



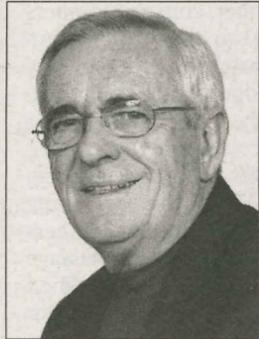
# WESTERN RECORDER

July 22, 2008  
Vol. 182, No. 29

## FOR THE RECORD

**Disaster Relief**  
Southern Baptists help Iowa town clean up.  
Page 2.

**Baptists**  
Nashville megachurch to vote on future of controversial pastor.  
Page 2.



**Kentucky**  
State ministry leaders recall retiring David Aker's love for Eastern Kentucky. Page 3.

**Financial Forum**  
Avoiding common mistakes is key to improved finances.  
Page 4.

**Guest editorial**  
When does a church become really relevant?  
Page 5.

**Issues**  
Report: Families that attend church are happier, more stable.  
Page 8.

**Nation**  
Economy may affect churches in ways other than giving. Page 9.

## Churches on the Web



### Churches of all sizes using Internet as way to reach communities

By Ken Walker  
State Correspondent

**Richmond**—When CrossPoint Baptist Church started meeting last year, Pastor Randy McPheron wanted to spread the word about the new congregation without spending a fortune. His solution: the Internet.

Lacking expertise in cyberspace, McPheron relied on church members to set up and maintain the church's Web site—[www.crosspointbaptist.net](http://www.crosspointbaptist.net). Because of it, a number of visitors have attended services at the elementary school where CrossPoint holds worship services.

"I think we've had good success with it," McPheron noted. "We wanted to be exposed to the community and be easy to find on the Web. We wanted folks to get a basic idea of who we are."

The site's content includes audio of the pastor's sermons, something McPheron said allows non-members to get a better idea of what the church is all about.

CrossPoint pays a small monthly fee to a service to host its site, but thanks to volunteers there are few other expenses.

"I have friends who have spent tens of thousands of dollars set-

ting one up," McPheron explained. "I think we're able to be effective. Ours isn't the greatest of quality but it's good enough."

At 40 years old, McPheron said he is on the cusp between becoming familiar with technology in his college years and kids now growing up with high computer literacy. However, he advised pastors not to get discouraged if they are not familiar with computers, saying there are either church members who can help with establishing a site or technology companies that specialize in Internet operations.

□ See Church Web sites ... Page 6

## Giving to ministries topped \$100 billion in 2007, report says

**Glenview, Ill. (RNS)**—Giving to religious charities and congregations passed the \$100 billion mark for the first time in 2007, according to a recent report by the Giving USA Foundation.

Giving to religious groups increased 4.7 percent, bringing the total to \$102.32 billion. Overall giving to charitable causes reached \$306.39 billion in 2007, a 3.9 percent increase from 2006.

The report, released last month, shows that donations to religious causes accounted for half of all individual charitable giving. Three-quarters of all giving in the U.S. came from individual donations to charity, the report noted.

Del Martin, chair of the Giving USA Foundation, said, "And what you can't forget is that the 'little guys,' the families most affected by the economy, kept on giving despite any worries they might have about their personal situations."

Charitable giving consistently represents 2.3 percent of the average American's disposable income each year, a figure that held up in 2007, according to the report.

The survey, conducted by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, analyzed eight charity subsectors—arts/culture/humanities; education; environment/animals; health; human services; public-society benefit; international affairs; and religion. Each saw individual increases last year, according to inflation-adjusted estimates.

Meanwhile, presidential campaigns in 2007 raised \$580 million, according to the Federal Election Commission, a mere one-quarter of 1 percent of the \$306 billion raised for charity.

## Kentucky Changers leaves positive mark on Williamsburg, state

By Daphne Baird  
University of the Cumberlands

**Williamsburg**—Summertime for most young people means a break from school and long, lazy days hanging out with friends. The teenagers who recently visited Williamsburg as part of Kentucky Changers see summer the same way, but with one important difference—their long days were anything but lazy.

Kentucky Changers is the missions emphasis of the Kentucky Baptist Convention that challenges students to live out their faith while getting their hands dirty doing hard work. The youth who serve not only volunteer their time but also pay for the privilege, just as they would for a more conventional summer camp experience.

From July 5-13, more than 350 volunteers—middle school, high school and college students and adults—representing Kentucky Bap-

tist churches from across the state as well as a church from Ohio, completed jobs for 28 local families and individuals in Williamsburg and Whitley County who needed repairs or maintenance for their homes.

The Williamsburg project was the last of three Kentucky Changers endeavors this summer which brought nearly 1,000 volunteers out to help neighbors in need across the state. The first two projects were held in Monticello and Maysville in June.

In Williamsburg, materials were provided by local businesses and the city, and were distributed to the worksites by students in the Mountain Outreach program at University of the Cumberlands, which served as the base of operations for the week.

Most crews replaced roofs, painted, repaired windows and built wheelchair ramps. One crew poured a concrete floor and framed an addition to the Emergency Christian Min-

istries building in Williamsburg.

Despite almost daily storms, which caused delays and even halted an afternoon at the Kentucky Splash Water Park, the crews pushed to finish their projects by the end of the week. As some crews completed their jobs, they joined others to help ensure that all of the scheduled work was finished on time.

Rachel Freeman, a student at South Marshall Middle School in Benton who served as the medic for crew 26, celebrated her 14th birthday by ripping old shingles off the porch roof at the home of a single mother of two.

"This is my second year and this is an awesome crew," she said with a smile. "I will do this again."

A program like Kentucky Changers requires a great deal of planning. Project coordinators Peggy Murphy and Philip Ritchie spent ten months □ See Kentucky Changers ... Page 3



**SELFLESS SERVICE** Kentucky Changer Rachel Freeman celebrates her 14th birthday by tearing old shingles off the Williamsburg home of a single mother with two children. More than 350 students participated in the week-long project in Williamsburg. (Photo by Daphne Baird)

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, July 23.

## Southern Baptists help Iowa town clean up

By Richard Nations  
Iowa Baptist

Lamont, Iowa (BP)—Flood debris sitting in the sun produced a foul odor in Lamont, Iowa, a small town of 490 people. Some residents piled debris on the curb for sanitation workers to haul away, but they were at a loss for what to do next.

Many of the town's senior adults and some with physical disabilities had been waiting for assistance to clean out their homes, which were damaged by floodwaters when eight inches of rain fell May 25.

The mayor of Lamont, Alfred Hotchkiss, said he heard about Southern Baptist disaster relief at a meeting of the emergency management council in the county seat about 20 miles away. He asked if SBC workers could come to the town and help residents who were having trouble getting assistance.

Ty Berry, disaster relief coordinator for the Baptist Convention of Iowa, responded in the affirmative, and a one-day blitz of the town was arranged for July 9. Twenty-eight workers from Oklahoma, South Carolina, Colorado and Texas converged on the town and cleaned out 11 homes.

The homeowners had signed releases giving the crews permission to remove debris and tear out damaged walls and floors down to the bare wood studs. After a power washing, the wood was treated with a solution of bleach and water to pre-

vent the growth of mold. The walls and floors were then ready to be recovered and painted.

Mud was carried out in buckets and left in a pile on the curb for city workers to take to the landfill. Furnaces, water heaters and laundry appliances that were non-repairable were removed from homes.

Residents said they could not believe Southern Baptists would travel from all parts of the country to work with them in their little town.

"After you go through something like (the flooding), you really appreciate it," Hotchkiss said of the Baptists' help. "We had water nearly as wide as a football field across our main street in town."

Hotchkiss noted that the town's Methodist minister "has been going around trying to calm the people down after the flood. But he can only do so much, and people were starting to get upset with the lack of progress.

"I heard about this service, and we arranged for it. You really appreciate the help, and then when these guys are done they stand around and pray with you and give you hugs," the mayor added. "That's the really great part."

As far as anyone in Lamont can recall, this was the biggest flood ever to hit the town.

Hotchkiss patrolled in his "mayor mobile," a John Deere Gator ATV, as he kept SBC relief workers informed of residents who needed help.

"I think she's a shift worker and may work nights," Hotchkiss told one disaster relief worker who had been unable to contact a homeowner. "She'll be up in a little while."

The mayor, who seemed to know most of the town's residents on a first-name basis, has been on the city council off and on for about 30 years. A tool and die maker in Cedar Rapids, Hotchkiss works nights and handles town affairs during the day.

Southern Baptist workers were washing chairs at St. Peter's Luther-

an Church when the church treasurer, Dian Smith, came by to thank them for assisting with the clean up. She explained that the church had 24 inches of water in the basement from the creek behind it.

"Everyone in the church membership is just tough, though. We are old and faithful," Smith noted, adding that about 15 people attend the church.

The pastor, Roger McKinstry, serves four Lutheran churches in northeast Iowa. He has been a spiritual comfort to the elderly St. Peter's members. But Smith acknowledged the Southern Baptist efforts were a special blessing because "we just didn't have the energy" to clean the rest of it out.

Norman Wagoner, who has served in disaster relief for nearly 30 years, supervised the Oklahoma mud-out crew. That state, along with Texas, was one of the first to get involved in disaster relief as a men's ministry.

"It's really rewarding" Wagoner said. "We just wanted to come over here and help these people with their flood and show the love of God."

### KBC dispatches mud-out crews

Meanwhile, the Kentucky Baptist Convention has sent a disaster relief team to assist with the mud-out efforts currently underway in Wapello, Iowa.

According to Coy Webb, KBC's disaster relief associate, a team of volunteers from Alexandria, Cerulean, Frenchburg and Utica arrived July 20, and will serve through the week.

Webb said the KBC is also hoping to send out volunteers to staff an on-site kitchen in Wapello. Trained volunteers interested in helping can contact the KBC's Baptist Men on Mission department at (502) 489-3527, or toll free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3527.

With additional reporting by KBC Media Relations Associate Kristie Randolph

### CLEAN-UP CREW

Community Southern Baptist Church in Waterloo, Iowa, is the temporary home for more than two dozen Southern Baptist disaster relief mud-out crews working in northeast Iowa, including this team from Oklahoma. (BP photo by Richard Nations)



## BAPTIST DIGEST

**Carson-Newman names O'Brien president.** Baylor University professor and administrator Randall O'Brien has been named president of Carson-Newman College. Trustees of the Jefferson City, Tenn., school elected him July 8. O'Brien will assume full-time duties Jan. 1, 2009, after a transitional period that begins in August. O'Brien replaces James Netherton, who resigned in 2007. O'Brien has served at Baylor for 17 years, including the last three as executive vice president and provost.

