church. My congregation hasn't really grown the way I would have thought it should when I came here three years ago. I have wanted to see fruit from my ministry, and that desire (while good) has caused stress in my life and caused

me to strive to succeed in the eyes of others.

But now I want only one thing, and that is a church that loves. I want to shepherd people who care for each other and are a loving family of believers reaching out to others in our community.

It doesn't matter how large or how small we are. When I stand before the Lord, I want to know that I taught my people to love as Jesus loves. As a result of this, I have come into God's rest with myself as a pastor doing the Lord's work in His church.

Don Daniel
Elizabethtown

Evaluate each case individually. Check out the information provided.

Keep records. Know who is being helped and how often. Coordinate data with other area churches. Don't unknowingly abet any professional leeches.

Never give cash. Provide food or other needed items; make payments directly to utility services or landlords.

Give more than material or emotional support. Always share the good news of Jesus.

Every person should be treated with respect. Never allow a bad experience with one person to color how the next person who asks for assistance is treated.

"For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in. ... 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to eat? When did we see You a stranger and take You in?' ... 'And the King will answer them, 'Whatever you did for one of ... these, ... you did for Me'" (Matthew 25:35, 37-38, 40 HCSB).

Judy Woodward Bates is the author of "The Gospel Truth about Money Management"

Inspirational music

Congratulations to the Kentucky Baptist Women's Chorale, Kentucky Baptist Men's Chorale and Kentucky Baptist Wind Orchestra for another fine year of making music.

Kudos to Carl Stam, David Dale, Sue Ellen Ballard, Nevalyn Moore, Ken Goforth, Roxanne Nanne and most of all to Jim Cordell for fine leadership and conducting.

The men have just completed a mini-tour of the state and the women will be on tour in mid-July. Their performances are both professional and inspiring. Don't miss hearing these groups in the future.

William E. Ellis
Richmond

Significant KBC Mission Board actions

The Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board made a number of significant decisions during its May 3-4 meeting at Cedarmore Camp and Conference Center. Let me share with you some of the highlights.

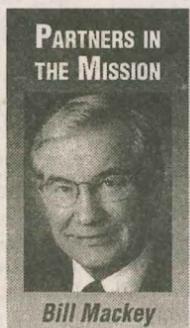
First and foremost, the board approved the budget for the 2004-05 fiscal year. Messengers to the annual meeting approve the budget goal and the percentage distribution between Kentucky missions causes and world missions through the Southern Baptist Convention. The Mission Board then approved the detailed budget for distribution of funds to KBC institutions and agencies and the ministries of the Mission Board.

The Mission Board also approved the business and financial plan for all expenditures. The business and finance committee, a standing committee of the Mission Board, provides careful oversight for implementation of the budget, financial plan and the annual audit of all Mission Board ministries.

Other significant action came to the board through the administrative committee, another standing committee that gives attention to concerns not assigned to other committees and also serves as the personnel committee. This committee provides direction for the staff performance process and reviews my work as executive director.

The administrative committee recommended Ronnie Sivells, pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Princeton, to serve as the church development strategist for Western Kentucky. God has blessed Ronnie to experience church growth while serving as a pastor in Cadiz and Princeton.

The administrative committee also approved Patrick Whyte to be the campus minister at Kentucky State University in Frankfort, and Monica Merrifield as a part-time worker with international students in Louisville. These are gifted servants who deserve the prayers and support of all Kentucky Baptists.



Bill Mackey

STEWARDSHIP

Follow these 10 basic rules to help manage debt

By Don Spencer

For most people, debt is a necessity. However, if not handled properly, debt can become a major problem.



A common problem today is approaching a debt purely

from the standpoint of the monthly payment. For example, a couple decides to purchase an item on credit because it will cost only \$20 per month. Next month it's another item for only \$10 more per month. The financing cost adds significantly to the cost of the item. Little by little, this mushrooms and sets up a person for problems.

You must control debt. If debt begins to control you, then you are setting yourself up for potential disaster. Consider 10 simple rules for using debt wisely and safely:

1. Save for major purchases. Don't finance unless absolutely necessary. Set a goal of paying cash for vacations, cars, etc.

2. Use credit cards as a convenience only. Do not finance long-term debt with credit cards. Pay the credit card bill in full each month. Credit cards are easy to get and misuse. They generally have a very high interest rate. A continuing monthly balance is a bad use of credit.

3. Keep all debt payments under one-third of your gross income. Above that level, you're exceeding safe limits

4. Lower the real cost of debt. Try to make all interest tax-deductible. A home equity loan has this advantage.

5. Maintain adequate assets that easily can be turned into cash. Debt has never hurt anyone. A lack of sufficient cash flow to manage the debt has.

6. Have adequate life and disability income insurance. Ignoring this exposes a person to significant financial risk.

7. Make debt predictable. Be cautious using adjustable-rate financing and loans with balloon payments.

8. Accelerating debt payments might not always be best. One should maintain adequate savings for emergency needs, fund tax-deferred retirement plans adequately and pay off non-tax-deductible debt before accelerating payments on other debts.

9. Refinance only if it will save money. Consolidation loans do not always save money.

10. Protect your credit. Don't abuse credit. Make payments on time. If you have problems meeting payments, talk to the creditors and re-negotiate.

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

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

How can teens use summer break to expand friendships?

Q: The recent final episode of "Friends" has left my teenage daughter lamenting the fact that she has no close friends. Going into the summer, this is especially troubling. How can I help her?

Summer brings both good and bad news for those wrestling with how to make, deepen and sustain meaningful friendships.

The bad news is that most teens lose the structured activities (school, sports, band, clubs) that serve as the laboratories in which they can build and experiment with relationships. If not for attentive parents, some teens will move into the air-conditioned isolation of cyberspace, video games, television and movies as a way of avoiding their insecurities and perceived inadequacy in making friends.

The good news is that summer represents a clean slate in which students can experiment in different settings with concerns related to identity and friendships. Many teens return to school in the fall with increased confidence because of a summer that was filled with non-traditional activities and opportunities.

Here are several tips to help your daughter this summer:

PARENTING

- Encourage her to practice social "micro-skills" such as smiling, making eye contact with others, and learning and using others' names.

- Remind her that one key to establishing friendships is initiative. You might set a goal with her to invite one person a week to spend the night, go to the pool, to a movie or out to eat.

- Take advantage of activities in a church youth group such as camps, swimming parties, discipleship groups.

- Help your daughter evaluate the thoughts she has that make her anxious in relationships. Examples might include: "I should never make a mistake." "People should always like me." "I should always know what to say."

- Consider allowing her to meet with a "relationship coach" or Christian counselor who can help her understand her personality type.

- Encourage her to deepen her friendship with Christ who "sticks closer than a brother" and to study friendships in the Bible.—*Scott Wigginton*

Q: My child is being bullied. What can I do?

According to pastoral counselor Mike Waldrop, nearly 160,000 students stay home from school every day because they are afraid of being bullied.

Waldrop says some type of "back and forth" should be expected between children, but bullying goes beyond the typical aggression between students. Bullying is all about power and control. It involves a significant imbalance of power and an unequal level of emotion. There also typically is a pattern of physical or verbal abuse happening over and over. The effects of being bullied can be lasting.

Bullies are not always boys; they are not always big. Bullies typically crave power, lack guilt and lack empathy for others. They often target passive victims, including children who are loners, physically weak or have weak social skills.

Waldrop offers good ideas for helping a child who is being bullied: Listen. Allow the child to talk about what is happening. Teach the child to walk away from the situation and to get help if pursued. At the same time, empower the child to act first—to look the bully in the eye and say, "I don't like your teasing. Stop right now." Encourage the child to develop more friendships and to join social organizations where there can be a sense of belonging. Teach the child to pray for the bully. Finally, understand that there may be situations that require adult intervention.—*David Garrard*

(This article is based on a class taught by Mike Waldrop at Rec Lab, and is used with his permission.)

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



KBC needs: How will your church respond?

The Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board handled a full agenda during its meeting last week at Cedarmore Baptist Conference Center.

