



WESTERN RECORDER

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Churches' impact lies outside walls, consultant insists

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

Lexington—Kentucky Baptists must move their churches outside their walls if they expect to influence the world and win people to Christ, a leadership consultant told a conference last week.

Speaking at a "Next Level" ministry training event last Thursday, author Reggie McNeal said Americans must become missionaries to their own culture to see the kind of dramatic growth Christianity is experiencing worldwide.



Reggie McNeal

"The next big wave of evangelism will be from churches that are missional," McNeal said at the conference, held at Broadway Baptist Church. "You go out and bless the community and you'll find out you don't have a corner on wanting to live in a good town.

"Pagans want to live in a good town," McNeal said. "They'll come alongside you in helping the community. Then they'll ask you why you're doing this. Then you will have an opportunity to give an answer for the hope that lives within you."

Director of leadership development for the South Carolina Baptist Convention, McNeal's appearance was co-sponsored by Elkhorn Baptist Association and the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

McNeal told 185 pastors, staff members and church leaders that taking the gospel into the world is the only way it can reach a post-modern culture.

Elsewhere around the world Christians are doing this, said McNeal, pointing to a worldwide conversion rate of 175,000 people a day.

"There's a Pentecost happening every day in the world," said McNeal, who consults with churches from denominations nationwide. "We're consumed with church and missing God."

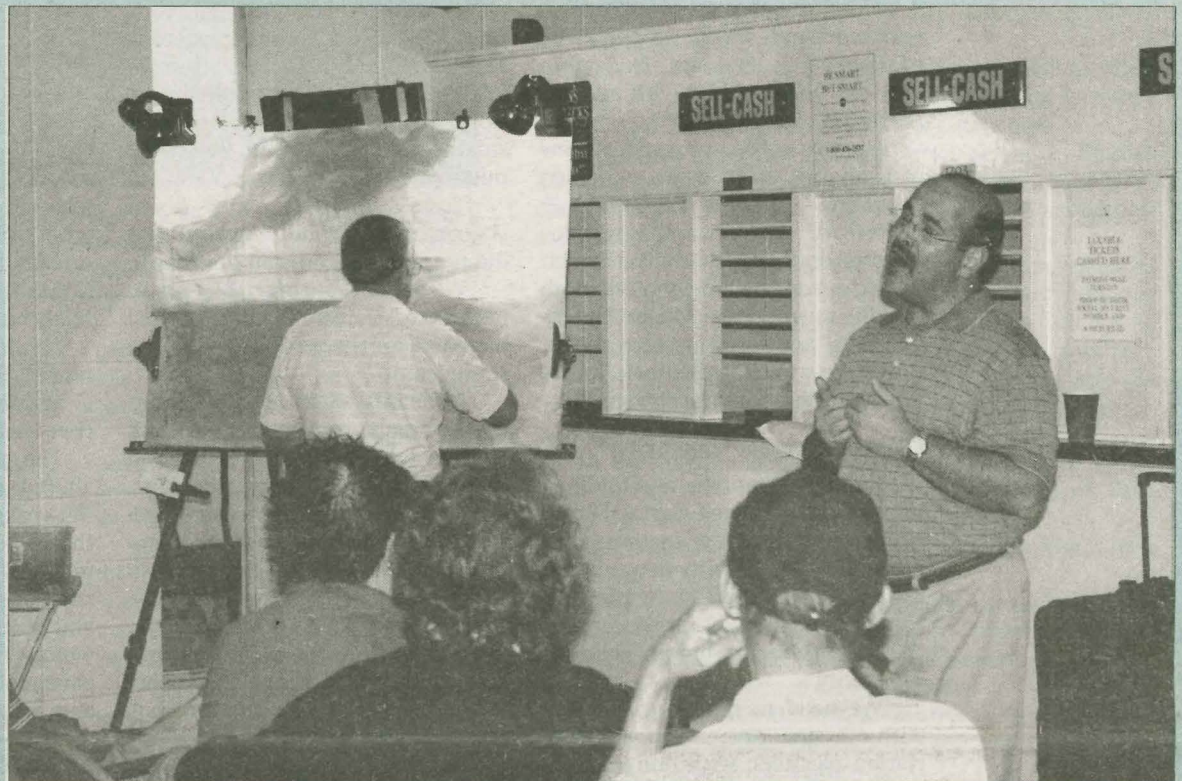
To illustrate how U.S. churches are consumed with church, he compared the Pharisees of Jesus' era with many American congregations.

The Pharisees created a parallel culture because they thought they could convert people by confronting them about their behavior, McNeal said.

Likewise, modern churches ask outsiders to act like them if they want to be considered right with God, he added.

□ See McNeal tells Kentucky... Page 10

Horsetrack ministry



SEASIDE IMAGERY Eric Lowry sings "The Anchor Holds" while his uncle, John Lowry, creates a chalk drawing of a seascape during a recent worship service held in the stable hands' recreation center at Churchill Downs. The Lowrys are members of Vienna (Ind.) Baptist Church. (Photo by Dannah Prather)

Volunteers, chaplains focus on people, not setting

By Dannah Prather
Partnerships Editor

Louisville—A glance at Ken Boehm's prayer list illustrates the unique flock he shepherds as chaplain at Churchill Downs horse racetrack.

Beside one name is written, "Finger bitten off by horse."

Another entry seeks prayer for a jockey with a pelvis broken in five places.

Still another simply reads, "Father died in Mexico."

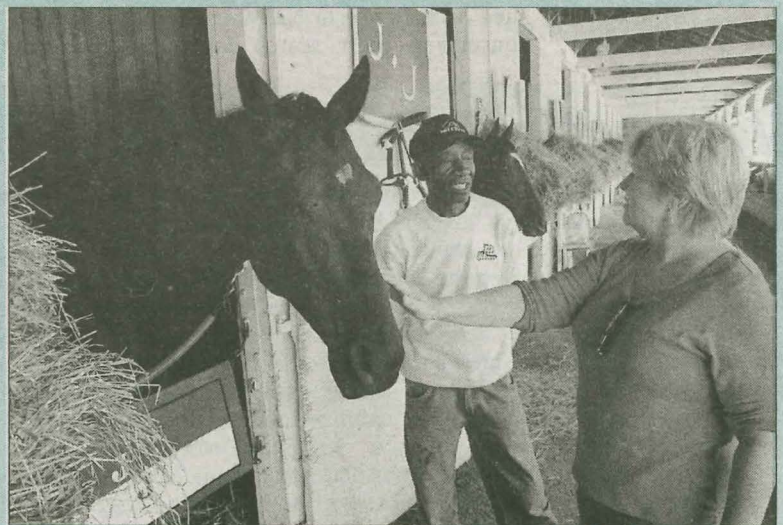
Diverse flocks with unique needs are the norm at Kentucky's five thoroughbred racetracks, said Steve Guarneros, a volunteer chaplain at Ellis Park in Henderson.

"You'll deal with people from Third World countries and princesses and kings," Guarneros said. "There's nobody that's left out."

Chaplains might squeeze in a moment of prayer with a "front-side" executive on his way to a power meeting. Ministry takes on a different look on the track's "backside" among the hundreds of workers involved in the labor-intensive process of caring for and racing thoroughbred horses.

On the backside, Boehm said, he might pray with workers while they're giving a horse a bath.

A mostly transient and multicultural flock—Keeneland Chaplain Michael Powers estimates that 77 percent of backside workers at the Lexington track are His-



BACKSIDE Suzette Gilpin, church coordinator for Long Run Baptist Association's racetrack ministry in Louisville, pets "Born to Dance" while talking with horse groom Sonny Wright of James Jackson Racing Stable. The ministry to workers lasts year-round, as an estimated 3,000 horse handlers stay in Louisville all year. (Photo by David Winfrey)

panic—creates a variety of ministry challenges.

"If a person were to choose for himself to be a racetrack chaplain, he'd be crazy," joked Tom Farley, chaplain at Northern Kentucky's Turfway Park. "There's so much you deal with and so few times you see the final result."

More than 10 years ago, Farley agreed to serve a 30-day stint as interim chaplain. He has yet to leave, but "interim" was dropped from his title.

Partnering with Boehm,

Guarneros, Powers and Farley in this ministry are thousands of Kentucky Baptists.

Each year, churches throughout the commonwealth hold trackside worship services, provide clothing and other material needs, serve home-cooked meals, host holiday parties, offer intercessory prayer and perform countless other gestures of kindness in between for approximately 16,000 horsemen and women who work in Kentucky's most famous industry.

□ See Racetrack ministries ... Page 3

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, May 10.

"Your choice for the next leader of this ministry may be the greatest ministry contribution of your life. Don't mess up."

SBC President Bobby Welch's charge to NAMB trustees

NAMB leaders seek to 'rebuild credibility'

Jersey City, N.J.—Trustees of the Southern Baptist North American Mission took the first steps down the road to recovery May 1-2, two weeks after their embattled president resigned under pressure.

"We walked away with a great deal of unity and a much better spirit," outgoing trustee chairman Barry Holcomb said. "We are ready to walk forward."

The trustees met for the first time since Bob Reccord resigned April 17. A report of a trustee investigation, released March 23, questioned some of Reccord's decisions, leadership style and relationships with mission partners.

The board also approved 74 new missionaries and 63 SBC-endorsed chaplains.

Reccord was on hand May 1 for a closed-door session during which he addressed the trustees. Holcomb said the meeting was "just sort of between us" and a way for Reccord and the trustees to close the books on his nine-year tenure at the agency.

Employee morale "improving"

"Employee morale at NAMB is improving," reported Carlos Ferrer, NAMB's interim chief operating officer. "We need stability in our building so that our staff know they are valued, trusted and that we care for them. Outside the board, we need credibility.

"We need to rebuild credibility with our state convention and association partners, with our missionaries and with Southern Baptists," Ferrer said. "They need to know that we are trustworthy and will do what we say we will do. And we are committed to doing everything in our power to do that."

SBC President Bobby Welch issued a challenge to NAMB trustees concerning their search for Rec-

cord's successor.

"Your choice for the next leader of this ministry may be the greatest ministry contribution of your life," Welch said.

"Don't mess up. On behalf of 16 million Southern Baptists in 45,000 churches, don't mess up. You've got to get this right because the eternal destiny of untold millions depends on your choice. That's how important your search is."

Presidential search committee chairman Terry Fox said the committee plans to conduct listening sessions with a broad spectrum of leadership, including state convention partners, pastors of large and small churches and directors of missions.

Trustees elected a new board chairman in a divided vote, but they did not name an interim president.

"We are not moving at any break-neck pace," Holcomb said. "The time has come for the board to take a few slower steps."

No details were released about the severance package for Reccord. Sources told ABP Reccord received two years' salary plus other benefits, but Holcomb and other trustee leaders declined to discuss the specifics.

Bill Curtis, who was elected trustee chairman, declined to discuss the specifics of Reccord's severance in an interview before the meeting. However, when asked about the report of two years salary, he said "there is precedent at other SBC agencies" for such a settlement.

Curtis, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Florence, S.C., and author of the investigative report critical of Reccord, was elected chairman by a 3-to-1 margin over Florida pastor Ted Traylor in a vote that reflects the board's division over Reccord.

Traylor was one of 41 SBC pastors and leaders who issued a statement

April 21 defending Reccord and affirming his integrity, character and accomplishments at NAMB. The trustee board adopted a similar statement May 2.

Ferrer reported that an outside auditing firm has completed two financial audits, and NAMB received "clean opinions" on both. One of the audits was the entity's normal annual review, while the other was focused on questions about some of the board's programs, policies and expenses.

Outside contracts terminated

He also reported that several contracts with outside vendors have been renegotiated or terminated, saving million of dollars in the long term. Those contracts include one with InovaOne Aviation for use of private airplanes which will save NAMB \$40,000 on a contract that already has cost the agency \$142,000.

"We are not flying that plane anymore," Ferrer emphasized. "I want to be sure all of our supporters hear that loud and clear."

The previous week, NAMB also altered its relationship with 316 Networks, a broadband Internet site that involved a three-way business relationship between NAMB and two media companies, InovaOne and MultiCast—an Atlanta business which hosted the network. The partnership cost NAMB \$1.4 million and had generated only \$30,000 in return.

NAMB officials also terminated contracts for \$12,000 a month with two outside public relations agencies that were hired without trustee knowledge. Ferrer said the firms were doing work that can be done by NAMB staff.

Compiled from reporting by Associated Baptist Press, Baptist Press and the Georgia Christian Index

Reinstated Africa missionaries agree to IMB guidelines

Richmond, Va.—A Southern Baptist missionary couple who faced dismissal for establishing a church that was not explicitly Baptist have reached an agreement with International Mission Board officials that will allow them to continue their ministry in Guinea, West Africa.

Wyman and Michelle Dobbs, who have worked for eight years among the Fulbe Fouta people in the overwhelmingly Muslim nation, have agreed to adhere more precisely to the IMB's guidelines for cooperation with missionaries of other denominations, according to a news release from the IMB.

Wyman Dobbs said May 3 that he and his wife are excited that IMB officials have allowed them—under the guideline policy—to work with non-SBC churches "in fulfilling the Great Commission."

The couple's role in starting a "baptistic" church in partnership with non-SBC missionaries became public in mid-April. The Dobbses had signed a church-planting partnership document called the "Tinka Agreement" in 2003, which had not been endorsed by the IMB's West Africa regional leadership.

In addition to the Dobbses, that agreement was signed by mission representatives from the Assemblies of God, Christian Reformed Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Pioneer Bible Translators, WEC International, Youth With a Mission and the Swiss Evangelical Alliance Mission. IMB leaders said the agreement did not adequately communicate the five levels of partnership to which IMB trustees had committed.

The IMB guidelines state that partnerships are launched with the intention of supporting church-planting movements and in accordance with the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

West Africa mission leadership recommended the couple resign or be terminated after the Dobbses refused to follow the guidelines.

