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Barna: Born-again voters still major force in elections

Ventura, Calif. (BP)—If the turnout for the 2008 presidential election is anything like that of 2000 and 2004, born-again voters will cast roughly half of all ballots, The Barna Group predicts.

"Born-again Christians should not be underestimated. They represent half of Republican voters, two-fifths of registered Democrats and one-third of independent voters," said David Kinnaman, the researcher who directed the study for Barna. "As the presidential primaries gear up and both parties try to attract the broadest group of voters, it will be to their benefit not to alienate the diverse Christian segment."

By examining 32 measures of religious committing, belief and activity, Barna found that while Republicans continue to attract the most born-again Christian voters, Democrats are gaining ground. Republicans attract a disproportionate share of evangelicals, Barna found, and Democrats are much more likely to attract other religions.

"While one out of 14 Republicans is aligned with a religious belief system other than Christianity, the same is true for one out of every five Democrats," Barna noted.

But as presidential candidates seek to reach out to the evangelical voting bloc, Kinnaman warned that their attempts at appearing religious are easily identified. "Keep in mind that many Christian voters are increasingly skeptical of being played for political purposes," he said. "Appealing to them must go beyond simply saying the right combination of messages or getting them to show up at the polls, but instead should genuinely connect with their perspectives and principles."

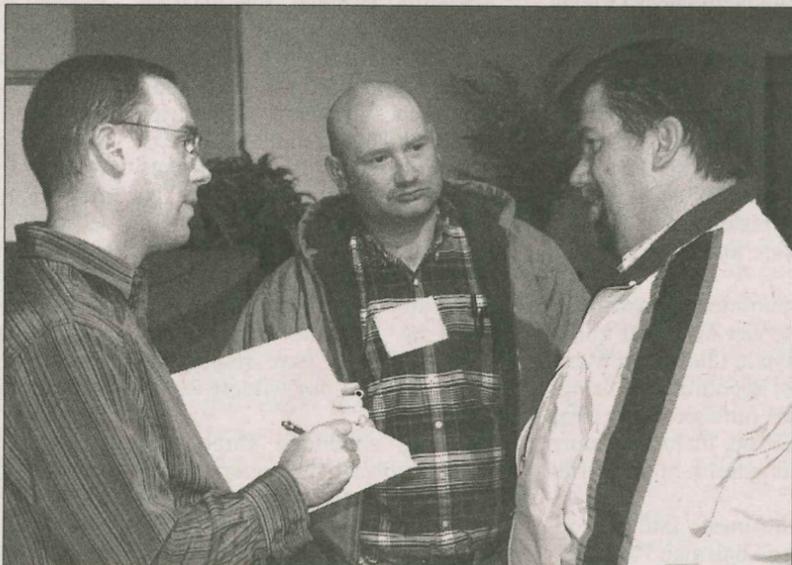
'Live the Call'



■ **Above:** Members of Korea Woman's Missionary Union's Esther Missions Choir and Handbells perform a fan dance at the 104th annual meeting of Kentucky WMU held March 23-24 at Third Baptist Church in Owensboro. ■ **Left:** Megan Zeigler, a student at Kentucky Wesleyan College, portrays a mountain climber facing a test of faith. Baptist Collegiate Ministries was one of the missions highlighted at the meeting. ■ **Right:** National WMU Executive Director Wanda Lee was this year's keynote speaker, sharing stories of how believers around the globe answer God's call to serve in His name and share the gospel message. **Stories and more photos from this year's meeting are on page 3.** (Photos by Dannah Prather)



Author highlights keys to implementing 'Simple Church' process



SIMPLE PLAN Eric Geiger (left), co-author of "Simple Church," visits with workshop participants and autographs copies of his book at the conclusion of a Simple Church seminar held March 20 at Crestwood Baptist Church in Oldham County. The seminar, hosted by the KBC church development team, attracted more than 250 participants.

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

Crestwood—Emphasizing that simple isn't the same thing as easy, Eric Geiger invited church leaders last week to explore the "Simple Church" process for discipleship and church growth.

Geiger, executive pastor of Christ Fellowship in Miami, is co-author of "Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples" with LifeWay Christian Resources President Thom Rainer.

Geiger led a Simple Church Seminar March 20 at Crestwood Baptist Church in Oldham County. The one-day event, hosted by the Kentucky Baptist Convention's church development team, attracted more than 250 participants. While most of those in attendance were from Kentucky Baptist churches, others came from neighboring states and from as far away as Canada.

While affirming the Simple Church process, Geiger warned church leaders, "Going to simple isn't easy. Simple and easy are different. Simple is streamlined and focused; easy is effortless."

The Simple Church process is not about "just giving some programs new names," he pointed out. "A simple church is a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth."

Geiger noted that he and Rainer began their research by identifying every Southern Baptist church that had grown 10 percent for three consecutive years. After finding only 116 such churches among Southern Baptists' 43,000 congregations, he said, "We actually had to lower the expectations of what a vibrant church would be."

□ See 'Simple Church' author ... *Page 6*

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, March 28.

Trustees unanimously elect Hammond as NAMB president

"I want us to be missionary-minded in all we do."

Geoff Hammond, newly elected NAMB president

Alpharetta, Ga. (BP)—Trustees of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board voted unanimously March 21 to elect Geoff Hammond as NAMB's new president.

The vote came after trustees met in executive session to review Hammond's nomination and interview the candidate and his wife, Debbie. He will officially assume his duties as president at the trustees' May 8-9 meeting.

His election comes almost a year after a major leadership crisis rocked NAMB, leading to former President Robert Reccord's resignation amid concerns about Reccord's leadership style, financial decisions and ministry strategies.

"It's a long way from Ogbomoso, Nigeria, to Atlanta, Ga.," Hammond said, referring to his birth to missionary parents in the African nation. "And I am not here today because of anything I have done, but because of who He is."

International ministry experience

Hammond, 49, is the first bilingual president of the national agency or its predecessor agencies (Home Mission Board, Radio & Television Commission, and Brotherhood Commission). In addition to growing up on the international mission field in Africa, he attended college in England and taught church planting and evangelism at a seminary in Brazil. A naturalized American citizen, he has had church planting experiences on four continents.

In brief remarks to the trustees after the vote, Hammond outlined his vision for NAMB and the need for the gospel in North America.

"I grew up as a kid looking at North America as a place that already had the gospel," Hammond said. "That was until I came here.



CONGRATULATIONS Roy Fish (left), who has served as interim president of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board since June 2006, congratulates Geoff Hammond on his election as NAMB president March 21. (BP photo by John Swain)

The longer I am here, the more I am convinced that we need to see North America as a mission field."

Hammond is the son and grandson of missionaries and currently serves as a NAMB church planting missionary with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia convention. He also serves as senior associate director of the SBCV.

"I am a missionary," Hammond said. "I want NAMB to be a missionary agency in all we do. I want us to be missionary-minded in all we do. I want us to think like missionaries. I want us to have a missionary culture in this building. I pray that when you walk in this building, you will feel like this is a missionary place."

Hammond joked that when he entered the NAMB building the day before, he was given a temporary name badge. Upon entering the building for the meeting with trust-

ees, he wore the missionary badge issued to him when he was appointed as a NAMB missionary several years ago.

"I know I'll be receiving a new badge soon but if you don't mind, I'm going to hold on to my missionary badge as well," he noted.

Hammond was recommended March 1 by NAMB's presidential search committee after a nine-month search.

Fauls: "Moved by the hand of God"

"We were so moved by the hand of God through the process concerning Dr. Hammond that we are presenting a recommendation to you unanimously as a committee—a true unanimous recommendation from our committee," Greg Fauls, chairman of the presidential search committee, told fellow trustees.

"We had no pre-determined can-

didate," said Fauls, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Owensboro. "We were looking for someone who was not just mission-minded but had the mind of a missionary—someone who could think like a missiologist and could shape missions work at NAMB and with our state partners."

In his address to trustees after the vote, Hammond cited Isaiah 6 as a passage of Scripture God used to speak to his heart during the process of interviewing for the NAMB presidency. In that passage, God asks the prophet Isaiah, "Whom shall I send?"

"I tried to jump out of the process several times and God would not let me," Hammond said. "I wanted to say, 'Here I am, Lord, in Virginia.' I thought, 'We can't leave this place, we have a son who's going to be a senior next year, things are going well with this job, this is the best we've ever had it.' I thought we had come to our last stop when we went to Virginia."

"And I remember the day when I had to come face to face with the fact that I was willing to do anything for God except one thing. So I had to say, 'Here am I. Send me.'"

Hammond said he embraces a style of managing by consensus, but that he could make strong decisions when necessary.

He asked trustees and Southern Baptists to pray for spiritual awakening and revival and that revival would start with NAMB and spread throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I believe today is a divine moment and God has called me to seize it and He is calling the NAMB staff and missionaries to seize it."

With additional reporting by Joe Westbury of the Georgia Christian Index

BAPTIST DIGEST

S.C. convention nominates new director. Jim Austin, associate executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention, has been nominated as executive director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. If his nomination is approved this week by the state convention Executive Board, the convention is expected to hold a called session next month to consider his election. If elected, he will succeed Carlisle Driggers who retired in February after 15 years as executive director. Austin is a former pastor of churches in Georgia and Virginia.

Garland named Truett Seminary dean. Paul Powell, dean of Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary for six years, will retire in May and be succeeded by veteran Baptist educator David Garland, the school's associate dean for academic affairs. Powell came out of retirement to lead Truett in 2001 after serving as president of the former Southern Baptist Annuity Board. Truett faculty members have unanimously endorsed Garland's selection. Garland came to Truett in 1997 after a 20-year career teaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He and his wife, Diana, left Southern after leaders there decided to close the school of social work, where Diana Garland was dean.

Crawford to head Richmond seminary. Trustees of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond recently elected Ron Crawford as president of the 18-year-old seminary. Crawford, 55, will begin his new role July 1. The pastor of College Park Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., Crawford is a native of Virginia and former trustee of the seminary. He will succeed Thomas Graves, who retired last fall due to health reasons. The Richmond school is a moderate Baptist seminary affiliated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

IMB appoints 49 workers, projects record offering

Memphis, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist International Mission Board trustees rejoiced during their March 19-21 meeting in Memphis, Tenn., that the 2006 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is projected to exceed the goal of \$150 million, which would be a record.

Trustees appointed 49 missionaries, affirmed evidence of greater Southern Baptist involvement in the West Africa region and heard a challenge to embrace change to reach the world's unengaged peoples.

David Steverson, the IMB's vice president of finance, reported the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is projected to exceed the \$150 million national goal for 2006. A final report will be released after the May 31 close-out date for the offering receipts.

Trustees appointed 49 missionaries during a service March 21 at Kirby Woods Baptist Church in Memphis. The latest appointments brings the IMB's total number of overseas personnel to 5,160, including more than 4,000 long-term missionaries on the field.

In other business, IMB Personnel Committee Chairman Paul Chitwood, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mount Washington, said the ad hoc committees revisiting a baptism guideline and prayer language poli-

cy for missionary candidates, both adopted in November 2005, had concluded their work and reported to the Personnel Committee. Their recommendation will be presented to the full board in May.

Following a year-long campaign to highlight mission efforts in West Africa, regional associate Roger Haun reported how God is moving in the region.

Through regional mobilization summits, stories and various promotional materials, the region now has 300,000 prayer partners. More than 200 churches attended West Africa summits in Florida and Missouri. In the process, about 20 churches adopted people groups. More than 120 other churches made some type of commitment to help the region.

"The response has been phenomenal," Haun said. "We've been very pleased by the number of Southern Baptists who have responded. It's been beyond our wildest expectations."

Trustees appointed three missionary couples to the region during the Memphis meeting. By the end of this year, the region expects to receive more new missionaries than in the last three years combined, Haun said.

The region has the world's largest number of unreached people

groups of fewer than 100,000 people. IMB personnel are giving priority to reaching all people groups of 100,000 or more throughout the world and, therefore, need church partners to engage many of those smaller groups that still are unreached, such as in West Africa.

