



# WESTERN RECORDER

December 20, 2005  
Vol. 179, No. 50

## FOR THE RECORD

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## Half of Americans say they've had life-changing spiritual event

**Chicago (RNS)**—Half of Americans claim to have had a spiritual transformation experience, and 35 percent of those are not born-again Christians, according to research from the University of Chicago.

Most "changers" were part of a religious community when they had the experience and reported an increased commitment to God that has lasted for many years, the study found. Many respondents said transformations occurred early in life and at a turbulent time—during an illness or after an accident or a relationship breakup.

Tom W. Smith, the study's author, said he was surprised by the reported endurance of the behavioral changes, which also included becoming more compassionate and quitting bad habits.

"I expected a deterioration," Smith said, noting that 13 years, on average, have passed since most respondents' experiences.

The report was based on a 2004 university survey of 1,328 adults.

Fundamentalist and evangelical Christians reported the highest percentage of changers (72 percent).

But nearly half of Protestants in moderate and liberal denominations and 30 percent of Catholics also reported transformations. Jews, Muslims and other religious groups were omitted from the report because of small sample sizes.

Transformations were least likely in New England (24 percent) and most common in the South (about 60 percent). About 15 percent more blacks reported spiritual transformations than those of other racial backgrounds.

The survey marked the first time a quantitative study asked open-ended questions about transformations, Smith said.

"We asked 'What was it like? How has it changed your life?'" he said. Language from the answers—for example, how many times Jesus was mentioned—was evaluated mathematically.

Smith expects other researchers will build on the anecdotal answers, examining them in new ways.

The Pennsylvania-based John Templeton Foundation, which supports scientific research in religion, funded the study.

## 12 Days of Christ



**TWELVE POINTS OF DOCTRINE** A song about gifts to one's true love actually was developed for Catholics in England to teach doctrine to their children during a time when they could be killed for practicing their faith. (Getty image)

## Christmas song taught doctrine in disguise

By Jane Davis  
Religion News Service

**Washington (RNS)**—"The Twelve Days of Christmas" is one of the most popular songs of the season, but many Americans are confused about both what the song means and the event it observes.

Often the "Twelve Days" are considered a prelude to Christmas Day. In fact, the "Twelve Days of Christmas" do not precede Christmas Day, but rather follow it.

The "Twelve Days of Christmas" begin with the celebration of Jesus' birth on Dec. 25—among Western Christians—and continue until Jan. 6, the feast of the Epiphany, or "manifestation" of Jesus to the Gentile world.

The last day is celebrated in recognition of the Magi, the wise men or kings, who followed the star to Bethlehem and brought gifts to the baby Jesus. Their brief story, told in the first chapter of Matthew—and whom legend has named Melchior, Balthasar and Caspar—represents all people and races, for they came from "afar."

The carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas" was created by the Jesuits, or the Catholic's Society of Jesus. It was used to teach catechism to children during a time of persecution from 1558 to 1829 when Catholics in England were prohibited from practicing their faith—in private or in public. Those caught

### What do they mean?

Each item in the "The Twelve Days of Christmas" represents an aspect of the Christian faith. In addition to the partridge symbol of Jesus, others are:

**Two turtle doves.** The Old and New Testaments.

**Three French hens.** Three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity.

**Four calling birds.** The four Gospels, or the four evangelists.

**Five golden rings.** The first five books of the Old Testament, known as the "Pentateuch."

**Six geese a-laying.** The six days of Creation.

**Seven swans a-swimming.** The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**Eight maids a-milking.** The eight beatitudes.

**Nine ladies dancing.** The nine fruits of the Holy Spirit.

**Ten lords a-leaping.** The Ten Commandments.

**Eleven pipers piping.** The 11 faithful apostles.

**Twelve drummers drumming.** The 12 points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

were imprisoned, hanged or drawn and quartered—literally torn into pieces while still alive—according to Hal Stockert in an article for Catholic Information Network.

Each phrase of the song has religious significance. For example, the partridge in a pear tree denotes Jesus as a mother partridge which feigns injury to keep predators from her young, while the two turtledoves represent the Old and New Testaments, and the three French hens are symbolic of the three theological virtues—faith, hope and charity.

Many Christians mark the end of the "Twelve Days of Christmas" with an Epiphany party, in which people are invited for a feast to celebrate the arrival of the "Three Wise Men."

Often a small ceremony takes place in which a child—usually the youngest—reads the story of the Magi. Sometimes a father holds the child up to the top brace on the front door and the youngster, using chalk, signs the door with 20 M + B + C 06 to commemorate the year (in this instance, 2006), and the first initials of the Magi.

This serves to remind all those in attendance that everyone is invited to follow the star of Jesus' birth throughout the year. By placing the symbol on the door frame, the person is reminded to follow the star every time he leaves the house. This tradition is widely practiced in many European countries and in several parts of the United States.

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, December 21

## Oregon pastor elected editor of Louisiana paper

Alexandria, La. (ABP)—Trustees of the Louisiana Baptist Message, who last month were rebuffed by state convention messengers in an effort to dissolve their independent board, unanimously elected conservative Oregon pastor Kelly Boggs as editor.

Boggs, 45, pastor of Valley Baptist Church in McMinnville, Ore., also is a newspaper columnist in Oregon and frequent commentator for Baptist Press. He succeeds Lynn Clayton, who is retiring effective Dec. 31.

Under a plan proposed by David Hankins, new executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, the Baptist Message would have been merged into the convention structure as part of a newly formed communications team.

The plan to dissolve the board, which required a two-thirds vote by messengers at the Nov. 14-15 convention meeting, was defeated by an estimated two-to-one margin.

Boggs is a graduate of the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

# 2005 in review

*Natural disasters were year's biggest news stories, Baptist editors say*

By Greg Warner  
Associated Baptist Press

Jacksonville, Fla. (ABP)—Two unprecedented natural disasters overshadowed all man-made news in 2005, according to a survey of Baptist editors.

Hurricane Katrina and the South Asia tsunami—and the benevolent response that followed each—were the most important Baptist news stories of the past year, the editors said. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court, the 100th anniversary of the Baptist World Alliance, gay marriage and historic changes at Baptist colleges also commanded the attention of the nation's 35 million Baptists.

1. Katrina, which struck New Orleans and the Gulf Coast Aug. 29, evoked the largest Baptist disaster response in history. More than 9,000 Baptist volunteers participated in the relief effort, which included preparing a record 13 million meals for hurricane victims and relief workers. Katrina also was the costliest storm in U.S. history. Insurance claims totaled \$23 billion and reconstruction costs are estimated at \$200 billion-plus.

2. The tsunami struck South Asia on the day after Christmas 2004, but the disaster and recovery efforts dominated the news in early 2005. Almost a year later, officials still aren't sure about the total number of deaths, usually estimated between 210,000 and 225,000 people. Triggered by a 9.0 earthquake off the coast of Indonesia, the tsunami caused \$9 billion in damage and prompted an unprecedented global outpouring of help. Hardest hit were Indonesia (where most of the deaths occurred), Sri Lanka, Thailand and India. Recovery will take more than a decade, experts say.

3. The death of U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist and the impending retirement of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor created two openings on the nation's highest court—and gave conservative Christians hope their replacements could swing the balance of power on key social issues such as abortion and school prayer.

4. The Baptist World Congress brought about 14,000 Baptist participants from around the globe to Birmingham, England, in late July. England was the birthplace of the Baptist World Alliance in 1905. Although the island country was distracted this summer by terror attacks, it did little to dim the celebration of the 100th anniversary of BWA. The organization counts 35 million members in 214 Baptist bodies worldwide, despite the recent withdrawal of the largest group, the 17-million-member Southern Baptist Convention.

5. The national debate over gay rights, which accounted for three of the top 10 stories last year, continued to divide the public and many of the nation's largest denominations. Efforts to define marriage as "one man and one woman" succeeded in several states, while gay-marriage advocates won key court battles. The Episcopal Church, United Methodist Church, American Baptist Churches-USA and others clashed over gay rights this year.

6. Several historically Baptist colleges separated from the state Baptist conventions that supported them—sometimes peacefully, often not—in what may turn out to be the most dramatic year ever in Baptist education. In the Georgia Baptist

Convention, Mercer University was kicked out over homosexuality and other issues while Shorter College lost a long legal battle to elect its own trustees. Belmont University distanced itself from the Tennessee Baptist Convention while Georgetown College and the Kentucky Baptist Convention peacefully adopted a revised ministry partnership.

7. The war in Iraq and Afghanistan remained prominent in the minds of Baptists, as the American death toll passed 2,000 and public support for President Bush dropped to record lows.

8. Three of the five largest Baptist universities—Baylor, Mercer and Samford—were poised to select new presidents in a three-month period, signaling a historic changing of the guard in Baptist higher education. Baylor regents elected John Lilley of Nevada in November. Mercer elected Baylor interim president Bill Underwood. And Samford nominated Ouachita Baptist University president Andrew Westmoreland, who is expected to be elected Jan. 10. The three schools count a total of 25,000 students.

9. Louisiana Baptists elected a new executive director, conservative David Hankins, but surprised many by rejecting his plan to dissolve the convention's independent newspaper and bring it under his control. The Louisiana Baptist Convention also battled over control of its college, Louisiana College in Pineville, which landed on probation for infringing on academic freedom.

10. The right-to-die battle over Terri Schiavo captured the attention of the media and public. The Florida woman was allowed to die March 31 when the courts refused

to reinsert her feeding tube, over the objections of her parents and other conservative Christians.

The survey of Baptist journalists was conducted in mid-December by Associated Baptist Press.

Other stories that caught the attention of Baptists included:

11. Baptist megachurch pastor Rick Warren, rated one of the nation's "most influential evangelicals," continued to dominate best-seller lists and TV talk shows while expanding his activism to include global poverty and AIDS.

12. Robert Sloan resigned in January after 10 years as Baylor University president, under fire from alumni, regents and faculty after charting an aggressive and expensive path to elite-college status.

13. Memphis megachurch pastor Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist, a three-time SBC president, died in November after a long illness. The widely loved preacher was a key figure in the rise of conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention.

14. Jimmy Draper, another former SBC president and key conservative leader, announced his retirement as president of LifeWay Christian Resources. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Thom Rainer was elected to succeed him.

15. The Supreme Court issued mixed rulings on public displays of the Ten Commandments in June, declaring a monument outside the Texas state capitol is legal, while a similar posting inside Kentucky courtrooms was held unconstitutional.

Among stories "under-reported" in 2005, the Baptist editors listed Christian use of the Internet, global persecution of Christians, and the "erosion" of church-state separation.

## 2005 Looking Backwards

## Policy on tongues sparks conflicting views among IMB trustees

By Trennis Henderson  
Editor

A policy related to speaking in tongues adopted last month by Southern Baptist International Baptist Mission trustees has prompted conflicting reports among some trustees.

The action established a policy banning the appointment of new missionaries who have practiced a "private prayer language."

The IMB already excludes people who speak in tongues in public worship from serving as missionaries. But the Nov. 15 action amended its list of missionary qualifications to exclude those who use a "prayer language" in private.

Part of the ongoing debate centers on the fact that IMB President Jerry Rankin acknowledged prior to his election in 1993 that he had occasional experiences of "praying in the Spirit" in his private prayer life. He also cited a one-time experience of interpreting when a man spoke in tongues in a public worship service in Singapore where he served as an IMB regional director. He was elected president on a 59-14 vote after a three-hour closed-door meeting with trustees.

While the new policy specifies it is not retroactive, some trustees have expressed concern that the action is a slap at Rankin's leadership.

Wade Bursleson, a trustee from Oklahoma, who opposed the policy change, said it puts the IMB "in the absurd position of having the president of our International Mission Board not qualified to serve as a field missionary. This does not make sense."

Kentucky Baptist Convention President Paul Chitwood, who also serves as an IMB trustee, insists the policy does not target Rankin or any other current missionary or staff member.

Chitwood serves on the board's personnel committee and process review subcommittee, both of which were involved in formulating the policy.

Noting that the proposal had been under consideration more than two years, Chitwood said, "It was brought to the process review committee from some of the trustees, basically saying there have been a few isolated incidents in the past of missionaries being dismissed for charismatic practices. The question was, 'Why not be more diligent in our approv-

al process to try to be sure this doesn't become a problem in the field?'"

The goal, Chitwood said, was to "address the issue in the approval process rather than trying to fix it" after missionaries are appointed.

The policies "are only meant to help us send qualified candidates to the field," he added. "They do not affect any field personnel or staff of the IMB. It is irrelevant for those who are already in leadership or field service for the IMB."

Questions also have surfaced about the reported vote count on the issue. The IMB Web site initially reported the policy was adopted on a 25-18 vote. Since then, the vote count has been removed from the site, and IMB trustee chairman Tom Hatley reportedly said the vote was 50-15.

IMB employee Michael Chute, who wrote the initial story, said the 25-18 figure was reported by one of the board's assigned counters and appeared closer to the actual vote total.

Chitwood, who was not present for the vote, said his understanding is that "the vote count that was initially published was inaccurate."

In addition to the policy on private prayer languages, trustees adopted a guideline specifying that missionary candidates must have received believer's baptism by immersion.

"We're seeing applicants from very diverse backgrounds in growing numbers apply for appointment through the board," Chitwood explained. "This was not an issue in the past as much because generally Baptist churches' approach to baptism was more uniform."

"Because we have had several applicants who have been baptized in other denominations and some denominations that have major doctrinal differences from Southern Baptists, that was the reason for this policy," he added.

"In a very diverse world, there's a reason why we call ourselves Southern Baptists," Chitwood noted. "We have convictions about Scripture and doctrine. We have so many who desire to go to the field under appointment of the International Mission Board that we really want to send those candidates who represent Southern Baptists."

With additional reporting by Robert Marus of Associated Baptist Press

## KBC board elects Goodson, honors Owen and Marshall

By Trennis Henderson  
Editor

Louisville—Tog Goodson, worship pastor at Valley View Baptist Church in Louisville, has been named director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention worship and music department effective Jan. 1.

Goodson, who was elected Dec. 13 by the KBC Mission Board, will succeed longtime department director Jim Cordell, who will retire Dec. 31. (See related article below.)

Describing his "heart for the local church," Goodson told members of the Mission Board's administrative committee his goal is to help churches "get over our differences, get over our personal agendas and reach out to the people who are coming and to a community that literally is lost and going to hell."

"I have a passion for the local minister of music and connecting ministers of music to local pastors," he added. "Why not create an environment where we can talk to each other, trust each other and encourage each other?"

