



WESTERN RECORDER

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FOR THE RECORD

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Making an impact on the bluegrass

High impact church plants work to reach unchurched in Kentucky

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—Baptist churches are plentiful in Kentucky, dotting the bluegrass from Pikeville to Paducah. It's the old truism: There's a Baptist church on every corner.

But is every one of the thousands of Baptist churches in the state full on Sunday mornings? Is each church thriving, growing and reaching non-Christians for Christ?

The answer to those questions came back a resounding "no" in 2003, when a Mission Study Committee, appointed by the Kentucky Baptist Convention, discovered that a small percentage of the state's population was involved in church. And according to the committee's report, more than 400 KBC churches did not baptize a single new believer in 2002.

Out of those alarming conclusions was born the Kentucky Baptists Connect initiative. Within that five-year ministry strategy was the emphasis on planting more churches throughout the state.

But with so many churches already, why start more?

"Those churches may be there, but they're just going to continue to reach their own," said Larry Baker, director of the KBC's new work and associational ministries department. "Church planting is something that needs to be done."

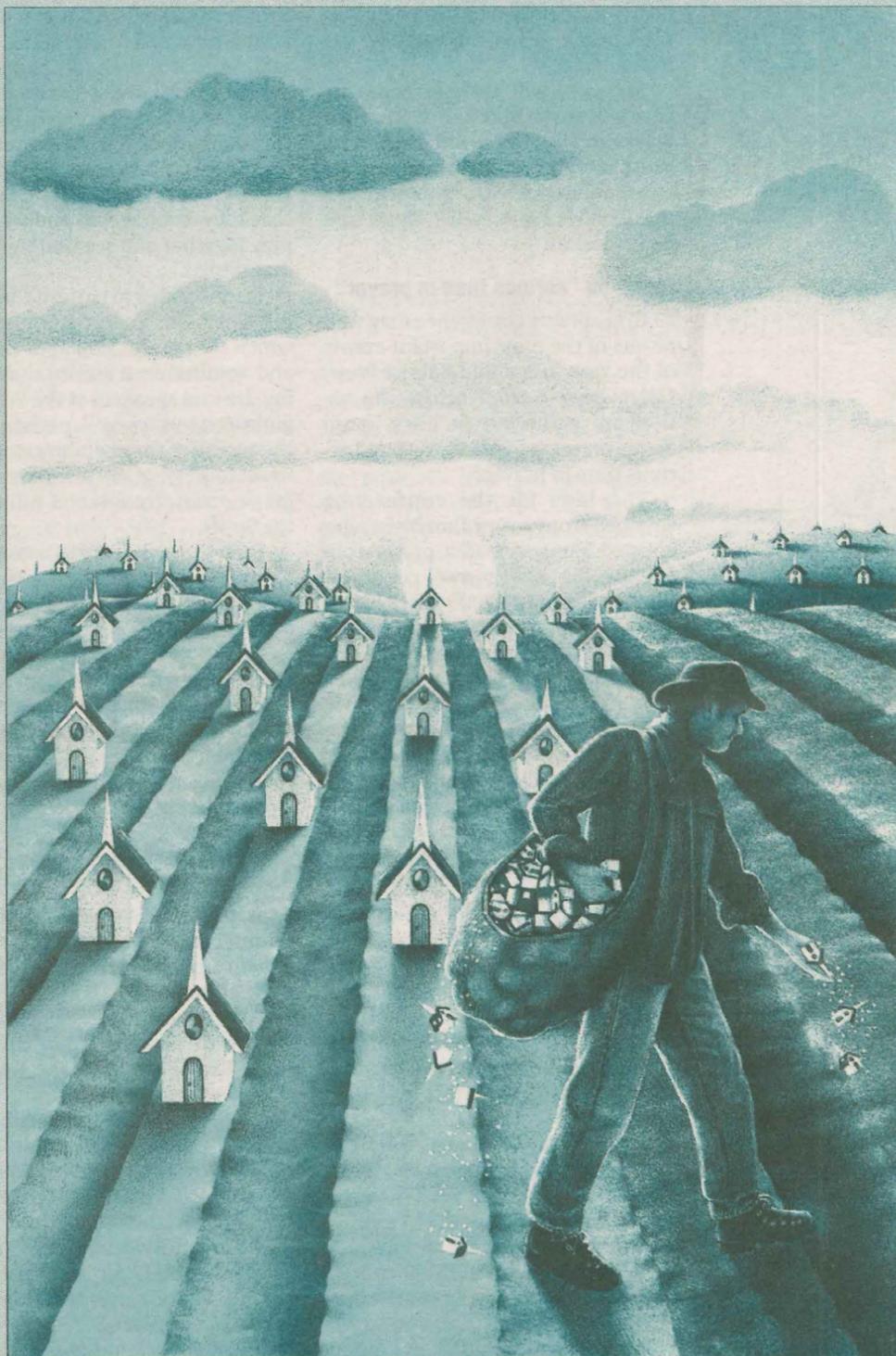
As Roy Fish, former interim president of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board wrote in Richard Harris' book, "Reaching a Nation Through Church Planting," "There is no better way for us to enrich Christ's reputation on earth than by planting new healthy churches that multiply disciples and purpose to start other reproducing churches."

Church planting is nothing new for Baptists in Kentucky, but as Baker pointed out, since the 1950s, it has become a lost art.

"Before that, that's what Southern Baptists did, they planted churches," he noted.

Baker added that until the 1990s, Baptists forgot about planting churches and assumed that all churches were growing. He pointed out that the reality is only 12 to 14 percent of Kentuckians attend church on Sundays, according to the mission study committee's report.

Out of the necessity to start churches in areas that need them most, the High Impact Churches was created. *See KBC high impact churches reach out ... Page 3*



Alabama minister hits trails to help fund Kentucky church building

By Grace Thornton
Alabama Baptist

Pelham, Ala. (BP)—The sun is waning when Donnie Sisk makes it to a campsite deep in the Shoal Creek Ranger District of the Talladega National Forest. Sisk's water supply is waning too, so much that his backpack has shed a third of its weight.

He sheds a place to sit down, and at the same time, a young boy spots him, eyes wide.

Sisk, pastor to students and recreation at First Baptist Church of Pelham, Ala., starts to tell the boy about the big picture, the real reason he's hiking the Pinhoti Trail.

Living Waters Fellowship in Oak Grove, Ky., needs a new church

building, so Sisk hiked 100 miles earlier this summer to raise money for building supplies.

"This isn't about me, or my church, or even Oak Grove," Sisk said. "This is about the Kingdom work that can keep growing there if they can build a building."

The median age in Oak Grove is 32, as the majority of the residents are stationed at the nearby Fort Campbell, Ky., military base, Sisk explained.

"There are only about 10,000 people in Oak Grove, but since they are military and will scatter from there to places all over, if the church there can touch those folks, they can touch the world," he said.

Two years ago, Sisk and a team from First Baptist Church of Pelham went to help the 35-member Living Waters Fellowship build, but when they arrived, the church wasn't ready and had no funds for building materials, Sisk recalled.

The answer to prayer for materials for the Oak Grove church was a five-day hike across Alabama's two highest mountains, according to Pelham Pastor Mike Shaw.

"Donnie is praying for missions while he walks and ... doing this for the glory of God, putting feet to his prayers," Shaw said.

And if Sisk needs reminders that it's his prayers that are doing the job, then his feet remind him, he

said.

"To be honest, this is way more than I can do. It's going to have to be a God thing," Sisk said. "The way my feet feel right now, there's no way I could accomplish this on my own."

Sisk, an avid outdoorsman, had previously done a 100-mile bike ride for missions work in Honduras, but he had only hiked "one 20-mile day in my life." By the halfway point of the hike, the \$10,000 goal for materials had nearly been met.

"As I've walked and prayed and sang, I've thought of all the people who came together to make this happen," he said. "It's incredible to think of what people have given and how they have prayed."

Page calls Baptists to prayer gathering

By Erin Roach
Baptist Press

Martinsburg, W. Va. (BP)—The dream of a West Virginia pastor has spawned a nine-day prayer gathering with the theme "Broken Before the Throne," and Southern Baptist Convention President Frank Page is urging people nationwide to attend.

The West Virginia Prayer Conference is a joint venture among several state conventions and the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, to be hosted by Westview Baptist Church in Martinsburg, W. Va., Nov. 3-11.

Speakers will include Page, authors Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby and T.W. Hunt, and evangelist Sammy Tippit. A two-day women's conference Nov. 9-10 will feature Bobby Rankin, Tex Tippit and Elaine Helms.

Focus on "serious time in prayer"

"This prayer conference may well be one of the most important events of the year," Page told Baptist Press. "Many people from across the nation are gathering to learn more about prayer, as well as to spend serious time in prayer."

The idea for the conference emerged from pastor Dan Biser, who enlisted Hunt to lead a prayer conference for Biser's two congregations in the fall of 2005. Biser is pastor of Zoar Baptist Church in Augusta and Fox's Hollow Baptist Church in Romney.

"During those three days, we saw a tremendous moving with the time of prayer that we had," Biser recounted. "Following up on that, I went to Heart Cry for Revival at Billy

Graham's The Cove, and I met with Dr. Henry Blackaby at that time and spoke with him about something on a larger scale for a longer duration of time. And that's the reason for the nine days of the prayer conference now."

Biser shared his idea with West Virginia Baptists and others, and they got on board.

"We sent out a letter to all the state executive directors and all the state prayer coordinators with the Scripture out of Joel 2 that says, 'It is a time for a call to assemble,'" Biser said. "And it is time for ... a main focus for revival and a spiritual awakening, and this is necessary through this long duration of prayer that people be committed as individuals as intercessors, and as churches, that they would come and we could pray together and see God's glory be manifested."

Biser decided to pattern the meeting after the Keswick Convention, which began in England in 1875 and resulted in a spiritual awakening. He said speakers at the West Virginia conference will pattern their themes after those embraced at Keswick: confession of sins, the remedy for sin, consecration and fullness of the Spirit.

Each day will feature a morning, afternoon and evening session in three-hour blocks, including a time of intercessory prayer, Biser said.

"Since assuming the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention, I have been calling for God's people to pray for spiritual awakening and renewal," Page said. "This prayer conference may well be the catalyst for such a spiritual awakening."

The conference is funded by Cooperative Program gifts and contributions from state conventions, SBC entities and individuals. No registration fee is required, but organizers request that those who plan to attend pre-register to help with logistical planning.

Page asked that those who cannot attend the conference to take time to pray for its effectiveness.

"Satan would wish for Baptists in particular and Christians in general to ignore this avenue of connection with God," Page noted. "Let us respond to his pressure by going to the Father. I pray that God would do a mighty work during this conference."

Topics include confession, culture

Biser said some of the topics during the conference will include confession of sins on behalf of the nation, the state of the family, and the seeming powerlessness of the local church to stem the tide of corruption in the culture.

Elaine Helms, manager of prayer and spiritual awakening at NAMB, said the conference theme, "Broken Before the Throne," appears to be the right answer for Southern Baptists today.

"We really need to come before the Lord in brokenness and humility," she said. "To focus on that theme for a whole week with these dynamic speakers, I am so encouraged and excited with anticipation for what God might do when His people humble themselves before Him."

To register or for more information, visit www.prayerconference2007.com.

Garland to lead LifeWay's church consulting efforts

Crestwood—Dan Garland, pastor of Crestwood Baptist Church in Oldham County, has been named director of pastoral ministry and church consulting for LifeWay Christian Resources effective Aug. 16.



Dan Garland

Garland, who was called one year ago as pastor of Crestwood, previously served more than seven years as leader of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's church development and evangelism team.

In his new role with LifeWay, Garland's responsibilities will include developing strategies for ministry areas such as small churches; church conflict mediation; church starts; church leadership training and development; and church consulting. He also will serve as a primary national training leader for pastoral ministry, collaborating with other LifeWay leaders.

Garland "brings with him rich experience as a pastor and as a denominational leader who has worked with pastors, ministers of education and other church leaders," noted former Kentucky Baptist pastor Ralph Hodge, director of church relations and consulting at LifeWay. "He will lead our effort to be trusted advisors, teachers and partners to learn from and serve church leadership in America."

Garland, who has more than 20 years of pastoral experience, served 17 years as pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Henderson. He also is a former pastor of churches in Ohio and served as Crestwood's interim pastor in 1999-2000.

In a letter to Crestwood members, Garland wrote, "This is a bittersweet time ... as we feel the time has come to close our chapter of service at CBC to pursue an opportunity that literally has pursued us."

Citing "a clear call to this new and exciting opportunity," Garland added, "We know that God is in control of every season, so we gain confidence about our future because we believe in His sovereignty."

Emphasizing that "I have a real heart for pastors," Garland said his primary role at LifeWay will be to help pastors become more effective in ministry.

"I bring a practitioner's approach to LifeWay," he noted. "In that, I understand the need for relevant services and training that will lift up the pastor."

Garland is a graduate of the University of Kentucky and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Charlene, have one adult daughter, Christy Hale.

Baptist leaders launch Vision San Diego initiative

By Meredith Day
Baptist Press

San Diego (BP)—San Diego is known by locals as "America's Finest City." Beautiful beaches dot the city's coastline, desert flowers bloom in inland areas, and, of course, there's the nearly perfect weather.

It's a center of industry and research, a home base for thousands of residents who serve in the United States military, a temporary home to 250,000 college students, and a thriving tourist destination.

