PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

WESTERN RECORDER

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For the Record

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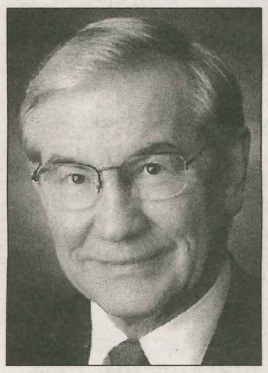

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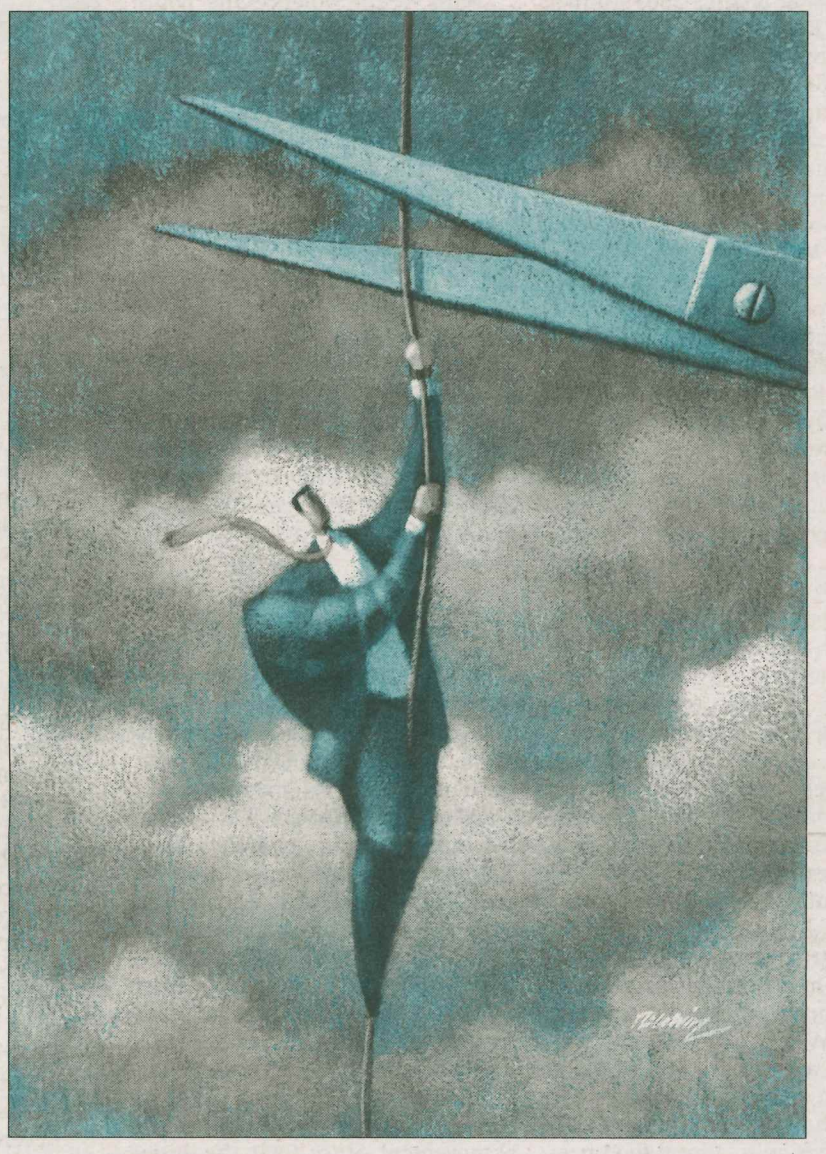
Hanging on ... for better or worse



Seminars encourage KBC pastors to ride out turbulent times

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

Gilbertsville—With average Sunday attendance of 70 at Gilbertsville Baptist Church, it is hard to overlook a flock of visitors.

So Pastor Johnnie Davis did not try to hide the fact that a delegation that showed up last year to hear him preach was another church's pastor search committee.

That upset some members, with several later asking for his resignation. Instead of stepping down, Davis—who did not accept the other church's call—rode out the storm.

Among the help he received that persuaded him to stay was attending Ministers in Transition, a seminar offered twice a year by the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

"One thing pastors need to learn is we bail ship too often," said Davis, who attended the session last fall. "We need to tough it out. God wouldn't put us in a perfect church to mess it up. There's a reason God put me here."

Karl Babb, who heads the state convention's leadership development team, explained that the three-day seminars are part of an effort to stem a tide of forced terminations in Southern Baptist life.

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Barna: Abortion tops evangelicals' list of concerns

Ventura, Calif. (BP)—Abortion is the overwhelming choice of evangelicals as the nation's top problem, according to a new survey by The Barna Group.

The poll examined the perceptions of both evangelicals and non-evangelicals on a handful of issues, asking them whether they believe a particular matter was a "major" problem facing the country.

Among evangelicals, abortion topped the list with 94 percent of those surveyed considering it a major problem. It was followed by Americans' personal debt (81 percent), television and movie content (79 percent), and homosexual activists and lifestyles (75 percent).

"One of the myths about the 2008 election is that the evangelical vote is splintering over issues such as abortion and homosexuality," Barna Group President David Kinnaman said. "In fact, when defined based upon a consistent set of theological perspectives, evangelicals remain very united on abortion and homosexuality."

Among all American adults, only 50 percent consider abortion a major issue. That ranks behind poverty, immigration and global warming.

Kentucky Baptist pastors explore better methods of evangelism

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Lexington—Research shows that Southern Baptists baptize fewer than 400,000 people each year. At that current rate, according to Kentucky Baptist Convention President Bill Henard, it would take more than 650 years to reach all Americans for Christ. To reach the world, it would take more than 10,000 years, he added.

Henard, pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, was the host pastor for the KBC's Jan. 24 Pastor/Staff Forum. The focus: evangelism.

"What I find is sometimes, we as pastors lose the passion that we need to have and ought to have for doing evangelism," Henard noted.

Adding that "we are living in a time of lostness," Henard challenged the more than 100 pastors in attendance to ask the question, "What will I do about this?"

"While we may not be gifted to do evangelism, we are called to do the work of an evangelist," he said.

Expounding on Henard's comments, Chuck Lawless, dean of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth, noted that "far too many churches in the SBC aren't doing enough" when it comes to evangelism.

"The typical SBC congregation has about 90 participants and is not growing," Lawless pointed out, adding that most churches which are experiencing growth are only doing so through membership transfers or "swapping sheep," as he put it.

"I would contend that the enemy is all about transfer growth," Lawless said. "We can't settle for that."

"Where is the disconnect?"

Studies conducted by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board show that 62 percent of pastors' sermons focus on personal commitment or conversion, Lawless said. He added that 93 percent of churches surveyed emphasize witnessing.

Despite those lofty percentages, the same research shows that only 16 percent of adult participants are involved in personal witnessing. "Where is the disconnect?" Lawless asked.

The answer may lie in the pulpit, he noted.

"The pastor's role is critical in leading a church to be evangelistic," Lawless said. He added that a congregation is not likely to "go beyond" its pastor in the areas of personal evangelism, prayer and personal holiness.

"If we're not living them out, we're less likely to preach about them," he declared. "It really does come back to where we are as leaders."

Lawless pointed to the personal evangelism model created by Willow Creek Community Church founder Bill Hybels. Despite the church's recent findings that its members were not growing spiritually, Lawless described Hybels' formula as "absolutely on target for personal evangelism."

The formula (HP+CP+CC=MI) consists of combining High Potency (HP) with Close Proximity (CP) and Clear Communication (CC). All of those together add up to Maximum Impact (MI).

Lawless described High Potency as "believers who are on fire for God," while Close Proximity is characterized by making an "intentional choice" to spend time with nonbelievers. He illustrated Clear Communication as a training element, encouraging pastors to ask the ques-

❑ *See Forum explorers ... Page 8*

EVANGELISM TACTICS *Chuck Lawless, dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, addresses a group of more than 100 pastors at the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Pastor/Staff Forum at Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington Jan. 24. Lawless challenged pastors to be a model of personal evangelism for their congregations and discussed various approaches to accomplish that goal. (Photo by Drew Nichter)*

Amid Uganda's hardships, 14,000 baptized

By Shawn Hendricks
SBC International Mission Board

Richmond, Va. (BP)—Digging down three feet in the dirt, a group of Ugandan Baptists lined the hole with a tarp, then filled it with muddy water collected in jars. There was just enough to baptize 35 new believers.

"It is a hard place to live," said Danny Hood, a Southern Baptist international missionary in Uganda's capital of Kampala. "I mean it is almost desert up there" where the baptisms took place. "(But) God's Spirit is very much at work."

Hood has many stories about Ugandans who have given their lives to Jesus Christ. In Kampala, more than 1,000 were baptized in a year, according to Ugandan Baptists and international missionaries. In addition, the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's 2007 Annual Statistical Report showed more than 14,000 were baptized in the country and 609,968 worldwide.

These decisions for Christ come about in part through the ministry of missionaries like Hood and his wife, Claudia, who are supported through Southern Baptists' gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Cooperative Program.

A key role of a missionary is providing guidance and training for local believers. In many instances, Ugandan Baptists already are leading the way in ministering to their own people.

"Our Ugandan pastors do all of the baptizing," Hood noted.

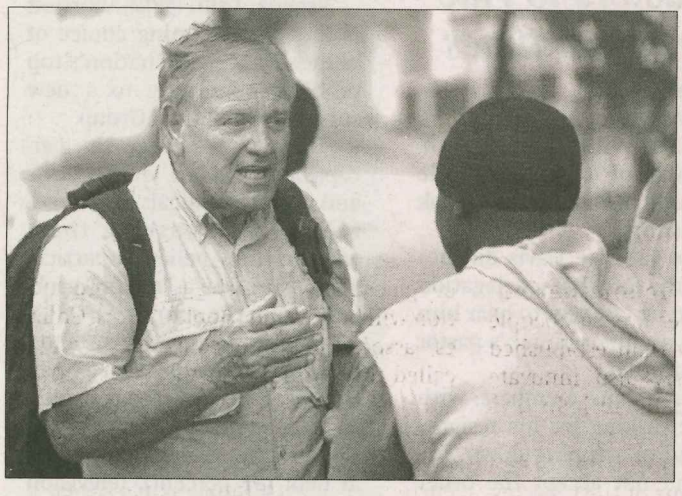
"We were supposed to go home last week, and (IMB leaders) asked us to extend so that we could cover some bases here," Hood said. "Right now, we're really short on personnel. We really do need (more missionaries.)"

In a remote area of northern Uganda there is only one IMB missionary—who is in his 70s—working among a Muslim people group, Hood said.

With recent violence and political protests in Kenya, a number of refugees have fled into neighboring countries like Uganda. And a growing Muslim presence in the country supports the second-largest mosque in the world, located in Kampala.

The Hoods will end their three-year term in April serving through the IMB Master's Program for people age 50 and older, but they plan to make a long-term commitment for missions service.

"We've had work in Africa for a long, long time, and so everybody is almost ready to say Africa has been won," Hood said. "But the truth of the matter is that Africa has not been won. There are still many, many people groups that need the gospel."



GOD AT WORK *Danny Hood, a Southern Baptist international missionary in Kampala, Uganda, says the African country is "a hard place to live, (but) God's Spirit is very much at work," evidenced by 14,000 baptisms in a year's time. (BP photo)*

Baptist churches join annual 'Souper Bowl' effort

By Mickey Noah
SBC North American Mission Board

Alpharetta, Ga. (BP)—Long after the New England Patriots or the New York Giants win Super Bowl XLII, the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund will continue benefiting from this year's Souper Bowl of Caring.

