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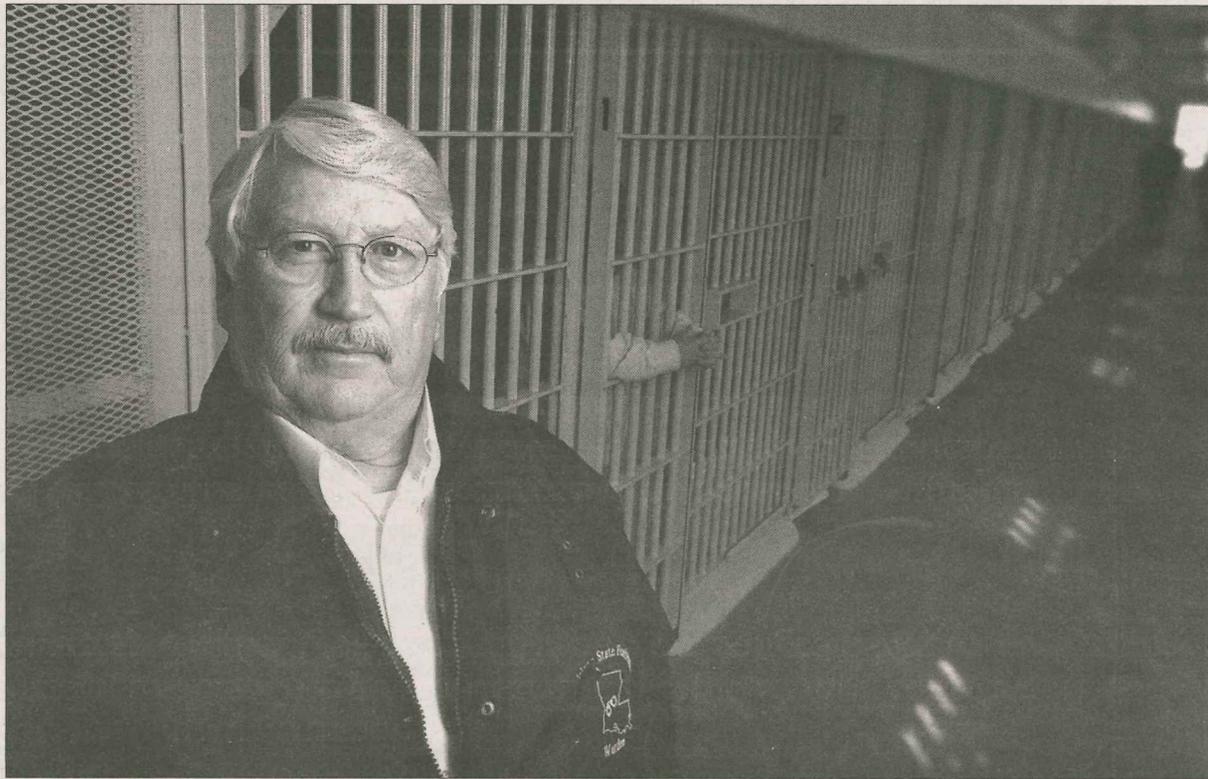
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Angola's transformation



Warden Burl Cain has instituted key changes at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. Prisoners meeting for Bible studies and worship are a common occurrence at what once was considered the nation's bloodiest prison. (BP photo by Robin Nelson)

Warden sees Christ as only answer to heal troubled La. prison

By Dennis Shere
Baptist Press

Angola, La. (BP)—Heaven, hell, sin and redemption are not just words at Louisiana's Angola Prison. Warden Burl Cain makes certain every inmate has the opportunity to know the transforming power of the gospel.

Once called the bloodiest prison in America, the Louisiana State Prison at Angola now has a new reputation as a place of hope for more than 5,000 inmates who live out their life sentences without parole. Many inmates know they will leave the pris-

on walls only when they die, yet despite their circumstances, there is joy in their hearts.

Credit for this unprecedented transformation is given to its one-of-a-kind warden, Burl Cain, who governs the massive prison on the Mississippi River delta with an iron fist and an even stronger love for Jesus.

The hallmark of Cain's 12-year administration is his relentless effort to help each inmate discover value and purpose in life and experience true freedom of the soul, even when the inmate's life is spent behind razor wire and guard towers.

"I truly believe these men can rebuild their lives—lives that have been shattered by awful crimes—if they embrace a genuine change of heart," he explained. Cain said he wants the outside world to see that many inmates are being genuinely rehabilitated, and that perhaps a few could be released some day.

Cain recalled the executions that changed the way he viewed prison life—and death.

Cain had been on the job for only a few months in 1995 when his first execution was scheduled. Cain □ See Warden transforms ... *Page 8*

Watchdog group issues annual list of best ministries

Matthews, N.C. (RNS)—MinistryWatch.com has released an honor roll of 30 evangelical Christian ministries it cited for financial openness and Christian identity.

In its third annual study, the fiscal watchdog group chose the nonprofit organizations based on financial transparency, mission and clear self-definition as evangelical Christian ministries.

During the process, MinistryWatch.com examined Internal Revenue Service documents and other specific information about each of the nonprofits' internal dealings. The group maintains a zero-tolerance policy, excluding organizations that suggest any financial "red flags," noted Rod Pitzer, the managing director of research for the group.

Rusty Leonard, president of MinistryWatch.com, said 10 years ago, organizations balked at the request for financial documents. Now some nonprofits voluntarily post the information on their Web sites.

"Once they realized that organizations like ours were going to treat that information with respect ... they realized this is a good thing," Leonard noted.

Included on MinistryWatch.com's 2007-2008 list of "Shining Light" ministries are: Answers in Genesis, Awana Clubs International, Compassion International, Crown Financial Ministries, Prison Fellowship Ministries and Young Life.

Kentucky Baptists challenged to help fight expanded gambling

By Robert Reeves
Kentucky Baptist Convention

Louisville—Kentucky Baptists are being challenged to fight efforts to bring casino gambling to the commonwealth that will begin in earnest when the Kentucky General Assembly session opens Jan. 8.

Committee on Public Affairs Chairman John Chowning told members of the Kentucky Baptist Mission Board at their December meeting that the time is now for Kentucky Baptists to get in the game on the issue.

"If Kentucky Baptists sit on the sidelines ... a year from tonight when we meet here, we are going to be talking about casino gambling in the commonwealth of Kentucky," Chowning declared.

Casino gambling proposals have been debated in the General Assembly for more than a decade but 2008 could be a decisive year because new Gov. Steve Beshear made adding ca-

sinos a key component of his campaign. Gambling proponents are pushing for passage by the General Assembly of a constitutional amendment that would go to Kentucky voters for ratification in November. Passage could allow casinos at both horse racing tracks and other locations.

KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey has written Beshear to spell out KBC opposition to the expanded gambling proposals on moral and public policy grounds.

"From a moral standpoint we believe God encourages us to help each other rather than seek to benefit from others' losses; that gambling encourages us to reduce our dependence upon God; and that it discourages a proper work ethic," Mackey wrote.

In outlining the convention's public policy concerns, Mackey noted the devastation that casino gambling will inevitably bring to individ-

uals and families, the harm it will do to other businesses as casinos siphon off resources and gambling's potential for corrupting government.

"No one disputes that as gambling expands, some human beings will be destroyed through suicide, spouse abuse, divorce, child abuse and neglect, embezzlement, alcoholism, etc. Are these fellow citizens really expendable to us?" Mackey asked. "I think all government officials should ask themselves if they would support expanded gambling if they knew in advance that it would be one of their own family members who would be counted in the ranks of the 'expendable people.'

"Our government should be engaged in activities that strengthen society, not weaken it as gambling unquestionably does."

Chowning said convention officials are looking for Kentucky Baptists who are willing to be active contacts on the issue.

He also encouraged Kentucky Baptists to sign up for e-mail updates at the Committee on Public Affairs Web site at www.kybaptist.org/publicaffairs where a variety of information is posted.

Kentucky Baptists can get involved in a number of ways, beginning with prayer, Chowning said. In addition, Baptists need to be willing to personally contact their legislators and the governor, talk about the issue with friends and neighbors, write letters to local newspapers and communicate in other ways to combat what is expected to be an onslaught of advertising from the gambling industry.

"The Committee on Public Affairs and the convention staff cannot do this on our own. This is an issue where Kentucky Baptists have consistently spoken in convention after convention in opposition to casino gambling," Chowning said. "Folks, the time (to get involved) is here."

Mohler is third nominee for SBC presidency

Louisville—Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville since 1993, will be nominated in June as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, according to Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas.

In a news release provided Jan. 2 to the Southern Baptist Texan, the state Baptist paper of the conservative Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, Jeffress said his decision to nominate Mohler is the result of prayer and concern for the future of Southern Baptists' global witness. He said he believes Mohler would "motivate Southern Baptists to unite around cooperation for global missions and evangelism."

Mohler, 48, is the third announced nominee for the SBC presidency. The other two nominees, both former SBC vice presidents, are Wiley Drake, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Buena Park, Calif., who served as SBC second vice president in 2006-2007; and Bill Wagner, a former Southern Baptist missionary and seminary professor and current president of Olivet University International in San Francisco, who was SBC first vice president in 2003-2004.

Robert Bosworth, a member of Drake's congregation, announced in August that he would nominate Drake as SBC president. Wagner announced his candidacy in September.

If elected by messengers June 10 during the SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis, Mohler would preside at the 2009 SBC meeting in Louisville during Southern Seminary's 150th anniversary year. He also would become the seventh seminary president to serve in the top denominational office.

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and

an architect of the SBC's conservative shift, served as SBC president in 1998-2000 while he was president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. Prior to Patterson's election, no seminary president had been elected to the SBC's top post since the 1940s.



Albert Mohler

Mohler, an outspoken proponent of Calvinism, debated that issue with Patterson, a non-Calvinist, during two breakout sessions at the 2006 Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference.

Declaring that "I believe in all five points of Calvinism"—total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints, Mohler told the crowd he prefers the term "effectual calling" rather than "irresistible grace."

"I do believe before the creation of the world, God determined to save sinners who would come to accept Christ through the electing purpose of God," he added.

Patterson countered that "I do not find in Scripture any case for irresistible grace."

According to a recent study by LifeWay Research and the North American Mission Board Center for Missional Research, 29 percent of recent Southern Baptist seminary graduates indicated they are Calvinists. That compares to 10 percent of Southern Baptist pastors who affirm five-point Calvinism.

Mohler is a member of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville where he serves as a teaching pastor and Sunday school teacher.

According to Southern Baptists' 2006 Annual Church Profile, Highview reported 174 baptisms—the second highest total among Kentucky Baptist churches—and \$167,919 (3.3 percent) of undesignated receipts given through the Cooperative Program from total undesignated receipts of more than \$5 million.

Highview, which is dually affili-

ated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, channeled less than \$10,000 of its CP contributions through the KBC, according to the state convention's 2006-2007 CP report. The church has campuses in four Louisville-area locations as well as one in Taylorsville and one in Sellersburg, Ind.

Jeffress described Mohler as "the kind of visionary leader Southern Baptists need to communicate a missional conservatism and biblical clarity to the world."

Citing Mohler's frequent appearances on such programs as "Larry King Live," Jeffress added, "Whether the issue is the family and marriage or Islamic terrorism or the religious liberty of Christians to share the gospel freely anywhere in the world, Dr. Mohler represents Southern Baptists well in pointing to Christ and His Word."

Mohler said he believes the SBC's "greatest challenge is to recover our passion for the gospel in evangelism and missions and to renew our determination to defend the gospel in an age of postmodern confusion. I would hope to articulate a vision that would unite Southern Baptists and energize us together."

"We are not a top-down denomination—and for good reason," he added. "I promise to do my best to encourage Southern Baptists to be even more faithful, more biblical, more evangelistic and more thankful for what God has given us in this convention of churches."

Mohler, a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., and Southern Seminary, was pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church in Bedford while in seminary. Prior to his election as Southern Seminary president, Mohler served four years as editor of Georgia Baptists' Christian Index.

He and his wife, Mary, have two children, Katie and Christopher.

Based on reporting by Baptist Press and Editor Trennis Henderson

Will Huckabee's Iowa victory unify evangelical bloc?

Washington (RNS)—When former Baptist pastor Mike Huckabee resoundingly won the Iowa caucuses Jan. 3, Republican evangelicals backed his campaign by a margin of more than 2-1 in the crowded GOP field.

But could that view translate across the country, making him the candidate who could finally unite the nation's splintered evangelicals? The jury's still out on that, say observers of conservative Christian politics.

"They'd love to see him be the nominee," said Laura Olson, a political scientist at Clemson University in South Carolina. "But being that that's a movement that's very politically sophisticated and very diverse, and very much wanting to maintain its sort of turf in the Republican coalition, you can't get too crazy about anybody just yet."

Still, the potential power of a reinvigorated evangelical bloc—with one of their own now a viable candidate—was in evidence as the first votes were cast in the 2008 race for the White House.

The former Arkansas governor, also a former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and alumnus of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., reaped 34 percent of the overall Republican vote in the caucuses. But experts say Iowans' enthusiasm will need to be followed by wins elsewhere, as well as a campaign that has more money and a wider base of support.

Most don't expect major evangelical figures to get behind Huckabee until the Feb. 5 "Super Tuesday" primaries have neared or passed. Some evangelical leaders were much more willing to congratulate their peers on their ability to get out the vote.

"The former governor may not become the Republican nominee, and I have not endorsed him, but what happened there last night was evidence of an energized and highly motivated conservative community," said Focus on the Family Action Chairman James Dobson.