But more importantly, as California's second-largest city, Greater San Diego is filled with more than 3 million people, more than half of whom claim no religious affiliation. Only 6 percent of the population claims to be evangelical Christians.

Local and national Southern Baptists hope to bring the light of Christ to the city through "Vision San Diego," a part of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board's Strategic Focus Cities initiative.

Vision San Diego is a partnership among local Southern Baptist churches, the San Diego Southern Baptist Association, the California Southern Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board, as well as other Southern Baptist entities. The initiative places its emphasis on starting new churches, strengthening existing congrega-

tions, and mobilizing thousands of volunteers from around the nation to help strengthen the ministries of those churches.

"We're here to help our pastors. They're the ones God has called to reach San Diego with the Gospel," said Mike Carlisle, Vision San Diego's executive director. "We want to respect their uniqueness and their differences, but at the same time bring individuals and groups together based on our common ground. We're better together than we are by ourselves."

When Carlisle describes his role with Vision San Diego, it's evident that he's made a quick transition to his new home. After nine years at NAMB where he served in a variety of leadership positions, Carlisle is returning to Southern California, the place where he began his ministry more than 30 years ago.

"I believe that when God calls us to ministry, He puts in our hearts a passion for certain locations, cultures and people," he said.

John Welch, associate executive director for Vision San Diego, shares Carlisle's dedication to ministry in the region. A lifelong Californian, Welch has served on several church staffs in different parts of the state and, most recently, with NAMB's church finance ministry.

"As someone who's been involved in ministry in California for so long,

it's exciting and challenging for me to be able to assist our pastors in furthering the ministries of their churches," Welch said.

Earlier this year, the Vision San Diego team hosted an open house for pastors, lay leaders and staff from the association and state convention. The event gave pastors an opportunity to learn more about Strategic Focus Cities San Diego and provided a forum for people who want to join hands in reaching the city for Christ.

Dwight Simpson, who serves as director of missions for the San Diego Southern Baptist Association, said he hopes the legacy of Vision San Diego will be just that: Churches increasingly able to effectively reach out to their communities with the gospel. Because many San Diego churches are small and led by bivocational pastors, Simpson said they often face challenges that can seem overwhelming. His hope for Strategic Focus Cities in San Diego is one of partnership and cooperation with the goal of increasing God's Kingdom.

"God has a big family, and He's going to bring some of that family to help us here in San Diego," Simpson said. "Our prayer is that it will result in the salvation of many souls, and that those people will be brought into the life of the church."

For more information about Vision San Diego, call (877) 817-4777 or visit www.visionsandiego.com.

"We really need to come before the Lord in brokenness and humility."

Elaine Helms, NAMB manager of prayer and spiritual awakening

"God has a big family, and He's going to bring some of that family to help us here in San Diego."

Dwight Simpson, director of missions for the San Diego Southern Baptist Association



KBC high impact churches reach out to state's unchurched

Continued from page 1

launched. The ultimate objective of each of the new churches is to seek the unchurched in a specific area, eventually start other churches, and reach an average attendance of 250 people in five years.

"The purpose is to help us be intentional and strategic in starting churches," explained KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey.

Currently, the 11 churches are:

- Master's Church, Lexington.
- The Journey, Murray.
- The Crossing, Louisville.
- thechurch@cedarcreek, Stanford.
- Cardinal Valley Iglesia, Lexington.
- Journey, Union.
- Mountain Community Fellowship, Paintsville.
- Lifesong Church, Ashland.
- The Baptist Worship Center, Mount Sterling.
- The Way, Crittenden.
- CrossPoint, Morehead.

The goal is to see 25 of these churches planted throughout the state by 2010, an average of five per year. Baker said it will be difficult to meet the goal of 15 by the end of this year, even though several potential church plants are on the drawing board.

"The potential for reaching our goal is there, but it may not happen this year," Baker said.

What's the difference?

Since January 2005, 117 churches have been planted in Kentucky, so what sets the high impact churches apart from the others? It all starts with the individual interested in planting the church.

"The expectations for the church planter of a high impact church are higher than what we would necessarily require for the other church plants," Baker said.

According to the KBC's High Impact guidelines, the prospective planter must demonstrate the ability to grow a ministry, develop resources and have a master's degree in theology or equivalent training and experience. Another requirement for a planter is a four-hour assessment given to all planters and their spouses.

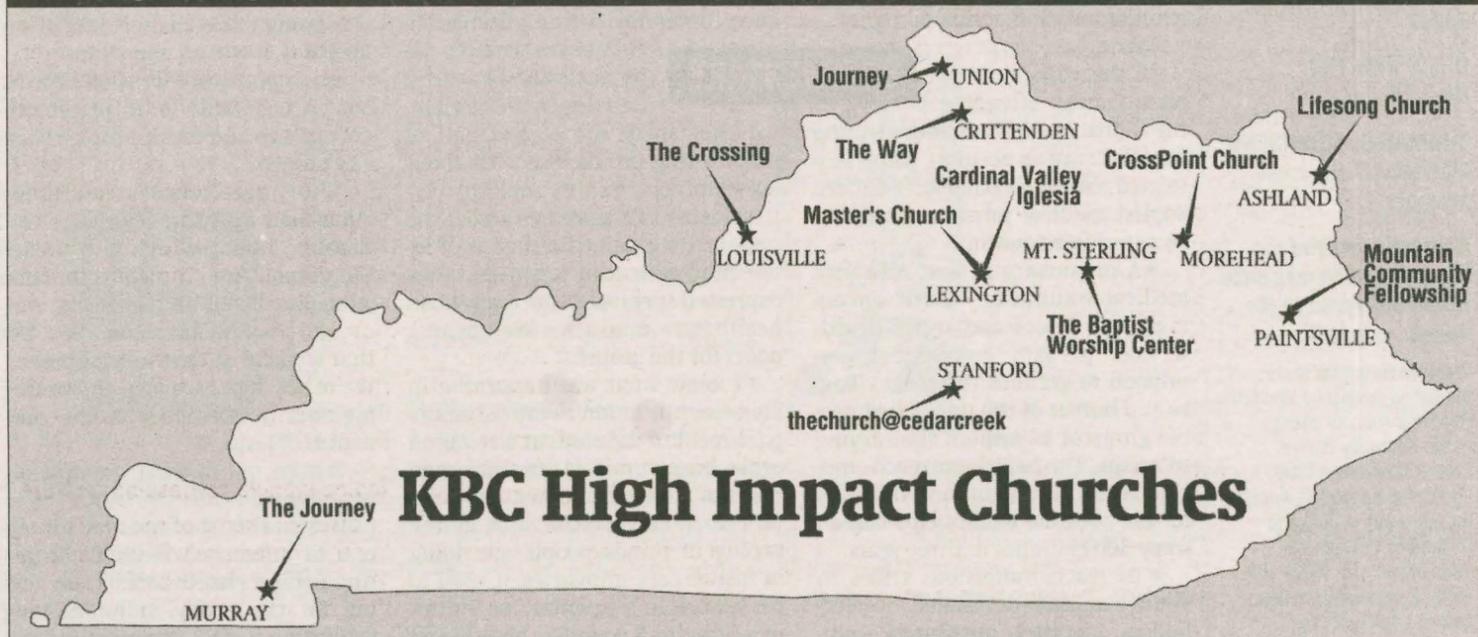
"This helps us weed out those that have some romantic idea about church planting and really don't have the skills or the aptitude to do it," Baker said. "It has been very effective and we have a very high rate of success in all of our church plants because we use this assessment."

"Church planting is not easy," Mackey added. "It is a tough job and it takes an unusual persistence and special gifts for a person to be able to do it successfully."

If the potential planter successfully completes the initial assessment and a required basic training course, the next step is to find a sponsoring church or association. According to Baker, the responsibility of the church sponsor is to provide the planter with mentoring and commit to funding over a three-year period.

Baker pointed out that early on in the high impact process, planters with a vision sought partnering churches, but since word of the ini-

Making an impact for God's Kingdom



tiative has spread, he said churches and associations have contacted him seeking to get involved.

"Now we have about three strong KBC churches that want to be partnered," Baker noted.

In addition to the churches, Baker said groups in Christian County in southwestern Kentucky are looking for two high impact church planters. They want to reach the military personnel in the area around Fort Campbell, as well as the African-American community in Hopkinsville.

Once the planter and the sponsor are in place, a prospectus is drawn up and presented to the High Impact Church Advisory Team, or HICAT, as Baker likes to call it. The team consists of several KBC staff members, pastors and laypeople from across the state, all of whom "understand church planting," Baker said.

At these meetings, the planter and sponsoring entities share their vision and prospectus for the church. But it is not your typical boring board meeting, according to Baker.

"It's like a revival service," he declared. "You almost come out of there shouting because it's so exciting to see the way God has moved when you hear the testimony and the vision."

"The attendance of this committee is probably the best of any committee that I work with," Mackey pointed out.

After the committee has met with the church plant candidate, the team makes its final recommendation. It must then be approved by Mackey, the chairman of the KBC business and finance committee, Jerry Tooley; and the chairman of the Kentucky Baptists Connect initiative, Charles Barnes.

Upon approval, the high impact church hits the ground running, but not without continued help from the convention. The KBC provides each church with \$100,000 over a three-year period, but no more than \$60,000 in one year. Baker said that most churches opt to take the maximum amount the first year to help get the church off the ground.

The High Impact allocation "has really made all the difference for us," said Dustin Neeley, who is pas-

tor of The Crossing in Louisville.

But as Baker pointed out, despite the financial support, the KBC is not looking over the planter's shoulder.

"We trust the partnering church to be their supervisor," Baker said. "We expect that local sponsoring church to give that planter as much freedom as possible. ... He's the one with the vision. We don't want the partnering church to steal the vision."

Even with that freedom, high impact churches are expected to contribute to the Cooperative Program and support their local associations.

Highs and lows

With the High Impact program in its third year, Baker said he considers it a huge success. But it has come with its share of criticism.

"Some churches in the areas where these new churches are planted don't really see the need for another church," Baker said.

Keith Menshouse, who is pastor of Lifesong Church in Ashland, said his church has been a somewhat unwelcome addition to some members of the surrounding Baptist church community.

"We've not been really well received in circles that I expected to be; we've been seen as competitive," Menshouse said.

Another criticism of the high impact churches is the names that the planters have chosen. Of the 11 churches started thus far, only one includes the word "Baptist"—The Baptist Worship Center in Mount Sterling.

"There are some that get real upset with that," Baker acknowledged.

But Menshouse defended his church's decision not to include the word "Baptist" in its name.

"To put that in our name would be an unnecessary stumbling block in somebody's way," Menshouse noted. "Let's get here first of all, see what God does in your life, then we'll work out the details of who we are and how we do things."

Neeley agreed.

"Younger generations in every study that I've seen, the loyalty that our parents' generation had to any denomination is not there," he said. "People are not committed to the

home team like they once were so it doesn't necessarily help attract anyone in that regard."

Despite the negatives, Baker said the positives have far outweighed any concern about the High Impact program. And he said he frequently receives positive reports about the work being done in the churches.

The first high impact church was Master's Church in Lexington, which launched in October 2004. It recently reached a level of giving to the Cooperative Program that surpassed the \$100,000 investment made by the KBC.

In less than two years, The Crossing has sent out several of its members to start other churches, one in New Orleans and another in Cleveland. Plans are in the works for a third church plant next year "probably out west somewhere," according to Neeley.

Baker said he is excited about the work that The Journey in Murray and CrossPoint in Morehead are doing by reaching unchurched students at Murray State and Morehead State. In Lexington, Cardinal Valley Iglesia has been successful in taking the gospel to the local Hispanic community.

The future is bright for the High Impact Church program, Baker notes, adding that now that the word is getting out about these church plants, the need has shifted to finding more church planters.

"As people hear about (High Impact), they're starting to get in touch with us. Now our problem is finding the church planters," Baker said.

Baker has been pounding the pavement seeking to identify individuals with a heart for planting. In June, he did some recruiting at a church planting conference at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., and will be leading sessions in church planting classes at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary this fall.

Baker said he believes the High Impact Church initiative is crucial to reaching the unchurched in Kentucky, but pointed out that all church plants are important.

"High Impact has become a trademark for this particular group of churches," Baker said, "but it really is a definition of every church plant."



Beginning next week, the Western Recorder will publish a series highlighting the 11 high impact churches across the state.

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TRENNIS HENDERSON
Editor

DREW NICHTER
News Director

THOMAS C. TOWNSEND
Marketing & Business
Manager

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

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A new day for medical missions

By **Erich Bridges**

Richmond, Va. (BP)—Southern Baptists got out of the medical missions business overseas when they stopped running mission hospitals, right?

Wrong. If the reports from missionaries attending the Global Medical Alliance meeting July 16-22 are an accurate gauge (see related article on page 8), Southern Baptist medical mission work may be entering a new era:

■ A missionary in East Asia uses medical volunteers, health screenings, eye clinics and other health services to gain government permission to get into the rural villages and homes of the unreached people group of 17 million she's trying to access. The health outreach, coupled with training of local believers to take over the work, helps launch some 500 churches in three years.

■ To reach indigenous tribes in South America devastated by alcoholism, another missionary combines Bible storying with simple methods designed to help alcoholics stop drinking.

