

March 25, 2008
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'The nations have come to us'

'Pioneers' crossing religious divide to reach Louisville's ethnic community

By Drew Nichter
News Director

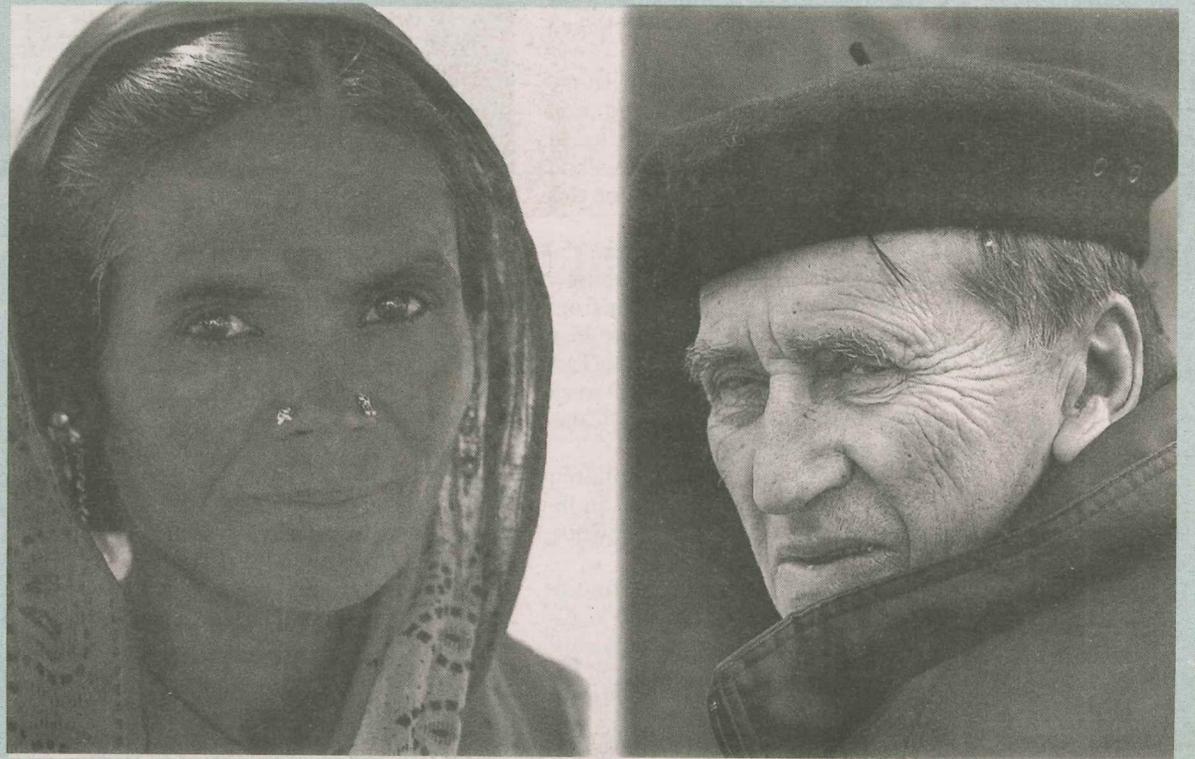
Louisville—Kevin and Jennifer Green* are not your typical church planters. Shortly after moving to Louisville in 2003, the couple began working among the city's Bosnian refugee community, a people group which is strongly Muslim.

More than four years later, there is no church. But the Greens have planted themselves among their Bosnian neighbors in order to become a living example of Christ's church.

"We are working among Muslims who currently aren't interested in converting," Kevin acknowledged, "but we love them and share Christ anyhow."

The Greens are just one of several individuals working to reach the dozens of people groups that exist in Louisville alone. And with a growing emphasis on ethnic church planting, the city is certainly a field ripe for harvest.

Jim Carpenter, missions strategist for Long Run Baptist Association which encompasses the Louisville area, cited a study done by the Jefferson County Public School system that identified children from 70 language groups and 90 countries enrolled in its schools. He added that of those groups, the associ-



A Hindu woman from India and a Bosnian man represent just two of the dozens of people groups that live in Louisville. Several individuals are serving among these people groups—many of which are Muslim—to share the gospel and plant churches.

ation is only reaching between 12 and 15 of them.

In 2005, the Louisville Metro Office for International Affairs released a study that found the city to have one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the United States. Between 2000 and 2004, that population grew by 93 percent; between 1990 and 2004, the number ballooned to an incredible 388 percent.

"The nations have come to us,"

Kevin Green declared. "You don't have to hop on a plane anymore to be involved in cross-cultural ministry."

According to the Louisville survey, Bosnians comprise the second largest group of refugees in the city. Green estimated that there are as many as 8,000 Bosnians now living in Louisville.

In their four years among the community, the Greens said they have established strong relation-

ships with the Bosnians through discussions and simply helping out with everyday tasks.

"The way we've approached things is basically integrating into their community and just loving them and showing them what true Christianity looks like," Jennifer Green explained.

However, the Greens noted, their work has yet to lead to a church or a home Bible study.

□ See Church planting ... *Page 6*

Page emphasizes need for prayer to bring about revival in the U.S.

By Garrett Wishall
State Correspondent

Louisville—Weak prayer lives among God's people has led to spiritual decline in churches across America, according to Southern Baptist Convention President Frank Page.

Speaking at the recent Greater Work prayer conference at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Page told the story of a grandmother who forgot to insert a check in Christmas cards to her grandchildren in which she wrote "Buy your own present," to illustrate the attitude of Christians in America toward non-believers.

"By living a weak, anemic, prayerless, lethargic Christian life in front of the world, in essence what we have said to them is, 'We love you, but go buy your own present,'" said Page, who also serves as pastor of First Baptist Church of Taylors, S.C. "Because of that our nation is lost. Our churches are dying. Our young people are leaving in massive numbers, saying 'I'm not so sure I don't

like Jesus, but I know I don't like the church.' We are in perilous days."

Noted author and speaker T.W. Hunt and Donald Whitney, senior associate dean of Southern Seminary's School of Theology, joined Page as presenters at the conference, which was jointly sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the seminary.

Page said persistent prayer is vital to bringing about spiritual revival in America.

"I have been calling across this convention for nearly the last two years for spiritual awakening and revival," Page declared. "I have been calling us to beg God for renewal and revival. God has told us what He requires from us that we might sense and see the power of God. Prayer is part of that requirement."

Focusing on the KBC, Hunt said that in order to see great revival, the members of its churches must be obedient to pray.

"Are you willing in these crucial, crucial days to be obedient?" he asked. "It will involve Bible study,

prayer, witnessing and sharing one another's burdens. The only way to win Kentucky is to be obedient to God, no matter what He says, no matter where He wants you to go."

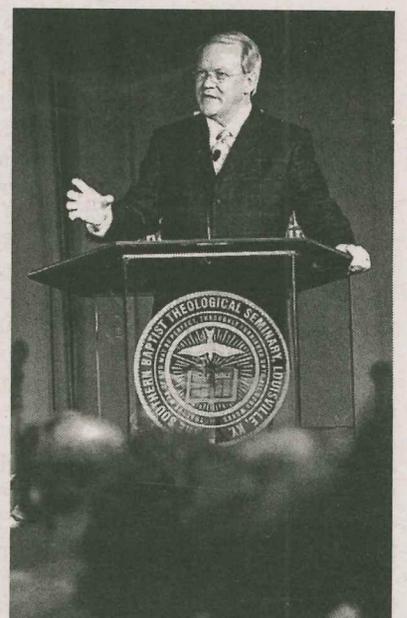
Page focused on Jesus' parable in Luke 11, where He speaks of continually asking, seeking and knocking. The passage reveals that persistence in prayer assures us of receiving an answer to our prayers, Page noted.

"When we are in prayer we are in a position to hear God's answer," Page added. "God does not always answer the way we think He will answer. But if we are in a position to hear, God will give us the answer that we need."

Page also pointed out that the story teaches us that persistence in prayer makes us strong and enables us to overcome the adversities of life.

"There is a spiritual obligation to pray, because when we pray we stay close to God," he said. "When we don't pray, we get weak and we get discouraged."

□ See Conference urges Ky. ... *Page 3*



PRAYER PARTNERS SBC President Frank Page speaks at the Greater Work prayer conference March 15 at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. The event was co-sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention and Southern Seminary. (Photo by John Gill)

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, Mar. 26.

Mohler recovering from colon surgery

Louisville (BP)—Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, underwent successful surgery for the removal of a pre-cancerous tumor from his colon March 20.

Results of pathological testing on the tumor are not yet available, but doctors expect Mohler, 48, to make a full recovery. The tumor was discovered during a routine colonoscopy in February.

Registration for summer family mission trips on the rise

By Mickey Noah
SBC North American Mission Board

Alpharetta, Ga. (BP)—James and Cheri Tew and their children were “on mission” as a family even before the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board turned their summers toward ministering to others.

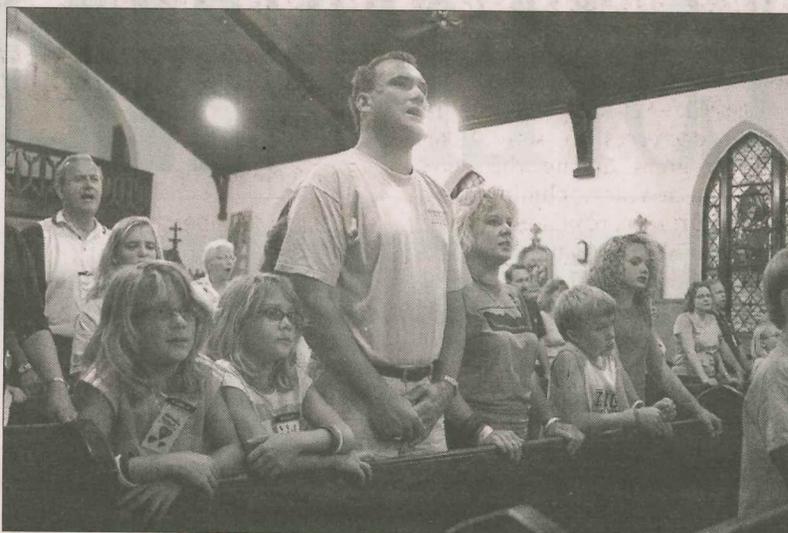
In lieu of the typical family vacation at theme parks or the beach, NAMB’s Families on Mission enables mom, dad, kids and even grandparents to join in a Saturday through Thursday pre-packaged missions venture.

