

PRactical Resources for Christian Living

WESTERN RECORDER

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FOR THE RECORD

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Bangladesh relief efforts get funding following cyclone

Nashville (BP)—Southern Baptists are working with Bangladesh Baptist leaders to identify areas of greatest need after a Nov. 15 cyclone killed more than 3,400 people in the Ganges River delta along the Bay of Bengal.

An initial \$50,000 in Southern Baptist relief funds have been released. Requests for additional funds are expected because relief will be needed in multiple areas.

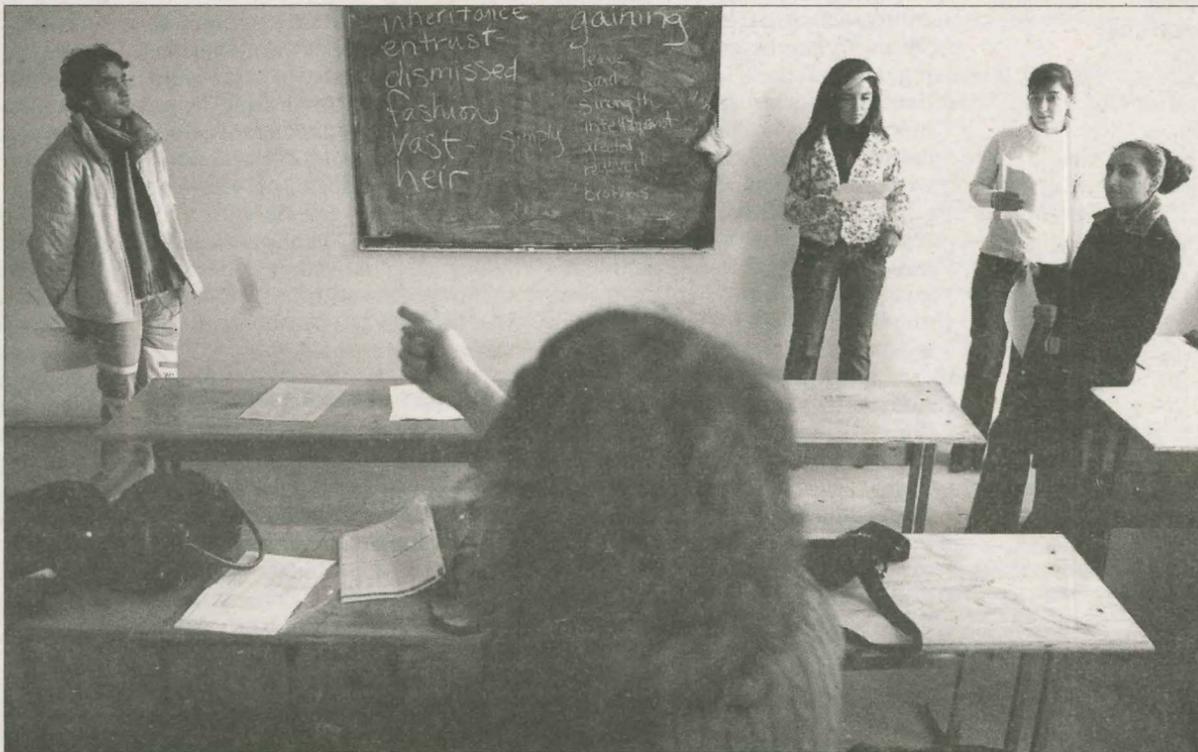
Although as many as 2 million people obeyed government evacuation orders, there appear to have been many who tried to ride out the storm as Cyclone Sidr's 155-mph winds lashed homes.

The toll could reach 10,000 once rescuers reach outlying islands, according to assessments compiled by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, the Muslim equivalent of the International Red Cross.

The Bangladeshi government did a good job of getting relief supplies in place before the storm hit, said Jim Brown, U.S. director for Baptist Global Response, a Southern Baptist international development and relief organization. Military helicopters are dropping emergency rations into areas not yet accessible by road.

"Our strategy is to work with the Bangladesh Baptist Convention to identify areas that are not being adequately helped and focus our efforts there," Brown noted.

Faith lessons



University students in one of the former Soviet republics in central Asia polish their English skills during a classroom exercise. Their teacher (foreground) uses a morality-based curriculum to lead classroom discussion toward matters of faith. (BP photo)

Morality-based lessons nudge students toward faith in Christ

By Don Graham
SBC International Mission Board

Central Asia (BP)—Chalk races across a blackboard as Anne-Marie Bennett* struggles to keep pace with her students. The names are coming quickly now—Napoleon, Washington, Stalin. She has asked her class to list the world's greatest leaders, and they have plenty of suggestions.

But the 37-year-old Southern Baptist worker's next question is more telling.

"Between wealth, intelligence, strength and love, which is most important in a leader?" Bennett asks.

She assigns a trait to each corner of the room and tells her students to move to the one they would pick. Once the shuffle is finished, only the "love" corner remains empty.

The exercise is part of the morality-based curriculum Bennett uses to teach English and share Jesus with university students in the former Soviet Union.

It's also a clue to the overwhelming lostness that consumes the central Asian nation where she ministers.

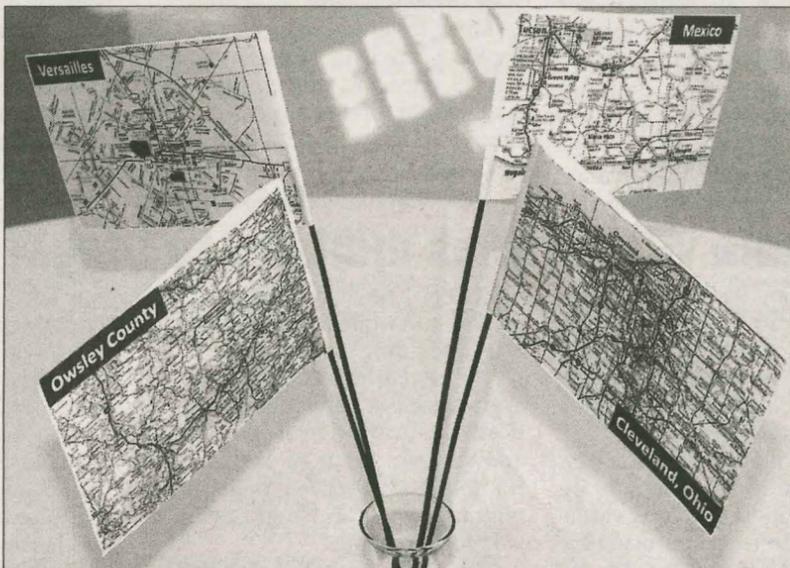
Fewer than 2 percent of Bennett's people group identify themselves as evangelical Christians. Most are Muslim, though decades of communist rule ground their Islamic faith to a thin veneer.

"They're Muslim because they're told they're Muslim," noted Tom Sterling,* a Southern Baptist worker who serves with Bennett. "Most haven't read the Koran, but they'll tell you that's what they believe in."

□ See *Missionary teaches ... Page 8*



Missions-minded Ky. Baptist churches accept Acts 1:8 Challenge



MISSION MAPS Maps symbolizing four proposed mission fields are displayed during Versailles Baptist Church's Acts 1:8 Challenge Kickoff Sunday earlier this month. The maps are of Versailles, Owsley County, Cleveland and Mexico. Versailles Baptist has developed missions partnership with a church plant in Cleveland and an orphanage in Naco, Sonora, Mexico. (Photo courtesy of Michael Cabell)

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

Elizabethtown—After its major relocation earlier this year, Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown wanted to re-focus the energy that drove its move to its new facilities on Ring Road.

Pastor Billy Compton and church leaders found their purpose in the Acts 1:8 Challenge, the missions emphasis that encourages churches to reach out to their community, state, nation and world.

"It's an accountability thing," said Compton, whose church recently hosted the Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting. "People are being more intentional about doing missions. It helps motivate the church to continue becoming a worldwide missions center."

The Acts 1:8 Challenge spans several Southern Baptist agencies, including the North American Mission Board, International Mission Board

and cooperating state conventions and associations.

Started in May of 2004 at First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ga., it has since spread to more than 3,200 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, including nearly 130 in Kentucky.

That ranks the commonwealth 11th among Southern Baptist state conventions. While the number is growing, it represents only about 5 percent of Kentucky's churches.

"I think it takes a while for it to feed down," said Randy Jones, the KBC's missions growth team leader. "It takes a while to talk to Kentucky Baptists."

The Acts 1:8 Challenge creates awareness of the need for all church members to become missionaries, whether that means going overseas or talking to a neighbor, Jones noted.

"This is one thing where church- □ See *Churches in Ky. ... Page 3*

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, Nov. 28.

“Contextualization ... helps us avoid building rectangular buildings for people who live in round huts.”

Gordon Fort, IMB vice president for overseas operations

IMB trustees adopt cross-cultural principles

By Don Graham
Baptist Press

Richmond, Va. (BP)—Making the gospel more accessible to the world's 6,500 unreached people groups is the goal of new guidelines adopted by trustees of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board during their meeting earlier this month.

Trustees outlined five “principles of contextualization” to further the church-planting efforts of 5,300-plus Southern Baptist missionaries serving around the globe. The guidelines’ purpose is to help missionaries more effectively share Christ across cultural and religious boundaries without compromising the gospel.

“Anthropology and sociology teach us that every people group has distinctive differences in language and culture,” explained Gordon Fort, IMB vice president for overseas operations.

“Contextualization allows a missionary to separate a people’s traditions from our doctrinal foundations and apply an appropriate trelis that shapes the new church in its most indigenous form. This allows new believers to grow within a cultural framework that is true to biblical foundations. It helps us avoid building rectangular buildings for people who live in round huts.”

Rankin affirms trustee action

Noting that the guidelines already are practiced by Southern Baptist missionaries, IMB President Jerry Rankin affirmed the action.

“Most of the peoples of the world will never be willing to hear and receive a Christian witness until it is communicated in a way they can understand,” Rankin said.

“These principles recognize the challenges our missionaries face in taking the gospel to Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, animist and postmodern cultures,” he noted. “They provide valuable and sound guidelines for entering into dialogue and witness across religious barriers and concepts to introduce the fact that Jesus Christ is the only way to God the Father.

“Contextualization is not implied compromise of the gospel message or the authority of God’s Word; it is simply communicating it in a way that will be understandable in a local language and cultural worldview,” Rankin added. “An evangelistic witness does not embrace a foreign concept of God or perverted religious ideas but shows respect and understanding of what others believe in order to open hearts to the claims of the gospel.”

“Principles of contextualization”

An overview of the principles of contextualization adopted by IMB trustees include:

1. We affirm that the Bible is the only infallible text that exists. It is appropriate to evaluate all other books by the Bible. ... Content that is in accord with biblical truth should be embraced. What is contrary to sound doctrine should be rejected.

2. We affirm that there is a biblical precedent for using “bridges” to reach out to others with the gospel (Acts 17:22-23). ... Out personnel may use elements of their host culture’s worldview to bridge to the gospel. This need not be construed as an embracing of that worldview. ... Our evangelism must go beyond bridges to present the whole unvar-

nished truth of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

3. We affirm an incarnational approach to missions that is bound by biblical parameters. Following the example of Him who became flesh (John 1:14), it is appropriate that our personnel continue to tailor their ministry to their setting. ... We advocate the learning and appropriate utilization of language and culture. Constant vigilance is required lest contextualization degenerate into syncretism.

4. We affirm both the sufficiency and unique nature of biblical revelation (2 Timothy 3:14-17). We deny that any other purported sacred writing is on a par with the Bible. While reference to a target people group’s religious writings can be made as a part of bridge building, care should be exercised not to imply a wholesale acceptance of such.

5. We affirm the need to be ethically sound in our evangelistic methodology (2 Corinthians 4:2). Becoming all things to all men in an incarnational approach does not necessitate an ethical breach. Jesus instructed His disciples to be as “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16). We are to be wise in our bridge building. We are to be harmless in our integrity as we hold forth the truth.