Under the umbrella of the Souper Bowl of Caring—now in its 19th year—Southern Baptists can donate to the SBC World Hunger Fund on Super Bowl Sunday, Feb 3. One hundred percent of the money Southern Baptist churches collect that Sunday will go to the World Hunger Fund or to the participating church's charity of choice.

"We hope our Southern Baptist churches will consider supporting the World Hunger Fund's domestic program with their collections," said Sandy Wood, hunger ministry specialist for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. "Not a penny raised will go toward administrative costs. One hundred percent is used to minister to the hungry in Jesus' name."

Wood said Baptist youth can participate by simply taking up a collection in a soup pot during their church's Feb. 3 worship services.

First Baptist Church of Chester, S.C., is a congregation that not only participates in the "Souper Bowl of Caring" but has taken it to the next level.

"We started several years ago just collecting money in a pot as our folks left the morning worship service," said Clay Waldrip, the church's pastor. "Then a few years ago, we started making soup for lunch after the service, charging $5 apiece." Half the proceeds go to a local food pantry and the other half goes to the World Hunger Fund.

"It gives us a chance for some good church fellowship and plays off the Super Bowl theme at the same time," said Waldrip, whose church runs 225 to 250 in attendance each Sunday.

All Southern Baptist churches that participate in the emphasis should report donations to www.souperbowl.org, but the collected money itself should be sent directly to the SBC World Hunger Fund or to the church's charity of choice.

Wood said NAMB's hunger relief ministry assists churches, associations and state conventions so that in the process of distributing food, the gospel also can be shared with people in need. Last year, more than 30,000 people accepted Christ through hunger ministries in North America.

Souper Bowl of Caring began in 1990 at a single South Carolina church and has grown into a national movement. Since 1990, the initiative has raised more than $41 million for those in need.

Southern Baptist churches choosing to participate in the 2008 Souper Bowl of Caring can register at www.souperbowl.org. Donations to the SBC World Hunger Fund may be mailed to NAMB, World Hunger Funds, 4200 North Point Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30022.

BWA plans global youth event

Leipzig, Germany (ABP)—The Baptist World Alliance will hold its next global youth conference July 30-Aug. 3 in Leipzig, Germany.

Thousands of teenagers are expected to gather in the central German city to "join together in worship and in missions and to see what God is doing among youth around the world," organizers said.

Past BWA youth conferences were in 1998 in Houston and in 2004 in Hong Kong, drawing 8,000 and 4,000 participants, respectively. This year's host city is notable as the home of St. Thomas Church, the Lutheran church where famed composer Johann Sebastian Bach served as organist and choirmaster. It is also the location of Leipzig University, which was founded in 1409 and is one of Europe's oldest universities.

Highlighting the theme, "Dive Deeper," events at the 2008 conference will include morning worship services, concerts and evening sessions with keynote speakers. Opportunities to participate in mission projects throughout Europe prior to and after the conference will also be available, organizers said.

Early registration at www.bwanet.org will end March 31.

SBC youth survey opens Feb. 10

Nashville (BP)—Registration opens Feb. 1 for the Southern Baptist Convention's second annual Student Ministry Survey, designed as a comprehensive guide for Southern Baptist churches across the nation to garner information about teens, their families and youth ministry.

The free survey will be open for people to complete online Feb. 10–April 13. After the survey closes, each participating church will be able to download a full report April 15. It will show the responses of their congregation separated into groups without identifying specific individuals who took the survey.

During the months of April and May, participating churches will be able to hold "Vision to Action" workshops, which will bring key parents, youth and leaders together to set new ministry directions based on the survey information.

Church registration for the survey, at www.sbcstudents.com/annualsurvey, runs through the end of March. The survey will measure each group's attitudes on subjects such as Christian doctrine, spiritual discipline, parent and youth relationships, and youth ministry leadership.

While churches are studying their local data, Southern Baptist leaders also will be studying the results. State conventions will be able to post statistics from their states on their websites, while SBC entities will have access to national figures to help determine effective directions for student ministry within the convention. Participating churches, meanwhile, will be able to compare their results with statewide and nationwide results.

Virginia minister nominated to lead Texas convention

By Robert Marus
Associated Baptist Press

Dallas (ABP)—Randel Everett, who has headed a seminary and served as pastor of prominent churches in four states, is the nominee for the executive director position of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Randel Everett

Convention officials announced Jan. 22 that a search committee will nominate Everett to succeed Charles Wade, who is set to retire Jan. 31. Everett's nomination will be presented to the BGCT's Executive Board at its next meeting on Feb. 25-26 in Dallas.

Everett, 56, has served full-time as pastor of the 1,700-member First Baptist Church of Newport News, Va., since 2006. Prior to that, he was the founding president of the John Leland Center for Theological Studies, a seminary based in Arlington, Va., near the nation's capital.

Under his leadership, the seminary gained accreditation with the Association of Theological Schools and grew to more than 150 students.

Everett moved to the seminary from the pastorate of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va. Columbia perennially is one of the top contributors to the Baptist General Association of Virginia and one of the largest Baptist churches in the Washington area.

Everett also has served as senior pastor of several other large congregations, including First Baptist Church of Pensacola, Fla.; University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas; and First Baptist Church of Benton, Ark.

Ken Hugghins, chairman of the search committee, said Everett is qualified to lead Texas Baptists out of a difficult period. A recent scandal involving misappropriated funds for planting churches in the poverty-stricken Rio Grande Valley caused many Texas Baptists to question current BGCT leadership. And sluggish giving in 2007 resulted in layoffs for 29 state convention employees.

"As the committee listened to Texas Baptists and talked with excellent leaders and candidates across our state, a description of the kind of leader Texas needs emerged," said Hugghins, pastor of Elkins Lake Baptist Church in Huntsville, Texas. "Randel Everett matches that description and more."

A Fort Worth native, Everett is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

A decade of KBC leadership

Bill Mackey reflects on 10 years as Kentucky Baptist Convention executive director

Louisville—Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Bill Mackey will mark 10 years in that role Feb. 1. The following interview highlights his first decade of ministry in that post as well as his goals for the future of Kentucky Baptist ministry:

Q: During your first year as executive director, you highlighted your desire to focus on the four major goals of spiritual foundations, vision and values, relationship and service. How has that been achieved in KBC life over the past decade?

First, I want to thank God for the privilege of serving Him with Kentucky Baptists. I do not know of any other place where I would rather serve, and I am confident that my wife, Kay, feels the same way. We love Kentucky Baptists and their hearts for missions.

I shared those four objectives during the KBC Executive Board meeting when I was being considered for this role, and it has been gratifying to see growth in those areas over the past decade.

I believe our commitment to the spiritual foundations is evident in how we serve and lead KBC churches. For example, our staff has provided leadership in prayer through countless prayer meetings, seminars and events such as our statewide prayer tours and the "With One Voice" simultaneous prayer event.

In 2003, the KBC Mission Study Committee developed a new mission statement, objectives and goals to guide the work of the KBC. Our staff has also developed vision, values and priority concerns to guide our work.

Throughout my time here, I have tried to strengthen relationships by being available, accepting all possible engagements, writing notes, attending events, trying to be inclusive of everyone, meeting with entity leaders, and utilizing committees to deal thoughtfully with potentially divisive issues. In the second month on the job, we arranged 44 listening sessions across the state, which helped initiate relationships.

We've maintained a strong focus on serving and strengthening the churches through training, seminars, leadership development, supporting church staff and helping churches be strategic in ministry.

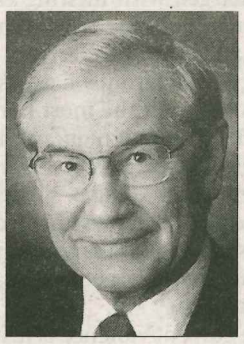
Q: What do you consider your greatest accomplishments so far as executive director?

It has been very gratifying to help lead Kentucky Baptists in working together to avoid major distractions and unnecessary hindrances to our mission. Our mission plan has helped strengthen this unity by providing direction and focus. It is rewarding to see a strong emphasis on evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, missions, networking and strengthening churches. I also am grateful to see strategic and intentional church planting, expanded use of technology, improved communications, record attendance at training events, staff connecting with leaders in the field and with young leaders, and a renewed climate for innovation. We've also enjoyed excellent cooperation with our associations, institutions and agencies as well as SBC entities.

I am grateful for an excellent staff that is committed to Jesus Christ and that believes in high values of integrity, service and teamwork. I am also grateful to God for Kentucky Baptists who make all of this possible through their gifts to the Cooperative Program.

Q: What are the biggest challenges or disappointments you have experienced in your role?

Perhaps the biggest challenge has been the inability to reach our potential in baptisms. Baptisms are plateaued at about 17,500 per year, but I am still hopeful that we can reach 20,000 and move toward the goal of 25,000. It also has been challenging to deal with staff reductions due to limited growth in CP funding and yet try to maintain ministries and services. However, I am very proud of our staff for their positive and innovative responses to these challenges. We continue to search for ways to help revitalize churches through consultations, creativity and our recent "Comeback Churches" emphasis. We have worked hard to help everyone feel included and represented.



Bill Mackey

Q: Baptisms generally have plateaued in recent years in Baptist life despite ongoing convention efforts to encourage increased baptisms. What do you see as primary reasons for a lack of increased baptisms and how can the current trend be corrected?

It is harder to reach people today due to distractions and the time needed to build relationships and trust. Some who are "dechurched" need time for wounds to heal and an opportunity to experience church in a loving and meaningful way. The truth must be shared in love.

Several things that could help correct the trend include: 1. Renew the conviction that people are lost without a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. 2. Focus on receptive people and engage the harvest fields now (John 4:35). 3. Try new approaches. Every church needs a signature and effective ministry in the community that serves and attracts people. 4. Make evangelism a priority for leadership, witness training, small groups, budgeting, preaching and scheduling. 5. Prepare for new believers as a couple prepares for a new baby, and I believe that God will provide.

Q: The KBC's five-year "Kentucky Baptists Connect" ministry emphasis has been a major focus in Kentucky Baptist life the past few years. What is your assessment of its overall ministry impact so far?

Staff reports indicate we are on track to meet goals in missions including new ministries and church planting, leadership development, networking and strengthening churches. The goal for church planting was increased recently upon recommendation from KBC staff and the Mission Advisory Committee. We continue to strive toward the evangelism goal of 25,000 baptisms per year by praying for God to move upon His churches and by developing outreach strategies. Assimilation and discipleship concerns have remained a priority, and we are looking for a way to measure the 80 percent assimilation goal. The impact factor related to funding in the Mission Study Report has been addressed recently by the new staff position for the promotion of CP, stewardship development and legacy giving. Three major research projects have identified concerns related to the unchurched, communications and discipleship. Overall, the "Connect" emphasis has created a sense of unity, priority and direction for Kentucky Baptists, as well as the KBC staff and ministries.

Q: Church planting, including starting and supporting "high impact" churches and ethnic congregations, is a primary "Connect" strategy. Why is it important to put time, energy and financial resources into planting additional churches throughout the commonwealth?

- **Lostness.** Only 12.3 percent of Kentuckians are in church on a given Sunday. More than 2 million Kentuckians do not indicate a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.
- **Aging denomination.** New churches reach people more quickly than established churches. They also innovate more easily and can help revitalize the denomination.
- **Cultural diversity.** Different expressions of the New Testament church will be needed to reach the different generational, ethnic and interest groups.
- **Ratio of churches to population.** Church planting must exceed population growth in order for lostness to be reduced. Other churches will fill the gap.
- **Pattern of the New Testament.** By the time the reader gets to Acts 9:31, the number of churches is being multiplied.

Q: The percentage of local churches' undesignated receipts given through the Cooperative Program has gradually declined during the past decade from 10 percent to a current level of just over 7 percent. Why is it important for churches to strengthen their CP giving and what are realistic strategies to help that happen?