Rick Head, NAMB’s adult volunteer mobilization consultant, said a total of 280 people participated in Families on Mission last year—and 675 have registered to date for this summer’s projects.

For the second year in a row, the Tews, their 14-year-old son Andrew and 8-year-old daughter Mollie, from Lakeland, Fla., will participate in a Families on Mission initiative. Last summer, the family spent a week in New Orleans repairing hurricane-damaged homes.

“Working alongside our children in New Orleans last year was an incredible experience,” Cheri Tew noted.

James Tew, referring to the upsurge in Families on Mission registrations, said he believes such missions trips are “going to take off because I think this kind of mission work is at the heart of God. And



ON MISSION TOGETHER The Tallent family of Spring City, Tenn., worships together during the 2006 Families on Mission experience in Lynch. The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board announced that 675 people have registered for the family mission trips across the country this summer—up from 280 people a year ago. (BP photo by Jim Burton)

when I think about families working together for the Lord, I think that pleases God.”

In Lakeland, Tew is a bivocational minister who also operates a 2,300-acre cattle ranch and blueberry farm. Serving in ministry since they both attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where James earned a doctorate, the Tews discovered the Families on Mission initiative by accident.

“We were elated when we found out about it on NAMB’s Web site last

year,” Cheri recalled. “James and I had talked about the need for such a missions program for years. We found Families on Mission as an opportunity to show our children that we’re willing to go outside our comfort zone.

“We view everything in life—and we’re busy people with a lot of responsibilities—from the standpoint of missions,” she added. “We want our children to understand that a family is to be on mission wherever they are, even at school.”

James, who will serve as project coordinator for a Families on Mission effort in Bryson City, N.C., this June, emphasized that missions “is not just a vocation reserved for a select group of Christians. We believe missions is the responsibility of every Christian and that families should do missions together.”

The Bryson City project has a maximum capacity of 150 slots for volunteers. The Tews’ own church, Kathleen Baptist Church in Lakeland, already has filled 20 of those.

Plugging into the work of local missionaries and their ministries, participating families may spend their week doing light construction, repairs, painting and yard work. Other projects may include conducting vacation Bible schools, sports camps, block parties, prayer walking or simple acts of kindness.

Days begin with family devotions and missions training, and end with evening praise and worship, testimonies and family discussion of the day’s events.

Registration is underway for the six Families on Mission trips scheduled in June and July: Bryson City/Cherokee, N.C., June 7-12; Blue Ridge, Ga., June 14-19; Helen, Ga., June 21-26; Lynch, June 28-July 3; Blue Ridge, Ga., July 12-17; and Summersville, W.Va., July 19-24.

The cost is \$225 per person, which includes meals and housing for the week.

BAPTIST DIGEST

Scholarships available for missions volunteers. Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary has announced it will make scholarship assistance available for qualifying Southern Baptist missions volunteers to receive seminary training. Those who are part of SBC International Mission Board programs such as International Service Corps and Journeymen, and SBC North American Mission Board programs such as Mission Service Corps and US2/C2, qualify for the benefit.

Smith named to CBF missions post. Jim Smith has been named the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s director of field team ministries for CBF global missions. The position was previously held by Jack Snell, who died in October after a six-month battle with pancreatic cancer. Smith currently lives in Berlin and serves as the fellowship’s associate coordinator for mission teams. As director of field team ministries, Smith will supervise CBF global-missions field personnel and support mission teams. A native of Martinsville, Va., Smith is a graduate of Averett College in Danville, Va., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

British Baptist leader to head U.S. seminary. Alistair Brown, general director of BMS World Mission since 1996, has been named president of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago. The school’s trustees elected Brown to the post in early March and he will begin his tenure in the fall. A former journalist and ordained minister, Brown has worked as a church planter and served for more than 10 years as senior pastor at a church in Aberdeen, Scotland. He is chairman of the Baptist World Alliance membership committee and also serves on the BWA’s general council and executive committee.

Ala. music minister charged. An Alabama music minister prominent in Baptist life has been charged with sexual abuse of a minor while employed at an earlier position in Maryland. Tim Mann, who has been minister of music at Shades Crest Baptist Church in Hoover, Ala., since 2001, was arrested March 13 on a warrant from Maryland. Shades Crest Pastor Dennis Foust told a Birmingham, Ala., newspaper that Mann passed an extensive background check when the church hired him and that he was not aware of any current allegations of abuse against Mann. Mann has resigned from his position at Shades Crest.

Southwestern Seminary celebrates centennial

Fort Worth, Texas (BP)—Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary celebrated its 100th birthday in grand Texas style March 14.

The day’s activities began with a centennial chapel service on the seminary’s front lawn in Fort Worth, Texas, followed by alumni gatherings, a campus-wide picnic and fireworks.

Several notable alumni and former faculty and administrators were also on hand to honor the legacy of Southwestern’s first century of service to Southern Baptists, and to challenge the seminary to remain a premier training ground for pastors, Christian leaders and missionaries.

During the Founder’s Day centennial service, SWBTS President Paige Patterson welcomed students and guests, recognized alumni and read letters of congratulations.

Former president Kenneth Hemphill acknowledged it was “good to be back home,” encouraging the crowd to be “kept and sanctified by the Word while in the world.”

Seminary alumnus Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., thanked the school for consistently setting the pace of evangelism for Southern Baptists.

“In the day and age in which we live, wedding a healthy, robust theology to a Great Commission passion—that is my prayer for Southern Baptists,” Akin said. “That is my prayer for all of our seminaries and, in particular, the one that has set the pace for so long. That is my prayer and my heartbeat for Southwestern Seminary.”



MARKING 100 YEARS Fireworks highlight the Founder’s Day celebration recognizing the 100th anniversary of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, March 14. (BP photo by Matthew Miller)

Another Southwestern alumnus, O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources in Dallas, recognized his alma mater for its influence in training more pastors, religious educators, music ministers and missionaries than any other seminary. He also praised the school for its integrity in staying true to founder B.H. Carroll’s vision.

An estimated 2,100 alumni, students and faculty members also gathered on the lawn in front of the B.H. Carroll Memorial Building, standing side by side to form the number 100 for an aerial photograph commemorating the celebration. The festivities concluded with fireworks above the iconic building.

Since its founding, Southwestern Seminary has sent out more than 40,000 graduates to serve in local

churches and mission fields around the world. In 1908, B.H. Carroll established the school on the campus of Baylor University in Waco, Texas. It was moved to its current location on Fort Worth in 1910 and was placed under the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925. Paige Patterson was elected as the seminary’s eighth president in 2003.

In conjunction with its 100th anniversary, the school has released a centennial edition of its Southwestern News Magazine, capturing the history of the seminary and its eight presidents, and casting a vision for the next 100 years for equipping the next generation of preachers, musicians, educators and missionaries to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

Reggie McNeal brings 'Get a Life' message to Ky.

Lexington—Kentucky Baptists seeking to strengthen their leadership skills are invited to attend the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Get a Life! event on April 12 at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington.

Featuring author Reggie McNeal, the conference is based on his book, "Get a Life! It Is All About You." Discussions will focus on concepts presented in the book including how to find God's purpose and maximize one's strengths in leadership.

"This event is designed to help Kentucky Baptists to choose and to live an abundant life that has impact and intentionality," said Richard Adams, director of the KBC's leadership development department. "We need to discover that God created each of us uniquely and that our strengths help us lead effectively."

The conference also will examine five key life questions:

- Why am I here?
- What is really important to me?
- What is my scorecard?
- What am I really good at?
- What do I need to learn?

McNeal serves as the missional leadership specialist at Leadership Network in Dallas and has written several other books. He previously served as director of leadership development for the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

The event runs from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and the cost to register is \$30 per person. For more information, visit www.kybaptist.org/getalife, or call (502) 489-3522, or toll free at (866) 489-3522.

KBC baptisms down; fewer churches report

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—Kentucky Baptists recorded decreases in several key ministry areas during the 2006-2007 church year, including a significant drop in baptisms, according to the 2007 Annual Church Profile report.

The number of baptisms among Kentucky Baptist Convention churches totaled 15,503, a decline of 2,317 (13 percent) from last year, and the fewest number of baptisms reported since 1996.

The baptism numbers fell well short of the yearly goal set forth in 2005 by the Kentucky Baptists Connect initiative, which calls for 125,000 baptisms by 2010—an average of 25,000 per year. Since 2000, baptisms have averaged just more than 17,100 annually.

The ACP report "says we're reaching fewer people at a time when we've been trying to increase our efforts to reach more people," noted Steve Thompson, KBC's assistant executive director. "We had been making slight progress through last year.

"We have two years to go" in Kentucky Baptists Connect, he added. "We just hope to reverse the figure next year and ... hope to approach the 20,000 goal by the end of 2009."

Thompson added that efforts are already underway to increase baptisms in churches across the state, specifically among youth and children, two age groups which have maintained a steady decline over the past several years. To accomplish this, KBC leaders are promoting youth evangelism events, he noted, as well as encouraging more churches to hold vacation Bible schools in the summer.

"Let's look at the positives and thank God for the ones who were saved," suggested Ross Bauscher, KBC's evangelism growth team

Kentucky Annual Church Profile statistics

Category	2007	2006	+/-	% +/-
Total membership	780,235	810,821	-30,586	-3.8%
Resident membership	558,158	587,676	-29,518	-5.0%
Total baptisms	15,503	17,820	-2,317	-13.0%
Other additions	15,286	16,955	-1,669	-9.8%
Worship attendance	255,448	274,162	-18,714	-6.8%
Sunday school enrollment	303,721	326,557	-22,836	-7.0%
Sunday school attendance	171,693	179,972	-8,279	-4.6%
Discipleship training	63,407	60,751	2,656	4.4%
Music enrollment	62,077	65,440	-3,363	-5.1%
Woman's Missionary Union	39,195	38,618	577	1.5%
Baptist Men on Mission	13,973	13,120	853	6.5%
Undesignated receipts	\$324,014,087	\$318,111,558	\$5,902,529	1.9%

leader, "but let's be challenged to reach more."

