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Museum discovers artifact linked to obscure O.T. figure

London (BP)—It's doubtful that many Christians remember the name "Nebo-Sarsekim" from the Old Testament, but thanks to an archaeological discovery at the British Museum, they may in the future.

British Museum officials recently announced the discovery of a two-inch-wide, 2,500-year-old cuneiform tablet that contains details of a financial transaction by a "Nabu-sharrussukin," who is called in the tablet the "chief eunuch" of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar.

That's the same person mentioned in Jeremiah 39:3—although spelled differently in different translations—as the chief officer of Nebuchadnezzar who was in Jerusalem when the Babylonians overtook the city around 587 B.C.

Babylonian names often are difficult to translate. The New King James Version calls him "Sarsechim" and the New International Version calls him "Nebo-Sarsekim."

The small tablet is one of more than 100,000 inscribed tablets housed at the British Museum, according to The Times newspaper, and was acquired in 1920. But it wasn't seen as having a biblical connection until recently.

"A throwaway detail in the Old Testament turns out to be accurate and true," said the British Museum's Irving Finkel. "I think that it means that the whole of the narrative takes on a new kind of power."

Growing where planted

Above: Glenn Armstrong basks in the sound of praise from the Beaver Dam Baptist Church choir during his last worship service as pastor of the Ohio County church. Armstrong served the congregation 40 years. **Right:** Richard Oldham, who this summer marks 50 years as pastor of Glendale Baptist Church in Bowling Green, speaks to a young member of the congregation after Sunday worship. Oldham said he has no immediate plans to retire. (Photos by Dannah Prather)

Lengthy pastorates thrive on stability, harmony & 'holy ambition'

By Dannah Prather
Partnerships Editor

Louisville—If Richard Oldham and Glenn Armstrong consciously accepted the challenge to "grow where you are planted," by now they could be labeled over-achievers.

It doesn't take long to realize that the roots of ministry developed by these two pastors—Oldham has served 50 years, Armstrong 40—per-

meate their congregations and communities and reach deep into Kentucky and Southern Baptist life.

Hundreds of pastors, ministers and missionaries serving in Kentucky and around the world can point back to Oldham's pastorate, Glendale Baptist Church in Bowling Green, or Armstrong's former pastorate, Beaver Dam Baptist Church, and say, "That was where I first learned

about Jesus."

Glendale Baptist leaders calculate 250 men and women from their congregation have embarked on Christian service, in part, because of Oldham's influence. About 150 of those Swordsmen, as church members call them, attended a 50th ministry anniversary celebration for Oldham July 13.

□ See *Growing where planted...* Page 3

Churches make safety a top priority for vacation Bible school

By Michelle Rindels
Religion News Service

Elizabethtown (RNS)—The arrival of summer brings the excitement of vacation Bible school for churches and children all across Kentucky and the nation.

But with that excitement comes the concern of keeping kids safe from those who would rather inflict harm than share the love of Christ.

"It's a sad commentary on the world we live in," said Laurie Souleyrette, director of preschool ministries at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown. "We no longer know everybody who walks in the doors" of the church.

Severns Valley recently enjoyed an incident-free week of VBS with more than 600 children, thanks in part to a number of security measures put in place several years ago. Those precautions include background checks on all volunteers, photo ID checks at

child pickup time and a safety team on alert at all times.

It might seem like an extensive process, but as Souleyrette explained, "We have to be proactive in protecting our children."

When planning vacation Bible school activities, Nicole Carmines decided it wasn't enough to require background checks and inspect IDs.

So she decided to hire two uniformed police officers to stay on church premises for the entire week. Excessive? Carmines doesn't think so.

"We constantly hear comments about extra measures that we go through," said Carmines, vacation Bible school director at Concordia Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas.

She says parents are grateful for the precautions—which include everything from ID tags to a walkie-talkie network. Seven years ago, 650

elementary school-aged students signed up for Concordia's vacation Bible school. VBS enrollment this June broke the 1,300 mark, and she believes the staff's diligent security is one of the biggest reasons.

In light of well-publicized sexual abuse scandals at churches, background checks aren't just for paid staff anymore—they're virtually standard fare for any children's ministry worker. Likely, that's because child abuse allegations surface at the rate of 70 per week in America's churches, according to national surveys conducted from 1993-2002 by Christian Ministry Resources, a tax and legal advice publisher.

"I don't want to be known as another church that's had all these allegations against them," Souleyrette said. "That hurts the Kingdom of God more than anything."

VBS programs pose an acute set of security challenges for churches,

especially since they attract throngs of unfamiliar children and a small army of volunteers.

"One of the problems is we need a lot more (children's) workers than we do on Sunday," said Jerry Woolley, VBS ministry specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources, which provides VBS curriculum to most of the Southern Baptist Convention's more than 42,000 churches and many outside the denomination. "Sometimes we become desperate for workers and take them even if we don't know who they are."

LifeWay has long used printed "leader guides" to coach teachers on child safety.

The company added a new item this year—ID wristbands.

Woolley says it's just one more way to ensure that at the end of the day, kids end up in the arms of parents, not predators.

□ See *Churches take 'extra ...* Page 8

Love the 'least lovable,' IMB leader urges

By Shawn Hendricks
Baptist Press

Richmond, Va. (BP)—Sometimes being a missionary means loving people who are hated in the eyes of the world, said a leader for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's Central Asia region.

"Anything worth the blood of Jesus is worth our loving," he said. "We need to love the people who are the least lovable on the face of the earth."

The leader, who could not be identified due to security concerns, gave his report to IMB trustees during their July 16-18 meeting. In one of two reports related to a year-long emphasis on the former Soviet Union, he spoke of reaching a persecuted Muslim community in Moscow.

There are more than 3 million Muslims in Moscow, the leader said. Muslims often are despised by the Russian people and looked upon as outcasts; yet, by 2050 Muslims are expected to constitute more than half the population of the Russian Federation. It is up to missionaries and local believers to reach them with the gospel, he added.

"And there is nobody trying to reach (Muslims in Moscow) with the gospel," he said. "Nobody. Not from our organization. Not from any other organization."

He asked churches to pray that God would raise a missionary team to reach them, "that God would break down the barriers, ... that Russia would be a place known as a light for the gospel."

Rodney Hammer, the IMB's regional leader for Central and Eastern Europe, said local believers from the region's "Bible belt"—Romania, Moldova and Ukraine—are hard at work, but small in number compared with the number of unreached people in the region.

The three countries "are only 2 percent evangelical," Hammer said. But churches in those countries are ministering all over Western and Eastern Europe, he added.

One Romanian pastor stood up in a recent gathering of believers from 12 countries and told them, "We are coming to your country on mission,"

Hammer said. The pastor then gave a detailed presentation with his vision for reaching all of Europe.

"This wasn't the missionaries doing the talking," Hammer noted. "This was a Romanian brother. It was really awesome to see."

84 missionaries appointed

Eighty-four missionaries were appointed July 17 at Grove Avenue Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., in the IMB's largest appointment service of the year. They join 5,100 other Southern Baptist missionaries already serving across the globe.

IMB President Jerry Rankin reminded those in attendance that far more missionaries are needed to finish the task of reaching the world with the gospel. Southern Baptists must focus on the task and look beyond their comfort zone, he added.

He reminded IMB trustees of the goal to engage all people groups with a population of more than 100,000 by the end of 2008 and all unreached people groups by 2010.

"Our mission mandate is clear," Rankin said. "It is up to us to maintain a disciplined focus, a determined boldness, a dedicated creativity and a devoted passion for the task."

"We have not completed our mission responsibility until all the peoples of the world know that the Savior has come and died for them."

GLOBAL IMPACT

Southern Baptist international missionaries hold flags from around the world representing countries they are going to serve. Eighty-four missionaries were appointed July 17 at a service in Richmond, Va. (BP photo by Beth Spain)



BAPTIST DIGEST

Gathering highlights first Baptist association. History professors from three Southern Baptist seminaries will join Baptists from other denominations in Charleston, S.C., Aug. 1-3, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the founding of the first Baptist association in America. The Philadelphia Baptist Association was formed in 1707. The "Baptist History Celebration" will be held at First Baptist Church of Charleston, which was founded in the late 1600s as the first Baptist church in the South. Among the speakers are Michael Haykin and Tom Nettles of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lloyd Harsch of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Keith Harper of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. For more information, visit www.baptisthistorycelebration.org.

Baptist deacon who ministered to ex-cons murdered. Willie Scott, a Baptist deacon who turned his experiences as a crack addict and convict into tools for his ministry, was shot and killed July 10 at his clothing and shoe business in Houston. The shooters reportedly had attempted to rob the 42-year-old Scott. A deacon at Rose of Sharon Baptist Church, Scott founded Jails to Jobs, a nonprofit organization that trains ex-offenders to do construction work. Friends remembered him as a spiritual leader who helped get many former inmates on the road to a new life. Scott is survived by his wife and 2-year-old son.

Carver named Army Chief of Chaplains. Doug Carver was sworn in July 12 as the 23rd U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains. Carver, who was also promoted to major general, is the first Southern Baptist to hold the position of chief of chaplains since 1954. He was commissioned as a chaplain in 1984.

N.C. Baptist morality activist arrested. Coy Privette, the president of a Christian morality group and a former state legislator and Southern Baptist Convention leader, has been arrested on prostitution-related charges in North Carolina. Privette, the president of the Christian Action League in North Carolina, was charged July 19 with six counts of aiding and abetting prostitution. The board of the Christian Action League removed him as president, pending resolution of the charges. Privette, 74, is a former trustee of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission (now Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission) and a former trustee chair of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. A retired pastor, he also is a former president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Baptist bloggers consolidate efforts to discuss SBC issues

Arlington, Texas (ABP)—Internet bloggers who have challenged the Southern Baptist Convention establishment for the past two years are consolidating their efforts to create a new Internet presence they say will be the "premier site for Southern Baptist news and commentary."

Benjamin Cole, Marty Duren and other prominent bloggers announced last month they would reduce the focus on SBC issues on their individual blogs.

But the bloggers agreed to collaborate, continuing their calls for denominational reform on a single blog—www.sbcoutpost.com, a weblog that had been administered by Duren, a Buford, Ga., pastor.

"I think most bloggers are stepping back to let the convention rest," both for personal and strategic reasons, said Cole, a pastor in Arlington, Texas. "You can't maintain a full offense for an undetermined period of time."

