

WESTERN RECORDER

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Obama calls for 'era of responsibility'

Barack Obama assumes role as nation's 44th president at historic inauguration

By Tom Strobe
Baptist Press

Washington (BP)—Barack Obama, minutes after being sworn in as the country's first African-American president Jan. 20, said the crisis that confronts the United States requires a "new era of responsibility" from its citizens.

Obama, 47, told a vast television audience and a National Mall crowd in sub-freezing temperatures estimated at about 2 million people that "the challenges we face are real, they are serious and they are many," but he promised they "will be met." He said the crisis includes not only a war "against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred" but a "badly weakened" economy.

He told Americans, "We have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task."

While there is much that government "can do and must do," Obama noted, "it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies."

Minutes after Vice President Joseph Biden was sworn in, Obama took the oath of office from Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts to mark a historic first in Amer-

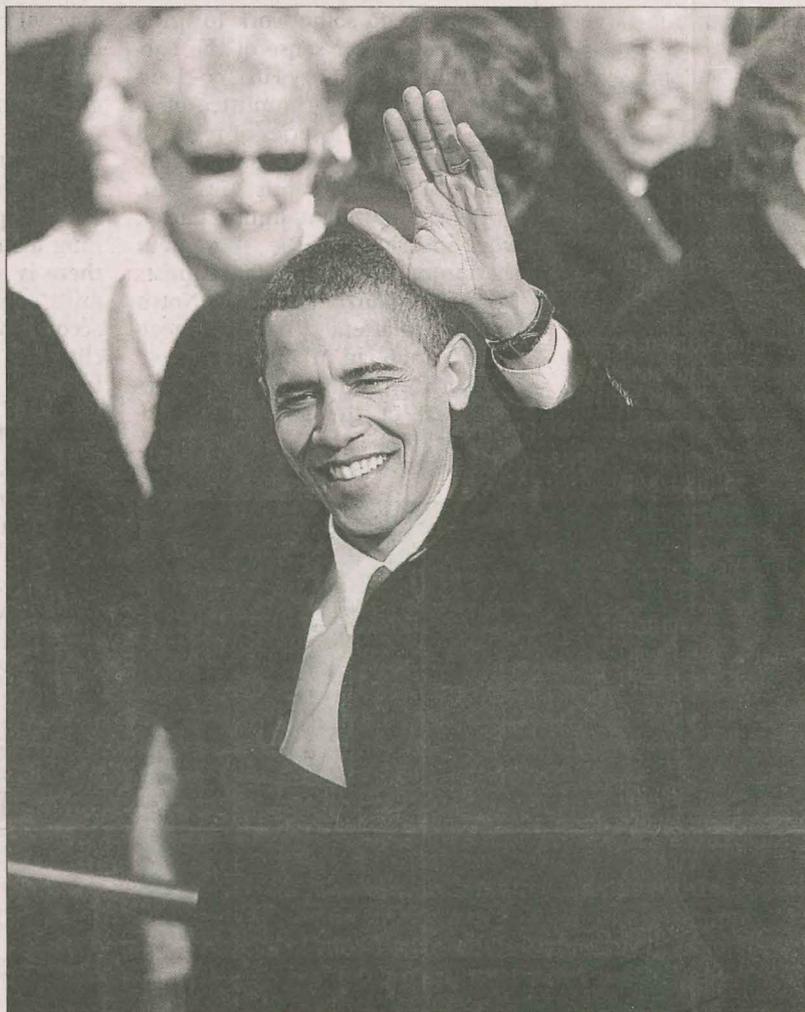
ica. He is the son of a black Kenyan-born man and a white Kansas-born woman, both now deceased, who met at the University of Hawaii.

"I don't know how anyone could watch those images of President-elect Obama taking the oath of office on the west front of the Capitol and look at the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial beyond and not think about Dr. King's 'I Have a Dream' speech," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, following the inauguration.