Karl Babb, leader of the KBC leadership development team, affirmed Goodson's "heartbeat for reaching people," noting that "it's a tremendous part of who he is."

Babb added that Goodson is someone "who did not have a style agenda but could help people discover and experience the worship that's right for them in their context and community." He said Good-



Tog Goodson

son "brings that out of his ministry background."

Goodson, 44, has served at Valley View Church since 1998. He previously was minister of music and media at Little Flock Baptist Church in Shepherdsville, minister of music at First Baptist Church of Fairdale and music intern at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville. He also served churches in Georgia and Florida as well as serving as an assistant band director at two Florida high schools.

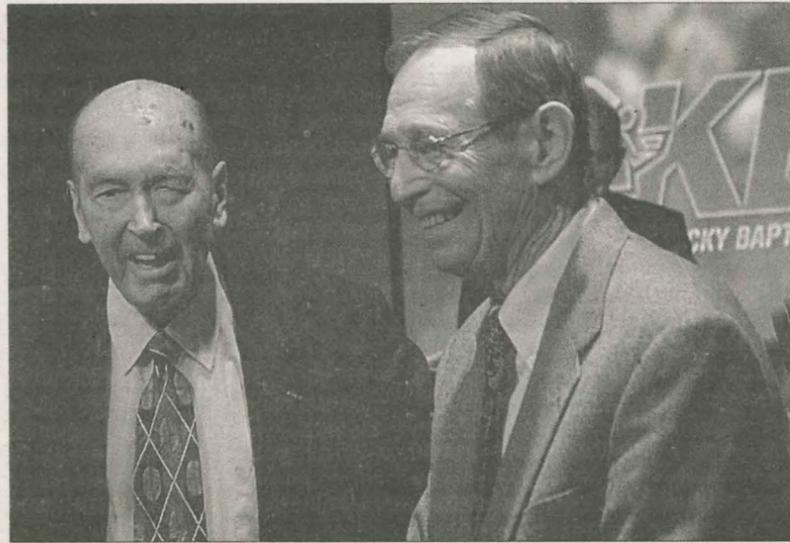
Goodson is a graduate of the University of Florida in Gainesville and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He and his wife, Kathy, have four children.

In other Mission Board action, board members dedicated two rooms in the new Baptist Building in honor of former KBC executive directors.

The new facility's chapel was named in honor of Franklin Owen, executive director in 1972-1983, and one of the building's board rooms was named in honor of William Marshall, executive director in 1983-1997.

KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey, who succeeded Marshall in 1998, said he was pleased with the opportunity to "honor the ministry and service of these two men."

A display outside the chapel notes that Owen was "known for his strong commitment to Christian stewardship," adding that "his ten-



KBC LEGACY Former KBC executive directors Franklin Owen (left) and William Marshall were recognized Dec. 13 with rooms in the new Baptist Building dedicated in their honor. (KBC photo by Brenda Smith)

ure saw Kentucky Baptists' giving to missions increase dramatically."

Mackey said Marshall came to the position "with a passion and a vision for missions." He said that during Marshall's tenure, "missions got into the DNA of Kentucky Baptists and they've never been the same because of it."

Board members also approved year-end fund allocations for 2005. More than \$800,000 was available for distribution, including \$440,000 in Cooperative Program receipts above the 2004-05 CP budget goal of \$22,504,000.

Distributions include \$528,000 for KBC ministries, \$158,546 for Southern Baptist Convention causes

and \$125,391 for Kentucky Baptist institutions and agencies. Major allocations in the KBC portion include \$100,000 for church starts, \$100,000 for Baptist Campus Ministry facility maintenance, \$90,000 for the KBC's Brazil missions partnership and \$70,000 for evangelism.

Other actions included changing the name of the Church Annuity Plan to the 403(b)(9) Retirement Plan for Southern Baptist Churches to bring the plan name in line with changes adopted by GuideStone Financial Resources. An undesignated estate gift of more than \$12,000 to the Kentucky Baptist Foundation was added to the KBC's Cooperative Program endowment fund.

## Cordell's Kentucky Baptist ministry affirms worship, relationships

By Trennis Henderson  
Editor

Louisville—Diverse worship styles are common today in Kentucky Baptist churches. But that wasn't always the case.

Jim Cordell, who will retire Dec. 31 as director of the KBC's worship and music department, said worship styles were fairly uniform when he began working for the KBC in 1985.

"When I started out 20 years ago, you could pretty well predict the 11 a.m. worship service," Cordell noted. "Now that's just not the case at all. Things are changing so quickly."

While Cordell brought a background of traditional and blended worship styles to his position, he has sought to affirm the diversity present in worship services throughout the commonwealth.

"The challenge is to be able to genuinely celebrate diversity," he pointed out. "That's been a personal area of growth for me."

Cordell said one of the highlights of his 20-year KBC ministry was a two-year study in 2000-2002 aimed at helping Kentucky Baptist churches "experience authentic corporate worship of God."

Visiting more than 70 churches, interviewing pastors and worship leaders and conducting a statewide survey, Cordell said at the time that he was seeking to encourage "a renewed understanding of what it

means to worship God in spirit and truth."

The survey, which involved more than 800 church leaders from nearly 400 congregations, found that 51 percent of respondents described their church's congregational singing in worship as traditional, 42 percent considered their music blended and 7 percent listed contemporary.

"The first thing I learned through that experience is that effective worship is not based on style; it's content," Cordell said in a 2002 interview.

"To me, a guide for worship planners should be that in worship we sing the Bible, we pray the Bible, we read the Bible and we preach the Bible. ... Worship is about God."

Reflecting on the study three years later, Cordell recalled that another key finding "was that particular worship styles did not indicate growth."

"It was the content, whether traditional, blended or contemporary," he explained. "It was the heart of the worship leader; the relational dimension."

While "skills and competency certainly are important, the real strengths in worship came through authentic Christian living," he noted. "The churches that were growing weren't growing because of the techniques, but because of the authentic relationships and love for people in the Lord."

Echoing Cordell's perspective, KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey said, "One of the things Jim has contributed has been his real desire to help people have an authentic experience with God through worship. He has tried to focus on authentic worship rather than styles."

Karl Babb, leader of the KBC's leadership development team, emphasized that "one of the greatest legacies of Jim's ministry is the relational dimension."

Noting that Cordell "is trusted and valued" by music and worship ministers across the state, Babb added, "He cares about people, the church and God's Kingdom. He's brought those things together in a very positive way."

### "Baptist to the bone"

Cordell, who describes himself as "Baptist to the bone," served 15 years as minister of music at First Baptist Church of Somerset before joining the KBC staff. He earned music degrees from Georgetown College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

As he prepares to take early retirement at the end of the month, just a few weeks before he turns 62, Cordell recalled that serving as a denominational staff member initially "was not a part of my vision for ministry."

After twice declining the music associate position, Cordell said he eventually "realized it was as if the Lord had been preparing me for this position."

Having served as an associational music director, participated in the Kentucky Baptist Men's Chorale, been on the faculty of children's music camp at Cedar-moore Assembly and been involved in state handbell and youth choir festivals, he said, "When they begin to describe the job, I said, 'I know it; I've done it on a voluntary basis.' I felt like God was preparing us."

Two decades later, as he looks toward retirement, Cordell said he plans to be available for interim music minister positions as well as "intentional interims for churches that have gone through the worship wars and help them in the process of rediscovering worship."

In the meantime, he and his wife, Joyce, plan to spend a few weeks focusing on rest, relaxation and spiritual renewal. They also look forward to spending more time with their daughter, son and five grandchildren.

"We've moving to a new phase in our ministry," he said. "It's our desire to seek God's will in how we can best use our gifts in the next phase of ministry."

Reflecting on his 20 years of denominational service, Cordell acknowledged, "There's that grieving that you go through. In a sense I'm leaving a family."

On the positive side, he added, "It's just been a blessing to have the opportunities I've had. As God gives you opportunities and you respond to His leading, it can't get any better. He knows best."



FRANKLIN OWEN  
CHAPEL

Franklin Owen Chapel is a beautiful, modern chapel located in the new Baptist Building. It is named in honor of Franklin Owen, KBC Executive Director from 1972-1983. The chapel is a testament to his vision and leadership.

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**"Effective worship is not based on style; it's content."**

Jim Cordell, director of the KBC worship/music department

### Correction:

In an article about Christmas pageants for the Dec. 13 issue of the Western Recorder, a reporter's error misidentified the author and director of Severns Valley Baptist Church's pageant. Don Patterson wrote and directed "Behold the King."

## WESTERN RECORDER

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

Western Recorder is published weekly by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253, except for one week in July and December. For general information, call (502) 489-3535. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

To subscribe: Send \$12.50 for a one-year, individual subscription. Group subscriptions on the church budget plan are \$10 per year. An additional church newsletter service is available for churches of all sizes. All subscriptions are payable in advance, except church accounts, which require a tax exemption number.

POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to: Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253.

To register change of address: Send the mailing label from page 1, along with your new address, to the subscription department at the Western Recorder address.

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## Is the gift you're giving worth your life?

By James Draper

Nashville (BP)—I love Christmas. I love the music, the lights and the surprises. I love being with family and exchanging gifts. I love reading again the humble beginnings of our Lord Jesus Christ. I love to think about the promise delivered by the angel: "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

But fighting long lines at department stores, maxing out our credit cards and becoming exasperated distracts Christians from focusing on that good news. At best, many people give cursory thought to the baby in the manger.

However, that baby in a manger could not save us from our sin and allow us to escape the judgment that awaited us. It was a man on a cross—a martyr—who believed the message He had to share was more precious than life itself. How my heart aches praying that more Christians lived with that intensity of focus. Thank God many have—and it has cost them their lives as well.

## Roll call of Christian martyrs

It was nearly three years ago that a gunman slipped into the Baptist Hospital in Jibla, Yemen, and killed Bill Koehn, Kathy Gariety and Martha Myers. In the blink of an eye, three Southern Baptist workers passed into eternity, literally giving their lives so that the Muslims of Yemen could hear the good news of the Savior proclaimed by the angel.

Less than three months later, a terrorist's bomb killed Southern Baptist missionary Bill Hyde. The big missionary with a big heart full of love for the people of the Philippines was dead after 25 years of service, but thousands of Filipinos not only heard the good news but experienced the joy of knowing the Savior who was born in Bethlehem.

Just a year later, in March 2004, Southern Baptist workers David McDonnell, Karen Watson and Larry and Jean Elliott were killed when terrorists opened fire with high-

powered rifles on their small truck. The four, along with McDonnell's wife, Carrie—who survived—were in northern Iraq surveying potential water purification projects in the area around Mosul. Their hope was to bring the good news of the Living Water to a spiritually dry and thirsty land.

Jan. 8 will be the 50th anniversary of the deaths of missionaries Nate Saint, Roger Youderian, Ed McCully, Jim Elliot and Peter Fleming. The five were killed while taking the good news to the Waodani people deep in Ecuador's jungle.

The deaths of David Mankins, Mark Rich and Rick Tenenoff, three missionaries with New Tribes Mission, were confirmed in early 1996. Colombian guerillas had kidnapped them three years earlier from their home near the Colombian-Panamanian border where they shared the good news among tribal peoples.

It's been nearly 64 years since New Tribes' first missionaries—Cecil and Bob Dye, George Hosback, Dave Bacon and Eldon Hunter—ventured into Bolivia's jungle to share the good news with the Ayor tribe. They were buried near where they were killed.

There is an expression that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, but some say these missionaries died in vain. I say we shame ourselves if we even think in that manner. Spiritual fruit continues to be harvested from the sacrifice made by each of these mentioned above. We cheapen the proclamation of the angel when we live in the comfort of a "domesticated Christianity," as Erwin McManus calls it.

We too often miss the point. The church does not exist for us. Most seem to feel that the church exists to provide for them, please them and satisfy them. It isn't for us—it is for those outside and away from God. God's intention is that we inside the church leave our domesticated Christianity and go to them.

We have two purposes in this life: To worship God and to make

## FIRST PERSON

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We have two purposes in this life: To worship God and to make

His name known among the nations. Sometimes making His name known is dangerous. Countless common people beyond America's borders die a martyr's death every day because they realize the joy they've found in Jesus Christ is greater than any harm man can bring them.

In a note to his wife shortly before going into the jungle, Cecil Dye wrote:

"I don't believe we care so much whether this expedition is a failure so far as our lives are concerned, but we want God to get the most possible glory from everything that happens, and we know that the powers of Hell are marshaled against anything that would bring about this desired aim. On the other hand, it seems that it would be a real testimony to the Lord's power to make this expedition successful. Then again, perhaps, more Christians would become more aware of their responsibility to lost men and less concerned over the material things of this life if the expedition failed and we lost our lives. Maybe they would pray more for the next group that went to the same tribe, and maybe, there would be more 'all out' volunteers so that every tribe would be reached in our generation."

## Proclaim good news

This Christmas, I'm not calling you to martyrdom; only God can do that. What I am praying is that through this article you "would become more aware of (your) responsibility to lost men and less concerned over the material things of this life." We honor the deaths of those who have shed their blood by pressing forward with the good news. Southern Baptists have a great opportunity to do that through the International Mission Board and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. More importantly, we honor Jesus Christ.

This Christmas, take a few moments to consider whether or not the gift you're giving is worth your life. Aren't you glad the gift Jesus gave was worth it? Now share His gift with someone else.

James Draper is president of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention

## CHURCH

## Make plans now to strengthen your stewardship in '06

By Doug Strader

As this year's Christmas celebrations culminate, we quickly will be staring a new year in the face.



What will 2006 bring to each of us? Only God knows what the new

year holds. Many of the things that will occur in our lives are out of our immediate control. But there are some things each of us can do to help make the new year more enjoyable and profitable:

■ Begin the year by making a personal commitment to Jesus as Master of your life.

■ Seek to be present for Bible study and worship with your church family every Sunday of the year.

■ Be a giving person. Someone shared with me several years ago that the whole world can be divided into two types of people: givers and takers. Which are you? If you are not a giving person, commit now to become a giving person during 2006.

The place to begin the process is to come to the realization that everything you have really belongs to God and He allows you to use it while you are living. When individuals die, everything they call their own will belong to other people, because the Bible declares that we brought nothing into this world and we will take nothing out of this world when we die.

■ Seek God's guidance on how to be a good steward of all that you call your own. Begin by being a good steward of your time. Are there some areas of your time that could have been better used for God's work in 2005?