**Missionary loses cancer battle.** Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary Theresa Thompson, 41, died July 10 in Munich, Germany. Diagnosed with advanced colon cancer last year, Thompson chose to remain in Germany so she could continue her work for the IMB, where she served in a variety of roles during her two-and-a-half year stint. A Missouri native, Thompson was a graduate of Missouri State University and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in San Francisco.

**CBF receives grant for 'ecosystem' initiative.** The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship will create a leadership "ecosystem" during the next three years with a \$1 million grant from the Lilly Endowment. The ecosystem, as the grant describes it, will focus on two initiatives. One will be aimed at youth and college students, while the other will bring theological educators and pastors together in dialogue. The program is aimed at helping young people discover their vocational calling. Plans call for the program to begin to take shape this fall.

## NAMB's Meacham appointed to new associational strategy role

Alpharetta, Ga. (BP)—The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board has appointed David Meacham to the newly created position of senior strategist for associations. Prior to his new appointment, Meacham served as NAMB's senior strategist for church planting.

In naming Meacham to the new position, NAMB President Geoff Hammond expressed his commitment to ensure greater thinking from Baptist associations throughout the mission board and a higher visibility of associations and their efforts.

The appointment of Meacham to the newly created job follows a NAMB-initiated "think tank" meeting in April during which NAMB associational relations was discussed and redefined. The session was attended by NAMB representatives, associational missionaries, several state executive directors and state directors of missions.

Hammond said with Meacham in the new post, associations will have a higher profile as NAMB assists Southern Baptists in their task of fulfilling the Great Commission in the United States, Canada and their territories via NAMB's strategy of sharing Christ, starting churches and sending missionaries.

Meacham said he is looking forward to assisting associations in the areas of evangelism, church planting and missions, especially with the added challenge of NAMB's recently announced national evangelism initiative, "GPS—God's Plan for Sharing."

Meacham, who served as director of missions in Las Vegas from 1981-1992, led Southern Baptist statewide efforts from 1992-2001 as executive director of the Nevada Baptist Convention. He came to NAMB in 2007 from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he served as director of the Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health.



David Meacham

## Nashville church to vote on future of divisive pastor

Nashville (BP)—Members of Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville will vote July 27 on an early retirement package for senior pastor Jerry Sutton.

The church has been embroiled in controversy over Sutton's leadership since July 2007 when a church trustee was removed from membership. A group of about 50 current or former church members filed suit last September seeking access to detailed financial records and launched a Web site listing their grievances against Sutton.

In October, church members voted 1,101 to 286 to affirm Sutton as pastor and in January 2008, a judge dismissed the lawsuit but gave the plaintiffs access to records, including meeting minutes and financial documents. In May of this year, a vote to dismiss 71 church members fell four votes shy of passage but was later reversed when the congregation voted to disallow ballots cast by the members who were the subject of the ouster motion.

A July 17 statement released by John Levesque, chairman of the congregation's human resource team, said discussions between Sutton and the church's lay leadership had resulted in "an outline of terms ... that allow Dr. Sutton to take early retirement."

The congregation's human resources committee, budget and finance committee and trustees formulated a retirement package that will be presented to the congregation for a formal vote July 27, the statement indicated.

"We are grateful for the leadership and spiritual guidance Dr. Sutton has provided to our congregation over his 22 years of dedicated service to Two Rivers," deacon chairman Andy Dunning wrote in the statement. "Church leadership agreed with Dr. Sutton's view that it is time for the next phase in the life of this church, and in his life as well."

If the proposal is approved, Sutton's retirement would take effect "near summer's end," the statement noted. Following that, interim leadership would assume preaching duties and "at an appropriate time in the future" a search for a new senior pastor would begin.

The statement released by the church said that when Sutton became pastor, membership stood at 4,600 and more than 3,000 people have been baptized since then. It also credited Sutton with leading a \$12 million building campaign in 1992.

Sutton has served the 45-year-old church since 1986. He was first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2005-2006.

## State ministry leaders reflect on Aker's love for East. Ky.

### Mountain missions director set to retire at end of the month

By Ken Walker  
State Correspondent

**Oneida**—Twelve years have passed since the Mountain Missions Conference that Larry Martin marks as a turning point in the annals of Eastern Kentucky's spiritual history.

The former missions director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention recalled how discouraged participants were. However, on the final day an impromptu prayer meeting went two hours past customary closing time.

In 1997, David Aker assumed the position of mountain missions director which had been vacant for five years. One of his first actions was following up on a suggestion from the 1996 conference to hold prayer meetings in five state park lodges.

Martin noted that a phenomenal move of God is occurring in Eastern Kentucky because of those prayer meetings, which he attributed to Aker's influence and leadership.

Over the past 11 years, Aker has had a hand in planting 19 new churches, not counting six High Impact churches in the region that were started by the KBC. Today, there also are 67 ministries offering food, clothing and housing assistance, with a dozen of them started during Aker's tenure.

"David is a strategist," said Martin, now a missions consultant. "He led churches to become more involved in missions and developing local ministries. David's strong points are, first of all, a love for people and a deep heart for people who have deep needs."

Other tributes to the 66-year-old Aker will be forthcoming at the annual Mountain Missions Conference July 28-29 at Oneida Baptist Institute. A reception will be held the first evening for the outgoing mountain missions director, who retires from the state convention July 31.

Aker will not rest long, though. On Sept. 2, he will become director of missions for South Union-Mount

Zion Baptist Association.

"I felt like it was a good time for me to step aside," said Aker, who will relocate from Somerset to Williamsburg. "Someone else might be able to fit the role better in terms of new starts. It takes a lot of energy and a lot of miles."

His new position will continue a longtime association with Kentucky Baptists that stretches back to 1955 when Aker professed Christ as his Savior at Eden Baptist Church in Mount Vernon.

During his time at Cumberland College (now University of the Cumberland) he was pastor of Ringgold Baptist Church in Somerset. After graduating in 1964, Aker took a bivocational position at Providence Baptist Church in Irvine.

Aker then pastored churches in Vanceburg and Louisville from 1968 to '75, when he became director of missions for Pulaski Baptist Association for 22 years.

#### Heart for Appalachia

Noting that his native Pulaski County is part of Appalachia, Aker acknowledged that Eastern Kentucky has long held a special place in his heart.

"After graduating from college, I went to Irvine to pastor and teach school," he recalled. "I was just captivated by the people in Estill County. Any reasonable facsimile of them I look forward to working with."

Randy Jones, leader of KBC's missions growth team, said Aker's knowledge of mountain culture, passion for associational work and desire to start new churches were the reasons for his effectiveness.

"David is very compassionate and kind and gets people to work with him," Jones noted. "Plus, he's an entrepreneur. He's done good research and related well to the culture where he works. He's a people person."

In addition to calling those 1997 prayer meetings, early in his term Aker pulled together directors of missions, convention staff and individuals from the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. Discussions with those personnel helped develop a missions strategy for the region, Jones recalled.

He said the eight basic objectives encompassed such areas as society, evangelism, the economy and church planting.

"He got the people in Eastern Kentucky involved by claiming ownership and got people to serve on committees," Jones explained. "He got right to the grassroots and said, 'What needs to be done? What can we do to help you?'"

Larry Baker, the state convention's director of new work and associational missions, said Aker's strong points include his understanding of Appalachian culture, ability to develop relationships and his commitment to meeting diverse needs.

"One of the things I've learned about him is he's been a risk taker in the area of ministry," Baker emphasized. "He thinks outside the box."

According to Aker's former assistant who now serves as missions mobilization coordinator for the KBC, people in Eastern Kentucky appreciate what Aker has meant to the region.

Teresa Parrett added that Aker is well known and liked and has a vision for what needs to be done.

"I am grateful to David for connecting me to the KBC and helping me to find my place in ministry," she said. "He taught me so much and involved me in many ministry experiences."

#### Friend and mentor

Bill Boldt, director of missions for Bracken Baptist Association, noted that Aker not only saw the big picture, but helped him personally while Boldt was pastor of Stanton Baptist Church.

Aker "was very effective in his ability to mentor me," said Boldt, who recalled taking on a challenging project. "I remember he was there to encourage me, telling me to be cautious, careful and prayerful."

Jim Castlen, missions director for Three Forks Baptist Association in Hazard, called Aker a good friend and a wise counselor.

"David has meant a lot to people in the mountains," Castlen noted. "My view of his contribution to our association has been nothing but positive. I know South Union-Mount



Zion will be blessed by his experience and wisdom."

Castlen added that Aker also has preaching talent, recalling a sermon the retiring director gave at a Three Forks associational meeting a few years ago.

As he listened to Aker's insights about missions, Castlen said he thought that it was one of the best challenges from a state convention employee he had ever heard.

"I thought, 'If I weren't already committed to missions and already a career missionary, I would have walked the aisle right now,'" Castlen recalled.

However, when Aker talks about his greatest accomplishment, he credits God for improving Eastern Kentucky's baptism ratio. The region's average of one baptism per 20 resident members is more than twice the statewide average of one baptism per 43 members, he pointed out.

"I really believe this is the greatest proof that God has been visiting us," Aker acknowledged. "The KBC's mountain missions program has contributed to that ratio. The reason we have a good ratio is because we get lots of help from volunteers."

#### MOUNTAIN MAN

David Aker, who has served as the KBC's mountain missions director for more than a decade, is honored alongside his wife, Wanda, at a luncheon at the Kentucky Baptist Building in Louisville July 15. (KBC photo by Brenda Smith)

## Kentucky Changers leaves positive mark on Williamsburg, state

Continued from page 1

planning the three summer projects, as well as two additional projects in the spring.

Murphy, a ministry assistant with the KBC's Baptist Men on Mission department, said she has seen Changers grow from one project with 80 volunteers in 1994, to the current five events which attracted more than 1,000 volunteers last year.

"It's amazing how God has grown the program," Murphy noted.

Ritchie, who works at a water plant in Lawrenceburg, is a volunteer who devotes all his vacation time each year to Kentucky Changers. He said that the projects give him an opportunity to change things.

"Seeing the change—what God has done in the lives of these kids—that's my pay," he said.

Each evening after the long day of hard work, the volunteers attended



**WORKING HARD** Kentucky Changers (from left) Kyle Taylor, Matt Dusenberry, Troy Graham and Laura Campbell work on the roof of a Williamsburg home. (Photo by Daphne Baird)

joint worship services in Gatliff Chapel on the University of the Cumberland's campus, led by members of the ministry team. Afterward, the students met with their church groups for Bible study and prayer.