■ A missionary doctor takes a team into one of the most hostile and conflict-torn areas of Northern Africa, holds medical clinics, prays and successfully treats many sick people—including a boy nearly dead from a lethal disease. The team's compassion wins hearts and minds, enabling the doctor to share the gospel with influential community leaders. "We were like rock stars," said the doctor. "Whenever we walked through town, people would say, 'You are the ones who care for Africans and healed that boy. You have told us the most important thing we could ever hear.'"

■ A missionary physician in South Asia who continues to consult with a Baptist hospital uses new "training for trainers" methods to help hospital evangelists and other Baptist workers multiply church starts in a region that is home to 57 million people. Their vision: a church within

walking distance of every person in the region's 37,000 villages.

More than 90 medical missionaries attended the Global Medical Alliance conference at the International Mission Board's International Learning Center in Rockville, Va. They spent the second half of the meeting interacting with about 200 Southern Baptist medical professionals from churches across the nation. They spent the first half interacting with each other—and they expressed surprise at the many ways health care ministries are opening doors for the gospel.

"I knew what was happening in my area, but I didn't realize the impact medical missions is having on other areas," said a physician and medical strategist based in Asia. "We've all been blown away by the variety of things people are doing in health care ministries. It used to be, 'I work in a hospital,' or 'I work in a clinic' or 'I do public health' and that was it."

What unites most of the varied ministries is a commitment to work that leads to church multiplication, often among unreached people groups who cannot be accessed by other means.

"Our purpose is church planting," stressed the medical strategist. "The old debate was institution versus non-institution or clinic work versus public health. The emphasis now is: Do you have a strategy that is moving toward church-planting movements?"

Many medical missionaries felt marginalized by changes in International Mission Board strategic priorities over the last decade or two. Those years have brought the turnover of mission hospitals to national Baptists or other local entities—and a far more intensive focus among all IMB missionaries on evangelizing unreached peoples through church-planting strategies.

"A lot of medical missionaries thought the escalator had stopped,"

COMMENTARY

Family vacations create cherished memories

Vacations are wonderful times for families and friends to have fun, make memories and strengthen relationships.

Our family has had a tradition of vacationing each summer at North Myrtle Beach in South Carolina ever since our daughters were young. We've often been blessed to have friends of the family join us from year to year.

A special delight this year was enjoying the ocean waves with the grandchildren and watching them ride the waves for the first time. They have always enjoyed playing in the sand.

Some of the grandchildren are now old enough to enjoy the challenge of the more daring rides at family fun parks. The water log ride was probably their favorite this year.

Family vacations and other special gatherings allow us to create memories with our children and grandchildren. Even though my family did not have resources for vacations while I was growing up,

we had many occasions to attend family dinners and visit with relatives. These occasions gave us the

opportunity to build rich memories. During many of these gatherings, we enjoyed conversation about our involvement in local churches.

Vacations also strengthen relationships because they provide a more relaxed atmosphere for us to spend time with one another. When we are away from tasks and responsibilities, it is easier to focus on feelings and the value of relationships.

Our grandchildren were talking about coming back next year. I am trying to imagine what it will be like as the grandchildren get older.

When our children were young, I made the mistake of being too focused on my work. Though my work was in the church, it came at the expense of relationships.

I regret that the distraction included my relationship to God as well as family. If I could start over, I would spend more meaningful time

reflected a missionary dentist based in South America. "Instead of seeing this as being freed from some of the institutions we had been tied to, we kind of gave up at first. It scared me in a lot of ways, because I knew there was going to be change. But in the long run, it was an opportunity."

An opportunity for what? For using critical skills to go places others can't go and touch people others can't touch.

"Every time Jesus sent out His disciples and apostles, He always told them to heal the sick and preach the gospel," said a medical mission strategist based in Northern Africa and the Middle East. "It's not that we heal so that we can preach. We're not 'bait.' We heal and preach together in obedience to the commands of Jesus."

It plays out in what the missionary physician calls the "ABCs" of effective health strategies: A for Access to unreached areas. B for Getting Behind closed doors. C for Caring for the needy. D for making Disciples. E for Empowering the church to multiply and reach other unreached areas.

Another medical strategist believes workers are in a "unique time" in medical missions history, when health care mission workers have opportunities to go to the "least-reached and the least-accessible" in places ravaged by war, AIDS, natural disasters, poverty and isolation. If they mobilize more of the thousands of Christian medical professionals in the U.S. to go with them, they can multiply their impact.

Missionary physician Rebekah Naylor, a veteran of 35 years of medical work in India, thinks Southern Baptist medical missions is emerging from its recent identity crisis.

"I think we're moving beyond it," she said. "Those of us who've been through all this are extremely encouraged. Things don't happen overnight, but I really believe we are going to move into a new era in health-care missions."

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

with God and with family.

Recently, I heard Bob Morrison, Little Bethel Association's director of missions in Madisonville, speak on Genesis 3. Bob was the keynote speaker for the Mountain Missions Conference at Oneida Baptist Institute. He focused on how God provides a gracious plan of redemption beyond the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin. Bob pointed out how passionately God wanted to have fellowship with man and woman.

The theme of the conference was "Back to Basics," and Bob was addressing the basics of relationships with God and with one another, as we see in the early chapters of Genesis.

Please join me in asking God to help us value our relationships with Him, family and one another. God will bless us to assist others in discovering and developing a personal relationship to Him through Jesus Christ.

Please pray that we will be renewed daily in our relationships to God and to people so that all people might be connected to God through Jesus Christ.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

FAMILY

Rethinking options for retirement can bring 'reirement'

By **Jeremy White**

The word "retirement" conjures up all sorts of pictures—including many images put in our minds by commercials. We've all seen the advertisements of a tanned,

gray-haired couple walking the beach arm in arm, laughing. The travel industry, the financial services industry and homebuilders in the Sunbelt states all dangle the retirement utopia to encourage sales of their products.

This pressure to have enough money to begin and sustain retirement lifestyles results in stress, worry and an earthly focus rather than a Kingdom focus. Medical studies have shown that it is healthy to continue work of some type, particularly for men.

Retirement might not be as great as you imagined it to be in your 30s. Lady Astor, the first woman to serve as a member of the British House of Commons, said, "I used to dread getting older, because I thought I would not be able to do all the things I wanted to do, but now that I am older, I find that I don't want to do them."

According to one dictionary's definition, retirement means "withdrawal from one's position or occupation, or from active working life." I don't believe that the Bible calls for "withdrawal." I like Ron Blue's recharacterization of "reirement." You might stop working in one position in order to change jobs, change occupations or begin volunteering. That's reirement.

Therefore, you might retire from a particular occupation or vocation, but it would not be for the purpose of living a life of ease for the rest of your days. God will call you to another activity, ministry or vocation.

I'm not suggesting continuing in a difficult workplace of drudgery or ignoring sweetened early retirement incentives. Go ahead and retire from that job of 25 years, travel a bit, enjoy some golf, slow down, spend time with the grandchildren. Then, take on a new career, volunteer for missions, serve on charitable boards, turn your hobby into a part-time business, help your children in their business, do more at your church.

Leisure is not of a higher value than work. Our perspective should be that, in light of eternity, we have so little time and so much to do.

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant with Blythe, White & Associates in Paducah



Key signs can indicate when child is ready to trust Christ

Q: How can I know if my child is ready to make a decision to follow Christ?

For 17 years, Art Murphy served as minister to children at First Baptist Church of Orlando. During that time, he personally baptized more than 1,000 children. In talking with these children about their faith, Murphy looked for several signs to help him determine if a child was ready to accept Christ. These are outlined in his excellent book, "The Faith of a Child."

PARENTING

Does salvation make sense? Beyond giving right answers to questions about God and Jesus, can the child explain in his or her own words what it means to be a Christian? Do they understand the difference between salvation and baptism? Murphy emphasizes that we should not allow children to enter the Christian life ignorantly. At the same time, we should not make the mistake of waiting until understanding is complete before taking a child seriously.

Does the child exhibit brokenness over sin? Before they can become Christ followers, children need to understand and admit that they are sinners. Regardless of age, children need to understand that they need forgiveness that can only be found in Christ. These are the twin ideas of conviction and accountability.

Is the child serious about this commitment? Children can sometimes be rather casual about the decision to follow Christ. Do not confuse a child's impatience to be baptized with the seriousness of accepting Christ.

Is the child's decision self-made? Is the child looking for attention? Is he or she simply following the crowd? Is the child trying to please a parent or other significant figure? Or do they demonstrate a genuine desire to follow Jesus?—*David Garrard*

Q: My wife and I are struggling financially. We both work and earn a good living. Yet we are in debt. Recently I discovered she has used credit cards and has built substantial debt. I am feeling desperate and really angry with her. What can I do to stop this?

Henry Cloud and John Townsend in their book "Boundaries in Marriage" discuss setting boundaries in a number of marital situations, including overspending. It is helpful to know if you or your wife is a boundary lover or boundary buster. If you love boundaries, you value setting limits and how this strengthens a relationship. Boundary busters do not value limits or even like them. Here is a checklist drawn from Cloud and Townsend's book to consider and perhaps discuss with your wife.

Checklist for Boundary Lovers:

- Open to feedback and correction from others.
- Does not become defensive about spouse's feedback.
- Takes ownership of one's own problems, choices, feelings, attitudes and behaviors.
- Allows spouse freedom to be different from himself or herself.
- Sees own need for growth and change.

Checklist for Boundary Busters:

- Lacks empathy or compassion and struggles to see the effect such views have on others.
- Low sense of ownership for actions; believes he or she should be able to do whatever he or she wants and suffer no consequences.
- Views confrontation or consequences as threats to personal freedom.
- Unable to see spouse as having separate and equal feelings and ideas.
- Refuses to admit weaknesses and faults.

Boundaries in marriage are essential for a healthy relationship. Boundaries help establish respect, trust and love.—*Valerie Vincent*

Family Forum writers are:

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

James Stillwell, minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington. E-mail: james@ibs-lex.org.

Valerie Vincent, Christian counselor with Hardy Associates in Louisville. E-mail: dr.vincent@insightbb.com.

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.



Kentuckians urged to pray 'With One Voice'

As the anniversary of Sept. 11 approaches next month, it's hard to imagine that six years have passed since that dark national tragedy.

While life generally has returned to normal for most Americans, the constant threat of terrorism continues to impact day-to-day life. And for thousands of families whose loved ones were killed or injured, their lives remain changed forever.

How will you observe next month's somber anniversary? Will you attend a public service of remembrance, pause for a brief moment of silent prayer or merely go about business as usual?

One significant option this year is to take part in the Kentucky Baptist Convention's "With One Voice" simultaneous prayer gatherings throughout the state. Co-sponsored by the state convention and Baptist associations across the state, the prayer gatherings will be held Sept. 11 at 6:30 p.m. Central time and 7:30 p.m. Eastern time in more than 60 locations.

The prayer emphasis builds on a pair of Kentucky Baptist prayer tours conducted the past two years: "Pray the Perimeter" and "Pray the Interior." This year's simultaneous prayer gatherings are based on Romans 15:5-6, "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

According to promotional material for this year's prayer emphasis, "If there was ever a time when Christians have needed to join together in prayer to ask God to pour out healing and revival on our communities, state and nation, it is today!"

Citing the "evil deeds" perpetrated on Sept. 11, 2001, that "shook this nation and the world," KBC

Executive Director Bill Mackey declared, "On Sept. 11, '07, as Kentucky Baptists we want to pray with one voice that God will shake our foundations and touch Kentucky and the world through us for the betterment of all people and the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan."

Urging Kentucky Baptists to "pray for the transforming power of the gospel to be lived and shared," Mackey emphasized, "Kentucky needs now more than ever the experience of the power of united prayer. ... It is urgent that we gather to intercede before God with one voice on Sept. 11."

Specific prayer concerns suggested by state convention leaders include heartfelt prayer for:

- Spiritual awakening in local communities.
- A movement of God in local congregations.
- Kentucky Baptist ministries and missionaries throughout the state.
- People who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

The "With One Voice" emphasis also will serve as part of Kentucky Baptists' celebration of the 300th anniversary of Baptist associations in America.

Why should prayer be a top spiritual priority in believers' lives? In the words of legendary evangelist Billy Graham, "How many times have you heard someone say, 'All I can do is pray'? You might as well say to a starving man, 'All I can do is offer you food.' ... Praying unlocks the doors of heaven and releases the power of God."

Kentucky Baptists have an incredible opportunity to unleash the power of prayer Sept. 11. Don't miss it.

For more information about "With One Voice," visit www.kybaptist.org/one voice or call the KBC at (502) 489-3528 or toll-free at (866) 489-3528.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Pray for students as school year starts

I think it is an old song by Bing Crosby on his White Christmas album that uses the line, "and Mom and Dad can hardly wait for school to start again." Whether or not that is our sentiment, it is that time of year again—time for school to start and for summer to be over.

This time of year always was bittersweet for me. I enjoyed summers in youth ministry; in fact it is one of the things I miss the most about being a youth minister in a local church. But with the inevitable end of summer comes opportunity for one of the best seasons of ministry.

I asked several youth ministers across the state what their networks were doing to help prepare their students for their return to school. The similarity of what is happening across Kentucky is amazing.

In Knox Baptist Association, where Tim Bargo is associational youth director, leaders are planning a back-to-school block party at the Knox Central High School baseball field parking lot. Both the county high school football teams are involved in the Pioneer Bowl: four schools, two games, one night. "We will have music, free refreshments, free T-shirts to the first 50 students and a guest speaker," Bargo said.

