



WESTERN RECORDER

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FOR THE RECORD



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Poll: Literal belief in Bible declined 10 points during past 30 years

Princeton, N.J. (RNS)—A little more than one quarter of Americans believe the Bible is the literal word of God, down 10 percentage points since 1976.

According to a recent survey by the Gallup Poll, 28 percent of Americans believe the Bible is literally true, compared to 38 percent 30 years ago. The survey was conducted among 1,002 adults, ages 18 or older.

Nearly half, 49 percent, said the Bible was the "inspired word of God," while 19 percent called it an "ancient book of fables." Only 3 percent had no opinion.

Eddie Gibbs, professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., said the "responses are cultural rather than reflecting of a deeper personal belief; the Bible has lost its position of cultural prominence."

The survey asked respondents if they believed the Bible was the actual word of God and should be taken word-for-word; whether it was inspired by God, but should not be taken literally; whether it is a book of fables and legends; or whether the person has no opinion of the Bible.

Between 1976 and 1984, the same poll showed between 37 percent and 40 percent of Americans chose the "actual word of God" option.

Gibbs said "broader culture has cast doubts and raises questions about all Scripture, leading to pluralism all around."

The research considered age, geographic region, education level, political views and religious identity as predictors to a person's view about the Bible.

Literal belief in the Bible was highest among older Americans (36 percent), those with lowest levels of education (39 percent), Southerners (39 percent), Republicans (33 percent), and Protestants and other non-Catholic Christians (37 percent).

"Older Americans grew up in a time where the Bible was more culturally relevant," Gibbs said, "which leads to a very significant emotional hold later in their lives."

The poll carried a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Who rules?

More Baptist churches consider governance by elders instead of 'congregational' model

By David Winfrey
News Director

Louisville—Some see it as a way to streamline decision making.

Others call it a scheme to wrest authority from the membership.

Regardless of perspective, more Baptist churches are going to an elder form of governance and, in the process, raising questions about whether they are departing from their Baptist roots.

Some churches have switched (or tried to switch) from a democratic "congregational authority" model to an elder system with varying levels of hurt feelings and resistance.

In other situations, Baptist church starters are launching congregations with an elder form of leadership already in place.

Here in Kentucky, churches are using elders as decision makers for a variety of reasons.

■ In Bowling Green, members of Living Hope Baptist Church voted to adopt an elder system of governance nearly 10 years ago.

Then-pastor Brad Johnson said the move helped broaden decision making to more people who were praying and seeking God's will.

■ In Lawrenceburg, Hope Community Church has used an elder system since it was started eight years ago.

Pastor Jeff Eaton said the church started with such a system, in part,



because he needed a body of advisers when the church was small and had few leaders.

■ In Louisville, many of the recent church starts that have applied for membership in the local Baptist association have come with an elder system in place, according to Director of Missions Wesley Pitts.

Traditionally in Baptist life, churches employ a "congregational authority" form of decision making. Every member has a vote on such

matters as staff hiring, church discipline, budgets and new initiatives.

"Historically, anything other than congregationalism is an exception," said Bill Leonard, dean of the school of theology at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

Congregationalism is linked to Baptists' belief that God reveals Himself and His will for a congregation to every member of the church, not solely to a pastor or bishop.

□ See More churches ... Page 8

Baptists responding to Indonesia earthquake crisis

Yogyakarta, Indonesia (ABP)—Several Baptist groups have joined the worldwide outpouring of support for victims of a deadly 6.3-magnitude earthquake that killed more than 6,000 people May 27.

More than 200,000 people remain homeless, according to the Indonesian government.

The May 27 earthquake was the latest in a series of four large temblors in Indonesia since the magnitude 9 quake that caused a tsunami killing more than 130,000 people in 2004.

The 6.3-magnitude earthquake struck early May 27 along the main island of Java's southern coast, crushing thousands of Indonesians as they slept in their homes and injuring at least 15,000 more. The quake flattened whole villages in the area and destroyed thousands of buildings.

In the Bantul district, one of the hardest-hit areas, up to 80 percent of homes were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Aid



QUAKE DAMAGE Multiplied thousands of dwellings were destroyed in Indonesia's central island of Java. (Photo by Berbar Halim/SIPA Press)

shipments and relief workers have flooded into the area, but many villages lack food and clean water.

Indonesia sits on an archipelago fraught with volcanic activity. Mount Merapi, located close to the capital city of Jakarta, has produced

three times as many hot clouds per day as it did before the quake, according to AP reports, and experts worry increased seismic activity could trigger a larger eruption from the volcano.

□ See Baptists send food ... Page 6

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, June 7.

BAPTIST DIGEST

There's still time to pray for Crossover. The Southern Baptist Convention's "Crossover Triad" evangelistic emphasis is just a few days away, but Southern Baptists still have time to join in prayer initiatives for the June 9-10 ministry effort. Prayer opportunities for Crossover and the SBC annual meeting include prayerwalking and a prayer room at the Greensboro (N.C.) Coliseum, according to Chris Schofield, senior consultant for prayer evangelism strategies at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. To join a prayer-walk, volunteer for the SBC prayer room or become a prayer partner, register online at www.crossovertriad.org.

Florida pastor to nominate Page as SBC president. Forrest Pollock, pastor of Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, Fla., announced June 1 that he will nominate Frank Page as Southern Baptist Convention president. Page, pastor of First Baptist Church in Taylors, S.C., is expected to face Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church of Springdale, Ark., for the SBC presidency. Describing Page as "a conservative, Bible-believing inerrantist," Pollock added, "Frank Page has a bold vision for the future that involves the next generation of leaders. He is calling for adding passion, revival, soul-winning and missions to the convention's 30-year concentration on doctrinal purity." Floyd, who will be nominated by Georgia pastor Johnny Hunt, has been endorsed by three SBC seminary presidents.

Third candidate announced for SBC first VP. Jimmy Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., will be nominated for first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, former Alabama pastor Fred Wolfe announced June 1. Jackson has been one of the SBC's parliamentarians for 20 years and is a former member of the SBC Executive Committee. His church reported 194 baptisms last year and gave 4.3 percent of undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program. Other expected nominees are evangelist Keith Fordham of Fayetteville, Ga., and Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Wicker to be Pastors' Conference president nominee. Former Southern Baptist Convention President James Merritt announced he will nominate Hayes Wicker, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Naples, Fla., as president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference. Wicker, pastor of the Florida congregation since 1992, previously was pastor of churches in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

Welch announces retirement as pastor. Southern Baptist Convention President Bobby Welch has announced he will retire Aug. 27 as senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Fla. Welch, who has served the congregation 32 years, wrote in a letter to church members, "I've always prayed God would make it clear to me when this time had come. He surely has and that period in our lives is now. It is the perfect opportunity for the church and us, and I could not imagine a better time." Welch, a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, is co-founder of the FAITH Sunday school evangelism strategy.

CBF assembly highlights global needs. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's general assembly, set for June 21-24 in Atlanta, will highlight the theme, "Being the Presence of Christ for a World in Need." Most of the events, worship sessions and speakers will correlate with the theme of social consciousness, poverty, AIDS, war, disease and education, according to Bo Prosser, CBF's coordinator for congregational life. This year's featured speaker, Trevor Hudson, has written several books about spirituality. He serves in a Methodist church in Benoni, near Johannesburg, South Africa. Emmanuel McCall, retired pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in Atlanta, will succeed Joy Yee, pastor of New Covenant Baptist Church in San Francisco, as CBF moderator.

N.C. leaders propose stricter anti-gay policies. Leaders of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina voted May 23 to tighten policies designed to oust churches that affirm homosexuality or permit gay church members. The proposal, endorsed by the convention's executive committee and board of directors, likely would exclude more than 20 North Carolina churches affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists, which is welcoming and affirming of homosexuals. The proposed policies would exclude churches that "knowingly act to affirm, approve, endorse, promote, support or bless homosexual behavior." The proposals will require a two-thirds majority vote of convention messengers to take effect.

NAMB shifts 'Vancouver Focus' to Canadians

Alpharetta, Ga. (BP)—The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board has transferred coordination of "Vancouver Focus"—Southern Baptists' multi-year church planting and evangelism initiative in Vancouver, British Columbia—to the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists.

The Canadian convention is assuming day-to-day management and responsibility for Vancouver Focus so the program can launch with a stronger Canadian influence and more realistic expectations, according to John Yarbrough, NAMB's vice president for strategic initiatives.

"NAMB will continue to partner with the Canadian convention, Vancouver Focus and the Capilano Southern Baptist Association to support the initiative, including the same amount of funding," Yarbrough said. "However, the planning and expectations will be developed by Canadian Southern Baptists over a longer period of time."

Vancouver was announced three years ago as one of NAMB's Strategic

Focus Cities, and was on schedule to implement a comprehensive plan of church planting and evangelism this year and next. Canadian Baptists are extending the emphasis to 2009.

"This change in our partnership with Canada to impact Vancouver reflects the need to follow their lead in working in their culture and setting," Yarbrough said. "We've come to the mutual conclusion that initial plans and goals were probably too aggressive for a Canadian city, because the culture is so different than the United States, although the need is the same, Jesus. We must rely on our Canadian colleagues to help us know how best to assist them in impacting their culture with the gospel."

Gerald Taillon, national ministry leader of the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists, said the convention welcomes the responsibility.

"This is a great opportunity for us to partner even more closely with Vancouver Focus and the Cap-

ilano Association, which is what we do all the time," he said. "We see this as a win-win situation for everyone involved to be more effective in reaching people for Christ."

Citing a statistic that only about 3 percent of the population in Vancouver is Christian, Yarbrough said NAMB officials discovered the city is one of the most challenging mission fields in North America.

"Vancouver is a tremendous city and will require our best efforts and partnerships with our Canadian brothers and sisters to come alongside them to impact that great city with the gospel," Yarbrough said.

NAMB's Strategic Focus Cities emphasis, established in 1998, continues to be a learning experience and a work in progress, Yarbrough said.

"We are learning and changing to discover the best ways to join the associations and state conventions to assist churches in these great North American cities to do what Baptists do best—share Christ and start churches," he added.

Burleson urges SBC to investigate IMB actions

Enid, Okla. (ABP)—Wade Burleson is calling for the Southern Baptist Convention to investigate "manipulation" and "coercion" by his fellow trustees of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

But the Oklahoma pastor backed down from his threat to publish details of those alleged abuses on his blog, saying a formal SBC-level investigation is "a better road" that will allow "for all to defend their actions before things are made public."

John Floyd, the IMB's newly elected trustee chairman, declined to comment on Burleson's announcement.

Burleson, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Enid, is a first-year trustee of the International Mission Board. Earlier this year, some IMB trustees accused him of using his blog to violate trustee confidentiality, prompting trustees to try to have him removed from the board. Trustees later reversed their call for Burleson's dismissal, but adopted a

policy forbidding trustees to express public dissent about board actions.

In a June 1 posting on his web blog, Burleson said a motion will be introduced at next week's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting calling for appointment of a seven-member ad hoc committee to investigate "five concerns":

- "Manipulation of the nominating process" by which the SBC elects IMB trustees.

- Attempts "by one or more" chief executives of SBC agencies "to influence and/or coerce the IMB trustees, staff, and administration"—an apparent reference to Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, who circulated a lengthy report by a seminary professor critical of the IMB's direction under President Jerry Rankin.

- The appropriateness of closed-door meetings—"forums and executive sessions"—by IMB trustees, "as compared to conducting business in full view of the Southern Baptist Convention," and the exclusion of

"any individual trustee" from meetings of the full board without SBC approval.

- Imposing "new doctrinal requisites" on IMB employees and missionaries that go "beyond the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message"—a reference to the IMB's new policies against private prayer languages and defining an appropriate baptism—and "suppression of dissent" among trustees.

Burleson's motion invokes SBC Bylaw 26B, which will require messengers to vote on the motion during their two-day meeting rather than refer it to another body. Invoking the bylaw reportedly would require approval by two thirds of the messengers voting.

Burleson said an SBC investigation would be the fairest way to address his allegations against his colleagues. In the meantime, however, he said he will continue to serve on the board and to blog about his experiences.

With additional reporting by Baptist Press

Statue honors ministry of evangelist Billy Graham

Charlotte, N.C. (BP)—Prior to unveiling a statue honoring evangelist Billy Graham at next week's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C., SBC President Bobby Welch presented a bronze model of the sculpture last week to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association at its headquarters in Charlotte.

Sculpted by Terrell O'Brien—a bivocational pastor, whose church and studio are in Wyoming—the bronze model depicts Graham standing before a cross, with outstretched arms, holding an open Bible.

"This is really about a man who lifted up the Lord Jesus, glorified God, preached the gospel all around the world in a way that has never been done before," Welch said of Graham.

Welch presented the model statue to Graham's grandson, Will



TRIBUTE Will Graham (left) receives a model statue of his grandfather, evangelist Billy Graham, from SBC President Bobby Welch. An 18-foot-tall version of the statue will be unveiled at next week's SBC annual meeting. (BP photo by Norm Miller)

Graham, who accepted it on behalf of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

O'Brien described his involvement in the statue project as a "dream come true for a pastor."

"It was my strong desire that this

piece pay tribute to Billy Graham in his life's work of preaching the gospel," O'Brien said. "As I began to think what it should look like, eventually the cross came into view."

Cliff Barrows, longtime song leader for Graham's crusades, responded, "What a privilege has been mine for 60 years to have stood beside Mr. Graham to watch him and pray for him as he's extended his arms, and held the Word of God up around the world.

"May this statue be an incentive and an encouragement to the younger generation that comes behind to faithfully follow Christ and to proclaim His truth," Barrows added.

The statute to be unveiled next week features the cross standing 18 feet tall, and Graham's likeness is 9.5 feet tall. After the unveiling, the statue will be on permanent display in downtown Nashville.

Ayers and Gaddis to be nominated for KBC presidency

By **Trennis Henderson**
Editor

Bowling Green—Two former state convention presidents who served in the 1980s will nominate younger pastors for president at the Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting in November.

James Jones, KBC president in 1988-89, will nominate Steve Ayers, 42, pastor of Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green. Don Mathis, KBC president in 1985-86, will nominate Darren Gaddis, 37, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Corbin.

