

May 20, 2008
Vol. 182, No. 21**FOR THE RECORD****Baptists**N.C. pastor Les Puryear is sixth SBC presidential nominee. *Page 2.***Baptists**Florida pastor Forrest Pollock, son killed in plane crash. *Page 2.***Kentucky**KBC offers special funding for churches to hold vacation Bible school. *Page 3.***Financial Forum**Is a long-term care insurance policy right for you now? *Page 4.***Guest editorial**The 'eternal flame' of missions burns brightly. *Page 5.***Kentucky**Kentucky Baptist give account of relief work in Nicaragua. *Page 6.***Issues**Barna: Only 5 percent of U.S. adults tithed last year. *Page 8.***Kingdom building**

Volunteers from Baptist Builders pause for prayer during construction of Faith Decision Baptist Church's new facilities in Paint Lick. Workers from the group, led by KBC's Baptist Men on Mission, completed the building project, estimated at \$1.5 million, for only \$450,000. (Photo courtesy of Faith Decision Baptist Church)

Ky. churches gain from Christ-honoring labor of Baptist Builders**By Ken Walker**
State Correspondent

Paint Lick—Faith Decision Baptist Church dedicated its new building in late March, with a hearty thanks to the Baptist Builders who made it possible.

With more than 500 volunteers from 30 states coming to central Kentucky last year, the 23-year-old church completed a \$1.5 million building—for only \$450,000.

Its new home includes a 160-seat sanctuary, staff offices and a fellowship hall. In the old building, students in grades one through six met in the same room

for Sunday school.

"We wouldn't have been able to build a building one-fourth this size without the Baptist Builders," Pastor Jimmy Closterman said of the program led by Kentucky's Baptist Men on Mission. "It has allowed us to have more Sunday school rooms and accommodate children and different groups. We have the availability to reach out to different groups in the community."

Immediate impact

Since moving into its new space earlier this year, the church—which averages 125 in Sunday at-

tendance—has seen 10 converts, all of whom have since been baptized. This spiritual activity reflects what Closterman calls a year-long revival since construction started nearly a year ago.

"There's excitement, enthusiasm and a bond that has grown," the bivocational pastor explained. "There's also an awareness of missions and how valuable it is that there's a network there. We have a growing outreach program now."

That includes plans by Closterman to coordinate a home repair project in Madison County □ *See Kingdom building ... Page 3*

Baptists mobilize relief efforts after recent tornadoes

Joplin, Mo. (ABP)—Various Baptist disaster relief groups began mobilizing chainsaw teams and feeding units May 12 to assist victims of deadly tornadoes that tore across the Midwest and Southeast Mother's Day weekend.

The storms claimed the lives of at least 22 people, including 15 in Missouri, six in Oklahoma and one in Georgia.

Among the dead in Missouri was a former volunteer worship leader at Forest Park Baptist Church in Joplin. Rick Roundtree, 52, his wife, Kathy, 47, son, Clayton, 13, and mother-in-law, Ruby Bilke, 76, were killed near Racine, Mo., May 10 as they traveled to a wedding. Roundtree had completed interim work at the church on May 4.

The Missouri Baptist Convention has a handful of chainsaw units in the area, according to disaster relief coordinator Rick Seaton. The disaster team from Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association also has sent a feeding unit.

According to the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger newspaper, Oklahoma Baptist disaster relief has two feeding units in place. One has been set up in Miami, Okla., near the hard-hit town of Picher. Six people were killed there and the tiny town was virtually wiped off the map. Another Oklahoma Baptist unit has been stationed at Albion in the southeastern part of the state.

Meanwhile, Georgia Baptist disaster relief has sent volunteers to three locations—Douglas County, Wrightsville and Macon. Clean up and recovery, feeding and childcare units, and shower trailers are among the units dispatched, according to Eddie Oliver, communications specialist for the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Despite economic struggles, Southern Baptists continue to give**By Mark Kelly**
Baptist Press

Nashville (BP)—While economists debate how serious America's economic slowdown really is, Southern Baptist pastors report their members are still giving in spite of the financial pressures many are facing.

A new study by LifeWay Research shows that 72 percent of Southern Baptist pastors indicated that difficulties in the United States economy are affecting their churches negatively, yet 76 percent said that offerings are at or above levels they had expected when drafting budgets several months ago.

At the same time, 24 percent of the pastors surveyed said offerings are below what they had expected and 27 percent indicated their congregations will not meet budgets if current giving trends continue.

"When two-thirds of Southern

Baptist churches are plateaued or declining in membership and attendance, it is no surprise that 20 to 30 percent of churches find their giving under budget at any given point in time," said Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Americans are feeling the pressure of rising prices on food and gasoline and millions are falling behind on mortgage payments, but members in many congregations are exercising faith by continuing to give, McConnell acknowledged.

"God has asked us to give from the first fruits we receive, and it appears that many Southern Baptists are continuing to do this despite the financial pressures they face," he added. "Giving God your first fruits requires much more faith when in-

flation is stealing what remains in your fruit basket."

The online survey was conducted April 16-May 5 among a representative sample of 778 Southern Baptist pastors. A similar survey conducted in February 2003 provides an interesting counterpoint to these most recent findings, McConnell noted.

Giving trends

Although 2002 had not officially been a time of recession in the United States, a greater percentage of pastors (31 percent) indicated their church's total income ended the year lower than expected. A higher percentage of pastors (28 percent) also indicated that income was higher than expected, while fewer (36 percent) said income was right at expectations.

According to McConnell, changes in congregational giving can be

hard to predict, and that makes budgeting a real challenge.

"Difficulty in predicting giving not only affects responses to these questions, it also affects budgets. Many of these budgets were set more than six months ago," he added. "In the 2003 survey, we found a slim majority had budgeted for growth, but the size of the growth these churches budgeted was a very substantial 12.4 percent.

"If budget projections for 2008 were anywhere near that aggressive, optimism about meeting budget may fade as the year goes on," McConnell emphasized.

Despite the indications that Southern Baptist church members are continuing to give amid difficult economic times, a recent study by The Barna Group found that only 5 percent of American tithed in 2007. **See article on page 8.**

Puryear is sixth SBC presidential nominee

Arlington, Texas (BP)—Les Puryear, pastor of Lewisville Baptist Church in North Carolina, will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention during the June 10-11 annual meeting in Indianapolis. Dwight McKissic, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, announced his intentions May 12 to nominate Puryear.

Puryear is the sixth announced nominee for the post. He joins Frank Cox, pastor of North Metro First Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, Ga.; Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ga.; Avery Willis, a former Southern Baptist missionary and retired senior vice president of overseas operations for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board; Bill Wagner, a former Southern Baptist missionary and seminary professor, and current president of Olivet University International in San Francisco who served as SBC first vice president in 2003-2004; and Wiley Drake, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Buena Park, Calif., who was SBC first vice president in 2006-2007.

Puryear, a native of North Carolina, has been pastor of Lewisville Baptist Church since 2005. Prior to his call into full-time vocational ministry in 1996, Puryear served as

a telecommunications executive for 25 years.

"Les is a small church pastor and he represents the majority of the convention," McKissic said in nominating Puryear. "It's time for the Southern Baptist Convention to acknowledge that small churches are just as valuable in God's Kingdom as any other size church. Les will encourage the convention to provide specific support in the way of conferences, materials, etc., for the small church environment."



Les Puryear

"I have known Les to be a person of integrity, vision and compassion," McKissic added. "He wants to work with all of the people in the Southern Baptist Convention, no matter what their differences are in regard to non-essential doctrinal beliefs, race or church size."

According to the 2007 Southern Baptists' Annual Church Profile, Lewisville Baptist Church reported 11 baptisms and \$20,331 (5.9 percent) of undesignated receipts given through the Cooperative Program from total undesignated receipts of \$343,795.

Puryear is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and currently is working on a doctorate at Trinity Theological Semi-

nary in Newburgh, Ind. He and his wife, Debbie, have two sons and two grandchildren.

Pastors' Conference nominee

Ed Litton, pastor of First Baptist Church of North Mobile in Saraland, Ala., will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference during its June 8-9 meeting in Indianapolis. James Draper Jr., president emeritus of LifeWay Christian Resources, announced the nomination May 13.

Litton, the first announced candidate for the position, has served as pastor of the Alabama congregation since 1994. He previously was founding pastor of Mountain View Baptist Church in Tucson, Ariz., served as associate evangelism director for the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention while under appointment as a Southern Baptist North American Mission Board missionary, and worked as a youth and collegiate ministry intern under Draper when he was pastor of First Baptist Church of Euleus, Texas.

Litton is a former president of the Arizona and Alabama Baptist pastors' conferences and served as first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2001-2002.

Litton is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He and his late wife, Tammy, have three children.

Baptist seminary in Lebanon is safe despite violence

Beirut, Lebanon—The Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, located outside Beirut, Lebanon, sustained no damage after fighting broke out between Hezbollah militia and the Lebanese government May 8.

The seminary, operated by the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development, had to postpone a public lecture on "The Missional Church," scheduled for May 12, because of the violence. Baptist educator Finlay Graham founded ABTS in 1960.

Nabil Costa, executive director of LSESD, has requested prayer for the Lebanese people. "Please pray for wisdom for all relevant decision makers. ... Pray as well for the Lord's protection on the people and His intervention that this country may be able to move forward and thrive in its role as (a) center for Christian ministry and a gateway to the Arab world."

The fighting in Lebanon began on May 7. Some reports indicate that more than 80 people have been killed and several hundred injured.

Based on reporting by Baptist Press and Baptist World Alliance

Florida pastor Forrest Pollock, son killed in N.C. plane crash

Asheville, N.C. (BP)—Florida pastor Forrest Pollock and his 13-year-old son were killed May 12 when the single-engine plane Pollock was flying crashed in North Carolina.

Pollock, 44, had been pastor of the Tampa-area Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, Fla., since 2002.

According to the Citizen-Times in Asheville, N.C., rescue officials confirmed the deaths of Pollock and his son, Preston, who were reported missing shortly after their 5 a.m. takeoff from an airport in Rutherfordton, N.C. The St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times reported that Pollock had flown to North Carolina to see his mother on Mother's Day. The Times also reported that one of Pollock's daughters, Brooke, 14, had gone along but had stayed with her grandmother. Pollock planned to

stop in Arkansas to pick up a friend before heading to Texas for a speaking engagement.

Debris from the single-engine Piper PA-32-260 was found the morning of May 13 by rescuers in a heavily wooded area in the western part of the state, on a ridge north of Cold Mountain in the Shining Rock Wilderness.

Pollock was to have been a featured speaker at the Southern Baptist Convention's June 10-11 annual meeting in Indianapolis. He also had been appointed to serve on the convention's Committee on Committees.