At the same time, the conversation about SBC issues continues, he said. And he hopes to increase participation in the blogs.

"The new SBCoutpost is an effort to get the conversation in one place," he added.

In addition to Cole and Duren, among other SBCoutpost contributors is Tim Sweatman, a minister from Bowling Green.

One prominent blogger will not be closely associated with the new collaboration—Wade Bursleson, the Oklahoma pastor whose writings about the SBC International Mission Board trustees brought blogging to the attention of many Southern Baptists.

"I may every now and then contribute to the Outpost, but I like the immediacy of having your own blog," Bursleson said.

One blog feature Cole said he expects SBCoutpost to continue is the distribution of "primary sources."

"Largely, blogging has been providing documentation that has never been seen before," Cole said. "This is different in that a whole document or a whole letter has been provided, rather than an edited version in a news story."

Organizers also hope to widen the range of contributors to SBCoutpost. Cole has invited denominational executives, chairs of boards of trustees, megachurch pastors, laywomen and editorial writers to join the conversation. "Some have said they might do it, and others have been totally opposed," he noted.

There's no guarantee all the contributors will agree with each other, either. Cross said their core beliefs unite them, but they don't walk "lockstep" together on every opinion piece.

"Each of us is our own person," he said. "We disagree often. And we'll agree to disagree publicly."

Still, bridging the "diverse constituencies" in Southern Baptist life remains a goal of SBCoutpost, as well as providing an "outlet" for staying active in convention life.

Many of the bloggers plan to continue their own blogs, although Cole said he expects visits to those sites to diminish. "We all took the perspective of John the Baptist," he said. "SBCoutpost must increase and we must decrease."

Baptist churches among nation's 'most influential'

New York (ABP)—Two of the top 10 most influential churches in America are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, according to a recent magazine report.

The SBC-affiliated Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., and Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas, rank No. 2 and 3, respectively, on this year's "50 Most Influential Churches in America" study by The Church Report. Bill Hybels' Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Ill., tops the list.

Rounding out the top 10 churches are: North Point Church in Alpharetta, Ga.; Life Church in Edmond, Okla.; Granger Community Church in Granger, Ind.; Lakewood Church in Houston; Mars Hill Church in Seattle; The Potter's House in Dallas; and Seacoast Church in Mount Pleasant, S.C.

The churches represent the "passion and sense of mission mandated in the New Testament," the report said.

Twelve congregations affiliated with the SBC and two that belong to the Baptist General Conference—a denomination of Swedish Baptist heritage with a membership concentrated in the Midwest and West—made the list of 50. That's up from 2006, when five of the churches listed were SBC-affiliated.

Some other Baptist churches on the list include: Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas (22); Second Baptist Church of Houston (24); First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla. (29); First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ga. (30); Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va. (34); Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn. (38); New Birth Baptist Church in Lithonia, Ga. (44); Bethlehem Baptist in Minneapolis, Minn. (46); and First Baptist Church of Hammond, Ind. (48).

The Church Report said the nature of the list—heavy on contemporary, new-paradigm and "emergent" kinds of congregations and lighter on traditional denominational churches—reflects recent decades' rapid change in the ways churches grow and reach out.

"It appears to also affirm the new expressions of ministry by emerging churches while also affirming the best of churches that endure through eras of dramatic change," the report said.

The Church Report, a national news magazine for Christian leaders, surveyed leaders of 2,000 Protestant congregations. Participants recommended up to 10 churches as "the nation's most influential."

According to the report, 77 churches were recommended, and the top 10 churches received 65 percent of all recommendations.

Growing where planted

Two long-term KBC pastorates thrive on stability, harmony & 'holy ambition'

Continued from page 1

Ohio County native Katie McKown, an assistant minister at Memorial Baptist Church in Arlington, Va., said she didn't know the exact number of vocational ministers from Beaver Dam, but instantly remembered three peers from her class alone who discerned God's call while growing up in the congregation.

Beaver Dam Baptist "was a place where I felt loved, nurtured and challenged," McKown said. In May, she made the 700-mile trip from Virginia to Kentucky for Armstrong's last sermon and retirement reception.

"He's the only pastor I've ever known," she said, adding that until she went to college, "I didn't know people had more than one pastor."

According to Guy Futral, a consultant with the Kentucky Baptist Convention's leadership development team, the average tenure of a full-time Southern Baptist pastor at a single church is "a little more than three years." In Kentucky, that figure stretches to five years. "Anything beyond 10 years is considered a long-term pastorate," he said.

Although separated by only



READY TO TEACH Richard Oldham, pastor of Glendale Baptist Church in Bowling Green, greets a recent Sunday morning crowd prior to the sermon. Oldham, 77, also teaches a Sunday school class. The night before, he and eight members of the congregation returned from a mission trip to Mexico. The church has undertaken a mission to Mexico annually for 32 years. Another mission trip, this one to Southeast Asia, is set for later this summer. Oldham plans to make the trip.

about 45 miles, the Glendale and Beaver Dam congregations and pastors are very different, but when deacons and church members describe each pastor, similar adjectives and phrases arise, such as "humble," "servant," "a people person" and "encouraging."

"I've always been kind of easy-going," Armstrong said. "I think I get the job done while trying to alienate as few people as possible."

Atmosphere of harmony

His approach helped create an atmosphere of unity and harmony that, in part, has kept Beaver Dam's music minister, John Cashion, and youth minister, Doug King, with the congregation for 23 and 21 years respectively.

"The staff issues that have been a source of frustration and hurtfulness for some of my colleagues haven't been an issue here," Cashion said, describing the church as a place of "mutual respect and shared ministry."

Oldham shares a similar ministry style. "I bring new ideas to our deacons," he said. "If it catches fire with them, they bring it to the church. If it doesn't, it dies or waits."

He credits the Glendale congregation for the ongoing bus ministry, K-12 school, weekly youth radio broadcast, annual mission trips and other ministries. Still, deacon Mickey Berkley estimates Oldham sometimes works 20-hour days.

"He leads by example but he's not the boss," Berkley said. "He's a person who always puts God first."

Berkley's son, Brian, is on staff at Glendale, one of the many young Christian servants Oldham has mentored.

Deacon Barry Fields said about 7,000 people have made professions of faith in Christ and nearly 5,000 have been baptized through Oldham's ministry.

"He has tremendously impacted this community by conducting thousands of weddings and funeral services, all at no charge," Fields said. "Many of the funerals are for

people who aren't from our church, but they have asked him to be their honorary pastor." Fields added that Oldham has voluntarily reduced his salary when church finances were tight.

According to Futral and Greg Wills, a professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, current culture both within and outside the Southern Baptist Convention contributes to fewer pastorates as long as Oldham's and Armstrong's.

"There is an element of ambition," Futral said. "That's part of our culture."

It is a trend that concerns Wills. "You don't have to look too hard to see that we have many worldly pastors," he said. "There is this culture that defines success in terms of larger churches and larger salaries and perks. ... I think this problem has always been with the church, but it's a peculiarly powerful temptation for the churches of the modern West and modern America in particular."

Some moves by full-time pastors from smaller to larger churches are financial necessities, Wills said. "It wasn't until 1880 to 1890 that churches began to place a premium on having a full-time pastor; before that, most were bivocational."

Today when a small church puts out the word that it needs a pastor, often leaders ask for a single man or a couple without children, Wills said, because the congregation knows it cannot provide a salary sufficient to support a family.

Outside the parameters of providing for a family, however, Wills said it is obvious that "too many of our churches seem to have made peace with the world, and have induced their pastor to do the same."

The megachurch era perhaps throws the trend in sharper relief, but Armstrong said it is not new. "Ambition isn't particular to any one generation," he said.

Oldham and Armstrong said they have remained confident of where God placed them, but they gained that assurance in different ways.



"When I came to Beaver Dam 40 years ago and preached my trial sermon. I went back up to the church that afternoon by myself," Armstrong said. As he stood behind the pulpit, "I had this inner awareness that I would spend my life here. ... The Lord did not call me anywhere else."

Oldham said when he returned to his native commonwealth to a pastorate in Lansing, Mich., "I was sort of scared. ... I thought (Glendale) was a big work but I didn't think I was qualified for it." He said he saw great ministry opportunities in the college town and the 19 members meeting in a house on Jones Avenue but the certainty of God's call came day by day, not all at once.

"Several times churches have asked me to come," he said, noting that he visited some of those congregations but didn't feel God leading him anywhere except back to Glendale.

"I've never tried to climb ladders," he said.

Observers should not assume that pastors who stay many years at the same church lack ambition, Wills cautioned. Those pastors may have the perfect sort of ambition.

"I believe that a pastor who is not ambitious for the Kingdom of God will not accomplish much," Wills said. "Through hard work, prayer, diligent study of the Word, seeking the lost, ministering to the saints ... there's much he can do with the blessing of God for the Kingdom."

GIFT OF SONG Children and grandchildren of Glenn and Elaine Armstrong sing "Remember Me" at a May worship service marking the close of Glenn Armstrong's 40-year pastorate at Beaver Dam Baptist Church. One of the Armstrongs' daughter, Glenna Metcalfe (top row, far right), is organist and music minister for First Baptist Church in Georgetown. (Photos by Dannah Prather)

Time, training can ease ministry transition as churches identify next pastor

Beaver Dam—The process now under way by leaders and members of Beaver Dam Baptist Church is unique: "dearmstrongification."

Bill Danks, chairman of deacons, said the term was coined by former pastor Glenn Armstrong himself.

The church is "getting used to being without Bro. Armstrong," Danks said. "He told us, 'If you don't do that, then the next pastor you call will be an interim anyway.'"

Wise words according to Guy Futral, consultant with the Kentucky Baptist Convention's leadership development team. "It's really important when a long-term pastor leaves that a congregation give itself time to adjust to the reality of being without that person leading them. In some cases, he is the only pastor that many of them have known. It is a time of grief."

Beaver Dam music minister John Cashion said the period surrounding Armstrong's retirement has been

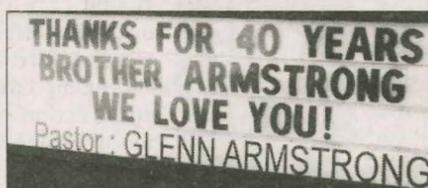
a "very difficult time for the church."

Armstrong took it a step further, describing the aftermath for himself as "traumatic." To lessen the trauma for the church he loves so much, Armstrong said he "did everything I could think to do to get them ready for the transition." That included the formation of two committees and special training for members.