Integrity requires, for example, that we not imply that a false prophet or a body of religious writings other than the Bible are inspired. There is a level of contextualization that crosses the line of integrity. Our board has dismissed personnel who have refused counsel and deliberately positioned themselves beyond that line.

Chapman urges ministers to take part in CP survey

Nashville (BP)—Morris Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, recently mailed letters to every church pastor in the SBC, asking them to participate in a Cooperative Program/stewardship survey.

Chapman said the purpose of the survey is “to collect data that will provide an empirical baseline of our churches’ thoughts, feelings and perceptions about Cooperative Program/stewardship and to give us insights for developing a more focused strategy in the promotion of CP and stewardship across the convention.”

LifeWay Research is conducting the survey.

Chapman noted that “every pastor plus five members of each church in the convention are being asked to participate. We are asking some very tough questions in this survey—many of the questions are groundbreaking in nature.

“The survey provides the churches of the convention an opportunity to both praise and criticize what we are collectively doing with the gifts given through the Cooperative Program,” Chapman added. “We can only improve the value added to the Cooperative Program gifts we receive if we know the heart of our churches in their giving practices.”

BAPTIST DIGEST

Child dies after accident with Baptist volunteers. A team of Baptist volunteers on their way to feed flood victims in southern Mexico accidentally killed a child in a traffic accident Nov. 15. Members of Texas Baptist Men were driving through a small village in Mexico when children attempting to sell things began darting around their slow-moving vehicle, witnesses said. One child misjudged the van’s speed and ran into the side of it, causing a large gash in the boy’s head, group leaders said. He died two days later in an area hospital. Local authorities detained the van driver, who was released and cleared of all charges. The men’s group is seeking to contact and minister to his family.

Crews elected Northwest executive director. Messengers to the Northwest Baptist Convention elected Bill Crews, former president and chancellor of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, as executive director during their Nov. 13-14 annual meeting in Yakima, Wash. Crews, 71, had been serving as the convention’s interim executive director since April 1. Presenting Crews on behalf of the convention’s Executive Board, Washington pastor Joe Martin described Crews as the “youngest mature man I know,” a reference to Crews’ energy and creative thinking even after more than 50 years in ministry.

New name in store for Canadian Baptists. Canadian Southern Baptists are just one vote away from adopting a new name—Canadian National Baptist Convention—to more accurately reflect their geographic location. A final vote on changing the name will be held at next year’s annual meeting of the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists. Gerry Taillon, national ministry leader for the CCSB, said confusion caused by the word “Southern” in the convention’s title is a key reason for the change. “To the uninitiated in Baptist and evangelical life, ‘Southern’ is a geographical term,” he noted. Taillon said he believes the proposed new name accurately reflects “who we are” while reaffirming “our absolute loyalty and our prized partnership” with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Louisiana Baptists ensure control of institutions

Alexandria, La.—Messengers to the Louisiana Baptist Convention annual meeting adopted without discussion a measure that ensures the convention has complete control of its college and other affiliated institutions.

The measure amended the charters of convention-related entities to clarify that the convention owns the institutions.

The entities affected include Louisiana College, the only institution of higher education related to the convention, as well as the Louisiana Baptist Foundation and Louisiana Baptist Children’s Home.

The move was necessitated by the convention’s decision to incorporate a year ago, according to Frances LaRocque, chairman of the state con-

vention’s Executive Board. LaRocque is pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Lake Charles, La.

The convention’s 2008 budget, an increase of more than \$10,000 from the current year, anticipates \$13,655,183 in giving from Louisiana Baptist churches. The budget includes 64.5 percent for Louisiana Baptist ministries and 35.5 percent for Southern Baptist Convention causes. Receipts exceeding the budget will be divided 50/50 between the state convention and SBC causes.

Mike Holloway, pastor of Cook Baptist Church in Ruston, La., was elected president over Chuck Pourciau, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., by a vote of 513-314.

Messengers adopted several reso-

lutions that spanned the gamut of moral and cultural concerns, including measures opposing hate crimes legislation and partial-birth abortion and affirming pastors showing active Christian citizenship as well as calls for protecting children from abuse and for personal and corporate repentance.

During the pre-convention Cenla Family Fun Days evangelistic outreach, more than 300 people made professions of faith in Christ. Twenty-seven churches hosted the series of coordinated events.

The Cenla Family Fun Days included motorcycle stunt riding, skateboarding acrobatics, bull riding and neighborhood block parties. *Compiled from reporting by Associated Baptist Press and Baptist Press*

Oklahoma vote affirms ministry to illegal immigrants

Moore, Okla. (ABP)—Messengers to the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma adopted a resolution emphasizing non-discriminating ministry to illegal immigrants.

The resolution dealt with a new state law making it a felony to associate with undocumented immigrants. Messengers, in approving the resolution, said they don’t “necessarily agree (with) or oppose the new law,” but will continue to minister to anyone.

Convention spokeswoman Heidi Wilburn said Christians should

place their “No. 1 focus” on God and look to government as a second priority, according to news reports.

The resolution states: “Christians are under biblical mandate to respect the divine institution of government and its laws. Let it be known that House Bill 1804 related to illegal immigration will not change their ministry to any people.”

The local Catholic archdiocese and the Muslim community of Oklahoma City have also sent letters of protest to Gov. Brad Henry.

Messengers adopted 10 other resolutions, including ones opposing

“any hate-crimes legislation that potentially criminalizes speech and belief”; opposing the sale of alcohol in Oklahoma grocery and convenience stores; and affirming the Southern Baptist Convention’s “conservative resurgence” which “returned us to our historic roots of commitment to the Bible as the infallible and inerrant Word of God.”

In other action, messengers adopted a record budget for 2008, anticipating \$24.6 million in Cooperative Program gifts. That’s an increase of \$1.1 million from the current budget.

KBC approves two new High Impact church plants

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—The Kentucky Baptist Convention expanded its roster of High Impact churches recently with the approval of two church plants in the eastern part of the state.

Hillside Community Church in Catlettsburg and New Heights in Pineville were granted High Impact status earlier this month.

The addition of the new congregations increases the number of church plants in the initiative to 13. According to Larry Baker, KBC's director of new work and associational missions, that is one shy of the goal set for the first three years of the plan, which was instituted as part of Kentucky Baptists Connect in 2003.

Baker mentioned that the High Impact plan is gaining momentum and "we've got several on the plate right now." He added that the High Impact church initiative remains on target to meet the five-year goal of 25 such churches and noted that the goal of beginning five High Impact congregations in eastern Kentucky has already been met.

Hillside Community Church is being led by Tim Holmes who most recently served as associate pastor of education at Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green, which is Hillside's sponsoring church. While the congregation may call Catlettsburg and the Ashland area home, Holmes insisted that it is not targeting a region.

"When we say 'target,' we're not speaking geographically or of age," he explained, "we're speaking of condition. Our target group is the unchurched or dechurched and that means anywhere."

Hillside currently worships in an old courthouse in Catlettsburg and averages between 60 and 80 people each week. Holmes said the church has not yet set an official launch date.

New Heights in Pineville is a first-of-a-kind congregation in that its sponsoring church is another High Impact church—Mountain Community Fellowship in Paintsville. The church is led by Pastor Mark Elkins.

Elkins described New Heights as a "changing church for a changing world."

"We believe that anytime you come into the presence of Jesus, He's going to change you," he emphasized.

New Heights currently occupies a storefront, as well as a movie theater in Pineville on Sunday mornings. The young church has set a launch date of Jan. 20, 2008, but is already holding worship services with as many as 70 people in attendance.

Churches in Ky. accept Acts 1:8 challenge

Continued from page 1

es can be more strategic in planning, budgeting and training," he added. "It's a process of people learning about missions through involvement."

Participants are asked to embrace an eight-point plan to stimulate involvement, such as education, prayer, giving and increasing short- and long-term missions opportunities.

"This is not a program, it's an initiative," said Tim Yarborough, NAMB's director of church relations and the Acts 1:8 Challenge coordinator. "Pastors who have prayed about it, taught it and understand what it's all about, ... they see all the things God can do with it."

That is the case at Severns Valley, which made Acts 1:8 its churchwide emphasis through the end of 2008.

The church kicked off the effort last August with a leadership dinner and Sunday service featuring former SBC President Jim Henry as the keynote speaker.

Members were asked to signify their agreement to pray, give or go by taking a bracelet with a passage from Acts 1 stamped on it.

Among its first steps to promote missions-mindedness in the community was canceling a Halloween alternative party at the church.

Instead, students printed up cards on how to connect with Jesus and Severns Valley, with members encouraged to hand them out with candy on trick-or-treat night.

On Thanksgiving, the church hosted a dinner for clients of a benevolence ministry, homeless shelter and crisis pregnancy center.

While its 2008 calendar isn't complete, among activities planned are a family mission trip to Baltimore, participating in a Habitat for Humanity home building project and a medical mission to Brazil.

"It's creating a lot of remarkable energy and passion for getting outside the walls of the church," Compton said.

"Ongoing program"

Versailles Baptist Church is another congregation that recently joined the initiative, kicking off its campaign Nov. 5 with a missions fair and special worship service.

"Instead of shooting for a one-time thing, we think it's better to host an ongoing program," said Michael Cabell, minister of evangelism and discipleship. "Acts 1:8 gives us a chance to do that."

Versailles Baptist already has planned six missions activities for 2008. They include a service day next April, community block party in July and a pair of trips to the Owsley County Food Place Ministry in Booneville. Outside Kentucky, teams will visit Baltimore and Mexico.

That compares to a single trip this year to Biloxi, Miss., to do hurricane relief.

Cabell added that he hopes to involve 90 members in short-term mission trips and 150 in local service activities next year. That goal represents 51 percent of its average Sunday attendance of 450.

In the past, Versailles Baptist has taken a number of mission trips to such places as Russia, Venezuela and

Some churches embrace challenge, others decline

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

Paducah—Lone Oak First Baptist Church was one of the first Kentucky Baptist churches to enlist in the Acts 1:8 Challenge, signing up soon after its launch in the spring of 2004.

Lone Oak's multi-faceted effort includes several outreach projects in the Paducah area, helping at a home for troubled teens in Mayfield, and continuing visits to Lynch and Oneida Baptist Institute.

Outside the state, numerous teams have visited the Gulf region to do hurricane relief. Overseas trips are scheduled next year to Ethiopia, Zambia and Morocco.

Counting the hundreds who help distribute food to needy families at Christmas and with Operation Christmas Child, Jeff Wallace estimates nearly half of the church's 3,000 members participate in some form of missions activity.

"It's missions that gets people involved," said Wallace, Lone Oak's minister of global outreach since 2004. "We have to help people think about Acts 1:8—to learn about missions, pray for it, give and go."

A missionary to Thailand and Spain before he came to the western Kentucky church, Wallace credited the initiative with creating more of a missions mindset.

Fourteen percent of the budget went to missions in the 2007 church year and a similar amount is pledged for the coming year, according to Pastor Dan Summerlin.

Since the Acts 1:8 Challenge began, giving is up in all areas, including a record \$60,000 donation to last year's Lottie Moon international missions offering, the pastor noted.

"Any time a church gets involved in missions, it affects everything," Summerlin said, adding that opportunities are available to every church. "It's a ripple effect where people begin to see missions opportunities everywhere."

However, it appears some Kentucky Baptists don't share Lone Oak's enthusiasm for the Acts 1:8 Challenge.

In response to that, Randy Jones, missions growth team leader for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and a representative of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board visited three cities in mid-September to explain the concept.

"I can't say there is major interest," Jones said. "A few pastors I talked to said, 'This is just another national promotion and then they'll be on to something else.'"

However, Jones explained that convention officials assure him the initiative will be around for years to come.

In addition, he said the SBC offers numerous printed resources, many of which can be downloaded from the web site (www.actsone8.com), videos and support materials.

