



# WESTERN RECORDER

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## FOR THE RECORD

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## Poll: Most teens pray and believe God will answer

New York (RNS)—The vast majority of U.S. teenagers who pray believe their prayers are answered, a new study by the American Bible Society has found.

Ninety-one percent of teens said they believe their prayers are answered, the society reported.

But teens had varying views on how often their petitions received a response: 24 percent said they believe their prayers are answered all the time; 24 percent believe they are answered most of the time; and 44 percent said they are answered at least some of the time.

They also vary in the kinds of prayers they utter: 54 percent say they most often say a personal prayer; 22 percent say the Lord's Prayer; and 1 percent say the rosary. Eleven percent of teens say they utter some other kind of prayer and 14 percent say they do not pray at all.

Most teens who pray do so on behalf of a sick relative or friend (77 percent) or for personal needs (72 percent). Fifty-one percent pray for world peace or other global concerns. Twenty-three percent pray for material things.

Asked about ongoing religious activities, 45 percent of teens said they pray daily or weekly before meals at home, compared to 23 percent who never pray in that setting. Most students (64 percent) never pray before meals at school, while 36 percent pray before school meals daily or weekly.

## Closer examination

### Background checks recommended for pastors, church staff & volunteers

By Ken Walker  
State Correspondent

Louisville—After less than three months in office, the new pastor of Oakwood Baptist Church in Kearney, N.J., told the congregation he had to attend a wedding.

But members were shocked when they learned the real reason for his absence. He had been charged with sexually abusing a 15-year-old boy in his previous church. After pleading guilty to sodomy, he received a five-year prison term.

"I think it's a sad day that any one of us would have to say to a potential candidate: 'I would like to ask specifically to your face. Have you ever had an arrest or allegation made against you in the realm of sexual impropriety?'" Oakwood's office manager, Ron Green, told Religion News Service.

"You're asking a man who's a minister of God, 'Oh, by the way, are you a pedophile?'" Green said.

Unpleasant as that question might be, churches across Kentucky may face bigger problems if they fail to ask it.

Kentucky Baptist Convention leaders are among those who urge churches to perform background checks on pastors, youth workers and other staff and volunteers whose actions could expose the church to lawsuits.

Interviews with several KBC employees didn't reveal any horror stories like the one in New Jersey, but Guy Futral said some Kentucky churches have discovered inconsis-



tencies in a pastor's resumé.

Futral, a consultant for pastoral ministries, said churches face serious problems in the event of a staff member gone bad.

Failure to screen staff members and volunteers who work with children and youth exposes a congregation to higher legal liability, he said.

"If a person turns up having a problem and the church has done a background check and things were OK, that says a huge amount to a lawyer or insurance company," Futral said. "If (a congregation) has

done nothing, they're wide open for a liability judgment."

Nor is morals the only issue. Futral said background checks, at least for pastors or staff members who will handle money, should include credit checks.

Credit reports can turn up bankruptcies or other problems with handling money, which can reflect poorly on a church, he said.

"If he's not able to manage his own finances, how can he handle the church's finances?" Futral asked.

□ See Advisers, insurers urge ... *Page 3*

## Women of Worth conference offers lifestyle evangelism ideas



**CHECK, PLEASE** Monica Hutchinson (left) is less than inspired by Melinda Brinson's evangelistic techniques. During the Women of Worth Lifestyle Evangelism Conference May 17, the two members of Beacon Hill Baptist Church in Somerset performed three skits illustrating common pitfalls to sharing the gospel. (Photo by Dannah Prather)

By Dannah Prather  
Partnerships Editor

Somerset—Lisa Whelchel describes lifestyle evangelism as sharing personal stories of God's faithfulness.

"We have the stories to tell, and people want to hear them," the actress and homeschooling mother of three told participants at Kentucky Baptists' Women of Worth Lifestyle Evangelism Conference May 17.

Founder of MomTime, Inc., a ministry to women and homeschooling parents, Whelchel was the keynote speaker at the WOW conference at Beacon Hill Baptist Church in Somerset.

She told the group of 550 mostly women that there was a time when she didn't understand how she could have a Christian impact on anyone apart from overtly sharing the gospel.

Recalling her relationship with her co-stars on the 1980s situation comedy "The Facts of Life," Whelchel said, "I hadn't shared the Four Spiritual Laws, handed out any tracts or even worn my 'Turn or Burn' t-shirt. But my pastor told me 'Your life is speaking to those girls.'"

Whelchel's personal stories of growth in Christ were tailor-made for a lifestyle evangelism conference, according to Shelly Johns, Kentucky Baptist Convention women's/senior adult ministry associate.

"God could not have put a better program together," she said. "I wanted the women to be reminded of our responsibility to share Christ no matter what, when or where." Johns said lifestyle evangelism occurs "first by being connected to others."

□ See Whelchel, skits share ... *Page 6*

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, May 26.

## Seminary leaders urge defense of marriage

By Jason Hall  
Baptist Press

Wake Forest, N.C. (BP)—The presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries issued a joint statement May 17 upholding marriage as the permanent union between one man and one woman as defined by God in the Bible. They called on all Southern Baptist churches to stand in defense of the institution of marriage.

Joining the presidents in affirming the statement, titled "Let No Man Put Asunder," are the faculties of each institution, totaling more than 300 professors. The presidents said they hope the statement will be a clarion call to the church at large, and Southern Baptists in particular, to speak out against homosexual activists and others seeking to rewrite the definition of marriage in the United States.

### Issue demands education

"Southern Baptists should begin now to educate themselves on the issue," said Charles Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. "This is one of the major reasons why I think this resolution is a good thing."

In addition to Kelley, the statement was signed by Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, who drafted the statement; Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.; Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.; Phil

Roberts, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.; and Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

The presidents' statement comes as Massachusetts has begun issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, following a controversial ruling by the state's high court late last year.

"This is a mammoth issue since the family is the fabric of all social order," Patterson said. "Furthermore, the judgment of God looms before a society that cannot retain clarity on the basic unit of relational life."

The statement asserts that marriage "is not a human contrivance. Indeed, it is part of God's perfect design for His human creatures. We affirm that marriage was designed for humanity by our Creator, who gave us marriage for the rightful ordering of human sexuality and relationships."

It states that marriage "has been undermined by permissive sexuality, the availability of divorce, the assumption of personal autonomy, and now, by the prospect of legalized same-sex unions."

"Without a commitment to marriage," the statement adds, "human society is deprived of its most fundamental structure—and social disaster will inevitably follow."

The presidents insisted their convictions about marriage are not based on bigotry or prejudice, as many advocates of same-sex mar-

riage claim, but instead are based on the Bible.

"Sexual orientation has never been an issue of personal prejudice or discrimination," Roberts said. "It is not an issue that can be defined any way else, but as a moral choice. Therefore, it would be hard to rationalize that to oppose an issue that is clearly against God's law as being an expression of bigotry."

"Homosexuality is not singled out by biblical Christians," Patterson agreed. "All sexual behavior or even contemplation of such outside of biblical marriage is viewed in the Bible as destructive and, therefore, sinful."

### Proposed amendment "necessary"

Although the statement did not specifically address the issue of a proposed constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union between one man and one woman, Akin called the passage of such a measure a "necessity."

Roberts noted, "It is clear in the minds of many people in America today that they do not understand the true meaning of marriage. It should therefore be clarified once and for all in our national law."

The statement calls on Southern Baptists to join in presenting "the watching world a bold witness to God's glory in marriage."

"There is always hope," Kelley said. "Our responsibility, however, is not to stem the tide. Our responsibility is to bear faithful witness to God and His ways and never, never, never give up laboring for righteousness."

## Proposed resolution affirms public education

Petros, Tenn. (ABP)—While a proposed resolution asking Southern Baptists to remove their children from public schools is getting widespread media attention, another resolution is being proposed in support of public education.

The opposing statements will be considered by the Southern Baptist Convention's Resolutions Committee when it meets in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting June 15-16 in Indianapolis.

The resolution proposed recently by T.C. Pinckney of Virginia and Bruce Shortt of Texas asks Southern Baptists to remove their children from "godless" and "anti-Christian" public schools. "Just as it would be foolish for the warrior to give his arrows to his enemies, it is foolish for Christians to give their children to be trained in schools run by enemies of God,"

the proposal states.

Although previous resolutions submitted to the Resolutions Committee have called for withdrawal from public schools, such proposals have not yet survived committee scrutiny for presentation to messengers.

However, widespread publicity about the Pinckney/Shortt proposal prompted Tennessee pastor Jim West to offer a counterproposal that calls for Southern Baptists to "affirm the American public education system" and to encourage members "to participate actively in the life of society so that they may indeed perform the dual functions of salt and light."

West, pastor of First Baptist Church of Petros, Tenn., said he is concerned about the impression created by Pinckney and Shortt's resolution.

"The public at large will think that the majority of Baptists are thinking about removing their children from public schools," he said. "I don't think a lot of Baptists will pull their kids out of public school just because a resolution is passed at the convention."

West's proposed resolution affirms "the hundreds of thousands of Christian men and women who teach in our public schools" and encourages "our youngsters to consider the teaching profession as a possibility that in it they may well be answering the call of God."

It notes that Southern Baptists "are devoted to missions and the call of Christ to be salt and light in a world desperately in need of both" and that "Southern Baptists take seriously the Great Commission and its requirement that we go into all the world."

## Poll: Discipleship top need among church members

Nashville (BP)—LifeWay Christian Resources asked 16,000 people: What do you need?

Their replies signaled a need to be discipled.

LifeWay surveyed adults and youth attending 29 conferences and events sponsored by the Southern Baptist entity last year about what kind of help they need from their churches. The top need expressed by both groups was help with personal needs—spiritual, emotional, physical and social.

In a previous survey of 1,500 pastors and ministers of education inquiring about the purposes of their churches' discipleship ministries, the leaders indicated that many of the personal needs cited by their members could be addressed through discipleship studies.