Offering strategies for how churches might begin to increase their baptism numbers, Bauscher urged, "Teach people to communicate their faith in a style that fits them, ... emphasize relational evangelism, and get evangelism in the DNA of the church.

Both he and Thompson also indicated that the number of baptisms—as well as statistics in several other ministry areas—may be down because the number of reporting churches declined. The ACP report showed that 2,130 KBC churches submitted profile statistics for 2006-2007, 74 fewer than reported the previous year.

However, Thompson noted, the percentage of churches that reported—84.1 percent—is above average compared to other Southern Baptist state conventions and is likely not the sole reason for the dip in numbers.

"In all likelihood, we can't account for a more than 2,000 difference in those non-reporting churches," he pointed out.

On the positive side, KBC churches' undesignated receipts increased by \$5,902,529 (1.9 percent), maintaining a trend that has carried on now for a decade.

Missions organizations and discipleship training also saw a rise in numbers. Baptist Men on Mission and Woman's Missionary Union, after significant declines the previous year, enjoyed modest increases. Meanwhile, discipleship training membership increased by 2,656 (4.4 percent) to 63,407.

In other areas, total membership fell by 30,586 (3.8 percent) to 780,235 and resident membership dropped by 29,518 (5 percent) to 587,676. Sunday schools also experienced a loss with enrollment declining 22,836 (7 percent) to 303,721 and average attendance falling off by 8,279 (4.6 percent) to 171,693.

KBC leaders stress importance of assimilation

Flemingsburg—One of the challenges of leading a growing church is knowing how to keep visitors and lead them to become involved members of the congregation. The best way to accomplish this, according to Steve Rice, is to close the back door.

"How do you keep them coming back?" asked Rice, director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's discipleship and assimilation department. "How do you keep them from leaving and never coming back?"

Rice and other KBC staff members addressed this issue at the second stop of the Assimilation Tour March 13 at Flemingsburg Baptist Church. Rice was joined by Darryl Wilson, KBC's Sunday School department director, and Glen Cummins, church development strategist for north central Kentucky.

During the evening's opening session, Rice reported that of the 1,800 KBC churches which submitted annual church profile statistics each year between 2002 and 2006, the assimilation rate of those congregations was a meager 1.12 percent. He added that many individual churches actually maintained a negative rate during those years.

"There is a need in our churches to improve assimilation," Rice emphasized.

He also offered seven tips for churches to begin C.L.O.S.I.N.G. the back door:

- Create a welcoming environment.
- Let people know you care.
- Offer multiple connection points.
- Start a membership class.
- Invite people to lunch.
- Notice what's happening with people.
- Give them a place to serve.

Rice also noted that potential members tend to evaluate five factors when considering a church home: acceptance, friendship, value, benefit and expectations.

Pastors need to find ways of "connecting people to your church so that they'll stay," he added.

According to Wilson, there are many different ways in which congregations can provide "connection points." These can include Sunday morning worship, home Bible studies, sports teams, even work projects, which, Wilson noted, can be a valuable way for men to connect with a church.

He pointed out, however, that the most important way for new people to get connected is through Sunday School, citing research that shows many new believers come to Christ through the often intimate small group settings.

"We need to get them out of our pews and into our Sunday Schools," Wilson urged.

Meanwhile, Cummins suggested that while a church may offer numerous ways for visitors to connect with a congregation, none of them will matter if members fail to show visitors that they really care for them.

"We are never more like Jesus than when we demonstrate that we really care," Cummins noted.

The Flemingsburg stop of the Assimilation Tour was the second of eight events scheduled through May. The remaining stops include: Walnut Memorial Baptist Church in Owensboro, April 1; Immanuel Baptist Church in Pikeville, April 10; Central Baptist Church in Corbin, April 17; Mount Washington Baptist Church, April 22; Crossroads-The Church at Logan in Russellville, May 1; and First Baptist Church of Danville, May 13.

Conference urges Ky. Baptists to be persistent in prayer lives

Continued from page 1

Hunt noted that prayer played a central role in Jesus' instruction to His disciples.

"Jesus returned again and again to the subject of prayer," he remarked. "Jesus said the disciples would have to lean on prayer to build His Kingdom after He left. ... Jesus had told them that they couldn't build His Kingdom, but that it had to be built through prayer."

Meanwhile, Whitney, who has served as a pastor for 24 years and is the author of "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life," explained that many genuine believers struggle with a sense of boredom in their prayer lives.

"Everyone who has the Holy Spirit desires to pray, whether they are nine or 99," he said. "However, for most of us prayer is boring. We know that true Christians pray. And we know that we can't stop praying."

Whitney added that most people pray about the same issues: family, future, finances, work or school, church or ministry and the current crisis in their lives. But, he pointed out, prayer becomes boring because people pray the same old things about the same old things.

According to Whitney, the solution to this problem is fundamentally simple: Let the Bible enliven our prayer lives by reading through a passage and letting Scripture shape our prayers.

"There is nothing that kindles my cold heart more than praying through Scripture," he noted. "It is not just that these words are fresh and different, it is that they are supernatural words inspired by God and we are simply praying them back to God about the things going on in our lives."

WESTERN RECORDER

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Louisville, KY 40253
(USPS 679-380)

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

Western Recorder is published weekly by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253, except for one week in July and December. For general information, call (502) 489-3535. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

To subscribe: Send \$12.50 for a one-year, individual subscription. Group subscriptions on the church budget plan are \$10 per year. An additional church newsletter service is available for churches of all sizes. All subscriptions are payable in advance, except church accounts, which require a tax exemption number.

POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to: Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253.

To register change of address: Send the mailing label from page 1, along with your new address, to the subscription department at the Western Recorder address.

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Standing firm with Kentucky Baptists

By Bill Smithwick

Louisville—We appreciate the Western Recorder accurately reporting on the Louisville Courier-Journal's recently published accusations against Sunrise Children's Services. We also appreciate the opportunity to share this column with Kentucky Baptists.

Our mission is to "provide care and hope for hurting children and families through Christ-centered ministries." We serve from the same traditional family, Judeo-Christian values upon which this ministry and our country were founded. The values that drive our mission have not changed, but are attacked by the growing secular humanism of our politically correct culture. The defense of our values is not our purpose, and having to do so drains resources from our mission—caring for confused kids in pain. We prefer to fulfill our mission rather than spend time defending it, but we will not hesitate to defend it.

Our funding is often a point of confusion for Kentucky Baptists. The

assumption is often made that if we receive any state or federal monies, we become extensions of the government. That is not true. Like many private agencies and businesses, we contract with the state to perform services they alone cannot provide. Any-

FIRST PERSON

one serving the children and adolescents in Kentucky as we do is subject to the same licensing regulations and standards, whether they receive public monies or not. Our contracts do not require the sacrifice of our identity, mission or autonomy.

Our name changed last year, but our ministry remains the same. The Kentucky Baptist Convention annually elects each of our 24 board members. Obviously, our values and mission have not changed. The name changed for one reason: To invite more people of like faith and values to support our efforts to save Kentucky's at-risk children.

The reimbursements we receive from state contracts do not meet the costs of caring for the children. The spread between our reimbursement

revenues and costs increase annually. In the last fiscal year, our expenses were \$19,670,038 while reimbursement from the state was \$14,650,601, leaving a balance of \$5,019,437. Our Cooperative Program revenues were \$334,993, combined with \$820,322 from the Thanksgiving Offering, totaling \$1,155,315. The amount of money we needed to raise last year was \$3,864,122. For this ministry to remain strong, we must have more people investing in it to meet our expenses.

Kentucky Baptists, we need your support. There is a vulnerable, suffering population of children in Kentucky who need us. We need you to stand boldly and openly with us when we are attacked for refusing to acquiesce to political correctness. We need more churches to receive the Thanksgiving Offering whenever it is convenient for them to do so. We need more individuals willing to support our missions programs across Kentucky. Thank you for our history and heritage together; please help us keep it strong.

Bill Smithwick is president of Sunrise Children's Services

We are ambassadors for Christ

By Henry Blackaby

Atlanta (BP)—Our Bible is full of truth from God. It speaks about the nature of God, His purposes and His ways. It also has much to say about our lives and what our relationship with God should look like.

An enormous truth that we find in 2 Corinthians 5:20 is that "we are to be ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us."

Our relationship is to be so close, so intimate, that God Him-

self has full access through us to redeem those who are without hope. We, who are now a new creation and having been reconciled to God through Christ, have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

Today, we see a nation and a world desperately in need of hope. And we know that this hope is given to us by God alone, through His Son Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:1). Once, we ourselves were without Christ, without God and without hope (Ephesians 2:12). But

now God "has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). This "word" of hope has been given for us to share as "ambassadors for Christ," encouraging all people to be reconciled; that is, made right with God. This is God's message of hope to all people.

Living in right-relation with God and in harmony with Him makes available to us the fullness of His love—the fullness of life. This is the message of hope that our nation and our world need—through us—today.

Henry Blackaby is the founder of Blackaby Ministries International in Atlanta

COMMENTARY

What are you thinking?

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

Facing opportunities that lie ahead

Opportunities are always before us, but sometimes we have to deal with huge challenges in the process. Since I wrote my last column, I have had the challenge of spending several days and nights at Baptist Hospital East in Louisville.

I am grateful for the doctors and staff at the hospital and for the effective treatment they have provided. I am also grateful for those who have prayed for me. Most of all, I am grateful to God who is our great physician.

I am also appreciative to Kentucky Baptists for the way they have responded to the support of missions through the Cooperative Program during recent months. As you will remember, Kentucky Baptists gave so graciously at the end of the 2006-07 budget year, that the budget was almost met on the final day.

Now, after initially falling behind in CP giving by more than 11 percent during the first part of the new fiscal

year, Kentucky Baptists have again given so graciously that we have nearly caught up to where we need to be with the budget for this year. I look forward with faith that this trend will continue.