Among the major business items were proposals that set in motion the possible sale of the Baptist Building in Middletown as well as several hundred acres of undeveloped land at Cedarmore. (See related article on page 3.)

While those issues likely will make an impact on the long-term ministry efforts of Kentucky Baptists, an even more crucial issue was referenced in support material included with the KBC's proposed 2004-05 budget. On page 89 of the 101-page document was a chart highlighting the percentage of Kentucky Baptist churches' undesignated receipts given through the Cooperative Program in recent years.

The chart revealed that Kentucky Baptist congregations had channeled as much as 10.145 percent of their undesignated gifts through the Cooperative Program as recently as 1997. Since then, however, the giving percentage has declined fairly steadily.

Last year's CP gifts in Kentucky dipped below 8 percent of undesignated receipts to a low of 7.867 percent. At the same time, total CP gifts have plateaued around \$21.5 million in recent years, dipping as low as \$21.39 million last year.

While the KBC's pre-inflation CP receipts have grown since the mid-'90s, income has not kept pace with inflation since 1990. Last year's KBC receipts ended 15 percent below the inflation rate compared to 20 years ago.

Why are such statistics significant? Simply because as churches' percentage giving through the Cooperative Program declines and inflation chips away at the remaining dollars, Kentucky Baptist entities have considerably less money to support vital ministry and mission efforts.

Based on Kentucky Baptist churches' receipts of

more than \$270 million last year, if churches had maintained the 10.145 percent CP giving rate recorded in '97, CP receipts for 2003 would have increased by more than \$6 million to \$27.5 million.

Even after forwarding 36 percent of those gifts to the Southern Baptist Convention to support national and international ministry efforts, KBC ministries would have gained almost \$4 million over last year's actual receipts. Imagine the ministry impact that could have both in Kentucky and around the world. Rather than lamenting budget shortfalls and trimming expenses, the KBC could be at the forefront of meeting both spiritual and physical needs throughout the Bluegrass State and beyond.

The reality, however, is that churches gradually are keeping more and more of their offering receipts on the local level. Churches undoubtedly have a variety of reasons for their choices, whether increased financial needs at home, major building programs, expanded mission projects, denominational political concerns or other issues.

As you consider KBC facility needs for 21st century ministry, Cedarmore financial challenges and other statewide ministry efforts, think what a tremendous difference \$3 million to \$4 million a year would make. Your congregation's part might involve simply increasing your Cooperative Program contribution by 1 percent in the coming year.

David Melber, president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies, said the primary reason to seek to undergird Cedarmore financially is so that people can experience spiritual birth or renewal. The same is true of other Kentucky Baptist ministries.

"It's got to be rooted in the heart; having people experience Christ," Melber explained. "If we focus on life change, people will come back."

What are you and your church willing to do to help make that happen?

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

A call for national repentance

By Dale Hanson Bourke
Religion News Service

And so the spinning begins: It wasn't my fault, it wasn't technically illegal, no one told me it was wrong. From Martha Stewart to teens downloading music to soldiers guarding prisoners in Iraq, we are a nation proficient at excuses and seemingly unable to mourn our ethical and moral failings—let alone repent.

We would like to believe the American soldiers pictured in those horrific photos from the Iraqi prison are not like the rest of us. We talk about punishing those responsible as if we can simply deal with a few aberrant citizens and then go back to remaining in denial about our own culpability.

But I believe we must look at each of those young soldiers involved in the Iraqi prison debacle and see them as if they were our own sons and daughters. Collectively, as a nation, we share their guilt. We have raised them to believe that ethical behavior is a moving target and that the law trumps morality. And if we choose to make examples of them without looking deeply at ourselves, God help us all.

We have preached our moral superiority over those who look different than ourselves and devoted media coverage to the deaths of movie stars and sports figures while ignoring the slaughter of thousands in Third World nations. We have told our young people that human

life has varying degrees of value and individuals count more for their accomplishments than their souls.

As a nation we have stopped studying history for what we can learn from it and manipulated it to support our views of national superiority. We rarely look at the Constitution as a call to individual responsibility in exchange for freedom. Instead we see it as one more tool to use in a lawsuit.

We have tagged those who stand up against what is wrong as "whistleblowers" instead of heroes; we have shown that the guy who speaks up about what he sees as wrong usually is ignored or worse because of systems in business, education and the military that reward group think.

And since the tragedy of Sept. 11 we have allowed ourselves to profess that individual freedoms are secondary to national security without questioning what that really means or how far we are willing to take it. Because we were wronged we feel righteous, a view that must strike the many peoples of the world who have suffered horrendous tragedies as both immature and myopic.

As a nation, we have nurtured individuals who have no moral muscles and whose vision of righteousness is to try to be better than the next guy. We have allowed violent video games to provide hours of entertainment for our children and shrugged as music that denigrates women and blasts profanity

becomes "mainstream."

Our houses of worship often seem more geared to entertainment than godly pursuits, and our schools are places where teachers are so worried about being accused of abuse that they can neither show concern nor administer discipline without fearing for their jobs.

We are, as a nation, not nearly as clear about morality as we profess in this harsh glare of international publicity.

So how do we begin to right the wrongs of our society? I don't think we start with more rules. I think we start with collective repentance.

We begin by acknowledging that "there but for the grace of God go I." We are not morally superior as a nation any more than any one of us individually is less capable of sin than the next human. We are fallen human beings living in a society where we are more likely to call a lawyer than a minister when confronting a decision.

As a nation we should all be repenting over what has happened in Iraq and what our national values really are. We cannot claim to be one kind of people then live different lives without getting caught. We are raising the next generation to do as we do, not as we say. If we are going to hold them responsible, we must all accept the blame as well.

If this horror does not bring our nation to search our souls as never before, it will be more than a disgrace. It will be a national tragedy.

Dale Hanson Bourke, a former editor of Religion News Service, is a consultant to humanitarian organizations

COMMENTARY

Versailles artist's depictions of Jesus raise eyebrows

Continued from page 1

He said he was ready immediately, but God made him wait another 20 years as his spirituality and artistic talent grew. During that time, he searched for the proper person to model as the Jesus figure for his paintings.

That search took him across the country and even to Israel, but Sawyer said he eventually found his model walking across the street in Versailles.

"When I met him I literally ran across the street. I told him, 'I've been looking for you for 20 years,'" he recalled. "When I made my commitment (to paint Jesus) he was 12 years old. Twenty years later, he was 32 and his legal middle name is 'Dove.'"

New York Times & Today Show

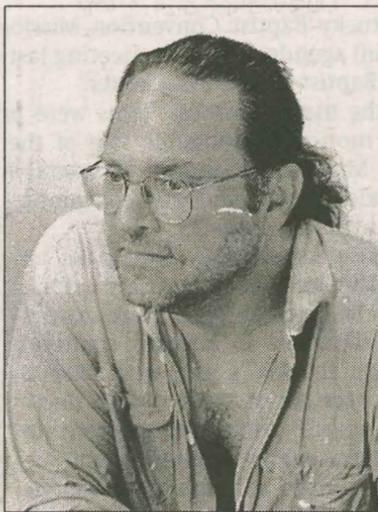
This spring, Sawyer's portraits of Jesus as a prizefighter in the boxing ring have appeared in The New York Times, on the Today Show, as well as other publications throughout the country "to illustrate the new face of Jesus," he said.

The new face of Jesus, a la Sawyer, shows Jesus in familiar poses but also depicts Him as a boxer, holding children, steering a ship, laughing and being a protector. Sawyer's Jesus clearly has become, at least lately, the illustration of choice when media are not showing clips of actor James Caviezel, who portrays Jesus in "The Passion of the Christ."

"The Today Show contacted me, asking for some of my work that shows Jesus inside the boxing ring to serve as an illustration about the discussion that was framed between a Roman Catholic priest and a rabbi about Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ,'" he said. "Lately, I've gotten a lot of exposure as discussions have gotten more intense about what Christ looked like. There's been this talk about the new face of Jesus, and my work is clearly included in that discussion."