In the survey of 16,000 people, respondents were asked: In which three areas could you most use help from your church?

The choices were: church; education/learning; home and family/relationships; personal needs (spiritual, emotional, physical, social); world/culture; work/school.

Personal needs ranked first with both adults and youth. The second highest response for adults was home and family/relationships; for youth, work/school. Third for adults was education/learning; for youth, home and family/relationships.

"Both adults and youth place home and family/relationships as top areas in which they could use some help," said LifeWay's Scott McConnell, who directed the survey.

The latest figures from the Annual Church Profile, compiled by LifeWay from local church reports routed through Baptist associations and state conventions, show that more than 2 million Southern Baptists are enrolled in some sort of discipleship study.

"A church might call this ministry area discipleship, or they might call it small-group studies, equipping studies, personal growth studies, video studies or any number of names," McConnell said, "But it's still about helping individuals grow in their relationship with and knowledge of Christ."

In the earlier survey of Southern Baptist church leaders, 69 percent said a purpose of their discipleship ministry was to inspire and motivate people in their Christian walk. Sixty-three percent said it was to provide opportunity for discussion; 61 percent said to encourage personal daily Bible reading/study; 57 percent said to foster life application; and 56 percent said to train people to share the gospel.

### BAPTIST DIGEST

**Sloan retains Baylor post on 18-17 vote.** Baylor University President Robert Sloan narrowly retained his position May 14 when the school's regents voted 18-17 against asking for his resignation. The vote was a significant shift from last September when board members voted 31-4 to affirm Sloan's leadership. His critics cite the university's financial troubles, including a costly building campaign and growing debt.

**American Baptists, CBF hold joint meeting.** Regional groups of the American Baptist Churches USA and the Cooperative Baptist

Fellowship recently held a joint meeting in New Hampshire, marking a new level of involvement between the two organizations. The American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire and the Baptist Fellowship of the Northeast held a joint annual convention May 7-8 in Manchester, N.H. Participants donated more than \$10,000 in a special offering for the Baptist World Alliance, an international Baptist organization the Southern Baptist Convention is expected to withdraw from and defund in a vote during next month's SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis.

**BGCT to ask university to rescind action.** The Baptist General Convention of Texas is expected to ask Houston Baptist University to rescind its new "fraternal relationship" with the conservative Southern Baptists of Texas Convention because the relationship "violates the spirit and intent" of the BGCT's longstanding agreement with the university. The Christian Education Coordinating Board, which represents the BGCT to Baptist colleges in the state, also voted May 17 to escrow most BGCT funds for the Houston school. Both proposals will be presented this week to the BGCT Executive Board.

## Costs not prohibitive for screenings, leaders say

By Ken Walker  
State Correspondent

Frankfort—The perceived costs of criminal background checks might inhibit some churches from screening potential staff or volunteers, but researching the background of Kentucky residents can be done for little or no cost.

The pretrial services division of the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts charges only \$10 per person for criminal background checks, according to spokesperson Leigh Anne Hiatt.

The screening is free when it is for any individual working with youth, whether in churches, schools or day care facilities, Hiatt said.

But, she added, the state agency requires third-party notification, meaning the individual being reviewed will receive a copy of the court history along with a statement of who requested it.

The form to request background checks can be obtained from the judicial agency by calling (800) 928-6381. It also can be

downloaded from the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Web site, [www.kybaptist.org/backgroundcheckform](http://www.kybaptist.org/backgroundcheckform).

"It's a big plus," Wendy Dever, preschool and children's associate for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, said of the free service for screening youth and children's volunteers.

"This issue is out there and churches are starting to recognize the potential danger."

### Kentucky or national check?

When it comes to a potential staff member coming from another state, a church must run a nationwide criminal check.

But Guy Futral, KBC pastoral ministries consultant, said that isn't as challenging as it might sound.

"Some people say, 'We're not going to do that. We know our people, they've been here for 20 years,'" Futral said. "But they don't know what a background check is; they think it involves more than it does. It's just a check of court re-

cords. It doesn't involve interviews or other (procedures)."

Karl Babb of the state convention's leadership development team said numerous agencies can handle such checks.

### Finding screening companies

He advised that churches run an Internet search or contact an attorney for recommendations. In the case of credit checks, Babb said congregations can obtain names from a banker.

"They should find sources that are most comfortable to them," Babb added.

Jim Donnell, director of administrative services for the KBC, said companies that run background checks can also conduct credit and other screenings. He said the company the state convention uses charges \$31 per person for criminal records checks.

It also is possible for a church to run a credit check, said Shari Rogers, KBC assistant director for administrative services.

She said her office set up a sim-

ple release form with blanks for the applicant's name, signature, Social Security number, address, and a previous address if he or she relocated in the past three years.

With that information, a church can contact a recognized credit bureau to run a check. While sources on the Internet start at \$9.95, Rogers said the cost for credit checks averages \$30 per name.

Churches can get overly concerned about the cost of screening, Futral said, but in the case of volunteers that is often a one-time expense.

He also pointed out that most churches only do a background check for one person they're most interested in, not for every serious candidate.

Even if a smaller church had to screen 10 volunteers as a safeguard, the expense would be minimal compared to the cost of a serious problem, Futral added.

"If they realized the value to themselves, \$300 or \$400 would be a drop in the bucket compared to a liability assessment."

**"This issue is out there and churches are starting to recognize the potential danger."**

Wendy Dever, preschool and children's associate for the Kentucky Baptist Convention,

## Advisers, insurers urge background checks for staff, volunteers

Continued from page 1

Although the highly-publicized sex abuse scandals in the Catholic church have raised awareness about the need for background checks, most churches in America don't do them.

James Cobble, Jr., co-author of "Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church," said almost 70 percent do little to screen volunteers.

But approximately 3,500 churches each year face an allegation of child sexual abuse, said Cobble, executive director of Christian Ministry Resources in Matthews, N.C.

In Kentucky, Futral estimates that half of KBC churches don't do background checks, either for staff members or volunteers.

### Reasons for resistance

Resistance is rooted in two factors, according to Karl Babb, leader of the state convention's leadership development team.

One is a trust issue; members reason if a person is called of God, then unseemly issues won't be a problem, he said.

The second is the reluctance of churches to acknowledge a pastor or staff member had problems for fear of being sued or appearing to pass judgment on that person, Babb said.

As for volunteers, Babb said churches argue they know their members, think such a problem wouldn't happen in their community or fear losing potential helpers.

Instituting a new screening procedure might be complex and touchy, but Babb warned that churches must consider the serious, long-term implications.

"Churches have to realize they're not exempt any more," Babb said.

"They're going to be held accountable for their actions, or lack of action."

In addition, churches soon might have no choice.

### Some insurers require screenings

Wendy Dever, preschool and children's associate for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, said the insurance company for her church, First Baptist of Middletown, already requires them to screen employees and volunteers who work with children or youth.

That insurance company, Guide One, is one of the largest insurers of churches in the nation, according to Dave Amole, an agent in Lexington.

Amole, owner of Amole Insurance Services, said Guide One recently instituted the requirement in an effort to take a proactive role because of increasing numbers of claims in that area.

The policy means that if a church isn't willing to screen, it won't be covered for sexual misconduct claims even if it has insurance for property and general liability.

"I don't know if other companies will require it," Amole said. "I know the trend is for insurers to try to get a handle on this to minimize the risks associated with churches."

"This is one area of risk that, quite honestly, has been ignored for a long time," he added. "Any warm body can go in and work in the nursery, and that's just not a good situation."

Rather than object to this type of screening, Dever said churches should be willing to go further than other agencies.

For example, Jefferson County schools require staffers and volunteers to undergo background checks before accompanying children on a field trip.

"It says so much to a (potential member) when you can say the church does background checks," Dever said. "It says, 'We care about children.'"

An attorney for the firm that handles legal matters for the KBC said the first step in instituting checks is for the church to adopt a blanket policy.

### Consistency a key

Screening all staff members and volunteers who work with children protects the church from claims that it discriminates in the process, said Shannon Hamilton of Stites & Harbison.

Churches should get written permission for both criminal and credit checks and decide in advance what items will result in automatic disqualification for a position, Hamilton said.

A candidate who pleaded guilty to drunken driving 40 years ago at the age of 18 and has had a clean record since might not deserve to be turned away, she said.

But churches might not want to hire someone who has a recent record of reckless driving if that job requires a lot of driving, Hamilton said.

While congregations don't like to acknowledge it, there is an element of business involved, the attorney said.

"When you put a new foyer in the church, you want to make sure it's not so slippery that folks are slipping ... and breaking their legs and arms," Hamilton said.

"That same philosophy applies to people in hiring and people it's putting out as volunteers. As a business decision, these checks are becoming more and more common for churches."

One reason for this increase is because of a decade-old Kentucky Supreme Court decision.

The case involved a department store that failed to screen a janitor



who had an extensive history of sexual assault charges.

The court ruled that the company was liable for "negligent hiring" after the man attacked a female employee, Hamilton said.

Sometimes, churches are reluctant to institute a screening policy, Babb said, thinking that if they fail or forget to follow the policy once it might make them liable to a lawsuit.

"The fact is you'll be liable without a policy," Babb said.

"A lot of the struggle is because of the family-church model, where everyone knew everyone," he added. Some people "feel like we shouldn't have to do this. But in the type of world we live, we have to do it."

With additional reporting by Rudy Larini for Religion News Service.

## WESTERNRECORDER

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

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## Preachers, politics and the IRS

By Michael Clingenpeel

There's a presidential election this November. Maybe you haven't noticed it yet, seeing as how you're probably in the midst of 40 days of purpose or Dr. Adkins, in which case your mind has been on God or food. But if you read the newspaper or watch the news, you may notice that the Republicans and Democrats have a little contest going.

Even if you haven't sniffed a whiff of the campaign, the Internal Revenue Service has. The IRS recently issued an advisory to inform churches and clergy that they cannot engage in any partisan politics without jeopardizing the tax-exempt status of their church.