Ayers' congregation is one of the top KBC churches in baptisms and Gaddis' church is among the state convention's leading churches in Cooperative Program giving.

Jones, who retired in 2002 after more than 20 years as pastor of Campbellsville Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Campbellsville. Describing Ayers as "a role model for young preachers coming along nowadays," Jones added, "I've known Steve and watched his ministry for a long time.

"I think he is right on the cutting edge of evangelism, which we need in this day and time," Jones noted. "He has a very evangelistic spirit, loves people, loves this denomination and wants to work within our denomination. ... He's just got what we need at this particular time."

Mathis, a vocational evangelist, also is staff evangelist at Eastwood Baptist Church in Bowling Green. Noting that Gaddis is a former



Steve Ayers



Darren Gaddis

KBC second vice president and has served on several KBC committees, Mathis said Gaddis "has already made a positive impact on the KBC as a Christian statesman and an outstanding leader."

Describing Gaddis as "a Bible-believing conservative with a gentle spirit," Mathis added, "He is respectful of those with different viewpoints within the context of a deep commitment to Jesus Christ, the Bible as the Word of God, and a strong believer in the Cooperative Program and the mission programs of our convention."

Ayers: Evangelism is key

Ayers described himself as "a Jesus preacher" and "a cross and Resurrection guy."

"I'm a gospel preacher full of passion, believing that the church of Jesus Christ is a community of hope to the world and that the church is still valuable to today's culture and that the cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ transform people's lives."

Emphasizing that "I don't like politics," Ayers said, "I want to keep

this as non-controversial as it can be. I'm going after one thing: We're in the 'Connect' program and wanting to have a year of emphasis on our churches really developing an evangelistic strategy that lets them connect with those who are not connected to Jesus. That's my only agenda."

Gaddis: A call for cooperation

Although "I'm not a big fan of labels," Gaddis said, "I consider myself a conservative Southern Baptist. I have no problem claiming the Bible to be inerrant; that is how I was raised and how I was trained and that is now my conviction."

If elected president, "one of the things I hope to bring to the table is to increase the togetherness of our churches," Gaddis said. "Cooperation in missions and evangelism and cooperation in giving are two things that have been upon my heart."

"I want to see this unity that is building in our state denomination to continue," he added. "I believe a renaissance in our state convention is on the horizon because I believe we're on the right track" in missions, evangelism and leadership development.

Ayers is a graduate of Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville; and Drew University in Madison, N.J. He previously was pastor of Barren River Baptist Church and youth associate pastor of Greenwood Baptist Church, both in Bowling Green.

Ayers has served on the KBC

Mission Board, Kentucky Baptist Assemblies board of directors and as a member of the KBC Mission Study Committee. He also was elected to preach this year's KBC convention sermon.

Gaddis is a graduate of the University of West Florida in Pensacola and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He is pursuing a doctor of ministry degree from Southern Seminary. He previously was pastor of Liberty Point Baptist Church in Cadiz and was a pastoral intern at First Baptist Church of Dallas while in seminary.

Gaddis is moderator of South Union-Mount Zion Baptist Association and served as KBC second vice president in 2002-03. He is former chairman of the KBC Committee on Constitution & Bylaws and is a member of the KBC High Impact Advisory Team and the KBC Cooperative Program Study Committee. He also is a trustee for GuideStone Financial Resources.

Hillvue Heights Church, where Ayers has been pastor since 1991, recorded 435 baptisms last year and gave approximately 1 percent of undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program. Ayers noted the church's CP percentage has grown to about 3 percent this year.

Central Baptist in Corbin, where Gaddis has been pastor since 2002, reported 33 baptisms last year and gave 15 percent of undesignated receipts through CP. The church recently was recognized by the KBC for contributing \$4 million to CP during the church's history.

Bennett, former Campbellsville board chair, dies

Campbellsville—Jerry Bennett, who recently completed three years as chair of Campbellsville University's board of trustees, died May 30 after a brief battle with cancer. He was 66.

Bennett was president of Campbellsville Industries, which formerly was part of Campbellsville University. The firm manufactures steeples, domes, clock towers and related products.

Affirming Bennett's "creativity, business acumen, servant leadership, work ethic, intelligence and Christian commitment," Campbellsville President Michael Carter said Bennett gave "unselfishly of his time, expertise and resources in service to Campbellsville University."

Bennett, a 1965 Campbellsville graduate, is survived by his wife, Jackie, and three children. Memorial gifts may be made to Campbellsville University.

Volunteer construction in state drops as teams go to Gulf Coast

By **Ken Walker**
State Correspondent

Horse Cave—With droves of Kentucky Baptists bound for the Gulf Coast this summer, church building projects in the Bluegrass State using volunteer assistance are expected to drop 50 percent.

Only six projects are on tap, compared to an average of 12 to 14 most summers, said John Edwards, who coordinates the state's Baptist Builders effort for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

"I look for the same situation to go through next winter and summer," said Edwards, a Mission Service Corps missionary.

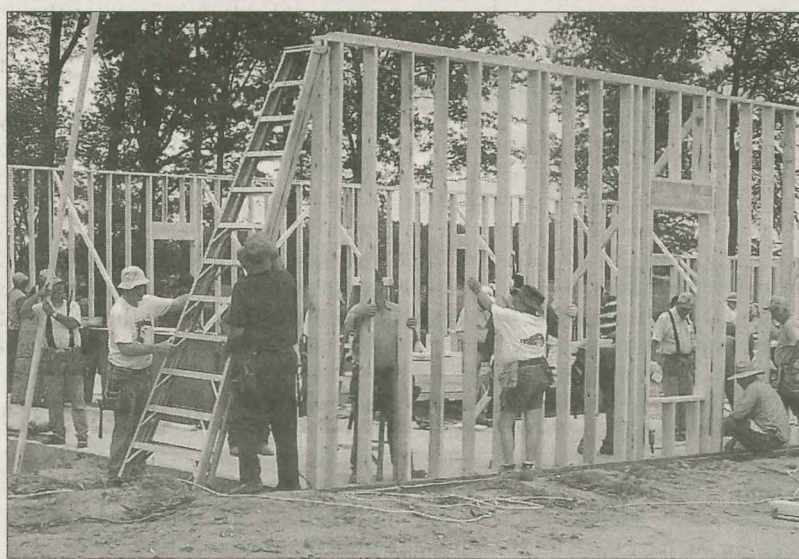
During the next three months, 200 to 300 Kentuckians per week are expected to travel to Louisiana and Mississippi, according to Randy Foster, director of the KBC's men on mission department.

The KBC has formed partnerships with three associations in the Gulf Coast that were hit hard last summer by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Foster said the Kentucky Baptist Convention has spent about \$1.2 million to assist churches and individuals in the Gulf, with individual churches likely sending another \$1 million in direct assistance.

Many financial and volunteer numbers are estimates because of churches establishing congregational partnerships without going through the men on mission office, Edwards said.

"There's a lot more going on



BAPTIST BUILDING Volunteers help construct a building for Loving Chapel Baptist Church in Franklin. The number of volunteer church construction jobs in Kentucky has been cut in half, primarily because more volunteers are working in the Gulf Coast region. (Photo by John Edwards)

than I know about," Edwards said, explaining that many churches arrange mission trips through personal contacts.

Jerry and Etta Butcher, members of First Baptist Church of Franklin, are serving as on-site coordinators for the state convention's partnership with Jackson Baptist Association in Pascagoula, Miss.

Mrs. Butcher said 26 teams from Kentucky churches, ranging from 10 to 73 team members, have signed up with the associational office to work on rebuilding in June and July. The projects include such tasks as hanging and finishing drywall,

installing new floors, roofing and clean-up.

Some teams will help people move out of trailers, provided by the federal government, after their houses become livable, she said.

Thousands of Baptists respond

Kentuckians also will be among volunteers traveling to the Gulf Coast trailer parks this summer to stage sports camps, vacation Bible schools and puppet shows for children.

More than 15,000 Southern Baptists from every state in the nation have responded to the needs since

last fall, Mrs. Butcher said.

She estimated that since she and her husband arrived in March, 150 to 200 Kentuckians each week have come to Pascagoula to work.

"It's amazing how God has provided," Mrs. Butcher said. "People have poured out to help."

But the work is slow going. Volunteers have helped clean up more than 3,000 damaged homes in Pascagoula since the disaster, but only about 10 percent have been rebuilt.

Removing water-damaged dry-wall might take a team a whole week to remove and another a week to install new material, with another team needed to finish it.

Other teams often must work on flooring, plumbing and electrical. The latter can include tearing out old wires and receptacles and installing all new equipment, followed by new cabinet installation, painting and other tasks.

The destruction is so widespread that rebuilding will take years, Mrs. Butcher said.

Still, she finds cause for rejoicing amid the challenge.

"We've served in a lot of places," said Mrs. Butcher, a veteran disaster relief volunteer, "but I don't think we've ever served in a place that (people are) more appreciative. You don't always see that."

"I'm very excited that Kentucky Baptists have been able to help so many churches get what they need to get back ready to worship," she added.

Kentucky projects:

- A team from the Oldham-Trimble Baptist Association will help frame a new building for a Hispanic congregation in Bowling Green.

- Groups from Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi will help erect new sanctuaries for Loving Chapel Baptist Church in Franklin, Westside Baptist Church in Berea and Hays Fork Baptist Church near Richmond.

- A group from Alabama will help The People's Church of Bardstov frame its building in late June.

- Volunteers from Georgia helped Eubank Baptist Church work on its new educational center the last week of May.

Construction supervisor John Edwards said he also hopes to assemble a team to work on a project in September to expand the sanctuary at Oak Grove Baptist Church near Eubank.

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

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SBC's mixed signals

Item 1. An ad hoc Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program study committee has urged the election of officers from churches that contribute at least 10 percent of their undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program.

Item 2. A pastor whose church gives one-40th of that level (one-fourth of 1 percent) is to be nominated as president of the SBC. This pastor says, "I desperately want to lead us to spiritual renewal—personally, one-on-one with Jesus and corporately within churches."

Baptists first formed a convention to support a missions program that individual congregations could not support alone.

In the 1920s Southern Baptists called missionaries home from their field of service because there was not enough money to keep them there. Out of that dilemma came the Cooperative Program, and churches were encouraged to contribute a percentage of their budget to SBC missions programs.

The fundamental conservatives of the SBC have focused on doctrine and supported SBC presidents who appointed the "right" people. But there is more. The SBC needs a president who believes in and supports the Cooperative Program.

Will the SBC elect a leader who

focuses only on doctrine? Or will the SBC elect a leader who will strongly support—by word and with finances—the Cooperative Program?

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also." The SBC needs a president who will clearly say, "Follow me. I am committed to the mission of this convention. My church and I are resolutely committed to the Cooperative Program and will set an example for all churches to follow."

Spiritual renewal includes accepting the financial responsibility of supporting SBC missions programs. Nothing less should be acceptable.

*George Casey
Worthington, Ohio*

Pro-life dialogue

In a recent article on his Web log, Albert Mohler questioned the widespread evangelical acceptance of the "contraceptive mentality" that has been a weak link in consistent pro-life arguments. Mohler even references "Humanae Vitae," the landmark encyclical written by Pope Paul VI and largely ignored by most of the world for the last 60 years.

But Mohler inadvertently demonstrates the problem with evangelical pro-life dialogue. The Catholic position is derided by many, including some Catholics, for being contrived, legalistic, archaic or just loony. But

observe the alternative. Where exactly does the Bible clearly say that sex should or shouldn't result in pregnancy? Where does it explicitly say all abortions are wrong? As a proud pro-life Christian, I admit that while the Bible makes oblique references to the importance of unborn life, it never establishes a clear, unarguable ethic that would allow some contraceptives and at the same time condemn abortions; not without extra-biblical tradition coming into play.

And there's the rub. All evangelicals can do with this issue is simply read Scripture as any modern thinker would: as conveniently as possible. And that often leaves us wanting; interpreting Scripture to validate our personal preferences, and knowing that's what we have done. Suddenly, the Catholic position isn't too bizarre after all. Catholic teaching essentially states that we must, in lieu of definitive evidence to the contrary, always support life.

That's the problem with evangelicals trying to wade into the Tiber. Catholic doctrine—love it or hate it—is a unified whole, not based on polls or popular demand. Praising one aspect while dismissing the rest often finds us no more consistent than we were in the first place, and seldom does justice to the whole of Catholic, or for that matter evangelical, doctrine.

*David K. Griffey
Delaware, Ohio*

Are you living for eternity?

By Henry Blackaby

Atlanta (BP)—God's nature and heart are in eternity. Isaiah 57:15 states: "For thus saith the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy..." Then the prophet continues to describe the nature and activity of God, especially as it relates to each of us.

God works from eternity and toward eternity. Time is only where and when He is now working, but always in the context of eternity.

God, therefore, always works with urgency, for He fully knows the reality and certainty of eternity—endless existence—without Him or without Him.

We too often live without a sense of eternity and without a sense of urgency or seriousness. We often are too careless or casual in the decisions we make, the relationships we establish, the priorities we live by, and the overall way in which we live.

How should we live personally,

with our family, in our churches, in our workplaces and in our world? Certainly, with eternity in mind. Jesus reminded us that if we are going to make an investment in our lives, we are to do it with eternity in mind: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth ... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21).

These are serious times, and our lives must be lived before God and the world with an obvious awareness of eternity.

Henry Blackaby is president of Blackaby Ministries International in Atlanta

Plan to attend SBC annual meeting

It is my hope that a large number of Kentucky Baptists will attend the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C., June 13-14, as well as the pre-convention meetings.

Outgoing SBC President Bobby Welch has spent months preaching and promoting convention attendance and evangelism in churches within 75 miles of Greensboro. He is the first leader to make this kind of sacrifice for the mission of the Southern Baptist Convention and SBC churches. His emphasis on "Everyone Can" has come at a time when baptisms and other growth and discipleship indicators are plateaued and declining.

He also has taken an active role in every aspect of convention life, including responding to the disasters in the Gulf and church burnings in Alabama, participating with the Ad Hoc Cooperative Program Committee, dealing with the transitions and concerns at the mission boards, and

encouraging all Baptists through visits to all state conventions.