I want to remind Kentucky Baptists about the reason we give to support missions through the Cooperative Program. It's not just to reach a dollar goal. Everything we do and all that we give is for the purpose of seeing people come to faith in Jesus Christ, follow in believer's baptism and be taught to follow Him.

With this in mind, one of the tasks we all need to work especially hard at right now is reaching children and teenagers. Although research indicates that these age groups are the most receptive to the gospel, the rate of baptisms for older children and teens has declined statewide and nationally.

The Cooperative Program is making possible a great opportunity

for Kentucky Baptist Convention churches to focus on reaching boys and girls. Vacation Bible school training clinics are available, as are funds to assist churches that have not had a VBS. CP funds are also being made available to assist with mission vacation Bible schools.

If you need additional information, please contact Wendy Dever, KBC's preschool/children's ministry department director; the church development strategist in your area; or your director of missions. We are praying that every vacation Bible school will be an evangelistic outreach to boys and girls and their families, and that there will be effective follow up with every person who confesses faith.

There is a wealth of other services being made available by the Cooperative Program to help your church effectively reach lost people. You can find out more about these in the KBC Services Directory—call (502) 489-3578, or toll free at (866) 489-3578, if you do not yet have one—or visit www.kybaptist.org.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

Ways to tell if the current debt crisis is affecting you

By Don Spencer

The news is filled with reports of problems related to a "debt crisis." It's affecting our economy and the effects continue to trickle down the chain affecting an increasing number of people. But will it affect you personally? The crisis is having some effect on almost everyone, but how much debt may affect you personally lies more in how you use credit.

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

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

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

- You make only the minimum monthly payment on your debts.
- More of your income each year goes toward paying your debts.
- You have more than two major credit cards.
- You do not have an emergency fund and other savings.
- You're unsure of how much total debt you actually have.
- You use cash advances from one credit card to pay another.
- You use credit cards to purchase items that you used to buy with cash.
- You and your spouse tend to fight over money issues.
- Your credit card debt is at or near its maximum limit.
- You have received calls from collectors or have been denied credit.

If you answered yes to two or three questions, you may be heading toward credit/debt problems and need to be earnest in guarding against getting in deeper trouble. Answering yes to more than three questions means you are probably already in over your head and need professional help to deal with this problem. The sooner you act, the better.

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



Wedding plans should include time for premarital counseling

Q: Our son is getting married this summer and he and his fiancée are very busy with wedding plans. They have told us they are going to work through a book on marriage preparation before spring, but have not yet gotten around to it. How can my husband and I get them to see how important it is to plan for their marriage and not just their wedding?

For those couples who are spending these next months planning for a wedding, it can be easy to neglect the most important element of a wedding—the premarital counseling. Some couples will not make this the priority it must be and begin their marriage at a great disadvantage. Planning a wedding is a huge distraction from preparing for a marriage.

Couples need to have intentional conversations about specific topics. Premarital counseling helps couples accomplish both while having access to someone who can offer genuine support, encouragement and caution.

Some of the areas that premarital counseling covers include finances, communication, conflict resolution, faith, sex, relationship roles, parenting, personality types, family of origin, friends and marriage expectations. Inventories like FOCCUS and Prepare/Enrich address these areas, as well as books like "SYMBIS: Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts." Your local Christian bookstore also offers a number of good resources for premarital counseling.

It is easy for a couple trying to plan a wedding to become easily distracted and not read books together. That is why premarital counseling with a minister or couples group is much better for accountability and focus. Many pastoral counselors offer programs that include a premarital inventory. If necessary, you and your husband may set requirements for funding some of the wedding costs. This will help hold your son and his fiancée accountable for completing the most important task in their wedding preparation.—*Valerie Vincent*

Q: Our teenage son seems to be mad all the time. How can we help him without making him angrier?

The Bible, especially Proverbs, is full of examples of the potential destructiveness of anger. While the emotion of anger is not right or wrong, the decisions we make regarding how we handle it may prove to be quite constructive or profoundly destructive. Paul reminds us, "Be angry, but sin not" (Ephesians 4:26).

Unfortunately, men in our society often employ anger as a default emotion. Instead of expressing sadness or anxiety, guys get mad. Many men do not even realize that anger is often a secondary emotion.

Before talking with your son, discuss as parents about the following questions:

- In what ways might we be provoking our son to anger?
- What negative examples might we be setting as to how anger is handled?
- When did we first notice his angry attitude and to what might this change be linked?
- What are the specific behaviors he is demonstrating that seem unhealthy or "out of bounds?"

Talk with your son at a time when he is not upset and calmly and directly let him know of your concerns. Remember that being angry with him for being angry probably won't help things. Ask him to talk with you about his anger, being aware that it often is a response to some threat or something we desire to be blocked. Be open to non-defensively listen to his feelings and how you might help him to feel better.—*Scott Wigginton*

Family Forum writers are:

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

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

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

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



Church must walk alongside those in grief

There is an old story that is told about a minister riding on an airplane and the announcement comes on that the plane has lost an engine and will likely crash. Someone jumps up and says to the minister, "Do something religious." So he takes an offering.

I often think about how this is true when it comes to the church ministering in times of grief. When someone dies, we are great to rush to the scene with a casserole. We don't seem to realize that grieving people lose their appetite. In fact, there are many things that we do not seem to know about those who grieve.

We have some misconceptions that older people do not grieve and that in a few days, grief-stricken folks just get over it. Death is only natural and so naturally, things become "all right." We fail to recognize that the pain of loss goes on and recovery is a process. We must realize that people do recover, but things are never the same. We must learn how to walk beside those who make this journey.

I am amazed at how little material is available to the church on ministering to grief-stricken individuals. I am even more amazed at how little interest there is within the church to be trained to minister to each other in times of traumatic grief. (Any time death comes to a close family member it is traumatic.)

We call the church a "fellowship of believers." The real concept of fellowship is "to walk alongside." That is what is most needed in times of grief. There is this great need for the church to learn to walk alongside hurting people.

When I retired from the pastorate, I met with the deacons of the church for a conversation time. You might call what we did a "debriefing." It was a good

thing. My wife had died from cancer after two years of chemotherapy, tubes, bags, IVs and pumps. In our conversation, one of our deacons demonstrated great wisdom when he asked, "What could we have done differently to help you?" After a moment I replied, "In the last year, only one couple from the church came to my home and sat on the couch and took the time to talk with me. I cherished that time."

I had been very lonely and while folks were kind to me, prayed for me and spoke to me, I never felt like there was a lot of "walking beside me." If we are to minister to people in grief, we must train ourselves to journey with them for a while. We are good at going to the funeral home, attending the memorial service, sending cards and taking a casserole to the home. But in a month, we have moved on—the grieving person has not.

Six months after my wife died, I received a letter from Bill Kaufman. In that letter he noted that he had waited all this time to write because he knew I needed help more later rather than sooner. He understood. Bill had learned to minister to a grieving soul. He knew because he had walked that road. But we all can—and should—learn to minister to the grief stricken.

The church needs to equip herself to walk alongside those experiencing emotional pain. Jesus from the cross looked down at His mother and gave John the responsibility for her. What love. And, by the way, every one of us will need this same loving ministry at one time or another.

Floyd Price is chairman of the Western Recorder Board of Directors. He also serves as associate pastor at First Baptist Church of London and is a former Kentucky Baptist Convention president.

GUEST EDITORIAL



Floyd Price

What on earth are we thinking?

By Gene Fant

Jackson, Tenn. (BP)—"What on earth was he thinking?"

How many times have we silently asked that question as we've heard about yet another politician, leader or even close friend who has been caught in a web of immorality?

We all know the story: A person flirts with sin and little by little, he finds himself sliding into a morass of wrong-headed actions. When discovery occurs, everyone who watches quivers in amazement at how the guilty person could even imagine that he would not get caught. This is especially true of political leaders who ought to know that they are subject to incredible scrutiny.

A friend of mine once told me about a man who had been caught embezzling money. The police came to the man's office and arrested him. As they led him out of his office in handcuffs, he shouted, "Do you have any idea how much smarter I am than you?"

My friend said that he believes there is a connection between righteousness and rationality. As we wade deeper into sin, we stop thinking logically and begin to believe that we are smarter than anyone else—including God. In the process, we begin to rationalize our thoughts, leaving behind God's standards for obedience and becoming slaves to our own crooked thinking about right and wrong. We delude ourselves into believing that we, and

not God, are the ultimate judges of what's right and wrong. We convince ourselves that we need neither God nor His ideas about holiness.

This is the danger of sin: It leads us away from God, the source of all wisdom, and into selfishness, the source of all foolishness. It causes us to leave behind our common sense and instead pursue our own sense of self satisfaction.

The Scriptures remind us at every turn that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). Even the grammar of this verse emphasizes that the pursuit of wisdom starts with us on our faces at the foot of the Lord's throne. When we begin in humility, we follow after the One in Whom resides all power and glory. We measure our thoughts aright when we measure them against God's Word.

We are fallen creatures, however, and our minds constantly substitute our own wisdom for that of God. This pattern finds its history regressing all the way back to the serpent's temptation of Eve with that crafty phrase, "Did God really say ...?" (Genesis 3:1). Our hearts have a constant tendency to overpower our minds.

Paul makes it clear that our mental lapses get us into incredibly foolish circumstances: "For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they be-

came fools" (Romans 1:21-22). This foolishness is why Paul exhorts believers, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

For those of us who are involved in Christian education, the chief end of our endeavor is that we glorify God and enjoy a relationship with Him for all eternity. This means that we begin and end with God. We examine the sovereignty of the Lordship of Christ over all human activities, including those that are moral and intellectual. When we tap into the wide, rushing stream of the great Christian intellectual tradition, we have access to the lessons of the past; lessons that serve as constant reminders that God is infinitely wiser and holier than any of us.

The net effect of this pursuit, of seeking after the Lordship of Christ in our lives, is that we stop at regular intervals and examine our lives. As we do this, each of us will be forced to stop and realize that there are areas of our own lives where we must admit frankly, "What on earth are we thinking?"