In order to reach more unengaged people groups, IMB President Jerry Rankin contended Southern Baptists must be willing to embrace change.

By the end of the decade, Rankin said, he hopes to see 10,000 Southern Baptist churches involved in strategic partnerships overseas. Other goals include expanding the missionary force from more than 5,000 to 8,000 and engaging unreached people groups.

But first, Southern Baptists must identify and let go of strategies, programs and methods that no longer are relevant in today's society, Rankin said. He stressed that the IMB must remain firm in message, purpose, mandate, principles and values, but said the agency's organization, strategies, methods and programs must be open to change.

"How do we as a mission agency remain relevant and on the cutting edge of effectiveness?" he asked. "It will not be without a readiness to embrace change."

'Live the Call'

Korean guests, collegiate ministries, worldwide prayer highlight WMU annual meeting

By Dannah Prather
Partnerships Editor

Owensboro—Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union members and guests participated in a worldwide prayer emphasis, heard an update on Baptist Collegiate Ministries, and enjoyed multiple offerings by Korea WMU's choir and handbells at the March 23-24 annual meeting hosted by Third Baptist Church in Owensboro.

Kentucky Baptists and guests also celebrated the record-breaking, and still growing, Eliza Broadus Offering for State Missions which already has reached nearly \$930,000.

"Will this be the year we reach \$1 million?" asked Joy Bolton, Kentucky WMU executive director. Bolton thanked Kentucky Baptists for their unprecedented support of state missions. She also reminded

them that the offering season does not conclude until Aug. 31.

Jerry Tooley, director of missions for Daviess-McLean Baptist Association, said he became more aware of the significance of the Eliza Broadus Offering serving on the missions committee of the Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Board in the 1980s.

As he learned of the many ministries funded through the offering, "I made a commitment to give cheerfully to that cause," Tooley said. Ministries to the Hispanic community and prison inmates are just two efforts in Daviess-McLean Association that are supported, in part, through the state offering, he said.

Other local, national and international missionaries were on hand to thank Kentucky WMU members for teaching children and adults the many ways they can "Live the Call," such as praying for missionaries, supporting missionary-sending agencies, and participating in missions at home or around the world.

"Though we don't really know you, I don't know what we'd do without you," said "K," a missionary who serves with his wife in the Pacific Rim. Because of security concerns, they are identified by initial only.

Sharing the gospel in "Last Frontier" countries steeped in non-Christian religious tradition means "hard work with little results," K said.

Direct evangelism is illegal in many Last Frontier nations, and practical obstacles, such as poor transportation and infrastructure, also are frustrating.

Despite the challenges, K said Southern Baptists should have hope. "Korea was once the Last Frontier," he said, gesturing to members of the



ALL AROUND THE WORLD Members of Girls in Action and Children in Action from across Kentucky perform their theme song during the final session of the 104th annual meeting of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union. (Photos by Dannah Prather)

Korean WMU Esther Missions Choir and Handbells. "Where we are standing—where this church is—once was the Last Frontier."

Karen Wright, a missionary to Chile for 22 years, encouraged Kentucky Baptists to embrace their own call to missions, describing her realization that God wanted her to be a missionary as "a process. God knew it would take a while."

Even after 22 years on the field, Wright said she experiences new challenges such as coordinating construction projects, promoting True Love Waits or starting new churches. She said she meets challenges just as all believers should, remembering that "His first call to me, beyond the salvation call, is to know Him and to reflect His life in everything I say and do."

Members of Owensboro-area Bap-

tist Collegiate Ministries participated in the WMU annual meeting program. Keith Inman, collegiate ministries director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, told WMU members that their support of Baptist Collegiate Ministries extends beyond state campuses.

Summer missions for college students is just one example, he said. "Our campus ministers tell students, 'Do not let (a lack of) money keep you from a missions experience,'" Inman said. "What allows them to say that is your gifts to the Eliza Broadus Offering."

Many young men and women involved in BCM go on to serve as missionaries, pastors, chaplains or in other ministry roles, he said.

"WMU is a righteous arm of God's church. We need you for these students to go and live the call."



PRESIDING Kentucky WMU President Pat Reaves wore a traditional Korean dress during the Friday evening session that included a parade of flags and prayer for peoples of the world.



25 YEARS OF MINISTRY Brenda Price was recognized for 25 years of service through Kentucky WMU. She is preschool/children's consultant and associate executive director. She also served as interim executive director prior to Joy Bolton's election.



HELPING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS A WMU member donates a Wal-Mart gift card that will help students from other countries attending colleges in Kentucky. The hundreds of gift cards will be distributed among Kentucky's Baptist Collegiate Ministries.

Lee: Jesus' call is the same for everyone: 'Follow Me'

By Dannah Prather
Partnerships Editor

Owensboro—National Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Wanda Lee told Kentucky Baptists that answering God's call involves recognizing His voice, understanding His loving care and embracing the world.

Through scripture, personal experiences and stories from the mission field, Lee encouraged Kentucky Baptists attending the Kentucky WMU annual meeting to draw closer to God, and then take action.

"There are four specific times in my life when I have heard (God's) voice and responded—and it changed the course of my life," Lee told the more than 650 people gathered at Third Baptist Church in Owensboro March 23-24.

Lee said accepting Christ as her Savior, becoming a nurse, embarking on full-time Christian service, and accepting the position as national WMU executive director were her most life-changing encounters with God.

She is the seventh executive director of national WMU and has served since 2000. Many of the stories and insights she shared are from her book, "Live The Call," released

last year by New Hope Publishers, WMU's publishing arm.

Acknowledging that many believers testify to hearing God's voice audibly, Lee said her times of calling grew from exploring the Bible and seeking His will through prayer.

As believers learn more about God's character, they discern what role they are to play in His mission, she said. "We must understand who He is and what His mission is—not what we think it is or ought to be."

As her relationship with God deepened, Lee said she asked Him to "help me see the world and the people in the world like He does, so I, in turn, could be an instrument He could use."

Embracing the world comes when Christians understand that God loves everyone and wants to see everyone come to faith in Him through Christ, Lee said.

"Jesus' call is the same for all of us," Lee said. "Follow Me." The message may be simple, but the mission is not, she said. It is a lesson Lee said she learned anew on a mission trip to the Balkans in the late 1990s.

Lee encountered a woman with a severely handicapped child. They had fled one of the breakaway republics to Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The mother had a dwindling supply of medication vital to her child.

Lee discovered that the drug was made in Germany and illegal in Bosnia. For two weeks, in between long shifts providing medical care to refugees, Lee and her interpreter, a new Christian, went to pharmacies inquiring if they had any of the medicine. Each time she was told that the medicine was banned in Bosnia and that she never would find it.

"I became fixated on this," she said, adding that the knowledge that she and the other nurses were helping hundreds of other people did not console her when she thought of the desperate mother. "In my great frustration, I cried to the Lord, 'Please help me meet this one need and I'll understand why You brought me to this place,'" Lee said.

The trip was in its final hours and Lee and her interpreter made a stop at a local market to purchase coffee. As they were leaving the store, she noticed a pharmacy across the street. Her interpreter agreed to give it one more try.

With no hope, Lee said, she made her inquiry "for about the 40th time." Bracing for the usual reply, Lee instead saw the pharmacist reach under the counter and produce two

boxes. In English, the druggist said, "This is an illegal drug in Bosnia. It is German made. I have no idea why I have it. Please take it and leave."

As miraculous as finding the medicine was, Lee said perhaps the greatest miracle was locating the mother.

Lee did not know her name or address, only that she and her child were living in an apartment somewhere in Sarajevo. Her interpreter said finding her would be impossible.

As they were driving through the city, Lee spied a woman on the street and called to her interpreter to stop. Despite the improbability of recognizing a woman draped in an Islamic burka, Lee said she knew she had found the mother.

"They're all veiled," the translator protested, "How can you tell?"

Lee credits God for the insight. She jumped out of the vehicle and ran toward the woman, waving the boxes of medicine. As they embraced, Lee said the only word she understood the woman say—perhaps the only English she knew—was "sister."

"You can live the call," Lee told Kentucky Baptists. "Do you believe it yet?"

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

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Caring for the abused, neglected and forgotten

By Ken Connor

Leesburg, Va. (BP)—In recent weeks, "NBC Nightly News" has featured a series of reports titled "Trading Places: Caring for Your Parents."

The series began with the personal stories of NBC reporters Brian Williams, Tim Russert and Ann Curry, each of whom is dealing with an increasingly common question: What should I do with my aging parents? Baby boomers are beginning to experience sleepless nights as they worry about their mothers and fathers, and legislators should start to worry too. The fact is that eldercare already is a national problem, and soon will become a national crisis.

The plight of elderly Americans is a top concern for the Center for a Just Society because this population is at significant risk of abuse and neglect. In my law practice, I have spent decades representing elderly men and women who have endured unspeakable nursing home abuse and neglect.

Short staffing characterizes the operation of too many nursing homes, and many corporations operating facilities put profits over people. The care of the institutionalized elderly is becoming a national disgrace. However, because the abused and neglected victims are elderly and frequently "out of sight," the problem is all too often ignored.

I believe three factors will soon place aging Americans at even greater risk in long-term care facilities. Those factors are demographic, economic and cultural.

Demographics. In the next 30 years, the number of Americans over the age of 65 is expected to double. More specifically, there will be an 83 percent increase in the number of men and women between the ages of 65-74. There will be a 119 percent increase in those aged 75-84, and there will be a whopping 143 percent increase in people older than 85. A majority of these men and women will require long-term care. Because most Americans are having fewer children, there will be fewer young people around to take care of

the older generation. Therefore, the demand for institutional care will rise sharply. Today there are 16.5 million people living in nursing homes; by the year 2035 that number is expected to double.

COMMENTARY

Economics. America is on the threshold of a national crisis when it comes to its old age social assistance programs. In its first year, Medicare had a budget of \$1 billion. According to the most recent budget, the cost is now \$394 billion. Likewise, the budget for Medicaid has gone from \$1 billion in its first year to its current \$276 billion annually. With the graying of America, these budgets will only grow larger in the coming years. All of this leads to the year 2018, when Medicare will likely run out of money. This will be far more than an economic crisis; it will be a human crisis. When government funds dry up, what will happen to millions of dependent elderly Americans?

Cultural. In addition to the "age wave" and the economic shortfall, there also are cultural changes in America that will put the elderly at increased risk. Our culture is shifting from a "sanctity of life" to a "quality of life" ethic. Increasingly, we are calculating the net worth of human beings based on cost-benefit ratios and quality-of-life calculus. The elderly—who cost more to maintain than they produce, and whose functional capacities have deteriorated because of old age or illness—do not score well under these standards. In the next 20 to 30 years, when the elderly are taking up valuable resources and are no longer deemed "useful," one shudders to imagine what "solutions" might be devised to deal with the growing problem of eldercare.

For a multifaceted crisis, we will need a multifaceted solution. First and foremost, Christians should start seeing eldercare as one of the great moral issues of our generation. Sometimes it is easy to think of Medicare reform as an economic problem and abortion and marriage as moral problems. However, more

often than not, economic problems have real social impact. Christians should start working to convince the culture that the elderly—no matter how disabled or helpless—are fully human and entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. Our elders should have the same rights as everyone else. They ought not be victims of a sliding scale of dignity that erodes their protection as their faculties diminish. We need to be prepared to uphold the rights of the elderly as vigorously as we uphold the rights of the unborn.

The Bible is quite clear on this point. Of course, we already know that we are called to honor our mother and father (Exodus 20:12). As Scripture says, children and grandchildren "should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God" (1 Timothy 5:4).

Christians must not ignore the needs of our frail elders. Surely they are to be counted among the "least of these" to whom we owe a duty of care and concern (Matthew 25:40). Paul declares, "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

Translating this into the public sphere, Christians should be at the forefront of ensuring justice for the infirm and the elderly. We should be in the vanguard of making and enforcing laws that protect the dignity of older men and women, especially those who are languishing in long-term care facilities. The pro-life movement has done an incredible job establishing pregnancy care centers across the country to help women with crisis pregnancies. In a similar way, Christians should start thinking about how they might create an infrastructure to help protect the elderly in the coming years. It is our duty as Christians—and as citizens—who were nurtured and cared for by those who now need our help. Ken Connor is chairman of the Center for a Just Society based in Washington D.C.

