



WESTERN RECORDER

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Protecting the unborn

Crisis pregnancy centers offer care for mothers-to-be who need alternatives to abortion

By David Winfrey

Kentucky Baptist Convention

Greenville—A few weeks back, a young mother-to-be visited Pathway of Hope crisis pregnancy center in Greenville—but she was not looking for maternity clothes or advice, according to Director Diana Anderson.

"She came in because she wanted to know if I had a man who could come and talk to her husband about his addiction," Anderson recalled, adding that she recruited a couple of pastors to talk to the man.

Long known for counseling women considering abortions, today crisis pregnancy care centers are asked to help with a variety of needs for mothers-to-be.

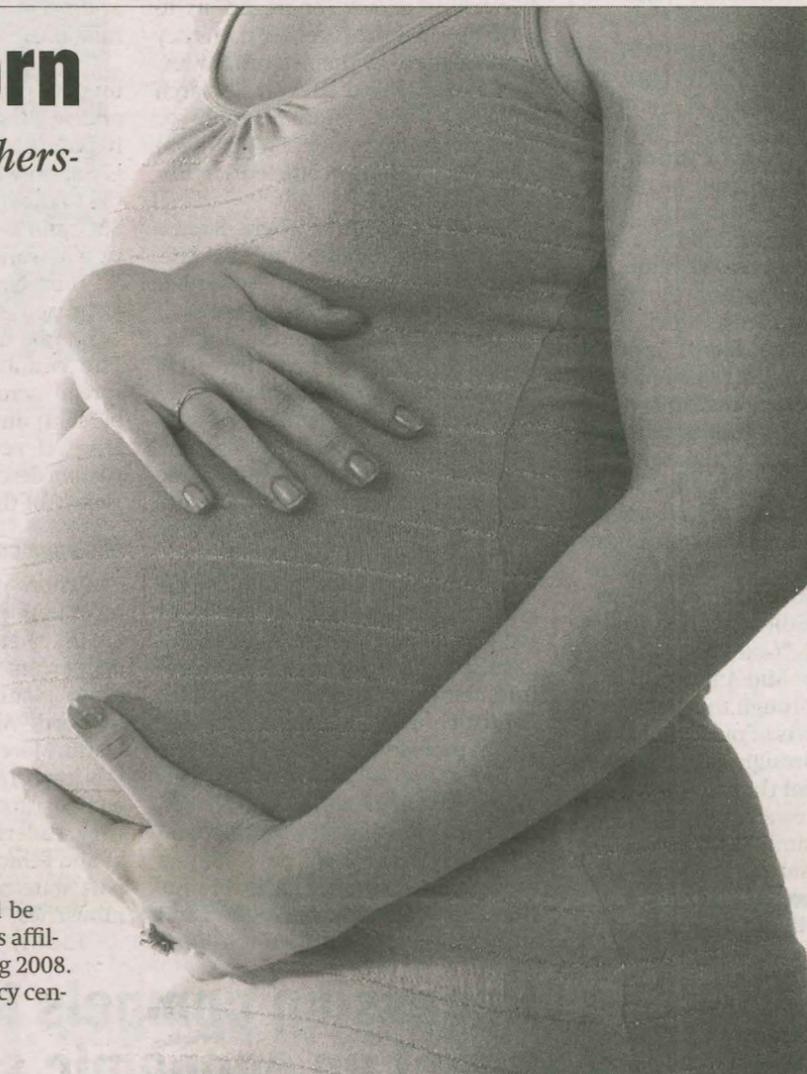
"A lot of what we do is helping materially—wipes, pregnancy tests, maternity clothes. Most (women) come in because they have a need and cannot meet their physical needs," said Anderson, who trains workers at centers in Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia. She plans to open a new facility in Monticello this year.

Anderson, a member of Second Baptist Church of Greenville, serves as a Mission Service Corps volunteer for the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board.

In recognition of Anderson's work and others like her, churches all across the Southern Baptist Convention will observe "Sanctity of Human Life" Sunday Jan. 18, marking the 36th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

While Southern Baptists will not be celebrating *Roe v. Wade*, they will be celebrating that because of 249 crisis pregnancy centers in the United States affiliated with NAMB, more than 4,300 babies were spared from abortion during 2008. Additionally, some 3,100 women accepted Christ last year because pregnancy center staff members shared the gospel with them.

□ See *Crisis pregnancy centers ... Page 6*



Survey: Majority favors limits on abortions in U.S.

Washington (BP)—More than 80 percent of Americans believe abortion should be either prohibited or limited, according to a new survey.

The poll of U.S. adults shows 11 percent support a total ban on abortion, 38 percent favor restricting, 38 percent favor of rape, incest or a threat to the life of the mother, and 33 percent endorse limiting the procedure to the first three or six months of pregnancy. Nine percent favored unlimited abortion rights throughout pregnancy.

Abortions may be performed at any stage of pregnancy in the United States, based on the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions. Under more recent high court rulings, states may enact some restrictions on the procedure.

The online poll of 2,341 adults, commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and conducted last month by Harris Interactive, also found strong majorities favor specific laws limiting abortion. The data was weighted to be representative of the U.S. population.

□ See *Survey shows ... Page 7*

Study reveals disconnect with stewardship, debt

By Mark Kelly
Baptist Press

Nashville—While almost two-thirds of Southern Baptist pastors have preached on stewardship in the past year, a new study shows that few of those pastors believe members of their congregations have a significant amount of debt—revealing a serious disconnect with the realities of American family life.

The survey of 3,500 Southern Baptist pastors was conducted by LifeWay Research on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee between November 2007 and February 2008. The study revealed that 65 percent of pastors had preached that financial stewardship during the previous year, but only 25 percent said their church members have "a significant amount of personal debt."

That stands in stark contrast to national statistics about the debt load American families are carrying, noted Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research.

"In 2006, household debt in America grew by \$1.2 trillion—a one-year increase larger than the total amount of household debt just 30 years ago," McConnell said.

"The average American is struggling with oppressive debt; they are spending \$1.26 for every dollar earned," said Bob Rodgers, vice president for Cooperative Program and stewardship with the SBC's Execu-

tive Committee.

Church members tend to look within their own congregations for guidance on promoting and teaching stewardship, according to the survey. A full 74 percent of pastors said the congregation looks to them for guidance and 31 percent said their churches turns to members of the church. Only 2 percent said church members look to an independent stewardship consultant and 9 percent look to a preferred author, while less than 1 in 4 look to their associational or state convention leadership.

Creating a "New Day"

The SBC Executive Committee is trying to address this disconnect between pastoral perspective and church member reality with the "It's A New Day" financial management workshops. "It's A New Day" is described as a "how-to" workshop designed to help pastors and churches learn strategic skills to manage their money more effectively, work their way out of financial bondage and achieve a sense of spiritual well-being about the financial side of their lives.

Church members appear to be open to teaching or preaching on the subject of stewardship. A full 67 percent of the pastors describe their congregation as open on the subject and another 22 percent did not see church members as closed to

the matter. Only 8 percent thought their members were closed to learning more about principles of biblical stewardship.

Besides preaching on the subject, congregations had used other activities in the last year to promote stewardship, the pastors noted. An emphasis on planned giving or estate planning had been conducted by 48 percent; 32 percent had faithful or sacrificial givers share testimonies; 24 percent had offered Sunday school lessons; 20 percent had used a bulletin insert; and 18 percent had conducted a Stewardship Sunday emphasis.

Six percent of churches had offered a special group study on financial stewardship, money management or debt reduction. Only 15 percent of the pastors said their congregations had not conducted any type of stewardship emphasis in the preceding 12 months.

According to Rodgers, one of the greatest needs of the church is for pastors to have a greater awareness of the debt load many of their church members carry and to provide resources to help them.

"When God's people understand and practice biblical principles of money management and debt reduction, it not only increases their joy in the Christian life," he said, "it also strengthens the church financially and enables it to minister more effectively in its community."

Baptist seminary announces plan to stabilize tuition

Cordova, Tenn.—

Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, which has campuses in Cordova, Tenn., and Schenectady, N.Y., has announced plans to initiate a tuition stabilization program beginning in August.

"During these times of financial turmoil, we want our incoming students to know that their tuition will not be increased as long as they are continuously enrolled as full-time students," said Seminary President Mike Spradlin.

He announced the program as part of Mid-America's Seminary's commitment to provide theological training at a cost which will allow students to graduate without seminary debt.

"God has provided for Mid-America through the gracious gifts of our donors, the foresight of our trustees and the disciplined stewardship of our administrators, so that the burden of this economic downturn will not have to be borne by our students," he noted.

The seminary operates on a \$5-million annual budget of which 60 percent is provided by the direct contributions of individuals and churches, 20 percent from return on investments and 20 percent from tuition and fees.

While Mid-America Seminary is Southern Baptist in doctrine, it is not owned by the Southern Baptist Convention and therefore does not receive Cooperative Program support.

Survey reveals pastors' opinions of Cooperative Program

By Mark Kelly
Baptist Press

Nashville—The large majority of Southern Baptists believe strongly in the Cooperative Program—the Southern Baptist Convention's unified approach to missions support—because it allows congregations to accomplish more together than they could achieve by themselves. However, new data from LifeWay Research indicates 1 in 4 pastors see room for improvement in how CP dollars are allocated and how efficiently they are being used.

A census of all Southern Baptist congregations, conducted by LifeWay Research between November 2007 and February 2008 on behalf of the SBC's Executive Committee, revealed that 87 percent of pastors are generally satisfied compared to 13 percent who are generally dissatisfied with the Cooperative Program. One out of 3 pastors strongly agree that state conventions and SBC entities supported by CP use the contributions efficiently.

According to Bob Rodgers, the Executive Committee's vice president for Cooperative Program and stewardship, "The Executive Committee initiated the survey of all Southern Baptist churches to collect data that would provide an empirical baseline of our churches' thoughts, feelings and perceptions about the Cooperative Program and stewardship, and to give us insights for developing a more focused strategy in the promotion of the Cooperative Program and stewardship across the convention."

Recession compels NAMB to enact an economic slowdown

Alpharetta, Ga. (BP)—In remarks to some 250 staff members of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board Jan. 8, President Geoff Hammond asked NAMB team leaders to operate at 90 percent of their approved budgets during 2009.

However, Hammond said funds committed to God's Plan for Sharing, the denomination-wide evangelism emphasis, would not be affected. State cooperative budgets also will not be subject to the 90-percent spending level.

Carlos Ferrer, NAMB's chief financial officer, said in comments to Baptist Press, "In light of continuing economic trends, the North American Mission Board leadership believes good stewardship requires that we be proactive in planning for potential changes in revenue during 2009."

In addition to the 90-percent spending level, Ferrer said NAMB also would evaluate and monitor closely hiring for any staff vacancies. "While there is no hiring freeze, it is appropriate to fill vacancies wisely," he said.

Hammond is scheduled to announce final results of giving to the 2008 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions during a meeting with national and state leaders of the Woman's Missionary Union this week.

"We praise God for the faithfulness of His people in giving to cooperative missions and to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering in 2008,"

Pastors also selected one of six descriptions that best fit their view of CP. The description chosen by the most pastors (44 percent) was "mostly positive" stating, "We believe CP perhaps could be improved in some ways, but is doing a very good job at present of supporting worldwide missions."

The second largest group of pastors (36 percent) describe the Cooperative Program as "overwhelmingly positive," stating, "We believe CP is not only satisfactory, but is essential to the continued existence of the SBC, and the fulfillment of its mission of worldwide evangelism."

Thirteen percent of pastors have a "mixed" view agreeing that CP "could be improved in many ways." The remaining responses were spread across "mostly negative" (2 percent) and "overwhelmingly negative" (1 percent). Three percent of pastors describe their church as "unaware" of the Cooperative Program.

Missions support

Pastors feel strongly that the most important objectives of the CP are to send and support missionaries (83 percent) and to provide resources to plant churches (74 percent) in North America and around the world. More than half strongly agree it is important for CP to educate and equip pastors, missionaries and ministry leaders, to address social, moral and ethical concerns, and to support state convention missions and ministries.

"Clearly, pastors believe the Coop-

erative Program is valuable for more than two reasons, but supporting missionaries and church planting are the most widely affirmed as essential," noted Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research. "Since many churches equate missions with the Cooperative Program, we should not be surprised that missionaries are at the top of the agenda for pastors."

Pastors indicate that the most important benefit of the Cooperative Program is that it "allows my church to support more missions endeavors efficiently than we could on our own." Seventy-six percent of pastors strongly agree that this is an important benefit and a nearly identical 74 percent strongly agree that this currently describes CP.

In sharp contrast to the strong overall view of CP and agreement upon its objectives are pastors' assessment of how efficiently contributions are used.

While 65 percent of pastors strongly agree it is important for SBC entities supported by the Cooperative Program to use the contributions efficiently, only half that number (34 percent) strongly agree efficiency is present today. Similarly, 63 percent of pastors strongly agree that efficient use of funds by state convention entities is important but only 32 percent strongly agree this is the case today.

Stetzer explained, "Although the vast majority have a positive view of the Cooperative Program and a majority believe the funds are used efficiently, it is important to note

there is noticeable drop between those who 'strongly agree' that it is important the Cooperative Program be efficient and those who 'strongly agree' it actually is efficient."

Views of the current allocation of funds also fall short of the importance pastors place on it. More than half of pastors strongly agree the appropriate division of Cooperative Program funds between state conventions and the SBC is important. Currently 31 percent of pastors strongly agree funds are divided appropriately.

A larger majority of pastors (62 percent) strongly agree that it is important for the Cooperative Program to allocate contributions appropriately among state, national and global ministries, missions and entities. Only 38 percent strongly agree such current allocation is appropriate.

Despite indicating room for improvement in efficiency and exact allocations, more than two-thirds of pastors strongly agree that CP currently "supports SBC entities, ministries and missions that my church values."

Two-thirds of the pastors surveyed said they have promoted CP in their churches during the past year. Other frequent activities to emphasize missions giving include budgeting a percentage of offerings for missions (62 percent), promoting once-a-year offerings for SBC entities (73 percent) and providing offering envelopes that allow designated giving for missions (67 percent).

Baptist World Alliance responds to 2007 letter from Muslim leaders

Falls Church, Va. (ABP)—The Baptist World Alliance has issued its formal response to a 2007 letter, written to Christians by 138 Muslim leaders, describing love for God and love for neighbor as common ground between the two faiths.

BWA leaders agreed that the double love for God and neighbor "lies at the heart of the message of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels" but clarified that Baptists do not understand those commands as "the sum total of our two faiths."

The letter cited one example, the Trinity, as "troubling" for Muslims but "absolutely essential for us in confessing the oneness of God."

"We are well aware that Muslims believe the Christian idea of the Trinity contradicts the affirmation that God has no other being in association with Him," the Baptist leaders wrote, but Christians do not understand "the distinct reality" of God in three persons to mean that any other being is beside God.