Every four years the routine advisory is issued. Every four years some overzealous or uninformed minister or church violates the rule.

If you want to know the IRS guidelines, they are available in IRS Publication 1828, Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations (www.irs.gov). Here's the operative paragraph:

"Under the Internal Revenue Code, all section 501(c)(3) organization are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. ... Violation of this pro-

hibition may result in denial or revocation of tax-exempt status and the imposition of certain excise tax."

The IRS guidelines are very specific. Pastors may endorse a candidate as long as they speak for themselves and make it clear that their views do

not represent those of the church. They cannot make partisan political comments in official church publications or at official church functions.

Churches do not violate IRS guidelines when they distribute voters' guides, as long as the guides are designed to educate voters about candidates' stands on issues and are not for the purpose of favoring or opposing a specific candidate. Churches also are permitted to hold voter registration or get-out-the-vote drives, as long as they are non-partisan.

Some Americans consider the IRS code, originally adopted in 1954, to be a violation of religious free exercise and free speech, two guarantees of the First Amendment of the Constitution. A North Carolina congressman, in fact, offered a legislative remedy to the IRS code called the Houses of Worship Political Speech Protection Act.

Wisely, in 2002 the U.S. House of Representatives defeated this ill-conceived bill 239-178.

The IRS guidelines against parti-

san political activity by churches do not rob any individual or congregation of free speech or free exercise. They allow clergy to address moral and public issues from their pulpits, and to participate in political campaigns as private citizens. They allow churches freedom to learn about public issues or, if they feel deeply enough about a specific candidate, to forgo their tax exemption in order to champion an individual candidate for public office.

Pastors and churches demonstrate the restraint of Esau when they barter their prophetic role for bumper stickers and campaign buttons. God is not the mascot of the Republicans or Democrats. Nor is God the campaign manager for George W. Bush or John Kerry. The United States is not the Kingdom of God on earth.

Read Luke's account of the early church in Acts for an example of apostles who understood that they did not follow Jesus in order to sign on as Pharisees, Sadducees, emperor-worshippers or empire-builders. Their allegiance was to a Lord before whom every knee eventually would bow. Their community was as much eternal as temporal.

Your vote is important. It is a precious responsibility. Christians should be involved in the political process. Be wise, however, in the way you march into the public square.

Michael Clingenpeel is editor of the Virginia Baptist Religious Herald

## COMMENTARY

## In the world, not of it

After reading in the May 18 issue of the Western Recorder that the Southern Baptist Convention is being asked to consider a resolution urging Southern Baptists to remove their children from public schools, I had to ask myself, "What's next?" Will Baptists be asked to quit their jobs in the secular marketplace because sin is rampant there too?

If Christians withdraw from the

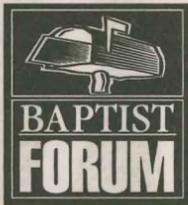
world, how will the world be reached with the good news of Jesus Christ? I believe the better approach is to teach our children to be salt and light in a world that is so desperately in need of God.

In Jesus' prayer in John 17:15-18, He says, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the

world." If what Jesus says matters anymore, perhaps we should do just the opposite of the proposed resolution because He has sent us into the world. If we go to the world, God will protect us from the evil one.

This letter is not meant to be critical of anyone who has their children in private school. Public school is not the best thing for every child. However, things will certainly not improve if all Christians pull out. See also Matthew 5:13-16. Be salt and light.

Jeff Story  
Lexington



## Rose Hill celebrates 50 years

Rose Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Ashland celebrated its 50th anniversary May 16. It was a privilege for my wife, Kay, and me to be a part of this wonderful day.

Sponsored by Pollard Baptist Church in 1954, Rose Hill has grown to a membership of more than 1,800 people and has a strong commitment to local missions and evangelism. Since 1972, the church has sponsored six mission congregations that have constituted as churches.

In addition, the church has led an aggressive bus ministry with eight buses under the direction of Mike Heacock and Mike Williams. In order to minister to the community, the church constructed a new children's educational wing in 1977 and started a day care ministry. The Rose Hill Christian School was launched in 1980 and has grown to have more than 300 students enrolled.

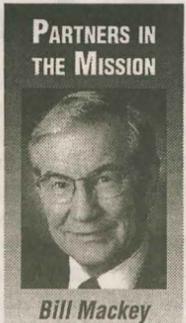
Charles "Chuck" Stewart, the

church's pastor from 1964-1994, attributes much of the growth to faithful members and dedicated staff.

He likes to tell the story of Clayton Carroll's passion to see people come to Christ. When Clayton discovered that he had four months to live, he wrote letters to 16 unsaved friends urging them to receive Christ and meet him in heaven. Stewart delivered all 16 letters. Fifteen of the men have since trusted Christ.

Dorothy Robinette started the Rose Hill Woman's Missionary Union in 1964. The focus on missions education and ministries has become one of the strongest among Kentucky churches. A special building has been constructed and dedicated to WMU ministries.

The church also has been involved in the ministries of Greenup Baptist Association and the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Last year, the church contributed \$63,806



Bill Mackey

## CHURCH

## Is weekly offering a worshipful time for your church?

By Doug Strader

In many Baptist churches the offering time gives the appearance that it is not related to the rest of the service.

Often nothing is said to prepare the worshippers for the offering, nor does the offering time appear to be anything special. Sometimes it

appears to be an afterthought like: "Oh, by the way, we need to receive an offering."

How can you make the offering time a more worshipful time in your church? Is the offering time to be a worshipful time? Or is it just something that we have been doing the same way as long as anybody can remember, therefore we need to keep up the tradition?

The offering time should be one of the most meaningful and worshipful times of the service. That is the time when we are giving back to God a portion of what He has given us the past week. We are offering our best to God our Father because we love Him and we are seeking to be obedient to His Word. Therefore we should make this time as worshipful as possible.

Several years ago, Talmage Williams wrote a book titled, "The Worshipgiver." It includes a section with "giving statements" that can be used during the preparation time for the offering. Williams listed 52 statements, one for each Sunday of the year. Each statement includes a Scripture related to giving or stewardship. That is followed by a two- or three-sentence idea related to the Scripture on such topics as Christ's sacrificial gift or God's generous blessings to us.

We have been using these statements since the first of the year in our morning worship service. The statements have caused us to focus on the offering, why we give an offering and how we should give our offerings to God.

This is not the only way to help make your offering time more worshipful. Another approach is to have someone give a personal testimony about the joy and blessings of giving to God.

You can come up with your own ways to make your offering time more worshipful. How you do it is not as important as the fact that you are consciously making an effort to see that your congregation truly worships when they give their offering to God.

Doug Strader, retired director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's stewardship department, is pastor of Farmdale Baptist Church in Louisville



## Should single adults spend time searching for a soulmate?

**Q: As a single adult, I long to find my "soulmate." How do I know when I meet him?**

In the words of the 1960s TV show, *Lost in Space*, "Danger, Will Robinson!" You should know that the term "soulmate" is of ancient Greek origin, not from the Bible. It is the belief that eternal souls roam the universe in search of their "other half." Single people with this philosophy often find themselves looking for "a needle in a haystack," wondering why they are lonely.

A recent cover story in a national psychology magazine warned that this idea is the curse of many marriages. As couples move past the "falling in love" stage, they often get into a cycle of getting out of the marriage and starting over again and again in search of that elusive "other half."

Better than a soulmate, one should look for a "goal mate." Marriage is a commitment to move in the same direction together and be a blessing to one another and to humanity. A Jewish rabbi recently wrote that if you can't answer "yes" to the following questions, you should not marry the person you are dating:

■ "Do I respect this person enough to want to be more like him or her?"

■ "If his or her personality and habits stay exactly as they are today, will I be happy 20, 30, 40 years from now?"

■ "Do we share common goals and priorities?" (Rabbi Kalman Packouz, [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com))

In the words of single adult expert Harold Ivan Smith, "What am I refusing to see about this person I am dating?" In the words of single adult Apostle Paul, "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

Consider the advice of Neil Clark Warren, author of "Finding the Love of Your Life," who says, "If your head and your heart disagree, listen to your head."

If you're single, keep your eyes and ears open to those who are going in the same direction as you. If you're married, "rejoice with the spouse of your youth." (See also Paul's words of wisdom in 1 Corinthians 7).—James Stillwell

**Q: What are some fun activities our family can enjoy together this summer?**

Many families will enjoy discovering and playing disc golf. The game is similar to regular golf except that players throw a flying disc instead of hitting a ball. Players must throw each shot from the spot where the previous shot landed until the disc lands in an elevated target consisting of a basket mounted on a pole. Almost anyone can play, from school age to old age. The equipment is relatively inexpensive and play usually is free at public parks. A round of disc golf takes only one to two hours. Find out more by clicking on [www.pdga.com](http://www.pdga.com). (Cedarmore Baptist Assembly has a terrific course.)

Orienteering can be a fun way to spend time together in God's outdoors. In orienteering, participants use a compass and a map to find their way from point to point on a trail that has been laid out in the woods. In Kentucky, call (502) 968-3212 for more information, or click on [www.bluegrasscomm.com/olou](http://www.bluegrasscomm.com/olou). You might also want to visit the United States Orienteering Federation Web site at [www.us.orienteering.org](http://www.us.orienteering.org).

"Play Your Way" is an ESPN fitness initiative designed to provide activities and resources that encourage lifelong physical activity. The program gives suggestions on games to play, places to play and stuff to play with, and focuses on physically active games. Play Your Way encourages parents to think back on active games they played as children and share them with their kids. Click on [teamespn.com](http://teamespn.com) for more information.—David Garrard

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## Should Baptists abandon public schools?

One of the strengths of Southern Baptist Convention business procedures is that any messenger can propose any resolution or motion on any subject. Of course, the drawback to that system is that any messenger can propose any resolution or motion on any subject.

Such is the case this year. A strident, 22-paragraph, anti-public school resolution has been recommended to the SBC Resolutions Committee for consideration.