■ Seek to be a better steward of your talents and spiritual gifts. Talents are your natural abilities that God gave you when you were born into this world. Spiritual gifts are those qualities that God gave you when you were born into His family as a Christian. Did you use your abilities and spiritual gifts wisely for His sake in 2005? How could you better use your abilities and spiritual gifts in 2006?

■ Be a good steward of your material possessions. Did you honor God's work by giving back to Him at least a tithe, 10 percent of your income, during 2005? If not, begin now to make a commitment that during 2006 you will give at least a tithe to God's work.

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

## The joy of Christmas and family

Christmas provides a wonderful opportunity for Kay and me to spend time with family, and especially the grandchildren. It is surprising to observe how quickly they grow and learn.

We are blessed by God to have two wonderful daughters and sons-in-law who love the Lord and are active in their churches. We pray that our grandchildren will grow to love the Lord and give their lives in godly service through local churches. It is a privilege, opportunity and responsibility to pray for them and the transitions they will face in their lives.

Lilly, our oldest grandchild, has just celebrated her 5th birthday. She is very verbal and is a great conversationalist on the telephone.

Lilly was born in Louisville during the time her father, Bartley Wooten, was a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Bartley is minister to singles and college

students at First Baptist Church of Indian Trail near Charlotte, N.C.

Our daughter, Beth, is a homemaker for Lilly and her younger brother, Mack, age 28 months. Mack has beautiful blue eyes and is making progress in growth and speech. This family will have some welcome adjustments to make in March when a younger brother is expected.

Our older daughter, Anonda, and her husband, A.J. Nepa, live in Raleigh, N.C. He is vice president for retail for a chain of variety stores.

They are active in a new church, and Anonda has consented to be vacation Bible school director. In addition to homemaking and church, Anonda is busy with neighborhood activities and transporting their two boys to preschool activities.

Their son, Will, has just celebrated his 3rd birthday. He is a people person and loves to play with his trains.

## PARTNERS IN THE MISSION



Bill Mackey

## How can couples help reduce holiday season's hectic pace?

**Q: My husband and I have been married less than two years and this is our second holiday season together. Last year the time from Christmas to New Year's Day was incredibly stressful. What can we do to make this season brighter?**

You can know Christ's peace even amid whatever tough circumstances you face. After their relationship was strained due to her pregnancy, Mary and Joseph faced a notification of additional taxes, a tough trip to Bethlehem while pregnant, no room at the inn and Joseph helping deliver the Christ Child in a barn. This was followed by Herod's threats on the baby's life and the need to flee to another country.

### MARRIAGE

Are you feeling any better?

Marital stress often runs high during this busy time of year. Take some time and talk about what you both want to do during the holiday season. While both families have various traditions, you need to remember it is wise to create your own traditions. You might need to alternate times with each of your families to avoid feeling that you are "on the road" constantly.

Every party invitation you receive is not a party you must attend. Don't feel obligated to attend every work, school or even church activity. Remember that making choices will help keep you from resenting a frenetic schedule.

Make a list of the individuals for whom you will buy gifts. Come up with a budget and set an amount for each. Keep in mind that it is not the amount that matters; it is the fact that you remembered them.

Don't forget to carve out some quiet time each day to reflect on Christ's birth and significance in your life. Don't forget to simplify. When it comes to the schedule, less is more.—Scott Wigginton

**Q: What are some helpful goals for my child to pursue in 2006?**

Luke 2:52 tells us that Jesus grew mentally, physically, socially and spiritually. As a new year begins, this simple verse can guide goal-setting for children.

**Set a fitness goal.** Decide to become more physically fit during 2006. Look for aerobic activities that will build cardiovascular endurance. Make active play a priority each day. Some children might need to lose weight. Develop a plan and get started.

**Set a learning goal.** Beyond the demands of school, decide to learn to make, do or understand something new. Explore a new hobby. Learn a new game. Study nature. Plant a garden. Decide to read one book each month. (Children might enjoy reading the entire "Chronicles of Narnia" series.)

**Set a social goal.** Decide to make one new friend at school, at church or in your neighborhood. Invite them to join you at a church party, or have them over to play or spend the night. Consider reaching out to a child who seems lonely and might need a friend.

**Set a spiritual goal.** Decide to learn the books of the Bible. (Most children don't know them.) Establish a regular time for prayer and Bible reading. Read a Proverb each day. Get a prayer calendar from a missions organization and pray for missionaries on their birthday. Work with a spiritual growth resource such as the "Survival Kit for Children" or Rob Sanders' "My Growing to Be Like Jesus Journal."

Arrow Ministries offers a Daily Growth Chart to help children track growth and record progress in five areas: God, self, home, family and others. To order, visit [www.arrowministries.com](http://www.arrowministries.com).—David Garrard

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## Reflections on key issues, events of 2005

As 2005 draws to a close, this year will be remembered for catastrophic natural disasters around the globe.

The year began with massive relief efforts in response to the December 2004 tsunami that crippled southern Asia. Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, which battered the Gulf Coast from Florida to Texas, were followed by an 8.7 magnitude earthquake that wreaked havoc in Pakistan.

While the calamities caused thousands of deaths, heartrending grief and billions of dollars of damage, they also provided unprecedented opportunities for compassionate Christian ministry. Kentucky Baptists responded with heartfelt prayer, generous financial support and personal involvement in disaster relief work.

Among other editorial reflections on the events and issues of 2005:

**Gambling.** "While advocates of casino gambling only have to win one time to expand legalized gambling in Kentucky, gambling opponents must be continually vigilant, gearing up year after year to battle the onslaught of pro-gambling proposals. ... While anti-gambling efforts have proven successful the past few years, it's now 2005. The state legislature reconvenes next week and it's time once again for concerned citizens to take a stand against expanded gambling. ... You can leave a message for legislators on the toll-free Legislative Message Line at (800) 372-7181 and contact Gov. Fletcher's office at (502) 564-2611." (The same concerns are true as we approach the 2006 legislative session.)

**Baptisms.** "The good news is that after four years of declining baptisms, Southern Baptist Convention churches posted an increase in their 2004 baptism statistics. The not-so-good news is that the increase of 10,590 still leaves SBC baptisms short of the 400,000 mark and far below the ambitious goal of 1 million baptisms for the coming year being promoted by SBC President Bobby Welch. While a one-year increase does not constitute a trend, it still is a positive step as Southern Baptists pursue the 'Empowering Kingdom Growth' ministry initiative as well as Welch's "Everyone Can" Kingdom Challenge for Evangelism."

**Billy Graham.** "Legendary evangelist Billy Graham recently announced that he would not accept an invitation to lead a crusade in London later this year. Graham, 86, preached to an estimated 240,000 people June 24-26 in New York, with more than 10,000 making public spiritual decisions. With he and his wife, Ruth, suffering declining health, Graham said in response to the London invitation, 'After much prayerful consideration, I determined that I should not be that far from home.' ... Whether or not Graham ever steps behind another crusade pulpit, his legacy as one of the most effective Christian

### Christmas concerns

While I agree with Mr. Henderson's position on keeping churches open on Christmas Sunday, I am troubled by the way we (as Baptists) are responding to some of the current things in our secular society.

First and foremost, if we are true to our heritage, we should be highly concerned by too much support from the state, even for our own faith. The founding fathers of our country (several of whom were not religious) as well as the founders of our Baptist faith would be concerned about any perception that Christianity might be "state sanctified."

### STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

ministers in history is secure for all time."

**Baptist World Alliance.** "From the opening celebration to the closing gavel, the centenary Baptist World Congress was a tribute to global Baptist cooperation. More than 12,000 delegates from 100-plus nations gathered July 27-31 in Birmingham, England, to celebrate 100 years of ministry and fellowship through Baptist World Alliance. ... Absent from the congress for the first time in BWA's 100-year history was an official delegation from the Southern Baptist Convention. ... Global Baptist unity remains a fitting goal for believers committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with people in need around the world."

**Rosa Parks.** "Who could have imagined in the racially charged days of 1955 that Rosa Parks' death half a century later would make national news headlines? ... Parks, who died Oct. 24 at age 92, became known as the mother of the modern civil rights movement. Her refusal to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Ala., city bus in 1955 became one of the defining moments of our nation's civil rights struggle. ... Parks' life and death are fitting reminders of the importance of strengthening our commitment to equality, justice and acceptance for every person of every race. ... I thank God for Rosa Parks' courage to take a stand for racial equality and human dignity by keeping her seat."

**Georgetown College.** "The 2005 Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting proved to be peaceful, positive and productive. Prior to Kentucky Baptists' Nov. 15-16 gathering in Frankfort, there was the potential for significant division on such issues as Georgetown College trustees' decision to establish a self-perpetuating board and a contested presidential election. While scattered reports indicated this could be a political showdown among Kentucky Baptists, the reality is that convention leaders and messengers conducted themselves in a Christ-honoring way that longtime KBC observers have come to expect. On the Georgetown College front, KBC and college officials worked diligently in recent months to craft a win-win proposal. In the end, messengers overwhelmingly approved a plan that will allow Georgetown to elect its own trustees beginning next year. Rather than immediately cutting off funds or filing suit against the school, KBC leaders agreed to gradually phase out Georgetown's \$1.3 million annual Cooperative Program allocation over the next four years."

**Kentucky Baptists Connect.** "At the heart of 'Kentucky Baptists Connect' is the goal of Kentucky Baptist congregations baptizing an average of 25,000 new believers each year throughout the five-year effort. ... What do baptism goals have to do with celebrating Christmas? Both involve telling the good news of Jesus Christ. ... As you celebrate this joyous season, don't forget to tell the good news."

Secondly, the premise that my faith, or the celebration of Christ's birth, is somehow "endangered" because the secular world chooses to celebrate ice and snow, is insulting to the Lord Himself. His power and majesty aren't subject to whether or not secular celebrations become "Holiday Festivals."

Last, but most importantly, one must ask whether we are guilty of removing Christ from Christmas ourselves. I find it hard to believe that He is glorified by the way Christmas has been celebrated in this country for the past 30 years or so, particularly with regard to the way we (Christians) have participated in the commercialization

of this day. (This problem probably goes back further than this, but I'm not old enough to have firsthand knowledge.) When we find ourselves fighting traffic at the mall, fretting over buying the latest gadget or toy, or envisioning Bill Gates as the devil himself because Microsoft didn't make enough X-Box 360s, have we really honored the arrival of the newborn King?

It would be interesting to see what would happen if we, as Southern Baptists, focused on our hearts on Christmas Sunday, and poured our energy into worshipping Christ the King with the same energy that we pour into protests (or even letters to the Western Recorder's editor).

Tim Gooch  
Goshen



# Relief, Georgetown among top KBC news of 2005

By Trennis Henderson  
Editor

Disaster relief efforts along the Gulf Coast and Georgetown College's decision to loosen ties to the Kentucky Baptist Convention were among major news stories in 2005.

But the biggest story of the year unfolded a week before 2005 began when a devastating tsunami hit southern Asia, killing more than 200,000 people.

Kentucky Baptists were among countless people around the world who responded to the overwhelming destruction with prayers, financial gifts and personal assistance.

Initial Southern Baptist response to the Dec. 26, 2004, tragedy focused on delivering food, water, blankets and other essentials to coastal villages in southern Thailand.

"What has happened is overwhelming to those who are providing aid," noted one Southern Baptist worker. He added, however, that "God has really opened up an opportunity for believers to share God's love through acts of service in doing whatever we can to help the survivors of this terrible tragedy."

Among other major news items throughout the year:

**January.** The Western Recorder's first issue of 2005 carried the obituaries of two longtime Southern Baptist statesmen who died in late December: Roy Honeycutt, former president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, and James Sullivan, retired president of the former Baptist Sunday School Board.

Honeycutt died Dec. 21 at age 78 after suffering head injuries in a fall at his home in Louisville. Sullivan, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board for 22 years, also served one term as Southern Baptist Convention president. He died Dec. 27 in Nashville at age 94.

**February.** On the KBC ministry front, Mission Service Corps missionaries increased from 30 to 145 workers over the past five years; the state convention agreed to house the 10-state Appalachian Regional Ministry; and KBC leaders launched a three-year missions partnership with Baptists in Brazil.

On the SBC level, LifeWay Christian Resources President James Draper announced his retirement effective February 2006.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary officials announced

plans for a "wholesale change" in the school's Christian counseling department, emphasizing "the view that Scripture is sufficient to answer comprehensively the deepest needs of the human heart." Russell Moore, dean of Southern's school of theology, labeled the previous approach pioneered by Wayne Oates of integrating theology and psychology a "failed" model.

**March.** More than 2,400 people from almost 200 churches attended the KBC's 2005 Creative Ministries Festivals in Louisville and Bowling Green. Hands-on training in clowning, mime, puppetry and sports ministry were among scores of workshops offered.

Carman Sharp, longtime Kentucky Baptist pastor and peace activist, died March 14 at age 87. A founder of the Baptist Peacemaker publication, he also served on the Council on Peacemaking and Religion.

**April.** Emergent church leader Brian McLaren, whose invitation to speak at the 2005 KBC Evangelism Conference was withdrawn by state convention leaders, spoke at Georgetown College's annual Pastors Conference. His book, "A Generous Orthodoxy," drew criticism from some observers over his view of salvation. In an interview with the Western Recorder, McLaren said, "I believe Jesus is the only Savior... Is Jesus exclusively the Savior? Absolutely."

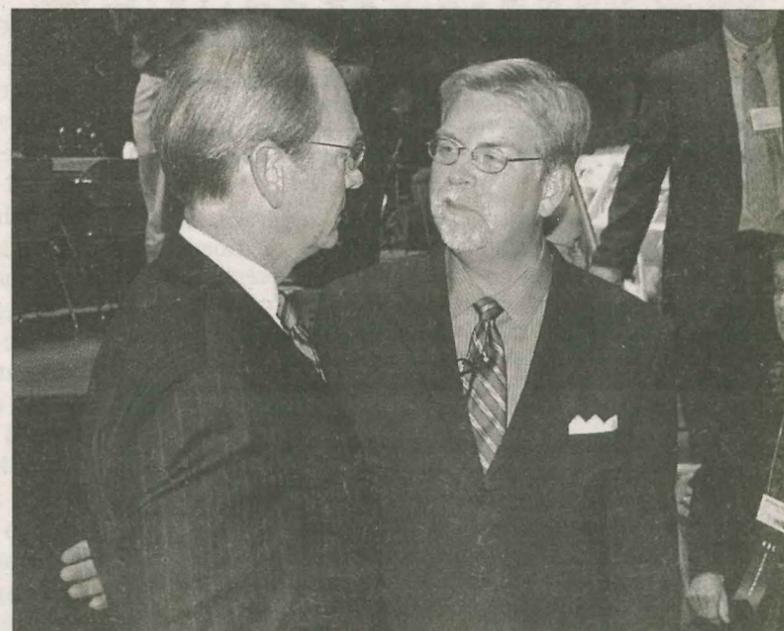
In other state news, Kentucky Baptist Assemblies sold 800 acres of unused property at Cedarmore Assembly for \$1.3 million. The income will be used to improve Cedarmore's facilities in an effort to attract more guests.