Churches need to strengthen CP giving for some of the following reasons:

- Some ministries and missions initiatives do not have special offerings and depend completely on CP gifts. These Acts 1:8 efforts deserve generous support.
- CP gifts provide the infrastructure for the promotion and channeling of all missions funding, the organization and administration of missions by all entities, and funding for missions education and seminary training.
- State conventions, along with associations, have the primary assignment of helping strengthen churches. Our churches are the source of missionaries, ministers and funding for state, national and international missions.
- There are billions of people to be reached for Christ and 3,000 new missionaries are needed to reach and develop new believers for Jesus Christ in unreached people groups.

There are several realistic strategies that could help strengthen CP giving:

- Encourage churches to support CP giving on a percentage basis. An increase of 0.25 percent in church contributions would provide an incredible $800,000 for missions.
- Communicate the results of CP missions to churches and individuals.
- Help people understand the value of cooperation and the roles at each level.
- Help local churches with stewardship development and local giving.
- Continue to involve church members and leaders in missions experiences.

Q: International partnership missions has been a major emphasis among Kentucky Baptist churches in recent years. How crucial is that involvement for the sake of global missions and what do you see as the future of such efforts?

It is crucial to continue involving church leaders and members in partnership missions. Personal involvement helps advance the cause of missions and develops a greater passion for support of missions. Many people who participate are later called to missions as they become aware of options for service. Due to the limited number of career missionaries and the number of unreached people groups, less emphasis will be placed on countries and more attention will be given to people groups. Churches, associations and conventions will be called upon to take on this responsibility. State conventions may also help fill the gap where some international Baptist conventions need assistance, similar to the KBC's current work with Tanzanian Baptists.

Q: How do you perceive the current level of unity or division among Kentucky Baptist leaders in light of the convention's political diversity?

Kentucky Baptists have always worked hard to cooperate despite cultural, regional and theological differences. It is important to recognize there are bigger missional concerns that should draw us together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ to accomplish the mission He has for us. We can come together on the essentials of God's Word and recognize there is room for disagreement on non-essentials. We must continue to be intentional about including all who support the mission and making sure they are represented as much as possible. It will take a great deal of love and maturity to cooperate as current theological differences increase, but personal preferences must give way to trust and cooperation to the glory of God and the fulfillment of His mission. It is my prayer that Kentucky Baptists can come together as brothers and sisters in Christ and relate in Christian love and trust based on biblical guidelines.

Q: What are your primary hopes or goals for the future of Kentucky Baptist ministry?

It is my prayer that the ministry will continue to be strong and focused on reaching people for Christ, developing them as fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ and mobilizing them in missions and evangelism in Kentucky, across North America and around the world. I pray KBC ministries will continue to serve and strengthen churches as they seek to fulfill God's mission. I pray that the KBC will continue to assist churches with innovation in evangelism, starting new ministries and churches, developing leaders, networking, sharing best practices and providing resources on the website. I pray that the churches will continue to recognize the KBC as a trusted partner in channeling mission gifts for KBC and SBC missions and ministries, and as an effective provider of innovative services. And I pray that as churches and leaders come to understand the partnership at all levels that they will be willing to grow in their financial support of missions, ministries and evangelism through the Cooperative Program.

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

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Kenyan Christians confront tribal hatred

By Erich Bridges

COMMENTARY

Richmond, Va. (BP)—Life goes on, even in a crowded camp for Kenyans fleeing the ethnic violence that has gripped their nation.

Mothers wash clothes and prepare food—if they have any food to prepare. Children play. Parents watch over their families. Young men sit around, talking and passing the time. But life is anything but normal for the more than 250,000 people driven from their homes in Kenya since Dec. 27, the day a disputed presidential election brought submerged ethnic hatreds roaring back to the surface. Hundreds have died in political and tribal clashes in the weeks since.

Many Kenyans hope and pray the rage will die down before it gets worse. Some are putting feet to their prayers—such as three Baptist women from different tribes who united to deliver food to one of the displaced persons camps. It wasn't much, but they gave it with all their hearts.

"We saw a lot of people being displaced by the skirmishes," said Carolyn Charono, one of the visiting women. "So we made up our minds and decided, 'OK, let's get whatever little we have and come over here and see how we can help our brothers and sisters in our own little ways.'"

"We are all one tribe"

The three women acknowledged their different tribal affiliations, but insisted they are Kenyan first. "Here in Kenya we are all one tribe, one people, one nation," declared Kristen Kimani.

That's an admirable ideal, proudly held by many Kenyans since they won independence from British colonial rule in 1963. Kenya has managed greater stability and ethnic harmony than many African nations since the end of the European colonial era. But dozens of ethnic and tribal groups make up Kenya's 32 million people. The Kikuyu people, favored by the British during colonial times, are the largest tribal group, comprising about a fifth of the national population. They have dominated the Kenyan political and economic scene since independence, accumulating land, top jobs and other perks—often at the expense of other groups.

When incumbent President Mwai Kibaki, a Kikuyu, claimed re-election in the December contest with challenger Raila Odinga, a member of the Luo tribe who appeared headed for a major victory, ethnic attacks broke out in many areas. Both sides have been charged with inciting violence and manipulating tribal tensions before and after the election.

Opposing ethnic groups have assaulted each other. In the most horrifying attack, dozens of men, women and children seeking shelter in a church were burned alive. Villages have gone up in flames. Armed youths in some areas reportedly have been paid for each member of a competing tribe they kill.

To say the current violence is just another instance of "African tribalism" is a vast and probably racist oversimplification. "It's about resources, it's about land, it's about tribe, it's about so many issues that successive governments have not addressed," one Kenyan activist told a BBC reporter. It's also about poverty and unequal opportunity. And it's about generational change, as younger Kenyan leaders try to take the reins of power from the aging elite who have ruled since independence.

But at its deepest heart, the violence reveals a spiritual problem that has plagued Africa for a very long time. It's time to confront it, according to some of Kenya's Christian leaders.

"A demon has been set loose," warned Ngari Kariithi, senior pastor of Karura Community Church in Nairobi, Kenya's capital. "The depth of hatred was a shock to many of us. The church needs to face up to what is happening and get involved. Pray God will help us with tribalism. Pray the church can rise above this. We are the hope for Kenya."

But first, he and other leaders stress, Christians must repent of their own continuing hatreds.

"The elections did not cause this violence," said Simon Mwangi, pastor of Parklands Baptist Church in Nairobi. "The election results triggered something that was already here, a rift between our ethnic groups. Kenya, as a nation, has sinned against God. Kenyans are killing Kenyans. Christians are killing Christians. We must put an end to this. Kenya is a Christian nation, and we need to start showing God's love."

Standing against violence, hatred

Many Kenyan Christians are taking a stand against violence and hatred. Like the three women who took aid to the displaced persons camp, they are helping the suffering, making personal sacrifices, even risking their lives to help members of other tribes. They also are repenting of the nation's sins—and their own.

Join them in this prayer of Kenyan Baptist leader Samuel Mbiti:

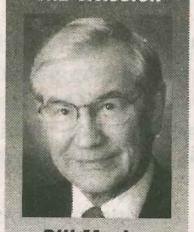
"Lord, help us restore peace in this country. We pray for those who have been displaced. We pray for those who have lost their property, their loved ones and even all their hopes that have been shattered. Father, we pray that You will restore hope to these people, that You will restore hope to our nation. We pray, O Father, that the enemy will be ashamed, because we know that more than 2,000 years ago You defeated him on the cross. Today we are sure, God, that his works have been defeated. Thank you, Lord. Help us as we go through this that Your church shall stand firm. As You said, the gates of hell shall not prevail."

Amen.

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

Casinos too costly for Kentucky

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION



Bill Mackey

The governor, many state leaders, some racing industry leaders, casino owners and prospective owners are trying to convince Kentucky senators and House members that casinos are a cheap way to increase state budget revenues by 5.2 percent, or an estimated $500 million.

The more realistic number would be 3.2 percent, or an increase of $300 million in revenues.

In order for the state to realize $500 million in revenues, casinos would need to earn $1.4 billion, which means Kentucky families and individuals would lose $1.4 billion.

If the cost were spread out evenly to every family, the loss would be about $1,450 for a family of four.

However, it doesn't work that way. According to research reported by Ivan Zabilka, 50 percent of losses to casinos are from pathological gamblers (2 percent of the population). Problem gamblers involve another 4 to 6 percent of the population, and they account for most of the other half of the losses.

According to Zabilka, pathological gamblers cannot stop and problem gamblers can exercise some control but exhibit the same behavior as pathological gamblers.

Zabilka estimates, using conservative numbers, that casino earnings of $1.4 billion per year would result in 80,000 pathological gamblers who would provide $700 million of the casino earnings (about $8,750 each, every year). The average individual income is less than $30,000.

How long will it take for everything the family or individual owns to be put in jeopardy and lost?

Research on the cost to society ranges from $11,000 to $19,000 per pathological gambler. If we use the conservative number of $13,000, the cost soars to $1.04 billion. That would include lost production by the gambler, court and legal costs, lost tax revenue, bankruptcy, crime costs, public assistance and more.

It's important to note that annual revenues to the state from casinos would be a high estimate of $500 million, but the cost to the state and society would be $1.04 billion per year.

Zabilka states that every pathological gambler will impact an average of 12 people, including family members, close friends, individuals who have loaned money, and those who have been victims of theft (a total of one million people impacted).

With this kind of impact, the culture of Kentucky will change forever. It is morally wrong for government to prey upon its citizens. Government officials take an oath of office to protect their citizens and to work for the well-being of all citizens.

Please contact your representative and senator before Jan. 31 to let them know how you feel. If you do not express your concern, you may soon be welcoming the consequences of casinos into your family and neighborhood. Please join me in praying for moral leadership and for our elected officials to take a strong stand against the power and influence of casino money.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

Are you aware of six basic truths about investing?

By Don Spencer

FINANCIAL FORUM

What is an investment? It is when you put your money to work for you. Savings accounts and CDs generally are safer, but their return usually is smaller. An investment will have increased risk and volatility but generally will provide increased earnings. You need both—savings and investments.

Most investments fluctuate in value. Fear and greed often determine short-term values of stocks. This has been very evident in the recent stock market volatility. An important rule to remember about the investment world: Fear inevitably returns to greed and greed inevitably returns to fear. Don't be overly concerned about the short-term "ups and downs." Invest for the long term.

Use time, not timing. Even the experts rarely time the market correctly. Just as they agree on the direction of the market, it often moves the opposite way. Those trying to time the market often do the wrong thing at the wrong time. However, those who keep time on their side by investing for the long term, generally profit. Be patient.

Bank CDs and savings accounts will not make you rich. It happens too often. Individuals put their money in CDs or savings accounts to reduce their risk. After taxes and inflation, they end up with a dollar amount that is lower in terms of real buying power. For the long term, it generally is better to invest for growth.

Your "portfolio" is more important than any single investment. No one can expect every investment to grow dramatically. But, you expect reasonable growth from a total mix of investments (portfolio).

It pays to diversify. "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." Use a mix of investments with differing levels of risk. This reduces the volatility of one's total portfolio. People often know this reality but ignore it. The classic example is when individuals see an investment that did extremely well last year and they move all or a high percentage of their total portfolio to that one investment, only to have invested too late and ride the values back down.

Christians should invest their money. Many of Jesus' parables deal with stewardship. Appropriate investing is part of a Christian's total stewardship (Matthew 25:14-30).

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

How can one move beyond anger toward former spouse?

Q: I find myself constantly mad at my former spouse. How can I cope with these intense emotions?