Welch has been a model president in supporting missions and evangelism through the Cooperative Program in his church, First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Fla., and promoting mission causes represented in the Cooperative Program during every speaking engagement. It is obvious that he places great value on CP as an effective way to provide stability and continuity in missions work locally and around the world.

He also has expanded the base of leadership in the SBC. Several ministers whose churches annually are in the top five in KBC support of missions through the Cooperative Program have been given an opportunity to serve.

It is my prayer that the emphasis on promoting CP, expanding the base of leadership, and providing a champion for prayer and evangelism will continue.



STEWARDSHIP

Goals & priorities help define one's financial success

By Don Spencer

From time to time it is good to evaluate one's goals and priorities in life.

One of many areas in life to consider is how well you're doing financially. Are you on target to achieve

your goals? Do you need to set new goals? Are you succeeding financially? That leads to another crucial question: How do you define success?

Do you know what success will look like when you get there? Does success for you involve a particular position in life? Does it involve accumulating a certain amount of material possessions? If so, how much is enough?

Success for each person is based on his or her personal values and goals. Your success will be determined by those things that are important to you. Often, the tensions we feel in life come from an inner conflict between our values and how we spend our money.

Money itself has no intrinsic value. It is only a medium of exchange. It can be used to help you reach your goals in life.

Many people never get in touch with this reality. Without a proper focus on money, you can experience many negative emotions such as anxiety, worry, guilt and fear. To gain a proper perspective on money, you must view it as a tool. If you're given a tool, you have to know what to do with it—what task or what goal you're trying to accomplish—or the tool is useless.

As you set financial goals in your life, realize that everyone earns a certain amount of money over a lifetime. The process of meeting short-term and long-term goals is a matter of allocation. Every dollar spent involves a choice between options. You never can spend that dollar again.

How well we reach our financial goals will be affected by many things in life. As we strive to meet those goals, remember that financial success will be different for everyone. The things that make it different are our values and priorities.

Once we identify those values and priorities, we can achieve financial success by focusing our financial planning and spending on these areas. Hindsight will later confirm whether you have reached your own personal definition of financial success.

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



Effective planning can help enhance family vacation fun

Q: What are some secrets to having a good family vacation?

Almost all family experts agree that shared memories help build strong families. Family vacations can contribute to such memories, and thus make a family stronger. However, vacations also can be a source of stress—physically, financially and even emotionally. Here are a few ideas for making this summer's vacation a good one for everyone:

PARENTING **Be realistic in determining how much to spend.** A vacation doesn't have to cost a lot to be fun. Credit cards are easy to use, but when the bills come due the fun can fade as fast as a summer tan. Consider starting a vacation jar in January and encourage family members to toss extra change in the jar as the year goes along. The money won't pay for a trip, but it might provide an extra treat or special activity. It also will give children a sense of contributing to the vacation.

Don't over-schedule your vacation. Poor or overly ambitious planning can leave you exhausted instead of refreshed at vacation's end. Allow enough time to fully enjoy the activities you have planned or the places you want to see. Build in some down time, and make sure everyone gets plenty of rest at night.

Enjoy travel time. Don't be in too big of a hurry. Stop frequently, especially if your children are young. Pack snacks. Play games. Sing that God. Read a book together.

Remember that God goes with you. Give thanks for the opportunity to be together as a family. If you see a spectacular sunset, a beautiful beach or a majestic mountain, take the opportunity to point out the greatness of God as Creator. Be intentional about asking God to use your vacation to renew and strengthen your family's relationship with Him.—David Garrard

Q: My son recently was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. I want to make sure he gets the help he needs. What help is available?

Asperger's syndrome is considered by many to be a high spectrum autistic disorder. Some identify Asperger's as a disorder separate from autism. Dr. Tony Attwood has spent much of his career working in this area. He suggests it takes 15 years to teach needed social skills to a child with Asperger's.

According to Attwood, time is better spent helping an adolescent or adult with Asperger's educate others about how best to respond and interact with their behavior patterns. Those with Asperger's syndrome usually lack the social skills needed to develop friendships. Often individuals with Asperger's have a singular interest on which they fixate and can talk for hours on that subject.

It is important that your son begins social skills training and learns to build relationships in a safe environment. Children with Asperger's syndrome also need alone time to recharge.

The Autism Society of Kentuckiana can provide helpful information about parent support groups and some social group opportunities. In addition to Dr. Attwood's therapeutic work with individuals with Asperger's, there are helpful resources by Steven Gutstein and Jed Baker. Baker has developed "The Social Skills Picture Book," which seeks to teach children how to interact with peers and adults. His "Social Skills Training" workbook provides information and activity for group settings.

God has created us to be relational. Relationship skills are a severe deficit for those with Asperger's syndrome. Teaching your son the social skills and relationship skills he needs to live out his life created in the image of a relational God will take effort, determination and intentionality on your part. Be sure to build a support system for you and your son as you seek to help him.—Valerie Vincent

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



What kind of SBC president do we need?

Editor's Note: Leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee recently proposed eliminating the SBC ad hoc Cooperative Program committee's proposal encouraging convention messengers to elect officers whose churches give at least 10 percent of undesignated receipts through CP. Anthony Jordan, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and chairman of the CP committee, expressed disappointment with the proposed revision. Prior to the Executive Committee officers' proposed amendment, Jordan wrote the following column addressing the issue.

By Anthony Jordan

Southern Baptists will gather in Greensboro, N.C., June 13-14. One of the most significant matters of business will be the election of a new president. These are rocky times. Both of our mission boards have experienced rough seas. While the sounds of battle have quieted in our convention, we are struggling to find how to operate in times of peace. Thus, the new president will have a plethora of opportunities to display his ability to lead. With that in mind, a fair question to ask is, "What kind of president do we need?" I have a few suggestions.

We need a statesman. I use this word to describe a person with the ability to bring large segments and partisan groups together. Like the church at Corinth, we have our groupies. Our president needs to be a consensus builder. He must be someone who stands true and tall but shows grace to a divergent crowd. Our struggle is no longer against liberalism—it is for unity. We need a man who unites us rather than draws tighter lines.

We need a man who has demonstrated belief in our cooperative approach to accomplishing the Lord's work. There was a day in the SBC when the doctrinal position of our president was more important than anything else. We elected men who could stand in the face of liberalism and never flinch. During those days, we compromised our cooperative conviction in favor of conservative theology. Hence, we elected leaders whose percentage given through the Cooperative

Program would be hard pressed to fill a thimble.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me be clear. I voted for these men and give thanks for them. Without them and their unwavering commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture, we would have slouched toward a destructive liberalism that would have destroyed our denomination. While we will never be able to go to sleep or cease our vigilance in regard to liberalism, it is not our most pressing matter today. Frankly, I am not worried that the SBC will elect a liberal as president. Not going to happen!

Our greatest challenge is electing a man who has demonstrated a proven commitment to the Southern Baptist way of supporting missions. Many of the megachurch pastors have turned aside from cooperative missions in favor of direct or societal missions. They do missions, but they choose to do what their church can accomplish, rather than realizing the power of what we can achieve together. They have abandoned a tried and true axiom among us. We can do more together than we can do alone.

Recently, I chaired a committee that called upon Southern Baptists to elect leaders who give at least 10 percent to the Cooperative Program. Is it a magic number? No, but it is a historic number. For nearly 75 years, our churches averaged giving more than 10 percent of undesignated receipts to missions through the CP. Today, the average has slipped to under 7 percent.

I believe if a man is going to lead the largest evangelical denomination in America, he should have demonstrated his wholehearted support for the most fundamental and unifying issue among us—the Cooperative Program. Eighty-one years ago, Southern Baptists rejected societal missions. We do not need leaders who would return us to a less effective way of doing our work. We need men who believe in and model our approach to missions.

Great preachers and great pastors will always rise to leadership among us. I am glad. But we need great "cooperators" if we are to preserve the largest mission-sending denomination in the evangelical world.

Reaching teens: Learning culture is key

Our daughter, Karen, recently arrived in Slovenia for her summer missions experience. She is working with Southern Baptist missionaries Dwayne and Melissa Doyle, who have been there two years, learning the language and the culture and trying to develop a strategy to reach this people group. Learning the culture and language is the key.

The same is true in reaching students. This generation of students is different from any generation that has come before them. This generation reportedly reads more in 24 hours than the 17th century man read in his lifetime. Today's messages come from such sources as instant messaging, T-shirts, text messages and Web sites.

But what are Christians doing to learn about and intersect with this culture? Sometimes as a church we feel like we are cutting edge when we add PowerPoint presentations to our worship events. At the same time, however, youth baptism rates continue to fall. Last year Kentucky Baptists baptized 3,707 students age 12-17, according to North American Mission Board statistics. That is fewer than two students per Kentucky Baptist church.

One way to get to know students is to hang out where they are. Bill Houpt, associate pastor at Hillcrest Baptist Church in Hopkinsville, like many other youth workers across

the state, can be found at the football field every Friday night in the fall. That routine led him to the opportunity to be exposed to a side of culture few of us ever see. He was cheering loudly for one of the students in his ministry. A woman from Nashville who was in the stands wondered aloud why he was there cheering for several students. She was told he was the youth minister at one of the local churches.

Several months later Houpt received a call from the woman after her son was killed in a drive-by gang shooting. Houpt was asked to conduct the funeral. I'll let him tell you the rest of the story:

"I arrived at the church and got out of my car to be stopped by a policeman asking why I was there. I told him I was here to do the service, and he asked to see some ID. Then he told me to stay there and went to his car and did a make on me, I guess. He came back and reminded me I was in a bad neighborhood and to be careful.

"He let me go just to be stopped again by members of this kid's gang. They asked me the same thing. Using my phone and graph I explained again and they said I was not needed and I should go home. I told them the mother would have to tell me that because she was the one who had called me. ... The mom was a mess, God love her. She said her son had left the gang and the gang was there trying to keep face. She had to let them stay because she had two more sons in it. I preached on choices and took about 40 minutes. Then the gang carried him out, cussing to each other all the way."

After the graveside service, "I helped the mom into the car and told her if I could help, call me. Then one punk told me I was finished and to go back to where I came from. I came back realizing we are missing a whole type of kid."

We are missing all kinds of kids. Whether it is the gang kid from a metropolitan area or the farm boy out in the county, they are a culture unto themselves and have more in common with each other than they do with any generation that precedes them. Learning culture and reaching students go hand in hand.

Joe Ball, youth strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, has a youth ministry weblog at www.kybaptist.org/despisingnone

YOUTH MINISTRY CORNER



Joe Ball

Baptists send food, medical teams after Indonesia quake

How to help

Donations for relief work in Indonesia can be sent to:

■ SBC International Mission Board, Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230. Designate financial gifts "General Relief-Java Earthquake." Online donations can be given at imb.org.

■ Baptist World Aid, c/o Baptist World Alliance, 405 North Washington Street, Falls Church, VA 22046.

■ Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Box 101699, Atlanta, GA 30392. Designate financial gifts "#17019 Southeast Asia Earthquake." Online donations can be given at thefellowship.info.

Continued from page 1

Southern Baptist Convention relief specialists arrived quickly with funds to help feed survivors.

They are working with local Indonesian Christians on a 30-day plan of action to provide food for a large portion of the affected population through 11 command centers connected with churches scattered throughout the affected region, according to a relief worker who was not identified for security reasons.

"An initial \$50,000 (in Southern Baptist relief funds) has been committed to the effort and will go far in providing for the basic food needs of the victims. This will assist more than 5,400 families per day."

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Baptist World Aid sent two relief teams to Bantul and Yogyakarta. The teams—one of which was already in the field working on tsunami recovery and the other dispatched by Hungarian Baptist Aid in Budapest, Hungary—include doctors, medical assistants and supplies, according to a CBF press statement.

"The medical team consisting of six doctors and paramedics with half a metric ton of equipment will be joined by two Singaporean paramedics to work together with local Indonesian Baptists," reported Bela Szilagyi of Hungarian Baptist Aid.

"They will also assess needs and possible ways for Baptists to be involved in later stages of humanitarian relief and rehabilitation."

Indonesian Baptists also donated food and tents, and they continue to look for bodies as the death count continues to rise.

Baptist World Aid, the relief sector of the Baptist World Alliance, designated \$20,000 for the relief effort.

Yogyakarta Baptists are considering setting up a public kitchen to help feed the victims. Emergency tents, meal packs and some food has already been distributed.

"It is great to see the way in which Indonesian Baptists have responded so quickly to this tragedy," said BWAid Director, Paul Montacute. "The worldwide family of Baptists now needs to give generously to sup-

port the continuing relief efforts."

Despite the mobilized aid, heavy rains and damaged roads have made it difficult for workers to help survivors, Associated Press reported. Local airport closures and power outages also continue to impede the recovery process in the country with the world's largest Muslim

population.

According to experts, shelter and sanitary water are the most urgent needs in a crisis like this. United Nations officials have led the charge, donating 10 100-bed hospital tents and supplies, AP reported.

A Southern Baptist disaster relief coordinator said much soul search-

ing already has begun in the hearts of the victims. He anticipates many spiritual questions will come out of this disaster.

"We want to be there to answer their questions and share the message," he said.