"Rather, the church is attempting to express the truth that there are mysterious, unknowable depths to the personal nature of God," the letter said. "It is also aiming to be faithful to the truth of God which has been disclosed in the event of Jesus Christ in history."

The Baptist leaders said the letter is not the place for "a fuller exposition of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity" or an attempt to try to convince Muslims of its truth.

"We write in order to make clear that we ourselves cannot think of God as love except in terms of an eternal communion or fellowship whose unity is dynamic and relational," the letter said. "While we rejoice to confess with you that there is one God, it is not possible for us to speak of the one God without also speaking of Trinity."

In November 2007, a number of Christian leaders published a statement in the New York Times responding to A Common Word Between Us and You by Muslim scholars and clerics.

After some conservative evangelicals criticized the Christian letter for not explicitly affirming the deity of Christ, some of the original signers had their names removed.

During a discussion of a Baptist response to the Islamic letter last summer, according to a report on the Web site EthicsDaily.com, some Baptists expressed concern about theological language in the original letter from Islamic leaders.

Meanwhile, some Baptists from areas of the world where Christians and Muslims clash questioned the need for dialogue.

Ky. lawmakers reignite bid to expand gambling in state

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Frankfort—With his election last week as House Speaker, Rep. Greg Stumbo has reignited the expanded gambling debate in Kentucky.

Stumbo, D-Prestonsburg, ousted Jody Richards, D-Bowling Green, during a short week of leadership meetings to kick off the 2009 General Assembly. Richards had served as House Speaker since 1995.

Just days after his victory, Stumbo, a supporter of expanded gambling in the commonwealth, filed a bill with the House that would bring video lottery terminals to race tracks across the state.

The move comes less than a year after the defeat of a constitutional amendment that would have allowed casinos to operate in Kentucky. Gov. Steve Beshear pushed hard for the bill, which lacked support among state senators.

Kentucky Baptists were some of the loudest voices heard in opposition to the governor's gambling amendment last year. Several groups, including Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union and the Kentucky Baptist African-American Pastors' Fellowship, organized anti-casino rallies at the Capitol Rotunda, just feet from the governor's office.

However, the expanded gambling push this time around presents a whole different challenge for opposition leaders.

Stumbo's bill focuses on video lottery terminals, or VLTs, devices that are very similar to slot machines. The House Speaker's plan



calls for the machines to be instituted as an expansion of the Kentucky Lottery, eliminating the need for a constitutional amendment.

"Last year, it was all about letting the people decide," said Robert Reeves, Kentucky Baptist Convention communications director. "This year, they're changing tactics to say, 'Maybe the people don't really need to decide. We can do this in the legislature and get this passed.'"

Reeves, who administers a blog for the KBC's Committee on Public Affairs, described VLTs as slot machines—with a high-tech difference.

"They are all tied to a central computer. So, the computer can be programmed to allocate winners in a way similar to a lottery, as if you

were buying a lottery ticket," he explained.

Stumbo's bill would place VLTs at seven Kentucky race tracks. Two Lexington tracks would be allowed to operate a joint VLT parlor, similar to that of a casino, according to Family Foundation of Kentucky Executive Director Kent Ostrander.

"The fact of the matter is 'racinos' are casinos," he said, "and VLTs and video slots are the most addictive form of gambling."

Highly addictive games

Ostrander called VLTs "the absolute worst" form of gambling which would create very few jobs in the state "because hundreds of machines can be maintained by one person."

"These machines are designed to, as the gambling industry describes, encourage patrons to 'play unto extinction,'" he added.

According to a report in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Stumbo claimed his plan would raise as much as \$700 million a year once the VLTs are full operational. That money, he said, would be distributed to elementary education, drug treatment programs and problem gambling treatment.

Paul Strahan, who serves as chairman of the Public Affairs Committee, said pumping gambling revenues into education will do little to improve Kentucky's schools. A Mississippi native, the pastor of First Baptist Church of Owensboro indicated that the abundance of casino gambling has had little positive effect on his home state.

"I've seen what it's done to (Mississippi's) Gulf Coast, he said. "Now, there will always be some people who'll be pushing (expanded gambling) saying, 'The education's better.' But in Mississippi, the education is not better."

Strahan pointed out that expanding gambling in the state only serves to prey on those who can least afford to give their money away. "Somebody's got to be losing it for somebody to gain it."

He said he has urged his church members to get in touch with their legislators to voice their opposition to expanded gambling.

"We've got to make it known how important it is to us," Strahan noted.

The KBC's Committee on Public Affairs has urged Kentucky Baptists to voice their opposition to expanded gambling by calling the Legislative Message Line at (800) 372-7181.

The committee's blog offers frequent updates on the progress of the gambling bill during the 2009 General Assembly, as well as other public affairs-related news items. It can be found at www.KyBaptist.org.

Foreign missions partnership puts ordinary Ky. Baptists in charge

By Karen Owen-Phelps
State Correspondent

Mayfield—The Western Kentucky Baptists with responsibility for taking the gospel to parts of central Mexico are not career missionaries. They are regular ministers and church members.

Of course, no one at the Southern Baptist International Mission Board is complaining. There are not enough missionaries to reach all people groups with the gospel, the professionals say. It is going to take everyone to fulfill the Great Commission.

The Caldwell-Lyon and Graves County Baptist associations are among the first associations across the country to serve as strategy coordinators in partnership with the IMB. They are working in the southern portion of the Mexican state of Zacatecas.

"The two associations have sole responsibility for that part of the world," noted Tony Steele, pastor of Sharon Baptist Church in Mayfield and missions coordinator for the Graves County group. "If we don't do it, it won't get done."

"I think it shows (members) the value of the association and being able to do a big thing, even if they're not a big church," said Rick Reeder, Caldwell-Lyon's director of missions.

Most strategy coordinators who are not IMB staff members are individuals or particular congregations, explained Gary Tufts, an IMB official who covers Central America and the Caribbean. A Mississippi association

is handling the job in the Dominican Republic, he added.

Even with 5,400 career missionaries, "The Great Commission was given to the whole church. If the gospel is truly going to get to every people group, everyone needs to own it as their own," IMB spokeswoman Wendy Norvelle said. "There will never be enough missionaries to reach the whole world."

Concern for those back home

The Zacatecas project began after two migrant farm workers asked Caldwell-Lyon Association to start a Baptist church in their hometown. For several years, the association had been holding a worship service, meal and English class each summer Sunday afternoon for 30 to 100 migrants working in the area.

In 11 years, organizers saw about 190 men from all over Mexico make professions of faith in Jesus Christ through the ministry, Reeder said. Fewer migrants were coming into the area, though, because of changes in the tobacco industry, he noted. It seemed like the migrant ministry was winding down.

When the new Christians asked for help back home, though, it sparked interest. Some local Baptists already had visited Zacatecas because of their contact with migrants. Then Reeder made a mission trip to the area.

"We just really got a burden for the state of Zacatecas because it is the least evangelical Christian" area, Reeder pointed out. Less than 1 per-

cent of the population would be considered evangelical, he added.

Caldwell-Lyon sent its first official missions team to the state in 2002. "We began to pray to God to bring other partners along," Reeder recalled.

Graves County Association officially joined the effort last October. Members of neighboring associations also have been on the missions teams or have expressed interest in helping, Reeder said.

Their role, after going through training from the IMB, is to learn about a people group, their religion, culture and worldview, and figure out "the best way the gospel can be most effectively introduced and then coordinate resources to do so," Norvelle said.

In this case, Caldwell-Lyon and Graves associations are working in an area with 175,000 to 200,000 people, but only three small independent Baptist churches with bivocational pastors.

Community missions

The Western Kentuckians have conducted eye care clinics in the area and handed out free eyeglasses. They also have distributed information about prenatal care and held sports clinics and school music clinics. They also sponsor a pastors' conference in the area each year.

Mostly, though, they prayerwalk through the community, then go door to door distributing copies of the Gospel of Matthew or John and taking a survey to see who would be

interested in a Bible study or church. In some communities, "it's the first time they have met someone from any other country in their life," Reeder noted.

"If people are willing to hear it," Tufts said, "there's a personal testimony or very brief gospel presentation."

"It's not a pushy thing. We just trust God to open up the hearts of the people," Reeder said. "Our experience as far as rejection has been very low."

The missions groups have visited 9,500 homes so far, Reeder pointed out. They try to network with other Baptists in the area, Steele said, but they do not have a lot of control over the follow-up.

"We have not directly planted any churches," Reeder acknowledged, "but we have seen three or four new churches started, not through direct involvement, but prayer involvement."

"When I was in seminary in the 1980s, my wife and I felt called into missions," Steele recalled, "but the door closed to us. In 2006, this opportunity came forward. I felt this was God's answer to that call."

He has challenged his church members to give "at least two weeks out of the rest of your life to go to the foreign mission field." At least 35 people at Sharon Baptist, which runs 125 to 135 people in Sunday school, have signed a commitment to do just that. At least 11 people have gone already, and even more are scheduled to visit Zacatecas, Steele said.

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

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Southern Baptists: Protecting life

By Roger (Sing) Oldham

Nashville (BP)—During the early days of the so-called "culture war," those who argued for elective abortions accused those who defended the right to life of only caring for the infant in the womb. For centuries, Baptists around the world have been caring for children of every age, and Southern Baptists are part of this caring tradition. What follows is a list of ways Southern Baptists have invested themselves in life.

■ Since 1973, Southern Baptists have used the power of relentless influence to encourage elected officials to defend and promote life. Richard Land and the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission have taken the initiative in keeping this topic ever before us. Though some have grown weary in defense of life, the ERLC has not wavered from its support of life from conception to natural death. It has not stood alone. Across the nation, millions of individual Baptists consistently vote their convictions and advocate for life in the congressional districts in which they live.

■ The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board provides ministry support for local churches that have pregnancy care centers as part of their ministries. Many other Southern Baptist churches are not financially strong enough to maintain their own centers, so they solicit support from likeminded believers from many denominations to provide centers of hope in their local communities.

■ Many of our state conventions maintain homes for children who need a safe haven. While the age of the "orphanage" is largely a thing of the past, many children are "orphans" by divorce, dysfunction or despair. Baptists have stepped forward to provide ministries for children of every age. These ministries offer residential care, promote adoption and work to place children in loving foster-care environments.

■ In his 1991 volume "Acts of Compassion," Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow chronicled the phenomenon of the millions of

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Americans who choose helping careers as a vocation. His basic premise dovetails with a statement we frequently hear—"when I helped that family, I received more of a blessing than I gave." Southern Baptists find tremendous fulfillment through their work in community-based programs that promote children's health.

■ Another area where Southern Baptists directly impact and influence children is through public and private education in our nation's school systems. Our educators strive to radiate the joy of the Lord and the fruit of the Spirit on a daily basis. Given the strictures against actively testifying of the grace and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, these educators nevertheless demonstrate life-changing compassion.

■ Hundreds of Southern Baptist churches provide church-based education services for families, including affordable day-care programs, mother's day out programs and Christian schools. Many of these employees work at great financial sacrifice, performing these acts of service as investments of love and worship.

■ One of the greatest evangelistic tools ever promoted by Southern Baptists is vacation Bible school. VBS could not exist were it not for the willing volunteers. To look at a VBS volunteer is to see what an individual who values the life of each child looks like.

■ Nursery care in the church setting is perhaps the most unsung ministry a local church offers. Most churches would come to a screeching halt if nursery volunteers rose up and said, "I will no longer serve." One longtime pastor observed that many mothers and fathers take advantage of the nursery service as an entitlement. What they fail to realize is that when they choose not to

volunteer, they take advantage of the goodwill of others who willingly give of themselves to watch over and care for children who are not their own.

■ It has been said that the greatest gift a parent can give a child is to provide a stable home environment. It has never ceased to amaze me how some homes are "kid magnets." What a wonderful blessing to be the home where your children's friends want to congregate. Parents who intentionally create this kind of home environment demonstrate the love of Christ and their desire to protect children throughout life.

■ Very few churches do not have an active age-graded ministry of some kind. In the small church, the youth and children's ministries may overlap and be led by volunteers. In larger churches, ministers with specialized training in preschool, childhood, middle school and high school ministries provide oversight and guidance. But, even here, the ministries would end overnight if thousands of volunteers did not make the ministries a priority.

I could go on. Simply put, Southern Baptists are involved in the lives of children throughout their childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. They rejoice over the strong and successful. They receive the fallen, seeking to restore them with gentleness and love. The convention partners with states, associations and local churches to provide resources to protect the innocent from sexual molestation and abuse.

On this 36th anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision, let us recommit ourselves to promote life, protect the innocent and unborn and provide ministries and services that will give each child the best possible opportunities to see, hear and receive Christ. The ethic of life is, ultimately, about more than mere biology. Jesus put it this way: "I have come to give them life; and to give it more abundantly."

Roger (Sing) Oldham serves as vice president for convention relations with the SBC Executive Committee

Kentucky Baptists Connect extension

"The purpose of the Kentucky Baptist Convention is to assist Kentucky Baptist Convention churches and ministries and associations in connecting all people to Jesus Christ."

—KBC mission statement
adopted by the Mission Board,
May 2003

Since the launch of Kentucky Baptists Connect in 2004, Kentucky Baptists have been working together to accomplish some very challenging goals to reach the lost, strengthen churches and develop leaders. Kentucky Baptists are on track to reach most of those objectives by the end of this year. However, ambitious goals in baptisms, assimilation and church turnaround growth likely will not be reached, although progress has been made.

It has been rewarding to have a plan adopted by the Mission Board to provide focused direction and priorities for resources, and to see how God has been at work through KBC staff, associations, churches and individual Kentucky Baptists.

To help keep us moving forward

as a convention, the Mission Board has voted to extend Kentucky Baptists Connect for three years by updating existing goals and adding new ones.

Some of the goal strengths from the original mission plan have been reshaped and more sharply focused. These include the areas of baptisms; discipleship; church planting; evangelistic outreach ministries; networking (especially with churches and young leaders); new Sunday schools and small group units; and Web resources.

New goals include a strong emphasis on receiving God's vision by leaders and churches; training church youth leaders and mentoring campus student leaders; strengthening congregational relationships; helping Sunday schools grow; retaining 16-19 year olds; helping churches with stewardship strategies; and assisting churches in plans for annual growth.

One of the new tools we soon will be offering churches to help achieve

these goals is a KBC-customized software package called Ministry Toolbox. It includes a church analysis tool to help churches determine their strengths in 10 vital areas of church life.

My excitement grows because of evangelism and outreach goals to make 30,000 evangelistic contacts by Baptist Campus Ministry; to work for increases in youth baptisms and youth Sunday school involvement; and to increase church involvement of preschoolers and children.

New goals in missions areas include encouraging greater levels of involvement of churches in missions; training in disaster relief and witnessing; increasing short-term missions volunteers in Kentucky; planting churches; and starting evangelistic outreach ministries.

A new Mission Advisory Committee will assist the executive director and team leaders in supporting efforts to reach these goals.