"It's extremely important for them to have some outside help in training," Futral confirmed. "They can do that through KBC resources, perhaps with directors of missions; sometimes interim pastors do that."

One committee is charged with finding an official interim pastor; the second, the new full-time pastor. Church member and former full-time pastor Wendell Romans stepped into the pulpit after Armstrong left. An announcement is expected this fall on the selection of an official interim.

Danks understands the precarious sea-



son the congregation is in right now. "I had been here eight years and we were about to call our fourth pastor. I prayed to the Lord, 'Please let him stay until he gets the job done.'"

That fourth pastor was Armstrong. Danks and other church leaders are prayerful God will send the right man again.

The KBC leadership development team has a 67-page workbook to help search committees in their quest to locate a new pastor or minister. The resource contains check lists, questionnaires and other tools on topics ranging from resumés, references and background checks to church/pastor covenants and installation

ceremonies.

The workbook is just one resource. To learn the extent of assistance available, contact Karl Babb, KBC leadership development team leader, by phone at (866) 489-3580. The workbook is available upon request or for download at www.kybaptist.org.

One of the most important things a committee can do is to listen to church members, Futral said. "Without the pastoral figure there, people begin to express their ideas about who (the church is) and where they would like to go." A search committee should have "some idea of what's in the heart of the people."

Congregations need a spirit of resolve to maintain, perhaps even grow, in a time of transition. The cliché is once the pastor's gone, "we won't know how to turn off the lights," Futral said. "They need to see that momentum is there not based only on that pastor."

WESTERN RECORDER

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

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Telling the gospel story—then and now

By **Erich Bridges**

Richmond, Va. (BP)—First-century evangelists had a short life expectancy—and no shortage of enemies.

"Endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist," the Apostle Paul wrote in a letter to his young disciple

Timothy, boiling the missionary task down to its rugged essence (2 Timothy 4:5). Threats, persecution, beatings and probable martyrdom were all part of the job description.

Paul and Timothy preached the gospel in a violent, decadent and pagan world. The Roman emperors demanded submission and even worship. Roman and Greek idols captured the Gentile imagination—and local economies—in Roman-ruled cities like Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The political/religious/economic power structure didn't take kindly to competition, as Paul discovered when he ran afoul of the Ephesian merchants who made a good living off the cult of the goddess Artemis (Acts 19).

Paul eventually died at the hands of the Romans. Years later, according to church tradition, Timothy was dragged through the streets of Ephesus and stoned to death after trying to stop a pagan procession and preach Christ.

Human nature doesn't change

Paul never sugarcoated the difficulty of the mission task. In his letter to Timothy, he predicted things would get even worse in the last days:

"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:2-5).

Sound familiar? Human nature

doesn't change much from one era to the next.

Christian evangelism is less life-threatening these days, at least in some places. In other places, it's more dangerous than ever.

"Political disruption and instability threaten missionary presence on many fields," Southern Baptist International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin said last month during his report to Southern Baptist Convention messengers. Global terrorism also jeopardizes ministry in multiple areas.

But sometimes the "safe" places—such as post-Christian Europe—present greater spiritual challenges than the dangerous ones. Why?

"A massive wave of postmodern humanism responds with ridicule to anyone who would embrace the notion of absolute truth and the certainty of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ," Rankin explained.

Reactionary humanism is really another form of paganism—updated, pretending to be tolerant, but just as hostile to the gospel as the merchants of Artemis were. The gospel, however, has two timeless advantages in the global struggle for hearts and minds: It is the truth, and people everywhere are hungry to hear it.

People like Genady Krechin, a Russian businessman who spent years living for himself. He made a fortune in the post-Soviet economic free-for-all by selling vodka and building ties to Russian gangsters. But he felt his eternal soul slipping away.

"As the Bible would say, I decided that I would serve mammon as the ruler of my life," recalls Krechin, whose testimony was featured during the IMB report at the SBC annual

What are you thinking?

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

Summer outreach opportunities

I have been utterly amazed at the amount of mission outreach I have observed firsthand and received reports about this summer. Let me tell you about some of my stops on a recent tour.

I'll start at the Jonathan Creek Conference Center where I recently participated in a worship service for the "Crossings" youth camp. The preacher was Dave Blankenship, the student pastor from Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green. The altar was filled with youth making decisions for Christ.

David Melber, president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies, expects the assemblies to have ministered to more than 6,000 youth at Jonathan Creek and Cedarmore by the time summer ends. Hundreds of these youth have already made meaningful decisions for Christ while attending camp.

A brief visit at Cadiz Baptist Church was long enough for pastor Kevin Roberts to introduce me to the church's Upward Basketball Camp for children. The gospel is shared ev-

ery day of that camp.

The next stop was at Hillcrest Baptist Church in Hopkinsville where Greg Giltner is pastor. This church is the home for many young people involved in Kentucky Changers through the leadership of youth minister Bill Houpt.

In Monticello, I saw where 200 Kentucky Changers conducted 20 construction projects paid for by local churches. Their goal was not just to transform a home, but to also help the homeowner experience the transforming

power of love in action.

There is something very powerful and authentic about the worship of Kentucky Changers. The preacher for the week was Josh McFarland, the youth minister at Maple Grove Baptist Church in Louisville.

In addition to 900 Kentucky Changers, there have been hundreds of World Changers in Kentucky this summer in Henderson and Owensboro. The Post Oak Changers in Russellville, organized following Kentucky Changers in their city last

meeting. "But as the money became more and more, happiness and joy became less and less. I was drinking. I was partying. I was destroying myself. I was divided against myself. My spirit was struggling."

When a Russian Baptist believer told him the story of Jesus, the words about God's love and mercy moved him. One night, Krechin repented and gave his heart to the Lord. Today he's a Baptist church planter working with Southern Baptist missionaries in Moscow. Visit www.imb.org and click on "Lottie Moon" to see a dramatization of Krechin's spiritual transformation.

Witnessing despite hostility

People need the Lord—and they are desperate to know Him. That was true in first-century Ephesus and it's true now. And despite how hostile the world may seem at any given moment, tellers of the Jesus story have more friends than they realize.

Recently a Christian evangelist in China was sharing Jesus with a 16-year-old seeker in a public shopping arcade when a security guard walked over and snatched a gospel tract out of his hand. Not knowing what would happen next, the Christian turned to the guard and said, "Yes, I have already talked with this young man. He showed interest. I am not forcing him to do anything. If he should decide to believe, it's his own decision."

As the guard flipped through the pages of the tract, the evangelist prayed silently. When he saw that the guard was on the last page, he asked, "Sir, do you know Jesus?" To his amazement, the reply was yes.

Then the guard handed the tract to the 16-year-old and said, "Here. Read it."

Erich Bridges is senior writer with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board

CHURCH

Scriptures detail blessing of giving to God & others

By **Doug Strader**

The world in which we live has been described by some as being filled with two types of people—those who give and those who receive.



In the Book of Acts, the

Apostle Paul quotes Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

A friend of mine was fond of saying that if we did not believe that statement, we should swap places with a beggar and see if it is not more of a blessing to be able to give than to be begging.

To be a Christian is to be a giving person. That is the very nature of one who has received salvation from Jesus Christ. Because we have been given so much, we too must give, as the gospel songwriter said.

But I still hear people say, "All my church wants is my money." There may be some churches that put too much emphasis on money, but my experience is that most churches do not put enough emphasis on giving and the blessings of being able to give to the Lord.

Why should we give our tithes and offerings to God through His church?

■ Giving makes us more like Jesus. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you by His poverty might become rich."

■ Giving blesses the giver in return. Proverbs 22:9 says, "Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for He shares His bread with the poor."

■ In 1 Timothy 6:18-19 Paul, says that giving can produce a victory over materialism. "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

■ Giving can bring true contentment. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

■ James 2:14-18 emphasizes that if we are giving our possessions to help others, we are showing evidence that we have a true faith in Jesus. Our good works must accompany our faith.

Doug Strader, retired director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's stewardship department, is pastor of Farmdale Baptist Church in Louisville

Pastor can help couple focus on positive ways to connect

Q: As a pastor, I have a couple in my congregation coming to see me about their marriage. Yet all they talk about is their daughter, a college student, and her consistently bad behavior. Their marriage is struggling, but how do I get them to focus on it?

Many people tend to distract from the real problem at hand. It is a natural defensive maneuver to protect one's self when feeling vulnerable.

MARRIAGE

It is likely in the family system that this couple's daughter has served as the "identified problem" for the family's dysfunction. The family apparently has struggled to relate in healthy, meaningful ways. The couple appears to avoid this truth about their marriage by focusing their energy, time and prayer on their daughter's challenging behavior.

It will require patience on your part as you gently steer them toward a conversation before God about their own relationship. If you force this focus, this couple may retreat to the safer topic of their daughter. Pray for discernment so you can guide them to talk about their marriage, even for brief periods of time. Maintain your own focus since you easily could become consumed with the dilemma of their daughter's behavior just as they do.

For some couples, focusing on a child holds the marriage relationship together. They may feel more connected with each other when talking about their child than any other time. Part of their growth will be to discover other ways to feel connected and close. This couple may long to feel close and yet not know how, so they continue to do what they do know to feel connected.

Part of your ministry with this couple may be to help them become more aware of their struggle to connect with each other and find a way to talk about this in order for healthy change to occur in their marriage and in their family life. They are fortunate to have a pastor who cares about their marriage.—Valerie Vincent

Q: I hadn't been back in the dating scene very long when I realized that maybe I should break up with the person I have been going out with. Do you have any guidelines I can contemplate in making this decision?

At the risk of sounding like "blue collar comedy," here are some tips:

You may need to break up if ...

- You feel stifled.
- There's no sense of balance.
- You're not able to be yourself.
- You feel dominated or controlled.
- You've outgrown the other person, or vice versa.
- You feel betrayed.
- You have clashing core values.
- You think you can change the other person.
- You don't like who you are when you're with the other person.
- You don't feel safe.
- You don't feel respected.
- There's unhealthy or addictive behavior.
- You feel pressured to be somebody you're not.

Remember the words of Psalm 34:14-18 if you're in this situation: "Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Remember, any divorce before a wedding is better than one after. Pay attention to the warning signals you see and trust God to reward your wisdom with direction, comfort and peace.—James Stillwell

Family Forum writers are:

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

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

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



Long-term pastors multiply ministry impact

A front page article in this week's Western Recorder pays tribute to two faithful Kentucky Baptist pastors—Glenn Armstrong and Richard Oldham—who have served lengthy pastorates.