In 2006, Pollock nominated Frank Page to serve as SBC president during the annual meeting in Greens-

boro, N.C., and was a member of the Resolutions Committee that year.

Pollock also was president of the Large Church Roundtable, a gathering he founded in 1999 for pastors of large churches who meet for fellowship and sharing ideas.

Page, who will conclude his SBC presidency in June, told Baptist Press, "We are deeply grieved and in a state of shock that someone so young, so promising was taken so early." Heaven

is "a richer place today because of the presence of Forrest and Preston Pollock."

"I know I speak for our entire convention in expressing our appreciation for his ministry and our prayers for Dawn and the other five children and the precious people of



Forrest Pollock

the Bell Shoals Baptist Church."

Page noted that he and Pollock became friends through the Large Church Roundtable. "Forrest quickly endeared himself to me and to everyone present with his kind heart, his competency in ministry and his sweet spirit. He was a man who was self-effacing and had a tremendous sense of humor."

Prior to becoming pastor at Bell Shoals, he served as pastor of Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, La., from 1997-2002; pastor of Rosen Heights Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, from 1994-1997; and associate pastor of church growth at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, from 1992-1994.

Pollock is survived by his wife Dawn and five other children, Courtney, 15; Brooke, 14; Hope, 12; Blake, 10; and Kirk, 8.

Nashville congregation reverses vote, ousts dissenting members

By Lonnie Wilkey
Tennessee Baptist and Reflector

Nashville (ABP)—One week after an effort to oust 71 members of Two Rivers Baptist Church failed by four votes, the Nashville congregation voted again and this time removed the dissenting members on a show-of-hands vote.

The congregation was told that the 71 plaintiffs who filed a lawsuit against church leaders last September should not have been allowed to vote May 4 on a motion for their own dismissal, as outlined in Robert's Rules of Order. Members then voted not to allow the votes of the plaintiffs to count, effectively reversing the outcome of the May 4 vote.

The 71 members filed a lawsuit against Pastor Jerry Sutton for refusing to release church records to members and using church funds for his daughter's wedding reception and other questionable expenses. The suit requested that Sutton be fired and sought compensatory and punitive damages. Sutton has repeatedly denied the allegations.

In the May 4 vote, 1,000 secret ballots were cast; 663 people voted to dismiss the plaintiffs, while 337 voted "no"—four votes shy of the two-thirds majority required for removal from membership.

Another business meeting was called following the May 4 service so deacon chairman Carlos Cobos could officially report the initial

vote, according to an article in the Nashville newspaper, The Tennessean. David Mills, a former trustee and deacon chairman, then challenged Cobos' decision that allowed the 71 plaintiffs to vote, the newspaper reported.

Two Rivers attorney Larry Crain attended the service but told the paper he was not expecting a revote. He did, however, defend the action. "If you're charged with a crime, you can't sit on the jury," he told The Tennessean.

Last October, Sutton, who has served Two Rivers for more than two decades, easily won a churchwide vote of confidence in his leadership. The plaintiffs had asked a local judge to stop the vote-of-confidence

meeting, but she refused.

In April, Sutton requested that the plaintiffs be dismissed from membership "because of the damage done to the witness, reputation and welfare of Two Rivers Baptist Church," leading to the May 4 vote.

Neal Buchanan, a long-time member of Two Rivers and one of the plaintiffs, said he went to church May 11 without a suspicion that "anything would happen."

Buchanan noted that Sutton had prayed last week that the Lord's will would be done. After the vote to oust the members came up short, "we thought that it was over," Buchanan said. He noted some plaintiffs had gotten together to discuss ways to reconcile.

CORRECTION: An article in the May 6 issue of the Western Recorder about six Kentucky Baptists nominated to serve on various Southern Baptist Convention boards included an error.

Members of the 2007-2008 SBC Committee on Nominations recommend individuals on SBC boards. Kentuckians who are part of that committee are Don Mathis, staff evangelist at Eastwood Baptist Church in Bowling Green, and Karl Neely, a member of First Baptist Church of Henderson.

KBC underscores importance of VBS with special funds

Louisville—In an effort to encourage its churches to host vacation Bible schools, the Kentucky Baptist Convention has made available funding grants and training support to its member churches.

According to Wendy Dever, KBC's preschool/children's ministry director, the convention has designated \$30,000 to help churches host Bible schools this summer. The funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis to churches that did not host a VBS last year.

"Bible school is still the biggest outreach that churches have," Dever said. "It's the flagship outreach event for our churches, convention-wide. We want to help churches be able to offer Bible schools and teach children about Jesus."

Any size church may apply for a limited allotment of funds, as long as it meets the lone criteria of not having held a VBS last year. Even churches that previously held a VBS, but did not do so in 2007 are eligible, Dever said.

"This is the pilot year for the funding grant, so this is when we're writing the rules. People are telling us their needs and we are matching those needs with resources," she added.

According to Dever, VBS options are endless, as more churches are hosting non-traditional Bible schools in order to meet the changing needs of families.

"About 81 percent of our churches have Bible school at night now, and it's not just because of the teachers—the children are busy with all kinds of activities," she noted.

Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville is one such church. With plans to host its VBS this July, Childhood Education Minister Linda Blincoe said the church's weekend Bible school will include a Friday night session and a half-day Saturday session.

She noted that the KBC helped supply her with curriculum and also put her in contact with college students who will help lead the VBS.

Dever explained that Bible schools often are effective because "one week of VBS is more than a whole quarter of Sunday School time for Bible study."

"It's probably the easiest way for families to connect to a church," she said. "We really are talking about families here, because if you love someone's child, you're more likely to be able to love them into church."

Kentucky Baptist churches interested in VBS assistance should contact their local association's office or the KBC's preschool/children's ministry department at (502) 489-3575, or toll free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3575.

Kingdom building

Baptist Builders offer cost-effective, Christ-honoring labor to Ky. churches

Continued from page 1

this summer. Meanwhile, members will travel to two other towns to help with Baptist Builders projects.

God deserves the credit for a diverse group of people from such a wide-ranging area coming together to complete the job, acknowledged Mike Montgomery, who served as project coordinator.

"He moves in ways you wouldn't see Him moving in the normal construction world," said Montgomery, a business owner who volunteers his time to work with the initiative. "We saw people saved and people rededicate their life to Christ."

Building for less

The associate pastor of Loving Springs Baptist Church in Glasgow and a member of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky, Montgomery has worked with Baptist Builders each of the past two years. He said completing a building for \$29 a square foot is evidence of God equipping his people to do work. That figure compares to an average cost of about \$100 a square foot across the commonwealth.

Montgomery noted the practice of regular prayer on the job site and an atmosphere of welcoming God's presence are what attracted so many people to Paint Lick.

"People are coming to Kentucky and experiencing God on the job site instead of in the sanctuary," he added. "When God moves in a place where people don't expect God to move, it gets attention."

"It's a beautiful story. It's a beautiful testament to our Lord. But if we fail to give Him glory, we won't see Him show up in the lives of believers and unbelievers."

Baptist Builders Director John Edwards pointed out that the Faith Decision project ranked among the top five for volunteer laborers and was one of the most active spiritually. He also said it reminded him of construction completed in 2003 at Providence Baptist Church in Estill County. At both sites, men constantly sought God's guidance and asked Him to provide the materials and workers needed to finish the job, Edwards recalled.

"They really had to rely on God to make their budget," said Edwards, a Mission Service Corps volunteer based in Horse Cave. "It just seemed God poured His Spirit on those people because they wouldn't have been able to build their building without Him."

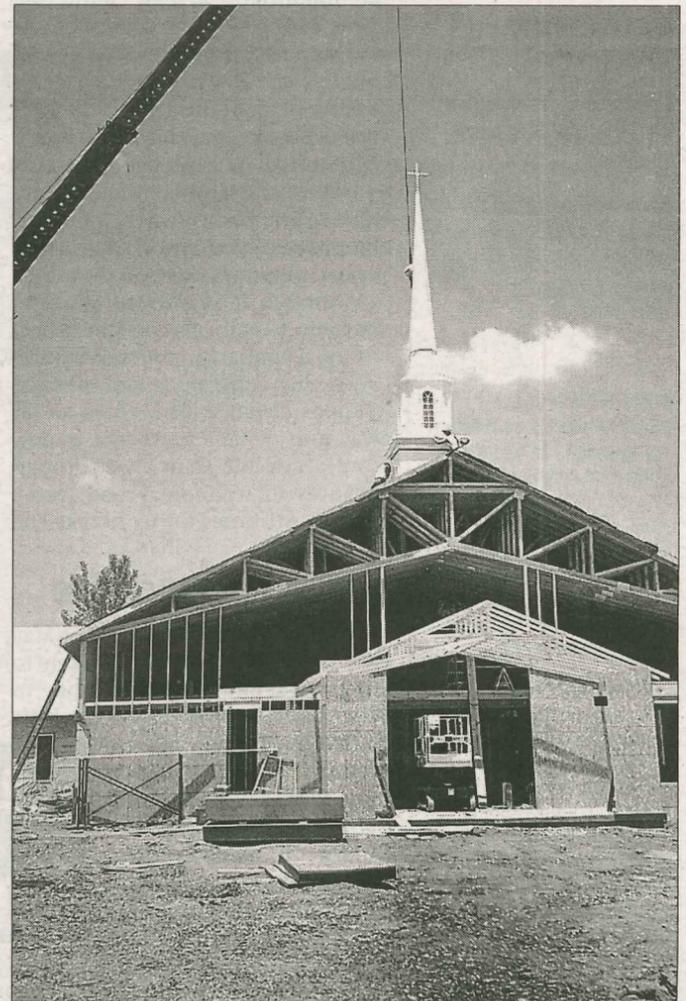
Another key to the Paint Lick project was having Montgomery there to coordinate construction, Edwards noted. The project coordinator will travel to Elkton in June to help rebuild Johnson Chapel Baptist Church, a small congregation destroyed by fire last year.

In addition, Montgomery is helping train another man who will act as a second project coordinator next year, according to Edwards.

Summer projects

Other sites where Baptist Builders will be sending volunteers this summer include Caney Baptist Church in Pippa Passes and Unity Baptist Church in Hillview. Edwards estimated that 700 volunteers will come through Kentucky this year, but said the Builders can always use more help.

"Things are happening with Baptist Builders in Kentucky that have never happened before, in an ex-



tremely positive way," said Edwards, who has been full time with the program since 2001.

Churches interested in applying for help can contact the Baptist Men on Mission's office at (866) 489-3527, or send an e-mail to Edwards at hammernails@gmail.com.

In order to qualify, Edwards explained, churches must have agreed in a business meeting to build, arranged financing and retained an architect to execute a master building plan.

