



# WESTERN RECORDER

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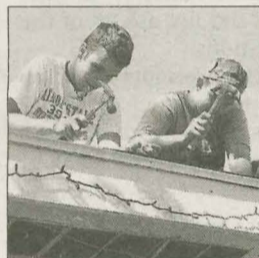
## FOR THE RECORD

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## Survey: More Americans read Bible regularly

Ventura, Calif. (RNS)—A survey shows the percentage of Americans who say they regularly read the Bible continues to increase.

The survey, conducted by the Barna Group, found that 47 percent of respondents said they open the Bible on a weekly basis, up from just 31 percent in 1995 and 40 percent six years ago.

The survey also polled respondents on six other "religious behaviors" including church attendance and attending small groups such as Bible studies. Forty-seven percent said they attend church on a weekly basis, up from 37 percent a decade ago, while 23 percent said they attend small group functions affiliated with church.

Twenty-seven percent of those asked said they volunteer through church, while 24 percent said they attend Sunday school, up from 17 percent in 1996.

Survey director George Barna said it was unusual for there to be an increase in participation in all of these religious behaviors at the same time.

"The intriguing possibility," he said in a statement, "is that with most of our key behavioral measures showing increases at the same time, there is the possibility that this may herald a holistic, lasting commitment to engagement with God and the Christian faith."

## 'High impact' churches

*KBC hopes strategic starts help reach 'dechurched'*

By Ken Walker  
Kentucky Baptist Convention

Louisville—The Kentucky Baptist Convention's goal of starting 25 "high impact" churches by 2010 is on track, according to KBC leaders.

In the past year, Kentucky Baptists started 46 churches, including five KBC-approved high-impact churches.

Starting 46 churches "is a record while I've been here," said KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey who took office eight years ago. "I look forward to seeing what God is going to do this year."

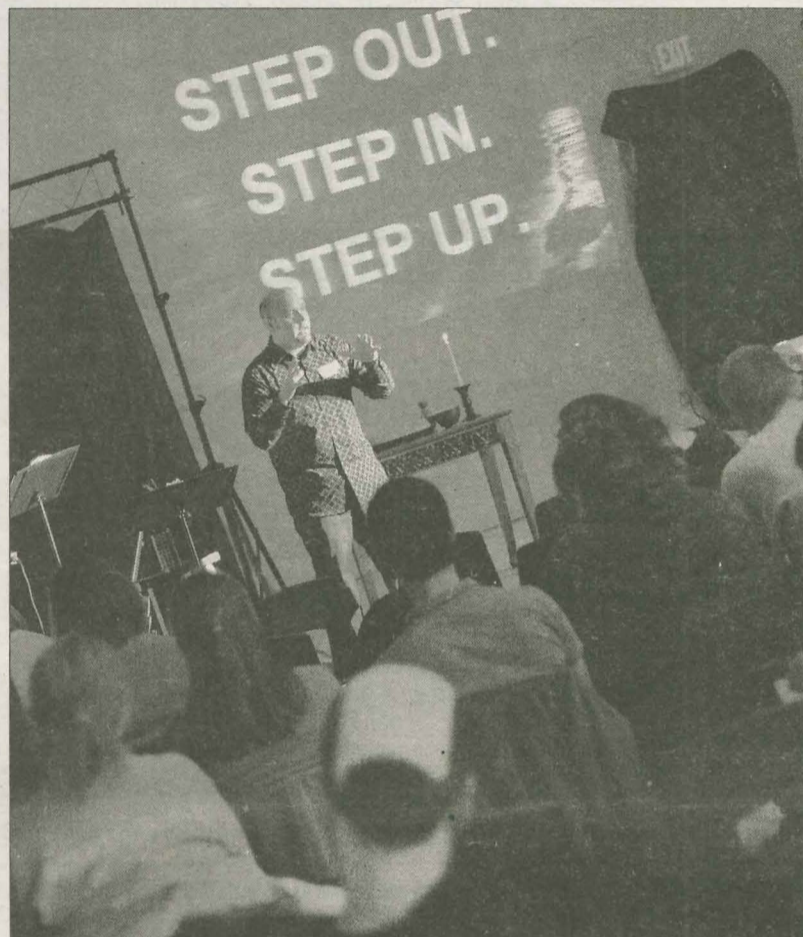
The KBC is helping sponsor the high-impact churches in an effort to reach non-Christians and the "dechurched," people who have dropped out of church involvement.

The five high-impact churches include:

- Master's Church in Lexington.
- Journey Baptist Church in Murray.
- Crossing Church in Louisville.
- The Church @ Cedar Creek in Lincoln County.
- A Hispanic church set to launch soon in Lexington.

The state convention invests \$100,000 over a three-year period for each high-impact congregation. The new starts also receive additional support from established congregations. High-impact churches have a five-year attendance goal of 250.

Mackey noted that strategists view new churches as one of the best ways to reach an unreached people group. He said they also will help



**CROSSING OVER** Dustin Neeley, pastor of Crossing Church in Louisville, preaches during a worship service, currently held in the evenings at an Episcopal church building. The Kentucky Baptist Convention hopes to help sponsor 25 "high impact" congregations by 2010. (Photo by Laurence Bell)

Kentucky Baptists accomplish the convention's "Connect" goals for evangelism and church planting.

"Doing five a year is a massive undertaking," said Larry Baker, director of the KBC's new work and associational missions department. The department partners with churches and/or associations

to identify potential sites for high-impact church plants.

Baker has identified Northern Kentucky, Christian County, Louisville, Ashland, Paducah and Versailles as other prospective areas for starts in the coming year.

While not specifically aimed at  
□ See 'High impact' churches ... *Page 8*

## Henderson churches reach more than 200 youth at 'Power Surge'

By Ken Walker  
State Correspondent

Henderson—After a recent "Power Surge" youth rally sponsored by Student.net prompted 212 students to follow Christ, participants in the interdenominational organization hope to see more churches join the effort.

"The trust factor is building," said Mike Irby, student minister at Zion Baptist Church in Henderson. "The body of Christ is the church working together and territorial barriers are coming down."

Key congregations involved in Student.net, a Henderson-area youth pastors organization, include three Kentucky Baptist churches—Zion, Hyland and Spottsville—as well as the Presbyterian Church of Henderson and First Assembly of God.

About a dozen churches of various sizes and denominations were involved in the area-wide Power Surge rally, which was co-sponsored

by the Kentucky Baptist Convention. The April 6-8 event featured motivational speaker Keith Davis and Southern Baptist evangelist Jerry Pipes.

Davis, a former football star at the University of Southern California, played one year of professional football with the New York Giants. He spoke at four school assemblies and invited students to evening meetings at South Middle School.

During the evening events, after Davis talked about overcoming a bad situation growing up and shared what God had done in his life, Pipes concluded with a gospel presentation.

About 50 volunteer counselors recorded 134 professions of faith, including 47 by students with no previous church affiliation. Another 78 people rededicated their lives to Christ.

Irby said follow-up included a plan to visit, within 48 hours of the

rally, everyone who made a public decision but didn't have a home church.

"They've been loved into the Kingdom; now they need to be loved into church," Irby said. "If we all work together and go after every student in Henderson County, our churches will naturally overflow with students."

Irby said Power Surge got a boost from an area-wide Disciple NOW weekend in January that attracted almost 500 youth from seven churches.

Other youth pastors who participated in the rally said it has energized their teens. Jason Cowan of Hyland Baptist Church said it was exciting to see the flood of people answering Pipes' invitations to accept Christ as Savior.

While this year wasn't the largest Power Surge, it produced one of the best responses in the group's 16-year history, he added.

Becky Durham, director of youth and Christian education at the Presbyterian Church of Henderson, said her 20-member youth group could never organize this kind of event alone.

"One of the benefits of being in Student.net is we have an opportunity to be part of a bigger thing," Durham noted. "I think it's really exciting to have different denominations and churches working toward a common goal."

Irby said the next step is the possibility of a weeklong summer camp to promote increased cooperation among various churches.

For now, though, he is basking in the glow of the recent event.

"I think it's made us stronger," Irby said. Noting he has received an inquiry from a Catholic church about getting involved, he added, "We're realizing it's going to take us working together" to make a spiritual impact on area teens.

## '05 SBC ministry stats: Baptisms down, membership up

Nashville—As Southern Baptist Convention leaders urge local congregations to baptize 1 million converts this year, statistics from the SBC's 2004-2005 church year reveal a baptism decline for the fifth time in six years.

The annual statistics, compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources from Annual Church Profile reports, show that baptisms last year dropped from 387,947 to 371,850, a 4.15 percent decrease.

Reaching this year's "Everyone Can" goal of 1 million baptisms will require more than 628,000 additional baptisms—a one-year jump of almost 170 percent.

"Southern Baptists should view

this report as a wakeup call," said LifeWay President Thom Rainer, noting that the totals for baptisms dropped to the lowest since 1993.

"Baptism is the outward act of obedience that pictures God's work of redemption in a believer's life," he added, "and so for Southern Baptists the ACP figures indicate we are faltering in our efforts to reach a lost world."

### Baptisms down 16,000

The decrease of more than 16,000 baptisms comes after a gain of 10,000-plus baptisms the previous year. But that gain was preceded by four consecutive years of baptism declines, decreasing from more

than 419,000 baptisms in 1998-99.

Rainer, who previously was dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, produced a report last year titled "A Resurgence Not Yet Realized: Evangelistic Effectiveness in the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979."

He reported that in 1950, Southern Baptist churches baptized 376,085 people—more than 4,000 above the latest total of 371,850.

"Simply stated, the Southern Baptist Convention is reaching no more people today than it did in 1950," Rainer said in that report.

Southern Baptist Convention President Bobby Welch has spearheaded an "Everyone Can' Kingdom Challenge" with the goal of 1 million baptisms during the current church year from October 2005 through September 2006.

After his re-election last year as SBC president, Welch told reporters that Southern Baptists are seeing decreased results in evangelism because of a lack of effort and "unity of purpose."

Southern Baptists "are stifling and slouching along ... because we are not creating spiritual synergy," Welch declared. "We need something to force us to come together on a quest."

Despite the baptism decline, there was growth in other key areas. The ACP showed a net increase of 234 churches in 2005 for a total of 43,699, up from 43,465 in 2004. The number of churches has increased by more than 2,100 over the past five years, for an average gain of more

than 420 churches per year.

Total membership increased slightly to 16,270,315, a gain of more than 62,000 members. Membership also has recorded gains each of the past five years, increasing from 15.9 million in 1999-2000.

Other key areas that experienced decreased enrollment were Sunday school (8,068,780—down 137,660), men and boys mission education (388,264—down 34,943) and Woman's Missionary Union enrollment (804,983—down 162,848).

### Statistical roller coaster

Each of those ministry areas has been up and down over the past five years. Sunday school enrollment has declined more than 117,000 since 1999-2000, men and boys mission education enrollment is down more than 99,000 and WMU enrollment is down more than 87,000.