The full statement of objectives and goals for the Kentucky Baptists Connect extension can be found at www.KyBaptist.org/ConnectResources.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

New year brings new regulations for U.S. taxpayers

By Laurie Valentine

As the new year rolls in, so do annual adjustments the Internal Revenue Service makes to various federal tax provisions. Here are some of the key adjustments for 2009:



Personal exemptions increase. The income tax exemption for you, your spouse and dependents increases to \$3,650 per person (up from \$3,500 in 2008). This benefit "phases out" after these adjusted gross income thresholds: married, filing joint return \$250,000; head of household \$208,500; single \$166,800.

Standard deduction increase. Joint filers and surviving spouses have an \$11,400 standard income tax deduction. For heads of household, it's \$8,350, and for singles it's \$5,700. Additional amounts are available for those over age 65 and for the blind: \$1,100 for each category (or \$1,400 if the taxpayer is single and not a surviving spouse).

Deduction reduction for itemizers. The itemized charitable and other income tax deductions (other than medical expenses, casualty and theft losses and investment interest) of taxpayers with AGI over \$166,800 (up from \$159,950 in 2008), is reduced by an amount equal to 1 percent of the portion of their AGI over \$166,800.

Social Security benefits. The annual earnings limit for Social Security recipients who have reached full retirement age to age 70 has been repealed. Persons in that age group who continue to work after reaching their full retirement age under Social Security will no longer have their Social Security benefits reduced, no matter how much they earn.

The earnings test continues to be imposed for working Social Security recipients who are 62 years old until they reach their full retirement age. This year, the maximum amount that can be earned by that group without reduction of benefits is \$14,160.

Gift tax annual exclusion increased. The annual gift tax exclusion (the amount you can give to any one person each year without having to file a gift tax return) is increased from \$12,000 to \$13,000. By "gift splitting," couples can give a total of \$26,000 per person.

Estate tax exemption increased. The portion of an estate that can be passed at death without any estate tax liability increased from \$2 million to \$3.5 million on Jan. 1.

Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation

Resources abound to help keep God's Word fresh for teenagers

Q: For the past several years, our teenage daughter has been faithful to have a daily quiet time with God. Over the last several months she has been apathetic in this area and says that she is bored with the devotional book she's been using. What are some other options for her?

First of all, congratulations that your daughter has been impressed as a teenager to begin a daily time with God. In most cases, this means that she has seen someone else (probably you) be intentional and disciplined to enjoy God's presence each day. This has helped her to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

There are any number of options for both teens and adults in approaching a daily devotional time with God:

- Go to a Christian bookstore and browse through different types of devotional books.
- Read through the Bible in a year (each year choose a different translation so as to gain different perspectives into Scripture).
- Utilize classic Christian literature such as "Pilgrim's Progress in Modern English" by John Bunyan, or "Devotional Classics" (edited by Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith), a collection of significant Christian writers over hundreds of years.
- Read a chapter a day in the Bible, underlining a key verse and keeping a daily prayer journal.
- Read through a user-friendly commentary on a given book or series of books from the Bible (e.g., William Barclay's commentaries on the New Testament).
- Check into online resources and computer programs that offer devotional options.

Remember that what helps keep relationships fresh and exciting are new approaches and discoveries. Don't forget to help your daughter learn about other spiritual disciplines such as Scripture memory, fasting, celebration and secret acts of service.—*Scott Wigginton*

Q: How can a "top 10" list help my child celebrate the new year?

With apologies to David Letterman, CBS and the folks at the "home office," I would like to again suggest top 10 lists as a great way to help boys and girls (moms and dads, too) welcome a new year. Top 10 lists provide a chance to look back with thanksgiving while looking ahead with excitement and anticipation. They help preserve important memories and provide perspective and proof that God is good all the time. Top 10 lists may even become a favorite family tradition.

Here's how it works: At the top of a piece of paper, make a heading that reads, "The Top 10 Best Things About 2008." Below that, number to 10. Draw a line beside each number. Be sure to leave plenty of space, but keep the list to a single page. Complete one for each family member.

Distribute the lists during the last days of December. Ask family members to think back on the previous year and be ready to report Jan. 1. Include trips, gifts, special times spent together and achievements, for example. Prime the pump, but resist making suggestions unless you are asked. (The ten things don't have to be in order of importance.) Younger children may need help, but let them do the thinking; you do the writing. Working on the list over a period of several days will allow for revisions.

On New Year's Day, take time to share. Make special note of things that show up on more than one list. Give thanks for the blessings of the previous year and ask God for watch care in the new year. Then, file the lists away in your child's memory box or in another safe place.—*David Garrard*

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Personal testimony of an 'almost statistic'

As you may know, churches across the Southern Baptist Convention are being urged to recognize "Sanctity of Human Life" Sunday on Jan. 18. Several stories in this newspaper address the issue of abortion in the United States.

On Jan. 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its landmark decision in the case of Roe vs. Wade. The case led to the overturning of all state and federal laws restricting abortions.

Since that time, it is estimated that nearly 50 million abortions have been performed in the U.S., according to statistics from National Right to Life.

In 1976, I nearly became an abortion statistic.

Now, I know a great deal of people reading this know and love my mother. She serves the Lord faithfully at Crestwood Baptist Church in Oldham County as assistant children's minister, pre-school teacher and Sunday school instructor. She simply loves children and desires to see them come to know and love Jesus Christ.

In 1976, my mother was 21 and trying to keep a struggling marriage from falling apart. During that time, she became pregnant. The decision was made, she recalled, to terminate the pregnancy.

My father—with whom I have a somewhat distant relationship—drove my mother to a clinic. My mother said she could not stop crying during the entire trip. She knew that having a baby would not save the marriage, but her desire to have a child was too strong.

Sitting in the parking lot of the clinic, my parents decided not to go through with the abortion.

In March of 1977, I was born. Just a few days later, my parents were divorced.

For the better part of my first six years, she did her best as a struggling single mother to raise me. When I was 4 years old, she again had to choose between having a second child or terminating the pregnancy.

She chose abortion.

Her circumstances forced her to make a decision that she said only recently has she come to terms with. Growing up in a Baptist church-going home, she knew that abortion was wrong. But she said she made the only decision that seemed right at the time.

In the years that followed, my mother recalled becoming very sad and depressed around the date she had the abortion.

When I was 6, God blessed my mother with a new husband, and me with siblings and a step father who took an interest in me and loved me as his own. My mother even had another child, my younger sister, Jamie.

The Lord also moved in my mother's life a few years later and brought her back to a closer relationship with God, with me in tow. Since then, she has dedicated her life to sharing Christ's love with everyone, es-

pecially children.

Despite her faith, she said she still struggled with the guilt of her abortion more than 27 years ago. She noted that most women who are "post-abortion" do not feel that they can be forgiven for that act. They often feel that a mother's highest calling is to protect her child, and when she chooses to end its life, that is unforgivable.

My mother's response profoundly struck me: "To say that God cannot forgive an abortion is to tell Him that His blood is not enough."

This is the message that my mother now delivers through Crestwood Baptist's GRACE Ministry for post-abortion women. And statistics show, those women are out there. It is estimated that 1 in 4 women age 45 or younger have had at least one abortion; 70 percent of those women claim some sort of Christian affiliation.

The confidential ministry encourages women to Grieve the past; Receive forgiveness; Allow healing to begin; Choose to forgive; and End the silence.

And end her silence is just what my mother intends to do on "Sanctity of Human Life" Sunday Jan. 18. She said she wants to encourage other women who have chosen abortions in the past to give that burden over to Christ and receive His forgiveness.

I'm thankful for my mother and her love of Christ. I see it in her every time I'm around her—it's unavoidable. I also thank God that He allowed her to choose to have me. I'm not so vain to believe that this editorial space would be empty if I weren't here—but it's humbling to have the opportunity to write this.

Knowing what I know about how I arrived in this world, sanctity-of-life issues have taken on a whole new meaning for me.

My wife, Sarah, is pregnant with our second child. We recently found out that he or she may have Down Syndrome. A recent blood test revealed an increased risk for the chromosomal disorder in our baby.

As I write this, the ultrasound to possibly find this out still is days away. For nearly a week, I have been stewing in my own worry over the health and future of my child and our family.

Unfortunately, parents who discover their unborn child may be affected by a birth defect often consider abortion as an alternative to a lifetime of caring for a handicapped child.

But, while I may question my ability to adequately love and care for a special-needs child—doubts only God can help me overcome—there is no questioning the sacredness of our child's life. As God told Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart for my holy purpose."

Drew Nichter is news director for the Western Recorder. For more information about GRACE Ministry, e-mail FreedomWithGrace@gmail.com.

Missions: It takes a lot of faith

By Jerry Rankin

Richmond, Va. (BP)—Missionaries who raise their own support often are called "faith" missionaries in contrast with those sent out by denomination-al entities such as the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, which provides support and benefits.

However, the IMB does not generate income to support the more than 5,500 missionaries overseas receiving financial support. We are totally dependent on the gifts of Southern Baptists.

It takes faith to believe God will provide \$170 million through a once-a-year missions offering named after a 19th-century missionary. It takes faith to trust Southern Baptists to have a mission heart and allocate a percentage of their church gifts to the Cooperative Program.

Last year, the IMB sent out 841 new missionaries—none were delayed in leaving for their field of assignment because they could not raise funds. They followed God's will, confident He would provide for their needs through our churches.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of meeting three young missionaries on our Xtreme Team in the jungles of Peru's Amazon Basin. After a flight to a city in the northwestern part of the country, we flew in a chartered plane to a remote landing strip near the border with Brazil. Following a five-hour ride in a motorized canoe, we reached a Yamina-hua village where the Xtreme Team members had been living for a couple of months.

Missionaries like these who have been sent out by the IMB are able

to take the gospel to the ends of the earth because of the faithful giving of Southern Baptists. Your support through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering enables these young men to live among this indigenous people group, where there now is a thriving church.

It is a joy to represent the entity that serves the churches of our denomination by channeling support to those sharing the gospel among the nations.

Never forget, it is a challenging world to which God is calling us to go and tell the gospel. We cannot wait while multitudes enter eternity without Christ. I pray that we as Southern Baptists will be found faithful and obedient in our giving and will challenge the next generation to be faithful in fulfilling our missions task.

Jerry Rankin is president of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board

GUEST EDITORIAL



Drew Nichter



Crisis pregnancy centers offer care for women in need

Continued from page 1

As of last November, more than 129,000 clients in the United States received counseling and free services from the pregnancy centers during 2008, and staff members shared the gospel with almost 36,000 girls and women.

In Pikeville, the Appalachian Pregnancy Care Center dispenses diapers, formula and baby clothes from its "Bundle of Joy Room," noted Anderson's Kandle Hammond.

"We do offer alternatives to abortion, but we also want to help the girl as a whole," said Hammond, who opened the center with 50 volunteers in November, 2007. Since then, 66 clients have visited the center for a variety of services.

The center also offers educational classes ranging from abstinence programs in schools to substance and physical abuse educational workshops for clients.

Anderson said that often the

greatest gifts that centers dispense are prayers and positive outlooks. "They (pregnant women) need love. They don't realize that their life has value, a lot of times," she explained. "We can teach them that God loves them and we love them unconditionally."

"Every woman that walks in the door might not be abortion minded, but we have to keep in mind that they are abortion vulnerable," she said, and peers that pregnancy members and peers might be encouraging the women to end their pregnancies.

"One of the most effective tools for combating the abortion clinics is the local crisis pregnancy center," noted Elaine Ham, a pregnancy resources consultant for NAMB,

She pointed out that most people do not realize that the number of abortions still is alarmingly high. In the U.S., one out of five pregnancies ends in abortion. Under today's laws, abortion is legal for the entire nine months of the pregnancy, Ham added.

More than 45 million legal abortions occurred in the U.S. between 1973 and 2005, according to the pro-choice Alan Guttmacher Institute. At least half of all American women will experience an unplanned pregnancy by age 45, and at current rates, about one-third will have an abortion.

"Regardless of the reasons, more than 95 percent of abortions are performed as a matter of convenience—not because of rape, incest or to protect the life of the mother," Ham said.

In the past year, Pathway of Hope has seen approximately 375 clients, and volunteers know of only one who has opted for an abortion. That woman has since returned distraught over her choice, Anderson noted.

"She realized that we were offering her hope, and once she had gone through that she had nothing to hang on to," Anderson recalled. The

staff has led the woman through a Bible study titled "Forgiven and Set Free," written specifically for women who have had abortions.

"She needed to know she was still loved after making that choice," Anderson said. "We all find ourselves in rough places at times. We need someone to come alongside us to reassure us that God still loves us."

Anderson also serves as a resource to 45 pregnancy care centers. The KBC supports the centers by sponsoring Anderson's work and providing occasional grants.

Anderson's work includes ongoing training for volunteers and advice for anyone exploring launching a new ministry. "This is not something everybody's called to do. It's not just talking; it's a whole lot of praying."

She said she felt called to participate in a crisis pregnancy center after visiting a fundraiser for a similar ministry in another county.

Anderson still remembers one of the first women she counseled. The young woman was three months pregnant, in an abusive relationship and having physical problems with her pregnancy.

"She was afraid for herself and the baby," Anderson recalled, adding that the woman also had grown distant from her Christian faith. "She felt like she was unworthy and that God wouldn't forgive her. ... Because of some things she had been told by others, she believed God didn't love her anymore."

"We just explained that God's mercy and grace was there for her and she just had to receive it."

Pathway got the woman to a shelter in a neighboring county. Today, the mother and child are healthy, Anderson reported, and the mother helps lead a church youth ministry. "She is a wonderful mother, and that child will be 3 the first of next year. It's just an awesome thing to see her thrive as a mother."

Today, approximately 35 congregations support Pathway in a variety of ways, including "diaper drives" and other donations to volunteers who come to play with children while their mothers get assistance from the center.

Anderson said her appointment as an MSC missionary has heightened the awareness of Pathway and her work. As a result, she said, more people are willing to get involved. "It's just the neatest thing to see people learn about the ministry. They may never see the face of someone who walks through the doors here, but they have the opportunity to eternally change a life."

Pikeville's Appalachian center has seen support from both churches and community groups, Hammond noted.

"People have just seen what a need there is for this," she said. "One of our own volunteers, her own daughter became pregnant. It's something that can happen to any family."

Of course, as the economy has deteriorated over the past year, Anderson said the plight of pregnant young women has worsened as well, a trend that will continue into 2009 as the recession and unemployment deepens.