After reaching the 2,000 mark in December of 2005, momentum has slowed, with just over 3,200 churches currently registered.

However, an official with the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board said the agency has decreased its emphasis on registration this year to spend time beefing up resource materials.

"Churches have asked us to put together some programs to help them put feet to their commitment," noted Tim Yarborough, NAMB's Acts 1:8 Challenge coordinator. "We've taken their ideas and put together new tools that churches can use."

Among those are materials for a kickoff celebration, an Acts 1:8 leadership seminar, a students' weekend based on Discipleship Now, an outline for an Acts 1:8 Renewal Weekend and curriculum that will be released in January.

There is also an Acts 1:8 on-line directory store that allows churches to create customized banners, displays and bulletin inserts.

"I've promoted a lot of things over the years but there's something going on with Acts 1:8," Yarborough said. "We're looking at Southern Baptists who have always had a passion for missions get re-ignited. Acts 1:8 reminds them what church is all about."

Mexico. The congregation also has a couple on the mission field in central Asia and a single woman preparing for a two-year assignment in the Pacific Rim.

However, Cabell noted enlisting in the Acts 1:8 Challenge will promote a more coordinated effort.

"It gives us this comprehensive strategy instead of doing a trip here or an emphasis there," he said. Acts 1:8 "are the last words Jesus gave to the church."

"We're trying to be obedient to that. We're trying to be well-rounded in each of the four fields and enable God's Kingdom to grow."

In addition, Versailles Baptist hopes to revamp its mission education program and create a new Women on Mission group for young adults.

Cabell said the advantage of the initiative is its flexibility, since a church does not necessarily have to do missions in each sphere.

That means even the smallest church can be involved in one area while supporting the others with giving and prayer, he added.

Cabell said he believes people grow in their relationship with the Lord by serving others on the mission field, which means enabling more people to serve will strengthen the church.

"Having a revival may not just mean having a speaker, but taking a trip with the Acts 1:8 Challenge."



CHURCH ON MISSION

■ **Left:** A student from Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown volunteers at a local crisis pregnancy center, meeting the Acts 1:8 Challenge of community missions.

■ **Below:** Families from Severns Valley assist those affected by Hurricane Katrina near Biloxi, Miss. (Photos courtesy of Severns Valley Baptist Church)



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

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Trusting God with your financial future

By Howard Dayton

Gainesville, Ga. (BP)—So, what's in your future? No, this has nothing to do with horoscopes, but many Christians make financial decisions based on fear of the future instead of trust that God will provide for them.

Fear of the future can cause families to forfeit the blessings of God because they base decisions on the latest headline or stock market report. Too often, Christians give little thought to God's ability to take care of them.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't plan ahead to ensure financial stability for our families. However, when Christians find that attitudes of fear and worry are motivating financial decisions, they need to reevaluate their financial priorities and recommit to trust in the Lord.

Withholding from God

Often, Christian families that are motivated by fear of the financial future will cut back on their tithes and offerings. Mistakenly, they see this as a first step in an attempt at financial stability.

Recent events such as U.S. relations with North Korea, war in Iraq, gasoline prices, major layoffs and an unstable economy have caused many Americans to be concerned about the future.

The U.S. economic slowdown has the financial well-being of many Americans hanging in the balance. They worry about not having enough money to pay normal monthly bills, and the rash of recent mortgage defaults has devastated many families. Many Americans live so close to the edge financially that a prolonged economic downturn could put them in serious financial straits.

Even though many people are concerned about the financial future, consumer spending has not dropped proportionately. Actually, there has been very little change in the percentage of income that Americans spend.

Still, there has been a shift in how the funds are spent. Less money is being saved and contributed to churches and charitable organizations, while more is being spent on credit card interest, recreation, alcohol, gambling and pets.

This gives us good reason to pause and review what Jesus said: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ... No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money" (Matthew 6:21, 24).

The Bible says we are to honor God with the tithe—the first-fruits of our income. Keeping our financial vows to God is the way to ensure that we will not become victimized by a financial downturn.

Withholding your financial commitments to the Lord so that you can buffer yourself against potential future financial hardships will end up costing your financial security rather than guarding it, simply because God's blessings will not be on such a self-imposed buffer.

Faith conquers fear

Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as something we hope for that we do not presently have. God's plan seems to be that we have some needs so that we can develop our faith in Him. It is vital for us to view potential future financial needs as opportunities to exercise and develop our faith.

No Christian can truly serve God and live in fear of financial loss. Jesus makes it clear in the passage from Matthew 6 that we must make a choice—either serve God or money; we cannot serve both. Fear of our financial future exhibits a lack of trust in God and in His provision. In other words, when we fear the future, we choose to serve the fear of financial loss, rather than to trust and serve God Who has conquered all fear and holds the future in His hands.

We live in a materialistic society and generally base our priorities on

desires and wants rather than on needs. The perspective of what is actually a need is often clouded by what our materialistic society says we need.

Although God has promised that He will always supply our needs, He has not promised that He will supply all of the wants that society calls our needs. Even though we sincerely ask God to honor our request to supply the money to repair our microwave, automatic dishwasher or second car, His answer may very well be "no."

You see, we may be asking with the wrong motives (James 4:3). It may not be the right time, according to God's will and purpose (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). Or it may be contrary to His overall plan (Acts 21:13-14). After all, we are to serve God, not expect Him to serve us (Job 41:11).

Steps to trusting God

There are some important steps we must follow that will help us trust God completely with the present and the future:

- Find God's direction for your life. Most frustrations that Christians experience are the result of trying to model their lives after someone else's life. Instead, through prayer and study, find God's will for you.

- Make a conscious effort to trust God. Put thoughts, words and commitments into action and trust God. Don't buy on credit. Plan ahead and wait for God to supply your needs.

- Develop a long-range perspective. Trust God's directives and His guidance (Matthew 6:34).

- Pray diligently. Prayer is the key that unlocks God's blessings, power and direction (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).

Although we are bombarded daily with events that can cause doubt concerning our financial future, we must never doubt that God is in complete control. Refuse to panic and do not be governed by fear of the future. Keep your commitments and vows to God, pray without ceasing and trust your future to Him without reservation.

Howard Dayton is co-founder of Crown Financial Ministries

- One week: \$785.
- One day: \$111.
- One hour: \$4.66.
- One minute: \$.08.

This helps me understand that every gift counts for the cause of missions—even the widow's mite.

The theme for this year's Week of Prayer for International Missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas offering is "Tell Me the Story of Jesus." The Lottie Moon Offering goal is \$165 million. Our gifts are a wonderful way for each of us to help tell the story of Jesus to people around the world.

All of these numbers can overwhelm us and we can be tempted to think that our gift will not make a difference. However, when I read the e-mails from my dear friends who are serving as missionaries, my gift becomes very personal. As I read of their courage and sacrifice in serving in very difficult places, I cannot help but be moved to do my part in supporting their work.

God is counting on you and me to complete the story of Acts 1:8.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

COMMENTARY

GIVING

As '08 draws near,
God calls us to be
faithful stewards

By Doug Strader

As we enter the holiday season, the beginning of a new year is just a few weeks away. Our record for the year of 2007 is almost complete. We cannot change anything about this



past year, but we can do something about 2008.

In Philippians 3:13-14 the Apostle Paul wrote, "But one thing I do: Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." What a difference it would make in our lives if we could live by Paul's admonition to the Philippian Christians.

When most Christians think about stewardship, they think of money—and that is part of our stewardship responsibility. But the truth is we are to be stewards of all our lives. Included in that responsibility is our time, talents, possessions and spiritual gifts.

Most of us can find room for improvement in one or more of these areas of life. Maybe we have been faithful in giving our tithes and offerings to the Lord through the church, but we have been lax in giving our time and using our talents and spiritual gifts for Him. If you are serious about your faithfulness in every area of your stewardship responsibility, the beginning of a new year is an ideal time to begin anew with that commitment.

Paul began by forgetting the past. That is the place for us to begin also. It is not always easy to forget the past, but it is an essential part of our growing commitment of being faithful stewards. If we have asked God to forgive us, according to the Bible He forgave us. (1 John 1:9).

The next step is to forgive ourselves. Then move forward. The word Paul used was straining. It would not be easy; it would take effort and some "stick-to-it-ness." But that was his goal; he had something to encourage him to go forward.

If we will commit our lives to God and His will for our lives of being faithful stewards, and if we will strain to meet the goal, we can do it. We can be faithful stewards in 2008 if we begin now to be faithful.

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

Reaching a lost world for Christ

Acts 1:8 tells us to share the gospel with all people. As Southern Baptists, we are certainly striving to do just that but there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done.

To drive this home, here are some statistics from the Southern Baptist International Mission Board:

- There are 11,372 distinct people groups among a total world population of 6.6 billion.

- Of these people groups, 6,512 (3.6 billion people) are unreached for Christ. This means that less than 2 percent of the people in these groups are evangelical Christians.

- 5,900 people groups (1.6 billion people) are considered to be "last frontier." This means that less than 2 percent of the people are evangelical Christians and that there is no active church planting.

- There are 2,082 unreached people groups with populations of 100,000 or more. Of these unreached

groups, 638 have no evangelical Christian missionary work taking place with them at all.

- There are 1,140 people groups directly or indirectly engaged by IMB personnel (through 5,309 field missionaries). IMB reported 475,072 baptisms, 23,486 new churches and 590,890 new believers in discipleship last year.

Because of the unreached people groups around the world and the clear command of our Lord to share the gospel, we as believers should give sacrificially to support international missions. This is especially important this year because the shrinking buying power of the dollar overseas means it will require more funds to support the same level of missions work.

You may find it helpful to know the amount required to support an international missionary:

- One year: \$40,866.
- One month: \$3,405.

PARTNERS
IN
THE MISSION

Bill Mackey

Advent celebration can help affirm meaning of Christmas

Q: What are practical ways I can keep my Christmas celebration from being so materialistic and exhausting?

Try practicing Advent. Having an intentional, daily spiritual practice the weeks leading up to Christmas takes the emphasis off the world's priorities of buying, decorating and partying and puts the emphasis on the spiritual. Be intentional in getting spiritually ready for celebrating the coming of Christ. You can observe Advent with your church, Sunday school class, on your own, with your family or close friends. Here are a few ideas:

■ Read from an Advent devotional book each day.

■ Take Sabbath time. Contemplate the rest you have in God. Your work will wait a day or a half-day while you make time for an intentional spiritual focus.

■ Make a special gift to the church or a worthy charity as a Christmas gift to the Lord.

■ Light a candle each Sunday of the season.

■ Go to a Christmas Eve candlelight service.

■ Attend a Christmas concert such as a performance of Handel's Messiah.

■ Spend more time in Scripture; notice Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment.

■ Rather than always feasting, plan a mealtime where you will fast as intentional spiritual preparation.

■ Write an Advent journal entry for each day.

■ Dedicate a part of a day to serving the less fortunate such as the homeless.

■ Take inventory of your life and initiate a relationship of accountability with someone who can encourage you.

Just as you would invest time, money and attention in preparation if someone very special was coming to your house in a few days, take advantage of these days for spiritual renewal and formation. It is a way to make the Christmas season a time for spiritual uplift rather than a time of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual exhaustion.—James Stillwell

Q: Is it important for me to encourage my child to memorize Scripture?

In an essay published in her book, "Wrestling with the Text: Young Adult Perspectives on Scripture," sociologist Nancy Ammerman notes that many

mainline Protestant denominations are missing the opportunity to educate children about faith. In particular, Ammerman laments the fact that when children do attend Sunday school, "free-thinking teachers rarely ask them to memorize anything, lest they be accused of indoctrination."

There are some who believe that embedding all of those biblical images in our brains "makes us too accepting of patriarchy, too willing to trust authority and to willing to believe." Thus they shy away from Scripture memory. In contrast, Ammerman believes that "when we commit something to memory, it sinks deep and often resurfaces in surprising ways to meet new situations. Biblical fragments ... happily can grow with us, providing both a touchstone to the past and points of connection to new people and new meanings."