It was at the fall Values Voter Summit, which Dobson's group co-sponsored, that Huckabee's embrace by evangelicals became evident. He won the straw poll with 51 percent of the vote though Mitt Romney edged him out when online voters were tallied.

Connie Mackey, senior vice president of FRC Action, said the support shown for Huckabee at the summit and in Iowa shows it is possible for conservative Christians to galvanize around a key candidate.

"Whether or not he can bring in all evangelicals, a really solid base across the country ... I don't think we can take that to the bank yet," Mackey added.

BAPTIST DIGEST

Queen Elizabeth II honors BWA president. David Coffey, president of the Baptist World Alliance, became an officer of the Order of the British Empire Jan. 2. Coffey, a Briton who has served as BWA's president since 2005, received the honor from Queen Elizabeth II for his work in ecumenical and interfaith relations, according to a BWA press release. The organization is the worldwide umbrella group for regional and national Baptist associations, unions and conventions. Coffey said the title bestowed on him collectively honors the "great work that is done by the thousands of Baptists and unsung heroes who will not appear on any honors list but who we would be lost without." BWA General Secretary Neville Callam said Coffey's life of service is fueled by intellect, excellence and a willingness to serve. Coffey retired in 2006 after 15 years as general secretary for the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Gore named 'Baptist of the Year' by EthicsDaily.com. Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore has been named "Baptist of the Year" by EthicsDaily.com, the Web site of the moderate Baptist Center for Ethics. Gore "has pressed for the global good with a compelling message about the danger of climate change and a clear call for moral responsibility, knitting together science and faith, reason and passion," noted Robert Parham, the center's executive director. The EthicsDaily.com honor comes two months after Gore won the Nobel Peace Prize with the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for their work on global warming.

Church employees invited to take part in SBC compensation survey

Dallas—The 2008 Compensation Survey for Southern Baptist churches, provided through the joint efforts of Baptist state conventions, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources, is now available online at www.LifeWay.com/compensationsurvey. All ministers and employees of Southern Baptist churches are encouraged to participate, according to convention officials.

Answers to the online survey are kept confidential and are not reported individually. The survey takes, on average, less than 10 minutes to complete. In addition to salary and benefit information, participants in the survey will need to have available their church's average weekly worship or Bible study attendance, resident membership and annual budget.

LifeWay and GuideStone are pooling resources to provide the online survey, compile the data and make available an online reporting tool for users to access results. The survey

is available through mid-April and results will be released prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June.

For more than a decade, GuideStone has teamed with Baptist state conventions to survey Southern Baptist churches concerning their compensation of ministers and church employees. Every state convention participated in the last bi-annual study in 2006, which included results from more than 7,000 churches and 17,000 individuals. Through the survey, church administrators, personnel and finance committees and minister search teams have access to an accurate baseline by which they can compare their own church's salary and benefits with similar churches across the country.

Southern Baptist church ministers and employees may complete the survey through April 15. For staff at churches without Internet access, a copy of the survey is available by contacting GuideStone Financial Resources at (888) 984-8433.

Ky. pastor answers call to serve as military chaplain

By Byron Crawford
Louisville Courier-Journal

Shelbyville—Many in his congregation were stunned when Ed Erwin announced he was resigning his successful pastorate at First Baptist Church of Shelbyville to become a Navy chaplain.

"I feel it is my patriotic duty to be of service to my country in a time of great need," Erwin told the congregation last October. "Right now, in a time of war, our nation desperately needs chaplains."

The church members were no more surprised than Army and Air Force recruiters who, because of Erwin's age, both said no to his attempts to enlist. The Navy finally accepted him after rigorous physical testing and an extensive hearing in Washington.

"They said, 'Why are you doing this?'" Erwin recalled. "It was just a strong, unmistakable calling is the only way I can explain it. I could coast to retirement, but I just feel that God has something else for

me to do."

Erwin has turned down a university professorship and opportunities to pastor at several other churches over the past 13 years while serving at First Baptist, and will take a substantial pay cut to become a Navy chaplain.

On Sunday, Dec. 30, the church held a farewell service for Erwin and his family—his wife, Rhonda, and four children, including son Tristan, 18, who is in the Army National Guard.

"Rhonda is very supportive," Erwin said. "We both feel called to this new ministry and patriotic service."

Leon Mooneyhan, a longtime church member and retired superintendent of Shelby County schools, said Erwin's decision is typical of his character.

"There are few people I've dealt with who are so genuine and true to their beliefs as Brother Ed," said Mooneyhan. "Most times when you

lose a pastor, they've gone on to another church—usually a bigger church with a bigger salary—but that's certainly not the case here."

On Jan. 7, Erwin reported for duty in Newport, R.I., for nearly three months of training. He initially was told he'd be assigned either to an operational battle group at sea or to a Marine battalion. But he has since received orders to report to an installation of the Naval air station in Pensacola, Fla.

However, he has been assured that he will be deployed at some point, possibly to Iraq, Afghanistan or another combat zone, and Erwin said he is prepared to accept any such assignment.

"Here you've got these men and women putting their lives on the line, and they don't have enough chaplains," he said. "They need people with experience. If there wasn't a great need, I'm sure I wouldn't have joined. For me, this is not in any way

politically motivated."

This will not be Erwin's first service as a chaplain. After earning a history degree from The College of William & Mary in Virginia and a Ph.D. in theology and ethics from Duke University, Erwin served for two years as a chaplain with the Air Force Reserves while earning a master's of divinity from Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

The son of a retired Army lieutenant colonel, Erwin grew up mostly on Army posts, so he is accustomed to military surroundings. But he guesses he may have some trouble adjusting to the boot camp atmosphere of officer training, which is designed for much younger recruits.

"I'm not used to having a Marine drill sergeant yelling at me," said Erwin. "And I heard we'd just have 15 minutes to eat lunch. It takes me 15 minutes to open up a napkin, get something to drink and put sugar in a cup."

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Ed Erwin

Family travels country to share their 'sanctity of life' message with others

Pineville—Doug Cullen realized his calling the night he reluctantly accompanied his wife, Joli, to a crisis pregnancy center fundraiser in Florida. That evening, Cullen, now a Mission Service Corps missionary, heard the testimony of 23-year-old Gianna Jessen.

Jessen's remarkable life began when her biological mother, who was seven months pregnant, was advised to have an abortion.

The procedure that was performed was a late-term saline abortion. After drowning in a solution for nearly 18 hours, Jessen was delivered alive, weighing only two pounds.

Despite several further attempts to end her life, Jessen did not die. A nurse eventually had the infant transferred to a hospital where Jessen was later adopted. However, the abortion attempts left her with cerebral palsy.

"It allows me to really depend on Jesus for everything," Jessen told a House Judiciary Subcommittee in Washington back in 2000.

Touched by Jessen's testimony, Cullen began volunteering at a crisis pregnancy center, driving a mobile unit motor home for several years. He also attended crisis pregnancy classes.

"I did what a man can do in a pregnancy center," he recalled. "Women prefer to be counseled by other women."

Later, while a student at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, Cullen consistently wrote papers concerning the sanctity of life.

"Everyone knew my stance," he said. "That was my passion."

In the summer of 2004, Cullen and his wife were considering a mission trip when they said they sensed God leading them in a different direction. In an effort to "test the waters," as Cullen put it, the couple lined up four months

of speaking engagements in Florida churches, addressing the issue of abortion.

"We knew right away what God was calling us to do," Cullen noted.

Upon graduating from Clear Creek in 2005 and using Deuteronomy 30:19 as biblical inspiration, Doug and Joli Cullen formed Choose Life Ministries.

With their three teenage children in tow, the Cullens hit the road in a van traveling the country for three months at a time, speaking about the sanctity of life.

"In 2006, we felt God calling us to do more so we gave up our rental home and sold our possessions," Cullen said. "We haul our belongings in a utility trailer behind the van. We don't have a home."

For more than two years now, the Cullens have shared their message of the sanctity of human life in more than 200 churches and schools in at least 15 states.

On the road for more than 40 weeks a year, the family usually sleeps in church parsonages and missionary houses. One time, they even bunked in a retirement home.

In the few weeks each year the family is not on the road, they stay at a mission house on the Clear Creek campus.

As the ministry has grown, the Cullens said they have been amazed by the different ways God has used their message.

"During our first trip out west, 12 people accepted Christ," Cullen recalled. "Several middle-aged women who had abortions in the past have come forward for prayer."

"Our goal in Choose Life Ministries is not to change pro-choice people into pro-life people," Cullen noted. "But it is for people to know Jesus through the sanctity of life message we share."

Cumberlands professor uses missions field as classroom

By Emily Henson & Jamey Temple
University of the Cumberlands

Williamsburg—For one University of the Cumberlands professor, learning is not contained to just a classroom.

"I've really learned to deepen my faith," said Christopher Leskiw, associate professor of political science. "I think the biggest lesson I've learned from Mountain Outreach is that God has a plan for me and that He has been building it up all my life."

Since joining the Cumberlands' faculty in 2004, Leskiw has been working with the organization. "Everything about Mountain Outreach appeals to me, especially the mission of the organization," Leskiw noted. "There is nothing like serving the underserved part of the community."

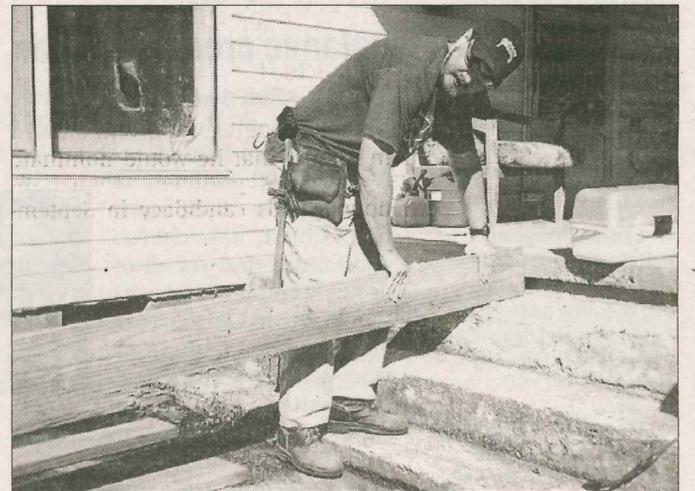
Mountain Outreach, one of the university's non-profit organizations, makes needed home repairs and distributes clothing, shoes, coats, blankets, personal hygiene products and other items to community residents in need.

As far as construction experience goes, Leskiw said he learned what he knows from his grandfather. As a child, Leskiw followed his grandfather building decks and roofs, wiring homes for electricity, and painting.

Later, as an adult, Leskiw and his wife, while living in other states, often volunteered and worked for Habitat for Humanity.

"We really enjoyed doing that together," Leskiw said. "Around here, Mountain Outreach serves that capacity."

Leskiw has used his past construction experiences to assist other Mountain Outreach volunteers. He also has brought along new helpers to join the experience. Last fall, 10 students from his Insights class—a class designed to help Cumberlands' freshmen bridge the gap between high school and college—participated in a Mountain Outreach project. According to Leskiw, the man's



home rested on a steep mountain-side without safe access to the front door. The man—who was undergoing chemotherapy treatments—had to climb nearly six feet to reach his home and refused treatment from nurses out of fear for their safety.

Mountain Outreach workers attached a porch to his trailer, which enabled him to not only gain safe access to his home, but also to receive much-needed cancer treatments.

"Since that time, a few of those students have come to a number of our builds," Leskiw noted. "I've learned that I take away more from (the students) than I think I give to them."

Leskiw's willingness and knowledge have not gone unnoticed. Mountain Outreach Director Marc Hensley noted, "I knew that he was the person that I had asked God to send me. His construction knowledge and experience is top quality, and the rapport he has with the students is unbelievable."

Despite the affirmation, Leskiw remains modest and said he looks for the lesson in the experience.

"I've learned to be very humble in circumstances—we go to places that totally shock me," he added. "I'm not used to seeing these kinds of things in terms of poverty. I've learned lots of humility and lots of compassion."

RIGHT-HAND MAN
Christopher Leskiw, associate professor of political science at University of the Cumberlands, measures the slope of a handicap access ramp during a recent Mountain Outreach project. Leskiw has been a member of Cumberlands' faculty since 2004 and has helped out on numerous Mountain Outreach projects. (Photo courtesy of Mountain Outreach)

WESTERNRECORDER

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TRENNIS HENDERSON
Editor

DREW NICHTER
News Director

THOMAS C. TOWNSEND
Marketing & Business
Manager

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

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Calvinism and Southern Baptists

By Frank Page

Taylors, S.C. (BP)—The issue of Calvinism has been at the forefront of many articles and discussions in our convention.

A conference on Calvinism was held in late November at LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina, co-sponsored by Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Founders Ministries. Though I was unable to attend the conference except for a brief time of greeting, it is my understanding that the conference was a wonderful event where solid, healthy discussion took place.

This conference came on the heels of a major research study released by LifeWay Research. I find the results to be quite fascinating.

The research portrays what many have imagined to be true. While around 10 percent of rank-and-file Southern Baptist pastors would consider themselves to be five-point Calvinists, a sizeable portion (29 percent) of recent seminary graduates would identify themselves in that particular way. In fact, more than 60 percent of the recent graduates of one of our seminaries identify themselves as five-

point Calvinists.

The study concluded the following:

■ First, Calvinist-led churches are in the minority, though the number is increasing.

■ Second, Calvinism is on the rise among recent seminary graduates. If current trends continue, Calvinism will continue to grow as an influence in our convention.