"In the long span of history, it's not very long from 1963 (when King spoke at the Lincoln Memorial) to 2009," Land noted. "The fact we have had this racial divide and racist past and now have an African-American man and son of an African immigrant as president is an extraordinary and graphic testimony to the power of our ideals, in that this country is still dedicated to the promises of its founding document that we believe 'that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.'

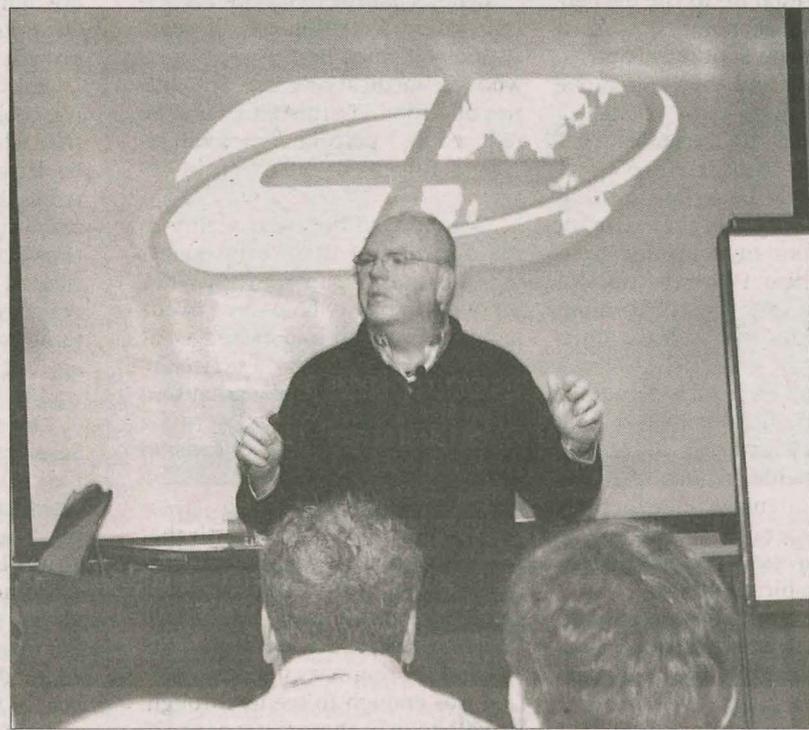
"With the inauguration of its first African-American president, this country has turned a tremendous chapter in its history," Land added. "I think there are tens of mil-

See Obama calls for 'new ... Page 9



SAY HELLO TO HISTORY President Barack Obama waves to the crowds after taking the oath of office during last week's presidential inauguration ceremony. During his first speech as president, Obama acknowledged that while there is much that government can do, "it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies." (RNS photo by Noah Murray/Newark (N.J.) Star-Ledger)

McNeal encourages churches to embrace missional movement



MISSIONAL MESSENGER Author and church consultant Reggie McNeal discusses changes of the cultural climate for ministry at the Jan. 22 Kentucky Baptist Convention Pastor/Staff Forum in Louisville. More than 200 pastors and church staff members gathered to hear McNeal's message of encouraging churches to get involved in the "Missional Renaissance," the title of his forthcoming book. (Photo by Todd Deaton)

By Kristie Randolph
Kentucky Baptist Convention

Louisville—The cultural climate for ministry has changed, and churches must change how they interact with their communities, Reggie McNeal told more than 200 Kentucky Baptists at the Jan. 22 Kentucky Baptist Convention Pastor/Staff Forum.

McNeal is an author and missional leadership specialist with Leadership Network in Dallas. The forum provided Kentucky Baptists an opportunity to learn more about concepts covered in his latest book, "Missional Renaissance," scheduled for release next month.

"The missional renaissance is the biggest change since the Reformation," he said, adding, "It's going to be impossible in our lifetime to think of the world and church in the same way."

For years, Christians have focused on bringing others into the church, McNeal explained. The missional church movement requires churches to move out into the culture and follow the work of the Holy Spirit.

"Don't miss what God is doing.

We're asking God for it; He's already doing it."

One simple way for churches to effect change evangelistically is to see themselves as "blessers," intentionally blessing others as they live a normal life, McNeal suggested.