The Dobbses appealed the decision in an April 29 meeting with Gordon Fort, IMB vice president for overseas operations. Fort agreed to let them return to the field after he conferred with Randy Arnett, West Africa regional leader. The couple currently is on stateside assignment and is scheduled to return to Guinea in February.

The Dobbses told Fort they are committed to partnering within IMB guidelines. They also agreed to plant indigenous Baptist churches and said they would work under the authority of IMB leadership in West Africa.

Compiled from reporting by Baptist Press and Associated Baptist Press

Disgruntled conservatives: Arrogance threatens SBC

Memphis, Tenn. (ABP)—About 30 Southern Baptist conservatives from diverse backgrounds are repenting of the arrogance and isolationism they say threaten the Southern Baptist Convention's integrity.

The participants met behind closed doors in Memphis, Tenn., May 2-3 and later issued a "Memphis Declaration," expressing concern and dissatisfaction over the current direction of the SBC.

But the group stopped short of proposing a candidate for SBC office or actions to be taken at next month's SBC annual meeting.

Couched in terms of repentance, the statement says in part: "We publicly repent of triumphalism about Southern Baptist causes and narcissism about Southern Baptist ministries which have corrupted our integrity. ... We publicly repent of an arrogant spirit that has infected our partnership with fellow Christian."

The meeting was organized by a group of mostly young pastors who have called for more openness in SBC life, particularly among agency trustees.

"We publicly repent," their statement added, "of our inattentiveness to convention governance," of not holding "trustees accountable to the body which elects them to preserve our sacred trust and direct our entities with the guidance, counsel and correction necessary to maintain the integrity of those entities."

While examples were not stated, many in the group have been critical of recent decisions by trustees and leaders of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board and North American Mission Board.

Benjamin Cole, pastor of Parkview Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, said that he and a few others called the invitation-only meeting. Among those in attendance were participants in the SBC's loose-knit young leaders network, "emerging church" pastors, Baptist bloggers and leaders of Calvinist groups in the SBC.

Some in the Memphis group are urging IMB trustee Wade Burleson to be nominated for SBC president during the Greensboro, N.C., convention. So far he has declined interest publicly. But in a recent blog, he seemed more open to the possibility.

"If I believed a nomination to a position of service in the SBC would be detrimental to providing solutions to (the SBC's exclusivism), I would decline that nomination without hesitation," he wrote. "I will do what I believe is best for the convention—period."

In the Memphis meeting, Cole said, the group discussed many aspects of SBC life but took no actions other than drafting the declaration.

He said potential candidates for SBC office were discussed but "we are not offering candidates, nor have we determined secretly to offer any candidates." However,

he did not rule out the possibility of such a candidate emerging.

The group's declaration pledged to partner with other Great Commission Christians "for the glory of Jesus Christ, who is proclaimed with power when His disciples are at peace with one another."

It committed to engage American culture actively and to build bridges and encourage "reasoning together" with those who differ on non-essential theological issues.

"We publicly repent of having turned a blind eye to wickedness in our convention," the statement said, especially in the form of "slanderous, unsubstantiated accusations and malicious character assassination" of Christian brothers.

It said biblical authority "does not necessitate absolute uniformity on all matters of doctrine or practice."

Art Rogers, associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Russellville, said those who met in Memphis do not wish to alter the convention or "move politically" within it.

"We are simply humbly gathering together in an attitude of prayer, trying to cast a vision of humility and cooperation among Southern Baptists, working with not only other Southern Baptists but also other denominations and Great Commission organizations to advance the gospel."

The "Memphis Declaration" is posted at www.twelvewitnesses.blogspot.com.

Racetrack ministries focus on people, not setting

Continued from page 1

"(Kentucky Baptists) take such an active part," said Marty Maline, executive director of the Kentucky Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association. "Especially (as) people who don't know much about the track, and would never consider gambling in any shape, form or fashion."

"The Baptist church is our largest supporting church," Boehm (a Lutheran) said, referring to Kentucky Baptists. "They were involved in chaplaincy before anyone."

According to Suzette Gilpin, church coordinator for Long Run Baptist Association racetrack ministry in Louisville, until the late 1980s, a single chaplain served workers at all Kentucky tracks during racing meets.

Long Run leadership hired a chaplain to minister to employees who remain at Churchill Downs between meets to support horses still in training. Maline estimates that as many as 3,000 track workers stay in Louisville most of the year.

"God has given (Kentucky Baptists) the ability, the responsibility and the means to meet these needs in His name," said Gilpin, who also is treasurer of Kentucky Race Track Chaplaincy, an organization that coordinates ministry at four tracks and two training centers.

The organization is non-denominational, but Gilpin said the vast majority of participants and contributors are Kentucky Baptists. This occurs despite Kentucky Baptists' vocal opposition to gambling.

"Some people feel that because (a racetrack) is a gambling estab-



GIFT OF SONG Tracside workers at Churchill Downs sing from hymnals during a Monday night worship service. The hymnals were purchased by a member of the congregation who saved a portion of his wages to give back to the ministry. Worship is held on Mondays because Sunday is a racing day at Churchill Downs.

lishment, it's wrong to minister to the people back there," Gilpin said. "But those are very much in the minority."

Farley also said he has met Christians who believe participating in racetrack ministry gives tacit approval to gambling.

"I don't argue with them. I say, 'I'd like to argue with you. The reality of what is being done every day,'" Farley said. "Most of the time, after they hear that, they say, 'We'd like to come and see what it's all about.'"

As she schedules churches to host fellowship meals following Monday night chapel services at Churchill Downs, Gilpin said she has no problem finding enough

congregations to participate. "It's just unbelievable how loving and generous they are," she said.

The atmosphere is equally supportive in Northern Kentucky. "We get new churches every year," Farley said.

Serving at Keeneland "has been a very big eye-opener for me," said Paula Brock of Georgetown Baptist Church. When she first began volunteering, she said, "I saw them as a lower class of people. They'd come in and I'd smell alcohol on them. I don't mind now giving them a hug or shaking their hand."

"Human beings, not projects"

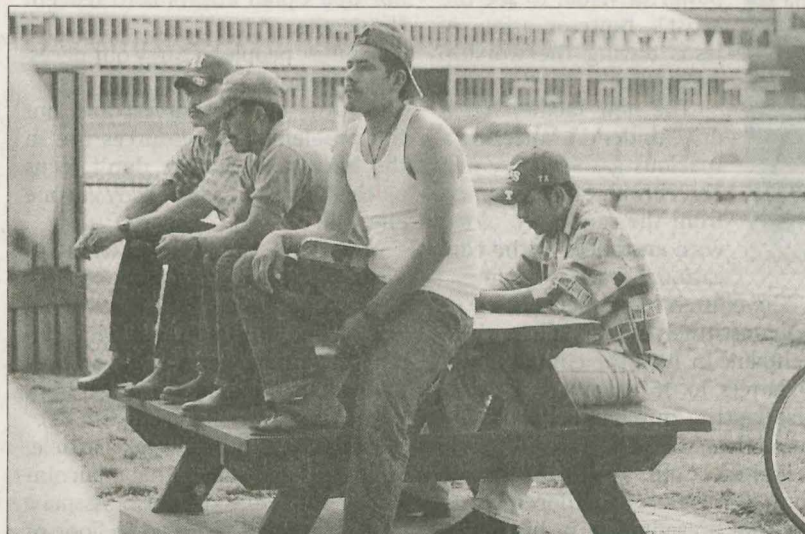
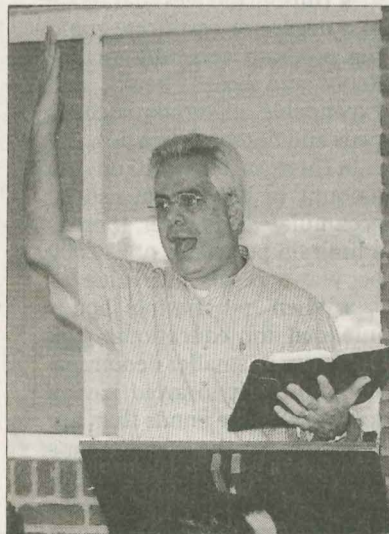
After six years, "I've gotten to know them personally as human beings, not just mission projects," Brock said. She has met college graduates and even a retired bank president laboring as grooms, stable workers and hot walkers. "They just love the horses."

Guarneros said racetrack ministry enables churches to take the gospel to people rather than hoping the non-Christians and unchurched will come to them. "There is a need for the church to get out of the sanctuary."

The scene at an Ellis Park worship service might offend some devout churchgoers, but Guarneros said he thinks it illustrates how Jesus ministered to people.



CHRIST CHAPEL Located on the backside of Churchill Downs, the chapel will provide a permanent location for worship services and other ministries to the Anglo and Hispanic congregations. It is expected to be completed in June.



TRACSIDE WORSHIP Two services are held each Monday evening at the backside of the track at Churchill Downs in Louisville. One is in English and another in Spanish. After worship, both groups share a meal that often is provided by members of Long Run Baptist Association churches. ■ Left: Jesus Pacheco reads Scripture for his Spanish-language sermon. ■ Right: A picnic table serves as a pew for a group of workers. The Spanish-language service draws more people than can be seated in folding chairs on the porch of the recreation center.

Starting with food, worship

Like many Kentucky Baptists in ministry, those serving at race tracks often start with worship and food.

Delois Nunaley, a member of First Baptist Church of Henderson, has served nearly 10 years in ministry at Ellis Park. Her congregation, along with many others in Green Valley Baptist Association, hosts worship services and fellowship meals during nine weeks of racing at Ellis Park. Green Valley Woman's Missionary Union coordinates the effort.

"It meets a spiritual need as well as a physical need," she said. "You can't expect people with empty stomachs to be responsive to the gospel."

Green Valley volunteers "leave enough food to make lunches during the week for people who can't afford them," said Ellis Park Chaplain Steve Guarneros.

Keeneland hosts two worship services, one in English and one in Spanish. Chaplain Michael Powers said 16-20 congregations in Elkhorn Baptist Association participate each year.

Northern Kentucky Baptist Association congregations assist Chaplain Tom Farley with two weekly services, one at Turfway Park and another at Riverdowns in Cincinnati.

"Backside" workers live and travel in cramped quarters, and move often. Keeneland volunteer Paula Brock said the nomadic lifestyle means workers travel light—sometimes too light.

"In the spring, they come from the South and arrive in Kentucky with just a short-sleeved shirt," Brock said. "They can only take what will fit in one bag."

"The workers coming from Florida ... some don't have any shoes," Nunaley said.

Kentucky Baptists collect everything from clothing to non-perishable food and toiletries for track workers in need. Household items such as mattresses, bed linens, radios and televisions are also in demand.

Longtime Churchill Downs volunteer Suzette Gilpin said she remembered one track worker who had tears in his eyes after receiving a pillow.

"He cried because it had been so long since he'd laid his head on a pillow," she said. "I have to throw pillows off my bed before I can even get in."

Through Kentucky Race Track Chaplaincy and other non-profit organizations, Kentucky Baptists also support English as a Second Language lessons, G.E.D. preparation classes, substance abuse counseling, transportation services, medical care and many other services. *Dannah Prather*

"People drove up (to the service) in their carts drinking beer, drinking wine, smoking cigarettes and playing soccer," he said. "But those people were listening. I wept like a baby. When Christ was reaching the multitudes, He never said how they came was wrong. ... We bring them to Christ, He cleans them up."

A pastor for nearly 30 years before coming to Keeneland, Powers said the atmosphere of gambling, drinking and other vices "is something you never get used to. ... Everything that I preached against and stood against, I'm probably right in the middle of," he said.

"The things that come along with a racetrack ... you never get comfortable around it, but that's not what I do. I just minister to the people who work on the backstretch."

Powers and others say that they keep coming back to the track to serve in order to have an opportunity to share the gospel and demonstrate the love of Christ.

"Many of these people who sit in a service are hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time in their lives," Powers said. "You don't have to go to Mexico to reach them, they come to you."

"For someone with a heart for evangelism and reaching the lost," Boehm said, "this is a wonderful place to be."

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

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Pat Day: missionary to horse racing

By Tim Ellsworth

Louisville (BP)—For 22 years at Churchill Downs, Pat Day had one of the best seats possible in the Kentucky Derby—perched atop the back of a speeding thoroughbred.

The legendary jockey was a fixture in the Derby, and in all of horse racing, for that matter. He accumulated nearly 9,000 wins in his 32-year career, amassing purse winnings of nearly \$300 million.

This year, Day had a different vantage point for last weekend's race. Day retired as a jockey in August, and to honor him for his prestigious career, Churchill Downs gave him a luxury box from which to watch the Kentucky Derby.

But Day instead chose to watch the race from the backstretch with a group of friends.

"Here's a guy who's won almost every horse race imaginable, and he's ... watching the Kentucky Derby from the backstretch," said Ed Donnally, a longtime friend of Day's and development director of Racetrack

Chaplaincy of America.

That choice might surprise Donnally if it came from someone else. But with Day, Donnally has grown accustomed to such humility—humility that springs from Day's relationship with God.

"He understands what his accomplishments are, but he always gives the credit to God," Donnally said. "He's someone who's walked his talk a long time in a place where it wasn't popular at all."

Every time Day dismounted from a horse after a race, he'd gladly testify about his love for the Lord. In some circles, Day even earned the nickname "Little Jesus."

"Sportswriters didn't really like him at all, because you're going to get a quote about Jesus whether you want one or not," Donnally said. "He's put Christ on the sports pages in a lot of places across the country."

Ken Boehm, chaplain at Churchill Downs, is another longtime friend of Day's who speaks about the

jockey with admiration.

"He's just a real person," Boehm said. "He's a genuine Christian man who lives to please nobody more than Jesus Christ."

At one time, Day wondered how he could please God by making his living in a sport that's largely built on gambling. After he became a Christian, he thought about leaving the sport for that very reason.

But after wrestling and praying over the matter, Day decided God had placed him in horse racing for a reason. He didn't condone the gambling, but he knew he could be an example to those who didn't know the Lord the way he does.