Discipleship training enrollment declined by 234,785 to 1,667,709. LifeWay officials noted, however, that the discipleship reporting for 2004-2005 was changed to eliminate duplication. Rather than counting each participant in each study throughout the year, individuals are counted only once per year.

The past year's totals for discipleship training, men and boys mission education and WMU also were impacted by the fact that 33 associations in Texas did not ask all of the 2005 ACP questions.

Total offering receipts were up \$550,347,520 to more than \$10.72 billion. That's an increase of more than \$2.2 billion since 1999-2000.

Compiled from reporting by Baptist Press, Associated Baptist Press, Religion News Service and Editor Trennis Henderson

### SBC Annual Church Profile statistics

Category	2005	2004	+/-	% +/-
Churches	43,699	43,465	234	0.54%
Total membership	16,270,315	16,267,494	2,821	0.02%
Baptisms	371,850	387,947	-16,097	-4.15%
Other additions	396,443	424,669	-28,226	-6.65%
Worship attendance	6,052,321	6,024,289	28,032	0.47%
Sunday school enrollment	8,068,780	8,206,440	-137,660	-1.68%
Discipleship training <sup>1,2</sup>	1,667,709	2,237,345	—	—
Music ministry enrollment <sup>2</sup>	1,577,364	1,633,794	-56,430	-3.45%
Woman's Missionary Union <sup>2</sup>	804,983	967,831	-162,848	-16.83%
Men/boys mission education <sup>2</sup>	388,264	423,207	-34,943	-8.26%
Total receipts	\$10,721,544,568	\$10,171,197,048	\$550,347,520	5.41%

1. The 2004-2005 discipleship training reporting was revised to eliminate duplication. Each participant was counted once per year rather than once per study.

2. Thirty-three associations in Texas did not collect information in these categories.

### IMB couple refuses to resign, faces termination next month

Richmond, Va. (ABP)—After receiving an April 15 ultimatum to resign or face termination, Wyman and Michelle Dobbbs have refused to resign as Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionaries in Guinea, West Africa.

The couple was targeted for starting a church in Guinea that reportedly isn't "Baptist" enough. When the deadline passed, the Dobbbses received a letter April 17 from an IMB regional director that said the missionaries will be terminated May 31.

The Dobbbses, who have served an unreached people group in the mostly Muslim country for eight years, started the church with the help of a missionary couple from the Christian and Missionary Alliance, an evangelical denomination with doctrinal standards and church governance similar to those of Southern Baptists. The Dobbbses have filed an appeal, which will be reviewed by a regional committee in May.

"I personally think this is an outrage," said Jason Helmbacher, the Dobbbses' stateside pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Sallisaw, Okla. "I don't believe it's fair that they've been given an ultimatum based on misapplied policy. I just think it's wrong."

IBM Chairman Tom Hatley disagrees. Hatley said he must stand by IMB policy, which he said the Dobbbses have violated. IMB policy states that missionaries may plant churches in cooperation with non-Baptist missionaries who endorse the Baptist Faith and Message statement—the CMA couple has—but those churches must have Baptist doctrine at their core.

It is unclear what doctrinal deviation is alleged in the Dobbbses' case. The Dobbbses and the Christian and Missionary Alliance couple reportedly started a church that is Baptist in doctrine and polity but not in name.

If the Dobbbses' firing is not reversed on appeal, the full trustee board will vote on the termination in a later plenary session.

### Proposed resolution affirms Baptist dissent

Arlington, Texas (ABP)—A Texas Baptist pastor has submitted a resolution that accuses Southern Baptist Convention leaders of trying to "silence principled dissent."

Benjamin Cole, a leading critic of recent actions by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, has sent his resolution, titled "On Baptist dissent," to the SBC Resolutions Committee, according to a weblog run by IMB trustee Wade Burleson.

The proposed resolution states that Southern Baptists recognize "majorities are not always right, and that it is necessary for the voice of dissent ... to be welcomed and heard if the dangers of authoritarianism or tyrannical governance are to be withstood both in our denomination and the world."

It adds that "we regard all attempts to silence principled dissent by fellow Baptists within our denomination, or of any religious minority, as a compromise of our cherished Baptist witness and an egregious disservice to the Kingdom of God."

Cole, pastor of Parkview Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, earlier wrote an open letter suggesting Southern Baptists should vote during their meeting June 13-14 in Greensboro, N.C., to dismiss all the trustees of the IMB. Cole's action was sparked by the board's January decision to recommend that the

convention dismiss Burleson, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Enid, Okla., from his trustee post.

Trustees later voted to rescind their request to remove Burleson, but they also approved a new policy that bars trustees from criticizing actions of the board.

### Cole: Dissent "subverted"

Cole said the proposed resolution isn't aimed solely at the IMB but at SBC agencies and leaders in general. "I really do think the cherished principle of dissent has been subverted in certain quarters of our denomination," he said.

Other proposals could include a motion calling on the IMB to re-think its recent policy changes. Typically, motions made from the floor of SBC meetings are referred to the agency they concern, and the agency's trustees report back at the following year's annual meeting. A two-thirds majority of messengers, however, can vote to require the agency to report back on the motion before the meeting adjourns.

In an April 17 post on his blog, "12 Witnesses," Kentucky minister Art Rogers suggested that is what might happen during the Greensboro meeting.

"If a motion concerning policies at the IMB were 'in order' and therefore referred to the IMB's (board of trustees), the convention could then direct, by two-thirds vote, that

the (trustees) answer back to the convention before we dismissed," wrote Rogers, associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Russellville. "Now, this does not give the convention the right to tell the IMB what to do concerning any policy, but it does give the convention the opportunity to express its mind clearly to the IMB's governing body."

Under SBC governing documents, only trustees of an agency—not the convention as a whole—can set policy for the agency.

In another sign of potential debate at this year's annual meeting, some supporters of the SBC's current leadership describe recent dissent as an attack on former SBC President Paige Patterson.

Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and one of the chief architects of the SBC's conservative shift, reportedly is among SBC leaders who gave input into the recent IMB policy changes.

Patterson "had led the way for us as conservatives with integrity, compassion, and as a friend to all," Lynn Snider, executive director of South Texas Baptist Association, wrote in a recent e-mail. "Let's go to N.C. and stop these disgruntled ingrates who 'think' they can take over the convention with their self-serving cries for change."

With additional reporting by Editor Trennis Henderson

# WMU's international flavor

*Annual state meeting focuses on missions and power of prayer*

By Dannah Prather  
Partnerships Editor

**Harrodsburg**—From the recitation of the Great Commission in five languages to the launching of a three-year partnership with Korean Baptist women, the world seemed to come to central Kentucky for the 103rd annual meeting of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union April 21-22 at Harrodsburg Baptist Church.

More than 1,000 members of Kentucky WMU and guests heard many ways that Kentucky Baptists and Southern Baptists "Keep the Message Alive" through missions education, financial support and direct participation in sharing the gospel at home and around the world.

The meeting itself was a venue for missions, raising more than \$7,000 in offering and collecting hundreds of Bibles translated in Spanish to be used in Kentucky Baptists' Hispanic ministries around the commonwealth.

The crowd at Friday morning's opening session heard the Great Commission—Jesus' command for His followers to make disciples of all people groups—recited in English, Thai, Spanish, French and Hebrew. Making the recitation in Thai was Kaye Miller of Little Rock, Ark., president of the national Woman's Missionary Union. Miller's parents were missionaries to Thailand, and she and her siblings were reared in the Southeast Asian country.

## Driven by passion & purpose

Miller encouraged Kentucky WMU members and guests to look to the future as they continue to serve the cause of missions today.

"We are making eternal history every day," said Miller, whose term began in 2005. "Does that make your heart skip a little bit? We have the opportunity to impact eternity in our own spiritual lives and the lives of others, 24-7."

Citing societal changes and changes in church culture, Miller said WMU members must be deliberate and focused in their efforts to promote, support, pray for and participate in missions.

"We must be driven by our passion and our purpose," she said, "and that is the salvation of a lost and dying world."

Returning to the annual meeting's theme, Miller said, "We cannot walk this road alone and expect this message to stay alive. ... We must pour ourselves into someone else. You must have someone waiting to walk alongside you who is ready to write eternal history with her own life story. She only needs a little guidance and direction." WMU was designed for mentoring, she added.

Missionary Carmela Bartles described how she has seen the universal gospel meet many different needs.

"The message for West Africans was that Jesus was power," said



**PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED** Sook Jae Lee, executive director of Korea Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, speaks about the need for missions education in Korea's Baptist churches during her address to Kentucky, officially, the three-year partnership between Kentucky and Korea WMU. National WMU also will contribute to the effort.

Bartles, who has served more than 25 years in international missions and now is on stateside assignment at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College in Pineville. "Power over Satan's kingdom and freedom from fear."

Bartles shared the story of Charlotte, the first person in her family to become a Christian. Upon hearing of Charlotte's decision, her mother consulted a witch doctor who told the woman he no longer could see Charlotte as a member

of the woman's family. The fearful woman confronted her daughter who replied, "Of course not. I'm not in that kingdom anymore. I joined God's Kingdom."

Bartles said when her family first came to West Africa there were only two Baptist churches. Fifteen years later there were 180. Today there are more than 500.

## Reconciliation & prayer

In Moldova, Bartles said the message for local Christians was forgiveness. Once part of the Soviet Union, Moldova's Christians faced intense persecution. Bartles told the story of one village where police interrupted a church service and asked people who believed in Jesus Christ to stand.

The people who stood were taken into the woods, forced to remove their clothes and were abandoned in the snow to try to find their way back home before freezing. Those who returned formed underground churches in their homes.

"All of Russia had been like this," Bartles said. "Fast forward to the '90s (and the fall of communism) and some of those who had not stood wanted to come back to the church. They came before the church and asked for forgiveness. ... (Southern Baptists) had been given a ministry of reconciliation."

The power of prayer was an undercurrent during the meeting. Ross Bauscher, partnership missions



**OFFERING THE WORD** Members and guests at the Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting place Spanish Bibles at the altar. The Bibles will be distributed to hundreds of Hispanics across Kentucky served by a number of special ministries. More than 1,000 people attended the meeting this past weekend at Harrodsburg Baptist Church. (Photos by Dannah Prather)

director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, discussed prayerwalking and praised WMU members for their on-location intercession in Brazil in 2005, and their participation in the subsequent mission trip earlier this year.

"There are direct correlations between prayerwalking in those towns and how God blessed those teams," he said. In one community, before Kentucky Baptists' ministry, 10 people were meeting in the pastor's home. "Before the week was over, 65 people were saved. ... Don't tell me our God isn't the God of possibilities." That pattern was repeated in several villages in the region, he added.

## International voices

The international flavor of the annual meeting continued through the event. Attendees heard the chorus of Friendship International, a ministry in Louisville serving more than 200 people from 36 countries and funded through the Eliza Broadus Offering for State Missions.

The praise band for the Hispanic congregation of Cooper Chapel Baptist Church in Louisville also performed.