■ Third, Calvinist-led churches generally are smaller in worship attendance and annual baptisms than non-Calvinist churches.

■ Fourth, church growth statistics in terms of annual baptism rates indicate there is little difference between Calvinist and non-Calvinist led churches.

Where does all this take us in the Southern Baptist Convention?

Most everyone who knows me knows that I am not a Calvinist. However, I have made it clear that I would be fair to those who are Calvinists in appointments in our convention. I have been true to my word. I believe that the issue of Calvinism is one that can be discussed within the family of Southern Baptists. I believe we need to have honest, open dialogue.

FIRST PERSON

Balance creeds & deeds

I am saddened and stunned at the outcry of those who lament how Southern Baptists seek to clarify doctrinal issues concerning the Scriptures, God, Christ, the church and family. And yet all of us show the same type of shock when we see that of all the denominations from which the cults steal their sheep, Southern Baptist are their primary source of growth. Why is this?

It is because we Southern Baptists define ourselves more by what

we do than by what we believe. Look back over older Western Recorder editions: They spent more time teaching what the Scriptures say rather than talking about missions and church growth almost to the exclusion of doctrinal beliefs. In fact, when Southern Baptists take a stand, they are derided as uncaring, academic and divisive.

I am all for loving Jesus, but I believe creeds are just as valuable as the deeds. Both must be present—both the content of Scripture as well as the fruit of obedience to the Scriptures. I am

for loving the Jesus of the Bible who has clear attributes and had a clear mission for His people.

Until Southern Baptists rigorously study who Jesus is, what He has done, what the implications are for us who claim to be Christ followers, what He expects from His church and its individual members, we will continue to be fodder for those who deny the faith as we will cease to grow in any significant and spiritual way. Numbers are not the only way to grow a church—we need to be sure there are enough faithful in the church already as well!

Matthew R. Perry
Lexington

90 days to stop expanded gambling

The Kentucky General Assembly opens the 2008 legislative session this week with one of the biggest issues focusing on expanding gambling by adding casinos at the racetracks and other locations. This has become a perennial issue in Kentucky politics, but our new governor's endorsement of a constitutional amendment to allow casino gambling means the possibility of passing such a dangerous amendment is greater than ever.

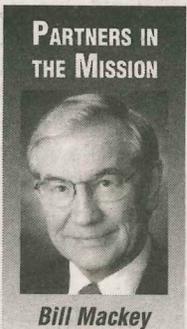
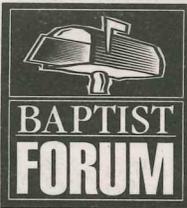
The administration and House of Representatives leaders have said they expect to have a constitutional amendment ready by April and it appears that gambling proponents may have the votes they need in the House. Therefore, the Kentucky Senate is where the best hope lies for stopping expanded gambling.

I am urging all Kentucky Baptists to contact your legislators, especially your state senator. It is urgent that you contact your senator to share your opposition. Our senators need to hear from hundreds of people in each county.

According to a recent Louisville Courier-Journal survey of senators, 15 senators are for amending the constitution to permit racetrack and free-standing casinos, 13 are against or leaning against, eight are undecided, and one could not be reached. One has since been elected to a state office and is no longer in the Senate.

All of the senators need to hear from you. Those who are undecided need to know how their constituents feel. Those who are opposed need to know that they have solid support. And those who are supportive of casinos need to hear that there are hundreds of concerned citizens in their districts who understand the devastation that casinos can bring to our state.

House members must hear from their constituencies as well or they will conclude that there are no concerned citizens in their area. I have heard reports of representatives and senators who say they have not heard from a single voter in their district on this issue.



It is important for Baptist laypeople to get involved. Our elected officials already expect to hear from pastors, the KBC Committee on Public Affairs and me. They must also hear from voters and business leaders in their communities.

You can easily contact your legislators by calling the legislative message line at (800) 372-7181. If you don't know who your legislators are, the receptionist will be glad to tell you.

You can also easily locate your legislators on the Kentucky General Assembly Web site at www.lrc.ky.gov. For updates from the Committee on Public Affairs, visit www.kybaptist.org/publicaffairs where there's a wealth of material, including my recent letter to the governor.

No one will escape the negative consequences of expanded gambling. Research has discovered that 40 percent of the gamblers come from within a 50-mile radius of the casinos. Every extended family, community and church will feel the impact.

Please let your voice be heard!

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

Recognize typical warning signs of too much debt

By Don Spencer

There is a time for the good use of credit. However, one of the major problems for many people, especially younger couples, is the overuse of credit. Too many people are in over their heads financially. You will never have financial freedom as long as you are a slave to debt.

Just because you can pay your monthly bills, including the minimum debt payments each month, does not mean you are free of credit problems. Low minimum payments are to the creditor's benefit, not yours. Being able to pay your monthly bills, including debt payments, on time is great but that can also lead to a false sense of security about your handling of debt.

Do you have a problem with debt and credit? Here are some of the warning signs:

1. You make only the minimum monthly payment on your debts.
2. Each year, more of your income is going toward paying your debts.
3. You have more than two major credit cards.
4. You don't have an emergency fund or other savings.
5. You're unsure of how much total debt you really have.
6. You use cash advances from one credit card to pay another one.
7. You use credit cards to purchase things that you used to buy with cash.
8. You and your spouse tend to fight over money issues.
9. Your credit card debt is at or near its maximum limit.
10. You have had calls from collectors or been denied credit.

If you answered "yes" to two or three of these, then you could be heading toward credit/debt problems and need to be serious in guarding against getting in deeper trouble. If you answer "yes" to more than three of these, then you probably already are in over your head and need to get professional help to deal with this problem. The sooner you act, the better.

The Web site www.credit.about.com is one of several Web sites that offer valuable guidance on dealing with debt/credit problems.

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



Children's Bible Drill helps enhance biblical knowledge

Q: My child is interested in participating in Bible drill for the first time this year. What is involved in the program and how does it work?

As the new year unfolds, Children's Bible Drill gets into full swing in many churches. As stated on the Kentucky Baptist Convention Web site, "The purpose of Children's Bible Drill is to help children increase in the knowledge of the Bible, develop skills in the use of the Bible, begin developing memory skills, and learn how to apply the Bible to their lives." Worthy goals!

Bible drill participants (boys and girls in grades 4-6) are challenged to memorize 25 verses, learn the books of the Bible, and learn the location of 10 key passages—sections of scripture that deal with important events such as creation, the Ten Commandments or the resurrection of Jesus.

Children compete against a standard, not against each other, and they do so in a series of three drills: The church drill, the associational drill and the state drill. Each drill consists of 24 calls designed to test the children's knowledge of the material they have learned. Half of the calls focus on the verses and rely strictly on memory. The remaining calls require the children to find books and key passages in their Bibles. The standard of achievement becomes higher as the drills progress.

Children who participate in Bible drill for three years will be exposed to 75 important verses, 30 key passages and be able to find any book in the Bible without hesitation—and without having to look in the table of contents!

For more information, visit www.kybaptist.org, click on Preschool/Children and look for Bible drill.—David Garrard

Q: I am struggling with a really tough decision I am facing. Where can I turn for help?

One helpful option is to seek out a referral to a competent counselor.

Another suggestion is to engage your mind in Scripture mediation. Get yourself still and allow a small passage of Scripture to speak to your soul. Consider meditating on the following:

1 Samuel 16:7, John 7:24. Spiritual values trump outward appearance.

Proverbs 14:15, Psalm 26:2, Psalm 139:23. Slow down and consider choices deliberately.

Matthew 7:1-5. Make sure your decision is free from hypocrisy.

John 3:19-21. Make sure your decision will stand the light of day.

Romans 12:2-3. Evaluate how your decision flows from your discipleship.

Romans 12:17-21, Hebrews 12:11-15. Seek peace and avoid revenge.

Ephesians 4:20-32. Ask how your decision is consistent with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 3:13. Avoid staying stuck in the past.

Philippians 4:6-9. Use these guidelines for right thinking.

Colossians 3:1-17. Treat yourself and others in a Christ-like way.

Hebrews 4:12, 8:10. Let God's Word form in you.

James 1:26. Exercise control of your tongue.

James 3:13-18. Contemplate wisdom.

James 4:1-3. Make sure your prayers are not selfish.

1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:7. Live in anticipation of Christ's return.

As you pray through your decision, pay attention to your body. That's where feelings are primarily noticed. These can be the "warning lights" that you may be going in the wrong direction, or they can be the "green light," in light of God's truth, that says the way is clear.—James Stillwell

Family Forum writers are:

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

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

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

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

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

'unChristian' offers insights for believers

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to make time to read more (or even if it isn't), one book to put on your must-read list is "unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity ... and Why It Matters."

Written by David Kinnaman, president of The Barna Group, and Gabe Lyons, founder of the Fermi Project, the book examines perspectives about Christians and Christianity based on interviews with 16- to 29-year-olds, who Kinnaman identifies as Mosaics (born between 1984 and 2002) and Busters (born between 1965 and 1983). "unChristian" also includes candid responses to the research data by more than two dozen noted Christian leaders such as Chuck Colson, Louie Giglio and Rick Warren.

The basic gist of "unChristian" is that "many of those outside of Christianity, especially younger adults, have little trust in the Christian faith ... and they reject Jesus because they feel rejected by Christians."

Why should Christians bother to read negative perceptions from younger generations who do not embrace Christianity? Precisely so that we can understand their concerns and criticisms in order to build authentic relationships with them and demonstrate the true nature of biblical Christianity.

Noting that "many Christians have lost their heart for those outside the faith," Kinnaman points out, "We are accountable when our actions and attitudes—misrepresenting a holy, just and loving God—have pushed outsiders away."

"To engage non-Christians and point them to Jesus, we have to understand and approach them based on what they really think, not what we assume about them," Kinnaman adds. "We can't overcome their hostility by ignoring it."

So what do Mosaics and Busters think about Christians and Christianity today? In short, Kinnaman's research found that young adults generally view Christians as hypocritical, too focused on getting converts, anti-homosexual, sheltered, too political and judgmental. Ouch.

"In studying thousands of outsiders' impressions, it is clear that Christians are primarily perceived for what they stand against," Kinnaman notes. "We have become famous for what we oppose, rather than who

we are for."

Among specific findings, "nearly two out of every five young outsiders (38 percent) claim to have a 'bad impression of present-day Christianity'" and "one-third of young outsiders said that Christianity represents a negative image with which they would not want to be associated."

"The primary reason outsiders feel hostile toward Christians, and especially conservative Christians, is not because of any specific theological perspective," Kinnaman explains. "What they react negatively to is our 'swagger,' how we go about things and the sense of self-importance we project."

While "you may not agree with the views of outsiders," he adds, "you should not ignore

them."

How should Christians respond? For starters, Kinnaman cautions that "softening or reshaping the gospel is an utterly wrong response to the objections people raise."

Rather, "to shift our reputation, Christ followers must learn to respond to people in the way Jesus did."

"Knowing the problem and diagnosing the hostility are just the start," Kinnaman emphasizes. "We should consider whether our response to cynics and opponents is motivated to defend God's fame or our own image."

On the positive side, "one of the clear implications of our research is that the negative image of Christians can be overcome, and this almost always happens in the context of meaningful, trusting relationships."

Warning that many Christians "have lost sight of being for Jesus rather than against outsiders," Kinnaman declares, "The reprieve from our deep-seated image problem comes when Christ followers become more faithful to a God who has redeemed us and more concerned about a hostile culture in need of the same redemption."

While many of the book's blunt, unvarnished findings are difficult to hear, the bottom line is that Christians are called to share positive, Christ-honoring ministry in the lives of people we encounter each day. The tough, straightforward challenges presented in "unChristian" provide timely insights and resources to help us do so.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

The best & worst films of 2007

By Phil Boatwright

Kansas City, Kan. (BP)—Though there were several films in 2007 whose artistic and technical merits captured the attention of critics and moviegoers, I wanted to choose a couple of good ones that uplifted the spirit.

As for the worst film of the year (there were many), I picked two that besides being stunningly awful in their execution also contained negative concepts of Christianity.

The best

■ "In the Shadow of the Moon" (PG for mild language and brief violent images). This incisive documentary features the accounts of the surviving members of the Apollo teams who walked on the moon, giving a fresh perspective of those achievements, and allowing for the spiritual implications that affected the men on those explorations. At one point, we hear Charles Duke from the Apollo 9 mission give his testimony. I couldn't believe my ears; a man was declaring his faith in Jesus Christ and there were no snickers from audience members. Indeed, my fellow moviegoers were moved, realizing that there is something far bigger than man, or even space itself. "In the Shadow of the Moon"

engages, uplifts and unites.

Nearly the best

■ "Elizabeth: The Golden Age" (PG-13 for violence and some sexuality). Reprising the roles they originated in "Elizabeth," Cate Blanchett and Geoffrey Rush return for a historical drama laced with treachery and romance. Joining them in the epic is Clive Owen as Sir Walter Raleigh, a dashing seafarer and newfound temptation for Elizabeth. Writers William Nicholson and Michael Hirst and director Shekhar Kapur have given moviegoers a stunning cinematic experience.

The story has much to do with Catholicism vs. Protestantism, or at least the political significance of the two during that age. Spain's King Philip, according to the film, was sure he was meant to defeat Elizabeth, seeing Protestantism as the devil's deception. Queen Elizabeth wanted the two religions to dwell in harmony under her reign, and she wouldn't punish people for their beliefs. Alas, a very brief shot of nudity (seen from behind) and an implied fornication scene keeps this one from the "best" category.