TO THE TOP A crane lowers the steeple onto the roof of Faith Decision Baptist Church's new facility. The Paint Lick church dedicated its new building in March. (Photo courtesy of Faith Decision Baptist Church)

Kentucky native Dottie Rambo dies in bus crash

Mount Vernon, Mo.—Gospel music legend Dottie Rambo, a native of Morganfield, died May 11, when her tour bus veered off a Missouri highway and struck an embankment. She was 74.

Seven others aboard the bus suffered severe to moderate injuries in the accident on Interstate 44 near Mount Vernon in southwest Missouri and were hospitalized in Springfield, according to the Associated Press.

Rambo's entourage was en route to a Mother's Day performance at a Dallas-Fort Worth-area church. The singer's Web site confirmed that high winds from severe storms in the area were to blame for the accident. A spokesperson from Rambo's recording label also confirmed that the singer was asleep at the time.

Rambo, who was born Joyce Reba Luttrell, published an estimated 2,500 songs, with entries in nearly every hymn book. Included in the 1991 Baptist Hymnal, for example, are "We Shall Behold Him" and "Behold the Lamb." The two songs and a third, "Holy Spirit, Thou Art Welcome," also are included in the 2008 hymnal to be released this summer.

Rambo won a Grammy for a 1968

solo album, "It's the Soul of Me," and Dove awards in 1999 for her song, "I Go to The Rock," sung by Whitney Houston in the motion picture "The Preacher's Wife," and in 1982 for "We Shall Behold Him."

She is a member of the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, the Southern Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame and the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. She was recently inducted into the Christian Music Hall of Fame which was to formally honor her next month. She also was honored in 2006 by the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame. Among the artists who have recorded her songs include Elvis Presley, George Beverly Shea, dcTalk, Johnny Cash, Dolly Parton, Bill Gaither and Steve Green.

"We have lost one of the truly great poets, but her voice will only be amplified by death," wrote fellow songwriter Gloria Gaither on the Web site she shares with her husband. "Songs of Dottie Rambo will more insistently than ever speak to the experiences of life bringing hope, counsel, encouragement and perspective."



Dottie Rambo

Rambo was born in Madisonville and grew up in Morganfield in Western Kentucky. She wrote her first song at age 8 and started singing and traveling from church to church at age 12.

As a teen, she was signed to a songwriting contact by Gov. Jimmie Davis of Louisiana. Eventually, she became a staple on Christian television, including "The Dottie Rambo Magazine" on the Trinity Broadcasting Network in the 1980s. She lived in Nashville at the time of her death.

Throughout her prolific music career, Rambo recorded dozens of albums, both as a solo artist and as a member of The Rambos with her daughter, Reba, and former husband, Buck. Her latest album titled, "Sheltered," is slated for release this summer.

A memorial service was held May 19 at Christ Church in Nashville. Donations can be made to the Dottie Rambo Memorial Fund which can be found at www.dottierambo.net. Based on reporting by Baptist Press, Religion News Service and News Director Drew Nichter.

WESTERN RECORDER

Box 43969
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DREW NICHTER
News Director

THOMAS C. TOWNSEND
Marketing & Business
Manager

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

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It's a great day to be Southern Baptist

By Paul Chitwood

Mount Washington—I was raised in the mountains of east Tennessee. I was never very conscious of the sky because, frankly, I couldn't see it without looking straight up. The view of the sky over the mountains is very limited. As a teenager on a family trip driving through the flat cornfields of the Midwest, I suddenly realized something had changed. The sky had grown. It was enormous.

Although it is obvious that the sky hadn't really grown, nor was it falling, a similarity can be found between that experience and overseas missions. What once seemed so far away and distant years ago is now more accessible than ever through advances in technology and travel. The opportunities for us to take the

gospel to the nations have grown. In fact, they are enormous.

Churches of like faith and practice formed the organization that is today the Southern Baptist Convention primarily for the purpose of doing just that—getting the gospel to the nations. For 163 years now, Southern Baptists have been engaging the lost overseas through what we know today as the International Mission Board. The work of the IMB is the primary thing that brings us together. While the statistical analysis—and the analysis of the analysis—of the current state of the SBC continues, I fear the most important statistics are escaping.

Is there any good news to tell concerning the work that brought us, and yet holds us, together? Indeed

there is.

The number of Southern Baptist missionaries serving overseas is 5,359. Our most recent statistical analysis reveals overseas baptism totals at an all-time high of 609,968. The number of new believers being disciplined overseas totaled 567,413, another all-time high. Last year's new churches overseas totaled 25,497. You guessed it—an all-time high.

When it comes to missions, the sky is not falling. It is exploding—with opportunity.

So get on a plane, take to the skies and help spread the gospel among the nations. It's still a good day to be a Southern Baptist. In fact, analyzing the statistics, it's the best day to be a Southern Baptist.

Paul Chitwood, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mount Washington, is chairman of the International Mission Board trustees

FIRST PERSON

Another perspective

In reference to the article of May 6th on the unchurched less likely to even visit a church, I would like to offer another perspective. Could it be that the reason the unchurched are not likely to come to even visit a church is the overall atmosphere of our churches. Even in the article—and with no disrespect to the writer—it shows an attitude that “The Church” is this building of ours made with sticks or stones that practice a certain tradition (mind you there are plenty of traditions today) and it seems to exude a bit of arrogance.

“The Church” should always be thought of as the body of believers wherever they are. Our buildings should be secondary to the message of Jesus. When they stop being so, we have created an idol for ourselves.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus meets many people and tells them about the Kingdom where they are. Although Jesus never neglects the

temple, He never says, “Meet me in the temple on the Sabbath.” He addresses issues with people on the spot.

The church of today seems to demand that if you are lost, you come to the temple first. If we are to carry out the mission of Christ, our most important places to do so are in living rooms, parks, grocery stores and every other place where the lost might be found. After this, we can ask them to come to the temple.

*Ed Sissel
Falmouth*

Back to basics

The April 29 issue of the Western Recorder carried the headline “Truly disheartening” in reference to the recent survey revealing Southern Baptist Convention baptisms at the lowest point since 1987. What I find even more disheartening are the statistics regarding SBC church membership (16,266,920) versus primary worship attendance (6,150,000).

Associations: Partners in the gospel

Associational missions week is May 18-25, which makes for a great time to pray for your association. It is certainly a privilege for me to praise God for the wonderful partnership between the Kentucky Baptist Convention and Baptist associations in the state.

By definition, associations are churches partnering together in missions locally and around the world. Each church is autonomous but they choose to cooperate on mission together in order to extend the gospel. Through fellowship, prayer, training and ministry, churches are strengthened to carry out the Great Commission.

Here are just a few of the areas in which the KBC and associations partner:

Public affairs. Associational leaders help churches stay informed about public affairs issues of concern. The battle against expanded gambling during this past General Assembly session is a great example.

Evangelism. Associations often sponsor evangelism projects and crusades, which the KBC then helps

to fund through the evangelism growth team and other ministry areas. For instance, the KBC's youth ministry department has assisted with funding for numerous associational events with Brock Gill and the Freedom Experience, which has resulted in hundreds of decisions for Christ.

Vacation Bible school. Associations partner with the KBC in training workers for vacation Bible schools. In 2008, KBC will provide funding for VBS in mission churches and in churches that have not conducted a VBS recently.

Training Sunday school and discipleship leaders. Associations partner with the church development team as it provides training for church and associational leaders. In 2007, Super Saturday conferences provided training for 3,800 leaders from 450 churches.

Prayer. For the fourth year in a row, associations will partner with churches and the KBC in a special prayer emphasis. “With One Voice” prayer gatherings will be held in churches across the state Sept. 10.



Disaster relief. Associations partner with churches and KBC in training workers, utilizing equipment and mobilizing teams in disaster readiness and response.

Promoting missions. Associations partner with the KBC, Woman's Missionary Union, the Southern Baptist International Mission Board and North American Mission Board in promoting prayer, education, giving and participation in missions and ministries locally, across Kentucky and around the world.

Associations also partner with the KBC in ministries, new work, leader support and training, worship, special events, associational missions support, collegiate ministry, etc.

In his newsletter, “The Bridge Builders,” Phillip Basinger listed numerous important roles played by associations. They nurture harmony and fellowship, call churches to be on mission, provide resources, develop and encourage leaders, maintain relationships, manage resources, and provide information about churches to the denomination.

These partnerships are effective in extending the mission of our Lord and deserve our best involvement and support.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

Is long-term care insurance policy right for you now?

By Don Spencer

Long-term care insurance can be valuable protection but not everyone is a good candidate, especially if it is at the expense of meeting other financial goals. Here is a series of questions to answer to help think it through:

■ Will you have assets between \$300,000 and \$2 million upon retirement?

■ Is leaving an inheritance important to you (and your spouse)?

■ Do you want to avoid relying on family or friends for you care?

If you answered yes to at least one of the above questions, then continue with these questions:

■ Are you and/or your spouse between the ages of 55 and 65?

■ If you are younger than 55, do you have a family history of chronic illness?

■ Are you healthy now?

If you answered yes to at least two of these questions, then a long-term care policy may be appropriate for you and the premium should be reasonable. To help determine if you can truly afford a policy, ask yourself these questions:

■ Are you saving enough to have adequate retirement income?

■ Do you know what your retirement income will be?

■ Do you have adequate health, disability and life insurance?

■ Do you know the cost of nursing homes and assisted-living facilities in your area?

Once you can answer yes to all of the last four questions, you are ready to give serious consideration to a long-term care policy. As you begin shopping for a policy, carefully compare things such as benefit period, elimination period, the amount of daily benefit and whether inflation protection is included with the policy.

For more help on considering long-term care insurance and for guidance in shopping for coverage, visit http://doi.ppr.ky.gov/kentucky/Documents/Health/lcguide_rev_oct_2006.pdf to view the “Consumer Guide to Long Term Care Insurance” published by the Kentucky Department of Insurance.

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

Uncertain economic times can cause rising tensions at home

Q: The outrageous price of gasoline infuriates my husband. While I am concerned about our economy, I have tried to explain to him—to no avail—that the overall cost per year is manageable for us. Several of my close friends say that their husbands are equally upset and almost inconsolable. Why do men get so worked up about this?

In his book, "The Secrets Men Keep," Stephen Arterburn shares some fascinating research that reveals some of the things men think and feel that they do not talk about with others. A survey of 3,600 men showed that more than two-thirds said that they live in fear of running out of money either now or in the future.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, for only the third time since records have been kept, Americans have recorded a negative savings rate (-0.05 in 2005). The other times this occurred were in 1932 (-0.9 percent) and 1933 (-1.5 percent) amid the Great Depression.

A man's anxiety about finances is primarily related to his role in the family. While called by God to be the leader and lover, a man is also supposed to be provider and protector. In a shaky economy with rising gas prices and ancillary services, your husband is hard wired to be concerned about the protection and provision of your family. And if 68 percent of the men in America are fearful about financial security both now and in retirement, it only makes sense that 68 percent of all the marriages in America have a measure of tension in them as a result.