So he stayed, and he prospered. He won race after race after race, and he always deflected attention from himself and toward Jesus Christ. Those who know Day best say horse racing is better because of it.

"People think that he was a jockey by profession, but he was a jockey by the God-given talents God gave him," Boehm said. "By profession, he was a missionary in the racing world."

Tim Ellsworth is a columnist for BP Sports

COMMENTARY

Every Baptist a tither

By Wanda Lee

Birmingham, Ala. (BP)—In January 1950, Woman's Missionary Union's Royal Service magazine carried an article titled "Right Percentage" that highlighted the 25th anniversary of the Cooperative Program.

The emphasis across the denomination that year was "Every Baptist a Tither," and WMU pledged to do its part in promoting tithing and increased giving to CP. The author wrote that WMU "will give all the force she can to the achievement of these goals. We will do everything we can to teach stewardship of possessions and to lead Baptist women and young people in the practice of good stewardship."

Our involvement promoting CP and stewardship was nothing

new. Records show WMU played an integral part in the creation of CP. Teaching stewardship and service across all age levels has been a part of WMU since its inception.

FIRST PERSON

The heart and soul of any denomination's missions efforts must be founded on its members' understanding of these basic concepts: Everything I have belongs to God; I am responsible for using whatever I have to honor God; a world is waiting to hear the good news and I am responsible for seeing that they hear. When these concepts are planted firmly in a believer's life as they are through missions education, tithing and cooperative giving by churches and state conventions will not be a problem.

Baptist giving patterns show a strong correlation between mis-

sions education and involvement and stewardship. An occasional tithing sermon or testimony from someone who tithes will not produce individuals or a church that is committed to biblical stewardship. What is needed is an ongoing infusion of these principles through the teaching of the church. Then, and only then, will stewardship of our resources become a part of the fabric of our daily lives.

Past and present WMU members understand we can do so much more together than we can alone. Cooperating for the cause of Christ in our giving and our going is a long-held pattern of mission support that works. As you think about your understanding of stewardship remember these words of Jesus, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34).

Wanda Lee is executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union

Dayton congregation rebuilds church facility

It has been a long but rewarding journey for First Baptist Church of Dayton, according to Pastor Allan Daigle.

The church's sanctuary was destroyed by fire on Jan. 16, 2004, but now, more than two years later, the church is worshipping in a beautiful new sanctuary that blends parts of the old with new construction.

The church was able to worship in the new sanctuary for the first time Easter Sunday. With the help of insurance and generous gifts, the church entered the new facility debt-free.

Pastor Daigle said many people offered financial help, including numerous non-Baptist churches in the area. Members and friends of the church also provided gifts and encouragement.

The church was able to preserve the 1895 tower of Bedford stone and two beautiful stained glass windows in a wonderful blending of the old Bedford stones and new red bricks.

The stained-glass window of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane was placed behind the pulpit, the same location as in the former sanctuary. It is a powerful visual to see the artist's representation of Jesus during the worship experience.

The new facility has a drive-under entrance and a spacious gathering center. The church office is across from the sanctuary, along with entrances to the educational space and gym.

The church has a rich history. It was constituted in May 1850 with 16 members. In 1904 the church granted letters to 16 members to form First Baptist Church of Bellevue. The church has had 34 pastors.

Walton Cole served as pastor from 1929-1960. His children made a special presentation in his honor during the Sunday afternoon dedication service.

When we face big challenges like the one this church faced, God usually has our attention and desires to

reveal His enlarged purposes for us.

I suggested to the congregation there are several steps we can take that can help in difficult times:

- Spend some time with God to answer two questions: What does God see? What does He want me to do? God's plan always is to redeem His people.

- Enlist people to carry out necessary functions.

- Focus on the harvest and not the problem. The resources are in the harvest. If leaders don't focus on the harvest, it's not likely anyone else will.

- Change the conversation to focus on the mighty acts of God. Record and benchmark the mighty acts of God to share them with current and future generations so they might know God and not turn back in the time of challenge (Psalm 78).

Correction: In last week's article, I should have stated that Malcolm Cheek and Pulaski Baptist Association remodeled the second floor of the educational building for Calvary Baptist Church in Pascagoula, Miss.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

U.S. bonds offer savings option for college expenses

By Don Spencer

Parents have a number of tax-advantaged ways to save for their children's education expenses. These include Education Savings Accounts, Section 529 Plans, using funds from an Roth IRA, and U.S. Savings Bonds. Each one has specific advantages. This week, let's look at a few basics on using savings bonds:

- You can exclude all or a portion of the interest earned from savings bonds from federal income tax for qualified higher education expenses incurred by the taxpayer, his or her spouse or dependents. Savings bonds always are exempt from state and local taxes whether they are used for education or not.

- Only EE or I bonds issued since January 1990 qualify.

- When purchasing bonds for education savings, you do not have to declare at the time of purchase that they are intended for educational expenses.

- You also can choose not to use the bonds for education.

- You must be at least 24 years old when you purchase the bonds. Bonds purchased for education savings should be registered in the parent's name, not the child's.

- If married, a joint return must be filed to qualify for the income tax exclusion.

- For individuals with higher income levels, the tax exclusion is reduced or eliminated.

- Expenses qualify at most post-secondary institutions, including colleges, universities and some vocational schools. The school must participate in federally assisted programs.

- Qualified education expenses must be incurred in the same tax year the bonds are cashed in.

- Tuition and fees that relate to a degree or certificate-granting program generally qualify. Room and board, books, and expendable materials such as pens and notebooks do not.

- There is no limit on the amount in bonds that can be accumulated. However, there is a limit on purchases of \$30,000 per year of bonds' face value.

- When purchasing bonds intended for educational use, buy them in smaller denominations in order to avoid having to cash in more bonds than are needed to pay the current year's expenses. Any excess money received from bonds can increase taxable income.

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



Teen's bitterness over church issues is learning opportunity

Q: Our teenage son is bitter due to some painful experiences we have had in our church in the last few years. He says he does not want to return to church if this is what it is like. How can we help him?

Listen carefully as your son talks about his anger, hurt and fears. Give him opportunities to discuss these issues with you and encourage him to talk with other adults he respects. Resist the temptation to give glib answers, focusing instead on understanding and empathizing with him.

PARENTING

Take the opportunity to remind your son of the biblical image of the church as the "Bride of Christ." While the Heavenly Bridegroom is perfect, without spot or blemish, it is important to remember that the church as the bride of Christ is not. In fact, the apostle Paul reminds husbands to love their wives and not be harsh with them (Colossians 3:19). This parallels the way the Bridegroom responds to the Bride as "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her ... that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Just as mature spouses understand that they are married to imperfect individuals and that they must use discerning acceptance and not harsh judgment, one mark of a maturing believer is to understand and practice grace and forgiveness within the life of the local body of believers.—Scott Wigginton

Q: What is the big deal about romance? My wife likes to watch the latest romantic movies, and she always is reading some romance novel. There is no way I can compete with all that mushy, romantic stuff. I'm happy with our marriage. Why can't she be too?

Ahh, romance. It is a powerfully attractive word to most women.

My husband and I recently led a marriage retreat using Tommy Nelson's "The Book of Romance" based on the Song of Solomon. He has some good ideas on the subject of romance.

MARRIAGE

Nelson defines romance as "expressing tender desire to be with another person and making that person feel special and valuable." And guess who our model is for expressing tender desire? Our Heavenly Father.

Nelson emphasizes the acts of God in history to woo His creation in order to give love and forgiveness, to bestow identity and value, and to create an intimate relationship with us.

Nelson challenges men in three ways: First, men are expected to be romantic. A husband has a leadership role in the area of romance. Second, Nelson says men are capable of romance. Husbands can learn and grow this ability to express charm, romance and affection. Third, God desires for men to be romantic. If God is the model and male and female are created in the image of God, then yes, according to this definition of romance, husbands and wives must be romantic in their marriage.

Nelson offers caution in listing four areas that kill romance: sin, age (focusing on outer beauty), forgetfulness and laziness. The challenge to husbands and wives is to protect and nurture romance in marriage.

"Love must be shown," Nelson writes. "Honor must be expressed. Cherish is an attitude that must be displayed." Just as church attendance, prayer and Scripture reading are disciplines, romance in marriage is a discipline. Consider romancing your wife by expressing tender desire to be with her and showing your wife you see her as special and valuable. It is likely she will not seek her romance from the movies or novels if her husband romances her every day.—Valerie Vincent

Family Forum writers are:

David Garrard, minister to children at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville. E-mail: dgarrard@smbclouisville.org.

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Scott Wigginton, associate professor of pastoral ministries and counseling at Campbellsville University. E-mail: sewigginton@campbellsville.edu.

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



'Da Vinci Code': Don't be fooled by fiction

What's all the fuss over "The Da Vinci Code"?

As Dan Brown's mega-bestselling book (40 million-plus copies sold) is transformed into a blockbuster movie that opens next week, countless newspaper and magazine articles, television interviews, Web sites and seminars have examined the book's claims about Jesus Christ. In fact, a Google search of "Da Vinci Code" turns up a whopping 58.1 million references.

In case you haven't turned on your TV or flipped through a newsmagazine in the past few months, the basic secret of the book's mysterious code is that the Vatican and Opus Dei are seeking to hide the "fact" that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and she gave birth to a daughter whose royal bloodline continues today. Quite a plot, huh?

As Brown sprinkles a few obscure facts in with lots of fiction, many readers apparently have become confused about the line between reality and fantasy.

One of the most accurate pieces of information in Brown's book is found on the copyright page, which states, "This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental."

That should settle all the arguments and confusion, right? But Brown isn't content to leave well enough alone. Though his book is a work of fiction, Brown claims that "all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in this novel are accurate." Not quite.

For instance, he writes that "the Priory of Sion—a European secret society founded in 1099—is a real organization." He goes on to claim that Leonardo da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton and Victor Hugo were among leaders of the organization that has guarded the Da Vinci code's secret for centuries.

Reality check: Historians, theologians and journalists agree that such claims are false. According to a recent "60 Minutes" segment, there was "no evidence of the Priory of Sion before 1956." The report added that the group's 20th century organizers forged documents to create "an elaborate hoax."

If Brown missed that badly on an easily researched historical note, imagine how his errors multiplied as he attempted to delve into theology and early church history.

Here are a few of his novel's gems:

■ Harvard professor Robert Langdon, speaking to French cryptographer Sophie Neveu, "If Jesus were not married, at least one of the Bible's gospels would have mentioned it and offered some explanation for His unnatural state of bachelorhood."

■ Langdon, speaking to Neveu, "You witnessed a sex rite. Didn't you? ... What you saw was not about sex, it was about spirituality."

■ Neveu, speaking to Langdon: "But you told me the New Testament is based on fabrications." Langdon smiled. "Sophie, every faith in the world is based on fabrication. That is the definition of faith—acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove."

You get the idea. The fact is that Brown's book, while an intriguing suspense novel, is fiction—and heretical fiction at that.

So how should Christians respond as the movie heightens many viewers' confusion?

While a few Christian groups have called for a boycott of the film, many others are using Scripture-based pamphlets and DVDs to equip believers with the truth and encourage them to use casual conversations about the book and film as a ministry outreach to non-Christians. That sounds like the best way to go.

"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," Jude 3 urges. That doesn't take a cryptographer or a Harvard professor to decode.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Praise bands can strengthen youth ministry

The school year is almost over, which means summer is almost upon us. For those who are involved in youth ministry, the fun is about to begin.

Summer always has been my favorite time in youth ministry. The opportunity to get students out of their normal routine of life and tuned in to God is exciting.

One of the great things about summer is camp and the awesome worship experiences there. There were few summer youth events our church's young people attended that didn't inspire some of them to want to come back and worship like that at church. To help youth leaders be prepared to kindle the vision and passion some students will get to begin a praise band, after camp, I solicited the advice of a couple of youth leaders who have "been there, done that."

Jamie Lawrence, associate pastor of youth and education at Macedonia Baptist Church in Owensboro, says, "Obviously every conference your group attends will have great worship music, but are your kids interested in learning to play or maybe even looking for an outlet where they can showcase their talents? I look for kids who can play or want to play."

J.R. Hopson, minister of youth and outreach at Edgewood Baptist Church in Hopkinsville, notes, "Trying to start a praise team is not al-

ways the easy thing to do, especially coming in to a new place of ministry. First thing I did was to seek out talent, and begin putting together a list of those students.

"Once I got a core together," he added, "I would then begin to practice with those students and then slowly incorporate the praise team into our youth worship."

"If you are a leader and you don't play an instrument, do not fear," Lawrence said. "Get in touch with adults in your church who play, local music stores that have musicians or players you know. The knowledge has to be there to start this."

Lawrence noted that another "great tool I use is SPIN360 (spin360.com). This is a worship CD collection produced by Joel Engle Ministries that gives you, on an average, 10 songs. You get CD demos, soundtracks, PowerPoint or Media Shout files, lyrics, and for your upcoming musicians, chord sheets."

Youth leaders can "put together a youth praise team using these soundtracks," Lawrence noted, encouraging participants to "practice till they know them by heart. Soon you will have four or five students leading worship with soundtracks."

Remember that there is a difference between having musical ability and being able to lead worship. Some students might want to be in

a praise band to be on stage and be seen by others.

"Teaching your youth to be worship leaders is another story," Lawrence said. "All students have to realize that they are lead worshippers, not just worship leaders."

"It is good to find a kid who wants to showcase his abilities," he added, but praise team members must be taught "that their abilities are given by God for them to refine and use for His glory, not theirs."

"Once this is set and running for a few weeks, get your musicians to meet," Lawrence suggested. "Sometimes it is good to have just a couple of kids at one time getting together. If all your guitar guys and girls can take lessons from the same person, that person can help you get them to playing together."