**May.** Several Kentucky Baptists were honored with state and national awards. Physicians John and Marilyn Sanders of Louisville were honored by the Baptist Medical and Dental Fellowship with the Don Watkins Servanthood Award. Stephanie Hodges, manager of the LifeWay Christian Store in Paducah, was named national manager of the year. The Western Recorder staff earned five national awards in news, feature and editorial writing from Baptist Communicators Association. Tom and Joyce Nation of Owensboro were named the KBC's 2005 D.M and Kay Aldridge Literacy Volunteers of the Year.

**June.** A sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court barred Ten Commandments displays in courthouses June 27. The 5-4 decision found that Commandments displays in two Kentucky courthouses violate the separation of church and state by promoting religion. In a related case, the justices ruled 5-4 that a Ten Commandments display on the grounds of the Texas capitol is permissible.

Evangelist Billy Graham held his final crusade June 24-26 in New York City. An estimated 230,000 people attended the crusade, with more than 10,000 responding to the 86-year-old evangelist's invitation to make a spiritual decision.

In Nashville, Southern Baptist Convention messengers launched



**WORKING TOGETHER** Georgetown President Bill Crouch (left) and Kentucky Baptist Convention President Hershael York worked together to insure the passage of a new ministry partnership that will allow Georgetown to elect its own trustees.

## 2005 Looking Backwards

President Bobby Welch's "Everyone Can" evangelism campaign and ended the SBC's eight-year Disney boycott.

**July.** Jerrell White of Eddyville was named the KBC's 2005 Mission Service Corps Missionary of the Year. He works with more than 1,300 students and staff at the Job Corps Academy in Morganfield.

Friendship International, a Louisville ministry that offers English lessons and other assistance to immigrants and international visitors, is celebrating 30 years of service to people from dozens of nations.

**August.** More than 12,000 Baptist Christians from around the world celebrated a century of cooperation at the Baptist World Alliance's centennial congress in Birmingham, England. The event, which featured keynote speakers Jimmy Carter and Rick Warren, came one year after the SBC withdrew its membership and financial support from the global Baptist organization.

The KBC Mission Board staff, Kentucky Baptist Foundation, Western Recorder and Woman's Missionary Union moved into new facilities the weekend of Aug. 12-15. KBC officials sold the convention's former facilities in April for \$4.2 million, helping pave the way for moving to the new 51,000-square-foot building near the intersection of I-265 and LaGrange Road in Louisville.

**September.** Kentucky Baptist disaster relief workers were among thousands of Baptist volunteers who responded to widespread destruction along the Gulf Coast caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. KBC disaster relief officials trained more than 2,800 volunteers in the wake of the hurricanes. Larry Koch, KBC disaster relief coordinator, encouraged churches and associations to develop both cleanup and feeding teams. "We could use a cleanup team in every association across the state," he said.

Thom Rainer, founding dean of Southern Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth, was elected president of LifeWay Christian Resources Sept. 9. Rainer, 50, will succeed

retiring president James Draper in February.

Conducting a 2,200-mile "Pray the Perimeter" prayer tour, KBC leaders held prayer services at 30 stops throughout the state Sept. 10-16. KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey said the tour "has helped get us all on the same page in clarifying our understanding that prayer is essential in all that we're doing."

**October.** Reconciliation Networks of Our World, a nondenominational international body that promotes reconciliation through Christ, held its 2005 gathering at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville. Host pastor Les Hollon noted, "At the heart of the New Testament is the ministry of reconciliation made possible by Christ."

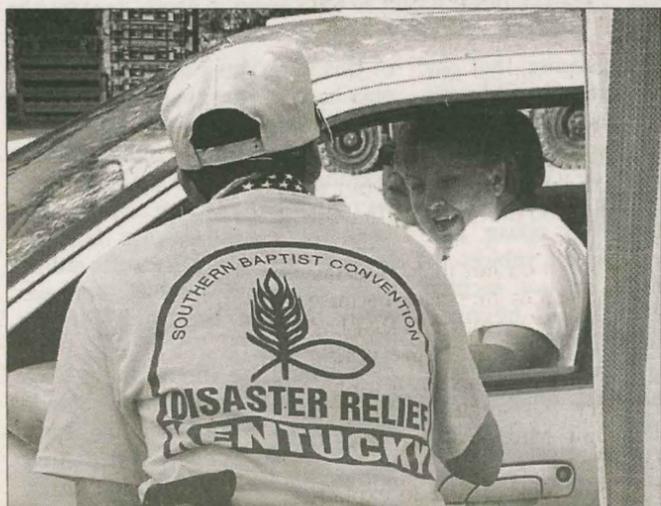
As major natural disasters continued throughout the year, an 8.7-magnitude earthquake hit Pakistan, killing more than 70,000 people. Southern Baptist aid workers responded with truckloads of medical supplies, tents and food.

**November.** KBC messengers voted overwhelmingly Nov. 15 to approve a new ministry partnership with Georgetown College. Major provisions of the agreement specify that Georgetown will elect its own trustees beginning in 2006 and that the KBC will phase out Georgetown's \$1.3 million Cooperative Program allocation over the next four years.

In other convention action, messengers elected conservative pastors to the KBC's top offices, including President Paul Chitwood, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mount Washington.

Three-time SBC President Adrian Rogers, whose conservative leadership helped change the SBC, died Nov. 15 following a battle with cancer. He was 74.

**December.** Rick Warren, author of "The Purpose Driven Life," used a conference timed to conclude on World AIDS Day Dec. 1 to announce a new commitment to caring for the millions of people infected with HIV and AIDS. "The church has the moral authority to say, 'Hey, it's not a sin to be sick,'" Warren declared. Citing Christ's compassion for diseased outcasts, he added, "Today's 'lepers' are those who have HIV/AIDS."



**KATRINA RELIEF** Hundreds of Kentucky Baptists responded to Hurricane Katrina, training to serve as disaster relief volunteers and traveling to the affected Gulf Coast area. (Photo by David Winfrey)

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# Death loomed large

*Globally, 2005 marked by tragedies, passing of newsmakers*

By Kevin Eckstrom  
Religion News Service

Washington (RNS)—It is said that death waits for no one and makes no appointments.

Just ask the 1,000 people killed by Hurricane Katrina, the 70,000 dead in October's Pakistan earthquake, or the 200,000 lives claimed by the Asian tsunami that hit in late 2004, overshadowing the dawn of 2005.

Death came suddenly, unannounced and with extraordinary ferocity.

Globally, the death of Pope John Paul II on April 2, was the highest profile death for both religious and secular news agencies.

### Schiavo battle

A week before John Paul died, another high-profile death dominated the headlines as conservatives fought to keep the courts from removing life support for Terri Schiavo, a brain-damaged Florida woman. Congress passed—and President Bush signed—a bill to keep her alive, but local courts allowed the feeding tube to be removed. Schiavo died on Good Friday.

Conservatives used the Schiavo case as a proxy for their battle against "activist" judges, who they said were imposing a liberal agenda on the country. Another death—that of Chief Justice William Rehnquist—reopened the battle over the judiciary and galvanized religious conservatives when John Roberts, Harriet Miers and later Samuel Alito were nominated for the Supreme Court.

Polls showed Americans over-

whelmingly opposed government intervention in the Schiavo case. Nonetheless, the high-wattage battle over the courts showed how conservatives who won big in the 2004 elections were now seeking to exercise their increased political clout.

Just before Rehnquist died, the high court ruled that Ten Commandments displays were unconstitutional if intended as a religious message, but could be allowed in historical displays. The ruling, not surprisingly, left both sides unsatisfied.

Also in June, evangelist Billy Graham, slowed by age and infirmity, returned to New York for what he called his last crusade. More than 230,000 people turned out to see the 86-year-old preacher in the city that first made him a household name almost 50 years ago.

"I was asked in an interview if this is the last crusade. I said it probably is—in New York," a smiling Graham said to laughter and applause. "But I also said, 'I never say never.'"

Across America's churches, homosexuality continued to divide denominations. Signs of a fissure appeared in the American Baptist Churches USA, while Lutherans rejected a policy that would have kept a ban on gay ministers but allowed churches to violate it without sanction.

A debate about life—this time over its beginnings, not its end—flared in classrooms across the country as supporters of "intelligent design" reopened a simmering battle against evolution. The idea, that the natural world is so complex that it must have been overseen by a creator, found a foothold in Kansas. But in November a Pennsylvania school board that supported it was voted out of office. Both sides agree the dispute is likely to continue well into 2006 and beyond.

### Katrina, death and God

Death was never so visible as in September, when Katrina tore into the Gulf Coast and flooded New Orleans in a toxic soup of destruction and despair. Some saw it as God's punishment for a host of sins. Others claimed God must have been looking the other way.

Many who have worked in tsunami and hurricane relief say it's best not to ask where God was during the wind and waves, but to search for God in the calm after the storm.

"For me, I do not look at (disasters) as signs or messages because my reading of Scripture is that bad things happen, but not everything that happens comes from God," said Gary Harbaugh, a Lutheran theologian who is also active in relief efforts.

"I don't look to God to explain why bad things happen. I look to God to help me to know how, when bad things happen, to embody His care and compassion in the world."

**2005  
Looking  
Backwards**

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## City that never sleeps



**NIGHT LIFE** Madrid is a city that seems to never rest. The streets constantly buzz with activity, as the city serves as Spain's political, financial and entertainment capital.

### Madrid abuzz with business, entertainment & other activity

**Madrid, Spain**—It's mid-afternoon in Madrid, and storefronts stand eerily still.

As the scorching sun elevates temperatures above 100 degrees, Spaniards race for the relief of air-conditioned rooms. Businesses close between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. People slowly return to work in the early evening, but the city remains relatively quiet until 9:30 p.m.

Millions of Madrid's inhabitants take to the streets once the sun sinks below the horizon. During the workweek, the typical Spaniard doesn't think of sleeping until midnight. For university students, the night might end when the sun reappears the next morning.

Madrid is a sprawling, diverse urban city that offers a taste of everything. It serves as the governing capital of Spain, and the rows of embassies and law offices give Madrid an appearance similar to Washington, D.C. It functions as the hub of business activity; thus, the downtown area vibrates with the same buzz as New York City. Madrid is home to numerous movie stars, sports heroes and entertainment moguls, making the city as dazzling as Hollywood.

With 6 million inhabitants, it's no surprise Madrid is home to people from every background, culture and lifestyle. More than 250,000 university students attend the city's 10 universities. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants and refugees from Northern Africa and Latin America have come to escape political and economic hardships. At least 1 million professionals work in Madrid's government and business districts. And another 1 million people fill blue-collar jobs as taxi drivers, gatekeepers and waiters.

Fewer than 2 percent of Spaniards are evangelical believers, and the current generation is raised to believe Spain has outgrown its need for religion. As one Christian worker in Madrid said, "In the biblical analogy of the seed sower, we're still picking up stones in the garden. We have to clear the land before we can start planting seeds."

#### Mobilizing Christian workers

Christian workers in Madrid say that if the city is to be transformed by God's love, they must mobilize believers to spread the gospel. One team works with university students, both from America and Spain, to train them to evangelize and disciple their peers.

Another team focuses on mobilizing immigrants from Latin America, many of whom are evangelical Christians and can communicate with the locals in Spanish. This team attempts to train Latin American immigrants to share their faith with employers and local Spaniards in a culturally acceptable way.

One team seeks to share the gospel with professional residents, the movers and shakers of Madrid. They help Christian businessmen find ways to share the gospel with co-workers and mobilize Christians into cell groups that eventually will become church plants.

The fourth team's vision is to plant churches among Muslims who frequent the thousands of mosques throughout the city. They distribute Bibles and "Jesus" films to Muslim refugees and immigrants and offer English-as-a-Second-Language classes inside mosques.

"Our goal is to produce followers," says Daniel Peters, city strategist for Madrid. "But the natural expression from that will be churches. Our vision is to see all the people of Madrid come to know Him."

## Missionary mentors to multiply churches

(Editor's note: Because European city strategists often work with Muslims or with other missions-sending groups that have security concerns, the following stories use a pseudonym for missionaries and their family members.)

By **Brittany Conner**  
SBC International Mission Board

**Madrid, Spain**—The playground's dust scatters beneath children's scampering feet as they race for the slide.

Mothers stand nearby to monitor the raucous playing, their heads covered with traditional Muslim scarves. A few loose dogs skid to a stop as they pounce on a ball thrown by their owner.

Children's laughter mingles with chirping birds and chatting parents to create a buzz at the neighborhood playground.

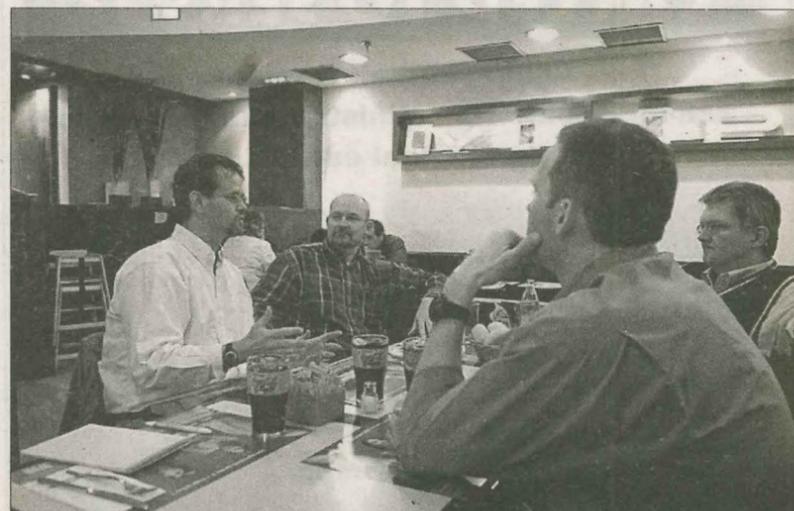
Missionary Daniel Peters strolls among the people in this park, observing their nationalities, listening to their conversations and praying about their needs.