Sawyer said he attributes the recent discussion about an increased interest in religion and Jesus to a heightened concern over safety in the United States in the wake of the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, and the war in Iraq, as well as the recent release of Gibson's controversial "Passion." But Sawyer said he disagrees with some of the assessments many analysts are making regarding the renewed interest in Jesus.

"There's a strong notion that



RESTORING BALANCE Artist Stephen Sawyer said the historical portraits of Jesus were skewed. "Now, people like me, like Mel Gibson, are trying to put that view (of Jesus) back in balance."

people are interested in Christ more now because of a concern over the tragic events we've witnessed over the past couple years," he said. "I think, though, that in a discussion about Jesus, you have to take a long look at the history of His appearance. Over the centuries, I think the reality of the portrait of Jesus has gotten out of balance. Now, people like me, like Mel Gibson, are trying to put that view back in balance."

For Sawyer, striking the balance means going out on a limb using his unique artistic style to deliver a message about what Jesus' ministry on earth really was all about.

Indeed, Sawyer's work, depicting Jesus as a prizefighter in three paintings titled "The Warrior," "Undefeated" and "Warfare" portray a startling new image of Jesus that fans and detractors alike agree place Him in a new light.

Ask him which painting is his favorite, and he compares them to his five children. "They're all my kids and I really can't like one more than another."

Sawyer's friend Doug Simpson, pastor of Pinckard Baptist Church in Versailles, recalled the first time he saw Sawyer's paintings.

Simpson said he appreciated the "tough guy" depictions. Too often, he said, Jesus is shown as a "marshmallow."

"It was a fresh look at Jesus," he said. "A way we haven't seen Him very often."

Sawyer attends Pinckard Baptist Church regularly but is not a member and also visits churches of other denominations.

"He wants to be able to minister to all denominations," Simpson said. "He's the real McCoy on being a Christian, that's for sure."

Questions of commercialism

A couple years ago, Sawyer made his mark with a portrait of Jesus sporting jeans and showing off a tattoo on his left arm with "father" inscribed over a bright red heart, sparking some controversy among church leaders who questioned the portrayal as crass and commercial. Simpson disagreed.

"He's not making a terrible lot of money with it," he said. "He's living on faith depending on God."

Sawyer said his wife, Cindy,

has been his greatest supporter throughout this ministry.

"My wife never told me to get a job. She's always believed in what we're doing," he said. "It's just been an amazing ride to do this."

Fans of Sawyer's work like the fact that he depicts Jesus in everyday scenes, like real people. There is his piece that shows Jesus wearing a tuxedo and holding a young girl in "Lover of My Soul," and he paints a stern-looking Jesus standing and pointing the way behind a young boy steering a storm-tossed ship in "Storm Pilot."

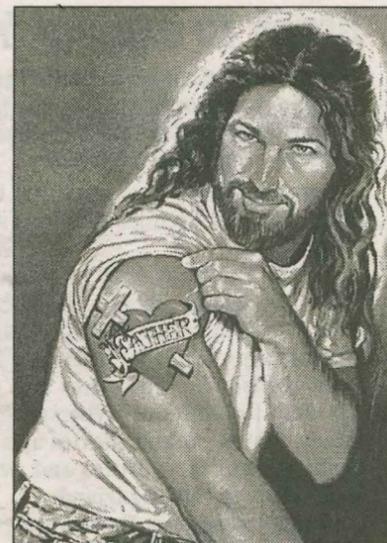
"I'm not trying to provoke anybody with my work," he said. "But I disagree with the recent statements people have made that I'm purely in this as a commercial endeavor. Yes, I sell prints of my work, but I view this as my own special ministry as a Christian artist."

Art and churches

Sawyer said churches have been slow to incorporate art into its expression of worship and witness.

"I think the church still prefers to entertain, which is why music does so well," he said, quick to add that's his observation, not a criticism.

He said Christians must be willing to embrace new ways to share the gospel. He referred to the parable of the talents, noting that the only servant who got in trouble was



"NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY" While some critics call Sawyer's paintings crass and commercial, fans like seeing Jesus in everyday scenes.

"the one who wanted everything to stay the way it was and afraid to change."

To develop new Christian art and Christian artists, Sawyer is sponsoring a national art competition for children and adults.

"Virtually any Christian theme, in any medium, can be used," Sawyer said. Prizes are available, and details are available on the Art for God Web site (www.art4god.com).

With additional reporting by News Director David Winfrey



"FATHER FORGIVE" This painting was used with materials for the FAITH evangelism program.

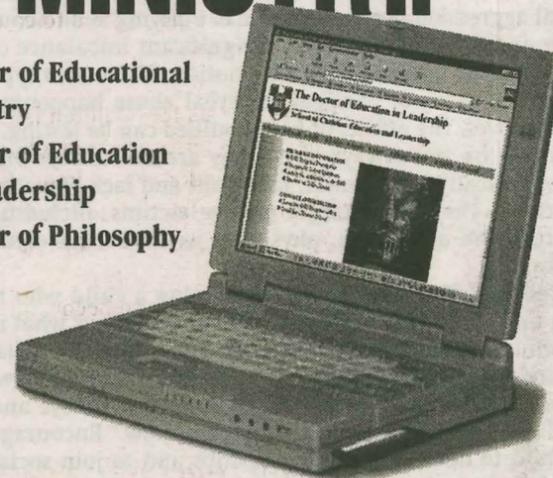
"UNDEFEATED" Kentucky artist Stephen Sawyer views his unique religious painting as a ministry and hopes to encourage other Christian artists. (Photos courtesy of Stephen Sawyer/www.ART4GOD.com)



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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

A step of faith

Moldova camping project offers God-size challenge

This past fall, I had the privilege to visit the country of Moldova, which lies between Romania and Ukraine. My visit was to explore the possibility of buying a camp with our future summer missions offerings from Crossings at the Creek.

By the end of the trip, God provided a different vision: sponsoring kids to attend camp rather than buying a facility.

Sponsoring kids had not been done in the past, and our contacts in Moldova were not exactly sure how well it would be received. They thought we might be able to sponsor 300 to 500 kids.

Camp in Moldova is much different than here for many reasons. First, camp costs very little. Typically, a day of camp costs \$3-\$5. This cost covers food, camp rental and program support. While this seems like so little, it is expensive for the Moldovan camp leaders. The typical annual per capita income is only \$460 per year.

Historically, our Crossings summer camp offerings have averaged \$8 per camper. Currently, we have 3,804 reservations for Crossings

this summer, which translates to an offering of \$30,432.

While this is a great amount, and easily would cover the cost of 300-500 kids we had envisioned, God has provided an even greater challenge. At this time, we have approximately 2,500 Moldovan children signed up for camp, which translates to a cost of about \$52,000! God has presented us an opportunity for faith to be exercised. We ask for your prayers and support to meet this challenge.

The youth who attend camps in Moldova come from a variety of backgrounds. Many come from orphanages, and most never have heard the gospel. In years past, one out of three campers accept Christ as their personal Savior.

The hurdle in this partnership is that we must commit to these youth in Moldova before we collect the first offering this summer. Please pray that our faith is strengthened through this and that hundreds, maybe even 1,000 campers will receive Christ this summer in Moldova.