How important for all of us to live a life of faith—not fear—and to trust that God our Father is our ultimate Provider.—Scott Wigginton

Q: My husband and I have settled into a marriage routine where I am not very happy. I have threatened to leave, but he says his male friends are no different with their wives than he is with me. I want something different, but he will not read anything and certainly would not attend anything about marriage. Am I supposed to settle?

Settling does seem to be a common disease in relationships. The reality is they are very hard work. You must stay diligent, focused and keep aiming for the goal.

Often we look at other marriages and comment, "They look fine." Then we are shocked when we hear about a divorce. Too many couples keep their marriage life very private and tend to not ask for help until one—or both—has decided that divorce is the only option.

A very strong philosophy dominates our culture about trying something, and if we do not like it, then try something else. There is no sense in dwelling on something that does not work, fit or please. For some, this may be understood as "not settling" because you find something better and move on.

The truth is most people tend to settle for what is easy. Building an Egyptian pyramid by hand without laser technology would not be easy, but it has been done. We like easy. We invent new machines to make life easier. The problem is there has not been an invention to make relationships easy. They are work, good work, and work worth doing.

The shema—a reminder for the Hebrew people to devote themselves to God daily—is a New Testament challenge as well: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." These are Jesus' words. There is no settling here. Is it work to do this? Yes. So, if Jesus says this is the standard for the relationship with the Lord, is the standard so much less with being in relationship with your spouse?

The standard is set very high with the Lord. It also is high with your spouse. So I encourage you and your spouse to never settle, but set a new standard—one that requires daily devotion, remembrance and effort.—Valerie Vincent

Family Forum writers are:

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

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

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

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

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

MARRIAGE



'Eternal flame' of missions burns brightly

Our personal involvement in missions began more than 50 years ago as recently graduated and newly-married college students teaching high school in Nazareth, Israel, followed by a summer of working at Mizrah, a nearby Jewish kibbutz. In each of these settings, we experienced both the anguish and aspirations of Arabs and Jews, neither of whom have since achieved their aspirations and whose disaffections for each other spill over onto the rest of the world.

It might have seemed an improbable seed bed for nurturing our life's call into missions—19 years of it with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board) and 14 years in the more recent context of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Mission Board.

Leaving the pastorate in 1964 to join the FMB personnel department staff, my salary was \$4,300 and Executive Secretary Baker James Cauthen had placed a lid on the size and cost of homes purchased by incoming elected staff. More than once refusing a raise in his salary, Cauthen resisted the already noticeable upward trend in SBC institutional salaries.

Staff travel overseas was limited because of the expense. When I was given my first overseas orientation of missionary stations in 1966, it was a 10-week, around-the-world journey.

Missionaries formerly were appointed for a lifetime of service; there were no short-term assignments. They served for three, four or five years before taking a year's furlough. Most assignments required language study, the more difficult requiring at least two years of protracted study before engaging in full-time ministry in the host country.

Foreign missions week at Glorieta and Ridgecrest Conference Centers were among the most popular and best attended of the summer assemblies. Each of the six SBC seminaries held an annual foreign missions event and Baptist Student Union directors came trooping in with their college youth to hear missionary speakers and participate in challenging seminars.

It is comforting to know that those years past have helped contribute to some of the more encouraging realities of the mission enterprise. Christian churches and believers have multiplied numerically and are

situated in more countries and language groups. More entities which had, for years, been "receivers" of missionaries have become "senders." More groups have chosen to cooperate in missions endeavors, diminishing the exclusivity sometimes associated with denominational priorities. Many more churches have moved from a largely financial support role to hands-on involvement in local and international missions.

Simultaneously, the challenge of missions has intensified. Permanent or extended visas for missionaries are more often resisted by host countries. Persecution of Christians has increased, particularly where they are a minority. Islam has become increasingly evange-

listic, aggressive and influential as it expands. Western culture increasingly reflects a disenchantment with the "established church" and a secular inclination to challenge the necessity and relevance of "religious" missions. Fewer Western missionaries seem motivated to remain for extended periods of time, avoiding the discipline of language learning and cultural identification. These are only a few of the many challenges of the Christian mission in today's world.

With so many changes during this writer's lifetime, can one find any sign of constancy in God's mission to reconcile a world to Himself and with each other? I think so. For some, it would simply rest in the historical reality that the Christian mission has sustained for more than 2,000 years.

For me, I find this constancy reflected through the lives of younger Christians—youth who truly believe that the gospel and its social implications (as in Matthew 25) must be shared and lived out and that God wants them to be personally involved in that mission.

That is why I take joy in seeing the younger ones among us "going out" on summer missions, participating in a mission project with a local church, or hear someone speak of a life-changing event because of a missions experience.

They remind me that the "eternal flame" still burns.

Bill Marshall is a retired missionary, pastor and former executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. He and his wife, Alice, are co-directors of the Marshall Center for Christian Ministry at Georgetown College.

GUEST EDITORIAL



Bill Marshall

Are you hiding from God?

By David Jeremiah

El Cajon, Calif. (BP)—Who is the most famous fugitive in the Bible? Jonah is famous for being the prophet who ran from God, but then ran into God in the depths of the ocean.

He discovered there are no hiding places from God.

Think of the hideouts and hideaways Jonah used to disappear from God:

Geography. Jonah thought he could hide from God in a foreign land.

Religious prejudice. Jonah thought the pagan Assyrians did not deserve God's compassion.

Self-pity. Jonah thought God was being unreasonable, so he retreated into feeling sorry for himself.

Stubbornness. Jonah thought he could just say "no" to God.

Of course, hiding from God is impossible, but sometimes building hideouts is something we do anyway. Then God comes knocking, just as He did with Jonah, to ask why we're hiding from Him.

People do not usually quit their jobs and move to a foreign country to hide from God as Jonah did. But that does not mean we don't try to build modern hideouts. Think about the following examples. Have you built any of these in your life?

Work or career advancement.

Sometimes we know God wants us to do something for Him, but we hide out in our jobs or careers. When He comes looking for us we say, "But

Lord, I'm working to provide for my family ... oh, yes, and to be able

to give more to Your work." Or, "But, Lord, you gave me talents. Don't You want me to use them?" Working hard is commendable. But since all our work is for the Lord (Colossians 3:23), He may have a different assignment for us in His Kingdom. We have to be prepared to do what He wants, not what we want.

Family. This is subtle. Everyone knows family is important to God. We don't know if Jonah had a wife and children, but what if he had said, "Sorry, Lord. I can't go preach to the Assyrians. I have to be at my son's soccer game." Who hasn't allowed family to become top priority and used the Bible to justify it? We are in complete control of our family's schedules, and if family leaves little time for God, ... whose fault is that? It's a sad day when we are so consumed with family that we cannot hear the Lord knocking on our own door (Revelation 3:20).

Leisure. This is another hideout that's easy to justify "in the name of the Lord." "The Lord does not want us to be so stressed out, but to carve out time for recreation and enter-

tainment." However, we live in a society in which entertainment is a way of life. Jesus and His disciples drew away from the crowds on occasion, but that was so they could be refreshed for further ministry. Hiding from God in leisure is a sign we have let the world distract us from the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Ministry. What better way to avoid doing something the Lord has called us to do than by doing something He has not called us to do. "But, Lord, can't You see that I'm up to my neck in six-year-old boys in my Sunday School class? I couldn't possibly take the gospel to the homeless in the inner city." When we hide from the Lord in ministry, we are missing our most important ministry: to the Lord (Luke 10:41).

Are you running from the Lord and hiding out in any of these places—or other places only you (and the Lord) know about? Don't forget: There are no hideouts or hideaways God does not know about. You will eventually come face to face with Him at a time and in a place you least expect.

Be a follower, not a fugitive. Run to the Lord, not away from the Lord. Hide in the Lord, not from the Lord. When the Lord sees you next, may He see your face, not your back.

David Jeremiah is pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, Calif., and chancellor of San Diego Christian College

Ky. Baptist relief teams give account of work in Nicaragua

By Mark Kelly
Baptist Press

Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua (BP)—As Nicaragua's Miskito Indians try to reclaim their hardscrabble existence from the ravages of Hurricane Felix, Southern Baptists are making a difference for the poorest families among this poverty-stricken people.

When Felix slammed into the country's coastline near the Honduras border in September of last year, 160 mph winds leveled the rickety houses in its path. Fruit trees—a crucial food source for the Miskito—were uprooted; rice and bean crops also were washed away. For people who barely eke out an existence in the good times, Felix was a catastrophe.

An estimated 120,000 Miskito people rode out the storm, which dumped as much as a foot of rain on the swampy coastal land. The rain-forest was so badly ravaged that a one-hour trek from their villages to the planting fields took four hours, noted David Brown, the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's disaster relief coordinator for the region.

"As people tried to make their way to population centers for help, the debris kept them from being able to carry much of anything," Brown said. "Wild animals were coming into towns and villages looking for food. Without trees, winter rains would keep the rivers in flood stage, making it impossible to replant crops."

Southern Baptists responded to the crisis almost immediately, sending a chain saw team from the Baptist General Convention of Texas into Puerto Cabezas, where roads were laden with fallen trees and branches, preventing relief supplies from getting into town. As missionaries Jim and Viola Palmer were able to connect with leaders in nearby villages, they began trying to identify families in greatest need of help.

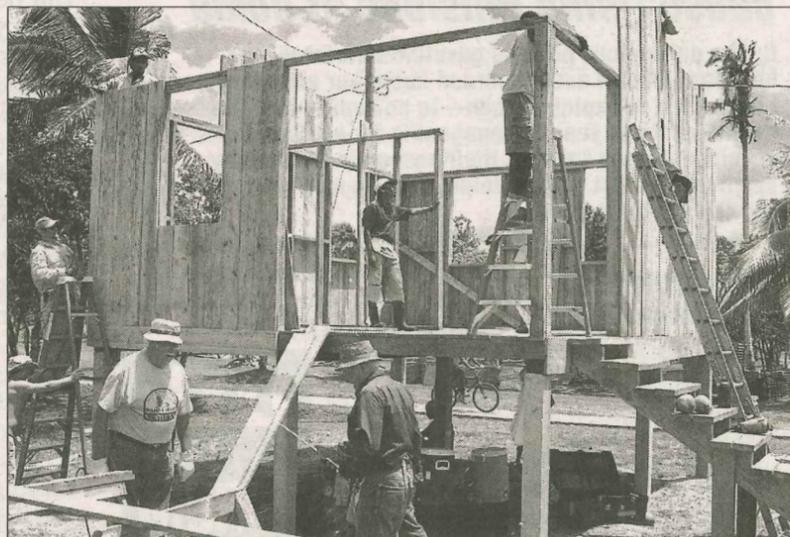
"We told them we would provide all the building material and labor to build homes for those who were unable to work for themselves or had no means of helping themselves," recalled Jim Palmer, who has served in Nicaragua since 1990. "The elders actually chose who would receive the new homes."