"WMU has kept the message alive among our international neighbors," said Pat Howard, a Mission Service Corps missionary with the Southern Baptist North Hispanic Ministries Board, the Bowling Green area.

"WMU ladies across Kentucky are teaching English as a Second Language. WMU ladies took the initiative and started Bible studies (among ESL students) that have become churches, missions and preaching points."

Howard speculated that the Hispanic presence is growing in Kentucky because too few missionaries are reaching their regions.

"God has challenged us by bringing them to us. Dare we fail?"

Wanda Walker, Kentucky WMU adult consultant, reported on the start of Union Feminil Missionera, Kentucky's Hispanic WMU.

"This organization began with

just a handful of women five years ago," Walker said. More than 125 women and 70 children attended this year's meeting in Horse Cave. With leadership, spouses and special guests, attendance surpassed 450 people.

Cristina De la Barra, who, with her husband, Carlos, are Southern Baptist missionaries in Kentucky, serves as one of the leaders of the Hispanic WMU. "I know in the future, we're going to have a big group just like you," she told her Anglo counterparts.

## Hispanics feel welcome

Carlos De la Barra praised Kentucky WMU for reaching out to the ever-growing Hispanic population in Kentucky.

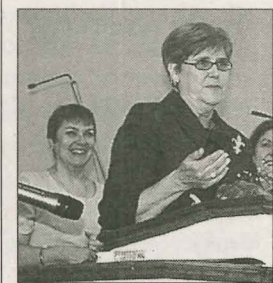
"I felt that welcome to the Baptist churches through WMU," he said, then singled out Bolton, praising her for addressing the Hispanic WMU "for 20 minutes completely in Spanish" at the Horse Cave meeting. "How can we not feel welcome to Kentucky?" De Barra asked.

Grundy Janes, language missions coordinator for the Kentucky Baptist Convention and retired Southern Baptist missionary to Chile, said Kentucky Baptists hope to launch at least 10 new Hispanic churches, missions or small-groups this year. Currently there are 72 formalized ministry groups and five churches for Hispanics in the commonwealth.

The newly formed Hispanic Bible institute graduated 22 in its first class and today has 45 students enrolled. "So many of these groups need pastors," Janes said. Training new leaders is a priority.

Four Hispanic ministry leaders participating in a panel discussion expressed profound gratitude for the offering of Hispanic Bibles. "Some of these people have never read the Bible," said Rolando Muniz, who serves in southern Kentucky. "You are opening a whole new world for them."

The 2007 annual meeting of Kentucky WMU will be March 23-24 at Third Baptist Church in Owensboro.



**NEW PRESIDENT** Pat Reaves, newly elected president of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, prepares to receive the gavel from outgoing WMU President Cathy Chinn (left).

## Pat Reaves named WMU president

**Harrodsburg**—Pat Reaves of Louisville will be elected the 37th president of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union at the 103rd Kentucky WMU annual meeting April 21-22 at Harrodsburg Baptist Church.

A native of Louisville, Reaves is a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church. Currently, she serves as chairperson of the Missions Growth Committee for the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board.

"I have been involved with WMU most of my life. I was a G.A. (Girl in Action) and started teaching Sunbeams (now Mission Friends) when I was about 14," Reaves said. She is former director of WMU for her church and Long Run Baptist Association. During her term on the Kentucky WMU Executive Board, she served as chairperson of the personnel/administrative committee and was a member of the preschool committee.

She also is a member of the Kentucky WMU Resource Team in the area of preschool missions education. Reaves and her husband, Dudley, teach 2- and 3-year-old children for their church's Mission Friends program, and also are involved in ministry to Hispanic children.

Pat Key of Central City remains Kentucky WMU vice president, and Susan Stinnett of Frankfort continues to serve as recording secretary.

## WESTERN RECORDER

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

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## Rahman case offers lesson in liberty

By Marv Knox

Thank God, our Christian brother Abdul Rahman will not be executed for his faith. His close call with death illustrates a vital—and, unfortunately, often-misunderstood—distinction between democracy and religious liberty.

Rahman became a Christian 16 years ago. This winter, Afghanistan government officials arrested him. Prosecutors wanted to put him to death for forsaking Islam in favor of Christianity. They could bring such charges because the Afghan Constitution is based on Islamic Sharia law. Many Muslims believe the law demands death for apostates who leave the Islamic faith.

Rahman's case attracted worldwide attention. The Vatican, the United States and numerous other nations put pressure on Afghan leaders, urging them to free Rahman.

Pope Benedict XVI called on Afghan President Hamid Karzai to release Rahman out of "respect for every person's freedom of conscience and religion," Religion News Service reported. "I am certain, Mr. President, that dropping the case against Mr. Rahman would bestow great honor upon the Afghan people and would raise a chorus of admiration in the international community."

## Afghan officials acquiesce

The Afghan government acquiesced. The lead prosecutor dropped the charges against Rahman, claiming he was "mentally unfit to stand trial." While religious leaders resented the implication that embracing Christianity is a sign of mental instability, they rejoiced that he was freed.

But Rahman still wasn't safe. Citing Sharia law's death-sanction for apostates from Islam, many Afghan religious leaders called for his assassination. The United Nations pleaded with Western countries to grant him asylum, and Italy stepped up to

the cause. "We are very glad to be able to welcome someone who has been so courageous," Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi said.

So, Rahman—theoretically, at least—has found security in Italy.

He is banished from his homeland, but his faith reportedly remains intact. And he is free to worship God as his relationship with Christ, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the record of Scripture lead him.

American Christians' response to these events has been almost as riveting as the life-or-death drama played out on Rahman's behalf in Afghan courtrooms. Many U.S. Christians, particularly evangelical Christians, were shocked and appalled—shocked and appalled—that a person could face the death penalty in democratic Afghanistan simply for the "crime" of becoming a Christian.

They correctly noted the United States played the key role in liberating Afghanistan from the Taliban, the Islamic extremists who put the country in a chokehold for years. They also correctly pointed out the United States and other Western countries helped establish a democratic government in Afghanistan—a government that would hold open elections and place the nation's political and governmental power in the hands of the people.

But they incorrectly assumed democracy equals religious liberty. Democracy equals majority rule. It means that, when people vote, the candidates and parties who gain the most votes get to run the country. But it doesn't necessarily mean the rights of Christians or other reli-

gious minorities will be protected in an overwhelmingly Islamic nation. A country, like Afghanistan, could be completely democratic and still impose the majority's religious will upon the minority.

You can understand the confusion. The people who were shocked and appalled by Afghanistan equate democracy with how government functions in the United States, where we have both a democratic government and guaranteed religious liberty. The U.S. Constitution brilliantly bestows our democratic privileges—citizens get to vote, and majority rules. But it is the First Amendment to the Constitution that guarantees religious liberty for all people, even—no, especially—minorities.

## Religious liberty for all

Ironically, the First Amendment is denigrated and, some would say, even imperiled today. Many conservative Christians who are comfortable in their majority status don't understand why the religious liberty of minorities—such as Muslims, Jews and Hindus—should be protected. They seem to overlook the fact that right is right and religious liberty should be a protected right. And they ignore the changes brought by demographic tides, and the possibility that, one day, their children or grandchildren might be religious minorities who seek, like Abdul Rahman, the freedom to practice their faith.

What a pity if U.S. Christians behave no more morally, compassionately and graciously than Afghan Muslims.

Marv Knox, former editor of the Western Recorder, is editor of the Texas Baptist Standard

## COMMENTARY

## What are you thinking?

The Western Recorder considers letters on any subject for publication, provided they don't make a personal attack. The maximum length for a letter is 300 words. Submit by mail to Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253; fax, (502) 489-3565; or e-mail, wesrec@earthlink.net.

## Mississippi association recovering from Katrina

Jackson County Baptist Association in southeast Mississippi is recovering from the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, thanks to Kentucky Baptist gifts and volunteers.

"We felt so helpless with five feet of water in our church buildings and parsonage, the insurance premiums were costly (\$32,000) and the insurance companies were backing out and we were a struggling congregation before Katrina. I did not see how we could survive," said Johnny Beaver, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Pascagoula. "But God provided opportunities for improvements to facilities that we could have only dreamed about."

Pastor Beaver could not say thanks enough for Kentucky Baptists Jerry and Etta Butcher, who helped the church with a new kitchen to serve day care and new ministries. Also, Beaver was grateful for Hamp Valentine, director of missions for Tates Creek Baptist Association, and teams who remodeled the second floor of their educational

building, and for Kentucky Baptists who provided the materials and the kitchen.

The story of Pastor Beaver and Calvary Baptist Church is just one of a dozen I heard on a recent visit to Jackson County Baptist Association. Charles Rodgers, director of missions for the Jackson County association, invited me to hear the stories of the pastors and their gratitude for financial gifts and the hundreds of Kentucky Baptist volunteers.

Rodgers also provided a tour of several churches to see the results of rebuilding by Kentucky Baptists. It was a gratifying experience to view the beautiful and effective handiwork of Kentucky Baptist volunteers.

With much excitement, Rodgers took me by the International Seaman's Center that had been provided by Sand Spring Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg. Rodgers understood that the members of Sand Spring had provided \$75,000 for the Seaman's Center and \$25,000 to assist one of the churches—and were

unanimous in their vote to do so.

More than 2,500 seamen visit the center each year. Recently, the "Jesus" video was shown on a ship to seven seamen and all seven prayed to receive Christ.

Sand Spring Baptist Church and their pastor, Mike Hamrick, are wonderful examples of the commitment of Kentucky Baptist Convention churches and their leaders to missions.

Charles Rodgers is pleased with how God is at work. More than 150 messengers and guests attended their spring associational meeting, their first meeting since Katrina. The moderator expressed appreciation for their association and the opportunity to work together during these challenging months.

The association passed a resolution expressing appreciation for all the financial assistance, volunteers and encouragement by Kentucky Baptists.

This is just one more occasion when I have been so pleased to be associated with the wonderful missionary people known as Kentucky Baptists.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

## GIVING

## Charitable giving: Real estate often is valuable option

By Laurie Valentine

Real estate is a valuable resource for charitable giving.

If you own a home or other real estate that you no longer want to live in or manage and you are thinking about making a charitable gift to your church and/or other causes, consider using that real estate to accomplish your charitable giving objectives.

An outright gift of real estate that has appreciated in value can provide double benefits—an immediate income tax deduction equal to the current market value of the property and avoiding capital gains tax that would be owed if you sold the property.

If the property's value has depreciated, you can sell the property and make a gift of the sale proceeds. This could allow you to use both the charitable income tax deduction and the capital loss on your income tax return.

Like gifts of other types of assets, gifts of real estate do not have to be an "all or nothing" proposition.

If you are not comfortable with giving up the full value of the property, a bargain sale to the charitable cause you wish to benefit might be the answer. In a bargain sale, you agree to sell the real estate to the charity for a price below its current market value. The transaction is part gift (the difference between the market value and the sale price) and part sale. Benefits of this type of gift include: You get a charitable income tax deduction equal to the gift portion of the transaction and only incur capital gains tax on a portion of your total gain in the asset. Additionally, the charity gets the property for a below-market price.