That's just it: We aren't thinking. We are wallowing in selfish egotism rather than in the renewing strength of God. May God grant to each of us the discipline to pursue Him, so that we may glorify Him with each and every facet of our lives.

Gene Fant is dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Union University in Jackson, Tenn.

Church planting 'pioneers' cross religious boundaries

"The nations have come to us. You don't have to hop on a plane anymore to be involved in cross-cultural ministry."

Kevin Green*, church planting missionary working among the Bosnian community in Louisville

Continued from page 1

"Up to this point, they have been very clear that they are Muslim," Kevin acknowledged. "In their minds, to be Bosnian is to be Muslim. So the idea of converting to Christianity is incredibly foreign to them."

Jennifer pointed out that the couple's work is made even more difficult by Bosnia's history. "Christians were slaughtering them and those atrocities continue with the family that they have close contact with back home," she said.

Like the Greens' ministry with Bosnians, Mission Service Corps missionaries Hal and Laurie Wright* are establishing similar connections with Louisville's third largest refugee community, Somalis—a group which is also predominantly Muslim.

Since 2005, the Wrights have been slowly building a ministry to the Maay speaking Somali people. Like Bosnians, unrest in their home country has led them to seek refuge in the United States.

"God's really used the turmoil in their homeland to get them out of an almost impenetrable country to get them to places where we can get to them," Hal Wright noted.

The couple have planted themselves among the Somali community as a way to help the refugees acclimate to a new environment.

During the winter, the couple collects warm clothing for their neighbors. They also put together school packets for Somali children. Wright said the response from the community has been overwhelming.

"They are just totally astounded that we take time to do little things with them," he added.

Those small acts of service have allowed the Wrights to take a major step in their ministry. To date, the couple has distributed three Bibles and have shown the Jesus film in the Somali language several times. He acknowledged that these steps point

to a larger goal of eventually planting a church.

"We're building toward it, but we're not there yet," he said.

The task of planting churches among Muslim people groups has been a difficult one to undertake since it is a fairly new concept in Kentucky, according to Carlos de la Barra, ethnic associate for the Kentucky Baptist Convention's new work and associational missions department.

"This is something completely new for us," he recognized. "It is really hard work to enter the (Muslim) community."

De la Barra called those who have established such ministries "pioneers," adding that they do it out of "pure love."

However, he noted, trying to offer assistance to missionaries like them can be tough because there are very few resources to point them to.

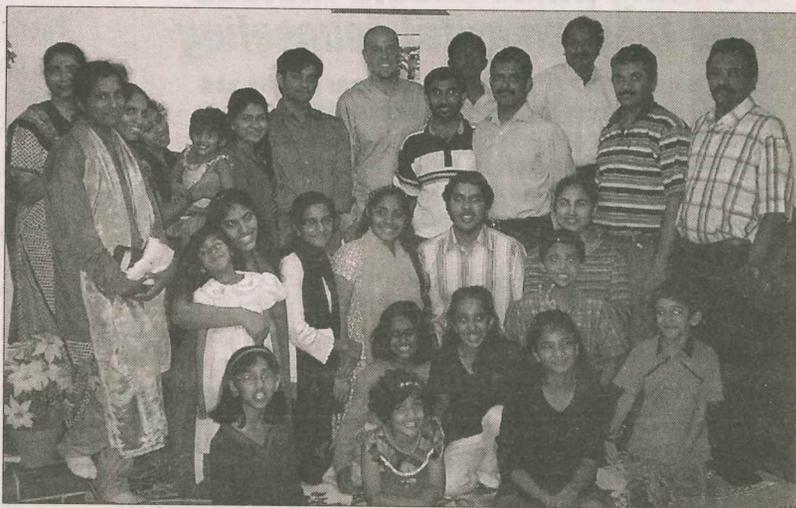
"I know how to help the Koreans. I know how to help the Hispanics," de la Barra said. "How can we help Muslim church planters?"

Plus, he added, with such a clear-cut strategy in place for assisting and funding church plants, the task becomes much more complicated the longer it takes to start a church.

Carpenter suggested that the need to cross religious barriers in order to reach certain ethnic groups may require an overhaul in the church planting mindset.

"We have to look at ... reaching those kind of people groups in a much different way than Hispanics (and) those countries that have some kind of Christian presence," he said.

Carpenter also noted that more resources are being developed. Recognizing the growing international population in the United States, he pointed out that the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board and International Mission Board have begun "a coordination of strategy" to reach ethnic communities.



PRAYER GROUP The Cypress Pointe prayer meeting, a community of Indians in Louisville, gathers weekly to pray and study the Bible. Heather, a Nehemiah Project intern through Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said that two women have accepted Christ through the gatherings and are waiting to be baptized.

"If it works in that country, with a little tweaking because they're in our culture, it still will work here," he emphasized.

Another way that barriers to ethnic church plants are being broken down is through the Nehemiah Project at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The program has allowed many students to explore the inner workings of planting a church.

One of those students is Heather, a Nehemiah Project intern who is working with several different Indian groups throughout Louisville. She came to Southern Seminary following a two-year term as a Journeyman in northern India, an experience which she hopes to make her life's work.

Once in Louisville, Heather—who asked that her last name not be used—said she discovered an entire community of Indians, mostly from the southern part of the country.

"I've been going to all the Indian festivals, everything wherever Indians are, I'm there ... building lots of relationships with families,"

she said.

Heather also works with the Cypress Pointe prayer meeting, a community of Indians that meet each week to pray and study the Bible. She noted that while they do not yet consider themselves a church, the gatherings have led to two women accepting Christ.

Although many of her Indian neighbors are Hindu rather than Muslim, there are still barriers to sharing the gospel.

"They have a lot of misconceptions about Christianity that you really have to pull apart before you can get to the gospel," Heather acknowledged.

Whether it is Muslims or Hindus, Carpenter pointed out that the most important way for these church planting missionaries to cross religious boundaries is through relationships.

"I really admire these people ... willing to invest their lives," he said. "They're just developing relationships ... and sharing Christ in the midst of that relationship."

*Names changed for security reasons

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Supreme Court to revisit television decency standards

Washington (RNS)—The U.S. Supreme Court announced March 17 that it will revisit limits of on-air vulgarity in the court's first case on unsavory speech in almost 30 years.

After expletives were used during the 2002 and 2003 Billboard Music Awards on the Fox network, the Federal Communications Commission reprimanded the network and changed its policy to penalize "isolated" and "fleeting" expletives. Previous FCC policy had penalized only repetitive and deliberate obscenities.

Last June, the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Fox, finding the FCC's policy violated administrative law by changing policy without adequate explanation.

The Parents Television Council, a strong supporter of the FCC's efforts, is also urging legislators to take on the issue of on-air indecency.

TV ministries face March 31 deadline in financial probe

Washington (BP)—Three television ministries that have refused to cooperate with a U.S. Senate committee's probe into financial records have been given a new deadline for providing requested information, according to the panel's leadership.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont., and the panel's top Republican, Charles Grassley of Iowa, announced March 12 that new letters were sent to Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Creflo and Taffi Dollar, and Eddie Long, asking the televangelists to provide documentation the committee is seeking by March 31.

The senators expressed hope that the panel would receive the information "without resorting to compulsory process," they noted, referring to the possibility of subpoenas.

Three other ministries have complied, or indicated they would comply, with a series of questions submitted in November by Grassley. Joyce Meyer Ministries has fulfilled Grassley's request, while Benny Hinn Ministries has indicated it would cooperate. A representative of Randy and Paula White also has said they would fulfill the committee's request.

In a Nov. 5 letter, Grassley asked the six tax-exempt ministries to provide personal and ministry-related financial records. The senator's request was based on reports from watchdog organizations and investigative news reports, he noted at the time.

Grassley set a Dec. 6 deadline when he made his original request.

As of March 12, he and Baucus said that the ministries of Copeland, Dollar and Long "have not cooperated, citing privacy protections or questioning the committee's standing to request the information."

The senators defended their authority to conduct such an inquiry, saying the Finance Committee wishes to know if the regulations governing tax-exempt organizations are fulfilling the goals of the revenue code, the senators noted. The pair also said they sought the opinion of the Senate's legal counsel to make sure Grassley's original letter did not violate the First Amendment rights of the ministries.

Meanwhile, Copeland lambasted Grassley at a Jan. 22 ministers conference, saying he would not disclose information on his ministry's donors. "You wanna get in a faith fight with me?" Copeland asked. "Why just come on. But I'm gonna warn you; I fight dirty. I got somebody else does my fighting for me. I just sit back and watch. I just throw the first punch and then get out and let my angels go to work."

National Religious Broadcasters also expressed concern about Grassley's investigation in early December, even though none of the six ministries is an NRB member. NRB President Frank Wright said in a letter to Grassley that he was worried about the "broader implications," saying the senator's investigation "goes far beyond a mere request for financial records necessary to scrutinize the charitable nature of (an) organization's operations."

A Baptist school

Being grateful for what Oneida Baptist Institute's middle name means to us

By Michael Spencer, assistant to the president

One of my jobs this year will be writing an accreditation document on "what it means for Oneida Baptist Institute to be a Baptist school." I've been giving much thought to the implications of our middle name and what I would want the readers of this column to know about our Baptist identity. I can assure you that we aren't ambiguous about our middle name.

Oneida Baptist Institute would not exist if James Anderson Burns' vision for a mountain mission school had not been adopted by Kentucky Baptists. At key points in our history, and in small, continuous ways throughout the years, Kentucky Baptists have been part of the birth, development and prosperity of God's school in the mountains.

Our Baptist identity is made up of innumerable connections with thousands upon thousands of Baptist individuals and churches who have joined our ongoing story. From dollar bills at Christmas, to estate gifts, to our endowment, to hours worked in the craft shop, to donations of clothing, to entire buildings constructed as mission projects—in these and in many other ways, we are involved daily and constantly with a network of Baptists who "own" us in ways far more important than stockholders own a corporation.

Oneida is also "Baptist" in our identity as a place where missions takes place. Nothing holds Southern Baptists together like our concern for missions. God has allowed Oneida to be a place where students from the hills and "hollers" of our own county, students from all over Kentucky,

students from almost every state and students from many countries come together in a community centered on the gospel of Christ.