"Anytime I go anywhere, I'm constantly looking and thinking, 'What are their needs, and how can I help meet them?'" Peters says.

Peters is the city strategist for Madrid. His task is to ensure that every people group in the city has a chance to hear the gospel. Part of his assignment is to aid Southern Baptist workers and "Great Commission Christians" in the city who lead teams focused on particular segments of the city's 6 million people.

"Professionally, I see myself as someone trying to develop new leaders both within and without our organization," Peters says. "If I'm able to develop church planters from the North American Mission Board, IMB or Latin America, I feel like I'm doing my job."

Each week, Peters mentors a leader from one of the three teams he oversees: the university student ministry team, the Latin American mobilization team and the immigrant and refugee team. He helps them develop a prayer strategy, study the culture and beliefs, and create a plan for getting the gospel



**MANY MEETINGS** Daniel Peters (left) regularly meets with Christian workers in Madrid to discuss creative and successful methods for evangelism and discipleship to reach the sprawling city's 6 million inhabitants. (IMB photos)

to their people group. He also meets every week with a Spanish friend who is not a believer.

"Everything that happens in Madrid happens over a cup of coffee," Peters jokes.

He also regularly meets with other Great Commission Christians to discuss strategies for evangelism and starting churches. They talk about outreach events that work and methods that failed. They also discuss ways to turn one house church into two churches that could duplicate into four.

#### "It's hard to multiply by one"

"It's important to remember it's hard to multiply by one or zero," Peters says. "We need to see many groups of churches start to plant other churches. It may look slower in the beginning because we have to add churches before they start multiplying."

Peters and his wife, Teresa, have served in Madrid since 2001. He worked as a church planter in Tennessee, Georgia and Texas with the North American Mission Board before they were appointed to serve as church planters in Madrid. He eventually became city strategist, as well as leading a team focused on taking the gospel to Madrid's professionals.

More than 1 million professionals

live in Madrid—nearly 20 percent of the population—and fewer than one-half percent of them are believers.

"One large challenge here is not that people do not know about God," Peters says. "They are culturally religious people. They have many beautiful church buildings and Christian religious festivals."

"However, I see millions of people here who often think religion and ritual are enough; I want them to experience that the only way to the Father is through a relationship with Jesus."



**That all peoples may know Him**



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# Missionary kids helping parents reach residents

By Brittany Conner  
SBC International Mission Board

Madrid, Spain—Although the Southern Baptist International Mission Board appointed Daniel and Teresa Peters as city strategists for Madrid, their ministry includes the entire family.

Karla, who is 14 years old, has lived in Spain since she was 9. Her brother, Tyler, has lived there most of his life.

The Peters children have mastered the language and culture of their adopted city. And they understand their purpose in Madrid: to evangelize the lost, disciple new believers and help their parents start churches among the city's 6 million people.

"A lot of what my parents do is through what Tyler and I do," Karla says. "I have friends from all different places, so when I go to meet with them, my parents get to meet their parents."

Daniel Peters' task is to develop strategies to effectively share the gospel in Madrid. He trains and mentors other Christian workers to

plant churches that will, in turn, start other churches. He has learned most evangelism in Spain starts with building friendships. So Daniel and Teresa seize every opportunity to build a reputation with the community and the other parents.



**That all peoples may know Him**

Last summer, they hosted a volunteer team of parents and children from the United States. The group organized four English-as-a-Second-Language summer camps throughout the Peters' apartment complex.

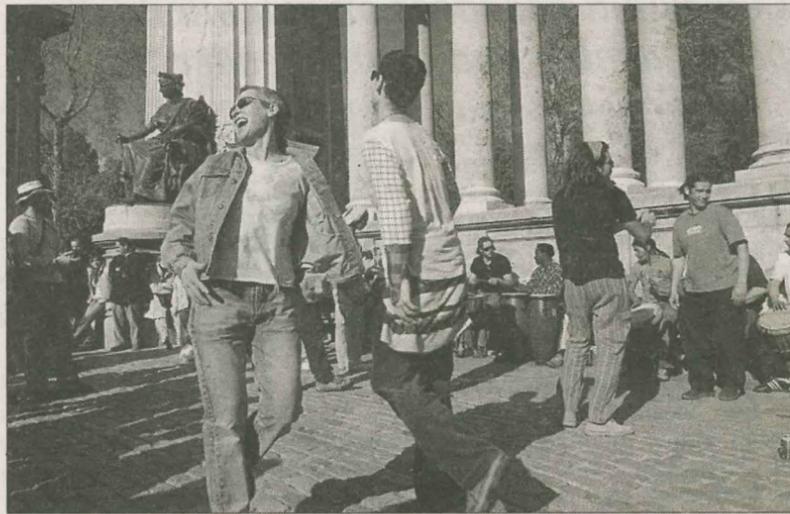
"The purpose is for relationship-building, and to build credibility and trust with our neighbors," Teresa says. "We had an excellent response. The parents loved it!"

Karla and Tyler assisted the groups as they taught English lessons and Christian values to 70 preschoolers and 6-year-olds.

Daniel says activities such as the English-language camps are conducted with one purpose in mind: planting churches. He says his goal is to see a cell group form among parents with children in the camps.

### Outreach parties

Karla also organized a party, inviting the teenage volunteers and her Spanish friends to learn from one another. The volunteers lived out their Christian beliefs while interacting with the Spanish friends,



**FREE SPIRITED** Parque del Retiro (Retiro Park) lies in central Madrid. Drum circles are a common affair, mostly attracting young, free-spirited college students, but any age is likely to join in. Often dozens of drummers will line up in an arc and pound out rhythms for hours while others watch and dance to the beats. (IMB photos)

many of whom do not have personal relationships with Jesus. The Spanish teenagers reciprocated by inviting the teens, including the Peters family, on a museum outing.

Teresa says the teenagers' interaction gave her and Daniel an opportunity to get to know the parents.

The Peters family maintains a busy schedule as they balance ministry responsibilities with family obligations. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings, they transport Karla and Tyler between guitar, piano or violin lessons, horseback rid-

ing class and tennis lessons. While the kids practice, Daniel and Teresa talk with other parents and build relationships with these people they see on a regular basis.

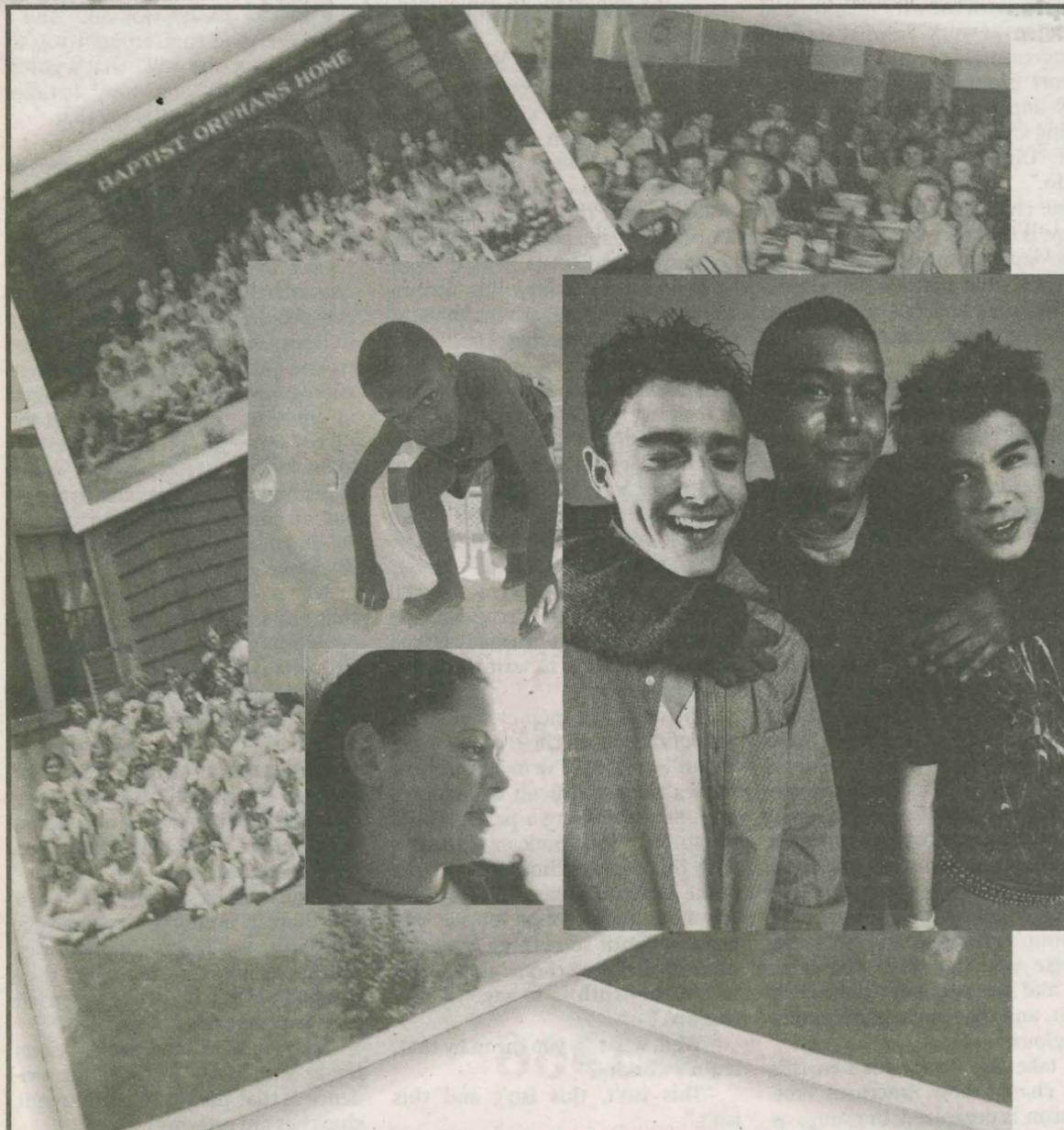
"My priorities have always been God, family and ministry, and that doesn't change," Teresa says.

Daniel agrees. "Being a good husband to the bride of my youth is important," he says. "My kids are my first disciples. If I start a church plant, but my kids suffer, then that's a poor testimony."

*"A lot of what my parents do is through what Tyler and I do."*

Missionary kid Karla

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**KENTUCKY BAPTIST HOMES FOR CHILDREN**

## Schaller: Courageous leaders can say 'It ain't workin''

*Consultant has ideas on communication, peer learning and church leadership*

**"The road that brought you to today is not the road that's going to take you to tomorrow. It takes courage to lead and to say that."**

Church consultant  
Lyle Schaller

Richmond, Va.—Lyle Schaller has been called the "dean of church consultants." Although "retired," he still speaks at conferences and to churches. John Chandler, team leader of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board's courageous churches team, recently interviewed Schaller.

**Q: What issues do you see emerging for 21st century church leaders?**

Lyle Schaller: Many emerging issues would fall under the label of "technology." The big changes in technology are that for a lot of people, projected visual imagery is the preferred channel for receiving messages rather than the spoken or printed word. People speak different languages. We used to think of it in terms of German, French, English, or whatever. Now we recognize that for a lot of people, particularly teenagers, music is a language. Numbers are a language. There are a variety of languages out there.

The big unknown out there is, "Do you have to go to work to be at work?" An increasing proportion of the population works out of their home. Do you have to go to the grocery store to purchase groceries? No, you can order them online and have them delivered. Do you have to go to the ballpark to see the game? No, you can watch it on television or your computer.

Do you have to go to church to go to church? No, you can watch a variety of television services. Or, increasingly, you can pick them up off your computer or iPod. What this is going to do is similar to what's happened in professional football, basketball and baseball, which have said, "We can't afford to play the game based on box office receipts." So professional teams are getting more and more money out of selling television, radio and reproduction rights.

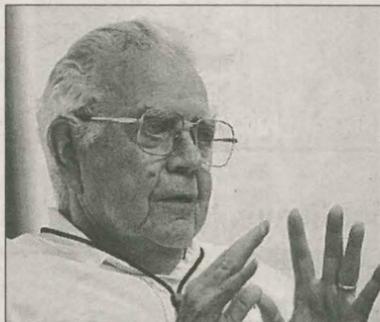
Motion pictures increasingly can be seen at home not after they have exhausted their box office or theatre receipts, but a few weeks or months following the first release. Many motion pictures bring in more revenue from electronic reproduction than they do from box office receipts.

How is that going to change how we do church? How is it going to change how we pay the bills? How do we do a whole bundle of things, including, how do we staff?

Our society is moving from a vertical world to a horizontal world. There was a day when there were people in charge and people who worked for them. But increasingly, people work for themselves or in teams. This brings an increase in horizontal relationships. In education, we see this in a growing acceptance and affirmation of peer learning, which used to be reserved for one-room schools and graduate school seminars.

**Would you say that peer learning is going to become the chief educational tool for leadership in churches?**

I would say more than that. First of all, it already is the competitor for the teacher-focused Sunday school



**HORIZONTAL SHIFT** Church consultant Lyle Schaller says America is becoming a more "horizontal" society that values peer groups and peer learning. "This could change how American Protestantism is organized." (BP file photo)

class. Our traditional Sunday school class was a teacher-centered affair. You had a teacher prepare and people came to class to learn. To be fair, many of these classes became caring communities. But a big issue as we move into a more horizontal world of peer learning and peer-driven groups is, "How are we going to teach and learn?"

People are now willing to talk with peers about their worries and concerns, where it used to be that you wouldn't tell anyone about a problem at home, or with your spouse or children. People are much more open to talk about personal problems with their friends, kin and colleagues at work. So what we have are increasingly peer-driven, mutual support groups that include Bible study and prayer, as well as some looking after one another. We hear a lot of, "Oh, I have the same problem you do."

One characteristic of peer-driven groups is that they surface issues. ... The group is not teacher-driven; the peers are what matters. We expose our weakness and talk about them with other people, our peers.

**How can pastors take advantage of this horizontal world for their own learning as leaders?**

Probably they can't until after they've affirmed the legitimacy of this in their own church and have seen how it works. To some extent, it's a generational difference or half-generational difference. The 55-year-old pastor endorses the idea and brings a 30-year-old on staff to build peer-driven communities. The pastor sits in on them once in a while, silently, and says, "Hey, this is working. I wonder what's out there for me, with my peers?"