Real estate also can be used to fund a charitable remainder trust. These types of trusts provide an income stream to the donor and/or others for life or a term of years, with the remainder passing to the causes you designate at the end of the trust's term.

When considering a gift of real estate, consider its salability, current market value and whether it is subject to a mortgage. These issues could affect the way in which your gift should be made to be most beneficial to you and the causes you wish to benefit.

Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation



## Integrate grief into life rather than seeking to 'get over it'

**Q: My parents both died within the past year. I am struggling with questions about why they died and how to process my grief. Where do I turn for help?**

Harold Ivan Smith, author of "Grieving the Death of a Father" and "Grieving the Death of a Mother" shares these thoughts about "parent-grief":

### GRIEF

It's OK to ask, "Why?" Remember, Jesus did (See Matthew 27:46).

Do a "thumb check." Since your thumbprint is distinct, why wouldn't your grief-print be also? You don't have to grieve like anyone else. Don't worry about what's "normal."

People (especially men) often grieve by doing things rather than shedding tears. It's OK to do things in memory of your parents. Try to think of something that represents them and will last for generations.

Your goal is to integrate the grief, not to "get over it." It is like the difference between a boxed cake mix and a homemade cake: one is a contained short-cut while the other is worked through in every dimension and is much more satisfying. Grieving is not "recovery"—your goal is not to return to a previous "normal" place but to move forward with who you have become thanks to who your parents were.

There likely are competing sets of photographs and memories in your mind. Allow yourself to shuffle through those cards and come to a new place in how you remember your parents.

Although it goes against American culture, get to the pain. What you feel you can heal.

Emotions are unpredictable. Various triggers will bring back memories and remind you of your loved ones.

Mourn the secondary losses—who you are without them. Speak their names out loud with someone who will sit with you in your grief. Remember Psalm 30:5, "Weeping may endure through the night, but joy comes in the morning."—James Stillwell

**Q: What is the one best thing I can do to help keep my child healthy?**

Doctors and health organizations agree. Hand washing is by far the best way to prevent germs from spreading and to keep your kids from getting sick. Besides the common cold, some serious diseases including hepatitis A, meningitis and infectious diarrhea often can be prevented by the simple act of washing hands.

Germs are everywhere, and children who play in the mud, climb on public playground equipment and basically touch anything and everything within their reach are especially susceptible. Once on the hands, germs make their way into the body when a child touches his or her nose, eyes or mouth. Hand washing helps reduce the spread the germs, and forms a strong first line of defense against infection.

Use warm water and soap. (Antibacterial soap is not necessary.) Lather up and rub the hands together for 10-15 seconds. Be sure to get between the fingers and under the nails, and don't forget the back of the hand. Rinse with warm water and dry with a clean towel.

The Center for Disease Control recommends washing one's hands before you eat, after you use the bathroom, after handling animals or animal waste and whenever your hands are dirty. The CDC also recommends more frequent hand washing when someone in your home is sick.

If your child is reluctant about washing his or her hands, try using colored or scented soaps, or a soap that comes in a bottle with an interesting or unusual shape. You might also try singing a simple song while hand washing.—David Garrard

Family Forum writers are:

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



## NAMB transition: What does future hold?

The recent upheaval at the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board has been brewing publicly for the past two months. But Robert Reccord's April 17 resignation as NAMB president doesn't end the board's challenging crisis. Rather, it moves NAMB into a pivotal time of transition as board members seek the next person to lead Southern Baptists' vast North American mission efforts.

In his letter of resignation, Reccord acknowledged he found it "increasingly difficult to be an entrepreneurial leader within a denominational structure." That recognition came as trustees prepared to implement "executive level controls" in such areas as Reccord's travel, speaking engagements, bidding procedures for outsourced work and developing new ministry initiatives.

"I regret that events of recent weeks have created an environment which makes it difficult to lead the organization and to stay 'on mission,'" Reccord wrote. "After much quiet thought and prayer, I believe that honest philosophical and methodological differences have brought us to this point of separate directions."

How have Southern Baptist Convention leaders responded to Reccord's resignation and NAMB's future ministry opportunities?

**Barry Holcomb, NAMB trustee chairman:** "Through the years, we've had our share of challenges that accompany any new organization. ... Through it all, Dr. Reccord has sought to provide leadership that was both consistent and visionary. ... Any impression gleaned from our report that suggests that the trustees are either unaware or unappreciative of the many strong accomplishments at NAMB by our president or our people is incorrect. ... He has a strong love for our missionaries, for those who work with NAMB and for our trustees. And so, taking the high road of leadership on behalf of our missionaries, our agency and our convention, he is resigning ... as president."

**SBC President Bobby Welch:** "As NAMB's first president, Dr. Reccord assumed a Herculean task in the

launch of that new and expanded entity (in 1997). ... NAMB's future is critical to world change for the cause of Christ and lost souls. The SBC has never needed NAMB to do its best like now. NAMB now demands seasoned, experienced, trusted, focused leadership like never before to double its primary focus upon evangelism and new church starts. ... The trustees of NAMB and their chairman, pastor Barry Holcomb, have done and are doing an extraordinary job responding in a very timely and trustworthy manner to the challenges pressed upon them in recent months. ... Dr. Reccord's resignation signals the next great step and stage for the relatively new NAMB."

**Morris Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president:** "Bob Reccord is a friend, colleague and brother in Christ. ... He is both a visionary leader and gifted communicator, and I'm convinced he will have a significant and fulfilling ministry in the Lord's service for many years to come. ... Fortunately, the work of the Southern Baptist Convention in general and the North American Mission Board in particular will go forward because it is greater than one man. ... In some respects, I have also been encouraged by the whole process. Questions were asked by Southern Baptists. Inquiries were made by the trustees of NAMB. Accountability was required of leadership. Action was taken by the leadership that was ultimately in the best interests of NAMB and of the Southern Baptist Convention. ... I commend Dr. Reccord and the trustees for honoring Christ in the way they worked through this process."

Take time to pray for Reccord and his family during this time of transition. Pray also for NAMB trustees as they seek the right leader to guide NAMB through its next phase of ministry. May they succeed in finding and calling a "seasoned, experienced, trusted, focused" leader who combines Christ-honoring vision, servant leadership and accountability for the vital cause of missions throughout the U.S. and Canada.

### STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

## Discovering the best career plan

By Howard Dayton

**Gainesville, Ga. (BP)**—Apparently it's never too early to plan for a career, considering the fact that many of today's public schools require teens to make key education and career decisions at increasingly earlier ages—sometimes as early as 6th or 7th grade.

A recent news program reported that an online poll conducted by Scholastic magazine says more than 80 percent of our children do not want to be president of the United States. That's a complete reversal from 2004, when 75 percent of the elementary and middle school children wanted to be the head man or woman in the White House.

Lots of folks are asking our kids questions about their future, but are our youth learning a biblical model for education and career decision making? Unfortunately, most of us would have no idea where to start to help a child solve career issues from a biblical perspective, because no clear process has ever been taught to us at home, at school or in the church.

However, there are some steps you can follow to discover how God has designed you, what His

calling is for your life, and what is the spiritual nature of work. Then, knowing this, perhaps you can help others as well.

One study reported half of the men and women who go to work each day feel they are in the wrong career field. It's not just that they think they would like a different job, but they feel they are in the wrong career altogether. Another study found that 52 percent of those working in the information technology field said they would rather be doing something in the area of liberal arts.

These statistics reflect the fact that people make career decisions based on faulty foundations. They use the world's perspective for career choice. These include choosing a job because it pays so much; it's the first or easiest you can get; it's offered to you; you have friends who work for the company; you've done that kind of job before; the job sounds good or has a good title; your parents do or did that job; or—perhaps worst of all—it will fulfill your parents' unfulfilled dreams.

Do any of these sound familiar? Unfortunately, they are all too common, and the results typically are

the same—stress, lack of fulfillment and eventual burnout.

However, there is good news. There is a biblical perspective of work and career, so you don't have to operate under the world's perspective of work. As Christians, we should understand that God has ordained each of us to fill a special role in His service. Every Christian has a calling, which God has prepared for us. Each of us has been designed uniquely by God, and through the work He calls us to, we can serve others, honor Him, impact the world around us and win others to Him.

It's never too late to teach your children about the biblical principles of work and stewardship of talents. Everyone needs a model to follow. The question is: Will your children be influenced by God's direction or the world's perspective?

Our youth should be brought up with the realization that they are created uniquely by God and should look prayerfully to Him for what His will is for their lives. It doesn't matter whether they become doctors, custodians, lawyers, preachers—or president. What matters is whether they are following God's will for their lives.

Howard Dayton is CEO of Crown Financial Ministries

## Kentucky teens help rebuild hurricane-damaged homes

**"It wasn't about houses; it was about Christ and was more of a Kingdom-type thing."**

Volunteer Calvin Fields

By Brad Kessie  
WLOX-TV

Bay St. Louis, Miss.—They gobbled up spicy shrimp and then donned their tool belts. Lunch was over. The Crestwood Baptist Church youth group had a house to frame.

Katrina wiped out the home that once sat on this Bay St. Louis, Miss., property. It reappeared after 75 teens and three dozen adults from Crestwood Baptist in Oldham County showed up during their recent spring break.

"We came because we wanted to serve," explained Meredith Salyers, one of the chaperones on this post-hurricane mission. "We felt like we needed to be here the most."

Salyers, Crestwood's student ministries assistant, noted that the Kentucky Baptist congregation's youth group had been involved in spring break mission trips to Myrtle Beach, S.C., the past several years.

"We didn't want to go to Myrtle Beach like we've always done," she added. "We wanted to be here so we could do whatever we could to help after the hurricane."

"It's amazing to me. I can't believe the work these kids have done," Salyers said. "We almost framed the whole house in one day. So that was just a blessing to see the kids work that hard and really do a good job."

While some of the Crestwood youth worked on construction, others wrote Scripture verses on the cement foundation.



**HAMMER BRIGADE** More than 100 teens and adult leaders from Crestwood Baptist Church worked on post-hurricane construction projects during their recent spring break mission trip to Bay St. Louis, Miss.

"We feel like that's a huge part of this house and really the reason we're here, to show the love of Christ to others," Salyers noted.

Bertina Burge felt that love.

"I'm just amazed that we've been blessed enough to have these people over here and help us build a new house," the Bay St. Louis homeowner said. "It's just amazing what they've been able to do."

Burge and her husband, Doug, are the longtime owners of the hurricane-damaged property where the Crestwood volunteers worked. They oversaw the placement of every board used to rebuild their house's

frame.

"These kids have been amazing. They are so compassionate and generous. It's just amazing," Burge said. "It's just been such a blessing for us to have them come here. They touched our hearts and our lives so much, they don't even know."

Calvin Fields, a junior at South Oldham High School, was among the Crestwood teens serving in Bay St. Louis.