Churches connecting people to God

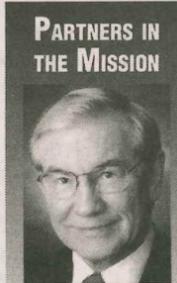
"God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

This great demonstration of love is powerful to change lives and direct destinies. It is what compels us to invite people to worship and Sunday school. God wants us to help people to know how much He loves them so they can be connected to Him in a growing, dynamic relationship that will last forever.

Recently, I had a wonderful experience with God in worship at Forest Missionary Baptist Church in Louisville where John Crittenden is pastor. The pastor, music director, choir and congregation all have a rich experience in worshipping God with the "whole" person. When I asked Pastor Crittenden about how long I should preach, he stated that he would try to get me the pulpit by noon.

The church reaches out to the

culture in many ways. It conducts "block parties" in order to connect with the community and Crittenden serves as one of four chaplains for the University of Louisville basketball team.



Bill Mackey

Crittenden also strongly supports Sunday school work and brings a large group of his workers to Super Saturday each year.

The following Monday night I had the privilege to speak to the Sunday School Mobilization Rally in Graves County Baptist Association, meeting with Northside Baptist Church in Mayfield. Charles Clark, the director of missions, presented more than 30 awards to churches based on growth in Sunday school attendance, enrollment and starting new units.

One of the goals of Kentucky Baptists Connect is for Kentucky Baptist churches to start 5,000 new Bible study units. Due to a two-year emphasis on Sunday school growth, in-

creases have been recorded in Graves County Association in average attendance, baptisms and new units, as well as in worship attendance and undesignated gifts.

Bill Dodson, pastor of Bell City Baptist Church, has a personal passion to see Sunday school growth in all of the churches. During the past two years, his church has enrolled more than 400 people in Sunday school, and has started 13 new Bible study units in the past 13 months.

Easter is a great time to invite people to Bible study and worship and I encourage you to make a major effort to do so this year. Contact Darryl Wilson, the KBC's Sunday school director, or visit www.kybaptist.org to discover creative ways your church can start new Bible study units.

These units can meet during the regular Sunday school hour or at other times. They also can meet at off-campus sites near unreached neighborhoods, in mobile home communities or wherever people need to know God's love.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

Create an overall plan for making charitable gifts

By Don Spencer

In addition to our regular tithes and offerings through our local church, Christians often want to support other ministries and charitable causes.

There is never a shortage of ministries needing and asking for financial support. Here are a few thoughts on giving to these other causes:

■ Find out about the people and the ministry. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't give until you're satisfied with the answers to your questions. Ministries with nothing to hide will encourage your interest.

■ A critical question: What percentage of the funds raised actually go to pay the expenses of raising the funds? The higher that percentage, the less of your money actually goes for the real ministries. There are several well-known charities where the cost of raising the funds significantly exceeds half of the money contributed. This is an inefficient way to give. (To put this in perspective, our Southern Baptist Cooperative Program funding for missions uses well under 5 percent of the money for expenses related to promoting and collecting those funds. On the other end of the spectrum, I'm aware of one well-known charity that does good work but uses another company to do all its fund raising. The company keeps almost 80 percent of every dollar raised.)

■ Don't give impulsively. Determine whether the ministry or need coincides with your overall giving plan. Look at your reasons for giving and make sure you are putting into practice the principles of "responsible giving."

■ Become an informed giver. Learn about the ministry's programs, objectives and finances. Reassure yourself that your dollars are being put to their intended use.

■ Give what you are able and have pre-determined to give. It does not matter whether your contribution is large or small. What counts most is that you are doing it for the right reasons.

■ Never give cash. Keep records of your donations so you can document your giving at tax time.

■ Always remember, "the tithe belongs to the Lord." Giving to other charities, as valuable as they are, is never a replacement for giving tithes and offerings through your church.

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



Look for creative approaches to teach kids about Easter

Q: As parents, how can we help our children remember the true meaning of Easter?

Many stores reflect a commercialism reminiscent of Christmas. From Kroger to Cracker Barrel, shelves are stuffed with rabbits, baskets and candy eggs. What can Christian parents do to shift the focus of Easter back to its true meaning?

PARENTING

As Easter approaches, look for an opportunity to talk with your child about events leading up to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Many Lentist and girls will not participate in Lent, but they may have Catholic friends who do. Help your child understand Lent as a season of sacrifice when Christians willingly give up ordinary things, like chocolate and soft drinks, as a reminder of the sacrifice Jesus made.

Attending Maundy Thursday or Good Friday worship can help children sense the somber mood leading up to Easter. Explain the special focus of each of these services in simple language. A visit to the library or the Internet can provide background information, or ask your minister to recommend resources.

Play a game with your children. Obtain a dozen plastic eggs and an empty egg carton. Leave one egg empty, place a yellow cotton ball in each of the others. Mix the eggs so your child does not know which egg is empty. Let your child choose an egg and open it. When they find the empty egg, have them jump to their feet and shout, "He is not here! He is risen!"

If you choose to give Easter gifts, make sure you include something that pertains to the resurrection.—David Garrard

Q: My wife and I are having a few problems. I really don't think it's a big deal but my parents don't agree. They have suggested marriage counseling. That seems like a big step, and I don't know if it's necessary at this point. How intense is marriage counseling and when should a couple take that step?

That is an important question and one to be asked at the first sign of trouble. Mechanics will tell you if you notice a problem with your car, do not wait until the problem gets worse. The price tag will end up a lot steeper and the damage to your vehicle more substantial.

MARRIAGE

Why do we take better care of our cars than our marriages? Because too many of us believe a myth that marriages are magical and will take care of themselves or that if God has blessed this relationship, it is a done deal. So we neglect, take for granted, fail to get check-ups and just let our marriages take their own course. Too often that course is a dead-end.

Couples invest a great deal in dating and courting. They spend time, money and effort, make adjustments, pay attention and focus on the relationship. A marriage license is not a license to quit. If all these actions are placed before the wedding and very little after, as divorce statistics show, the relationship likely will end.

You can do this differently. It may take guts to ask for help. It may take nerve to share personal relationship history. It may take trusting God to do a good work in your marriage as you work toward the same goal.

Marriage really can last your lifetime if you take care of it. It sounds like this is a great time for marriage counseling when problems are few. Too often couples wait until they are done with the relationship and use counseling as a last-ditch effort.

A counselor cannot save your marriage but can offer help to you and your wife as you both work together. God created marriage as a vehicle of blessing and not for misery. Our human sinfulness leads to the latter. Growing in God's will and purpose for our life allows for the former.—Valerie Vincent

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



New NAMB leadership: From crisis to hope

Does Geoff Hammond's election last week as president of the North American Mission Board signal a new day for the Southern Baptist missions agency? Hopefully so.

Hammond's unanimous election March 21 by NAMB's board of trustees culminated a nine-month search led by Kentucky Baptist pastor Greg Faulls. The search followed the resignation of former NAMB President Robert Reccord in the wake of numerous concerns about Reccord's leadership, ministry strategies and financial decisions.

To their credit, NAMB trustees responded to the entity's leadership crisis by conducting a detailed internal investigation and placing Reccord under strict "executive level controls" prior to his resignation.

"We want the Southern Baptist Convention to know we've responded to the issues and because of that response we believe that you can trust what we're doing here at NAMB," said Barry Holcomb who was NAMB trustee chairman at the time. "At the end of the day, the North American Mission Board is going to be a stronger agency."

Faulls, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Owensboro, was named search committee chairman midway through the search process. He emphasized that the nine-member search committee was "honestly trying to seek God's man."

"We do not already have it figured out who we are going to recommend," he said at the time. "We are starting from scratch and going through the names and seeking the Lord ... and trying to discern who God's man is for the North American Mission Board."

When the search committee announced Hammond's nomination earlier this month, it wasn't a name widely known in Southern Baptist Convention life. A third-generation missionary born in Nigeria, Hammond has served as a pastor, church planter, Southern Baptist international missionary to Brazil, seminary professor and director of missions. For the past five years, he has served as senior associate director of the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia state convention, one of three state conventions (two conservative and one moderate) that have broken away from historic Baptist state conventions in Virginia, Texas and Missouri.

Faulls described Hammond as someone who "understands missions at every level," adding that he is "gifted in leadership and adept in the areas of business administration."

In keeping with NAMB trustees' commitment to be accountable to Southern Baptists and restore trust in the mission board's leadership, trustee leaders arranged a conference call between Hammond and several state Baptist paper editors a few hours after his election. While I have never met Hammond in person, I had the opportunity to participate in the hour-long question-and-answer call.

Openness to all Southern Baptists

One question I posed to Hammond concerned his openness to working with Southern Baptists across the SBC's diverse political and philosophical spectrum, especially since he has spent the past few years in a leadership role with a group that chose to separate from the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

"Is your goal to work with all Southern Baptists," I asked, "and if so, how do you plan to accomplish that?"

"The answer is an absolute yes," Hammond responded. "NAMB partners with all state conventions and I remind folks that my experience with Southern Baptists is from birth, in churches, on staffs and representing all Baptists as both a NAMB and IMB missionary. I'm excited about the opportunity to do that as I have the privilege of leading the North American Mission Board."

I also asked about NAMB's declining financial support of national Woman's Missionary Union (from more than \$450,000 per year in the early 1990s to \$50,000 a year for the last three years) in response to WMU's role in raising millions of dollars for NAMB through the annual Annie Armstrong Easter Offering

for North American Missions.

"How do you view NAMB's relationship to WMU," I asked Hammond, "and is the funding issue a concern that should be addressed in any way?"

While acknowledging that he was not familiar with the details of NAMB's financial contributions to WMU, Hammond affirmed that "in the promotion of Annie Armstrong and in prayer support, WMU has done a tremendous job through the years."

Noting that the past year was "one of the best years ever for Annie Armstrong," he asked to "convey to Southern Baptists how grateful we are for their prayers and for their support."

In light of NAMB's recent leadership crisis, I also asked Hammond about the importance of integrity, openness and accountability in his role as NAMB president.

"I believe integrity is one of the greatest things a Christian disciple can have and it must be guarded at all times," Hammond declared. "It takes a lifetime to build a reputation of integrity but that can be lost in a moment."

"I am committed to accountability and transparency," he added. "With me, what you see is what I am. Openness is important. I seek to understand before I know; that is going to be an important part of how I lead."

Other editors posed a variety of other questions, including ways NAMB can partner more effectively with the International Mission Board, NAMB's role in non-traditional church plants that reject the Baptist label, and Hammond's future relationship with other SBC entity heads.

Enhanced partnership between NAMB, IMB

"I've always believed there could be a closer relationship between NAMB and IMB," Hammond said. As an example, he noted that "there are so many things that IMB missionaries have discovered and introduced overseas that NAMB people can use as we reach ethnic groups and unreached people groups here in the United States."

Concerning non-traditional church plants, the new NAMB president said, "We want church planting to be creative but sound theologically. And as Southern Baptists, we are autonomous local churches but we cooperate on missions. We're based on the Bible. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 holds us together. ... The church plant has to feel a part of the greater whole. There are a lot of folks who may look and be different and express themselves differently in church life, but we're all Southern Baptists."

Hammond said he has received a cordial welcome from other SBC entity heads. Emphasizing that his "goal is to build relationships," Hammond said one key question to address is: "Are there areas where we are duplicating efforts among various SBC entities that can be coordinated and streamlined?"

Bill Curtis, NAMB's current trustee chairman, told the editors, "We have been through a challenging year as an agency. But it gave us the opportunity to refocus on our vision and clarify the role of NAMB and what God has called us to do for these amazing folks called Southern Baptists."

He added that Southern Baptists "can have a great deal of confidence in the work of the board over the past year and in our commitment to follow Dr. Hammond as he leads us into the future."