Lawrence said he would "start with a set list of around five songs. This should not overload them. Slowly put the musicians and singers together in a practice worship setting. Eventually things start to gel. The friendships and growth in Scripture and leadership that come from an experience like this is incredible. Who knows, some day you may find these students leading worship in other churches thanks to the chance you gave them and the trust you put into them."

Hopson also encouraged praise team members to "invest in someone to replace them when they leave" the church's student ministry.

Joe Ball, a former youth minister at Edgewood Baptist Church in Hopkinsville, is youth strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention

YOUTH MINISTRY CORNER



Joe Ball

SBC PREVIEW

Ministers' wives luncheon. June 13, noon, Guilford Ballroom, Sheraton Four Seasons Hotel, Greensboro, N.C. Theme: "Silent Witness: The Language of Your Home." Speaker: Interior designer Georg Andersen. Tickets are \$10. To register, visit www.swbts.edu/conferences or call (877) 467-9287.

Pastors' conference wives session. June 12, 8:30 a.m., War Memorial Auditorium. Theme: "Contagious Joy." Speakers: humorist Anita Renfro; Carol Ann Draper, wife of retired LifeWay Christian Resources president Jimmy Draper; and Elizabeth Luter, wife of Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans.

Younger leaders summit. June 12, 10 p.m., War Memorial Stadium. Speakers: Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary; Jimmy Draper, retired president of LifeWay Christian Resources; Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board; and Tim Sweatman, pastor of Jackson Grove Baptist Church in Bowling Green.

Evangelists' conference. June 9-11, Holiday Inn Express Guilford Convention Center. Theme: "Going into All the World." Speakers: Richard Blackaby, president of Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary; Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board; and evangelist Larry Smith. For more information, visit www.sbcevanglist.org.

African-American fellowship. June 11, Immanuel Baptist Church of Greensboro; June 12, Sheraton Hotel Meadowbrook Room. Theme: "Critical Issues." Speakers: Eddie Scott, pastor of Christian Bible Fellowship in New Orleans; and Christian president Mark Croston, pastor of East End Baptist Church in Suffolk, Va.

Directors of missions conference. June 11-12, Greensboro Marriott Downtown. Theme: "Partnering for Kingdom Purposes." Speakers: Ken Whitten, pastor of Idlewild Baptist Church in Tampa, Fla.; Ted Stone, an evangelist from Durham, N.C.; and Reggie McNeal, director of leadership development for the South Carolina Baptist Convention. To preregister, visit www.sbcadom.net.

Hispanic Baptist fellowship. June 10-11, Pleasant Garden Baptist Church of Greensboro. Theme: "Facing the Challenges of the 21st Century." Speakers: Jason Carlisle, director of Hispanic mobilization for the International Mission Board; David Fajardo of the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, Texas; and Christian counselor Liz Rosales. For more information, visit www.confaternidad.org.

Messianic fellowship. June 9-11, Pebble Beach Room, Sheraton Greensboro Hotel. Theme: "To Bear Fruit—Build Up the Saints." Speakers: Sam Nadler, president of Word of Messiah Ministries; and Ed Stetzer, research team director at the North American Mission Board. For more information, visit www.sbcmessianic.net.

Seminary luncheons. The six Southern Baptist seminaries will host luncheons June 14 at the Sheraton Four Seasons Hotel. Room locations and cost include: **Golden Gate**, Blue Ashe Room; tickets \$10, (888) 442-8709. **Midwestern**, Guilford Ballroom C; two free tickets per family for first 100 reservations, (877) 414-3720. **New Orleans**, Guilford Ballrooms F/G; tickets \$10 before June 1, www.nobts.edu/alumni. **Southeastern**, Guilford Ballrooms D/E; tickets \$12, (919) 761-2349. **Southern**, Imperial Ballroom; tickets \$20 in advance, (800) 626-5525, ext. 4143. **Southwestern**, Guilford Ballrooms A/B; tickets \$10 before June 1, (877) 467-9287.

Kentuckians nominated to serve on SBC boards and committees

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

Kentucky Baptists serving on the 2006 SBC Committee on Nominations are **Kevin McCallon**, pastor of First Baptist Church of Paducah, and **Lynette Ezelle** of Louisville, wife of Highview Baptist Church Pastor Kevin Ezell. Kentuckians nominated by the committee for a first term of service are:

Barry McRoberts, a member of LaGrange Baptist Church, to serve on the board of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Robert Gutmann Jr., a member of Shively Baptist Church of Louisville, Southern Seminary.

Randall McGee, a member of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Southern Seminary.

Lyman Hutcherson, children's pastor at First Baptist Church of Paducah, to serve on the board of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

John Ewart, senior pastor of Cedar Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, to serve on the board of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Larry Lewis, senior pastor of Reidland Baptist Church in Paducah, to serve on the board of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Kentucky Baptists nominated for a second term of service are:

Paul Badgett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pikeville, SBC Execu-

tive Committee.

Paul Chitwood, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mount Washington, International Mission Board.

Randall Murray, a member of Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville, Southern Seminary.

Ray Moncrief, a member of Immanuel Baptist Church in Corbin, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Floyd Paris, pastor of Unity Baptist Church of Ashland, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

SBC President Bobby Welch also announced the following SBC committee appointments:

Billy Compton, pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Committee on Committees

Rick Mann, pastor Fairview Baptist Church, Russell Springs, Committee on Committees.

Gary Arrington, pastor of Garner Baptist Church in Rush, Committee on Credentials.

Ric Frazier, pastor of First Baptist Church of Louisa, Committee on Credentials.

Dan Summerlin, pastor of Lone Oak First Baptist Church in Paducah, Tellers Committee.

James Doyle, pastor of Greenwood Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Tellers Committee.

Welch previously announced the appointment of the 2006 SBC Resolutions Committee. Proposed resolutions must be presented to the committee no later than 15 days before the June 13-14 SBC meeting.

New Orleans Seminary's administrative staff returns to city

By Gary Myers

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

New Orleans (BP)—After almost eight months away, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary returned its administrative staff to the Crescent City.

The move from temporary offices in Atlanta marked yet another milestone on the long road back from Hurricane Katrina.

Approximately one-fourth of the offices and staff members had returned to New Orleans in January to assist with spring commuter classes on the main campus. But Internet, telephone services and electricity were still spotty at the time; mail deliveries had not resumed; and only a small number of apartments were restored.

Due to the lack of services and housing, most of the staff remained in Atlanta as the campus restoration continued.

On April 24, the relocated offices reopened on the main campus.

"It's great to see so many of you back," seminary President Chuck Kelley told staff members during a meeting at Martin Chapel April 27. "It really does take all of us. What you have done this year is the stuff of legends."

The week took on a festive mood as the close-knit staff was reunited. The staff quickly unpacked and got back to work, with graduation and summer workshops only a few weeks away.

Kelley thanked an army of Baptist volunteers for making the



WELCOME BACK COOKOUT Staff members at New Orleans Seminary enjoy a welcome back cookout in late April to mark the return of seminary offices and staff members to the stricken city after an eight-month temporary relocation to Atlanta. (NOBTS photo by Gary Myers)

return possible.

Nearly 1,000 Southern Baptist volunteers had restored the apartments that staff members call home. Volunteers continue to prepare the seminary campus for full-scale resumption of campus operations in August.

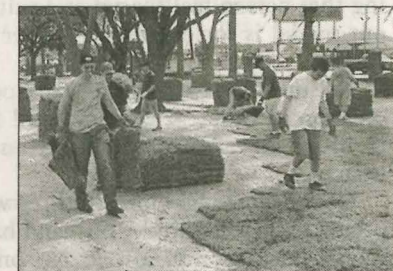
Volunteers worth \$3 million

Seminary contractor Mike Moskau, whose workers were assisted by the influx of Southern Baptist volunteers, said their help cannot be overstated: The volunteers have saved the seminary up to \$3 million in labor costs.

While Moskau's crews have gutted and reconstructed the flooded first floors of seminary housing and repaired roofs throughout campus, volunteers have cleaned and restored second- and third-floor apartments.

The volunteers, including many students from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., also have installed much of the new sod on campus.

The front block, which includes the seminary's main academic buildings, has been open since January. New landscaping and grass have since been installed on



SOD SQUAD A group of students from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., haul sod to be installed at New Orleans Seminary in early March. (BP photo by James Yacovelli)

the front block giving it a finished look.

The first round of repairs to Leavell Chapel will be complete in time for the spring graduation service May 13.

Fully operational by August

Ten faculty homes and some student apartments are nearing completion.

The remaining faculty homes and student apartments are on schedule to open at various times during the summer. The entire campus is expected to be fully operational by August.

New construction on campus includes an addition to the Nelson Price Center for Urban Missions and two new faculty homes.

The Price Center addition was scheduled to begin in September 2005. Hurricane Katrina put the project on hold. Construction on the addition begins this month.

The Da Vinci deception

Louisville pastor offers scriptural, historical response to Da Vinci claims

By Leslie Hollon

"The Da Vinci Code" is a mega-bestselling book, and a movie based on it will be released May 19 in theaters around the world. The book is a conspiratorial suspense novel written by Dan Brown. Though listed as fiction, the author claims that his references to history are factual.

Brown tries to persuade the reader to believe that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and by her had a child who was to establish a royal bloodline for an earthly family lineage. The popularity of Brown's work requires a response from the Scriptures and Christian history about the truthful origins of Christianity.

Who is Jesus in the New Testament?

During a pivotal period of Jesus' ministry, He asked the apostles two questions: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" And, "Who do you say I am?" That was the time and place Jesus chose to call out the faith commitment of those who were ready to respond.

With mounting expectation, Jesus asked, "What about you? You have been with Me. You have heard My teachings; seen My miracles; walked with Me; asked Me questions; calmed your fears by My presence; been shocked, humbled and bewildered by Me. We have prayed and worshiped together. You need to know that you know who I am! So give me your best answer."

The best of the rest in that moment was Peter. He spoke with a faith that he knew was true: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Peter boldly spoke what the others were thinking but were unable or unwilling to say. "You, Jesus," Peter was saying, "are the anointed Messiah and You are doing this as the sign of God's living presence—You are His Son."

Who is Jesus in the Da Vinci Code?

Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code" is a fictional mystery that scratches our itch to know more about Jesus' life. His book connects with the inquisitive nature of our minds, not the historical foundation



SUSPENSE Professor Robert Langdon (Tom Hanks) pauses in front of the Louvre in a scene from "The Da Vinci Code." (Columbia Pictures photos)

of Christianity. His careless blend of fiction with fact infers that perceptions based on fiction are as valid as perceptions based on external reality. As a pure fictional read, his work is good enough to keep the pages turning. As a resource to better know the Christian faith, his writing is a grievous lie.

The following list illustrates the false bases on which Brown wrote his book. Many more falsehoods could be cited. Each point responds to a claim made by Brown, and responds to the untruth of his claim:

- Mary Magdalene was not the wife of Jesus nor was she the mother of a child by Jesus. This distorted storyline maligns not only Jesus but Mary Magdalene. She was a courageous follower of Christ who was among the women disciples (Luke 8:1-3); gave witness in Jerusalem during Jesus' final days (Mark 15:40-41; John 19:25); risked her life to anoint Jesus' body at the tomb (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55-24:1); and gave witness of His resurrection (Luke 24:1-11; John 20:11-18).

- The New Testament is not a fictional writing to cover up the real story about Jesus. No book has stood the test of time better than the Bible. The New Testament has been analyzed and criticized in a free

and open marketplace of intellectual and spiritual exchange. Good historical research confirms, rather than rejects, the New Testament's authenticity.

- Jesus' deity was not fabricated at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus' divinity was declared. All the New Testament was written in the first century, with Paul's letters initiating in the late 40s and Mark, the first Gospel, written in the 60s.

- The Bible is not a fable written by the winners of history but is a faithful witness by a people, under God's inspiration, who were losing in their struggle against world powers. Jesus was crucified by an empire. Many believers were martyred. Before A.D. 313, the Roman Empire unleashed 10 periods of persecution against Christians. The critics of Christianity relished any criticisms of counterfeiting to the Gospel accounts of Christ.

- The figure to Jesus' right in Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" painting is not Mary Magdalene but John, "the beloved disciple," and to Jesus' left is John's brother James. The "effeminate" look of John was characteristic of showing the introspective nature of a spiritual person.

- Scant are the art historians who give credence to Leonardo da Vinci's paintings—"Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper"—as indicating he has secrets to tell, including claims that there really is a Holy Grail and that the Holy Grail is the bloodline of Jesus by way of Mary Magdalene.

- The Holy Grail (a mythological chalice used in the Last Supper and with which Joseph of Aramethia reportedly collected drops of Jesus' blood from the cross) probably doesn't exist, but even if it does, most etymologists see no legitimate word connection of Holy Grail to "Sangreal" to royal bloodline. Brown states the Holy Grail was not a cup but a person, Mary Magdalene, and the blood she carried was the child of Jesus. Brown is attempting to mainstream this lie as history.

- The Gnostic writings are not accurate accounts of the first century Jesus of Nazareth. They are writings that express: all that is material is evil and that a demiurge (an evil god) created the material world and inspired the Old Testament; and that Christ could not have been incarnational (human

and divine) as the Messiah because that would have made Him evil. Brown refers to Gnostic writings in trying to support his conspiracy against the New Testament.

- The Priory of Sion is not a legitimate carrier of a sacred secret. The society is an esoteric group with French origins, most of which can be traced only to the 1700s. The historicity of parchments known as "Les Dossiers Secrets" has yet to be substantiated by historians outside of conspiratorial circles.

- The Opus Dei is not a murderous order. It is a controversial order within the Roman Catholic Church that emphasizes lay ministry and does have its headquarters in New York City. There is no evidence that it uses assassins to accomplish its purpose.

- "Yahweh" and "Shekeniah" are not the male-female version of God in the Old Testament or in the Hebrew faith. There is no basis for this claim and therefore no reason to think that there were images of them cohabitating beneath Solomon's Temple. The Star of David is not the union of two triangles to indicate the union of male-female.