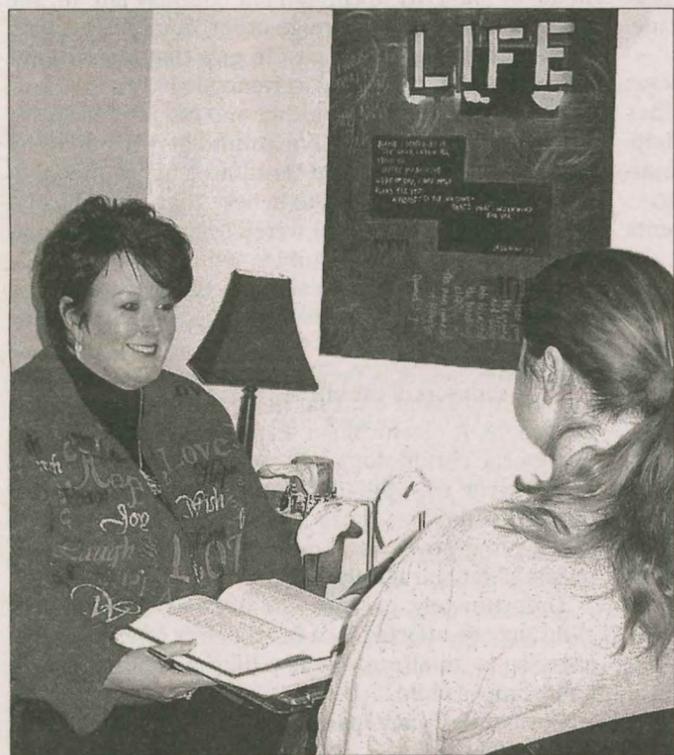
"We had one pregnant woman finally come in after she had lived in her car for five solid days," Anderson recalled. "Many feel hopeless and are seeking ways to find hope, which we tell them only comes through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

Hammond said the center needs a variety of support from churches.

"We need money support. We need volunteers. We need prayers," she said. "We need women throughout the churches just coming in and showing these girls there is support for them."

With additional reporting by Mickey Noah of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board

PATHWAY OF HOPE Diana Anderson (left), executive director of the Pathway of Hope Pregnancy Resource Center in Greenville, counsels with a client about alternatives to abortion. Pathway of Hope is one of 249 crisis pregnancy centers affiliated with the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. (NAMB photo by Jan Anderson)



Ky. Baptist pastor's testimony highlights sanctity of human life

By Diana Derringer
State Correspondent

Campbellsville—For years, Pastor James Jones has been a leader of his church and community. He faithfully served the Kentucky Baptist Convention as its president in 1989-90, as well as the Southern Baptist Convention, his local Baptist association and on numerous foreign mission trips.

"For a poor, skinny kid from Birmingham, Ala., who felt like a zero, a nothing with no ambition, my opportunities have been amazing," said Jones, pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Campbellsville.

Yet there is one aspect of his life that is known by only a few—something that makes Jan. 18's "Sanctity of Life" Sunday particularly meaningful.

According to Jones, his mother did not want him. After she became pregnant with him, she took medication given to her by her doctor in an attempt to abort him, information she later shared with him when as a child, he recalled.

Jones' mother later abandoned the family, he said. And because

his father's job often took him out of town, Jones and his sisters were placed in a church-sponsored boarding school.

When he was 7, he contracted diphtheria and was given a life-or-death gamble. Yet, once again, he defied the odds. His parents reunited as a result of the health scare and his mother became a Christian soon after.

Despite all of that, Jones said he was haunted by feelings of rejection and was certain no one loved him. He even joined a gang when he was 11 years old.

However, the persistent efforts of one person finally led Jones to a personal relationship with the Lord when he was a junior in high school. That changed both his sense of worth and the direction of his life, he recalled. An added blessing came when Jones' mother finally told him she was proud of him and was glad that her abortion attempt had failed.

"By all that is logical, I should never have been born and should

have died on at least two other occasions," Jones said. "Yet here I am, still blessed with a wonderful life and serving the Lord the best way I know how."



James Jones

Prior to graduating from high school, Jones said God called him to preach, and he began his ministry in college. In addition to serving as a pastor, he has led mission teams to several countries.

One team he directed in Russia, shortly after the fall of the former Soviet Union, distributed 2,000 Bibles in a single day. Several of his teams helped erect a church building in Kolpino, Russia, with which Taylor County Baptist Association maintains a missions partnership.

During another mission trip to Kenya, Jones recalled finding himself at the wrong end of a Maasai warrior's spear. "I'll be honest, I thought I was a goner."

Yet, before the day had passed, Jones led that warrior and two others to faith in Jesus Christ. The spear of that warrior now hangs in Jones'

study as a reminder of God's work.

Jones is "a great motivator. He always made me feel I was important to the trip," said Ken Streble, who has accompanied Jones on mission trips. Streble described the longtime pastor as a "people person" who "always seems to be on call" and "rarely goes out without having to see some person with a need."

Jones recalled the joy of leading his father to the Lord shortly before his death. But added that he was saddened after realizing they had never told each other, "I love you." As a result, Jones stresses in many of his sermons the desperate need individuals have for love and for being told of God's love.

Whether in the pulpit, leading a mission team, working with a local organization, chairing a Southern Baptist committee, or taking on any of a number of KBC roles, Jones said he has tried to live as he believes God wants him to live each day.

"In spite of my blunders, I believe He has made a difference in me and through me," Jones acknowledged. "He had a plan and purpose for my life, as He does for each of us."

Pro-life groups prepare for battle with new administration

President-elect has voiced support for pro-choice measure

By Michael Foust
Baptist Press

Washington (BP)—Faced with a strengthened pro-choice majority in Congress and a new pro-choice president, pro-life groups are gearing up for a political fight to prevent passage of the Freedom of Choice Act, a bill that could set back their cause by decades.

FOCA, as it often is called, has been proposed by abortion rights supporters for two decades, but now may have the votes for passage, particularly with President-elect Obama—a FOCA supporter—about to take office.

The proposal has two prongs:

- It would make abortion a “fundamental right” for women and ensure that abortion remains legal even if *Roe v. Wade* someday is overturned.

- It would legalize partial-birth abortion once again and nullify all restrictions on abortion, such as waiting periods and parental notification laws. Additionally, it almost certainly would require taxpayer funding of abortion.

Pro-choice activists thought they had the votes for passing FOCA when President Clinton took office in 1993 with a pro-choice Congress, but pro-lifers successfully defeated it. It was re-introduced in the current Congress the day after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the federal ban on partial-birth abortion—with supporters of the bill championing the legislation because it would reverse the ban.

Even though Obama has yet to move into the Oval Office, pro-life groups already are educating and mobilizing their constituents.



BATTLE BREWING? Pro-life supporters are concerned that President-elect Barack Obama's “unrelenting” support of pro-choice causes, could set the anti-abortion movement back decades.

Americans United for Life launched a Web site—FightFOCA.com—with an online petition that has accumulated more than 300,000 signatures opposing the bill. National Right to Life also has a petition at its Web site that can be printed out and mailed to the group's Washington office. Both organizations said they will let members of Congress know the results.

Douglas Johnson, legislative director for National Right to Life, said pro-lifers lost about 15 seats in the U.S. House and at least five in the Senate during the November elections—a Senate total that could jump to six depending on how the Minnesota recount between Republican Sen. Norm Coleman and Democrat Al Franken turns out.

Johnson estimated that pro-lifers “may be in a little bit more jeopardy now than we were” when Clinton was inaugurated in 1993. Part of that is because Obama is “more unrelent-

ing” in his pro-choice views than was Clinton, Johnson explained.

Obama was one of 19 Senate co-sponsors of the bill. Asked in 2007 at a Planned Parenthood meeting what he would do as president to make sure abortion remains legal, he replied, “The first thing I’d do as president is sign” the Freedom of Choice Act. Whereas Clinton, who also supported FOCA, “would sometimes fold” on the issue of abortion, Johnson noted, Obama so far has not.

“Obama has never budged one inch on any issue touching abortion throughout his career in the legislature or the Congress—even on issues where many other pro-choice lawmakers came over to our side, like the partial-birth issue or the born-alive infants issue,” Johnson said. “If you put all that together, we have to recognize that there is a very real danger that the new Congress could approve something even as radical as the Freedom of Choice Act.”

When Clinton took office there were 57 senators and 258 representatives from his own party. Including independents who caucus with Democrats, Obama will have at least 57 senators and 256 representatives.

FOCA puts hospitals in jeopardy

Days after Obama's election, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops went on record warning about the dangers of FOCA, with some saying the bill could force Catholic hospitals to choose between performing abortions and shutting down. Other religious-run hospitals could face similar decisions. Such a move could have a dramatic impact on the health care system.

In a November newsletter, Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council cited stats from conservative blogger Ed Morrissey and wrote, “Catholics run more than 550 hospitals and 415 clinics in America, spending billions out of pocket to help

the disadvantaged get the care they need. Under FOCA, religious providers would have two options: either comply with the abortion mandate or end their services completely. Is Congress so intent on appeasing Planned Parenthood that it would jeopardize the health care of 90 million Americans? We'll see.”

The good news for pro-life advocates is that the bill has not passed the House or Senate during this Congress, much less made it through a committee. Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life of America, told Baptist Press she is taking Obama at his word that he wants to reduce abortion. She also pointed out that Obama himself said during the campaign he wanted to avoid dividing Americans on cultural issues.

“If that bill comes up, it is going to be really divisive,” she said. “It's a radical bill. It would be a big mistake to bring it up. I don't think it would get out of the House.”

Day also said she cannot see a scenario where Sen. Majority Leader Harry Reid would bring the Freedom of Choice Act to the floor.

But that does not mean pro-lifers should not be prepared. Johnson emphasized the pro-life side has a winning argument when it comes to FOCA, which Johnson calls the most radical pro-choice bill ever introduced.

“Many lawmakers who are supporters of *Roe v. Wade* and legal abortion would be voting for something that the sponsors of the bill acknowledge would wipe out laws that are in effect in their own states—parental notification, cutting off state funding for abortion, 24-hour waiting periods,” Johnson pointed out. “These laws are on the books in so many states because they have broad popular support, so that gives pause to some members of Congress when they start to get down to the specifics.”

“We have to recognize that there is a very real danger that the new Congress could approve something even as radical as the Freedom of Choice Act.”

Douglas Johnson,
National Right to Life
legislative director

Radio network gives ad money to pro-life groups

Overland Park, Kan. (BP)—Under Federal Communications Commission law, Bott Radio Network—an evangelical chain of radio stations covering 14 states—was required to run political advertisements paid for by Barack Obama's presidential campaign.

The company, though, did not have to pocket the money.

In the weeks following Obama's election, Bott Radio Network distributed all of the revenue from Obama's campaign advertisements—a total of about \$4,000—to crisis pregnancy centers in Missouri and Indiana, two battleground states targeted by Obama.

“We tried to find a way to take lemons and make lemonade,” noted Rich Bott, executive vice president of the network.

He said the network's listeners, most of whom are social conservatives, likely were surprised when the network began airing ads in October stating Obama shared their values. After all, some of the network's programs—such as “Focus on the Family,” “Richard Land Live” and “Jay Sekulow Live”—take positions opposite that of the president-elect.

“I found (Obama's ads) particu-

larly disingenuous, knowing that he had pledged to Planned Parenthood to support the Freedom of Choice Act,” Bott said, referencing a bill that would overturn pro-life laws nationwide and guarantee that abortion remains legal. “You can't share our values and be in favor of killing innocent unborn children.”

Opposing views

“We felt we had an obligation to clarify our position to our listeners. We aired editorials at the same time his advertisement was running explaining to our listeners that we were required to air those ads and that we objected to his position on life and gay marriage. ... And, we pledged to our listeners that we would donate the revenue from those announcements to pro-life crisis pregnancy centers.”

The revenue went to five such centers: Thrive in St. Louis; Options Pregnancy Clinic in Branson, Mo.; Crisis Pregnancy Center in Excelsior Springs, Mo.; Lifeline Pregnancy Resource Center in Kirksville, Mo.; and A Hope Center in Fort Wayne, Ind.

This is not the first time Bott Radio Network has faced a similar predicament. In 1996, President Bill

Clinton, running for re-election, ran ads on the network, which responded—as it did this year—by running editorials explaining the situation and donating the revenue to pro-life organizations.

Obama—who opted out of public financing for the general election—shattered previous campaign fundraising records, raising more than \$700 million in the primary and general election seasons. In the final months, his campaign had so much money that it was even purchasing ads with online sports video games, such as Xbox 360's “Madden NFL 09,” encouraging gamers to vote early.

Bott said that some no doubt will find it ironic that, in a roundabout way, Obama's campaign helped fund crisis pregnancy centers. “We spread his wealth around.”

According to its Web site, Bott Radio Network operates more than 80 broadcast signals reaching more than 40 million people in 14 states. The company does not operate any frequencies in Kentucky, but residents in the Southwest and South Central areas of the state can pick up programming from Bott stations in Nashville and Memphis, Tenn.

Survey shows solid majority of Americans favor abortion limits

Continued from page 1

Among the findings:

- Eighty-eight percent support informed consent laws, which require abortion providers to inform mothers of possible risks to their health and of abortion alternatives.

- More than 75 percent back laws that protect health care providers from being required to perform abortions or to refer women to doctors who will conduct the procedures.

- Nearly three-fourths of those polled favor laws requiring parental involvement in a minor's abortion.

- Sixty-three percent support laws banning the use of government funds to pay for abortions.

A USCCB official described the results as “remarkable.”

“Support for these measures cuts across ‘pro-life’ and ‘pro-choice’ positions,” said Deidre McQuade, assistant director for policy and communications with the USCCB's Secretariat of Pro-life Activities. Even 35 percent of those who favored unlimited abortion rights supported at least three of the six abortion-restrictive laws presented to respondents in the survey, she noted.

“This research indicates how out of touch pro-abortion groups are with mainstream America,” McQuade added.

Abortion-rights advocates in Congress are expected to promote legislation overturning pro-life policies, including those barring federal funding of abortion and abortion advocacy. President-elect Barack Obama has endorsed the Freedom of Choice Act, which would strike down all limitations on abortion and guarantee that abortion remains legal even if *Roe v. Wade* someday is overturned.

Survey indicates 1 in 10 adults is full-time caregiver

Nashville (BP)—Eleven percent of adults who participated in a LifeWay Research survey said they or an immediate family member are the primary full-time caregiver to an elderly parent or a special needs child.

Approximately 14 percent of American children under age 18 have special health care needs, according to the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that 36 out of every 1,000 Americans 65 and older live in a nursing home, while 277 per 10,000 require home health care.

According to the LifeWay study, marital status and race signal the most significant differences in individual's status as primary full-time caregivers. Those who are unmarried and living with a partner (18 percent) are acting as primary caregivers for elderly parents or special needs children far more than either married people (11 percent) or single people (9 percent).

Also, females (14 percent) are caregivers for elderly parents or special needs children more often than males (9 percent), according to the LifeWay Research data.

Neither education nor income level make much difference in a person's likelihood of being a full-time primary caregiver to a child or parent. However, those most able to outsource care to others—those making \$100,000 or more—provide full-time care just as often (13 percent) as other income groups.