Armstrong, who recently retired as pastor of Beaver Dam Baptist Church, served that congregation for 40 years. Oldham, who has served Glendale Baptist Church in Bowling Green for an incredible 50 years, is still going strong in that pastorate.

Mickey Berkley, a deacon at Glendale, described Oldham as "a person who always puts God first." Katie McKown, a former member at Beaver Dam, affirmed Armstrong's lengthy tenure by candidly noting, "I didn't know people had more than one pastor."

In addition to honoring Oldham and Armstrong, the article by Western Recorder Partnerships Editor Dannah Prather cites the overall ministry impact of long-term pastorates.

The fact is there are dozens of pastors throughout the commonwealth who have served their current congregation for 20 years or more; several have retired with more than a quarter-century of ministry at one location. Each of those dedicated ministers deserves a heartfelt salute for their ministry commitment and leadership.

What difference does it make whether a pastor serves one congregation for decades or moves from church to church every few years?

According to Prather's article, Kentucky Baptist Convention leadership consultant Guy Futral explained that the average tenure of a full-time Southern Baptist pastor at one congregation is "a little more than three years." Here in Kentucky, he added, that average increases to five years. "Anything beyond 10 years is considered a long-term pastorate," Futral noted.

In a recent column about Armstrong's ministry and retirement, KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey pointed out, "The advantage of this kind of longevity is that effectiveness is not lost in starting and closing ministries. Maximum effectiveness for most pastors usually begins somewhere between years five and seven of their ministries."

Is your church sending mixed messages?

By Woody Murray

Nashville (BP)—As you sit at home—or in your office—reading this story, your church continues to communicate many messages to your community.

Right now, someone is reading your church sign while driving by your church. Another person is studying your small ad in the Yellow Pages. A young couple is checking out your church website. Neighbors are watching your church van drive down the main road in your town. A newcomer to the area is listening to your church answering machine message to find out about the times of services.

If you don't present one clear and inviting message for your church through every touch-point, then a single weak communication can counter all of the strong church promotion you are working so hard to build.

When was the last time you took a close look at your key communications touch-points?

■ Your church sign messages should be warm and inviting. Use your sign to encourage people to worship with you, and tell them the

And that's where the significance of long-term pastoral leadership comes into play. With the average tenure of Baptist pastors ranging from three to

five years, many pastors and congregations miss the opportunity to experience the maximum ministry effectiveness cited by Mackey. Rather than building deep, lasting relationships that can translate into unparalleled ministry opportunities, many pastors spend their ministry years establishing new relationships over and over as they gradually earn each congregation's trust and respect.

Obviously, the sense of God's call and timing are major factors in any minister's decision to stay at a particular congrega-

tion or move to a new ministry field. But part of the challenge is determining whether God is calling a pastor to "bloom where he is planted" or move on to greener (often translated "larger") pastures.

While not every pastor is called by God to serve for decades in one setting, it clearly is a special blessing to many pastors and congregations who have shared such a ministry journey.

In addition to building deep relationships within a congregation and community, long-term pastorates provide the pastor the opportunity to grow in wisdom and knowledge over the years.

According to Proverbs 16, "The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction. ... Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life." Such wisdom and splendor seldom are gained by a pastor and revealed to a congregation in a brief two- or three-year pastorate. The stature and reputation of such pastors as Glenn Armstrong and Richard Oldham are gradually earned over time as they spend years growing in wisdom and knowledge and building lasting bonds with God's people where He has planted them.

Congratulations to Oldham, Armstrong and every other pastor who is seeking to faithfully follow and fulfill God's ministry call wherever it leads. May each of you strive to some day echo the triumphant words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

day night? How about directions to the church?

What if someone calls on Sunday morning? The answering machine is not your best option. If at all possible, have someone attending your church answer the phone on Sunday morning. Your designated phone "welcomer" can address any questions, give simple driving directions to the church, and maybe even greet the guests they speak to when they arrive at the door.

Because you don't know how—or when—someone will want information about your church, you can't afford to let any one message touch-point miss the mark and hinder the ministries of your church.

Perhaps the best Scripture reference for stressing the importance of effective church communications is Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Jesus was speaking to His disciples, but His message also applies to the ways we communicate to others about our church. Let the light of your church shine brightly before men.

Woody Murray is a church communications specialist based in Nashville

SIMULTANEOUS PRAYER GATHERINGS ACROSS OUR STATE



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September 11, 2007

A Time for Prayer

6:30 pm CDT
7:30 pm EDT



With One Voice is part of the 300th anniversary celebration of associations in America - 1707-2007

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- Pray for Kentucky Baptist ministries across the state and for our Kentucky Baptist missionaries
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For a complete list of prayer gathering locations, visit

www.kybaptist.org/onevoice

Study on homosexual policy concerns evangelical leaders

New York (BP)—Conservative and evangelical leaders are expressing concern that an American Psychological Association task force might condemn efforts on the part of some homosexuals to change their sexual preference.

An APA task force assigned to revise and update the organization's policy on counseling homosexuals met for the first time July 17 and could issue its full report early next year. Conservatives are particularly concerned because they say the six-member task force is stacked with those who don't believe it's possible for people to leave homosexuality.

Current APA policy—adopted in 1997—condemns therapy that considers homosexuality a mental illness, although it doesn't specifically prohibit conversion therapy. Conservatives and evangelicals want the APA to leave room in the official policy for homosexuals who, on their own, want to change and are seeking professional help.

"We consider it a foundational principle that respect be afforded to clients who determine that their religious teachings forbid homosexual conduct and construct their lives accordingly," reads a June 29 letter from more than 100 conservative and evangelical leaders to the APA board of directors.

The document was signed by numerous psychologists, as well as such leaders as Bob Stith, the new

national strategist for gender issues for the Southern Baptist Convention; Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville; and James Dobson of Focus on the Family. In addition, several signees—such as Alan Chambers of Exodus International and Tim Wilkins of Cross Ministry—themselves are former homosexuals.

"We are writing to express some concern that the mission of the task force may not recognize same-sex attracted persons who also have solid and unwavering religious commitments which lead them to avoid homosexual behavior," the letter reads. "Such persons frequently experience significant religious, spiritual and emotional distress and as a consequence seek psychological therapy."

"We strongly believe that psychologists can offer a valuable service if they respect the religious commitments of their clients to the same degree that they respect sexual orientation diversity."

The leaders asked the board of directors to consider either expanding the focus of the task force to include recommendations for psychologists who "respect religious identity" and are willing to counsel homosexuals who desire to change, or to form a second task force that would provide such recommendations.

Religious leaders lobby Congress for Farm Bill to knock out hunger

Washington (RNS)—A group of religious leaders met on Capitol Hill July 17 to lobby for a Farm Bill that would improve the Food Stamp Program—a change they described as the quickest way to reduce hunger in the U.S.

Bread for the World, a Christian anti-hunger organization, is leading Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans and other churches to push what they call "reform that reflects American values of fairness and equal opportunity."

Religious leaders have been visiting representatives and encouraging Christians to write letters to legislators—both in favor of food stamps, which now pay recipients an average \$1 per meal, and in opposition to what they see as an expensive and unjust farm subsidy program.

"Our nation's farm policy needs to be guided by a strong moral compass," said David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World, at a

press conference. "An equitable system would not pour federal dollars into the largest farms in America without addressing the needs of those who need help the most."

According to Oxfam, an anti-hunger advocacy group working with Bread for the World, just 25 percent of farmers qualify for commodity subsidies. Among those who do qualify, Oxfam said, only 10 percent receive 72 percent of the benefits.

The group also argued that these commodity payments distort the global market and have destructive repercussions abroad. Low prices for subsidized American products make it more difficult for foreign producers to compete in the global market.

"The House leadership must begin to address this bill from a moral perspective," said Episcopal Bishop John Bryson Chane of Washington.

The current farm legislation has been in place since 2002, when it was adopted with a 10-year price tag of \$190 billion.

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Reaching out to orphans

Crossings partnership sparks focus on orphans, adoption

The Melber family is in final preparations to welcome our fifth child. I know many of you may be thinking: How many is enough? Well I believe we are most likely done. In just a couple of days, Tera will be leaving to travel to Ethiopia to get Jonas, our third son. We are not exactly sure how old he is, but we think he is about 5 or 6.

Jonas will be our second child by way of adoption. Maritess, who is 9, came to us about two and a half years ago from the Philippines. Adoption has been a significant part of our lives that began in large part due to our Moldovan partnership that began back in 2003.

That was the year we began a partnership to sponsor youth to attend camps in Moldova. Through offerings given here at Crossings, Moldovan youth (many of whom are orphans) would financially be given the ability to attend camp. Now nearly four full summers later, we have sponsored nearly 20,000 Moldovan campers.

This partnership has been incredible as nearly 8,000 of these students have accepted Christ as their Savior. Not only has this part-

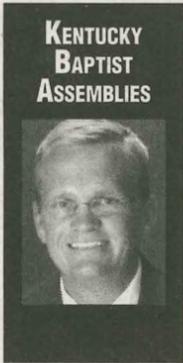
nership been a blessing for our ministry, God also used that experience to move our family to become advocates for the orphaned.

As our family has grown through adoption, many other people have expressed interest in adoption and churches have expressed a desire to begin an adoption ministry.

As Crossings Ministries looks toward the future, we are rapidly moving toward another partnership to provide orphan care in Zambia, Africa. I encourage each of you to consider how you can partner with us to care for orphans. Current estimates place the number of orphans in the world at 143 million. That is a staggering number, but as the church we are commanded to care for these children in need, according to James 1:27.

Please contact our office for additional information about orphans and adoption awareness. We can assist you in a variety of ways and our prayer is that churches will work together in seeking to solve this worldwide crisis.