Faulls emphasized that trustee leaders have sought to "create a culture that enables Southern Baptists to have confidence in their North American mission agency," adding that "this is an agency in the days ahead that will be a better steward of their finances, prayers and commitments ... than in the years past."

One year after NAMB's darkest days, board leaders are optimistic that much better days are ahead. Take time to pray for Geoff Hammond, Bill Curtis, Greg Faulls and other NAMB leaders during this significant time of transition and hope.

"This job is way bigger than me," Hammond said. "I want to do it in God's strength with humility." May it be so.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

'Simple Church' author cites steps to implement process

Continued from page 1

Focusing on churches with at least 5 percent growth per year for three years in a row, Geiger said they identified 417 such churches for the first phase of their research.

Noting that a simple church "isn't just haphazardly thrown together," he added, "It is actually thought out. It is designed around a process that actually moves people somewhere—from point A in their spiritual journey to point B in their spiritual journey."

Four elements of designing an effective discipleship process in a local church are clarity, movement, alignment and focus, Geiger explained.

Describing clarity as the most important step in the process, he said, "Until you really have nailed down the clarity element, until you know the process God has given you, you don't know what to eliminate" to achieve simplicity.

"For this really to be owned by you and make a difference in your church, it's going to have to be a spiritual journey for you" as a church leader, Geiger noted. "If you can't preach it, it's not your process, it's not your vision. Until it's burned into your heart, don't preach it."

Movement is designed to help people move to increased levels of spiritual commitment and ministry while alignment involves organizing all ministries and staff around a unified process.

"The process doesn't produce disciples; God does that," Geiger said. "Only God produces spiritual transformation."

Noting that "unity reflects the nature of God," he said, "You can't get any closer than the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Describing focus as the most difficult step to implement, Geiger emphasized, "Focus is saying no to things that fall outside of your process."

Declaring that "less really is more," Geiger encouraged church leaders to "lead with courage, wisdom and compassion ... to make a difference for the Kingdom of God."

Chowning honored with 'Greater Good Award'

Frankfort—John Chowning, vice president for church and external relations and executive assistant to the president at Campbells-ville University, recently was honored by the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities with the organization's "For the Greater Good Award."

The award honors a staff person from an AIKCU member campus who has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the organization and to independent postsecondary education in Kentucky.

"John is a tremendous asset not just to Campbells-ville University and the Taylor County community, but

to the independent postsecondary community throughout Kentucky," said AIKCU President Gary Cox.



John Chowning

Chowning, who also is pastor of Saloma Baptist Church in Campbells-ville, was honored for his involvement in AIKCU's public policy and government relations efforts, which focus primarily on promoting positive student financial aid policies at the state and federal levels and enhancing public and private partnerships.

Describing the award as "a great honor," Chowning said it is rewarding to work with AIKCU colleagues "in making certain that the perspec-

tives of our sector of the higher education community are carefully articulated in Frankfort and Washington."

Chowning has extensive experience in government and public policy and has served on a number of local, state and national boards.

Chowning is the founder and director of the Kentucky Heartland Institute on Public Policy at Campbells-ville University, which currently is hosting a series of gubernatorial candidate forums. He also teaches part-time in the university's political science division and recently helped establish the nonprofit "Greater Campbells-ville United," which he chairs, to promote racial and ethnic harmony in the region.

KBC workshop to help leaders navigate news media

Louisville—Church leaders can learn how to effectively communicate with the media at an April 3 seminar titled "Telling Your Mission Story: Keys to Sharing through the Media."

The one-day workshop, sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention, will offer participants practical tips on how to gain positive news coverage by sharing stories with the media.

Participants also will learn strategies for crisis management and how to respond to unfavorable media coverage.

The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Baptist Building in Louisville.

A variety of communications professionals from across the state will share their insights at the seminar. Featured guests will include: Courier-Journal writers Byron Crawford and Peter Smith, Associated Press reporter Roger Alford, former radio journalist Jack Fox, publisher Chip Hutcheson of The Times Leader in Princeton, Western Recorder editor Trennis Henderson, KBC communications director Robert Reeves and photojournalist Shirley Cox.

Session topics will include: Getting into the Mind of a Reporter, How God Works When People Hear the Good News Stories, Stories from the Commonwealth, Telling Your Story to Kentucky Baptists, Questions for the Questioners (a panel discussion) and When Bad Things Happen to Good Churches—A Look at Crisis Management.

The workshop cost is \$20 per person, and includes lunch and a CD with additional resources. For more information or to register, visit www.kybaptist.org/telling, or call (502) 489-3525 or (866) 489-3525.

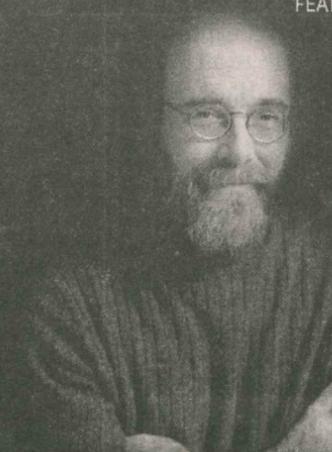
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Christian groups, ACLU join forces in free-speech case

By Robert Marus
Associated Baptist Press

Washington (ABP)—Few events in American society could bring together the American Civil Liberties Union and Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice, especially to defend a banner mentioning drug use. But a case argued before the Supreme Court March 19 did just that—they united in opposition to President Bush's administration, former U.S. Solicitor General Kenneth Starr and a public school board.

The unlikely bedfellows are arrayed against opponents in what could become the most significant student free-speech case in 30 years.

The high court heard oral arguments in *Morse v. Frederick*, a case stemming from a 2002 prank by an 18-year-old senior at Juneau-Douglas High School in Juneau, Alaska. During a parade celebrating the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, Joseph Frederick and his friends held a 14-foot-long banner on a public sidewalk across the street from the school. Its message read "Bong Hits 4 Jesus." A bong is a water pipe sometimes used to smoke marijuana.

Frederick said he had seen the

phrase elsewhere and chose it simply as an absurdist, nonsensical way to celebrate his free speech—and attract attention from news cameras.

Upon seeing the banner, which she took as an endorsement of drug use, school principal Deborah Morse walked over to Frederick and ordered him to take it down. When he refused, she tore the sign down herself.

Frederick sued Morse and the Juneau School Board, and he won in lower federal courts. The losing parties appealed the case to the Supreme Court, and the Bush administration joined their side.

Arguments alarm diverse groups

However, the breadth of the arguments from the school board and the government alarmed civil libertarians and conservative Christian groups, several of which filed friend-of-the-court briefs on Frederick's behalf. Besides the ACLU, the groups included the Alliance Defense Fund and the Christian Legal Society.

Attorneys for both the school board and the government argued that school officials could suppress any student message "inconsistent with the school's basic education-

al mission." Anti-drug groups filed friend-of-the-court briefs in favor of that view.

But agreeing with such a view would compel the court to make an exception to its landmark 1969 *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* ruling. In that decision, the majority ruled the school could not prevent students from wearing black armbands to class to protest the Vietnam War. The court's majority said, famously: "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

In the years since *Tinker*, the court has made narrow exceptions to the rule in cases where students engaged in disruptive or vulgar speech or where the school could be seen as directly endorsing the speech.

But the Juneau School Board's argument, echoed by the government, would allow suppression of student speech beyond previous cases. School officials' right to censor speech could extend to any student speech that, though neither disruptive nor subsidized by the school, proved to be at odds with school district policies.

The Christian groups who side with Frederick warn that such a broad ruling could have unintended consequences. The ACLU brief said school administrators "face a constant temptation to impose a suffocating blanket of political correctness upon the educational atmosphere."

Drug policy draws attention

During March 19 arguments, Starr, arguing on behalf of the school board, and Deputy Solicitor General Edwin Kneedler, who argued for the government, focused on a narrow exception for student speech that appears to endorse drug policy.

"Let me be very specific: This case is ultimately about drugs and other illegal substances," Starr said in response to a question from Justice Anthony Kennedy.

But Justice Samuel Alito said the contention that schools may suppress speech at odds with their mission is "a very disturbing argument" because schools "can define their educational mission so broadly that they can suppress all sorts of political speech and speech expressing fundamental values of the students."

NATIONAL NOTES

Bishops from six U.S. Methodist denominations have pledged to work together on common social justice goals but said a merger or union among them is not likely to happen any time soon. Representing the United Methodist Church and the historically black African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion and Christian Methodist Episcopal churches, the bishops gathered in Atlanta earlier this month for their quadrennial meeting. Two new members also joined the meeting: the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Union Methodist Protestant Church. Bishop William Oden, the ecumenical officer for the United Methodist Council of Bishops, said there are several obstacles blocking a merger, including pension structures, how bishops are elected and concerns that the smaller denominations would be "swallowed up" by the 8-million-member United Methodist Church.

Prolific Christian author Max Lucado has announced plans to step down as senior pastor of his San Antonio megachurch due to a heart ailment. In a letter addressed to members of Oak Hills Church, Lucado said he had begun easing away from his duties as senior minister. The 51-year-old pastor reportedly is suffering from heart arrhythmia. "While my spiritual heart is in a wonderful state, my physical heart has developed some irregularities," Lucado wrote. "We have high hopes for complete healing; yet, I need to make some lifestyle adjustments." Lucado said he is in good physical shape, but he added that he began feeling dizzy last summer, which led to the diagnosis. The condition often causes extreme fatigue. Since 1985, Lucado has authored or contributed to 80 books including "Just Like Jesus" and "When God Whispers Your Name."

Federal judge strikes down law protecting kids from online porn

Washington (BP)—The effort to protect children from Internet pornography has suffered another legal setback.

A federal judge in Philadelphia struck down March 22 a federal law that prohibits commercial Web sites from making sexually explicit material available to children under the age of 17. In permanently blocking enforcement of the Child Online Protection Act, judge Lowell Reed Jr. ruled the 1998 law violated the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech.

It marked the second time Reed has ruled on COPA, having issued

a preliminary injunction against its enforcement in 1999. The case worked its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where the justices voted 5-4 in 2004 to uphold the injunction. They also ordered the case to return to the federal court for a full trial.

The case, *ACLU v. Gonzales*, could return to the high court, where chances for a reversal appear remote. Two new justices, Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito—have joined the court since 2004, but those they replaced both dissented in the earlier decision. Therefore, there would be no gain on the court for support-

ers of the law, unless another justice changes his vote.

In his 84-page opinion, Reed agreed with Congress' goal but said COPA was vague, overbroad and not "the least restrictive and most effective alternative" in accomplishing the federal government's interest in protecting minors online. He affirmed filtering technology as opposed to the measure, which required Web sites to confirm a person's age through such means as credit cards or other identification.

A supporter of the law described the courts' continuing opposition to online protections for children

as "utter nonsense."

"Today, if a child were to walk into an 'adult bookstore,' he or she would be told to leave, because it is against the law to sell pornography to children in real space," Morality in Media President Robert Peters said in a written statement. "But if that same child were to 'click' to most commercial Web sites that distribute pornography, he or she could view pornography free of charge and without restriction, because when it comes to 'cyberspace,' the federal courts think it is up to parents to keep children away from Internet pornography."

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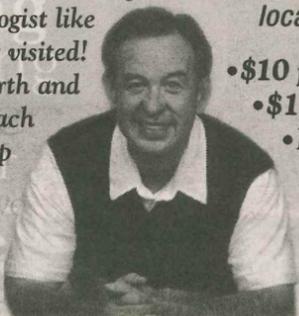
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Rainer emphasizes ministry must be LifeWay's primary motivation

Louisville (BP)—As LifeWay Christian Resources examines its future, it must consider itself a ministry first and a business second, LifeWay President Thom Rainer said during a recent presentation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Reviewing the Baptist entity's history, Rainer noted that LifeWay has been self-supporting since its inception in 1891 as the Baptist Sunday School Board. Even with that legacy, he added, LifeWay always must maintain a ministry focus.