The worst

■ "License To Wed" (PG-13 for sex-

ual humor and language). Reverend Frank (Robin Williams) won't bless a marriage union until the couple undergoes his marriage-prep course. I suppose the concept of Robin Williams playing a priest was amusing to those who read the script, but his irreverent reverend is bizarre to the extreme. He not only vomits out off-color jokes to his congregation; he makes inappropriate comments to a class of little kids he's teaching about the sins of adultery. Other humor ranges from lame to borderline blasphemous.

The subject of a young couple entering into wedlock is ripe for incisive satire, but here we are given nothing of true substance or clever wit. Nor is there one honest emotion or three-dimensional characterization in the entire film.

■ "The Reaping" (R for language, violence, disturbing images and some sexuality). Hilary Swank plays a former Christian missionary who lost her faith after her family was tragically murdered by the very people she had been sent to help. She has since become a world-renowned expert in disproving religious phenomena. If you're looking for a joyless spook story complete with deceptive theology, gruesome deaths and a moping lead, this may be your cup of tea.

Phil Boatwright reviews films from a Christian perspective for previewonline.org

Churches hesitant to tackle NFL over party restrictions

By Ken Walker
Baptist Press

Charlottesville, Va. (BP)—John Whitehead is aching to take the National Football League to court but cannot find a church willing to take on the influential football colossus.

"You go to any bar on Super Bowl Sunday and they'll be showing the game on their (big screen) TVs," the president of the Rutherford Institute said.

The conservative nonprofit legal organization represented Fall Creek Baptist Church last February in its legal tussle with the NFL.

"They want to restrict it to a 55-inch screen, which in a big church you'd need binoculars to see," Whitehead remarked. "It's designed to prevent churches and groups like that from doing this. If churches en masse wanted to do this, they could get the law changed."

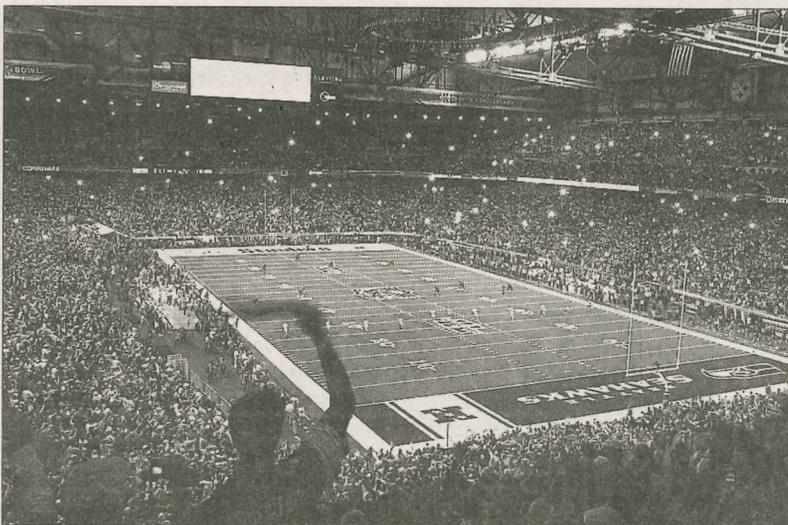
NFL spokesman Greg Aiello said the reason bars and sporting establishments are permitted to show the game on larger screens is a legal exemption for organizations that use them year-round instead of for a one-time event.

At least one unidentified church called the NFL last year and cited the exemption for those who use large screens year-round, according to Baptist Press. The church argued that because it uses its screen year-round, it should be exempted. The league allowed the church to hold the party without interference.

Measured against the increased size of home TV sets, not only is the screen size stipulation absurd, Whitehead noted, but the law cited by the NFL is vague and silly.

Though he has not discussed the issue with any congressmen, Whitehead said he is sure some legislators agree the law is obsolete and would overturn it if church members organized a grassroots campaign.

The pastor of Fall Creek Baptist, John Newland, said the church did



PARTY FOUL Camera flashes fill the stadium at the start of Super Bowl XL in 2006. The National Football League's policy on Super Bowl church parties continues to stir controversy, and one church claimed it has found a loophole in the NFL policy. (BP photo)

not proceed with a lawsuit last February because they decided a legal case would create a distraction from their ministry.

"My heart for Indianapolis goes way beyond a Super Bowl," Newland explained. "I feel like I would be doing my church a big disservice if I allowed my calling to be distracted by a lawsuit. To me, the NFL isn't worth it."

In addition, as a conservative who does not like the idea of judges legislating from the bench, Newland said he could not argue that the NFL was misinterpreting the law.

Besides, the strength of the body of Christ has been its flexibility to adapt to various situations, the pastor noted, as Fall Creek did by shifting to home parties rather than one large church gathering.

"The solution for us is to multiply cells and put it in homes and they can't touch us," he declared. "We're going to be able to have our party, it's just going to be on a smaller scale."

Other pastors offered various reasons for not tangling with the NFL

in court, such as the commitment of both time and energy required to pursue a lawsuit.

Tom Rives, pastor of Carrollwood Baptist Church in Tampa, Fla., said his congregation averages 375 on a Sunday and does not have the financial resources to tackle the NFL.

"The only way you would get somebody to do this rather than an individual church would be to get some corporate entity, where pastors would be able to be part of a group," Rives noted. "I'm not willing to take on the NFL by myself."

Even a church with the financial muscle of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, which is among the 10 largest churches in the nation, decided it did not want to have the reputation as the church that brought litigation, according to minister of single adults Jeff Ballard.

He noted that the church's legal counsel researched the law last winter and decided it was vague enough that Southeast Christian could have challenged the NFL. But after weighing the decision, Ballard said they

decided to comply with the restrictions.

"It's a matter of choosing your battles," he added. "We decided it wasn't worth it to us."

Although unhappy with the NFL's dictates, Richard Odom, pastor of First Baptist Church of Summerfield, N.C., said his church felt it had to comply with the law because of guidelines set forth in Romans 13. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that, unless the government is trying to forbid the preaching of the gospel, believers are to obey the law, Odom pointed out.

"I don't think we intentionally want to violate the law," he said. "It's a horrible example to set for our kids."

Aside from legal issues, the senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund said he believes the pro football league is fighting a losing battle in the court of public opinion. Mike Johnson revealed that his group received two calls last February from churches upset about the policy.

Even though each decided not to press a case, Johnson said the NFL has been subject to a spate of bad news, from gripes about the NFL Network to player suspensions.

"From a marketing perspective, why would you throw cold water on that?" Johnson asked of church parties. "It seems to me they would want to encourage these church gatherings and not discourage them."

Newland agreed, saying the league is shooting itself in the foot by discouraging parties that would draw numerous young people. Many teens are not big football fans because they follow extreme sports, he added.

"Ultimately it's the consumer who decides if they succeed," Newland said. "The millions who walked away from baseball and the NBA can just as easily walk away from the NFL."

Judge blocks civil union law from taking effect in Oregon

Portland, Ore. (RNS)—A federal judge recently blocked Oregon's domestic partnership law for gays and lesbians from taking effect Jan. 1, saying opponents should have a chance to make their case for a statewide election on civil unions.

The surprise ruling came just days before gay couples would be eligible for most of the same legal benefits of marriage. Couples across Oregon had planned to show up at county offices to register as partners.

But U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman ruled Dec. 28 that they will have to wait. He set Feb. 1 to hear a lawsuit by gay-rights opponents challenging the state's methods for verifying voter signatures. Opponents gathered signatures last summer to try to overturn civil unions on the November 2008 ballot but were rejected by state officials.

Elections officials determined that they fell 96 signatures short of the 55,179 needed for a referendum on a law passed by the legislature.

Mosman said attorneys for opponents showed that the rights of voters may have been violated if their signatures were wrongly rejected.

The ruling does not affect a companion state law to ban discrimination against gays in work, housing and public places.

Supporters of the new law were stunned by the judge's decision. "It's unfortunate that families are once again bearing the brunt of this ongoing struggle," said Jeana Frazzini, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon. "In this case, I still believe we will prevail."

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Study findings reveal limits to Willow Creek's success

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

South Barrington, Ill. (RNS)—Willow Creek Community Church, the suburban Chicago megachurch that has become a model for some of the nation's largest churches, started more than a quarter-century ago by asking the question: Why don't people go to church?

Now, church leaders are looking for new ways to keep them there after new research revealed that worshippers' spiritual growth did not keep pace with their involvement in church activities.

The findings, based on research at Willow Creek and similar churches, showed that involvement in church activities did not carry with it a boost in spiritual growth, defined as "increasing love for God and others."

The findings were not only enlightening for Willow Creek and its 20,000 weekend worshippers, but also for the more than 12,000 churches in the Willow Creek Association that look to the church for guidance on meeting the needs of spiritual "seekers."

Church activities "don't seem to be lifting them up the spiritual ladder to a new level," noted Cally Parkinson, who helped manage the evangelical church's research effort.

Bill Hybels, senior pastor of the church, said it was "almost unbearable" to learn that nearly a quar-

ter of the people at his megachurch were either "stalled" in their spiritual growth or dissatisfied with the church, with many considering leaving.

"It is causing me to ask new questions," Hybels acknowledged in the foreword to "Reveal," the 110-page book that detailed the research results. "It is causing me to see clearly that the church and its myriad of programs have taken on too much of the responsibility for people's spiritual growth."

The initial study looked at Willow Creek and six other churches across the country; it was expanded to include 23 additional congregations. In response to the research, Willow Creek is retooling its programs and providing pointers to churches that belong to the association.

Going deeper

Greg Hawkins, the church's executive pastor, said the research showed that Willow Creek was doing well in terms of evangelism, serving the poor and encouraging Bible reading.

"But what we found was our people were hungry for even more," acknowledged Hawkins, who co-wrote the "Reveal" book with Parkinson. "They wanted to go deeper with the Bible. They wanted to go deeper with personal spiritual practices."

Willow Creek is now building an online "next-step tool" that will



direct people to books, videos and other activities based on answers to questions about their spiritual path. Willow Creek's midweek services for the first half of 2008 will focus on a chronological overview of the Bible.

In recent months, Willow Creek undertook a churchwide teaching series on the New Testament book of James. Commentaries were available for those who wanted to further study the text. Worshippers were encouraged to take a range of "challenges," including attending all of the related services, reading the biblical text on their own or joining small-group discussions.

Recently, the association completed additional research with 200 churches, 40 percent of which are not specifically targeted at spiritual seekers. The network plans to spend \$500,000 to use the research as the basis for a fee-based system that will funnel information to congregations.

Meanwhile, some of the churches in the earlier phases of the study have made changes based on what they have learned.

Pastor Steve Stroope of Lake Pointe Church in the Dallas suburb of Rockwall is trying to turn around the "shockingly low" finding that showed only 18 percent of his flock read their Bible daily.

"How about reading just a chapter a day?" he has asked his 10,000 worshippers. "Don't read for vol-

ume. Let's read for quality. And just take one thing out of that."

Indiana pastor Jason DeVries said the Willow Creek research may help churches understand where they are so they can move forward.

"I think churches are out there and they have the questions, and they either don't have the mode to find out the answers or they might be afraid of what the answers tell you," he added.

While the findings may have startled Willow Creek leaders, they did not surprise Diana Butler Bass, who has tried to identify signs of vitality among smaller mainline Protestant churches.

"I have interviewed dozens and dozens of people throughout the United States who used to belong to churches like Willow Creek but left them in order to become Presbyterians or Lutherans or Episcopalians," she said. "Ex-members of the megachurches have sort of rediscovered a level of being Christian that they were unaware of."

Just as some mainline churches are emphasizing the importance of simple practices such as prayer and Bible study, Bass noted, churches like Willow Creek are having a similar revelation.

"The littlest congregation in the world can do those kinds of things," she pointed out. "It's through those pathways that those churches have actually found revitalization."

SEEKING ANSWERS

Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Ill., boasts the second-largest congregation in America with more than 23,000 worshippers a week. The megachurch is reexamining its "seeker-sensitive" approach to evangelism after recent research found that nearly a quarter of Willow Creek's members were "stalled" in their spiritual growth or dissatisfied with the church altogether. (RNS photo)

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Warden transforms violent prison into a place of hope

Continued from page 1

planned to do his part in the procedure, nothing more, nothing less.

Thomas Ward had been sentenced to die for murdering his mother-in-law. Cain viewed him as little more than a criminal whom society had ruled should die for his crime. "I didn't worry about what he must have been experiencing in the hours before his death. I didn't go to his last meal, and I didn't share Jesus with him," Cain recalled.

When it was time for the court's order to be carried out, Ward's face was a mask of fear as the deadly fluids began flowing through his veins. "I felt him go to hell as I held his hand," Cain said.

"Then the thought came over me: I just killed that man. I said nothing to him about his soul. I didn't give him a chance to get right with God. ... I decided that night I would never again put someone to death without telling him about his soul and about Jesus."

Feltus Taylor was the next inmate Cain was ordered to execute. He had been in the prison system before; he served his time and was released. Now he was back in prison, sentenced to die for shooting two restaurant employees, Keith Clark and Donna Ponsano, during an armed robbery. Clark survived, but was paralyzed from the neck down. Donna Ponsano died instantly.

The inmate's family had come to visit on the execution day. As the appointed hour drew near, Cain escorted them to a private waiting area and asked them to be strong. "Feltus needs to be as emotionally and spiritually ready as he can be in his final hours," the warden told them. He returned to Taylor's cell near the execution chamber.

"I met with Feltus, and we prayed together" Cain says. "When the time came, we took him into the chamber, and the guards prepared him for the execution."