David reminds us that hiding God's Word in our hearts helps us live lives in keeping with His plans and purposes (Psalm 119:11). Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach us and remind us of His words and ways. As Ammerman says, "Those biblical words, in fact, the common language we speak as Christians, part of the toolkit with which we build ourselves and our communities of faith."

Children's Bible Drill and Bible Buddies encourage children to memorize Scripture. Wise parents will want their children to participate in these or similar programs.—David Garrard

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



KBC ministry efforts are far from routine

While the business sessions during the recent Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting were rather routine, the actual business was not.

In addition to the officer elections, Cooperative Program budget and resolutions, the 1,200 messengers and guests heard numerous reports about the work God is accomplishing through Kentucky Baptists. Of course, the vast majority of Kentucky Baptists miss the opportunity to hear such ministry reports firsthand.

In addition to the annual meeting coverage in the Western Recorder and online, another resource for convention messengers is the annual KBC Book of Reports. This year's 36-page tabloid report compiled by the KBC communications department staff includes more than 40 written reports from KBC teams, departments, agencies, institutions and committees as well as such resources as the KBC constitution and bylaws.

For the benefit of the thousands of Kentucky Baptists who didn't attend the Nov. 13-14 state convention gathering in Elizabethtown, here is a sampling of KBC ministry efforts from this year:

■ New work and associational missions (Larry Baker, director): "Planted 45 new churches in Kentucky in 2006: 21 Anglo, 18 Hispanic, one deaf and five others."

■ Mission service and ministries (Eric Allen, director): "There are 143 Kentucky 'connected' Mission Service Corps missionaries serving associations, churches and local ministries. ... Realized 1,317 professions of faith during previous year as a result of their ministries. This reflects a 15 percent increase over last year's reported professions of faith."

■ Partnership missions (Randy Jones, interim director): "The many projects Kentucky volunteers took part in were in these locations: Teresina, Brazil—prayerwalking, medical, evangelism, discipleship, vacation Bible school; Federal District of Brasilia—evangelism, VBS; Nice, France—evangelism, prayerwalking; Interlaken, Switzerland—extended teaching care, VBS, youth camps; Austria—Experiencing God weekends."

■ Baptist Men on Mission (Randy Foster, director): "Disaster relief volunteers helped with disaster responses in flooding in Floyd County, Ky.; ice storms in Missouri; snowstorm in Buffalo, N.Y.; floods in Oklaho-

ma; floods in Ohio; along with the continuing work in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Katrina."

■ Collegiate/young adult ministry (Keith Inman, director): "Hundreds of students continue to serve in mission and camp staff experiences throughout Kentucky, the U.S. and the world. ... Over 6,000 participated in some aspect of Baptist Campus Ministry. ... Over 1,000 international students had the opportunity to hear the gospel."

■ Sunday school (Darryl Wilson, director): "In Kentucky over the last 10 years, Sunday school enrollment declined from 333,056 to 326,203. ... In the same period, average weekly attendance in Kentucky increased from 174,971 to 179,665. ... Enrolling worship attenders and starting new classes must become a priority for the coming year."

■ Discipleship/assimilation (Steve Rice, director): "Our Kentucky Baptists Connect assimilation goal calls for 80 percent of new church members to remain active a year after joining the church. ... We will conduct an assimilation tour across the state during March, April and May 2008."

■ Youth ministry (Joe Ball, director): "Youth evangelism events (included) Freedom Experience with Brock Gill, August 2007, Lincoln County, Ky. Over 6,000 people attended; 227 salvation decisions."

■ Leadership development (Richard Adams, director): "Leadership development and spiritual formation are the Lord's strategy for equipping the body of Christ for our mission calling to journey with Jesus as He transforms the world. ... Our passion is to develop spiritual leaders from the inside out as they equip others to discover, develop and deploy their grace gifts."

■ Worship & music (Tog Goodson, director): "We strive to remain faithful to our vision 'to inspire meaningful corporate worship of God that reflects the diversity of each church congregation and to assist members in the discovery of spiritual gifts and music talents for ministry.'"

From church starts and disaster relief to discipleship and worship, these are just a few of the ways Kentucky Baptists are moving beyond business as usual for the sake of God's Kingdom.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Who are our true heroes?

By Charles Lawless

Louisville (BP)—Several years ago, I had the privilege of speaking to missionaries in Russia, and I commented that they were some of my heroes. With a humility that typifies missionaries, they encouraged me not to see them as heroes. "We're just doing what God called us to do," they told me.

I've heard the same spirit from pastors of churches that are genuinely reaching non-believers and making disciples of Christ. It seems like the more the church is really making an eternal difference, the more likely it is that the pastor is humble and self-effacing. Rather than make these missionaries and pastors feel uncomfortable, I tried to be more cautious with my words of praise.

I've since changed my mind. Ask our children who their heroes are, and I fear they would speak of a cartoon figure, a movie character or a television superhero. I hope they would name their parents, but I'm not persuaded that would always happen. I am fairly certain the children would not name their pastor, and I'm convinced most children would not identify a missionary as their hero. I doubt most could even name a missionary. William Carey and Lottie Moon are often un-

knowns, and present-day missionaries are equally unfamiliar.

That reality, I think, is tragic. Who of the next generation will take the gospel to the ends of the earth if they don't know the stories of missionaries? My wife, who teaches a missions group at our local church, told

the children that the guests next month would be missionaries from Africa. With the honesty of a child, a little girl asked her, "Really? Can we touch them?" Maybe her fascination with a missionary was excessive, but she might just have new heroes after she meets the missionaries. At least she will know about a missionary because someone taught her. And who knows? God might call that little girl to follow her new heroes into missionary service.

How many of our boys will be open to a call to ministry because their pastor has been a hero? How many will long to be like their pastor who preaches the Word, lives a holy life, models personal evangelism and loves God's church? One of my pastoral heroes, Jack Tichenor, preached God's Word for more than 60 years. Never did I hear him say a negative word about another person, nor did I ever see him miss an opportunity to speak a good word about Jesus. He was a pastoral evangelist until the day he died. If God

were to allow me to be even somewhat like "Brother Jack," I would be honored.

My point is not to rob God of His glory by being anthropocentric. Rather, it is to give God His due glory for the missionaries and pastors He has given the church. It is to praise Him for the leaders who have challenged us to follow God in radical obedience—to take the risks necessary to grow biblical churches by doing the Great Commission at a local, national and international level.

So, to the missionary who is serving in the middle of nowhere, know that you are one of my heroes. To the church planter starting a congregation amid millions of people in your urban setting, you are my hero as well. To the pastor who passionately shares Christ day in and day out, you, too, are numbered among my heroes. I know that makes all of you uncomfortable, but that's part of what makes you my heroes. You serve persistently and passionately without suffering from spiritual arrogance.

I call you my heroes without apology, knowing that you will deflect any praise to the gracious God who has chosen to call you and use you. I wish my children could know all of you.

Charles Lawless is dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

Compton offers keys to leading effective change

By **Trennis Henderson**
Editor

Elizabethtown—When it comes to navigating change, Billy Compton has plenty of firsthand experience.

Compton, pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, recently led his congregation through a major relocation process. But the church also has dealt with such issues as adding a contemporary worship service and reducing the number of church meetings from monthly to quarterly.

Opening his church's new facilities as host of the recent Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting, Compton also led a KBC workshop on "Leading Your Church through Change."

While insisting that "I'm not an expert when it comes to change," Compton emphasized that one of the keys to effective change is seeking to be strategic.

"Change can be defined as: Christ Himself Always Negotiates Greater Experiences," he noted. "For the church, there's a spiritual application to this ... if it's of God and you have prayed through the process."

Along with the spiritual dimension, Compton said it is important to "analyze the need for change."

"Sometimes a change doesn't need to be made," he acknowledged. At other times, "crisis creates situations where you have to change."

Once a leader determines change is needed, he said the next step is to "create a culture or climate for change, begin sharing the vision."

"If you're talking about changing worship style or relocating a church," he added, "you need a biblical basis for that."

"If you are a leader of change, appeal to the best in people and walk along with people" through the process, he suggested. "When you join hands and hearts for Jesus, you can do more together than you can alone."



Billy Compton

Reminding leaders to "build on your strengths, not your weaknesses," Compton said, "Don't begin with your problems; begin with your dreams and it's amazing what God can do."

"Whatever church you're in, you need to celebrate your heritage even if you're talking about the need to change things," he added. "The other thing is to realize you've got a future. You've got

to create that sense of destiny."

Emphasizing that "sometimes change is better caught than taught," Compton told workshop participants, "Being a pastor of a church is kind of like being a banker; you make deposits and withdrawals. If you make more withdrawals than deposits, you're in trouble."

Urging church leaders to "pray and work and show compassion and be consistent," he declared, "It takes unselfish people to grow a church. ... We must be willing to minister outside our comfort zones."

For churches already in the midst of change, "Thanksgiving is a good time to affirm your people and thank them," Compton pointed out. He called on church leaders to intentionally "find some ways to express your thanks."

Pastor highlights need to reach those far from God inside church

By **Drew Nichter**
News Director

Elizabethtown—How would Kentucky Baptists' commitment to witnessing and ministry change if they knew they had only one year left to share the gospel?

That was among the questions posed by Kevin Marsico at his workshop, "Creative Communication—How to Reach Those Far from God," at the recent Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting.

"If we knew ... beyond a shadow of a doubt Jesus would come back by next year's KBC annual meeting, what would you do different?" he asked workshop participants.

Marsico, who is pastor of Northstar Community Church in Ijamsville, Md., shared tips on how to effectively reach those who feel far away from God, but added that many who are included in that group are in church already. He said those needs must be addressed first.

"How do we communicate with those who are far from God internally, so that we can reach those who are far from God externally?" Marsico asked.

Noting that most churches tend to think in terms of "us and them," Marsico pointed out that both groups include many individuals who are "miserable" and "depressed."

"Our people typically feel exactly

like the 'thems,'" Marsico said. The only difference, he added, is that the "us" group knows the love of Christ.

Marsico challenged Kentucky Baptist pastors to "be thinking about the people that you're talking to."

To emphasize his point, Marsico urged pastors to "take responsibility for causing your students to learn." He said it is in all pastors' job descriptions to do just that, referring to Ephesians 4:11-13, which states that God raised up some "to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service ... and become mature." He added that teaching people "makes them mature" and that if "people aren't serving, we aren't doing our jobs."

Marsico recommended using props to illustrate a point in a sermon. He cited an example from his own church where he delivered a message about change, while changing clothes behind a curtain several times on stage.

Marsico stressed that because some people in church are just as far from God as those outside of church, ministers need to reevaluate their practices. He added that the task is not really as difficult as many people perceive it to be.

"We've got enough knowledge that this should be easy," Marsico declared. "The world is dying and going to hell; we have to ask some new questions."

Unity

IN ACTION

Atlanta, Georgia
January 30-February 1, 2008

Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant, a history-making milestone for Baptists in North America.

Spread the gospel. Promote peace with justice. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Shelter the homeless. Care for the sick and marginalized. Welcome the strangers among us. Set at liberty those who are oppressed.

These biblical mandates are shared by Baptists of all North American geographies, races, cultures and theologies. Members from all these groups will gather in Atlanta Jan. 30-Feb. 1 and explore ways to accomplish — together — the goals that Jesus inspired in Luke 4:18-19. The New Baptist Covenant Celebration will be a history-making event. Register for it today, and experience the power of unity at work.

PLENARY SPEAKERS:

- Charles Adams
- Tony Campolo
- Jimmy Carter
- Bill Clinton
- Al Gore
- Lindsey Graham
- Chuck Grassley
- Joel Gregory
- Bill Moyers
- Julie Pennington-Russell
- William Shaw
- Marian Wright Edelman

Plus 16 special interest sessions.

For program information, registration form or details about housing and transportation, visit our website www.newbaptistcovenant.org Or call (678) 547-6455.