Labeling public school education as "anti-Christian" and "officially godless," the proposal claims that "it is foolish for Christians to give their children to be trained in schools run by the enemies of God."

The proposal is the brainchild of former SBC second vice president T.C. Pinckney, editor of the fundamentalist Baptist Banner in Virginia, and attorney Bruce Shortt, the Texas coordinator of Exodus Mandate, an organization seeking to replace public schools with private Christian and home-school education.

On the positive side, it seems doubtful the Resolutions Committee will recommend such a measure—at least in its current form. While SBC messengers have adopted resolutions in recent years affirming the options of private Christian education and home schooling, they have not taken a stand against public school education.

SBC President Jack Graham, a strong supporter of private Christian schools, said he is confident the 2004 Resolutions Committee will recommend resolutions "that best reflect the heart of Southern Baptists." He added, however, that "I doubt the SBC will approve a statement which urges parents to remove their students from public schools."

And they shouldn't. In the same year that SBC

messengers likely will (wrongly) determine that the Baptist World Alliance isn't politically and theologically narrow enough to warrant the SBC's ongoing support and involvement, we certainly don't need to also abandon our public schools—which need and deserve the positive influence of Christian teachers and students.

As the SBC grows more exclusive, it gradually will jeopardize its opportunity to influence and impact society with the gospel.

The Apostle Paul declared, "I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." Doesn't sound much like pulling back from engaging society, does it?

It was Christ Himself who urged His followers to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." Should we hide our Christian influence under a bushel by clois-

tering ourselves from the culture? No.

While commending Christian public school teachers "who labor as missionaries to unbelieving colleagues and students," Shortt said Christian youth are not ready for such responsibility. I beg to differ. What better place to learn to live out their Christian commitment than among peers on a daily basis?

Yes, there are problems with many of our public schools. But abandoning them is not the answer. Yes, Christian schools and home schooling are the best options for some students and parents. But it should remain a choice, not a mandate.

Tennessee Baptist pastor Jim West has proposed an alternate resolution that calls on Southern Baptists to "affirm the American public education system" and encourages them "to participate actively in the life of society so that they may indeed perform the dual functions of salt and light." That sounds quite a lot like New Testament Christianity.

### STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

## Same-sex 'marriage' no longer make believe

By Richard Land

Nashville (BP)—Courtesy of a wrong-headed decision by Massachusetts' highest court to permit homosexuals to "marry," the United States has been pushed to the verge of a constitutional and cultural crisis.

Same-sex "married" partners will be rushing back to their home states with a newly minted Bay State marriage license in hand. Under the U.S. Constitution's Full Faith and Credit clause, other states in all likelihood soon will be forced by federal courts to recognize these Massachusetts marriages.

What was only recently relegated to the land of make-believe on television screens now is real world. By the edict of a state court, God's law has been set aside. Under years of extreme pressure from radical revisionists, God's designs for family and marriage have been torn asunder.

While God intended marriage to be a covenant between a man, a woman and Himself, the state of Massachusetts has shoved God out of the way and inserted itself in His place. This is a dangerous road we have chosen. Forget about the separation of church and state; we've allowed the state to co-opt the divine institution of marriage.

The push to legalize homosexual "marriage" lends credence to the myth that the focus of marriage is to be on the individuals' sexual welfare and the fulfillment of personal desires. Marriage, as God intends it,

is to be a union of one man and one woman where each is dedicated to the emotional, spiritual and physical welfare of the other and to the children produced by their union.

Rebellion is at the heart of human nature. Reflect on the travails of the Israelite people in the Old Testament. Consider that their digressions were most often driven by their desire for personal pleasure and fulfillment. Consider your foibles. Where are we all most tempted? To satisfy our own desires.

No matter the relationship, the tendency is to ask, "What's in it for me?" Far too often, Christians have done a poor job with their own marriages. Divorce is as common within the body of Christ as outside of it.

The decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to codify same-sex "marriage" is just another in an ever-growing list of ethical lapses in our world. Babies can be murdered before birth in any state in the union. A physician can help you take your life in Oregon. In 37 states, the government runs radio and television ads in a wildly successful attempt to use lotteries to separate taxpayers, many of them poor, from their desperately needed cash.

And that's just the legal stuff. It's enough to make your head spin.

Sunday morning, the worship service was grand. The choir's special music was stirring; the pastor hit it out of the park. Now, 24 hours later, what difference did it make? Or for that matter, what difference

did the service on the Sunday before make?

Are we really a changed people? Are we totally transformed? Or is our mind only partially renewed? As Christians, how can we be so quiet when God's plans for people and our nation are being trashed in the public square?

We chatter on about the weather, knowing full well we can't do anything about it, except carry an umbrella. But what aren't we talking about? We are being stalked by our shadows, which have witnessed our silence in the face of repeated assaults upon our faith and our families.

I used to think the church was sleeping and that someday something big would happen and we would all wake up and say, "Stop it now!" I still hope it will happen, but the hour is very late and the crisis is great.

My prayer is that God would convict our hearts and we would consider the desperate need for conviction and repentance. We serve a God who is merciful and slow to anger. In His compassion, He calls us to return to Him with a contrite heart (Joel 2:12-13).

This is the promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14. America will not be changed until His children focus on Him and Him alone. The hour is upon us. Before God, let us confess our sin and turn from our sinful ways and embrace His ways and let Him heal our land through spiritual revival.

Richard Land is president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

## Whelchel, skits share evangelism lessons at KBC event

**"I didn't realize how much people were watching."**

Former actress Lisa Whelchel

**FACTS OF LIFE** Lisa Whelchel gets expressive during the recent Women of Worth conference at Beacon Hill Baptist Church in Somerset. Approximately 550 people attended the conference, sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention.



Continued from page 1

Interspersed among prayer and worship were skits performed by two members of Beacon Hill Baptist Church that illustrated a common obstacle to evangelism. In the skits, one woman tried several ways to share the gospel but did not have positive results because she focused too much on the method and not enough on the needs of her friend.

"Was I the only one convicted by at least one of those skits?" Whelchel asked the audience. "Evangelism is not what you do, it's who you are."

Whelchel said she agreed that her approach in sharing the love of Christ is an illustration of lifestyle evangelism. "When I found out (the topic of the conference) I thought, 'Great, I'll be able to tell my stories.'"

The former Mouseketeer and sitcom star has many stories to tell. She said in filming the "Facts of Life" reunion movie, she found herself falling into the old habit of "bonding" with her co-stars by talking about others.

### Making a positive impact

After a gossipy phone call to absent cast member Nancy McKeon, Whelchel said she was unable to sleep because of feelings of guilt. "I think there are angels that just shake us awake sometimes," she said. "I'm so glad Jesus corrects those He loves."

Whelchel said after that night she was more careful about her conversations on the set. By the end of the shoot, cast and crew were commenting on what a pleasure it had been to work with someone so positive.

"I think I had more of an impact during that one month of filming (the movie) than I did the other nine years of the series," she said. "I didn't realize how much people were watching." The lesson, Whelchel said, is to "live your life before the Lord. He will speak through you very loudly."

Ramona Young of Winchester homeschools her two children and considers Whelchel a role model. "I love her and admire her so much," Young said. "It's so important for moms to be built up and strengthened."

Young's husband, Danny, had the day off from work and attended the conference with his wife even after he found out the audience would be overwhelmingly female.

He said his wife has spoken of Whelchel so often, "I feel like I'm meeting one of her friends. A lot of homeschooling moms get looked down on," he said. "It's good for them to have a role model."

Keva Noble of Hazard said she did not know what to expect when she came to the conference because her only impression of Whelchel was from her depiction of the snobbish, superficial Blair on "The Facts of Life."

"She has real problems like we all have," Noble said. "I thought her testimony was great. She's someone who saw her need for Christ."

Debbly Caskey of Danville waited to speak to Whelchel until there were just a few conference participants left. "This is the first time I ever went to one of these," Caskey said, holding a copy of Whelchel's book, "The Facts of Life and Other

Lessons My Father Taught Me."

"Your message spoke to my heart," Caskey told Whelchel as she signed the book.

Jennifer Kennedy Dean, founder of The Praying Life Foundation, led a pre-session study on "The Life Changing Power in the Name of Jesus."

"When anyone but (believers) say the name of Jesus, it's just a word, but when you say it, the spiritual realm snaps to attention," said Dean, who was speaking at her third WOW conference.

During the evening session, Dean put the study into action when she invited women to pray for "the prodigals" in their lives. Several women wept as Dean invoked the name of Jesus to pray on their behalf for lost friends and family members.

SoulReal, a women's vocal trio from Southeast Christian Church in Louisville shared in song. Shy Rice of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Louisville, opened the evening session with a sign language interpretation of the song "Come, Now Is the Time to Worship."



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Super Saturday relates to the leader training, networking and strengthening churches objectives of the Kentucky Baptists Connect emphasis.

Telling our story

Land sale shows challenge of separating facts, rumors

Many of you might have been keeping track with what has been happening with the Cedarmore property. As some of you might know, we are in the process of selling the unused property at Cedarmore. Let me stress, "unused."

Communicating with our fellow Baptists all across this state is one of the most difficult of our responsibilities. I always pray that people will know the reality of our camps, not the rumors about the camps. For many years, the future of Cedarmore has been in question. During the 1990s Kentucky Baptists voted to retain the camp as opposed to selling the whole property. Now our plans are very similar. We will keep the camps and seek to be the best stewards of our resources beyond the three camps. We believe the vast unused acreage would be much more beneficial by converting the property to cash to be invested in the camps and programs operated by our ministry.

This column is much too short to go into all the details, but I pray that each of you understand that

the Kentucky Baptist Assemblies board thoroughly researched and evaluated all scenarios to save the historic camp. For the past six years we have been faced with the problem of how to make Cedarmore work financially. I believe we are at a crossroads that requires our sacrifice as well as a step of faith into the unknown.