SINGLES

FAMILY FORUM

Whenever your anger flares, take advantage of the following strategies. In addition, take some regular quiet time to meditate on the accompanying Scriptures. Ask God to help you develop the "peace that passes all understanding" to guard your heart and mind as you walk through difficult situations (Philippians 4:7).

Cultivate awareness of your emotions. Where do you feel it in your body? You are not at your best when under the control of reactive emotions (Romans 12:16-20).

Stay in shape. Regular exercise can lower your "set point" for anger by giving you a more constant flow of the "feel good" chemicals like serotonin (1 Timothy 4:8).

Breathe. Just breathe. Thomas Jefferson said, "When angry, count to 10. When very angry, count to 100." When you focus on your breath, you are not focusing on anger triggers. You are giving your body and mind a chance to get back in balance (1 Kings 19:11-12).

Work on your own self-image. (Psalm 139, Genesis 1:27.) Anger often comes from a feeling of being inferior or being given a bad break by others. Surround yourself with energy-giving people and thoughts. Stay away from energy-draining people and thoughts as much as you can.

Find a way to laugh, or at least form a smile. Imagine something funny. It is a great distraction and can put everything back in focus (Proverbs 15:13).

Take the long view. Two hundred years from now, how much will it really matter? (Revelation 21:3).

Admit to yourself that your former spouse may be upset and acting out for reasons that have nothing whatsoever to do with you. A little empathy and compassion go a long way. Since we never really know someone else's true, inner motivation, and since it helps our own well-being to choose to think the best, why destroy ourselves by thinking the worst? (Luke 23:34, Matthew 6:25-34).—*James Stillwell*

Q: What is the proper time to begin guiding children toward a career and what are some ways to help them find the right fit? We have a son who is almost out of college who has struggled in this area. We want to be more helpful with our middle school daughter.

PARENTING

A phrase that we use a lot at Campbellsville University is "Find Your Calling." All young adults must answer two critical questions: Where am I going? Who will go with me? Answering the latter before dealing with the question of calling may set up a serious mismatch.

Your middle school daughter must first understand that God has made her for a purpose. Colossians 1:16 asserts, "For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible ... everything got started in Him and finds its purpose in Him."

Set before her opportunities to grow in Christ and to discover both her spiritual gifts and her God-given talents. Don't limit the categories in which her talents might be defined or try to bend her to your desires. Pay special attention to see if she might be especially bent toward words and language; math; science; athletics; music; relationships; art and architecture; or a special ability to self-reflect.

Let your daughter test out her talents in different environments and encourage her to not be afraid to fail. Realize that you are looking for doors of opportunity that God may open, successes that are affirmed by significant others, and activities about which she finds herself impassioned.—*Scott Wigginton*

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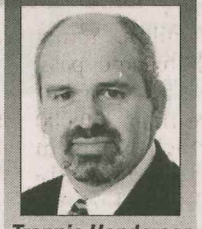
Bill Mackey: The face of Kentucky Baptists

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Feb. 1 is a significant milestone in Kentucky Baptist Convention life. It marks the 10th anniversary of Bill Mackey's ministry as KBC executive director.

Since taking office Feb. 1, 1998, Mackey has become the public face and personal heart of the state convention for many Kentucky Baptists throughout the commonwealth. In addition to guiding the work of the KBC Mission Board staff, he has tirelessly traveled the state, speaking at church anniversaries, building dedications, associational meetings and countless other Baptist gatherings.

Former KBC President Charles Barnes, who served on the search committee that recommended Mackey to the KBC's top administrative post, echoed that perspective.

Affirming that Mackey "is the face of Kentucky Baptists," Barnes reflected, "When the search committee for the new executive director asked him to accept the position, they stated that the new Kentucky leader should be someone who could be out in the state encouraging our pastors and churches. Dr. Mackey, with the strong support of his wife, Kay, has done this in a very effective manner.

"Dr. Mackey's love for pastors and our Baptist people, and his passion for evangelism, along with his strong prayer life, have been evident in his leadership," Barnes added. "God has indeed blessed Dr. Mackey's ministry among us."

Current KBC President Bill Henard, pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, noted that Mackey "has served Kentucky Baptists with distinction and honor during his 10 years as the leader of our convention."

"He is a truly humble servant, whose two greatest assets have been his love for Kentucky Baptists and his genuine concern for the welfare of those under his leadership," Henard declared. "Dr. Mackey exemplifies the biblical admonition to first love God and then others. I cannot think of anyone who could have led Kentucky Baptists to be where we are today except Dr. Bill Mackey."

Peggy Hicks, who chaired the executive director search committee, said the committee recognized Mackey as "a man who was concerned with taking our convention into the future together," adding that "his strong sense of togetherness has been a blessing."

"The passing of time has confirmed our decision as he has given superb leadership under God's hand," Hicks noted. Citing Mackey's deep commitment to missions and ministry, she said, "He has given good leadership for everybody across the state. He works well with people. He genuinely cares and that's what makes the difference."

From a personal perspective, it has been a privilege for me to minister alongside Dr. Mackey during the past several years. Even before I became editor of the Western Recorder, I knew of Dr. Mackey's stellar reputation as a dedicated spiritual leader with a strong personal commitment to missions, evangelism and prayer.

While the state convention has faced major challenges in such areas as baptism rates and Cooperative Program giving, Mackey has provided positive, consistent leadership in seeking to address those and other crucial issues. He also has sought to reach out and involve Kentucky Baptists across the convention's diverse political spectrum.

"We can come together on the essentials of God's Word and recognize there is room for disagreement on non-essentials," Mackey emphasized in this week's page 3 interview. "It is my prayer that Kentucky Baptists can come together as brothers and sisters in Christ and relate in Christian love and trust based on biblical guidelines."

That sincere commitment to Christian unity for the sake of God's Kingdom promises to remain an enduring and endearing part of Dr. Mackey's ministry legacy among Kentucky Baptists.

Countries, conventions need free press

By Marv Knox

FIRST PERSON

A friend forwarded an e-mail citing the "memoirs" of Vo Nguyen Giap, a general in North Vietnam during its war with the United States. The e-mail quotes Giap as saying: "Your media was definitely helping us. They were causing more disruption in America than we could in the battlefields." It then makes a contemporary application: "The exact same slippery slope, sponsored by the U.S. media, is currently well under way. It exposes the enormous power of a biased media to cut out the heart and will of the American public. ... Do not fear the enemy, for they can take only your life. Fear the media far more, for they will destroy your honor."

The quote is bogus (debunked by websites snopes.com and about.com), but the e-mail illustrates a common perception—a free press is dangerous for freedom. Such thinking is broad-based—in society and among Baptists. How ironic that free people don't seem to value one of the freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment. Some considerations:

Even if you were to believe in this quote, a communist general isn't exactly the most reliable commentator. We fought a war with his kind precisely because they deny freedom. And what do communists and other despots do upon seizing power? They take over the media, so that they control exactly what the people hear and read, and eventually, what they think. This is the polar opposite of democracy.

Still, some Americans reflexively complain about the media. They say they want Supreme Court justices to interpret law based exclusively upon what the Founding Fathers wrote in the Constitution. But these same people seem to think the Founding Fathers were out of their minds when they included freedom of speech and freedom of the press in the First Amendment. The Fathers knew what they were doing. And people today can't have it both ways.

In fact, a free press is the grease that keeps the wheels of democracy turning—in a country, in a convention. Sure, it's messy. Of course, some journalists are incompetent, and some good ones make mistakes. But this happens in every endeavor. Some pilots show up intoxicated and others flip the wrong switches; some doctors operate on the wrong patients.

Journalists I know take their journalistic freedom seriously. When I cover an event or approach a powerful person and ask for information he or she would prefer to keep private, I don't go on behalf of myself. I represent all the Baptists who depend upon me to tell them the truth. I don't demand freedom because I want to do whatever I want; I demand freedom because the people to whom I report have a right to know. And even when that knowledge is messy or uncomfortable, knowing it helps us to face our challenges, make better decisions and improve our life together.

Ironically, the "liberal media" is much more potent in imagination than reality. The owners of the major media are some of the wealthiest corporations in America. It often appears they're making most of their decisions based upon what's good for their bottom line, not the public trust. Likewise, as editor of a news organization owned by a large convention, I often worry about whether I will make decisions to please the "corporation," because that is the easiest path. Our assignment, unquestionably more difficult, is to represent pew-sitting Baptists who have a right to know about all the details of their denomination.

So, a free press, like a democracy, sometimes is messy. Sometimes it makes us uncomfortable. Sometimes it disturbs and disgusts us. Sometimes, of course, the media make mistakes. But I'll take that risk. We're far better off with a free press—in a country, in a convention—because ultimately, the people will know the truth. Truth is power.

Marv Knox is editor of the Texas Baptist Standard

Forced termination of pastors on decline in Ky. churches

Continued from page 1

Working through directors of missions, Babb said his team obtains names of pastors who have been forced out or are in the midst of pressure-packed situations, and helps them resolve personal issues.

"We bring them in for small group discussions, personal awareness and to process where they are and where God might be working in their lives," he added. "We give them a safe place to do that, at a neutral site and with confidentiality."

The initiative is among several offered through the team, which works with as many as 10 churches annually to help identify areas of conflict and disagreement and resolve those problems.

Last year it assisted 20 pastor search committees to help them determine the qualities congregations needed in their next leader. A two-hour training session is available to help committees set up that process.

The net effect of these efforts can be seen by Kentucky ranking at the lower end in the latest report of forced terminations from the Southern Baptist Convention's Church-Minister Relations Association.

Released in early January, the report showed that 945 pastors and staff members were forced out of office in 2006, with 27 occurring in Kentucky. That was compared to 1,302 SBC pastor and staff dismissals during 2005, including 29 in the commonwealth.

The actual numbers may be a bit higher at the convention and state levels, though.

Nashville counselor Barney Self, who compiled the statistics, noted that conservative conventions in Texas and Virginia did not file reports, meaning the national figure may have been closer to 1,100.

In Kentucky, Babb said the recent retirements of several directors of mission—who supply statistics to the association—means they may also have missed several dismissals.

"The good news is it wasn't a spike up," Babb acknowledged. "It's been pretty consistent the last few years. We don't have as high a number as some other state conventions, but some other conventions have more churches, too."

Despite the apparent progress in the SBC, Self pointed out that the latest forced terminations report does not account for pastors whose resignations never made the statistics.

"How many pastors left because the chairman of deacons sidled up and said, 'If you resign we'll take care of you; if you don't, we'll fire you'?" asked Self, a former pastoral counselor with LifeWay Christian Resources.

The list of reasons for forced dismissals was nearly identical to 2005, topped by control issues, namely, "Who is going to run the church?"

The fact that the reasons remained relatively unchanged is not frustrating to Babb.

Top 10 causes of forced terminations in 2006

1. Control issues: Who is going to run the church?
2. Church's resistance to change.
3. Poor people skills on the part of the pastor.
4. Pastor's leadership style is too strong.
5. Church was already conflicted when pastor arrived.
6. Decline in attendance and/or conditions.
7. Pastor's leadership style is too weak.
8. Administrative incompetence on the part of the pastor.
9. Sexual misconduct.
10. Conflict with other church staff.

"I think it helps us when dealing with churches," he noted. "It helps me to work with search committees and say, 'You've got to look at these issues. You've got to do your homework.' Having the knowledge is an advantage."

However, even knowledge sometimes will not prevent a parting of ways.

Lynn Traylor, pastor of Buckner Baptist Church, discovered that when he endured a forced termination from a previous congregation.

"There are times in the life of a church where you have enough credibility built up that you can work it out," said Traylor, who was forced out after nine years in the pulpit. "Sometimes what happens is there's a lack of commitment or a lack of feedback so issues don't get resolved until there's tension ... and the best thing you can do is negotiate a way out."