On Friday evening, the entire group of volunteers, as well as the home owners, community mem-

bers and representatives of the university and the KBC attended a celebration service at Main Street Baptist Church in Williamsburg. As "before and after" photos were displayed of each home, crews and home owners shared their experiences of the week.

Williamsburg Mayor Roddy Harrison affirmed the volunteers' impact.

"With all the pessimistic outlook on our world by some, it's a blessing to see groups like Kentucky Changers show that there are so many great things going on and good people doing them," he said. "It's especially heartening to see so many youth giving of their time and understanding the need for charitable deeds."

Some Kentucky Changers volunteers returned the compliment to the city and University of the Cumberland.

"I am so grateful to University of the Cumberland for going out of their way to make this the most accommodating and comfortable Changers ever," said three-time Kentucky Changers participant Laura McCoy.

Murphy and Ritchie pointed out that the Williamsburg project marked the first time Kentucky Changers had worked in conjunction with another group like UC's Mountain Outreach. They said they were thrilled with the support and cooperation from the students and staff members who served as "runners" throughout the week.

Although Kentucky Changers was in Williamsburg for only a week, the results of their work will be evident for years to come, not only in the repairs, but also in the lives touched.

With additional reporting by News Director Drew Nichter

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

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## How long, O Lord?

By David Jeremiah

El Cajon, Calif. (BP)—Do your problems seem insurmountable? Taking too long to detangle? In Psalms, we find writers who felt the same way and asked the plaintive question, "How long, O Lord?"

In Psalm 13, David's poignant "how long" is packed with emotion, yet there is a clear progression to his thoughts. Its six verses describe a three-fold response to those long nights of heartache when tomorrow seems far away.

**The groping phase.** In verses 1 and 2, David was groping. He wrote: "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?"

David's prolonged, "How long?" is a bitter but biblical cry. He was a man of God, after God's own heart. Yet he groped for answers and cried out, "How long?"

**The coping phase.** Psalm 13 also talks about coping through the medium of prayer: "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest my enemy say, 'I have prevailed against him'" (verses 3-4).

David turned to prayer and begged God to hear him lest his night of sorrow never end. Prolonged trouble can teach us about prevailing prayer. Through unanswered prayer, we learn patience.

## CBF struggle

In reference to the letter written by so-called "younger" CBFers criticizing Cecil Sherman's Holocaust analogy, there is an old joke that goes something like this: The primary difference between major surgery and minor surgery is this: If it's my surgery, it's major; if it's someone else's surgery, it's minor.

In other words, if you're not old

We need to progress spiritually from groping to coping, using the wonderful availability of prayer—even when the answers seem delayed. "Consider and hear me, O Lord!"—that's our cry.

**The hoping phase.**

As we wait before the Lord with unanswered questions and unsolvable problems, He wants to move us into the hoping phase that ends this Psalm. Notice that Psalm 13 begins with a sigh and ends with a song: "But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me" (verses 5-6).

I'm not sure David's circumstances had changed; but through prayer, he had moved into an attitude of hope, of trust, of optimism and of sustained joy.

A wise elderly blind woman said, "Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time." Moving into a nursing home, she told the attendant she loved her room.

"But you haven't seen it" the attendant replied.

"It doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged," the woman responded, "it's how I arrange my mind."

Amid difficult news, serious problems and drawn-out challenges, we make a choice. We can either gripe and complain, or we can lift up our eyes to the Lord and say, "God, I don't know what is going on

enough to remember the pain, don't criticize those of us who do because we suffered through it. Some of us

"older" CBFers do remember how heartbreaking it was to be disenfranchised by the very group that we loved so much and from which we had drawn our spiritual identity for so long.

An then there's the old adage: If you don't learn from your mistakes, you're bound to repeat them. We



## Growth at Valley View, Louisville

Valley View Baptist Church in Louisville has shown exceptional growth during the past year under the leadership of Pastor Joel Carwile.

Attendance exceeded 5,400 on Easter Sunday, which followed an attendance of 2,300 on Saturday night. The church's life groups exceed 1,000 in attendance and worship surpasses 2,300 on a weekly basis.

My wife Kay and I recently had the opportunity to worship at Valley View and get acquainted, over lunch, with Joel and his wife, Jo. They are the proud parents of a son, Ezekiel, who is nearly three.

Joel and Jo left their parents near Huntsville, Ala., to follow God's call to Valley View. Joel was a college football and baseball player and had settled into a successful career when God called him to preach. He was a bivocational pastor for a few years and God blessed his ministry with

outstanding growth.

His home church had conflict and asked Joel to be the pastor of 19 people. Soon the church was able to call him full time. Bethlehem Church, in a town of 2,100 people, extended a call and over the next 13 years grew from 80 members to 800.

Joel is a Holy Spirit-anointed Biblical preacher who engages the audience with frequent life applications and humor. It is obvious that Joel and Jo love the Lord and people.

It is also obvious that Joel and Jo have a passion to reach people for Christ and discipleship through the church. On the weekend we visited, new Christians were baptized Saturday and in both services on Sunday.

The mission of Valley View is expressed as a three-step process—loving God, becoming like Jesus and serving others.

It was gratifying to learn about the missions emphasis and involve-

ment of the church in Africa and South America. It also was exciting to hear about Joel's passion to plant new congregations.

Valley View has a variety of life groups and a host of ministries to provide spiritual growth and service opportunities for its large body of believers. Of the 12 staff and ministry leaders, several have served at Valley View for many years.

Kay and I were captured by the dynamic worship experience with the excellent leadership of worship ministry leader Rod Hamilton, who was assisted by talented musicians and media persons.

Many volunteers serve every weekend in the worship, teaching, prayer, fellowship, outreach and missions ministries in Kentucky Baptist Convention churches. Many of these individuals serve behind the scenes.

I join with all pastors and church staff members in praising God for their godly leadership and service. We love you and praise God for your faithful ministry in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

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

Jeff Wise  
Louisville

## STEWARDSHIP

## Avoiding common mistakes is key to improved finances

By Don Spencer

Most individuals can improve their handling of finances by simply avoiding the most common financial mistakes. How many of the following mistakes are you making?

**Neglecting to cover gaps in insurance.** A sure way to wipe out years of hard-earned money is to suffer an uninsured loss. Deficiencies in any area of insurance can be financially disastrous.

**Mismanaging credit.** Credit is too easily available. Many people lack the self discipline needed to manage debt effectively. Financial institutions do not help by promoting high-limit credit cards, 5-year car loans and large home equity loans with liberal repayment terms. Most people should avoid these. The current "credit crunch" in our country is the result of the overuse and misuse of credit.

**Failing to save regularly.** Saving is essential to financial security. As income increases, savings should increase. Savings should include an emergency fund as well as adequate provision for retirement years.

**Making inappropriate investments.** Due to ignorance or greed—or both—many people make inappropriate investments at least once in life. Some consistently invest in the wrong areas by taking either too much or too little risk.

**Failing to take advantage of tax breaks.** Tax reduction techniques are often not used. By reducing taxes as allowed by law, one gains more income and savings levels can be increased.

**Overspending.** Living beyond your means always puts your finances in jeopardy. Living within ones means is a strong affirmation of everything the Scriptures teach about stewardship.

**Neglecting to prepare a will.** While not around to witness the havoc, people who do not prepare basic estate planning documents do their heirs a disservice. It can cost a family a great deal in terms of inconvenience, relationships and money.

**Failure to be a Christian steward.** A Christian's perspective on money should be different. God owns it all; we are stewards/managers. How we handle our possessions is one of our most dramatic means of Christian testimony to the world. Our handling of money should reflect that view.

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



## Single adults can take simple steps to deal with loneliness

**Q: It's not so much that I hate being alone as I hate feeling alone. It can be overwhelming not to have someone with whom I can carry on a simple conversation. What do you suggest?**

Author and speaker Harold Ivan Smith reminds us that the loneliest person in your zip code tonight is not a single adult, but a married adult 18 inches from his or her spouse, crying to sleep from aching loneliness. Still, your question is valid.

### SINGLES

■ Watch your "self talk." If your thoughts are "downers" about how "bad" it is to be single/alone, such feelings are likely to follow.

■ Take action to put yourself face to face with another human being. It might be as simple as picking up the phone. Who in your circle of influence needs a touch?

■ Remember to take advantage of the alone times. Single adult Henri Nouwen, in his classic book, "Reaching Out," talks about how to move "from loneliness to solitude." As you get comfortable with God's company, you develop peace and contentment from God's Spirit.

■ Brainstorm with a trusted friend, pastoral counselor or life coach for new avenues of connection.

■ Get out of your comfort zone with a mission trip. To be thrown together with others is a "spark plug" to connection—especially when it is not all about you, but serves a higher purpose.

■ Be friendly to your living space. Consider a roommate, a pet or even planting a garden.

■ Research what clubs, community activities or Christian small groups are available in your area.

■ Look at your time management. What could you stop doing or do less that puts you in a negative frame of mind?

■ Treat yourself by reaching out. God's words, "It is not good for man to be alone," are not primarily about marriage. It is God's intention for all people to be connected.—James Stillwell

### Q: What is the No Cussing Challenge?

Fourteen-year-old McKay Hatch started the No Cussing Club at his junior high school in California in 2007. Bothered by all the foul language being used by his friends, McKay challenged them to clean it up. The No Cussing Club now has more than 20,000 members worldwide.

### PARENTING

Membership is free and simply involves a willingness to make a commitment to use better language. The challenge can be found at [www.NoCussing.com](http://www.NoCussing.com). The organization's motto, "Leave people better than you found them," encourages members to look for opportunities every day to help people and lift them up through words and actions. That reminds me of Paul's words in Ephesians 4:29, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up."

Our children are growing up in a society that has become desensitized to cursing. Foul language has worked its way into TV, movies and everyday life in ways that are perhaps considered commonplace, but that still remain offensive to many. Hatch said that when he raised the issue with his friends, most did not realize how much they cussed, or how much it bothered him. The No Cussing Club believes the world will be a better place if more people choose to use words that are polite, respectful and kind instead of choosing to curse.

Parents might want to consider taking the No Cussing Challenge as a family and using it as a springboard for conversations about appropriate language. Some children also may want to start a club chapter at their school or in their neighborhood.—David Garrard

Family Forum writers are:

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Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253 or e-mail [wesrec@earthlink.net](mailto:wesrec@earthlink.net).