Brown is trying to rewrite history in order to recreate people's perceptions of Christ. Since he does not like the Christ of the New Testament, he is trying to mainstream a different Christ in people's perception of reality. He wants people to believe in the perceptions of his reality and not to examine the reality of his perceptions.

Christians are conscientious followers of Christ Jesus. The love and salvation of Christ is freely offered to every person in the world. This radical offer threatens those who oppose the message of Jesus.

Our sacred responsibility as individuals is to do the sweaty work of discerning whether or not our internal views connect with realities outside of ourselves before we attempt to forge a future based upon that truth. Dan Brown needs to learn this lesson and we need to help others not be confused by his confusion.

Leslie Hollon is a church historian and pastor of St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville. St. Matthews will host a biblical and historical response to "The Da Vinci Code" May 10, 6:30 p.m. Joining Hollon in the discussion will be a biblical archaeologist and an art historian.



CODE BUSTERS Robert Langdon (Tom Hanks) and Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou) examine a cryptex that allegedly contains the secret of the Holy Grail.

Women of Worth conference coming to Somerset

Somerset—Kentucky women will gather for a time of spiritual refreshment at the 2006 Women of Worth lifestyle evangelism conference set for May 22 at Beacon Hill Baptist Church in Somerset.

The theme for this year's conference will be "Cross-eyed Living."

Guest speakers will be Mary Southerland, author and founder of Journey Ministry, a teaching ministry dedicated to equipping women for their life journeys; and Phyllis Foy, a Southern Baptist missionary for church renewal in North America.

The program also will include dramatist Amanda Walter of Louisville, Christian recording artist Christy Nockel and sign interpreter Tyra Lokey Robinson of Lawrenceburg.

A pre-session conference on freedom from depression will begin at 4 p.m., with the general session beginning at 6:35 p.m. Registration costs \$20, which includes light refreshments.

For more information or to register, visit www.kybaptist.org/wow or call the KBC leadership development team at (502) 489-3530 or toll-free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3530.

Hopkinsville tutor wins literacy award

Somerset—Wanda Belcher, director of an after-school tutoring ministry in Hopkinsville, recently received the Lillian Isaacs Award for Literacy Volunteer of the Year.

"Wanda truly has a heart for children who are at risk in our community," said



Wanda Belcher

Andy Buckingham, minister of education at First Baptist Church of Hopkinsville, where Belcher serves.

Belcher organized the program approximately two years ago, Buckingham said. "She did all the legwork, working with the superintendent of the Christian County school system, principals and teachers, recruiting the tutors, the transportation issues.

"The strides we have seen in the grades and smiles of the children tell stories of the good they are receiving," he continued. "Grades are up and self-esteem has emerged. ... Children are being ministered to and learning in the classroom."

The Isaacs Awards are given to those recognized for outstanding dedication and skill in two categories for ministry: adult reading and writing and children and youth tutoring.

The Isaacs Award is named in honor of a pioneer of literacy missions ministry among Kentucky Baptists. Isaacs organized the first literacy training workshop at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College in 1959.



CLASSROOM TOUR Lorena Steenbergen, assistant professor of nursing at Campbellsville University, shows Arlene Achterhof (left) one of the mannequins students will use during classes at Campbellsville's School of Nursing. (Campbellsville University photo by Joan McKinney)

Campbellsville University dedicates nursing school

Campbellsville—Campbellsville University officials dedicated its School of Nursing facility April 25.

"This is an exciting time for Campbellsville University," said President Michael Carter. "Thousands of lives will be better because of the hands and sweet spirit of CU nurses."

James Achterhof, chairman of the board for the Richard D. Van Lunen Foundation, presented Carter with a check for \$250,000 toward the foundation's commitment of \$750,000 for the project.

"The nursing building is important because it represents God's calling to serve and help others," Achterhof noted. "What a beginning God has blessed us with."

The School of Nursing will offer an associate's degree in nursing. Graduates from the program will be eligible for testing to become licensed as a registered nurse. The 7,160-square-foot building includes classrooms, labs and offices.

David Morris, chairman of

Campbellsville's board of trustees, told those attending the dedication ceremony, "How fitting it is that a place that cares so much about people will educate its students to care for others."

Jo Ann Wever, dean of the School of Nursing, said about 340 inquiries already have been received by the school from prospective students.

"Students have told me how they want to go into missions and help other people," Wever said.

"Being a nurse is the perfect way to minister to them."

Classes at the school will begin in the fall, with a class of 40 students.

The school initially will admit one class per year, but officials hope eventually to expand that to two classes of 40 students per year.

Applications are being accepted for the nursing program through May 15. For more information, contact Wever at (270) 789-5155 or jawever@campbellsville.edu.

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Georgetown honors ministry excellence with Chafin Awards

Georgetown—Georgetown College recently honored missionaries and ministry specialists with the school's annual Ken Chafin Awards.

Recipients were honored during Georgetown's first-ever ministry reunion, a three-day event for graduates involved in Christian ministry.

The awards, designed to recognize lifetime achievements in ministry, are named after a prominent Baptist scholar, preacher and evangelist.

Those receiving awards this year were:

Helen White Brown. Brown, a 1952 Georgetown graduate, was honored for her work with children and music at Trinity Baptist Church in Lexington, where her husband, Bob, was pastor until his death in 1980. She has been the church organist for more than 40 years. For the last 30 years she has been the organist for Milward Funeral Home in Lexington.

Tom Smoot. Smoot retired in January after more than 30 years on the staff of the Kentucky Baptist Convention collegiate ministry team.

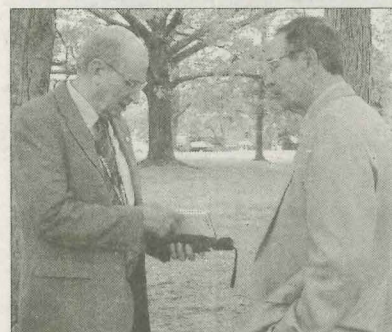
Smoot "invented creative ministry," said Jack Birdwhistell, long-time campus minister and now professor of religion. "Scores of Georgetown students have been transformed by their summer spent on one of Tom's Son Teams."

Jean and Grundy Janes. The couple were career missionaries in Chile. After their retirement in 1995, the Janeses led Georgetown to establish a partnership with the Baptist Academy in Temuco, Chile. More than 100 Georgetown students and faculty have traveled to Temuco since then, and four Baptist Academy graduates currently attend Georgetown.

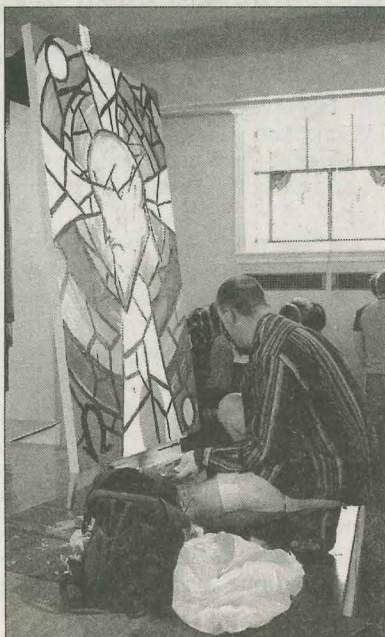
Harold Bratcher. The missionary has baptized more than 1,200 people in his 47 years as a missionary in Brazil. Bratcher and his wife, Marie, traveled from Manaus, Brazil, on the Amazon River, to attend the ministry reunion and receive the award.

This is the fifth year that the Ken Chafin Awards have been presented by the college.

Ken Chafin served on Georgetown's board of trustees and directed the annual Georgetown College Pastors Conference. Earlier winners of the Ken Chafin Award for Excellence in Ministry were: Harold Pike, Bob and Edie Fields, James Baldwin and Jim Henry.



CATCHING UP Retired missionary Grundy Janes (left) and retired Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Bill Marshall talk while attending the Georgetown ministry reunion. Janes and his wife, Jean, were among five Georgetown grads honored with Ken Chafin Awards for achievement in ministry.



ART IN WORSHIP Georgetown College graduate Tim Boyce, a church planter and campus minister at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Ill., produced this painting during a morning worship service at Georgetown's ministry reunion, April 24-26. (Georgetown photo by Jim Durham)

Approximately 270 ministers and ministry specialists attended the three day ministry reunion, April 24-26.

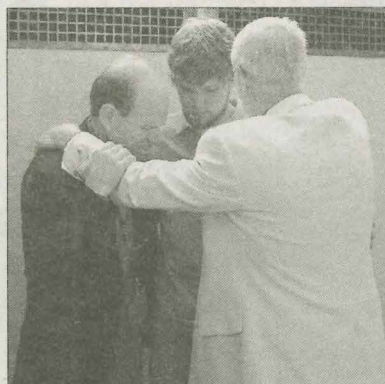
Other highlights included the annual student commissioning service and receptions for missionaries and campus ministers. A reunion choir premiered the commissioning service anthem "All Generations Praise God," written and composed by Georgetown alumnae Mary Ellen Kerrick.

Dwight Moody said the attendance was impressive, but he was even more pleased with the interaction between graduates and current Georgetown ministry students.

"In every respect this gathering exceeded our expectations," said Moody, dean of Georgetown's chapel and organizer of the event. He predicted the school will host a similar event in four years.

Student Jennifer Pratt said the reunion was inspirational for students.

"I think the ministry reunion is a wonderful way for the students to see the influence that other Georgetown College graduates have had on the world and begin to think of possibilities of what impact they can make."



PRAYER CIRCLE Dwight Moody, dean of the Georgetown chapel; Ken Holden, pastor of Georgetown Baptist Church; and student Curt Lowndes of Pikeville pray during the ministry reunion. (Georgetown photo by Jessica Ehleben)

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McNeal tells Kentucky churches to get outside walls

Reading list

Reggie McNeal has written four books:

"Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders."

"The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church."

"A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders."

"Revolution in Leadership: Training Apostles for Tomorrow's Church."

McNeal also recommends:

"Organic Church" by Neil Cole.

"Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America," edited by Darrell Guder and Lois Barrett

"Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time," by Susan Scott.

"The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others" by Scot McKnight.

"The Shape of Things to Come: 7 Imperatives for Winning in the New World of Business," by Richard Oliver.

Continued from page 1

"We're asking people to convert to church culture, and Jesus may or may not be in the membership kit," McNeal said, whose remarks drew frequent laughter and applause. "There's no correlation between time in the pew and ... discipleship."

Instead of dreaming things up that don't relate to the culture, McNeal said Christians should spend time with non-members to learn about their needs, dreams and desires.

McNeal described three major shifts churches must make to become missional, but he warned it is a long-term process that might take up to six years to implement:

Churches must change from an internal to an external focus.

"Open your eyes and look out," he said. "Kingdom growth in Southern Baptist life is not about church growth with a prettier dress on it. It is a different set of lenses that helps you see God in a different way."

Instead of being preoccupied with church activities, Christians must be concerned with community transformation, McNeal said.

"Most of our preaching is to club members who can fill in the blanks before we're done," he said. "(In the Bible) Jesus only uses the word 'church' twice. He uses 'Kingdom of God' or 'heaven' almost 90 times."

Most church members fail to recognize the world is spiritually oriented, McNeal said, citing a recent poll in which 92 percent of Americans expressed a belief in God.

One-liners keep leaders listening, laughing

Reggie McNeal has developed a host of one-liners to keep people listening and thinking. Here's a sampling of the sharp wit he displayed with Kentucky Baptists last week in Lexington:

■ "The bulb blew on the Power-Point so we're reduced to relying on the Holy Spirit today."

■ "Don't count your critics, weigh them. How much do 1,000 gnats weigh?"

■ "In one province in India they've documented 10,000 new

Christians a month. The (missionary) said, 'The church is growing so fast we don't have time to do evangelism.'"

■ "The Pharisees thought they could clean fish before they caught 'em."

■ "For years we've been exporting what doesn't work. We've got to look at what's working and say, 'How can we import it?'"

■ "Christian people are upset that Oprah stole God from them. But you ain't gonna beat the Spirit

from the streets back into the church. He's gone wild."

■ "Your job is to bless Nineveh. Bless people who vote Democrat. Bless people who aren't like you."

■ "We've got to go where the people are. Why did Jesus go to the well? In a water-toting culture, where do people hang out?"

■ "We're all the time talking about leading lost people to Jesus. If we'll shut up long enough to listen to their questions, they will lead us to Jesus."

But instead of meeting people where they are, the church tries to "broker" God, telling people they must "come to us" if they want to know God, he said.

McNeal noted that country music singer Garth Brooks cut a new CD that can be purchased only at Wal-Mart. The discount chain proclaimed it was cutting out the middleman and passing on the savings.

"The church is the middle man in a post-modern world," McNeal said. "Church people think we are the focus of God's redemptive mission. We don't get it. The redemptive mission of God is always aimed and played out beyond His people."

As a symptom of this prevailing internal focus, McNeal noted that churches typically build facilities with themselves in mind. Instead, he said, churches should start with community needs.

McNeal recently advised a church that was expanding to design its new building to accommodate an after-school program and then decide how it could use it on non-school days.

Such a stance will fuel members' enthusiasm, he said.

"A lot of people in our churches 'get it' and they're not all young,"

McNeal said. "People come alive when they get to serve because we were built to bless."

Churches must move from being program-driven to developing people.

McNeal noted that a church in California is preparing to interview each of its 1,200 members, asking such questions as how they want to serve others and how they want to see God work in their own family.

Completing the survey will mean eliminating a lot of "church stuff," but it will create a much more responsive congregation, McNeal said.

Church leaders must shift from planning for the future to preparing for it.

Much of what is happening in the world is outside the church's control to influence, but spiritual preparation is the biblical way to prepare for the future, McNeal said.

He compared getting ready to

the surfer who prepares to ride a wave by waxing his surfboard and jumping into the water.

Likewise, Christians must prepare for the future with the confidence that God won't be surprised by it or unable to face it, McNeal said.