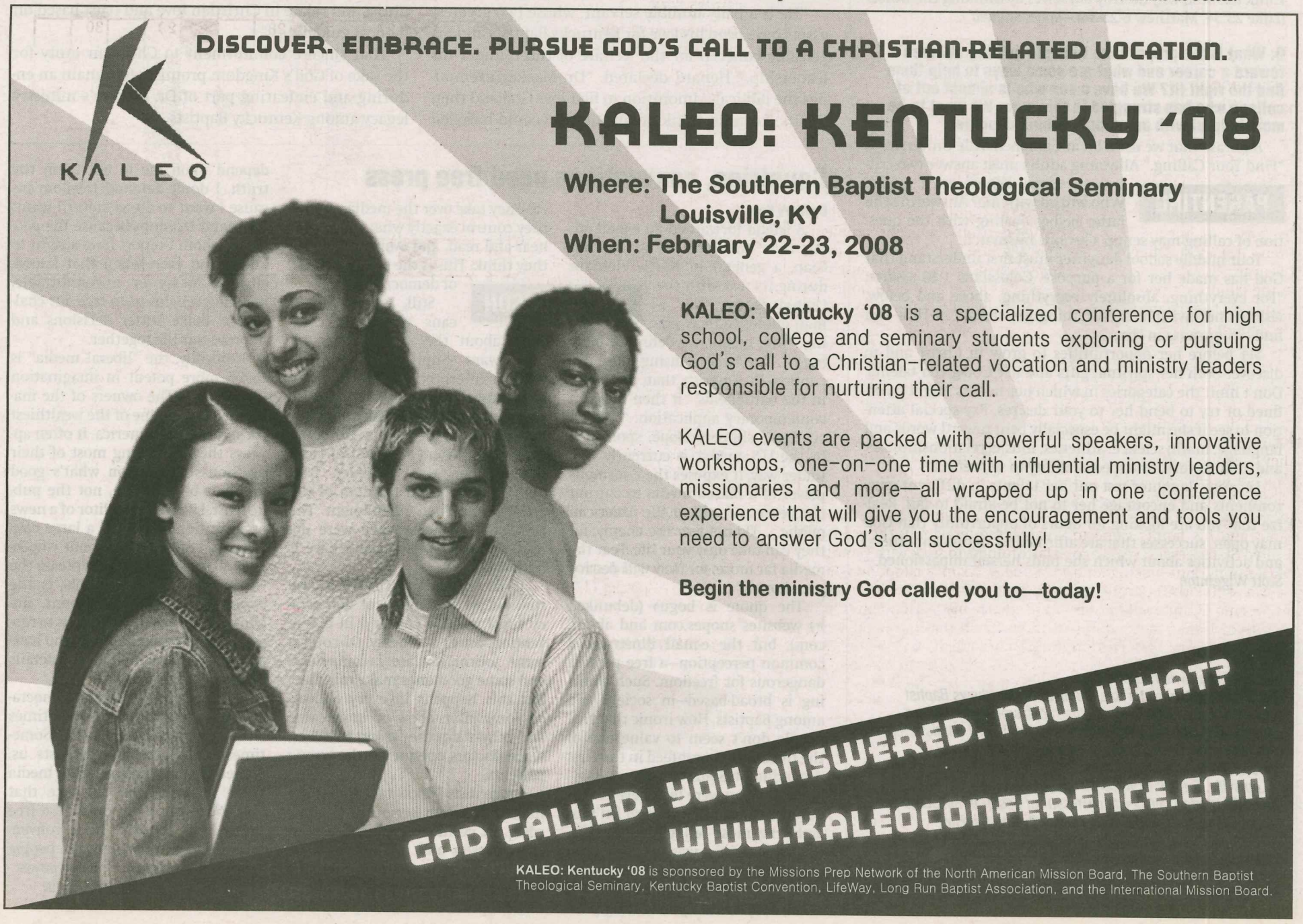
Despite his termination, Traylor expressed satisfaction over attending the seminar, saying it helped him bounce ideas off other pastors and learn from them. He added that it also showed him the value of face-to-face meetings and continual communication to resolve issues and see adjustments he may need to make in his current position.

Max Hester, pastor of Stanford Baptist Church since 2001, described the seminar as a "ministry saver."

Although at his previous church for 17 years, Hester said disputes that eventually cropped up left him so stressed out he would sometimes have to lie down in his office because of pressure in his chest.

"Ministry can be a lonely journey," Hester acknowledged. "Part of what I learned is that conflict is normal. Conflict happens.

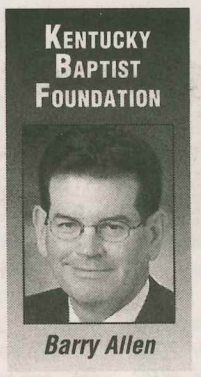
"It was so uncomfortable, and people are so uncomfortable with it, that you seek to avoid it at all costs," he continued. "But we can grow from it. While it's still not fun, God can use it to make us better."



Who is my family?

Consider including 'charity child' in your estate plan

I have discovered personally and professionally the most difficult issues in family wealth and philanthropic planning are not financial in nature but are relational, regardless of the level of wealth in a given family.



Barry Allen

It is natural for us to want to leave assets to our families when we die. In thinking about the future care of one's family, the Apostle Paul advised in 1 Timothy 5:8: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Given these realities, one of the most important questions we must ask ourselves as we plan the distributions of our estates is: Who is my family? Who is my family based upon blood, and who is my family based upon affinity? Who is my family based upon affinity would include: by marriage or remarriage, by adoption, by stepchildren, by membership and volunteerism in an organization, including your church and church-related organizations as well as other charitable organizations.

My prayer is "your family" includes your church and other charitable organizations with which you affiliate, including the missionary, educational and benevolent ministries of the KBC and the SBC.

Let me encourage you to consider in your estate plan the concept of a "child called charity." I learned of this concept from Greg Ring, president of PhilanthroCorp, a Christian-based planned giving service based in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The child called charity concept is to adopt one or more ministries you want to remember in your estate plan and to treat them as additional children in your own family. For example, if you have two children, then add a child called charity as your third child. Divide an equal amount to the three children and include in the child called charity portion all the charities you desire to benefit.

Please call toll-free Laurie Valentine or me for more information on including a child called charity in your estate plan.

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

A new year, a new family, a new world

Foster & adoptive parents offer stability, hope, love

Sunrise Children's Services appreciates all our foster parents, but we also have great expectations for them. We pray for families who are not only desiring to care for hurting children for a short time but also are desiring to make the children a permanent part of their families by adopting them.

Bill Smithwick

Stability is so important for children whose lives have been uprooted. They bear deep scars when they have lost the only family and way of life they have ever known. That's what happened to Gamil—a 12-year-old boy from Morocco—way too many times.

Gamil and his family came to the United States several years ago as illegal immigrants looking for a new world of opportunity. After his father became ill and couldn't obtain health care as an illegal immigrant, Gamil's parents returned to Morocco. They left Gamil and his older brother with money and a place to stay, but Gamil's brother failed him too. He became addicted to drugs and disappeared for days at a time. Fortunately, a neighbor who was paying attention alerted social workers, who placed Gamil in foster care.

Gamil—a smart boy who speaks French, Arabic and English—loved his foster parents, and they wanted to adopt him. But when the foster father found out that his military service would require moving his family to a different state, Gamil started having serious behavior problems. He just didn't want another change! This caused the foster family to no longer want to adopt him.

That's when the state referred Gamil to Sunrise. We placed him with newly certified foster parents who were interested in adoption. The foster parents were in for a shock. Gamil wanted to be anywhere else expect with this new family. He was angry. He was hurt. And he let them know it. But God gave his foster parents the grace and faithfulness to stick with Gamil.

Today, Gamil's adoption is nearly finalized. Now, he is proud to call them his permanent family. And after all that has happened in his young life, he has finally found a new world of stability, hope and love. Remember to pray for kids all over Kentucky like Gamil who need adoptive parents. And ask yourself: Is there room in your heart for one more child?

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

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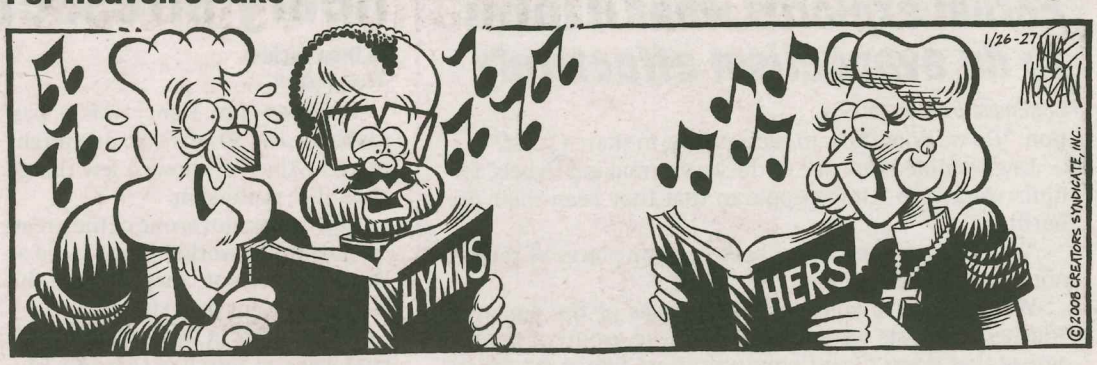
For Heaven's Sake

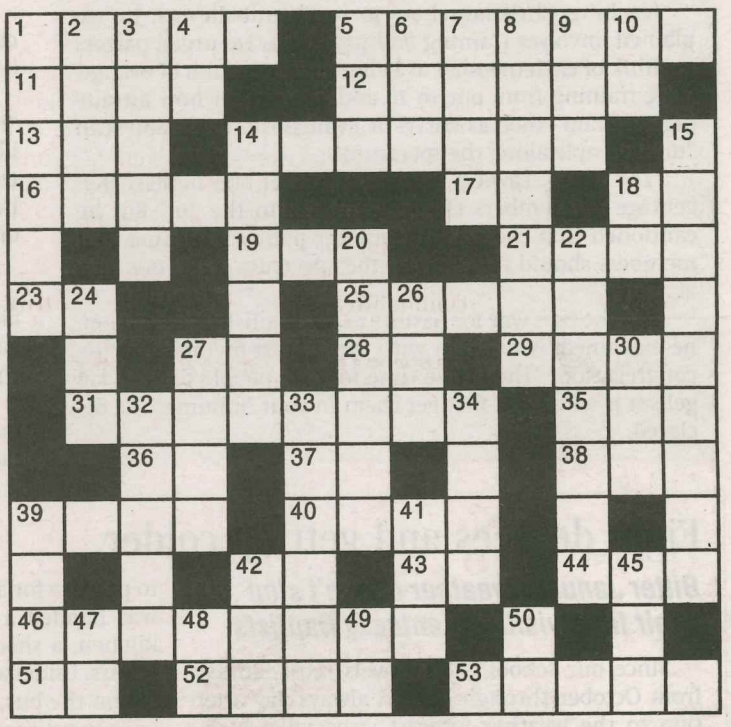
Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp

Bible Crosswords



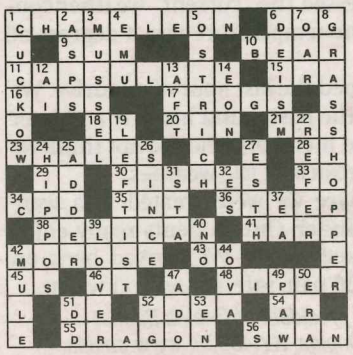
Across

1 "Keep me as the ____ of the eye" (Psalm 17:8)
5 A person who runs errands
11 "For the ____ which is lent to the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:20)
12 A citrus fruit the color of its name
13 Second day of the week, abbr.
14 "And the ____ father shall say unto the elders" (Deuteronomy 22:16)
16 "Wert graffed contrary to nature into a good ____ tree" (Romans 11:24)
17 Fa, so, ____, ti
18 A shot for an air rifle
19 "When thou was under the ____ tree, I saw thee" (John 1:48)
21 "Orpah kissed her mother in law, but ____ clave unto her" (Ruth 1:14)
23 District Attorney, abbr.
25 "Our Lord, and his Christ; and he shall ____ for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15)
27 Common Era, abbr.
28 "I ____ that bread of life" (John 6:48)
29 "The sons of Ram ... were, Maaz, and Jamin, and ____" (1 Chronicles 2:27)
31 "And Jacob took him rods of the ... hazel and ____ tree" (Genesis 30:37)
35 "Where neither moth ____ rust doth corrupt" (Matthew 6:20)
36 Advertisement, abbr.
37 Drug danger (abbr.)
38 "There is none that doeth good, no, not ____" (Psalm 14:3)
39 To be idle
40 Spills water upon
42 California city, for short
43 Heat, abbr.
44 Garden of ____ (singular) (Song of Solomon 6:11)
46 "When thou shalt hear a sound going in the tops of the ____ trees ... thou shalt go out to battle" (1 Chronicles 14:15)
51 Book that follows Jeremiah, abbr.
52 A vein of metal ore
53 A sour fruit used to make a cool drink

Down

1 "I see a rod of an ____ tree" (Jeremiah 1:11)
2 "Go, wash in the ____ of Siloam" (John 9:7)
3 A great fear causing loss of control
4 Lane, abbr.
5 Pom-____
6 American Rocket Society, abbr.
7 A Scottish Highlander
8 "For I will cast out the nations before thee, and ____ thy borders" (Exodus 34:24)
9 Brigadier generals, abbr.
10 Old English, abbr.
14 Rebels
15 "Thou that ____ idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" (Romans 2:22)
18 Bachelor of Theology, abbr.
20 Rio ____
22 "I found an altar with this inscription, to the ____ God" (Acts 17:23)
24 Air Coordinating Committee, abbr.
26 A large Australian bird
27 To give up
30 A very long time
32 "And Jacob took him rods ... of the ____ and chestnut tree" (Genesis 30:37)
33 "But the answer of a good conscience ____ God" (1 Peter 3:21)
34 An examination of knowledge
39 A green citrus fruit
41 "____ word is a lamp unto my feet" (Psalm 119:105)
42 A northern constellation
45 Unidentified flying object, abbr.
47 "There was a man in the land of ____, whose name was Job" (Job 1:1)
48 Bachelor of law, abbr.
49 Again, anew, once more, suffix
50 "But that the world through him might ____ saved" (John 3:17)

Last week's solution



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Forum explores what it takes to do evangelism effectively

Continued from page 1

tion, "Do we know how to train people to share Christ?"

Lawless noted that one of the keys to making Hybels' formula work is to "train people so that they keep their fire burning."

"Most of our churches ... have become places of refuge, not a place of rearmament," he added.

When asked to consider which areas of the equation Southern Baptists were strongest in, the group of pastors agreed that it was Clear Communication. "We've got the resources," one pastor said.

However, the crowd was split when asked in which area Southern Baptists tend to lack. Several pastors argued that churches lacked the Close Proximity variable, while others contended that High Potency was most lacking. One pastor even speculated that weak Close Proximity may be the result, but that inadequate High Potency may be the cause.

Lawless noted that it would be difficult for a church to increase in the area of High Potency without growing in Close Proximity.

"I just don't see how we can genuinely be growing in Christ and catching the heart of God ... and at the same time get increasingly pulled away from the world He loves," Lawless said. "We're going to be driven back to (the lost) at some point."

Training members

Teaching Christians how to reach unbelievers, he explained, involves training and programs. He urged pastors to think of each member as being on a spectrum of evangelistic training from one to 10 and to consider how a training program—such as FAITH or Evangelism Explosion—can "move people along the spectrum."

"The goal," Lawless noted, "is to get the highest percentage of members closer each year to the 10." But he cautioned that the process requires patience, adding that members should move along the spectrum only "one step at a time."

And the best way for pastors to accomplish that mission, he explained, is to begin with the newest members of the congregation. "The prime time to train people to do evangelism is when you first get them in your building," he declared.

Henry stresses importance of 'shepherding'

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Lexington—Jim Henry was a pastor for nearly 50 years. So one might imagine that he knows a few things about the profession.

"Being a pastor is one of the greatest gifts in the world," he declared at the KBC's recent Shepherding the Shepherd event in Lexington.

Henry, who in 2006 retired from First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., after 28 years, brought his wealth of experience and knowledge to the "Shepherding for the Long Haul" breakout session.

The longtime pastor described himself as a "learner" and said that he wanted to teach other pastors how to keep a ministry together "not because I'm an expert, but because I've found some things that have worked."

Citing 1 Peter 5:2 in which the apostle instructs the elders of the church to "be shepherds of God's flock," Henry noted that shepherding is one of the most important responsibilities of being a pastor.

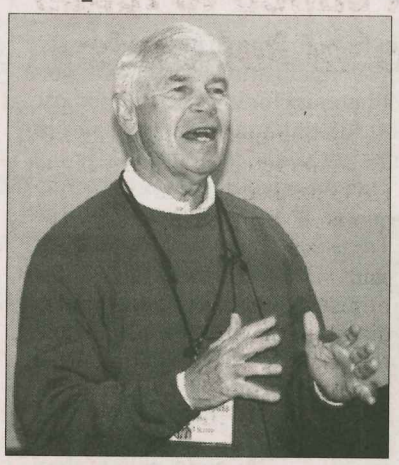
"Being called to be a shepherd carries with it a lot of opportunity," he added.

Seeking to answer the question, "How can you get a sense of shepherding?" Henry offered those in attendance a number of ways in which he remained a shepherd to members of his church.

They included:

■ Writing handwritten letters and notes to members of the congregation who reached milestones in their lives or lost a loved one.

Henry recalled that each Christmas, he would send a note to each family in the church who had lost a loved one during the year. He said he would let each family know that the pastor had prayed specifically for them. The notes were "a little thing that became a big thing," Henry added.



LONG-HAUL PASTOR *Jim Henry addresses pastors and spouses at the KBC's recent Shepherding the Shepherd event in Lexington. Henry retired in 2006 after nearly 50 years as a pastor. (KBC photo by Larry Brannin)*

He also noted that when members of the church would become new parents, he would write a short letter of congratulations. He said he would also include a letter to the new baby that was to be opened when that child gave his or her life to Christ.

■ Spending one morning each week with a small group to pray and discuss life.

Henry said he met with a group of men for an hour every Friday morning for 40 years. "I learned from them," he noted, adding that the pastor never brought the devotion for the group.

According to Henry, the close-knit unit developed a lasting bond between the men and their pastor. "They will go to the gates of hell for their pastor," he said, "because they know you and they love you. ... You're mentoring and discipling them."

■ Staying connected with the community.

Henry noted that pastors have a "shepherding responsibility in the community," not just within the church.

He recalled a ministry to homosexuals that he helped get started at First Baptist, Orlando. He said that ministry helped him to learn a very important lesson about being a pastor.

"We're not called to change people, we're called to love people," Henry noted. "We're called to show that compassion."

"And if we are that transparent," he added, "there's a good chance that our people will begin to get a hold of that in their own hearts and lives."

Henry also discussed ways that he said he has learned to "maintain momentum."

Among the things Henry pointed out was the importance of personal worship and maintaining a quiet time with God. He urged pastors to pray and read the Bible or a devotional before leaving each morning.

Henry also stressed the importance of remaining physically, emotionally and mentally sharp. In addition, he encouraged pastors to embrace change, ask questions of others, listen to what they have to say, and most importantly, focus on God and anticipate what He will do in the life of the ministry each day.

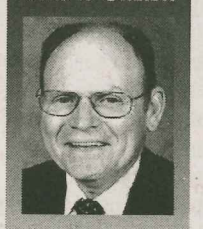
Eight degrees and getting colder

Bitter January weather doesn't stop choir from visiting Kentucky Baptists

Since our school choir travels most Sundays from October through April, I always pay attention to the weather forecast, especially during the winter. The recent cold snap had me a little concerned, with predictions for the coldest temperatures of the winter on a weekend. It is a little unnerving to travel with a bus full of teenagers when weather conditions are somewhat extreme.

I am amazed at how well most of our choir students get up so early on Sundays. While they can sometimes sleep later, many Sundays require getting up at 5 or 6 a.m. I am sure most readers can understand the temptation to sleep in, especially when it is extremely cold outside.

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

This past Sunday was one of those extreme days. I plugged in the block heater Saturday evening so our Greyhound-type bus would start Sunday morning. I arrived a little before 6 a.m. to warm up the bus for our northern Kentucky trip.

Frankly, I was not sure what would happen when I pushed the start button. Happily, the bus started right up even though it was idling a little rough. While the bus was warming up I checked the temperature gauge to see just how cold it was. The number was not encouraging—8 degrees. We had reminded the choir students on Friday to wear warm coats and maybe even bring a blanket in case we had problems while traveling.

At about 6:45, the students started arriving for our 7:15 departure. I was very pleased to see nearly all of the students wrapped in blankets. Maybe for once they realized how important it was to prepare for a worst-case scenario. Each student was handed a warm sandwich fresh from our kitchen, a snack and drink. When we leave early, Mrs. Underwood prepares a breakfast they can eat on the bus, giving them an extra 20 minutes or so to get ready.

We left campus promptly at 7:15. It did not take long for the students to curl up in their seats and cover up with their blankets. The next two hours always are peaceful as the students quickly go back to sleep.

Even though our bus is an older model, it does have a very good heater. In fact, most of the time the students tell me it gets a little too warm and they ask me to turn the heat down. That was not the case on this cold Sunday morning. I had the thermostat turned as high as it would go but the students never asked me to turn it down.

We pulled into the Georgetown rest area at 9:15 and the students reluctantly pulled their covers off and made their way to the rest rooms. I went into the entrance area where I could check on weather and road conditions. When I pressed the "current" weather conditions button the temperature was 4 degrees at Lexington.

We then finished the last hour of our drive. We were greeted by the pastor and his wife and later by some surprised members who did not think we would make it because of the weather.

After the service we were treated to a wonderful potluck dinner. Our students really enjoy those home-cooked meals. We arrived back on campus about 6:30 p.m. safe, sound and warm.

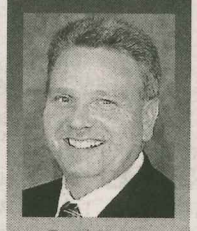
W.F. Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, Box 67, Oneida, KY 40972; www.oneidaschool.org; e-mail: president@oneidaschool.org

Campus life for a single student

Dorm, choir & 'workship' provide unique family

The word "family" often is used to describe the Clear Creek experience. While the majority of our students are married with children, we also have a number of single students who are also an important part of the Clear Creek family.

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Donnie Fox

First year student Benjamin Harr is enjoying his "family" experience as a single student at Clear Creek. "I enjoy living on campus as a single student in Kelly Hall," Benjamin said. "It has really been a totally new experience for me. Dorm life in general is all right, but I do miss Momma's cooking and help with my laundry.

"Kelly Hall has 10 different guys on it," he continued. "You really have an opportunity to grow close to those guys you live with because they pretty much become your housemates. I have been able to develop some great friendships."

"I have also enjoyed the friendships I have formed through my participation with the Clear Creek Singers. We were invited to sing at the Kentucky Baptist Convention this past year. We also get invited to sing in churches throughout the tri-state area."