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



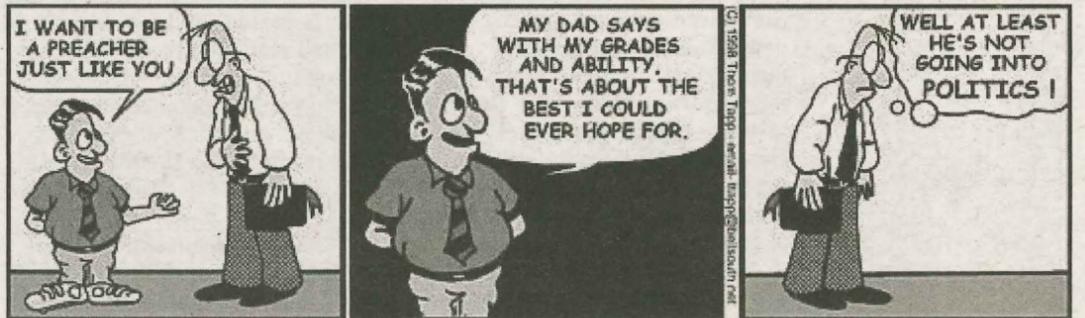
For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

By Joyce Handzo

Across

- 1 "Rule them with a ____ of iron" (Revelation 2:27)
- 3 "At the ____ of Jesus every knee should bow" (Philippians 2:10)
- 6 A bitter compound used in drugs and dyes
- 10 Utah, abbr.
- 11 "The ____ fell upon Jonah" (Jonah 1:7)
- 12 To regard with affection
- 14 Rhode Island, abbr.
- 15 "Go thee one way ____ other" (Ezekiel 21:16)
- 17 "____ thy mouth wide" (Psalm 81:10)
- 18 For example, Lat. abbr.
- 20 "The days that Adam lived were ____ hundred and thirty" (Genesis 5:5)
- 21 Street, abbr.
- 23 "Jesus died and ____ again" (1 Thessalonians 4:14)
- 24 One who selects the contents of a publication
- 27 Associate in Applied Science, abbr.
- 29 Officer of the British Empire, abbr.
- 30 "Women ____ themselves in modest apparel" (1 Timothy 2:9)
- 32 "We are not ____ to answer thee" (Daniel 3:16)
- 35 Ribonucleic acid, abbr.
- 36 "They ____ unto it a lace of blue" (Exodus 39:31)
- 37 Northeast, abbr.
- 38 "The angels of God ____ him" (Genesis 32:1)
- 39 "____ that man" (2 Thessalonians 3:14)
- 41 Social Security, abbr.
- 42 Metal containers

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- 44 "And the ____ stood still" (Joshua 10:13)
- 46 "The coat was without ____" (John 19:23)
- 48 Anno Domini, abbr.
- 50 "For God ____ loved the world" (John 3:16)
- 52 "Ye do ____, not knowing the scriptures" (Matthew 22:29)
- 54 "All the fiery ____ of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16)
- 56 "His ____ went to Jerusalem every year" (Luke 2:41)
- 57 "The ____ of all flesh is come before me" (Genesis 6:13)
- 16 "In the first chariot were ____ horses" (Zechariah 6:2)
- 19 "Surely ____ and mercy shall follow me" (Psalm 23:6)
- 22 "Write them upon the ____ of thine heart" (Proverbs 7:3)
- 25 Very fat
- 26 Referee, abbr.
- 28 "Go to the ____, thou sluggard" (Proverbs 6:6)
- 30 "He took them up in his ____" (Mark 10:16)
- 31 A cereal plant
- 32 "Take up the ____ out of the burning" (Numbers 16:37)
- 33 "Why make ye this ____, and weep?" (Mark 5:39)

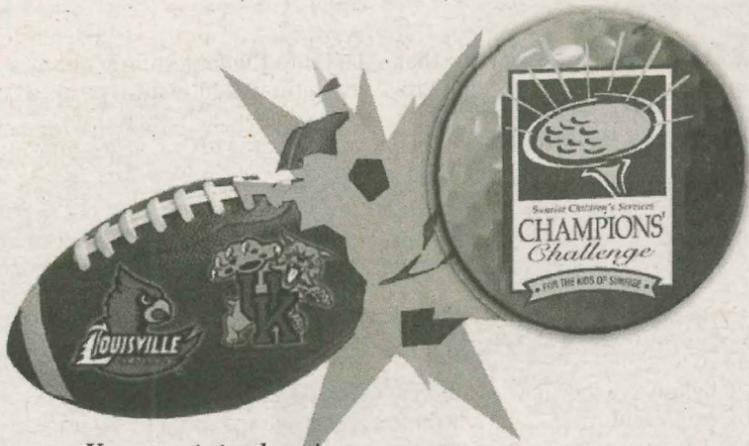
Down

- 1 "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ____ of thy people" (Acts 23:5)
- 2 Old Testament, abbr.
- 3 "There is none righteous, ____, not one" (Romans 3:10)
- 4 Makes amends for sin
- 5 Each, abbr.
- 6 Ampere, abbr.
- 7 "A faithful witness will not ____" (Proverbs 14:5)
- 8 Vessels used to make tea or coffee
- 9 Maine, abbr.
- 11 Measurement in only one direction
- 13 "Gamaliel, a ____ of the law" (Acts 5:34)

Last week's solution

J	U	B	A	L			J	A	B	A	L
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Churches take 'extra measures' to keep children safe at VBS

Continued from page 1

"Unfortunately, pedophiles hang out in churches," said Richard Odom, pastor of First Baptist Church of Summerfield, N.C. With a background in law enforcement, Odom is adamant that his church screen all VBS volunteers, from teachers to kitchen helpers.

"Pedophiles think twice about a church that takes a step" to perform checks, he said.

Additionally, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's website offers a free downloadable background check form for children and youth volunteers. Individuals can find the form at www.kybaptist.org/backgroundcheckform. Souleyrette said she believes churches who do not institute such safeguards need to get up to speed.

"We implemented our volunteer application process about six years ago," Souleyrette said, "and I felt then we were five years behind."

Research from Christian Ministry Resources suggests that most abuse in churches involves volunteers, not staff. Abusers typically seek to build a relationship of trust before preying on their victims, and a week-long VBS doesn't provide enough "alone time" for most criminals.

Still, a careless church has a lot to lose. Even if an incident does not occur, a child abuse accusation can be just as destructive.

"It can be devastating for the church and the accused," said attorney Charlotte Cover, a member of the Christian Law Association, which offers free legal counsel to churches. Even if they are false, she

said, accusations can be a tool of manipulation.

"Some of the kids are pretty street-wise and know if they get mad at a worker, if they allege abuse ... (the worker) will get in trouble."

That's why the Christian Law Association is encouraging churches not just to be above reproach, but to have documents to prove they're above reproach. Keeping detailed attendance records comes in handy when an accusation arises. In one case, Cover recalled, an individual claimed a church worker committed misconduct on a specific date. Since the church kept detailed attendance records, it proved the accuser wasn't even at church on the alleged date. The charges were dropped, Cover said.

"Taking measures does work," she said. "It's not 100 percent fool-proof. But courts require due diligence."

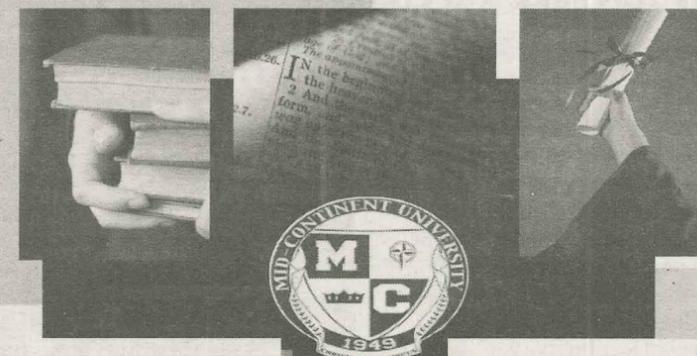
The Christian Law Association also encourages workers to avoid any situation that might suggest compromise.

Severns Valley instituted a "two-person rule" that prohibits an adult from being alone in a room with a child.

"It protects them and it also protects the child," Souleyrette noted.

"Personally as a pastor and a father—I would hate to sit in someone's living room and explain that harm came to one of their children," Odom said, "and that we did not do everything humanly possible to prevent it."

With additional reporting by News Director Drew Nichter



Committed

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My decision to attend Mid-Continent University was an easy one. The core belief system embedded in the history of the school was only one factor. This institution offered a positive atmosphere and a size that was not intimidating to me, someone who graduated with 60 other people. It became very apparent during my first few months that each and every teacher wanted to help students succeed not only in the classroom but also in life. They went above and beyond the realm necessary to make sure everyone got the attention and help needed, something that is rarely seen in many other schools. My experience was a positive one. It would be very easy for me to recommend this school and these teachers to other potential students.



MID-CONTINENT UNIVERSITY

Homecoming 2007

Variety of activities and fellowship highlight annual OBI celebration

By Myrtle Cooke, OBI Alumni Director

June 30 was OBI's annual Homecoming. We had a full day of activities with lots of good food served under the tents on our athletic field and also in our air-conditioned dining room.

Our first activity was a hymn sing at Oneida Baptist Church. This year's hymn sing, led by Richard Burns, former OBI band and choir director, was dedicated to the memory of George Irvin Hensley, who died in May. George was a member of the class of 1957, our 50th anniversary class. After graduating from Cumberland College with a major in music, George returned to Oneida to direct the choir and teach music and social studies for eight years. He also served six churches in Kentucky and Tennessee as minister of music. We were honored to have George's wife, Judy—also an OBI graduate—and their sons, daughter and families with us. George's sisters, Fronia and Lynda, and his brother, Michael (all OBI graduates) were also here.

The second activity was our alumni basketball game. Basketball players who graduated in the odd-numbered years, coached by former OBI coach, Joe Tom Gregory, played those who graduated in the even-numbered years, coached by former coach, Oliver Hawkins Jr.

The main event was at 2:30 p.m. in our chapel. Our special guests were two granddaughters of Saul Houchell, Sue Ann Houchell Diamond and Jamie Houchell, both from Louisville. "Sonny" and Jamie had come to unveil the portrait of their grandfather, OBI's fifth president (1941-1946). In the last few years at Homecoming, we

have been adding oil portraits of our past presidents to the walls of our chapel. Saul and his wife, Lillie DeZarn, both graduated from Oneida in 1911. Saul was teacher, coach, editor of the Oneida Mountaineer, and director of school and church music (1916-1932). He left Oneida to teach at Eastern Kentucky State Teachers College. When his old friend, Charles Goins, OBI's fourth president, resigned for health reasons, he requested that the trustees ask Saul to return to Oneida as president. During Houchell's administration, Oneida reached an agreement with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. By mutual consent between our trustees and the KBC, OBI became a part of the Kentucky Baptist department of Christian education and would receive some financial support from Kentucky Baptists.