"One of the dangers we have at LifeWay is that we are so focused on being a business that pays its own way, that we forget that our primary purpose is not revenue production, but it is to do ministry for the benefit of local churches, primarily in the Southern Baptist Convention," he said.

Rainer was on Southern Seminary's campus in Louisville to present his vision for the future of LifeWay. Before becoming LifeWay president in February 2006, Rainer served 11 years as founding dean of Southern's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth.

Facing challenge of bureaucracy

In addition to the challenge of maintaining a ministry focus, Rainer identified several other issues LifeWay must address to effectively minister to local churches.

"One of the challenges is our sheer size, bureaucracy," he said. "When you have an organization that has 3,000 full-time equivalent employees, and 7,000 total employees, there is a tendency to have an organization that is not nearly as streamlined as it could be. It is big, and sometimes it can be cumbersome. As a result, there are times when we respond like a bureaucracy, responding slowly or not re-

sponding at all."

Another challenge Rainer cited is meeting the needs of the varied constituencies within the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I had no idea of the diversity of theological views, within orthodox theology, that makes up the Southern Baptist Convention," he said. "We have an academic constituency, such as this seminary. We have a constituency that thinks we cater too much to the academic constituency. It is a constant challenge to serve the Southern Baptist Convention, but that does not mean that we will not strive to do that."

Highlighting his vision for addressing such challenges, Rainer said LifeWay must achieve biblical depth in its materials.

"LifeWay employees have heard it from me again and again: We must pursue biblical depth," he said. "It is a challenge to present a Sunday school lesson (with biblical depth) that people will cover in 30-40 minutes, but we are going to do it."

"Recently, we created B&H Academic. B&H Academic is important to me, because it will influence the influencers. It will influence the pastors and lay leaders in the church. If we can have a small role in influencing the influencers then we will have made at least some contribution."

Noting that "there is often the assumption that to mention the word relevance means that you abandon biblical depth and a biblical framework," he added, "I will say that this can occur and often does. But we have to touch the generations of today. We have to reach out to those who have not been hearing our messages in our churches."

LifeWay must be unapologetically evangelistic, Rainer insisted.

"I have a heart-burning desire to be an entity that reaches people for Jesus Christ," he said.

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By Mickey Noah
SBC North American Mission Board

Mesick, Mich.—Deer hunts, fish fries and wild game dinners are just a few items in Southern Baptist missionary Ken Wilson's gospel-sharing toolbox. He uses them to tell the good news of Jesus Christ to residents who love the thick woods and crystal-clear lakes of northern Michigan.

"Our motto is: Whatever it takes, we get 'em anyway we can," said Wilson, referencing the deer that he's frequently on the prowl for; his ministry strategy is similar.

As associational missionary for Michigan's Northland Baptist Association, Wilson uses his personal interest in hunting and fishing to build relationships with residents and tourists of the area, opening doors to share the gospel.

"I don't think God could have called me to a better place than northern Michigan," he said. "The opening day of deer season is a local holiday."

Each year, hundreds of people attend fish fries sponsored by the association. Wild game dinners are other popular events that provide Wilson, or other Southern Baptist speakers, a platform from which to share the gospel with a much larger group than would be drawn to a worship service at the local church.

Local hunters who are Christians work with Wilson to organize deer hunts that have an atmosphere of a Baptist men's retreat.

"Every evening during the hunt, we have devotions, share the gospel and pray that lost hunters come to know Jesus," Wilson explained.

A former pastor in southern Illinois, Wilson estimates that 70 to 80 percent of northern Michigan's population is unchurched, many having never heard a concise presentation of the gospel.

Limited Baptist witness

"We have some counties with no Southern Baptist Convention churches," he added. There are 15 Baptist churches or missions in the 10-county area of Northland Association.

Although rural and a hunter/fisher paradise, some parts of the association are growing rapidly—up to 35 percent annually—Wilson said, emphasizing the need for short- and long-term missionaries.

"We have many church-planting needs. We need some partner churches to come up here and help us," he said.

Like many Baptist associational ministries outside the Bible Belt, Wilson's work is supported primarily by Southern Baptists giving to the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. Most churches in the association draw 30 to 40 people for Sunday worship, a number not large enough to sustain associational ministries.

"We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering," Wilson noted.



TARGETED MESSAGE Southern Baptist missionary Ken Wilson (left) draws a bow while talking to Dave Robb about hunting deer in northern Michigan. An associational missionary, Wilson coordinates unique activities to share the gospel with residents and tourists. (NAMB photos by Michael Shead)

In 2003, Wilson, his wife, Cindy, and their children moved to Michigan. He was a pastor in southern Illinois for more than 18 years, serving his last church for eight years. He said God's call came as a surprise.

"We were very happy where we were. We owned our own home. Everything was secure and settled."

With a strong desire to "plant or re-start" churches, Wilson said, "I was hoping and praying that I could do that from my church there in southern Illinois, but God assured me that I needed to be involved in church planting at a different level."

The transition to northern Michigan wasn't easy. "By Feb. 15, when the snow's 36 inches deep and you're looking for someplace to go ... it can get lonely and depressing," he said. "So, it's a calling to be here."

Recruiting people from the Michigan area to serve as pastors and church workers is important, Wilson said, because they know the culture and can relate to people more easily.

Rich Ratts answered such a call. The former pastor of Grace Church in Jackson, Mich., Ratts left a congregation of 1,200 to start a church in Traverse City—the largest population center in northern Michigan.

In 2004, Ratts' new pastorate, The Orchard, began with 120 people. Today nearly 200 people attend each week. The Orchard has baptized 70 people since opening its doors.

The need for more church starts such as The Orchard is great, but Wilson emphasized that Southern Baptists from across the U.S. remain welcomed—and needed—to serve in the region.

"The mission teams are very important to us, and help us reach the people," he said. "It's also a real shot in the arm to our local churches and pastors."

Recently, a group from First Baptist Church of Fenton, Mo., helped a local congregation, Greenlake Church, host its first Bible school in seven years, Wilson said. Other activities include sports camps, block par-

ties, door-to-door surveys and light construction.

In addition to the blessing of Christian service, missions teams can enjoy the outdoor sports and scenery of northern Michigan.

The success of the wild game dinners, fish fries, hunting trips, out-of-state missions teams—and congregations such as The Orchard—help Wilson remain hopeful for the future. His ministry sights now are set on Mackinac (pronounced "Mackinaw") City—a community with a thriving summer tourist industry.

Church plant needed

The city "needs a church plant badly," Wilson said. "In the summer, Mackinac grows to 10,000 people or more, but in the winter, it reverts to a ghost town."

There is the opportunity to minister to the world through Mackinac, "because many of the tourists are from foreign countries," he said, "(but first) we need to reach the indigenous people of Mackinac, those who live there year-round."

The answer to Wilson's prayer for the people of Mackinac City might come from around the campfire after a long day of hunting, or perhaps over a plate of fried fish.

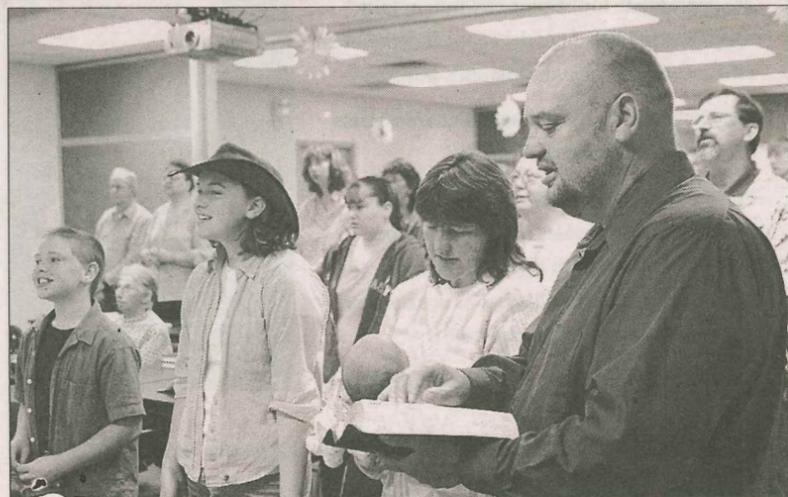
"The mission teams are very important to us and help us reach the people. It's also a real shot in the arm to our local churches and pastors."

Southern Baptist missionary Ken Wilson, discussing the importance of short-term missions groups serving in northern Michigan

About Michigan

- With 9.8 million residents, it is the 8th largest state in population. Detroit is the largest U.S. city with an African American majority—more than 900,000 residents.
- More than 100 different language groups are represented in the state.
- There are 21 counties without any Southern Baptist witness.
- There are more non-Christian people in Michigan than 42 other states have in total population. An estimated 80 percent of the population is not Christian.
- More than 2.9 million people—30 percent of the population—live in multi-housing communities. More than 90 percent of those residents do not attend church.

Source: Baptist State Convention of Michigan



QUICK REVIEW Ken Wilson looks over scriptures before preaching a Sunday morning message at Thunder Bay Baptist Church in Alpena, Mich. Standing beside him is his wife, Cindy, and their children. Before becoming an associational missionary, Wilson served in southern Illinois as a pastor.

USA Today: Most Americans would receive 'F' in religion

Washington (BP)—It's clear from media reports that religion is in the spotlight more today than in previous decades, but it appears that a majority of Americans are unprepared to discuss the issue of religion with adequate knowledge.

According to a recent report in USA Today, most Americans would receive an "F" in religion if they were graded on their ability to answer questions correctly. In fact, the newspaper said 60 percent of Americans can't name five of the Ten Commandments and half of high school seniors think Sodom and Gomorrah were married.

"More and more of our national and international questions are religiously inflected," Stephen Prothero, chairman of the religion department at Boston University and author of the book "Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't," told USA Today. "If you think Sunni and Shia are the same because they're both Muslim, and you've been told Islam is about peace, you won't understand what's happening in Iraq."

"If you get into an argument about gay rights or capital punishment and someone claims to quote the Bible or the Quran, do you know it's so?" he asked. "If you want to be involved, you need to know what they're saying. We're doomed if we don't understand what motivates the beliefs and behaviors of the rest of the world."

Prothero said he believes all Americans should strive to grasp Bible basics as well as the core beliefs, stories, symbols and heroes of other faiths.

To facilitate that goal, Prothero advocates requiring middle school students to take a course in world religions and high school students to take a class on the Bible, USA Today reported.

All college undergraduates should take at least one course in religious studies, Prothero said, noting that biblical knowledge should be added to lessons on history and literature where it's relevant.

These days, only 8 percent of public high schools in the nation offer an elective Bible course. Some observers say that is because many school officials are afraid to reference the Bible for fear of backlash, even though it is legal to educate students about the Bible in literature and history classes.

Study: Family time trumping church involvement

By Erin Roach
Baptist Press

Nashville (BP)—A growing number of families would rather spend their limited free time together than at church, a study by Leadership magazine found.

"The increased emphasis on 'family time,' even at the expense of meaningful involvement in church life, is a sign of the times," reporter Eric Reed wrote for Leadership. "It's one way Generations X and Y are making up for the hands-off, latch-key child-rearing styles that characterized their Boomer parents: heavy investment in the kids, and everything else takes a back seat—including church."

Time-crunched lifestyles

Leadership surveyed 490 pastors about what is keeping people away from church, and the Christianity Today-owned magazine found that people routinely choose family events over church commitments because they say they're not finding church to be relevant enough in their time-crunched lifestyles.

More churches are seeing decreased attendance at church events, especially those held on weeknights, because when families feel obligated to participate in sports, music lessons and other extracurricular activities, the only night of the week they have to be together might be Wednesday, Leadership found.

Another problem families seem to be voicing is that when they arrive at church they're divided into different age groups and sometimes husbands and wives are split into gender-segregated classes. Families often are quicker than churches at re-

alizing no family bonding is going to occur at church when that method is used, the magazine reported.

"Shouldn't we as a church try to bring families together?" Carol Welker, children's ministry pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Orlando, Fla., told Leadership. "Instead, what we do is bring them to church and then put Mom and Dad in this room, the high school kids in that room, and the elementary kids down the hall. It's no wonder families are spending more time doing family things than they are spending at church."