Noting that he "began to work for God instead of just work," Fields said the spring break construction project was "something I did for Him as an offering. ... It wasn't about

houses; it was about Christ and was more of a Kingdom-type thing."

He said an added benefit was seeing how the homeowners "were touched through that."

Despite dealing with heat, bugs and "sleeping on a concrete floor on an air mattress," Fields said, "That was probably the best spring break I've ever had."

In addition to framing the Burges' house, team members worked on 10 other projects, including roofing several houses and removing drywall and debris from other hurricane-damaged sites.

"The reason we do short-term missions is because it rounds out the spiritual development of our young people," said Jeff Fuson, Crestwood's student minister. "It gives them a whole new way of relating to the world and discovering that God has a mission for them far bigger than just graduating from high school or college."

"Young people really do want to do something significant with their time and energy," he added. "They are spiritually hungry and hungry to make a difference."

The Burges experienced that difference firsthand. They had planned to rebuild their home by Christmas. Now that they've gotten help from the Kentucky church group, they anticipate moving out of their FEMA trailer several weeks sooner.

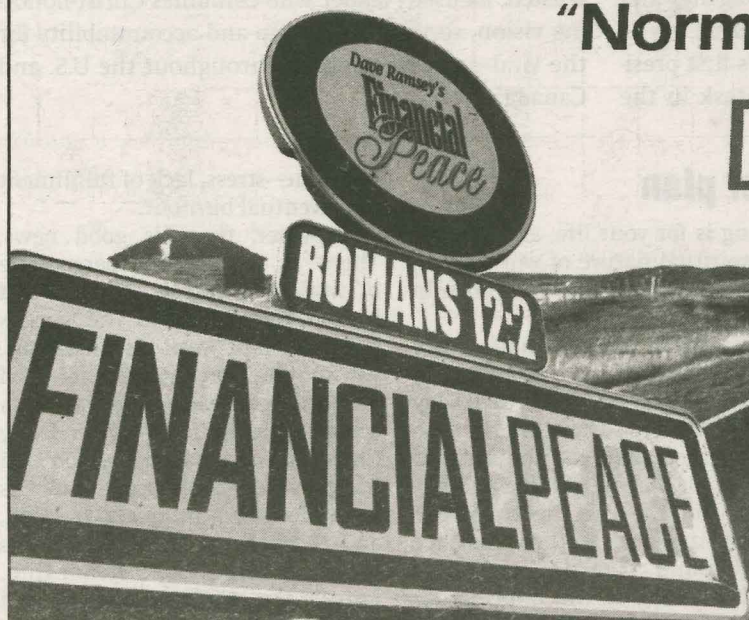
With additional reporting by Editor Trennis Henderson

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**"Normal"** people divorce over money fights.

**"Normal"** people are broke.

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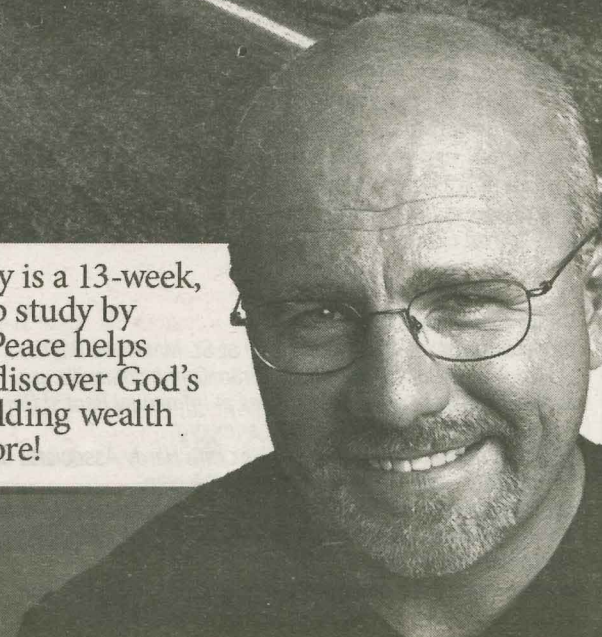
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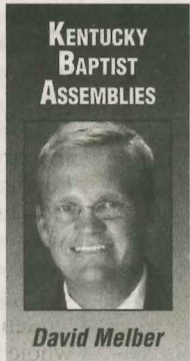
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Answers with sad significance

Video interviews show many people don't know Jesus

Recently in church, we watched a video of random interviews from people on the streets. These interviews were testing the general public's answer to two questions. The first question was, "Do you celebrate Easter?" The second was, "What is the meaning of Easter?"



KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES

David Melber

The answers would have been comical, had they not had such sad eternal significance. At the conclusion of the video, I told my oldest son Alex, "This is the world in which you will live."

Lately, Alex and I have had many significant conversations about life. Just the other day, I was reflecting on some of my special childhood events and recalled riding my bike miles from home to fish in ponds and creeks. Alex asked where he could ride his bike to go fishing and then realized that riding that kind of distance would not be "acceptable" in today's world.

Our world, and more specifically the United States, is no longer some small town buckle of the Bible Belt sanctuary. We live in an environment that is not only hos-

tile to Christianity, but does not even realize Who Jesus Christ is.

As parents, we are relying on the Lord to intentionally train our sixth grade son to stand as salt and light in a dark world. We fervently pray that God will raise up many people in his generation who will boldly proclaim the gospel of Christ here and afar.

I am proud to be a part of a team of people who are choosing to invest in our children's futures. It is a team of committed individuals who see that it is our God-given responsibility to reach into the lives of many youth and, with His guidance, light a torch of passion for the gospel that will be carried into the world to proclaim the fame of our Father.

As you watch the news and see the world as it is, be reminded that this young generation has no other hope than in Jesus Christ. Their future will not be as "friendly" as ours has been. Partner with us to help make known the only hope that can save them.

David Melber is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies. Contact him at Box 99918, Louisville, KY 42069-0918; phone (502) 491-7000.

Kudzu



Doug Marlette

Church of the Covered Dish



Thom Tapp

Bible Crosswords

Evelyn Boyington

Across

- 1 Mentor to Samuel
- 4 "Sir, we would see \_\_\_\_" (John 12:21)
- 9 Judicial sentence
- 12 Benign skin tumor
- 13 City of Hadad (Genesis 36:35)
- 14 "Out of whose womb came the \_\_\_\_?" (Job 38:29)
- 15 Apiece (abbr.)
- 16 Sign
- 17 \_\_\_\_ of Melchisedec (Hebrews 7:11)
- 19 "I was \_\_\_\_ in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5)
- 21 Ask what might have been
- 22 French possessive pronoun
- 23 Said goodnight
- 27 Without a nom or a nom de plume (abbr.)
- 29 "Simon Peter ... went into the sepulchre, and seeth the \_\_\_\_ clothes" (John 20:6)
- 30 Bible language (abbr.)
- 31 \_\_\_\_-oni (Rachel's son)
- 32 Grace
- 33 Function
- 34 Son of Judah (Genesis 38:6)
- 35 Already sold
- 36 Played a tuba?
- 37 "Men of low degree ... and men of high degree ... are altogether \_\_\_\_ than vanity" (Psalm 62:9)
- 39 One one-thousandth of an inch
- 40 Ancient Hebrew liquid measure
- 41 "Dost thou still \_\_\_\_ thine integrity?" (Job 2:9)
- 44 "I lay in Sion a chief corner \_\_\_\_" (1 Peter 2:6)
- 46 "Ye \_\_\_\_ men with burdens grievous" (Luke 11:46)
- 47 Concerning

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48			49	50					51	
52			53						54	

- 48 French possessive pronoun
- 49 "A man's wisdom maketh his face to \_\_\_\_" (Ecclesiastes 8:1)
- 51 Parts of a yr.
- 52 Actor Morita
- 53 Pursues, as the truth
- 54 "Go to the \_\_\_\_, thou sluggard" (Proverbs 6:6)
- Down
- 1 Jacob gave Esau 200 \_\_\_\_ and 20 rams (Genesis 32:13-14)
- 2 Mother of Dinah
- 3 Hoosier state (abbr.)
- 4 Son of Zebedee, and disciple of Jesus
- 5 Tied
- 6 "Be ye angry, and \_\_\_\_ not" (Ephesians 4:26)
- 7 State of Salt Lake (abbr.)
- 8 "For the bed is \_\_\_\_ than that a man can stretch himself on it" (Isaiah 28:20)
- 9 New Jersey college
- 10 Fast point, in tennis
- 11 \_\_\_\_ your instructions
- 16 \_\_\_\_ sesame
- 18 "The \_\_\_\_ of that house was great" (Luke 6:49)
- 20 Son of Manasseh, king of Judah (2 Kings 21:18)
- 23 Ohio, for one
- 24 "John also was baptizing in \_\_\_\_" (John 3:23)
- 25 "Woe to them that are at \_\_\_\_ in Zion" (Amos 6:1)
- 26 Popular female fictional detective
- 27 Brother of Seth
- 28 Father of Salathiel (Luke 3:27)
- 29 Gennesaret, for one
- 32 "Let your soul delight itself in \_\_\_\_" (Isaiah 55:2)
- 33 Father of Arah (1 Chronicles 7:39)
- 35 Willow
- 36 "If ye \_\_\_\_ and devour one another, take heed" (Galatians 5:15)
- 38 Holy \_\_\_\_
- 39 Overtakers of Babylon
- 41 Sergeant, for example
- 42 \_\_\_\_ horse
- 43 Aerie
- 44 Brand of automobile oil
- 45 Orange Pekoe, for example
- 46 "The highways \_\_\_\_ waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth" (Isaiah 33:8)
- 50 Pronoun
- 51 Sturbridge state (abbr.)

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## 'High impact' churches reach out to state's 'dechurched'

**"We wanted to reach people disconnected from church."**

Matt Johnson, pastor of Journey Baptist Church in Murray

*Continued from page 1*

young adults, people in their 20s and 30s form the backbone of these new churches, reflecting the age range of the pastors (28 to 35). Attendance currently averages between 35 and 150, while each church has reported conversions and baptisms.

The first high-impact launch has welcomed a new pastor since its start. Alex Kinchen, a former pastor in North Carolina, was called a year ago as pastor of Master's Church in Lexington. "To be involved in something like this is different from anything I've been involved in," Kinchen said. "It's amazing."

Master's is located in an office building about a mile south of Masterson's Station, a rapidly growing residential development.

Averaging about 140 people in Sunday worship, Kinchen says Master's is attracting the dechurched and people who were inactive in other churches. It has baptized 10 converts.

The church's most fertile outreach came last July at the annual Bluegrass Fair, when it invited Christian illusionist Greg Farmer to perform. Nearly 800 people attended his performances and 360 completed cards indicating they had received Christ as Savior.

### Establishing identity

Establishing an identity and building trust in the community have become the 16-month-old church's biggest challenge, he said.