According to Brian Schindler, youth minister at Second Baptist Church in Greenville, "Every fall

we do Messy Madness at one of our schools." This event is sponsored by Off-Campus Ministries, a non-denominational group of youth ministers in the area.

"This is our annual kick-off for events we do together throughout the year," Schindler added. "We normally have around 200 kids come out for all of our messy games. It's totally gross and awesome!"

Tree Akers, youth minister at Northside Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, reports, "There are two things for our area. A couple of our churches are doing an event called Yuck Day. Yes, it is the day of mud, food, water, etc., games." He said it also is "kind of our initiation for incoming 6th graders as well."

"The other thing we are doing has several churches involved," Akers added. "We are calling it 'Summer Splash.' We have rented out the swim/fitness center for the evening, and we are bringing in an improv comedy group (3-2-1 Comedy) to share the gospel message."

Two of the First Priority Networks, Tri-States and West Kentucky, are holding daylong training events on Saturdays to prepare students for the upcoming school year. Students from Kentucky Baptist churches are being prepared to take the gospel on their school campuses through campus clubs such as First Priority.

One of the strengths of such

events, whether training as campus missionaries or "Yuck Days," is that they bring students and youth ministries together from various churches.

One thing that hasn't changed about students is that for them, there is strength in numbers. Students are much more likely to take a stand for Christ, live their faith in front of their peers and share the gospel with their non-Christian friends if they know they are not doing it alone. Area events help them know who the other Christians are in their school and reassure them they are not alone.

We also need to remember to pray that our students will be bold in the faith. Also pray for the teachers, administrators, bus drivers and cafeteria workers. Take time in a morning worship service to recognize all the school personnel in your congregation and pray over them. Commission them as missionaries for the coming school year. Go to the school and prayerwalk the perimeter. Touch the building, stand in the parking lot and pray.

Students and school employees are on the front line of missions. Studies from several sources indicate that only about 10 to 12 percent of our school population is in church on any given week.

The best thing we can give our students to prepare them for returning to school is our commitment to pray for them daily.

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

YOUTH MINISTRY CORNER



Joe Ball

From Warsaw to Poland

Kentucky-born heavy-metal missionary shares Christ over pickle soup & coffee

By Sue Sprenkle

SBC International Mission Board

Lubin, Poland (BP)—Drab, high-rise block apartments cut a dirty, jagged line against the gray sky. Two rough-looking young men walk in the buildings' shadows. Unsmiling, they nod to friends smoking and drinking alcohol outside a small grocery store.

The two duck inside an out-of-place, single-story building. Once inside, their hard exteriors melt as warm golden hues, soft red lights and pulsating techno music provide a hip—yet safe—environment for youth in this Polish city.

They flash huge smiles and bound over to greet their American friend, Rich Ellis, making coffee behind the counter.

"Are we still on for pickle soup and Bible study Monday night?" they ask.

The man making coffee is from Warsaw, but not the metropolis northwest of Lubin. He's from the Northern Kentucky Warsaw, and he can't hide his smile, even behind a dark beard and mustache.

The Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary said it wasn't too long ago that no one was interested in coming to the coffeehouse, let alone learning anything about the Bible. Today, on most weekends, Coffeehouse Logos is packed.

Technically, business isn't "booming"—most of the youth never order coffee and snacks from the menu—but that doesn't matter. What matters to the small Polish Baptist church sponsoring the coffeehouse is that people are exposed to the love of Jesus Christ.

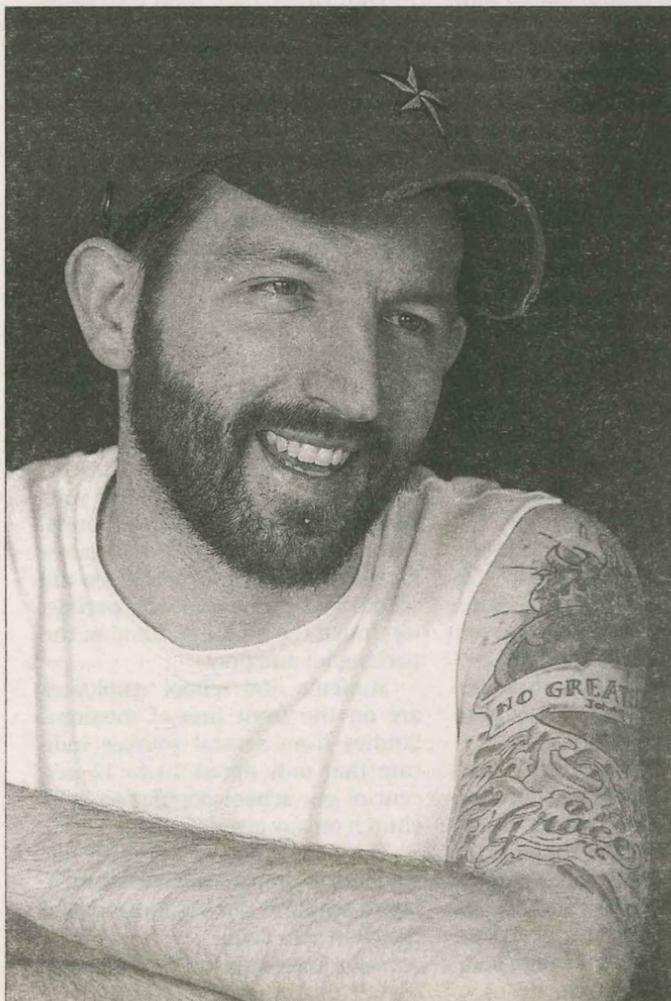
Ellis partners with the church



TIME TO TALK International Mission Board Journeyman Rich Ellis counsels a Polish teenager at Coffeehouse Logos, a facility he and a Polish Baptist church run for neighborhood youth. The coffeehouse provides a safe haven where young people can listen to music, play games, watch movies and hang out with friends. It also allows Ellis to build relationships and share the gospel with the young people and their families. (IMB photos)

BODY (& SOUL) ART

Kentucky native and Southern Baptist Missionary to Poland Rich Ellis was a heavy-metal drummer before he began serving in Lubin, Poland, southeast of Warsaw. Ellis partners with a Polish Baptist church to reach youth in the neighborhood with the love of Christ. A tattoo on one arm reads "One Truth" in English; the other arm has "One Truth" tattooed in Polish. Ellis, who works in a coffeehouse, has found that Polish young people are curious about his tattoos, which opens the door for witnessing opportunities.



to reach the surrounding neighborhood for Christ. He serves coffee, cleans toilets, plays ping-pong, foosball, and teaches English and the Bible.

His willingness to do anything endears him to the church and the neighborhood. He never meets a stranger. He chats with anyone just as if he were back home in Gallatin County.

Something about this young missionary captivates people. Is it the piercing in his lower lip? Perhaps it's the tattoos on both arms. No, these help him blend in with the rough neighborhood.

More likely, it's the love that emanates from this IMB Journeyman. Young people flock to him because he cares. Whether it's roughhousing, playing games or sharing American goodies from a package from home, Ellis shows his love by investing in lives.

"There's not much around here to do but sit outside, smoke and get drunk. The kids we work with are rough, but we've seen some changes in the last year," Ellis said. "One way to reach these kids is by building relationships and trust. You do this by hanging out."

Pickle soup night

Four guys barely fit in Ellis' small kitchen at home, despite their slight build. A big tub of dill pickles sits in the middle of the table. Someone fishes out a pickle and grates it for the soup. Another peels potatoes as a third prepares the carrots.

"When we started Monday nights, none of us knew how to cook," one of the guys said, holding a knife awkwardly over the clutter on the cutting board that's supposed to end up as a traditional Polish meal. "Look at us now."

"Yeah, look at our mess," Ellis joked back, wrist deep in pickle juice. "Seriously though, nothing beats a hot bowl of pickle soup on a

cold night."

Soup night started with a few guys coming to Ellis' house on the evening the coffeehouse is closed. The group started with just a few guys; now girls have joined the ritual.

Ellis said the close quarters in the kitchen provide opportunities for the Polish youth and young adults to ask questions about God. Monday night regulars seem to be searching for a deeper Bible study than what is offered Thursday nights at the coffeehouse.

It appears none of the regulars have a belief system based on the gospel, although all of them claim to be Christians because of their Catholic background. Nearly 78 percent of Poles claim to be Roman Catholic. The Protestant population number is around 0.4 percent, according to Operation World.

In the past, Ellis explained, Baptists and other Protestants were considered to be sectarian, or a cult. A change in thinking is emerging because people such as Ellis are taking a stand to share their faith in Christ.

"If you had told me a few years ago that I'd be a missionary, I would have thought you were crazy," Ellis said, shaking his head in disbelief. He said there are some days he still doesn't believe it.

As a boy, Ellis said he "did the typical youth group stuff—mission trips, lock-ins." At 13, Ellis said he "made a decision for Christ," but like many teens, he began to stray from regular Sunday school and church attendance.

At 17, Ellis became a drummer in a heavy-metal band, experimenting with alcohol and illegal drugs. Soon church became a Christmas/Easter-only ritual.

A few years later, his grandparents died; Ellis said his world turned upside down. His only earthly spiritual role models were gone. At a

New Year's Eve party after a concert, he was especially down.

"A song from a Christian heavy-metal band came on," Ellis remembered. "A friend sang the lyrics and looked at me. The words went straight through me: 'Your blood-shot hippie ways are going to lead you down a blackened path.'"

Ellis went home and read a devotional, one of the last things his grandmother had given him. He said he knew it was time to "get right with God."

Tattooed witness

Today he is still a musician but uses his talent, and tatoos, on the mission field in Poland.

All tattoos have meaning, so people who have tattoos ask each other about them. On a volunteer mission trip to Poland a few years ago, Ellis found the same was true in Europe. Pointing to Ellis' leg, a schoolboy asked what John 3:16 meant.

"When I found out I was going to Poland for two years, I decided to get a tat in Polish because I knew they would ask about it," Ellis said.

One arm displays an artistic rendition of "One Truth" in English. The other arm communicates the same in Polish.

Every day someone at the coffeehouse stops Ellis to look at his tattoos and ask him questions. Even strangers on the street stop him to ask about his Polish tattoo.

On this day, a boy brings a group of his friends to view the body art. He grabs Ellis' sleeve, pulls it up and points out the Polish writing. Ellis smiles and encourages the boy to share with his friends the meaning behind it.

"God uses everything unique about us to tell His story," Ellis said.

Glancing around the packed coffeehouse, he adds, "I can't believe they call this work. I get to hang out all night with friends and try to talk about God. I love it."

NAMB, KBC event to equip missions education leaders

Louisville—The Kentucky Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board are teaming up to host the Mission Education National Certification Training event Aug. 17-18 at the Baptist Building in Louisville.

The conference is aimed at individuals currently leading or interested in leading mission education programs.

Five leadership tracks will be offered, including Royal Ambassadors, Challengers, Baptist Men on Mission, churchwide mission education, and church renewal. NAMB-issued certification is available in any one of the five areas.

Those not seeking certification may select from a variety of conference workshops, including:

- Adult Mission Education Ideas and Resources.
- Camp Craft and Racer Overview.
- Camp Craft and Racer Nuts and Bolts.
- Children's Mission Education Ideas and Resources.
- Overview of Classical Adult Mission Education Organizations.
- Overview of Classical Children's Mission Education Organization.
- Overview of Classical Student Mission Education Organizations.
- Student Mission Education Ideas and Resources.
- The Bridge: Connecting Volunteers with Missions Technology.

The event is free, but registration is required by Aug. 1. To register visit www.kybaptist.org.

Super Saturday events offer new tracks

Louisville—African-American church leaders and ministry volunteers can benefit from a new African-American track at four of the six Kentucky Baptist Convention Super Saturday events this year.

The African-American track will be offered to participants at the Lexington, Owensboro, Paducah and Elizabethtown gatherings.

"There's been an increasing number of African-Americans attending Super Saturday each year, but we really want to take that to the next level," said Darryl Wilson, adult Sunday school group director for the KBC and organizer of Super Saturday. "We are hopeful that this will be something we can continue to do at future events."

Super Saturdays are comprehensive church ministry training conferences. Hundreds of participants are expected at each of the six locations offered this year.

Events will be held Aug. 18 at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Aug. 25 at First Baptist Church of Pikeville and First Baptist Church

of Owensboro, Sept. 8 at First Baptist Church of Paducah and First Baptist Church of Somerset, and Sept. 15 at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

According to Wilson, the KBC continues to look for ways to support African-American churches within the convention. Providing specialized training at Super Saturday is one more way the convention is demonstrating its commitment to African-American churches, he said.

Wilson closely with Lincoln Bingham, superintendent of missions for the General Association of Baptists, to develop the African-American conferences that will be offered.

"Super Saturday is a tremendously beneficial event for all churches, and it has been my desire that more African-American Baptists would share in this event," said Bingham, who has served as cooperative ministries consultant for the KBC for 25 years and pastor of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church in Louisville for 16 years.

Partnership benefits KBC churches looking to build

Louisville—Churches considering or already involved in facility construction can benefit from a new Kentucky Baptist Convention partnership with L&F Design Build, a design and construction company based in Kentucky.

L&F Design Build will offer Kentucky Baptist churches a variety of architectural planning and construction services through its division, Baptist Church Builders.

As part of the new partnership, all Kentucky Baptist churches qualify for a complimentary consultation.