Celebration
OF A
**NEW BAPTIST
COVENANT**

True holiday celebration

Find ways to serve widows, orphans & others in need

I hope that you are having a great holiday season. One of my favorite times of the year is the days between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. The time our ministry staff gets to spend with their families is greatly needed and enjoyed during this season.

During the last few months, God has been teaching me some lessons in life that are sometimes painful. I must admit that the balance between a life of faith and doing all we can as humans is difficult to follow on a daily basis.

The world in which we live is relentless in its attempts to shape our minds and our practices to be works-based. The world promises that we can have it all if we just work hard enough and the world tells us that we deserve it all; therefore we can use whatever means necessary to meet our "needs."

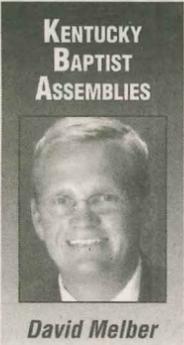
We must remember that the Bible says in James 1:27, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

Our command is to not be of the world but to be a light in the world. I know that my struggle is to live the life of faith by forsaking the things of this world that "stain" my heart and life.

A great tool to keep us from the world is to minister to these groups of people mentioned in James—the widow and orphan. These are groups of people that are in most cases fully dependent on others for their existence. Throughout the world there are an estimated 143 million orphans and many are in extreme poverty.

Our ministry has become active in the lives of orphans over the past four years. We are now entering a new phase of ministry with our project in Zambia to meet the needs of thousands of orphans in this impoverished country.

During this holiday season, take time to minister to someone in need. You will be blessed greatly, and most importantly, as James says, it will keep you from being stained by this world and to grow in practicing a life of faith.



David Melber

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

Home for the holidays

Sunrise helps heal a heart and find a nurturing home

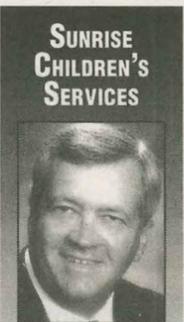
At Sunrise Children's Services, a spirit of thanksgiving is something we strive to feel on a daily basis. We're thankful for so many things, but most of all we're thankful for the successes of the children in our programs—kids like Marissa.

Marissa, currently age 13, suffered abuse over five years from her father and others close to her family. Like many children, she didn't tell anyone about the abuse. Finally, police came to her house during one abusive incident and she had the courage to tell them the truth. Her father was arrested, and Marissa was sent to live with an aunt.

Marissa's aunt was not supportive of her to the point that her state social worker placed her at our Genesis Center in Mayfield. There, Marissa was determined with the help of the staff to overcome the way her father and aunt mistreated her.

Meanwhile, the state researched Marissa's family and found that some of her family members had kept their distance from her immediate family because they knew how dysfunctional it was. They had completely lost contact with Marissa's immediate family. A distant cousin agreed to be Marissa's foster parent after she graduated from the program at Genesis. It took a lot of work—by the state, the Genesis staff and most of all Marissa herself—to achieve the goal of healing her heart and finding her a loving home.

Marissa will be spending this holiday season with her new family, and we rejoice with her because of that gift. But please remember in your prayers the many children in Sunrise's care who will be separated from family during the holiday season. Our prayer is that every hurting child's story ends like Marissa's did—in a nurturing home.



Bill Smithwick

Bill Smithwick is president of Sunrise Children's Services. Contact Sunrise at (502) 538-1000 or www.sunrise.org

For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

By Janet Kennedy

Across

- 1 "Meat offering baken in the ____" (Leviticus 2:7)
- 7 Part of a curved line
- 9 The sound of a cow
- 10 "As a man wipeth ____, wiping it, and turning it upside down" (2 Kings 21:13)
- 12 "My heart standeth in ____ of thy word" (Psalm 119:161)
- 14 Sweaty smell, in other words
- 16 Gold, chem. symbol
- 17 Peach state, abbr.
- 18 A cow's baby
- 20 Rounded dishes
- 21 Old Testament, abbr.
- 22 "The tongue of the wise ____ knowledge aright" (Proverbs 15:2)
- 24 Electrical engineer, abbr.
- 25 Compass point, abbr.
- 26 Tap gently
- 27 U.S. island commonwealth, abbr.
- 28 A man's name
- 31 Dish
- 34 Velocity, in other words, abbr.
- 35 Plan again
- 37 "Certain also of your own ____ have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28)
- 39 By way of
- 40 "Come unto ____, all ye that labour" (Matthew 11:28)
- 41 Occupational therapy, abbr.
- 42 "And he struck it into the pan, or ____, or caldron, or pot" (1 Samuel 2:14)
- 44 A shady place formed by trees or plants
- 46 A Catholic sister
- 48 Of the Navy
- 50 "____ maketh me to lie down in green pastures" (Psalm 23:2)

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			9				10			11		
12	13				14	15						16
17				18	19				20			
21							23					24
25											27	
		28	29				30		31	32		33
34						35		36				
37				38				39				40
41											43	
			44		45						46	47
48	49							50			51	
52												
							53					

- 51 Mouths or openings, Lat.
- 52 "For my ____ are many, and my heart is faint" (Lamentations 1:22)
- 53 "Yet they had a file for the ... ____ and the axes" (1 Samuel 13:21)

Down

- 1 "A ____ of wine" (2 Samuel 6:19)
- 2 Contraction of I am
- 3 "____ man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18)
- 4 A kind of drinking glass
- 5 Advertisement, abbr.
- 6 Nickel, chem. symbol
- 7 An exclamation of satisfaction
- 8 "Take thou now the spear ... and the ____ of water" (Samuel 26:11)
- 11 Cause to be seen
- 13 "The woman then left her ____, and went her way" (John 4:28)
- 15 "This do ye, as ____ as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25)
- 16 On guard
- 18 "Ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and ____" (Mark 7:8)
- 19 Belonging to Abia's son (Matthew 1:7)
- 23 A laugh

- 27 "Meat offering baken in a ____" (Leviticus 2:5)
- 29 Poem
- 30 "So the eyes of man are ____ satisfied" (Proverbs 27:20)
- 31 "Make clean the outside of the cup and the ____" (Luke 11:39)
- 32 California city, abbr.
- 33 "Believeth in him should not perish, but have ____ life" (John 3:15)
- 34 "The bowls, and the ____, ... wherewith they ministered, took they away" (Jeremiah 52:18)
- 36 "To him was given the key of the bottomless ____" (Revelation 9:1)
- 38 "And ____ lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran" (Genesis 11:26)
- 42 Knock out (boxing), abbr.
- 43 "And Seth lived ... and begat ____" (Genesis 5:6)
- 44 Average, abbr.
- 45 Barrels, abbr.
- 47 "I am the Lord that brought thee (Abram) out of ____ of the Chaldees" (Genesis 15:7)
- 49 "And Joshua sent men from Jericho to ____" (Joshua 7:2)
- 50 "____, everyone that thirsteth" (Isaiah 55:1)



Because 'Desperate Housewives' probably isn't your best source for family advice.

Missionary teaches students lessons of language, faith

Continued from page 1

Above Allah, many in this post-Soviet nation worship affluence. Here, what you have is more important than what you believe. From designer clothes to high-rise apartments, looking good and living well matter.

Indeed, it is the prospect of bigger paychecks that attracts many of Bennett's students. Elshad*, 17, is one of them. Clean-cut and energetic, the college freshman studies toward a career in the country's lucrative oil industry. Bennett pointed out that fluent English skills instantly can propel students like Elshad into the upper-middle class.

But with materialism also comes corruption. Students sometimes bribe professors for passing grades; police extort money from those they are supposed to protect.

Other problems abound as well. War forced many from their homes, leaving thousands displaced. Others wrestle with dubious job security following the Soviet Union's demise in the early 1990s. Unborn babies are routinely aborted as a substitute for birth control.

"There's just a sadness," Bennett said. "And if there's not a sadness, there's a hardness. People grasp for anything they can reach. And if (Christians) are not here to stand in the gap, what are they reaching for?"

Bennett prays the answer will be Christ. Her goal is to see new churches spring up across the country, starting with her students. But it cannot happen without the chance to share the gospel, and Bennett uses English as a tool to do that.

She has dubbed her classes "conversation clubs" for a reason. There

is no mention of dangling participles or diagramming sentences. Instead, students simply do a lot of talking. The idea is to practice and polish conversational English, building on language basics learned in earlier grades. A morality-based curriculum helps Bennett steer classroom conversations toward values and ethics, even faith.

No matter how deeply a spiritual conversation may delve, these types of witnessing opportunities are not silver bullets. Most of the students Bennett has helped lead to the Lord accepted Jesus only after repeated exposure to the gospel.

Her own salvation experience enables Bennett to empathize with students' issues with Christianity. Raised in a non-believing family, Bennett gave her life to Christ in college thanks to a friend who frequently invited her to church. Bennett said it is amazing how the Lord has given her common ground with the people He has called her to serve.

Despite such blessings, Bennett's ministry isn't a string of success stories. She also has endured bitter disappointment while serving in the former Soviet Union nation.

Four years ago, Bennett remembers standing on a beach as two of her students were dipped beneath the frigid waters of the Caspian Sea. Their baptisms were among the first fruits of a newborn church Bennett helped start in her home. Afterward, the band of believers held their first Lord's Supper.

"When everyone left that evening, God's peace rested on my house," she recalled. "And it was so beautiful and marvelous. ... But that was then."



SEEKING BETTER LIVES In one of the former Soviet republics of central Asia, university students collaborate on an in-class assignment involving new vocabulary words. Although these English classes do not count for university credit, students attend because good English skills translate into better paying jobs. (BP photo)

Soon the fledgling church began to fizzle. Within two years the congregation completely collapsed.

"Everything I had seen, understood and been a part of was basically falling apart," she said. "It caused me to wonder about God. Not that He wasn't sovereign; not that He couldn't or wouldn't work through this; but to wonder what He was about to do."

In that moment of despair, Bennett said the Lord threw her a life preserver—Isaiah 43:18-19a: "Forget the former things. Do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing."

"You can't shortcut the system for seeing fruit," she noted. "I made a greenhouse and wanted to see something grow quickly, and it did. But you can't keep the plant in the greenhouse forever. ... One day it has to come out."

Bennett added that she made a

conscious decision to step back from the church as it crumbled, knowing it needed to thrive, or die, on its own.

"I could have come in with Elmer's glue and bandages and repaired it, and it would still be limping along," she admitted. "If they want to gather again, they have the tools, understanding and discipleship behind them to do that. Perhaps one day they will."

Bennett is not allowing past failures to diminish her passion for seeing students come to Christ. She is busy rebuilding her ministry. She said God has blessed her with a core group of students with whom she has forged solid relationships.

"I'm praying for a few people who will say, 'We want to be discipled,'" she remarked. "I love working with students; I love sharing Jesus with them."

*Names changed for security reasons.

4-foot, 5-inches & 60 pounds of pure tiger

At Oneida, Robert is 'on the grow' spiritually, academically & emotionally

I have come to believe that, other than a physical or mental disability, there probably isn't anything more challenging for a young person to overcome than being small—often very small—for his age.

Often, these students are lumped together with children much younger and they are treated by peers and even adults as if they are much younger. Physically smaller children can become very frustrated. They want so much to be treated according to their age, not their size.

"Robert" (not his real name) enrolled in August. We knew from the application that he was small for his age. We also knew from his school records that, because of this, there had been some altercations, especially on the bus. Being treated as if he were younger than his age, Robert was quick to stand up for himself and let everyone know that they were not going to push him around.

I first became aware of Robert's temper when I had to correct him in the dining room. I have been working with young people most of my life and with Oneida students for the past 24 years. I usually know what to do and what not to do in order to gently but firmly correct a student.