## When does church become really relevant?

One of the buzzwords for the last decade has been the word "relevant." Churches, denominations and every other form of Christian ministry have struggled to be relevant. Unclear in all the efforts has been what these groups would look like if they achieved the goal and actually became relevant.

Part of the confusion results from the meaning of the word itself. The dictionary says relevant means "bearing upon or relating to the matter in hand; pertinent," implying "a close logical relationship with or importance to the matter under consideration." But when churches use the word, the most common understanding is something that is meaningful or meets the needs of a particular group.

And there is one of the problems with the concept of being relevant. What particular group is one talking about?

Most churches mean the 20-somethings. That is the group most churches have the greatest difficulty reaching. Logic dictates that if the church can meet the needs of this age group, then the 20-somethings will come back to the church or the denomination or the ministry.

In the name of being relevant, a church makes changes in music, in dress, in preaching style, in message, in programs, in how the congregation does church. Unfortunately what appeals to most 20-somethings may not appeal to the 50-somethings and the church finds itself in discord.

By concentrating on being relevant to one target group, the church makes itself irrelevant to others.

Some try to gloss over this outcome by saying that older Christians will go along with whatever changes are necessary in order to see their children or grandchildren involved in church. Certainly every Christian parent prays for his or her children and grandchildren to have a saving relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ and to be active in a local congregation. At the same time, those parents and grandparents have needs that are just as real and just as important to them as those of the 20-somethings.

Does the church have a responsibility to be relevant to other age groups as well? Certainly. The apostle Paul said he became all things to all people that he might win some. That is attempting to be relevant to all groups.

When a church chooses to focus on a target group—any target group—it must be careful about the mes-

sage it sends. Focusing on a target group may communicate that the church is all about that target group and about meeting the needs of that target group.

But church is not supposed to be about meeting the needs of any group of people. Church is supposed to be about meeting God. The church's task is to help people come out of themselves and focus on God. It is hard to do that when the church offers them more of the world out of which they have just come.

People long for a place where God is taken seriously. That means the church is more than a reflection of the latest fads or trends. The church is not about that which is passing away. The church is about that which will endure forever.

The message of the church was around before any of us were born. It will be here long after we are gone, if the Lord tarries.

Experiencing God has always been the greatest need of every human being. That need transcends a target group's demographics or the cultural expressions of a particular period of history. Who am I? Why am I here? Where did I come from? Where am I going when I die? These are still the greatest questions people ask.

It is the church that teaches each human being is created by God. It is the church that teaches each one is created in God's image. It is the church that teaches that God is in charge so one finds out what God wants. It is the church that teaches eternal life is possible only as a gift from God made known through Christ.

Well-known pastor and author Rick Warren got it right when he wrote, "It is not about you. ... You were born ... for His purpose."

Dealing with these questions not only takes God seriously but it also takes the value of each human being seriously. The church helps people overcome the world as they find their places in the timeless stream of believers who have learned to love God with heart and soul, mind and strength through Jesus Christ.

The church's calling is to help people experience God and grow in His grace, not to help people feel good about themselves. The church's calling is to preach the full counsel of God, not to offer simplistic "how-to guides" for certain problems.

When the church helps people—all people—experience God in worship and empowers them to serve Him in life, then the church is really relevant.

Bob Terry is editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

### GUEST EDITORIAL



Bob Terry

## Dropping someone from the roll

By David Francis

**Nashville (BP)**—I recently exchanged a number of e-mails with a Sunday School leader in Mississippi.

It has been delightful to try to deal with real questions from

### FIRST PERSON

real people in real classes trying to figure out how to do real ministry through Sunday school. This particular leader, along with the pastor of his church, were meeting to discuss some policies and procedures for helping teachers follow a standard process. They solicited my help with some questions about how to best manage the class rolls. The following were my suggestions:

■ Change the name from "roll" to "ministry list." This is subtle, but the idea is that it changes the primary responsibility. "Roll" connotes that the people, once enrolled, are committing themselves to attendance. "Ministry list" connotes that we, the leaders, are committing ourselves to the members.

on the ministry list? Just saying yes. Here's my stock phrase when I'm enrolling someone: "Enrolling in our class—agreeing to become a member of our ministry list—does not make you a member of the church nor obligate you to become one." The obligation is on us, not them.

■ Before removing someone from the ministry list, ask this question: What is the worst thing that could happen to this person? If the answer is, "We don't know if anyone would ever pray for them again, ever contact them again, ever be available to minister to them again, and when they die, we're not at all sure they would go to heaven," then how about leaving them on the ministry list?

■ So, when would you drop someone from the ministry list? First, when they have moved too far away from the church for us to minister to them. Notice that if they were on a roll, we would remove them if they moved too far away to attend. But, re-

member, it's a ministry list. Second, if they demand to be removed and we've been unsuccessful at talking them out of it. Principle: Don't take people off the roll unless they want off—really bad.

■ What do you say to someone who asks to be taken off the ministry list? Try to communicate that you care for them and would like to be able to remain in touch with them, whether they attend or not. You'd like to be able to pray for them and be available to respond to them in the event of a crisis in their family. Many people are only "testing the water" when they ask you to take them off the list. They may just want to know if you really care.

What's the bottom line of all this? It is remembering that when we ask someone to enroll in Sunday school, we are making a commitment to them more than asking them to make a commitment to us. In reality, it's a joint commitment. Who on your ministry list needs to be the recipient of your prayer this week?

David Francis is director of Sunday school for LifeWay Christian Resources.

## Church Web sites prove valuable in reaching communities

Continued from page 1

Mark Webb, pastor of First Baptist Church of Highland Heights, is another believer in the Internet as a way of reaching the public, calling it the most cost-effective tool of the modern age.

If a pastor does not know any church members who are knowledgeable about setting up a site, Webb suggested calling the nearest director of missions.

When Webb came to First Baptist about 18 months ago, the church's Web site—[www.fbchighlandheights.org](http://www.fbchighlandheights.org)—consisted of a single page and links to several Southern Baptist agencies.

Since then, the pastor has purchased a \$300 piece of software and enlisted a friend to help redesign the site.

"Ours isn't that great, but it has potential," Webb said. "It has helped spread the word. We have several couples who have come and literally told us they came to our church because they liked our Web site."

In addition to sermons, other essential elements Webb recommends are a statement of beliefs, directions to the church along with a map, and a contact page so people know where to call or e-mail if they have questions.

Regardless of how a church proceeds, an electronic media specialist with the Kentucky Baptist Convention said it must first determine how to manage the site before it is even set up.

Brenda Smith added that congregations must examine such questions as what will be posted or updated regularly and who will be responsible for handling that information. This planning extends to design, she noted, and includes determining what information will be included and how it should be presented.

Smith also recommended choosing tools that are easy to use, such as LifeWay Link or another "content management system"—sites that provide an online editor, ongoing maintenance, design templates and other options (see related list).

Often, volunteers will offer to build a site using Web design software, but when it comes time to make changes, things can get complicated, she acknowledged.

"There's a learning curve for such tools and management can be unwieldy," Smith said. "After awhile it may be difficult for a single volunteer to continue to maintain the site

and it is challenging to train others to take over."

Since anyone anywhere can read the site, she explained that content must be presented honestly, accurately and in such a way that it is above reproach. Smith also advised against using church jargon.

Other tips she offered:  
 ■ Be careful when talking about missionaries or mission trips, particularly if it involves someone traveling to nations hostile to Christianity.

■ Be sensitive about posting information or photos of people you minister to if that could cause them embarrassment. She suggested getting permission before sharing a person's photo or story.

■ Be thorough in posting information by answering the "who, what, where, when and why (or how)" questions.

■ Always answer the question, "What's in it for me?" This means mentioning the benefits of attending your church or a particular event—writing with the reader in mind.

Although numerous Kentucky Baptist churches have Web sites, both McPheron and Webb said they know that many do not because of conversations with pastors in their respective areas. McPheron attributed that partially to a generation gap, saying many older pastors are not familiar with the Internet or do not see the necessity of their church having a Web site.

However, the pastor of CrossPoint Baptist said churches that shun the Internet are missing an opportunity to impact people who do not believe in Jesus Christ.

"I would encourage churches to do this as obedience to the Great Commission," McPheron noted. "Some of the older tools of reaching people aren't effective today. Our message doesn't change, but our methods do."

### Kentucky pastors enter blogosphere

Winchester—When Bob Sharp began blogging in late January, he had no idea the modern communication method would become a tool to lead non-believers to faith in Christ.

Over the first three months of his blog ([www.bible21.blogspot.com](http://www.bible21.blogspot.com)) the bivocational pastor of Providence Baptist Church led 10 people in prayers to receive Christ. Most are employees of the computer services company where he works.

Sharp has baptized six of the converts, four of whom have become church members.

"Somebody reads my blog and heads out back to get a Coke or eat a sandwich," Sharp said, noting more non-Christians read his blog than church members. "They talk with someone else awhile and when that person can't answer questions, they say, 'Let me introduce you to the guy who wrote it.'"

The idea to start the regular column came from conversations about spiritual topics at work. After several discussions, one inquirer said it would be nice to have something to read.

Sharp asked his wife—a computer programmer—if she could establish a blog for him. She directed him to Blogger.com, which offers free blog sites. The pastor has written about such topics as Easter and the resurrection, how Passover parallels Christ's sacrifice, courage (after some company layoffs), as well as heaven and eternity.

Though striving to post a new entry each week, sometimes mission trips or other business means two weeks or longer may lapse before Sharp updates his

blog. Each time he posts an entry, Sharp alerts regular readers via e-mail and invites them to post questions.

"It depends on the topic I put out there," the pastor said of the feedback. "If I write about tithing, I don't hear much. If I write about heaven or hell, I hear a lot."

In addition, Sharp said the blog has built bridges with young people who might otherwise never attend church.

Although another central Kentucky pastor has primarily used his blog to communicate with church members, evangelism is part of Rick McKinney's long-range plan.

A former missionary, the pastor of Parksville Baptist Church began blogging in late February after attending the state evangelism conference.

McKinney's wife, Jane, attended a workshop that recommended it; speaker John Avant also urged pastors to do whatever it takes to reach young people.

The pastor named his blog "Sunday's Comin'," ([www.pastorricksays.blogspot.com](http://www.pastorricksays.blogspot.com)) while Mrs. McKinney set up her own to communicate with women at the church.

"I look at this as a teaching opportunity," McKinney said. "It gives me an opportunity to cover some subjects I wouldn't tackle in a normal church setting."

One reason the pastor decided to start the blog was his goal of reaching more adults in the 25- to 40-year-old range. With half its members over age 55, Parksville Baptist has to attract more young adults and children if it hopes to have a future, McKinney acknowledged.