"Our vision is to help KBC churches use their resources in the best way possible so that ultimately, more people can be reached," said Bill White, director for Baptist Church Builders' Kentucky Baptist church di-

vision. "Because we serve as a single point of responsibility, we believe we deliver a better product, and in most cases, we also help churches save a lot of money."

Baptist Church Builders works with church leaders and building committees to develop a plan that meets the individual needs of a church.

Clients are taken through a four-step building process that includes vision and master planning services, architectural and engineering documents, interior design and facility construction oversight.

"Building projects can be overwhelming because of the many options available to churches," said French Harmon, leader of the KBC's church development team. "Baptist

"This is an event that shouldn't be missed," he said. "The African-American courses and faculty are added incentives, but I'm encouraging participation because of the all-inclusive benefits of Super Saturday."

Training is available for leaders and volunteers in most areas of local church ministry, including Sunday school, stewardship, discipleship, evangelism, Woman's Missionary Union, women's ministry, worship and music, preschool/children and Baptist Men on Mission.

Also new this year, a teen track and church architecture course will be offered at all locations.

Registration is required for all Super Saturday events. The cost to attend is \$20 for those who register online by the Monday before each event, or \$25 by phone or at the door.

To register for Super Saturday or for more information, visit www.kybaptist.org/supersaturday, or call (502) 489-3572 or toll-free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3572.

Church Builders is committed to working with our churches to design a building tailored to each church's specific needs."

Qualified consultants from Baptist Church Builders can help churches of all sizes prepare for a building project.

"We're pleased to offer the benefits of this partnership to Kentucky Baptists and to recommend Baptist Church Builders as a resource for this important aspect of church growth," Harmon said. "This is just one more way we can help strengthen and support churches in their work."

Representatives from Baptist Church Builders will speak about planning and building church facilities at each of the six upcoming KBC Super Saturday conferences.

SUPER '07
SATURDAY

Practical training for churches of all sizes and ministries of all kinds!

Aug. 18 • Immanuel Baptist Church, Lexington
Aug. 25 • First Baptist Church, Pikeville
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

NEW THIS YEAR!

Teen Track and Church Architecture Conference
at all locations

African-American Ministry Track
at Lexington, Owensboro, Paducah, Elizabethtown

REGISTER ONLINE TODAY!

www.kybaptist.org/supersaturday

\$20.00 – online by Monday
before each event

\$25.00 – at the door

KBC
KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION

Ky. Baptist university receives grant for community program

Williamsburg—Mountain Outreach, a non-profit community service program of University of the Cumberlands, recently received a \$150,000 grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation.

The foundation has played a major role in the work of Mountain Outreach by providing needed financial support to the student-based program for more than 15 years.

"The foundation's support has meant so much to the Mountain Outreach program," said Marc Hensley, the program's director. "They have literally helped thousands of needy mountain folks in our community."

The grant will be used to continue the outreach efforts of students and other volunteers to assist in providing new housing or repairs to existing homes for disadvantaged families in southeastern Kentucky.

Based in suburban Baltimore, Md., the Weinberg Foundation provides grants to service organizations "dedicated to assisting the poor," according to its website.

"The Weinberg Foundation's generous support allows Mountain Outreach to continue to help those who have a genuine need and who have demonstrated effort to help themselves," Hensley said.

Since Mountain Outreach's founding in 1982, thousands of students and other volunteers have built 126 homes, made needed repairs to hundreds of homes, and distributed to thousands of people clothing, shoes, coats, blankets, personal hygiene products and other items to meet basic needs.



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.

Religious minorities in Iraq suffer adversity, panel told

Washington (BP)—Conditions for religious minorities in Iraq “have deteriorated very considerably” in the past three to four months, the bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was told recently.

The panel heard testimony July 25 about the plight of Chaldo-Assyrian Christians and other minorities in the first Washington hearing involving representatives of those communities. The Capitol Hill hearing demonstrated the situation for such religious minorities has not improved in the time since the American-led coalition deposed Saddam Hussein in 2003 and began seeking to rebuild the government.

The witnesses’ testimony also seemed to affirm the USCIRF decision in May to place Iraq on a “watch list” because of the “alarming and deteriorating situation for freedom of religion and belief,” as described by the commission. The commission removed Iraq from its list of most severe violators of religious freedom after Hussein’s regime was toppled.

Andrew White, vicar of St. George’s Anglican Church in Baghdad, told the commission his parishioners told him recently, “We’ve never had it so bad.”

Members of religious minorities have been kidnapped, tortured and killed, he said. When White visited with his Iraqi congregation two weeks earlier, he learned that 36 of his parishioners had been kidnapped in the previous week, he testified.

Witnesses provided the following estimates, some based on United Nations reports, on the extent of the persecution of Christians:

- As much as 50 percent of the Iraqi Christian population has fled the country.
- About 40 percent of the 2.2 million refugees from Iraq are Chaldo-Assyrian Christians.
- More than 30 churches have been destroyed.

White, who is from Great Britain, said he supported the war and the overthrow of Hussein, but he added, “It causes me great sorrow to see that the international community, including my own nation and yours, has not really done anything to help these people. The fact is they are suffering because of us.”

The United States still “can do a huge amount,” White said in response to a question from USCIRF member Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Needs include security, food, water

Iraqi Christians need security, basic provisions—such as food and water—and engagement with other religious groups, White said.

Iraq has been plagued by violence between Sunni and Shi’a Muslims, as well as attacks on non-Muslims. The Shi’a-dominated government has been guilty of failing to prevent attacks on religious minorities while also backing militias who have committed such crimes, the USCIRF has reported.

The Iraqi government is, “in theory, very helpful, but the fact is there is increasing influence from Iran on the Iraqi government, and the whole concept of Iraqi democracy has not really worked,” White said.

Pascale Warda, a Chaldo-Assyrian Christian and Iraqi minister for migration and displacement in 2004-05, told the commissioners through an interpreter that Christians are “directly targeted” because they do not possess militias.

“They are identified as American allies and infidels for the simple reason that they share a common faith with those in the western world,” she said. “The security situation is worsened for lack of any protection offered by the Iraqi local government. ... It is the moral obligation of the Iraqi and American governments to help them achieve these objectives and to ensure the protection of these vulnerable ancient communities of Iraq.”

Michael Youash of the Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project told the panel the U.S. Congress can help by providing funds to assist Christians who have relocated to the northern part of the country, the Nineveh Plain and other areas.

The ERLC’s Land commended the witnesses, telling Baptist Press, “I applaud the courage of all of those who testified and the courage of those that they testified in behalf of in continuing to bear witness for their faith in the midst of a terrible and tragic situation. Hopefully, their testimony will help encourage our government to do more to ensure that the rights of all religious minorities will be protected in Iraq.”

Conference spotlights medical missionaries

By Erich Bridges
Baptist Press

Rockville, Va. (BP)—By lunchtime her first day at the Global Medical Alliance, Brandi Bhimji already felt excited—and a bit overwhelmed.

“I want to do it all,” said the nurse manager from Winchester, Va., after spending the morning listening to Southern Baptist medical missionaries talk about their ministries. “Every story is so compelling, you want to go there.”

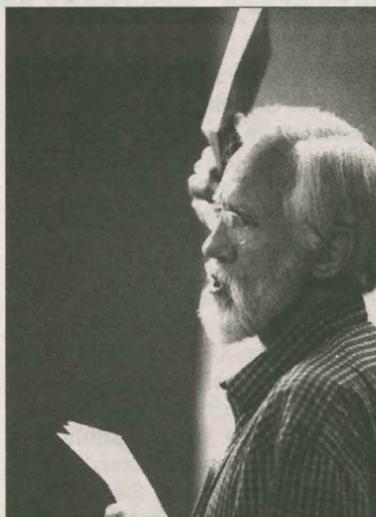
Bhimji and her husband, a pharmacist, attended part of the July 16-22 gathering of health care missionaries and church-based medical volunteers. They joined some 200 Southern Baptist doctors, dentists, nurses and other medical professionals from churches across the nation attending the Global Medical Alliance mobilization conference at the Southern Baptist International Mission Board’s International Learning Center in Rockville, Va.

The health professionals—some already partnering with mission teams overseas, others considering medical projects for the first time—mingled with more than 90 medical missionaries from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East.

Through presentations, interaction, workshops and a “partnership fair,” they learned of the remarkable variety of ways missionaries and their partners are using health care ministries to heal the hurting, share the love of Jesus Christ and plant churches.

One missionary strategist in a restricted area of East Asia described using medical volunteers, health screenings, eye clinics and other health services to gain government permission to go beyond the regional capital city of her area and into rural villages.

“What would get us into the countryside, behind closed doors and in the homes of the people?” she asked. “Eight years ago no one was



BEST MEDICINE Missionary doctor David Sorley makes a point during a session at the Global Medical Alliance conference. More than 90 medical missionaries spent several days networking and comparing notes on the best practices in medical ministry. (BP photo by Warren Johnson)

outside the capital. Now we have people not only going to the villages, but staying there.”

Three-fourths of the more than 17 million people in the group have never heard of Jesus, the missionary said. They are animistic, fear evil spirits and adopt bits and pieces of traditional religions in the region. The health outreach, coupled with training of local believers and other approaches, has helped launch some 500 churches in the last three years. More than 1,300 people have become followers of Jesus just in the past year.

Another missionary described combining Bible storying with simple methods designed to help alcoholics stop drinking in order to reach indigenous tribes in South America devastated by alcoholism.

“Even those of us who’ve been around for a long time weren’t aware of all that’s being done in health care ministries,” said mis-

sionary physician Rebekah Naylor, a 35-year veteran of medical ministry in India. “We’ve been amazed and inspired by all that’s happening and the proof we’re seeing of its role in church planting. I’ve heard new ideas I can incorporate into my strategy.”

That’s the kind of interchange IMB President Jerry Rankin envisioned for the conference, which will become an annual event.

“We are still very involved in and committed to medical work, and we have increasing numbers of medical assignments we’re seeking to mobilize for”—especially in restricted and unreached areas, Rankin said. “I think we’ll see a wave of growth in requests for new medical missionary personnel, but the real impact is going to be in mobilization of U.S. partners. I would anticipate twice as many state-side church partners here next year.”

One medical missionary at the conference estimated there are as many as 37,000 physicians, more than 9,500 dentists and 128,000 nurses attending Southern Baptist churches across the United States. Most have never participated in a mission project overseas.

“That is a tremendous resource,” Rankin said. “A mission trip is not an end in itself. It’s part of an ongoing strategy and gives you a sense of ownership. We want to give Southern Baptist health care workers a vision of being partners with us in an ongoing strategy that results in glory for the Kingdom of God.”

Before the church-based volunteers arrived, the medical missionaries spent the first several days of the conference networking and comparing notes. The IMB turned most of the mission hospitals and clinics it once operated over to national Baptist leaders years ago, so missionaries have sought new ways to use health care ministries in outreach without relying on traditional medical institutions.

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New agriculture bill passes without reform amendment

Washington (ABP)—Despite pleas from a wide coalition of religious, free-trade and anti-hunger groups, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a massive agriculture bill July 27 with only a handful of reforms.

The chamber approved the 2007 Farm Bill on a mostly partisan vote of 231-191. House Democratic leaders worked until the last minute to ensure its passage, shoring up support by adding increases in funding for federal nutrition and conservation programs and funding for minority farmers who have sued the Department of Agriculture over inequities in its subsidy program.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and other House Democratic leaders termed the measure a "reform" bill. But a group of fiscally conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats said it was more like a status-quo boondoggle.

It reauthorizes a number of food- and farm-related federal programs last visited by Congress in 2002. They include crop subsidies, which the government has offered to some farmers for decades in an attempt to stabilize the agricultural economy.

However, in recent decades, the payments have begun to have an unintended effect, often subsidizing the owners of large, wealthy farms while providing little or no help to smaller farmers, many of whom are

minorities.

According to the anti-hunger group Oxfam America, the richest 5 percent of U.S. farm owners get more than half of all the "commodity payments," or federal subsidies.

In an attempt to reform the way the government provides farmers with crop subsidies, a broad array of organizations supported a bipartisan amendment to the bill. Chiefly sponsored by Rep. Ron Kind (D-Wis.), the amendment would have significantly lowered the income level at which farmers can continue to receive the government payments. But Kind's amendment failed on a 117-309 vote.

"The leadership of both parties failed to deliver when faced with a real opportunity to provide a 21st-century vision for American agriculture and rural stewardship," Oxfam President Raymond Offenheiser responded.

Subsidies that go to large farmers but often bypass small operations have exacerbated the trend of smaller farms selling out to their larger, wealthier neighbors. In turn, the exodus of such farmers from small towns in the nation's heartland has devastated local economies, creating an economic ripple effect.

President Bush has threatened to veto the bill if it is not significantly altered before it reaches his desk.



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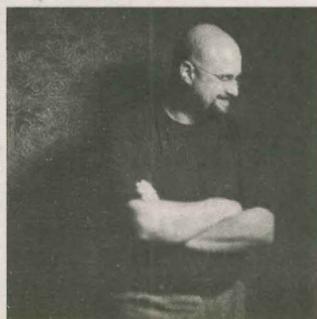
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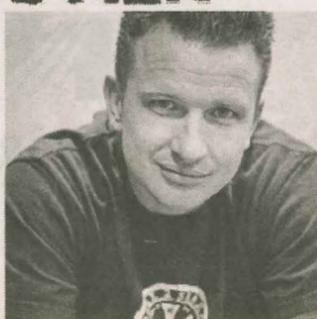
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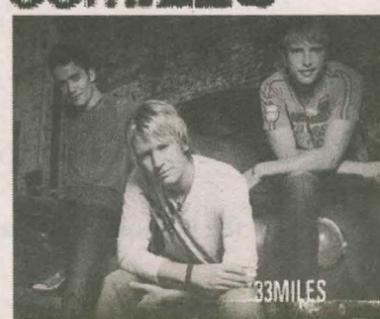
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JOSH BATES



Christians take on Wall Street through religious investing

"Now, instead of boycotting Disney, they'll be investing in Fox Family Films."