"In the church, it's not allowing comfort to set in," Kinchen added. "People can get comfortable where they are. They can take a break and say, 'Let's enjoy this.' But we haven't

reached a place where we can say, 'Let's sit on the sidelines and rest.'"

The Church@Cedar Creek, the state's first high-impact church sponsored by a Baptist association, currently meets at the Lincoln County Baptist Association's office in Stanford, where about 35 people attend Sunday morning worship.

Despite its location in a rural county of 25,000 people, Pastor Jefferson Calico said it needs only 1 percent of the county's population to reach its five-year attendance goal. He hopes to see that take place after the church moves to a five-acre site the association bought near Cedar Creek Lake.

"We've been drawing people in their 30s and 40s. ... Everyone coming is either dechurched or unchurched," Calico said, adding that he's delighted to see people interested who have no previous church background.

The church has sponsored several community outreach events, including a bike rodeo last fall and an open gym night at a nearby elementary school each Saturday.

In eastern Jefferson County, Crossing Church launched its Sunday evening services Sept. 11 at an Episcopal church, although it hopes to move by fall to a larger space.

Pastor Dustin Neeley, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said the church is averaging 60 people. Most of them attend one of the small groups it sponsors throughout the week in homes.

While affirming several conversions and candidates for baptism, Neeley said his No. 1 challenge is apathy in the community, which he attributes to spiritual warfare.

"People don't seem to be as in touch with their spiritual need as in a more depressed area," he said. "There's a lot of affluence and people think they're fine without God."

### Reaching students

In Western Kentucky, Journey Baptist Church is seeing a lot of collegians at its services on the campus of Murray State University.

After reaching a high of 153 at the end of last fall, attendance dropped to about 45 in early January before starting back up. Thirteen people have accepted Christ since its launch service Sept. 18.

Pastor Matt Johnson estimated that three-fourths of those coming weren't attending anywhere previously.

"We wanted to reach people disconnected from church," Johnson noted. "God has been good to give us favor with people and in the community."

The fifth high-impact church will launch this spring in the Cardinal Valley area west of downtown Lexington, which is home to an estimated 10,000 Hispanics.

Iglesia Bautista Alexandria (Al-

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exander Baptist Church) will be led by Pastor Claudio Toro, an engineer from Chile who was commissioned as a church planter by the Chilean Baptist Convention.

Mackey said most churches in the convention have been accepting of high-impact starts, but he emphasized that the KBC needs every church to be strong.

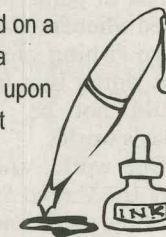
"If we're going to reach the state for Christ, we need every church reaching their maximum potential," Mackey said. "Some of the greatest potential ahead for KBC churches and missions work around the world are people who haven't been reached yet."



### Graphic Artist

The Kentucky Baptist Convention Communications Department is seeking an additional graphic artist for print and Web projects.

Work is assigned on a project basis at a mutually-agreed upon hourly rate. Artist must have own computer and graphic design software, e-mail capabilities and broadband Internet access. Louisville area preferred but not required.



E-mail robert.reeves@kybaptist.org for more information.

## Meet some of the class of 2006, part 5b

### Student leaving Oneida with 'whole new outlook on what God means to me'

This week I continue with more of "Nathan's" senior essay:

"Before coming to Oneida I had pretty much given up on God. I used to go to church but had quit altogether. When I first got here, I had no desire to have anything to do with God, church or anything religious. However ... my thoughts about how God plays a role in my life began to change. I spent some time one night talking to the dean of boys, Mr. Saldaris. He was talking to me about ... how drugs would do nothing but keep me from reaching my goals and dreams. He ... told me that when he was a student at Oneida he found the answers to life by accepting Christ as his Savior. When I quit doing drugs it left a kind of hole in my life. Mr. Saldaris told me the best way to fill that hole was with Christ. He told me that if I looked to Christ for guidance He would replace the holes in my life left behind because of drugs. It was at that moment that I began to think about God, religion and the Bible.

"Chapel has been very beneficial to me. I know there have been times that I have slept or goofed off. But overall, I have to say that I have learned a lot from the speakers and the worship services. ... The services are geared more toward the students. There are a variety of speakers and styles of worship to choose from. But all in all, the main thing that is brought forth in the services here is the love and salvation of Jesus Christ. My favorite chapel service is Friday praise and worship. While it is normally very hard for me to sit and listen to someone speak, on Friday I can really get into the

service. I like music. I guess through the music that is played and sung on Fridays, I really sense a touch of what Christ is all about. I actually find myself listening to the words of the songs. So I have to say that I am leaving here with a whole new outlook on what God means to me."

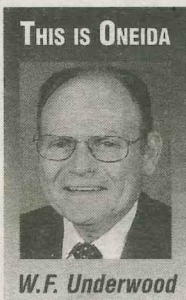
Before continuing with Nathan's essay, I want to tell you a little about the people he is going to mention next. I already have identified Mr. Saldaris as the dean of boys. Saldaris is also a

houseparent and a 1989 Oneida graduate who has been here for the past 10 years. Nathan is going to mention Mr. White, one of our houseparents and a 1982 Oneida graduate. White has been faithfully serving here for the past 20 years. Finally, Nathan is going to mention Mr. Futrell, who works in our new construction department. For the past year Nathan has worked with Futrell and others on our new construction crew. Not only did two of our housepar-

ents have a direct impact on Nathan, but also one of our support staff. Now let's continue with his essay:

"Thank you, Mr. White for sharing your life struggles and showing me how you overcame some of the same things I have to deal with. ... Mr. Futrell, thanks for just being who you are and for ... guiding me during work time. Thanks for your ... encouragement and everyday acts of kindness and for the jacket. Thanks for (allowing) me to be a part of what you do as a servant of God at Oneida. Most of all, thanks to Oneida for giving me the opportunities to succeed in everything I set my sights on."

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



W.F. Underwood

## Clear Creek commencement on May 5

### John & Jesus offer principles for prophetic ministry

The dialogue between John the wilderness prophet and Jesus, recorded in Luke 7:18-35, offers some abiding principles for service in the Kingdom of God. I pray that our students who graduate May 5 live out these principles.

What a contrast between John's fiery preaching in the desert and his questioning if Jesus was the Messiah; doubt seems to have overcome confidence. Yet he does what we must do when spiritual struggles come—seek Christ's strengthening presence.

Changing circumstances and unrealistic personal expectations often run aground on the rocks of reality. Alexander Maclaren said, "We shall not come to much harm if we carry our doubts to Him to be cleared away by Himself."

The divergent styles between John and Jesus remind us to choose spiritual substance over changing style. In what has been called "the parable of the brats," Jesus tells us that people are prone to be fickle about style. "It's got to be my way or I'm on my way home." Ministry based on changing styles has no lasting impact. John wore camel's

hair and Jesus wore a seamless robe; but both declared the prophetic word. Dr. Kelly's preaching coat is now out-of-style, but we still preach the same gospel and Clear Creek remains grounded on the same spiritual substance taught in that first class of 1926.

I pray also that our graduates will accept their Kingdom standing rather than push for professional status. John reached the pinnacle of status; Jesus said, "There is not a greater prophet than John." But Jesus also said the least one in the Kingdom is greater. That includes each person faithfully serving Christ. Self-esteem and security do not come from the size of the ministry, number of baptisms, the degrees we earn, the salary we make or the offices we hold.

Commencement marks the conclusion of formal study for a graduate; it is also the beginning. With Christ beside us, no struggle can defeat us. We refuse to tie our ultimate loyalty to fading styles but trust His transforming power in sharing the gospel with all. How blessed we are to share in His victory.

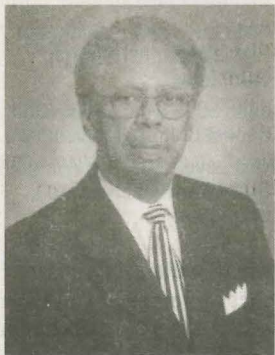
Bill Whittaker is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, Pineville, KY 40977; (606) 337-3196

### CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

**Dr. Lincoln N. Bingham  
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For more information, please call the Kentucky Baptist Convention at:  
502-489-3525 or 866-489-3525

**Driving Directions:**

St. Matthews Baptist Church is located at 3515 Grandview Avenue between Cannons and Breckinridge Lanes. The church campus is accessible from I-64 (exit Cannons Lane) or the Watterson Expressway I-264 (exit Breckinridge Lane North).

**N. Kentucky prof suspended for vandalizing pro-life crosses**

By Kevin Eigelbach  
Kentucky Post

Highland Heights—Northern Kentucky University President Jim Votruba has placed a veteran professor on leave in connection with vandalism to a campus right-to-life display last week.

Literature professor Sally Jacobsen went on leave April 17 and will remain so for the rest of this semester, which ends this week, Votruba said.

Jacobsen, who has taught for 27 years at the university, already had planned to retire at the end of the semester, he added.

Jacobsen, who lives in Fort Thomas, Ky., said last week she had no comment.

Two weeks ago, she told The Post that she was offended by the display of nearly 400 crosses, symbolic of 4,000 abortions performed in the United States every day.

A woman going through the process of abortion "should not be slapped in the face by her university by calling her a scarlet woman," she said.

She said she asked students in her British literature class on the night of April 12 if they wanted to exercise their free speech by taking down the display. Some of the students did, she said, but she wouldn't say if she also took down some of the crosses.

Police later found the crosses, which they valued at \$600, in campus trash cans.

**Free speech issue**

The university's faculty handbook gives Votruba the authority to put a faculty member on leave under "unusual circumstances," he said.

Jacobsen caused the public to question the university's commitment to freedom of expression,

Votruba said.

"She encouraged students to break the law, that's a significant issue," he noted.

He said that as a tenured professor, Jacobsen would suffer no loss of retirement benefits because of this action.

"I don't believe it's fair to judge a 27-year career by this one action," Votruba said.

"People sometimes get to feeling strongly about things, and that can result in action that doesn't reflect the best judgment."

Two of Jacobsen's colleagues, including Literature and Languages Department Chairman Danny Miller, will take over Jacobsen's four classes and do whatever final grading needs to be done, Votruba said.

Also last week, the Northern Kentucky University faculty senate passed a resolution that spoke in the strongest terms of the university's responsibility to protect freedom of expression, Votruba said.

He has received about 200 e-mails about the matter, he said, but only two or three found fault with the way the university has handled it.

Even the campus pro-choice group lined up with strong support for the right of the pro-life group to be heard, he said.

"It has been heartening that students and faculty groups that do not necessarily support the position of Northern Kentucky Right to Life have come out strongly in support of the organization's right to be heard," Votruba said in a statement.

"This reflects a commitment to the importance of free speech and inquiry as a hallmark of our university."

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**Gambling foes help derail casino bills**

Frankfort—Gambling opponents helped stop a dozen gambling-related bills during the 2006 Kentucky General Assembly, according to Howard Beauman, executive director of the Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems.

Beauman, who monitors legislation on behalf of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, noted that during the recent legislative session, "the greatest victory was the stopping of any gambling bill."

