



WESTERN RECORDER

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FOR THE RECORD



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Publishers Weekly lists top religion books of 2006

New York (RNS)—Read any good books lately? Publishers Weekly has released its list of this year's best religion books.

The 10 nonfiction books are:

■ "Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church Is Transforming Faith" by Diana Butler Bass (HarperSanFrancisco)

■ "Peter, Paul & Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend" by Bart D. Ehrman (Oxford)

■ "Gonzo Judaism: A Fresh Path for an Ancient Faith" by Niles Elliot Goldstein (St. Martin's)

■ "Overcoming Life's Disappointments" by Harold S. Kushner (Knopf)

■ "My Life with the Saints" by James Martin (Loyola Press)

■ "Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness" by Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Brazos)

■ "A Jew Among the Evangelicals: A Guide for the Perplexed" by Mark Pinsky (Westminster John Knox Press)

■ "Essential Torah: A Complete Guide to the Five Books of Moses" by George Robinson (Schocken)

■ "Rumspringa: To Be or Not to Be Amish" by Tom Shachtman (North Point Press)

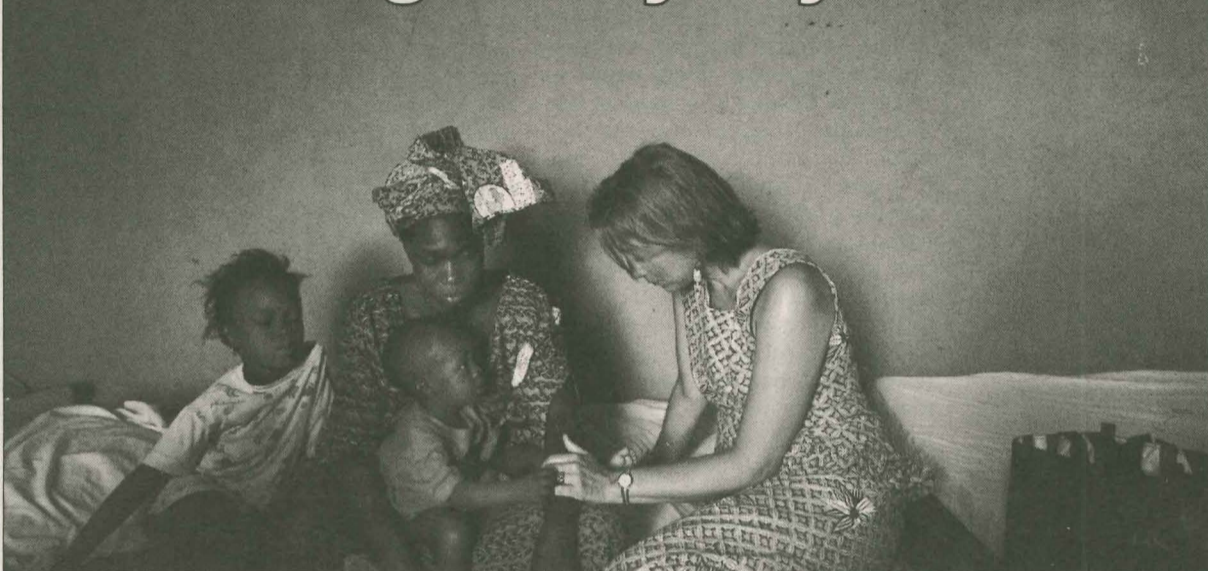
■ "Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?" by Philip Yancey (Zondervan).

Two fiction titles chosen are:

■ "Winter Birds" by Jamie Turner (Baker/Bethany House)

■ "Dwelling Places" by Vinita Wright (HarperSanFrancisco).

Becoming 'Sally Biyo'



PRAYING FOR LIGHT Strong religious and cultural influences keep many Songhai in spiritual bondage, but Southern Baptist missionaries such as this member of the Songhai missions team (right) are sharing the gospel of Christ and watching people come to know Him. Dec. 3-10 is the 2006 Week of Prayer for International Missions. (IMB photo)

After 12 years in Niger, Kentucky native 'belongs' to Songhai

By Kristen Hiller
SBC International Mission Board

Niger, West Africa—Pregnant Songhai women approach the cinder-block, tin-roofed clinic of Kanazi for routine checkups. They come one by one. When Kentucky native Sally Womble reminds them to return next month for another exam, she often hears the response, "Inshallah" or "if God wills."

After 12 years in Niamey, Niger, Songhai team strategy coordinators Brad and Sally Womble have grown accustomed to the phrase.

"It's their excuse," Sally said. "It removes their sense of responsibility. So because of that, there's no tomorrow for them. Their tomorrows only come if God wills."

While this commonly held view of God releases the Songhai from any earthly responsibility, Brad Womble suggests this mentality also keeps the Songhai in bondage. In the past decade, Womble said he never has heard a young person mention any long-term goals.

"These people want to eat lunch today, and that's it," Womble said. "That's as far as they see. Their belief in God is a god who is so far removed and so judgmental and so distant that he really doesn't care, and the only interaction they'll ever have with him is in judgment."

But there's a larger problem than just the lack of long-range goals. There's spiritual darkness.

"The Songhai aren't only in a

false religion," Womble said. "They are active participants in the demonic spirit world. So they're even deeper than hopeless."

Ali, a church planter from Niger on the Songhai team, attributes some of the Songhai's hopelessness to their Islamic beliefs.

"If you pass 40 years of age without making your peace with God through the Muslim faith, you cannot after that," Ali said.

Because 99.8 percent of the Songhai people are both Muslim and animistic, demonic worship and possession are common to their culture.

"You can go into villages where they're walking bodies, but there is no person left in that (village)," Womble said. "There's just blankness. All the life is gone from their eyes."

□ See Wombles bring ... *Page 6*



'Operation Inasmuch' founder urges believers to embrace outreach

By Dannah Prather
Partnerships Editor

Bowling Green—Tennessee Baptist pastor David Crocker remembers the day he prayed, "God, I'm not going to do church the same way anymore."

He admits that when he prayed that prayer, he didn't know exactly how "doing church" was going to change, but Crocker said it wasn't long before God provided an answer. "For me, that is outreach ministry."

Crocker led a workshop session on "Transforming Your Church through Ministry" during the recent Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting in Bowling Green.

Crocker, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Fountain City, Tenn., said Southern Baptists and other evangelical churches are emerging from a safe cocoon of Christian subculture, and "God is in the process of

remaking His church."

Instead of "hoping that maybe the folks out there in the world will come be a part of us," Crocker said, believers must think of themselves as bridges joining the world to God. Such a task cannot be accomplished within the church walls, he added.

"It begins with our relationship with God but transcends into our relationships with other people," he said. "Your church's relationship with the community is part of 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Eleven years ago, Crocker started "Operation Inasmuch," his blueprint for Christian outreach based on Matthew 25:40. In the passage, Christ declares that when believers help people in need, they are loving Him. "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, brethren, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, My brethren,

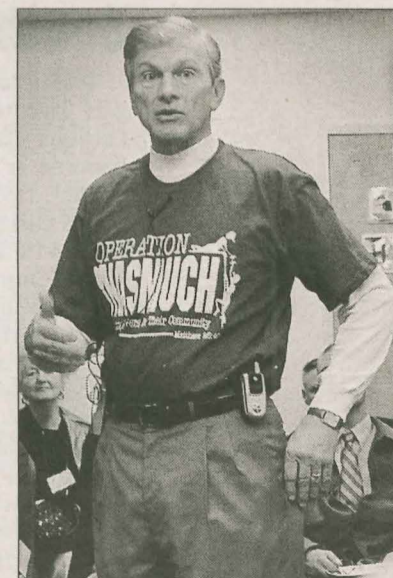
you did it to Me.'"

Since its founding in 1995, Operation Inasmuch has equipped 500 churches in eight states and two other countries to serve their communities through a variety of ministries.

Crocker said the joy believers receive from obeying Christ's words "is better than anything else we experience."

Operation Inasmuch will work for congregations large or small, he said. Dependent on detailed, front-end planning, the model equips churches to provide a "focused one-day event" in which to involve their members.

"It's getting more and more difficult to get people to give you their time," Crocker said. "When you tell them, 'If you will give us four hours on a Saturday, or eight hours, you



OUTREACH David Crocker challenges Kentucky Baptists to transform their churches through outreach ministry. □ See Pastor challenges ... *Page 3*

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, November 29.

Healing bodies & souls

Southern Baptist medical relief teams serve Lebanon war victims

"As hard as the war is, God has allowed it to be an opening for us to be here and for us to share His love."

Elaine Brown, Southern Baptist medical relief team volunteer

By Don Graham
Baptist Press

Southern Lebanon (BP)—Sherri Redding* listens intently to her stethoscope. It's 10 a.m., and the makeshift Southern Baptist medical clinic in southern Lebanon is already buzzing. Patients line up outside the clinic's door in plastic lawn chairs. Inside, a handful of doctors and nurses are moving at full tilt.

But Redding manages to tune out the commotion. Right now, the nurse practitioner is focused on the man at the other end of her stethoscope. His name is Abdullah* and he's complaining of back pain and breathing problems. What Redding doesn't know is that while she listens to Abdullah's lungs, she's also healing his heart.

Redding is part of a Southern Baptist medical relief team ministering to Lebanese communities ravaged by the recent Israel-Hezbollah war. Abdullah, like many others, has come to the clinic because treatment is free and because there are no doctors left in his hometown.

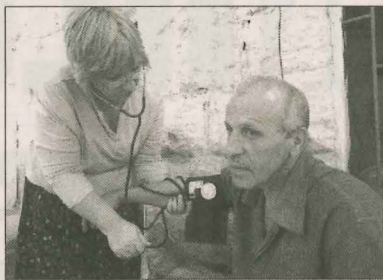
"During the war a lot of people evacuated to Beirut, even left the country," Redding said. "But not everyone has come back, and there are still areas where the (local) physicians haven't returned. ... We want to be there to fill the gap."

Most people come seeking routine medical care. The morning of Abdullah's visit, the team treats a baby suffering from a mouth fungus, a diabetic woman with a wound that's slow to heal and a grinning 6-year-old named Ahmed*. He's come so nurses can check a row of stitches on his head. Bashfully, Ahmed explains that a friend hit him with a rock.

By nightfall, the team has seen nearly 40 patients.

With the fighting more than two months behind them, volunteers haven't had to contend with gunshot or shrapnel wounds, trauma one might expect in a war zone. Instead, work-related injuries are on the rise as rebuilding efforts intensify. One man is treated for a cut from a jagged piece of rebar, another limps in after dropping a concrete block on his toe.