Also at the afternoon service, President W.F. Underwood announced that the new blue carpet in the chapel had recently been donated and installed by a man who had come with his church in 2006 to volunteer. This friend, who owns a carpet business, offered to replace our nearly 20-year-old carpet—and agreed to have it done by Homecoming. What an amazing, timely gift!

Paul Bowling (class of 1947), Melvin Smallwood (class of 1959) and Gina Carmony Smith (class of 1984) were inducted into the OBI Athletic Hall of Fame. Classes gathered around tables to share stories until supper time. After more eating, laughter, hugs and handshakes, it was time to say "goodbye"—until our next Homecoming: June 28, 2008.

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Donnie Fox

From Fort Knox to Clear Creek

Army, Navy veterans now preparing for ministry

The headlines about the military are more personal to Bernell and Lois Rash. Prior to moving to Clear Creek they both served in the Army; Lois also served in the Navy.

His Army experience includes service in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm. "I pray for the troops," he said "It is harder on them now than when I served." His assignments included Colorado, Oklahoma and Greece. Bernell considered, a military career and after a few years in the Reserves returned to active duty, serving as an MP at Fort Knox. Lois, also on active duty, worked as

a cook; they met at a post Navigators' Bible study. Lois also holds an associate degree in hotel management and a bachelor's degree in business.

Reared mostly in Gainesville, Fla., Bernell was converted at age 12. He is grateful for Christian parents; his father was a deacon and his mother taught Sunday school. "None of my family is saved," Lois said. "My mother was an Orthodox Jew."

Shortly before moving to campus their son, Michael, age 8, became a Christian. He was baptized on Eas-

ter morning of 2006. Michael recently came to school with his dad. "He wanted to see what Daddy was learning in school," Bernell said. "I took him to two classes and to chapel; he was glad to get back to his school. He decided I had it tougher."

The family is involved at West Pineville Baptist Church, where Clear Creek graduate David Peters is pastor. Lois helps with Awanas and both of them are helping start children's church. "We enjoy David's preaching and he is also an excellent singer," Bernell said. "I have learned a lot from him."

Bernell and Lois are employees on the student workshop program.

She works in the Kelly Hall kitchen and he does maintenance in the Aldridge Building. "We are grateful for these jobs," Bernell stated. "It fills in a lot of gaps for us." Support for their salaries and other student employees will come from a million dollar workshop endowment now being raised. The KBC approved asking the churches for help in this campaign.

Donnie Fox is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, 300 Clear Creek Road, Pineville, KY 40977; toll-free: (866) 340-3196; Web site: www.ccbbc.edu; e-mail: dfox@ccbbc.edu

Guitarist recounts spiritual transformation in new book

By Michelle Rindels
Religion News Service

Phoenix (RNS)—Most of Brian "Head" Welch's tattoos are new.

It seems like the multicolored ink sleeves and matted brown dreadlocks would be remnants of the "old" Brian, the one who spent a decade pounding out power chords to lyrics like "Right now / I feel it scratch inside / I want to slash and beat you."

But the tattoo near his make-up-lined eyes gives him away. It's a small teardrop—a traditional gang symbol—juxtaposed with a cross. When he got it a couple years ago, he thought it symbolized the intense love of Jesus Christ.

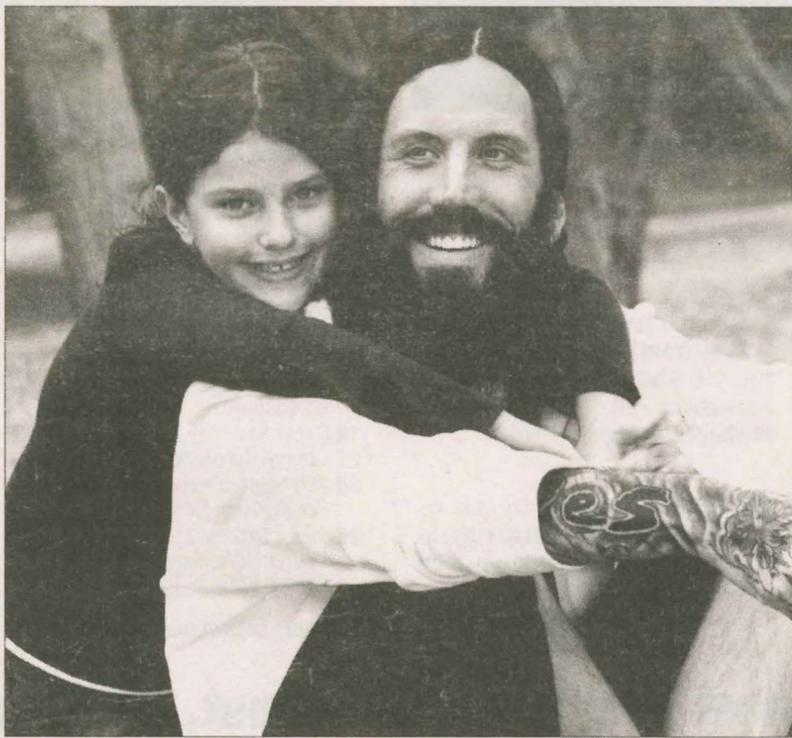
Now, he said, it's a permanent symbol of the unrelenting hardship, and prevailing joy, he discovered in 2005 when he abandoned riches and rock-star glory to become a Christian.

Welch, 37, released "Save Me From Myself" earlier this month. The book chronicles his years as lead guitarist for the hard-core band Korn, a quintet whose albums splintered parents' ears with profanity, sexuality and proclamations of rape and murder.

The band's "cathartic rock" was so offensive that it earned national attention in 1998 when a principal at a Michigan high school suspended a student for wearing a Korn T-shirt on grounds that the music was "indecent, vulgar and obscene."

For their teenage fan base, Korn's tracks were a chance to release pent-up anger and aggression. For Welch, they were a fitting soundtrack to a drug-induced downward spiral.

Raised as a nominal Episcopalian, Welch said his spiritual experiences were limited to the influence of one Christian friend when he was in junior high. By the time his guitar prowess and speed addiction propelled the band to fame in the mid-1990s, he had plunged into a dark



FATHER'S LOVE Brian "Head" Welch, with his daughter Jennea, 9, details his conversion from a drug-taking heavy-metal rocker to a clean-living Christian in his new book, "Save Me From Myself." (RNS photo courtesy of Harper Collins)

culture where every night on tour was a drunken orgy and God was out of sight, out of mind.

"No one would bring it up," he said of Christianity in a recent interview. "I remember making fun of Christians on TV and stuff. But until I heard from God myself, I didn't know it was real."

In his memoir, Welch describes the moment when he knew his life was careening out of control. His 5-year-old daughter, Jennea, was tagging along during a tour with the band when she innocently started humming a Korn hit—"A.D.I.D.A.S.," an acronym that stood for "All Day I Dream About Sex."

Couple that experience with Welch's insatiable methamphetamine habit, prescription drug and alcohol addictions, and a physically

abusive relationship with his former wife.

After a decade of headlining concerts with the likes of Ozzy Osbourne and Marilyn Manson, Welch realized he now knew a different kind of rock—rock bottom.

How the jaded rocker "melted" is a complex plot. There was the random e-mail from a Christian friend, a Bible for Christmas, spiritual questions from his young daughter, and a haunting dream of his own death.

But the defining moment came one night when he was sitting in front of his computer, simultaneously snorting speed and writing e-mails telling Korn he was quitting the band to get a grip on his life.

His voice crescendos when he describes the supernatural experience he felt, sitting still in front of the

keyboard: It was "an overwhelming sense of the presence of the love of God," he recalls. "I knew it was God, I knew I was changed and I've never been the same again."

Waking up the next morning, he opened his Bible, read a verse in Ezekiel that said "the soul who sins is the one who will die," and immediately flushed all his meth down the toilet.

Skeptics have questioned whether his 2005 conversion was "for real."

"I knew it was wiggling everyone out," he said. "One day I was in Korn, the next day I looked like Jesus."

But Welch knows he's a new man. Two and a half years later, the rocker is still clean and said he's at peace in his newfound faith, even though it meant giving up fame and glory to forge a path alone.

He said he's focusing on things of greater significance—like being dad to Jennea, now 9, and sharing his story through the book.

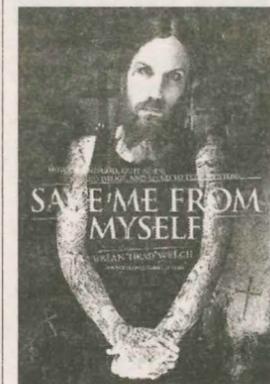
He's also back in the recording studio once more. He's got new songs—ones that seem to offer answers to the musings in Korn's hit "Alone I Break": "I am hoping I can find / where to leave my hurt behind."

Nothing is certain, especially with the music. But asked if he ever regrets the decision to abandon rock-star glory, his voice halts with emotion.

"I already had that, and it wasn't anything like what I thought it would be," he explained. "I wasn't content. Now I can be content if I never do anything in the limelight again, or if I go out and get famous in music again like I was."

And with his kohl-lined eyes fixed, deliberate, he said this commitment is as permanent as that little cross tattoo.

"It's for life, it's forever," he said. "This body is (God's) now, it's not mine."



"I knew it was wiggling everyone out. One day I was in Korn, the next day I looked like Jesus."

Former Korn guitarist Brian "Head" Welch

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Aug. 25 • First Baptist Church, Owensboro
Sept. 8 • First Baptist Church, Paducah
Sept. 8 • First Baptist Church, Somerset
Sept. 15 • Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown

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KBC
KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION

Report: Christian product sales grow to \$4.6 billion in last year

Colorado Springs, Colo. (RNS)—Sales of Christian products increased to \$4.6 billion last year, according to reports by the major trade association for Christian retailing.

The \$4.63 billion in 2006 sales, through a range of religious and secular distribution channels, is up from \$4.3 billion in 2004, \$4.2 billion in 2002 and \$4 billion in 2000, according to CBA.

A new study by the trade association, formerly known as Christian Booksellers Association, shows that 52 percent of Christian products are sold by Christian retailers while general market retailers—including stores such as Wal-Mart and Borders—sold 33 percent. The remaining 15 percent of sales including direct-to consumer and non-profit ministry sales.

"Christian retail is the supplier's best partner—historically, in the immediate and long-term," CBA President Bill Anderson said in a statement. "This channel sells more Christian products than all the other channels combined."