Ron Simkins, director of the Kripke Center for the Study of Religion & Society at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb.

By Jeffrey MacDonald
Religion News Service

New York (RNS)—Religious activists with a moral agenda for corporate America used to rely primarily on consumer boycotts and sympathetic lawmakers to get the attention of Wall Street.

But now their toolbox is growing—and there's a lot more money in it.

Over the past decade, America's market for religious investment products has grown by more than 3,500 percent, according to data from fund tracker Morningstar.

During the same period, faith-based mutual funds, which routinely push for social change in corporate board rooms or shun stocks they deem immoral, grew from about \$500 million to more than \$17 billion.

What's emerging, observers say, is a market-based response to popular demand for ways that people of faith can make their voices heard on issues closest to their hearts. And people of faith—especially social conservatives—are seizing what they see as a new opportunity to make a difference.

"It's just a matter of growing up" and adding more sophisticated tools for advancing an agenda, says Ron Simkins, director of the Kripke Center for the Study of Religion & Society at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. "Now, instead of boycotting



INVESTMENT STRATEGY Rusty Leonard is CEO of North Carolina-based Stewardship Partners, which invests at least \$100,000 for "red state Christians" who want to make sure their money does not support companies that promote liberal values. (RNS photo)

Disney, they'll be investing in Fox Family Films."

Many religious conservatives are mobilizing to attach a voice to the cash they already have on Wall Street. For example, the Tupelo, Miss.-based American Family Association is urging its 2.8 million online members to purge their investment portfolios of companies that support a "gay agenda" or "anti-family" practices.

Yet, as social conservatives increasingly tether their agendas to

their investments, they're hardly walking in lockstep. They're choosing among a range of religious financial products—including 16 families of faith-based mutual funds—that vary in how they define corporate responsibility.

Evangelicals, for instance, are getting behind more than one vision. Some have contributed to the \$600 million Timothy Plan, a family of mutual funds with evangelical roots and a pledge to avoid "securities of any company that is actively contributing to the moral decline of our society."

Evangelicals are also behind much of the \$900 million invested with the politically enigmatic Menonite Mutual Aid Praxis Funds. This group avoids companies such as Pfizer, which fund managers regarded as manufacturers of abortion products. But MMA Praxis also lobbies on behalf of shareholders for eco-friendly corporate policies, and its pacifist orientation screens out stocks in defense contractors and bonds issued by the U.S. Treasury.

MMA hears evangelicals saying "I want more," said Mark Regier, the MMA's stewardship investing services manager. "As an evangelical or conservative Christian, I do care about the environment. I do care about human rights. I do see the sense in being engaged with companies and encouraging them to move to more positive positions on social

issues."

Still, promoters of what's known as "morally responsible" or "biblically responsible" investing are expecting the values component to be a powerful drawing card.

Kingdom Advisors, a nationwide network of more than 1,200 Christian financial advisers, this year created a subgroup of those who offer biblically responsible investment products. Centurion Funds, named after a faithful figure in the Gospel of Luke, launched less than a year ago with a pledge from company President David Lenoir to "not just avoid the 'sin stocks' but to look for the good in companies."

And more than 600 investors, each committing at least \$100,000 to private money management with Stewardship Partners in Matthews, N.C., have demonstrated there's a market for customizing equity portfolios according to what CEO Rusty Leonard calls "red state Christian values."

"Red state Christians give money to Christian ministries that try to sway the political process," Leonard said. "They got their people elected, but they didn't see their issues advanced to any great degree."

"Meanwhile, their opponents in the culture wars were coming around the left flank and going into the corporate sector, which red state Christians have ignored," he added. "We're hoping to change that."

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A plan for generosity

Four-step process can help highlight charitable goals

Like most people, you are bombarded with solicitations by telemarketers calling at the dinner hour, fund raisers surveying the neighborhood and organizations campaigning through the mail. With so many appeals, even the most generous among us get tired and confused. There is a way to revive the joy found in helping others.

First, prayerfully consider your values. What are the principles in which you most strongly believe? Consider the experiences, people, causes and organizations that matter the most to you.

Second, prayerfully concentrate your efforts. From your list of values and the organizations and causes that mean the most to you, through which ones can you make the greatest difference?

Third, prayerfully prepare a personal plan. Decide how much money you can devote to charities. Do not let limited resources intimidate you. No one is excluded from making worthy gifts.

Fourth, prayerfully look before you leap. Be as prudent in your evaluation of a charity as you would be with any other investment deci-

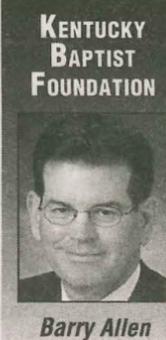
sion. If necessary, visit the site. Do whatever it takes to understand and feel comfortable with the charities in which you plan to invest.

It would be my hope your church, association and one or more causes of our larger Baptist family would be among those charities you determined were making the greatest differences in the world. My wife and I have concentrated our giving among our church, association and the various missionary, educational and benevolent causes of our larger Baptist family. We followed the four-step plan outlined above and came to the conclusion we could make the greatest impact by giving to and through these causes.

In 2 Corinthians 9:6 and Galatians 6:7-9 Paul reminds us of the law of sowing and reaping. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 he instructs us about giving not out of impulse, but after careful and prayerful reflection. Paul closes in 2 Corinthians 9:15 by exclaiming his gratitude to God for God's indescribable gift.

Let us assist you in your plan for generosity.

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



Barry Allen

For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

By Michael Landi

Across

- 1 Enemy (Luke 12:58)
- 7 "He is a ___ creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- 10 "He turned the ___ into dry land" (Psalm 66:6)
- 11 "Upon ___ stone shall be seven eyes" (Zechariah 3:9)
- 12 Meaning abundant flow of water; John was baptizing near there (John 3:23)
- 14 "___ us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13)
- 15 "Woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint and ___" (Luke 11:42)
- 16 "It shall ___ given him" (James 1:5)
- 17 God cannot live in its presence (Isaiah 59:2)
- 18 "And ___ the sacrifices of the dead" (Psalm 106:28)
- 19 "The race that is ___ before us" (Hebrews 12:1)
- 20 "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a ___, that was cast into the sea" (Matthew 13:47)
- 21 "___ his feet in the blood of the wicked" (Psalm 58:10)
- 23 "Light of the body is the ___" (Luke 11:34)
- 27 Collection of 27 books, abbr.
- 28 "Felling a ___, the axe head fell into the water" (2 Kings 6:5)
- 29 The only son of Abraham by Sarah (Genesis 17:17-19)
- 32 The coarse and broken part of flax ready for spinning (Judges 16:9)
- 33 "I the Lord search the heart, I ___ the reins" (Jeremiah 17:10)

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- 34 "Of the ___ of Benjamin" (Philippians 3:5)
- 37 Place in the land of the Chaldees (Nehemiah 9:7)
- 38 "Shall be as an oak whose ___ fadeth" (Isaiah 1:30)
- 40 "The ___ of the disciples was multiplied" (Acts 6:1)
- 42 "Your eyes shall see, and ___ shall say" (Malachi 1:5)
- 43 "And ___ about the paps with a golden girdle" (Revelation 1:13)
- 44 "Breastplates of fire, and of ___" (Revelation 9:17)

- 8 Hostility, hatred (Luke 23:12)
- 9 "Therefore ___ conclude that a man is justified by faith" (Romans 3:28)
- 13 That is, Lat. abbr.
- 16 "Bring forth the ___ robe" (Luke 15:22)
- 17 "If any man among you ___ to be religious" (James 1:26)
- 19 Make holy (Ephesians 5:26)
- 22 Temporary dwelling (2 Kings 7:8)
- 24 Another name for "bishop" (1 Timothy 5:1)
- 25 "Fall into a ___ on the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:11)
- 26 "The earth ___, and trembled" (Psalm 97:4)
- 30 "Lusts, which war against the ___" (1 Peter 2:11)
- 31 Religious ode (Matthew 26:30)
- 35 Literally means "master;" title given by Jews to teachers of their law (John 1:38)
- 36 "I hate robbery for ___ offering" (Isaiah 61:8)
- 39 "And smote off his ___" (Matthew 26:51)
- 41 Example, Lat. abbr.

Down

- 1 "The ___ saw the angel of the Lord" (Numbers 22:23)
- 2 Famine (Acts 11:28)
- 3 "Ye are of more ___ than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31)
- 4 "They offered a ___ of the flock" (Ezra 10:19)
- 5 "Said unto her, What ___ thee, Hagar?" (Genesis 21:17)
- 6 "Went to Jerusalem every ___ at the feast of the passover" (Luke 2:41)
- 7 "The multitude of ___" (Jeremiah 46:25)

Last week's solution

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Register for a 4-week online study of Baptist Identity. Each session is highly interactive and provides opportunities for online discussion with the facilitator and other study participants. The facilitator, Jon Messer, is the Education Coordinator for the Virginia Baptist Historical Society.

Registration is \$150 (Scholarships are available to cover 50% of registration fee). Courses dates: September 10 - October 7, 2007.

For more information: http://www.btsr.edu/baptist_identity.html
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N.D. city wins battle to display Commandments

Fargo, N.D. (BP)—

When the city commission in Fargo, N.D., voted to move a Ten Commandments monument from the lawn outside city hall, they quickly learned how much the biblical document means to their citizens.

In June, the city commission voted to move the Commandments off city property to avoid further legal challenges, according to USA Today. But opponents of the move collected 5,265 signatures, far surpassing the 2,850 needed to force commissioners either to keep the monument or let voters decide its fate.

Late last month, one commissioner changed his vote and the commission decided to keep the Ten Commandments monument on the lawn of city hall.

The 6-foot-tall granite monument was donated to the city in 1958 by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, and it has been the most prominent feature of the lawn since 1961.

Abstinence education funds take hit in House legislation

Washington (BP)—Part of the children's health legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives Aug. 1 extends Title V abstinence education funding for another two years but expands the funding to include "comprehensive sex education" programs which often promote premarital sex.

The bill greatly increases federal funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, although issues such as promoting sexual abstinence among youth and defending unborn children are not protected in the legislation.

The Title V language of the bill includes "medical accuracy" requirements that the pro-family National Abstinence Education Association claims are hostile to current abstinence education programs. The new language also will grant funding only to those programs that have measurable success in reducing teen pregnancy and STD rates.

"They're simply giving states more money to fund Planned Parenthood and the programs that teach our children to have sex," said Linda Klepacki, a sexual health analyst for Focus on the Family Action.

Valerie Huber, executive director of NAEA, has repeatedly warned that comprehensive sex education is harmful to the nation's youth because such programs spend less than 5 percent of their course time promoting abstinence from sexual activity.

By contrast, abstinence education encourages students to remain sexually abstinent in order to attain life

goals, Huber said.

"Abstinence education shares the realities of sexually transmitted diseases and the best way to prevent them," Huber wrote in an opinion piece called "Abstinence works" in the July 30 issue of USA Today. "Accurate information about contraception is provided, but always within the context of abstinence as the healthiest choice."

Huber's column was published as an opposing view to USA Today's editorial decrying abstinence programs as failing to prevent early pregnancies and diseases. The newspaper pointed to the Mathematica Policy Research study from earlier this year which claimed there is no evidence that abstinence-only programs reduce teens' sexual involvement.

The newspaper also took issue with abstinence supporters who "attempt to take credit" for teen pregnancy rates trending downward during the same decade when abstinence funding has risen.

Huber rebutted the Mathematica reference by noting that the study evaluated only four of 700 abstinence programs in the United States. She added that the principal researcher of the study said results shouldn't be used to draw sweeping conclusions.



Showmanship and smiles

Through livestock shows, students learn patience, responsibility, respect

By Lynn Cole, OBI farm manager

Can you imagine attempting to break 13 to 20 steers, each weighing around 500 pounds, to lead all at one time? A greater challenge might be teaching the same number of students to safely train the steers. This is what the farm staff has done every year for the past five years.

Students work all winter and spring feeding, bedding, grooming and teaching the steer how to lead and "set up" squarely on all four legs while holding its head high and alert at all times. The greater lessons in patience and persistence also are learned.

About the first of May, we begin a similar process so students can show goats and hogs, too. It doesn't require nearly as much work to show these species. Some students work exclusively with these animals. Most of the students who show steers also show goats and hogs.

In mid-May it's Spring Fling day that features a livestock show. The judge examines each animal to be sure it is clean and properly fitted. Students are evaluated on their ability to properly show the animals and demonstrate courtesy to other showmen. A big smile for the judge is expected at all times, even if the animal won't cooperate.

Ribbons and trophies are awarded to the best showmen. Soon most of these students go home and it's the end of OBI Showmanship Phase I.

Then comes Phase II when summer school begins. In the first two days, students are taught how to safely work around their animals and given general instruction about their chosen job of working on the farm.