We are retaining all the land used for the main camp, Cedarcrest and RaBro, as well as a significant buffer zone. The proceeds of this sale will go directly to rebuilding Cedarmore and developing new programs to serve many people, from kids to senior adults. Our belief is that the best days

are still yet to come at Cedarmore. The process to rebuild and develop new programs will not be done overnight. In fact, it will take five to eight years to begin to see significant change. I ask for your prayers as well as your patience as we begin this new journey. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me. I would be glad to discuss this in detail.

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

KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



David Melber

Kudzu

Doug Marlette



For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Bible Crosswords

Janet W. Adkins

Across

- 1 Engrossed
- 5 "In God will I praise \_\_\_ word" (Psalm 56:10)
- 8 "The Lord came unto the prophet Gad, David's \_\_\_" (2 Samuel 24:11)
- 12 "Wilt thou \_\_\_ destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18:23)
- 13 "Of \_\_\_, the family of the Erites" (Numbers 26:16)
- 14 "He would not spend the time in \_\_\_" (Acts 20:16)
- 15 Seriously wound
- 16 "But it \_\_\_ thou" (Psalm 55:13)
- 17 "Rejoicing, so that the city \_\_\_ again" (1 Kings 1:45)
- 38 Chemical suffix
- 20 "Let my last \_\_\_ be like his!" (Numbers 23:10)
- 22 "There is nothing \_\_\_ for me" (1 Samuel 27:1)
- 25 "It is \_\_\_ a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44)
- 29 "They are vanity, and the work of \_\_\_" (Jeremiah 10:15)
- 30 "A soft \_\_\_ turneth away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1)
- 31 American Institute of Electronics, abbr.
- 32 Mine product
- 33 "His hands were \_\_\_ until the going down of the sun" (Exodus 17:12)
- 37 Girl's name
- 40 Exam taker
- 41 "It \_\_\_ fire and brimstone from heaven" (Luke 17:29)
- 42 Hot and cold beverage
- 43 "His master shall bore his ear through with an \_\_\_" (Exodus 21:6 NKJV)
- 44 "I will speak but this \_\_\_" (Judges 6:39)

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- 47 Agent, in other words, abbr.
- 49 Greek god of love
- 53 "Where the body of Jesus had \_\_\_" (John 20:12)
- 54 Confederate general
- 55 "And they \_\_\_ upon horses" (Jeremiah 6:23)
- 56 "Exceeding in \_\_\_ attire upon their heads" (Ezekiel 23:15)
- 57 "\_\_\_, of the Gentiles also" (Romans 3:29)
- 58 Spit out
- Down
- 1 "The \_\_\_ of consecration" (Exodus 29:27)
- 2 In the manner of, Fr.
- 3 Greek letter
- 4 Love apple
- 5 "Let them be \_\_\_ of wood" (Joshua 9:21)
- 6 "And \_\_\_ also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David" (2 Samuel 20:26)
- 7 The captain of Jabin's army (Judges 4:7)
- 8 "Unto Thyatira, and unto \_\_\_" (Revelation 1:11)
- 9 That, Sp.
- 10 One, Ger.
- 11 Old piece of cloth
- 19 The father of Abner (1 Samuel 26:5)
- 21 Girl's name
- 22 "Ye shall slay the \_\_\_" (Leviticus 20:15)
- 23 A descendant of 13-Across
- 24 "I see men as \_\_\_, walking" (Mark 8:24)
- 26 "For they had \_\_\_ with all their heart" (2 Chronicles 15:15)
- 27 Inspiring fear
- 28 "\_\_\_ not, nor be dismayed" (1 Chronicles 22:13)
- 34 "\_\_\_ unto my cry" (Psalm 17:1)
- 35 River in Scotland
- 36 "And this man went up out of his city \_\_\_" (1 Samuel 1:3)
- 37 "For our vines have tender \_\_\_" (Song of Solomon 2:15)
- 38 "There is one \_\_\_ for them" (Leviticus 7:7)
- 39 Tankers for refueling ships
- 44 "And a nourisher of thine \_\_\_ age" (Ruth 4:15)
- 45 "\_\_\_, my son, let us not all now go" (2 Samuel 13:25)
- 46 Business house, Fr. abbr.
- 48 Shoe width
- 50 "And \_\_\_ up their women with child" (2 Kings 8:12)
- 51 Poem
- 52 "Woe to the women that \_\_\_ pillows to all armholes" (Ezekiel 13:18)

Last week's solution

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| 44 | A | R | B  | O  | R  | T  | 46 | 47 | N  | U  | N  |    |   |   |
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## KBC class prescribes Holy Spirit for those in occult

### Witnessing tips

Interfaith witness specialist Bill Gordon offered seven suggestions for sharing one's faith with Wiccans:

- Don't misrepresent Wiccan beliefs.
- Realize the spiritual warfare involved.
- Use the Bible.
- Share your testimony.
- Explain the meaning of the gospel.
- Show how Jesus overcomes everything.
- Share the simple gospel.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention offers seminars on understanding other belief systems each spring and fall in conjunction with the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board.

For more information, contact the KBC church development/evangelism team toll-free at (888) 254-5722.

By Kasie Secrest  
Kentucky Baptist Convention

Louisville—Christians might be giving a nod to occult practices every day without even realizing it, according to an expert in the field.

Phrases such as "I'm getting a vibe," or "it's in the stars" roll off the tongue as easily as the Lord's Prayer for some, and many Christians peruse the horoscopes featured in many newspapers and magazines.

Occult activity is all around, said Bill Gordon, an interfaith evangelism specialist for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. Christians often unconsciously—and sometimes consciously—use language or practices associated with it.

Speaking at a recent workshop on the occult held at the Kentucky Baptist Convention building in Louisville, Gordon said the occult is not an organized religion but simply an area of interest in the secret, hidden or supernatural. The word "occult" means mysterious, concealed or hidden.

Occult practices might range from the extreme, such as spiritualism (calling the dead through séances, mediums, trance channeling or Ouija boards) to pop culture practices such as divination (fortune telling, psychics, palm reading, tarot cards).

Divination and astrology might seem hokey to the average person, but Gordon said any belief that creation, and not the Creator, controls human life is rebuked throughout Scripture.

Astrology, for example, is rooted in the belief that the sun, moon

and planets have a decisive influence on human life and destiny. Gordon said that people who participate in the occult often are seeking great power, which they believe they can find by seeking out hidden and supernatural things.

### What is Wicca?

One of the more popular forms of occult practice is Wicca, or modern witchcraft. Wicca shares many similarities with the New Age movement; both deny the reality of sin and view evil as simply being unenlightened. Adherents also believe in reincarnation and karma and that each person is divine.

Those involved in Wicca are involved in "magick" (spelled with a "k" to distinguish it from "magic" or sleight-of-hand illusions), conjuring up spells for use or for sale.

Jeff Eaton, pastor of Hope Com-

munity Church in Lawrenceburg, said he encounters Wiccans on a regular basis and has seen some become Christians.

"We didn't go looking for this ministry," explained Eaton, who offered insights into sharing the Christian faith with these individuals. He said those in the occult are drawn to the supernatural.

"They think they have more power than you," Eaton said, "(but) you have to trust that the Holy Spirit will show them more power than what they are already experiencing.

"The Holy Spirit is working on them even when you're not," Eaton noted. Wiccans know if they are being loved or condemned, he added.

The second greatest commandment, "love your neighbor as yourself," can be the best witness, he said. Confidence in one's faith in Christ also helps overcome fear of

occult practices, he said.

Eaton said those in the occult are seeking power in order to control. Christians should share about the uniqueness of Christ and His power, and stress Christ's authority over all spiritual forces. Christians also should pray and ask the Holy Spirit to lead them through encounters with occult practitioners, Eaton said.

Gordon added that Christians should remember that people who are drawn to occult practices are interested in all things spiritual or supernatural.

God falls into this category whether they realize it or not. The Holy Spirit is a spirit who is set apart, Eaton explained, but He is still a spirit.

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## Oneida fosters 'one main thing'

### Graduation a celebration of accomplishment for 38 seniors

Graduation 2004 is now history.

A few hours ago, 38 anxious seniors were seated in our chapel for our commencement service.

They had come to Oneida Baptist Institute from across Kentucky, nine other states and four foreign countries.

Three of them began their graduation journey in our kindergarten 13 years ago. While we are a boarding school for grades 6-12, we have grades K-5 for our faculty and staff children so they are on the same schedule as their parents.

On average, each senior had been at Oneida for about three and one-half years.

Nearly half of the senior class enrolled making mostly D's & F's. However, 50 percent of the class of 2004 earned advanced diplomas. Four in the class earned Commonwealth Diplomas!

During the service, I read portions of each graduate's essay written earlier.

The essays gave the seniors an opportunity to tell about their Oneida experiences and where they are spiritually. I would like to share some of what they said.

Joey wrote, "Oneida has fostered in me one main thing, and that is the reassuring message of the love and salvation provided by our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the story I have been told since birth; however, Oneida has allowed this message to be in the environment of my fellow students and me."

Cliff wrote, "My parents have been the big-

gest influence on my life. Whether I've turned out good or bad, they have always loved me and pointed me in the direction of God. ... I think I'll do fine after high school if I just let God lead me where He wants me to go."

Joy wrote, "Even though I didn't like Oneida at first, I realized that God had me here for a reason. God's plans aren't always my plans and I don't always understand them, but it is my job to fulfill them. ... God has taught me many lessons since coming to Oneida. ... Life can change completely in a matter of seconds, but God is always there. ... When God calls someone to do something, He gives him or her the strength to carry through with it."

Samrawit, one of our international students, wrote, "The main thing I have learned at Oneida is about God. I did not know much about the Bible before I came to Oneida. But when I came here I learned so many new things about the Bible."

One of our day students, Veronica, said, "OBI is definitely a unique school in the fact that it accepts students from all over the world, those who profess Christianity and those who don't. As different as we all may seem at first glance ... we were all designed by the same Creator, each with his own unique talents and gifts."