"The moment He imagined creation He imagined the end," McNeal said. "It's the future that's informing your present. God knows what the next chapter is and so He's pouring into the present."

McNeal said key elements of preparation include:

■ Embracing a vision that derives from many members instead of a few.

■ Giving people a chance to practice what they believe.

■ Changing the ways of measuring results.

■ Focusing on the church's strengths.

■ Shedding old traditions to form new initiatives.

3 Kentucky pastors want churches to be more involved in ministry activities

Lexington—Three Kentucky Baptist pastors at last week's "Next Level" training event said they want to lead their congregations to become more mission-minded.

Central Baptist Church of Winchester is considering forming a partnership with a local school, a step McNeal recommended for churches to reach their communities.

Pastor Art Beasley said he recently was invited to speak with two classes of third graders after a teacher died at the school.

Afterward, five students asked to talk to him, Beasley said.

Beasley said leaders also are asking how to match members with ministries God has placed on their hearts.

"As a pastor, one of the things is not to fear what might happen, but to trust God and let it happen under His leadership," Beasley said. "That takes a lot of pressure off me trying to find programs or things to do."

Jay Stratton of North Fork Baptist Church near Frankfort said McNeal had prompted him to consider ways to lead members to think about church in unconventional ways.

Noting that the youth group already is community-oriented, Stratton said he hopes to see the congregation use community events for ministry.

"I think I can see a greater opportunity now for us to not only say, 'We're North Fork Church, we want you to come up on the hill and worship with us,' but we can touch lives one at a time through those events," Stratton said.

Shannon Back, pastor of host church Broadway Baptist, said a mission team recently returned from working with First United Baptist in New Orleans.

On the way home, Back said, God led him to start praying about sending a missionary from the congregation to work with the inner-city church.

"We've got folks who are ready," Back said. "They want to be on mission. They're tired of playing church and watching the tail wag the dog." Ken Walker



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Campers will soon be upon us

Pray for staff at Jonathan Creek, Cedarmore, Moldova

Summer is upon us, and we anxiously anticipate the arrival of our program staff. As expected, this time of year is a press to ready ourselves for the beginning of camp. We are, by far, at our largest anticipated camper attendance and the busiest in our history.

New additions and upgrades abound at both Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek. We have completed the dedication of the Fields Cabin at Cedarmore. This building will be in full use with campers scheduled all summer. Our immense thanks goes to the Fields family in honor of the late Calvin Fields. Calvin played such a pivotal role in the boys' camping program at Cedarmore in its foundational years. Many stories are still told of his great commitment to see the lives of so many changed while at Cedarmore.

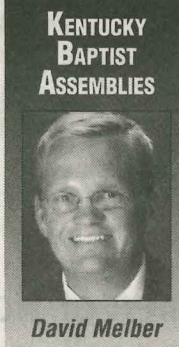
As camp begins, I continue to ask for your prayers. Our complete staff of volunteers, summer program staff, part-time help and full-time staff swells to a total of 300-350 people by the end of the summer. Our camper total this year is projected to be 8,000-9,000

at Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek combined and another 5,000-6,000 in Moldova. Imagine that our potential total might be 15,000 campers spread over a short 63 days of summer camp. The numbers stagger my mind as I wait in awe of what the Lord has planned for the lives of these youth.

Please pray that camp remains safe for all involved and that we are good stewards of the opportunity to present the gospel to so many. Most importantly, pray that we see several thousand first-time salvation decisions for Christ, hundreds of youth called to full-time ministry and countless other rededications.

I also personally want to invite to the properties all who have not had the chance to see the camps and, more importantly, those who have not seen camp in action. While we have minimal free space, we will work hard to allow visitors to see what God is doing through the camp environment.

As you consider seeing camp in action this summer, please contact me at our office at (502) 491-7000 and come see what God is doing. David Melber is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies. Contact him at Box 99918, Louisville, KY 42069-0918; phone (502) 491-7000.



David Melber

Kudzu

Doug Marlette



For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Bible Crosswords

Across

- 1. Moses's brother
- 5. People who make cloth by interlacing threads
- 11. Possible undergraduate degree for a minister, abbr.
- 12. Not yes
- 13. Do not ____ to the words of the prophecy (Revelation 22:18)
- 14. Black sticky substance
- 15. Infant
- 17. ____ of the Chaldees
- 18. Preposition that indicates location
- 20. Burnt offering for peace to the Lord (Exodus 24:5)
- 22. Aromatic substances (Exodus 25:6)
- 25. Sympathetic noise
- 26. Hole
- 27. Name for Mother
- 28. "____ a child is known by his doings" (Proverbs 20:11)
- 30. Control
- 32. Something given to God
- 34. The color of the Tabernacle's ram skins (Exodus 25:5)
- 35. The language of Cervantes, abbr.
- 36. Head
- 38. The beings whose wings cover the mercy seat (Exodus 25:20)
- 43. Address abbreviation
- 45. Opposite of off
- 46. Selenium, chem. symbol
- 47. Eleven, Romans num.
- 48. Ancient
- 49. Metal taken as a Tabernacle offering (Exodus 25:3)
- 51. Why Jesus died

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- 52. Place near Bethel (Genesis 13:3iv)
- 53. Young adult, abbr.
- 54. Greatest Christian virtue
- 55. Fabric dyed blue, purple, and scarlet for the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:4)
- 56. Silver, chem. symbol
- 57. The priest who took care of Hannah's son Samuel

- 23. "Enter ... into his ____ with praise" (Psalms 100:4)
- 24. "Thy ____ will I establish" (Psalms 89:4)
- 25. American Academy of Family Physicians, abbr.
- 26. Writing instrument
- 27. The man God sent to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians
- 29. Contender
- 31. Shelter from the wind
- 33. Jewish priest's outer vestment
- 36. Greek letter
- 37. Friend, Fr.
- 39. Printer's measure, approximately half of an em
- 40. United Service Organizations, abbr.
- 41. Beautiful, Ital.
- 42. Mountain where Moses talked with God
- 44. "They ____ not, neither do they spin" (Matthew 6:28)
- 47. Greek letter
- 49. Past tense of gin
- 50. "A ____ returneth to his vomit" (Proverbs 26:11)
- 51. "That we may ____ and believe" (Mark 15:32)
- 53. Old-fashioned you

Down

- 1. Short for Abigail
- 2. Woman's name
- 3. Stone worn on Aaron's shoulders (Exodus 28:9, 12)
- 4. A denial
- 5. Armed conflict
- 6. Edward, for short
- 7. Adjust
- 8. Alien from space, abbr.
- 9. "Let us run with patience the ____ that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1)
- 10. Jr.'s father
- 16. Kind of tie
- 17. Not, prefix
- 19. Note on the scale
- 21. "The Lord shall reign for ____" (Exodus 15:18)
- 22. "Trees of the wood ____ out" (1 Chronicles 16:33)

Last week's solution

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NATIONAL NOTES

Mass. high court considers effort to overturn gay marriage.

Justices of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court took up arguments May 4 about whether to kill a proposed citizens' referendum to ban gay marriage. A lawyer for a gay rights organization told the state's highest court that the state constitution does not allow for ballot questions that seek to reverse judicial decisions. The referendum seeks to amend the state constitution to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Supporters said it would not reverse the 2003 court decision legalizing gay and lesbian unions because it would apply only to marriages taking place after the vote in November 2008.

Prosecutor promises "Alabama justice" for church arson.

Authorities announced state arson and burglary charges last week against three church fire suspects and said they won't settle for anything less than a long time behind bars for the former college students. Grand juries in four counties indicted Matthew Lee Cloyd, Benjamin Nathan Moseley and Russell Lee DeBusk on a total of 46 charges in connection with the Feb. 3 and 7 fires. "We want them to realize they picked the wrong state to set churches on fire," Bibb County District Attorney Michael Jackson said. "We're going to send them to prison."

Presbyterians cut missionary, staff positions.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) announced May 1 that 75 national staff jobs will be cut at its Louisville headquarters, along with 55 positions in its overseas missionary force. The church's General Assembly Council, which functions as its board of directors, determined that the cuts were necessary to reduce the mission budget by \$9.15 million. The changes will eliminate three church-wide divisions: congregational ministries, national ministries and worldwide ministries.

Bush leads Day of Prayer ceremonies.

Calling the United States "a nation of prayer," President Bush marked the annual National Day of Prayer with an interfaith ceremony at the White House May 4. The White House event was one of many across the country that involved millions of Americans, from Mount Rushmore to Capitol Hill, for the 55th annual observance. The National Day of Prayer was established by Congress in 1952 and is observed each year on the first Thursday in May.

Survey: More Americans reading Bible at least weekly

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 like 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 that they volunteer through church, while 24 percent said that 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."

The Barna report was based on data taken from 1,003 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone in January.

Meet some of the class of 2006, part 7**Reluctant student says she finds the Oneida experience to be a positive one**

"On a scale of one to 10, 10 being the best, how badly do you want to attend Oneida?" Her answer: "Five."

With that response we were off to a not very good start with "Mindy" (not her real name). In the interview process we ask students how badly they want to be here. An answer under seven is not good. With an answer of five or less, we might not let the student enroll. Oneida has a lot to offer students, but if they do not want the help, we often are wasting our time. Mindy was here, but she did not want to be here. And frankly, we almost did not let her stay. She was in trouble at school and at home. Her whole life was seemingly one conflict after another. Now, three years later and ready to graduate, here is part of her senior essay:

"Life before Oneida didn't have to be completely horrible, but I made it that way. I actually came here because I didn't hang out with the right people. They didn't make good choices, which influenced me. I lived with my mother at the time, and things between her and me weren't very good. I would lie to her about everything and yell at her. We couldn't be in the same room more than five minutes without getting into an argument. Eventually, I started running away, doing drugs, getting suspended and was even arrested once. The last time I ran away, I was gone for 10 days, and that was my last chance.

"My experience at Oneida began on orientation day, which was the worst day of my life. ... I cried myself to sleep for the first two or three months I was here.

"But when I came here, I noticed the classes were much smaller, which would allow more one-on-one time with the teachers. Study hall, although I thought it pointless at the time, actually did me some good and even motivated me to do my homework. ... If I had stayed in public school, I probably would not be graduating, or at least not on time. The changes I have gone through during my time at Oneida are amazing. I actually dress like a girl now. I've learned to incorporate other colors in my wardrobe besides black. ... Mom and I can even stay in the same room now and have a civilized conversation. I have matured socially, in that I can talk to almost anyone now. And I have grown spiritually because I am not afraid to talk to others about my faith and I know that I should always keep my eyes on Jesus.

"Originally, when I was told that we had to attend chapel services every day, I was furious! I thought these people were crazy and all they wanted to do was to shove religion down our throats. On the contrary, the chapel services, little by little, began to open my eyes and brought me closer to God.

"I believe I am prepared for the future because of my being at Oneida. ... I have learned that your past doesn't have to determine who you are now. Your faith in Christ makes you who you are and this is probably the best thing I've learned at Oneida. Thank you Mom and Ma-Maw for sending me here, and thanks to everyone who ever supported me here, even those I don't know. I love this place and the people here, and I would not give up my experiences here for the world."

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



W.F. Underwood

Trustees hold semi-annual meeting**Budget and Christian worldview statement OK'd**

The Clear Creek board of trustees held their semi-annual meeting April 18 at the Dudley and Jean Asher Pomeroy Family Life Center.

West Kentucky educator Denny Vincent was elected secretary; he recently retired as principal of Muhlenberg North High School and works as an educational consultant.

Trustees heard an encouraging current financial report. With 75 percent of the budget year completed, receipts have met the budget need while expenses are at 67 percent. However, cash flow has not allowed the total repayment of a line-of-credit.

The 2006-2007 budget was approved. The \$3,097,473 spending guideline is 7 percent less than the current year. This decrease is largely due to reductions in health and retirement benefits. The faculty and staff received a 4 percent cost of living adjustment in salary. Student rent remained the same, but tuition increased 10 percent. Clear Creek tuition remains among the lowest for private colleges.

The faculty recommended and trustees approved a report and projected resource needs to imple-

ment a quality enhancement plan for general education. This plan is part of the school's accreditation response to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. An online associate of arts in Bible/theology degree was approved.

A faculty-drafted Christian worldview statement was approved. The six-paragraph document supports Clear Creek's core values and Bible curriculum and focuses on the nature of God, humankind and redemption. The document further states: "History is a tool in the hand of God, totally and completely under His control, and is an expression of His general revelation. ... All truth is from God,

whether gained in the physical realm by scientific observation or in the philosophical realm by reason. Because sin has marred the image of God in humankind, all human logic and reason must be under the authority of God's Word and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. In human relationships all Christians follow the explicit teachings and model of Jesus in love, mercy and grace."

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



Bill Whittaker

Rebel with a call

Franklin Graham says he's called to speak truth, regardless of consequences

By Kristen Campbell
Religion News Service

Mobile, Ala. (RNS)—Franklin Graham should have parked his dirt bike when he had the chance.

"I'm praying that the Lord will do something to get your attention—break your leg or put you in the hospital," Ruth Graham told her son, who was skipping church to enter Sunday races. "I have prayed, 'Lord, don't kill him, but do whatever it takes to get his attention.'"

A few weeks later, he recalls in his autobiography, he broke his foot.

A few years after that, he knelt in a Jerusalem hotel room and asked God into his life.

The self-proclaimed rebel son of Billy and Ruth Graham talked about his life in late April prior to conducting a festival in Mobile, Ala.

Graham said he wanted to bring a message of hope and "light at the end of the tunnel" for the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina.

Graham's relief agency, Samaritan's Purse, has raised \$38 million for hurricane victims and has helped repair homes for 7,700 families in five states.

Graham also said he thinks people want the truth, a belief that's garnered him a reputation for being outspoken. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Graham told NBC News: "The God of Islam is not the same God. He's not the Son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian faith. It's a different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion."