But mending broken bodies is only part of the team's task in Leb-



MEDICAL CARE Pamela Gary, a registered nurse from California, checks a patient's blood pressure outside the Southern Baptist medical clinic in southern Lebanon. (BP photo)

anon. Despite their experience and expertise, medicine can do only so much to make their patients whole again. Children shriek in terror at the booming sound of soldiers detonating unexploded bombs. Some families have seen everything they own reduced to rubble. Many are thankful simply to have survived the war without losing a loved one. Others are not so fortunate.

"Their spirits are wounded and they're very afraid," said Elaine Brown, a volunteer nurse from a Southern Baptist church in Georgia. "The suffering is just so real it's hard to see, especially the children."

"We heard so many people say over and over, 'We're used to this; it's our way of life.' That was really disturbing to me."

Living out love

There is hope amid the devastation, however. Redding and other Southern Baptist relief workers have witnessed firsthand how God is using them to bring healing to this war-torn community.

"Right now the medical needs are not that huge, but the spiritual needs are great and people are really seeking," Redding said. "A large percentage of our patients talk about feeling stressed—not feeling any peace. It gives us an opportunity to provide real encouragement."

"We pray that the Lord brings people to the clinic whose hearts He has already prepared."

Wrapping up her exam, Redding hands Abdullah a package of pills and a book as a gift to his family. Inside the front cover she writes, "I pray God brings healing to your body, peace to your heart and bless-

ings to your family."

Abdullah's deep-set eyes show he is deeply touched by her bedside manner.

"I've never actually had anyone listen to my lungs before," he tells her. "I've seen lots of doctors and they just take my pressure and tell me to leave. They don't actually listen to me. I've never had anyone take this much time with me."

"Our spiritual needs and our physical needs are intertwined," Redding explained. "If someone is sick or hurting, they may not be able to think about their spiritual needs until their physical needs are met."

Though volunteers weren't always able to talk about their faith directly, the medical team wasn't short on alternative means to share the gospel. Doctors and nurses frequently asked to pray with patients. Sometimes, sharing Jesus' love was as simple as sharing a hug.

Opportunities to love others also came outside the doctor-patient relationship. When the medical team's van blew a tire, Brown was able to share hope with a young man named Nassir* who helped change it. Another day, the wife of a high-ranking Lebanese government official visited the clinic. She came with an entourage of about 30 women to thank the volunteers for their work.

Every one of those women welcomed the team and the hope that they brought, Brown said. "That really thrilled my heart—the whole trip was worth it just to see that."

Chaos and faux pas

Representing Christ wasn't always as easy as talking with a new friend or checking blood pressure. The medical team also dealt with its share of communication chaos and cultural faux pas.

"It was difficult because of the language barrier—we didn't always have interpreters," Brown said. "If you're creative, there are always ways you can (express love and compassion) through a smile or a motion or whatever."

Kerfoot Walker, a physician from Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, recounts a mishap he experienced while treating a woman hav-

ing trouble with her knee.

"I touched her knee to examine it and you would have thought the world had suddenly erupted," Walker said.

To his surprise, other women in the room suddenly stood up with a collective gasp. Unbeknownst to Walker, Arabic culture dictates that it's inappropriate for men to touch women other than their wives, especially in a public setting like the clinic's waiting room.

"We then discussed her knee more carefully without touching it," he said. "She didn't care if I touched her knee, but everybody else in the room was fainting!"

Cross-cultural pitfalls aside, volunteers said overall they felt very welcomed in southern Lebanon.

"The way the people received us—they were so appreciative and hospitable, just really genuinely open and accepting of us regardless of the fact that we were Americans," Brown said.

Ministry opportunities

Medical teams are scheduled to continue relief work in southern Lebanon into next year and volunteers are needed. Individuals with medical experience interested in learning more about work in Lebanon can e-mail dan@mmronline.org, or call (866) 667-8996.

Disaster relief opportunities also are open for volunteer teams working to rebuild homes in southern Lebanon. For information, contact Jim Richardson, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, at jrichardson@sbtexas.com.

Southern Baptists who can't travel to Lebanon can still be part of the relief efforts through giving and prayer.

"If we go out without prayer, we're going in our own strength," Redding said. "Yes, we can treat patients, but if the Lord isn't in it, then what we've done is no different than secular work."

"As hard as the war is, God has allowed it to be an opening for us to be here and for us to share His love," Brown added. "We can be something that they can cling to, and we can offer them hope in Him."

*Names changed for security reasons

South Carolina executive director receives 2006 CP leadership award

Greenville, S.C. (BP)—Carlisle Driggers, executive director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, was honored as this year's recipient of the M.E. Dodd Cooperative Program Award during the state convention's Nov. 14-15 annual meeting at First Baptist Church of Taylors, S.C.

The award, presented on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, recognizes individuals who have demonstrated continuous excellence in supporting missions at home and abroad through the Cooperative Program.

"That's what the Cooperative Program is: Never forget that the Cooperative Program is missions. It's not money; it's missions," SBC Executive Committee President Morris Chap-

man said in making the presentation. Chapman commended Driggers and South Carolina Baptists for sending "a 13th check" from the budget overage stemming from the churches' gifts through the Cooperative Program.

The M.E. Dodd Cooperative Program Award, a bronze sculpture of a sower scattering seed around the world, is named after the chairman of the Southern Baptist commission that recommended creation of the Cooperative Program in 1925.

Quoting Psalm 1:1-3, Chapman expressed appreciation for Driggers' positive convictions about the Cooperative Program over the course of his tenure. Driggers, who has served 15 years as executive director of the

South Carolina Baptist Convention, will retire in February.

"I've come to thank God for his heart," Chapman said of Driggers. "He has a heart for God, for Southern Baptists and the Cooperative Program."

Recounting the birth of the Cooperative Program more than 80 years ago, Chapman described the giving plan as "part of the strength of the fabric of who Southern Baptists are."

"I believe the Cooperative Program is a gift from God," Chapman said, noting that CP gifts allow Southern Baptist missionaries "to go overseas and know that Southern Baptists are not only praying for them, but also caring for them

financially." He also expressed appreciation to Southern Baptists for providing for theological training of ministers through the Cooperative Program.

The Cooperative Program helped lead Southern Baptists to expand their vision beyond an inward focus, Chapman said, adding that Southern Baptists are a "giving people," working cooperatively together, rather than a "getting people" working independently.

"I pray we never lose this deeply convictive love for missions," Chapman said. He also affirmed Southern Baptists for exceeding the \$200 million mark in CP giving for the first time during this past fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30.

Pastor challenges Kentucky Baptists to embrace outreach

Continued from page 1

will be finished with a project that makes a difference to the community, they will get excited."

Crocker said most Christians want to serve but perhaps don't know how to start. "They want to get out there and do something that's meaningful."

Operation Inasmuch provides congregations with a kit of resources to plan and implement an outreach event. "It's flexible to what you need to do in your community, and it's affordable." He estimated that a meaningful outreach can be accomplished at a cost of \$4 to \$12 per volunteer.

Some churches work with community help agencies such as Habitat for Humanity or the American Red Cross. Crocker's congregation also has recruited teams from other local churches.

The church requires leaders to look at the "needs and dreams of community, the mandates and desires of God and the callings and capacities of the church. Where they converge is service," Crocker said.

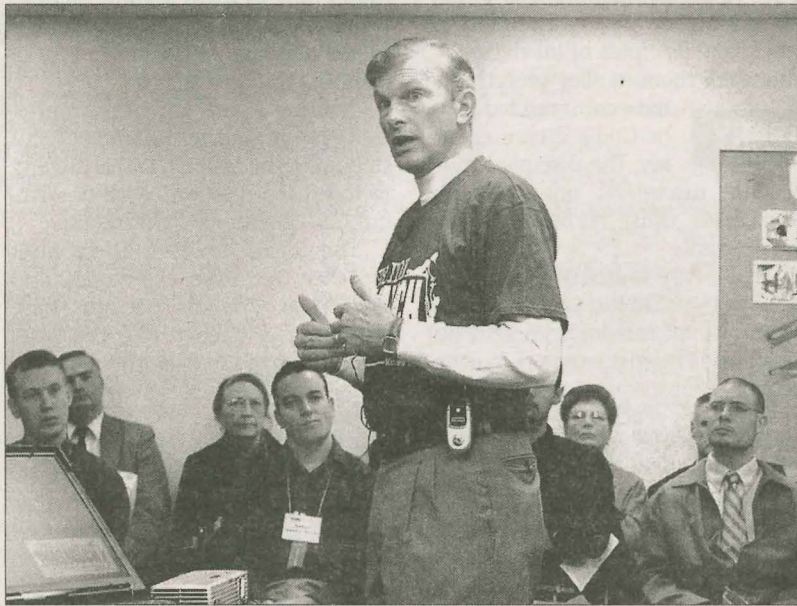
Involve all age groups

Churches should try to involve every age group in their congregation, Crocker noted. He said by "mixing up" the membership among the activities, fellow church members get the opportunity to know one another better.

Some of the activities undertaken by Operation Inasmuch projects include:

- Community greenspace upkeep.
- Home repair and maintenance.
- Hosting a blood donation drive.
- Providing a one-day "store" where people can purchase donated household items at reduced prices or free of charge.
- Free automobile fluid/filter/tire pressure checks.
- Block parties, worship services.
- Nursing home ministry.

Crocker said one of the senior adults in his church never had found



BEYOND THE WALLS David Crocker, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Fountain City, Tenn., shares with Kentucky Baptists how God led him to "do church" differently through community outreach. Crocker led one of several breakout sessions during recent Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting in Bowling Green.

a way to get involved in hands-on ministry until Operation Inasmuch. Now she regularly coordinates a team of seamstresses who create lap throws and walker bags for nursing home residents.

"It does make a difference in the church," he said. "It energizes a congregation, it builds fellowship, broadens a congregation's understanding of missions and enhances involvement in other mission causes."

The most important accomplishment of community outreach is that it "authenticates a Christian witness," Crocker said. "The people in our communities who are unchurched are cynical about the church." Believers attempting to share the gospel in "traditional ways" often are dismissed or ignored, many times in a hostile manner. "Sometimes people aren't even polite anymore," he said.

Community outreach projects are "a show-and-tell proposition," he added. "We have to show them before we can tell them."

When a team of volunteers arrives in a neighborhood or at a nursing home, curiosity takes over, he said. "When people ask, 'What are you all doing?' or 'Where are you from?' that's an open door" to share the gospel, Crocker said.