They select the animals they prefer to work with and get acquainted with them. Most or all of these new students have never worked with livestock before.

We teach them to respect the steers—now some 1,200 pounds—plus 240-pound hogs and small goats. Then students get a crash course in feeding, care and showmanship in preparation for the Laurel County Regional Ag Fair the following week. With only about an hour per day to teach all of this, it might seem like an impossible task. The staff sometimes wonders how it can be done, but with God's help, we always accomplish the seemingly insurmountable task—and do it very successfully.

Miriam Waslewski has been coming in at the top of this contest for several years and received second this year. She also placed seventh in the Skillathon contest and the judging contest. She was second in Goat Showmanship and Grand Champion in Swine Showmanship. She also had the third most points in the entire show—quite an honor.

Deja Beresford won Reserve Champion Senior Showmanship in the steer competition. Jessica Vires' steer was named Reserve Champion. Ryan Lucas had the fastest-growing steer.

Our 15 students who showed won many, many classes and were respected by all those at the shows. Lots of tears were shed when sale time came. The students realized that the animals that they had become attached to were about to become someone's dinner—another important lesson to be learned in life on the farm.

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



W.F. Underwood

Serving God & country

Deployed to Iraq, student learns unique lessons

Clear Creek Baptist Bible College is a unique Christian higher education institution. Every student who comes here has expressed a divine call from God to serve Him in some area of Christian service. Our desire is to equip students, helping them grow in their call to serve.

God sometimes uses unique ways to help our students gain an appreciation for serving Him.

One of our students, Dustin Smith, is serving his country in Iraq. God's call leading this student to train for ministry at Clear Creek was put on hold in June when Dustin was deployed to Iraq.

As we have communicated via e-mail, Dustin has told me that his military service has instilled in him a greater appreciation for serving both God and country.

"You really just feel depressed knowing you are going thousands of miles away to a place where you think people hate you," Dustin wrote.

"With my son being a few days old at the time, that made it extremely hard, too," he continued. "I had only been married for less than a year. Although, the more I thought about it, the Lord began

to strengthen me greatly every day and I began to feel excited about something new and adventurous.

"I see it now as a test given to me by God. ... God's love within me is the only way I have been able to make it."

Dustin said he hopes to return to Clear Creek and finish his degree. "My experience on campus was truly great. I found myself closer to the Lord from the beginning and realized there was a lot more to God than I thought. I would recommend Clear Creek to anyone in the ministry who wants to deepen their knowledge and education in the Lord."

Hopefully Dustin will return home in September, bringing with him valuable lessons about service. "I want to learn from this experience and use it in my life and testimony," he said. "From an experience like this that most people never face or go through, I feel blessed to have been given the opportunity."

Pray for Dustin as he grows through his service to God and country.

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.ccbcc.edu; e-mail: dfox@ccbbc.edu

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Folks in middle America give more of their time, report says

Washington (BP)—Those who feel connected to their communities, have more education and own their own homes are more likely to volunteer, according to a report by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Released last month, the report is based on Census Bureau statistics and found that volunteers contribute about 8.2 billion hours a year, which is worth about \$152 billion.

Minneapolis topped the list of the 50 metropolitan areas with the highest percentage of residents who volunteered in 2006, and experts say that's because 70 percent of families there own their own homes and the city has a history of civic engagement.

"Everyone is connected to an arts

or non-profit cause that they care about, so they roll up their sleeves and get to work," said Jeremy Hanson, a spokesman for the mayor.

Some cities ranked in the top 50 with large numbers of Southern Baptists include Louisville, at number 16; Nashville, at 19; Dallas and Oklahoma City, tied at 20; and Atlanta, at 38.

Stephen Post, a bioethics professor at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, told USA Today that volunteering is good for people.

"When people are self-preoccupied, they're also preoccupied with the problems of the self," he said. "When people volunteer in a community, there is a lifting of that anxiety, and they tend to be happier."

Survey shows older Americans' belief in afterlife grows with age

Washington (RNS)—As Americans get older, their confidence in an afterlife increases, according to a recent survey of people over age 50 conducted by the AARP, the advocacy group for seniors.

Seventy-three percent of older people believe in life after death, and two-thirds of those believers say that confidence has grown with age.

But while 86 percent of respondents say there is a heaven (70 percent believe in hell), they were split on what it looks like. Forty percent of those who believe say heaven is a place, while 47 percent think heaven is a "state of being."

"Americans see life after death as a very dynamic thing," said Alan Segal, a professor of religion at Barnard College in New York. "You don't really hear about angels and wings, sitting on clouds playing melodies. ... They talk about humor in the afterlife, continuing education, unify-

ing families—like a retirement without financial needs."

While most people believe that heaven exists, and about nine in 10 of them say they will end up there, they are less sure about others. People who believe in heaven say an average of 64 percent of others will get there, too.

Other findings in the survey:

- Women are more likely to believe in an afterlife (80 percent) than men (64 percent).

- Income matters: Of those who believe in an afterlife, 90 percent of those earning \$25,000 or less believe in heaven, compared to just 78 percent of people with an income of \$75,000 or more.

- 29 percent of those who believe in a heaven think one must "believe in Jesus Christ" to enter. Twenty-five percent believe "good people" go to heaven, and 10 percent think everyone is admitted.

Hundreds join NOAH rebuilding effort

New Orleans (BP)—For the 400-member "Carolina Mission Team" in New Orleans—Operation NOAH Rebuild's largest group of volunteers ever—changing the world might not seem so tall an order.

"Sometimes kids don't think they can change the world until they have the opportunity to be a part of something bigger than they've ever imagined," said Jeff Gray, youth minister at Willow Ridge Church in Lexington, S.C., one of nine Carolina churches represented on the trip.

In an initiative as big as the team itself, the group worked with NOAH—the North American Mission Board partnership with Louisiana Baptists to rebuild homes and share the gospel in New Orleans—to tackle dozens of work orders, taking on everything from painting to roofing.

"The Carolina group did a tremendous amount of work for our homeowners," said Steve Gahagan, NOAH construction manager. "They came prepared with field supervisors, runners and the skills needed for the task."

Under the banner of Carolina Mission Team for the first time, the group was led by L.E. Williamson, minister of students and students' families at First Baptist Church of Mauldin who has coordinated several groups of students.

The key is relationship, Williamson said. With 32 years in ministry, including 18 years at Mauldin, he has known most of his students literally all of their lives. Youth ministers from four of the churches—First Baptist and New Hope in Hickory, N.C.; First Baptist in Mooresville, N.C.; and First Baptist Newberry, S.C.—were part of Williamson's ministry as youth.

"Kids grow to trust you when they see you practice your faith in front of them," Williamson said. "It's fulfilling to help them mold their lives and sell out to God."

Other South Carolina churches involved in the July mission trip were First Baptist and West Side Baptist in Simpsonville and First Baptist of Laurens.

While the team almost single-handedly filled NOAH's "Volunteer Village," the housing unit at the World Trade Center in downtown New Orleans, Williamson said their focus was not on numbers.

"This is about helping these kids become the leaders that God can use for the next 30 or 40 years," Williamson said. "We are totally about growing closer to God and sharing the faith."

Glenn Oubre, a Willow Ridge youth leader who came to Christ as an adult through the influence of a Christian employer, said the mission trip to New Orleans reflected his desire to help youth transition to adulthood with their faith intact.

"It's powerful for a kid to see other youth who are passionate about their faith," Oubre said.

In New Orleans, where NOAH mobilized 10,000-plus volunteers in its first year to rebuild homes and share the gospel, the city is taking notice of Southern Baptists.

Betsey Holmes, 15, from First Baptist of Laurens, said a man on the street in downtown New Orleans noticed their shirts and asked if they were a mission team. When the group said yes, he gave them a "thumbs up."

"The people know that we didn't have to come, but that we wanted to," Holmes said. "This shows them what Jesus can do."

John Yeats, the Louisiana Baptist Convention's director of communications and Southern Baptist Convention recording secretary, noted, "Before the 2005 hurricanes ravaged the Louisiana Gulf shoreline, the people in this region never gave Southern Baptists a thought. Now, Southern Baptists are known as the people of compassion who know how to get the job done. Throughout our long history, we have never experienced the open doors of evangelistic witness like we do now. And it's because of the investment of time, skills, energy and testimonies by thousands of volunteers."

Beyond New Orleans' city limits, others have noticed as well. Curt Shaw, a mechanical engineer for a company with international offices, said a French colleague was amazed that Shaw's family of four would spend a week of vacation time helping others.

"Go" is an important part of the Great Commission," Shaw said. His wife, Paula, added that "you never know what God will use to plant a seed."

The trip to New Orleans, Gray said, was an opportunity for students "to live outside their normal lives" and a part of something making a national and even global impact. With the world's eye on New Orleans, God is "rebuilding lives and pouring out His grace through others."

After an evangelism team led the homeowner to faith in Christ at their worksite, Jan Stanley, a youth leader at First Baptist of Mauldin, said her team was energized to work harder and share the gospel with the neighbors, even those who were unresponsive.

Scott Hall, youth sponsor from the Mauldin church, reminded his crew one morning that God will use their interests to reach others. Later that day, Hall's own passion for Duke University basketball became a conversation-starter with an unchurched neighbor.

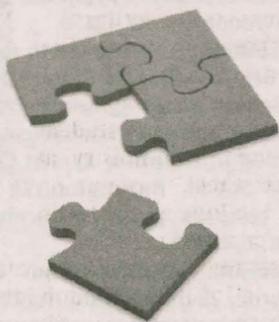
"We may never see the results of what we do here," Hall said, "but we've done what we were called to do."

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HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

By Ronny Raines

After the Southern Baptist Convention in San Antonio, my wife and I, along with some friends, visited Sea World. After surviving a few rollercoaster rides, watching seals perform and enjoying the majesty of Shamu, we settled in for a 4-D theater experience about pirates. Seeing a movie in 4-D allows the audience to personally get involved. While the 4-D experience at Sea World was entertaining, our Heavenly Father expects every Christ follower to live a 4-D life.

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15-16 counsels. What does a 4-D life look like?

1. Develop relationships. How many relationships do you have with individuals who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior? Ask the Lord to help you develop at least one relationship with someone who does not know Jesus Christ as his or her Forgiver.

2. Discuss life. As you and I develop relationships, it is wise to discuss life. Share such questions as: What do you do for a living? What recreational interests excite you? I have found over the years that most people love to talk about life.

3. Declare Jesus. Our goal in life should be to lift up Jesus in all we do. You and I are around people daily who need to experience Jesus Christ. Are you declaring Jesus in your relationships?

4. Disciple Christ followers. After people understand the need for a Savior (Romans 3:23) and receive the gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), they need to grow in Christ. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) commands the church to make disciples. Are you helping anyone grow in Christ?

A 4-D life is the life our Heavenly Father expects of believers. Are you living a 4-D life? Ronny Raines is pastor of First Baptist Church of Cold Spring

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BARDSTOWN**—Elmer and Genevieve Rountree, members of First Cedar Creek Church, will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary Aug. 14. Family members are hosting a reception in their honor at the church Aug. 12, 2 to 4 p.m.

■ **COVINGTON**—Oak Ridge Church recently ordained David MacMillan to the gospel ministry as Edgewood Fire Department's first chaplain. He also was ordained as a deacon along with Bobby Garnett and David Smith.

■ **DAWSON SPRINGS**—Morris Brown recently resigned as pastor of Lafayette Church.

■ **DIXON**—Don Canode recently resigned as pastor of Lakeview Church.

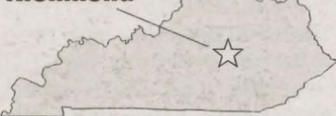
■ **GILBERTSVILLE**—Bethel Church will celebrate its 160th anniversary with homecoming services Aug. 12, 10:45 a.m., followed by a fellowship meal. Max Sledd, a retired Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria, will be the guest speaker.

■ **MADISONVILLE**—John Gilbert recently resigned as part-time music minister at Second Church.

■ **MILBURN**—Milburn Church will hold tent revival services Aug. 19, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., and Aug. 20-22,

Spotlight on ...

Richmond



Viney Fork Church will celebrate its 210th anniversary Aug. 12, 11 a.m., with speaker James Armistead and music by Freely Forgiven.

7 p.m., with former Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith as evangelist. Glen Stewart is pastor.

■ **PARKSVILLE**—Parksville Church has called Rick McKinney as pastor. The church also recently honored Darrell and Phyllis Taylor on their 50th wedding anniversary.

■ **PIKEVILLE**—Charles and Theda Marlow, members of Immanuel Church, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary July 28. Sam Crawford is pastor.

■ **RYLAND HEIGHTS**—Tom Prather, pastor of Visalia Church, and his wife, Peggy, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary June 15.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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 Tournament, Cherry Blossom Golf & Country Club, Georgetown.

22 Children in Action Day Camp, Cedar Crest.

22 Punt, Pass & Kick, Campbellsville University.

28-29 Focus 2007, Crestwood Baptist Church, Crestwood.

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

■ **SALYERSVILLE**—Daniel Lucas, pastor of Licking River Church, recently resigned to lead a church plant in Morehead.

■ **SHEPHERDSVILLE**—Sunnyside Church recently called Scott Phillips as pastor.

■ **STANFORD**—Christian illusionist Brock Gill's Freedom Experience will be held Aug. 20-22, 7 p.m., at Lincoln

County High School. Other performers include pop/punk band Eleven-tyseven, hip-hop musicians Group 1 Crew, the Outcast BMX stunt team and skateboarder Tim Byrne.