Now we see pastors coming together in groups of five, six or seven. For many this has become the most valuable two hours they spend in a week. They bring a concern to a group, share it with the group, hear the group's response, find out someone else who has faced the same issue and learned how they dealt with it, and that openness becomes contagious.

To take this a step further, this could change how American Protestantism is organized. In groups as different theologically as Southern Baptists and the United Churches of Christ, it raises divisive issues in

the roles of national and regional agencies. These judicatories used to think of themselves as there to give out advice and counsel. They proved they were needed by holding big meetings that people would come to, and if the attendance was better this year than last year, then it proves it was working.

But what if there is a whole different style of what people are going to attend? If denominational people don't offer peer-learning help, there are a whole range of parachurch agencies that will come in and do so.

**In this horizontal world, what competencies are going to be valuable for leaders?**

I think you will get almost unanimous agreement that No. 1 is listening skills. Not simply sitting quietly and listening. But active listening, where you not only hear and see by body language what's being communicated, but you wait long enough to be the fifth person to respond. Yes, someone has to respond first. But if I wait to be the fifth person to respond, then I have the benefit of the first four responders.

**The better leader is the one who is able to postpone jumping in until gathering all of the appropriate information, creatively processing it and only then responding out of the increased "wisdom" base?**

Yes, that's right. Listening skills are No. 1.

No. 2 is patience. Now I don't pretend to be real good at either one. But in parish consultations, I did learn to listen to an awful lot of laypeople. Sometimes wanting to interrupt, but holding back and waiting until the person had really finished what they wanted to say (because quite often, they'd begin with a surface issue). But waiting and not giving negative signals, so they would know they could go a little deeper.

The final thing leaders will need is courage. At least one piece of courage is the willingness to tell the truth, to say what is not politely or politically acceptable. To be the one required to run counter to the thrust of what's going on. Now, I put listening and patience ahead of courage, because if you speak too soon, you'll simply be viewed as disruptive, and your comments get brushed off. You have to be patient to wait to say the courageous word.

The most common expression of the courage to tell the truth is to say, "It ain't workin'." I've had a dozen or two extremely difficult experiences over 40 years where a pastor would say to me, "You think my future is with this congregation or not?" The polite thing to say is, "Yes, you can stay here and serve as long as you want, or until something better or more challenging comes along." But to tell the truth is to say, "It ain't workin'."

"Well, what do you mean by that, it ain't workin'?"

"This isn't, this isn't and this isn't."

"How do you know that?"

"Primarily from the feedback I've been getting from your laypeople,

particularly your leadership, some of whom are good personal friends of yours."

"Well, that's all news to me."

"It probably is news to you, otherwise you would have acted on it. But I think they're valid comments."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"No, one more comment. It's worse than it sounds. This has been going on long enough here that you've used up about all of the grace period that you have."

"How long can I stay?"

"I'm not going to say five minutes. But I'm not going to say five months, either. I think you need to tell at least four or five of your crucial leaders that you know your time is limited. And ask them to be your allies in helping you through a phase-out chapter here. I don't think you should try to do it all by yourself. I think you've used up the grace period already."

**Might courage also be a leader saying to a congregation the same thing: "It ain't workin'?"**

Same thing. The clearest illustration of this is when the numbers have been going down and have been for some time. Whether you're talking about worship attendance, Sunday school attendance, giving, people leaving, joining another church not triggered by change of residence.

(Today, there's a tendency to say,) "Well, we're doing what we always did and it always worked." And I say, "The road that brought you to today is not the road that's going to take you to tomorrow." It takes courage to lead and to say that.

**What are the grace notes of encouragement and hope that you could offer to one who wants to be a courageous leader?**

The market demand by American citizens is for churches that call people to a high commitment to Jesus Christ, are focusing on discipling people and both challenge and equip volunteers to be engaged in doing ministry. The demand for those churches is at an all-time high. We've never had so many adult Americans who have dropped out of church "A" to join church "B" because church "B" is more demanding.

For a long time, we thought that the churches who were more demanding were the fundamentalists. Or we thought that they were the ones who would be shrinking. They expected everybody to tithe, and not only that, they expected that at least half of that tithe came through the church's treasury. They expected that if you were a member, you would be in worship every week. They expected that you couldn't even serve on a committee, much less chair it, unless you met certain standards. And the assumption was, "Those are the dying churches; they demand too much, they're too strict, their expectations are too high."

Today—and this has been obvious for at least three decades—the evidence is that the high-commitment churches are growing.

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### Urgency and opportunity

#### India reflects the global challenge of sharing Christ

Recent natural disasters in the United States and around the world that "swept thousands upon thousands into a Christless eternity" are startling and staggering reminders of the urgency for each of us to follow God's call to keep so many people from dying without hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ. By now, I trust you have given to the 2005 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Your gifts to this special offering are critical because they make it possible for more and more missionaries to reach places like South Asia, where more than 200,000 people die without Christ each week.

I was overwhelmed by what I learned during the week of prayer study at my church about the challenges of reaching India for Christ. Examples of the challenges are: the huge population of people for the geographical size of the country, a birth rate almost three times the death rate, the number of people dying with HIV/AIDS, the number of ethnic groups, the high percentage of people who practice the Hindu religion, and

I could go on and on. Perhaps as much as any situation in the world at this time, India reflects both the urgency and the opportunity of taking the gospel to the people groups of the world from African tribes to Asian mega cities.

Perhaps you would consider prayerfully using a portion of the financial resources God has entrusted to you to help strengthen and secure the future of international missions "that all peoples may know Him." Laurie Valentine, our trust counsel, and I are just a toll-free call away, and we would consider it a privilege to assist you in your consideration of such a decision.

The simplest idea to consider is a bequest in your will or revocable living trust of at least a tithe of your estate to establish an endowment fund with the foundation for the perpetual benefit of international missions through the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

Please call.

Barry Allen is president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, PO Box 436389, Louisville, KY 40253; (866) 489-3533; www.kybaptistfoundation.org

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### Bible Crosswords

Evelyn Boyington

#### Across

- 1 "Until the day dawn, and the day \_\_\_\_\_ arise" (2 Peter 1:19)
- 5 "Believe not every spirit, but \_\_\_\_\_ the spirits" (1 John 4:1)
- 8 Some circles
- 12 "Take thine \_\_\_\_\_, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19)
- 13 Do garden work
- 14 Wild rest stop
- 15 Operatic highlight
- 16 Mange, in Marshalltown
- 17 Land measure
- 18 "Let them be for signs, and for \_\_\_\_\_, and for day, and years" (Genesis 1:14)
- 20 Pine
- 21 Exclamation of pain
- 22 Item to do
- 24 Newsmen Phillips
- 27 Laughing sound
- 28 Moisture
- 31 Holds the deed to
- 32 "We have also a more \_\_\_\_\_ word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19)
- 33 Forest female
- 34 "If God \_\_\_\_\_ for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)
- 36 "We pray you in Christ's \_\_\_\_\_, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- 37 "They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in \_\_\_\_\_" (Hebrews 11:38)
- 39 \_\_\_\_\_ of the Chaldees
- 40 Late actor Ames
- 42 Survived in water
- 47 Kind of scale
- 48 "Ye \_\_\_\_\_ bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20)
- 49 Tabu, to toddler

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

- 50 Greek letter (pl.)
- 51 Nothing
- 52 Oaf; bully
- 53 Black, for one
- 54 Kind of glass
- 55 Sea bird

#### Down

- 1 "The gathering together of the waters called he \_\_\_\_\_" (Genesis 1:10)
- 2 "The devil threw him down and \_\_\_\_\_ him" (Luke 9:42)
- 3 "The churches of \_\_\_\_\_ salute you" (1 Corinthians 16:19)
- 4 "Produce your cause ... bring forth your strong \_\_\_\_\_, saith the King of Jacob" (Isaiah 41:21)
- 5 There's partner
- 6 Sunday entree
- 7 "\_\_\_\_\_ not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20)
- 8 "The Lord is not \_\_\_\_\_ concerning his promise" (2 Peter 3:9)
- 9 Every
- 10 Soggy ground
- 11 Anger
- 19 "\_\_\_\_\_ no man any thing, but to love" (Romans 13:8)
- 20 King of Judah; son of Abijam
- 23 Exclamation of delight

- 24 Earth
- 25 When this many are gathered together, the Lord is present
- 26 Christians worship the \_\_\_\_\_ true God
- 28 "A word spoken in \_\_\_\_\_ season, how good is it" (Proverbs 15:23)
- 29 Historical period
- 30 Unite
- 32 "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a \_\_\_\_\_ land?" (Psalm 137:4)
- 34 \_\_\_\_\_-oni, Rachel's youngest
- 35 Printer's measure
- 36 "A Boy Named \_\_\_\_\_" (J Cash hit)
- 37 KJV verb
- 38 Airport runway
- 40 Recently, with "of"
- 41 Showing no favoritism (Fr.)
- 43 Call on for help
- 44 "Behold, I stand at the \_\_\_\_\_" (Revelation 3:20)
- 45 \_\_\_\_\_ Church, Virginia (site of 1864 battle)
- 46 Well \_\_\_\_\_
- 47 Charlotte's \_\_\_\_\_ (E.B. White classic)
- 48 Reply (abbr.)

#### Last week's solution

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
S	A	L	E	C	A	R	E	T	O	W
A	M	O	S	A	M	E	N	E	W	E
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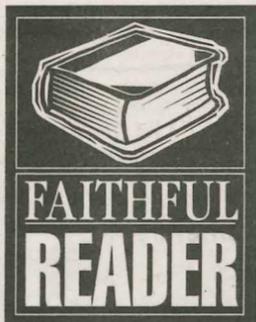
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PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C.; Jim Holladay, pastor of Lyndon Baptist Church in Louisville; Steve Coleman, pastor of education and youth at New Work Fellowship in Hopkinsville; and Victoria Moon, a state correspondent for the Western Recorder. They welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: whager@trifolium.net; lyndonpastor@aol.com; risen4me@hotmail.com; and victorimoon@earthlink.net.

**"God's Blogs, Insights from His Site."** Lanny Donoho. Multnomah, 2005. 256 pages. \$14.99. ♦♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

Imagine God logging on to the Internet and starting His own Weblog, or "blog," commenting on such issues as tsunamis, love, death and even soap bubbles.

Lanny Donoho has written "God's Blogs," a witty and funny book with entries to make you chuckle and others that are thought provoking, challenging readers to assess their own opinions on subjects. He challenges all to listen to God and follow Him in His grace.

The book is written with notes in the margins in different colors, as if God is adding footnotes and cartoons to His text. The chapters are short, and there are no page numbers in the book. The table of contents shows a map with a journey being marked on the page.

Donoho is attempting to portray God talking to the reader in such a way that new insights might be made concerning a loving God. One chapter explores what it means to be made in the image of God. Another about tsunamis considers where God is when disasters strike.

Donoho tries to frame God's perspective on topics from preachers to weddings, to forgiveness and other fun topics to have you think about as you read.

The book is fun to read regardless of age group. It includes great illustrations to use in teaching a Sunday school class, youth program or even a Sunday morning worship service. *Steve Coleman*

**The Leadership Labyrinth: Negotiating the Paradoxes of Ministry.** Judson Edwards. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2005. 118 pages. \$15. ♦♦♦♦♦

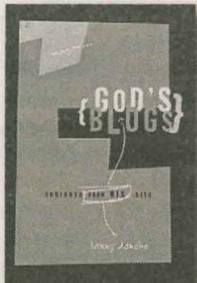
If Judson Edwards is correct, then pastoral ministry is largely a counter-intuitive practice. The most obvious attitudes and courses of action can lead the pastoral minister down paths that work against ultimate success in ministry.

In "The Leadership Labyrinth," Edwards offers insights into 21 leadership paradoxes. Some of them are humorous, such as, "The more you preach, the less you have to say." Others challenge our assumptions, such as "The most powerful people in your life will not be powerful people."

Still others provide insights that I call blinding flashes of the obvious: "The harder you try to control a group, the less control you have."

Each chapter is short, pithy and from Edwards' own ministry experience. I do not know if his insights would stand up to thorough testing, but as I read them, most made perfect sense. In my ministerial tenure, I have experienced most of what he talks about. Reading his book, I was reminded of the tendency to take myself and my importance too seriously.

A college religion professor once admonished us, "Gentlemen, when you take something so seriously that you can't laugh at it, you are taking it too seriously." That sounds a lot like Edwards' concluding paradox, "Only pastors who are having fun can seriously proclaim the gospel." *Jim Holladay*



**Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today.** David Hesselgrave. Kregel Publications, 2005. 368 pages. \$20.99. ♦♦♦♦♦

David Hesselgrave has been the leading spokesman for evangelical missions for decades. His "Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally" and "Planting Churches Cross-Culturally," are standards in classes on missions.

Now retired, Hesselgrave turns his attention to the tough questions that must be answered for effective missions in the 21st century.

Responding to what he sees as increasing tolerance and pluralism, even within evangelical Christianity, Hesselgrave explores different approaches to questions such as: "For whom is the gospel good news?" "How should we approach adherents of other faiths?" "Is this mission trip really necessary?" "What on earth is God building, here and now?"

In discussing possible answers to these and other questions, Hesselgrave walks the reader through a thorough discussion of theology, Scripture, social science and history.

Hesselgrave's bottom line is that any change in missiological approach should be considered long and hard. He promotes a cautious progress in the ways we do missions.

Whether you agree or disagree with him, Hesselgrave continues to contribute to the study of missions in a way in which all future discussions must respond to how he answers the 10 key questions in missions. *Wayne Hager*

**Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life.** Joanna Weaver. WaterBrook Press, 2002. 241 pages. \$13.99. ♦♦♦♦♦

In our culture of instant information and constant motion, Joanna Weaver's book is a welcome invitation to stop and examine our priorities in relation to the priorities of Christ.

While 241 pages might seem like overkill for five verses of Scripture (Luke 10:38-42), Weaver manages to breathe new life and imagination into these verses.

Weaver muses on the character and thoughts of Mary and Martha as they interact with Jesus, portraying both women as sympathetic characters whose choices are reflected in the daily choices of today's Christian women.

It is refreshing, also, to find a Bible study that delves far beneath the surface and really challenges not only newer Christians, but also those with a mature faith.

Weaver's book, though gentle and non-judgmental in its approach, quietly demands change. It calls readers to question what is truly important, to have the courage to say "no" to those things which are not, and to remember the freedom and refreshment that can be found by those who are willing to make the hard choices necessary to be able to have the time to sit at the feet of the Jesus.