A "missionary" environment doesn't mean a constant hothouse of high-pressure evangelism tactics. It does mean daily, patiently, plainly teaching the meaning of the gospel. Our goal is to honor our Baptist emphasis on missions with the same spirit as missionaries who spend their lives laboring that the gospel will be incarnated and communicated to those who never have heard. The gospel is a constant invitation; it is the Father's invitation to come home through Jesus, and it is the very meaning of what we do with our students in every part of our ministry.

OBI is a Baptist school because of our connections to local churches. Many of our students came to us through the concern of a pastor or a Sunday school class. Church-sponsored mission projects and volunteer groups are a constant presence on our campus. Churches send us resources and worship with us almost every day in chapel. Churches come and share creative ministries with us. Churches send us staff members to be part of our ministry team.

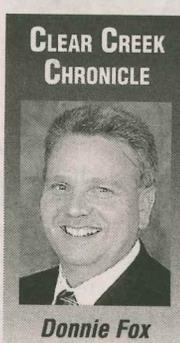
Baptist churches overwhelmingly make up our support on every side. It is a network of Baptist churches that holds our hands as we do the work of teaching, mentoring, coaching and loving students. OBI is a Baptist school for these and many other reasons, and for that we are increasingly grateful.

*Reprinted from WR, Oct. 18, 2005

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



W.F. Underwood



Donnie Fox

Updates from alumni

Messages from former students bring us great joy

I always enjoy hearing from our alumni about how God is using them in the ministry field. An update from 1980 alumnus Wesley Venable of Saline, La., recently reminded me of how God is using Clear Creek alumni literally all over the world.

"A group of 38 Louisiana Baptists traveled to South Korea in October of 2007 in cooperation with the Korean Baptist Convention," Wesley wrote. "We did personal soul winning by appointment and street witnessing. We presented the plan of salvation and invited each individual to pray and receive Christ as Savior. The total number of professions of faith for the 38-member team was 1,200."

Updates from Wesley are unique because he always sends a poem that God has led him to write. With his permission, we are reprinting his latest, "God Called Abram."

God called Abram from his tent;
And told him to build altars wherever he went.

From Ur of the Chaldees he was told to go;
To a place far away that he did not know.

Up the River Euphrates an beyond its source;
Led by God's power, the un-

seen force;

They stopped in Haran to linger awhile;
Then God called Abram to travel on for many a mile.

All along life's pathway he built those altars of stone;
So that to one who follows faith's way might be known.

Into the land of promise walked this man with family alongside;
And explored the life of promise in that land until he died.

175 years of age was Abraham when his body of flesh failed;
But his walk of faith down through hundreds of centuries prevailed.

The altars of faith put down in stone;
That marks the pathway to God's own home;

They were property markers to show God's ownership of the land;
And that not even one square inch is owned by sinful man.

The markers lead from Ur to Egypt and back again;
They lead up Calvary, God's altar that worked His plan;

Where His Son died to pay sin's debt for man;

Up Calvary, God's altar of stone;
Up to Heaven's very own throne; These words etched deep in the stone;
'Christ Redeemeth' ... Christ Alone!

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

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Gambling opponents say moral arguments are falling flat

By Greg Trotter
Religion News Service

Phoenix (RNS)—As more and more states turn to casinos and gambling to fill shrinking budget coffers, the voices of the religious opposition are struggling to convince people that it is morally wrong.

A recent study by Ellison Research showed that 70 percent of Americans do not consider gambling to be a sin.

"It's not acceptable in today's society to present arguments based solely on religion or morals," said I. Nelson Rose, who teaches gambling law at the Whittier Law School in Costa Mesa, Calif.

Thirty years ago, gamblers had to try their luck with scratch-off tickets or at casinos in Atlantic City or Las Vegas. Today, only two states—Utah and Hawaii—do not have some form of legalized gambling, according to the American Gaming Association.

Gambling contributes around 5 percent to state budgets—double what it was five years ago, said Richard McGowan, a Boston College professor and author of "The Gambling Debate."

In some states, it contributes much more, McGowan said—11 percent in Louisiana and 18 percent in South Dakota. Experts suggest the gambling industry is growing and

shows no signs of stopping.

"The church's opposition to gambling has not been widely effective," noted Tom Grey, spokesman for the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling.

Grey, who fought gambling for years from the pulpit as a United Methodist pastor, said the moral argument that gambling is a sin is too easily swept aside as impeding the personal freedom of others.

As a result, his anti-gambling coalition avoids explicit mentions of religion and presents more economically grounded arguments that center around addiction, bankruptcy and crime, he said.

"There's a cost when people lose—they chase the loss," Grey explained. "It's the government's dirty little secret. The house always wins."

Some states, including Kentucky, Kansas, Maryland and Massachusetts, are in various stages of trying to expand the gambling options they already have.

Gov. Steve Beshear and Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, both Democrats, recently proposed bills to open commercial casinos, citing jobs and more money for economic development, education and other state programs as the payoffs.

In a 2007 Gallup survey, 63 percent of Americans had no moral qualms about gambling. Earlier this year, Gallup found that 65 percent of Americans participated in some form of gambling, 46 percent played the lottery and 24 percent had been to a casino.

"Problem gamblers"—those who become addicted, go broke or turn to criminal activity—only make up 1 percent of those who gamble, Fahrenkopf pointed out.

Many states that are expanding gambling are just trying to keep up with their neighbors.

Kansas recently enacted legislation to become the first state to have state-owned casinos. The state Lottery Commission is considering developers to build and operate four such casinos—in part to keep money from flowing to casinos in neighboring states.

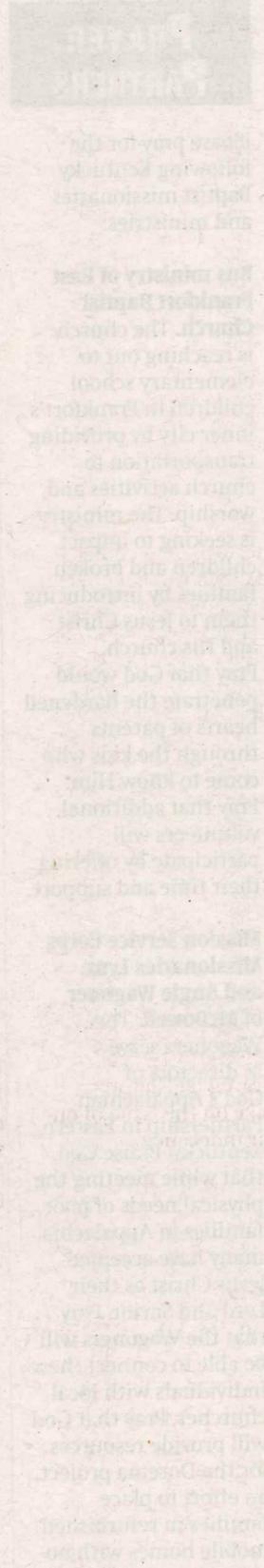
The casinos are projected to rake in \$200 million a year in revenue, noted Sally Lunsford, spokeswoman for the Kansas commission. About 2 percent of the take will go to developing programs for problem gambling, she added.

Still, whether or not her voice is being heard, Barbara Knickelbein is not stopping her fight against gambling, even though her organization, No Casinos Maryland, changed its name from Religious Communities United in Opposition to Casino-Style Gambling, as it was known when it launched in 1995.

A voter referendum that would put 15,000 slot machines at various race tracks and other locations will be on the Maryland ballot in November. The projected \$600 million that the slots would be an unfair tax on the poor, she said.

The organization focuses its opposition on morality or economics, depending on the audience, she acknowledged, but religious groups have a stake in the outcome.

"It's the churches who are going to have to pick up the pieces when families are torn apart by gambling," she said.



NOT SO LUCKY
Gamblers take their chances at the Isle of Capri Casino in Biloxi, Miss. Many states have turned to gambling to add revenues to depleted budgets, and gambling opponents say moral arguments are falling flat. (RNS photo by John David Mercer/Mobile (Ala.) Press-Register)

What is your church saying to guests?

BEYOND THE FIRST VISIT

THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2008
10 AM - 3 PM

Registration begins at 9 am

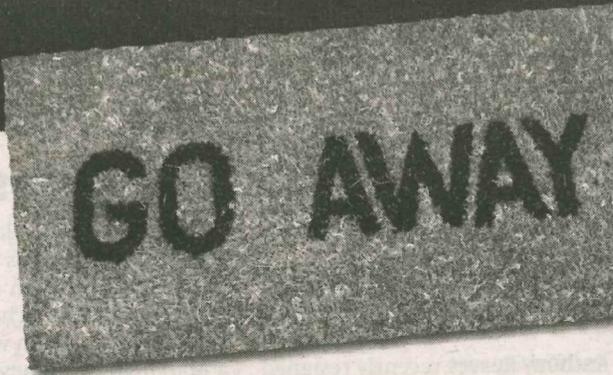
Based on the book and featuring Gary L. McIntosh, this event offers sound advice on assessing and improving the ways your church attracts, welcomes, and connects newcomers to your church family.



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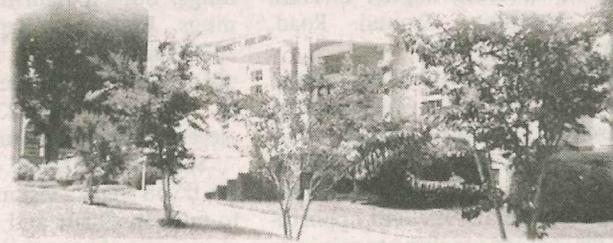


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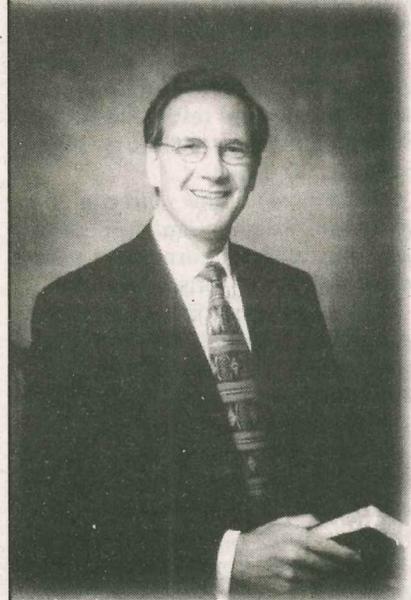
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Wednesday, April 16

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PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist missionaries and ministries:

Bus ministry of East Frankfort Baptist Church. The church is reaching out to elementary school children in Frankfort's inner city by providing transportation to church activities and worship. The ministry is seeking to impact children and broken families by introducing them to Jesus Christ and His church. Pray that God would penetrate the hardened hearts of parents through the kids who come to know Him. Pray that additional volunteers will participate by offering their time and support.