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



David Melber

Kudzu

Doug Marlette



For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Bible Crosswords

Janet W. Adkins

Across

- 1 Cat comment
- 5 "Thou ___ cast out in the open field" (Ezekiel 16:5)
- 9 Glass container
- 12 Johanan's grandfather (Nehemiah 6:18)
- 13 "___ begat Asa" (Matthew 1:7)
- 14 Flightless bird
- 15 "That thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy ___ do not appear" (Revelation 3:18)
- 17 Rodent
- 18 A Latvian
- 19 "And the ___ shall make you free" (John 8:32)
- 21 "And the ___ of the locusts were like unto horses" (Revelation 9:7)
- 24 "For he hath founded it upon the ___, and established it upon the floods" (Psalm 24:2)
- 25 Buddy
- 26 Zany
- 28 "Moses' father in law went up out of the city ... in the south of ___" (Judges 1:16)
- 30 "To him which ___ his people through the wilderness" (Psalm 136:16)
- 31 "And they came to ___, where were twelve wells of water" (Exodus 15:27)
- 33 "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be ___" (Matthew 23:12)
- 35 Compass direction, abbr.
- 36 "___, and Dumah, and Eshean" (Joshua 15:52)
- 37 "For an ___, the hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:8)
- 40 "Certain lewd fellows of the ___ sort" (Acts 17:5)
- 42 Half, prefix
- 43 Map abbreviation
- 44 "And he ... began to publish in ___ how great things Jesus had done for him" (Mark 5:20)
- 49 National Stock Exchange, abbr.
- 50 "Of the tribe of Issachar, ___ the son of Joseph" (Numbers 13:7)

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
12					13					14		
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40	41						42					
43				44	45					46	47	48
49				50						51		
52					53					54		

- 51 "Salathiel, which was the son of ___" (Luke 3:27)
 - 52 "Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean ... nor Taanach ... , nor the inhabitants of ___" (Judges 1:27)
 - 53 "Now the ___ of Jacob were twelve" (Genesis 35:22)
 - 54 "Then Herod ... enquired of them diligently what time the ___ appeared" (Matthew 2:7)
- #### Down
- 1 "The Son of ___ must be lifted up" (John 12:34)
 - 2 Equal Rights Amendment, abbr.
 - 3 "Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an ___" (2 Samuel 18:10)
 - 4 "Judah is a lion's ___" (Genesis 49:9)
 - 5 "Your messenger, and he that ministered to my ___" (Philippians 2:25)
 - 6 Aid
 - 7 Sibling
 - 8 "If so be ye have ___ that the Lord is gracious" (1 Peter 2:3)
 - 9 "Abiathar carried the ark of God again to ___" (2 Samuel 15:29)
 - 10 "I ___ the point to die" (Genesis 25:32) (2 words)
 - 11 "The name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other ___" (Ruth 1:4)
 - 16 River in Scotland
 - 20 "The ___ is not to the swift" (Ecclesiastes 9:11)
 - 21 Health bath
 - 22 "Brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and ___" (1 Chronicles 5:26)
 - 23 "There came unto him a woman having an ___ box of very precious ointment" (Matthew 26:7)
 - 24 "Her countenance was no more ___" (1 Samuel 1:18)
 - 26 Little name for a big sea
 - 27 "But ye shall ___ away for your iniquities" (Ezekiel 24:23)
 - 29 "For we ___ not make ourselves of the number" (2 Corinthians 10:12)
 - 30 This country was once famous for its cedars, abbr.
 - 32 "There ___ him two possessed with devils" (Matthew 8:28)
 - 34 One of the seven churches of Asia
 - 37 Cures
 - 38 Electromagnetic pulse, abbr.
 - 39 "Whose faces were like the faces of ___" (1 Chronicles 12:8)
 - 40 "For I was ashamed to require of the king a ___ of soldiers" (Ezra 8:22)
 - 41 "Lord, wilt thou slay ___ a righteous nation?" (Genesis 20:4)
 - 42 Read over hastily
 - 45 Self
 - 46 "___ there be no strife ... between me and thee" (Genesis 13:8)
 - 47 "And ___ also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David" (2 Samuel 20:26)
 - 48 "___, thou hast nothing to draw with" (John 4:11)

Last week's solution

C	H	R	Y	S	O	P	R	S	U	S		
H	U	R	A	B	E	N	A	B	A	L		
A	F	B	P	E	A	K	Y	O	R	E		
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Shea still enjoying role as Graham's set-up man

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

Montreat, N.C. (RNS)—Ask the man long known as Billy Graham's soloist for his favorite hymn and he'll say it's not a fair question.

But it doesn't take long for George Beverly Shea to pick one among the many he likes so much.

"I must admit that I have not tired of 'How Great Thou Art,'" he said in a recent interview. "It's just so marvelous and ... just so foundational and scriptural and the melody is so old-fashioned and great and it's easy to sing."

Shea, 95, has performed solos and sung with choirs at the crusades of the famous evangelist for decades. He also has written a new book, "How Sweet the Sound: Amazing Stories and Grace-filled Reflections on Beloved Hymns and Gospel Songs."

With his deep voice occasionally drifting into song as he discusses a range of hymns, Shea said music sometimes can affect the listener as

much as spoken words in worship.

"There's certain Scriptures that might get to the heart in a hurry, like John 3:16," he said. "Hymns, the poetry, just gets to the heart."

The evangelist with whom he teamed has similar sentiments.

"Songs can touch and open a heart to hear God when sermons and preaching may fall on deaf ears," Graham wrote in the foreword to Shea's book. "Music is such a universal language—and God has used Bev to be an instrument to touch and enrich lives."

The book features the lyrics of more than 50 songs, recollections of Shea about them and related "devotional interludes" by Betty Free Swanberg, a writer for Tyndale House Publishers.

Changing "How Great Thou Art"

Shea described how he changed the words of "How Great Thou Art"—dubbed a "timeless classic" in the book—when he sang his favorite hymn with a Toronto crusade choir.

He modified "consider all the works thy hands have made" with "consider all the worlds thy hands have made" and changed "I hear the mighty thunder" to "I hear the rolling thunder."

Those alterations from 1955 have endured among congregations and celebrities.

"I got a bang when I used to hear Elvis Presley sing my two words," Shea said.

In that same year, the crusade singer wrote the words and music to "The Wonder of It All." Composed on an ocean liner, Shea was inspired by a Jewish publisher who inquired

about why so many people attended Graham's crusades.

The musician told him of the volunteer choir and the preaching and said, "Oh, sir, if you could see it, the wonder of it all!" The publisher challenged him to write a song of that title.

Finding himself awake in the wee hours of the next morning, Shea composed a song about the "the wonder of the sunset" he'd seen over the ocean the previous evening and "the wonder that God loves me."

Shea, who has written the music to other hymns, continues to improvise on the organ in his home—and even volunteered to put the phone down and play a few notes for a listening reporter on his three-manual instrument with 800 pipes that dates to 1926.

Raised on church music

The longtime singer was literally brought up on church music, waking on school days to his mother singing the chorus of a song that began "Singing I go along life's road, praising the Lord, praising the Lord." He took the bass part when his family gathered around the dinner table to sing the Doxology—which begins "Praise God from whom all blessings flow"—in harmony.

He would flip through the pages of the church hymnal as his father preached in churches in Houghton, N.Y.

"The rustle of the pages might have been a little distracting, but I know he forgave me," Shea wrote.

When he was 23, Shea composed

the music to the hymn "I'd Rather Have Jesus" at a time when he was still determining his career.

A few years later, inspired by that song, he declined an offer to sing with a secular singing group and ended up working for a Christian radio station in Chicago.

While at WMBI he performed on a morning program he started called "Hymns from the Chapel." In 1943, Graham heard the broadcast and invited Shea to sing on the evangelist's new radio program.

So began a friendship that has lasted for decades.

Shea, who lives in Montreat, N.C., about a mile from Graham, said the man 10 years his junior used to honk his horn as he drove by. Now, in the later years, they speak on the phone.

Their song and sermon combination continue.

Graham is scheduled to lead a crusade in Kansas City, Mo., in June and Shea already knows he'll be singing "He Died for Me" with the choir.

Apparently the evangelist would hear nothing of it when Shea suggested to Graham and crusade choir director Cliff Barrows that it was time for him to retire.

"Billy said, 'You're afraid you're going to lose your teeth or something?'" Shea recalled. "If you do, just come and whistle."

Shea, who sometimes flashes hand signals at musicians to tell them the key he wishes to sing in, considers his contribution to be a "kind of divine appointment."

"I just feel the responsibility of doing it right, if I can," he said.

STILL SINGING Vocalist George Beverly Shea, shown here at Billy Graham's 2001 mission in Louisville, already has penciled his calendar for Graham's next event in Kansas City, Mo., in June. (File photo)



Fertile ground, part 2

Father's Day offering an investment in lives of boys like Roy, Mike & Arthur

Another of our students who recently was saved and baptized is "Roy" (not his real name). Like "Victor" and several others saved during the spring revival, Roy also enrolled in January as an eighth grade student. His parents felt that Roy was not focused enough on his education and that there were too many distractions at home. Roy knew his mother was not as strict as his father, so he often played one against the other.