I monitor the dining hall every school-day morning. I do not have much patience with students or adults who waste food. Because our students serve themselves, there is no reason for them to take more than he or she will eat. During the first two weeks of school, Robert repeatedly returned his tray with too much uneaten food. I gently reminded him to be a little more careful

about how much food he took. Each and every time, his response was hateful and volatile.

Because of his unexpected reaction, I was especially careful about how I corrected him but still I received the same response. One day I asked Robert why he was being so hateful when I had gone out of my way to be respectful in correcting him. I let him know that in the future if he continued to waste food and respond so hatefully when corrected, I would take a much different approach.

During the next few weeks I was careful not to provoke him. Little by little, I began to see a change in his attitude. I still had to remind him from time to time about taking more food than he could eat but when he was corrected he was careful to control his temper.

When I interviewed Robert before he enrolled, he told me he wanted to make better grades and to learn to cope better with his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. This year, he is repeating the eighth grade because last spring, before he came to us, he made three Fs. I am happy to report that, while he did make one F, the rest of Robert's grades have greatly improved, including two As. Not really that bad for only being here nine weeks. He is getting along well with his peers and has had a complete change of attitude when it comes to controlling his temper.

Though Robert is one of the smallest boys in our school, he is a basketball manager—a job he does very well. And, most important of all, Robert accepted Christ as his Savior and was baptized at the end of October. Hopefully Robert will continue to grow spiritually as well as physically.

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



W.F. Underwood

M.K. follows God to Clear Creek

Initial reluctance to missions transforms into obedience

Children of missionaries are often referred to as Missionary Kids or "M.K.s." First-year student Ashley Hensley, 19, falls into that category having spent the last 12 years of her life in Venezuela with her missionary parents.

"I loved life in Venezuela at first," Ashley said. "I liked making friends while we were there. We began to move a lot after we were there for a while, though, and it became difficult for me to leave my friends each time we would move. After a while, I just stopped making friends because I did not like having to leave them."

Ashley said that disappointment created in her an initial reluctance to accept God's call to be a missionary.

"I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior at age 6," she recalled. "When I was 12 years-old I knew God was calling me to be a missionary but I didn't want to follow that call because of my experiences with having to leave my friends ... as a missionary kid."

"About two years ago I found out about Clear Creek on the Internet and felt God calling me here

to prepare for the mission field," Ashley said, "but I had my own plans because I did not want to be a missionary. I went to a different college but it did not work out. I knew in my heart that God wanted me to come to Clear Creek and I finally surrendered to the call to come here and now here I am."

Clear Creek has been a really good influence on me," she noted. "I know this is where I am supposed to be. I really enjoy my student 'workshop' job that allows me an opportunity to work on campus in the Family Life Center. I enjoy working in the nursery providing childcare for parents who use the facility. It is a blessing to be able to work in

a Christian environment." Ashley's parents will be heading back to Venezuela soon. Does she see herself going back there to serve someday? "I'm not sure," she said. "I really feel God is calling me to serve somewhere in Asia but wherever He leads I'm willing to follow."



Donnie Fox

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

'Golden Compass' movie stirs controversy prior to release

By Michael Foust
Baptist Press

Nashville (BP)—It is a fantasy universe where witches are good, the church is bad, and at the end of it all, God dies.

It's the world of author Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" trilogy, and on Dec. 7 a movie based on the first book in that series, "The Golden Compass," hits theaters.

For weeks now, the movie has been the focus of e-mails from concerned Christians, curious if what they have heard about it is true. In this instance—as even the truth-or-fiction website Snopes.com affirms—the rumors mostly are fact.

Pullman himself is not sure whether he's an atheist or an agnostic, but his own words leave little doubt that he has a strong distaste for Christianity—at least Christianity as he sees it.

The entire series has been dubbed the "anti-Narnia," with Pullman regularly expressing disdain for C.S. Lewis' fictional world and even once calling it "propaganda in the service of a life-hating ideology." Pullman has sought to write a completely different fictional tale, and he has succeeded. He said in a 2001 interview, "I'm trying to undermine the basis of Christian belief." Two years later, he told another newspaper, "My books are about killing God."

Pullman has been more toned down in recent interviews, perhaps because New Line Cinema has invested more than \$150 million in the first installment and it needs to be successful if the final two books are to make it to the big screen.

Launched in 1995, the book series has been wildly popular across the Atlantic and won several awards in the United Kingdom. In the U.S., Al Roker of NBC's "Today Show" recently made "The Golden Compass" part of his children's book club.

And, children are reading it: During an interview with Roker, Pullman took videotaped questions from children about "The Golden Compass." He also took questions on the show's website, where one boy, an 8-year-old in Virginia, said he was reading the book with his class. It is being sold nationwide in schools

through Scholastic, which also is selling the other two books.

The movie itself focuses on a 12-year-old girl named Lyra and her daemon (pronounced "demon")—her soul in the form of a talking animal. Everyone in her world, in fact, has a daemon, which could range from a monkey to a lion. Early in the movie her friend Roger is kidnapped, and she sets out to find him.

The movie—rated PG-13—reportedly avoids using the word "church" and instead calls it the "Magisterium," a Roman Catholic term. Additionally, in the second and third books "God" is regularly called the "Authority." The book and movie get its name from a golden device that can, according to the books, determine truth itself.

Toned down?

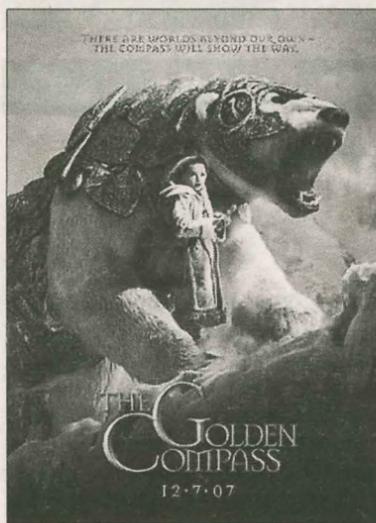
In fact, the most anti-religious elements are found not in the first book but in the latter two. Movie director Chris Weitz has said some of the more controversial ideas have been removed from The Golden Compass to make it more palatable for the public. Weitz said his goal is to make sure controversial scenes and dialogue—critical to the plot—are included in any future movies.

"The whole point, to me, of ensuring that 'The Golden Compass' is a financial success is so that we have a solid foundation on which to deliver a faithful, more literal adaptation of the second and third books," he said Nov. 14 on an MTV movie blog.

If that's the case, then the next two movies could be even more controversial. For instance:

■ In the second book of the trilogy, "The Subtle Knife," one of the main characters, Will, is told he possesses "the one weapon in all the universes"—a magical knife—that can "defeat the tyrant." That tyrant, he is told, is "The Authority, God."

■ In "The Amber Spyglass," the third and final book of the series, Will is told—by two fallen, homosexual angels—that "The Authority" has many names, "God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty." These were names God "gave himself" even though "he was never the creator."



CONTROVERSIAL FILM A movie poster touting the release of "The Golden Compass" in U.S. theaters Dec. 7. The film's anti-God message has many Christians concerned, prompting a flood of e-mails urging parents to prevent their children from seeing it or reading the novel.

Instead, Will is told, the Authority simply was the first angel formed out of "dust" and thereafter God proceeded to tell "those who came after him that he had created them."

■ In one of the final chapters of the third installment, an ex-nun named Mary tells Will and Lyra, "The Christian religion is a very powerful and convincing mistake, that's all." Mary also tells them that after she learned there was no God, she soon discovered that "physics was more interesting anyway."

One of Pullman's apparent themes is that science and reason trump faith.

"I don't think it's a reach to say that faith and enjoyment are antithetical in Pullman's worldview," noted Adam Holz, associate editor of Focus on the Family's Plugged In magazine. "He seems to say that it's impossible to have a life of joy, of pleasure, and be a member of the church."

Pullman himself has said his books have Christian themes because that was his world as a child—his father was an Anglican clergyman. If he had grown up as a Jew, he has said, his books likely would have had Jewish themes. His biggest

contentions with Christianity specifically and religion in general are the atrocities committed over the centuries in God's name.

"If there is a God and he is as the Christians describe him, then he deserves to be put down and rebelled against," Pullman told the London Telegraph newspaper in 2002. "As you look back over the history of the Christian church, it's a record of terrible infamy and cruelty and persecution and tyranny."

Working through children

In that same interview he talked about his desire to write books for all age groups.

"I wanted to reach everyone, and the best way I could do that was to write for children and hope that they'd tell their parents ... which is what happened," he said.

The trilogy ends with Lyra, Will and their companions killing "God" and then resolving how their own relationship (they're in love) will continue.

Cedarville University President Bill Brown said he hopes the movie will present Christians the opportunity to discuss their faith publicly in the media—in the same way "The Da Vinci Code" presented such an occasion.

"The God he has in his books—particularly in the last book—is not the Creator God," Brown said, emphasizing the evil nature of the trilogy's God. "It's just a weak being that is blown away at the very end. ... I'm opposed to that view of God and to that view of the church, too."

Holz said he is concerned about the books' impact on children.

"Not only has the story got a deeply anti-Christian component to it, but (Pullman is) aiming that story at children who may not have the discernment to notice or understand the message he's delivering," Holz explained. "I think Christians need to be aware of where he is coming from."

"Even if they tone down the anti-church references in all the movies, we're concerned that it's still going to lead people back to the books, because it's going to make people curious."

"I'm trying to undermine the basis of Christian belief."

Philip Pullman, author of "The Golden Compass," the first novel in the "His Dark Materials" trilogy, in a 2001 interview

LifeWay offers doctrinal study for 2008 examining 'Baptist Faith & Message'

Nashville (BP)—What does it mean to be made in God's image? What is the free agency of man? What do Baptists believe about the social order? These and other topics are explored in "Baptist Doctrine Study 2008: The Baptist Faith & Message."

Published by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, the six-session study examines the foundational doctrines, or teachings, of the Baptist faith as reflected in the 21 articles of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

In addition to exploring such Christian doctrines as the doctrines of God, man, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the church, the BF&M study incorporates historical and contemporary illustrations.

The study explains that all Scripture, as God's revelation of Himself to mankind, is trustworthy and stands as a testimony to Christ, who is Himself "the focus of divine revelation."

"The Baptist Faith & Message does not begin with the Scriptures by mere acci-

dent or custom," the authors of the study write, noting that all doctrines from the study are based on the Bible.

The 2008 doctrinal study examines each aspect of the Trinity as mentioned in the Baptist Faith & Message. It also examines God's providential hand as seen in His care and protection, His provision and His moral structure of the universe.

"God's providence is seen in the unfolding purpose of God's grace," the authors write. "The record of history is a testimony to God's purpose and providence."

The authors also explain terms such as "incarnation," "atonement," "propitiation" and "substitutionary." Guided responses pose reflective application questions such as, "Why do you believe in the resurrection of Christ?"

"Heretics and false teachers have always directed their attacks on the doctrines most closely connected with Jesus Christ," the authors explain. "We must be ready to defend the virgin birth of Christ,

His full deity, His full humanity, His miraculous acts, His bodily resurrection, His victorious return, and the substitutionary character of His atonement—as well as all the other biblical truths about Jesus Christ."

Compromise on the doctrine of Christ, the authors add, will be fatal to a Christian's witness and "subversive" to one's faith.

The authors also explore the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the Bible and how the Bible can simultaneously be the words of men and the Word of God.

The "Bible presents the process of inspiration—verbal plenary inspiration—as the Holy Spirit moving the human authors of Scripture to write exactly what He wanted them to write," the authors explain. "At the same time, the words the human authors wrote were the very words they wanted to write. This is because the Holy Spirit works within believers to accomplish His sovereign purposes."

The doctrine of salvation, God's purpose of grace and the church also are explored in the doctrine study.

The authors also write on baptism and the Lord's Supper. Believers' baptism by immersion in water, they note, pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, providing "a beautiful picture of our salvation and reminding us of His saving work."

Like baptism, the Lord's Supper is symbolic. "Baptists believe the Lord's Supper is not a sacrament but an ordinance," the authors write.