Baptist Global Response, a Southern Baptist international relief and development organization, coordinated funding and volunteers for the recovery project Palmer proposed—building 75 homes in six months. An initial distribution of \$43,500 provided basic food and supply needs in the immediate aftermath of the storm. Another \$113,000 allocated for the reconstruction project included \$38,300 for a "food for work" program that provided local labor to help with clean up and building.

Kentucky responds

When an 11-member volunteer team from Kentucky arrived in the area in late March, they were saddened to see the dire need of families in the area almost seven months after the storm.

"One thing that stood out to me was there wasn't any doubt we were working among 'the least of these,'" said Coy Webb, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's disaster relief associate. "One lady we built a home for had been living on a vacant lot with a blue tarp over it."



FOR THE LEAST OF THESE Kentucky Baptist volunteers build a house for a Nicaraguan family whose home was destroyed by Hurricane Felix last September. Eleven volunteers from all across the commonwealth spent eight days in Nicaragua as part of the disaster relief mission trip March 30-April 5. (BP photo)

"What we were putting up was a very simple structure—a 16x20 wood frame home with three rooms, built on stilts—and honestly, some of us have outbuildings that would probably be as big as what we were building. But she was thanking us over and over for what we were doing and the tears running down her cheeks showed us just how appreciative she was for our help."

A team from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, led by Larry Shine, pastor of Pine Forest Baptist Church in Onalaska, Texas, built six houses in that area earlier in the month. As they completed the fourth one, the widow who was receiving it cried out to friends standing nearby, "Look at all my brothers who have come to help me when I had no one else."

The cost of the simple homes was driven down dramatically by using the trees felled by the storm, said Charlie Simmons, a retired director of missions of Graves County Baptist Association.

"Jim Palmer had a couple of portable sawmills and he got permission from the government to use the trees blown down during the hurricane," Simmons said. "They were cutting those trees into lumber that we were using to build the houses."

With multiplied thousands of families left homeless by the storm, one might be discouraged about the possibility of making a significant difference, but the 75 houses being built by volunteers over the course of six months transformed the lives of those who received them, noted Ray Fultz, a member of Crestwood Baptist Church in Frankfort.

"The blue tarps there reminded me so much of Katrina," he recalled. "It just eats at your heart, but you do everything you can. A pastor told me years ago, 'Ray, you help people one at a time. That's all you can do.'"

"Whatever avenue we have available to us, we need to pursue it. Everybody needs to know how much the Lord loves them."

McElrath, longtime Southern professor, hymn writer, dies

Orange Park, Fla. (ABP)—Longtime Baptist hymn writer and music professor Hugh McElrath passed away May 8 at his winter home in Florida. He was 86.

McElrath was a professor of church music at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville for nearly 50 years, serving from 1948-1992. Officially retiring as the V.V. Cooke Professor of Church Music in 1992, he taught part time as a senior professor for a few years afterward. He also served as minister of music at Beechwood Baptist Church in Louisville for 22 years.

A native of Murray, McElrath earned a bachelor of arts degree in English from Murray State University, intending to become an English teacher. Instead, he entered Southern Seminary's first music degree program. He completed requirements for a bachelor of sacred music degree in 1947 and a master of sacred music degree in 1948. He earned a doctor of philosophy degree at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in New York in 1967.

"Singing With Understanding," a music textbook co-authored with Harry Eskew, is among his most noted works. He wrote several hymns, including "We Praise You With Our Minds, O Lord."

In 1992, he was the first church music professor to receive the Findley B. and Louvenia Edge Award for Teaching Excellence, the highest teaching honor Southern Seminary awards.

President of the Southern Baptist Church Music Conference from 1987-1989, McElrath served on the doctrinal/theological committee for the 1991 edition of the Baptist Hymnal.

The book, "Minds and Hearts in Praise of God: Hymns and Essays in Church Music in Honor of Hugh T. McElrath," was published in December of 2006 to celebrate his life and mark his contributions to church music.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth, and three children, Hugh Donald McElrath, Douglas McElrath and Margaret Partridge.

Funeral services were held May 14 at Alumni Chapel on the Southern Seminary campus. Burial was held at Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville.

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Demonstrating faithfulness

Business sales bring unique opportunity for stewardship

According to Dun & Bradstreet, there are 135,000 mid-sized, privately owned businesses in the United States, many of which are family owned. The VIP Forum has concluded that business owners who will sell their businesses by the year 2014 will realize \$4.6 trillion collectively. What a huge stewardship opportunity for these business owners!

Brian Keane of Citi Capital Strategies stated, "As Baby Boomers age, we will see an unprecedented amount of wealth change hands as retiring entrepreneurs cash out of their businesses. The impact of these transactions ... is the most important economic story of our time."

These business owners are men and women born after World War II, raised by modest, hard-working middle-class parents, and products of public schools. After launching careers in fields as varied as the American work force, many of these soon-to-be entrepreneurs began leaving their jobs to start their own companies. Others came back into family-owned businesses.

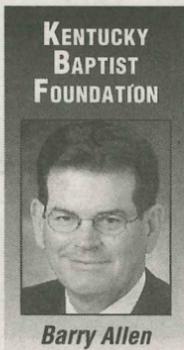
As these business owners approach retirement, the issues be-

come how and when they will exit their businesses. According to a PricewaterhouseCoopers study, only one-fifth expect to transfer their business to a family member. Why? Because in this age of opportunity, children were reared, educated, chose other vocational fields and had very little—if any—involvement in the family business. A full 72 percent expect to sell to another company, to the company's management or create a partial sale through an employee stock ownership plan.

In most cases, virtually all of these owners' net worth is concentrated in the value of their businesses. As a result, there will be huge capital gains taxes due on these sales. It's the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to demonstrate faithfulness to the One who entrusted the business owner with such wealth and to make a significant and lasting difference in the world for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Call Laurie Valentine for advice on tax-advantaged ways to honor Christ and help your family through the sale of your business.

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



Barry Allen

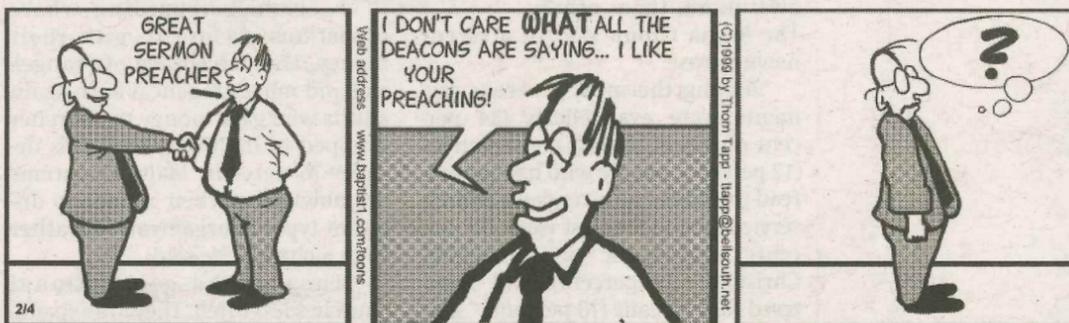
For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

By Michael J. Landi

Across

- 2 Metamorphosed
- 10 "He took ____ of his ribs" (Genesis 2:21)
- 11 Crasher or keeper
- 12 Partake
- 13 Missing ingredient in manna
- 14 Form of "drachma"
- 16 ____ Aviv
- 18 "But glory, honour, and ____, to every man that worketh good" (Romans 2:10)
- 20 Pal, to Philippe
- 21 ____ in (first point scored after deuce?)
- 22 Loan
- 24 "Burning ____ and a wicked heart" (Proverbs 26:23)
- 26 "He revealeth the ____ and secret things" (Daniel 2:22)
- 28 Conjunction
- 30 What April brings
- 32 "The ____ of all Israel are upon thee" (1 Kings 1:20)
- 34 One of David's men (1 Kings 1:8)
- 36 "Sow ... in righteousness, ____ in mercy" (Hosea 10:12)
- 37 "Enter into the rock ... for the glory of his ____" (Isaiah 2:10)
- 39 "But ____ wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord" (1 Kings 16:25)
- 40 What Isaac named the well at Gerar (Genesis 26:20)
- 42 Roman emperor with whom Paul had an audience
- 43 Not A.D.

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			42									43
	44					45			46	47		
					48				49			

- 44 Zaftig, but more bluntly perhaps?
- 45 "Call me not ____, call me Mara" (Ruth 1:20)
- 48 "Ye have made the heart of the righteous ____" (Ezekiel 13:22)
- 49 Aeries
- 17 Enlighten
- 19 Head of a family of Gad (var., 1 Chronicles 5:13)
- 23 Runs swiftly
- 25 "For the ____ things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4)
- 27 "Learn first to show ____ at home" (1 Timothy 5:4)
- 29 "To every man that asketh you a ____ of the hope" (1 Peter 3:15)
- 31 "____, in all these things we are more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37)
- 32 Town of the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:43)
- 33 Apostles and others
- 35 At ____-abarim, in the wilderness before Moab, Israelites pitched tents (Numbers 21:11)
- 38 Chief Philistine city (1 Samuel 6:17)
- 41 New Testament book
- 46 Its capital is Augusta (abbr.)
- 47 "For God ____ my witness" (Romans 1:9)

Last week's solution

1	D	E	F	I	L	E	S	E	N	T			
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Barna study: Only 5 percent of U.S. adults tithed in 2007

Ventura, Calif. (BP)—The United States is supposedly the most generous nation on the planet, but only 5 percent of American adults donated 10 percent or more of their income to churches and charitable groups last year, according to a study by George Barna's research organization.

Of the more than 1,000 adults surveyed, Christians did tend to give more than others, The Barna Group said in a recent news release.

"Among the most generous segments were evangelicals (24 percent of whom tithed); conservatives (12 percent); people who had prayed, read the Bible and attended a church service during the past week (12 percent); charismatic or Pentecostal Christians (11 percent); and registered Republicans (10 percent)," Barna noted.

The segments of society who were unlikely to tithe included people under the age of 25, atheists and agnostics, single adults who have never been married, liberals and adults who make less than \$20,000 per year, the research indicated.

Barna explained that the idea of a tithe originated in the Old Testament as the tax that Israelites paid from the produce of the land to support the Levites, to fund Jewish religious festivals and to help the poor. Since the New Testament, Barna said Christians have believed in generous giving but have not necessarily put a number on the percentage.

The average amount given to non-

profit organizations by U.S. adults last year was \$1,308, according to Barna, and one-third of all adults gave away \$1,000 or more. He also said that almost two-thirds of adults donated at least a small amount of money to a place of worship and 96 percent of evangelicals gave money to a church.