Roy was not a problem at school, but his grades ranged from good to very bad. He often had to attend Saturday school due to not completing his homework. Roy said he really wanted to be here and he believed Oneida could help him make better grades. He admitted that his attitude was not always the best and he hoped we could help him.

During his first few weeks with us, he was a bit of a challenge, but Roy seems to be making progress now. He is getting along with his roommates better and is getting into less trouble overall. Both parents work, so some of his problems developed when he was not getting the extra attention he needed after school.

A second eighth grader who enrolled in January and recently was baptized is "Arthur" (not his real name). Arthur was born overseas and came to the U.S. five years ago after his father was killed during the civil war in his country. Arthur's mother and two sisters came to the U.S. hoping for a better way of life. His mother has enrolled in college fulltime in order to get the education she needs to provide for her family.

Arthur is an older eighth grade student and

did not bring some of the home issues many of our students have. He had respect for his mother and did what he could to help around the house. His mother said he was a quiet boy who was looking forward to enrolling in our school. Arthur's mother was concerned about his safety and believed we provided a much safer environment for him. His grades at school were average, but he realized he needed to improve his reading skills. His attitude has been good, and he is well on his way to becoming a responsible young man.

"Mike" (not his real name) enrolled in January as a sixth grade student, along with his older brother. They were being cared for by their grandmother after the divorce of their parents. Mike was having considerable difficulties with his grades. He was rarely in trouble at his old school and is a rather quiet boy. He admitted to loving his grandmother and knew he needed to improve his grades. He also expressed a desire to become a better athlete. His grand-

mother told us Mike was very helpful around the house and was good about doing his chores. She did admit that he and his brother got into some pushing and shoving matches, but what two brothers don't do that? Mike's unemployed grandmother needed considerable additional financial aid for her two grandsons. We always have been blessed to have enough room at the table for one or two more.

Your gift to the Father's Day Offering is an investment in the lives of these and many other young boys and girls.

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Trustees hold spring meeting

Budget, distance learning post among business items

The board of trustees met April 20 in a session marked by thanksgiving for God's continued blessings on our ministry. Trustees enjoyed the beauty of spring and sensed the excitement leading toward graduation.

The major agenda item was consideration and approval of the 2004-05 budget; the \$3.387 million fiscal plan reflects a 5.3 percent increase over the previous year. The faculty and staff will receive a modest raise (none were given last year) while tuition and housing fees will remain the same.

Trustees approved three items recommended by the academic committee. The college recognized the intellectual property rights of faculty, staff and students producing academic materials used in classes. Dr. Roy Lucas was appointed H.C. Chiles Professor of New Testament. The Southwestern Seminary graduate came to Clear Creek in 1999. He chairs the campus community ministry committee and is co-pastor of Loyall Baptist Church near Harlan. Jayson Barnett was named director of distance education. The Southern Seminary graduate currently is

our registrar and has worked with leaders in five states to develop distance education sites.

Colleges usually are seeking funds, but our trustees decided to give some away.

Expecting an unrestricted estate gift, trustees made a generous gift to the Lillian Isaacs Literacy Missions Endowment Fund managed

by the WMU Foundation. Mrs. Isaacs helped launch SBC literacy missions at Clear Creek in 1959. The second floor library reading room was named in her honor.

The employee code of ethics was amended to include the expectation that all employees "conduct themselves in a Christ-like manner both on and off the job so that

their lives reflect Christian values. ... Failure to adhere to this conduct standard may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment." Trustees also voted to employ "only persons who are engaged in a heterosexual relationship within the confines of marriage as defined by Scripture, or persons not married who are celibate."

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Bush, faith leaders call nation to prayer

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

Washington (RNS)—Religious and political leaders marked the annual National Day of Prayer May 6 with programs on Capitol Hill, at the White House and across the nation in settings such as government buildings, parks and shopping malls.

President Bush observed the day at an East Room ceremony, describing prayer as a tradition for presidents and ordinary Americans.

"We recognize that all that we have and all that we are come as gifts and it is natural to be grateful to the giver," the president told an interfaith audience of about 150 people.

The president earlier issued an official proclamation and U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black wrote a "prayer for the nation" for the 53rd annual observance.

The program at the Cannon House Office Building featured keynote speaker Lt. Col. Oliver North as well as Attorney General John Ashcroft and evangelical leaders



PRAYER DAY President George W. Bush bows his head in prayer during an event marking the National Day of Prayer in the East Room of the White House, May 6. (Reuters photo by Jason Reed)

such as Shirley and James Dobson.

"We are gathered with over 50,000 prayer gatherings across the nation," said Shirley Dobson, chairman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force and wife of the founder of Focus on the Family ministry.

"The turnout this year is huge. The problems that we are facing in our country are simply too big for us and we need to call on divine providence to intervene."

Companion and alternative

events, featuring people of a variety of faiths and of no faith were planned across the country.

At the Capitol Hill event, which included Catholic and Jewish speakers, much of the crowd of more than 300 represented evangelical Christians.

Bush, in a proclamation released days before the annual observance, prayed for the U.S. military and for "safety and freedom" for the people in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East.

"Prayer is an opportunity to praise God for his mighty works, his gift of freedom, his mercy and his boundless love," the proclamation read. "Through prayer, we recognize the limits of earthly power and acknowledge the sovereignty of God."

Across the country, the annual observance occurred atop Pikes Peak, inside "prayer tents" on the roads leading into Deming, N.M., and in a Greensboro, N.C., shopping mall, said Mark Fried, media and marketing coordinator for the National Day of Prayer Task Force, based in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Saddleback, Southeast among largest U.S. churches

Bolivar, Mo. (RNS)—Lakewood Church of Houston has topped the lists of the largest and fastest-growing non-Catholic churches in the country, according to a study published by Outreach magazine, a church leadership publication.

The Houston church was founded in a feed store in 1959 by the late John Osteen. His son, Joel Osteen, now leads the congregation of 25,060, and it is renovating the former home of the Houston Rockets

basketball team for future services.

The study by Church Growth Today, a Bolivar, Mo.-based research center, is based on self-reported data from the churches cited.

"We don't look to these churches as 'the best,' 'the most spiritual,' or any other qualifier," states the magazine in a report titled "The Exponential Church." "They are simply the largest and—because of their size—command our interest and attention."

The Vista, Calif.-based magazine listed the churches, compiled by John Vaughan, founder and director of Church Growth Today, in its May/June issue.

The study listed the following congregations as the 10 largest non-Catholic churches in America:

1. Lakewood Church in Houston (25,060 attendees)
2. World Changers in College Park, Ga. (23,093)
3. Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. (20,100)
4. The Potter's House in Dallas (18,500)
5. Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas (18,129)
6. Second Baptist Church of Houston (18,000)
7. Southeast Christian Church in Louisville (17,863)
8. First Assembly of God in Phoenix (17,532)
9. New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga. (17,370)
10. Without Walls International Church in Tampa, Fla. (17,370)

The study listed the following churches as the 10 fastest-growing non-Catholic U.S. churches of the 21st century:

1. Lakewood Church in Houston (growth: 14,060)
2. Without Walls International Church in Tampa, Fla. (growth: 12,570)
3. The Potter's House in Dallas (growth: 11,300)
4. North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Ga. (growth: 10,200)
5. Fellowship Church in Grapevine Texas (growth: 9,950)
6. Mars Hill Bible Church in Grandview, Mich. (growth: 9,400)
7. Second Baptist Church in Houston (growth: 8,797)
8. Life Church in Edmond, Okla. (growth: 8,687)
9. World Changers in College Park, Ga. (growth: 7,593)
10. The Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. (growth: 7,567)

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PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING
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NATIONAL NOTES

Church raises construction funds on eBay. A Lutheran church in Wauconda, Ill., found a 21st century way to raise money for a new sanctuary: hawking members' trinkets and tchotchkes on eBay. The 1,500-member congregation has raised an average of about \$400 a month by selling parishioners' collector plates, books on tape and old postcards through the online auction site. The church's new sanctuary will help ease overcrowding in a facility designed to hold 240 people that now attracts more than 500. Parishioners have raised \$1.5 million for construction, with another \$1.7 million to go.