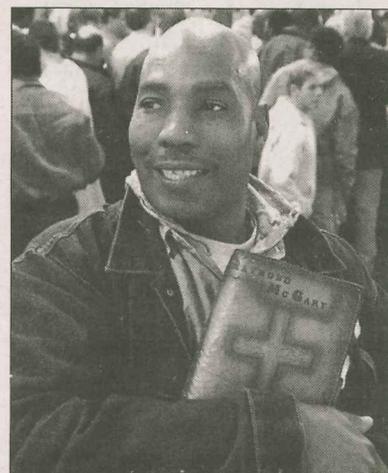
One of the witnesses observing the scene through a window to the chamber was Keith Clark. Confined to a wheelchair, he had met earlier with the warden and talked about the inmate's decision to commit his life to Jesus Christ.

Cain stood next to Taylor as he lay strapped down on the execution gurney. He bent over for a whispered last-minute conversation. "I held his hand and told him to get ready to see Jesus' face," Cain recalled. "He looked up into my eyes and said, 'Will you tell Keith Clark I'm sorry for what I did to him and Donna?'"

"I nodded yes. Then, as his eyes began to close for the last time, I said, 'Keith told me that he forgives you.' He smiled, closed his eyes and breathed twice. Then his breathing stopped."

Warden Cain drove home that night, deeply troubled by the suffering he had seen that day. The correctional system had failed, he thought. He vowed to do all in his power to transform the men under his charge.

"I had come to realize that criminals are very selfish people," Cain said. "I could teach them to read and write and help them learn skills and



NEW HOPE Inmate Raymond McGary holds his personalized, leather-clad Bible at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola during an evening worship service. (BP photo by Robin Nelson)

a trade, but without moral rehabilitation I would only be creating a smarter criminal.

"I knew we had to do more."

Cain said he knew three things for certain: Society considers prisoners to be non-persons, a despairing prisoner with no hope is a dangerous one, but no one is beyond God's love, forgiveness and redemption—not even hardened criminals.

Cain said he recognized that moral rehabilitation had to occur in order for an inmate to lift himself beyond the jungle atmosphere that too often smothers a prison. The only way for true change was Jesus.

Cain and his team worked tirelessly to create a better prison, a place where men sentenced to life imprisonment could choose to make lives and homes for themselves within the prison walls. Cain said he was determined to add value and moral responsibility to inmates' lives.

The warden invited New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to launch a rigorous four-year college extension course for inmates who desired a college degree. The program is funded largely by private donations.

Each weekday, more than 100 men crowd into prison classrooms to study the Bible and take courses toward a college degree. Cain also began a certificate program for faith-based education, aimed at inmates who did not have a high school diploma or a GED equivalent. More than 100 inmates earned their certificate in 2006.

Each year, inmate seminary graduates who feel called to ministry are transferred "two by two" to other prisons in Louisiana to serve as inmate missionaries. They receive no special favors or time reduced from their sentences; they choose to serve God by sharing the gospel with other inmates.

The missionaries carry what they learned in seminary into the prisons' living areas to help men "experience God." In one year alone, they baptized more than 150 prisoners.

"No one looks at a watch during a sermon, 'cause all we got is time," one inmate joked. "We love Jesus and how He's changed us from the inside. Even if we ain't never leaving here standing up, we know where we're going eventually."



I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. — Phillipians 4:13

Study: Students' spiritual interests increase despite drop in worship

Los Angeles (RNS)—Though college students' attendance at worship services declines, their interest in spiritual matters grows during their time on campus, according to a recent UCLA study.

The school's Higher Education Research Institute compared the views of students who were freshmen in the fall of 2004 with the same students' thoughts in the spring of 2007, when they were juniors.

The survey of more than 14,000 students found that more than 50 percent of students considered "integrating spirituality into my life" very important or essential in 2007, an increase of almost 10 percent from 2004.

Likewise more students thought "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" was essential or very important.

"Many students are emerging from the collegiate experience with a desire to find spiritual meaning and perspective in their everyday lives," said Alexander Astin, emeritus professor at UCLA and co-principal investigator for the research. "The data suggest that college is influencing students in positive ways that will better prepare them for leadership roles in our global society."

"Student interest in spirituality and religion is at a level not seen since perhaps the 1950s," noted Rebecca Chopp, president of Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y. "Religion and spirituality are important aspects of well being and character development and colleges need to support the growing interest and activities of our students."

While students' spiritual interests increased, their worship attendance did not.

Slightly more than half the students said they attended services in college at about the same rate as they attended them in high school. Almost 40 percent, however, revealed they worshipped less frequently. Only 7 percent said they worshipped more.

Researchers also concluded that an increasing percentage of students had an "ecumenical worldview." In 2004, 42 percent pointed out that they endorsed "improving my understanding of other countries and cultures"; 55 percent said the same in 2007.

Students showed increasing agreement over time with the idea that nonreligious people can lead lives as moral as those of religious believers, with 90 percent approving the statement in 2007.

Fusion college initiative to expand under IMB direction

By Mark Kelly
Baptist Press

Kansas City, Mo. (BP)—It has been heartbreaking to see how many Christian young people drop out of church after graduating from high school, said Scott Brawner, who founded a program called Fusion to counter that dropoff.

Established at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2005, Fusion will soon become an initiative of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, designed to inspire students to continue following Christ after high school and to pursue missions as a career.

Fusion offers high school graduates, ages 18-24, opportunities to gain missions experience for college credit. Students attending the program currently receive 32 hours of college credit through MBTS' undergraduate school, Midwestern Baptist College, for the two-phase course.

Phase 1 of the course involves both classroom study and rigorous training challenges to develop personal discipline and leadership skills. Phase 2 places a Fusion team on an international mission field, where they work under the oversight of career missionaries.

Fusion was created to help young Christians develop spiritual maturity and life direction, resulting in a lifetime passion for reaching the world for Christ, according to Brawner.

"Data compiled on Fusion graduates shows these young adults not only take personal responsibility for their faith, but become catalysts for evangelism and ministry while in college and beyond," Brawner noted. "This makes Fusion the ultimate freshman experience; it not only prepares young people to survive college with their faith intact but to follow hard after Christ for a lifetime."

Russ Savage, who participated in Fusion as a college student and has led others through the process, said students who are not challenged to live for Christ settle for a superficial religion that does not change lives.

"For many students, the call of Christ has been reduced to a list: Don't think about sex, read your Bible, ... be friendly, don't do drugs, go to youth group, etc.," explained Savage, a biblical studies major at Midwestern College. "The result is mediocrity in the pews and the hypocrisy in the high schools."

Fusion helps a student break through superficial stereotypes about Christianity and discover the gritty reality of following Jesus in a hostile world, explained Fusion leader Jeremy Vonada.

"Fusion provides a no-holds-barred missions experience," he added. "The program presents missions in a way that can't be sugar-coated."

The international missions component of Fusion encourages students to plug into missions at a local church and consider returning to the international mission field as short-term volunteers as well as full-time missionaries.

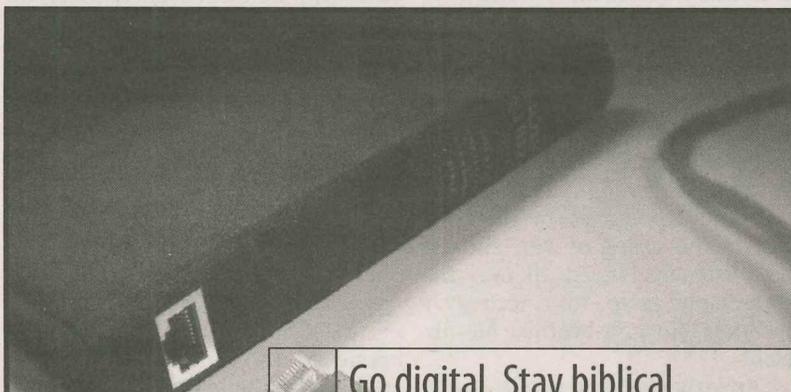
"Fusion provides a great emphasis on developing student leaders, and we look forward to expanding it to include a larger number of students in a wide variety of assignments worldwide," said Mike Lopez, who coordinates student enlistment and mobilization for the IMB.

During the 2008-09 school year, the nine-month program will remain a part of Midwestern Seminary and operated through Midwestern Bible College.

Beginning with the 2009-10 term, Christian colleges interested in offering the Fusion program to students can contact the IMB's student mobilization team.

"Fusion ... not only prepares young people to survive college with their faith intact but to follow hard after Christ for a lifetime."

Scott Brawner,
Fusion founder



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Gift-Based Ministry?

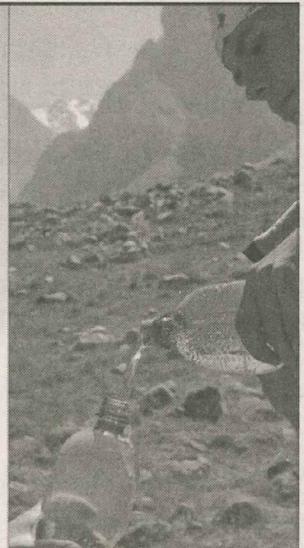
How does that work?

Want to help members move from the pews into the trenches of Christian servanthood? Want to explore issues of vocational Christian calling, spiritual gifts, the mission of the church, and the role of laypersons in ministry?

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On-the-go Bibles aim to keep pace with tech-savvy market

By Kat Glass
Religion News Service

Winston-Salem, N.C. (RNS)—Often when Mike Sheppard listens to the stories of the Crucifixion or Mary's discovery of the empty tomb, he gets so distracted that he almost forgets he is behind the wheel.

"There are points in the New Testament where you'll be brought to tears while you're driving down the road," said Sheppard a computer software technician.

The Southern Baptist said he has read the sacred text many times, but listening to "The Word of Promise" audio Bible is what really transports him to the first century.

Christian publishers are increasingly catching up with their multimedia-savvy consumers and offering Bibles beyond the traditional book format. Eager listeners like Sheppard can buy the story on tapes, CDs, MP3 downloads, iTunes and in many other formats.

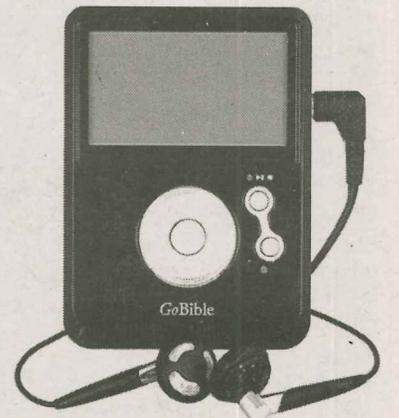
Andrew Block, founder and president of audio Bible company GoBible, started his business after noticing that technology was not reaching the faith-based niche.

"I just didn't see anyone using new technology to bring people of faith content that's important to them in an easy and affordable manner," Block recalled.

GoBible's "The Listener's Bible" looks like it is cut out for Gen-Y listeners, with an iPod-like screen and buttons made in the image of the popular portable music device. The entire Old and New Testaments are available with 70 hours of 31,000 verses individually marked so listeners can scroll through them.

A study conducted by the company in the spring of 2007 showed their listeners landed all over the demographic map—from tech-savvy youngsters to grey-bearded Methuselahs.

Similarly, the makers of the celebrated audio recording "Inspired by ... The Bible Experience" were pleasantly surprised that consumers of all ages are buying their New and Old Testament audio Bibles. The recording features actors Samuel L. Jackson



and Denzel Washington, along with Pentecostal pastor Bishop T.D. Jakes.

"The concern was that this would just be a trendy thing—that people would purchase it because of the star power—but then not really get engaged in the Bible. But just the opposite has been happening," noted Paul Caminiti, vice president and publisher of Bibles for Zondervan, which produced "The Bible Experience."

Block said some users have reported that they use the GoBible device to listen along while they are reading in order to get help with some of the trickier name pronunciations.

As Sheppard pointed out, listening to the Bible on audio can bring new meaning into the text for some.

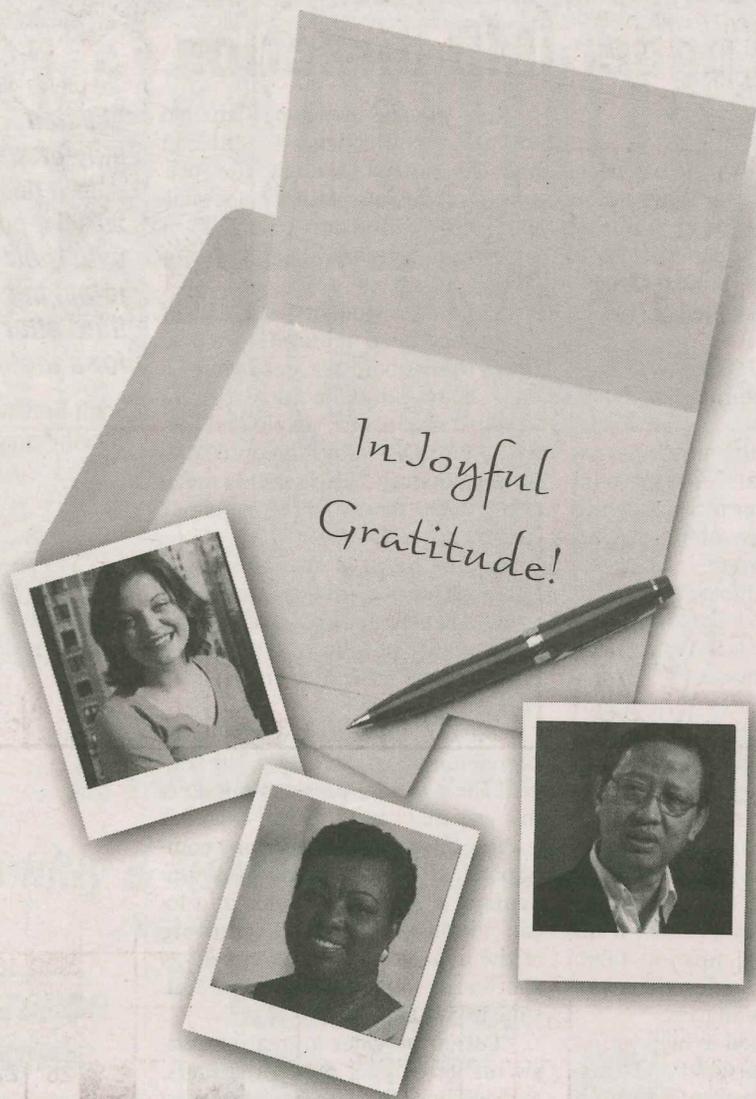
"When you listen to it, the readers bring from their experience," he said. "Sometimes the voices bring out a nuance that may bring insight that you hadn't thought of before."