■ **VERSAILLES**—New Hope Church will hold revival services Aug. 12, 6 p.m., and Aug. 13-15, 7 p.m., with Don Mathis as evangelist. Wesley Noss is pastor.

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FOR SALE: 1993 32-foot Holiday Rambler motorhome. Ford chassis, 460-ci motor with fuel injection. Must sell; reduced to \$21,000. For information, call (502) 245-4871.

FOR SALE: Church property. New Beginning Baptist Church, 200 Clermont Drive, Bardstown, KY 40004. For more information, call (502) 350-0701 or 348-7044.

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.

SEEKING: Part-time music minister for blended worship. Send to Fairview Baptist Church, 6426 Ky. Highway 1247, Waynesburg, KY 40489; or e-mail inquiries to jdb@wimaxexpress.com.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music. McLean County church passionate about worship and reaching the lost is seeking a worship leader for praise band and choir. Contact Calhoun Baptist Church at drsams@cbcheart.com.

SEEKING: Minister to families for Grace Baptist Church. Seeking to magnify Christ in Lexington, GBC seeks Spirit-led minister who will coordinate and be directly involved in our youth/children, senior adult, outreach/visitation, education, training and promotion ministries. Please e-mail your resumé and letter of interest to gbclxington@windstream.net; or mail to 811 Bryan Ave., Lexington, KY 40505.

SEEKING: Full-time associate pastor for Franklin Crossroads Baptist Church—a growing, strongly evangelistic, mission-minded congregation helping to build the Kingdom of God, soon to have two campuses. Send resumé to 4695 Hardinsburg Road, Cecilia, KY 42724 by Aug. 27; or e-mail resumé to franklincrossroads@windstream.net. Visit our Web site at franklincrossroads.org.

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: Mount Lebanon Baptist Church (www.mlbcn.org) is seeking a dynamic and ministry oriented individual to serve full time leading the worship and music ministry of the church. Mount Lebanon is a vibrant and growing community of faith located in Maryville, Tenn., at the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. The minister of music will provide innovative and strong Christian leadership for the worship ministry, which encompasses both traditional and contemporary worship. The minister of music will work closely with the senior pastor and ministry team in planning and coordinating worship. The minister of music also will be responsible for overseeing a choir program for all ages utilizing the gifts of a talented musical support staff and volunteers. In addition to having a strong musical education and full-time experience, applicants should exemplify a passion for Christ and His church, worship and music, and possess outstanding leadership, interpersonal and organizational skills. Resumés will be received through 9/30/2007 and should be submitted to Allan Atchley, associate pastor, via e-mail at aatchley@mlbcn.org.

SEEKING: Minister of youth. Enthusiastic, passionate, contemporary minister needed to lead teenagers to Christ and on to spiritual maturity. Calhoun Baptist Church in McLean County, Kentucky, seeks to help hurting people, evangelize the lost, assemble together for fellowship, rejoice in the Lord through worship, and teach the uncompromising Word of God. Compensation package includes parsonage, health insurance and retirement benefits. Interested candidates should contact Dr. Richard Sams at drsams@cbcheart.com.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music (called to the ministry) for a dynamically growing congregation (20 hours per week). Duties: leading a comprehensive music program. For more information, see our Web site at www.woodburnbaptist.org. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Woodburn Baptist Church, PO Box 38, Woodburn, KY 42170.

SEEKING: Full-time youth minister for Belleview Baptist Church, located in Boone County, Ky. Resumés may be e-mailed to tomwithorn@fuse.net; or mailed to Belleview Baptist Church, 6658 5th St., Burlington, KY 41005. All resumés must be received by Sept. 1, 2007.

SEEKING: Full-time youth minister for Belleview Baptist Church, located in Boone County, Ky. Resumés may be e-mailed to tomwithorn@fuse.net; or mailed to Belleview Baptist Church, 6658 5th St., Burlington, KY 41005. All resumés must be received by Sept. 1, 2007.

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SEEKING: Pastor. Union Baptist Church, 25 minutes south of Cincinnati, Ohio, in Northern Kentucky, offers the best of a rural and suburban setting, and is situated in the midst of booming housing developments. UBC is looking for a pastor to lead its flock of 274 (average worship attendance; more than 400 on high Sundays) in outreach to our community. This 120-year-old Southern Baptist church has a newer 500-seat sanctuary ready for its next pastor. Please submit resumés, along with tapes, to Union Baptist Church, PO Box 194, Union, KY 41091, Attn: Mike Webster.

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@fisherville-baptist.com.

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@fisherville-baptist.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.

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Choose your own adventure

More options keep Centrifuge camps relevant, thriving after three decades

By Kelly Shrout
Baptist Press

Ridgecrest, N.C. (BP)—As Matt Overton checked out the location of his next afternoon extreme sports gig at Centrifuge camp in Ridgecrest, N.C., someone yelled his name from the sand volleyball court.

"I just met that guy several hours ago," explained Overton, a high school senior from Gallatin, Tenn. "That's what Centrifuge is all about—becoming friends with like-minded Christians in a matter of hours. It's awesome."

While Overton and other Centrifuge participants enjoyed morning Bible studies and afternoon adventure recreation, other campers opted for an XFuge missions track that sent them on local ministry assignments such as painting a children's home, delivering meals to senior adults and feeding the homeless at a local church.

Jesse Bowling, a member of New Prospect Baptist Church in Hurt, Va., participated in the XFuge on Mission track and spent an afternoon feeding the homeless at First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C.

"As Christians we are called to out go to the less fortunate," said Bowling, who was one of hundreds of students who chose the missions track. "If we don't witness then we don't have purpose."

The build-your-own camp experience that offers essentially three camps—Centrifuge, XFuge and XFuge on Mission—at one location is a new model for the student ministry team at LifeWay Christian Resources. The inaugural combo camp launched in June at LifeWay's Ridgecrest Conference Center with a student crowd of 1,900.

The camp featured combined morning and evening performances from Christian band Big Daddy Weave, The Skit Guys, and messages from Tony Merida, associate professor of preaching and dean of chapel at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Triple threat

The triple camp prototype brought the largest group to Ridgecrest in more than a decade, sparking a fitting prelude to the 30th anniversary of Centrifuge slated for summer 2008.

"This is the largest event we have had in 29 years and I am amazed at how smoothly it has run," said Joe Palmer, director of LifeWay's student events, who credited the camp staff for the successful week. "In 1979 when Centrifuge began, we never dreamed that we could fill up the whole camp. Now we've taken over the entire Ridgecrest campus."

"To have more than 1,900 kids in one location is a dream come true," remarked Palmer, who added that LifeWay's student ministry team has provided camps for more than 85,000 students this summer.

The growth of Centrifuge in the



CAPTURE THE SPIRIT Above: Fuge campers rally around their recreational flags following an afternoon of sports at Ridgecrest Conference Center in Ridgecrest, N.C. Top right: Tony Merida, dean of chapel and associate professor of preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, teaches during an evening worship service in Spilman Auditorium at Ridgecrest. Bottom right: Fuge campers respond to God's call during a worship service. More than 1,900 students attended the Fuge camp at Ridgecrest June 24-29, the largest crowd in a decade. The Centrifuge camps will mark their 30th anniversary in 2008.

last five years has been remarkable, said Joe Hicks, LifeWay camp specialist. His ties to Centrifuge began in 1979 as a camper at the introductory camp at Glorieta Conference Center in New Mexico.

"I remember sitting in the back of Spilman Auditorium during a camp five years ago and thinking to myself, 'It would be incredible to fill every seat in this place,'" Hicks said. "When I walked into Spilman for the first camp worship service for this week and saw that there were no empty seats, I knew that this night represented great things to come for Centrifuge."

Centrifuge offers a small-group approach to Bible study, team-building exercises and interest track times such as photography, jewelry making and adventure recreation. It is designed for students entering grades seven through college and "is the staple of LifeWay's camp ministries that allow group leaders to invest in the lives of the campers," Palmer said.

"For 30 years, Centrifuge has been about relationships and it has been a successful model," he added.

XFuge camps focus on the group-teaching approach and add a missions aspect to the camp week. Mission projects include volunteering in children's homes, ministering at retirement centers and working with homeless shelters. XFuge also features top youth speakers, popular bands and drama teams.

First-time camper Mary Bastin, a high school senior and member of First Baptist Church of Gallatin, Tenn., followed the traditional Centrifuge track that focused on small-group devotions, adventure recreation and staff-led Bible studies. She said the week enriched her spiritual walk.

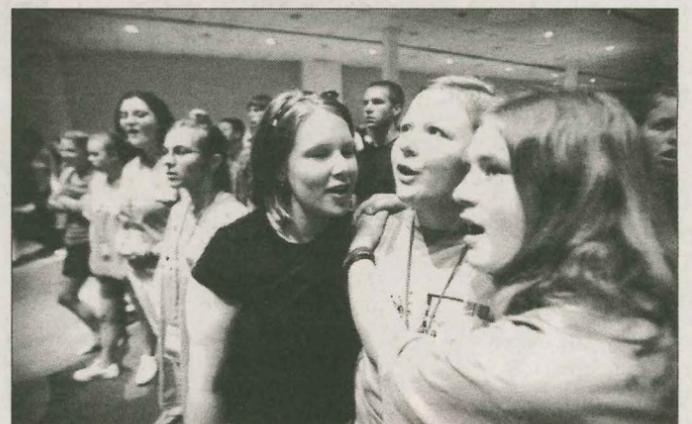
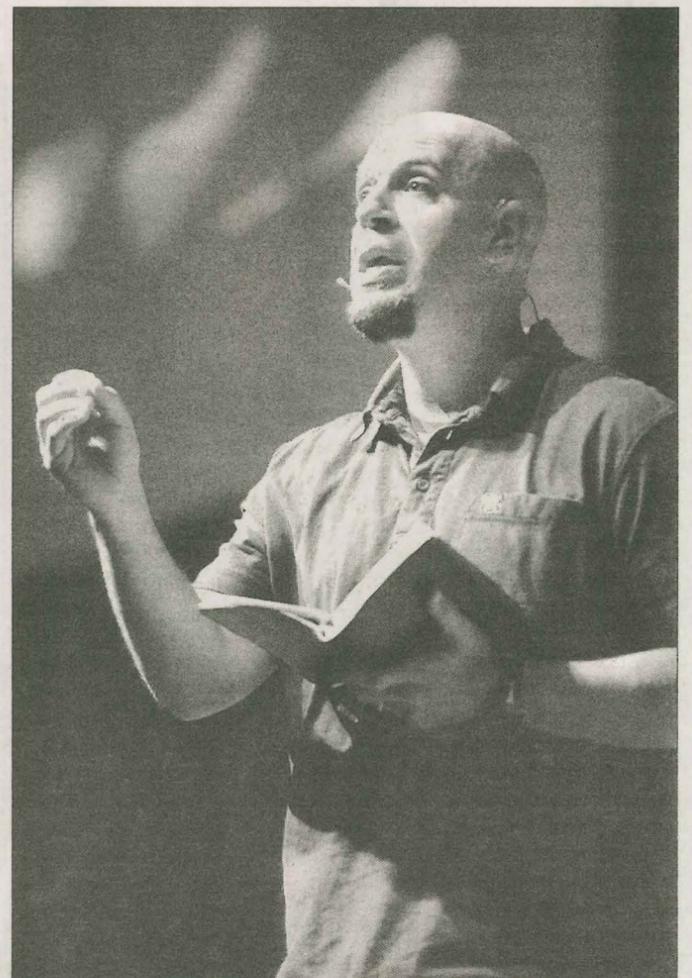
"God has shed a lot of light into my life," said Bastin, who plans to study music at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro this fall. "Centrifuge has been informative, yet entertaining. The teachers are great and the Bible study group time is very meaningful. I would encourage any student to come to camp if the Lord lays it on their heart."

The camp experience

Overton, a six-year veteran of Centrifuge camps, said the highlight of each camp is learning from students from other churches. "It's also a way to get away from the world and get alone with God," he added.

"Students should realize that they need to get out of their comfort zone and camp is a great way to do that," Overton stated. "Through the years, the camps have been life-changing for me and they have been something that I have looked forward to every year."

"Every time I leave Fuge, I want the camp experience to stay with me all year," he added. "Fuge has been a spiritual booster. I would encourage



anyone to come. MFuge is about serving and Centrifuge is about fun and spiritual growth. Both are great."

Overton said the evening sermons on holiness most influenced his spiritual growth.

"Holiness is an issue for everyone," he said. "I realize that as I get older in my group, the younger students look up to me, so I want to represent Christ the best I can."

Encouraging young people to serve the Lord, Overton cautioned against the ills of comfort, "whether it is at work or at school."

"I would encourage students to grow in the Lord and step out of their comfort zones," he declared. "My student minister always reminds us, 'Greatest is the one who serves.' Service may not always be fun, but it's necessary."

Next year, as Centrifuge marks its 30th anniversary, LifeWay will organize eight camps featuring simultaneous offerings of Centrifuge, XFuge and XFuge on Mission. Three events will be held at Ridgecrest Conference Center and five at Glorieta Conference Center. The Glorieta camp will also feature MFuge, a missions-based camp experience. All events will be held during June and July.

To learn more about all 2008 Fuge camps, visit www.lifeway.com/fuge.

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