"I tell people, 'Let's go out and practice being the children of God,'" he said. God's blessings are not reserved for perfect people, but should instead be shared with everyone as a way to ultimately share Christ.

Along with seeing themselves as blessers, McNeal said churches can become missional by shifting their approach in three key areas. He identified these shifts as moving a ministry focus from internal to external; from program-driven to people development; and from church-based leadership to apostolic leadership.

"We are not the point," he emphasized. "In the missional church, it's not about doing something better, but being something better."

Drawing from examples across the world, McNeal encouraged church leaders to preserve the essence of house churches that are springing up in countries like India

See McNeal urges church ... Page 3

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, Jan. 28.

New Baptist Covenant regional meetings set

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

Birmingham, Ala. (ABP)—Planners of a Jan. 31 gathering of diverse Baptist groups hope a national mood set by the election of America's first African-American president will spill over into renewed relationships between black and white Baptists.

"We are very excited in this time of a new atmosphere in the entire country to do some work to bring together a larger sense of the Baptist family," said Gary Furr, co-chairman of a steering committee planning the first of a series of regional gatherings of an interracial network known as the New Baptist Covenant.

Former President Jimmy Carter, who spearheaded the movement that prompted some 15,000 Baptists from 30 organizations across North America to attend a national meeting a year ago in Atlanta, is keynote speaker for the first of four regional repeats of the gathering scheduled for 2009.

It will be held in Birmingham,

Ala.—significant for its role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Sessions for the first event are scheduled at four sites: 16th Street Baptist Church, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and St. Paul's United Methodist Church. The historically black 16th Street Church is particularly symbolic as the site of one of the most shocking incidents of the African-American struggle for civil rights. On Sept. 15, 1963, a bomb set by segregationists exploded at the church killing four young girls attending Sunday school.

"I am proud to be a part of the New Baptist Covenant initiative," said Arthur Price, pastor of 16th Street Baptist Church and the planning team's other co-chair. "If ever there is a time when God's people must come together and be on one accord to make an impact in our churches and the culture around us for Christ, it is now."

"We need one another"

Furr, who is pastor of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church in suburban Birmingham, said he hopes the event will drive home the message that "we need one another and we need to help one another."

"Our hopes for this event are, first of all, it will be a time of inspiration, worship and challenge to all of us to build community and to forge new relationships with one another and pledge to cooperate with one another more fully," Furr said. "Our greatest hope is that people go home with a new set of relationships."

Jimmy Allen, a past president of the Southern Baptist Convention

and coordinator for the national New Baptist Covenant celebration, said other regional gatherings are scheduled April 2-4 in Kansas City, Mo.; April 23-24 in Winston-Salem, N.C., and Aug. 6-7 in Norman, Okla. A fifth regional gathering is being planned in Chicago, with a tentative date in June 2010, and a triennial national gathering is planned for 2011.

Allen said each regional gathering is planned by a local steering committee, and he serves as a volunteer coordinator to help with scheduling and other matters. "Each of the meetings comes out of a grassroots response to the national meeting and the aftermath of it," he noted.

Planning for the New Baptist Covenant goes back to April 2006, when Carter and Mercer University President Bill Underwood convened 18 Baptist leaders for a meeting at the Carter Center in Atlanta. Out of that meeting came a document called A North American Baptist Covenant.

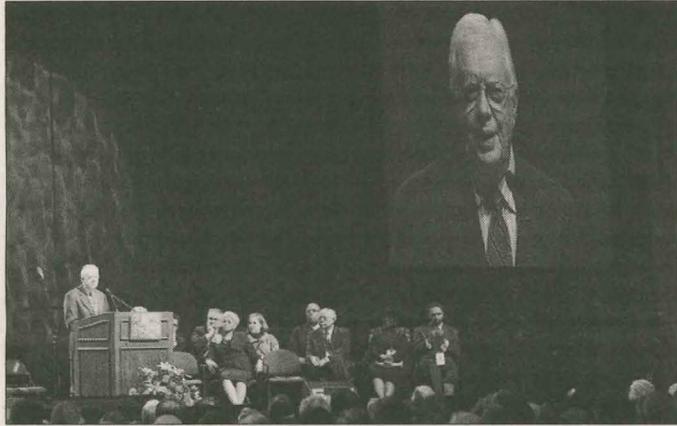
At the meeting last year, Carter described the New Baptist Covenant as "the most momentous event of my religious life."