### Companies that offer Web site content management systems:

- ACS Technologies, [www.ExtendPlatform.com](http://www.ExtendPlatform.com).
- Church Square, [www.ChurchSquare.com](http://www.ChurchSquare.com).
- Elexio, [www.Elexio.com](http://www.Elexio.com), or [www.Intellisite.com](http://www.Intellisite.com).
- FaithHighway, [www.FaithHighway.com](http://www.FaithHighway.com).
- LifeWay Link, [www.LifeWayLink.com](http://www.LifeWayLink.com).

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A modern-day Bethel

God is speaking to campers the way He spoke to Jacob

Words cannot adequately describe what takes place during our camp season. Imagine week after week thousands of students and adults coming to a place of refuge from their normal daily happenings. I could give you story upon story of people sharing how they feel so close to God when they are at Cedarmore or Jonathan Creek.

In Genesis, we are told of the importance of places where God has revealed Himself and how we are to make special in our minds the importance of such places and times. In the life of Jacob, as recorded in Genesis 35, one such place is Bethel. Several key events throughout Jacob's life are all tied to this special place of God's activity, and the very name Bethel was given because of God's revelation to Jacob.

During the first weeks of camp, our participants range from first-time visitors to leaders who have attended for nine years. Decisions that have been made year after year in the lives of these regular participants are quite interesting. Seeds that have been planted in years past continue to grow and bear fruit as students and leaders

alike continue to grow in their relationship with Christ. Our awareness of this process is a great blessing to our staff as we are encouraged that camp is much more than a week of emotion.

Perhaps one area of God's revelation to campers is more telling than others. In the area of missions, we have witnessed a great progression of God's activity. In the special place called camp where God speaks, the heart for missions is cultivated and grown to produce amazing results. During the past years, our overseas partnerships not only have raised a great deal of money, but students are being called to serve in missions as God has clearly met with them while they are at camp. During this summer alone, we anticipate that some 300-450 students will hear God's call to commit their lives to full-time missions.

I am certain that you can remember those special places where God has spoken clearly to you, and I pray that we continue to have thousands more come to know Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek as their modern-day Bethel.

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

KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



David Melber

For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

By Evelyn Boyington

Across

- 1 With Deborah, he confronted the army of Sisera
- 5 One of the sons of Merari (1 Chronicles 6:30)
- 12 Poems
- 14 Burn with anger
- 15 Contented comment
- 17 "And the Lord God caused a \_\_\_ sleep" (Genesis 2:21)
- 19 "Suffer the little children to come unto \_\_\_" (Mark 10:14)
- 20 Apiece (abbr.)
- 21 Perimeter
- 23 Farm implements
- 25 The \_\_\_ Pavilions (Kaye novel)
- 26 Son of Seth
- 28 "I took the little book ... and \_\_\_ it up" (Revelation 10:10)
- 29 In the \_\_\_
- 30 Information
- 32 Balmy state (abbr.)
- 33 Spanish pronoun
- 35 "In the \_\_\_ God created" (Genesis 1:1)
- 37 Exclamation of surprise
- 39 Concerning, with "in"
- 40 Oppressed person
- 42 "... come nigh unto Damascus about \_\_\_" (Acts 22:6)
- 44 "The Lord that delivered me out of the \_\_\_ of the lion" (1 Samuel 17:37)
- 46 "Thou art not a \_\_\_ of the law, but a judge" (James 4:11)
- 48 "For the stone shall \_\_\_ out of the wall" (Habakkuk 2:11)
- 49 Mentions
- 51 Bide a \_\_\_ (Scottish phrase)
- 52 Printer's measure
- 53 Great Commission verb
- 54 "The first came out red ... and they called his name \_\_\_" (Genesis 25:25)
- 56 Note on the diatonic scale
- 57 Abandon
- 60 "\_\_\_ ye from your evil ways" (2 Kings 17:13)
- 62 "The God ... who hath called us unto his \_\_\_ glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Peter 5:10)
- 63 Daniel's den mates

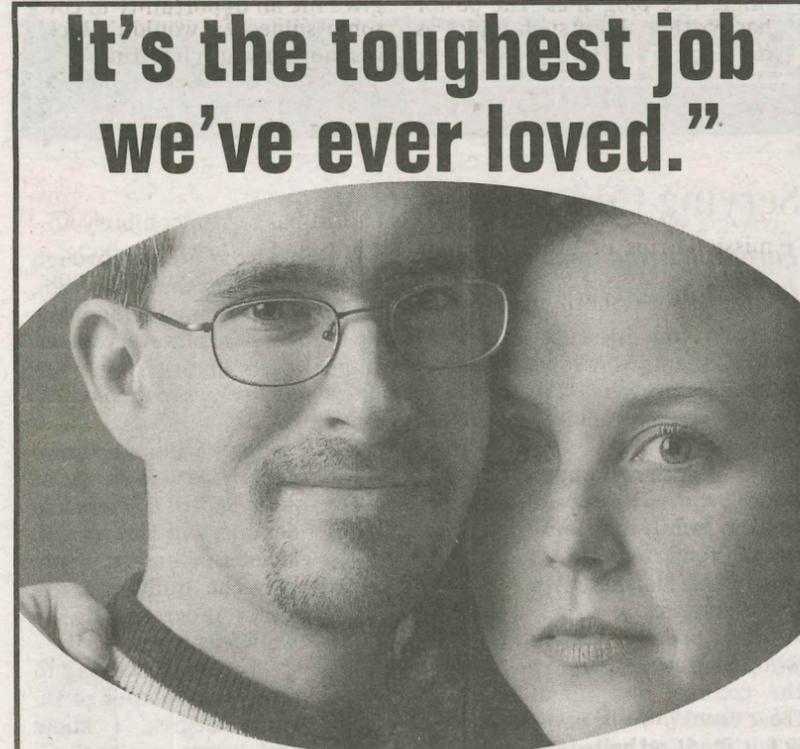
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57		58				59		60			61	
62									63			

- 4 "If ye love me, \_\_\_ my commandments" (John 14:15)
- 6 Resident of the Far East (abbr.)
- 7 Certain rocks
- 8 Command to a horse
- 9 With \_\_\_
- 10 "Then I will give them \_\_\_ to know Me" (2 words, Jeremiah 24:7, NKJV)
- 11 "\_\_\_ unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Psalm 34:11)
- 13 Actress Ward
- 16 "Naphtali is a \_\_\_ let loose" (Genesis 49:21)
- 18 "The blessed and only \_\_\_, the King of kings" (1 Timothy 6:15)
- 22 Ruth and Orpah were "women of \_\_\_" (Ruth 1)
- 24 Pronoun
- 25 Note on the diatonic scale
- 27 Cheerless
- 29 Ate out
- 31 "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full \_\_\_" (Hebrews 5:14)
- 32 Old-fashioned hand towel message
- 34 Yield
- 36 Mature
- 38 "Moreover the Lord thy God will send the \_\_\_ among them" (Deuteronomy 7:20)
- 41 "My \_\_\_ did not slip" (Psalm 18:36)
- 43 Worried exclamation
- 44 Greek letter
- 45 Occident
- 47 Bridle part
- 49 \_\_\_ fields (what Jesus went through on the Sabbath (Mark 2)
- 50 Son of Kish
- 53 European tongue (abbr.)
- 55 Father of Bezaleel (Exodus 31:2)
- 58 Quadrant in D.C.
- 59 British 'bye
- 61 "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be \_\_\_ strife" (Genesis 13:8)

Last week's solution

1	D	A	M	4	H	O	R	S	E	8	B	I	D	
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Down

- 1 Announce loudly
- 2 Right page (abbr.)
- 3 "Which of you ... can \_\_\_ one cubit unto his stature?" (Matthew 6:27)

## Report: Families that attend church happier, more stable

Charlottesville, Va. (BP)—Men who attend religious services regularly are more likely to have happy and stable marriages, more likely to be involved with their children and less likely to divorce, new research indicates.

Additionally, mothers who attend church weekly are half as likely to have children out of wedlock, the study said.

The research by the University of Virginia's W. Bradford Wilcox analyzed data from three national surveys: the General Social Survey, the National Survey of Families and Households, and the National Survey of Family Growth. The research also drew partially from data in Wilcox's book, "Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands."

"Any effort to strengthen men's ties to their children and families must acknowledge and incorporate the important role that religious institutions play in directing men's hearts toward home," Wilcox wrote.

The report noted that over the past 50 years large numbers of men have become disconnected from family life. The "percentage of children living in father-absent homes rose from 11 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 2000," the paper said. Additionally, 38.5 percent of babies in 2006 were born out of wedlock, it pointed out.

The breakdown of marriage, the sexual revolution, declining real wages and the rise of individualism all have contributed to distancing men from their families, according

to the research. Religion, though, can play a role in bringing men closer to their families, it said.

The research also found that:

- Seventy percent of husbands "who attend church regularly report they are 'very happy' in their marriages," compared to "59 percent of husbands who rarely or never attend church."

- Men and women who attended religious services several times a month or more "were approximately 35 percent less likely to divorce between 1988 and 1993, compared to their married peers who rarely or never attended religious services."

- Fathers who attend church several times a month or more "devote at least two hours a week more in youth-related activities," "are significantly more likely to engage in one-on-one activities with their school-age children" and "are also at least 65 percent more likely to report praising and hugging their children very often" compared to fathers who have no religious affiliation.

Why does religion have such a positive impact on fathers and families? The paper cited that churches and religious institutions:

- Teach moral responsibility to fathers.

- Provide fathers with opportunities to spend time with their children and families.

- Offer encouragement and advice on being an effective parent.

- Provide a "meaningful order" to life, thereby helping fathers "deal constructively" with trials, such as unemployment and death.

## Campbellsville University's School of Theology

Proudly presents the Guest Speaker for its annual  
"January Bible Study Preview: Exodus"



Dr. Dwayne Howell is beginning his 10th year on the faculty of the School of Theology at Campbellsville University and is the Distinguished Professor of 2008 at CU. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Dr. Howell is a 1982 graduate of Campbellsville University. He completed his Ph.D. in Old Testament and Christian Preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1993. He has pastored churches in central Kentucky and is pastor of the Rolling Fork Baptist Church in Gleanings, Kentucky. He is actively involved in professional development, having worked on two grants in Biblical Hebrew, serving as chair of the Homiletics and Biblical Study section of the Society of Biblical Literature and co-writing articles with his wife, Dr. Susan Howell, in the areas of Psychology and Biblical Studies.