Kentucky connection

First Baptist Church of Bowling Green has coordinated Operation Inasmuch events for several years, according to member Joyce Light.

"Every year we have about 300 people involved in our one day," Light said. Among their activities are a "meals on wheels" ministry to people in need and a blood donation drive. They also make scarves and other items to sell to raise money for their Relay for Life team benefiting the American Cancer Society.

"You become known as a church that is willing to help others," Light said, adding that some people who serve through Operation Inasmuch "aren't involved in anything else" during the church year.

Crocker and Light said follow-

ing up with the individuals served through the outreach is a challenge, but the effort can make an eternal difference.

"The weakest part of almost everything is follow-up," Crocker said. "It's a matter of being intentional about it." He encouraged Kentucky Baptists to be open-minded as they work to connect new believers to a church home.

"Remember they possibly will be coming from a different socioeconomic situation," and may be uncomfortable in the volunteer's church. "Your role may be to help them connect to another church," he said.

One way First Baptist of Bowling Green maintains relationships with the people they've served is through a celebration event, Light said.

"We give out written invitations to the people we've come in contact with," she said. Usually the Wednesday after a Saturday outreach, the church serves a dinner, followed by a worship service. Light said the congregation also uses the opportunity to promote its annual missions fair.

Eric Allen, director of mission service and ministries for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, reminded participants attending Crocker's workshop that community outreach is one of the goals of the KBC's Kentucky Baptists Connect emphasis.

Operation Inasmuch and similar projects help accomplish the "Churches Reaching Out" component of the five-year ministry plan.

Allen encouraged Kentucky Baptists to find out what the needs are in their communities and work to meet them. "It might be people in poverty, or people who need help reading, or young mothers." He said the goal is to meet people currently uninvolved in a local church and share the love of Christ with them through practical service as well as sharing the gospel.

For more information about Operation Inasmuch, visit the ministry's Web site at www.operationinasmuch.com or call (865) 689-9027.

IRS reimbursement rate for mileage increases Jan. 1

Louisville—Churches should be aware of the Internal Revenue Service's new mileage reimbursement rate that will take effect Jan. 1, noted Don Spencer, director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's church financial benefits department.

Spencer said the IRS recently announced a 4 cent increase in the mileage rate for next year, raising the rate to 48.5 cents per mile.

"Churches should adjust their budgets to reimburse pastors and other church staff for their ministry-related business miles at the new rate in 2007," Spencer said.

"The mileage rate that church members can use to deduct qualified charitable miles remains at 14 percent per mile," he added, noting that the charitable mileage rate is set by statute and only can be changed by Congress.

For more information about reimbursing church staff members for ministry-related expenses, visit the Web site www.kybaptist.org/annuity.

Mission Board affirms reorganization, promotes two staff members

By Brenda Smith
Kentucky Baptist Convention

Bowling Green—The Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board approved a reorganization of Mission Board staff and the creation of a new associate position during its meeting prior to the recent KBC annual meeting.

Board members approved the proposal by KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey and the board's administrative committee to divide the church development and evangelism team into two teams, the church development team and the evangelism growth team. The teams were separate prior to a 2003 staff restructuring plan that combined the two areas of work.

French Harmon was named church development team leader. He previously served as associate team leader for the church development/evangelism team. His responsibilities will include developing strategies that help Kentucky Baptist churches more effectively carry out the Great Commission



French Harmon



Alan Witham

and the objectives and goals of Kentucky Baptists Connect.

The church development team will include the discipleship and assimilation, adult Sunday school/ministry, youth Sunday school/ministry, and preschool and children's Sunday school/ministry groups, as well as the regional church development strategists.

Alan Witham was named the church development strategist coordinator. In addition to his duties as church development strategist for the south central Kentucky region, Witham will coordinate training for the church development

strategists and serve as a liaison between the strategists and other KBC staff.

The evangelism growth team will include the collegiate ministry group and the creative ministries group. The team also will coordinate all evangelism emphases, training and conferences.

Mission Board members also approved the creation of a new position in the new work/associational missions department. The new work ethnic associate will be responsible for overseeing Kentucky Baptists' efforts to evangelize and disciple various ethnic groups, particularly Kentucky's rapidly growing Hispanic population.

Candidates for the evangelism growth team leader and new work ethnic associate will be presented at a later date.

In other business, board members approved a plan to increase the KBC executive director's salary by 3 percent a year for the next two years. The increase, which is planned in addition to regular cost

of living and merit increases, is intended to bring the executive director's salary in line with the salaries of other executive directors of similar size state Baptist conventions.

Board members also witnessed the signing of two partnering agreements between Kentucky Baptist churches. First Baptist Church of Mount Washington is partnering with First Baptist Church of Fishersville, and Franklin Crossroads Baptist Church of Cecelia is partnering with Mill Creek Baptist Church of Bardstow.

Under the terms of the covenant, participating churches commit to help encourage and equip one another, as well as establish relationships between members of the two congregations and reproduce the partnering model in other Kentucky Baptist churches.

Kentucky Baptist leaders hope to foster such partnerships among 100 or more churches by Jan. 1, 2010, as part of Kentucky Baptists Connect. So far, 38 partnerships have been established.

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

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The disciplined must become disciplers

By Erich Bridges

Richmond, Va. (BP)—The 67 new missionaries appointed last month by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board will join more than 5,100 Southern Baptist missionary colleagues already working to take the gospel to every people group on earth.

Many more will follow as Southern Baptist churches send their best and brightest—and support them through giving to the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

But American missionaries can't handle the challenge of world evangelization alone. Not 5,000. Not 50,000. The task is just too big.

The world's population has topped 6.5 billion. At most, about one in 10 people claim evangelical Christian faith. Of more than 11,000 distinct people groups worldwide, more than 6,000—containing more than 1.65 billion people—remain unreached (with "unreached" defined as less than 2 percent of the population being counted as evangelical believers).

"You can never have enough missionaries," says Dickie Nelson, the IMB's regional leader for South America. "We have a significant part to play, but the real hope comes from partners around the world who catch a vision of being a part of the Great Commission, and there's a lot of them out there."

Full participants in ministry

Completing the task, Nelson says, will take local, indigenous churches multiplying new churches in every culture. That's where working with our overseas partners comes in.

"Every believer a full participant in the Great Commission" is one of the key goals of Nelson and his regional missionary leadership team. South American church members, they stress, should be trained as full participants not only in reaching their own cultures, but other peoples and cultures—in South America and beyond.

A time to express thanks

Kay and I are grateful for your prayers during our time of grief following the death of my mother, Evelyn, 87, and her only sister, Georgia, 93, within 36 hours of each other Nov. 17 and 18. We were able to arrive in time to sit with mother the night of Nov. 16 before her very peaceful death the next day at 11:55 a.m.

In God's timing I was permitted to be present and bring the message for each service. My daughter, Beth, and my brother's son, Brian, presented tributes to my mother and so did my brother, Ronnie.

My mother and aunt were members of Fork Hill Baptist Church, established in 1817, where their grandfather, George Ellis, served as Sunday school director for many years followed by his son, Robert.

Following initial grief, family members were able to understand that God had been gracious in giving us loving, Christian mothers be-

It's no more—and no less—than what Jesus commanded His followers in Matthew 28:19: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ... and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you."

COMMENTARY

In God's divine economy, the disciplined must become disciplers; one-time mission fields must become missionary senders.

That's why Southern Baptist missionaries worked last year with 1,772 international missionaries sent out by overseas Baptist partners to other people groups, as well as 3,400 home missionaries reaching out cross-culturally to people groups within their own countries.

Consider the ministry of "Marie," a South American medical mission worker serving in tough areas of North Africa and the Middle East.

"Local government officials actually ask her to go into some mountain areas there to do medical work," Nelson told IMB trustees. "A wonderful door has been opened in a place where there is no church and no witness to share the good news of Jesus. The folks who know Marie say that if you show her a mountain, her next question is, 'How do I climb it?'"

IMB President Jerry Rankin told trustees about his recent travel to South Korea, where he met evangelical mission leaders and spoke to several thousand seminary students. During a student-led missions emphasis week at the Korea Baptist Theological Seminary in Taejon, up to 300 students made commitments to international missions service.

"It was absolutely one of the most powerful experiences I have ever had," Rankin reflected. "When they come down the aisle and make a commitment, they're fully expecting you to put a passport and airline ticket in their hand, and they're out of there. They're putting it all on the shelf to follow the Lord to the mission field."

The Korean Baptist Foreign Mission Board already has more than 500 missionaries to 44 countries. Rankin met during his trip with

leaders of multiple Korean mission agencies that report sending out more than 13,000 missionaries. He found an eagerness among them to learn about church-planting movements and how to finish the task of reaching the unreached.

"I came home with the impression that if Southern Baptists don't step up to the task ... (God) is moving to fulfill His mission" with or without U.S. Christians, Rankin said.

The ideal, however, is to work together. We have experience and know-how. Overseas partners have passion and energy—like the Arab believers who took a three-month journey on camels earlier this year to take the gospel to non-Arab nomads in isolated desert oasis camps. Despite violent resistance in some locations, they won some new believers to Christ, and they intend to do it again next year.

Global mission surprises

God will have many surprises for us as the global missions movement grows. The Roma (Gypsy) believers in Eastern Europe are members of a people group long despised by those around them—rejected even by many European Christians as "too sinful" to be saved. But Jesus is the loving friend of sinners, says Rodney Hammer, IMB regional leader for Central and Eastern Europe. He sees Roma people coming to faith in Romania, the Czech Republic and Poland.

"Not only is it just like Jesus to specialize in the despised and the rejected, but Roma have now discovered through the power of the Holy Spirit that they can reach others as well," Hammer says. "Our missionaries have had the audacity to develop a missionary training program for the Roma."

It's a big world out there. Despite the increasing sophistication of mission research methods, we don't even know where all the people are—much less how to reach them. But God does, and He wants to use all His children in His great mission.

*Names changed for security reasons.
Erich Bridges is a senior writer with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board

maintain or increase their percentage of giving through CP in order to reach our state, nation and world for Christ. Kentucky Baptists are also to be commended for giving \$1.6 million for disaster relief along the Gulf Coast following last year's devastating hurricanes.

Other significant accomplishments during the past year included:

- The approval of a transition plan with Georgetown College that did not disrupt the mission of either the KBC or Georgetown College.

- The continued implementation of Kentucky Baptists Connect through the development of strategies to assist churches in reaching and developing people.
- Exceeding the projected Kentucky Baptists Connect goals for starting new churches—reaching a total of 90.