Compiled from reporting by Associated Baptist Press and Baptist Press

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2006 SUPER SATURDAY
NEW THIS YEAR!
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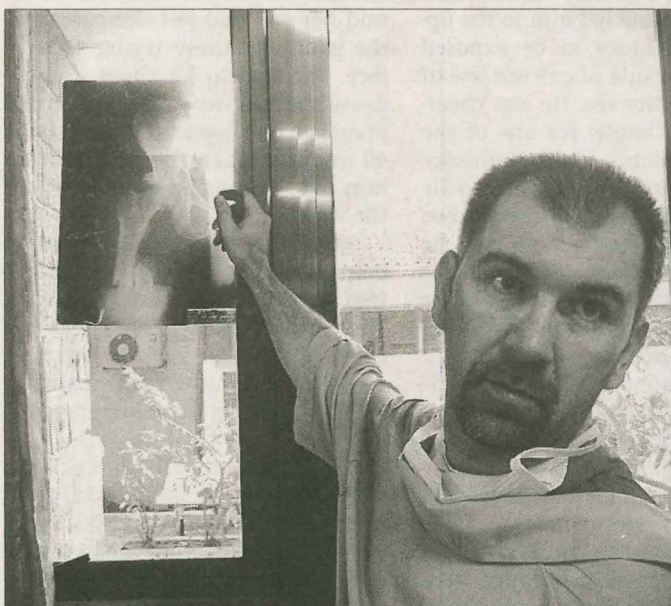
August 26
First Baptist Church, Prestonsburg
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Only \$15* to register online!
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For more information contact
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READING X-RAY Hungarian Doctor Dezso Toth, a member of a medical team sponsored by Baptist World Aid and Hungarian Baptist Aid, reads an X-ray through the window. The team, which had been doing post-tsunami medical work, shifted to Java after the recent earthquake. Three days after the quake, the team performed 20 surgeries as well as reset broken limbs. (Baptist World Aid photo. Used with permission.)

pursuit
STUDENT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

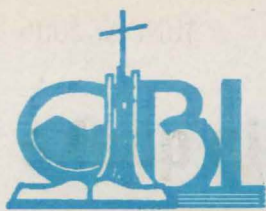
pursuit: (per - soot')
The act of striving for or chasing after over a period of time

PRICING:
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\$39 per adult mentor

LOCATION:
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DATES:
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Deadline: June 22

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Oneida Baptist Institute

Education for Time
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WHAT IS ONEIDA?

Oneida Baptist Institute is a fully accredited Christian boarding school for grades 6-12.

OBI was founded in 1899 by James Anderson Burns, and opened its doors on January 1, 1900. We have been ministering to young people for 106 years.

At Oneida, we teach respect for authority, honesty, high moral standards and responsible behavior.

PAYING ATTENTION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

OBI teachers know our young people by name. An 11:1 student/teacher ratio allows faculty to pay attention to the academic strengths and weaknesses of their students.

Oneida houseparents do their best to make the dormitories a "home away from home" while enforcing rules like keeping a clean room. Every child must have a daily job or activity. An array of co-curricular and work options give our students plenty of positive choices.

The most important thing we can offer a child is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Our students come from varying religious backgrounds. We openly share the gospel with them, and many come to Christ at OBI.

ONEIDA BAPTIST INSTITUTE

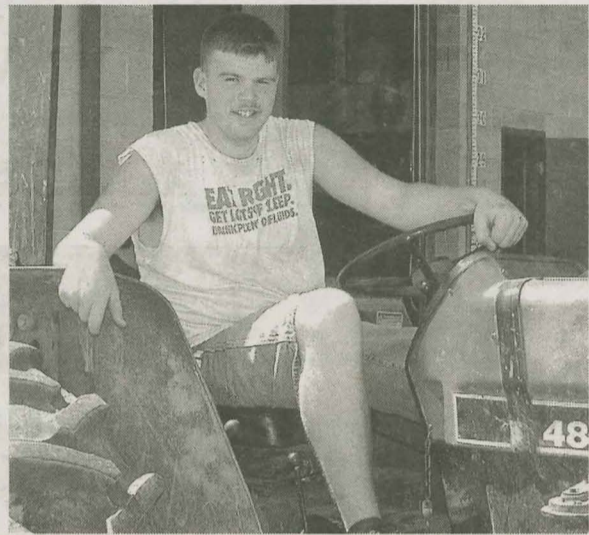
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Campus tours are available. Please call ext. 248 to schedule your next visit.

Meet some of the class of 2006

Josh found salvation and learned self control at OBI



Josh was "mature beyond his years" at work.

Josh came to Oneida as an eighth grader from northern Kentucky. "When I first came here, I had been doing really bad in school. I got in a lot of trouble," he said. His family knew about OBI, because his great-grandparents had worked as volunteers at Oneida. Josh said, "My grandparents always talked about sending me here."

After enrolling, Josh was tested and found to have low reading skills, so he was placed in the Tutoring Lab to get extra help. Josh recalled that he rejected most of the help offered to him. "I had a bad attitude at that time. I wouldn't listen to anybody. I thought the world owed me something," he said.

He remained at home his freshman year, where he continued having problems and low grades. "After I got home, I realized how much OBI had helped me," he said.

When he returned to OBI as a sophomore, many people noticed a change in Josh's attitude. He made the honor roll and joined basketball. His involvement in sports motivated Josh to continue to do well academically, in order to remain eligible to play. At the end of the year, he was voted Most Improved and Most Studious sophomore boy by the faculty.

Josh attributed his turnaround to maturity. "I saw that people didn't act the way I was acting. Plus,

I had become a Christian here in eighth grade, so that really helped," he said. Controlling his temper was also an important step in the right direction. "I had learned that getting mad doesn't help you get anywhere," he said.

OBI boys' work program director Dave Jaspersen remembers clearly the change in Josh after eighth grade. "He had always been in trouble in eighth grade. When he returned, he was so much more mature. He loved to work, and he was very respectful," Jaspersen said. Josh became a supervisor on the after school mowing crew and a dorm cleaning crew.

His senior year, Josh enrolled in two periods a day of Field Placement, a school-to-work program. He worked for Jaspersen who added, "He did more than just come to work each afternoon. He wanted to be there and help. I could always rely on the fact that when I put him on a job somewhere, it would get done. He was mature beyond his years when it came to work."

Josh appreciated all the academic help he received at Oneida. "I knew I could graduate, because so many people were willing to help me. You get all kinds of help here. The teachers are nice, and you get one-on-one help," he said.

Tara discovered God's love reflected in staff kindness

Tara and her brother came to Oneida from New Jersey in the spring of 2003. Her brother graduated from OBI last year. There had been conflicts at home, and when presented with the option of attending boarding school, Tara enthusiastically agreed. "I thought, 'Wow, I'm going to be free and able to do stuff for myself. My parents won't be telling me to do this and do that,'" she said. She was a freshman when she enrolled.

Tara was impressed with the safe school environment at OBI and the numerous opportunities for cocurricular involvement. She had never participated in sports, but because she is tall, her family had often encouraged her to try. At OBI, it was easy to join a team "just to see what it was like," she said. Tara discovered a love for sports and participated in softball, volleyball, basketball, track and cross country at Oneida. She was named the Most Valuable Player in volleyball and basketball.

Tara also joined numerous other campus activities including the Beta Club, Student Government Associa-

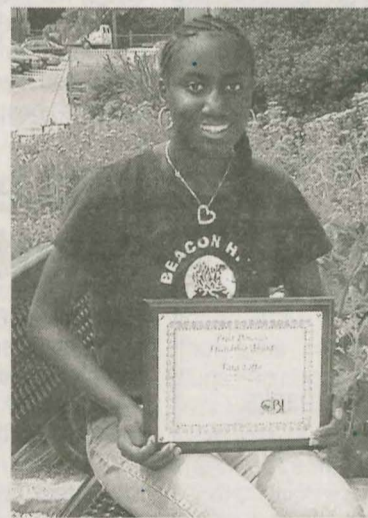
tion, Creative Ministries and choir.

Tara said she first heard the gospel and gave her heart to the Lord at OBI. Then, she learned about God's love as she observed the attention and care showered on students by the OBI faculty and staff. "I appreciate what everybody at Oneida has done for me. When you come to Oneida, every ounce of attention goes to you. The houseparents, the teachers, the staff people, all of them try their best. They showed me God's forgiveness, love and mercy and helped me turn my life around," she said.

Tara was surprised to hear her name announced two years in a row as the Most Outstanding sophomore and junior girl. "I figured everybody just saw me as some goofy kid, not as Most Outstanding! It's surprising to know that your teachers think of you that way," she said.

She had another surprise, when the OBI student body voted Tara as the recipient of the Brad Dorough Friendship award in tenth grade. "I was just being myself," she said.

"Tara has been the epitome of a positive person on our campus,"



Tara was voted the most friendly and helpful by the OBI students.

said OBI campus minister Michael Spencer. "Her smile and friendly attitude were a constant on any day at Oneida. She gave her all in whatever she was doing, whether it was praying for a Student Government meeting or leading a girls' sports team, and she always played the part of a helpful friend."

Tara plans to attend college and said, "I know that no matter where I am, I will miss OBI. It will always be a part of me."

Oneida is 'home' to Clay



Clay acted in 14 Oneida Players' productions over the last nine years.

It is not often that a graduating class of Oneida Baptist Institute includes a student who has attended since kindergarten. Clay's parents joined the OBI staff when he was just four years old. He was not just a "staff kid," but a "preacher's kid" as well, since his father is OBI's campus minister.

Clay enjoyed growing up in a close-knit community within walking distance of his classes and activities, while surrounded by the beauty of Appalachian hills. "Oneida has always been my home, and I've always enjoyed it," he said.

Beginning in middle school, Clay's parents encouraged him to get involved in campus co-curricular activities. "I'm grateful that I was told to get out and do something instead of sitting around. It was a good experience, and it allowed me to stay connected with the dorm kids," he said.

By graduation, Clay had acted in 14 Oneida Players' productions. "I liked getting a new character each time and the rush of opening night. The work was stressful but worth it," he said. He was named Best Actor in grades 10-12. He was honored as a senior for his years of service in the OBI choir, drama and Creative Ministries.

Clay most values the plaques naming him the Most Outstanding sophomore, junior and senior boy. He said, "If all the staff took a vote and decided I deserved that out of all my class, I think that's a pretty good honor."

OBI principal Dan Stockton commented, "Clay has been a tremendous asset to the Oneida Baptist Institute campus through his exemplary leadership in a host of activities [including] Baptist Campus Ministries, the Student Government Association, Beta Club and yearbook. He is a young man who has truly taken advantage of Oneida's mission, growing mentally, physically, socially and spiritually."

Clay graduated third in his class and plans to become an English teacher.

Oneida Baptist Institute

ANNUAL OFFERING

This is the twelfth year for Kentucky Baptist churches to observe the Father's Day Offering for Oneida Baptist Institute.

FUNDING

Approximately 9 percent of Oneida's funding comes from the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

35 percent comes from student fees.

The remaining 56 percent comes from income from our modest investments, churches, and individuals who choose to invest in the lives of young people. These gifts are the financial backbone of our ministry.

International student sixth from his family to graduate from OBI

Binyam is an international student from Ethiopia. He lost count of how many of his eleven siblings have attended this school, but said "at least five have graduated from OBI."

When he was old enough, he followed suit. "I wanted to be independent. I couldn't do that in Ethiopia, so I came here."

When it came time to pack, Binyam said he almost changed his mind.

"I didn't want to leave my mom, but I wanted to show my dad I could be an independent person," he said.

He followed through with his plans and enrolled at OBI as a sophomore.

Binyam found Oneida to be very close to what his brothers and sisters had told him.

One of the benefits of boarding

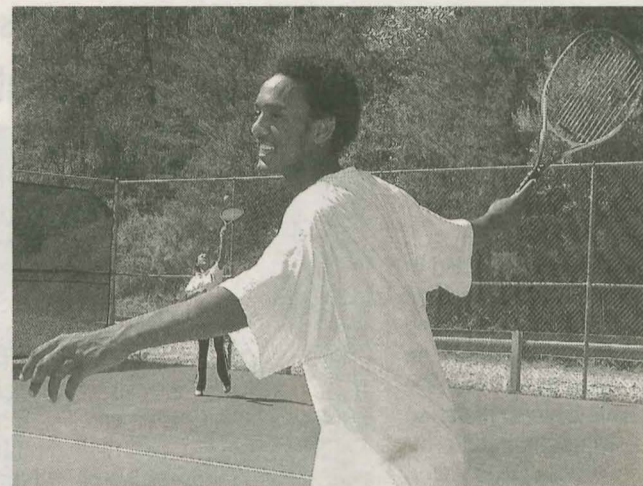
school that Binyam enjoyed was being able to concentrate more on his studies without so many "outside influences." Graduating in the top ten of the class, Binyam said, "I would not have had such good grades at home."

Binyam learned leadership skills as a supervisor on his after-school cleaning crew. "It helps kids be better workers in the future, because they learned to work well with their peers. If you're the supervisor, you have to be strict and not be intimidated by your peers," he said.

Binyam also enjoyed two seasons each of basketball and tennis and one season of soccer at Oneida. "It was nice playing with your friends in an organized way," he said.

OBI soccer coach Scott Self re-

Binyam enjoyed spending time with friends on sports teams.



called, "My experience with Binyam was nothing but pleasant. He was a true gentleman, quiet and reserved.

He was definitely an example for the rest of the boys, especially international boys, here at Oneida to follow."

Nichole turns to education and to God for a better life

Nichole came to Oneida halfway through her junior year from central Kentucky. She said that growing up,



Nichole's grades improved with the help of the OBI Tutoring Lab and a dictionary.

"I moved around a lot. I was tossed from home to home. I wasn't in school very much." Nichole was very far behind in her basic academic skills, especially reading.

When Nichole got in some trouble in high school, she was told about OBI as an educational alternative. "I wanted a high school diploma and not a G.E.D., so I picked Oneida. I didn't know anything about this school, except that there was a farm and supposedly I would work on it," she said.

Nichole was pleasantly surprised on her first visit to OBI. "I thought this was just some rickety school out in the middle of nowhere, but when I saw it, I liked it and I was ready to go." One of her first roommates remained a close friend until graduation. "To me, the dorm was like a slumber party. You have friends you can hang out with, people you can talk to and

relate to," she said.

Nichole found daily chapel to be a place where "you can relax and refresh yourself spiritually." She attended church at home but said, "I had kind of drawn away from Him. Here, I got my life together and I grew closer to Him."

Though studying was difficult for Nichole, she buckled down and did her best. "I knew that education was my only way out of the life I was in," she said.

Her first semester, Nichole attended one period a day for one-on-one help with reading in the Tutoring Lab.

Her grades in all subjects began to climb as her reading skills improved. "When I studied, I would have the book in one hand and a dictionary in the other hand," Nichole said. Smaller classes made it easier for Nichole to feel comfortable asking questions.

"The teachers here make you feel good about yourself. When you're doing good, they tell you. When you need to do better, they give you ideas and ways to do it," she said.