He recently told ABC's Nightline that he hadn't changed those views, and the subject is one that Graham said he'd prefer not to address. But Graham, who now leads both the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse, is compelled to speak when particular topics arise.

"I feel that as a minister of the gospel I have to speak the truth," he said.

Q: In your autobiography you wrote that you weren't quick to embrace the call you sensed to evangelistic preaching, that you wanted someone else to be the messenger. Why?

A: I didn't want to be in a position where I was compared to my father because who can beat Billy Graham? Who can match Billy Graham? I certainly can't.

He's an individual that God has called in a very special way. But at the same time I realized God had called me to preach and if I was going to sit around being concerned all the time what people thought, then I was never going to get anywhere.

I just finally had to decide if this is something God's called me to do, I just need to do it, and do it unto God—not to Billy Graham—and do the best that I can to tell men and women about a loving God who gave His Son for the sins of this

world, and a loving God that if we confess and repent and turn from our sins, who will forgive us of our sins.

Many speak of the multitude of ways in which the gospel can be presented. And you try to do so through your festivals as well as through your work with Samaritan's Purse. How would you compare the two in terms of effectiveness—and do you have a preference for one ministry over the other?

I don't have a preference. I enjoy preaching, that's for sure. ... What makes Samaritan's Purse unique is our spiritual focus.

It's not just humanitarian. But we realize that when we go into people's communities and homes, these are people, these are human beings that God loves. And maybe a lot of people are wondering: Does God love me? ... Is God judging me? Have I done something to make Him angry? Why did He take my home from me?

How do you respond to those questions?

First of all, I don't blame God. I don't think it was God's desire. But we have to understand that there is evil in this world. There is a devil in this world. And he wants to destroy. He wants to destroy life. He wants to destroy our marriages. He wants to destroy everything that we have.

And remember, you go up and down that coast, there were churches destroyed. I mean, does God want to destroy His churches? Maybe some of them, I don't know.

But there are some good people, wonderful people, that lost everything and lost life, lost family members. ... I think sometimes when storms like this happen there's maybe an evil force behind it. And I don't think we have to say, 'God did it' or 'this is an act of God.'

Insurance companies get out of paying because they say it's an 'act of God.' God gets blamed for a lot of stuff.

But I think through the storm God can speak to us. And I think when we come through the other side of it, I think God has a message that He wants to share with us and that's that He loves us and that He cares for us and that in the middle of those storms in life, He's still there. He hasn't left us.

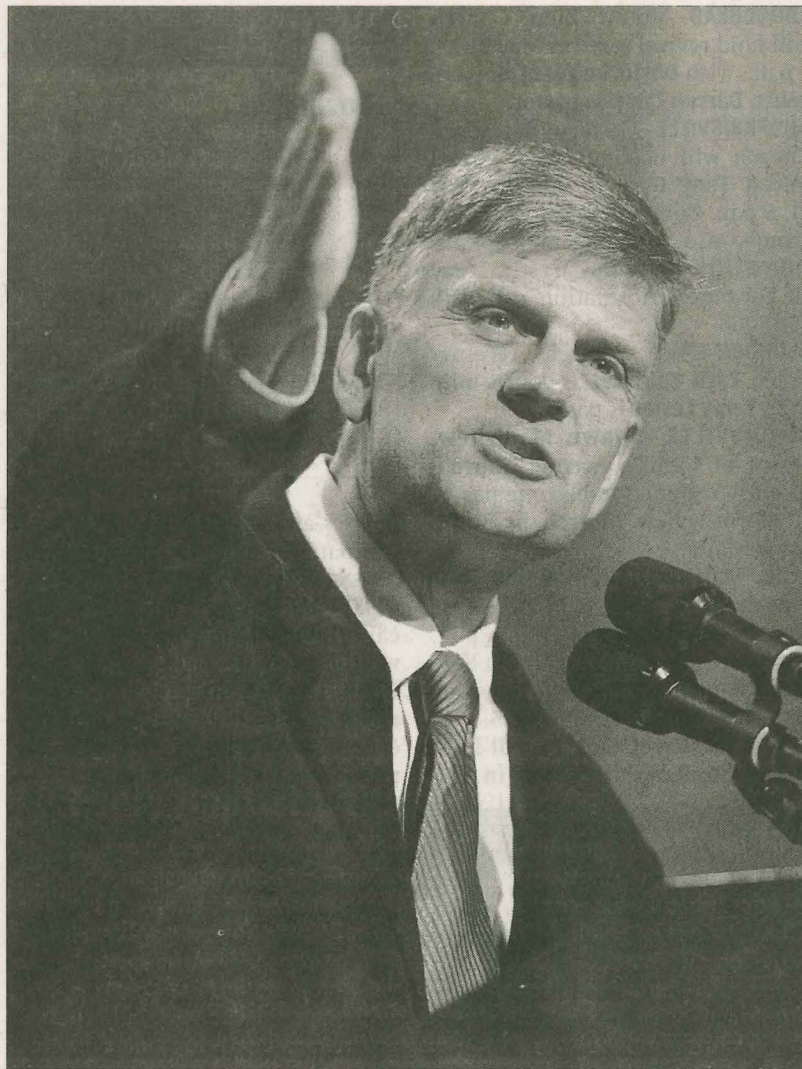
What do you see as some of the most ignored hot spots in the world today?

Poverty in the world is huge. And we are so wealthy. I really believe that we ... as a nation need to address this issue more and more and more.

Our poor in this country have a fairly high standard compared to the rest of the world who live in grass huts, who won't even get one meal a day, who are facing starvation.

In what ways would you most like to emulate your father?

My father has always been very transparent and he's always had high ethical, moral business stan-



"I HAVE TO SPEAK THE TRUTH" Franklin Graham recently conducted a festival in Mobile, Ala. His Samaritan's Purse relief agency has helped repair hurricane-damaged homes for 7,700 families in five states. (RNS/The [Mobile, Ala.] Press-Register photo by John David Mercer)

dards in his ministry, and I want to do exactly the same thing. ... Because we represent the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and I just think that those kinds of standards can never be too high for an organization.

How are your parents doing?

They're doing pretty good. My father was with me in New Orleans. I was trying to get him to come down to Mobile and preach one night, but ... he just felt he was doing too much; he needed to stay with my mother.

You've written about your father's ability not to "get sucked into any political issues" and your admiration for his ability to take any reporter's question and turn it around to focus on Christ. But you're known for being outspoken, and most recently for your views about Islam. Are there times and situations in which you feel compelled to take stands that some may find anything from politically incorrect to incendiary?

I think people want the truth, OK. And I feel that as a minister of the gospel I have to speak the truth. ... Many people in your line of work are not interested in truth. Many are interested in political correctness. They're more interested in a certain political agenda, a certain moral issue. I have to tell the truth.

If somebody asks me about what I think about gay marriages, well, it's a sin against God. I mean, homosexuality is a sin. Now, I'm not attacking gay people. I'm not after them. It's just, I've got to tell the

truth. It's a sin against God. When we read the Scriptures, homosexuality is a sin.

Now sex outside of marriage, between a man and a woman, any type of sexual relationship outside the marriage really is a sin against God. I have to tell the truth. So I'm not going after the adulterer or the sinner. But I have to be honest and tell them what their position is before God. And now a lot of them don't like hearing it. ... I just feel that I have to speak the truth when I'm asked these questions.

If you never had to answer another question about a particular topic, what would it be?

I think this thing over Islam, because it's crazy. ... I don't have an agenda against Islam. ... I don't go around and give speeches on Islam. I don't do that. That's not what God has called me to do. But I think after 9-11 this country has been confused about Islam.

I think they're still confused over Islam. And you have some people saying it's a peaceful religion, and then we see things on television that just horrify us. And so there's a lot of confusion over it. And I think most people today have probably made up their own minds what they think about it.

How, given your own history, have you sought to make your children comfortable "being Graham?"

Don't worry about me or their grandparents, but find out what God's calling them to do and do it and do it as unto the Lord.

"Insurance companies get out of paying because they say it's an 'act of God.' God gets blamed for a lot of stuff."

Franklin Graham

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist missionaries and ministries:

Meadow Hill Baptist Church in Louisville.

Pastor Ron Lasley and his congregation recognize that many race fans and car enthusiasts do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and do not attend church. Therefore, they are sharing their faith through Raceway Ministries at race tracks throughout the state and nation. The church will sponsor an afternoon car show on the church parking lot May 21. Pray that the car show attracts many non-Christians and that they experience the love of Christ through the actions and verbal witness of Christians.

Mission Service Corps Missionaries Jack and Wilma Simmons in Ekron.

The Simmons conduct "Kid's Klubs" and worship services in three mobile home parks and multi-housing sites each week. They work in cooperation with Salem Baptist Association and have converted a school bus into a mobile classroom. Pray that the Simmons share a consistent witness and that more children come to know Christ as Savior. Pray also that parents and families of children will be receptive to the gospel.

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 or call (866) 489-3530.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BRODHEAD**—Mount Zion Church will hold revival services May 21-24, 7 p.m., with **David Sargeant** as evangelist. **Darren Cupp** is pastor.

■ **HOPKINSVILLE**—Calvary Memorial Church will host southern gospel soloist **Tony Gore** in concert May 21, 6 p.m. Gore and other Christian groups also will sing at Hopkinsville's Little River Days Festival May 20. For more information, call (270) 886-6068.

■ **LONDON**—First Church recently called **Zack Caldwell** as youth minister. **Terry Lester** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—**Shawn Merithew**, pastor of Carlisle Avenue Church, recently resigned to become pastor of Morningview Church in Montgomery, Ala.

St. Matthews Church will host a celebration dinner in honor of **Lincoln Bingham** May 19, 7 p.m. For more information, call the Kentucky Baptist Convention missions growth team at (502) 489-3525.

Walnut Street Church will hold a SEAL (Student Enrichment in Aca-



DECADE OF SERVICE Rick Lucas (left), director of missions for Oldham-Trimble Association, receives a plaque from associational moderator Bradford Laubinger in honor of Lucas' 10 years of service with the association.

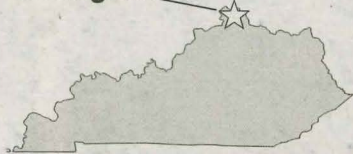
SEEKING: Full-time pastor. Conservative, traditional Southern Baptist church. Resumes: Hedgeville Baptist, PO Box 626, Danville, KY 40423.

SEEKING: Full-time associate pastor (youth/children) for Anchor Baptist Church, a traditional worship fellowship, Lexington, Ky. Paul Sisk, pastor. Six-year-old, rapidly growing congregation in new facility with plans for second building. Prefer seminary degree, ordination and two years experience with youth. Evangelize, teach, disciple and counsel young people and their families in spiritual matters. Salary commensurate with qualifications. Send resumé with photo: Charlie Cook, 3212 Buckhorn Drive, Lexington, KY 40515; or Cookstuff@aol.com.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music and education for Fern Creek Baptist Church. Applicant must be an excellent and experienced musician, worship leader and educator and must exemplify strong spiritual maturity. Send resumé to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291, Attn: Personnel Committee; or e-mail to linda@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resumes will be received through June 5. Questions: call (502) 239-0316. Linda Barnes Popham, pastor.

Spotlight on ...

Covington



Rosedale Church will hold a one-day revival emphasis May 21, 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m., with **Thad Griggs** as evangelist. **The Ball Family** will provide special music in the evening.

demics and Life) auction May 21, 5 to 8 p.m. For more information, call **Angela Carpenter** at (502) 589-5290.

■ **PIKEVILLE**—Grace Church recently called **Mark Swan** as pastor. He previously was pastor of Parkland Hills Church in Fisherville.

■ **POOLE**—Poole Church recently called **David Mabrey** as pastor. He previously was interim pastor.

■ **RICHMOND**—Gilead Church will hold revival services May 21-24 with **Kenny Davis** as evangelist. **Larry Freeman** is pastor.

■ **ROBARDS**—Correction: An incorrect church affiliation was listed last week for **Bob Crowder**. He was ordained as a deacon April 23 by Robards Missionary Church.

■ **SHELBYVILLE**—Victory Church will hold revival services May 25-27 with **Mark Williams** as evangelist and May 28 with **Tim Bardin** as evangelist. **Jesse Baxter** is pastor.

■ **WOODBURN**—Woodburn Church recently called **Warren Weeks** as minister of education and administration.

SEEKING: Part-time worship leader. Send resumé to: Highland Park First Baptist Church, 7321 Billtown Road, Louisville, KY 40299. Phone: (502) 231-3917.

SEEKING: Full-time organist/pianist with strong accompanying skills. Mail resumé to: Melbourne Heights Baptist Church, 3728 Taylorsville Road, Louisville, KY 40220. For more information, call the church: (502) 454-4681.

SEEKING: Blood River Baptist Association will be receiving resumes for the position, director of missions, beginning May 8, 2006, and will continue receiving all post-marked on or before June 30, 2006. All interested applicants may send a resumé to: Blood River Baptist Association, PO Box 18, Hardin, KY 42048, Attn: DOM Search Committee.

SEEKING: Severns Valley Association of Baptists is seeking God's man to serve as full-time director of missions for our 49 churches. We have two Korean churches and are involved with three other associations in starting a Hispanic ministry in this area. Please submit resumé and a cover letter by May 31 to: Director of Missions Search Committee, Severns Valley Association of Baptists, PO Box 541, Elizabethtown, KY 42702.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May

13 Regional Keyboard Festival, St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville.

15 "The Word Became Flesh" Workshop, Second Baptist Church, Madisonville.

16 "The Word Became Flesh" Workshop, Long Run Baptist Association Office, Louisville.

17 "The Word Became Flesh" Workshop, Allen Baptist Church, Prestonsburg.

18 "The Word Became Flesh" Workshop, Trinity Baptist Church, Lexington.

22 Women of Worth Lifestyle Evangelism Conference, Beacon Hill Baptist Church, Somerset.

22-24 Kentucky Baptist Youth Ministry Association Spring Retreat, Bullittsburg Retreat Center, Petersburg.