Like many of our students, Benjamin's pastor played a big role in his coming to Clear Creek. "My pastor took me to a conference where he introduced me to the former president of Clear Creek, Bill Whittaker," Benjamin recalled. "I visited the college, prayed about it, and God told me this is where I needed to be to further my education."

A job in the campus "workship" program provides financial support. "I work on the campus cleaning crew," he noted. "I am able to work 24 hours a week because of the two-day class schedule the college makes available to students. The flexible schedule allows me to still go to school full time and receive some much-needed financial support for my expenses.

"I really enjoy the friendliness and openness of the faculty and staff at Clear Creek," Benjamin added. "It's nice to be able to stop by their office and talk to them about anything. They will just stop what they are doing and take time to talk with you."

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

Oklahoma Baptist called to reach Darfur & other global hot spots

Bartlesville, Okla. (ABP)—On day 27 of a 40-day fast in a cabin in Michigan, God called Kevin Turner to ministry—specifically in war zones, disaster areas and places where Christians are persecuted.

"I believe we're sent into the hot spots of the world," said Turner, president of Strategic World Impact, based in Bartlesville, Okla. "Our approach is to get in, be part of the solution, make an impact and get out safely. We're not doing long-term development. It's a stopgap ministry to touch the lives of people who are standing on the brink of eternity."

Over the last decade, that mission has taken Turner and his staff to more than 20 nations. This month, Strategic World Impact is sending a 20-member medical mission team to Darfur.

The United Nations estimates that about 400,000 people have died as a result of conflict in Darfur since 2003, and more than 2 million have been displaced.

The Strategic World Impact team—including five physicians, one dentist and several nurses, paramedics and disaster relief specialists—plans to deliver 1,000 kits containing tarps, mosquito netting, utensils and hygiene items to displaced people in the war-torn area.

The volunteers will also deliver a solar-powered water purifier and Bibles for distribution.

"We bring in Bibles because the Christians there ask for them," said Turner, an ordained Baptist minister. "We never do the kind of distribution where people are told they have to take a Bible in order to get something else they need."

Last April, Turner conducted an on-site assessment in Darfur. He encountered displaced women, children and elderly people who lacked food, water and medical attention.

"I saw people walking or crowded onto the back of gravel trucks, fleeing through the desert," he recalled. "There were people who had traveled three days on foot since their last water supply in up to 130-degree temperatures,"

Turner acknowledged the safety concerns inherent in ministering in places like Darfur, but he said that Strategic World Impact trains staff and volunteers in how to minimize risks.

But as he avoids placing himself in a dangerous situation without proper preparation, Turner said he believes "there's nothing that can be taken from you when it's all surrendered to the Lord."

Message of True Love Waits impacts youth in Philippines

By Don Beehler
Baptist Press

Manila, Philippines (BP)—"What the youth need today is love education, not sex education," declared Derek Ross, who directs True Love Waits in the Philippines. He should know.

In metro Manila, a city with 5 million high school students, school officials do not need to be convinced of the need for abstinence education.

At Dasmarinas National High School, with 20,000-plus students at its main campus and eight annexes, it only took a 10-minute conversation with the principal to generate interest in sharing True Love Waits' abstinence-until-marriage message there.

That same year, more than 2,000 Dasmarinas students made commitments not only to abstinence but also to Jesus Christ through True Love Waits.

"Schools have jumped on True Love Waits; nationwide, we receive initiations every day," Ross noted.

In meetings with True Love Waits leaders at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville earlier this month, Ross spoke of how God has opened doors throughout the Philippines for TLW in its three areas of emphasis: schools, training churches and large events.

Some of the most famous Christians in that country, such as athletes, models, radio DJs, artists and rock stars, have become involved in True Love Waits through a variety of circumstances, Ross noted.

Media coverage, including an hour-long program on a national TV show, has greatly heightened the awareness and credibility of True Love Waits. Beyond churches and schools, the program has made connections "out in the world," which Ross described as "a great place to be because kids desperately need God."

Ross recalled an invitation True Love Waits received to have a booth at the 2007 MTV Music Summit for AIDS in the Philippines. The main sponsor of the event was a condom manufacturer, while another sponsor was a beer company. About 20,000 young people attended the event, where True Love Waits was the only Christian presence.

Student volunteers and True Love Waits staff engaged passersby in conversations about the gospel, asking questions such as, "Can a condom protect your heart?" In other cases, they simply put the gospel into the hands of Filipino youth.

Franco Ferrer, national training coordinator for True Love Waits, was among those who enthusiastically challenged summit attendees, several of whom described sex as "practice for relationships," to turn to God's pattern for relationships.

"God is on the move and the best is yet to come," Franco said. "It's a great honor to be part of True Love Waits, connecting with churches and schools and being able to make Jesus famous in the Philippines and beyond."

Because so many young people they encounter have had sex, Ross explained that True Love Waits emphasizes purity more than virginity in the Philippines, because anyone can make a commitment to begin and maintain a life of purity.

Ross likened his message to young people as "spiritual caller ID." Many young people see their Father calling them, he said, but are afraid to answer because they think He's mad at them.

"We try to help them understand that God loves them and wants to bless them," he added.

While Ross estimated he has personally spoken to as many as 40,000 people about True Love Waits in the past 18 months, he said he is increasingly focused on training others to share the abstinence message and finding ways to open new doors.

"I'm totally in love with these (Filipino) people," Ross declared. "Our plan is to join God where He is at work."

"Schools have jumped on True Love Waits; nationwide, we receive initiations every day."

Derek Ross, director of True Love Waits in the Philippines

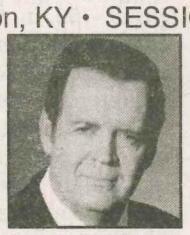
CALDWELL/LYON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

22nd WESTERN KENTUCKY EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

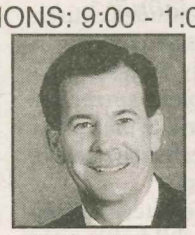
FEBRUARY 4, 2008

at Southside Baptist Church, 205 Nichols Street, Princeton, KY • SESSIONS: 9:00 - 1:00 - 6:00

Dr. Bobby Welch
Former President of the Southern Baptist Convention, Author of "You, The Warrior Leader"



Dr. Richard Land
President of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the public policy entity of the SBC



Dr. Herb Reavis
Pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church Jacksonville, FL

Dr. Don Mathis
Evangelist, Author, President of Kentucky Baptist Evangelists Bowling Green, KY

Dr. Ross Bauscher
Evangelism Team Leader for the Kentucky Baptist Convention

Chris Brady
Co-author of Launching a Leadership Revolution. Co-founder of TEAM.

Sons of the Father
full-time music evangelists ministering across the nation since 1989 in an average of 225 events a year. West Frankfort, IL.

SESSION 1 — 9:00 A.M.
Worship Music ..... Sons of the Father
Welcome & Invocation
Introduction of Speakers
Message ..... Dr. Don Mathis
Worship Music ..... Sons of the Father
Message ..... Dr. Ross Bauscher
Special Music ..... Sons of the Father
Message ..... Dr. Richard Land
Benediction
(11:30) Break For Lunch (Provided)

SESSION 2 — 1:00 P.M.
Special Music ..... Sons of the Father
Welcome & Invocation
Introduction of Speakers
Worship Music ..... Sons of the Father
Message ..... Dr. Don Mathis
Worship Music ..... Sons of the Father
Message ..... Dr. Bobby Welch
Worship Music ..... Sons of the Father
Message ..... Dr. Herb Reavis
Benediction
(4:00) Break For Dinner (On Your Own)

SESSION 3 — 6:00 P.M.
Pre-Session Music ..... Sons of the Father
Welcome & Invocation
Worship Music ..... Sons of the Father
Message ..... Dr. Herb Reavis
Worship Music ..... Sons of the Father
Message ..... Chris Brady
Worship Music ..... Sons of the Father
Message ..... Dr. Bobby Welch
Benediction

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For brochure, information, and reservations call 7 days a week:

YMT Vacations 1-800-736-7300

Prayer Partners

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist ministries and missionaries:

Hispanic ministry of Consolidated Baptist Church in Hazard. Pastor Charlie Edmonds is implementing an Hispanic Bible study ministry. He is hoping to develop relationships and meet the spiritual needs of the changing community. Pray that God will bless the ministry's efforts and open doors of opportunity. Pray also that there will be a great response and participation from the Hispanic community.

Mission Service Corps missionary Arlene Miller of Impact Ministry in Hopkinsville. Miller is director of Impact Ministry, a ministry of Christian County Baptist Association that is supported by its 41 churches. Impact provides food, clothing and spiritual counseling to low-income families. Pray for the strength and physical health of volunteers who make this ministry possible. Pray that volunteers will take advantage of every opportunity to share the gospel and introduce clients to Jesus.

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

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Campbellsville University will host a series of events in Ransdell Chapel to celebrate Black History Month, including **William Turner** of Berea College speaking Feb. 5, 10 a.m.; **Joseph Owens,** pastor of Shiloh Church in Lexington speaking Feb. 13, 10 a.m.; and Simmons College of Kentucky's **"SOS"** gospel group performing Feb. 19, 7 p.m. For more information, call (270) 789-5520.

■ **GREENSBURG**—Pleasant Valley Church recently called **John Willis** as pastor.

■ **HARDINSBURG**—**James Preston,** retired pastor of New Clover Creek Church, died Jan. 13 at age 76. Preston, a graduate of Campbellsville University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was a member of the American Christian Counselors Association. He is survived by his wife, Betty, five children, 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

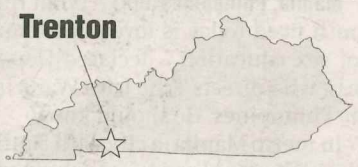
■ **LOUISVILLE**—Greater Louisville Christian Reconciliation Ministries will host its first quarterly prayer breakfast Feb. 5, 7:30 a.m., at St. Paul Missionary Church. For reservations, call **Jan Watts** at (502) 896-8882 by noon, Feb. 1.

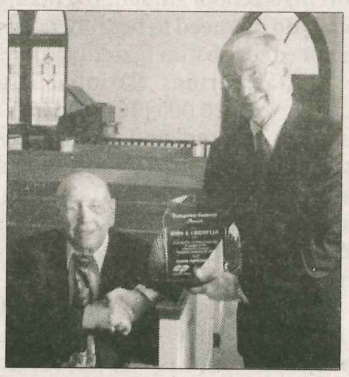
■ **MURRAY**—**Lloyd Austin Cornell,** a former campus minister at Murray State University, Morehead State University and the University of Hawaii, died Jan. 19 at age 76. A graduate of Stetson University in Deland, Fla., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, he also served as a Navy chaplain. He is survived by his wife, Masako, two children and seven grandchildren. His memorial service was held Jan. 25 at First Church of Winter Garden, Fla.

■ **SUMMERSVILLE**—**Chuck Pollard** recently resigned as pastor of Summersville Church.

Spotlight on....

Trenton





CP LEADERSHIP *KBC Executive Director **Bill Mackey** (right), presents a Cooperative Program Distinguished Leadership Award to retired Kentucky Baptist pastor **John Christian** during a recent service at Trenton Baptist Church. Christian was unable to attend the KBC annual meeting in November to receive the award due to health concerns.*

KBC Calendar of Events

KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION

January

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

NAMB appoints new Ky. missionaries

Alpharetta, Ga.—The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board recently appointed two new missionaries to serve in Kentucky.

Heriberto Erazo Torres has been appointed as a church planting missionary and regional Hispanic strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Torres, a native of Puerto Rico, will fill the role previously held by Rolando Muñiz, who died in March of last year due to complications from heart surgery.