Nichole explored many areas of interest in her short time at OBI, including farm work. She joined the OBI choir and played softball for two seasons. Most of her senior year, she worked after school in the campus grill. She also became the FFA president.

Softball coach Charlotte Craxton was impressed with Nichole's determination in every area of her life. "God has given her so many different talents, and she was always working hard. If Nichole had something in her mind that she wanted to do, no matter what obstacle stood in her way, she achieved it," Craxton said.

Nichole plans to attend college in Missouri.

Why do young people choose Oneida Baptist Institute?

- ◆ Some are struggling with academic setbacks.
- ◆ Others have been hurt by family conflicts and situations.
- ◆ Many need a change in peer group.
- ◆ Still others are seeking a distinctly Christian education.
- ◆ Often parents and grandparents are looking for a loving and structured environment for their teens.
- ◆ Young people enjoy the independence boarding school gives in preparation for college.

Karl experiences OBI as both "staff kid" and dorm student

Karl is a senior who first enrolled at OBI in the seventh grade, when his parents joined the OBI staff.

In 2004, Karl's family moved to western Kentucky, when his father took a ministry position at a church. Karl spent his junior year at a new school but returned to OBI because of complications with graduation requirements.

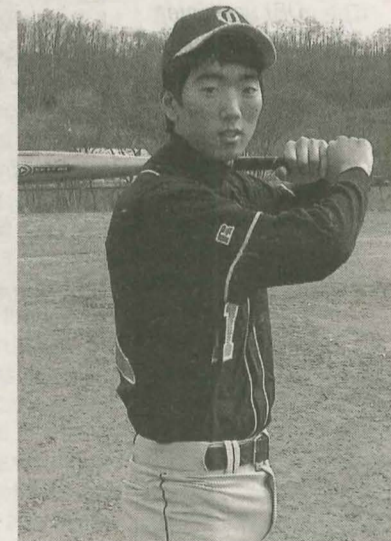
Karl enjoyed the opportunity to return to Oneida, where he could reconnect with coaches, teachers and friends as well as play a variety of sports. "I didn't have to worry about making the team or getting cut, and I would have a chance to play," he explained.

Before his move away from Oneida, he had been involved in OBI soccer, cross country, basketball and baseball. In addition to lettering in each of his sports, Karl earned the

Coach's award and the 110 Percent award in baseball his sophomore year.

As a senior, Karl lettered in cross country, basketball and baseball. He earned the 110 Percent award in cross country. OBI baseball coach Mike Waslewski had this to say about Karl: "I am so glad Karl returned his senior year. He was an inspiration to the baseball team with his zeal and dedication. Karl will be a leader in whatever field he chooses to enter."

Karl would like to have a career in law enforcement. He plans to major in political science with a minor in religious studies. He is honored to be the recipient of the Skiles B. Harris scholarship, a four-year college scholarship for an OBI graduate to attend Western Kentucky University. "I've enjoyed being at OBI. It's helped me a lot," Karl said.



Karl enjoyed the chance to play a variety of sports without fear of tryouts or being cut.

Oneida Baptist Institute

Felisha flourishes as campus leader



Softball was just one of many activities Felisha joined in six years at OBI.

Felisha is one of our "long-termers" who attended OBI for six years. She is from Ohio and enrolled in summer school just before seventh grade. "My Grandma thought I was hanging around with the wrong crowd. They were a lot older than I was. When I got involved in stuff I should not have been, she sent me here," Felisha said. It took a while for Felisha, twelve at the time, to adjust to living in a dormitory and finding her way around campus. It was difficult for her to not have her grandmother to tell her what to do. OBI houseparents and older girls filled in to help Felisha with daily chores or conflicts. "I got used to it, and then it was fun. The girls in the dorm called me 'little sister,'" Felisha

recalled.

Following in the footsteps of older OBI students, Felisha found the benefits of cocurricular involvement within her first year. "You're able to get to know people outside your dorm, and sports gives you the chance to get off campus," she said. She played softball and volleyball each for six years and was a cheerleader in grades 9-12. She was also a member of the yearbook staff and Student Government Association each year of high school.

Felisha was also a big help in the dorm as a hall monitor, late night study hall supervisor, dining hall clerk and office aid.

Though she was busy, Felisha did not shirk her academic responsibilities. She graduated in the top ten of the class. "I learned to manage my time and do my homework whenever and wherever," she said.

Daily chapel helped Felisha to keep God as a focal point of her life. "I was more interested and open to Christianity, because of the way it was presented. Mr. Spencer and the worship team know how to relate to teenagers," Felisha said.

Dean of Students Judy Lawson watched as Felisha grew from a "timid little girl into a true Oneida success story." She noted that during Felisha's senior year, she was called upon to lead campus tours. "Felisha is a girl who expresses a sincere appreciation for the staff and the many opportunities she has been given here. We grew to love and depend on her in the dorm," Lawson said.

Chris chose OBI for the opportunities

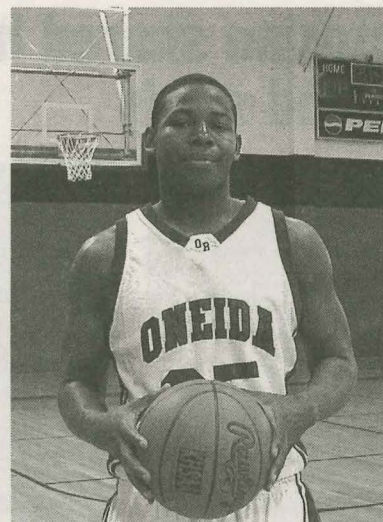
Chris enrolled at OBI as a sophomore from Michigan. His father is in the military and was being transferred out of the country for one year. He wanted an alternative to Chris living with his grandmother during that time. A coworker told him about Oneida.

Chris did not like the idea of attending OBI at first, but he promised his family he would stay. "I didn't get too comfortable, because I knew I would only be here a year," he said.

Chris did not realize that joining the OBI basketball team would give him the desire to stay at Oneida until graduation. When he joined the team in tenth grade, he recalls, "I was very overweight. I lost a lot of weight playing." As he developed playing skills and got in shape, he also formed a close bond with his coach and teammates. Knowing he would get to play a lot more the next season, Chris said, "I decided to stick with it to enjoy myself and to better myself."

His junior and senior years, Chris joined the track team in addition to basketball. He found that sports involvement "keeps your mind off a lot of things." He earned the Most Improved award in basketball his junior year and the Coach's award as a senior.

When he was not busy with sports, Chris worked on the night cleaning crew in the dorm and was



Joining basketball was a key to Chris' success at Oneida.

quickly promoted to supervisor. OBI houseparent Suzi Garrett appreciated his dependability in the dorm. "I have worked with Chris as long as he has been at OBI. He can step into any situation and become a leader. When I asked him to help with anything in the dorm, I knew it would be done well," she said.

Chris has always been a good student, but at OBI he said, "It's better, because you can talk to your teachers in school and after school, too." He plans to study engineering in college.

Chris is glad he decided to stay at OBI. "It was a good opportunity to keep my mind straight and to keep me off the streets. My whole family is proud that I stayed here," he said.

A FEW MORE FACTS

- ◆ Our average enrollment is 325.
- ◆ We have approximately 150 full-time faculty and staff.
- ◆ Our classrooms have an average 1:11 teacher/student ratio.
- ◆ Oneida has a 700-acre campus which includes a 200-acre farm. We have a full agriculture program.
- ◆ Our student body consists of young people from the local community, across the state of Kentucky, the United States and around the world.
- ◆ We accept students throughout the year.
- ◆ OBI provides Christian education at an affordable rate.

EDUCATION FOR TIME AND ETERNITY

Every school deals with the mind of man, but few, like Oneida, minister to the soul as well. Day after day, our students hear the gospel message. Each year, many boys and girls make positive decisions of eternal significance.

WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT THE OFFERING

- ◆ Make sure your church has received our box of offering materials.
- ◆ Offer to take charge of displaying posters and distributing brochures in your church.
- ◆ Tell others about the Oneida ministry.
- ◆ Pray for a successful offering.

Jessica finds freedom to worship at Oneida

OBI international students Jessica (second from left) and Anu, a 2005 OBI graduate, shared their testimonies at a KBC missions committee meeting. The girls posed with friends in the OBI dormitory before the event.



Jessica is an international student from Saudi Arabia. "It was my dream to come to America," she said. Her family is Indian, and many families in her culture try to send their children to the United States to be educated when they reach high school. Jessica was the first in her family to have this privilege.

Jessica led a very restricted life in Saudi Arabia. Being outside without a male escort was dangerous. Besides school time, Jessica was rarely out-

side her home.

Saudi laws prohibited any religious activity apart from Islam. Jessica's family, like many Indian families, were Hindus. Hindus did not meet together but worshiped small idols in their houses. Her father learned about secret Christian meetings from a man at work.

Seeing the Christian gatherings as an opportunity to be out of the house, Jessica and her siblings were allowed to attend, escorted by their

father's coworker. "That's where we learned about God," Jessica said. Within her immediate family, Christian beliefs were tolerated as long as Hindu and Indian customs were respected.

Jessica was a freshman when she asked her parents if she could attend an American school. She arrived at her first American school as a sophomore. She found herself alone among students from many other cultures and noted, "There was no Christian fellowship."

Feeling isolated and lonely, Jessica was scared when she became ill and even lost hearing in one ear. She had no choice but to lean on God during this time.

By the time Jessica returned home, she had recovered. Her parents agreed that her next school could be a Christian school. Her father found Oneida Baptist Institute on the internet. Her first day at OBI as a junior in the fall of 2004 was praise and worship day in chapel. "It was the first time in my life I saw people praising God without any fear of being caught by the police. I had tears in my eyes," she said. Jessica submerged

herself in all the Christian activities on campus including the Baptist Campus Ministry group, Wednesday night discipleship class and the OBI choir.

In the spring of 2004, Jessica had the privilege of sharing her testimony at the state convention of the Kentucky WMU. "I was really nervous, [but] once I saw their faces and reactions, their tears and smiles... it was just wonderful," Jessica said. This year, she spoke at a KBC bi-annual missions committee meeting.

Kay Underwood is OBI's admissions director for international students. She described Jessica as "extremely kind" and "very sensitive to others' feelings." She added, "Jessica loves the Lord with all her heart and hopes to always be a strong witness to others about what God has done for her."

Jessica is salutatorian of the senior class and plans to become a "missionary doctor" to poor countries. "I'm kind of surprised everything has gone so fast! Trusting in God has helped me so much. His guidance brought me to Oneida, and it was wonderful," she said.

Oneida Baptist Institute

OBI's valedictorian shared her faith in work and study



Jennifer helped the K-3 faculty and staff children with their reading at her senior Field Placement job.

Jennifer heard about OBI from people at her church in central Kentucky. "They said it was a Christian school that had lots of opportunities," she said. Jennifer agreed to visit OBI with a group from her church, and what she saw made her want to enroll as a student. "I loved everything about it, even the dorm rooms. I liked that you could go to church every day. I felt like God wanted me to be here," she said.

She enrolled as a junior, and found that she would need to exercise patience in the dorm. "Living with people was kind of hard. I was expecting they would all be Christians. I had to get used to people sometimes arguing and not getting along," she said. She was able to find plenty of Christian friends to help her on stressful days.

During her two years at OBI, Jennifer played volleyball and tennis, earning top awards in both sports. She also experienced a variety of jobs including the wax crew, kitchen and the farm. One of her after school jobs last year was tutoring four middle school students during evening study hall. "I loved that job," she said.

Jennifer was surprised to be named the recipient of the Brad Dorough Friendship award at the end of eleventh grade. This award provided a full scholarship to Jennifer for her senior year. It is the only major award voted on by

Oneida students. Jennifer said, "I guess they thought I was really nice to them, but I didn't expect anyone to notice! I was just trying to do what God wanted me to do and treat people the way I'd want to be treated."

OBI's Dean of Girls, Billie Faye Hoover, noticed Jennifer's kind treatment of others in the dorm. She said, "Jennifer is a solid Christian who was always willing to share her faith with others and help students with their schoolwork or personal issues."

Jennifer enrolled in the Field Placement program her senior year. She enjoyed the chance to work with children for one period a day. She was assigned to the OBI daycare for staff and faculty children, but she spent most of the year as a teacher's aid in the kindergarten-third grade classroom.

"Jennifer is an incredible young lady," said K-3 teacher Beverly Scull. "She put in many after school hours helping me organize the classroom."

Jennifer believes God brought her to Oneida to "grow as a person and meet different kinds of people." She also benefited from OBI's caring teachers. "They not only care about your schooling but also your spiritual life," she said. Graduating as this year's valedictorian, she plans to major in education in college.

A day at Oneida

Morning: Students get up, clean their rooms, and must be in class on time.

At school: Young people may take a variety of classes. High school students can choose a college or vocational track of study.

Chapel time: Each school day, our entire student body and faculty join for a time of worship.

Afternoon: As the school day ends, an afternoon of jobs, sports and other activities begins.

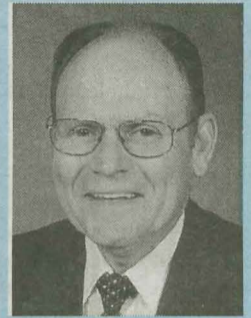
Evening: "Free time" is a chance to visit with friends in our recreational facilities.

Study hall: All students not on the honor roll attend nightly study hall.

Night-time: Students do evening chores and get ready for another day.

Paying attention makes a difference

One of the most common statements from our students is, "Teachers at Oneida pay more attention to me and give me the additional help I need." Far too many students do not get the attention they need in the classroom. This is often not the fault of the teacher or even the system; it is just reality. Overcrowded classes are not new to the public school system. Additionally, students' personal problems at home frequently filter into the classroom, creating problems for the teacher and the students. Seemingly, teachers and school systems have fewer and fewer options in dealing with those distractions. Often, after years of not getting the attention that is needed, students simply give up. If failing grades were not bad enough, many of those students decide to drop out of school. Without the benefit of a high school education, finding success after school is very doubtful.