The 12-week companion Bible study in the back of the book is useful, too, with questions that can be used for general discussion and a section for "Going Deeper." *Victoria Moon*



## A time to celebrate His gift and yours

### Thanks to God and thanks to Oneida Baptist Institute's faithful supporters

It is wonderful to know that we have the opportunity to celebrate the gift of Jesus Christ every day of our lives. We are reminded daily of the sacrifice God made by sending His Son to redeem man from a life of sin and failure. Each day of our lives we have the opportunity to thank Jesus for the gift of His life on the cross of Calvary. How empty and void our lives would be without the security of God's love.

It is a daily challenge for our faculty and staff to teach our students the reality of sin and that forgiveness can be obtained only by accepting the gift of God's Son. Before coming to Oneida, most of our students have had little in the way of spiritual training. They are well indoctrinated in the idea that if something feels good, it must be OK. As long as they do not hurt someone else, they believe that what they do is pretty much their business.

Trying to awaken their spiritual awareness can be likened to trying to re-hydrate something that has lost all of its moisture. It is often difficult for our students to understand that there is a loving and caring God Who would make such a sacrifice for them. Helping them to understand and accept His gift of salvation is often met with resistance and skepticism. On the other hand, when a young person's hardened heart finally is softened by the tender touch of God's abiding love, a marvelous transition takes place right before our eyes. How blessed we are to be able to celebrate the eternal gift God sent to us 2,000 years ago!

This season is also a time for us to celebrate

the gift of our friends and supporters. As we come to the end of our 106th year, it is easy to see the fingerprints of our many friends. Expressions of love can be seen in the abundance of volunteers who graced our campus in the past 12 months. More than 800 volunteers from more than a dozen states donated thousands of hours of labor. It is frightening to consider all of the things that would not have been done this year without our volunteers.

Nearly every day this year, visitors have traveled to our campus. They likely do not realize how much they encouraged us. Their presence told us that they care, that our work is important and that they support our efforts. It might be difficult for students to understand why people come just to see our school. After all, visitors never came to their old schools to see how they were doing.

Finally, where would we be without the generous financial support of the churches, WMU groups, Sunday school classes, vacation Bible school offerings and the unnumbered host of individuals who make our work financially possible? Nearly every day I sign dozens of thank you letters to those friends. Often the donor will attach a letter or note to the gift telling of some special story about the enclosed gift. Many of our friends are able to give only a few dollars and not very often. I personally know that many of those gifts have required more than a little sacrifice. During this wonderful time when we celebrate the gift of God's Son, we also celebrate the gift of your love and support!

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



W.F. Underwood

## The Versailles lamplighter

### Trustee Anna White keeps punching holes in darkness

One of the best Christmas gifts that came to Rebecca and me was a book of stories and memories, titled "The Lamplighter," written by Anna White of Versailles.

With 15 years of trustee service, Anna is chair of the academic committee and serves on the executive committee. At the 2003 commencement, she presented degrees to the graduates. Her husband of 60 years, Donald, previously served on the board.

Anna's story is the testimony of a "loving family," the faithful witness of dedicated churches, the mix of joy and sadness, ever moving toward the higher ground of a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. Her life exemplifies her two favorite Scriptures: Proverbs 3:5-6 and Galatians 2:20.

Her springtime childhood encounter with Old Jersey, the family milk cow, is a classic. While her older sister milked the cow, Anna "decided to take a swing on Old Jersey's tail. It never happened! As soon as I was beneath her, the cow decided she needed very badly to go to the bathroom. Plop! Plop! Plop! New green grass

diarrhea covered my head, my face, down my dress! Unbelievable!" You'll have to ask Anna what she told her mother.

Part of Anna's busy life includes making delicious sourdough bread. "On May 24, 1984, I made my first batch," she writes. "Since that time, I have made close to 5,000 loaves, most of which I have given away."

Rebecca and I usually receive a loaf each trustee meeting. Anna makes 12 loaves for Christmas "to meet the quota of the Sunday school class, shut-ins and others." Before baking, she imprints a cross on each loaf. Each loaf given is placed in a white sack with a leaflet about "The Bread of Life."

The close of this book of memories recalls the little boy describing the old lamplighter as "punching holes" in the darkness. "When I pass this life I hope the legacy I leave will be that the light of Christ was reflected by me," Anna wrote. "I hope my life has 'punched a few holes' in the darkness." All of us who know Anna White can testify she continues to leave that legacy.

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



Bill Whittaker

## Exiled Iraqi Christians vote with concern about future

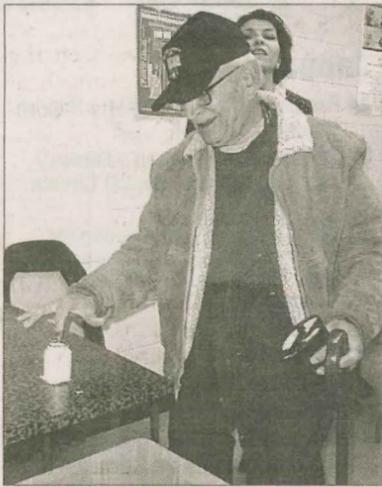
By Ashtar Marcus  
Religion News Service

**Skokie, Ill.** (RNS)—Yalda Hajey, draped in traditional Assyrian scarves around his neck and waist, with red and green feathers protruding from his hat, dropped his vote into a ballot box, dipped his finger into a purple ink sponge and sprang into an Iraqi jig.

But Hajey's dancing mood turned somber as he talked about recent killings of fellow Christians in Iraq, including three bodyguards protecting a Christian ministry official and two men putting up posters in support of a Christian candidate. Media reports said their splattered blood covered the posters.

"I'm voting for those who martyred themselves," said Hajey, 53, of Chicago, who cast his ballot Dec. 13.

Like Hajey, many of the tens of thousands of Iraqi Christians in the United States are deeply concerned about the future of their religious community in their native land. While the world's focus largely has been on Iraq's Muslim Shiites and Sunnis, Christians in Iraq are an important and suffering religious minority.



**EXILED VOTER** Phillip Lado, 73, dips his finger in purple ink after voting in the Iraqi election from a Chicago suburb. (RNS photo by Ashtar Marcus)

According to Iraqi legend, Christianity first came to the region by one of Christ's original apostles, with speculation centering on Thomas.

### Ancient root of Christianity

Iraq has been called an ancient root of Christianity, but its Christians say they are as vulnerable as ever, making up 4 percent of the

country's 26 million population.

"Christians are, in terms of history, the oldest inhabitants of Mesopotamia, known as modern Iraq," said Edward Odisho, a professor of culture and linguistics, specializing in the Middle East, at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago.

Odisho said Christianity predates Islam in Iraq by centuries, and "in the absence of democracy, they (Christians) have used religion as an umbrella to bring them together."

Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Syrian Orthodox and Church of the East are among the Christian denominations represented in Iraq. But their numbers have decreased in recent years due to a terrorism-induced exodus to other countries.

This election has allowed Iraqis living in the United States and elsewhere to vote over three days for a new government for their homeland. Of the eight American cities hosting elections, Pleasanton, Calif., and Skokie are expected to receive the highest Christian turnout, possibly in the thousands, election officials said.

"I'm voting because we elderly

have to lead the way for our children," said Phillip Lado, 73, speaking in his native Assyrian language. "We want to ask God to pour peace into our dear country of Iraq."

### Praying for 62,500 votes

Many Iraqi expatriates want a Christian representative in their native land's national assembly so the security concerns of Christians can be heard. In the January elections, one of the five Christian representatives in the temporary assembly was elected almost entirely by out-of-country voters.

"We need to reach the minimum of (an estimated) 62,500 votes to achieve a parliamentary seat," Isho Lilou, an elections official, said.

Out-of-country votes will be counted toward 45 "compensatory seats" of the 275-seat assembly, which will remain in authority for a full four-year term.

For Iraqi Christians, the outcome could determine the stability of their community, and an opportunity for exiles to return.

"We have become orphans in 54 different countries, scattered," Lado said. "We have to have representation to have our rights met like all people."

**"We have become orphans in 54 different countries, scattered."**

Phillip Lado, an Iraqi living in Skokie, Ill.

## Religious activists arrested in budget protest

**Washington** (RNS)—More than 100 singing church activists were arrested Dec. 14 outside the U.S. Capitol in a dramatic confrontation with a 2006 federal budget that they reject as immoral.

Officials said 114 protesters were arrested after they blocked the main entrance to the Cannon House Office Building during a carefully choreographed event that was organized by Sojourners and Call to Renewal, two progressive faith-based groups that focus on poverty.

The demonstration was the most direct action by religious advocates who have made the budget their highest domestic priority, and reflected the ongoing tussle between liberals and conservatives over what constitutes "moral values."

Congress is rushing to finish a compromise budget that includes \$50 billion in spending cuts ap-

proved by the House and \$35 billion passed by the Senate. Protesters said those cuts primarily will hurt the poor.

The House also has approved a bill to cut taxes by \$95 billion. Sojourners founder Jim Wallis said it was immoral to cut taxes for the wealthy as Christians prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, whom the Bibles says came to "bring good news to the poor."

### Christmas "scandal"

"There is a Christmas scandal in this nation ... but it has nothing to do with shopping malls saying 'Happy holidays' instead of 'Merry Christmas,'" Wallis said. "The Christmas scandal is the immoral budget coming out of this Congress."

Wallis and Ron Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action, were among those arrested. About

150 other demonstrators chose not to be arrested. Organizers said the protesters, who huddled together as the mercury dipped into the low 20s, came from across the country and represent evangelical, mainline Protestant and Catholic churches.

But religious conservatives who focus on hot-button social issues were noticeably absent from the rally. Instead, the Washington-based Family Research Council urged its members to support the House budget bill.

Wallis insisted that viewing poverty and the budget as moral issues is gaining traction among rank-and-file churchgoers, and cited a growing consensus against poverty in America's heartland.

"There's a moral center emerging in this country," he said. "Don't go left, don't go right, but go deeper in the middle."

## Not all Christians can celebrate Christmas, speakers say

**Washington** (BP)—American Christians might wonder if "Merry Christmas" is welcome in the public square, but followers of Christ in many countries know that expressing their faith can result in torture, imprisonment or death.

The persecution of Christians overseas continues and, in some countries, is increasing, specialists on international religious liberty said at a Dec. 14 briefing at the U.S. Capitol.

Charles Chaput, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Denver, said three things distinguish persecution of and discrimination against Christians globally.

### Ugly & growing

"First of all, it's ugly," said Chaput, a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious

Freedom. "Secondly, it's growing. And third, the mass media ... seem to generally ignore or downplay its gravity."

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and also a US-CIRF member, told the audience of congressional staffers, activists and reporters, "We come here at Christmastime, and we can celebrate our religious freedom. We're hear to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves because they live in countries where they are not free to worship."

Land, Chaput and five other speakers familiar with the issue described the conditions for Christians in countries such as North Korea, China, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and India.

The countries practicing religious persecution can be divided into three categories, said Paul Marshall, senior fellow at Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom:

■ Remaining and former communist countries, including China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba and Belarus.

■ Countries in which religious nationalism is practiced, such as Sri Lanka, Nepal and Burma.

■ Radical Islamic countries, including Indonesia, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Unlike the others, the countries controlled by radical Islam are "expansionist," Marshall said.

The Congressional Working Group on Religious Freedom and the Center for Religious Freedom sponsored the briefing.

## NATIONAL NOTES

**Polls: Opinions vary on "Merry Christmas" flap.** While the "war on Christmas" rages in the public square, most Americans say they privately support the holiday but remain apathetic about the debate. A poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found 45 percent of Americans say they don't care whether they are greeted with "Merry Christmas" or "Season's Greetings" in businesses. A similar Gallup Poll-revealed that 95 percent of Americans celebrate Christmas in some way and 62 percent said the trend toward "Happy Holidays" is a change for the worse.

**Target, Sears say they'll acknowledge Christmas.** Two of the country's largest retail chains have reversed course and are now directly acknowledging Christmas in their in-store promotions and advertising. Target and Sears both informed the American Family Association they are using "Christmas," thereby changing their recent practice. As a result of Target's decision, AFA announced it would end its boycott of the chain. AFA had not called for a boycott of Sears, but the organization had listed the company as one that had banned use of the word "Christmas."

**Under pressure, Ford to advertise in gay publications.** The Ford Motor Co. said it will advertise its entire line of cars in gay magazines after social conservatives pressured Ford's Jaguar and Land Rover divisions to pull their gay-targeted ad campaigns. The 3 million-member American Family Association ended its boycott against Ford on Nov. 30 after the automaker, citing economic constraints, said Jaguar and Land Rover would not advertise in gay publications in 2006. The Ford lineup includes Ford, Mercury, Lincoln, Jaguar, Land Rover, Mazda, Volvo and Aston Martin.

**Ban of prayers in Christ's name appealed.** The Speaker of the Indiana House of Representatives says he is appealing a court decision that bans ministers from using Christ's name in legislative prayers. Speaker Brian Bosma said Dec. 14 that Indiana's attorney general will ask U.S. District Judge David Hamilton to reconsider his Nov. 30 decision. Hamilton's ruling prevents ministers from using "Christ's name or title or any other denominational appeal."

**Post-hurricane donations top generosity scale.** The outpouring of private charity to the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina and two sister storms now ranks as the most generous in American history, according to researchers. Americans have donated about \$2.97 billion to families affected by hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, said Patrick Rooney, director of research with the University of Indiana's Center on Philanthropy. That surpasses the \$2.8 billion donated after the Sept. 11 attacks of 2001, he said.

## PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following requests related to Kentucky Baptists' partnerships with Baptists in New England, Brazil and the International Baptist Convention in Europe:

■ Praise God for the impact of partnership missions in 2005, including 20 teams with 240 volunteers who traveled to Teresina and Brasilia, Brazil. Workers distributed more than 30,000 tracts, nearly 750 Bibles, held 40 vacation Bible schools, conducted 32 prayer walks and two medical projects, built two churches and reported more than 1,100 people making professions of faith in Christ.

■ More than 200 Kentucky partnership volunteers were involved in ministry projects in the International Baptist Convention, Poland, Malta and New England.

■ Pray about your involvement in partnership missions for 2006. Volunteers are needed to fill project requests in Brazil, the International Baptist Convention, Malta, Poland and New England. For more information, contact the Kentucky Baptist Convention partnership missions department at (866) 489-3415 beginning Jan. 3.

## MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BEREA**—Fellowship Church recently called **Kenny Allen** as interim pastor.