One of the key findings Barna noted is a change regarding where Christians choose to give their money. The percentage of evangelical and non-evangelical born-again adults who gave money to churches dropped to its lowest level this decade—76 percent. Many Christians are now giving their money to different types of organizations rather than a church, he said.

"They attend conventional churches less often. They are expanding their circle of Christian relationships beyond local church boundaries. And they are investing greater amounts of their time and money in service organizations that are not connected with a conventional church," Barna said. "That doesn't make such giving inappropriate or less significant. It's just a different way of addressing social needs.

"If this transition in the perceptions and giving behavior of born-again adults continues to accelerate, the service functions of conventional churches will be redefined within the next eight to 10 years, and conventional churches will have to adopt new ways of assisting people in need," he explained.



Meet the class of 2008, part 5

In nine weeks, "Linda" moves from academic failure to OBI honor roll

This will be the final column about some of our graduating seniors. I hope these articles have been helpful in understanding some of the many ways the Oneida ministry impacts countless young people from a wide range of backgrounds.

While we are blessed to have the opportunity to work with these and other students, we could not do the work we do were it not for the support of our many friends. I hope you feel blessed to know that you have had a part in helping to change the lives of the young people who find their way to our campus each year.

"Linda" (not her real name) came to Oneida in the spring of 2006. If a student comes to us in the spring, it usually means things really are out of control at home and school. Otherwise, enrollment would be in the fall.

Here is part of what Linda wrote in her essay: "I came to OBI from central Kentucky with six failing grades and a lot of missed days due to skipping class. I was making wrong choices that would eventually have had harmful effects on me. I was always getting kicked out of class or having out-of-school suspensions due to my disrespectful attitude toward the faculty. And I was being disobedient to my parents.

"My mom had heard of Oneida and she had gotten the application to enroll me but I always refused to go through with it. But later, when I started thinking about my life and after talking to my mom, I decided that without Oneida I would drop out of school and end up in some juvenile detention center, so I finally agreed to go to Oneida.

"I mentioned earlier that I came to Oneida with six failing grades but within the first nine weeks at OBI, I was on the honor roll. The smaller classes and the one-on-one teacher attention really helped me to stay focused and get the academic help I needed. When I first enrolled at Oneida I was in the tutoring lab once a day to get help with my math. At my old school we did not get any help like that. The teachers here know us personally and they know exactly what to say to us to help us understand. ... I personally think all the teachers at Oneida are great and they care that we make the best grades we can.

"Before I came to Oneida, I did not attend church and God was the last thing on my mind. But after coming to Oneida the worship opportunities have brought me closer to God. If it were not for the daily worship time I would still know nothing about the Bible or be interested in the things that God has done for me.

"Since enrolling at Oneida, my life has changed in so many ways. I have matured a lot and I don't have the 'I don't care' attitude anymore. I have become a follower of Christ and my GPA has improved tremendously. I chose to stay and graduate from Oneida because I was not sure if I (could) graduate if I had gone to another school. ... I have learned to live and get along with other people, which will help prepare me for my future. The most important thing I have learned from Oneida is when you think you have hit bottom and there is no hope, there is hope if you just trust in the Lord."

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



THIS IS ONEIDA

W.F. Underwood

'I didn't run to the call—I ran away'

Student finds peace after following God to Clear Creek

First-year student Josh Lynn from Franklin is happy finally to be at Clear Creek and experience the peace that comes with knowing he is truly where God wants him to be. It has not been an easy journey for him.

"I knew from a very young age that God had placed a call on my life to be involved in ministry," Lynn said. "Like a lot of people, though, I didn't run to the call. I ran away. Sometimes when God places that call on our life we think we're not worthy or we're not the type of person God is looking for. That was my mindset at the time.

"As I was running from God, I realized the life I was trying to live for myself was not the life God had planned for me," he recalled. "I had joined the Marine Corps and I loved it. I thought that was what I was going to do the rest of my life. But due to an injury to my ear, my plans got changed.

"At that time, I felt God speaking to me again and reminding me that He had called me to His work and that He had a plan for my life. So right there on my footlocker at the end of my bunk, I surrendered

to His work and His plans.

"I came home, got a job and the busyness of life took over once again," Lynn continued. "I stopped focusing on God's plan for my life and started focusing on myself again. Then I broke my hand in seven places and God got my attention again. I met my wife, Casey, and got involved with Oak Grove Baptist Church in Springfield, Tenn." Clear Creek alumnus Shannon Benefiel is pastor. He talked to Lynn about the college and the Lynns came for a visit.

"We felt God leading us to come here to prepare for the ministry calling He has placed on our lives," Josh recalled.

"When we first got here, I grumbled a little to God about some of the things we had to leave behind when we came," he said. "But I have realized that I had to let all that go. I know God has called us and He will provide.

"The loving care of everyone here has been an awesome experience for Casey and me," Lynn noted. "God has truly shown us that He is the great provider."

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Donnie Fox



Help Turn the Table on Hunger!

Hunger is a very real problem not only abroad but right here in Kentucky. You can help turn the table by participating in Fast One to Feed One.

- 1) Fast one meal a month, using that meal time to pray for hunger needs.
- 2) Donate to the Southern Baptist World Hunger fund through your church the amount you would have spent.



Find out more about hunger and download free resources at kybaptist.org/hunger.



Mission Service & Ministries Department
502-489-3530 or 866-489-3530

Relief assessment begins in wake of China earthquake

Chengdu, China (BP)—Southern Baptist relief workers are in touch with partners in central China to assess needs created by the 7.9-magnitude earthquake that struck the region May 12.

At least 22,000 people were killed and tens of thousands more injured in small cities and towns nestled in the hill country north of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. Many are believed trapped in piles of concrete, steel and dirt in the city of Mianyang alone, according to news reports.

"We have been in contact with partners in the country and have offered help," said Jeff Palmer, executive director of Baptist Global Response. "Assessments are being made as to what the response should be."

A meeting of Christian organizations in the United States will be held May 14 "to better coordinate our overall effort to respond," Palmer added.

The Chinese government has said it will accept international relief supplies but has so far declined offers of aid workers because of damage to lines of transportation, news services reported.

Water purification leads effort in Myanmar

Bangkok, Thailand (BP)—A team of Southern Baptists is on the ground in Bangkok, Thailand, to help national believers from Myanmar deal with the mounting crisis in their country after a May 3 cyclone left 62,000 people dead or missing and drove perhaps 1 million people from their homes.

Five "initial responders," led by Sam Porter, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's disaster relief director, are setting up a coordination center and training Myanmar Christians in water purification techniques, according to Jeff Palmer, executive director of Baptist Global Response.

"The specialists we have on the ground in Bangkok have training in many areas of disaster relief," Palmer said. "Some Myanmar national believer partners are coming out to be trained in technical topics such as water purification, as well as an overall plan and methods for responding to a disaster of this magnitude."

The Myanmar nationals will then set up a disaster relief structure in their own country and be prepared to coordinate relief efforts coming from other areas, Palmer added.

Southern Baptists are focusing on partnerships with Myanmar believers and Christian organizations based in Southeast Asia because relief workers from Western countries are having trouble getting visas into the country, Palmer noted.



IN THE AFTERMATH An estimated 1 million people are homeless in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis ripped apart the thatch dwellings in which most people live. (BP photo)

While Baptist Global Response continues to pursue access through official government channels, progress also is being made through informal networks with Asian Christians who have access to Myanmar.

Working through those partners, Southern Baptists have been able to get medicines and water purification materials into the country, as well as help local partners purchase food relief that is coming down from northern Myanmar, Palmer said. Approximately \$100,000 worth of aid has been funneled into some of the most affected areas, which is "a drop in the bucket because the needs are

enormous and we are committed to help for the long run," he added.

Water purification is a crucial need because fresh water supplies have been contaminated by ocean water and the decaying bodies of dead people and animals. The World Health Organization reported that cases of diarrhea and dysentery are increasing in the country. As many as 1.5 million people are believed to be at risk for serious health problems in the storm's aftermath.

A team of disaster relief specialists from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention is standing by to continue the Oklahoma team's work.

Millions of child deaths each year are preventable, charity insists

Westport, Conn.

(BP)—Nearly 10 million children die each year from treatable illnesses like diarrhea and pneumonia—the vast majority of them in the developing world, according to the U.S.-based charity Save the Children. Child death rates are worst in Laos, Yemen, Chad, Somalia and Ethiopia, and eight of the 10 worst-ranked countries are located in sub-Saharan Africa.

Simple health initiatives such as oral rehydration to combat diarrhea can dramatically improve the chances of survival for children, said David Oot, Save the Children's associate vice president.

According to a report by the agency, more than 200 million children worldwide under age 5 do not get basic health care that would save lives, such as prenatal care, skilled birthing assistance, immunizations and treatments for diarrhea and pneumonia. Low-cost techniques— inexpensive antibiotics and oral rehydration solutions—could save more than 6 million children a year from preventable or curable causes, the agency noted. The top killer of children under 5 is pneumonia, while diarrhea ranks second.

Was bad karma to blame for deadly cyclone in Myanmar?

By Daniel Burke
Religion News Service

Yangon, Myanmar (RNS)—After a natural disaster strikes in the United States, the question almost immediately arises: "Where was God?" or, "Did God allow this to happen?"

Half a world away, as Myanmar digs out from a devastating cyclone that experts say could claim 100,000 lives or more, the question—and answer—are quite different.

About 80 percent of Myanmar's estimated 52 million people are Buddhist and many rely on the principle of karma to explain the storm, scholars note.

Specifically, many Myanmar people believe Cyclone Nargis is a karmic consequence of military rulers' brutal crackdown on Buddhist monks last fall, explained Ingrid Jordt, an anthropology professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee who was once a Buddhist nun in Myanmar and maintains ties there.

"The immediate explanation was: This is retribution for killing monks," Jordt noted. "In any cataclysm, human beings seek to make sense of something that completely destroys the continuity of life. It's an attempt to bring the world back into harmony."

The word "karma" is often misunderstood by Westerners as one's inescapable destiny, according to scholars. In Sanskrit, the word means "action" and refers to the act that creates one's fate, not fate itself. For Buddhists, karma regulates morality as firmly as Newton's law rules motion: To every action there is an

equal and opposite reaction.

Karma extends to other Buddhist traditions as well. The Dalai Lama has reportedly said that Tibet's loss of sovereignty in the 1950s can be at least partially attributed to his country's feudal past.

Hindus also believe in karma. Gandhi claimed that a 1934 earthquake was punishment for India's harsh treatment of its perpetually lower-class "untouchables," Indian author Arvind Sharma noted.