W.F. Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, Box 67, Oneida, KY 40972; [www.oneida-school.org](http://www.oneida-school.org); e-mail: [president@oneidaschool.org](mailto:president@oneidaschool.org)

### THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

## Hearts in the right place

### Tennessee brothers finish their first semester

Crossville, Tenn., brothers Paul and Kirk Kirkemide described their first semester at Clear Creek: "We have finally had a chance in our lives to do something for God and to help others. We asked a lot of questions and we are still a little 'rough around the edges,' but our hearts are in the right place. Thanks to Jesus."

For 20 years Paul and Kirk were "into drugs and alcohol quite a bit." Kirk started attending a mission and Paul decided to check it out.

"An old friend (2000 alumnus Ralph Reagan) was running it, a former drinking friend," Paul said. "He was helping Kirk, but I needed it even more."

At the end of his rope, Paul called on the Holy Spirit and for anybody who could help.

"I felt a calming experience, but it wasn't much of a life change," Paul recalled. "I wasn't doing any worse, but neither was I receiving any blessing."

At a funeral, he met a party friend from 25 years earlier.

"He was back home living on the farm and invited me to see him," Paul said. "I wanted to get

away from these former drug influences, but two days later I went and discovered he had been saved six years and prayed for me the whole time.

"We attended his home church, and I answered the altar call. I got on my knees and afterward I knew for sure about my salvation. Doors started opening; my life turned around. Baptized a week later and filled with the Holy Spirit, I knew I had a mission. I didn't know how it would come about, but I was out of the trap and here to help people."

Paul and Kirk played hand bells at a recent campus recital.

Kirk told me he has a sermon ready if a chapel speaker cancels.

"We're trying to be obedient," Paul said. "God must have a sense of humor to put us here after all these years. It's a tremendous change for us, but exciting to be learning so much. It's definitely not too late."

### CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

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

# 'If you welcome them...'

*Special-needs ministries driven by friendship and passion, leaders say*

By John Hall and Tony Cartledge  
Texas Baptist Standard &  
North Carolina Biblical Recorder

Tomball, Texas (ABP)—Starting a ministry to special-needs individuals is as simple as a smile, handshake or hug, according to several people who lead such efforts in their churches.

Parents of a disabled child often feel awkward in a church setting because they fear their child is bothering the rest of the congregation, said Michelle Guppy, a leader in the special-needs ministry of Graceview Baptist Church in Tomball, Texas.

Parents notice church members acting uncomfortable around their children, Guppy explained. Sensing this, many of the families choose not to attend church.

By greeting the child and touching his or her hand during conversation, church members go a long way to overcoming the discomfort, she said.

"As a parent, all they want is to feel welcome," said Guppy, the mother of a 10-year-old autistic boy. "We're not going to church to be healed but to be welcomed. We want to go somewhere our children will be welcomed, and someone will tell them about Jesus."

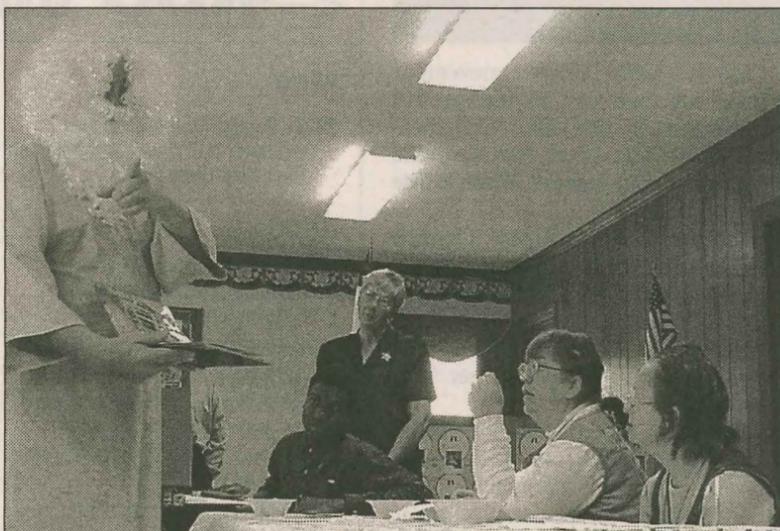
Many special-needs families know each other, Guppy said. When a church welcomes one of the children, word quickly spreads to other families that the congregation wants to minister to the special-needs population.

"If you welcome them, they will come," Guppy said. "They're out there."

Graceview Baptist members did more than welcome special-needs individuals—they sought them out. Program director Denise Briley followed the special-education school bus to each home in the community to enlist participants.

## Smiles Class

At Antioch Baptist Church in Heathsville, N.C., a 161-year-old rural congregation, the traditional members fit easily into three small Sunday school classes. But the fel-



**SMILES CLASS** Carolyn Vick, center, and her son Ernie lead the class for special needs adults at Antioch Baptist Church in Heathsville, N.C. Michelle Guppy, the mother of a 10-year-old autistic boy in Tomball, Texas, said, "We want to go somewhere our children will be welcomed and someone will tell them about Jesus."

lowship hall now overflows with the new "Smiles Class." The church began an outreach to developmentally delayed adults from group homes and families in the area. And, like Graceview Baptist, the North Carolina congregation sought out participants.

Pastor Joy Heaton approached LIFE Inc., which operates 30 residential care facilities for developmentally delayed adults in Eastern North Carolina, about ministry opportunities with residents.

Before Antioch began the Smiles Class, the special-needs residents occasionally visited other churches but had no regular place to go or targeted program of religious education. "Usually I have to go out and hunt places and ask if we can come," said Charles Jack of LIFE. "So we very much appreciate the ministry offered by the church."

On an average Sunday, a dozen residents, accompanied by several caretakers, make their way to the Smiles Class, presided over by Carolyn Vick, whose interest led to the formation of the class.

The youngest class member is 23, the oldest is in her 50s.

The class always includes a time for singing that is as joyful as it is off-key and often includes hand motions. There are Bible stories, refreshments and crafts. While the class members are appreciative, the blessings go both ways, Vick said. "They've done our hearts so good."

At First Baptist Church in Longview, Texas, all the special-needs individuals—ages 10 to 75—are in one group to begin Sunday school. They sing songs and do hands-on activities such as crafts and plays. Then the group divides into smaller classes.

## "Teach them God loves them"

Dale Sage, founder of the special-friends ministry, tries to put individuals into classes of people that are the same age and learning ability. Those who can sit through the worship service do, she said. The group tends to sit together with the teachers, who can help when needed.

Sage admits it is difficult to know how much each person comprehends, but she said she believes they need to know God loves them. "We feel strongly that it is not teaching them the Bible story or a memory verse that is important," she said. "We believe it is most important to teach them God loves them."

Sage tries to recruit leaders from among area public-school teachers, who receive state training in handling special-needs individuals. But she also trains those with a passion for helping disabled individuals.

Finding a church that ministered to her autistic son was a blessing to her whole family, said Michelle Guppy of Graceview Baptist.

"It brought the joy back," she said. "We've been blessed with faith through our journey."

## Graham's latest surgery might postpone Kansas City crusade

By Adelle Banks  
Religion News Service

Asheville, N.C. (RNS)—Evangelist Billy Graham underwent surgery May 20 to stabilize a pelvic fracture as organizers of his crusade that was scheduled for June in Kansas City, Mo., considered the possibility of postponing the event.

"Reverend Graham is doing great," said Michael LeCroy, orthopedic traumatologist, in a statement after the procedure. "He's in great spirits and recovering nicely. The procedure was successful in accomplishing our goals."

Graham underwent a "minimally invasive" surgery that took an hour under spinal anesthesia at Mission Hospitals in Asheville, N.C., the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association announced.

He was hospitalized May 14 after he fractured his pelvis in a fall at his home.

Halfway across the country, organizers of the crusade scheduled for June 17-20 in Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium announced their plans to move ahead with the event, even if it has to be delayed.

"Over the next week we will explore every option, including alternative dates," Richard Hastings, chairman of the crusade and CEO of St. Luke's Health System in Kansas City, said in a statement.

The goals of the surgery, LeCroy and other doctors said, were to ensure that the socket of the hip joint is held in place during healing to prevent any further displacement and to help alleviate pain during recovery. The procedure will allow Graham to begin physical rehabilitation immediately.

Before his recent injury, the evangelist had been recovering well from partial hip replacement surgery he had in January. Graham had planned to visit London during the week of May 24 to note the 50th anniversary of a 12-week crusade held there in 1954.

"They're having a celebration next week, commemorating that anniversary and Mr. Graham had planned to make a surprise visit over there," Larry Ross, Graham's spokesman, said.

Organizers of Graham's next crusade at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif., July 29-Aug. 1, were expected to meet soon to discuss how Graham's injury might impact that event.

If the Kansas City crusade is postponed, various contracts must be renegotiated and revised once a new date is determined, according to Mike Whitehead, legal counsel for the crusade committee.

"The June 17 date provided a very short lead time to prepare for the crusade," Whitehead noted. "A postponement for Dr. Graham's recuperation will provide extra time to permit more prayer and more participation by Kansas City-area churches and ministries."

Kansas City crusade planners were unanimous in their agreement to move ahead with the event, Hastings noted.

"Billy Graham has expressed his burden and passion for coming to Kansas City, and we want to reiterate our commitment to him, by giving him time to get well," he said. "We very much want him to come and preach—even if he has to sit in a chair."

With additional reporting by Baptist Press

## 92-year-old Byron Nelson known by peers for more than golf

By Art Stricklin  
Baptist Press

Irving, Texas (BP)—Golf's greatest players turned out to play in the EDS Byron Nelson Championship in mid-May in honor of the tournament's namesake, 92-year-old Byron Nelson.

But more important than Nelson's many achievements in the sport, including his 11 straight victories in 1945, is his legendary faith and the way he expresses it to anyone who will listen.