But the Christian market, along with other retailers, is grappling with new ways consumers make their purchases. Anderson said some Christian retailers are struggling while others are opening new stores.

"Christian retailers have had to respond to increased competition, challenges to traffic and price wars," he said. "And while we have lost some stores in the process, some of the smartest, most savvy retailers have not only survived, but have been improved by the challenges of recent years. They've been through a lot and are better retailers for it."



For more information: visit www.kybaptist.org/supersaturday, call 502.489.3572 or 866.489.3572 (toll free in KY), or e-mail supersaturday@kybaptist.org.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following requests associated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership missions efforts:

■ Pray for Brazilian Baptists and others who are ministering in the wake of the July 17 airplane crash in Sao Paulo, Brazil, that killed at least 190 people.

■ Pray for evangelism teams from Blood River Baptist Association and First Baptist Church of Monticello who currently are serving in Teresina, Brazil.

■ Pray for a medical/dental team from the University of Louisville that will be serving in Teresina July 30 to Aug. 8.

■ Pray for mission volunteers serving this summer through the 10-state Appalachian Regional Ministry and the seven-state Mississippi River Ministry.

For more information about partnership mission opportunities, contact the KBC partnership missions department at (502) 489-3529 or toll-free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3529.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **CLOVERPORT**—Cloverport Church recently called **Ben and Kayla Burke** as student ministers. **Wallace Gooch** is pastor.

■ **HAWESVILLE**—**John Owens** recently resigned after 33 years as music minister of Mount Eden Church to accept the call to preach. He will be ordained to the gospel ministry July 29. **Foy Back** is pastor.

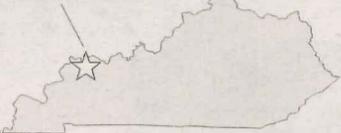
■ **LOUISVILLE**—Cloverleaf Church will host **The Anchormen** in concert July 26, 7 p.m. **Geoffrey Lacefield** is pastor.

■ **SHEPHERDSVILLE**—Little Flock Church recently called **Jammie Vance** as pastor. He previously was pastor of High Street Church in Somerset.

■ **SOMERSET**—**Bill and Edna Hubble**, members of First Church, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary July 14.

Spotlight on ...

Henderson



Immanuel Temple will host **The Echoes from Calvary** in concert July 29, 6:30 p.m. For more information, call (270) 826-9522. **Michael Eldridge** is pastor.

■ **VERSAILLES**—Versailles Church recently called **Adam Norsworthy** as minister of youth and children. **John Brandon** is pastor.

■ **WICKLIFFE**—**Larry Lindsey** recently resigned as pastor of Faith Church.

Campbellsville to host events on Holocaust, politics, global warming

By Joan McKinney
Campbellsville University

Campbellsville—Campbellsville University's Kentucky Heartland Institute on Public Policy will host sessions this fall on the Holocaust; political parties and upcoming elections; and evangelical perspectives on public policy issues.

John Chowning, Campbellsville's vice president for church and external relations and executive assistant to the president, said the sessions in September and October will "offer dignified and knowledgeable speakers" from all parts of the country.

Chowning noted that the institute "primarily focuses its attention on facilitating public policy study and issues debate, while encouraging the involvement of Chris-

tian leaders in the public and civic arenas."

He added that KHIPP is "committed to preparing Christian civic and political leaders for the 21st century."

The three fall sessions will be held Sept. 17-18, Oct. 8 and Oct. 30-31. Each of the programs will be in the school's Little Auditorium in the Student Union Building, except the Oct. 31 event which will be held in Ransdell Chapel.

"Causes and Lessons of the Holocaust," set for Sept. 17, 6:30 p.m., will be led by Victoria Barnett, staff director of church relations at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Barnett is also an author of several books and an editor of the "Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works,"



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July

25-26 Kentucky Baptist Secretaries' Summer Conference, Baptist Building, Louisville.

27-28 World Missions Unlimited, Immanuel Baptist Church, Lexington.

August

11 Crafters on Missions, First Baptist Church, Central City.

14 Understanding Other Beliefs, Bellevue Baptist Church, Owensboro.

18 Super Saturday, Immanuel Baptist Church, Lexington.

20-22 Freedom Experience, Lincoln County High School.

25 Super Saturday, First Baptist Church, Owensboro, and First Baptist Church, Pikeville.

September

1-3 Wrangler Trail Ride, Land Between the Lakes.

8 Super Saturday, First Baptist Church, Paducah, and First Baptist Church, Somerset.

13 Understanding Other Beliefs, Baptist Building, Louisville.

13 Retired Director of Missions/Spouse Luncheon, Severns Valley Associational Office, Elizabethtown.

14-15 Women on Mission/Baptist Nursing Fellowship Fall Retreat, Jonathan Creek.

15 Super Saturday, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

17-18 State Baptist Ministers Golf & Country Club, Georgetown.

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

fronting Our Nation" will be held Oct. 30-31.

The discussion will feature Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs with the National Association of Evangelicals in Washington.

The Oct. 30 session is at 5 p.m. and will address the topic: "For the Health of the Nation—An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility."

Cizik also will speak at Campbellsville's convocation/chapel Oct. 31 at 10 a.m., discussing the subject of "Creation Care—Concerns on Global Warming and Climate Change." The event is part of the school's "Earth Stewardship Series."

The events are free and open to the public. For more information, contact Chowning at (270) 789-5520.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR RENT: Family reunion or wedding parties. Highway 30A, beachside, 75 yards from the ocean; more than 5,000 square feet, eight bedrooms including five masters; full game room; large dining area; private heated pool. Call Suzannah at (800) 397-2708; www.reunionhouse.org.

FOR SALE: Children's animated Bible DVDs. Professionally made; enchanting to watch. Free resource books. Each DVD plays in Spanish or English; each has Web access. Call (859) 699-8384. E-mail wjenkins@nestfamily.com.

NEEDED: Church pews for Calvary Baptist Church (a new church start). Contact Rev. Rick Cox at (423) 663-9915.

SEEKING: Part-time worship pastor (20-30 hours). Bachelor's degree in music or related degree from accredited institution. Submit resumé: Rosemont Baptist Church, 556 Rosemont Garden, Lexington, KY 40503.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor who loves the Lord and the local church. Must preach the gospel message, practice the truth of the Bible and seek growth through outreach. Please send resumé and preferably a DVD or other taped message to: Pastor Search Committee, High Point Baptist Church, 220 West Farthing St., Mayfield, KY 42066.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor. Okala Missionary Baptist Church (50-80 attendees). Send resumé to Roy Chapman, chair, 1983 Highway 235, Nancy, KY 42544.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of education for First Baptist Church of Oak Grove. Please send resumé to Helen Stanfill, First Baptist Church, PO Box 27, Oak Grove, KY 42262. For more information, contact Helen Stanfill at (270) 439-5331.

SEEKING: Part-time paid minister of preschool/children's department. If interested, please submit resumé to: Fisherville Baptist Church, 15001 Old Taylorsville Road, Fisherville, KY 40023; or call (502) 267-5605 or e-mail to: secretary@fishervillebaptist.com.

SEEKING: Part-time children and family pastor for Rosemont Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky. Candidate will lead creative ministry for children ages birth through 6th grade and their families. For application information, please contact the church: (859) 277-6147.

SEEKING: Part-time paid minister of music. Will be working with various ages and doing PowerPoint presentations. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Fisherville Baptist Church, 15001 Old Taylorsville Road, Fisherville, KY 40023; or e-mail to: secretary@fishervillebaptist.com.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Oak Grove Baptist Church. Send resumé to Pauline Crump, 2175 Old Canton Pike, Cadiz, KY 42211.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor. Send resumé to Hyattsville Baptist Church, 3245 Richmond Road, Lancaster, KY 40444, Attn: Cynthia Bourne; or e-mail: crbourne@windstream.net.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for Southern Baptist church—approximately 20 hours per week. Prefer college training related to church music. Send resumé/application to Cecilia Baptist Church, 416 E Main St., Cecilia, KY 42724, Attn: Personnel Committee. E-mail to: church@ceciliabaptist.com.

SEEKING: Part-time worship/music leader (20 hours a week). Duties include: organizing and leading Sunday morning worship in a blended music style, and developing adult, youth and children music ministries. Send resumé to: Music Ministry, Bagdad Baptist Church, PO Box 8, Bagdad, KY 40003; or e-mail kyleamanda@bellsouth.net.

SEEKING: SBC seminary-trained children's specialist (preschool-5th grade). Prefer individual with previous successful church experience. Send resumé, references and photo to: Preschool/Children's Search, Hixson First Baptist, 5800 Grubb Road, Hixson, TN 37343. (423) 877-2467.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Anchor Church. Looking for a non-traditional, Spirit-filled church with Southern Baptist doctrine? If interested, please submit your resumé no later than Wednesday, Aug. 15, 2007, to: Pastor Search Committee, Anchor Church, 3126 Riggs Avenue, Erlanger, KY 41018; or e-mail to sjmorrison@insightbb.com.

SEEKING: Pastor. Beaver Dam Baptist Church in Beaver Dam, Ky., is actively seeking the pastor whom God has chosen to lead us into the future. We are a multi-generational congregation with a strong foundation of more than 200 years of ministry. The church is located in a small, western Kentucky town. Drawing people from several communities, we have an average attendance of 350 to 450 in Sunday morning service. Beaver Dam Baptist Church has a tradition of outstanding music, a strong youth program and a thriving Christian education program. Our church upholds the priesthood of the believer and has reaffirmed our acceptance of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message. Please send resumé to: BDBC Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 341, Beaver Dam, KY 42320.

WANTED: Church van for new church plant in small, eastern Kentucky town. Call pastor at (606) 793-1179.

Humble superstar

Spotlight gives slugger Pujols opportunity to shine for Christ

By Brad Locke
Baptist Press

St. Louis (BP)—Bart Millard, lead singer for Mercy Me, was performing at the St. Louis Cardinals' Christian Family Day on June 23 when he noticed someone watching him closely.

It was Albert Pujols, the star slugger and 2005 National League MVP, tapping his foot and singing along.

"I had to shut my eyes. I was looking at him going, 'Oh gosh, don't forget the words,'" Millard said after the event at Busch Stadium. "I'm pretty star-struck around baseball players."

It's hard to blame him, especially when it's Pujols watching. Through July 19, the 27-year-old first baseman is hitting .331 with 270 home runs over the first six-plus seasons of his already brilliant career and has become a Gold Glove-caliber fielder.