For more information contact:

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270.789.5029

theology@campbellsville.edu

The School of Theology  
and the Church Relations Council  
of Campbellsville University  
invite you to this year's  
January Bible Study Preview of Exodus.  
~Featuring Dr. Dwayne Howell~

**August 7, 2008**  
**Campbellsville Baptist Church**  
**Fellowship Hall**  
**Campbellsville, Kentucky**  
**12:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**

**Campbellsville**  
UNIVERSITY

\*Study free of charge  
\*Cost for evening meal \$10.00 (payable that day).

## Homecoming 2008

### 50 years ago, former OBI president welcomed 1908 grads back to campus

By Myrtle Webb Cooke, alumni director & member of OBI class of 1960

In April 1958, all five members of the inaugural graduating class of Oneida Baptist Institute returned to campus 50 years after they completed their studies to attend commencement ceremonies. A member of OBI's class of 1958, Barkley Moore, invited them.

Each of those first grads shared stories that day about their Oneida experience. They told of how James Anderson Burns called a meeting of the feuding families around Oneida and convinced them to stop the violence so their children could go to school. Some of OBI's first students were adults who had never had the opportunity to attend school before. Though the school opened January 1, 1900, the first graduation was eight years later.

At this year's homecoming, members of the class of '58 returned to mark their golden anniversary. Of the 28 students, seven are deceased, including former OBI President Moore. Three class members, Linda Whitt Glover, Carolyn Kelly and Gail Burns Young, wrote letters to remind their classmates about the anniversary. Eleven of the 21 living class members attended.

Each year at homecoming, the 50-year class receives major recognition. Each grad is presented with a ready-to-frame print of Marvin Hall and is invited to relate his or her Oneida experience. This year, all 11 of the honorees said Oneida had a tremendous impact on their lives. Two of the nine ladies had met their husbands at OBI. One had come to Oneida from Magoffin Baptist Institute.

In addition to the "golden grads" was Lizzie Mae Allen Barrett, a member of the class of 1933, who was celebrating the 75th anniversary of her OBI commencement. This year's main event was the presentation of an oil portrait of Barkley Moore. Unveiling the portrait was Barkley's mother, Evelyn Moore; his sister and brother-in-law Ronald and Gloria Bowling; and nephew and niece, Will and Veronica Bowling. After the presentation, Bill Smith (OBI '57), and Martha Bain Rice and Robert Halcomb (OBI '54), shared their memories about Barkley. When they had finished their "roasting," Pat Hignite (OBI '56) followed on a more serious note, quoting the poem that Barkley often recited when he spoke to Kentucky churches on behalf of Oneida—"Where Shall I Work?" by Stanley Singleton. Then Clayton Arnett (OBI '49) offered a special treat to end the day's festivities. We all listened, completely captivated, as Clayton played our

school song, "Oneida Fair," on his harmonica. When Barkley Moore's class graduated in 1958, the total number of students to graduate from Oneida was 817. This year's graduating class marked the 100th group to complete their studies at Oneida. Our graduates now number 3,468.

We are so blessed to be a part of God's work at Oneida Baptist Institute and are thankful daily for His continued abundant provisions for our school. For the last five years we have been honoring Oneida's past presidents at homecoming. This task will be completed in the next two years when portraits of Charles Goins and James Anderson Burns are unveiled.

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

## Serving God and country

### Former Marine answers call to become military chaplain

When you ask 2008 graduate Todd Latham where he is from, he usually answers, "I'm from all over"—a reply he assures us is "literally true."

"I was born in Tampa, Fla., but I literally moved all over the country with my family in the military," Todd recalled. "I was in the Marine Corps for seven years."

How does a person who has traveled all over the country end up at Clear Creek? "Well, I really felt that God called me to this place," Todd said. "I was at a men's retreat and spent a lot of time by myself in prayer and studying God's Word. I know during that time I got a clear message from God that He was calling me to full-time ministry."

"I went home and told my wife and we began to figure out what we were going to do," Todd continued. "We talked to our pastor and deacons at the church we were serving and they recommended some formal training, and here we are."

"One of my favorite things about my experience at Clear Creek is the sense of community that exists on campus and the friendships that are built over time," Todd noted.

"I worked in the library through the student 'workshop' program, and that allowed me the opportunity to meet basically everyone on campus.... Our library is second to none when it comes to theological education."

Todd is preparing to move to Texas where he will study at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

"I feel God has called me into the military chaplaincy program," he acknowledged.

"I will be studying to receive my Master of Divinity degree. I know God wants me back in the military because He wants me to minister to the men and women who are serving our

country. "It's a different day in the military," Todd added. "There are a lot of complex issues today that men and women of the armed services have to deal with."

"I know God has called me to minister to them."

Please pray for Todd as he prepares to serve God and country.

CLEAR CREEK  
CHRONICLE



Donnie Fox

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

## Economy may affect churches in ways other than giving

By Rachel Mehlhaff  
Associated Baptist Press

Champaign, Ill. (ABP)—The bottoming markets, soaring gas and food prices and a steady stream of home foreclosures may be affecting other sectors of the economy, but that does not mean church budgets will necessarily feel the pinch.

But local congregations may well be affected in other ways, according to experts on the subject.

In tough times people look to religion, said Sylvia Ronswalle, executive vice president of the Christian research organization empty tomb, inc.

In the United States, "60 million people are in a religious house of worship each weekend" she noted. "These numbers suggest church is one of the last places people begin to cut back on."

Giving to local churches has almost consistently been increasing since 1986. It decreased slightly during three out of six economic recessions between 1986 and 2005, according to an empty tomb analysis of church giving in recession years. The report also suggested that the decrease does not tend to show up until near the end of recessions.

The report also noted that "giving declined in four non-recession years during the 1968 through 2005 period." Therefore, it reasons, "church-member giving does not necessarily decline in a recession."

Scott McConnell, associate director of research for LifeWay Christian Resources, said he believes giving has been fairly consistent.

The organization recently conducted an economic survey of Southern Baptist pastors. The survey indicated that 72 percent felt the economy was having a negative impact on their churches. But the survey's other findings indicated the situation

for most churches may not be as dire as the pastors perceive.

It also looked at whether church receipts were meeting pastors' expectations. Half of the respondents said church receipts were about what they expected. Twenty-three percent said they were more than expected and 24 percent indicated their congregation's income was not meeting expectations.

McConnell explained that the share of those not satisfied with their church's income is a normal percentage from what he has seen in surveys conducted in non-recession years.

Finally, the LifeWay survey looked at whether or not pastors thought their churches would meet their budgets. Sixty-six percent said yes, while 26 percent responded no.

McConnell said government figures show that, overall, wages are continuing to rise. He added that he believes people should be giving at the same levels as income.

Whether this affects churches will be revealed at the end of the year, he noted. In particular, year-end giving figures will show how accurately churches and individual church members budgeted, taking the various economic stresses into account.

As unemployment begins to rise and tough economic times increase, McConnell said, the pinch could be a great opportunity for individual church members who can afford to give more generously than those whose budgets are tighter.

This is "an opportunity to see God work," he stressed. "I think there is a renewed awareness that we have heard from a lot of churches needing to be in tune with their community."

But other factors may affect giving in more logistical ways. For in-

stance, high gas prices could make it difficult for members to make it to worship services to turn in their tith envelopes.

Steve Hewitt, a reporter for Christian Computing magazine pointed out that churches are going to have to find alternate routes—such as online giving or automatic checking-account deductions—for giving.

"Churches can do stuff to fix this," he noted.

Hewitt said he believes that churches have other reasons to adapt their ministry to the rising gas prices. He drives 30 to 40 miles to church and frequently has church activities to attend throughout the week.

Hewitt noted more churches may choose to stream their worship services and other events live on the Internet to help members for whom

driving to church regularly creates an economic hardship.

But, the soaring price of fuel is fundamentally different than the other aspects of the economic crunch, Hewitt noted.

"It is directly proportionate to me going to church," he added. "It affects the largest of all churches."

Hewitt also said he believes one solution may actually create better fellowship within churches: A new emphasis on neighborhood meetings and local small groups of church members.

Participants in such groups not only can conduct some church business without driving to a remote location, but also get to know each other and share fellowship and support during difficult economic times, he emphasized.

## Christian book retailers fighting to survive in struggling industry

By Adelle Banks  
Religion News Service

Bentonville, Ark. (RNS)—At Skia, a new Christian bookstore in Bentonville, Ark., there are comfortable chairs, racks of apparel, a coffee and smoothie bar, and a full corner of the store dedicated to building, of all things, skateboards.

"It takes a little while to put together a skateboard, maybe 15 minutes or so," said store co-owner Bill Beyer. "It gives us an opportunity to talk with the kids and really develop relationships with the kids."

Meeting customers where they are has become the mantra of the Christian retail industry as its stores face stiff competition from big-box chains and online retailers. With more stores closing than opening each year, industry layoffs and a key publisher staying away from last week's annual International Christian Retail Show in Orlando, Fla., retailers and publishers say innovation is key to thriving in the current business climate.

In a survival-of-the-fittest atmosphere, stores, publishers and other Christian companies are cutting back and offering new products to appeal to consumers.

"Christian stores used to be destination stores because ... they had the dominant selection of product in the marketplace," said Bill Anderson, president and CEO of CBA, the organization that hosts the annual show. "And we are teaching them they still must have that, but that alone is not enough. ... To be a destination store, they have to offer that customer a total shopping experience that is rich and rewarding in and of itself."

The CBA itself is facing changes, with the decision this year by Thomas Nelson, the nation's largest Christian publisher, not to attend the annual CBA expo.

Michael Hyatt, the publisher's president and CEO, explained that CBA's show became "a very ineffective, very expensive way to reach a very few customers," because his company has regular contact with 95 percent of its accounts outside of the show.

Last April, Thomas Nelson cut about 10 percent of its staff, after

previously deciding to halve the number of new titles it introduces this year.

"You don't talk to any retailers that are saying what we need is more books," noted Hyatt, whose company sells about 35 percent of its products through Christian retailers. "What they're all saying is we need better books."

Zondervan, another big Christian publisher, cut five executive positions and a dozen others as a part of its streamlining in May.

At the Orlando show, it introduced "Symtio," a digital merchandising system that it hopes will counter competition from online and secular booksellers. Starting this fall, in-store customers can buy a gift card for the book they want and download it at home. They can read it on a computer or a device like the Sony Reader, or listen to an audio book on an MP3 player.