Mission Service Corps Missionaries Lynn and Angie Wagoner of McDowell. The Wagoners serve as directors of God's Appalachian Partnership in Eastern Kentucky. Praise God that while meeting the physical needs of poor families in Appalachia, many have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Pray that the Wagoners will be able to connect these individuals with local churches. Pray that God will provide resources for the Dorema project, an effort to place families in refurbished mobile homes with no-interest loans.

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

- **ADAIRVILLE**—Adairville Church recently called **Mark Bond** as pastor.
- **BARDWELL**—**Joe Bagwell**, a longtime Kentucky Baptist pastor, died Jan. 30 at age 75. Bagwell was pastor of Moscow Church in Clinton, Burkley Church in Arlington, Pleasant Grove Church in Hickory, Sugar Creek Church in Princeton and New Liberty Church in Mayfield. He is survived by his wife, Sara, three children, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.
- **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Campbellsville University's Kentucky Heartland Institute on Public Policy will host its annual Roundtable on Christian Public Policy Perspectives titled "Church and State and Religious Liberty Issues" April 1, 5 p.m., in the Student Union Building's Little Auditorium. **Richard Land**, executive director of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, and **Holly Hollman**, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Religious Liberty, will participate in the discussion.
- **ELIZABETHTOWN**—Immanuel Church will hold revival services March 30, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; March 31-April 3, 6 p.m. **Josh Brown**, **The Moore Sisters** and **Randy Richardson** will provide special music. **Charles Darland** is pastor.
- **HICKMAN**—David's Chapel Church will hold revival services March 30, 6 p.m.; March 31-April 2, 7 p.m., with **Robert Johnson** as evangelist. **Charles Southerland** is pastor.
- **LAWRENCEBURG**—Sand Spring Church will hold revival services March 30, 8:45 and 11 a.m., and 7 p.m.; March 31-April 2, 7 p.m., with **Tim Lee** as evangelist. **Mike Hamrick**

Spotlight on ...

Mackville



Mackville Church will host Gospel Music Hall of Fame inductee **Buddy Liles** in concert March 28, 7 p.m. For more information, call (859) 262-5470. **Micah Carter** is pastor.

is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Cloverleaf Church will host **The Milby Family** in concert March 30, 7 p.m. For more information, call (502) 367-0218. **Geoffrey Lacefield** is pastor.

■ **MAYFIELD**—**Charles Clark** recently resigned as pastor of High Point Church to accept a position with Flint River Association in Griffin, Ga.

New Harmony Church will hold revival services March 30-April 3, with **Jason Porter**, pastor of Beulah Church in Fancy Farm, as evangelist. **David Gossum** is pastor.

■ **WILLIAMSBURG**—Mossy Gap Church recently called **Roy Vaughn** as pastor.

Anthony Reaves recently resigned as pastor of Patterson Creek.

Pleasant Hill recently called **Janus Jones** as interim pastor.

What's going on?

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



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March

28-29 Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union Annual Meeting, Parkway Baptist Church, Bardstown.

29 RA Congress Region 7, Elk Spring Valley Baptist Church, Monticello.

31 Understanding Other Beliefs, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

31-April 1 Welcome to Kentucky Conference, Baptist Building, Louisville.

April

1 Assimilation Tour, Walnut Memorial Baptist Church, Owensboro.

1 Iron Sharpening Iron, Old Mill restaurant, Russellville.

3-4 Drawing the Net, Baptist Building, Louisville.

4-5 Collegiate Leadership Training Conference, Cedarmore Conference Center.

5 Youth Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament, Northside Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

10 Assimilation Tour, Immanuel Baptist Church, Pikeville.

15 Iron Sharpening Iron, Kentucky Lodge, Barkley State Resort Park, Cadiz.

17 Assimilation Tour, Central Baptist Church, Corbin.

17 Iron Sharpening Iron, My Old Kentucky Home State Park, Bardstown.

18-19 4:GO, First Baptist Church, Shelbyville.

18-19 Exalt, First Baptist Church, Shelbyville.

18-20 All State Children's Choir, Cedarmore Conference Center.

21 Senior Living Celebration, Northside Baptist Church, Princeton.

21 Iron Sharpening Iron, Moonlite Bar-B-Q restaurant, Owensboro.

21-22 Developing & Managing People, Baptist Building, Louisville.

22 Assimilation Tour, First Baptist Church, Mount Washington.

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

Lexington seminary installs first dean

Lexington—Dalen Jackson, professor of biblical studies at Baptist Seminary of Kentucky in Lexington, has been named the school's first academic dean. Jackson was installed at a March 10 ceremony at the chapel on the campus of Lexington Theological Seminary, which shares its facilities with BSK.

"When the seminary was ready to choose an academic dean, we knew we had the best person already with us," said BSK President Greg Earwood, noting Jackson's personal commitment to the seminary, his ability and experience in addressing

academic matters, and his strong work ethic.

In his first remarks as dean, Jackson shared an evolving vision for BSK that focused on the tension between the church and academia, stressing that the seminary's very existence is "for the sake of and in service to the church."

"We must find ways for each to enrich the other (by) forming and reforming our identities and understandings of what it means to live faithfully as Christians and to lead others into lives of faithfulness to God in Christ," he said.

CLASSIFIED ADS

AVAILABLE: Ordained Southern Baptist minister for pulpit supply, bivocational or full-time pastorate in central Kentucky area. Call (859) 272-7156, ask for George Bryant or leave a message.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of students/recreation. Red House Baptist Church in Richmond, Ky. dawn@redhousebc.com.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of youth (15-20 hours/week). Individual will be responsible for planning, coordinating, directing, evaluating, and being personally involved in the overall youth ministry program. This position is well-suited for bivocational commitment. For more information, call the church office at (270) 325-3820. Please send resumés to Buffalo Baptist Church, PO Box 40, Buffalo, KY 42716, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Part-time associate pastor/youth minister for Fellowship Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Ky. Send resumé to Judy Gash, Fellowship Baptist Church, 481 Cornishville St., Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

SEEKING: Full-time director of missions for Lawrence County Baptist Association, Leoma, Tenn. Accepting resumés through April 30. Please send resumés to: Search Committee, Lawrence County Baptist Association, 2427 Highway 43 South, Leoma, TN 38468.

SEEKING: Part-time or full-time youth minister for Fairview Baptist Church. Please send resumés to 6426 Ky. Hwy. 1247, Waynesburg, KY 40489. Phone: (606) 669-8771.

SEEKING: Part-time music minister. If interested, please send resumé to Great Crossing Baptist Church, 1061 Stamping Ground Road, Georgetown, KY 40324.

SEEKING: Worship leader/minister of music. Younger's Creek Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Ky., is actively seeking a bivocational minister to lead worship and choir ministries. We are an excellent opportunity for someone looking to minister in a truly blended worship setting. If interested, please send resumés to: Search Team, 251 Younger's Creek Road, Elizabethtown, KY 42701.

SEEKING: Full-time senior pastor for Lancaster Baptist Church, a rapidly growing Southern Baptist church near Lexington (average Sunday attendance: 500), ministering to a congregation of all ages with strong participation of young adults. LBC seeks a pastor to lead the church in glorifying God by obediently making and equipping fully devoted followers of Christ in Central Kentucky and throughout the world, by the power of the Spirit. Please submit resumé to LBC Pastor Search Team, 201 Richmond St., Lancaster, KY 40444.

SEEKING: Part-time or full-time youth minister for Fairview Baptist Church. Please send resumés to 6426 Ky. Hwy. 1247, Waynesburg, KY 40489. Phone: (606) 669-8771.

SEEKING: Pianist (contemporary and traditional). Wednesday evenings, Sunday mornings and evenings. Evergreen Baptist Church, 2698 Cardwell Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601, Attn: Personnel Committee. M. Hughes, (502) 223-7166; Office @evergreenbaptistchurch.us.

SEEKING: Full-time youth minister. If you share a vision to lead teens to faith in Christ and on to spiritual maturity by any and all possible means while maintaining a commitment to the authority of the Word of God, then request a church profile and prospect questionnaire at drsams@cbcheart.com. You also may send a resumé to Calhoun Baptist Church, PO Box 283, Calhoun, KY 42327.

SEEKING: Pastor for Grant's Lick Baptist Church, a Conservative congregation standing on God's Word with strong growth potential. Looking for an energetic leader with scripture-based messages. Visitation, AWANA, and outreach are vital ministries to bring others to Christ. Send resumé to: Grant's Lick Baptist Church, 941 Clay Ridge Road, Alexandria, KY 41001, Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

SEEKING: Part-time pianist for Sunday morning services and Wednesday evening rehearsals. Send resumé to Grace Community Baptist Church, 7300 National Turnpike, Louisville 40214; e-mail gcbc7300@peoplepc.com.

SEEKING: Bivocational youth minister for May's Lick Baptist Church, May's Lick, Ky. Seeking a man of God, called of God to work with our youth. Please send resumés to 5103 Main Street, May's Lick, KY 41055. Other info: call (606) 763-6585.

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

SEEKING: Full-time director of youth ministries for Gardenside Baptist Church. For information, visit www.gardensidebaptist.com.

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TOURS: Holy Land pilgrimage, Nov. 12-21. Deluxe hotels; 2 buffet meals per day; all entrance fees; r/trip air from Nashville or Atlanta only \$2,479. Contact Pastor Jack Studie for a color brochure: (270) 475-2197; or jstudie@aol.com. We offer experience you can trust—our 16th tour to Israel.