"If you ask him, he'd probably say his faith and his life after golf is even more important than all his golf records," PGA golfer Duffy Waldorf said.

This year, like every Byron Nel-

son tournament for the last seven years, the golfing legend hosted the PGA Tour Bible study at the headquarters hotel and gave his own testimony of what Jesus has meant in his life.

"I've been a Christian almost my entire life and my faith has meant everything to me," Nelson said. "My faith and my wife and this tournament have kept me alive for the last 20 years."

"My faith helped me in the hardest time, when my [first] wife died with a stroke."

Nelson said his faith and his clean lifestyle without smoking or alcohol or tobacco has helped him remain active, alert and immersed in tournament details.

"I remember the first time I saw him at the tour Bible study six or seven years ago, how awesome it was to see somebody who was a legend living out his faith like that," PGA Tour veteran Bob Estes said.

Nelson noted that in his era the PGA Tour had less money but more camaraderie among the players. He said he was determined to maintain his Christian faith and his moral beliefs in everything he did.

One year a large tobacco company asked Nelson to represent its product, a common occurrence in those days. He briefly took their money, but within days began to think about what it would do for his image. He returned all the money and asked the company to

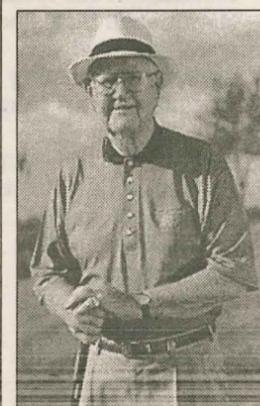
withdraw all photos of him.

"I didn't want one person to think I was a smoker or stood for something I didn't. My faith is important to me," he said.

Nelson regularly attends most services at his church and he helps out with special projects. His schedule at age 92 would tire men half his age.

"It's great to stay involved and stay active," Nelson said. "It's great seeing these players at the Bible study and showing their faith. That's what it's all about."

Pro golfer Paul Stankowksi added: "It's great he always comes to our study, but that just shows he's a neat man. I hope he's able to come to many more."



Byron Nelson

## PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following ministries throughout Kentucky:

■ **McKee Baptist Church.** The McKee church recently sponsored the theatrical production, "Heaven's Gate and Hell's Fire" for its community. Approximately 1,450 people attended this evangelistic production, and 112 people made first-time professions of faith. Another 37 people rededicated their lives to Christ and five people already have joined the church. Pray for Pastor Ron Maharrey, Director of Missions Bill Nichols and many others as they follow up and disciple the new believers.

■ **Kentucky Motor Speedway in Sparta.** Chaplain John Roberts serves at the track where more than 400,000 race fans will visit this summer. In addition to prayer before the races, Roberts leads and coordinates worship services and a variety of evangelistic efforts each week. Many more volunteers are needed, so pray that God will send believers who are willing to give a weekend or a day ministering with Roberts at the track. Pray also that God will honor their efforts and that they will see fruit from their labor.

■ **Mission Service Corps missionaries Ed and Wanda Lyons in Hopkinsville.** The Lyonses call Hopkinsville home, but they spend four or five months of the year ministering in Bagdad. They are volunteer coordinators and spend May through September recruiting other workers, coordinating schedules and assisting with the clean up, maintenance and camp program at Cedarmore Baptist Conference Center. Pray that they will have continued strength for the work and the assistance of additional volunteers this summer. Pray also that many young people will come to know Christ this year through the camp program.

## MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE—Barbara Dabney**, a member of Campbellsville Church, has been named 2004 Taylor County Woman of the Year.

Saloma Church has called **Kaleb Chowning** as interim music minister.

■ **CECILIA**—Cecilia Church called **J.T. Kirkpatrick** as pastor effective June 6.

■ **CORBIN**—Faith Church hosted four guests from Bryansk, Russia, May 16: **Gov. Yuri Lodkin**; **Mikhail Klarshstein**, administrative assistant to the governor; **Sergey Khokhlov**, pastor of Byezhitsa Baptist Church; and **Ludmila Tikhonova**, interpreter and international secretary for Byezhitsa Mission Center. Pastor **Bennie Bush** and **Shirley Rice** will accompany a mission team from First Church, London, to Bryansk in September.

■ **ELKTON**—Elkton Church recently called **Michael Cummings** as minister of youth and activities and **Casey Tindle** as director of music and education. **Jerry Tracy** is pastor.

■ **GRAND RIVERS**—Grand Rivers

Church's interpretive movement team will perform an interpretive movement to the song "God Bless the USA" June 4 at the Nashville Sounds baseball game. **Wade White** is youth minister.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Cloverleaf Church will host the **Melody Boys** in concert June 3, 7 p.m. For more information, call (502) 367-0218.

Crescent Hill Church recently honored **Helen Graves** on her 90th birthday.

Midlane Park Church will begin **The Upper Room** June 4, 7 p.m., a weekly Christian coffeehouse featuring special guests and live music every Friday. For more information, visit [www.midlaneparkbaptist.org](http://www.midlaneparkbaptist.org) or call (502) 491-7966.

■ **PADUCAH**—Olivet Church has called **Chris Prescott** as minister of youth and activities. **Tommy Tucker** is pastor.

■ **SONORA**—First Church recently called **Billy McClure** as interim youth minister. **James Hill** is pastor.

## Volunteers give Cedar Crest 'facelift'

Bagdad—Cedar Crest, built 40 years ago by Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union on the grounds of Cedarmore Baptist Conference Center, got a recent "facelift" for its 40th anniversary.

Sixty-nine volunteers took part in a May 10-15 work week sponsored by Kentucky WMU at Cedar Crest. Jerry Butcher, a Mission Service Corps missionary from Franklin, coordinated the project.

Volunteers painted, cleaned, trimmed trees, spread mulch and delivered new tables to each cabin. Shelby Baptist Association churches donated new curtains for the camp's 11 cabins.

Cedar Crest "continues to be a special place for girls to experience missions camping in the summer," noted Kentucky WMU Executive Director Joy Bolton. "From the build-

ing of the first six cabins and dining hall, Cedar Crest has grown to 11 cabins, dining hall, service building, swimming pool and the Martha Ware Chapel."

During the summer at Cedar Crest, Kentucky WMU sponsors Mission Adventure Camp for girls who have completed grades 4-10 and weekend Mother/Daughter Overnights for girls in grades 1-3. WMU also sponsors overnight events at Jonathan Creek for mothers and daughters, Girls in Action and leaders and Acteens and leaders.

Kentucky WMU currently is raising funds for additional improvements at Cedar Crest. Projects include adding eaves and replacing the roof on Ware Chapel, replacing bunk beds, repairs to the swimming pool and upgrading electrical service to the cabins.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### May

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

10-12 Soak-a-City—Youth Evangelism Conference, Pikeville.

12 Church Weekday Education Seminar, Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington.

12-16 Mission Adventure Camp for Boys, grades 4-10, Campbellsville University.

14-18 Discovery Youth Week, Cedarmore.

14-18 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, Cedar Crest, grades 4-6.

14-18 Mission Adventure Camp for Boys, grades 4-10, Campbellsville University.

18-19 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Cedar Crest, grades 1-3.

19 Church Weekday Education Seminar, Living Hope BC, Bowling Green.

19-26 Kentucky Changers, Calloway.

19-26 Kentucky Changers, Hopkinsville.

20-27 All-State Youth Choir/Orchestra, Murray State University.

21-25 Discovery Youth Week, Cedarmore.

21-25 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, Cedar Crest, grades 4-6.

21-25 Mission Adventure Camp for Boys, grades 4-10, Campbellsville University.

25-26 Acteens Splash, Jonathan Creek, grades 7-12.

25-26 GA Overnight, Jonathan Creek, grades 4-6.

25-26 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Cedar Crest, grades 1-3.

25-26 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Jonathan Creek, grades 1-6.

25-26 Mission Adventure Camp, father/son overnight for boys, grades 1-3, Campbellsville University.

28-7/2 Discovery Youth Week, Cedarmore.

28-7/2 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, Cedar Crest, grades 4-6.

### July

2-5 Baptist Men on Mission wrangler trail ride, Land Between the Lakes State Park.

3-10 Kentucky Changers, Frankfort.

5-9 Discovery Youth Week, grades 7-9, Cedarmore Camp.

5-9 Mission Adventure Camp for Boys, grades 4-10, Campbellsville University.

5-9 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, grades 4-10, Cedar Crest Camp.

For more information, call (888) 266-6477 or visit [www.kybaptist.org](http://www.kybaptist.org)

## Kentuckians earn seminary degrees

Fort Worth, Texas—Five students with Kentucky ties were among 304 graduates at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's spring commencement May 7.

Kentucky graduates, their hometowns and degrees are:

**Andrew Cooper**, Lexington, master of arts in marriage and family counseling and master of arts in Christian education.

**Jonathan Lovelace**, Paducah, master of divinity.

**Matthew Mason**, Owensboro, master of divinity with biblical languages.

**Matthew Norton**, Irvington, master of divinity with biblical languages.

**Christopher Prescott**, Murray, master of arts in Christian education.

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**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](mailto:ddwilson@charter.net).

**SEEKING:** Full-time director of missions for Severns Valley Association of Baptists in central Kentucky. Resumés should be postmarked by June 30, 2004, and addressed to: DOM Search Committee, Severns Valley Association, PO Box 541, Elizabethtown, KY 42702-0541.

**SEEKING:** Part-time minister of music. Buechel Park Baptist Church is located in Louisville, Ky., and is affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. BPBC enthusiastically affirms the historic traditions of Baptist life. Responsibilities include worship planning, and leading adult and youth choirs. Send resumés to: Personnel Ministry Team, Buechel Park Baptist Church, 2403 Hikes Lane, Louisville, KY 40218.