Pointing to the Bible's history as an oral text, Caminiti explained, "The Bible was really written to be listened to."

"Even (in) a book like Leviticus, which can tend to be tedious, you hear the sacrificial fires in the background," Caminiti said.

Jim Lahman uses "The Bible Experience" recording when he teaches his adult Bible study class. He encourages his students to read along as they listen to the actors, who are complemented by sound effects.

"It really adds depth to the Bible study," Lahman noted. "It's just not sitting there reading the Bible."



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Reflection and anticipation

2007 brought combination of blessings and challenges

The end of a year is always a time of reflection. This past year was no different for me as I personally had much to be thankful for in 2007. The most significant personal event has been the adoption of Jonas, our fifth child. We have been blessed as we have watched all of our family adjust to integrating a new 6-year-old son into our lives.

For the rest of the Melbers, the past year was great for many reasons. We have watched all of our children grow and mature in their walks with the Lord. Through the challenges that each of us has endured, God's grace has sustained us and given us strength each day. As we begin 2008, I am sure it will prove to be very eventful and exciting as a family of seven will surely experience quite a lot over the next 12 months.

This past year has been equally exciting for Crossings. 2007 was the largest year ever for our camp programs in attendance, missions giving and spiritual decisions. With the growth in numbers comes growing pains as our facilities are stressed and stretched to accommodate all the guests. Vis-

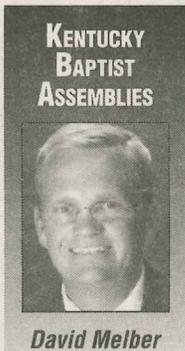
itors will enjoy the new lakes, housing and conference space that will be completed over the next few months. While these additions will not totally solve our surging growth, they will help.

I also must reflect on the staff and volunteers who have sacrificed greatly to help make camp and retreats all they can be. We have seen new additions in staff and watched others move on to new journeys in life. Honestly, the way God takes care of our staffing needs by providing just the right people at just the right time humbles me the most.

Each time God provides a new staff member, I think to myself what a privilege it is that God is allowing a new person to serve with us in camp ministry.

Overall, 2007 was a great year, full of excitement and adventure and a healthy dose of trials and growing pains both personally and ministerially. As I look toward what 2008 will bring, I am sure God will again use circumstances to teach us to rely upon Him more each day. May God bless you richly and grow your faith in 2008!

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

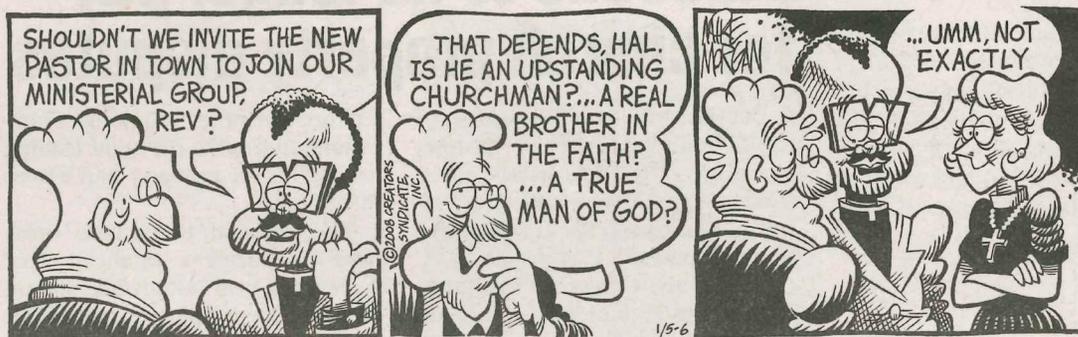


KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES

David Melber

For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

By Janet Kennedy

Across

- 1 Disney deer
- 6 Giver
- 11 Belonging to Robert E.
- 12 Girl's name
- 14 "I am like an ____ of the desert" (Psalm 102:6)
- 16 Wipe clean
- 18 Adam's companion
- 20 Peach state, abbr.
- 21 The main central parts of churches
- 22 Impersonal pronoun
- 23 Exodus author, Leon ____
- 26 Price mark-down
- 28 Esau's pottage was made from this legume (Genesis 25:34)
- 30 Cain did this to the ground (Genesis 4:2)
- 32 Digital audiotape, abbr.
- 33 Tree trunk
- 34 Horned African mammals
- 37 "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house ... even thine ____ , O Lord of hosts" (Psalm 84:3)
- 40 "Thou anointest my ____ with oil" (Psalm 23:5)
- 41 "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his ____" (Genesis 3:15)
- 42 You, KJV English
- 43 Stay away from
- 46 Nickel, chem. symbol
- 47 Physicians, abbr.

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42				43		44		45			46	
47		48		49							50	
		51	52				53	54				
	55						56					

- 49 Naaman was one of these because of his disease (2 Kings 5:1)
- 50 "My tongue is the ____ of a ready writer" (Psalm 45:1)
- 51 Social equal
- 53 "The wringing of the ____ bringeth forth blood" (Proverbs 30:33)
- 55 "A time to mourn, and a time to ____" (Ecclesiastes 3:4)
- 56 Game
- 15 "A certain man, which had devils long time, and ____ no clothes" (Luke 8:27)
- 17 Address abbreviation
- 19 Foul
- 24 Asian nation
- 25 "____ fast therefore in liberty" (Galatians 5:1)
- 26 Slow-moving mammal
- 27 Seaweed
- 29 International Trade Organization, abbr.
- 31 Sick
- 34 Poem
- 35 Pay attention to
- 36 Harsh
- 37 Strangers
- 38 French name
- 39 What David used to kill Goliath
- 43 Man's name
- 44 Kind of modern art
- 45 Fall
- 48 Health facility
- 50 Apiece
- 52 Printer's measure
- 54 Therefore

Down

- 2 "Israel loved Joseph more than ____" (Genesis 37:3)
- 3 Myself
- 4 Existed
- 5 God's chosen nation
- 6 To abandon
- 7 Metals
- 8 A silver-white metal, abbr.
- 9 "Ye are all ____ in Christ" (Galatians 3:28)
- 10 A bump in a ski slope
- 13 Doled

Last week's solution

1	F	R	O	G		5	S	C	A	B		9	S	I	S
12	P	E	R	U		13	T	I	E	R		14	O	R	O
15	O	B	E	I		16	S	A	N	C	E		17	J	O
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28	R	O	P	E		30	F	A	T		31	S	N	O	B
	33	S	U	N		34	D	E	R		35	E	R	E	
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52	E	S	E			53	T	O	E	S		54	S	N	O

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GuideOne to no longer pay for church property disputes

Des Moines, Iowa (ABP)—One of the nation's three largest insurers of congregations has backed away from covering lawsuits filed as a result of church splits and denominational disputes.

Since July, GuideOne Insurance of West Des Moines, Iowa, has been adding the endorsement to new and renewed policies for "directors and officers coverage." No specific incident triggered the policy change, according to GuideOne general council Tom Farr. "We're just following the developments of the church niche in general," he noted.

But the very public dispute over homosexuality that erupted among Episcopalians last year "got us to thinking," Farr said. "We had read about disputes among others over property," he added.

Insurance is designed to protect the insured against "unforeseen and accidental events," he explained, but a church split or disaffiliation is "clearly not accidental ... not like somebody running a red light. That's an internal matter and not either unforeseen or an accident."

Most churches and religious organizations carry two types of policies—general and directors/officers coverage. General policies usually include property, bodily injury and personal injury coverage. Directors-and-officers coverage typically is broad and covers claims against wrongful acts or issues created by wrongful actions. "It's financial injury coverage," he said.

Conflict between two factions in

a church or other religious organization often splits the body, leading to a fight over property and assets, Farr noted.

The decision to exclude those risks "is purely a financial act," he pointed out. "GuideOne should not have to pay legal expenses for both sides in a lawsuit that erupts from internal disagreement. We felt that our policy didn't cover it anyway, but we decided to clarify" that stance, the attorney said.

The other two primary insurers, Church Mutual of Merrill, Wisc., and Brotherhood Mutual of Fort Wayne, Ind., apparently have made no changes.

Brotherhood Mutual's policy already has a limitation in place, and the firm does not plan to broaden it, explained Mitzi Thomas, assistant vice president of corporate communications.

Neither Church Mutual's legal council Charles Kirby nor corporate communications director Jay Lillge would discuss whether the firm is considering a similar endorsement or other limitations. A few Church Mutual policyholders indicated they had seen no changes and had not heard about any pending changes from company representatives.

GuideOne's endorsement will be applied to regional and national religious bodies as well. Denominations that are more centrally controlled generally and individual churches and groups with provisions for splits in their governing documents or property deeds are not as much at risk, he acknowledged.

Loving the atheist

Unbelievers may change their beliefs if treated with love, dignity & kindness

By Michael Spencer, assistant to the president

The year that has passed will be known for several things but it would be difficult not to notice that 2007 was the year that atheism came out of the closet.

In no time in recent history have there been more high-profile atheists getting the attention of our culture. From the books of Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and Philip Pullman, atheists were "loud and proud" in 2007.

Often Christians do not take atheism seriously. We can't imagine how someone could not believe in God. Who do they thank for life's blessings? To whom do they pray when crises come? How do they face death? Of course, atheists know that their lack of belief is no more mysterious than our faith.

How can we pray to a God we can't see? How can we believe all those stories of miracles?

Atheism in the post-9/11 world has made the case that religion is inherently violent. Even CNN, in its series "God's Warriors," put Judaism, Islam and Christianity on equal ground as worldviews that endorse violence. For many people this makes sense; would we kill and hurt one another if we did not believe "God is on our side"?

Atheism is more, however, than just a protest. It is a worldview of its own, and it presents itself to young people as the best explanation for the confusing world in which they live, the pain they experience and the disappointments they've felt.

For a broken and disillusioned generation, atheism often makes sense, particularly alongside an anemic and irrelevant shell of empty reli-

gion. At Oneida Baptist Institute, we want to demonstrate that atheism is not true, and that God's love in Jesus Christ produces faith, hope, compassion and kindness. Rather than the self-centered existence that flows from atheism, the gospel of Christ calls us into relationship with others, to serve, love and accept them for Jesus' sake.

We understand that atheism is making a strong play for the minds and hearts of our students. Some may come to us professing atheism.

Unlike other Christian schools, we receive these students as part of our community. We do not demand that they worship or profess Christianity. We only ask that they allow us to be a community centered on Christ, ministering to our students in Jesus' name.

Even the most determined atheist has a hard time contending with the simple love, dignity and kindness that students experience at OBI. We embody respect, forgiveness and acceptance of

all people. You can be an atheist and be a recipient of all the blessings God channels through this place. The atheist's protest must meet—and answer—the simple love that is willing to adopt a person as family and love him as a creation of God. Our goal is not to argue with the atheist, but to give every student an experience that can only be explained by the person of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With your help, we make these blessings available to students of every race, tribe and worldview. Even the most determined unbeliever is treated with the understanding that Jesus Christ died and still lives for him or her.

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

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W.F. Underwood

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Donnie Fox

Honoring a lifelong Christian servant

Scholarship fund established in honor of Nasby Mills

Terrell and Sharon Kay Black of Dayton, Ohio, have established a scholarship at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College in the name of Rev. Nasby Mills of London.

Mills and his wife, Pat, were surprised with the announcement that was made Oct. 14, 2007, during the morning worship service at Laurel River Missionary Baptist Church in London where the Millses attend.

The date of the announcement was chosen to commemorate Mills' 80th birthday. The Millses' children, Joanna Smith, Lisa Ellis and Rick Mills, hosted a reception for friends, family and guests following the presentation.

"Establishing the scholarship in my uncle's name is a way to honor his 50 years of dedicated service as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ," said Sharon Kay Black, Mills' niece.

"My husband, Terrell, and I have tremendous respect for Clear Creek Baptist Bible College and its focused mission to provide proper Bible training for pastors," Mrs. Black continued.

Mills served Southern Baptist churches in both Kentucky and

Indiana. He was director of missions for Upper Cumberland Association of Baptists for 20 years and director of missions for Knox Association of Baptists for almost four years. His gifts for planning, development and spiritual mentoring of fellow pastors strengthened the cause of Christ throughout both regions. Now retired, Mills continues to serve Christ in interim pastorate roles. He truly is a lifelong servant of God.

We look forward to the growth, expansion and increased impact of the scholarship fund in years to come. Many people will grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord through this special scholarship.