■ **EAST BERNSTADT**—Arthur Ridge Church recently called **Michael Hampton** as pastor.

First Church recently called **David Hawkins** as interim pastor.

■ **GREENVILLE**—Longtime Kentucky Baptist pastor **Earl Mitchell** died Nov. 21 at age 91. He retired as pastor of New Barren Springs Church in Hopkinsville. He previously was pastor of other churches in Hopkinsville as well as Bowling Green, Cadiz, Central City, Crofton, Moorman, Oak Grove, Pembroke and Sebree. He also served churches in Indiana and Texas. Mitchell is survived by his wife, Bernice, a daughter, two sons, five grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

■ **HOPKINSVILLE**—Pembroke Church recently ordained **Aaron Arvin**, **Michael Campbell** and **Patrick McCuiston** as deacons. **Jack Studie** is pastor.

■ **LONDON**—**Jerry Hurst** recently resigned as pastor of Emmanuel Church.

New Salem Church recently

called **Chris Mofield** as music director.

■ **OWENSBORO**—First Church recently called **Paul Strahan** as pastor.

■ **POOLE**—Poole Church recently called **David Mabrey** as pastor.

■ **RICHMOND**—Tates Creek Church recently called **Jerry Huffman** as bivocational pastor. He also is employed as a training instructor with the Department of Criminal Justice.

■ **SPOTTSVILLE**—Spottsville Church recently called **Jeff Shouse** as pastor.

■ **SPRINGFIELD**—Temple Church recently called **Kevin and Megan Lutz** as youth ministers.

■ **SOUTH FARISTON**—Crossroads Church recently called **Jeff Jackson** as pastor.

■ **SULPHUR**—Sulphur Church recently honored **Roy Lillpop** for more than a decade of ministry as pastor.

■ **WILLIAMSTOWN**—Williamstown Church recently called **Darrell Morgan** as pastor of education and youth.

■ **WADDY**—Graefenburg Church recently called **Fred Moffatt** as interim pastor. He previously was pastor until he retired in October 2004.



**BUILDING ON THE MALL** Joy Henry, a construction supervisor for Habitat for Humanity of Louisville and a member of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, helps build a house on the National Mall last month in Washington. Habitat for Humanity International hosted the blitz build for the walls of 51 houses, which then were shipped to the Gulf Coast region and will be assembled into permanent housing. "We were working right in the shadow of the Washington Monument," Henry said. The build included representatives from each state and the District of Columbia. (Habitat for Humanity of Kentucky photo by Mary Shearer)



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### January

24 Pastor/Staff Forum, Victory Baptist Church, Lexington.

27-28 Preschool/Children's Ministry Meeting, Lakeside Baptist Church, Louisville.

27-28 Quarterly Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening, Severns Valley Association Office, Elizabethtown.

### February

3-4 Deacon/Pastor/Spouse Retreat, Bowling Green.

20 Retirement Choices Workshop, First Baptist Church, Princeton.

21 Retirement Choices Workshop, Baptist Building, Louisville.

22 Retirement Choices Workshop, First Baptist Church, London.

23 Retirement Choices Workshop, Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington.

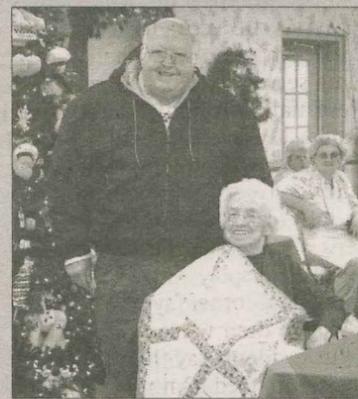
25 All-State Youth Choir/Orchestra Auditions and State Youth Choir Festival—East, Central Baptist Church, Winchester.

25 Hispanic Evangelism Conference & Hispanic Women's Meeting, Horse Cave Baptist Church.

27-28 Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference, Immanuel Baptist Church, Lexington.

For more information, call (800) 266-6477 or visit [www.kybaptist.org](http://www.kybaptist.org)

## Christmas cheer



Janus Jones, director of missions for South Union-Mount Zion Baptist Association, recently delivered several lap quilts as early Christmas gifts to residents of Williamsburg Nursing Home. He was assisted by associational office assistant Melany Hanrahan and her daughters Whitney, 13, and Dana, 5. The quilt squares were hand painted by campers at Cedar Crest this summer and then quilted by a group of Women on Mission volunteers. ■ Above: Dana Hanrahan helps a resident unwrap her gift. ■ Left: Jones poses with a resident who received one of the lap quilts.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**FOR RENT:** 2-bedroom/2-bath condo. Winter in Gatlinburg: \$65/night. Walk to town. (251) 666-2175. [pdw@world.att.net](mailto:pdw@world.att.net).

**FOR SALE:** 1982 15-passenger van. Has 100,849 miles; engine needs repairs. Asking \$800. Call (502) 368-5806.

**SEEKING:** Receiving resumes for associate pastor of youth and worship. Send to: Pastor, First Baptist Church, PO Box 577, Grayson, KY 41143.

**SEEKING:** Full-time minister for children through youth for McDowell First Baptist Church—an exciting, growing, loving fellowship in Eastern Kentucky. Mail resumes and/or sermon tapes to: McDowell First Baptist Church, PO Box 241, McDowell, KY 41647, Attn: Search Committee.

**SEEKING:** Director of missions to lead an association with 27 churches. The position is part time, and salary includes annuity, travel, insurance and housing. Seminary degree or equivalent, plus two years church-related experience required. All resumes should be sent to Shelby Baptist Association, PO Box 1148, Shelbyville, KY 40066-1148, by Feb. 28, 2006.

**SEEKING:** Full-time minister of students. FBC, Chester, Ill., is seeking a qualified and experienced minister to work with students (youth) and students in Sunday school (education). If interested in serving on staff with a healthy church in Southern Illinois, please send your resume to M.O.S. Search Committee, 719 State St., Chester, IL 62233. E-mail address: [chesterfbc@yahoo.com](mailto:chesterfbc@yahoo.com).

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for First Baptist Church of Highland Heights, located in Northern Kentucky. Please send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, 2315 Alexandria Pike, Highland Heights, KY 41076.

**SEEKING:** Part-time minister to students (25 hours weekly). Submit resume to: Personnel Committee, Lakewood Baptist Church, 13803 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40245.

**SEEKING:** Church secretary (20-plus hours per week). Call or submit resume to Victory Memorial Baptist Church, 3805 Southern Parkway, Louisville, KY 40214; or call (502) 638-2521.

**SEEKING:** Associate pastor/worship leader. Theologically conservative Southern Baptist church seeks man to lead blended worship.

Must exude love for Jesus and have a servant's heart. Reply to: FBC, 106 West Oak St., West Frankfort, IL 62896. (618) 932-2105. Fax: (618) 932-2106. [rkarrroll@verizon.net](mailto:rkarrroll@verizon.net).

**SEEKING:** Bivocational pastor for Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, a rural Southern Baptist church in Russell County. Mail resume to the church at 4555 S Highway 619, Jamestown, KY 42629-6709.

**SEEKING:** Full-time minister of education/youth for First Baptist Church of Walton. Resumes may be mailed to 47 South Main St., Walton, KY 41094; or e-mail to [pastorfbcw@fuse.net](mailto:pastorfbcw@fuse.net).

**SERVICES:** Christian long distance at 3.9¢/minute (24/7); no monthly service charge. Toll-free: (866) 587-8346 or [www.covenantphoneservice.com](http://www.covenantphoneservice.com).

# Rooms at the inns

*Bethlehem leaders hoping for return of Christmas tourists this holiday season*

By Michele Chabin  
Religion News Service

**Bethlehem, West Bank (RNS)**—Most of the items for sale in the Bethlehem Star Store have been sitting, undisturbed, on glass-encased shelves since 2000, the last time large numbers of pilgrims frequented the town where Jesus was born.

"Back then we worked day and night," recalls George Baboul, the shop's Greek Orthodox owner, sizing up his overflowing inventory of mother-of-pearl crosses and olive-wood Nativity scenes. "That was the year Pope John Paul II visited the Holy Land."

But when the Palestinian intifada erupted in September 2000, "the tourists stopped coming and there was no business. None. There was shooting and it was very dangerous."

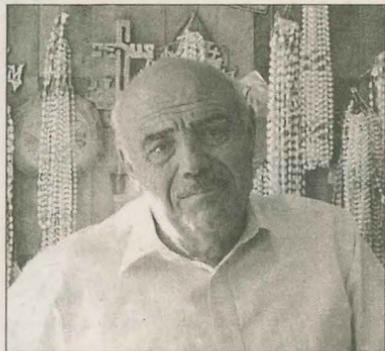
Baboul closed his store for three years, as did others. Palestinian-Israeli violence began to wane last December, but Baboul, 72, is still waiting for large crowds of tourists as in years past. He had high hopes for a recovery this Christmas season, but business is hardly booming so far.

"We hear that tour groups are coming and that the hotels have reservations," says Baboul, referring to Christmas week, traditionally the peak of December activity. This year, Hanukkah also begins Dec. 25, but Baboul still sounds more uncertain than hopeful.

While the increase in reservations is indeed a positive indicator, Palestinian tourism officials say a single terrorist attack or military maneuver could scare away visitors at the last moment.

Residents of this mixed Christian-Muslim town, who derive almost all their income from tourism, are trying to remain upbeat this Christmas despite the many disappointments they have endured in the past.

"Things are better this year," insists Viktor Batarseh, Bethlehem's mayor, from his office overlooking Manger Square. He credits political



**REOPENED** George Baboul, the 72-year-old owner of a Bethlehem souvenir shop, closed his store for three years during the height of the Palestinian uprising, which began in September 2000. Like other Bethlehem-area residents, he is praying for a peaceful and profitable Christmas.

reforms within Palestinian society and the relative lull in violence for his contagious optimism.

"We have a new, democratically elected municipality, things are quiet politically, and security-wise the city is very safe. We're expecting about 30,000 tourists," Batarseh says, compared to the 18,000 who visited Bethlehem the same time last year.

Last year's festivities got off to a late start due to the 40-day Muslim mourning period for the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who died Nov. 11, 2004, and because many would-be pilgrims still had security concerns.

## Restricted movement

Unlike the intifada years, when Bethlehem and its neighboring towns served as a battleground for Palestinian militants and Israeli soldiers, the streets are calm. Schoolchildren play tag along the narrow, winding streets, where most stores are now open for business. Many stores, including those owned by Muslims, display Christmas trees, Santas and other symbols of the holiday in their windows.

But residents say their Christmas is being marred again by the many



**FOR SALE** Bethlehem's world-renowned olive-wood industry was decimated by the four years of Palestinian-Israeli bloodshed. This handcrafted olive-wood Nativity scene stands outside a souvenir shop. (RNS photos by Michele Chabin)

restrictions Israel places on their personal movement.

While tourists should have no problem entering the Bethlehem area—which Israel recently surrounded with an imposing 25-foot-high concrete security barrier that has prevented terrorist incursions into Israel—it is almost impossible for ordinary Palestinians, both Muslim and Christian, to enter Jerusalem for work, family or prayer.

The result is a 50-60 percent unemployment rate, according to the mayor, and steady emigration of local families. In 1990, 60 percent of Bethlehem's residents were Christians. Today that number is estimated at just 20-30 percent.

"We live in a prison. This is not peace," asserts Maryam Azziza, a 48-year-old Latin Catholic, seated behind her desk at the Bethlehem Peace Center, where she fields visitors' queries.

For this reason, Azziza says, Bethlehem needs tourists more than ever.

Despite the security closure, which the Israeli government intensified after a deadly Dec. 5 bomb attack in the Israeli coastal city of Netanya, the government has announced plans to permit 500 Christians to enter Israel to worship and visit family.

## Upbeat in Israel

The atmosphere is a great deal more upbeat in Israel, where the dramatic reduction in terror attacks during the past year has given both Israelis and foreigners a sense of well-being. Long-shuttered restaurants and shops have reopened in downtown Jerusalem, and the once-quiet streets are again packed with people.

"We anticipate having approximately 2 million visitors this year," says Jonathan Pulik, an Israel Tourism Ministry spokesman. "The hotels are virtually full for holiday week, due to the convergence of Hanukkah and Christmas. We're having difficulty finding places for some groups."



**WALLED AREA** Israel credits the recently built 25-foot-tall barrier around Bethlehem and much of the West Bank for preventing terrorists from entering Israel and carrying out attacks. But Palestinians say it has turned the West Bank into a giant prison that prevents them from accessing their jobs, extended families and places of worship.

## WORLD VIEW

**British same-sex couples register for marriage.** More than 1,200 same-sex couples in the United Kingdom have registered their intention of entering into civil partnerships. The government expects 4,500 couples to enter into a civil partnership during the first year the legislation is in force.

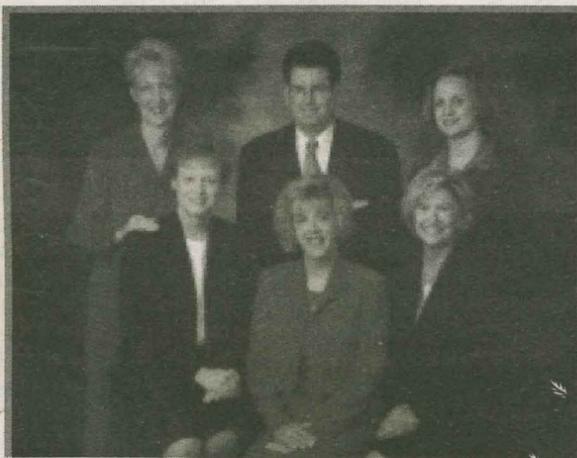
**French poll finds anti-Semitic Muslims.** Forty-six percent of practicing Muslims among France's ethnic immigrant population are likely to be anti-Semitic, a new study finds. But the wide-ranging survey by the Institute of Political Studies in Paris also found that a large percentage of Muslims aren't particularly religious, and many strongly ascribe to the country's official separation of church and state.

**South Africa legalizes same-sex marriage.** South Africa's highest court said Dec. 1 that the nation's constitution requires it to legalize same-sex marriage. The Constitutional Court delayed its ruling for a year to give Parliament time to rewrite the nation's 1961 marriage law to include gay couples. South Africa will become only the fifth country to grant nationwide legal status to gay matrimony.



*May you have the gift of faith,  
the blessing of hope and the peace of His love  
at Christmas and always*

*Lamine*  
*Leila*  
*Brenda*



*Jan*  
*Cherene*  
*Barbara*



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