**SEEKING:** DOM. Mineral Area Baptist Association's Director of Missions Search Committee is accepting resumés until July 1, 2004. Must support the Missouri Baptist Convention, the SBC and the 2000 BF&M. MABA DOM Search Committee, 5169 Flat River Road, Farmington, MO 63640-7404.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor. Send resumé to Ovesen Heights Baptist Church, PO Box 253, Hodgenville, KY 42748-0253.

**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](mailto:wbc1849@infionline.net).

**SEEKING:** Forest Park Baptist Church, located three blocks from Western Kentucky University, is in search of a full-time Minister of Music & Youth. Seminary education and/or prior experience is preferred. Loving congregation and excellent benefit package awaits interested candidates. Interested applicants may send resumé to: Minister of Music/Youth Search, Forest Park Baptist Church, 520 Old Morgantown Road, Bowling Green, KY 42101, Attn: David Morrow; or e-mail: [ForPrkBapt@aol.com](mailto:ForPrkBapt@aol.com).

**SEEKING:** Prayerfully seeking a full-time minister of children and youth. Correspond by calling Pastor Brad King at (859) 236-4956.

**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:** 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](mailto:GethsemaneBaptist@aol.com). This is a part-time position—benefits include salary and housing.

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# Real-life Samaritans

*Tiny biblical group seeks to grow while clinging to heritage*

By Michele Chabin  
Religion News Service

**Mount Gerizim, West Bank (RNS)**—Dressed in flowing robes of the type their ancestors wore thousands of years ago, the 670 people in the world who call themselves Samaritans gathered on this lonely mountain one evening in early May and celebrated the holiday of Passover.

At sunset in the small mountaintop village they call Kiryat Luza, the male heads of the various clans prayed and then cut the throats of 30 lambs as part of the Pascal sacrifice in accordance with the Book of Exodus.

For the remainder of the week, while the world below their mountain carried on its own routine, Samaritan children stayed home from school and their parents from their jobs. They ate special foods, including home-made matzah, or unleavened bread.

Despite the Samaritans' marking of Passover, the Sabbath and other rituals and observances similar to Judaism, Samaritans are not Jews but a distinct people. They are best known from the New Testament parable Jesus told of the Good Samaritan who came to the aid of a mugged and wounded traveler.

In contrast to Jews, who follow both the written law of the Torah as well as the oral law, the Samaritans adhere only to the five books of Moses.

## "Sons of Israelites"

Like Orthodox Jews, the Samaritans strictly observe the laws of circumcision, family purity and kosher dietary laws. They write in ancient Hebrew script, the language of their Torah, and pray in the ancient Hebrew dialect spoken by Jews through the first millennium A.D.

"Jews and Samaritans are both sons of the Israelites," says Israel Tzedaka, one of the Samaritans' much-honored elders, during the Samaritan Passover feast, which occurred a month after Jews celebrated the holiday.

Tzedaka lives in the Israeli town of Holon, as do roughly half the world's Samaritans. During holidays and family occasions, the Israel-based Samaritans travel to Kiryat Luza, where the community's other half resides on Mount Gerizim, in Palestinian territory just southwest



**REMNANT GROUP** Samaritan elders lead Passover festivities on the West Bank's Mount Gerizim in early May. Closely related to the Jews, the 670 remaining Samaritans trace their lineage to ancient Israel. (Photo courtesy of Osher Sassoni)

of Nablus, the biblical Shechem.

"We trace our roots to the 12 tribes of the Kingdom of Israel," Tzedaka says.

While there have been centuries of animosity between Samaritans and Jews, it was Christians and Muslims who almost succeeded in wiping out the Samaritans.

"Once we lived throughout the Land of Israel and there are 1.2 million of us," Tzedaka says of the Samaritan's Golden Age, in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. "When the Christians and Muslims came they persecuted us. They killed many of us and the rest were converted by force."

By the early 1900s, the community consisted of just 146 people, according to a local census. It grew a bit during the 1930s, under British colonialism and has continued to grow, slowly, ever since.

## Eclectic existence

Today's Samaritans are an eclectic mix of ancient and modern. While the older members dress as if they had just stepped out of the Bible, the younger generation sports jeans and T-shirts. They attend college and surf the Internet, while practicing their faith to the letter.

Arguably the most challenging precept the community maintains is the one related to marriage: Under Samaritan law, single women—who are outnumbered by single men by a 3-to-1 ratio—must marry another Samaritan. Usually, that's a first or second cousin.

Samaritan men are permitted to find a wife outside the group, but only on the condition the bride adhere strictly to the community's

laws and traditions. Thirteen women have entered the community in recent years, bringing with them new blood lines that hopefully will put an end to the group's inbred diseases, including cancer.

The Mount Gerizim Samaritans identify with their Palestinian neighbors. They speak Arabic among themselves and attend local Palestinian schools. Yet unlike other Palestinians, the Samaritans have Israeli identity papers that enable them to travel freely to and from Israel even when other Palestinians cannot.

Israel-based Samaritan men serve in the Israeli military, "though we're posted close to home so that we can maintain our traditions," says Osher Sassoni, a 25-year-old Holon resident who served in the armed forces before becoming a computer expert. "We can't eat the meat served in the army, so we eat like vegetarians."

Following such an unusual path, which skirts both Palestinian and Israeli society, is fraught with minefields, says Eleazar HaCohen, a Samaritan elder.

"The Arabs see us as Jews and the Jews see us as Arabs, but we're not Jews and we're not Arabs. We're Samaritans. We keep the Torah like they did in the beginning," he says. "What is permitted is permitted. What is not permitted is not permitted."

Yaffet Ben Asher Cohen, the self-appointed guardian of the community's priceless ancient texts and family trees that span 3,700 years, says, "Our hope is that we will be able to preserve our language, religion, traditions and unity of the people until Judgment Day."

## WORLD VIEW

### Religious freedom issues raised about Iraq, Afghanistan.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, in its annual report released May 12, expressed concerns about the future of religious freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan, two nations in which the United States has been conducting wars to topple oppressive regimes. The commission called on the United States to support "moderate" Muslims and encourage explicit guarantees of individual religious freedom in the two countries. Afghanistan's constitution provides a general right to religious freedom while Iraq's transitional law has more specific protections. "With no guarantee of the individual right to religious freedom and a judicial system instructed to enforce Islamic principles and Islamic law, the new constitution does not fully protect individual Afghan citizens against, for example, unjust accusations of religious 'crimes,' such as apostasy and blasphemy," the report states.

### Indian election results renew hope for religious freedom.

The future for religious freedom in the world's biggest democracy looks much brighter after Indian voters overwhelmingly defeated a Hindu nationalist party, experts in the subject say. The Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, suffered an unexpectedly lopsided defeat in elections for the national parliament. The election came only a day after the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom issued a report highly critical of India's record on protecting the rights of minorities under BJP leadership. BJP is the political arm of a collection of Hindu nationalist organizations. According to the commission's report, the nationalist groups "view non-Hindus as foreign to India and aggressively press for national governmental policies to promote the 'Hinduization' of culture."

### 'The Passion' captivates Middle East moviegoers.

Muslims in Middle Eastern countries have been flocking to theaters to view Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of The Christ," according to local media and Christian workers in the region. "Until now we have only been able to show the 'Jesus' film in Arabic to a handful of (Muslims) in the secret of a home setting," one missionary wrote. Missionaries in the United Arab Emirates call the opening "a miracle." Although Saudi Arabia does not have public movie theaters, pirated DVD versions of the film have been "selling like hotcakes," reported the English daily Arab News.

### Terror attacks pointing Spaniards to faith.

Spanish evangelicals are feeling an increased urgency for evangelism in the aftermath of terror attacks that killed almost 200 people March 11, according to a Baptist leader in Spain. "People in general realize no one is in charge of their own lives," said Manuel Sarrias, general secretary of the Union Evangelica Bautista Española. The terror attacks "have really encouraged us as evangelicals to double our efforts," he said. "Spain is a mission field. Secularism is rampant."

### Evangelists imprisoned in Vietnam.

More than two months after their arrest, three evangelists and a staff member of the Mennonite Church in Vietnam remain imprisoned and their status unknown. The four were arrested in Ho Chi Minh City on March 2. An April 1 letter signed by 13 church leaders and sent to the prime minister and ministry of public security decried the "evil actions" of the police "in beating, imprisoning and refusing to allow the church to visit (the prisoners)." Vietnamese Mennonites have been targeted by authorities for months. In January, a church building was demolished and the property confiscated, and church members have had their property confiscated. Mennonite World Conference, the global Mennonite fellowship, has sent a letter of concern to Vietnamese officials and requested a meeting with them to discuss the situation.

## Christian religious workers reporting visa problems in Israel

**Jerusalem (RNS)**—Hundreds of foreign aid workers and members of the Christian clergy have reported encountering problems obtaining or renewing their Israeli visas.

An estimated 130 Roman Catholic priests and nuns are living in Israel without proper permits, according to church officials. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of ministers from other Christian denominations are in the same position, as are many of their lay staffers. Additionally, more than 200

employees of aid organizations have been unable to obtain working visas, according to the Association of International Development Agencies.

During the past two years or so, Israel's Ministry of the Interior has made it much more difficult for the various churches and humanitarian aid organizations to procure B1 residency/work visas for their clergy and staffers. By all accounts the process is much more bureaucratic and can take several months.

Sometimes the visa requests are denied altogether.

One sweep for illegal migrants resulted in the arrest of a Catholic priest whose request for a new visa had been pending for months. After criticism from representatives of the Catholic Church, Avraham Poraz, the interior minister, instructed the police not to arrest Christian clergy, regardless of their residency status.

Earlier this month, 50 Catholic and Protestant leaders appealed to President Bush on behalf of the

dwindling Christian population in the Holy Land.

In a May 7 letter coordinated by the advocacy group Churches for Middle East Peace, the signers said "the endangered indigenous Christian population in the Holy Land could well disappear" unless Bush intervenes.

"We need your help in convincing the Israeli government that thriving Christian institutions are vital to all of our interests and to the future of a secure Israel," the letter said.

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