June

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

10-17 Kentucky Changers, Russellville.

12-16 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, Cedar Crest.

16-17 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Cedar Crest.

18-25 All-State Youth Choir/Orchestra Tour, University of the Cumberlands, Williamsburg.

19-23 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, Cedar Crest.

For more information, call (800) 266-6477 or visit www.kybaptist.org

Campbellsville celebrates success of \$35 million fund-raising effort

Campbellsville—Campbellsville University officials recently completed a \$35 million Centennial Campaign and announced a \$15 million expansion of the fund-raising effort.

President Michael Carter announced at an April 24 celebration dinner that the Centennial Campaign's goal was met 17 months ahead of schedule. The additional \$15 million goal approved by trustees will continue through June 2009.

The school's Centennial Campaign theme is "Campbellsville University: Transforming a New Generation—A Journey of Faith." To date, \$36,195,346 has been raised.

Carter said major contributors to the campaign include Kentucky

Baptist churches, Campbellsville trustees, foundations, corporations, alumni, faculty and staff.

James Achterhof, chairman of the board of the Richard Van Lunen Foundation, one of the campaign's major donors, noted that Campbellsville "has made great strides, and we want to see it expand."

Alan Medders, vice president for development, said the campaign began in 2004 and originally was set to end in June 2007.

Medders said the \$15 million extension will include \$5 million for capital improvements such as the completion of Ransdell Chapel; \$5 million for annual expenses, including increased student scholarships; and \$5 million for endowment.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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

SEEKING: Part-time minister of youth and recreation. Applicant must be spiritually mature, enthusiastic and creative. Send resumé to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291, Attn: Personnel Committee; or e-mail to linda@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resumes will be received through June 5. Questions: call (502) 239-0316. Linda Barnes Popham, pastor.

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.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music in Stanford, Ky., area. For job description or more information, call (606) 365-2116.

SEEKING: Part-time youth director for Green Acres Baptist Church. Must be committed to Christ, energetic, willing to build group and have balanced approach to youth ministry. Call (502) 964-8165.

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: Full-time staff minister to work with children and recreation ministries for Second Baptist Church of Greenville. This position will require skills in recruiting, training and organizing volunteers. Send letter of interest and resumé to: Search Committee, Second Baptist Church, PO Box 390, Greenville, KY 42345.

SEEKING: Old Testament professor (adjunct). Newburgh Theological Seminary. Accredited doctorate required. Mail resumé to Dr. Glenn Mollette, president, Newburgh Theological Seminary, Newburgh College, PO Box 1238, 8988 Ruffian Lane, Newburgh, IN 47629.

Minister of self-defense



CHOP Jim McCann III, pastor of Victory Christian Fellowship in Adamsville, Ala., teaches a karate class. McCann recently earned his black belt and now seeks to bring his students closer to God. (RNS photo by Ricardo Lopez)

Pastor uses karate lessons to share Jesus with students

"Blessed be the Lord my strength which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight" (Psalm 144:1).

By Ryan Mills
Religion News Service

Adamsville, Ala. (RNS)—On a breezy Thursday night, the only sound at the front steps of Victory Christian Fellowship is the barking of a dog in the distance.

It is here that Dustin Cornelius, an engineering analyst for Southern LINC Co., comes to wind down after a long day at the office.

But Cornelius is not here for Bible study.

He is here to learn how to fight.

Pastor Jim McCann III is offering karate classes in the church's youth room twice a week. He said he has more than 30 students in this fusion of karate and Christianity.

"I really like the fighting and the sparring," Cornelius said. "After a long day's work it's kind of good once in a while. I get any frustrations out."

McCann, a second-degree black belt in Yoshukai karate, said learning self-defense is not contradictory to his faith.

"God doesn't expect us to lie

down to someone and let them molest our families and molest our homes," McCann said. "He expects us to protect our home and our family and our country."

At 6-foot-4 and 350 pounds, McCann is an imposing figure. The life-long fan of contact sports started training in karate when he was a teenager in the early 1970s. He quickly rose through the ranks and earned his black belt.

But McCann said he was lost.

"I was a hell-raiser," he said. "I came to a point in my life when I knew I needed a Savior."

A turning point was the birth of his daughter in 1976.

"I held her in my hands and I said I don't want her to live like I lived," he said.

Basketball legend gives OK

When McCann became a minister, he decided to give up karate. In the mid-1980s, when he believed his life was back in order, he started training again.

Then, in the early 1990s, McCann said, he received a new inspiration in the form of former Harlem Globetrotter Meadowlark Lemon,

who visited Adamsville to preach. One morning over breakfast, Lemon told McCann that God wanted him to use his talents in karate to reach out to young people.

"That's when I began training again so I could do this," McCann said.

McCann started teaching karate at the church last summer. He charges \$40 a month, with classes open to church members and non-members.

In the youth room, McCann weaves in some preaching with his karate lessons. While teaching his students how to perform a round kick, for example, he impressed on them the importance of having a solid foundation.

"It's like life," he said. "If you don't have a good foundation in life, you're never going to make it."

Donna Thompson, 40, of Adamsville, started taking classes in the summer with her two teenage sons and the girlfriend of one of them.

"It's a good outlet," Thompson said. "I learn a lot, and it's good exercise and good self-discipline. And it's a good way to spend time with my family."

In this world view, sun revolves around earth, not vice-versa

Greencastle, Pa. (RNS)—The Earth is at the center of Robert Sungenis' universe. Literally.

Yours too, he says.

Sungenis is a geocentrist. He contends the sun orbits the Earth instead of vice versa. He says physics and the Bible show that the vastness of space revolves around us; that we're at the center of everything, on a planet that does not rotate.

He has just completed a 1,000-page tome, "Galileo Was Wrong," the first in a pair of books he hopes will persuade readers to "give Scripture its due place, and show that science is not all it's cracked up to be."

Geocentrism is a less known

cousin of the intelligent design movement. Both question society's trust in science, instead using religion to explain how we got here—and, in geocentrism's case, just where "here" is.

Mention geocentrism and physicist Lawrence Krauss sighs. He is director of the Center for Education and Research in Cosmology and Astrophysics at Case Western Reserve University and author of several books including "Fear of Physics: A Guide for the Perplexed."

"What works? Science works. Geocentrism doesn't. End of story," Krauss said from Cleveland. "I've learned over time that it's hard to convince people who believe otherwise, independent of evidence."

But Sungenis is among those who insist there's no evidence that the Earth rotates.

But what about Foucault's famous pendulum? Its plane of oscillation revolves every 24 hours, showing the rotation of the planet. If the Earth didn't rotate, it wouldn't oscillate.

Nope, Sungenis said: There just may be some other force propelling it, such as the pull of stars.

"If you see the Earth as just a humdrum planet among stars circling in a vast universe, then we're not significant, we're just part of a crowd," Sungenis said. "But if you believe everything revolves around Earth, it gives another picture—of purpose, a meaning of life."

Police officer's forgiveness leads to chapel for inmates

By Brian Blackwell
Louisiana Baptist Message

Mansfield, La. (BP)—The day started like any other that Oct. 23 in 1990. Gary Hobbs was working his usual Tuesday night shift for the police department in Mansfield, La. At 9:20 p.m., Hobbs was accompanying a parole officer to issue a probation warrant to arrest Todd Bass.

But Bass resisted arrest and fatally wounded the parole officer. Bass then fired six shots at Hobbs, who retaliated with nine rounds. Hobbs suffered only a minor wound to his wrist and missed a week of work.

The felon was sentenced to life in prison for first-degree murder.

Fourteen years later, Hobbs said he came to a point of personal misery and emptiness in his life. A visit to Southside Baptist Church in Mansfield, La., in June 2004 resulted in his becoming a Christian.

Five months later, Hobbs heard then-Southside Baptist pastor Troy Terrell preach about forgiveness.

"The Lord spoke to me," Hobbs said, "and after the service was over, I told the pastor that God was revealing lots of hatred that was built inside me."

Meeting a murderer

Two weeks later, Hobbs and Terrell visited the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola so that the police officer could sit face-to-face with Bass. "I told him of the change in my life and that I didn't have a problem with him anymore," Hobbs recounted. "He stared at the ground for a few moments and looked up at me with tears running down his eyes.

"I then heard the most sincere apology I had ever heard," Hobbs said. "From then on, there were no hard feelings between us."

After their meeting, Hobbs and Terrell toured Angola, and met Warden Burl Cain.

"Wherever I went on the tour, I experienced nothing but a friendly reception from the prisoners," Hobbs said. "I didn't feel threatened or hear any foul language. Moral rehabilitation has changed their lives."

Once known as the bloodiest prison in the United States, the Angola prison has experienced a revival of sorts in recent years since Cain instituted moral rehabilitation.

Moral rehabilitation is an approach that works with religious organizations to help inmates change.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has been a part of Cain's moral rehabilitation philosophy. Since 1995, the Southern Baptist seminary has offered extension classes at the prison.

Cain attributes the seminary program as a primary reason for the drop in violence at Angola. The number of men involved in an assault within Angola's walls has dropped from 10.4 percent of the inmates in 2001 to 7.4 percent in 2004, according to prison officials.

Taking on a \$150,000 project

Talking with Cain, he mentioned that the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women in St. Gabriel needed money to construct a chapel. "My pastor said we could raise \$150,000," Hobbs recalled.

Within 45 days, Southside Baptist Church members and others from the community raised more than was needed.

Hobbs said \$150,000 was presented in March 2005 to the Louisiana Prison Chapel Foundation for the construction of a 700-seat chapel inside the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women's walls. Construction of the facility should be complete in four to six months.

Twenty-one members from Southside Baptist Church traveled to the south Louisiana women's prison for the chapel's groundbreaking ceremony in January.

"If you change the prisoners and they are released, then they may have a positive effect on the rest of their families," the police officer noted. "In turn, those family members will not resort to a life a crime."

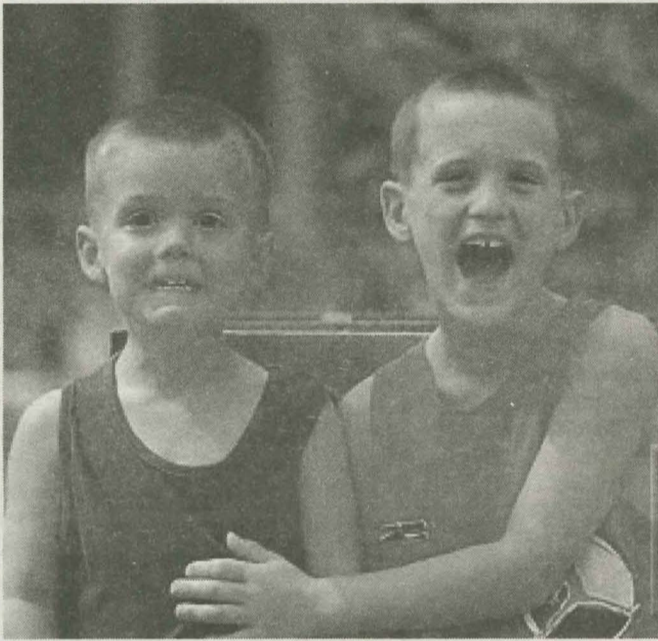
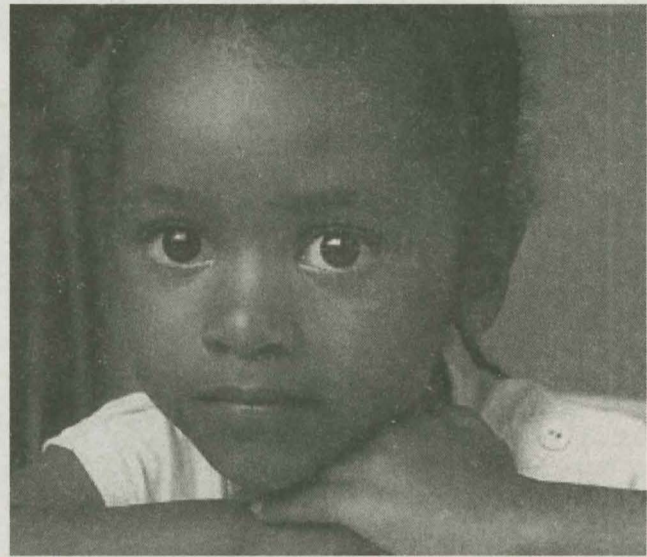
Terrell, now in full-time evangelism, echoed the thought.

"The only way to change a person is when Jesus enters his or her heart," Terrell said. "By building the chapels in the women's prisons, we are breaking lots of generational curses. Statistics show that children of prisoners have a higher chance of going to prison.

"If the bloodiest prison in America can become the most-evangelized prison, anything is possible."

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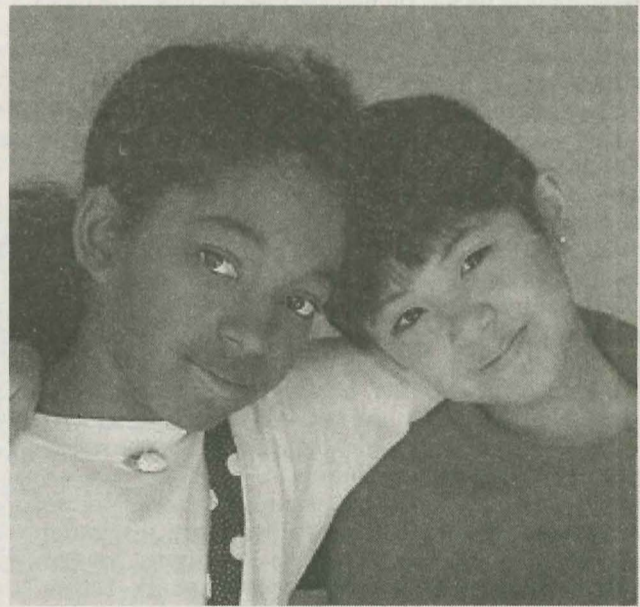


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