W.F. Underwood

Our teachers can make a difference because we purposely keep the number of students in each class to a manageable level, normally about 11 students per class. Oneida takes a no-nonsense approach to discipline. Students know what to expect from us and what is expected of them. We certainly do not mind giving a new student time to adjust and time to get settled in, but when the time for adjusting is over, our students know we expect them to take advantage of the opportunities we provide to them.

We know all that extra attention pays off! We are very proud of those students who are able to turn failing grades into grades that earn them honor roll status. This is often a tremendous challenge for our students and our teachers. However, given time and patience, we do make a difference. The gifts of our faithful friends are an investment in the future of these students. With your support through the Father's Day Offering, the patience of our teachers and the blessings of God, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of young people.

—Dr. W. F. Underwood (OBI '63)
President, Oneida Baptist Institute

"My journey was just beginning"

Dear Friends,

To all of you who have supported Oneida over the years, I want to say thank you. Thank you from all of us. Your prayers and contributions are a vital part of this ministry. We are all a part of this branch in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for this opportunity to tell you how God used Oneida to steer a teenage boy, desperate for love and purpose, back onto the road home to Heaven. Today I serve the Lord at Oneida because of what I learned as a student here. I can only hope that I can be the same example for someone today.

As a student, I came to Oneida not knowing Christ. While here, I heard about Him every day. My family life was troubled, and I had turned to worldly things to fill that emptiness. I felt so unimportant. God, in His great mercy, led me to this place. I began to watch and listen to the staff and faculty here. I often wondered, "Is God real? Does He really love me? Is there meaning to this life, and where do I belong in it?"

After being here for about a year and a half, I decided to ask Jesus to save me. One of the main reasons for my decision was that I could not deny that I had seen Him alive in the lives of the people around me every day. I wanted their peace and happiness. I knew they loved me, so surely God must love me also. I stayed at Oneida another year and a half as a Christian. My life changed as I began to follow Christ. I made great friends who are still my friends today. I achieved things I never thought of even trying before. Graduating alone was something I had thought I would never do. I had discovered I was important, and I had a purpose in this life. My journey was just beginning.

Over the years I have experienced many trials and many good things in my life. I can't tell you how many times God has used some conversation or event I had at Oneida to help me through some of those situations. And He still does today.

I never thought of coming back here to work. I did have a desire to help kids in some way as I was helped. I wondered about being some kind of foreign missionary, traveling the world. One day God put the desire in my heart to come back to Oneida and work for a while—and that was 20 years ago. Today, as I work with these kids, I am reminded even more of my student life at Oneida. I pray that God will use me to be a friend, parent or brother, to show them how He loves them as He showed me.

God continues to use Oneida. Everyone I work with inspires me. God has each of them doing a special work in some teenager's life here today. How blessed I am to have such friends to work with. What stories they could tell you of what God is doing with their lives.

My life was changed because of the work God is doing at Oneida. My life was changed because of the people who support Oneida. And now God is using my life to make a difference in someone else's life. This is His unfailing love.

—B. J. White (OBI '82)
Boys' houseparent

Oneida: near, dear and clear

Father's Day offering helps Oneida impact young lives

I agree with Barlow Mann, of the Sharpe Co.: "People give to charitable organizations that are near, dear and clear to them."

Certainly Oneida Baptist Institute is a charitable organization that is near, dear and clear to us Kentucky Baptists.

Although Oneida might be far from where you live geographically, I trust it is "near" to you emotionally. It stays close to me as I read in its newsletter the stories and testimonials of how students' lives are being touched, as I periodically log on its Web site at www.oneidaschool.org, and by an annual visit to the campus. If you can't get to the campus, invite an OBI speaker to come to your church.

Oneida is "dear" to us because it's part of our larger Kentucky Baptist family of Great Commission service ministries. It's "dear" because it's unique in its mission of connecting students, grades 6 to 12, to Jesus Christ.

Not only is its mission unique, it's also "clear." You can be comfortable and confident in supporting it because you know exactly

whom and how it serves and the nature of its mission, which includes education and evangelism.

Oneida is making a difference in the lives of young people through academics, spiritual life, co-curricular activities and work. As a school, it strives to assure that every student succeeds. Bible study and worship are part of the daily schedule. Every student is encouraged to be involved in activities such as BSU, choir, athletics, band and drama. Students are expected to work in some capacity, which teaches them good work habits, skills and self-respect.

As we approach Father's Day and the Barkley Moore Offering for Oneida, let me encourage you not only to give through this offering, but also to consider a legacy giving opportunity that would perpetuate beyond your lifetime your financial support of this special ministry, which is near, dear and clear to you.

For assistance call us toll-free, or call OBI President Bud Underwood at (606) 847-4111, ext. 202.

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

KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

Kudzu

Doug Marlette



For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Bible Crosswords

Evelyn M. Boyington

Across

- 1 Cut
- 7 "He fell into a ____" (Acts 10:10)
- 13 Declares
- 14 "The son of Geber, in ____-gilead" (1 Kings 4:13)
- 15 Jesus' birthplace
- 17 Exist
- 19 The number of commandments God gave Moses
- 20 "____, every one that thirsteth" (Isaiah 55:1)
- 22 Animal that Christ rode on Palm Sunday
- 24 Depend on others' money
- 26 "Whether it be good or ____" (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- 27 Activity
- 29 "Then an ____ cried aloud" (Daniel 3:4)
- 31 Pertaining to air, prefix
- 32 "God hath given ____ unto your brethren" (Joshua 22:4)
- 33 Hastens
- 35 "The seed is ____ under their clods" (Joel 1:17)
- 37 Vigor
- 38 "____ died without children" (1 Chronicles 2:30)
- 40 When you think you'll get there, abbr.
- 41 Three feet, abbr.
- 43 Relative, abbr.
- 45 Part of the blood that carries iron, abbr.
- 46 "The Lord fulfil all thy ____" (Psalms 20:5)
- 50 "This Agar is Mount Sinai in ____" (Galatians 4:25)
- 52 "We have had ____ to eat" (2 Chronicles 31:10)

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50	51							52			53	54
55								56				

- 55 "The ____ is not dead, but sleepeth" (Mark 5:39)
 - 56 "Thou shalt utterly ____ it" (Deuteronomy 7:26)
- Down**
- 1 Verb of being
 - 2 The Bible's new covenant, abbr.
 - 3 Taxi
 - 4 Article
 - 5 Place
 - 6 Mehir was the father of ____ (1 Chronicles 4:11)
 - 7 "He made a ____ about the altar" (1 Kings 18:32)
 - 8 Cheer
 - 9 "Surely I come quickly. ____" (Revelation 22:20)
 - 10 Name, Fr.
 - 11 Massachusetts' neighbor
 - 12 Questioning noise
 - 16 Man's name
 - 17 Sheep noise
 - 18 "There ____ not a man of them" (1 Samuel 30:17)
 - 20 "I will save her that ____" (Ephesians 3:19)
 - 21 "The ____ number of them is to be redeemed" (Numbers 3:48)
 - 23 Sharply inclined
 - 24 Emotions

- 25 "They should not return to ____" (Matthew 2:12)
- 26 Sew quickly
- 28 Anger
- 30 Return, abbr.
- 33 "Who came in privily to ____ out our liberty" (Galatians 2:4)
- 34 Appearing in consecutive parts
- 35 "They ____ upon the Lord God of their fathers" (2 Chronicles 13:18)
- 36 Seize for arrest
- 39 "I will ____ you go" (Exodus 8:28)
- 42 "Their ____ shall not become garments" (Isaiah 59:6)
- 44 Nautical mile
- 46 Girl's nickname
- 47 "____ them about thy neck" (Proverbs 6:21)
- 48 "The Lord our God is ____ Lord" (Mark 12:29)
- 49 "If any man will ____ thee at the law" (Matthew 5:40)
- 50 Commercial, abbr.
- 51 Radium, chem. symbol
- 53 Organization for young females, abbr.
- 54 Altitude, abbr.

Last week's solution

1	F	O	R	E	H	E	A	D	H	A	N	D
10	C	I	E	N	A	V	E	L				
12	N	E	B	E	A	C	H	M	P	H		
15	G	A	S	L	L	A	M	A	O			
18	E	N	E	E	E	I	I	O	R			
22	R	E	D	G	E	A	C	T	I	O	N	
26	B	Y			X	V						
29	T	E	E	T	H							
36	S	H	O	U	L	D	E	R				
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49	U	S	B	E	S	S	B	A	A			
52	E	T	C	A	M	H	E	A	D	W		

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- ◆ Contact Allen Harrod at (859) 626-5731

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More churches consider elders over democratic model

"In Frankfort, if a senator or a representative wants to kill something they take it to a committee."

Jeff Eaton, pastor of Hope Community Church in Lawrenceburg

Continued from page 1

Leonard said early American Baptist confessions of faith reinforce this perspective.

"For these early Baptists, the authority of Christ was mediated through the congregation of believers," he said. "A part of what we mean when we say Baptists are a 'believers' church' is that the authority of Christ was not mediated through the bishop, not through the presbytery, but through the congregation of believers."

Leonard links the growth of elder rule to three factors.

"It's a legitimate frustration with the messiness of congregational polity," he said, citing such landmines as voting children members, church discipline, and the "inability of churches to blend discipleship and church membership."

"When congregationalism works, it's wonderful. When it doesn't, it's terrible," he said.

"I think it's also the growing influence of Calvinism and the rise of ministerial authority from a fundamentalist perspective," he added.

In Louisville, Pitts said elder-rule churches are still in the vast minority in the association.

But among newly formed churches applying for membership, most have an elder form of governance.

Pitts traces it back to many church starters' training at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

"Somewhere at the seminary, that's being presented, and the students are coming away with the idea that that's the best polity."



Churches started with elder rule appear to be operating smoothly, he said, but efforts to change an existing congregational church to elder-rule can meet resistance.

"I know of two churches that have had serious problems trying to switch."

Recently some members of a Memphis church hosted meetings and sponsored a Web site to derail their pastor's attempt to transition the church to having elders.

Ultimately, members of Germantown Baptist Church rejected the proposal by a vote of 1,542-2,183.

Seeking spiritual counsel

At Living Hope in Bowling Green, some members left the church after it switched from congregational authority to elder rule, according to Executive Pastor Scott Kilgore.

But Kilgore and Johnson said most members responded positively after the church held an extended time of study and conversation about the subject.

Johnson said he considered

elders when he found that the church was growing and facing more complex issues at the same time when fewer people were attending church business meetings.

"And what we found is that some of the people who were attending those meetings were people who had not spent any time in prayer or searching the Scripture or fasting or even in discussion of the issue," he said. "It was not that they were bad people at all. It was that they were hearing many of the issues for the first time and making decisions on a whim."

As a result, he said, he began studying Scripture to see how New Testament churches made decisions.

He said his studies led him to believe that the words pastor, elder and bishop were used interchangeably.

"Same role with a triad of functions," he said. "And in the New Testament, it seems clear to me that there was a plurality of those people in a congregation."

A voice but not a vote

A couple of years later when Jeff Eaton was starting Hope Community Church in Lawrenceburg, Living Hope in Bowling Green provided some of the startup funds and influenced Eaton's decision to have elders.

"I needed an accountability group," Eaton said, adding that the elders would meet with him weekly to plan or assess where the church was and where it was headed.

Eight years later, Eaton said he prefers elders to the democratic model.

"I don't want to be in a congregational authority driven church," he said. "Because I see churches making decisions that are not based on the movement of the Holy Spirit and the movement of the Lord."

Eaton acknowledges that Hope Community Church might be susceptible to the same error, but adds that the elder system is more responsive for a church that's trying to "move at the speed of Jesus."

"People have a voice, they don't have a vote," he said. "I just know that in Frankfort, if a senator or a representative wants to kill something they take it to a committee."

Historical shift

Leonard said Baptists should recognize congregational authority, historically, is "one of the things that makes a Baptist church, as opposed to a Presbyterian church."

"As early as 1612 one of those first confessions of faith makes clear that the authority of Christ is mediated through the congregation," he said.

Both the 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message state that the scriptural offices of the church are pastor and deacon. It makes no mention of elders.

Leonard said he supposes its possible to have a Presbyterian form of church government and "still be somewhat Baptist," particularly by holding to the belief in baptism by immersion only for professing Christians.

"For me personally, I think you're on thin ice, historically. But the spectrum of Baptist identity is so wide that it's probably possible."

Paying attention does make a difference

Father's Day offering brings support for Oneida's ministry to young students

Father's Day is not only a special day to remember our fathers, it is also a day Kentucky Baptists have set aside to consider the unique ministry of Oneida Baptist Institute. Kentucky Baptists will have the opportunity to receive an offering to help continue the special ministry Oneida provides to young people who need the attention we give.

We know we make a difference in the lives of young people because our students tell us over and over how much Oneida has helped them. Let me share a few quotes from some of our 2006 graduates. The first is from our valedictorian: "When I attended the public school, it was easy to hang around with the 'wrong' crowd and that's exactly what I did. ... I chose to stay and graduate from Oneida because

I love the people here and I have learned more about life every single day." Another senior wrote, "If I had to sum up my life at Oneida, I would probably say that it was like the roads that surround it. Though filled with bumps and potholes, and in some places all you can see is the cliff, it's nothing you can't handle and it gets you where you need to be." One of our senior girls had been experiencing some difficult times. She wrote, "I had recently dropped out of school ... and it was mostly my need to come to Oneida. When I came here, I was a very unhappy person. ... All of my dreams (had) seemed to disappear. But when I was informed that I would be able to attend Oneida, it was like my dreams had a fresh breath of life breathed into them again." Another student wrote, "Before I came to Oneida, my grade

point average had always been a B. I was careless about my academic career and achievements. But by competing with many other students, I was encouraged to try harder and to challenge myself. The hard work brought my grades up to the 'All A' honor roll most of the time."

All of the above comments came from students who ranked in the top 10 of their class. The following comments are from students who were struggling with failing grades. "Before I came to Oneida my grades were mostly D's and F's. Now I am on the honor roll." "Oneida has really helped me academically, especially since I was making really low grades at my old school. ... I try harder and study a lot more here, both in study hall and at night in my room." "Going from a block schedule in school to having seven classes a day was a major change for me. I thought it would be harder than public school. But it wasn't because at Oneida there are smaller classes and you get more individual help. The tutoring lab also helped me. The teachers were willing to help me, and all I had to do was ask. ... I have honestly learned the value of an 'Education for Time and Eternity.'"