Welker suggested churches plan events around school calendars and events in the community that could force families to choose between church and other obligations. She added that family-focused dinners at church can help provide a time for both family and church fellowship.

Evangelist Jerry Drace told Bap-

tist Press, "What I have found in surveying thousands of teenagers across this country in our Hope for the Home conferences is that even when church families are not in church, they are not necessarily together in other activities either. Teens and their parents are going in different directions at the same time."

Sports compete with church

"The one common denominator for families is sports," Drace noted. "We have many fathers and mothers skipping church on Sunday to watch their child participate in his/her favorite team sport. When this happens, the god of sports replaces the God of Scripture."

"When the church seeks relevancy over relationship, you lose both faith and family," he added. "Worship should be a family event. This requires creative planning by the leaders."

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Missionary couple returns to States for healing after attack

By Charlie Warren
Arkansas Baptist News

Valley Springs, Ark. (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries Carl and Kay Garvin have returned to their home state of Arkansas and are recuperating after robbers attacked them in a hotel south of Moshi, Tanzania, in February.

Kay Garvin, who was shot in the chest, "is healing wonderfully well" and "is able to do anything she wants," said her husband, who is healing more slowly from surgery because of a broken arm, severe lacerations and ligament damage to his knee.

"I'm restricted on doing the things I like to do," Garvin said, adding that his arm is so fragile he will not be allowed to use it for three months.

The machete one robber used to hack at his arm cut out a wedge of bone, so he has a plate in the arm. He also has had knee surgery.

The Garvins initially were treated at a Moshi clinic before being airlifted to a hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. They arrived home in Valley Springs, Ark., March 8 and plan to be there for about six weeks before returning to Kenya for meetings with other missionaries and for a women's prayer retreat. They expect to be back in Moshi by the middle of May.

"It was quite an ordeal," Garvin said of the attack. "It was very frightening. But even so, we did not lose our ability to think coherently. ... We do not want to be seen as heroes, because God is the hero. Throughout this experience, He showed us and many others who He is in His grace

and power. Miracles bubbled out of this in our lives and in the lives of others who heard of this."

Garvin said the police inspector in Kenya told him the robbers meant to kill the couple.

"But that wasn't God's plan," Garvin said. "He only let them go so far. God is getting more glory from this. ... It's like God telling Satan he could touch everything around Job but he could not touch Job's life. God has received glory in this. As people prayed for us, God received glory and many received a blessing."

Garvin said he and his wife are eager to return to their ministry in Tanzania.

"This has not deterred our call at all," he said. "In fact, it has given us an even greater sense of His call."

Garvin expressed thanks to Baptists for placing "a prayer net around us." He also expressed gratitude for the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, which "provides for us physically in times like this as well as putting us on the field to do God's work."

Three Arkansas mission volunteers working with the couple when the attacks occurred were unharmed, Garvin said, because they were locked securely in their rooms the whole time, which likely saved their lives.

He said the volunteers, Joe and Cindy Lennon of First Baptist Church of Harrison and Rudy Dehrens of Grandview First Baptist Church of Berryville, were of great assistance from the time the robbers fled until the Garvins received initial medical attention.

Bill Merrell, former SBC Executive Committee VP, continues recovery

By Dana Williamson
Oklahoma Baptist Messenger

Norman, Okla. (BP)—Bill Merrell spends his days working on the computer, reading as much as he can, keeping up with current events and praying for Southern Baptist Convention leaders and pastors.

That sounds like a busy day for most people, but for type A personalities like Merrell, it doesn't compare to what he used to do or still wants to do.

Merrell was struck by a debilitating stroke in September 2003. At the time, he was vice president for convention relations with the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville. When the stroke occurred, he and his wife, Sharla, were headed for a vacation with friends in Florida.

Merrell, who was driving, said he felt a weakness come over him and knew he was having a stroke. His wife was able to get him to a hospital just under the three-hour time limit for receiving clot busters, which sometimes reverse the damage of a stroke, but doctors were afraid the medication in this case would give Merrell blood clots, so it was not administered.

Within a period of five months after the stroke, Merrell experienced blood clots in his arms, legs and chest and suffered a heart attack. But through therapy and determination, today Merrell can do just about anything if you give him enough time.

Because the stroke left him un-

able to perform his duties at the Executive Committee, Merrell is on long-term disability. He and his wife moved back to his home state of Oklahoma last August.

"Two of our three children live in Norman along with five of our nine grandchildren," Merrell noted. "And my roots are here."

Because Merrell tires easily when he reads, he decided he didn't need his extensive library of more than 5,000 books.

He said he gave about 1,000 books to ministers who couldn't afford to buy books, but he spent a lot of time in prayer about where the other volumes should go.

"I have degrees from two seminaries, but most seminaries have good-sized libraries, so I decided to give the collection to Union University," Merrell said. "It has less of a donation mechanism and is true to the Word and its mission."

It turns out Merrell's gift is the largest book donation ever made to the university's Ryan Center.

Ray Van Neste, director of the Ryan Center, said Merrell's library contained books ranging from great literature and poetry to classic and contemporary works of theology, biblical studies and pastoral ministry.

Van Neste described the collection "as a model of the sort of books one ought to have and read. Here his books will continue to be a blessing to the students, pastors and Bible teachers who use the center's library."

Meet the class of 2007, part 1

Through Oneida, senior realizes 'It's OK to need help and love'

"Kathy" (not her real name) was a very unhappy teenager on the way to Oneida in the fall of 2004. The past several years had been hard on her family. Kathy grew up in a broken home and then a blended family. When she was 4, her parents divorced. Kathy, her brother and mother got by the best they could—like any family facing those challenges. Her mother remarried, but that seemed only to make things worse. Kathy and her stepfather did not get along. She was becoming a teenager and seeking her independence. That did not help relationships at home. She kept her grades up at school, but was very unhappy. Even though the family lives outside Kentucky, Kathy's mom discovered Oneida. It was a discovery that led Kathy to our campus. Here is an excerpt from Kathy's senior essay, "My Oneida Experience."

"On Sunday, Oct. 18, 2004, my mom, my aunt and I headed down the winding, long road to Oneida. Who would have known how much Oneida would change my family and me? The ride to Oneida was long, but the country, the woods and the hills were all amazing to look at. It wasn't very long before a federal institution sign came into view. (There is a federal prison 15 miles from Oneida.) I knew my mom was mad at me, but I didn't think she would end up sending me there. Luckily, my fears subsided when I heard my mom and aunt cracking jokes about me being so close to a federal institution. Trust me, that 11-mile sign to Oneida has got to be wrong! We asked three men for directions. I was in the middle of nowhere talking (to) a guy whose accent I could not un-

derstand."

After the orientation process, Kathy went to the girls' dorm for her room assignment. Years ago, we gave up trying to keep toilet paper in the dorm restrooms; instead we give each student a roll of toilet paper when they get their room assignments. Kathy said she vividly recalls her first visit to the dorm office. "My day was going just peachy when one of the houseparents handed me my toilet paper," Kathy wrote. "What kind

of a place was my mom leaving me at? At home, I remember nights when my mom would try to help me with my math and I would literally cry because I would get very frustrated. Anxiety and I became very close during those years at home. I no longer stress anymore, I have great teachers who are always willing to help. Better is the fact that they become family. Having chapel in the middle of the day helped me. It gave me a daily dose of 'God is watching you. Are you

making the right choices?' Church is now something I look forward to and not a time to nap. I am a leader in a small Bible study group in the girls' dorm. It's amazing how much Oneida can help someone. I went from a girl who ran from the Bible to teaching it.

"I'm glad I chose to stay at OBI because it has made such a difference in my life. I've actually developed a relationship with my stepparents. My stepdad will sit in the same room with me now and I'm no longer a brat to my stepmom—well at least not the biggest brat. Oneida has helped me become someone I never thought I could be. I realize it's OK to need help and love."

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

Seeking changed lives

Somerset student graduates, anticipates future ministry

The death of his grandfather was an emotional loss to young Eric Douglas. "Soon after he died, I was led in a prayer and told to go down the aisle the following Sunday," Eric said. "But no change came in my life. At age 21, God changed my heart and I gained new love for Him."

Eric graduates with his bachelor of arts degree May 4. "Because of what happened to me, I don't want to lead a child into a false assurance without a changed life," Eric said. "The Holy Spirit has to convict and change a person."

Not long after his conversion, Eric had "a pressing desire" to teach God's Word and help reach others for Christ.

"I was a football coach and thought that would be my life," Eric said. He worked as an assistant coach at Somerset High School and coached one year at Lincoln County High School. He said he planned to attend Eastern Kentucky University to secure a teaching certificate, but God led him in another direction.

While working at a recreation center in Somerset, Eric met his future wife, Amanda Draughn, from Knott County.

"She came from a Christian home with involvement in the church," Eric said. "She was supportive of my ministry decision and made the transition easier."

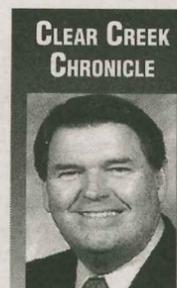
His first three semesters at Clear Creek, Eric commuted from Somerset. "We're so glad we moved on campus," he said. "We've grown closer as a couple and made great friendships."

In February, the Douglases welcomed their daughter, Leah Grace. Eric worked a year on campus, handling maintenance responsibilities in the Aldridge Building.

Currently he is interim pastor of Haynes Flat Baptist Church in Speedwell, Tenn. He said he feels called to serve as a pastor, and trusts God to open that door in His timing.

He considers coaching "a mission field and I'm open to serve as a volunteer assistant coach if that opportunity came, and the Lord led me to do that."

Whether on the sidelines or in the pulpit, Eric Douglas looks forward to sharing the gospel message and seeing changed lives.



Bill Whittaker

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

Parents, clergy influence teens' views about sex

Washington (ABP)—More than three-quarters of teens think religious leaders should do more to help prevent teen pregnancy—that's even more than the 64 percent of adults who think the same.

But while 76 percent of teens think religious leaders should do more to educate them about the risks of teenage sex, teens consistently say parents most influence their decisions about sex, according to an independent study commissioned by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Forty-seven percent of teenagers say parents influence their decisions more than friends, religious leaders, siblings, teachers, media and sex educators, according to Bill Albert, deputy director of the National Campaign.

"One of the primary findings here is really good news for parents—that they are more influential on the topic than they thought they were," he said, adding that "the science here is relatively clear. The kids who are most close with their parents are less likely to do some of the crummy things kids do."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 60 percent of teenagers have sex before graduating from high school. About 800,000 teenage girls in the United States get pregnant each year, even though in the past 10 years the government has spent more than a billion dollars on abstinence-only programs.

All told, teen pregnancies in the United States cost federal, state and local taxpayers more than \$9 billion in 2004, according to analysis from the report.

Despite the influence they wield in their children's lives, however, parents simply do not believe they affect a teen's perceptions about sex, Albert said.

The survey, which included responses from 1,037 children age 12 to 19 and 1,162 adults 20 years and older, said only 34 percent of parents think they influence teenage decisions about sex. But the proportion of teens who say parents most influence their decisions about sex increased from 37 percent in 2004 to 47 percent in this year's survey. And the proportion of teens who say they had a "helpful conversation" with their parents about delaying sex increased from 63 percent in 2004 to 71 percent in 2006.

"I think in some ways that parents are in a full state of denial," Albert said. "These issues of sex, love and relationships are difficult. What this survey shows is that what the opposite of most parents believe is actually true. While they may not act like it, most teenagers actually think their parents are the most influential."

Lawless: Avoid 'line' of sexual temptation

By Jeff Robinson
Baptist Press

Louisville (BP)—Sex is a gift God designed for marriage, but Satan tempts all Christians to misuse it in sinful ways, and they must be prepared to battle temptation, Charles Lawless told more than 700 college students recently at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Sexual temptation is a universal struggle among people because God-given physical urges are a strong tool in the hands of Satan, Lawless said during Southern Seminary's annual Give Me an Answer Collegiate Conference. This year's conference theme was, "Does God Care about Sex?"