Friends desiring to honor Mills by participating in the scholarship fund may contact Jay Sulfridge, Clear Creek's dean of institutional advancement, by phone at (866) 340-3196. Send contributions directly to Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, 300 Clear Creek Road, Pineville, KY 40977 and designate the gifts to The Rev. Nasby C. Mills Scholarship Fund.

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

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Students experience 'frontlines of lostness' in Senegal

By Emily Peters
SBC International Mission Board

Senegal, West Africa (BP)—Dustin Allen, 22, did not even notice the potent smell of fish in the saltwater air that had overwhelmed his senses a couple months earlier when he arrived at a seaside village in Senegal, West Africa.

It was just part of daily living for the missions volunteer from Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, Ga.

He awoke every morning from the foam mat on the floor and bathed using a bucket of water. He ate rice and fish with his hands out of a bowl on the floor. He slipped on his flip-flops and trekked through thick sand to visit the homes of young believers who have never been to church in a building.

"This is a great life," said Allen, who learned enough of the local language to teach simple Bible studies to believers. "I could really see myself doing this long term."

Allen's contemplation of missions as a career prompted him to join the Fishing for Fishermen (F4F) summer missions program which began among the Lebou people of Senegal in 2001. The effort offers about a dozen college students each year a summer-long look at missions work among the Lebou, who are more than 90 percent Muslim.

"This is like going from boot camp in the Bible Belt to the frontlines of lostness," noted Matt Herring, a student at Georgia Southern University. "It's like an internship for missions work."

Herring and Allen lived in villages and fished with the men as a form of outreach. F4F students receive a basic culture orientation to start. By day two, they are on the streets of the capital city, hailing taxis in the Wolof language to take part in various hands-on projects. Their tasks include everything from hosting medical clinics to being evangelical artists and sharing the gospel through spending time with locals.

Kelly Davis, a student mobilizer for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, explained that students get a much more accurate insight into missionary life when they move beyond a typical two-week mission trip to an extended missions experience.

"In six weeks, you run out of food bars, you have to use the squatty potty, you've given up on having clean feet, and you've discovered you can live without a cell phone or constant

Internet access," Davis said. "Six weeks or longer forces you to begin living within the culture as opposed to holding your breath and hoping you make it to the end."

As Kari Freeman, 19, strolls down a sandy street, children call out her Senegalese name and run up to hug her knees.

The nursing student from the University of Central Florida in Orlando greeted them and headed into the rustic clinic where she worked for two months. She understood enough Wolof to share in the busy Senegalese nurses' inside jokes as they lightened their heavy work with a laugh. During free moments she shared Bible passages with them.

"These are the amazing things you don't get to experience on the two-week mission trip where you build something and go back to your air-conditioned hotel room at night," Freeman declared. "This way we have time to build relationships."

"Picture of missionary life"

But the team of nursing student volunteers she served with in Senegal realized that extended service comes with a sacrifice. One teammate missed her best friend's wedding. Another received news from home that her grandfather died.

"When you're just here for a few days, you can push your struggles (to) the back of your mind and tough it out a few more days," Freeman noted. "But this just rips you from everything you're attached to, like your family and comforts. It exposes all your weaknesses and forces you to rely on God."

"This paints a much better picture of missionary life," she added.

And she claimed she would not have it any other way.

"It's been really good for me," Freeman said. "I'm definitely thinking of making a career of this."

For Grace Morehead, a screaming newborn baby is a good sign. She knows that it means the baby boy is healthy. Senegalese babies face a high infant mortality rate.

As Morehead rocks him, the baby begins to calm down.

"We prayed over him just that somehow he would grow up knowing that he is loved and that he would know Jesus," said Morehead, a nursing student from Azusa Pacific University in California.

She says the last four words of her prayers in the local language: "Ci tu-

uru Yeesu, ameen."

In the name of Jesus, amen.

Experiences like that have given Morehead a new definition of the life-giving work she said she feels called to do.

"I always thought just missions would not be enough and I had to do nursing, too," she explained. "But I've realized God isn't confined to work through medical things. We can heal wounds, but we have to heal souls."

Missionary Tim Horton admitted he knows that frontline missions experience is what it takes to give students a real look at missions work.

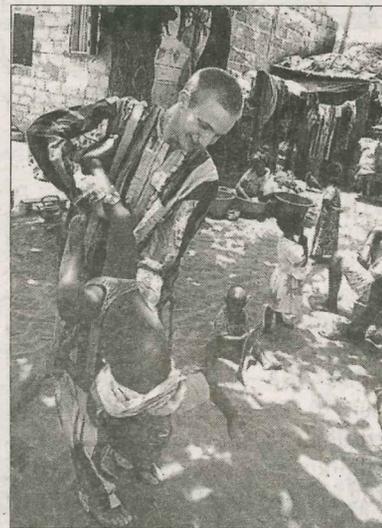
"God is going to grow in them a passion while they're here that He is going to use to bring them back to work for Him," he added.

As a college student, Horton spent multiple summers serving in F4F. Now he and his wife serve as full-time missionaries, discipling young Lebou believers and supervising the current generation of F4F missionaries.

"You can't gain a passion like that until you've been in the midst of the lostness and seen it," Horton acknowledged.

The students have not only seen the lostness around them but worked among it to transform lives for Christ, he added.

Lebou fisherman N'Gala Gueye accepted Christ last year thanks to the work of the F4F missionaries.



SUMMER BREAK Student Matt Herring plays with Senegalese children in Kayar, Senegal. Herring spent last summer in Senegal as part of the Fishing for Fishermen program, which focuses on the Lebou people. (BP photos)

With no church or pastor in his village, he was hungry to learn what he could about Christ from the college students.

"They came to be with us, to be our friends, to talk about the Bible, to bring us peace, and it is good," Gueye noted. "Through their actions and their spirit, they show us that they love Jesus. Whenever people want to see the way of God, they can see it through the lives of these students."

Student paints new picture of missions

Senegal, West Africa (BP)—Jenny Barker is not a typical summer missionary. With colored streaks in her hair and a tiny rhinestone stud piercing in her nose, she is an artist confident that "the Lord can use that for His glory," she said.

That is why the student from Hannibal-La-Grange College in Missouri packed up her paintbrushes and trekked to sub-Saharan Africa to take her heart-changing art to a place where most have never heard—or seen—the truth of Christ.

"I feel closest to God when I'm painting," Barker noted. "It's really worship for me, and it's amazing I can use it for His name and glory and purpose."

For two months she painted and sketched in Senegal to reach out to the Lebou—a people group of 1.5 million, nearly all of whom follow an animistic version of Islam.

Women in colorful African print dresses lounge on straw mats on a sandy porch in the hot afternoon, sipping traditional hot tea. They listen intently to a 40-minute cassette of the Creation to Christ story in their own Wolof language. But there are visuals, too.

Barker has created her own canvas. She has attached a coarse cloth onto a piece of cardboard and a friend is acting as a human easel. As the tape begins, Barker dips her brush into the latex paint and sweeps out a circle—the beginning of the world.

"My art helps me cross the language barrier," Barker said. "It's an easy way to tell a story."

As the narrator continues, Barker brings to life a dozen Bible stories: a man and a woman, a giant boat of animals on raging waters, a sacrificial lamb, a star in the sky. In the middle of it all, she paints a cross—the focal point of the story the women are hearing for the first time.

Barker finishes her painting just as the cassette concludes.

"Rafit Na!" the women exclaimed in Wolof.

"They're saying it's beautiful," Barker translated.



STORYTELLING Jenny Barker (left) paints a large version of the storying cloth picture of the woman at the well. Barker and her roommate Leah Horton (right) participated in Fishing for Fishermen, a missions program that focuses on the Lebou people of Senegal.

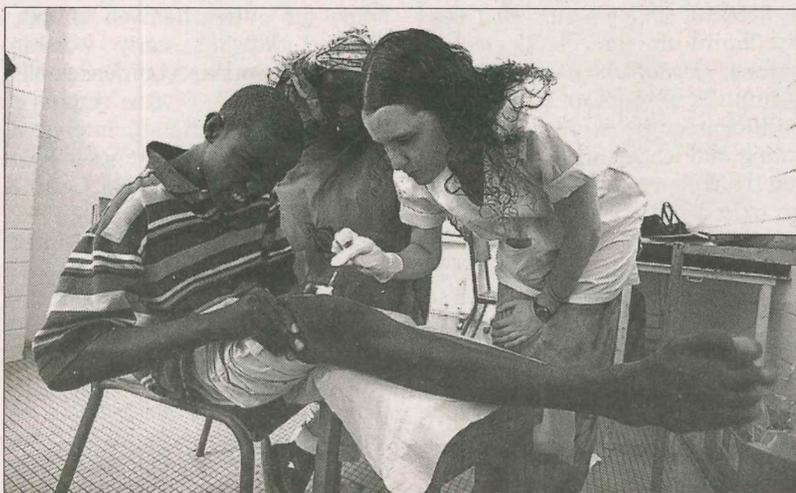
During her two months in Senegal, Barker sketched Bible stories for children, painted wall murals at a Baptist center and brightened up the interiors of missionaries' homes. She acknowledged that she hopes the images she leaves behind will bless onlookers long after she is gone.

Barker also said she enjoyed living with a Muslim family, using her everyday life to illustrate Christ to them in a new way.

"We just spend time with them and look for opportunities to share Bible stories or Scripture with them," she noted. "This has been a good stepping stone for what I hope to do in the future."

After she graduates from college, Barker plans to embark on a two-year International Mission Board Journeyman term.

"I have a passion for art and for international missions," Barker explained. "God has just worked it out so nicely where I can do both. I've learned more often than not, your passion will fit somewhere. God gives you a gift and you should give it back to Him. It might not be as you planned, but the Lord is still going to use it for His purpose."



MEDICAL ATTENTION College student Kari Freeman cleans a Senegalese boy's wound while volunteering at a clinic in Dakar, Senegal.

To find out more about Fishing for Fishermen (F4F), e-mail David and Cheryl Johnson at davidandcheryljohnson@hotmail.com or visit www.gowestafrica.org.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist ministries and missionaries:

Truck stop ministry of Crittenden Baptist Association in Williamstown. This ministry, under the direction of David Wolf, provides a Sunday morning worship service at the Corinth truck stop chapel for truckers and others who choose to attend. Volunteers also give away evangelistic tracts, Bibles, New Testaments, CDs and tapes to those who want them. Pray that the materials taken will be effective in reaching those who listen and read them. Pray that truckers will find time during busy runs to attend services and hear the gospel as it is shared.

Mission Service Corps Missionary Harrell Riley of Princeton. Riley serves the job corps students on three campuses in Kentucky and inmates and their families at the Western Kentucky Correctional Complex in Eddyville. Riley and his ministry staff provide Bible studies, worship services, discipleship and follow-up with new converts as well as special evangelistic events. Pray for inmate dads in the correctional complex and their children who are participating in the Awana program. Pray for healing and restoration within the families of inmates as they discover the hope and eternal difference that Christ can make in their lives.

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

■ **BRODHEAD**—Luther Allen recently resigned as pastor of Brodhead Church.

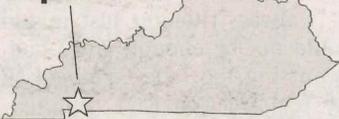
■ **EWING**—Ewing Church recently called John Christerson as pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Woodland Church will host a 13-week Financial Peace University class each Sunday beginning Jan. 13, 5:30 p.m. For more information, call Susanne Jenkins at (502) 417-0041.

■ **RAVENNA**—Williams Memorial Church recently called Paul Hubbs as pastor.

Spotlight on ...

Hopkinsville



Rodney Travis, pastor of First Church since 2000, recently retired after 42 years of ministry. The church will host a reception in his honor Jan. 13, 2 to 5 p.m.

Alum sues to put Bible verse on brick

Williamsport, Pa. (RNS)—James Pursley says he is a “proud alumnus of Penn State University” and a “devout Christian” who wants to memorialize pride in his alma mater by buying a brick on the Alumni Walk.

Pursley, of Chicago, wants his name, year of graduation and “Joshua 24:15” (not the full verse) inscribed on the brick, a request the

university has rejected.

The 2001 graduate filed a civil rights suit in U.S. Middle District Court, calling the university’s action “a blatant case of content viewpoint discrimination against religious speech in a public forum.”

Pursley states in the lawsuit that he was told his inscription was rejected because policy prevented religious messages.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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.

February

1-2 Deacon/Pastor/Spouse Retreat, Holiday Inn University Plaza, Bowling Green.

16 Special Needs Meeting, Baptist Building, Louisville.

18 Regional Church Financial Benefits Conference, First Baptist Church, Calvert City.

19 Regional Church Financial Benefits Conference, Warren Association Office, Bowling Green.

20 Regional Church Financial Benefits Conference, Anchor Baptist Church, Lexington.

21 Regional Church Financial Benefits Conference, Erlanger Baptist Church.

23 Hispanic Evangelism Conference and Hispanic Baptist Women’s Event, Elizabethtown.

23 Love 101 Conference, Living Hope Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

25-26 Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

28-March 1 Handbell Festival, Paroquet Springs Conference Center, Shepherdsville.

29-March 1 Creative Ministries Festival, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

29-March 1 Mission Service Corps Basic Training, Baptist Building, Louisville.

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

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Cookware (we stopped doing dinner parties). Beautiful new 17-piece sets; heavy, surgical stainless steel, waterless, lifetime warranty. Previously \$2,000, now \$295. \$149 knife set free with first five orders. vapoaseal.com. (800) 434-4628.