"This research should open our eyes to the number of people in our churches and communities that are looking for people to be the hands and feet of Jesus," LifeWay Research President Ed Stetzer said. "For the most part, the American church continues to ignore the emphasis that Jesus Himself placed on the poor and the sick. ... Until caring for the sick and the poor becomes as cool as church planting and rapid church growth, the church should not be surprised when the government steps in to do our God-called work."

Report: Further anti-poverty efforts needed

By Robert Marus
Associated Baptist Press

Washington (ABP)—The global financial crisis makes it even more urgent that the United States not only take care of its own economy, but also redouble efforts to aid the world's poorest, according to a new report and several development experts.

The 2009 edition of the Christian anti-poverty group Bread for the World's annual hunger report was released in November. It calls for the government to streamline international development efforts through renewed focus and a series of reforms—despite, and because of, the international economic downturn.

"At a time like this, we ought to use our foreign assistance effectively, and we ought to distribute more of our aid to struggling families around the world who are trying to overcome hunger and poverty," said Bread for the World President David Beckmann. "This crisis has been a huge setback in the world's progress against hunger, poverty and disease."

Beckmann noted massive increases in the cost of basic food items in many places around the globe that have driven approximately 100 million more people into extreme poverty in the last two years. The report estimated 75 million more people are malnourished now than two years ago.

Beckmann insisted the U.S. should not use its own economic woes as a reason to cut back on foreign aid.

"It would just be wrong for us to be so preoccupied with our own problems that we forget the nearly billion people in the world who do not get enough to eat," he said.

The report calls for several reforms in the way U.S. development and aid work is conducted, including:

- Elevating development and poverty reduction "as specific goals in U.S. foreign policy, distinguished from political, military and security goals, with distinct and secure funding."

- Coordinating development assistance with recipient nations "to meet their long-term development goals and focus on outcomes with measurable goals and objectives."

- Maintaining civilian leadership in U.S. development-assistance efforts, with the U.S. military's role "limited to its operational strengths in logistics and stabilization."

- Creating one "effective, streamlined agency" to channel all U.S. development assistance, now spread across 12 Cabinet departments and dozens of federal agencies and offices.

"We need to have a consolidated agency that is separate from AID," said Peter McPherson, president of the National Association of State

Universities and Land Grant Colleges, referring to the U.S. Agency for International Development. McPherson was the agency's administrator during the Reagan administration.

Other experts agreed but cautioned that it is important not only to increase assistance funding—the U.S. spends a far smaller percentage of its gross domestic product on aid than other industrialized nations—but also to make aid better targeted and more efficient.

"The Bush administration has increased assistance to Africa and foreign assistance in general, but I think what we want to talk about is the effectiveness of our foreign assistance in terms of development and growth," said Ken Hackett, president of Catholic Relief Services.

Beckmann said polls show that the majority of voters want to increase the aid the U.S. provides to the world's poor.

"Their main motive is humanitarian," he noted. "People know that people on the other side of the world are desperately poor, and so that if Americans think that they can really help they are willing to help."

Several Baptist organizations co-sponsored the report along with other Christian denomination and parachurch groups. The report includes a Bible study guide for churches to use in exploring what Scripture has to say about hunger and caring for the poor.

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Barbourville Pregnancy Resource Center • Barbourville

New Life Center • Bardstown

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Southeast Kentucky Women for Life • Corbin

Care Net Pregnancy Services of Northern Kentucky • Covington

New Hope Center • Crestview Hills

Pregnancy Resource Center of Central Kentucky • Danville

Heartland Crisis Pregnancy Center • Elizabethtown

Care Net Pregnancy Services of Northern Kentucky • Florence

AA Pregnancy Help Center • Frankfort

Avenues for Women • Frankfort

Opportunities for Life • Frankfort

Unwed Mothers and Their Children • Frankfort

Crossroads Pregnancy Center, Inc. • Glasgow

Pathway of Hope • Greenville

Marsha's Place Pregnancy Resource Center • Henderson

Alpha Alternative Pregnancy Care Center • Hopkinsville

New Hope Center • Latonia

AA Pregnancy Help Center • Lexington

Birthright of Kentucky • Lexington

Laurel County Life Center • London

A Woman's Choice Resource Center • Louisville

Birthright • Louisville

Pregnancy Resource Center • Louisville

Door of Hope Pregnancy Center • Madisonville

Hope Pregnancy Resource Center • Mayfield

Lighthouse Ministries • Mayfield

H.E.L.P. Pregnancy Care Center (Hold Each Life Precious) • Monticello

Hope Pregnancy Care Center • Morehead

Shelter of Love Crisis Pregnancy Center • Morganfield

Life House Care Center • Murray

Care Net Pregnancy Center of Owensboro • Owensboro

Meeting the Needs • Owenton

Hope Unlimited Family Care Center • Paducah

Appalachian Pregnancy Care Center • Pikeville

Choose Life Ministries • Pineville

CrossWay Pregnancy Resource Center • Radcliff

Pregnancy Help Center • Richmond

ARC Pregnancy Support Center • Russell Springs

A Loving Choice Pregnancy Resource Center • Shelbyville

AIM Pregnancy Support Center • Somerset

House of Hope Pregnancy Center • Springfield

Care Net Pregnancy Services of Northern Kentucky • Williamstown

AA Pregnancy Care Center • Winchester



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SUSPENDED LICENSE Legal challenges have resulted in a temporary suspension of South Carolina's "I Believe" license plates. Courts in at least three states are mulling the appropriateness of religious messages on license plates. (RNS photo courtesy of South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles)

Three states debate limits of religious license plates

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

Washington (RNS)—In South Carolina, a district court has temporarily halted the production of state-sponsored license plates that declare "I Believe" and feature an illustration of a cross superimposed on a stained-glass window.

In Vermont, meanwhile, an appeals court is mulling whether a vanity plate featuring John 3:16, the verse about Jesus saving the world, should be permitted on that state's roads.

And in Arizona, a court has ruled it is OK to give residents the option of having the words "Choose Life" on state plates.

The question is no longer, "What would Jesus drive?" Now, it's more likely to be, "What's on His license plate?"

Across the country, the small metal plates affixed to car bumpers have become the latest battleground for church-state disputes and questions of free speech.

"It's hard to draw a line between what is government speech and what is private speech when it comes to license plates," said Charles Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center in Washington. "Some people want to use their license plate to proclaim their beliefs and that puts the state in an awkward position, because if they allow one message then they have to allow others."

The South Carolina case is one of the more unusual—and overt—examples of religious speech on a license plate. The "I Believe" phrase and accompanying artwork were adopted unanimously by the state legislature, prompting a lawsuit by the Washington-based Americans United for Separation of Church and State on behalf of Unitarian, Jewish and Christian clergy and the Hindu American Foundation.

"I know some may quickly label this as an anti-Christian suit and I don't think that that's what is at issue," explained Suhag Shukla, legal counsel for the Maryland-based Hindu group. "It was more the state endorsement of religion, and such a blatant endorsement of religion."

U.S. District Judge Cameron McGowan Currie sided with the religious groups in a Dec. 15 opinion, halting distribution of the plates while the legal process continues.

"Just as a reasonable, objective observer would likely conclude that the state of South Carolina was promoting tourism with the Web site address 'Travel2SC.com' on its standard-issue plate," she wrote, "that same observer could reasonably believe the state is promoting Christianity through its legislatively created and DMV-designed and marketed 'I Believe' plate."

Beth Parks, a spokeswoman for the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles, said the state has complied with the preliminary injunction, which directed the department to remove advertising about the plate from its Web site.

"The people who submitted the \$5 pre-paid application ... are receiving refunds," she noted.

Beyond disputes over state-sanctioned specialty plates, Vermont driver Shawn Byrne is waiting for an appeals court to decide if he can use letters and symbols on his own vanity plate to spread the gospel. He hopes to put "JOHN316," "JN316" or "JN36TN" on his vehicle.

"Everybody knows when they're driving down the road and they see a vanity plate that this person behind the wheel is speaking, not the state," said Jeremy Tedesco, an attorney with the Arizona-based Alliance Defense Fund, who defended Byrne at a hearing last month.

Already, courts have permitted individuals to speak through specialized plates with messages to "Choose Life" sponsored by organizations such as the Arizona Life Coalition.

Arizona officials had initially rejected a "Choose Life" license plate, but the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said that policy amounted to viewpoint discrimination. Last October, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal by Arizona officials. More than a dozen states offer "Choose Life" plates and more are considering them.

Vanity plates appear on more than 9.3 million U.S. motor vehicles, according to a joint study by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators and the Web site LCNS2ROM.com, and officials say the interest in messages-in-motion is only likely to continue.

"People are certainly passionate about license plates," said Jason King, spokesman for the association. "They are vehicles for personal expression."



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College evangelicals reach out in effort to improve image

By Amy Green
Religion News Service

Orlando, Fla. (RNS)—Josh Spavin knows the stereotypes about evangelical Christians: judgmental, sanctimonious, narrow-minded. He may not buy into the image, but at the same time, he knows how real—and damaging—it can be.

So that is why Spavin, a recent graduate of the University of Central Florida and an intern with the UCF chapter of Campus Crusade for Christ International, wants to launch an HIV/AIDS outreach with

a campus gay-lesbian group.

“What we wanted to do is find common ground where we can serve alongside with them,” said Spavin, 25. “We don’t necessarily agree with their choices because that’s not part of our faith, but we still love them.”

Campus Crusade—an organization that once denounced rock music only to later embrace it—is once again changing with the times, engaging potential new Christians through social issues that perhaps seemed taboo in the past. Unofficially nicknamed “Good News, Good Deeds,” the initiative at UCF, and others like it, is a ground-up effort by one of the nation’s largest evangelical groups.

It also provides a peek at what issues young evangelicals see as important, and how they are changing a faith they inherited from their parents, but sometimes chafe against.

“Young evangelicals in particular are very conscious about poverty and the environment, and they tend to be more tolerant on issues such as gay rights and homosexuality,” said John Turner, assistant professor of history at the University of South Alabama and author of the new book, “Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America.”

“Evangelicals and evangelical organizations, they do have a big public relations problem of being known for intolerance or homophobia or not being concerned enough about social issues, and I think their desire is to correct that image,” he said.

Campus Crusade was founded in 1951 by the late Bill Bright and his wife, Vonette. Today, the Orlando-based megaministry counts 55,000 student members at nearly 1,100 U.S. campuses, and is active in 191 countries.

Campus Crusade officials say they detect a new desire among young evangelicals to live out Christian concepts such as compassion and understanding, and to imitate Jesus’ welcome by engaging in broad-based social issues.

“Students today realize that connecting to other people, that just to tell the story or talk about Christianity doesn’t seem to completely connect,” noted Chip Scivicque, a 30-year Campus Crusade veteran who now is based at Auburn University in Alabama. “There’s this desire to live out the Christian life and live out gospel truth so that when those truths are explained they make more sense.”

Increased involvement

Last year at Michigan State University, Campus Crusade partnered with other organizations on several events to draw attention to the international sex slave trade. The largest event drew about 1,000 for a mock “Price-is-Right”-themed game show in which contestants bid not on prizes but people.

Paul Hardaloupas, a 25-year-old Michigan State graduate who now is on staff with Campus Crusade, is planning more events for the spring semester, including one focused on rape.

At Stanford University in Palo

Alto, Calif., Campus Crusade has partnered with a local nonprofit group on nearly a dozen construction and renovation projects in recent years, including elementary schools, a center for at-risk youth and a home for unwed teen mothers.

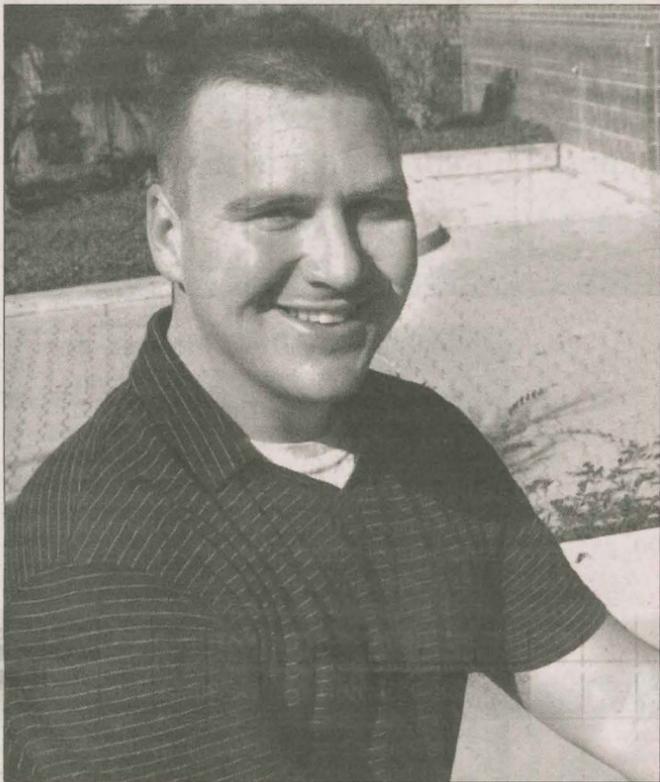
“I think a lot of it has to do with just getting into the Word more,” explained Trent Wiesen, 27, who belonged to Campus Crusade as a student at Stanford and now works with the local nonprofit group, 2nd Mile. “There’s just a hunger for the Word, and they’re kind of looking at the way of the church in those early years and kind of seeing the ways in which it doesn’t exactly match up with the church a lot of us have been growing up with.”

Back at UCF, Spavin attributed the new interest in social justice issues to a more global world. Internet-savvy young adults read about AIDS and poverty afflicting the world—and they want to do something, Spavin said. Just before Christmas, his group joined with a gay student group, a pro-marijuana group and fraternities and sororities to gather gifts for underprivileged children. Some 400 shoeboxes of gifts were collected for Samaritan’s Purse for distribution worldwide.

“It’s not just Christians but young people now—it’s almost like they’re waking up to the world,” Spavin said. “In general, Christianity has, like, a negative connotation to it. People feel like we are putting ourselves on a pedestal and condescending to people, and that’s not the love of Christ.”

IMAGE MAKEOVER

Josh Spavin, an intern with Campus Crusade for Christ at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Fla., wants to work with gay-lesbian student groups and others to help improve the image of evangelicals as narrow-minded and self-righteous. (RNS photo by Amy Green)



NATIONAL NOTES

Pentagon tightens religious literature policy.

The Pentagon recently reversed its policy of granting religious groups like the Gideons International preferential access to provide literature to new recruits. A new regulation distributed in November says non-federal entities can continue to receive permission to place secular or religious literature at 65 Military Entrance Processing Stations around the country, but faith-based and secular organizations must be treated alike. The policy change followed an investigation by the American Civil Liberties Union into a complaint by a recruit in Louisville about being approached by a representative of the Gideons, a 100-year-old organization best known for placing Bibles in hotel rooms. The new rule recognizes the importance of accommodating the religious beliefs of military personnel but says the government must avoid any appearance of establishing religion.