We not only help make a difference with grades but with social skills, too. One shy senior wrote, "Before coming to Oneida I was very antisocial, I just didn't trust anyone, and I never wanted to talk to anyone. With the help of some of my teachers ... at Oneida I have learned to trust people and how to communicate with others." Oneida can and does make a difference, but we can only make a difference with your support!

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Clear Creek in Hall of Fame

School recognized by Mountain Laurel Festival

On Memorial Day weekend, Pineville hosted the 76th Mountain Laurel Festival. The festival started in 1931 to honor Thomas Walker, the first white explorer to enter Kentucky. The festival features "Kentucky's loveliest young ladies from colleges and universities across the commonwealth."

The KMLF queen receives a laurel crown, usually bestowed by Kentucky's governor, in the natural amphitheater of Pine Mountain State Park. The queen's court descends limestone steps surrounded by cliffs blooming with white and pink mountain laurel. After the crowning, the crowd sings "My Old Kentucky Home." The festival is known as "America's Best Outdoor Beauty Pageant."

At the Friday night dinner for the KMLF board of directors, Clear Creek was inducted into the KMLF Hall of Fame. This recognizes our longtime community service involvement with the festival. The first festival was held at Clear Creek Springs, the campground launched in 1924 by Pineville pastor L.C. Kelly. Darlys Warren, 2005-06 KMLF president, served

on Clear Creek's faculty during 1988-91, the last three years as academic dean.

On Friday evening, Clear Creek hosts the Queen's Dinner, honoring the reigning queen. For many years employees in the physical plant and business offices have prepared the mountain laurel arrangements for the queen's court. This year

the chairperson was Vickie Washam, wife of the director of maintenance and facilities. On Thursday the grounds crew canvasses campus woods for white and pink blooms; they are kept fresh in water containers overnight. The arrangements are completed on Friday for the Saturday crowning.

This year several students staffed a courthouse lawn exhibit, distributing free Bibles and sharing salvation tracts. Prayer requests left by festival visitors were attached to a large wooden cross.

One of our institutional objectives is to "initiate and maintain cooperative relationships," and a core value commits us to "the priority of personal evangelism." Through the festival we seek to give a positive witness for Christ.

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

AIDS spending splits Robertson, Dobson

By Daniel Burke
Religion News Service

Washington (RNS)—Focus on the Family founder James Dobson and religious broadcaster Pat Robertson might agree on many things, but one thing they don't agree on is how the U.S. government should spend money to fight AIDS.

As the world marks 25 years since HIV and AIDS first appeared, a clash among high-profile evangelical leaders over an international relief foundation threatens to take center stage.

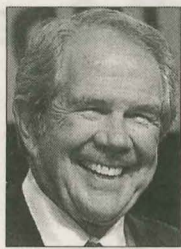
The dispute also lays bare a fault-line among American evangelicals, who have been divided over the treatment and prevention of AIDS because of the disease's perceived connections to homosexuality and sexual promiscuity.

The clash, which centers on the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, might have long-term ramifications, both for those suffering with diseases and for the reputation of American evangelicals, activists said.

If the U.S. fails to extend help because of objections from conservative Christians, "we will look on this as a very mistaken time," said Tony Campolo, a prominent sociologist and Christian activist.

Since its founding in 2001, the Swiss-based Global Fund has spent \$2 billion on programs that offer medical treatment and education in 130 countries, according to a spokesperson. The U.S. government has provided 30 percent of the public-private foundation's finances through 2005, and appropriated \$445 million for 2006.

Some of the programs bankrolled through the Global Fund—such as those that distribute condoms to prostitutes or provide clean needles



Pat Robertson



James Dobson

to drug addicts—have drawn fire from conservative evangelicals. Many conservatives favor President Bush's policy of abstinence and emphasis on fidelity in marriage.

After the Senate passed a non-binding budget amendment last March to increase the U.S. contribution to the Global Fund to \$866 million in 2007, Dobson lambasted the international foundation, saying it promotes "legalized prostitution and all kinds of wickedness around the world."

As the House debates a foreign spending bill this week that would maintain the current \$445 million to the Global Fund next year, Dobson's Focus on the Family ministry has turned up the heat.

Evangelicals on both sides

A five-page letter addressed to lawmakers criticizes the Global Fund's board of directors, its spending habits and its "social marketing" of condoms "to the near exclusion of abstinence and faithfulness." The letter is signed by Dobson and representatives from 29 other conservative organizations, such as Shepherd Smith of the Institute for Youth Development and former presidential candidate Gary Bauer of American Values.

But not all evangelicals are siding with Dobson.

The Global Fund released its own

letter on May 24 that quoted Scripture, detailing the foundation's accomplishments and listing supportive signatures of prominent Christian leaders, including Call to Renewal founder Jim Wallis, Campolo and Pat Robertson.

Interview requests with Robertson, CEO of the Christian Broadcasting Network, were declined.

"Robertson would be the first to admit that we don't agree on many issues. But there are certain issues that get people together all across the theological spectrum and this is one of them," said Campolo, who heads the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education.

Campolo said he was surprised Dobson has spoken so forcefully against the Global Fund when "it's a minute portion of the funding that would cause any objection in the evangelical community."

In fact, the Global Fund financially supports more than 70 faith-based organizations, including the Salvation Army, Youth for Christ, and World Vision, a Christian relief agency based in the United States.

Focusing on "narrow" and contentious issues—such as condom distribution—dismisses and distracts from "all the good work the Global Fund is doing for suffering people," said Jenny Eaton Dyer, national faith outreach director for DATA, an organization co-founded by U2 frontman Bono that is dedicated to eradicating disease and poverty in Africa.

Paul Hetrick, a spokesman for Dobson's ministry in Colorado Springs, Colo., said Dobson would rather see money funneled to a Bush administration program that stresses abstinence.

"We're just concerned," he said, "about government programs where abstinence is given short shrift."

Kentucky ranks among most conservative states

Washington (BP)—Kentucky is among the most conservative states in America based on laws pertaining to homosexuality and abortion, according to a ranking released last week by three liberal advocacy groups meant to "encourage action against discriminatory legislation."

New Mexico and New York are tied as the most liberal states as ranked by "Mapping Our Rights" project by Ipas, an international abortion rights group, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective.

States were assigned scores based on more than 20 indicators such as restrictions on abortion,

recognition of same-sex partnerships and the availability of the "morning-after pill."

Ohio and South Dakota are tied as the most conservative states, largely due to their restrictions on abortion.

Though the advocacy groups in charge of the rankings would characterize states at the bottom of the list as the worst possible places to live, some in those states are quite pleased with their status.

"I'd have been disappointed if we'd finished any higher than last," state Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, a Republican from Watertown, S.D., told Associated Press. Ohio State Rep. Bill Seitz, a Republican, expressed

a similar opinion. His state has passed several bills restricting access to abortion, and in 2004 Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment banning "gay marriage" and all forms of legal recognition for same-sex couples.

Following New Mexico and New York in the Top 10 most liberal states are New Jersey, Washington, California, Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Hawaii, according to the rankings.

In addition to Ohio and South Dakota, the 10 most conservative states are Indiana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Kentucky, Utah, Nebraska and Missouri.

Latest 'Left Behind' book speculating on who makes it into heaven

Nashville (RNS)—The "Left Behind" apocalyptic thriller series is predicting some of the celebrities of the Christian faith who are—or will be—in heaven.

"The Rapture," the latest novel in the series that was released last week, depicts heavenly citizens ranging from the Apostle Paul to evangelist Billy Graham. Graham, 87, is still alive.

Those given a literary place in heaven include the late Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for

Christ; Dwight L. Moody, founder of Moody Bible Institute; hymn writer Fanny Crosby; John and Betty Stam, martyred missionaries to China; and Ken Taylor, founder of Tyndale House Publishers.

"We are sometimes accused of painting a violent, negative picture of God," said Tim LaHaye, who with co-author Jerry Jenkins has written the best-selling series.

"Jerry and I want to communicate that the real story of 'Left Behind' is about hope and our merciful God.

We felt that it was important to the overall story to show the unseen and convey how God's promises fulfilled may look."

Tyndale House, the publisher of the series, said the new book incorporates "snapshot scenes from heaven" that show the well-known and the unrecognized "receiving their crowns in heaven."

"The Rapture" portrays the belief that Christians will be carried away to heaven before a period of tribulation.

Ex-UN official: Humanitarian aid is best weapon against terror

By Ken Camp
Texas Baptist Standard

Dallas (ABP)—Humanitarian aid is the most potent weapon the United States can deploy against terrorism, veteran congressman Tony Hall said.

Providing food for one's enemies not only fulfills a basic teaching of Jesus Christ; it's also good foreign policy, said Hall, an evangelical Christian who served 12 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Hall recently completed a stint of more than three years as ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture in Rome.

"When we feed hungry people—and help them solve other problems—we create goodwill that can last for generations, cement alliances and make us safer in an often-dangerous world," he wrote in his new book, "Changing the Face of Hunger."

"To fight terrorists who label us the enemy of the poor and the oppressed, we must make clear that we are the poor and oppressed's best friend."

The world does not lack the food necessary to eliminate chronic hunger; it lacks the political and spiritual will to bring about change, he added in a phone interview conducted while on his book tour.

"We grow enough food to feed everybody," said Hall, a three-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. "We need more political will and more spiritual will. We need more people of faith involved."

In 1993, when Congress eliminated the House Select Committee on Hunger—which Hall had co-founded and chaired—he went on a highly publicized 22-day fast to raise awareness and express his solidarity with the world's hungry people.

Hall traces his intense commitment to justice for the poor and food for the hungry to an admonition by Mother Teresa of Calcutta and a question by a Christian mentor who helped disciple him.

When Hall asked Mother Teresa how she could hope to make any impact on the world's vast problems, she said, "You do the thing that is in front of you."

Bringing God into his workplace

And when Hall met in a small group of Christians in Washington, D.C., about two years after his conversion, one of them asked him, "Tony, don't you think it's time you brought God into your workplace?"

Hall initially resisted. "I didn't want to be seen as a politician who wears his religion on his sleeve," he explained.

But witnessing firsthand the pressing needs of hungry people in the United States and around the globe fueled Hall's passion for justice.

He visited famine-stricken Ethiopia, investigated human-rights abuses in Romania, traveled to North Korea six times to witness hunger in a Communist country closed to most American officials, and brokered a deal with Mu'ammarr al-Gadhafi so food from the United States could be trucked through Libya and delivered to refugees in Sudan and Chad.

Hall, an Ohio Democrat, bridged partisan politics to build alliances with colleagues such as Frank Wolf, a conservative Virginia Republican, who shared his concern for human rights and global security.

"We can put aside partisan differences by concentrating on the things we agree upon," he said.

Hall remains convinced issues of hunger and poverty can let most people of goodwill find common ground if they see for themselves the needs of hungry people—whether in a refugee camp on the other side of the world or at a homeless shelter in their own community.

"I've traveled to 120 nations," he said, "and I take people with me to show them, to educate them. I've taken politicians and businessmen to see the good and the bad—programs that work and programs that don't work."

People of different faiths and political philosophies recognize compassion as a virtue, he stressed. By approaching the problem from different perspectives, they offer a variety of solutions—governmental aid, personal charity, small loans to benefit micro-enterprise and health-care education to improve standards of living.

Christians, in particular, have a responsibility to meet human needs and become advocates for poor and hungry people, he said, noting the Bible includes more than 2,000 verses concerning the poor.

"If each of us just did the thing that is in front of us, that would take care of half the problems in the world."

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

By John Chowning

With the recent release of "The Da Vinci Code" movie, coupled with a host of summer activities, Christians have a number of opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

We will encounter people during our summer activities who might never have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, or whose interest in the Christian faith has been sparked by the movie's fictional claims.

The following plan of salvation, adapted in part from the tract, "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" offers a clear biblical perspective about repentance and salvation:

Acknowledge your sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

You must acknowledge that you are a sinner and that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ" (Romans 6:23).

Repent of your sin. "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19).

Repentance is essential. It is necessary to turn from sin to God.

Believe in Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Are you willing to accept by faith that Christ took your place on the cross? "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Make your decision. "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Believe in Jesus Christ and receive Him personally as Savior and Lord.

John Chowning, senior pastor of Saloma Baptist Church in Campbellsville, also is vice president for church and external relations at Campbellsville University

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **COLUMBIA**—Pierces Chapel Church ordained **David Karnes** and **Larry Thompson** as deacons June 4. **Williams Karnes** is pastor.

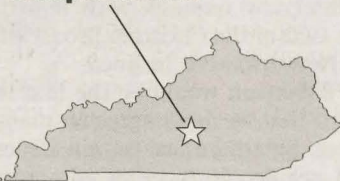
■ **COXS CREEK**—New Salem Church will host a sing-along and tea June 11, 2 p.m., in honor of **Jeff Clark**, a former youth minister at New Salem, and his family. The Clarks will travel to China this summer to teach English to campers at a university there. For more information, call **Nancy Crenshaw** at (502) 348-5608.

■ **HOPKINSVILLE**—**Will Stone**, pastor of Casky Church, graduated May 13 with a doctor of ministry degree from Liberty Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Va.

■ **WINCHESTER**—New Hope Church ordained **Doug Clem** as a deacon May 21.

Spotlight on ...

Campbellsville



Mount Gilboa Church will celebrate its 85th anniversary July 16, with morning worship at 10:30 a.m., dinner on the grounds and a 1:30 p.m. service featuring the vocal group **From the Heart**. For more information, call (270) 789-4808. **Fred Miller Jr.** is pastor.

More than 40 Kentuckians earn degrees from SBC seminaries

Louisville—More than 40 students with Kentucky ties received degrees May 19 from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Graduates, hometowns and degrees are:

Jonathan Akin, Louisville, advanced master of divinity.

Julie Bauscher, Louisville, master of divinity.

Richard Carwile, Bowling Green, master of divinity.

Mike Clark, Louisville, doctor of ministry.