NEEDED: Volunteers: Glorieta Conference Center. March-November in the mountains (7,500 feet) 18 miles east of Santa Fe, N.M. Serve in maintenance, conference support, grounds and food service. Long-term commitments preferred with a minimum commitment of one month. Each volunteer works at least 30 hours a week for which Glorieta will provide: a full-hook-up RV site, an apartment or hotel room, and meals (when available). For information/application: contact the coordinator of volunteers at (505) 757-4298; mail request to PO Box 8, Glorieta, NM 87535; or download information/application from our website: www.glorieta.com.

SEEKING: Senior pastor for The Baptist Church at Andover, Lexington-Hamburg area. Huge growth potential—150 in worship now. Conservative Southern Baptist. Send resumé, CD/DVD to 3330 Todds Road, Lexington, KY 40509.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of students/recreation for Red House Baptist Church in Richmond, Ky. Candidate should possess a master’s degree from an accredited seminary and at least five years of student ministry experience. Send resumé via e-mail to dawn@redhousebc.com.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for growing church. Primary duties include leading choir and congregational singing, coordinating music program and preparing seasonal cantatas. Please send resumé, references and DVD (if available) to: Minister of Music Search Committee, New Bethel Baptist Church, 2022 Verona-Mudlick Road, Verona, KY 41092; or e-mail to nbbc2003@aol.com with “Minister of Music” for the subject.

SEEKING: Full-time worship pastor gifted in leading contemporary praise/worship style services in seeker-sensitive environment. Significant experience/education expected. Send resumé to Bellevue Baptist Church, 519 W Byers Ave., Owensboro, KY 42303; fax: (270) 685-5134; e-mail to gfaulls@bellnet.org.

SEEKING: Minister of music for a growing congregation in Hodgenville, Ky. Duties include leading a comprehensive music program, choir and blended worship services. Please send resumé, references and a DVD if available to: Music Minister Search Committee, South Fork Baptist Church, 4915 New Jackson Hwy., Hodgenville, KY 42748.

SEEKING: Pastor for Burlington Baptist Church, located near Cincinnati in Boone County, one of Kentucky’s fastest growing areas. Contemporary and traditional worship services. Preferred is at least 5 years senior-pastor experience and a seminary degree. Send resumé to Pastor Search Committee, Burlington Baptist Church, PO Box 48, Burlington, KY 41005; or lkmc9@insightbb.com by Jan. 31, 2008.

SEEKING: Associate pastor. An innovative and contemporary church with a proven track record of being on the edge is looking for a minister who will work with our senior pastor to lead our church to the next level. Responsibilities include: oversight and leadership in the development of a vibrant adult small group ministry; working closely with the senior pastor in the pulpit ministry; and sharing a part of the administrative coordination of outreach/assimilation strategies and missional service ministries. Applicants should demonstrate creativity, strong teaching gifts, a passion for innovation and administrative skills. Send resumé to: Nikki Heiserman, administrative assistant, New Work Fellowship, 1611 S Main Street, Suite 3, Hopkinsville, KY 42240; nikkiheiserman@newworkfellowship.org.

SEEKING: Pastor for First Baptist Church, Providence, Ky. Resumé to Ray Gobin, 214 Benjamin Terrace, Providence, KY 42450.

SEEKING: Pastor—God’s choice for our small, growing, rural church in southern Kentucky. Salary plus benefits package. Send to: Resumé, 812 Walnut St., Franklin, KY 42134; or via e-mail: chatty54@multipro.com.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for Cecilia Baptist Church (12-20 hours a week). Experienced individual with knowledge of music, directing congregation and choir. Send resumé to Cecilia Baptist Church, 416 East Main St., Cecilia, KY 42724, Attn: Personnel Committee; or e-mail resumé to bettina@cecilia.baptistchurch.com.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Anchor Church, a non-traditional, Spirit-filled church with Southern Baptist doctrine, seeking God’s direction and will. If by seeking God’s will in your life you sense His leading toward Anchor Church, please contact us at: Pastor Search Committee, Anchor Church, 3126 Riggs Ave., Erlanger, KY 41018; or e-mail sjmorri@insightbb.com. If you know of someone who is seeking a church like Anchor, please send your suggestion to the same address.

SEEKING: Senior pastor. First Baptist Church of Leitchfield, Ky, seeks a visionary leader who is called by God to minister to people of all ages. This position requires strong communication and leadership skills, including the willingness to empower others to lead and work with other staff ministers. Individual must be an energetic, dynamic man who has a passion for community evangelism and soul winning as well as a loving, caring heart for guiding the spiritual development of others. His strong, disciplined prayer life will allow him to recognize God’s calling to this church and this ministry opportunity. Please submit resumé to Ed Carter, Pastor Search Team leader, PO Box 411, Leitchfield, KY 42755.

SEEKING: Part-time youth and children’s minister. Please send resumé to Palomar Baptist Church, 2190 Ft. Harrods Drive, Lexington, KY 40515, Attn: Youth Search Committee. For details, call Kimberly Goad at (859) 963-1400.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music for Chaplin Baptist Church (www.chaplinbaptist.org) in northeastern Nelson County. Housing is available. Submit resumé to Chaplin Baptist Church, PO Box 93, Chaplin, KY 40012, Attn: Music Search Committee; or via e-mail to fugitt@bellsouth.net.

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 Ave., Fort Thomas, KY 41075. Accepting resúmes through Jan. 31, 2008.

SEEKING: Part-time worship/choir leader for two morning worship hours for outreach-driven church. Blended worship, early worship band, late worship choir/ensemble, seasonal cantata. Diverse congregation, long-tenured staff. Interested individuals forward resúmes to First Baptist Church, PO Box 296, Carrollton, KY 41008. Phone: (502) 732-4396.

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 resúmes to: Pastor Search Committee, c/o Michael Turner, 141 Ridge Hill Drive, Highland Heights, KY 41076.

Defying life's expectations

Tennessee man overcomes own disability to minister to others who suffer physically

By Erin Roach
Baptist Press

Nashville (BP)—The youth minister asked everyone in the circle to stand up and join hands to pray, but Roger Rice did not have any arms, much less hands. It was his first time at church after a long absence and he was skeptical about how he would be treated.

"I wondered how he was going to react to me being right next to him," Rice recalled of the youth minister at Westwood Baptist Church in Nashville. "But without any hesitation at all, he reached and touched me on the shoulder. It was at that moment that God touched my heart and I realized how stupid I had been and that I needed Christ in my life."

Rice, who stands three feet, four inches tall, was born with severe physical handicaps caused by an inadequately tested drug that was intended to prevent miscarriages and control morning sickness. Medical professionals advised Rice's parents to place him in a nursing home because of the burden he would be to them and because his quality of life appeared dim.

But a nurse at the hospital where Rice was born privately told his mother not to do so because God had a plan for his life that would not come to fruition if he were abandoned.

The first five years of Rice's life were largely spent in hospitals where doctors experimented with casts, leg braces and artificial arms. In the end, his body proved to be too small for any of the experiments to work. Doctors said he wouldn't live past age 10.

At age 11, Rice mustered the determination to learn to walk, first by leaning on a coffee table until his legs were strong enough to support his body. At 16, he was accepted into high school and eventually he served as president of the Student Government Association at Columbia State Community College in Tennessee.

He had defied the expectations of those who said he would never amount to anything, and he still had more to show them. Rice said he was on top of the world when he transferred from Columbia State to

Memphis State University with plans of becoming an attorney.

"This was before the Americans with Disabilities Act. They did do some modifications for me, but they fell short," Rice recalled. "I couldn't get in buildings. I'd sit there and have to wait and wait and wait to get in."

Once, Rice found himself caught in a terrible thunderstorm that God would use to alter the course of his life, he noted. He was outside his dormitory, and no one was there to help him get inside.

"I could get in my room if I was inside the building, but I could not get in the building," he said. "I was caught out in the storm, and it scared me to death."

Rice, who today moves around in a power wheelchair and uses his feet to do nearly everything a person's hands would, returned to Nashville and obtained a broadcasting license. He approached a small town radio station near Nashville and asked for a job, but was turned away.

"The station manager said that he was looking for someone who had three arms, much less someone who didn't have any," Rice noted.

Meeting David

Soon after, God orchestrated an encounter that would give renewed purpose to Rice's life following two failed career attempts. He heard about a young man with physical disabilities who was confined to a nursing home, and Rice went to visit him.

"When I got to the door of his room, he thought that I was lost and was going to help me find the right room," Rice recalled. "I said, 'No, I'm here to see you.' He was shocked."

"As I went on in and started talking to him, he told me that I was the first person to come to see him specifically since his parents," Rice continued. "He was only 22 at the time that I met him, and somewhere around 18 or 19 his family brought him to this nursing home and literally left him at the steps. They left him outside, and they never came back."

The young man, named David, told Rice to look out the window at the nearby shopping mall. He then



asked Rice to look at his roommate, someone who Rice remembered looked dead except for his chest moving to indicate breathing.

David told Rice he could look out the window at the world's charms but was stuck inside with death, and he had lost the will to live. A short time later, David died of complications from a common cold.

"That's when I realized what my mother was told when I was a baby, 'Don't put Roger in a nursing home because God has a plan for him, and if you put him in a nursing home that plan will not come to fruition,'" Rice said, adding that the encounter with David also planted a seed for wanting to help others avoid the young man's fate.

In 1987, when Rice was 29 years old, a teenage friend repeatedly asked him to go to church. But each time, Rice gave an excuse for why he could not go.

Finally, Rice agreed to go just once, and found himself with his friend at Westwood Baptist, in a circle, sitting beside that youth minister. Rice was not a Christian, though his mother had always told him, "Roger, God is watching you," he recalled.

When God broke through to his heart using the youth minister's compassion, Rice said he knew what he had to do. He was baptized shortly thereafter, and became a Sunday school teacher, Royal Ambassadors leader and even an interim youth minister at Westwood.

In 1997, Rice met Martha Santana through a mutual friend, and three months later they were married. A year later, their daughter, Pricila-Melina, was born.

"God double-blessed me with the wife that I thought I'd never find and with a daughter," he declared. "I had been teased that I'd never have a child of my own, and within a year and three days, God gave me both."

As if his own survival story was not enough, since meeting David in the nursing home, a desire had been growing in Rice to help others with

physical disabilities.

Living as a missionary

Primera Iglesia Bautista, the church Rice now attends in Nashville, has made him an official missionary to physically challenged adults. He has even founded a nonprofit ministry called Look Mom, No Arms with the goal of building 20 individual homes and a center with assistive technology for physically challenged adults.

"The center will be the focal point of the community," Rice said. "It will draw clients from all over the U.S. We'll have four hotel-like suites for out-of-town clients, and they can stay there while our rehab engineers evaluate them and determine what kind of equipment they need."

In order to get his dream off the ground, Rice said he is trying to raise money. The first step in the process was to secure a minivan donated by two Nashville auto dealers, which he received last summer. Now he is on a quest to raise \$100,000 to cover the cost of high-tech equipment that will enable him to drive the van himself.

"This van will become a fundraising tool for me," he added. "Nowhere in their wildest imagination would someone believe that a little guy that's only 3 (feet), 4 (inches tall) and doesn't have any arms would be able to drive. And I'll be able to show them."

Rice shares his Christian testimony with churches to create awareness about the potential physically challenged people have to live a mostly normal life. When Jesus walked the earth, Rice said, He healed people physically and spiritually.

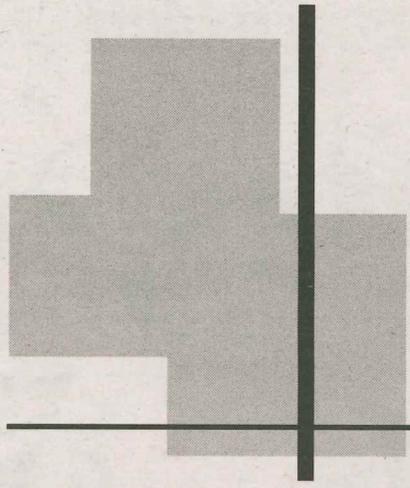
"One thing He would usually do was meet them where they were at," Rice said. "Whatever their needs were, He would meet that need first."

"I've been very blessed that people helped me with my struggles, and now God wants me to help those who aren't as fortunate—in both ways, in helping meet their physical needs and their spiritual needs."

FUND RAISER Roger Rice stands in front of a minivan that two Nashville auto dealers donated to his ministry. Rice hopes to raise \$100,000 to purchase adaptive equipment that will allow him to drive. Standing at three feet, four inches tall, he was born with no arms and other physical abnormalities. Today, he shares his story of how Christ transformed him and encourages other Christians to help those with physical disabilities. (BP photos)



FAMILY MAN God blessed Roger Rice with a wife, Martha, and a daughter, Pricila-Melina, just when he wondered if he would ever marry and after people teased him that he would never have a child of his own.



Tithe Your Retirement Assets At Death

Unlike other assets in your estate, your IRA, 401K, 403b and/or other retirement assets have the potential of being taxed twice — they are part of your estate for estate tax purposes and your beneficiaries will pay income taxes on the distributions

Designating your church and/or other charitable organizations as the beneficiary of retirement assets avoids the double taxation — your estate gets an estate tax charitable deduction and the distributions to charity are not taxable since the charity is exempt from income taxes

Using your retirement assets for charitable gifts at death allows you to have complete control and use of them as long as you need them, which is why you have them in the first place

Tithing your retirement assets allows you to be faithful to the Biblical principle of giving out of your substance (Proverbs 3:9)

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