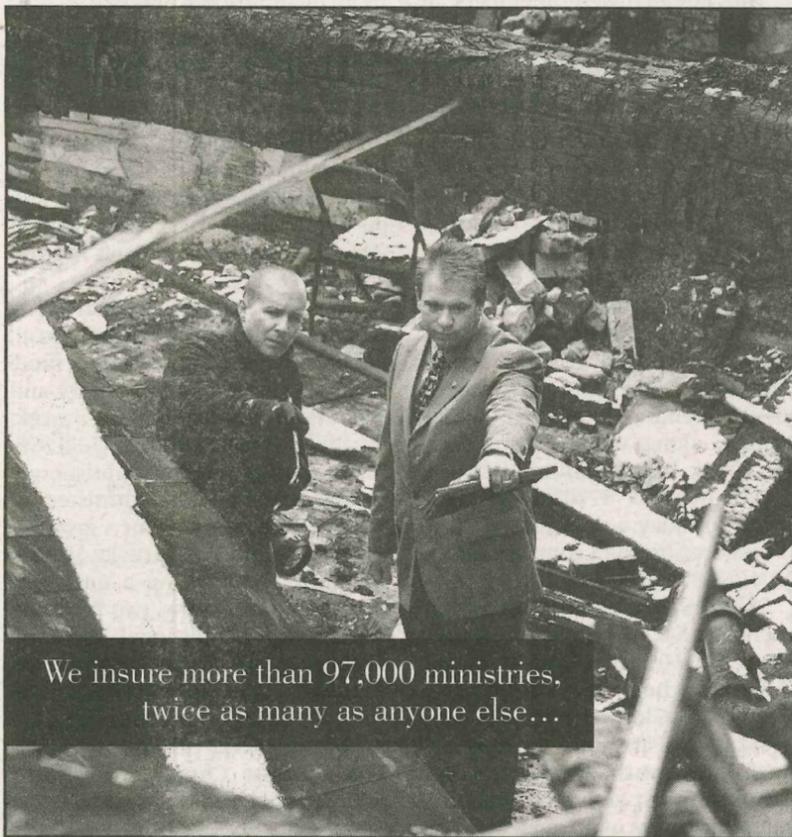
A distant echo of such ideas can perhaps be heard in Christian leaders who tied the Sept. 11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina to sexual immorality in New York City and New Orleans.

American Zen Buddhist Brad Warner said blaming Myanmar's cyclone on bad karma hues uncomfortably close to those ideas.

"To me it sounds like we're just substituting karma for God," he noted, adding that with so many innocent victims, karma seems a harsh and indiscriminate explanation.

But in Myanmar, weather is tied to rulers' behavior, Jordt said. Forecasts in the country's state-run papers almost always read, "The weather is fair throughout the land." It's a way of saying everything is OK karmawise, she pointed out.

But last fall, the military junta imprisoned or killed dozens of Buddhist monks who took to the streets to protest rapid inflation. Monks are revered in Myanmar and violence against them is forbidden. After that, Jordt said, "People knew something was going to happen."



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PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following requests associated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership missions efforts:

■ Pray for members of the volunteer team from Forks of Dix River Baptist Church in Lancaster, who will be traveling to Teresina, the capital city of the Brazilian state of Piauí.

■ Pray for the urgent need for volunteers to serve on missions projects in Maryland/Delaware.

■ Pray for the KBC team traveling to Tanzania at the end of the month to meet with leaders in that country.

■ Pray for all of the Kentucky Baptist volunteer teams that will be traveling throughout the summer.

For more information about partnership missions opportunities, contact the KBC partnership missions department at (502) 489-3529 or toll-free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3529.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **ARLINGTON**—Oak Grove Church recently called **Kyle McAlpin** as pastor. He was ordained to the gospel ministry May 17.

■ **BARLOW**—**Tim Smith** recently resigned as pastor of Ohio Valley Church.

■ **BOWLING GREEN**—First Korean Church recently installed **Gyeongwan Kim** as pastor.

■ **ERLANGER**—**Dwight Swim** recently resigned as pastor of Erlanger Deaf Mission.

■ **GLENDALE**—Gilead Church recently called **Sam Hinkson** as pastor. He previously was pastor of Mount Carmel Church in Lebanon Junction.

■ **HARTFORD**—**Gary Upchurch** recently resigned as pastor of Adaburg Church.

■ **KIMPER**—Kimper Mission recently called **Andy Keaton** as pastor.

■ **MAYFIELD**—Chapel Hill Church will hold homecoming services May 25. **William Strong**, pastor of Lynnville Church in Sedalia, will preach during the 11 a.m. worship service.

■ **MAYSVILLE**—Plainview Church recently called **Jack Arriasmith** as pastor.

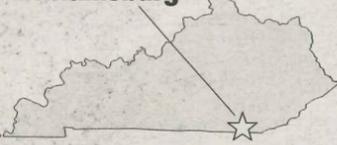
■ **MORNING VIEW**—Piner Church recently called **Tony Robinson** as pastor.

■ **OWINGSVILLE**—**Ronnie Beams** recently resigned as pastor of Owingsville Church.

■ **PRINCETON**—**Darell Eldridge** re-

Spotlight on ...

Williamsburg



University of the Cumberlands men's soccer coach **Paulo Neto** will host youth soccer camps June 2-5 in Corbin and June 24-27 in London. All children are encouraged to participate regardless of skill level. Participants who register before the camps will receive a \$5 discount. To register, call Neto at (606) 539-4386 or (606) 526-8387.

cently resigned as pastor of Second Church to become chaplain for Green River Hospice in Madisonville.

■ **SOMERSET**—Malvin Hill Church recently called **Jimmy Molden** as pastor.

■ **WILLIAMSBURG**—Kensee Church recently called **Wayne Barton** as pastor.

Wofford Church recently ordained **Charles Collier** to the gospel ministry. Bobby Joe Bunch is pastor.

■ **WINGO**—Wingo Church recently called **Scott Solowey** as pastor.

Campbellsville honors inaugural nursing school graduating class

By Linda Waggener
Campbellsville University

Campbellsville—The School of Nursing at Campbellsville University held its inaugural pinning ceremony May 8 for the first 22 graduates of the new school. The traditional ceremony was held prior to Campbellsville's spring commencement May 10 where the students were awarded their Associate in Nursing degrees.

After presenting a pin to each uniformed nurse, Jo Ann Wever, dean of the School of Nursing, told the graduates, "Take care of your patients, take care of each other. Take care of yourselves because as nurses, you will be constantly giving, constantly caring for others. Sometimes it can seem like a bottomless pit, so take care of yourselves."

Campbellsville dedicated the School of Nursing in April 2006 and began offering classes in the fall semester of that year. The school offers a two-year program leading to an associate degree in nursing preparing the graduate to function as a generalist and to practice in a variety of positions and clinical settings. According to Wever, the program's goal is to graduate "competent, qualified, caring and compassionate nurses."

In his remarks to the graduates, Campbellsville President Michael Carter recalled each of the individuals who inspired the dream for a nursing school at Campbellsville along with those who gave of themselves to make the dream a reality. He emphasized that part of that dream was to graduate a "Camp-

bellsville nurse," one who had all of the proper training and development, but who also had the heart of Jesus Christ.

"It was a dream that no matter where we were, we'd always be able to tell if it is a Campbellsville nurse," he said.

Frank Cheatham, the university's vice president for academic affairs, urged the graduates to take time to thank their family, friends and teachers who supported them through their academic career. He also thanked Wever for her leadership in bringing the first class of the School of Nursing to graduation.

James Jones, pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Campbellsville, closed the ceremony with prayer, followed by a reception for the graduates and their families.

The 22 School of Nursing graduates are: LaRee Bell, Campbellsville; Heidi Bloomquist, Martinsburg, Pa.; Courtney Carroll, Russell Springs; Megan Cox, Campbellsville; Lindsey Driscoll, Elizabethtown; Theresa Fagundes, Campbellsville; Anita Franklin, Campbellsville; Jamie Holt, Campbellsville; Denise Hughes, Greensburg; Dedra Kerr, Elizabethtown; Sarah Kerr, Campbellsville; Terri Miller, Campbellsville; Melissa Mings, Campbellsville; Rita Reynolds, Campbellsville; Janice Shuffett, Greensburg; Natalie Shuffett, Greensburg; Angela Stone, Greensburg; Ashley Thompson, Campbellsville; Christina Ward, Lexington; Janet Weatherford, Campbellsville; Allison Wise, Campbellsville; and Jacquelyn Young, Campbellsville.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May

- 14 Iron Sharpening Iron, Applebee's Park, Lexington.
- 17 Associational Womens Mission Union Leadership Training, Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 19-21 Youth Ministers Spring Retreat, Georgetown College.
- 19 Women of Worth Lifestyle Evangelism Conference, Beacon Hill Baptist Church, Somerset.
- 20 Women of Worth Lifestyle Evangelism Conference, Northside Baptist Church, Princeton.
- 29 Iron Sharpening Iron, Champion Window Field, Florence.

June

- 1-4 Girls in Action Camp, Cedar Crest.
- 4-7 Girls in Action Camp, Cedar Crest.

- 7 Church Weekday Education Seminar, Crestwood Baptist Church, Crestwood.
- 7-14 Kentucky Changers, Monticello.
- 9-12 Girls in Action Camp, Cedar Crest.
- 12-14 Express Mission Adventure Camp for Girls & Boys, Cedar Crest.
- 15-17 Express Mission Adventure Camp for Girls & Boys, Cedar Crest.
- 18-20 Acteens Camp, Cedar Crest.
- 20-21 Acteens Splash, Girls in Action Overnight, Mother/Daughter Overnight, Jonathan Creek.
- 20-21 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Cedar Crest.
- 21-28 Kentucky Changers, Maysville.
- 22-29 All-State Youth Choir/Orchestra Tour, Murray.

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

Church to honor missionaries' child

Louisville—A memorial service will be held for Anna Christine Borger, the 9-year-old daughter of Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionaries Todd and Timberley Borger, May 22 at 7 p.m., at Hurstbourne Baptist Church in Louisville.

Borger died in Indonesia May 7, from head injuries she sustained after falling from a bicycle. A visitation will be held prior to the memorial at 6 p.m.

The Borgers were members at

Hurstbourne while Todd was a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the late 1990s. The church also has sent missions teams to Indonesia to work directly with the missionary family, who have been in the Asian country since joining the IMB.

A memorial service was held for Anna last week in Timberley's home state of Virginia and another will take place in California where Todd's family resides. Anna also is survived by an older brother, Samuel.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FREE: 22 solid wood padded pews, 12 feet long. Available late July. Phone (270) 497-4522.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Gap Creek Baptist Church, a conservative member of the Cumberland Gap Baptist Association in Claiborne County, Tenn. Experience preferred. Gap Creek has an active membership of over 300 and is growing. If possible, send a CD or DVD of your sermon, along with a resumé, to Gap Creek Baptist Church, PO Box 177, Arthur, TN 37707, Attn: Troy Poore. You may e-mail your resumé to trpoore@hotmail.com; or fax to (423) 869-8777.