It has been an honor to represent Kentucky Baptists inside and outside Kentucky and to work with an incredible staff that seeks the Lord in serving Kentucky Baptists.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

Top 10 reasons for not saving for retirement?

By Don Spencer

10. I'm expecting a call from Publisher's Clearing House.

9. I might not live that long.

8. My employer will take care of me.

7. My spouse can get a job in retirement.

6. I'll let my kids support me.



5. I don't like investing in the stock market.

4. I'll turn my hobby into a second career.

3. I'm going to inherit a great deal of money.

2. Social Security will more than cover me.

1. I'm young. I have plenty of time.

Unfortunately, too many people believe reasons 1 and 2 are true.

However, the fact is that Social Security will not provide adequate retirement income. It was never meant to do so. At best, it will replace close to 40 percent of your annual earnings at age 65. For higher income folks, that percentage will be significantly lower. For most people, the remaining retirement income must be provided through pensions and savings.

There are two essential ingredients for providing adequate retirement: time and money. The more you have of one, the less you will need of the other.

To illustrate, let's assume your goal is to accumulate \$250,000 by age 65, using an investment that averages 8 percent earnings per year. You can reach that goal starting at age 30 by investing \$108 per month. If you wait until you are age 40, you'll have to save \$261 per month to reach that goal. At age 50, it will require an investment of \$718 per month.

When it comes to making your retirement years comfortable, don't wait. Savings, spending and investment decisions you make at earlier ages have direct bearing on how you live in your 60s and 70s.

Make certain to take time to make your retirement choices early and wisely.

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

Couple's conflict over tithing offers opportunity for growth

Q: My husband and I argue each month when it comes time to write a check to the church. I grew up tithing from the time I was very young. He grew up hardly attending church. He recently has become a Christian but refuses to tithe. Any suggestions?

It has been said that there are three types of givers: the flint, the sponge and the honeycomb. To get anything from the flint you must hammer it; even then you get only chips and sparks. To get anything from the sponge you must squeeze; the more pressure you apply, the more you get. The honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness.

MARRIAGE

Remember that Christian stewardship is always a heart issue. One can give without loving, but one cannot love without giving. Be patient with your husband, respecting his leadership and encouraging him to grow in his new relationship with Christ. It is important that he learns to increase his giving to the church as his love and obedience to Jesus increases.

While the tithe certainly is a biblical concept, it is not strongly emphasized in the New Testament. Perhaps that is because Jesus considered it to be the floor, while He always points us toward the ceiling! Encourage your husband to grow in his giving each year; the older and more mature he becomes, the more he will desire to give away.

The Apostle Paul writes, "Just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7).—*Scott Wigginton*

Q: My wife recently began having hot flashes. I am absolutely at a loss to know how to respond to her. I love her dearly and want to support her, but her emotions are all over the gamut. What should I do to help?

There are several resources to gather more information on how to be supportive to your wife. The most valuable resource is her perspective.

Set up a time to talk with her about what she needs from you. For some women, this life event is extremely challenging and difficult. Allow your wife the opportunity to describe her experience and what you can do or not do to be helpful.

Another resource is her gynecologist. Make it a personal priority to accompany your wife on an office visit so that you can hear firsthand what your wife is experiencing or will experience and what will be helpful. The North American Menopause Society has a Web site and e-mail newsletters to provide current information for individuals experiencing the symptoms that come with menopause. Some journal articles suggest increased attention to nutrition, exercise, sleep and hormonal triggers. Others suggest reflection and meditation while still others offer herbal or hormonal treatments.

While it's your wife's body that is experiencing change, the symptoms can affect the entire family. In Scripture women were kept apart from the community when they menstruated. We know the woman with an issue of blood who sought healing from Christ had been ostracized for many years. Jesus healed her body and restored her to the community.

No one wants to feel pushed away or set apart. This will be a tough time for your wife and you. It is OK to talk about what is happening. Talking and listening will build community. Seeking ways to understand and participate in the experience can build community. God brings wholeness and healing through community. Keep close communion with your wife and gather good information to help both of you through this life event.—*Valerie Vincent*

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Reflecting on words of wisdom at the KBC

With the Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting and the Thanksgiving season now behind us, everyone's attention rapidly is turning toward Christmas. But before memorable moments from the recent KBC gradually fade from memory, consider a few of the insights and challenges shared during the annual meeting and related events:

Convention sermon preacher Steve Ayers, pastor of Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green: "Kentucky Baptists, we need to start being a good news people. ... You'll be amazed how people will be absolutely convinced Jesus is the Absolute if you'll just absolutely tell them about Him." Ayers' challenge to keep evangelism a top priority in convention life is a vital goal to pursue as Kentucky Baptists seek to impact our state, nation and world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Outgoing Kentucky Baptist Convention President Paul Chitwood, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mount Washington: "Don't go around building fences around the gospel. Give away the gospel." While it's easy for believers to major on the minors and magnify our differences, Chitwood's call to share the gospel with those in need is a timely reminder of what's truly important in our Christian walk.

Tennessee Baptist pastor David Crocker, founder of "Operation Inasmuch" outreach ministry: "The people in our communities who are unchurched are cynical about the church. ... We have to show them before we can tell them." Crocker's plea to "show and tell" the gospel is essential for churches aiming to make a spiritual difference outside the walls of the church.

Tim Elmore, founder and president of "Growing Leaders," an organization established to help develop emerging leaders: "I'm an advocate of strength-based leadership. I don't think God makes average people. We've got to help them flourish." Elmore's leadership "habitudes" offer basic steps to help equip, encourage and empower local church leaders.

Jimmy Draper, retired president of LifeWay Christian Resources: "Some preachers are always mad. Treat people with courtesy, especially those who disagree with you. You can have strong convictions and be nice about it." Draper's workshop on "finishing well" in ministry was filled with practical tidbits of truth. The simple

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

call to "be ye kind one to another" is a key to authentic Christian leadership.

Christian illusionist Brock Gill, performing and speaking at a Cross Over youth rally: "We live in a very religious world. But religion without Jesus Christ is pretty much worthless." Gill's words point to the need to move beyond empty religious rituals to genuine surrender and commitment to Jesus.

Ken Hemphill, national strategist for the Southern Baptist Convention's Empowering Kingdom Growth strategy: "God always begins a great work in the heart of leaders. Help your people see where God is at work. ... The bottom line is it really isn't about us. It's about His Kingdom, not about our church." Empowering Kingdom Growth is far more

than an SBC ministry strategy; it's a personal commitment to expanding God's Kingdom wherever and however He leads.

Larry Baker, director of the KBC's new work and associational missions department, speaking at the dedication of the first Hispanic Baptist mission in Bowling Green: "This is a very important day in the history of Hispanic work in Kentucky. Today we have a lot of Spanish-speaking churches that are reaching that goal of becoming constituted churches." As Kentucky Baptists seek to expand our ministry among Hispanics and other ethnic groups, the dedication of Nueva Vida Baptist Mission is a shining example of what local churches and associations can and must accomplish together throughout the state.

Scott Pittman, Southern Baptist international missionary to Brazil: "Who really cares if Kentucky Baptist volunteers go to Piaui, Brazil? God cares. He's shown us He's an incarnational God. It is an incarnational ministry where volunteers go and do the Great Commission." The KBC's partnership mission efforts continue to offer hands-on opportunities for individuals and churches to help spread the gospel in Brazil, Europe and elsewhere.

Thomas Hammond, director of personal and mass evangelism for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board: "We do have the answer to those who are lost and hurting and broken. It is Jesus."

What more needs to be said?

Christ is making a Christmas comeback

By Ted Baehr

Hollywood—I believe our nation is on the threshold of a major revival, perhaps not equaled since the Great Awakening. The signs are there—some of them subtle, some not so subtle. One important sign is what appears to be the re-emergence of Jesus Christ in Christmas.

Christians have long known that it is more important to be "correct" than "politically correct." Christmas is about Christ, and that is "correct," accurate and true to history and tradition. Santa Claus, reindeer, wreaths and Christmas trees are fine, but what it is all about is the birth of the Messiah. Christmas heralds the turning point in history.

There is now evidence that our prayers over the last few years are being answered. Hollywood and big business finally seem to be getting the message: There are believers out there! God is alive and well in the popular culture!

Yes, the Christ Child is creeping back into Christmas. No, let me rephrase that: Christ is marching triumphantly back into Christmas. Hollywood is recognizing it, as are

Wal-Mart, Kohl's, Sears, Macy's and others.

The tide is starting to turn.

The new movie, "The Nativity Story," which has been described as a prequel to "The Passion of the Christ," is set to open Dec. 1 in more than 3,000 theaters nationwide. It will be a welcome reprieve from the usual holiday fare of action, violence, cornball comedy and even those films that revolve around "the holiday season."

Incidentally, "The Nativity Story" made history Nov. 26 when it premiered at the Vatican. That hasn't happened before as far as a feature film is concerned.

People, especially families, will want to go together to see this remarkable movie. Children will want to see it. Church members will go in groups. And yes, non-Christians will go out of curiosity. And how they will be rewarded—not just by a wonderful, dramatic, engaging movie, but one that tells the ultimate truth of what Christmas is all about.

Anne Graham Lotz, founder of AnGeL Ministries and daughter of evangelist Billy Graham, describes

the film as "biblically accurate, historically authentic and visually stunning."

I believe the movie is destined to become a Christmas classic. So move over "It's a Wonderful Life" and "Home Alone." You've got some real competition.

The movie is incredibly true to the authenticity of Scripture. Filmed in extraordinarily vivid color, it begins with a passage from Jeremiah. The rest of the movie references and quotes the Bible. The script was written by a Christian, Mike Rich, whose credits include "Finding Forrester." Costuming and settings are authentic.

In short, it is a near-perfect movie.

With all the fallout from fall elections and election turnabouts, Christians have an opportunity this year to put aside political agendas and really focus on what Christmas is all about. The distractions are behind us. Let us not miss this wonderful, crucial opportunity to proclaim the birth of our Lord in the highways and byways, yes, even in the marketplaces and the movies.

Ted Baehr is the publisher of Movieguide and is chairman of the Christian Film and Television Commission

Wombles bring hope to spiritually hopeless

Continued from page 1

Social pressures also inhibit some Songhai from believing the gospel. Because their society revolves around the family unit, Songhai rarely make decisions individually.

"For a Songhai to accept Christ they are rejecting their culture, their family, everything they've ever been taught," Mrs. Womble said.

The Songhai team understands the obstacles preventing people from coming to faith in Christ and has developed a master plan to target major market towns.