"We all struggle with the reality of our sexuality," said Lawless, dean of Southern's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth. "It is a gift that seems to haunt us because the enemy always wants to pervert the biblical picture of sexuality."

"The union of marriage and the beauty and perfection of marriage as God designed it helps us to see what the church is to be like and how God loves us. ... Satan uses sexual temptation to distort the picture of Christ's relationship with the church."

The Bible gives parameters about where the line of sexual sin exists, Lawless said.

"As Christians, we do know where these lines are because God has told us very clearly in His Word what His standards are," he noted. "A part of the problem is we live in a world that says there is no line or that keeps moving the line."

Since God's Word makes the line clear, Lawless said, Christians know when they are making choices that are pushing them closer to the line. Pointing to Genesis 3, Lawless said Satan lures Christians up to and beyond the line of sexual temptation in four basic ways:

■ Satan engages believers in con-

versation. Just as Eve conversed with the serpent in the Garden, so believers are inching closer to the line of sexual sin when they first ponder sinful activities, he said.

"Sin begins when you begin to think about staying on the Internet a little bit longer and you click one more time in a certain direction or you read that unsolicited e-mail that you know by the subject line is going to lead you into trouble. You begin to think, 'I wonder if I should check it out?' You are engaging in conversation with the enemy, but you are not yet at the line."

■ Next, Satan leads believers to doubt or ignore God's Word, Lawless said.

The enemy will replace God's Word with unbiblical thoughts such as, "nobody will know," or "you can always change your ways tomorrow," or "this is not going to hurt anybody else," Lawless said, adding that all such rationalizations cut directly against the grain of Scripture.

■ Satan then points the believer to what he or she is missing, Lawless said. While believers have profound eternal blessings in Christ, Satan will tempt Christians to seek ultimate pleasure in the "forbidden fruit," he said.

"When we cross the line we decide that the sin that we want, at least temporarily, matters more than every other blessing that God has given us: our health, our home, our family, everything," he said.

■ Finally, Lawless said, Satan wants believers who have compromised with sexual sin to flee to the secret place in shame—just as Adam and Eve hid in Eden following the fall.

The very one who formerly enticed the Christian to sin now becomes his or her accuser, Lawless said, with the result that the fallen person spirals into worse sexual behavior.

"The enemy always wants us to

live in secrets, to live in the hidden places of our lives," Lawless said. "He wants us to live in the depths of that sin so that it becomes more and more a stronghold. For example, sometimes the simplest pornography leads to looking at more extreme porn and then to even worse things."

But the bad news of Genesis 3 is accompanied by the good news of God's grace in Christ, Lawless pointed out. God came looking for Adam and Eve while they hid in the garden and, in His mercy, God also seeks out His fallen children, Lawless said.

While Scripture clearly marks the line for sexual sin, it also gives God's plan for overcoming temptation, Lawless said. To successfully battle sexual temptation, Lawless said Christians must:

■ Decide to seek the higher pleasure of serving God. Believers must decide that eternal pleasure is of greater value than the fleeting gratification that comes from sexual sin.

■ Get an accountability partner. Confession of sins to another person in line with James 5:16 will bring sins out of the closet of secrecy, he said. Lawless cautioned believers to take care in choosing an accountability partner; the person must not be a gossip and must not be of the opposite gender.

■ Stay away from the line. Christians must make choices that keep them from moving in the vicinity of sexual immorality, he said. For example, a boy and girl in a dating relationship might decide never to be alone together in a car or a family might put its home computer at a place where it can be seen by other family members at all times, Lawless suggested.

■ Replace bad thoughts and mental images with the Word of God. Christians must read and memorize the Bible constantly to renew their minds, he said.

■ Repent and move on. If a believer has yielded to such temptation, he or she must repent and then rest in God's mercy.



Chuck Lawless

Ministry aims to shield pastors from porn addiction

Grand Rapids, Mich. (RNS)—When Justin VanAntwerp wasn't preaching the gospel, he often would look at pornographic images—sometimes five or six times a day.

"I became really good at lying and covering up my tracks," said the 29-year-old former pastor of First Baptist Church of Lawton, Mich. "But on the inside I knew it wasn't right."

VanAntwerp's 15-year battle with pornography addiction ultimately cost him his ministry and his marriage. He resigned his pastorate and confessed to his wife about a year and a half ago—only to have her leave "almost immediately."

The former pastor now considers it his responsibility to share his story and help others steer clear of the sin that destroyed his life. And he isn't the only one becoming more involved in such endeavors.

Craig Gross, pastor of online anti-porn ministry XXXChurch.com, said he hears new versions of VanAntwerp's story all too often. He defines porn as "any sexually explicit writing and/or picture intended to arouse sexual desire."

"I think we'll continue to see pastors lose jobs and lose marriages," Gross said. "One of the things we always say is that porn will get you to do things you never thought you'd do."

Gross and ministry co-founder Mike Foster gained national attention when they began frequenting porn conventions and handing out Bibles five years ago. A Web site soon followed.

The site has become a venue where those who struggle with porn can learn more about their condition, share their experiences and find help. VanAntwerp's story is among those posted.

"I think whether you agree or disagree with what we do, people are finding out that this is an issue that needs to be talked about," Gross said.

There is also a free accountability program available for download called X3 Watch. It functions like spyware by keeping a record of "morally questionable" sites visited and e-mailing it to accountability partners specified by the user.

VanAntwerp, meanwhile, has gone to great lengths to fortify himself against the allure of porn. In addition to turning to constant prayer, he has removed Internet access from his home and is now part of a men's accountability group through his new church.

"I feel like, over this past year, what I've learned is that it's not just about keeping those things from my eyesight," VanAntwerp said. "It's about my own heart condition."

But despite the silver lining, the dark cloud still looms.

"I'm probably going to mess up again," he said. "But I'm going to be honest about it."

Grand Rapids' Christian Counseling Center offers help to those who struggle with all forms of sexual addiction. Dan Henderson administers one of the men's groups, and says he sees a "steady stream" of clients coming from both inside and outside the church.

"Oftentimes at the root of it are our issues with intimacy—not just physical intimacy, but relationship intimacy."

"The enemy always wants us to live in secrets, to live in the hidden places of our lives."

Chuck Lawless, dean of Southern Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth

"Porn will get you to do things you never thought you'd do."

Craig Gross, pastor of online anti-porn ministry XXXChurch.com

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist ministries and missionaries:

First Baptist Church of Owenton. Ministry coordinator Kitty Cammack shares that the church is joining forces with other congregations in the county to provide a more effective and strengthened ministry called "Meeting Needs." Participants will distribute food, clothing and used appliances; provide supplies and childcare instruction to new mothers; and offer assistance to community residents with electrical, plumbing and carpentry needs. Pray that many people will come to know Christ because of volunteers' willingness to share their faith while meeting the physical needs of the community. Pray that God will continue to provide much-needed resources and volunteers.

Mission Service Corps Missionary John Roberts of Sparta. Roberts serves as chaplain of Raceway Ministries at the Kentucky Motor Speedway. He coordinates the ministry and volunteers who provide worship experiences and special evangelistic events in the campground area. Roberts also equips and trains volunteers to serve on trauma teams in the grandstands and as witnesses in the vendors' areas. Tens of thousands of unchurched racing fans will visit the track this season to attend one of the scheduled NASCAR or Indy events. Pray that God will continue to show favor to this and other ministries in the racing community. Pray that God will provide physical and spiritual protection to the volunteers as they boldly share their faith.

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

Spotlight on ...

Madisonville



First Church will host a "Growing in Faith" ladies' night out April 19, 6 p.m., with **Eva Self** as guest speaker. For free reservations, call (270) 821-3611.

■ **BARDSTOWN**—Mill Creek Church ordained **Paul Carter** and **Vince Hall** as deacons March 14.

■ **BENTON**—New Bethel Church recently called **Mark Mohler** as pastor.

■ **EAST BERNSTADT**—Arthur Ridge Church recently called **Steve Smith** as pastor.

■ **FISHERVILLE**—First Church will hold a building dedication and celebration April 15, 2 p.m.

■ **FRANKFORT**—Crestwood Church's choir will present a musical and drama of the Living Last Supper, the Cross of Calvary and the Resurrection April 1-2, 7 p.m. **Wallace Kent** is pastor.

■ **HOPKINSVILLE**—First Church ordained **Kevin Meacham** and **Ben Westerfield** as deacons March 18. **Rodney Travis** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Cloverleaf Church will host **The Dills** in a Southern gospel music concert April 1, 7 p.m. **Geoffrey Lacefield** is pastor.

Deer Park Church's Chancel Choir and Strings will present "Worthy Is the Lamb" April 1, 10:45 a.m. **David Platt** is pastor.

Lyndon Church ordained **Matthew Lane** as a deacon March 18. **Jim Holladay** is pastor.

■ **LOYALL**—Calvary Church's choir will present the Easter cantata "He Loved Us So," written and arranged by church member **Nannie Head**, March 31, 7 p.m., and April 1, 6 p.m. **C.B. Rezek** is pastor.

■ **MIDWAY**—Midway Church ordained hospital chaplain **Susan Quisenberry Allen** to the gospel ministry March 18. **Tom Allen** is pastor.

■ **MOREHEAD**—First Church recently called **Susan Lockwood** as associate pastor. **Don Mantooth** is pastor.

■ **PIKEVILLE**—Immanuel Church called **Wayne Yeager** as minister of youth effective April 1. He previously was part-time minister of youth at Crittenden Church.

■ **PROVIDENCE**—Harmony Church recently called **Mark Bryant** as pastor.

■ **RICHMOND**—Unity Church ordained **Charles Long** as a deacon March 25. **Dennis Brewer** is pastor.

■ **SHEPHERDSVILLE**—Eagle Heights Church recently called **John Thomas Green** as pastor.

■ **SYMSONIA**—Elva Church recently ordained **David Little** to the gospel ministry.

■ **TATUMSVILLE**—Bethel Church called **Gary Cruse** as pastor effective April 1.

■ **WESTPORT**—Westport Church recently called **DeWayne Sowell** as pastor. The church also ordained **John Morgan** and **John Traylor** as deacons Feb. 25.

KBC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION

March

30-31 Exalt (State Acteens Conference), Second Baptist Church, Hopkinsville.

30-31 For Guys Only, Hillcrest Baptist Church, Hopkinsville.

30-31 Great Commission Prayer Conference, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

31 RA Congress Region 7, Elk Spring Valley Baptist Church, Monticello.

31 RA Congress Region 8B, Camp Howard.

April

3 Telling Your Mission Story Conference, Baptist Building, Louisville.

13-14 Collegiate Leadership Training, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

19-20 Quarterly Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening, Severns Valley Association Office, Elizabethtown.

20-22 All-State Children's Choir—East, Cedarmore.

23-24 Developing & Managing People/Supervision Training, Baptist Building, Louisville.

24 Senior Living Celebration, Eastwood Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

26 Senior Living Celebration, Central Baptist Church, Winchester.

27 Senior Living Celebration, Beacon Hill Baptist Church, Somerset.

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



TUTORS Six volunteers recently were trained at Eubank Baptist Church as Adult Reading and Writing tutors. Participants include: front row (from left) Jean Dixon and Margie Hutchens and back row (from left) Fonnice Blevins, Mitzi Barron, Camille Partin and Angie Chaney. Rebecca Carnell is the Kentucky Baptist Convention's literacy missions consultant. For more information about literacy missions, call (502) 489-3409.

CLASSIFIED ADS

AVAILABLE: Retired SBC pastor of 54 years available for supply or interim. Seventy-five mile radius of Danville, Ky. Phone: (859) 583-9641.

AVAILABLE: For supply, interim or bivocational pastorate—any place, anytime, any or no fees. Call Ben Render at (502) 368-3067.

FOR SALE: Large cabin near cleft Rock Retreat Center in Rockcastle County. Call (513) 831-0239 for information.