The doctrine study also addresses other aspects of the Baptist Faith & Message such as the Lord's Day, the Kingdom, last things (eschatology), evangelism and missions education, and stewardship.

LifeWay publishes a Baptist doctrine study for adults each year. The SBC has designated the week of April 13-17 as the Baptist Doctrine Study week on the denominational calendar in 2008.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist ministries and missionaries:

Weekend Backpack Ministry of Corydon Baptist Church. Pastor Rick Gannon shares that the church provides nourishing and healthy food to needy children each weekend through the backpack ministry in the local elementary school. This ministry helps parents who have trouble providing adequate food for their children and serves as an avenue for sharing the gospel. Pray that the financial support of this ministry will be strong and consistent. Pray that workers will be effective in reaching children and families with the message of Jesus Christ.

Mission Service Corps Missionary Robin Reeves of Corbin. Reeves serves as a church and associational strengthener through vacation Bible schools and backyard Bible clubs and coordinates short-term volunteer groups that provide home repairs. She also works through "Friends for Families" as the secretary and missions coordinator. Pray that God will direct her to funding and supplies for the upcoming ministry projects and much-needed warehouse facility. Pray that God will connect Reeves with a Kentucky certified electrical contractor who is willing to help finish the needed electrical work on a home repair project in the Corbin area.

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

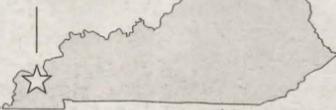
MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **CADIZ**—Oak Grove Church called **Larry King** as pastor effective Jan. 2.
 ■ **CORBIN**—**Raymond Hampton** recently resigned as pastor of Twentieth Street Church.
 ■ **ERLANGER**—Erlanger Church recently called **Derek Coleman** as pastor.
 ■ **FRANKFORT**—Evergreen Church recently ordained **Dawn Harrod, Steve Regan** and **Tina Troxel** as deacons. **Tyre Denney** is interim pastor.
 ■ **LOUISVILLE**—**Mary Ann Ward**, wife of **Wayne Ward**, a retired professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, died Nov. 17 at age 84. Mrs. Ward, a recipient of Long Run Baptist Association's Clarence Jordan Award, taught and counseled at International Baptist Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and Tantar Ecumenical In-

Spotlight on ...

Paducah



Four Rivers Church will host Dove Award-winning singer/songwriter **Mitch McVicker** in concert Dec. 4, 7 p.m. For more information, call (270) 898-7847. **Brad Henson** is pastor.

stitute in Jerusalem. In addition to her husband, she is survived by three children and four grandchildren. Memorial gifts may be made to Finchville Church, Crescent Hill

Southern Baptist evangelists seek to strengthen ministry impact

Alpharetta, Ga. (BP)—Longtime Southern Baptist evangelist Junior Hill was just a 21-year-old north Alabama preacher when the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists was born almost 50 years ago in 1958.

But as COSBE celebrates its golden anniversary at next June's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis, Hill and other SBC evangelists say the organization is more vital than ever.

"Even for us guys who've been around and established relationships and credibility over the years, COSBE is important," Hill said. "But for the young guys trying to get established, it's awfully important to be a member."

Because of today's trend of fewer, shorter and even no revival meetings and less emphasis on evangelism by some Baptist churches, Hill said he believes it is more difficult than ever to be a full-time vocational evangelist. He should know—he has been one since 1967.

Hill—now 71 and still based in Hartselle, Ala.—remembers the days of one- or even two-week revivals. He even remembers two-services-a-day revivals in rural churches all across the South.

In light of the changing times, Brian Fossett, COSBE's current president, and a Dalton, Ga.-based evangelist, is guiding COSBE to re-invent itself and make a comeback in terms of its membership and goals.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

10-11 KBC Mission Board, Baptist Building, Louisville.

January

17-19 Shepherding the Shepherd, Radisson Plaza Hotel, Lexington.

24 Pastor/Staff Forum, Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington.

24-25 Quarterly Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening, Hartford Baptist Church.

25-26 Preschool/Children's Ministry Meeting, Baptist Building, Louisville.

25-26 Regional Women on Mission Retreat, Laurel Lake Baptist Camp, Corbin.

31-Feb. 2 Southeast Conclave, Chattanooga, Tenn.

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

Church in Louisville or Golden Living Center/St. Matthews Manor.

■ **MORGANFIELD**—Northside Church will host **Donnie Fox**, president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, as guest speaker Dec. 9, 11 a.m. **Jim Adams** is pastor.

What's going on?

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

years, and then double it again over the following three years. "We need to get the new guys in full-time evangelism to identify themselves and join the group," he added.

"There are a lot of good preachers who are gifted in presenting the gospel in a revival setting," Fossett said. "But full-time vocational evangelists have a special anointing for evangelism. These are the men, endorsed by COSBE, who produce results."

Vocational evangelists differ from preachers who simply possess the gift of evangelism because "they feel a special call of God to pursue evangelism as a vocation," Fossett added. "This gives them the freedom to go anywhere, anytime and be used as a harvest evangelist."

"We're at a real Nehemiah moment as far as the Southern Baptist Convention and evangelists go," said Fossett, 42, a full-time evangelist for the last six years.

"Two of my major goals for COSBE are to get more exposure for our vocational evangelists and encourage the younger guys," Fossett noted.

"Some believe revivals no longer work. I like what Dr. Roy Fish says: 'Revivals work when people do.'" Fish is the longtime evangelism professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Fossett's goal is to double the membership of COSBE—now 200 evangelists—over the next three

CLASSIFIED ADS

AVAILABLE: Ordained minister looking for a church in which to preach God's Word. Reside in Crestwood—willing to travel for interim, bivocational or pulpit supply. Can provide resumé and references on request. Call Carl Silcox at (502) 643-5021.

AVAILABLE: Minister of music, pianist, senior adult leader. Anytime; preferably in the Louisville, Lexington, northern Kentucky area. Salary negotiable. Contact Mark C. Fields at mark121053@yahoo.com.

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

SEEKING: Part-time children's minister (preschool-6th grade). Send resumé to Locust Grove Baptist Church, 73 Locust Grove Church Road, Cadiz, KY 42211.

SEEKING: Bivocational pastor for established, growing church in Brown County, Ind. This position offers a monthly housing allowance and is located within commuting distance to Southern Seminary in Louisville. Please send letter of interest and resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 1340, Nashville, IN 47448.

SEEKING: Senior pastor for Grace Baptist (Lexington), an older church with a rich history. Applicants must be seminary graduates. If interested, please send resumé to: Pastor Search Chair, 568 Grantchester St., Lexington, KY 40505, Attn: H.S. Durbin.

SEEKING: Senior pastor to lead growing, mission-focused church in northeast Nelson County. Church has two other pastors on staff. Worship attendance (two services), approximately 325; Sunday school, approximately 170-plus. Candidates must have earned seminary master's degree or higher. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Bloomfield Baptist Church, PO Box 217, Bloomfield, KY 40008. E-mail: bfdcb@bardstown.com.

SEEKING: Pastor for First Baptist Church, a small Southern Baptist congregation nearing its 200th anniversary. Located in the heart of Newport, Ky. (near Cincinnati), FBC seeks a pastor to lead the church in growth as we continue to be an essential part of our changing community. Applicants should send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, c/o Michael Turner, 141 Ridge Hill Drive, Highland Heights, KY 41076.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister for Edgewood Baptist Church. Please send resumé and cover letter to Edgewood Baptist Church, 717 S Main St., Nicholasville, KY 40356; or e-mail resumé to edgewood@qx.net.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Somerset, Ky. Please send resumé to Pastor Search Committee, 1685 Highway 3091, Somerset, KY 42503.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of students (7th grade-college) for First Baptist Church, Pikeville. Send resumé by Nov. 30 to searchteam07@yahoo.com.

SEEKING: Part-time custodian for New Bethel Baptist Church in Verona, Ky. Approximately 20 hours per week. Any questions, please contact the church office Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-noon, at (859) 485-4864.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister for Bellfield Baptist Church. Send resumé to Bellfield Baptist Church, 9980 Highway 136 East, Henderson, KY 42420, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time senior pastor for non-traditional, Spirit-led Baptist church looking for a shepherd to disciple a diverse community in a deeper walk with God, and to increase His Kingdom in the Greater Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky area. Will need to work with elders to develop a staff and rebuild our church family. Preferred requirements: master of divinity degree and five to 10 years experience. Send resumé to Highland Hills Baptist Church, 132 South Grand Avenue, Fort Thomas, KY, 41075. Accepting resúmes through Jan. 31, 2008.

SEEKING: Pianist for Sunday morning worship and choir rehearsal at Melbourne Heights Baptist Church, Louisville. (502) 454-4681.

SEEKING: Children/youth and family ministry director. Great opportunity: Central Baptist Church, Paris, Ky., is a growing church with many young families. Come check us out—see posting at <http://centralbaptistchurch.lifewaylink.com>; or e-mail to LindenEst@bellsouth.net for more information.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for FBC Ft. Thomas, Ky. Send resumé to Miriam Fuller, deacon chair, 600 N Ft. Thomas Ave., Ft. Thomas, KY 41075; or mirm.ful@att.net.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for Fern Creek Baptist Church. Applicant must be experienced and excellent musician and worship leader and exemplify strong spiritual maturity. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Fern Creek Baptist Church, 5920 Bardstown Road, Louisville, KY 40291; or e-mail to linda@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resúmes will be received through Nov. 30. Questions: call (502) 239-0316. Linda Barnes Popham, pastor; Jim Cordell, interim minister of music.

YOUTH SKI RETREAT: \$89/weekend—includes skis, lift, two nights on-site lodging, five meals and lesson. Wild and Wonderful West Virginia: (800) 392-0152. Ask for Christmas week special.

Wartime witness

American soldier from Puerto Rico shows strong faith amid danger of war in Iraq

By Mickey Noah
SBC North American Mission Board

Baghdad, Iraq (BP)—Most Americans would agree negative news about the Iraq war typically outweighs the positive. But then there's SPC Victor Rosario Rivera—Puerto Rican, American soldier in Iraq, Christian, Southern Baptist.

For the past year, Rosario, 37, has served as an information system maintainer/operator with the 1-89 Cavalry, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division at Camp Stryker in Baghdad. English is his second language.

While Iraqi insurgent sniper bullets zip by and Improvised Explosive Devices explode on the streets of Baghdad, Rosario focuses on keeping U.S. Army computers, networks and Internet satellite services up and humming. When he is not doing that, he is sharing Christ, the Bible and his faith with his Spanish-speaking buddies.

Rosario came to the attention of the North American Mission board staff in Alpharetta, Ga., recently when he e-mailed NAMB requesting permission to use a logo for the fliers he prints and distributes to promote his Bible study for fellow Hispanic servicemen in Iraq. Permission granted.

In a response to a NAMB staff member, Rosario wrote, "I am just doing my duties as a Christian. Nothing more, nothing less, sir."

A Southern Baptist in his native Puerto Rico since 2001, Rosario said he "met Jesus when I was 21. From that time on, I've been His follower, disciple and friend. I live my life loving Jesus and resting in His grace." Rosario's SBC home church in Juana Diaz, P.R., is Iglesia Bautista El Mesias, where Victor Morales Marques is pastor.

But for an ironic twist of timing—perhaps God's timing—Rosario would not even be in the Army today, much less be stationed in one of the most dangerous places on earth.

"For three years I had been the manager of a Christian radio station in Puerto Rico," he recalled. "But after 9/11, I lost my job and spent 10 months looking for a new one."

The oldest of three children from a strong Puerto Rican middle-class

family—his father is retired from the U.S. Postal Service and his mom is a homemaker—he became rebellious. Frustrated and angry over his failed job search, he joined the U.S. Army at 32. Only one week after joining the Army, a "very good" job offer came Victor's way, but seven days too late. He was already in the Army.

"God used this experience to teach me a lot more about Him, about His timing, the way He works and about His plans for me," Rosario noted.