A series of bills sought to legalize casino gambling in the state or allow voters to consider it as a constitutional amendment. None of the 12 bills reached the floor of either the Kentucky House of Representatives or Senate.

In other action, Beauman noted that legislators approved a graduated drivers license for teenagers. The measure includes provisions to revoke a teen's license if he or she is convicted of possessing or attempting to purchase alcohol.

Legislators also adopted a measure to return the Ten Commandments monument to the state Capitol grounds.

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May 17, 2006	Prestonsburg	
May 18, 2006	Lexington	

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**KBC**  
KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION

**Child abuse prevention month**

**HONORING KBHC** Gov. Ernie Fletcher (seated) signs a proclamation in honor of the work Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children is doing to prevent child abuse and to care for Kentucky's abused and neglected children. Fletcher joined Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children President William Smithwick (right) in the capitol rotunda earlier this month to acknowledge the start of Child Abuse Prevention Month, also known as Blue Ribbon Month. The blue ribbon is a symbol of the bruises left by abuse. Kentucky officials note that each year they receive more than 65,000 reports of children who have been abused physically, sexually and emotionally. Substance abuse is identified in nearly half the Kentucky cases of child abuse and neglect.

## PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist missionaries and ministries:

**First Baptist Church of Oak Grove.** Military minister Roy Callahan is leading an effort to provide Christian magazines to American military personnel serving in Iraq. He is working with LifeWay Christian Resources to purchase the magazines and also is making arrangements for shipping. Magazines to be sent include: Home Life, Stand Firm men's magazine, Journey women's magazine, Parent Life, Living with Teens and Christian Single. Pray that God will provide the finances necessary for materials and shipping. Pray also that non-Christian men and women who read the material will come to know Christ and that Christians will be encouraged and challenged in their faith.

**Mission Service Corps Missionary Bill Barnard of Sturgis.** Barnard serves as a chaplain at the Union County Hospital in Sturgis. He ministers to patients and their families through Bible readings, prayer, devotionals and a listening ear. Pray that Barnard will consistently show love, compassion, and concern for each patient. Pray that local churches will extend their ministries to involve the newly developed "one-on-one" program with extended-care patients.

If you would like Kentucky Baptists to join in praying for a ministry of your church or association, please send the information to Eric Allen at [Eric.Allen@kybaptist.org](mailto:Eric.Allen@kybaptist.org) or call (866) 489-3530.

## MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

### Spotlight on ...

#### Campbellsville



Good Hope Church will celebrate its 210th anniversary June 11 beginning with worship services at 10:30 a.m. For more information, call (270) 465-3268. **Al Hardy** is pastor.

■ **ASHLAND**—**Curtis McComis**, pastor of Belmont Church since 1967, retired last month after 56 years in ministry. McComis also was former pastor of Rose Hill Church as well as churches in Indiana, Missouri and Ohio. He served 17 years as treasurer of Greenup Association and 16 years as manager of Hudgins Hill Camp.

■ **BARBOURVILLE**—Springfield Church recently called **Roger Jordan** as senior pastor.

■ **BEECHMONT**—Beechmont Church will hold revival services April 30-May 3 with **Roger Heltsley** as evangelist.

■ **CADIZ**—Liberty Point Church will hold a prophecy crusade April 29-May 1 with **Ron Herrod** as guest speaker. Service times are April 29, 7 p.m.; April 30, 8:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m.; and May 1, 7 p.m.

■ **CALHOUN**—Calhoun Church will host a Women's Day with **Allison Durham Speers** May 6, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Registration, including lunch, is \$15. For more information, call (270) 273-3645.

■ **HICKMAN**—First Church will celebrate its 160th anniversary May 21. Former pastor **Chip Davis** will speak at 11 a.m. For more information, call (270) 236-2424. **Tom Quimby** is pastor.

■ **LONDON**—Laurel River Church will hold revival services April 30-May 5 with **Denny McCowan** as evangelist. **Calvin Hibbard** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Lyndon Church honored **Ruby Isham** on her 90th birthday April 22. **Jim Holladay** is pastor.

**Jerry Douglas** recently resigned as minister of music at Melbourne Heights Church.

■ **MURRAY**—Cherry Corner Church will hold revival services April 30, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., and May 1-3, 7 p.m., with **Brad Hall** as evangelist. **Tom Mathis** is pastor.

■ **PHELPS**—First Church ordained **Arthur Chambers** and **Carl Robinette** as deacons April 23. **Bruce Hawkins** is pastor.

■ **PROSPECT**—First Church will host a National Day of Prayer event May 4. The church will be open for prayer all day beginning at 7 a.m. Times of focused prayer for the nation will be at 7 a.m. and noon, with a praise and prayer service at 6 p.m. For more information, call (502) 228-3286.

■ **WADDY**—Mount Vernon Church will hold revival services April 28-29, 7 p.m., and April 30, 11 a.m., with Pastor **Sean Post** preaching.

■ **WHITE MILLS**—White Mills Church will hold revival services April 30-May 3 with **Kenny Rager** as evangelist. For more information, call (270) 369-6173. **Bruce Underhill** is interim pastor.

## KBC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### April

28 Children's Bible Drill, Immanuel Baptist Church, Lexington.

28-29 Literacy Conference, First Baptist Church, Somerset.

29 Children's Bible Drill, Rose Hill Baptist Church, Ashland; and St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville.

29 Regional Keyboard Festival, First Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

### May

1 Adults 50+ Living Celebration, Central Baptist Church, Corbin.

2 Adults 50+ Living Celebration, Parkway Baptist Church, Bardstown.

4 Adults 50+ Living Celebration, First Baptist Church, Madisonville.

4 "Next Level" Ministry Workshop, Broadway Baptist Church, Lexington.

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



**PARTNERSHIP** James Booker (center), pastor of Kenwood Northeast Baptist Church in Crestwood, signs a partnering church covenant with Crestwood Baptist Church during services April 9 at Crestwood Church. Bill Ellis, education and discipleship minister for Crestwood Baptist (left), and Robert Reeves, communications director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, look on. The two KBC congregations pledged to support and learn from each other so that both can be more effective in sharing the gospel. The covenant signing is part of the KBC's Kentucky Baptists Connection initiative that calls for at least 100 churches in Kentucky to develop similar partnerships. (KBC photo by Larry Brannin)

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**FOR RENT:** 2-bedroom/2-bath Seascape Resort condo; across from beach in Destin, Fla. Phone: (502) 396-8397 or 850-8832.

**SEEKING:** Church pianist for Hurstbourne Baptist Church. Skills required include accompanying, improvisation and sight reading for blended worship style. Contact: Chris Kihn, minister of worship and music, 8800 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40222; or (502) 426-2444.

**SEEKING:** Director of missions for Central Association (Washington and Marion counties). If interested, mail resumé to Central Association of Kentucky Baptists, PO Box 596, Lebanon, KY 40033; or call (270) 692-9577 for information.

**SEEKING:** Senior pastor for Pioneer Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Ky. Average attendance: 80-100. Send or e-mail resumé to: Pioneer Baptist Church, c/o Harry Harmon, 126 Mercer Ave., Harrodsburg, KY 40330. [hharmon@adelphia.net](mailto:hharmon@adelphia.net); [www.pioneerbaptistchurch.us](http://www.pioneerbaptistchurch.us).

**SEEKING:** Couple to manage a group home for Quest Farm (adults who are developmentally disabled). (502) 535-4712; [www.questfarm.org](http://www.questfarm.org).

**SEEKING:** Children's minister for small, Southern Baptist church to work with ages 3-12—Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights and some outings required. Contact: Rev. Justin Hunter, (270) 926-1255 (Owensboro area).

**SEEKING:** Part-time youth minister. Send resumé to: South Campbellsville Baptist Church, 601 South Central Avenue, Campbellsville, KY 42718. Phone: (270) 465-4261.

**SEEKING:** Full-time director of preschool ministries to develop, coordinate and direct weekly preschool ministry (birth through kindergarten). A bachelor's degree in Christian or early childhood education is required, and experience in a community church setting is preferred. Interested applicants should forward a resumé with cover letter and salary requirements to: Personnel Committee, PO Box 22022, Lexington, KY 40522-2022.

**SEEKING:** Camp cabin leaders for Mission Adventure Camp. Applicants must be young women who have completed their junior or senior year in high school, or who are enrolled in college. Employment is for six weeks at Cedar Crest Camp in Bagdad, Ky. For more information please contact Kentucky WMU: (502) 489-3454; [Stacy.Nall@kybaptist.org](mailto:Stacy.Nall@kybaptist.org).

**SEEKING:** Preschool director—must be of Baptist belief with good organizational skills, knowledge of curriculum and be able to work well with children. Involves three mornings per week; average of 15 children; supervise a preschool teacher. Resumé to Cecilia Baptist Church, 416 East Main St., Cecilia, KY 42724, by May 5, 2006.

**SEEKING:** Part-time/bivocational pastor for Beech Grove Baptist Church in Owen County, Ky. Send resumé to Dave Jones, 1165 Slippery Rock Road, Owenton, KY 40359; or e-mail: [jonesdave2001@yahoo.com](mailto:jonesdave2001@yahoo.com).

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for Parkway Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky. We are a conservative Southern Baptist church seeking a godly man and a soul winner who the Lord already is preparing to lead us. Applicant currently must be an ordained Southern Baptist pastor with seminary training and pastoral experience. If you feel the Lord leading you to respond, please send your resumé and references to: Pastor Search Committee, Parkway Baptist Church, 1915 North Broadway, Lexington, KY 40505.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for Cropper Baptist Church in Cropper, Ky. Cropper Baptist is a Southern Baptist church in a fast-growing community. Average weekly worship attendance is 100-plus. Mail resumé with references to: Anna Woods, Pastor Search Committee, 482 Hillspring Road, Eminence, KY 40019.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for wonderful rural community neighboring Owensboro (short drive to Louisville). Average attendance at blended worship: 300. Five staff members. Resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Lewisport Baptist Church, 1115 Pell St., Lewisport, KY 42351.

**SEEKING:** Petrey Memorial Baptist Church in Hazard, Ky., is accepting resumé for the position of pastor. Please send resumé and videotape to: Pastor Search Team, 141 Alto St., Hazard, KY 41701. Visit our Web site at [petreymemorial.org](http://petreymemorial.org).

**SEEKING:** Part-time pianist for Fern Creek Baptist Church. Strong accompanying skills required. Send resumé to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291. Questions? Call (502) 239-0316. Linda Barnes Popham, pastor.

**SEEKING:** Part-time administrative assistant/circulation clerk for the Western Recorder. Mail resumé to Janet McIntosh, PO Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. For more information, call (502) 489-3428.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for East Cumberland Avenue Baptist Church, located in Middlesboro, Ky., near the entrance to historic Cumberland Gap National Park in SE Kentucky. Average attendance in Sunday morning worship: 100-125. We are looking for a shepherd who is passionate in his love for the Lord and for the flock, and will challenge our people to pursue holy living and to bring others to know Christ through clear, expository preaching of God's Word. Send resumé, at least one audio or video tape, and any related information to: Pastor Search Committee, East Cumberland Avenue Baptist Church, PO Box 1332, Middlesboro, KY 40965.