N.J. says complaint over civil union can proceed.

New Jersey officials said Dec. 29 that a lesbian couple can move forward with their discrimination complaint against a Methodist group that refused to let them use an oceanfront pavilion for a civil union. Since the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association regularly made the pavilion available for public use, including weddings, it was bound by the state Law Against Discrimination from barring civil unions, said J. Frank Vespa-Papaleo, director of the state’s Division on Civil Rights. For years, the association, which owns all land in the nearly one-square-mile section of Neptune Township, used the pavilion for both religious services and public events. But the association rejected a 2007 application of Ocean Grove residents Harriet Bernstein and Luisa Paster, saying their civil union would conflict with the association’s Methodist beliefs.

Evangelicals seek broad moral agenda.

Fifty-nine evangelical leaders signed a letter requesting that whoever is chosen to replace ousted lobbyist Richard Cizik at the National Association of Evangelicals carry on Cizik’s commitment to a moral agenda broader than opposition to homosexuality and abortion. In a letter to NAE President Leith Anderson dated Dec. 16, the evangelical leaders expressed gratitude for Cizik’s “broad Christian moral agenda that has helped define American Evangelicals’ public witness.” Cizik resigned Dec. 10 as the NAE’s vice president for governmental affairs after saying in a radio interview his view on gay marriage was shifting and he now supports civil unions for same-sex couples.

Court orders new review of detainee case.

The Supreme Court has instructed a lower court to review its decision that terrorism detainees lack religious rights under United States law. The justices issued an order Dec. 15 reversing a decision last January by the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals. The justices told the lower court to reconsider it in light of the high court’s June ruling in *Boumediene v. Bush*, which found that detainees have some rights under the Constitution. The ruling is a victory for supporters of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, one of the federal laws cited in the suit against U.S. officials filed by four former detainees held at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The plaintiffs were British citizens detained by American forces in Afghanistan and then transported to the high-security U.S. prison for terrorism suspects. After two years, they were released from Guantanamo without being charged. The Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty—which filed a brief in favor of the prisoners’ RFRA claims—welcomed the ruling.

Poll: Religious influence waning

Washington (RNS)—Two-thirds of Americans think religion is losing its influence on U.S. life, a sharp jump from just three years ago when Americans were nearly evenly split on the question, according to a new Gallup Poll.

Sixty-seven percent of Americans think religious influence is waning, while just 27 percent say it is increasing. That perspective demonstrates a continuing downward trend, Gallup noted.

But the 27 percent figure still is higher than the record low, set in a 1970 poll, when just 14 percent of Americans thought religion was increasing in influence.

Those who regularly attend worship services are more likely to say religion is losing its influence; three out of four weekly attenders (74 percent) said religious influence is fall-

ing, compared to 24 percent who thought its influence is on the rise.

At other times in American history, religion has been perceived by more Americans as having increasing significance. In 1957, 69 percent thought its influence was increasing, compared to 14 percent who thought it was declining. Likewise, in 2001, three months after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, 71 percent saw an increasing religious influence, compared to 24 percent who said it was decreasing.

The latest poll also finds that the percentage of Americans believing that religion “can answer all or most of today’s problems” has reached an all-time low. Slightly more than half of those surveyed (53 percent) held that view, while 28 percent say it is “largely old-fashioned and out of date.”

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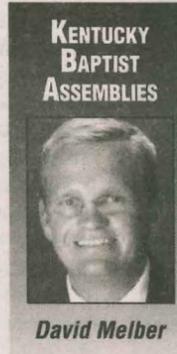
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Crossing over into a new decade

Crossings Camps celebrates 10 years of changed lives

We here at Kentucky Baptist Assemblies have great anticipation for this new year which is quite special for Crossings Camps. Perhaps you don't realize, but this year marks Crossings' 10-year anniversary. As we reflect on the last decade, we are filled with a variety of emotions and great anticipation for the next 10 years. I always have claimed that success is measured in many ways. One key aspect is consistency over time. To be specific, consistency as it relates to the core purpose of any given ministry.



David Melber

During 1998 and 1999, I, along with many others, absolutely believed that God gave Rusty Ellison, the first president of KBA, a clear vision of what camp could be—not that camp wasn't camp before. Rusty's vision was for a radical change in approach compared to what Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek had previously known.

The vision went far beyond attracting youth; it was specifically to attract lost and unchurched youth to camp where the gospel would be presented throughout an entire week of activities. Many obstacles and naysayers stood in op-

position. Through Rusty's leadership and with the support of a dedicated board of directors, the vision has stood the test of time.

Prior to Crossings' birth, our mission statement was—and continues to be—"to create an environment where our guests can come to know Christ or more fully experience Him." As we review the past decade, such a simple mission and purpose gives clarity to our ministry and serves as guidance to all of our efforts.

Now, as we have approached 10 years of Crossings, the spiritual impact of what God has done is certainly beyond what anyone would have thought possible. God continues to prove faithful and able to produce a great work through His church in camp ministry.

I hope you will take time to follow what God does through Crossings during the coming year. I do believe you will rejoice with us as people come to know and experience Christ. We humbly thank those who trusted God's leadership in the beginning to follow His path for His glory.

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

For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

By Janet Adkins

Across

- 1 Dr. Zhivago heroine
- 5 Metric land measure (abbr.)
- 8 Bone or breaker
- 11 Ancient Hebrew dry measure
- 12 Feminine name
- 14 N.A. country
- 15 "Avenge not yourselves, but rather _____ unto wrath" (2 words, Romans 12:19)
- 17 Knight's form of address
- 18 Actress Ullmann
- 19 "_____ hath desired to have you, that he may sift you" (Luke 22:31)
- 21 "Shall seven years of _____ come unto ... thy land?" (2 Samuel 24:13)
- 24 Indian princess
- 25 Southern state (abbr.)
- 26 Turmoil
- 28 "Give not that which is holy unto the _____" (Matthew 7:6)
- 30 Shoe width
- 31 Bog
- 33 Provide the means
- 35 Compass dir.
- 36 Thing on a list
- 37 "And your children shall _____ in the wilderness forty years" (Numbers 14:33)
- 40 Like an ump
- 42 Circular _____ (junk mail repository?)
- 43 Formerly Clay
- 44 "Dearly beloved, _____ yourselves ... I will repay" (2 words, Romans 12:19)

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| 52 | | | | 53 | | | | 54 | | |

- 49 "But as the days of _____ were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37)
- 50 Telephoned
- 51 "For a good man some would even _____ to die" (Romans 5:7)
- 52 Acted
- 53 At loose _____
- 54 "We have seen his _____ in the east" (Matthew 2:2)
- 16 Individual number, for ATMs and credit cards
- 20 City in southern Judah (Joshua 15:50)
- 21 Bell bottoms or hula-hoops
- 22 Healing plant
- 23 "And let thy name be _____ for ever" (2 Samuel 7:26)
- 24 Hwy.
- 26 "Stand still, and _____ the salvation of the Lord" (Exodus 14:13)
- 27 Sea eagle
- 29 Formed a lap
- 30 Small town street name
- 32 Poetic contraction
- 34 "Take heed, _____ of the leaven of the Pharisees" (Mark 8:15)
- 37 "Oh that I had _____ like a dove!" (Psalm 55:6)
- 38 Required H.S. math
- 39 Obligations
- 40 Author Ayn
- 41 "_____, lama sabachthani?" (Mark 15:34)
- 42 Ward off
- 45 Actor Johnson
- 46 Masculine nickname
- 47 Mouth (pl.)
- 48 Like a patio (abbr.)

Last week's solution

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On July 2, 2009, join your Spiritual Director, Baptist Minister Rev. J. Barry Worrell on this 15-day vacation including a 7-day deluxe Alaska Cruise with Holland America Line and a 7-day Pacific Northwest vacation with Your Man Tours. Devotions will be made available for those in the group who wish to participate. This will be Rev. Worrell's second time hosting this YMT Baptist vacation package. The first was on this same Alaska Cruise and Pacific Northwest trip that departed June 12, 2005. For 22 years, Rev. Worrell has served as Minister of Music and Senior Adults at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Grenada, Mississippi. Your group will fly into Salt Lake City for a day with a city tour (including the Mormon Tabernacle, Beehive House and Great Salt Lake). Next your group will take a five day scenic drive to Vancouver by way of Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Grand Teton National Park; West Yellowstone & Yellowstone National Park (two days); Butte, Montana; Lake Coeur d'Alene; Spokane, Washington; and Penticton, BC before boarding your five-star ship, HAL's *ms Volendam* in Vancouver. Enjoy the 5-star *Signature of Excellence Holland America Line* is famous for! And take advantage of Baptist devotions for your group aboard ship! Travel through a wondrous maze of forested-island and glacier-carved fjords, past charming coastal villages, migrating whales and calving glaciers to Juneau, Skagway, Glacier Bay National Park, and Ketchikan while sailing Alaska's Inside Passage. End your tour with one night in Seattle, Washington (with city tour) before flying home July 16, 2009. *Price per person, double occupancy; includes port charges, government fees, taxes and services; Alaska visitor's tax; ship fuel surcharge, the seven-day deluxe Alaska cruise, seven nights hotels, baggage handling and lots of motor coach sightseeing throughout the Pacific Northwest. Add \$650 airfare from Evansville, IN; Lexington or Louisville, KY; Nashville or Knoxville, TN.

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Digital television: How churches can ease the confusion

By Bryan Gill
The Alabama Baptist

Birmingham, Ala. (BP)—You've heard that digital television is coming. But what does it mean?

"There is a lot of confusion. This does not mean that you have to get out and buy a new TV," said Sharon Tinsley, president of the Alabama Broadcasters Association.

But churches, she pointed out, can help alleviate that confusion.

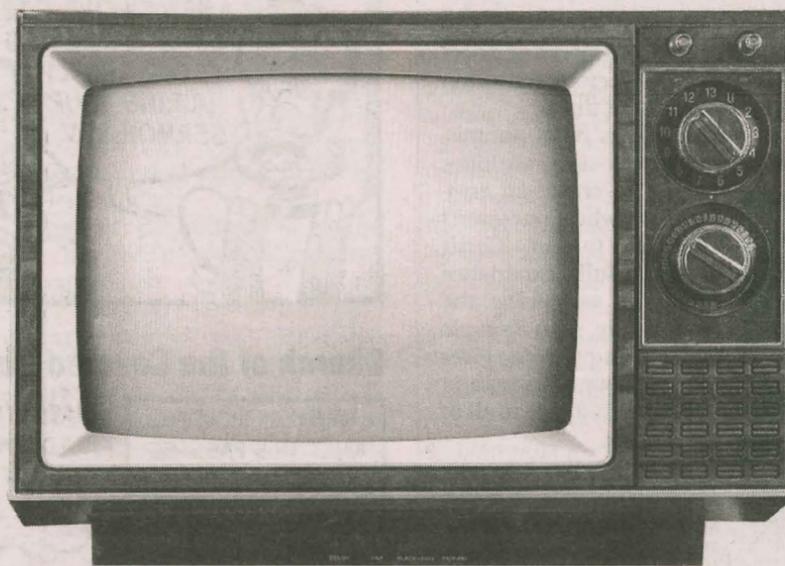
If you have cable or satellite TV, the switch will not affect it at all. But if you use an outdoor antenna or "rabbit ears," you will not receive a signal after Feb. 17. On that date, all television broadcast stations will convert from an analog signal to a digital signal. Your regular antenna will not work anymore without a converter box that makes the signal compatible with your television.

Converter boxes can be purchased at most stores where electronics are sold. They generally cost between \$40 and \$70, but coupons can be obtained from the government (see sidebar information). The deadline to request coupons is March 31.

With the switchover looming, churches can minister to members and others in the community by helping them make the DTV switch.

Some examples are:

- "Get your youth involved," Tinsley said. "The kids in your churches are hooked up. They have tech down. If I had a youth department, I would look at our membership list and poll them—senior adults, senior classes and homebound members—and ask them if they need help. If they do, they will need (the youth)



to get the converter box and help with the antenna."

- Have youth help senior adults apply for coupons, or set up a station in your church where members can apply for them online.

- Put on a seminar to educate your members on how to make the transfer from analog to digital.

- Individuals who do not need coupons can order them and give them to people who do, Tinsley noted.

- Sunday school classes could get together as a group and help purchase converter boxes for those who need them.

Television stations are conducting periodic tests for viewers of free TV to determine whether they are ready for the digital crossover. During these tests, viewers will see a test commercial in one of two ways—either with a red or green back-

ground. Those who see the red background are not ready for the switch.

"There will be some kind of slate or graphic that says if you are seeing this, you still need to take steps to make the transition," Tinsley explained.

"Every station's test might look a little different," she said, adding that she hopes the tests will help viewers who are not prepared realize they need to act promptly. "If people flip around from station to station during (a DTV test) time and see the same red screen, it will be a wakeup call."

On Feb. 18, the day after the switch, some individuals who have purchased a converter box still may not receive a signal. "The biggest problem is the antenna people use," said Mark Smith, operations manager at WAKA-TV in Montgomery, Ala.

With analog signals, Smith not-

ed, you can adjust the antenna and pick up fuzzy signals that show a snowy picture but still have sound. Digital signals are different. "People think the digital signal will be like an analog signal. There could be no two things further from each other than analog and digital," Smith said.

Tinsley noted that if you have been receiving a strong signal with analog, you probably will receive a strong signal with digital. But if you have a weak signal and the station is barely clear on your television with analog, you probably will not get that station after Feb. 17.

Smith explained that indoor antennas will be a challenge for anyone not close to a TV station's broadcast tower. Simply placing your indoor antenna outdoors will not work for the most part, he said. "You need a bona fide outdoor UHF/VHF antenna."

Some possible solutions for signal problems are:

- If you have a newer television with a digital tuner and do not have an antenna, you might need to buy an outdoor antenna.

- If you have "rabbit ears" and do not receive a signal, you might need an outdoor antenna.

- If you have an outdoor antenna, you might need to make it taller.

- Check to see if you have followed the instructions that came with the converter box in order to make sure that it is connected properly.

"It's imperative that you get your equipment now and play with it before the changeover occurs so that you will not have any questions when it does," Smith suggested.

'Twas the weekend before Christmas

Myriad of travel problems in Northeast delay Oneida students' Christmas break

In chapel two days before Christmas break, I told our students that the weather looked good for their trips home. Many were happy to hear that since they do not normally keep up with the weather. When they do the dorms first indication to go to breakfast, they get their first indication of weather conditions. It's not uncommon to see students in the dining hall on a cold morning in short sleeves. Fortunately, they can return to their dorms to get a jacket. So they were excited when I told them that the weather should not be a factor as they planned their trips home.

Well, my forecast was not totally accurate. While the weather here was accommodating, the weather north of us was downright bad. We had about 60 students who were to fly to various destinations. The phones started ringing the Friday morning before Christmas with calls from parents telling us the airlines had canceled all flights to New York City.