Millard said he considers Pujols "one of the greatest ever," and he's hardly alone in that opinion.

But Millard didn't really need to be nervous. Pujols has been called Prince Albert, Phat Albert and the Great Pujols, but unlike most people, Jose Alberto Pujols doesn't buy into all the hype.

"Just because I've got God in my heart and I'm a great baseball player, that doesn't mean that I'm perfect," Pujols said. "I'm a human just like everybody else here, and I make mistakes. Only God was perfect. He's obviously using me by giving me this platform so I can honor Him and get to know more people and just share the gospel with those who need."

Pujols shared those words after the Christian Family Day event, and after posing for several photographs and signing dozens of autographs. The Cardinals beat Philadelphia earlier in the day, with Pujols going 1-for-2 and scoring two runs.

It had been a long, hot day for Pujols. Yet he found the time to grant a seven-minute interview to a reporter from Tupelo, Miss. Once shy with the media because of the language barrier, the Dominican was downright loquacious.

At interview's end, he shook the reporter's hand and held on for a

moment to ask a couple of questions of his own.

Evangelist Tony Nolan, who was the keynote speaker on this day, has gotten to know Pujols.

"One of the things I'm learning about Albert is that he is off the field what he is on the field. That's huge," Nolan said. "When he gives God the glory, that's large, man."

Pujols has never had a problem showing his gratitude to God. He points to the sky at the end of every home run trot, and he's been very generous with his time and money for Christian causes.

Sharing his faith

Speaking about his faith, though, has been another story. Even though he's been in America a long time—he went to high school in Independence, Mo.—it took him years to feel comfortable addressing crowds.

"He can play in front of 40 million people, but speaking in front of all of them, he really gets nervous," said his wife, Deidre.

Albert and Deidre have been involved in the last seven Christian Family Days in St. Louis. In the past, Pujols would simply come out and wave to the crowd.

This year, he spoke for a few minutes, sharing his testimony.

"I came to a point about five years ago," Pujols said. "I'm like, you know what, it's not about Albert Pujols, it's not about being scared, it's about honoring and serving God. I'm going to go out there and give my testimony and speak because that's what the people want to hear."

In 1998, Pujols was an 18-year-old senior in high school when he met Deidre. He'd lied his way into a salsa club, and told Deidre, who was old enough to be there, that he was 21.

"I didn't care," Deidre said. "We went out to dinner the first night, and we've been in love ever since."

This was no whirlwind romance, though. Deidre was a single mother at the time but had since come to know and love Christ. One of the first things she did was invite Albert to church. She said she didn't want the relationship to go any further until she knew Albert would put

God above everything else.

Two weeks later, Albert gave his life to Christ.

"I wanted to get a man who was going to be on my page," Deidre said. "I needed an encourager, not somebody that would take me back to my (old) lifestyle."

The couple married Jan. 1, 2000. They now have three children, the oldest of whom, Isabella, has Down Syndrome. Albert and Deidre established the Pujols Family Foundation in 2005, which "is dedicated to the love, care and development of people with Down Syndrome and their families," according to the foundation's Web site. The foundation also helps impoverished families in the Dominican Republic.

Highs and lows

On the field, Pujols and his Cardinal teammates won the 2006 World Series with an unlikely run through the playoffs. Pujols was a big part of the championship, hitting .331 with 49 home runs and 137 RBIs in 2006.

Six months later, Pujols and his teammates found themselves in the deepest of valleys. Already struggling on the field, the Cards suffered a heart-rending loss when relief pitcher Josh Hancock was killed in a car accident on April 29.

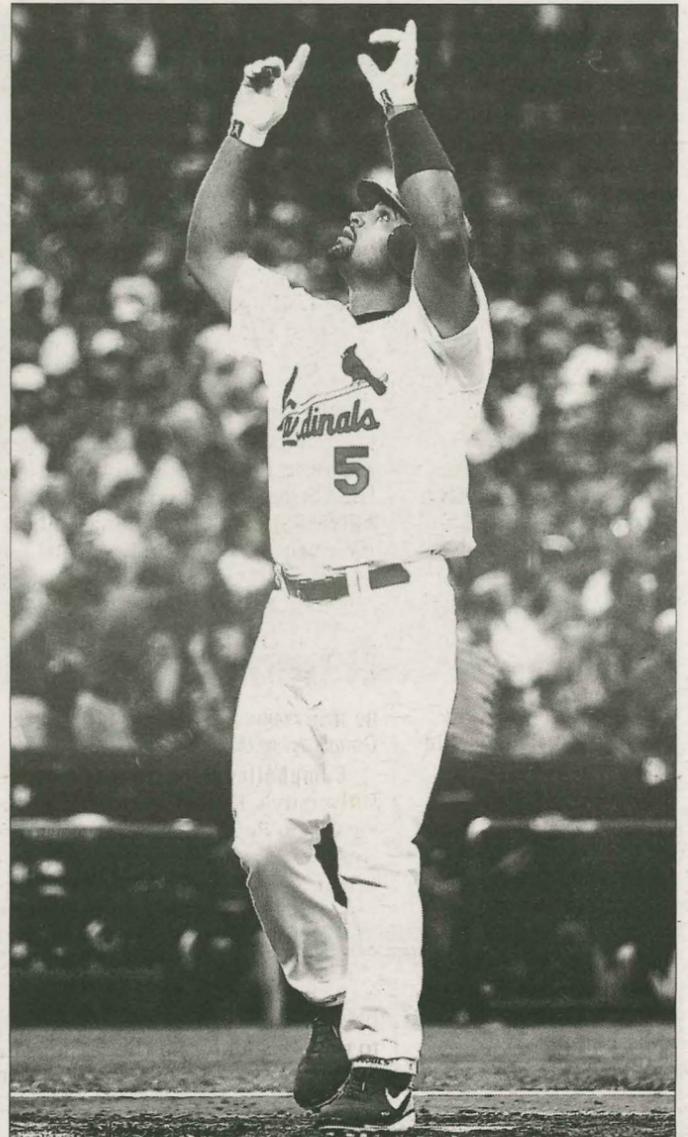
It reminded Pujols of the preciousness of life.

"It's one of the things you look at and say, 'Hey, God's the only one that offers us eternal life.' We want to make sure that we do have eternal life, so we can see each other in heaven," Pujols said.

As one can imagine, being a superstar athlete brings with it myriad temptations, such as being angry at God for what happened to Hancock. Pujols' spiritual equilibrium stays in kilter thanks to his wife, but also his family on the road—his teammates.

Several Cardinals, including pitchers Braden Looper, Adam Wainwright and outfielder So Taguchi are professing Christians. The group holds a Bible study every Tuesday.

"You know God's got your back, but you also have to have people that pray for you," Pujols remarked. "And I have so many people, and my



teammates, that pray for me. It's just a beautiful relationship, not just as a professional player, but spiritually."

The kind of support he gets from his teammates is one reason Pujols has been bolder in proclaiming his faith. He's come to learn that with so many people behind him, and of course with God behind him, there's no reason for him not to stand up in front of thousands of people and remind them that while others might treat him like a god, his purpose is to serve the true God.

"Every time I reach base or step on the plate," he said, "I remind myself it's not about Albert Pujols, it's about Jesus Christ."

GIVING THANKS Albert Pujols of the St. Louis Cardinals points to the sky as he crosses home plate after hitting a home run against the Los Angeles Angels at Busch Stadium June 8. (Photo by Dilip Vishwanat/Getty Images)

Former coach uses his love of baseball to spread the love of Christ

By Scot Beard
Athens (Ala.) News Courier

Athens, Ala. (BP)—Though he no longer coaches the Elkmont High School baseball team, Matt Stockman is still keeping busy on the diamond.

The former coach has found a new calling in the sport he loves. Stockman started Baseball for Christ, a program that allows him to teach youth not only how to strengthen their baseball skills, but to help strengthen them spiritually as well.

"It was a vision God gave me," he said.

Stockman played college baseball at Central Alabama Community College in the mid 1990s before transferring to Montevallo where he was the team MVP in 1998. He played professionally in the Northern League for one season, won a bronze medal in the 1999 Pan-American Games with Team Canada, played with the



JESUS & BASEBALL Matt Stockman addresses young players during one of his Baseball for Christ sessions. The former coach started the program to teach young kids about Jesus along with honing their baseball skills. (BP photo)

Great Britain National Team from 2001-2005 and was head coach at Elkmont from 2002-2006.

Beginning in 1999 he began to explore his spiritual side and was baptized in

2001. Three years later, Stockman was ordained as a deacon at Lindsay Lane Baptist Church and in 2005 he became an assistant student pastor at the church.

As his two passions became intertwined, Stockman realized he could use baseball as a gateway for passing along his knowledge of Christ.

"I decided I could go out and give a baseball lesson followed by a devotional," Stockman said. "I began with just a few players, but now I'm up to about 15-20 players who come to my sessions."

The sessions have been small, with just a few players at a time. Stockman is hoping to build the number of players he works with, and wants to offer his lessons to any child who is interested.

Recently, Stockman got a small taste of that dream as he hosted the first Baseball for Christ Camp, a sleepover camp for boys

between the ages of 9 and 12.

Baseball instruction included swing and pitching analysis, and drills on fielding, bunting and base running. There were also optional breakout sessions for special pitching and catching instruction.

In addition to baseball, campers were divided into smaller groups to compete in other activities such as touch football, fishing and basketball.

The spiritual guidance included daily quiet times with the Lord and lessons on the meaning of prayer and what a relationship with Christ is all about.

"We are looking to challenge the campers both physically and spiritually," Stockman said.

The camp was originally designed for 27 campers, but demand was so high Stockman found another coach to help and had 35 campers participate.

Rewarding your Christian Leadership

christian leadership scholarship program

Since 1980, approximately 2,000 young people have been recognized with scholarship awards for their outstanding Christian leadership in church, school and community through the Georgetown College Christian Leadership Program, the oldest program of its kind in Kentucky.

Offered in partnership with The Meetinghouse at Georgetown College, the Christian Leadership Program provides recipients a four year program featuring retreats, dinners, travel and a sophomore seminar on vocation, allowing students to focus on their chosen calling while vastly expanding their horizons.



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More information about this financial aid opportunity and an application may be obtained online at <http://www.georgetowncollege.edu/Admissions/cls.htm>, or by contacting Johnnie Johnson, director of admissions, at (800) 788 9985 or admissions@georgetowncollege.edu.