On market day, villagers throughout the area come to buy or sell goods in towns that are bigger and more progressive.

"We cannot get to every small, little village," Womble said. "However, if we can plant churches in those big towns, and teach those churches it is their God-given responsibility to reach their neighbors, their families and the next village for Christ, then it will be taken care of."

Despite spiritual darkness and social pressures surrounding the people, the Wombles said they have seen God at work among the Songhai.

When Womble led a volunteer team to prayerwalk in the heart of the Songhai kingdom in Gao, Mali, he said volunteers encountered spiritual warfare firsthand.

After praying through the village where Womble said people had been visibly possessed by demonic forces, the group returned to their boat. On the way, Womble said, a young boy tugged on his sleeve.

"I got down on my knees because he was so little and said, 'What?'"

The boy replied, "I know you have been praying to the real God for us. Please don't stop, because we need it."

The Wombles also have seen God moving through the work of their team members. Womble first introduced Ali to Christ in 1994. As a Niger native, familiar with the Songhai language and culture, Ali has extended the gospel as a church planter in the village of Gotheye.

Through this church plant, Ali said he sees an advantage to sharing the gospel in his own country.

"When the black man sees the white man, the first thing he might (think) in his head is to have money," Ali said. "But when the black man sees the black man come to see him, the first time, he's going to think, 'These people are like me. I know he doesn't have money like me, and so I want to hear what he wants to tell me.'"

Though Mrs. Womble said she never will be accepted as a native Songhai woman, villagers in the Kanazi area claim her as one of their own.

Last September, the Wombles were walking along a red clay path toward a Songhai village when Mamadou*, a Zarma man living in another village, began calling "Sally Biyo!"

The "yo" on the end indicates possession. In one syllable, he was saying "she's ours."

As he ran to catch her, Mamadou told Mrs. Womble he had received audiocassettes from the Songhai ministry and had prayed to receive Christ as his personal Savior.

"When the sun came up and my heart awoke," Mamadou said, "I was praying again that Jesus would forgive me of my sins and take me on the correct road, and that Sally Biyo would come today to answer more of my questions."

Standing along a tributary of the Niger River, Brad and Sally Womble bowed to pray with Mamadou, who, despite the persecution he would face from his people, decided to be baptized.

*Names changed for security reasons.



SPIRITUAL BONDAGE From Niamey, Niger, to Timbuktu, Mali, more than 1 million Songhai live in West Africa. Though most profess allegiance to Allah, demonic worship and possession are common among this people group. (IMB photo)

Southern Baptists give to reach the world

By Jerry Rankin, president
SBC International Mission Board

Richmond, Va.—I will never forget the horrible realization three years ago: We would have to defer missionary appointments due to lack of financial resources. After all, the Southern Baptist International Mission Board is a missionary-

sending agency of the largest evangelical denomination in the world. Each of the previous two years, more than 1,000 new missionaries were sent around the world, and more candidates were in the process of appointment than ever before.

Gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions are more than additional support for the IMB beyond the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program. It is the means for supporting God-called missionaries to take the gospel to a lost world.

Most Americans have heard the gospel. Yet, hundreds of people groups never have had a Christian witness. There is no church in their town, neighborhood, or perhaps the entire region. That's why we give, to reach the whole world.

This year's international missions emphasis is on West Africa, a region that desperately needs more missionary personnel. You will read about the Wolof, Songhai, Tuareg, Fulani and others—but what will it take to reach all 1,600 tribes and peoples of West Africa?

God is moving, using natural disasters, war, political upheaval and other changes to open closed doors.

He is doing His part, stirring world events to create a spiritual hunger in people searching for hope only Jesus can provide. God is calling out missionaries from our churches, but will we give to support them?

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

For the last three years, Southern Baptists have stepped up a new dimension of giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, but there is a price for gaining access and placing missionaries among unreached people groups. Penetrating lostness can be linked directly to missions giving. Without the support, missionaries cannot go.

One hundred percent of the Lottie Moon offering is used in the overseas budget. Meeting the goal of \$150 million in 2006 can assure significant progress in our task to reach the world. As you read about missionaries and how God is working, realize it is because we pray and we give. We all are a part of reaching the world.

2006 LOTTIE MOON
CHRISTMAS OFFERING



That all peoples
may know Him

For more
information about
Southern Baptists'
ministry in West
Africa, visit www.gowestafrika.org

PRAYING FOR OPEN HEARTS Joining hands atop a sand dune, members of the Songhai missions team pray for their people. (IMB photo)



Changing gears

Winter months busy with construction for next year

Our fall retreat season is practically finished with the arrival of Thanksgiving. Without question, this has been our largest fall attendance since Kentucky Baptist Assemblies began and perhaps since Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek have been in existence. During the month of November alone, we have had more than 500 retreat participants on many week-ends.

As we transition into the winter months, our focus shifts to facility upgrades and improvements and summer preparation. Prior to the summer of 2007, we will be investing more than \$1 million at the properties. The most significant addition is a new lodge at Cedarmore that will sleep more than 125 guests. The motels are gone and the new building will be a welcome and long-overdue addition.

As we have constructed four lodges over the past years, we have learned what works best from our guests' perspective, and this new building meets all the needs that have been identified over the years. In addition to the guest rooms, the new lodge has three separate infor-

mal meeting areas that will serve as large family room-type areas.

As we work through the winter months, our workload with all the improvements is quite heavy and our need for volunteers remains no different from the summer demand. If you or a group from your church are looking for a place to serve, please contact us since our project list is extensive and we have only about 18 weeks before our new season begins.

Each week this fall we have relied on volunteers for so much assistance with projects and food service. To all who have served with us over the past year, our staff is truly indebted to you. More importantly, our guests are indebted as well since our programs could not happen without your assistance.

If you have not been to Cedarmore or Jonathan Creek recently, we invite you to give us a call and allow us to show you how the properties are changing. We also would love the opportunity to tell each of you about the many lives who have been changed through camps this year.

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

KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



David Melber

Isn't there something ...

... that can help folks know what to do with those new 20-dollar bills they're getting?

You're holding it.

Every week, the Western Recorder's Financial Forum column provides practical ideas for applying biblical truths about personal and church finance. Whether the topic is tithing, church budgets or personal debt, our panel of experts has the experience and insights to help your members learn and apply sound financial concepts.



WESTERN RECORDER

JACKSON

Kudzu

Doug Marlette



For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Bible Crosswords

Carole Stengel

Across

- 1 "With the ___ angels" (Mark 8:38)
- 3 "The Holy ___ shall teach you" (Luke 12:12)
- 7 "They went ... from ___ into Canaan" (Genesis 11:31)
- 8 A short laugh
- 9 Moses and ___ went before Pharaoh (Exodus 5:1)
- 10 "___ is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:14)
- 12 Des Moines' state, abbr.
- 14 One of the twelve tribes (Numbers 1:38)
- 15 David reigned there (2 Samuel 2:1)
- 16 Substantive, abbr.
- 18 "The ___ of thy life shall be many" (Proverbs 4:10)
- 20 Northeastern area of the U.S., abbr.
- 21 Earned runs, abbr.
- 23 "Mine ___ is as nothing before thee" (Psalms 39:5)
- 24 "Our ___ is grown up" (Ezra 9:6)
- 29 Graduate degree, abbr.
- 31 A poem
- 32 Some were clay and some iron (Daniel 2:42)
- 34 "These are the ___ covenants" (Galatians 4:24)
- 36 "Being reviled, ___ bless" (1 Corinthians 4:12)
- 38 "God saw that ___ was good" (Genesis 1:10)
- 39 An unclean thing (Leviticus 11:29)
- 41 Santa Fe's state, abbr.

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			49		50						

- 42 A city belonging to the tribe of Naphtali (Joshua 19:38-39)
- 44 A mongrel
- 47 "By faith they passed through the ___ sea" (Hebrews 11:29)
- 49 Warrant officer, abbr.
- 50 News agency, abbr.
- 22 Do, ___, mi
- 23 I ___. God's name given to Moses
- 25 "I am the ___ and the offspring of David" (Revelation 22:16)
- 26 "He revealeth his ___ unto his servants" (Amos 3:7)
- 27 "___ I opened my mouth" (Ezekiel 3:2)
- 28 Stitches
- 30 "One ___ or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law" (Matthew 5:18)
- 33 "When we shall ___ him" (Isaiah 53:2)
- 35 "If any ___ have children" (1 Tim. 5:4)
- 37 "The noise of a ___, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels" (Nahum 3:2)
- 40 Zaccur's father (Nehemiah 3:2)
- 43 "To be sin for us, who knew ___ sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- 44 Pa's wife
- 45 "He was taken ___, and a cloud received him" (Acts 1:9)
- 46 "Given ___ hospitality" (Romans 12:13)
- 48 "Without me ye can ___ nothing" (John 15:5)

Last week's solution

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Israeli high court orders state to recognize same-sex marriages

Jerusalem (BP)—In a landmark 6-1 decision last week, Israel's Supreme Court ordered the government to begin recognizing gay marriages from other countries.

Although the decision does not grant homosexual couples the right to marry within Israel's borders, it puts Israel at odds with countries such as the United States which doesn't recognize foreign gay marriages. In fact, the U.S. government doesn't even recognize gay marriages performed in Massachusetts, the lone state where it is legal.

Four countries—Canada, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands—have legalized gay marriage. Additionally, the South African Parliament voted earlier this month to legalize same-sex marriage.

The Nov. 21 ruling by the Israel High Court of Justice—the nation's highest court—gives homosexual couples the same legal benefits as heterosexual couples, including tax breaks and the ability to adopt. The Jerusalem Post reported.

"We don't have a Jewish state here. We have Sodom and Gomorrah here," lawmaker Moshe Gafni told Israel's Army Radio, according to the Associated Press. "I assume that every sane person in the state of Israel, possibly the entire Jewish world, is shocked, because the significance is ... the destruction of the family unit in the state of Israel."

The lawsuit was brought by five homosexual couples who were married in other countries and wanted to have their licenses recognized in Israel.

The United States has a law known as the Defense of Marriage Act preventing the federal government from recognizing gay marriages. Homosexual activists hope to see it eventually overturned in court, but the major homosexual groups have yet to file suit.

In Great Britain, a court ruled in July that the government isn't required to recognize gay marriages from Canada.