Methodist delegates affirm unity, not split. Delegates to the United Methodist Church's General Conference meeting last week overwhelmingly endorsed a last-minute statement on church unity in order to downplay an earlier call for an "amicable separation" over homosexuality and other issues. Maxie Dunnam, president of Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore and a conservative leader, said a resolution circulated that urged a churchwide divorce was premature. Officials said it was drafted to spur discussion but was never a formal proposal.

Methodists join Taco Bell boycott. The United Methodist Church became the largest U.S. church body to join a boycott against Taco Bell, urging the Louisville-based fast-food giant to improve working conditions for migrant tomato-pickers in Immokalee, Fla. Delegates to the church's General Conference legislative meeting voted to approve the measure, without debate, on May 1. The Methodists join the National Council of Churches, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the American Friends Service Committee (Quaker) in the boycott.

Removal of 'Ten Commandments' judge upheld. Judge Roy Moore, whose 5,300-pound Ten Commandments monument cost him his job as chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, had his removal from office upheld April 30 by a special court of review. The seven-member court unanimously ruled that former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore's removal from office last year was "proper" because he violated state ethics codes when he defied a federal court order to remove the monument. The decision appears to be Moore's last avenue of appeal on the state level. But Moore held out the possibility of appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court, which last year refused to hear his case.

Jeb Bush to appeal ruling on 'Terri's Law.' A Florida judge struck down "Terri's Law" May 5, ruling the measure violated the state's constitution by allowing Gov. Jeb Bush to order the nutrition and hydration tube of a disabled woman to be reinserted. Pinellas County Circuit Judge Douglas Baird made the ruling the day before Bush's attorneys initially were scheduled to depose their first witness. Bush's office said he would appeal. Terri Schiavo, 40, is the Clearwater, Fla., woman at the center of a legal battle over the so-called "right-to-die." Some doctors say she is in a "persistent vegetative state" and will never improve or recover from a brain injury she received in 1990.

Dobson addresses Seattle marriage rally. Author and radio personality James Dobson told an estimated 25,000 people in Seattle on May 1 that America needs a constitutional amendment to protect heterosexual marriage. If homosexual marriage becomes the norm in the United States, "the culture war is lost," Dobson told those gathered at Safeco Field. "The only way to solve this problem is with a federal marriage amendment." The issue shouldn't be left for states to decide, he added. "We cannot have 50 definitions of marriage. You can't be married in Connecticut but not married in Texas."

Poll: Homosexuals not crazy about marriage. The majority of homosexuals responding to a magazine poll said they are opposed to same-sex "marriage" and a few want to see the institution of marriage abolished altogether. Toronto-based Fab Magazine, a homosexual-themed magazine, found that only 36 percent of respondents believed homosexuals should "settle for marriage and nothing less."

West Virginia pastor to head Louisville Seminary. The pastor of a large Presbyterian church in Charleston, W.Va., has been named the next president of Louisville Presbyterian Theological. Dean Thompson replaces John Mulder, who resigned abruptly in October 2002 after admitting to extramarital affairs. Since 1995, Thompson has served as pastor of the 1,600-member First Presbyterian Church in Charleston. He also was pastor of churches in Montgomery, W.Va.; Austin, Texas; and Pasadena, Calif.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following ministries throughout Kentucky:

The Answer Center in Henderson.

Green Valley Baptist Association's Answer Center has started a literacy ministry that will reach Henderson and Webster counties. Volunteers have been trained and Director Kathy Strange is now ready to move forward with this new avenue of ministry. Pray that God will give them direction about how to reach the many people who need this service. Pray also that clients will encounter Christ.

Georgetown College vocal group.

Georgetown's student ministry has a new vocal ensemble that began just a few weeks ago. In addition to singing during chapel services at the school, this women's trio, called "Glorify," will minister to churches and groups throughout the state. They request prayer as they prepare and perform music, share their faith and travel. Pray that they will have many opportunities to lead individuals in worship of a mighty God.

Mission Service Corps Missionary Sanghun Kim in Louisville.

Kim ministers to international students through the campus ministry at the University of Louisville. Kim has been sharing the gospel with the "world" that comes to study. With the school year drawing to a close, pray that the gospel will be carried back home in the hearts of students who came to know Christ this year. Pray that these same students will find a church or Christian study group that will encourage them in discipleship and spiritual growth.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BRONSTON**—First Church recently called **Steve Looker** as associate pastor and youth minister. He is a student at Clear Creek Bible College.

■ **DeMOSSVILLE**—Wilmington Church will hold revival services May 12-16, 7 p.m., with **Paul Chitwood** as evangelist.

■ **ELIZABETHTOWN**—Elizabethtown Church will host a Ladies Fellowship Tea May 15, 2 p.m., with **Mary Mohler**, wife of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Al Mohler, as guest speaker.

Mount Zion Church recently called **James Hollis** as minister of youth. He is a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. **Chad Brand** is interim pastor.

■ **EUBANK**—Oak Grove Church #2 recently called **C.E. Jacobs** as interim pastor.

■ **FRANKLIN**—Calvary Church recently called **Wyman Copass** as pastor. He previously served six months as interim pastor. Copass, who has served six years in full-time evangelism, will continue to be available for revivals in 2005.

■ **GLENDALE**—Gilead Church will host the Watoto Children's Choir May 22, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. The choir will present a blend of native African rhythms, contemporary gospel music and ethnic dance.

■ **GREENSBURG**—Macedonia Church recently called **Timmy Glass** as pastor.

■ **HARTFORD**—Concord Church recently called **Eddie Duke** as pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Beechmont Church will host a six-week women's

book study on "Just Hand Over the Chocolate and No One Will Get Hurt" by Karen Linamen. Sessions are available on Monday and Thursday, 6:30 p.m., beginning June 21. For information, call (502) 368-5806.

■ **Cornerstone**, St. Matthews Church's men's chorale, will present its annual spring concert, "Songs of Faith," May 23, 6:30 p.m.

■ **NANCY**—Cedar Point Church recently called **Lester Caldwell** as pastor.

■ **OWENSBORO**—Buena Vista Church recently called **Carson Bevil** as interim pastor.

■ **PRESTONSBURG**—**Reba Price** died May 2 at age 58. Price, a school-teacher for many years, was a graduate of Cumberland College in Williamsburg and Western Kentucky University in Richmond. Funeral services were held at First Baptist Church of Prestonsburg, where her husband, **Floyd Price**, is pastor and at Buck Grove Church near Brandenburg.

■ **ROCKFIELD**—Providence Knob Church will celebrate 200 years of ministry June 5, 10 a.m. Activities will include a noon dinner on the grounds and a 1 p.m. celebration in song.

What's going on?

Mail your happenings to Mountains to the Mississippi at Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. Fax: (502) 244-6474. E-mail: wesrec@earthlink.net.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May

- 13 Senior Adult Celebration, Central Baptist Church, Corbin.
- 15 Regional Keyboard Festival, Calvary Baptist Church, Lexington.
- 17 Start-a-Class Tour, Campton Baptist Church, Campton.
- 17 Women of Worth lifestyle evangelism conference, Beacon Hill Baptist Church, Somerset.
- 18 Start-a-Class Tour, Salvisa Baptist Church.
- 20 Start-a-Class Tour, Eminence Baptist Church.

22 Bivocational/Small Church Event, Campbellsville University, Campbellsville.

24-25 Daycare Orientation, KBC building, Louisville.