"People are familiar with doing it with music already but it's not been done with traditional publishing," said Verne Kenney, Zondervan's executive vice president of sales. "The beauty of this system is it does not require a retailer to make an investment in technology in order to be able to offer a digital solution."

Despite all the changes in companies selling and manufacturing products for Christian consumers, religious books continue to do well overall.

The Book Industry Study Group, a publishing trade association, reported in May that sales of religious books had an increase in net revenue of 6.3 percent last year—a higher figure than the net revenue gain for all publishers of 4.4 percent over 2006.

Lynn Garrett, former senior religion editor at Publishers Weekly, said Christian retailers that have survived the closings and reinvented themselves have found ways to distinguish their stores from their secular competitors.

"You might find the newest title of a superstar Christian author at Wal-Mart or at a Borders or Barnes and Noble, but you won't find all of their titles," she said. "That's something that the Christian stores can excel at."

## Pastor launches 'Gossip Free' campaign

Coloma, Mich. (RNS)—A Michigan pastor is urging people to go "Gossip Free" for at least eight days beginning Aug. 8, but pointed out it's never too early to stop listening to or sharing idle chatter at home, work or especially church.

Pastor Kevin Hester of Sanctuary Baptist Church in Coloma, Mich., said "even though gossip is commonly accepted by people and churches, God takes it seriously. It's right next to murder in the Bible."

Hester argues in his pocket-size book, "Gossip Free? The High Cost of Low Talk," that "gossip has caused more wars, broken up more homes, ruined more businesses, split more churches and destroyed more lives than anything else throughout human history."

Hester has distributed as many as 2,000 white "GossipFree.org" bracelets with his book, and is asking people to abstain from gossip for eight days, starting next month.

"Eight is the number in the Bible for 'new beginnings.' Most familiar is the story of the flood and God starting over with eight people," Hester noted.

The campaign is similar to one launched in 2006 by Will Bowen, a pastor in Kansas City, Mo., who launched a "Complaint Free" campaign and eventually got more than 5 million people to join him.

## PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ Pray that God will lead individuals to attend the Partnership Missions Team Leader Training event in September.

■ Pray that God would call even more people and churches to participate in volunteer missions in the coming year.

■ Pray for the family of Lawrence Kendrick who died July 2 from injuries suffered in a car accident while serving with a missions team in Russia last month.

■ Pray for Randy Jones who will be travelling to Tanzania to represent the Kentucky Baptists' partnership at the Tanzania Baptist Convention's annual meeting.

■ Pray for teams from Casky Baptist Church in Hopkinsville and Little River Association in Cadiz that will be travelling to Brazil next month.

■ Pray for the ongoing partnership with Maryland/Delaware Baptists.

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

- **ANNVILLE**—Bond Church recently called **Marvin Sams** as pastor.
- **BEREA**—Red Lick Church recently called **Charles Collier** as pastor.
- **BOSTON**—Mount Moriah Church ordained **James Briggs** to the gospel ministry July 13.
- **CENTRAL CITY**—First Church recently called **Daniel Kinkade** as youth minister. **Bob Lowery** is pastor.
- **FARMINGTON**—Farmington Church recently called **Jeff McAlpin** as youth minister. **Ben Stratton** is pastor.
- **FRANKFORT**—The Point Community Church recently called **John Martin** as family life pastor and **Jason Hampton** as youth minister. **Rick Long** is pastor.
- **HARRODSBURG**—Fellowship Church recently called **Hilary Claypool** as pastor. He previously was interim pastor.
- **LOUISVILLE**—**Derek Allen** recently resigned as minister of students and recreation at Fern Creek Church.
- **PAINT LICK**—Mount Tabor Church recently called **Joe Tuttle** as pastor. He previously was pastor at Mouthcard Church.
- **PRINCETON**—Liberty Church will hold its homecoming services July 27 with **Gates Bowman** as guest speaker. **Jason Randall** is pastor.
- **REYNOLDS STATION**—Zion Church recently called **Thomas Keim** as pastor.
- **RICHMOND**—First Church recently

## Spotlight on ...

## Williamsburg



**Brad Bell** recently resigned as associate pastor of students and family ministries at First Church to enter the IMB's Journeyman program. After completing his training, Bell will serve as a missionary to Africa for two years.

called **Steve Coleman** as youth minister. He previously was youth minister at New Work Fellowship in Hopkinsville. **Bill Fort** is pastor.

■ **SALYERSVILLE**—First Church will host **Gold City** in concert July 27, 6 p.m. Admission is \$10 and doors open at 5 p.m. For more information, call Pastor **Matthew Gullion** at (606) 434-3418.

■ **SCIENCE HILL**—Northside Church will host a "Praying Effectively for the Lost" prayer conference Aug. 2, 2 p.m., featuring author **Lee Thomas**. For more information, call (606) 423-2271.

■ **WHITLEY CITY**—First Church recently called **Grant Hasty** as pastor.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## July

- 24-25 Quarterly Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening, West Union Association office, Paducah.
- 25-26 World Missions Unlimited, First Baptist Church, London.
- 28-29 Mountain Missions Conference, Oneida Baptist Institute.

## August

- 16 Super Saturday, Immanuel Baptist Church, Lexington.
- 21 Understanding Other Beliefs, First Baptist Church, Pikeville.
- 23 Super Saturday, St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville.
- 30-9/1 Wrangler Trail Ride, Land Between the Lakes.

For more information, call (800) 266-6477 or visit [www.kybaptist.org](http://www.kybaptist.org)

## Campbellsville awarded federal grant

Washington—Campbellsville University has been selected to receive a grant of nearly \$400,000 through the U.S. Department of Education's Strengthening Institutions Program, U.S. Rep. Ron Lewis announced July 8. The funds will be used to support efforts to improve achievement and retention during the first two years of students' academic careers.

"I congratulate Campbellsville University for their success in receiving this grant," Lewis said. "Initiatives such as the Strengthening Institutions Program provide important resources to help students further their education and build successful careers."

The Strengthening Institutions Program helps eligible colleges and universities become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve

low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management and fiscal stability of eligible institutions.

The grant will be used to support Campbellsville University's ongoing efforts to improve student retention via three primary components: an expanded freshman year experience, redesigned general education program and intensified academic support services.

"We are very grateful that the U.S. Department of Education has approved the Title III grant for Campbellsville University," said President Michael Carter. "These funds will greatly enhance the mission of Campbellsville University in helping students reach their full potential as servant leaders."

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**AVAILABLE:** Pulpit supply. Experienced SBC minister available for supply within 70 miles of Louisville. Contact Rev. Matthew Stevens, (502) 290-3345.

**AVAILABLE:** Conference speaker, church revivals and seminars in west Kentucky. Balanced, conservative doctrine, marriage and family, Christian worldview and anti-cults. (270) 727-0707.

**FOR SALE:** 35 used choir robes. Burgundy with beige/burgundy collars; good condition. First Baptist Church in Russell Springs. Call (270) 866-6495.

**FOR SALE:** Covermaster gym floor protective covering system. \$1,200 or best offer. Westport Road Baptist, (502) 425-2350.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for First Baptist Church, Mayfield, Ky. Degree from a Southern Baptist seminary. Please send resumé and non-returnable video or DVD to Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church Mayfield, 118 West South St., Mayfield, KY 42066.

**SEEKING:** Minister to families with children for Aloma Baptist Church to facilitate ministry to children from birth through age 12, and to equip families to become spiritual nurturers. Preferred qualifications: minimum bachelors and 2 years experience. Please send resumé to Discipleship Ministries, 1815 SR 436, Winter Park, FL 32792; or e-mail [nmillica@alomachurch.org](mailto:nmillica@alomachurch.org).

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor, Frenchburg Southern Baptist Church, Frenchburg, Ky. Please send resumé, DVD, CD or tape of recent sermons to: Pastor Search Committee, Frenchburg Baptist Church, 298 Hwy. 36, Frenchburg, KY 40322-8118.

**SEEKING:** Minister of intergenerational education. Main Street Church in Alexandria, Ky. (Cincinnati metro), is seeking a strategic leader to direct our church in ministering to families with children. The candidate will seek to build bridges between our adult and children's educational areas with additional responsibilities in teacher training, curriculum review, parenting courses and communication. Main Street is a progressive, contemporary church with a missional philosophy averaging about 500 in worship. Interested individuals can view the service description at [www.sievechurch.org/staff.htm](http://www.sievechurch.org/staff.htm). Resumés may be sent to Main Street Baptist Church, 11093 Alexandria Pike, Alexandria, KY 41001.

**SEEKING:** Part-time music/worship leader. Seeking individual to join the ministry team at Williamstown Baptist Church, a community of faith that centers on worship, faith and love. Responsibilities include directing praise team/choir and leading worship in multiple services. Interested applicants should send a cover letter and resumé to Darrell Morgan, 214 N Main St., Williamstown, KY 41097; or to [Darrell@williams-townbaptist.com](mailto:Darrell@williams-townbaptist.com). Resumés accepted through Aug. 8, 2008.

**SEEKING:** Associate pastor for worship and music for First Baptist Church, Asheboro, N.C. Requirements: minimum of bachelor's degree in music; seminary a plus; 3-5 years experience. For more details, check the church Web site at [www.fbcasheboro.com](http://www.fbcasheboro.com). Submit resumé to: First Baptist Church, 133 N Church St., Asheboro, NC 27203, Attn: R.M. Stratton, chairman of Music Search Committee.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for Smithsboro Baptist Church, Sassafras (near Hazard). Send resumé and other material to Dr. Ken Slone, PO Box 70, Mallie, KY 41836.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor, Elkton (Ky.) Baptist Church. Excellent opportunity for a mission-minded, Bible-based leader for a growing congregation. Experience and seminary degree preferred. Send cover letter and resumé along with DVD or CD to EBC Search Committee, PO Box 703, Guthrie, KY 42234.

**SEEKING:** Full-time children's minister for Erlanger Baptist Church. We are seeking an individual with a strong calling to children's ministry and a calling to serve in the rapidly growing area of northern Kentucky. Qualifications include a calling to children's ministry and a demonstrated ability to minister to and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with children. The children's minister also will be responsible for recruiting, training and leading volunteers and managing the children's ministry budget. Erlanger Baptist Church is a dynamic and growing church. Our attendance averages over 500 a week and we've celebrated over 20 baptisms in 2008. Our children's ministry attendance averages 80 weekly. Please send resumé (before 8-31-08) to: Personnel Committee chairperson, Erlanger Baptist Church, 116 Commonwealth Ave., Erlanger, KY 41018.