Kyle Connell, Danville, master of arts in Christian education.

Samuel Conner, Louisville, master of arts in theological studies.

George Crabtree Jr., Franklin, master of divinity.

Adam Dooley, Berea, doctor of philosophy.

Darrick Erwin, Brandenburg, master of arts in Christian school administration.

Stacy Fickes, Barlow, master of

arts in Christian counseling.

Scott Gilbert, Somerset, advanced master of divinity.

Robert Gowins, Calvert City, doctor of education.

Michael Green, Louisville, master of arts in Christian education.

John Hale, Mount Vernon, master of divinity.

Matthew Hall, Louisville, master of divinity.

Jeremy Hatfield, Central City, master of divinity.

William Henard, Lexington, doctor of philosophy.

David Hicks, Radcliff, master of arts in missiology.

Scott Hughes, Auburn, master of arts in Christian education.

Nathan Joyce, Glendale, doctor of philosophy.

Glenn LaRue, Louisville, master of divinity.

Christian Lasley, Shepherdsville, master of divinity.

KBC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June

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.

23-24 Acteens Splash, Jonathan Creek.

23-24 Girls in Action Overnight, Jonathan Creek.

23-24 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Cedar Crest.

23-24 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Jonathan Creek.

24 Baptist Nursing Fellowship Summer Luncheon, Elizabethtown.

24-July 1 Kentucky Changers, Lawrenceburg.

July

1-4 Wrangler Trail Ride, Land Between the Lakes.

5-7 Express Mission Adventure Camp for Girls and Boys, Cedar Crest.

7-8 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Cedar Crest.

8-15 Kentucky Changers, Louisville.

10-14 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, Cedar Crest.

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

Jeffrey Moran, Corbin, master of arts in Christian education.

Joshua Moran, Corbin, master of divinity.

Deborah Morton, Louisville, master of divinity.

Sera Oh, Crestwood, master of divinity in worship.

James Outland, Hopkinsville, master of arts in worship.

Tony Peavler, Harrodsburg, master of divinity.

Erin Perry, Prospect, master of divinity in pastoral counseling.

Will Pierce, Glasgow, master of divinity.

Rachel Probst, Louisville, master of arts in Christian education.

Paul Proulx, Louisville, master of arts in theological studies.

Matthew Reynolds, Somerset, master of divinity.

Shannon Reynolds, Richmond, master of arts in missiology.

Matthew Riley, Flatwoods,

master of divinity.

Brian Robbins, Louisville, master of divinity.

Jason Robinson, Louisville, master of divinity.

Jayne Schweizer, Louisville, doctor of ministry.

Doug Whitaker, Somerset, master of divinity.

James White, Harrodsburg, master of divinity.

Kurtis Winters, Ballardsville, master of divinity.

Two Kentuckians graduated May 26 from Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.:

Jesse Frazer, Lynch, master of divinity.

Tanner Gordon Turley, Owensboro, master of divinity.

One Kentuckian graduated May 5 from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas:

Mark Mohler, Murray, master of divinity with biblical languages.

CLASSIFIED ADS

BOOKS: We buy quality used Christian books. Christian Book Nook, 2116 South Preston St., Louisville, Ky. (502) 637-8881.

FOR SALE: Cemetery lot (Resthaven, Louisville). Beautiful bronze section 8, lot 859, site 6. \$1,400. (859) 266-6830.

FOR SALE: Christian, Spanish and patriotic neckties; retail value: \$12-\$15; your cost: \$6; great fundraiser. Humor book: "500 Laughter Doeth Good Like a Medicine" \$8. (606) 285-3051.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister (grades 6-12) for Mexico Baptist Church in rural western Kentucky. Average Sunday school attendance: 135. Send resumé to MBC Youth Council, 175 Mexico Road, Marion, KY 42064, Attn: Brent Highfil, or call (270) 965-2149. brent.highfil@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Blood River Baptist Association will be receiving resúmes for the position, director of missions, beginning May 8, 2006, and will continue receiving all postmarked 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: Part-time youth minister for Union City Baptist. Send resumé: 2502 Doyleville Road, Richmond, KY 40475, Attn: Search Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for conservative Southern Baptist church in Grant County, Ky. Forward resumé to: Search Committee, 3000 Eagle Hill Road, Glencoe, KY 41046; or poland@fuse.net.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for FBC Olive Hill. Church averages 110 in SS, 155-170 in worship. Send resumé and a cassette/video/CD of sermon delivery to: FBC Olive Hill, PO Box 568, Olive Hill, KY 41164, Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

SEEKING: Volunteers for medical mission to villages in Romania. Need individuals with some medical experience to go late August through early September. Contact Dr. or Mrs. John Hines, (502) 893-8283.

SEEKING: Organist/pianist with strong skills in accompanying, improvisation and sight reading for blended worship style for Versailles Baptist Church. Contact Maria Lester, minister of music, 125 E Green St., Versailles, KY 40383; or call (859) 873-7338.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for blended/traditional worship for east end Louisville church. Mail resumé to: Melbourne Heights Baptist Church, 3728 Taylorsville Road, Louisville, KY 40220. Phone: (502) 454-4681.

SEEKING: Part-time director of missions for Mercer Association of Baptists. If interested, mail resumé to: Mercer Association of Baptists, 315 N Main St., Harrodsburg, KY 40330, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music. Applicant must be worship leader experienced in working with various styles of music. Zion is a dynamic, growing church that averages a total of 750 in two blended Sunday morning worship services. Candidate must be spiritually mature, have strong leadership skills and be able to lead all aspects of worship ministry including congregational worship, praise team & band, choirs of all ages and creative arts ministries. Position requires a seminary degree and at least five years experience. Send resumé, references and letter of interest to: Zion Baptist Church, 8158 Highway 351, Henderson, KY 42420, Attn: Worship Pastor Search Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time youth minister. Please forward resumé or letter of interest to either jgifford@cbnstl.com or Grapevine Baptist Church, 85 Sandcut Road, Madisonville, KY 42431.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister (20 hours per week). First Baptist Church (predominant affiliation: CBF). Mail resumé to church: 254 South Buckman St., Shepherdsville, KY 40165, Attn: David Wells; or call the church office, (502) 955-7372, for more information.

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

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

Clean laughs

Movie deal shows Christian comedians finding receptive audiences

By Marshall Allen
Religion News Service

Los Angeles (RNS)—Comedian Gilbert Esquivel is the son of migrant farm workers, so he knows hardship. "You've heard of Army brats—we were Salvation Army brats," he joked at a recent show.

Esquivel is a stout Mexican with wavy black hair. He tells the audience he looks like the lovechild of Saddam Hussein and Wayne Newton; he's not off the mark. Later, he riffed on his:

■ Rough upbringing: "My mom wanted to raise us in a safe environment, so we moved to Los Angeles."

■ Mexican heritage: "We were bad little kids. They used to call us 'Children of the Corn Tortillas.'"

■ And the multiculturalism in L.A.: "I got a homeboy—he's black and he married a Korean. They had a baby and they named him Martin Luther Kim."

Esquivel performs at the top comedy clubs in Los Angeles, was recently featured on Comedy Central's "Laffapalooza!" and has a role in an upcoming romantic comedy starring Jack Black and Cameron Diaz. On this night, he was working an audience of about 3,500 at Faith Community Church.

That's right, a church.

Though some might think it unorthodox for a church to host a raucous night of standup comedy, the crowd here was just in a good mood listening to some of the top comics in the country—all of them Christians.

The comics, the crowd and the upcoming movie highlight the confluence of three trends—the growing number of mainstream Christian comedians, churches that are latching on to the growth in Christian comedy, and Hollywood producers who increasingly see money in those pews.

The comedians took the stage on a night when the evangelical megachurch typically hosts a Bible study. The event was hosted by Emmy Award-winning actress Patricia Heaton, from "Everybody Loves Raymond." It will be turned into an



JOKING AROUND Comedian Gilbert Esquivel is one of several Christian comics featured in the upcoming movie, "Thou Shalt Laugh!" (RNS photo courtesy of Grace Hill Media)

upcoming feature film called "Thou Shalt Laugh," scheduled for release in theaters across the country in the fall.

According to its producers, four major studios fought to distribute the film, with Warner Bros. winning the deal.

The seven comics featured in the film have performed for decades in clubs across the country. They don't shy from material about their beliefs. Instead, it's integrated into their acts in a way that reflects faith, while being broad enough for a secular audience.

Christian comedy boom

The Christian comedy industry has seen a boom during the past five years. In 2002, about 35 Christian comics gathered in Nashville to form the Christian Comedy Association. Today 350 people belong to the group.

At the same time, the Christian subculture, which typically lags behind the mainstream when it comes to such trends, is catching up. Congregations across the country have been hosting an increasing number of comedy nights. Some shows are outreach events for non-believers; others just provide Christians with a non-offensive environ-

ment for good clean fun.

Veteran Christian comic Dan Ruppel, who leads the comics' group, said some of the comics are on par with the best in the business, and mainstream clubs want clean humor. Churches, he said, are also much more receptive to comedians.

"The church has changed a lot in the past 30 years," Ruppel said. "They have a much better sense of humor about themselves. They embrace humor and they love to laugh."

"Thou Shalt Laugh" is being produced by two Christians—a Hollywood insider and a publicist who's expanding his reach. Comedian Michael Jr. is a laid-back African-American with a sly smile and self-deprecating jokes that favor word play. He said someone once asked him if he was "pro-gay."

"No, I'm not pro-gay, or amateur gay either," Michael Jr. said. "I didn't even know they had a league."

What's so funny?

Comedians featured in the upcoming movie "Thou Shalt Laugh" riff on subjects ranging from religion to everyday life.

Jeff Allen:

"Teenagers are God's revenge on mankind. It's as if God Himself looked down and said: 'Let's see how they like it to create someone in their own image who denies their existence.'"

"My wife has a temper, and I mean a real temper. I'm not talking irritability and sarcasm, because those are what attracted me to her."

Thor Ramsey:

"I had to venture into L.A. last night, the most superficial city in the world. I never saw so much silicone in my life. I was thinking, 'That's probably why God flooded the earth when He did.' Because if He flooded it now, none of the women in L.A. would drown."

Taylor Mason:

"Whenever I am depressed and feeling blue, I open my Bible to these words that seem like they were written just for me: 'This Bible given to Taylor Mason on his 10th Birthday. From Grandma.'"

"I grew up in Illinois. My family farms. I knew I was going to be a comedian because I could make the cows laugh so hard the milk came out their noses."

"What is it with the Starbucks nation? I have a great idea. Why doesn't everyone just make their own coffee in the morning, then just pretend to stand in line for 15 minutes?"

"If women ran the world, there would be no war. There would be more massages. And our currency would be chocolate."

"My wife plays a game with me every morning. It's called 'Guess What Mood I'm in Today?'"

more animated, caustic and sarcastic. One of his bits revolved around a recent trip to North Dakota: "It's the only state where you can get an ice cream headache—from breathing."

Poking fun at evangelicals

Ramsey considers it his duty to prod the evangelical subculture.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about what it means to be a born-again Christian," Ramsey says in his act. "It's pretty simple, really."

"You just bow your head, say a simple prayer—and when you open your eyes, you're a registered Republican with a firearm."

Ramsey, who has been performing standup since 1987, said a comedian's job in any subculture is to speak the truth in a way that shakes them up.

Some of the performers said they prefer not to be known as "Christian comedians." Esquivel, for instance, is one of several who says he's a "comedian who also happens to be a Christian."

Megachurches moving beyond their big buildings into communities

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

Plano, Texas (RNS)—Holding a paint roller in one hand and steady- ing a ladder for another volunteer with the other, Heather Merchant joined 15 fellow members of her megachurch to help a widow turn her house back into more of a home.

Merchant and others in her "life group" at Fellowship Bible Church North spent a recent Saturday putting their faith in action, a call that's being answered throughout Merchant's church, which draws about 3,200 people each weekend.

Asked what she likes about the megachurch experience, Merchant listed "biblically based" teaching, youth programs for her kids and fellowship with her small group. But

the church's focus on community outreach, for her, is also key.

"I think the church really does have a heart for reaching out to the community and seeing the need to make bridges to the community," Merchant said.

Her church is one of an increasing number of "externally focused" megachurches that experts say are shifting their focus outward to the local community, beyond the massive crowds that walk through their doors each weekend.

Dave Travis, executive vice president of Leadership Network, a Dallas-based church consulting group, said there's been a shift in the last decade, with megachurches getting more involved with the people who live around them, not just those who worship in them.

A recent study by his office and scholars from Hartford Seminary in Connecticut found that about half of churches with weekly attendance of 2,000 or more said they partnered with other churches in the past five years on a local community service project.

"Where a megachurch does choose to engage, they tend to have a very large ministry," said Travis, whose organization fosters innovation among church leaders.

Balancing "souls" & "neighbors"

Fellowship Bible Church North uses a flowchart to keep track of which church leaders direct different aspects of the congregation's Community Service Impact ministry, including work with a food pantry, a children's medical clinic

and a crisis pregnancy center.

George Mason, pastor of a Dallas church that draws about 1,300 each weekend, said megachurches historically have tended to focus more on saving souls than serving their neighbors.

"You have to balance and do both the Great Commission, which they do extremely well, with the great commandment, which is ... love God and your neighbor as yourself," said the pastor of Wilshire Baptist Church, referring to biblical mandates to evangelize and be charitable.

He credits California megachurch pastor Rick Warren with changing some mindsets by directing attention to AIDS and Africa's poor after writing his best-selling "The Purpose Driven Life."

Evangelicals "have a much better sense of humor about themselves."

Veteran Christian comic Dan Ruppel

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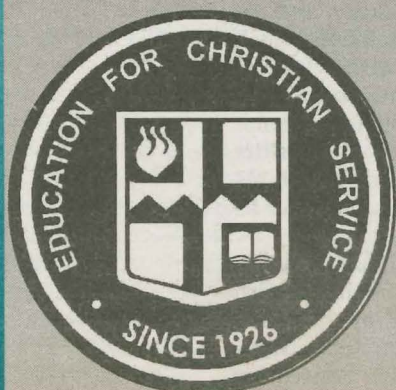
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