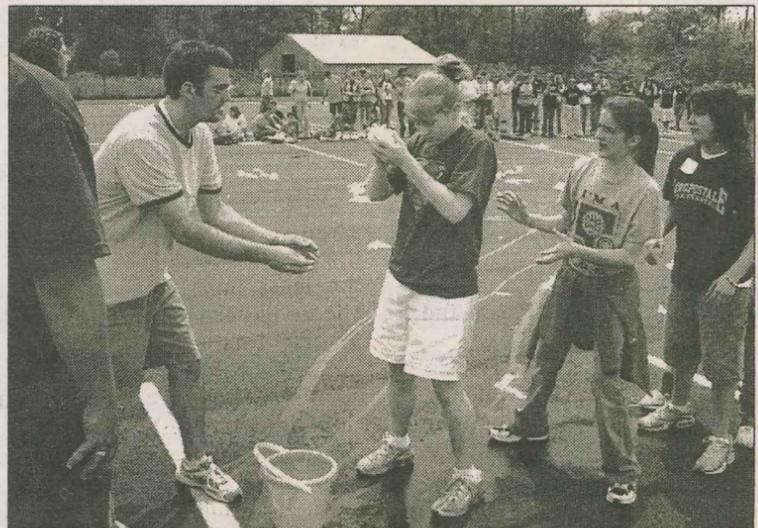
28-31 Baptist Men on Mission wrangler trail ride, Land Between the Lakes State Park.

June

5 Church Weekday Education Seminar, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Louisville.

5-12 Kentucky Changers, Maysville Baptist Church.

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



EXPERIENCING GOD Youth take part in a relay competition during a Youth Experiencing God Weekend April 23-24 in Murray. The event, sponsored by Murray State University's Baptist Student Union, attracted more than 300 youth from 25 churches. There were 11 professions of faith in Christ and other decisions during the weekend.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Used theological/Christian books bought and sold. Contact C. Brent Cloyd, 25100 Indian Ridge Road, Sterling, IL 61081. (815) 622-7899, Cloyd@essex1.com. List sent e-mail only. Will buy pastors' libraries.

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 resumé to MBC Youth Council, 175 Mexico Road, Marion, KY 42064, Attn: Brent Highfil, or call (270) 965-2149. turnerchandler@hotmail.com.

SEEKING: Kentucky Baptist Convention has an immediate opening for a senior accountant. This position has primary responsibility for payroll, general ledger, fixed assets and reconciliations. Should possess strong analytical and problem-solving skills, good communication skills, high energy, self-starter, ability to work both independently and as a team player, prioritize multiple projects to meet deadlines. Strong computer skills, with knowledge of spreadsheets and word processing software. Degree in accounting and 3-5 years experience required. Great environment, attractive pay and benefits. Mail resumé to: Administrative Services Department, PO Box 43433, Louisville, KY 40253-0433; or e-mail to: sracct@kybaptist.org.

SEEKING: Full-time music pastor needed for three Sunday services (traditional and contemporary). Congregation averages 300/Sunday. Members: Southern Baptist Convention and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Mail resumé to: Warrenton Baptist Church, 123 Main Street, Warrenton, VA 20186. Phone number: (540) 347-3509; Fax: (540) 347-2696; e-mail: wbc1849@infionline.net.

SEEKING: Youth pastor for Gethsemane Baptist Church, 10400 Blue Lick Road, Louisville, KY 40229. The candidate must feel a sense of God's call to the ministry with a gift to teach, preach and administer the youth program. Resumés should be sent to the church to the attention of the Personnel Committee. E-mail: GethsemaneBaptist@aol.com. This is a part-time position—benefits include salary and housing.

SEEKING: Gardenside Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky., is seeking a youth minister. We ask that all applicants please send resumés and the names of three references to Jeff Stringer, personnel, Gardenside Baptist Church, 1667 Alexandria Drive, Lexington, KY 40504; or respond to position advertisements: www.churchjobs.net; www.churchstaffing.com; www.ministrycareers.com; www.ministersearch.com. For more information, go to www.gardenside.com.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Salem Baptist Church, Shelby County. Send resumés to: Pastor Selection Committee, 8311 Mount Eden Road, Shelbyville, KY 40065.

SEEKING: Church planter to work with a team as we plan a new work in Northern Kentucky sponsored by Kentucky Baptist Fellowship and American Baptists. Dream with us now; funding comes later. Contact latoniabaptist@insightbb.com.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Madisonville, Ky., is prayerfully seeking a full-time minister to children and families. This individual will become an integral part of a ministerial team and will continue an established children's ministry for birth through 5th grade. Seminary education and prior experience in children's ministry is preferred. A competitive compensation and benefits package is available. Interested applicants may send a resumé to: First Baptist Church, 246 North Main St., Madisonville, KY 42431, Attn: Diann Wilson; or e-mail: ddwilson@charter.net.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, Henderson, Ky. Currently the church has 70 to 80 in Sunday school, and 100 to 125 in Sunday morning worship. Please send resumé to: Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, 2360 Green River Road, Henderson, KY 42420.

SEEKING: DOM for Crittenden Association. Person should have a minimum of four-year college degree, five years ministry experience and experience in missions. Send resumé to: DOM Search Team, PO Box 291, Crittenden, KY 41030.

SEEKING: Hardinsburg Baptist Church, a county seat church, seeks a pastor to lead congregation of approximately 440 members. Please send resumé to Greta Akridge, 204 Lake St., Hardinsburg, KY 40143.

SEEKING: Part-time church financial and administrative secretary. Growing church seeks an energetic, friendly person to work 15-20 hours per week. Experience with Microsoft Office software and Quicken a plus, but will train the right person. Good pay, vacation and friendly atmosphere. Contact church office at (502) 933-2761 for an appointment.

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.

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Christian-Muslim violence erupts again in Indonesia

Ambon City, Indonesia (BP)—Sectarian violence has erupted again in Ambon, one of Indonesia's Maluku Islands, dealing a blow to the Muslim-Christian dialogue that had brought several months of relative peace to the area, according to Compass Direct news service.

The flashpoint for the latest outbreak came April 25 when the independence party FKM-RMS (Moluccas Sovereignty Front) celebrated its 54th anniversary by hoisting banned flags.

The ensuing violence has left more than 25 people dead, 80 wounded and 200 homes burned down, Compass Direct reported.

Muslims see the RMS as an arm of the Christian community, seeking independence from the central government. Churches have denied any involvement with the RMS, but their denials have gone unheeded, leading to renewed fighting between Muslim and Christian communities.

Two churches were destroyed in the recent violence, the most recent being the Nazareth Church, which was burned the night of May 3. The Christian University in Ambon City, largely rebuilt after attacks in previous conflicts, was set afire April 27.

A meeting of national religious leaders took place in Jakarta on April 27, according to the Jakarta Post. Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian leaders from the Indonesian Committee for Religion and Peace cited "provocation" by "third parties" as the best explanation for the recent violence in Ambon, according to Compass Direct, which focuses on Christians worldwide who are persecuted for their faith.

In recent days, hundreds of Muslims and Christians have fled their homes in the still-divided Ambon City, leaving them at the mercy of wandering arsonists.

Thirty-one doctors have been sent to Ambon to help with the crisis, Compass Direct reported, and a contingent of 400 military police also has been dispatched to the area. The government also planned to bring in approximately 600 soldiers as reinforcements.

Authorities continue to cope with the after-effects of sectarian violence that first erupted in 1999. They have built housing for a large number of the estimated 36,000 refugees still living in refugee camps. But camp residents say the new houses are too small for families and water and electricity supplies are inadequate. Many of them have refused to leave the refugee camps, which they claim have better amenities.

A holy (and crowded) site

New discoveries being made at site of Jesus' baptism

By Dale Gaviak
Religion News Service

Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan (RNS)—Ever since Pope John Paul II put it on his millennial pilgrimage program, a site on the east bank of the Jordan where many people believe Jesus was baptized continues to draw huge crowds.

Although Bethany-Beyond-the-Jordan is best known as the baptismal site, the same area is believed to be the place where the Old Testament prophet Elijah ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot after completing his mission.

Once the military front line between Israel and Jordan, it is now troops of archaeologists who scout the hills rich with ancient churches, baptismal pools and mosaics.

Many experts consider the identification of the baptismal site on the Jordan River's east bank to be the most important discovery in Middle Eastern archaeology in the last few years.