The Israeli court ruling was issued nearly two weeks after a "gay pride" parade in Jerusalem was cancelled in response to pressure from Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders and concern over Islamic terrorist violence. Despite the cancellation, in recent years homosexual activists in Israel have won legal and political battles that activists in the U.S. have not. For instance, homosexuals in Israel can serve openly in the military. America's "don't ask, don't tell" policy prevents such open service, with U.S. military leaders saying open service would harm morale and cohesion.

The Israeli court decision "shows that the homosexual agenda is global," Peter LaBarbera, president of the conservative Americans for Truth, told Baptist Press.

The ruling, he added, is another example of how same-sex marriage laws in one locality can have a broad impact.

"It is essential to do everything you can to protect marriage wherever you are—in a state or a nation," LaBarbera said. "You have to take precautionary measures."

Five great truths

Key biblical principles influence daily ministry opportunities among students

By Michael Spencer
Oneida Baptist Institute Assistant to the President

If someone were to ask, "What are the keys to working with the young people at Oneida Baptist Institute?" I'd list five truths of the gospel. All apply to our daily ministry with every student.

I would begin by saying that every person is made in the image of God. Christians seldom consider what that means. Genesis begins its story of God's love for every person with the announcement that we are not at all like the rest of creation, but uniquely made to reflect our Creator in ways nothing else can duplicate. Not every student at our school is a Christian, but each is made in God's image. They were made, whether they believe it or not, to worship and glorify God. No matter what they have done or where they come from, they are made in God's image.

Second, every person is a sinner. Made to glorify God, we each have chosen to seek our joy in what is not God—in "the creature" rather than the Creator. The results are disastrous: ruined lives, ruined families and a ruined world. The world may say that sin is "normal," but to those who know that God made us to be masterpieces of His grace, it is a tragedy to know we have chosen disobedience. Our students know the word "sin," but only the Holy Spirit can show a person what it means to be a sinner, far from God, estranged from the very One who gave us life and called us to a great purpose in living.

Third, God loves sinners. The Bible is a record of God's loving, gracious involvement in a broken,

tragic world. It is a world that perverts His image, rejects His law and revels in disobedience and distortion. It is a world of hurt and loneliness, where nothing can fill the God-shaped emptiness of our hearts. God loves people like this, and He has worked in the world to bring about a way of salvation. Our students are reminded daily that God's love is life's great good news. The fact that they are at Oneida and that they daily hear and see the good news is evidence that God hasn't given up on them, and that He loves them more than anyone else could ever love them.

Fourth, Jesus lived, died and rose to make sinners right with God. He is the mediator, the final word and the heart of the gospel. Sinners must be forgiven, not just educated or reformed. They need a new heart and a new life. Jesus, as our representative and substitute, makes this possible by His perfect obedience and victory over sin and death. At OBI, students hear the gospel daily.

We could not imagine a day without telling God's good news of a Savior for every sinner.

Finally, we are saved by grace, through faith. God asks only that we believe, trust and follow. From the moment we believe, we are saved, and from the moment we are saved, our life takes a different path. We contribute nothing to our salvation, but after we are saved, we give everything we have to God. Oneida students are called to believe, to live by faith and walk by faith.

While they are with us, students live daily under the influence of these five great truths, and are invited, continually, to join the people of God who love and belong to such a God.

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



W.F. Underwood

Substance Abuse in my Church?

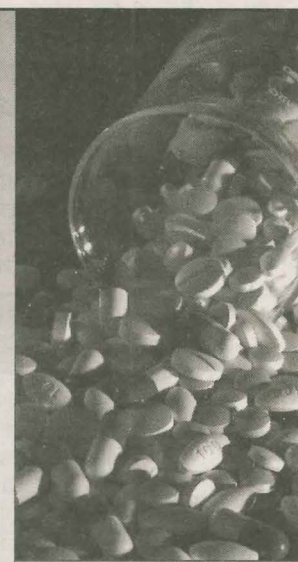
How do Christians become addicted to drugs and alcohol? How can the church help those with substance use disorders? How can the church help youth resist the temptation of drugs and alcohol?

Register for the online course series in Substance Abuse. Each of the three 4-week courses is highly interactive and provides opportunities for online discussion with the facilitator and other study participants. The facilitator is an experienced substance abuse counselor.

• Courses begin Jan. 15, Feb. 26, & Apr. 9

Registration: \$150 per course (Scholarships are available to cover 50% of registration fees).

Visit www.btsr.edu/scm, or call 1-888-339-2877.



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Unashamed of Jesus

At age 51, Clear Creek student is zealous witness

Now that colder weather has come, drivers approaching Pineville from Middlesboro won't find Paul Kirkemunde on the side of the highway as much.

"I jump up and down, advertising for Jesus," Paul said. "I get blessed, and people stop and ask questions. Many stop to just encourage me. Some want to know what makes me tick. I get an opportunity to talk about Jesus. All it costs is \$6.70 for the signs and the Holy Spirit."

In the summer, the third-year student from Tennessee went to Alaska and worked with alumnus

Todd Buck at Glacier Valley Baptist Church in Juneau. The team did carpentry on a building—exterior trim with caulking and painting. They installed a fire door and completed the attic space. Women members of the team conducted a vacation Bible school.

Paul's adventure began with a bus trip to Canada. "When I tried to cross the border the consequences of my past sins came home," he said. "I had a DUI about 10 years ago and that was brought up on their computer; they would not let me cross.

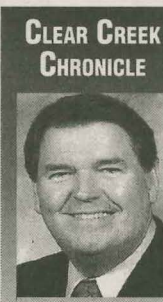
I was like Paul, who also had the door close where he wanted to go. I had everything planned for the trip through Canada; it came unraveled in 24 hours. Okay, Jesus, what plan do You have? A truck driver stopped and took me back to the Amtrak station, and I rode a train across America." The train ride was filled with encounters

and witnessing opportunities. Many of them came as a result of the t-shirts Paul wore. "I had these shirts printed with Scripture, and some of them had the wrong reference," Paul explained. "At first I thought I couldn't wear them, but God said, 'Yes, wear them; you don't have to be

perfect.' So I crossed out the errors, and those shirts gave me more response. I'm learning; I'm not ashamed of Jesus."

Paul also is a nursing student at South East Community College. "Nursing complements my Bible studies. I can use my talents gained as a military medic and use my RN training in rescue missions," Paul said. "Everything now at age 51 is bonus time for me; I love to work for Jesus."

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



Bill Whittaker

Panelists evaluate evangelicals' role, portrayal in media

By Tom Strode
Baptist Press

Washington (BP)—While the news media need to change in order to report more accurately and justly on evangelical Christians, evangelicals also can do things differently to affect their portrayal, panelists at a recent theological meeting said.

A panel including a Southern Baptist ethics leader, a Christian radio talk show host, an ABC News producer and former religion writers for two major news magazines discussed evangelicals and the media during a Nov. 17 session of the annual Evangelical Theological Society meeting in Washington.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and Janet Parshall, host of "Janet Parshall's America," said there is media bias but evangelicals could help themselves by choosing what shows to appear on and what topics to debate.

Land said he thinks "the general performance of the media in this country at the national level has gone down over the last 20 years and is more biased and is more sensational."

Parshall: "Exercise discernment"

Parshall said, "I've often said to some of my peers that if we stopped (playing) the role of the blow-up clown that maybe we wouldn't be so stupid in the media. ... I think the challenge for evangelicals in particular is to probably exercise that muscle known as discernment a bit more and to start being a little bit more judicious about the kinds and types of debates we do engage in ... the ones that are really reflective of biblical truth and moral absolutes, the ones



Richard Land



Janet Parshall

that really will be reflective first and foremost, last and always of Jesus Christ. And if it isn't, then maybe we should stay home."

Land said he has turned down invitations to appear on programs panelists described as "shouting matches" and "food fight shows."

"First of all, the media's responsibility is to get it right," Land said. "They need to know as much as they can about the people they are covering, and they need to do as good a job as they can of being as balanced as they can."

"Balanced journalism is not getting the two most strident voices on the opposite ends of the perspective that you can find and have them shout at each other for 15 minutes," he added.

While journalists have a responsibility to get the news right, evangelicals have a responsibility "to sort of keep a dialogue open," said Jeanmarie Condon, a senior producer for ABC News.

"You know, you have to engage us with a little bit more respect, I think, just as you would like the media to engage" evangelicals, she said.

Parshall challenged evangelicals "to try to encourage the media when they do the right thing and also to let them know when we think they do the wrong thing."

The news media could help by adding evangelicals to their staffs and by listening to those who faithfully represent the evangelical community, Land and Parshall said.

"I do think there is an extreme dearth ... in the electronic and the print media at the national level of people who are serious evangelicals," Land said. "What difference does that make? Because human beings can never be completely objective. It makes a difference, for instance, whether you believe there is an absolute truth or you don't believe there is an absolute truth."

Parshall said, "No. 1, get somebody on retainer on the networks who knows this stuff. Let him be your point man or woman on these issues. 'Hey, what does the Bible say about x, y, z? What does the church believe about x, y, z? And No. 2, how about hiring more reporters with a bibliocentric world view?'"

Threefold role of news media

Condon said she believes the threefold role of ABC and the rest of the news media is:

- "To take seriously the fact that religion is a major mover and motivator for people all around the world and that it needs to be considered carefully in our coverage of almost any story."

- "Not to treat it like an anthropological study, but to cover it from the inside, to look at what ideas people are debating, what causes conflict within various movements, what people agree on, what's bothering them, what people are talking about around their Sunday dinner table."

- "And the third thing is to provoke discussion."

Jeffery Sheler, freelance journal-

ist and former religion writer for U.S. News and World Report, said he believes the news media have improved their coverage of religion in the last 10 to 20 years, but he acknowledged evangelicals tend to be "stereotyped much more frequently than a lot of other groups."

"I'm saying there's a learning curve here, that things are getting better, not quite fast enough to suit me, but things are improving," he said.

Panel moderator Darrell Bock, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, asked the panelists what kind of role the media have in modeling a proper type of dialogue for society.

Sheler said he believes much of the coarse dialogue is a result of the need by cable news operations to fill 24 hours of programming.

"Of course," the media should model the right kind of dialogue, Sheler said. "Are they doing a good job of it? Not very, and I don't know what they do about it."

Panelist Richard Ostling, recently retired religion writer for the Associated Press and longtime religion writer for Time magazine, agreed that "the public discourse is very coarsened in our society," but he pointed to evangelist Billy Graham, not media, as a model.

"Graham has always turned away wrath," he said. "He's always had a charming way of not responding personally with questions and attacks and so on. His charming way, I think, of dealing with public controversy and debate and back-and-forth probably helped the evangelical movement a lot and is very different from what passes for religious and political discourse in a lot of American life today."