SEEKING: Dedicated Christian teachers (K-8, certified preferred) for the 2008-09 school year for small Christian school. Send resumé to SCA, PO Box 636, Stanton, KY 40380.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music and youth. Responsible for planning youth activities and leadership for choirs of all ages. Send resumé to Pleasant Memorial Baptist Church, 5440 West Fifth St. Road, Owensboro, KY 42301, Attn: Youth & Music Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Hopkinsville, Ky. Graduate of seminary required; minimum 10 years pastoral experience preferred. Provide both spiritual and administrative leadership for a growing congregation. For more information about our church and community, please visit us at www.fbchopkinsville.com. Send resumé to Pastor Search Committee, c/o Andrew Self, 712 Kensington Court, Hopkinsville, KY 42240; or e-mail to andrewself@yahoo.com.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Friendship Baptist Church in Irvine, Ky. Please send resumé to Pulpit Committee, Friendship Baptist Church, 124 South Hudson Ave., Irvine, KY 40336.

SEEKING: Full-time general secretary competent in MS Word, Excel, Publisher, and administrative module of Church Windows. Salary and benefits; 35 hours, five days a week. Broadway Baptist Church, (502) 895-2459. Phyllis@broadwaybaptist.org.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of worship and outreach for a growing church in western Kentucky. We are currently constructing a new worship facility and have two morning services (one traditional and one contemporary) with a combined Sunday morning attendance of 400-plus. Experience preferred; salary negotiable. Send resumé to: Edgewood Baptist Church, 676 North Drive, Hopkinsville, KY 42240; or e-mail to edbc@bellsouth.net. For more information, please call (270) 886-4461.

SEEKING: Fern Creek Child Development Center is now accepting resúmes from energetic, enthusiastic, committed Christians who are interested in teaching preschool beginning with the 2008-2009 school year. For more information, please contact Dorothy Black at (502) 239-8952; or dorothy@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resúmes must be received by May 30.

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Katrina-battered Miss. church keeps focus on missions

By Karen Willoughby
Louisiana Baptist Message

Long Beach, Miss. (BP)—At first glance it looked as though First Baptist Church of Long Beach, Miss., had been completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. But that was before the character of its people and the cooperative spirit of Southern Baptists kicked in.

"Pre-Katrina ... we thought we were a Great Commission church," said LaRue Stephens, pastor of the Gulf Coast congregation. "We gave a lot of money to missions, sent a lot of missions teams all over the world, and many of our people had been involved in direct support or going. We had our community food bank ministry and housed it on our campus at no cost, plus provided volunteers for it.

"However, one of the sweet blessings of the storm is that God allowed it to remove the walls," he added. "We had to decide what do we do now and we began to discover that the place to do church was not behind the walls in activities we called Bible study and worship. The place to do church is out in the community. With no walls to be concerned about, we saw the real needs of real people."

Located a short distance from the usually placid Gulf of Mexico, the church was in the direct path of Katrina when the hurricane made landfall on Aug. 29, 2005. All that remained of the church when the wind stopped howling was the worship center's round roof and a modern-shaped steeple topped by a cross that the wind was able to blow through rather than push over.

Stephens, who has led First Baptist for nearly 11 years, said the church is "committed to maintaining our level of commitment to the Cooperative Program because No. 1, we know what it means to have nothing.

"We understand the value of a cooperative partnership because we have benefited from the cooperative efforts of Southern Baptists around the nation. But even before Katrina, we knew the value of the Cooperative Program," he acknowledged, noting that it gives the church "an organized and efficient channel ... (to) engage in significant gospel ministry that impacts people in time and for eternity."

With the financial, prayer and hands-on support from 150 partnering churches across the country, First Baptist accomplished an amazing variety of ministries in the weeks and months after the hurricane, which touched virtually every family remaining in Long Beach and the surrounding region.

"It was a neat thing to watch our people," recalled Brenda Davis, the church's minister of education. "They had lost everything, but they were helping others. It gave them a purpose."

Community missions

Among the church's post-Katrina initiatives:

- An emergency distribution center was stocked like a grocery store, with as many as 1,400 people a day receiving food, cleaning supplies, batteries and more.

- A continuous supply of underwear was provided for local police and fire personnel, since initial responders had no place to wash clothes for at least the first three weeks after Katrina. First Baptist and its partnering churches also provided each officer with a personal ice chest and their departments with pallets of Gatorade.

- A school year's supply of toilet tissue, antibacterial hand cleaner, paper towels and other products were given to the Long Beach school system before the schools reopened in October. Also, backpacks stuffed with pencils, paper and other grade-appropriate supplies were provided for 1,250 students.

- A displaced church ministers' support fund was essential, Stephens said, because "we could not afford to have any of our ministers leave."

- A Katrina Relief Fund provided monthly support checks for 167 families "adopted" by the church in the months following the hurricane.

- Chain saw and debris removal ministries started the first week of Katrina's impact, with First Baptist, Long Beach, members guiding volunteer groups to their ministry sites, since street signs and other landmarks were gone.

"We didn't even think about rebuilding the church for nearly a year," Stephens noted. First Baptist, Long Beach, initially met for worship services at an elementa-



ry school; now it meets at a middle school. "When we did start talking about rebuilding, it dawned on me that when you're involved in meaningful ministry—connecting with people at their point of need—you really don't think about yourself or your need."

The church has since bought a 17-acre site further off the shoreline and its new 60,000-square-foot facility, with worship center seating for about 720 in multi-purpose space, is slated to open in July.

"Our regular church schedule has been pretty heavily impacted," the pastor admitted. "We are able to be at the school only Sunday mornings. No Sunday evening. No Wednesday evening," except for mission programs for elementary students—RAs and GAs—and choirs during the week.

Members meet in homes for three mid-week Bible studies. The youth meet at a local office suite. First Baptist, Long Beach, had a morning weekday preschool before Katrina, which now has grown into a full-day daycare in seven modular buildings for about 170 youngsters.

About 400 people now attend Sunday morning worship, but "there are some people who cannot sit in metal chairs or on bleachers, so it's hard to say how many we've actually lost," Stephens said. "I think we don't want to stop and count."

Despite their losses, and the tremendous needs in Long Beach and Mississippi's Gulf Coast, First Baptist, Long Beach, continued its five-year partnership with First Baptist Church of Bath, Maine, and is developing a three-year partnership with First Baptist Church of Aberdeen, Md., a Southern Baptist church directly outside a military base expected to triple in size over the next few years as other bases around the nation are decommissioned.

"The church in Bath had only been Southern Baptist for six months when we began our partnership," Stephens noted. "They were disbanding as a North American Baptist church and decided to give it one more try with the SBC. For the last five years, we have sent mission teams, construction teams

to remodel their facilities, as well as vacation Bible school and leadership training."

The new partnership in Maryland builds on a mutual military connection. A Navy construction battalion, the Seabees, is located near Long Beach, while Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Miss., is about 15 miles away. Many military families live in Long Beach because of the highly regarded public school system.

"We feel strongly about our involvement with military families," Stephens emphasized.

Budget stretched

In addition to the 10 percent of undesignated funds allocated for the SBC's Cooperative Program and 3 percent for the work of Gulf Coast Baptist Association, the Long Beach congregation also budgets for a jail ministry, seamen and truckers ministry, ministry to Vietnamese nationals who have immigrated to the Gulf Coast, and Baptist Collegiate Ministry on two local campuses.

"We're very involved in missions; we're committed to not becoming ingrown," Stephens emphasized. "We want to be an Acts 1:8 Great Commission church in practice. All of us (in the SBC) are, in theory, but we really want to be a church involved continuously in reaching out locally, in our Jerusalem and in our Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth."

Currently, the church's greatest challenge is "to avoid debt in our efforts to provide the ministry facilities and furnishings to carry on the ministries that are available to us right now," he acknowledged. "We have a \$4 million shortfall and there is no way we can service a \$4 million debt without adversely impacting our ability to continue all our ministries at the present level of engagement and to seize other opportunities as they present themselves.

"God has faithfully provided everything we have needed at each stage of our ministry since Katrina—and before," the pastor continued. "We're trusting Him to continue to do what He has done, as we have been obedient and even eager to serve in His Kingdom agenda in Long Beach and across the world."

PRESSING ON Hurricane Katrina's devastation of First Baptist Church of Long Beach, Miss., failed to derail the congregation's outreach to its community and, through the Cooperative Program, its part in Southern Baptist worldwide missions and ministries. (BP photos)

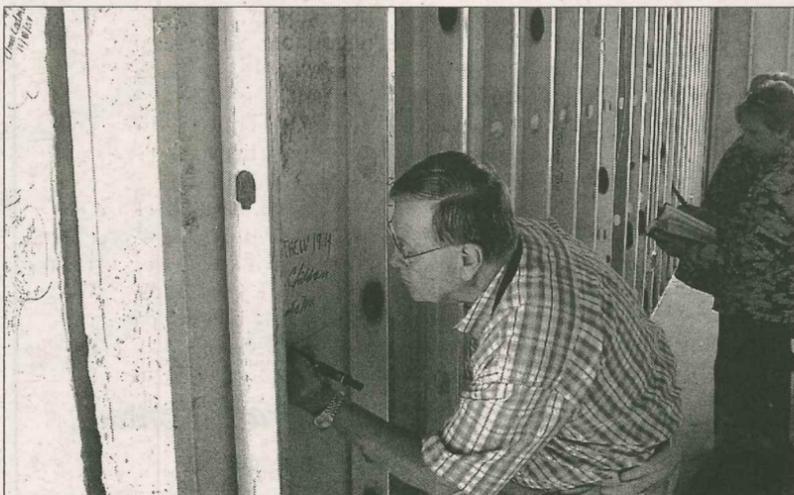
Foreign missions opportunity

The Samoa Baptist Academy on the island of American Samoa in the South Pacific Ocean is seeking several volunteer teachers for the 2008-2009 academic year.

Instructors are needed for grades 1, 4, 5 and 6. Teachers also are needed for math and science in grades 7-9.

Brian Smart, pastor of Happy Valley Baptist Church's English-speaking service, coordinates volunteer missionaries and teachers for SBA. He suggests volunteers raise \$10,000 to cover living expenses on the island for 10 months.

For additional information, contact Smart at brianmichaelsmart@gmail.com, or by phone at (684) 731-3798.



REBUILDING Members of First Baptist Church of Long Beach, Miss., write their favorite Scriptures on the sheetrock for their new building, slated to open in July. "We prayerwalked through the church and let people write Scripture quotes on the walls and floors so our people would be surrounded by Scriptures and prayers," said John McCall, minister of music at First Baptist, Long Beach.

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