Now that might seem like bad news for the family and the students stranded here, and it was—but don't forget that Christmas break is vacation time for our staff, too. Most of them had their cars packed Thursday evening. When the school bell rang Friday, they were just as anxious to get on the road as our students.

So who would care for the students who were stranded, since our dining room and dormitories were closed? Fortunately, we always have some folks who do not plan to leave for a day or two, so they often offer to keep students who have been delayed. The next problem was how to get those

students back to the airport. The flights that were canceled on Friday were rescheduled for Saturday morning.

So, it was back to the airport on Saturday. Not to our surprise, the flight was canceled again due to bad weather in New York and across the northeast. The flight had been rescheduled, however, for later that afternoon. Other than spending two hours in a laundromat, I can't think of many things more boring than spending six or seven hours at the airport; but wait it out they did. When the time came for the rescheduled flight, guess what? It too was canceled.

We had five very frustrated students and two staff members who wanted to begin their breaks. A friend of one student agreed to keep three of them overnight and take them back to the airport on Sunday. The other two were brought back to campus and cared for that night by a staff member.

I agreed to take the two students back to the airport on Sunday morning. We left campus at 2:30 a.m. to get to the airport in time for the 6 a.m. flight. Just before we arrived, my cell phone rang; my wife informed me that the flight had been canceled yet again. You can only imagine the students' disappointment. But she told me that the 6 a.m. flight had been changed to 7 a.m.

With more than a little pessimism, we spent two hours waiting and hoping there would actually be a 7 a.m. flight. I'm happy to say that at 7:58 a.m., the flight took off. Finally, all of our students were on their way home for Christmas.



W.F. Underwood

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

Online degrees now available

Clear Creek now offering expanded delivery mode

Recent advances in technology have opened up some exciting possibilities in the area of Christian higher education. Clear Creek recently received approval from both of our accrediting agencies to offer a fully accredited Bachelor of Arts in Ministry degree totally online.

We feel this degree offering will provide an opportunity to minister to bivocational pastors who may not be able to just pick up and move to campus. There are literally thousands of such pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention who have not had the opportunity to take advantage of any formal ministry training. This program now will allow them the opportunity to obtain a fully accredited degree while still involved in their current ministry settings.

The Ministry degree will prepare the graduate to lead a local church as pastor or associate pastor. For many graduates, this degree can and will serve as a pastor's final formal ministry preparation. It also will serve as excellent preparation for advanced study at a seminary or graduate program.

The degree includes 50 hours of Bible/theology classes; 30 hours of professional development courses; 14 hours of ministerial studies; and 36 semester hours of general education courses. Not only will students receive excellent Bible training, the practical component of the program will assist them in "doing" ministry in their local church.

The approval of the online degree also allows Clear Creek to offer other degrees in this format. We will now be able to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Bivocational Ministry degree; a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Service degree; and Associate of Arts de-

grees—completely online. In addition, Clear Creek also is now offering a 28-hour certificate in Bible. This will allow an individual to take courses online as a distance education student with the potential to complete the 28-hour certificate in 14 months.

If you would like more information, contact Director of Distance Education Jay Barnett at jbarnett@ccbcc.edu, or call toll free at (866) 340-3196.

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



Donnie Fox

Gaza conflict taking a toll on both sides of the border

Richmond, Va. (BP)—Christians normally permitted to leave Gaza for Bethlehem during Christmas found themselves separated from their families and unable to return home when fighting erupted between Israel and Hamas-controlled Gaza in late December.

After a week of rocket attacks launched by Hamas from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel, the Jewish nation responded, first with aerial bombardment, then with a ground offensive Jan. 2.

Isa,* a layman at Gaza Baptist Church, said he returned to Gaza Dec. 26 to take care of church business. His family remained in Bethlehem, unaware the borders were about to close. "This is the worst it has ever been," Isa told a Christian worker.

An air strike seriously damaged Gaza Baptist Church on New Year's Day. The church's windows were blown out when Israeli aircraft attacked a police station across the street, according to a report from the BosNews service.

It is not the first time for the only Protestant church in the Gaza Strip to be caught in the crossfire between battling forces. Palestinian police twice have seized the six-story building, which also includes a public library and one of the area's few breast-cancer clinics, as a sniper post.

Residents of Israel are struggling, too.

One Israeli soldier asked a Christian worker to pray for him while he was at war. To the worker's surprise, the soldier didn't ask him to pray for his safety but rather that he would not have to use his gun.

With 1.5 million residents, the Gaza Strip is one of world's most densely populated places, increasing the likelihood of collateral damage.

On Jan. 6, the 11th day of fight-

ing that began eight days after a six-month truce between Israel and the militants expired, at least 30 people died in a strike near a United Nations school where hundreds of people sought refuge from fighting.

Israel tried to deflect criticism by charging Hamas with using Gaza residents as human shields.

Israeli military spokeswoman Avital Leibovich told Associated Press, "Civilians will probably continue to get killed, unfortunately, because Hamas put them in the first lines of fire."

This latest conflict has jeopardized the "land for peace" concept that has driven Middle East peace proposals since 1933, according to Middle East commentator Daniel Pipes. A Dec. 31 column at DanielPipes.org quoted former Israeli general Yaakov Amidror as saying, "The historical lesson ... proves that with every concession, every territory we leave is used for attacks against us."

Hamas rockets now reach as many as 1 million Israelis, and Israeli intelligence now believes Lebanon's Hezbollah militias have rockets that can strike Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city, Pipes said.

"I want to remind the world that Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip more than three years ago," Israel Defense Minister Ehud Barak noted during an emergency session of the nation's parliament last week. He told lawmakers, "We gave a chance for a new reality and all we've seen in return is the Hamas government firing rockets and missiles on our citizens."

Living conditions quickly deteriorated in the Gaza Strip after the ground offensive began. In a culture where bread is served with every meal, a Christian worker explained, when a bakery does receive a shipment of flour, it is common for more



than 600 people to line up for the chance to get one piece of flatbread.

Even if families have flour, the worker noted, rotating blackouts make baking nearly impossible.

Israel last week began allowing aid into the area three hours each day. Food, water, cooking oil and medicine were among the supplies expected to flow into the area.

Southern Baptists already have provided assistance through Baptist Global Response, and according to Abraham Shepherd, an area director for BGR, "We have been in constant contact with various networks ... trying to coordinate efforts and be on standby for long-term sustainable relief."

"The situation in Gaza is a human tragedy," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "Hamas could have used the opportunity provided by Israel's withdraw-

al in 2005 to begin to construct a real Palestinian state by providing basic services to its people and building desperately needed roads and infrastructure.

"Instead, Hamas ... chose to squander that historic opportunity by committing the meager resources of the Palestinian people to turning the Gaza Strip into a terrorist base and a launching pad for thousands of rockets aimed deliberately at the civilian population of southern Israel," he continued.

"What other country in the world would have waited as long as Israel has to respond in force to such murderous acts against its civilian population? ... We should all pray that the 'peace of Jerusalem' should come sooner rather than later to the Holy Land."

**Name changed for security reasons. With additional reporting by Associated Baptist Press*

DISPLACED Many families have been separated or left homeless by fighting that erupted between Israel and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip Dec. 27. Israel's ground offensive, a response to rocket attacks launched from Gaza into southern Israel, began Jan. 2. On Jan. 7, Israel agreed to suspend operations a few hours each day to allow humanitarian aid into the area. (IMB photo)

Myths worsen HIV/AIDS pandemic, workers say

By Mark Kelly
Baptist Press

Nhlangano, Swaziland (BP)—Myths about HIV/AIDS put people at greater risk of infection, or multiply the rate at which the virus spreads. But according to international Southern Baptist workers, the most destructive myths are those that prevent God's people from sharing the gospel with people in need.

In 15 years as a missionary to Swaziland, Barbara Myers said she has heard almost all the myths about AIDS, ranging from simple ignorance ("You can get the virus from another person's sweat") to downright evil ("Having sex with a child can cure AIDS").

Myers recalled an item in the local newspaper that claimed a witchdoctor created a natural cure for AIDS that was available for \$110 a quart.

In rural areas of Swaziland, people cling to traditions where many of these myths and misconceptions originate, she noted.

"One husband took his sick wife to a witchdoctor, who told him the two other families living on their homestead were causing her to be sick," Myers recalled. "He chose to believe that nonsense even though

he has been told that both he and his wife have AIDS.

"Another woman who had been told several years ago that she was HIV positive ... was told she had tuberculosis due to windy weather conditions," Myers continued. "Now she is living the myth of believing she will fully recover if she takes her TB medicine."

Knowing the facts

The facts about the spread of AIDS are tragic enough without having to confront the harm these myths cause. HIV is transmitted several ways but emerging patterns point to a primary path of infection in specific regions:

- According to UNAIDS, the joint United Nations program on HIV/AIDS, globally 68 percent of all people living with HIV are in Sub-Saharan Africa; 61 percent are women, most infected by men who use illegal drugs or participate in high-risk sexual activity.

- In the U.S., according to recent CDC reports, nearly two-thirds of HIV infections resulted from men having sex with men.

- In Russia, HIV/AIDS is spreading largely through intravenous drug abuse and sharing of infect-

ed needles.

Confronted by the staggering numbers—22.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa alone—it is easy to think of the global crisis as "just a bunch of statistics," said Mark Hatfield, who directs work in Sub-Saharan Africa for Baptist Global Response, a Southern Baptist international relief and development organization.

"All you have to do, though, is visit in the home of someone with full-blown AIDS who is experiencing a slow, painful death, or stop in a home in which a 14-year-old is caring for three brothers and sisters because no adult is left," he said. "Then you begin to see the HIV/AIDS crisis as an extremely personal issue."

Poor personal choices, superstitions and underdeveloped societies contribute to the crisis, but many people are victims of someone else's poor choices, Hatfield added.

But "no matter the reason, these are all individuals who are loved by our Lord. These are all people He asks us, as His followers, to reach out to, with a touch that shares compassion and care."

Learn more about BGR at www.BaptistGlobalResponse.org

Indian high court warns Orissa officials to protect Christians

Chennai, India (RNS)—India's Supreme Court told the state government of Orissa Jan. 5 that it will not "tolerate persecution of religious minorities" and if the state government cannot protect Christians, "then quit office."

A three-judge panel of the Supreme Court issued the warning following a petition filed by Roman Catholic Archbishop Raphael Cheenath who requested protection for his flock in Orissa and compensation for church properties damaged in the ongoing violence. Such rulings by judges of Indian courts may not always have the force of law but they carry considerable weight and often influence the future actions of lawmakers and government officials.

The violence began after the murder last August of Swami Laxmanananda, a Hindu religious leader, in Orissa's Kandhamal district. Dozens of people were killed by Hindus who blamed the swami's death on local Christians. Last month, according to Indian news reports quoted by Baptist Press, "four men, one of them 'a hardcore Maoist' were arrested for the swami's murder."

The Supreme Court said the retaliatory violence against Christians in Orissa could not be tolerated anymore, and criticized the state government for failing to stop the violence earlier. Justice Markandey Katju told the lawyer for Orissa state, K.K. Venugopal: "If your government is unable to protect Christians, you better resign. We are a secular country, and no minority should feel insecure in our country."

At an earlier hearing last fall, the high court said paramilitary forces should be stationed in the riot areas, and damaged churches and institutions should be compensated.

With additional reporting by Baptist Press

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist missionaries and ministries:

Church and community missionary Pam Pyle of Lexington. Pam ministers to low-income families through the Irishtown Baptist Mission in Lexington. She shares Christ through worship services, children's church, a Feed the Hungry ministry, a clothes closet, youth and adult Bible studies, GED classes and the Read to Succeed program. Pray that Pam and the volunteers who assist her will reach families with the gospel and effectively disciple new Christians. Pray also that Pam will have wisdom to deal with the behavior and discipline problems of the students to whom she ministers.

MSC missionary Will Ruthven of Inez. Will serves as director of Appalachia Reach Out and is a chaplain at Highlands Regional Medical Center in Prestonsburg. ARO is a benevolent ministry that assists the poor with food and clothing, school supplies, home repairs and after-school activities and Bible clubs for children. Pray for the teen ethics classes and senior adult Bible studies that he leads each week. Pray that students participating in the after-school program will give their lives to Jesus Christ.

If you would like Kentucky Baptists to join in praying for a ministry of your church or association, please send the information to Eric Allen at Eric.Allen@kybaptist.org or call (866) 489-3530.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

- **BURLINGTON**—Burlington Church recently called **Todd Toole** as pastor and **Kent Holland** as worship leader.
- **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Campbellsville University will host a Martin Luther King Jr. memorial service Jan. 21, 7 p.m., at the school's Ransdell Chapel. **Emmanuel McCall**, pastor of Fellowship Group Church in East Point, Ga., will serve as guest speaker. The **Zion District Choir** will provide special music. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, call (270) 789-5520.
- **CLINTON**—Second Church recently called **Larry Fraser** as pastor.
- **EDDYVILLE**—Hebron Church recently called **Terry Davis** as pastor.
- **IRVINE**—Calvary Church recently ordained **Jeff Barnes**, **Jeremiah Davis** and **Wes Hensley** as deacons. **Keith Sands** is pastor.
- **KUTTAWA**—Mount Zion Church recently called **Aaron Brown** as pastor. He previously was interim pastor at Chapel Hill Church in Princeton.
- **LOUISVILLE**—Broadway Church will host "Stepfamilies Through the Wilderness by the Grace of God," a two-day retreat for blended families, Jan. 23-24. The cost is \$40 per couple, which includes meals and child care. To sign up for the event, call (502) 895-2459. The deadline to register is Jan. 19, noon.
- **MAYFIELD**—Cuba Church will hold winter revival services Jan. 21-24,

Spotlight on ...

Hodgenville



Edwin Attaway recently resigned as pastor of Middle Creek Church. He and his family will serve as IMB missionaries to Nicaragua. **John Routh**, a former IMB missionary to the Czech Republic, has been called as the church's interim pastor.

- 7 p.m.; Jan. 25, 10:30 a.m., with **Michael Durham**, pastor of Oak Grove Church in Paducah, as evangelist. **Bobby Waldridge** is pastor.
- **PRINCETON**—Chapel Hill Church recently called **Jeff Boone** as pastor. He previously was pastor at Fairview Church in Princeton.
- **SHELBYVILLE**—Emmanuel Church recently called **Jordan Nickell** as minister of music.
- **SOMERSET**—Immanuel Church recently called **Danny Pace** as pastor. He previously was pastor at Palestine Church in Campbellsville.
- **WATER VALLEY**—Pilot Oak Church recently ordained **Jamie Darnell** to the gospel ministry. He recently was called as youth minister at Hazel Church.

Baptist statesman Griffin Bell, who served under Carter, dies

Atlanta (ABP)—Baptist leader Griffin Bell, who served as the nation's attorney general during President Carter's administration, and who was a longtime benefactor of Mercer University, died Jan. 5 after long battles with pancreatic cancer and kidney disease. He was 90.