Warren's trip to Syria draws flak amid conflicting reports of visit

Nashville (BP)—Rick Warren, author of "The Purpose-Driven Life" and pastor of the 30,000-member Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., has come under fire for a recent trip to Syria.

Warren, who was on a three-nation trip to promote outreach and humanitarian efforts in early November, met with several leaders in the country, including President Bashar al-Assad, Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallim and Grand Mufti Sheikh Badr al-Din Hassoun, an Islamic cleric. The Syrian Arab News Agency, the government's chief propaganda outlet, posted four stories about the visit that, according to Warren, contained comments he did not make.

One SANA posting claimed that Warren addressed "Syrian-American relations" in a meeting with Assad.

"The American delegation stressed that the American administration is mistaken not to hold dialogue with Syria," SANA reported.

"Pastor Warren hailed the religious coexistence, tolerance and stability that the Syrian society is enjoying due to the wise leadership of President al-Assad, asserting that he will convey the true image about Syria to the American people."

In a meeting with Hassoun in Damascus, SANA reported that Warren said he believed there would be no peace in the region without Syrian

assistance, and that "80 percent of the American people rejected what the U.S. administration is doing in Iraq and considered the U.S. policy in the Mideast as wrong."

Mark Tooley, a columnist for FrontPageMagazine.com, the online political journal of the David Horowitz Freedom Center, wrote that Warren, like other preachers who delve into politics, had been naive in his dealings with the Syrian government. Tooley, who directs the United Methodist committee at the Institute on Religion and Democracy, said he doubted that the comments attributed to Warren by SANA were entirely accurate, but said Warren's presence there was a propaganda victory for the nation.

Joseph Farah, editor of the WorldNetDaily website, called Warren's actions "purpose driven terrorism" in his daily column Nov. 21. Farah also accused Warren of being a traitor to his country.

In a letter to the members of his congregation, Warren encouraged his church not to believe "everything you read on the Internet or hear in the media."

Warren noted that the trip was an effort to promote the church's global P.E.A.C.E. plan in Germany, Syria and Rwanda. Warren added, however, that he wished he had been better prepared for the trip to Syria.

"We would have handled some

meetings differently, watched our words more closely, and been more aware of the agenda of their state press," Warren wrote to his congregation. "As we left, the official state-controlled Syrian news agency issued some press releases that sounded like I was a politician negotiating the Iraq war by praising the Syrian president and everything else in Syria! Of course, that's ridiculous, but it created a stir among bloggers who tend to editorialize before verifying the truth. Does it seem ironic to you that people who distrust Syria are now believing Syrian press releases?"

Warren said he explained the Saddleback P.E.A.C.E. plan to Assad during his meeting with the president and that Assad gave the church permission to send teams to Syria.

"We wanted to just slip in and out, but that's nearly impossible for me to do anymore," Warren wrote. "It's been a learning experience."

A press release by Warren's publicist, Larry Ross, noted that Warren had discussed religious freedom and academic exchange with Syrian leaders.

"Contrary to reports by the official state-controlled Syrian news agency, Dr. Warren was in Syria to meet with and encourage the country's key Christian leaders and to promote religious freedom," Ross wrote.



Ross said Warren's visit to the country was "neither official nor political." As for his alleged criticism of American policy in the region, the news release quoted Warren as saying there should be "no doubt about our support for President Bush, our troops in Iraq and the war on terror."

Ross also explained Warren's comment that 80 percent of the American public wanted U.S. forces to withdraw from Iraq. When asked whether American public opinion had turned against the war, the news release stated that Warren replied, "Yes. The New York Times reported that 80 percent of Americans indicated in election day exit polls they now oppose keeping troops in Iraq."

DIALOGUE Pastor and author Rick Warren (right) visits with Grand Mufti Sheikh Badr al-Din Hassoun during a recent trip to Syria. (Photo by the Syrian Arab News Agency)

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist ministries and missionaries:

Mount Eden Baptist Church in Hawesville.

The church is involved in ministry to shut-ins and widows through a "repair fair," according to Pastor Foy Back. Members work together to assist with painting, replacing windows, fixing leaky pipes or roofs, etc. This ministry is a combined effort of several churches in the community. Pray that those doing the repair work will be bold in their witness for Christ. Pray that those receiving help will be open and receptive to the gospel as it is shared in both word and deed.

Mission Service Corps Missionaries Mitch and Christie Schumacher of London.

The Schumachers direct High Mountain Equine Outreach in southeast Kentucky. They serve their community by using horses as a tool to share the hope found in Jesus Christ. Pray for them as they develop and grow this ministry that they recently started. Pray that God will open doors of opportunity as they seek to share the gospel.

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

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Saloma Church's children and youth will present a Christmas musical program Dec. 17, 6 p.m. **John Chowning** is pastor.

■ **CRESTWOOD**—Crestwood Church's choir will present the 2006 Living Christmas Tree, "Wise Men Still Seek Him," Dec. 2 and 9 at 7 p.m., and Dec. 3 and 10 at 3:30 and 7 p.m. For free tickets, call (502) 241-8534. **Dan Garland** is pastor.

■ **ELIZABETHTOWN**—Severns Valley Church's Christmas Celebration Choir will present "Behold the King" Dec. 10, 6 p.m. For more information, call (270) 765-7822. **Billy Comp-ton** is pastor.

■ **ERLANGER**—Erlanger Church will present its 2006 Living Christmas Tree Dec. 8 at 7:30 p.m., and Dec. 9-10 at 5 and 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (859) 727-2588. **Dan Francis** is pastor.

■ **FINCHVILLE**—Finchville Church recently called **Tony Hough** as interim pastor.

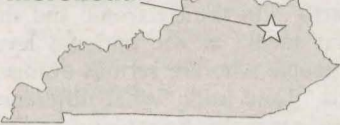
■ **GLENDAL**—Gilead Church's Music Makers children's choir will present "Gather by the Manger," a musical drama of the birth of Jesus, Dec. 3, 6 p.m. **Nathan Joyce** is pastor.

■ **LONDON**—Victory Church recently called **Brian Bond** as senior pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Lyndon Church will host **Rob Nash**, newly elected glob-

Spotlight on ...

Morehead



First Church's children's theater will present "A Charlie Brown Christmas" Dec. 17, 6 p.m. **Don Mantoath** is pastor.

al missions coordinator for the Co-operative Baptist Fellowship, as a guest speaker Dec. 10, 10:45 a.m. The church also will sponsor a public reception for Nash from 2:30 to 5 p.m. For more information, call (502) 425-7150. **Jim Holladay** is pastor.

■ **SHELBYVILLE**—First Church recently called **Chandra Heath** as minister to children and families. **Ed Erwin** is pastor.

What's going on?

Mail your happenings to Mountains to the Mississippi at Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. E-mail: wesrec@earthlink.net.

Campbellsville, Hispanic Institute leaders sign partnership agreement

Louisville—Officials of Campbellsville University and the Hispanic Bible Institute signed an agreement Nov. 10 formalizing a partnership between the two educational institutions.

John Chowning, vice president for church and external relations and executive assistant to the president at Campbellsville, said the university is honored to be part of the partnership.

Chowning, who also is vice chairman of the Hispanic Bible Institute's board, said the agreement will provide technical assistance, technology training, English as a Second Language training, faculty and equipment for the institute.

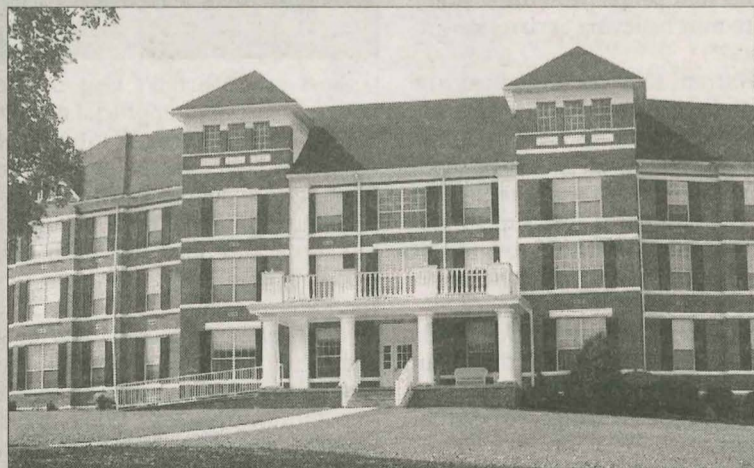
Twyla Hernandez, executive director of the Hispanic Bible Insti-

tute, described the agreement as a "dream come true." The institute currently offers classes in Bowling Green, Louisville and Somerset.

Grundy Janes, chairman of the institute's board, said the partnership agreement "is a significant step forward for the institute."

The partnership with Campbellsville "brings us to a new level of cooperative work," he added. "Large numbers of Hispanic Baptist pastors will benefit from the cooperation of Campbellsville University and the institute."

For more information about the Hispanic Bible Institute, contact Hernandez at institutokyo@yahoo.com, phone (859) 420-2220 or Janes at janes@twjanes.com, phone (502) 896-4177.



CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION Students at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg recently celebrated the centennial of Mahan Hall with free refreshments. The men's dormitory was built in 1906, when the university was known as Williamsburg Institute. The building originally was named Felix Hall, in honor of board member W.H. Felix of Lexington. It was renamed Mahan Hall in 1954 in honor of E.C. Mahan. The dormitory was renovated in 1984.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

11-12 Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board meeting, Baptist Building, Louisville.

January

18-20 Shepherding the Shepherd Conference, Radisson Hotel, Lexington.

23 Pastor/Staff Forum, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

25-26 Quarterly Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening, Northside Baptist Church, Mount Vernon.

26-27 Preschool/Children's Ministry Meeting, Lakeside Baptist Church, Louisville.

26-27 Woman's Missionary Union Regional Retreat, Laurel Lake Baptist Camp, Corbin.

February

1-3 Youth Leaders Conclave, Chattanooga, Tenn.

2-3 Deacon/Pastor/Spouse Retreat, Holiday Inn University Plaza, Bowling Green.

17 Special Needs Ministry Conference, Baptist Building, Louisville.

19 Financial Support Issues for Ministers and Church Employees Conference, Lone Oak First Baptist Church, Paducah.

20 Financial Support Issues for Ministers and Church Employees Conference, Daviess-McLean Baptist Association, Owensboro.