TransAlive ministry assists ill, injured truckers

By Kay Adkins

Fort Worth, Texas (BP)—At a Wyoming truck stop, Louisiana trucker Charles Worcester was 1,600 miles from home when crisis struck: He had emergency colon cancer surgery.

After nearly dying of complications from the surgery, he was transferred to Salt Lake City. Such was the long-distance, three-month ordeal for Worcester and, back in Louisiana, his wife, Charlene.

It could have been very lonely for Charles and worrisome for Charlene had it not been for Christians in Wyoming and Utah who ministered to the Worcesters. And such help for the Worcesters—and about 200 other distressed truckers and their families per year—may not have occurred without Bob Hataway, a chaplain for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board who heads up TransAlive, a nationwide ministry that aids truck drivers and their families when truckers become ill or seriously injured on the job.

Hataway and his wife, Carol, also meet needs and share Christ while traversing the country on TransAlive's AmCoach, a bus equipped to transport ailing and recovering truckers back to their homes. Assisting about 20 drivers annually, AmCoach is an alternative to expensive medical transports for ailing truckers and, as Hataway put it, "a cup of cold water in their time of thirst."

"On the coach itself, three have come to Christ," Hataway said. "We've shared with many on the coach who have said that it was the first time they've seen Christianity with a new understanding," causing them to become "less critical."

Hataway's call to minister to distressed truckers came in 1975 when he stopped at a traffic accident and later checked on a hospitalized trucker from Indianapolis. Bob and Carol subsequently ministered to the driver and his wife for more than eight weeks.

That incident imparted a concern to Hataway, a member of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas,



Bob Hataway

about the plight of truckers who often are isolated from their support systems.

"I was moved by what had been done for that truck driver. Many people became involved with that man," prompting Hataway "to visualize the needs of drivers" across the country.

Nine years later, in 1984, Hataway founded TransAlive, burdened that people often don't help distressed truckers because "they're not aware of the problem in the first place. Setting up a plan to notify the right people became my goal in the industry."

Through partnerships with major trucking companies, Hataway is among the first notified when a trucker experiences serious illness, injury or death while on the job.

"We need only to hear that a driver and/or their family members are in distress anywhere in the continental United States, and we move quickly to remove the uncertainty and replace it with warm caring friends willing to assist whatever the task," Hataway said.

The 44,000-plus Southern Baptist churches nationwide are Hataway's first resource to find help. Using the church search function on www.sbc.net, Hataway immediately seeks a Southern Baptist minister to be what he calls "God's representative" to that trucker or his family.

That's one reason Hataway is a keen advocate of churches having accurate emergency contact information on their answering machines and Web sites. Yet, he said,

many churches don't.

Because one church had such information, Hataway was able to contact and ask Doug Riggs, pastor of Woodland Heights Baptist Church in Bedford, Texas, to make a local death notification of a trucker who had died of natural causes on the job.

Riggs went to the trucker's family and stayed until their pastor came. "They were very gracious, kind and appreciative," Riggs recounted. "It was news they didn't want to hear, but it was handled through Bob in a way we would want it to be handled."

JB Hunt Trucking Company has called on Hataway since 1987 and is one of several companies supporting TransAlive financially. Hunt employs about 16,000 drivers, many of whom are owner/operators.

Mark Whitehead, Hunt's vice president of claims and litigation

management, said, "What we use Bob for more than anything else is to notify families of catastrophic injuries or occasionally the death of a family member."

Whitehead said Hataway "has a network of pastoral people that can be called on who will make the notification to the family and wait with them until they have the support they need in the initial crisis. We feel it's better for Bob to do the contact rather than a police officer who will go and then leave."

Charlene Worcester is grateful, too, saying the ride back to Louisiana "could not have been more comfortable for Charles. I cannot say too much about the AmCoach or the Hataways in what they did in helping us get home," she recounted. They were truly a godsend for us."

For more info on TransAlive, go to www.transalive.com.

TRANSPORTING HOPE
Trade shows are among the ways Bob and Carol Hataway spread the word about their TransAlive ministry among truckers. Their AmCoach is one facet of the ministry, providing ailing and recovering truckers with transportation back to their homes.



Emergency contact information vital to crisis ministry

By Kay Adkins

Fort Worth, Texas (BP)—When a pastor's phone rings at midnight, it often signals an emergency or tragedy—and early morning ministry.

John Sharp, pastor of North Point Community Church in Columbia, S.C., rolled over to answer his phone around midnight last summer.

Bob Hataway—a chaplain for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board who heads up TransAlive, a ministry to professional truckers—was on the line, telling Sharp that a driver from Columbia had been killed in an accident. Hataway asked Sharp if he'd minister to the family in crisis.

"My first thought was, 'Is this real or could this be a dangerous prank or scam?' After confirming its validity, my thought shifted to, 'Can't you find someone else?' I just couldn't seem to hang up the phone or give a good enough reason not to

accept the opportunity," Sharp recounted. "God wanted me to answer the phone that night and play a small part in ministering to a family in need." And Sharp did.

Hataway, a member of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, said Sharp is one of many pastors grateful for the opportunity to be used by God in crisis ministry. "Ninety percent of the time, they call me back and thank me for involving them."

Finding pastors to make death notifications to the families of truckers is but one of TransAlive's ministries. Hataway and his wife, Carol, travel across the country on TransAlive's AmCoach, a bus equipped to transport ailing and recovering truckers back to their homes.

Of vital importance to Hataway are the 44,000-plus Southern Baptist churches nationwide that are his prime resource for South-

ern Baptist ministers who will be "God's representative" to that trucker or his family.

An obstacle to making those important connections is a lack of accurate contact information that is readily available to fellow ministers such as Hataway. He said many churches neglect this detail. Consequently, he has had difficulties identifying and reaching local pastors during an emergency.

"We have a Christian force that is technologically armed to meet the needs of our metropolitan as well as isolated rural communities across America, but herein lies our dilemma," he said. Sometimes the information may be accessible but not handy. Another problem is when the information is out of date.

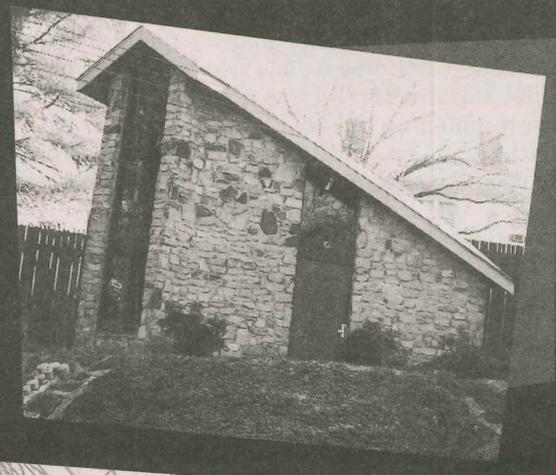
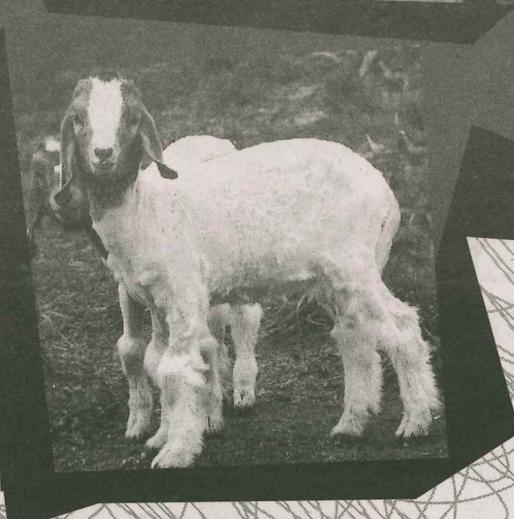
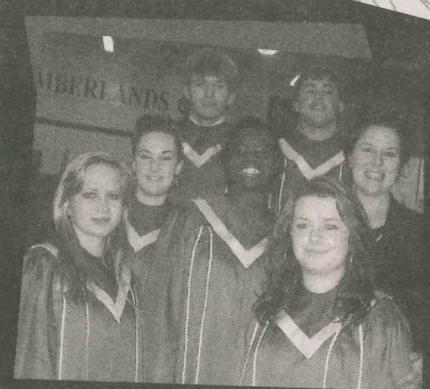
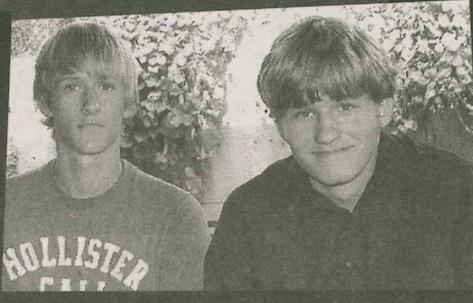
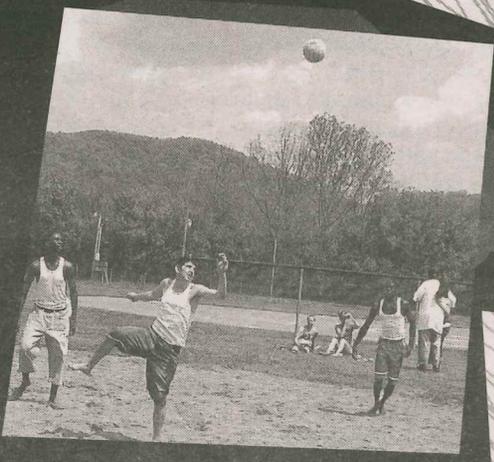
He suggests that churches include emergency contact information at the beginning of their voice mail or answering machine

messages, so people in crises are not required to listen to "a litany of church service hours and staff listings." Churches with several staff members could use a cell phone dedicated to after-hours emergencies, rotating it among ministerial staff, he added.

Based in Nashville, Tenn., the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee maintains a database of churches across the country on its Web site, www.sbc.net. The directory can be found under the "church search" tab.

Many state Baptist conventions and local Baptist associations also have Web-based directories. These are helpful tools, Hataway said, but are only as accurate as the information submitted.

Congregational leaders can check their church's listing at www.sbc.net by clicking on the "church search" menu and selecting "update your church info."



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