Bell, who grew up in Americus, Ga., near Jimmy Carter's hometown of Plains, earned his law degree from Mercer in Macon, Ga., in 1948. He worked more than 40 years at King & Spalding, an Atlanta law firm, and sat for 15 years on the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

He left his law practice to become the 72nd attorney general of the United States in 1977, where he served two years before returning to the Atlanta firm.

Judge Bell supported his alma mater, offering leadership as a trustee and helping raise more than half a billion dollars in gifts to Mercer. He served six terms on the university's board of trustees and was chair of the board from 1991 to 1995.

He was elected a life trustee in 2007—only the sixth person at that time to be named to the office in Mercer's 175-year history.

In 1983, he was named Mercer's first distinguished university professor and was a frequent lecturer and panelist at Mercer's law school over the years. Friends and colleagues raised \$1 million in 1986 to establish the Griffin Boyette Bell Chair of Law at Mercer.

"Over the past four decades, no one has been more committed to Mercer than Judge Bell, and no one has done more to advance the uni-

versity," said Mercer President Bill Underwood. "I will miss his friendship. I will miss his sense of humor. I will miss his wise counsel. He was truly a great man."

As a trustee, Bell made the motion to establish the Mercer School of Medicine, which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. In the late 1980s, he helped steer the university through financial difficulties and stood by Mercer in debates with the Georgia Baptist Convention over academic freedom.

Chancellor Kirby Godsey, who preceded Underwood as Mercer's president and worked closely with Bell for 27 years, said his presidency was guided and enriched by Bell's leadership and by their "profound friendship."

"His thinking was always clear and precise, his voice articulate, his will resolute," Godsey noted. "Judge Bell combined a high sense of integrity with a strong measure of grace. With his awe-inspiring wisdom and a rare quotient of insight, he made complex issues transparent, and he characteristically brought light and clarity amidst shadows of confusion."

Funeral services for Bell were held Jan. 7 in Americus. A memorial service was held Jan. 9 at Atlanta's Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church, where Bell was a member.

His first wife, Mary, preceded him in death in 2000. He later married a longtime friend, Nancy Kinnebrew, who survives him. Other survivors include his son, Griffin Jr., two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2009

15-17 Shepherding the Shepherd, Lexington Downtown Hotel & Conference Center.

22 Pastor/Staff Forum, Baptist Building, Louisville.

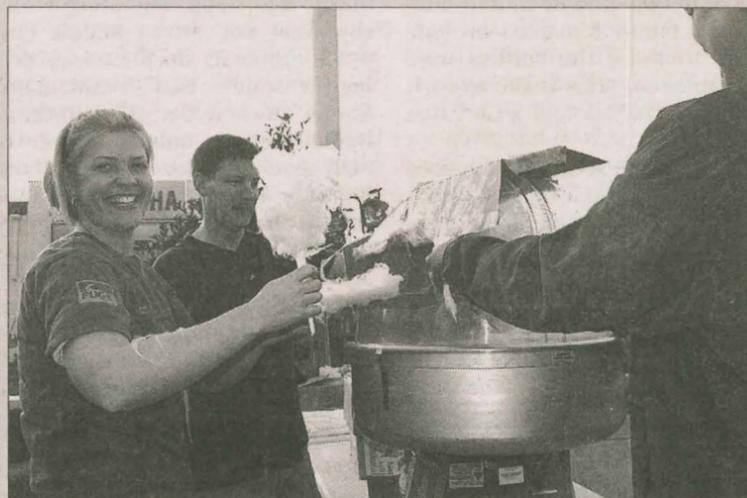
22-23 Quarterly Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening, Hope Community Church, Lawrenceburg.

23-24 Region 1 Disaster Relief Recertification and Training, Lone Oak First Baptist Church, Paducah.

28-31 Southeast Conclave, Atlanta.

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

Parade outreach



Members of Shadow Mountain Baptist Church in El Cajon, Calif., keep the cotton candy flowing as part of an annual evangelistic outreach prior to the 2009 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif. More than 150 volunteers from California and churches across the country participated in the event. Martin Davis, a San Diego businessman and member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, has organized the outreach for 13 years. Each year, between 750,000 and 1 million people line up along the 5-mile parade route. Some parade goers claim their viewing spots as early as 8:30 a.m. the day before. The gospel was shared with parade goers a variety of ways including mime teams, tract distribution, face painting, balloon animals, popcorn and cotton candy giveaways, as well as "What's in a Name" certificates that tell people what their name means. According to Davis, volunteers recorded 27 decisions for Christ through the outreach. (BP photo by Martin Davis)

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music. Responsible for overall supervision of music ministry of Green Acres Baptist Church. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee chairperson, 5075 Poplar Level Road, Louisville, KY 40219; or call (502) 966-3342, or the church, (502) 964-8165.

SEEKING: A growing church in southern Kentucky seeks a committed Christian with a passion to work with children (birth-6th grade) and their families. Contact High Street Baptist Church, 102 Bourne Ave., Somerset, KY 42501; or www.highstreetonline.org. Phone: (606) 678-8973.

SEEKING: Part-time director to plan, coordinate and lead music for worship services in a northern Pulaski County church. Send resumé to: NBC, PO Box 129, Science Hill, KY 42553.

SEEKING: Bivocational songleader to lead blended style worship at Pilot Oak Baptist Church in Graves County. Send resumé to Pilot Oak Baptist Church, 5378 State Route 94W, Water Valley, KY 42085.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Petrey Memorial Baptist Church in Hazard, Ky. Please forward resumé and, if possible, DVD, CD or tape, to Pastor Search Team, Petrey Memorial Baptist Church, 141 Alto St., Hazard, KY 41701. www.petreymemorial.org.

SEEKING: Part-time church secretary for Jeffersontown Baptist Church. Experience in bookkeeping, Microsoft Word, Excel and/or PowerPoint. E-mail resumé with references to office@jtownbaptist.com.

SEEKING: Full-time minister to youth for Sand Spring Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg. This individual must be a hard worker who feels called to serve in youth ministry. Candidates should send a resumé with a current photograph to sandspring@roadrunner.com.

SEEKING: Senior pastor for small-town church in Irvington, Ky. A student would be considered. Call Donnie Robinson at (270) 547-7272; or send resumé to 601 Hwy. 2202, Irvington, KY 40146.

SEEKING: Executive associate pastor for First Baptist Church of Sevierville, Tenn. Send resumé to: Executive Associate Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 317 Parkway, Sevierville, TN 37862. A ministry description for this position can be requested by e-mailing info@fbsev.org.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Providence First Baptist Church. Send resumé and, if possible, a photo, DVD or cassette, and references, to Mr. Ray Gobin, 214 Benjamin Terrace, Providence, KY 42450. Phone: (270) 667-2302.

In-home Bible study blooms into Arabic church

By Kelly Shroul
Baptist Press

Nashville (BP)—Inside a small trailer that sits on a plot of land in suburban Nashville, Tenn., a friendly congregation reads Scripture, sings hymns and partakes of the Lord's Supper. The only difference between this church and neighboring evangelical congregations is the fact that this worship service is conducted exclusively in Arabic.

Members of The Evangelical Arabic Church in Antioch, Tenn., come from nations such as Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Jordan and Lebanon. They are united not only in language but also in purpose—living out the Great Commission among non-believers in Middle Tennessee.

"I see that the Lord has given to Nashville the opportunity to witness to non-believers in their heart language through our congregation," said Allen Bennett, one of the pastors of The Evangelical Arabic Church. "The Arabic language is a means we use to invite nonbelievers to come to faith in Christ."

Church members minister to Arabic-speaking families, youth and collegians at least three times a week during Sunday-evening worship services, Wednesday-evening prayer meetings and Friday-evening "Sunday school."

Bennett said they adopted the unusual schedule because many members and prospects work in the hotel

and restaurant industry and can't meet during the morning.

Rami Ibrahim, who is originally from Egypt and is among the regular preachers at the church, said the Arabic congregation is especially important for non-English speakers.

"The Evangelical Arab Church offers spiritual food for a lot of people who are in desperate need of the Word of God," Ibrahim said.

Bennett, who is a native of North Africa, said the 120-strong congregation is keenly aware of the mandate to live out the Great Commission.

"We understand that the Bible tells us to go to every nation and preach the gospel," he said. "We also know that the Bible says that 'whosoever' believes will be saved. Here in Middle Tennessee, we have many Arabic-language nationals who come from overseas who do not know the Lord. We want to win them to Christ."

Bennett grew up in a non-Christian environment and was first exposed to Christ as an 18-year-old when a friend in North Africa invited him to a Christian meeting.

"I went to the meeting just for fun," Bennett recalled. "I wasn't interested at first but while I was there I bought a book called 'The Gospel.' I ended up reading the New Testament." He said he gave his heart to Christ after reading Romans and Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spir-

it within me."

"I know God has led me to help this congregation and He is using this church to reach the lost," he said.

The Evangelical Arabic Church originally started as a small group of five Arabic-language nationals who met in homes, then in 2001 moved to a room at First Baptist Church of Nashville.

Bennett volunteered to help with Bible reading and music in that initial group.

"From the very beginning we had a motto that revealed our heart for the ministry," he said. "We come to this place to worship God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The handful of worshippers soon grew to more than 100, and in 2006 the church purchased five acres of land in Antioch, Tenn., and began meeting in a small trailer. They currently have plans to build a permanent worship facility.

Though the congregation is growing, it needs assistance including help with leadership and funds to build the worship facility.

"We need a minister to help us follow up on the contacts we make," Bennett added.

He said the growth reminds the congregation that it is important to minister to Christians and non-Christians alike.

"It is our responsibility as believ-

ers to go toward those who don't know God," Bennett said. "I pray that God gives us the knowledge we need to continue this growth."

"Our congregation represents a great opportunity to look not to those of Christian background, but others who don't have any hope ... those who have no understanding of salvation."



AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

Playing the oud, a traditional Arabic instrument, Mafdy Moussa of Cairo, Egypt, leads worship at Evangelical Arabic Church in Antioch, Tenn. Moussa is in the United States for medical treatment. (Photo by Randi Anglin/Genesis Photos)

St. Paul-area Hmong Baptists embrace new arrivals to U.S.

By Kelli Cottrell
Baptist Press

St. Paul, Minn. (BP)—Recently, thirteen groups of people spread out across St. Paul, Minn., to deliver more than 60 boxes filled with food for the needy. The groceries were welcomed with joy and gratitude—and no small degree of puzzlement. The families were delighted to receive food for the holidays because they needed it. They were puzzled because, as Hmong immigrants from Laos or Thailand, most had never cooked a turkey or even had a Thanksgiving meal before.

Last fall's outreach was a partnership between Twin Cities Hmong Baptist Church in St. Paul and three other congregations: Calvary Baptist Church of Roseville, Minn., whose members donated most the bulk of the \$3,000 needed to purchase the food, Twin Cities Chinese Christian Church and St. Paul Fellowship.

Each box contained a turkey and traditional stuffing, as well as Asian staples such as cabbage, Asian fruits, string bean noodles, carrots and Top Ramen. Each box included a page of instructions on how to cook a turkey. Each box also came with a presentation of the gospel.

Most of the recipients said that until the team members delivered the gifts, they had never heard that Jesus loved them.

"Our goal is to share the love of God with them," said Zong Heng, whose husband, Chris, pastors Twin Cities Hmong. "We just want to reach out to the Hmong community. Even if they don't go to our church afterward, we want them to think about how much God loves them."

One of the recipients, Song Tao,



GOOD NEWS Zong Heng (left) shares the gospel with Song Tao, a Hmong immigrant living in St. Paul, Minn. Tao said the only time she had heard about Jesus before was from Mormon missionaries who visited her home on bicycles.

said the only time she and her husband had heard about Jesus was from Mormon missionaries who visited their home on bicycles.

Heng explains the difference between Mormons and biblical Christians, then the group prays with the couple.

"They said it was OK to call them later," said Zong, whose mother brought her to the U.S. as a 2-year-old.

The food distribution was conceived when Len Newquist, a member of Calvary Baptist, called and asked if the Hmong congregation would help Calvary volunteers share the gospel with some Hmong families. St. Paul is home to more than 26,000 Hmong people—the largest concentration of Hmong people in the U.S.

Maria Her, worship director at Twin Cities Hmong, estimates 80 percent of the Hmong population in the U.S. have never heard the gospel. Newquist's call came as the Hengs were praying about a Thanksgiving



FIRST THANKSGIVING Maria Her (left) gives Lee Yang, a recent Hmong immigrant to St. Paul, Minn., a box of food donated by members of four local congregations. The holiday ministry effort was coordinated by Twin Cities Hmong Baptist Church in St. Paul. (Photos by Jim Whitmer)

outreach.

"We believe it was a God-thing," Chris Heng said. "We created a flier in Hmong to go with the boxes, inviting the families to church and sharing Jesus' love."

More than half of the 80 volunteers who met at St. Paul Fellowship to deliver the boxes were from the Hmong church.

Each team had one Hmong-speaking person with them to share the gospel in the heart language of the families they would be visiting.

"I'm pretty excited about this," Her said. "There is a really big need for something like this."

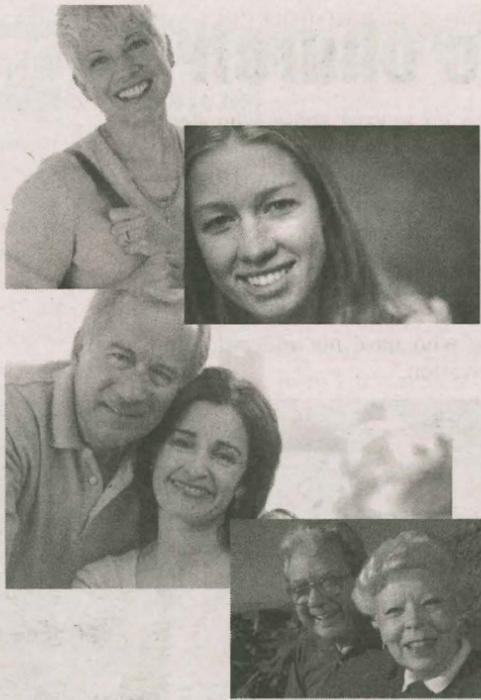
Twin Cities Hmong Church is unique because it welcomes all Hmong generations, Her explained. By providing translation devices dur-

ing the service for Hmong speakers and singing a mixture of Hmong and English songs, the church tries to provide a balance for its members.

Half of the members of Twin Cities Hmong Church are under 25 years old. "We are reaching the second and third generations of Hmong but also keeping the culture for the first generation," she said. "We don't polarize one body."

After delivering the food, the Hmong congregation gathered to enjoy their own Thanksgiving feast mixed with traditional Hmong food.

"We pray that our outreach today will draw Hmong people to seek only Jesus and no others," Chris Heng said. "We wanted to put our faith into action."



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