21 Financial Support Issues for Ministers and Church Employees Conference, Eastwood Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

22 Financial Support Issues for Ministers and Church Employees Conference, Versailles Baptist Church.

23 Financial Support Issues for Ministers and Church Employees Conference, Florence Baptist Church.

24 "Love 101" True Love Waits Conference, Living Hope Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

24 Hispanic Evangelism Conference, First Baptist Church, Mount Washington.

26-27 Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference, Eastwood Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

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

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: Full-time pastor in rural town near Owensboro (1.5 hours from Louisville). Worship attendance: approximately 280. Requirements include seminary degree and at least five years head pastor experience. Submit resumé with cover letter to Pastor Search Team, Lewisport Baptist Church, Lewisport, KY 42351; or www.lewisportbaptist.org.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth and young adults for Trinity Baptist in Lexington. Please send resumé to: Trinity Baptist Church, 1675 Strader Drive, Lexington, KY 40505, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Part-time praise and worship leader for Liberty Baptist Church to lead a blended service and establish a praise band. Send resumé: Jerry Netherland, 301 Coopers Point, Leitchfield, KY 42754.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for three services and adult choir rehearsal each week. Please contact Personnel Committee at Beechmont Baptist Church, 4574 South Third St., Louisville, KY 40214. (502) 368-5806.

SEEKING: Minister of music and a pianist. Send resumé to Grace Community Baptist Church, 7300 National Turnpike, Louisville, KY 40214; or e-mail to gcbc7300@peoplepc.com.

SEEKING: Payroll accountant (immediate need) for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This position is responsible for the accurate and timely preparation of all seminary payrolls, resolution of payroll-related problems and questions, and the organization and maintenance of payroll records. This position requires an associate degree in accounting, at least two years of accounting experience and at least one year of payroll experience. The seminary offers a fast-paced, multi-tasking work environment, plus a competitive salary and benefits package. Qualified candidates should e-mail their resumé with cover letters and salary histories to: humanresources@sbts.edu.

SEEKING: Minister of music (part-time or full-time). Position includes directing music for all worship services (Sunday morning and evening; Wednesday evening), weekly adult choir practice with approximately 40 dedicated and talented choristers, and supervision of organist and pianist. Regular attendance: approximately 400 and growing. Love for traditional and contemporary music in praise and worship. Seeking someone to grow with us through music ministry for all ages. Full job description available upon request. Mail resumé to Central Baptist Church, 829 High St., Paris, KY 40361, Attn: Music Search Committee; or e-mail to suecbc@bellsouth.net. (859) 987-3951. Questions: Chris Jones, chair; chris@qx.net.

SEEKING: Full-time associate pastor for First Baptist Church, Richmond, Ky. The position is responsible for assisting with the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through congregational worship, preparing and delivering sermons, providing clergy services, leading congregational spiritual development and providing pastoral care. Ability to build and maintain effective working relationships and rapport with members, staff, prospects and the community is required. Compensation includes salary, vacation, insurance, SECA and retirement. Send cover letter, resumé, salary history and available starting date to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 425 Eastern Bypass, Richmond, KY 40475; or via e-mail to Richard.landers@firstbaptistnet.com.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for First Baptist Church, 916 Main Street, Paris, Ky. We are a growing church located in central Kentucky with an average worship attendance of 240. Resumé should be sent by Jan. 15, 2007, to: Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 327, Paris, KY 40362; or e-mail: fbcparis@aol.com.

Right on track

Raceway ministries expand beyond Daytona, Indy to Carolinas & New Hampshire

By Jerry Higgins
Baptist Press

Concord, N.C. (BP)—With the popularity of NASCAR racing across the United States, it's not surprising that the areas surrounding motor raceways turn into small cities during race weekends—a mission field for sowing the gospel and providing a much-needed helping hand to race organizers.

A noisy raceway might not seem like a place to prepare people for worship but there are raceway ministries that meet NASCAR fans where they are. That's why organizations such as the National Fellowship of Raceway Ministries and Motor Racing Outreach have seen volunteers for their ministries multiply and requests for their services expand.

"There are thousands of people at any given NASCAR race and there are two or three races a weekend," said Roger Marsh, executive director of NFRM and chairman of the Texas Alliance Raceway Ministries.

"A half-million people can show up during the weekend," Marsh said. "This presents a tremendous opportunity for us to share the gospel. There are also 20,000 to 40,000 people in the campgrounds during the weekend, which gives us a captive audience. This is a great opportunity for outreach."

Filling a market niche

The National Fellowship of Raceway Ministries began in the 1970s through the efforts of three Southern Baptist pastors who ministered at tracks around the South including Darlington, S.C., and Daytona, Fla. It is a fellowship of local ministry groups that shares the gospel with race fans, competitors and motor sports participants of all kinds.

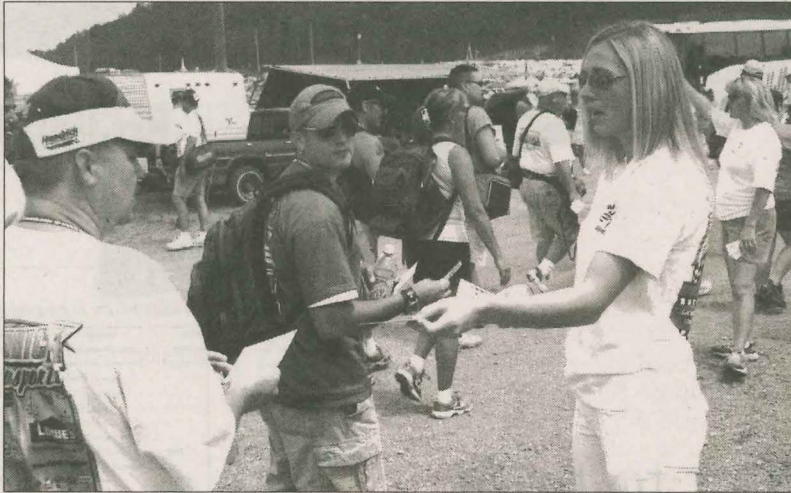
The NFRM has member groups from Daytona International Speedway in Florida to the New Hampshire International Speedway in Loudon, N.H., and across the country to the California Speedway in Fontana, Calif. Many of the groups share the gospel at the major speedways where NASCAR, the IRL (Indy Racing League) and CART (Champ Car World Series) race.

Others minister at road courses or local venues where modifieds, sprint cars and street stocks draw local racing enthusiasts who aren't able to make it to tracks like Lowe's Motor Speedway outside Charlotte, N.C.

The ministries help local churches and church groups organize outreach efforts. They meet with race officials and offer their services without pressing a gospel agenda, Marsh said.

"They know we have services for them and are useful to the fans. They know our volunteers are reliable and we can provide chapel services to them. We also speak their language," Marsh continued. "We say we want to give the fans one more reason to buy season tickets. They're very responsive to that."

Because many members of the racing community already are believers, Christian volunteers are ac-



MINISTRY VOLUNTEER Michele Mobley (right), distributes tickets for a free chance to win a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. An Auburn University student from Phenix City, Ala., Mobley drove to Bristol, Tenn., to volunteer to help with evangelistic outreach during a NASCAR event there. (BP file photo by Sherri Brown)

cepted more readily. "A good percentage of NASCAR fans are church people and there are a good number of Christians among the drivers and crews," Marsh said. "We fill a market niche that they need."

Motor Racing Outreach, based in Concord, N.C., is the primary provider for ministry to several auto, boat and motocross racing series, helping equip local church groups for the specialized ministry. MRO provides chaplains and also will train volunteers who want to serve as raceway chaplains.

Bill Carpenter of York, Maine, is the group's fan coordinator. He travels the country with his family in their RV, attending about 25 races annually, making initial contacts with track management, NASCAR officials and local churches and church groups.

"I run around and encourage peo-

ple," Carpenter said. Initially he said he would serve three years; that was more than 10 years ago.

With experience drawn from having worked at least 300 races, he said, "I.I.D. talent for whatever is needed. I start new sites and get calls from different groups on how to get involved at the track."

Connecting with race fans

MRO develops projects and resources that connect with racing fans, Carpenter said. "We provide literature like Our Daily Bread tracts geared to racing fans. ... We had a concert at Talladega (Ala.) that drew 7,000 people. We also work with smaller groups on things like Pinewood Derbies and face painting."

Racetrack volunteers help in a variety of ways. "We work with the track on medical and security situations," Carpenter said. "Emergency

people respond and take injured and ailing people for treatment and we help the family members. We minister to them and hook them up with local ministry people to make it easy to deal with the crisis."

Motor Racing Outreach also organizes chapel services typically 110 minutes before the start of a race. Services are open to anyone. Worshipers might hear drivers such as Dale Jarrett or Mark Martin share their Christian testimony. The services also are televised on DirecTV Channel 103.

For the past three years, raceway ministry groups sought a working relationship with world-famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway. This spring doors opened and ministry groups were allowed at the Brickyard for the Allstate 400.

"It was tough," said Terry Lewis, pastor of Eastside Community Baptist Church in Indianapolis and the ministry group organizer. "The track has been here for so many years and they want to make money. They asked, 'What can you do for us?'"

The Indianapolis group had 60 volunteers who distributed 5,000 cups of water and 20,000 pieces of Christian literature, Lewis said. They also had a Pinewood Derby. The Sunday worship service drew 60 people.

"Two people raised their hands that they prayed to receive Christ," Lewis said. "Others wanted to talk to us and share their experience with us. ... We received positive feedback from the speedway."

Lewis said the volunteers who served during the inaugural ministry are excited about the prospect of returning to the Brickyard. "We hope to work the Indy 500 and the IRL races in the future," he said.

MASSIVE MISSION FIELD
Kentucky Speedway in Sparta has more than 66,000 grandstand seats. Some NASCAR venues draw up to 500,000 people, providing endless opportunities for Southern Baptists to share the gospel and minister in the name of Christ. (KBC photo by Robert Reeves)



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The image displays three overlapping sample newsletters from 'Western Recorder'. The top newsletter is for Cecilia Baptist Church, dated October 17, 2006. It features a 'COMMUNITY WELFARE' section, a 'SUNSHINED BY THE CECILIA BAPTIST' section, and a 'POTLUCK' section. The middle newsletter is for First Baptist Hopkinsville, dated October 17, 2006. It features a 'FROM THE PASTOR' section, a 'REMEMBER IN PRAYER' section, and a 'CALENDAR OF EVENTS' section. The bottom newsletter is for First Baptist Owensboro, dated October 17, 2006. It features a 'Touch One Life, Start a Ripple' section, a 'A Word From Our Pastor' section, and a '2007 BUDGET!' section. Each newsletter includes church contact information and a variety of announcements.