## Ryrie: Christians wasting heritage of English Bible

Fort Worth, Texas (BP)—If Christians today could grasp an appreciation for the battles fought by Bible translators who were persecuted and even gave their lives to print the Bible in common languages, they might become more biblically literate, said Charles Ryrie, editor of The Ryrie Study Bible, one of the most popular Bibles in the world.

"We have a great heritage," Ryrie said. "Don't refuse to spend it."

Ryrie spoke on the "History and Heritage of the English Bible" during a colloquium at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, March 22-23. The influences of the Tyndale Bible published in the 15th century and the King James Version published in the 17th century were the primary focus of his remarks.

"The only way to spend (our heritage) is to read, study, live, love, learn the Scriptures," Ryrie said. "That is not bibliolatry, because it's the only sure way you have of knowing Christ."

Ryrie said evidence abounds that Christians have strayed from their heritage. He pointed to a lack of knowledge of the Bible and the lack of opportunities to hear the Word of God read directly from the Bible as two examples.

"In our public services, the way we read one verse or two or four or five at the most, and we take a text and depart from there ... is an absolute crime," Ryrie said.

Ryrie called for a return to a heritage of accuracy in Bible translations. He said some modern Bible translations can be helpful for certain age groups—whether spiritual age or chronological age—but too many translations veer far from the intent of the original manuscripts.

"There are some paraphrases that are appropriate, and there are some that are not appropriate: they are just too free," Ryrie said. "In some of them you are ... hardly getting a whisper of what God said, let alone a clear voice."

On the other hand, Ryrie said elevating one translation over all others has its drawbacks. He spoke in great detail about the developments that led to the King James Version and noted the great importance and value of that translation to this day. Yet he said that, according one scholar's estimation, there have been some 24,000 variations of the King James Version since its original publication in 1611.

"That doesn't make it wrong, not at all," Ryrie said. "But it's just something you might have in the back of your mind to help somebody who thinks King James is the only thing that we should use."

## Holy humor

### Pastors discover Christians have funny bones

By Kay Campbell  
Religion News Service

Huntsville, Ala.—Wendell Davis writes no-nonsense sermons.

"I write as seriously and with as much passion as I can," said Davis, pastor of Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church.

He reduces those scripts to outlines. He prays. He prepares to move into the pulpit on the wide platform in the sunny auditorium where the large congregation gathers.

He stands to preach—and every week it happens: laughter.

While Sunday services have hardly earned a reputation as comedy central, many ministers embrace humor as a way to connect with their congregations.

When Davis finds an ironic point, the congregation joins him in a laugh that rolls across the crowd. The elders on stage wave their hands in approval. Choir members jump to their feet with smiles flashing around the room.

"If in our worship we didn't touch everyone in the building, from the bereaved to the rejoicing, we haven't done our job," Davis said.

Laughter is an integral part of worship at Union Chapel, but Davis wasn't always so comfortable with that notion.

Worship, after all, is a serious matter.

Davis has been pastor of Union Chapel for 17 years and at other churches for nine years before that. It's only in the past few years, he said, that he's been comfortable with those moments when his energetic personality breaks through the scholarship of his prepared sermons to touch his members' funny bones.

Davis had tried to repress all that funny stuff. His wife told him to stop fighting it.

"She told me that God works with our personalities," Davis said recently. "And my grandmother told



me to take God seriously in every area—but never to take yourself too seriously."

Dennis Fakes, pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, admits that Garrison Keillor's radio essays that include anecdotes of Lutheran life have brought a new reputation for humor to his dignified flock.

"You know how to tell if someone is Lutheran?" Fakes asked recently, sitting in his study after pulling some books on holy humor from his bookshelves. "When the minister cracks a joke during the sermon, a Lutheran will smile right out loud."

Fakes takes a minute to laugh at his own joke, his mustache turning up cheerily on both sides of his mouth.

Fakes is a contributing editor for "The Joyful Noiseletter," a monthly religious humor publication.

Like most comedians, Fakes collects good material wherever he finds it. Two of his collections of sermon-tested anecdotes were published by CSS Publishing Company in 1983, "Point With a Punch," Volumes 1 and 2.

"I like to collect humor," Fakes said. "I like to be around people who like to laugh. And making a point with humor is probably one of the most effective ways of getting a point across."

Fakes points out there is humor in the Bible, too—but often it takes a child to see it.

Elton Trueblood, a Quaker theologian, wrote a book about humor in the Bible, Fakes said, after he was reading from the New Testament one night to his little boy and the child started laughing.

"A beam in someone's eye?" the little boy asked, referring to the expression used by Jesus to describe hypocrites who get upset over a gnat in someone else's eye while having a log in their own eye. "That's funny."

"Children get it," Fakes said.

Fakes is careful about the humor he uses.

"I don't want people to go away remembering the joke and forgetting the point," he noted.

And, as the recent furor over Danish cartoons of Muhammad reinforces, the use of humor in religious matters always needs to be mindful of who's laughing. Holy humor, Fakes said, acts as a bridge, not a wall.

The key, he added, is "laughing with people, not at people."

Remembering to keep humor in the holy, Fakes said, is part of being a healthy person and a healthy congregation.

"One of the sins of the church," Fakes said, "is taking itself so seriously and failing to see the joy and humor our faith gives us."

"That's the final punch line for Christians, isn't it? Ultimately, our faith says that everything is going to be all right."

**PUNCH LINE** Wendell Davis, pastor of Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., makes a humorous point during a recent sermon. (RNS photo courtesy of Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church)

## Seminary group seeks to aid Ugandan orphans

Mill Valley, Calif. (BP)—About 15 people affiliated with Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary have launched an organization to care for Uganda's orphans.

The group, called Fount, is seeking to connect resources with direct needs and to nurture community care for a generation of more than 2 million orphans from Uganda's HIV/AIDS epidemic and its 19-year civil war in which more than 30,000 child soldiers fought.

Bee Holland and Michelle Averna, neighbors in the married student apartments at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary near San Francisco, took different paths to their concern for the needs of children in sub-Saharan Africa.

Averna researched the Ugandan crisis for her global studies program. One evening, she discussed her findings with Holland, explaining the urgency of getting aid into Africa from the West.

Holland, assistant controller in Golden Gate's business office whose husband is a master of divinity student, described her heart's dream to build wells in Africa, offering hope to those who had only known despair in their young lives.

"It just clicked," Holland said. "I've always been drawn to Africa because it's the continent with the largest amount of social injustice. Michelle and I saw this huge need there," and the two felt they could help meet it in a culturally appropriate way.

The two women joined their skills. Averna did the research and wrote a detailed proposal. Holland used her business savvy to come up with bylaws and a projected budget. In November 2005, they started the process to become incorporated as a nonprofit organization. Just six weeks later, Fount was legally incorporated.

Other students, student spouses,

graduates and staff soon caught the vision and joined forces with them.

Explaining the name of their organization, Holland said, "Founts spring up and make ... streams of mercy." She added they are sources that dispense water in many places.

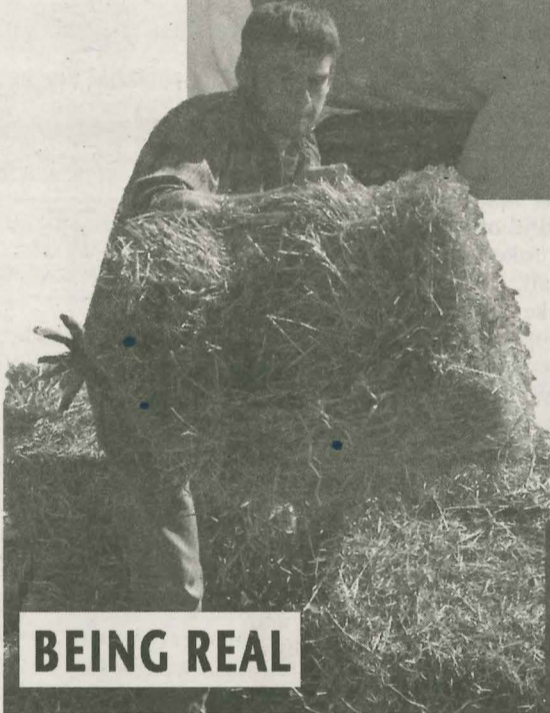
Although all of sub-Saharan Africa is part of the group's long-term vision, they decided to start in Uganda after learning about the child soldiers there.

In the coming months, a Golden Gate contingent of about 10 people will make its first assessment visit to Uganda, networking with non-government and community-based organizations to identify potential partnerships.

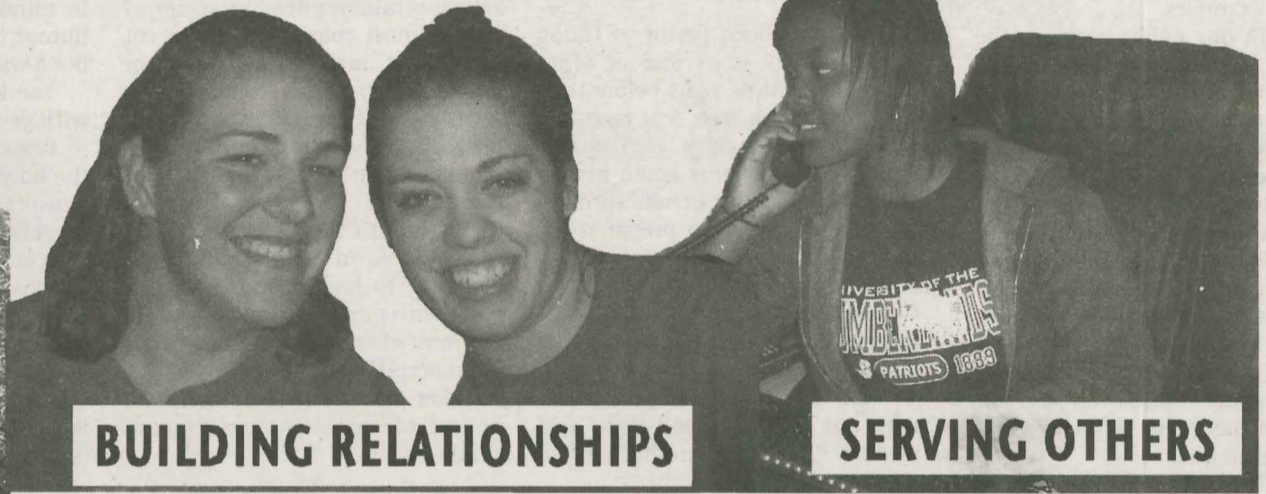
Holland said the team's goal is to "go in-country to see how to make Fount be Ugandan, not just another Western organization."

To learn more about Fount, visit the Web site, [www.fountofmercy.com](http://www.fountofmercy.com).

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