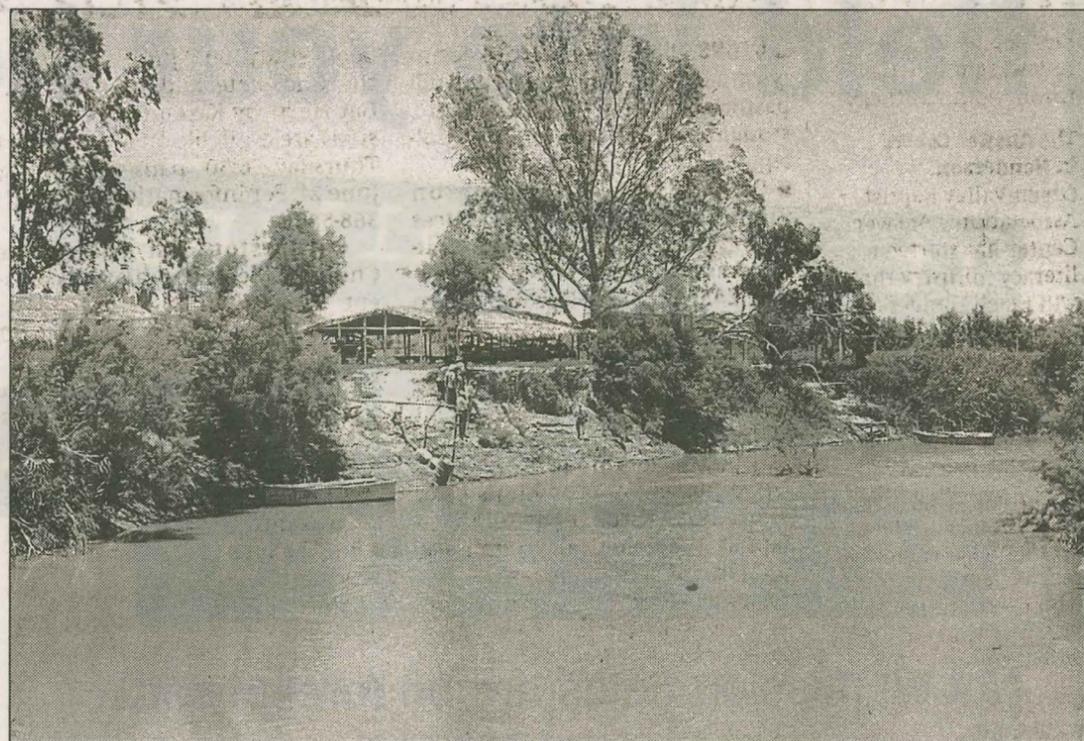
The area was closed for decades because it was in a military zone along Jordan's western border. But with its signing of the 1994 peace treaty with Israel, archaeologists from the country's antiquities department began unearthing a virtual treasure trove of more than 10 significant sites along Wadi Kharrar, which in Arabic means the valley of flowing water.

Unearthed churches, monastery

Archaeologists have found the remains of several Byzantine churches dated between the fifth and sixth century A.D. Another worship site, a cave church, in which the cave dates to the Roman period and was reused as the apse of the church that goes back about 1,500 years, is found on what is called Elijah's Hill. A monastery also was constructed over the area, dwellings for the monks, baptismal pools, as well as a structure called the Rhotorious church. Other discoveries include hermit cells facing the Jordan River and the foundation of a 25-by-25-meter caravan saray or lodge to host pilgrims traveling between Jerusalem and Mount Nebo. Its base contains fifth-century mosaic pieces mixed within the boulders and cementing material.

"We also have located the remains of two basilicas and a later chapel that were described by the Russian cleric and pilgrim to the area, Abbot Daniel, in 1106 A.D., as marking the spot where the Lord was baptized," says Rustom Mkhjian, supervisor of the archaeological preservation and restoration work at the site and a devout Armenian Christian.

But destruction in the deadly form of quakes and floods toppled the succession of structures built along the river's bank. "We have to ask why the Byzantines struggled and continued to construct one church after the other on this delicate spot," Mkhjian says, "know-



ing all the difficulties, all of the risks they would face with the river inevitably breaching its banks and earthquakes tearing down the walls.

"They built memorial churches," he explains, "over the place where they knew the Lord was baptized." Mkhjian says the followers of John the Baptist who lived in the valley passed on the knowledge of the location to the early church. A wealth of medieval accounts of pilgrims and travelers to the area, like those of the anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux in 333 A.D., Theodosius in 530 A.D. and Arculf in 670 A.D., have convinced Jordanian and international opinion about the veracity of the baptismal site.

"They described the Church of John the Baptist very carefully, saying it was built on the spot where the Lord was baptized on four vaults and arches," says Mkhjian. "And this is what remains. It's exciting to find something after digging only five to six meters sometimes."

Elijah's Hill

Experts, like Mkhjian, see the historical context of the site spanning back even further.

"There is a spiritual and physical link between the churches, the John the Baptist area and Elijah's Hill nearby," he explains. Elijah, a prominent Old Testament prophet, delivered the fervent message of repentance that would be taken up in much the same vein by John the Baptist centuries later. The second book of Kings in the Old Testament records Elijah's ascension to heaven in a fiery chariot from the east bank of the Jordan River.

"This place remained from as early as the Lord was baptized until today a holy place because of the prophets who passed through here, like Elijah who ascended to heaven from Elijah's Hill, opposite Jericho," Mkhjian says.

The agency responsible for maintaining the spot is the Baptism Site Commission. It has worked hard to preserve the area's rugged natural beauty and its archaeological treasures while receiving modern-day

pilgrims desiring to be baptized at the same place where John baptized Jesus, says Dia al-Madani, the commission's director.

Dense beds of delicate reeds, tamarisk and tall rushes hug the banks of the river. Natural materials, like stone and wood, have been used to maintain the area's lush environment, giving the site an air of tranquility and repose.

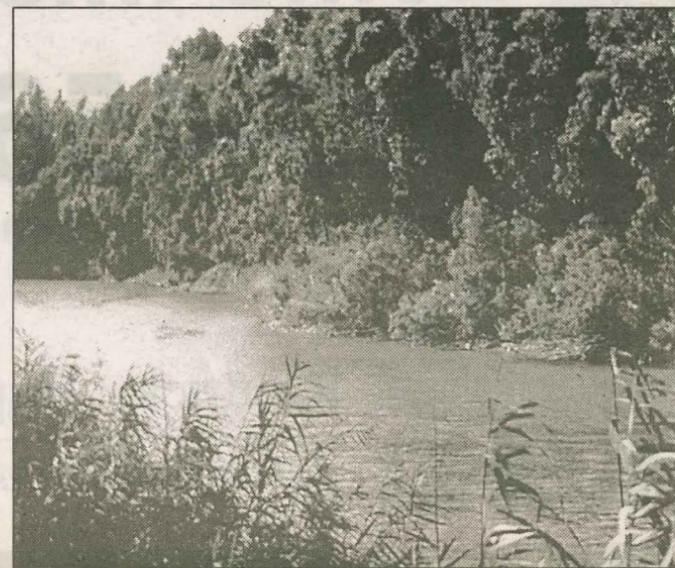
"Special trails have also been built for the physically impaired enabling all pilgrims to visit the site," he says. And for those who want to take the holy plunge, two baptismal pools, where the water is purified daily, are available and of course the river itself beckons.

"Jordan has agreements and arrangements with the Israelis about the site. It is open," Madani says. "People from Israel and the West Bank come to be baptized in the river as well as on our side." He adds it is difficult to estimate just how many people are baptized every year, but he says that at least one baptism takes place every day.

"Jesus' ministry started after His baptism from here, the lowest spot on Earth—nearly 400 meters below sea level—and it spread all over the world," Mkhjian says.

Now people from the world over have returned to the baptismal waters of John in search of their spiritual legacy and in earnest to renew their religious commitment.

BETHANY-BEYOND-THE-JORDAN These decades-old photos show the area now heavily visited by tourists and archaeologists for its historic link to Jesus, John the Baptist and Elijah. (Photos courtesy of Wayne Ward)



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