**SEEKING:** Experienced, full-time administrative assistant competent in MS Word and Publisher. Please send resumé to Melbourne Heights Baptist Church, 3728 Taylorsville Road, Louisville, KY 40220; or e-mail to [dianehein7@aol.com](mailto:dianehein7@aol.com).

**SEEKING:** Music assistant (requires 25-30 hours per week). First Baptist Church, Owensboro, Ky., is seeking a gifted musician who shares a passion for worship and leading others to do the same. We are interested in talents related to our contemporary worship format which include overseeing the worship band, vocal team and media/technical staff. Send resumé to First Baptist Church, PO Box 904, Owensboro, KY 42302; or by e-mail to [myoung@fbcowb.org](mailto:myoung@fbcowb.org).

**SEEKING:** Part-time minister of music for congregational singing in Sunday worship. Whites Run Baptist Church, Pastor Eric Newcomer, (502) 347-0727.

**SEEKING:** Senior pastor possessing the character traits described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, holding a masters degree from Southern Baptist Seminary, having a minimum of 5 years full-time pastoral experience and is 35 to 50 years old. Please send resumé and a non-returnable video or DVD to the Pastor Search Committee, Kings Baptist Church, PO Box 380, Mt. Washington, KY 40047. For more information, check the church's Web site: [www.kingsbaptist.net](http://www.kingsbaptist.net).

**SEEKING:** Full-time minister to preschoolers to plan and coordinate a comprehensive ministry to preschool children and their families at First Baptist Church, Clarksville, Tenn. Send resumé to Ron Moore, 435 Madison St., Clarksville, TN 37040.

**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](mailto:Phyllis@broadwaybaptist.org).

# Neighbors in need

## IMB servants feel tug of Mexico City's forgotten millions

By Kristen Hiller  
SBC International Mission Board

**Mexico City (BP)**—Israel leans back against a cast-iron gate on the streets of Mexico City's Tepito barrio. With arms crossed in front of his chest and head bowed in prayer, he shifts his weight then wipes a tear from his eye.

Mauricio Rojas knows the feeling. He was once in Israel's shoes.

The drug addictions that enslave Israel once trapped Mauricio. Standing at Israel's side, Mauricio gives the young man his address and tells him to stop by whenever he wants.

"Christ can do anything," Mauricio tells Israel. "He got me out of the trash and He can do the same for you."

In Mexico City, a metropolis of 28 million, Israel is one of countless young people battling drugs in a barrio with rampant drug trafficking, prostitution and a thriving black market. The presence of evil-spirit worship and animistic cults make the darkness of barrios such as Tepito seem oppressive.

While other missionaries concentrate on areas outside the city proper, William and Orpha Ortega are the only Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionaries among an estimated 9 million people living in Mexico City's inner city. The task before them and believers like Mauricio is great.

With five inner-city missionary opportunities available in Mexico City alone, Todd Beel, a regional strategy associate for the IMB, estimates 20 job requests have yet to be filled in urban centers across the country.

"We have to go where the people are," Beel said. "We have entire hidden cities within cities that are yet to have a serious gospel witness."

For the Ortegas, the spiritual darkness of Tepito can be overwhelming, but it is also the primary reason they chose to serve here.

"When God called us to Mexico City, it was a great lesson for us because we came to a place where the people are dying without Christ, without hope," William Ortega said. "What I'm trying to do is just a small part of what needs to be done."

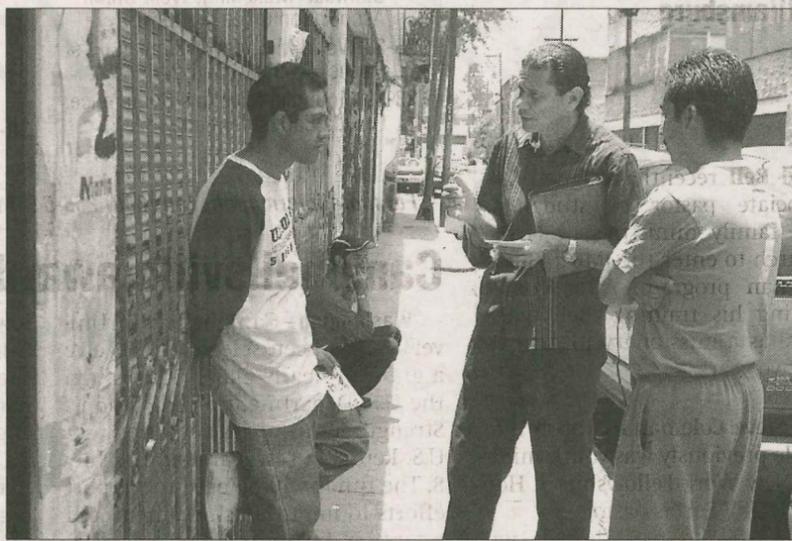
Orpha, a Texas native, had been a summer missionary to Mexico. She and William, who is from Costa Rica, were involved in ministry and education in North Carolina and Utah before becoming IMB missionaries.

When the Ortegas and their two daughters moved to Mexico City in 1999, they began working on the periphery of the city. After a fellow missionary asked the couple to develop creative ways to reach the inner city, they began to venture into areas like Tepito.

Orpha composed a lengthy list of outreach strategies. Beel liked them and asked the Ortegas to consider shifting their focus to the inner city to implement them.

"We prayed with the idea of saying, 'No thanks. It's too much for us,'" Orpha recalled. "But we continued praying."

Since mid-2006, William and Or-



**A BETTER WAY** In Mexico City, Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary William Ortega (center) and Mexican pastor Mauricio Rojas (right) pray for Israel, one of countless inner-city young people battling addictions.

pha have worked alongside believers in Mexico City such as Mauricio to plant churches in the inner city. With five house churches and four outreach groups started in areas similar to Tepito, Orpha said the greatest problem is not the lack of a harvest, but the lack of laborers for the harvest.

"Our goal is to reach Tepito, and we cannot do that alone," William noted. The Ortegas said they understand how easily fear can deter those who would serve. In fact, they still remember their own fears and hesitations about serving in crime-ridden areas of the inner city.

"Being afraid is normal," Orpha said. "We just prayed and asked God to give us a peace because someone has to do it."

Maria Martinez, a self-proclaimed witch in Tepito, stands beside the painted symbols on the sidewalk marking the entrance to a shrine of Santa Muerte (holy death).

## Short-term workers answer the call to 'GO'

By Erich Bridges  
SBC International Mission Board

**Mexico City (BP)**—The police were standing around a grimy box on a street in Mexico City.

Southern Baptist missionary Pam Wong and a group of church volunteers spotted them while distributing Gospels in the inner-city neighborhood. When they asked a woman standing nearby what was going on, they were told a homeless man had died on the street the night before.

"He was in a cardboard box. His body was there—and nobody cared," Wong recalled.

Of the 9 million people jammed into the centro area of Mexico's vast capital city, about 80 percent are poor. At least 50,000, according to estimates, live on the streets because of drug or alcohol abuse, joblessness or both.

"Some have checked out on society," said missionary David Wong, Pam's husband. "Others... truly want work. I met one man who had lost his business, home and everything else in the Cancun area because of a hurricane. It's hard for the working class to get off the low rung."

Maria said she believes that by standing on the white markings she will receive purification, cleansing and protection from her enemies.

"We believe that whatever we ask, she will give it to us," Maria said of the saint.

Standing before a plastic skeleton topped by a black wig and blue gown, cult worshippers cross themselves and place their hands on the glass window enclosing the shrine. Candy, flowers and candles litter the base of the altar where others bow in reverence.

With an estimated 700 Santa Muerte shrines and 2 million cult followers throughout Mexico City, William and Orpha noted they realize the battle for the souls of the men and women of the inner city is not against flesh and blood.

"We know (the enemy) we're going against," Orpha acknowledged, "and we know in whose name we're going—and He is greater."

Operation Gospel Outreach, or Operation GO, is an initiative to mobilize hundreds of Southern Baptist volunteers to distribute Christ's message throughout Middle America and the Caribbean—including Mexico City.

A recent 'GO' group from First Baptist Church of Gray Gables in Calahan, Fla., included volunteers who understand some of the struggles of the homeless from personal experience. Warren Hunter said he once had a drinking problem. Who better to pray over a concerned father and his young adult son struggling with alcohol addiction? "I can relate to this man and his son because I used to be alcoholic," Hunter noted.

Pam Wong said a powerful moment came when she was distributing Gospels with Mark Tuso, Gray



## Most religious practices steeped in pagan rituals

By Kristen Hiller  
SBC International Mission Board

**Mexico City (BP)**—The boy stands in Constitution Square with outstretched arms and open palms as a man dressed in native attire circles him, wafting smoke through the boy's clothing and hair. Like many tourists and locals, the boy dropped a few pesos in a basket to receive this tribal blessing. Less than 100 yards from this scene, worshippers bow before religious icons inside Mexico City's famed Metropolitan Cathedral.

In spite of the city's reputation as a historical hub of religious activity, it remains less than 2 percent evangelical.

Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary K.C. Crino described Mexico City and most of the urban centers in Mexico as historic "headquarters of pagan worship."

"That's why people flocked there," Crino said. "That's why they're the cities that they are—because something spiritual was taking place."

On the periphery of the city in a district called Xochimilco, Crino and his wife, Gail—former Illinois church planters—focus on building relationships to share Christ with those who have been inundated with religious ritual.

"We preach a gospel; we don't preach a religion," Crino emphasized. "We preach a relationship with Jesus. People have a hard time understanding that there's a difference."

By focusing on neighborhoods where no evangelical witness exists, Crino works with a team of IMB missionaries to reach low-income families. As he walks the crowded streets, littered with open-air markets, Crino stops to talk with local business owners on a Sunday afternoon.

"It's just being on-site, building relationships, loving the people, showing compassion and praying for the sick," Crino said. "That's how Jesus did it; that's what we need to do."



**EMPTY PRACTICE** Just outside the walls of Mexico City's Metropolitan Cathedral, tourists and locals alike gather to receive a tribal blessing in the city's Constitution Square.

Gables' pastor. "We were walking down the street and there was a man sitting on the sidewalk," she recalled. "He was crying and said he was all alone and had no family. We tried to talk to him but we knew he could only understand so much. He was drunk and maybe high on drugs. But he was so grateful that we would bend down on our knees and touch his leg and pray for him. He needed that time, just that little bit of time."

Many Southern Baptist volunteers come to Mexico but the Wongs said some church teams are reluctant to come to the sprawling capital. Although no recent volunteer groups have been threatened, Pam said she spends a lot of time on the Internet assuring nervous churches that it's OK to come.

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