Daily routine

Since August 2006, Rosario has been one of the 162,000 American servicemen in Iraq. He shares a small 10-by-10-foot room with two other soldiers. On a typical day at "Camp Stryker"—located near the Baghdad International Airport—he wakes at 0900 (9 a.m.). But that's because his "workday" stretches from 1 p.m. until midnight or even later.

Rosario does not complain because most of his friends on combat duty are sleeping outside Camp Stryker—"outside the wire" as he called it—inside buildings without air conditioning or inside vehicles, and chowing down on MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat). "They may go two weeks without using a real bathroom or taking a real shower," Rosario added.

Summer days in Baghdad saw temperatures as high as 137 degrees. Describing the airport area as hot and dry without much summer rain yet oddly full of green vegetation, Rosario said walking outside is like the breath-taking heat felt when the door of a kitchen oven is opened.

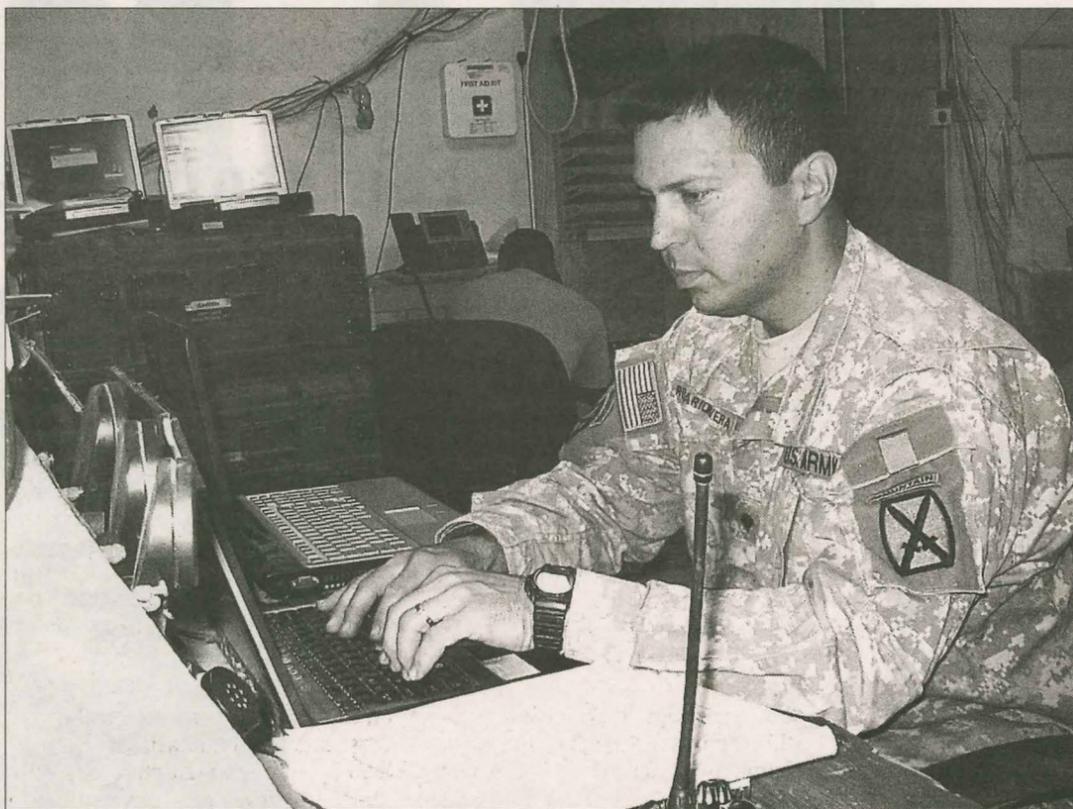
"It's not humid like summer there in the States, but it's not pleasant," Rosario explained. "You can drink one gallon of water and after an hour outside, you need more. You can never drink enough water. When you're on a mission, the only way to get a shower is to use two or three quarts of water. But because everything is so hot, including the water, you don't have the refreshing sensation of a shower."

Rosario and his pals must always be on the lookout for snakes and scorpions, but they are not nearly as fearsome as insurgent snipers and IED roadside bombs.

With his servant heart, Rosario spends his spare time repairing fellow soldiers' personal computers.

"We have public phones here but most of the guys rely on their computers to keep in touch with their families and friends back home," Rosario said. "It's easier and cheaper to call back to the U.S. using a computer than using public phones. If their families have the same program back home, a soldier can call for free from computer to computer or call a land line or cell phone for only three cents a minute."

Ever humble, Rosario pointed out that starting the Bible studies "was not my decision ... but it was God working in my heart. I am a soldier but also I am a missionary paid



by the U.S. I didn't leave my Christian life back in the United States.

"If we don't have a mission, we meet every Thursday," he added. "We have as many as seven in the study at any time, from privates to captains. We're all Hispanics from different countries."

So far, Rosario has covered Ephesians and Philippians. "I also talk to them a little about Islam because there are always a lot of questions about Islam among the soldiers. ... They want to know what in Islam makes the enemy do what he does."

Advertising the Bible study with fliers he posts all over Camp Stryker, Rosario said, "I leave the decision of how many I reach to God. I am thankful to reach one at a time."

"I've seen soldiers decide to return to Jesus and live by His direction" as a result of the Bible studies. "I've seen soldiers recognize that they are lost without Jesus," he noted. "It feels great to win them and if there is rejoicing in heaven when a person comes to Jesus, then why should we feel any less (joy) here on earth?"

Pressures of war

Nevertheless, Rosario said, it is difficult to be a Christian and a soldier simultaneously in Iraq.

"It's not impossible but it is hard. The peer pressure and the amount of time the Army requires have an impact on the Christian life here," he explained. "Some people say it is easy to be a Christian in the military because everyone is going to respect your beliefs and at the same time, you're going to respect their beliefs. I disagree."

"Sometimes we as Christians make some people uncomfortable and that can be good. But for a lot of soldiers, Jesus is only a lucky charm, not Savior and Lord."

Rosario has seen some of his friends killed and wounded, some seriously.

"A few of them are not with us anymore. One of my friends was wounded during an attack to his vehicle, and he was burned over 37 per-

cent of his body," he recalled. "Three passengers in the same vehicle were killed during the attack."

"I consider my friends to be very brave but sometimes I can see the fear in their eyes," Rosario said. "I have seen the bravest men have panic or fear of an attack."

Recently, one of Rosario's close friends came into the office where he worked one day and said, "Victor, let me see your boss."

"I told him my boss was not there," Rosario recalled. "Before he left, he turned to me and said, 'Keep up the good work.' Then 15 minutes later, the soldier took his own life."

"I know I can't reach all of them but at least I'm going to try to do my best," Rosario declared. "If I told you I am never scared, that would be a lie. But even in the moment I fear the most, I feel that I am loved by God and no matter what happens to me, I feel comforted by His presence and His Word which tells me, 'Fear not, I am with you.'"

Rosario said he hopes to return to Fort Drum in New York this fall and in December to return to Puerto Rico to marry his fiancée, Elena Maldonado. The couple will live near Fort Drum in Watertown, N.Y., until his stint in the Army ends.

"I love to work with computers but it is not my passion or vocation," Rosario said. "My heart burns to live and serve the Lord. So in the United States or Puerto Rico I am going to serve Him in anything He gives me the opportunity to do."

If there is any doubt about Rosario's servant-heart, his personal e-mail address begins with "doulousofjesus"—"doulous" is Greek for "servant" or "slave."

"I am a free slave who serves his Master by love," he declared. "What else can I do? Jesus gave me the most precious gift a man or woman can receive. He saved me. I am not lost, forgotten or cursed."

"I have a name written in heaven and am in the palms of His hands. Death is not a fear. The future is not uncertain. The past has been forgiven."

SOLDIER'S FAITH

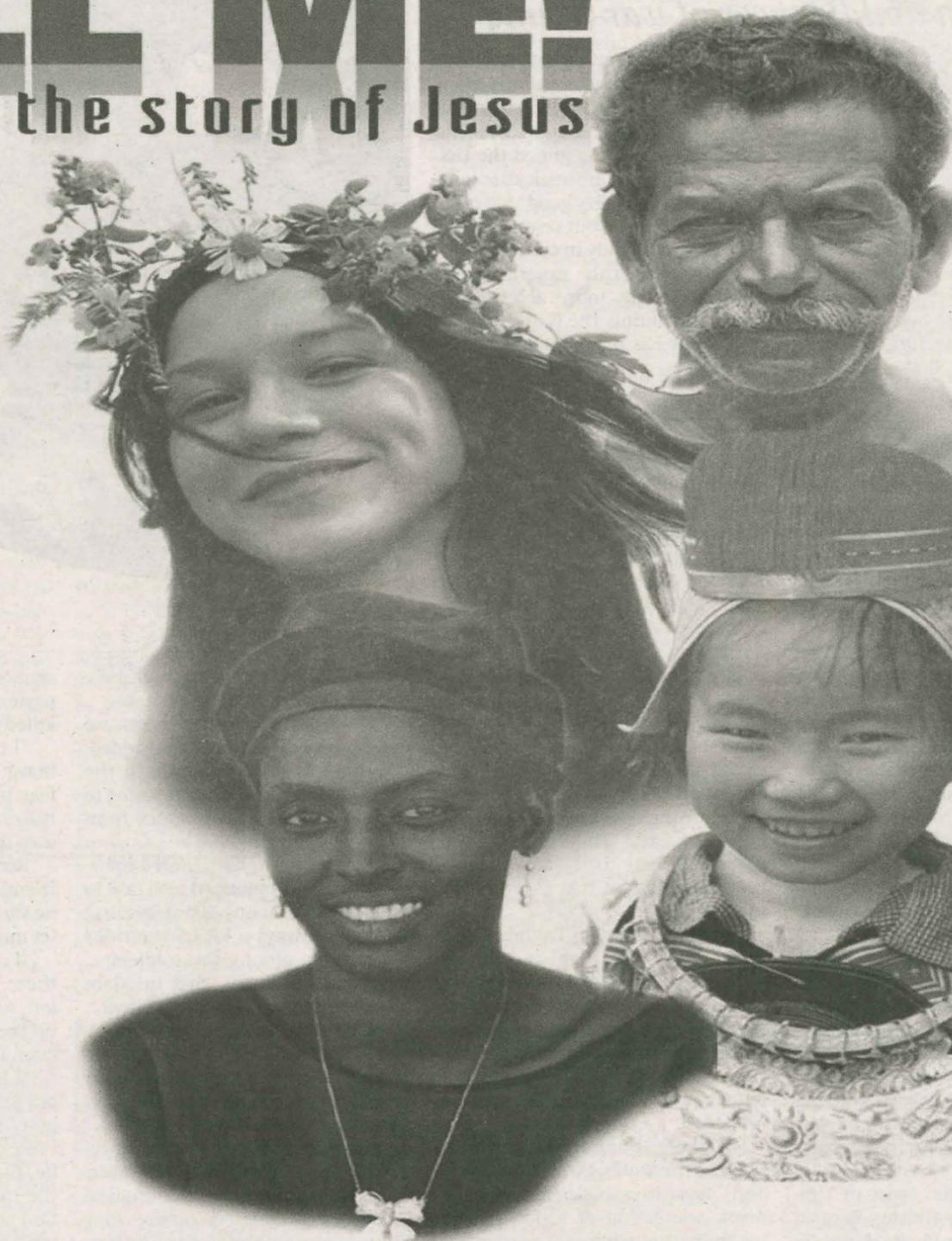
SPC Victor Rosario Rivera, an Army information system maintainer/operator at "Camp Stryker" in Baghdad, works 12-hour days maintaining communications/computer equipment. In his spare time, he leads Hispanic Bible studies for his fellow soldiers. (BP photos)



WEDDING PLANS SPC Victor Rosario Rivera and his fiancée, Elena Maldonado, plan to marry when he returns to the United States.

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