FOR SALE: Duplo D-590 Folder. Asking \$1,200. Contact Louise Cornell at (502) 955-5480.

SEEKING: Pianist/keyboardist with strong accompanying, sight-reading and improvisational skills for blended worship. Must be available Sunday mornings and evenings, Wednesday evenings, and for rehearsals. Contact New Hope Baptist Church at (859) 873-1707; or e-mail wnoos@newhopeky.org.

SEEKING: Full-time church administrator for large Lexington church. Responsible for the general operations, financial affairs and administrative matters of the church. Individual must possess a bachelor's degree (or higher) and appropriate training to manage business and fiscal affairs, human resources, facilities and food services. A minimum of five years experience in church and/or related environment required. NACBA certification preferred. Please send resumé to: Personnel Committee, 3100 Bates Creek Road, Lexington, KY 40502.

SEEKING: Full-time student minister. Must be energetic and Spirit-led. Please send resumé to: First Baptist Church, 916 Main St., Paris, KY 40361, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Part-time minister to coordinate and develop youth/children's work. Send resumé to: Pastor, PO Box 54825, Lexington, KY 40555.

SEEKING: Part-time senior adult minister for large church in Lexington. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, 3100 Bates Creek Road, Lexington, KY 40502.

SEEKING: Minister of students and recreation. Submit resumé to: Chatham Baptist Church, 1500 East Walnut, Chatham, IL 62629; or jerryweber@insightbb.com by April 27.

SEEKING: Bon Air Baptist Church, a growing, 2,700-member congregation near Richmond, Va., seeks a dynamic and creative individual to lead its children's ministry. This person will be responsible for maintaining and enhancing a program of Christian education, outreach and worship for preschoolers, children and their parents and leaders. Candidates should have a successful record in this field, knowledge of the latest trends, understand the multi-site concept and have a passion for sharing God's love with children and families. Qualified candidates may submit a cover letter and resumé to searchteam@bonairbaptist.org. Visit www.bonairbaptist.org for a job description.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for conservative Southern Baptist church in Georgetown, Ky. Forward resumé to: Gano Baptist Church, 212 Bevens Lane, Georgetown, KY 40324; or to ganopastorsearch@bellsouth.net.

SEEKING: Part-time (20 hours per week) youth minister/leader for conservative SBC church. Two years experience/training in youth required. Cornerstone Baptist Church, 104 W Maple St., Nicholasville, KY 40356. Phone: (859) 881-1213.

SEEKING: Minister of youth. Responsible for providing ministerial leadership and a comprehensive youth ministry that is consistent with the vision and mission of the church. Please send resumé to: Youth Minister Search Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 446, Taylorsville, KY 40071.

SEEKING: Shawnee Run Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Ky., is looking for someone who can help take our youth to the next level through worship. Candidate must be able to lead worship in music and word. Our church is a conservative but progressive SBC church. Our youth currently are lay-led and the Lord is blessing them with wonderful growth. A calling in the area of youth ministry is required. The successful candidate must be available on Sunday evenings initially and open to involvement with summer missions this summer. Send resumé: 1490 Shaker-town Road, Harrodsburg, KY 40330, Attn: Youth Intern Position.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Ohio Valley Baptist Church in Ledbetter, Ky. Please send resumé to Larry Martin, 870 Mt. Zion Road, Tiline, KY 42083; or e-mail to sgillahan@bellsouth.net.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of youth for Russell Cave Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky. Please send resumé by e-mail to pastor_rcrbc@yahoo.com; or to Personnel Committee, Russell Cave Baptist Church, 3179 Russell Cave Road, Lexington, KY 40511.

SEEKING: Parkway Baptist seeks a part-time youth minister who demonstrates spiritual growth and maturity with a Spirit-led love for students, grades 6-12. Individual to lead youth to a knowledge of the plan of salvation and develop them in Christian nurture. Send resumé to: Parkway Baptist Church, 1915 North Broadway, Lexington, KY 40505; or e-mail: info@parkwaybaptistchurch.org.

SEEKING: Student pastor: Tennessee church seeks SBC-seminary-trained student pastor with 1-2 successful church experiences—must be currently serving local church and in good standing. Candidates who are open to a new challenge supported by exceptional leadership and a solid budget may send resumé to: Search Team, Hixson First Baptist, 5800 Grubb Road, Hixson, TN 37343.

WANTED: Tickets to Beth Moore seminar in Nashville in September. If you have extra tickets, please call M.J. Wilcox at (270) 543-0235 or 754-4136.

Some churches opt for credit cards as IRS tightens rules

By David Briggs and Michael Heaton
Religion News Service

Cleveland (RNS)—Small business owners who have been burned by bad checks have long responded by posting a sign above their registers: "In God we trust. All others pay cash."

Well, now there's a related message in many churches: "In God we trust. All others can use MasterCard, Visa or American Express."

And beginning this year, the Internal Revenue Service also has a message: "In God we trust. All others show receipts."

A confluence of spiritual and secular interests is driving a change in the way many religious communities raise money. On the way out is the traditional practice of church members reaching into their pockets and dropping bills and change in the collection plate each Sunday. On the way in are options such as automatic deductions from bank accounts and paying by credit card.

Some church leaders hope the changes will woo young members used to a cashless society and will increase the overall offerings as worshippers become less arbitrary about what they give each week.

Responding to IRS rules

At the same time, giving practices that offer records of the transactions will help churchgoers meet IRS rules for 2007 mandating receipts to address the gap between what some taxpayers say they give at church and the amounts those congregations actually receive.

This leap into a new financial

world is raising questions for some churches:

One, will the move away from dropping cash in the offering plate and incurring the fees associated with credit card use lead to an increase or decrease in revenues?

Two, is the offering the same worship experience when individuals make their choice a year in advance on a bank form or credit card rather than making a conscious decision each week, one that can be influenced by appeals from the pulpit or the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

Many observers think the move toward automated giving will give churches a budget boost.

"I'm a big fan of electronic giving," said Charles Zech, an economist at Villanova University in Pennsylvania.

Having people commit to giving every week and being less susceptible to donating less on weeks they have less money in their pockets will more than make up the revenue that is lost to credit card fees, he said.

Pam McKee, director of stewardship and development at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, said the church realizes credit cards can be "a double-edged sword" because the church pays a 4 percent processing fee when people use credit cards for their tithes and offerings.

But she said the church is responding to requests from individuals by offering the option, and research showing people give more when paying by credit card indicates Trinity will come out ahead.

"When it comes out in plastic, it's almost like it isn't as painful,"



RNS illustration

she noted.

No one expects the toughened IRS rules to have much of an effect on overall church budgets.

People generally don't give based on tax deductions, and those who do throw in cash or loose change tend not to be people who would itemize their tax returns, said Sylvia Ronsvalle of empty tomb inc., a research organization in Champaign, Ill., that studies religious giving.

Record of cash donations

Additionally, local congregations in many denominations provide numbered envelopes so people have a record of their cash donations.

Of greater concern to some peo-

ple is the potential loss of individual participation in the service.

There is a sense of community, not to mention accountability, when people place their offering in the collection plate before one another each week, Ronsvalle said.

With electronic giving, the danger exists that church "becomes just another bill to pay," she said. Paying by credit card or automated deduction also makes it easier to stop paying than it is in a worship setting where giving is a public expression of faith.

"Churches need to work harder at helping people feel integrated with the worship aspect of giving," Ronsvalle noted.

Church choirs often are first stage for 'American Idol' contestants

By Adelle Banks and Sally York
Religion News Service

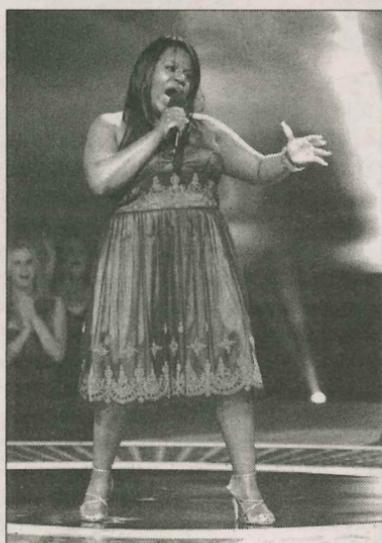
Flint, Mich. (RNS)—When Lakisha Jones belted out a song from the movie "Dreamgirls" in her debut on this season of "American Idol," the Michigan church that helped nurture her soulful sound was rooting her on.

The musical careers of Jones and some other "Idol" contestants—past and present—were birthed in churches across the country, settings where many singers perform each Sunday to a not-so-nationwide audience.

"Years and years of singing in church and never making a living off of something that I love to do," said Jones, a 27-year-old bank teller, summing up her musical career in a videotaped interview aired on the Fox talent show. "And now to have the opportunity ... it's a good feeling."

Churches, especially African-American churches, often have been the training ground for artists who make it to America's most prominent stages. As artists move from sacred to secular realms, their ministers of music and church choirs—as well as supportive church members—are cheering them on.

Members of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Jones' hometown of Flint, Mich., are busting with pride over the singer, whose powerful voice once belonged to their Voices of Mount Zion adult choir. Jones now lives in Fort Meade, Md.



Lakisha Jones

"She's always been our 'American Idol,'" said Cassandra Ellison, a Voices member for 13 years. "She was always the one who stood out."

At a recent Sunday morning service, Jones' mother, Beverly Jefferson, said, "Lakisha would like to thank everybody for their support and votes" in the popular televised competition.

The connections between contestants and church don't surprise Christian music experts like Teresa Hairston, founder of Gospel Today magazine.

"There are so many people that have started in gospel, famous people like Elvis Presley, Al Green and Aretha Franklin and Gladys Knight,"

she said in an interview as she kicked off her Gospel Heritage Foundation's recent "Praise & Worship Conference" in Washington.

When artists move on from the church, music ministers hope their faith remains with the fame.

Ternae Jordan Jr., a worship leader at Mount Canaan Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn., once sang backup for gospel artists with current "Idol" contestant Melinda Doolittle.

"Though she's doing the majority of everything in the secular realm, in the secular field, right now, she's bringing the cross over instead of crossing over," said Jordan, who attended the Praise & Worship Conference.

Doolittle, who attends the same Nashville church as gospel artist CeCe Winans and sang backup on one of her CDs, talked about her faith in a "Fast Facts" feature on the "American Idol" Web site.

Her personal goals, she said, were to "represent Christ well and do everything 150 percent."

Demetrus Stewart, president of the PureSprings Gospel Label that features Winans and other artists, said the style of many black churches gives singers the ability to do the musical runs and note-stretching that bring audiences to their feet.

Sam Patton, a music director at New United Church in Chattanooga, said music ministers like himself generally work with a corps of volunteers to create a grand choir sound.

But, on occasion, they may discover a potential recording artist. He's currently helping a budding artist cut her first album.

Patton said the range of church music—including elements of jazz and R&B, country and classical—helps prepare artists, such as former "Idol" celebrities Ruben Studdard and Fantasia Barrino, for musical careers.

"It's easier for them because they have sung so many different styles in church," said Patton, who also was at the Washington conference. "With praise and worship evolving like it is, you have to be versatile."

Sometimes that versatility leads to appearances at talent shows, either secular, like "Idol," or religious. Trinity Broadcasting Network and the Gospel Music Channel have produced Christian talent competitions. Current "Idol" contestant Jordin Sparks placed second in the Gospel Music Association's "Music in the Rockies" competition in 2005.

"The 'American Idol' syndrome is even spilling over in the church so there are several within the Christian gospel community," Stewart noted.

But for some churchgoers—including members of Jones' Flint congregation—the "Idol" stage seems particularly attractive, in part because one of their own is there.

"When I'm 16, I'm going to try out," said Ariele Hayman, a 13-year-old member of the same youth choir that once included Jones.



ETHIOPIA, NIGERIA, ERITREA, MADAGASCAR, RUSSIA, KOREA, JAPAN, CHINA, UNITED STATES

Good Friday and Easter are days to remember Christ's sacrifice for our sins, and His victory, which is the Gospel, the same message we are told to take to all of the world.

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