Torres and his wife, Noemi, will be based out of Horse Cave and serve the southern Kentucky region. The couple has two children, Caleb, 8, and Gabriela, 6. Prior to his appointment, Torres had served since 2003 as a pastor in Loudon County Baptist Association in Tennessee.

Tracey Mauldin has been named NAMB's regional collegiate evangelism coordinator for Kentucky. In her role, Mauldin will work closely with campus ministers at the state's colleges and universities in an effort to mobilize students for increased missions involvement.

She and her husband, Josh, will be based in Louisville. Mauldin most recently served as a NAMB US/C2 missionary in Calgary, Alberta.

Classified Ads

NEEDED: Bivocational pastor and wife relocating to Lexington—available to house-sit or rent apartment or extra room/bath. References. Call (606) 271-1647.

SEEKING: Pastor for Tunnel Hill Baptist Church. We are a traditional congregation, standing on the Word of God. Candidate should be a conservative leader with strong, scripturally-based preaching and teaching. Visitation and outreach also are important parts of the ministry of our church. Please send resumé to Pastor Search Committee, 734 Tunnel Hill Baptist Church, Elizabethtown, KY 42701.

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: 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: Senior pastor for First Baptist Church, Morganfield, Ky., seeking community-minded individual for a church that has an existing community outreach presence. Morganfield First Baptist Church is located in a small, western Kentucky town and has an average attendance of 200-250. We have two Sunday morning services—one contemporary and one blended. This is an awesome church that has a strong potential for growth. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 200 North Morgan St., Morganfield, KY 42437.

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 resumés through Jan. 31, 2008.

SEEKING: Passionate, visionary children's and worship leader to guide comprehensive programs in established, mission-minded church. Requires energetic and creative individual who seeks endless possibilities and a complete surrendering to the Holy Spirit. E-mail resumés to office@pgbcchurch.com or opsnurse@yahoo.com.

SEEKING: Part-time interim director of preschool and children's activities for First Baptist Church, Murray. This individual will be responsible for planning, administering and participating in activities for children from birth through 6th grade. Hours will be 15-20 per week; compensation negotiable. Bachelor's degree or prior experience in similar work required. Applicant should be a professed Christian, love the Lord and love children. Interested individuals should submit resumés and three references to Children's Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 203 South 4th Street, Murray, KY 42071. For questions, contact Wilma Beatty at (270) 753-7772.

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

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 pastor for Grapevine Southern Missionary Baptist Church, Madisonville, Ky. Average Sunday morning attendance: 350. 10-15 years experience. Send resumé to GBC Pastor Search Committee, 85 Sandcut Road, Madisonville, KY 42431.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of education for First Baptist Church, Blytheville, Ark. Responsibilities include education, evangelism and administration. Previous experience required; seminary degree preferred but not required. We are a traditional Southern Baptist church located just north of Memphis, Tenn. Please send resumé to Pastor Greg Bowers, First Baptist Church, 715 West Walnut St., Blytheville, AR 72315. Additional information can be found at www.fbcblytheville.com.

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.

For members of Casting Crowns, music is just a side job

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

Fairfax, Va. (RNS)—One night, youth pastor Mark Hall puts plans together for his Wednesday night youth service at Eagle's Landing First Baptist Church in the Atlanta suburb of McDonough, Ga.

The next night, Hall is on stage in the Washington suburbs, fronting his Grammy-nominated band, Casting Crowns.

For Hall and other members of his group, all of whom serve in youth ministry in Atlanta-area churches, middle and high school students are their top priority. It just so happens they end up reaching them both on and off stage.

"Our priority in our scheduling and our priority in how we do things is definitely student ministry because you can't pop in and pop out of the student ministry," Hall noted. "You can't just come in for a day and be a youth pastor—or I would hope you couldn't. You can't be a good one, anyway."

Despite the success of Casting Crowns—their latest album debuted at No. 2 on Billboard's Top 200 chart—Hall said their music and their mission are focused on helping average Christians, whether teenagers or former teenagers, grow closer to God.

The group's latest album, "The Altar and the Door," dwells on the difficulties faced by Christians who are challenged to live life a certain way when they are inside the walls of a sanctuary but forget some of those lessons once they leave.

Casting Crowns guitarist Juan DeVevo, who works with the student praise band at Eagle's Landing, said the high ranking on the Billboard chart is a sign that their music also is reaching non-Christians.

DOUBLE DUTY *Mark Hall (center) is the frontman for the Christian group Casting Crowns and a youth pastor at Eagle's Landing First Baptist Church in McDonough, Ga. All seven members of the band work in full-time youth ministry. (RNS photo courtesy of Song BMG Music Entertainment)*

"Believers are giving our CD to nonbelievers, and they're feeling like that stuff can speak to people and help them in their time of need, even though they may not even go to church," he said.

Rising fast

The band found fame when a college student at the church put their CD in the hands of Mark Miller, the frontman for the country music group Sawyer Brown. He started the Beach Street Records label in 2003 and became the band's producer.

Three albums later, Casting Crowns took home the "favorite artist" award in contemporary inspirational music at the American Music Awards last November.

Four of the group's seven members started playing together in 1999 at First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Fla., where then-pastor Bobby Welch was unaware of Hall's musical abilities when he was hired. But after Hall moved to Georgia and the band became more established, Welch invited them to perform at the 2006 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I don't think he's just doing a unique balancing act," Welch said of Hall. "I think his music and his ministry make each other."

Tricia Whitehead, a spokeswoman for the Gospel Music Association, noted that other Christian artists have come out of the church and continued to work as music ministers even as they performed onstage. But Casting Crowns, with its involvement in youth ministry, is different.

"Casting Crowns has set a standard that is fantastic to see, that they continue to be so involved in ministry alongside the huge success they're having as an artist," she added.

When Hall meets with youth pastors at concerts, he reminds them that relationships, not lectures, are the key to reaching young people.

"You'll teach more in the car on the way to Burger King after church than you will in your Bible study," Hall explained. He may spend hours working on "neat, artsy, cool" worksheets for his Wednesday night youth group, but said he finds teens are more interested in one-on-one time to discuss a personal matter.

A heart for students

In addition to reaching students, Hall has tried to help parents understand the sometimes mysterious lives of teenagers—especially the side of kids that is bared only online. He wrote a song, and then a column in USA Today, after a voyage through the social networking Web sites, Facebook and MySpace.

"They just want to have a friend to sit with at lunch," Hall pointed out. "They want to be accepted and sometimes your need for acceptance lures you outside of what you know to be right, what you know to be godly."

Hall's life is a constant balancing act. Before hitting the road for the concert in Virginia, he attended a staff meeting and sketched out worship plans. Then he met with about 400 youth for their weekly gathering, and hung around afterward to meet with a parent and help a student in crisis.

After sleeping on the bus from Georgia, he helped home-school one of his three children and also kept in touch with the youth back in Georgia.

"I texted 22 students this morning with a sort of a verse-for-the-day kind of thing I like to do with them," he noted. "You don't just check out of student ministry. It's impossible."

Sword swallower uses talents to share gospel

By Kay Campbell
Huntsville (Ala.) Times

Hartselle, Ala. (RNS)—Did you hear the one about Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, the preacher and the sword swallower?

Turns out that truth is, in fact, stranger than fiction when the Rudolph story can inspire a sword swallower to unsheath his unusual ability for God's cause.

A few years ago, Dan Meyer, 50, sat in his Alabama church during Christmas while the preacher encouraged people to view Rudolph's story as a parable. The reindeer with the nose he was ashamed of finally realized that his odd feature was his gift and his witness.

"You have to use what makes you unique," the preacher proclaimed.

At that moment Meyer said he knew he was going to quit his day job as a car salesman to become a full-time sword swallower—and develop a ministry with a memorable point to it.

"Believe it or not, this is my calling," Meyer acknowledged, pulling a 30-inch steel sword out of a leather scabbard during a recent demonstration. "I can reach the goth kids, the bikers—I can catch their attention, and I can turn their attention to the Lord."

Meyer puts the tip of the sword into his mouth, tilts his head back, flings his arms wide, and lets the inch-thick blade slide down his throat. Then he bows from the waist, his eyes twinkling above the hilt projecting from his mouth.

Meyer stands and flicks the sword from his mouth with his fingertips, so that it shoots into the air above his head. He catches it with a flourish.

He also has been known to stick an ice pick up his nose. "Does it gross you out?" he asked. "Good—it's supposed to. Of course, I get negative reactions from the adults on that one. But the kids love it."

His message, he explained, is to remind kids how fearfully and wonderfully they are made; that the hobbies other kids might think are weird or gross could become their way to witness for God in the world.

And that they should never try sword swallowing at home.

"I risk my life to do this," he said. "But I tell them there is a way they can become a spiritual sword swallower. In Hebrews 4:12, it says, 'The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, able to pierce the division of the soul and spirit ... able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.'"

In the show he takes to camps, youth groups and awards banquets, he pulls out the sword he calls his Pride. It is the first sword he managed to stick down his gullet after years of practice. Swallowing their pride and learning to be humble, Meyer tells kids, is even tougher than swallowing a sword.

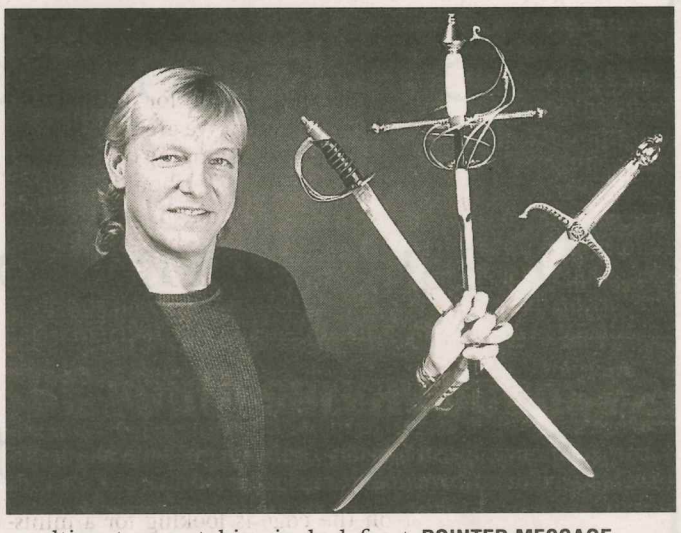
Meyer was inspired by the sword swallowers he saw in his early 20s while serving as a missionary in India. Nearly a decade ago, he said he became determined to learn the technique.

It took Meyer years of daily practice to overcome the natural revulsion of the throat. He learned to slide the blade behind his voice box, to nudge his heart aside where it presses on the esophagus, to insert the steel blade all the way to the sphincter guarding the stomach, and into the stomach itself.

His posture must be perfect, he noted, his body totally relaxed.

"If you look closely, you can see the blade beats with my heart," Meyer said. "I'm a living sheath—I put the Word of God in my body every day."

Meyer knows personally about the side effects of introducing inflexible steel into the throat. A trick he did a few years ago, when he was swallowing five swords at once, ended when his stomach retched. The resulting tear put him in bed for months.



POINTED MESSAGE *Dan Meyer is a Christian sword swallower who uses his unique talent to spread the gospel. He encourages audiences to find their particular—or unusual—talent and embrace it. (RNS photo by Mike Mercier/The Huntsville Times)*

According to Meyer, it was not the danger of sword swallowing but its unbelievable nature that got it banned by the church in the Middle Ages. Church officials were sure anyone who could take steel into their bodies and live to tell about it must be in league with the powers of darkness.

That accusation was not unlike what Jesus Himself faced, Meyer added.

"A lot of people thought He was just a magician, a charlatan, but He was real," Meyer declared. "And people were so impacted by what they saw 2,000 years later we're still talking about it."

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