The stated purpose for the regional gatherings is to "unite Baptists from our various conventions, fellowships and organizations to celebrate, exhort, network and encourage one another in fulfilling the obligations of our new Baptist Covenant."

"We are very excited about the possibility of a full crowd coming for this, and that President Carter is coming," Furr said of the Birmingham gathering. "We're looking forward to a wonderful time."

COMING TOGETHER

Former President Jimmy Carter addresses last year's inaugural New Baptist Covenant meeting in Atlanta. A series of four regional meetings across the country are set to begin Jan. 31 in Birmingham, Ala. The meetings are designed to renew relationships among racially diverse Baptists.



BAPTIST DIGEST

Former Baptist youth worker pleads guilty. A former volunteer youth worker at a Southern Baptist megachurch pleaded guilty Jan. 21 to molesting three boys. With opening statements set to begin, 41-year-old Marshal Seymour pleaded guilty and no contest to five felony charges. A sentencing hearing is scheduled March 12, where he could receive up to 65 years in prison, according to the Lakeland (Fla.) Ledger. Seymour was arrested in November 2007 on charges he molested three teenage boys he met through First Baptist Church at the Mall in Lakeland, Fla. Leaders at the church said they ran two background checks on Seymour before allowing him to volunteer. But after his arrest it was discovered he previously had been arrested on charges of sodomy and sexual assault while working as a youth minister at an Assembly of God Church in Mobile, Ala.

British Baptists call new director. David Kerrigan, a member of the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation, has been appointed general director of BMS World Mission, the major mission arm of Baptists in Britain. Kerrigan succeeds Alistair Brown who last year became president of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago. Kerrigan served as a missionary in Bangladesh between 1984 and 1988, and later became BMS' regional secretary for Asia from 1995 to 1998. Kerrigan had served as BMS' director for mission and deputy general director.

N.C. seminary professor dies suddenly. A 40-year-old professor at a North Carolina Baptist divinity school died unexpectedly Jan. 13. Gardner-Webb University officials released a statement saying Dan Goodman, the Bob D. Shepherd Chair of New Testament Interpretation at the college's M. Christopher White School of Divinity, had died suddenly. His funeral was held Jan. 15th at Boiling Springs Baptist Church in North Carolina, where he was a member. He joined the faculty of the divinity school in the fall of 2003 as associate professor of New Testament. Prior to coming to North Carolina, he was associate professor of New Testament Studies at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida. He is survived by a wife and two sons, ages 11 and 15.

New Orleans Seminary becomes latest to announce budget cuts

New Orleans (BP)—New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary announced significant budget cuts during a meeting attended by seminary faculty and staff Jan. 19.

President Chuck Kelley called the meeting in response to the deepening worldwide economic downturn and its effects on Southern Baptists, their churches and the Cooperative Program.

"We learned in December that New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary would be seriously affected as well," Kelley told the assembly. "It appears our total income from the Cooperative Program, tuition, gifts and investments will be more than \$1 million less than we anticipated."

The budget cuts include adjustments in medical benefits, temporary salary reductions; temporary adjustments in faculty teaching loads; intentional reductions in campus energy consumption; a freeze on non-essential operating expenses; and a hiring freeze.

While the reductions were significant, no employee layoffs were announced at the time. The budget adjustments take effect Feb. 1.

"We have made our decisions in light of the same basic principle we followed in responding to the Katrina disaster," Kelley noted. "Our guiding principle is the preservation of employment necessary to accomplish our mission."

The adjustments in medical benefits include a change in staff eligibility for insurance and changes in the deductibles for all faculty and those staff members who remain eligible for medical benefits.

Kelley's plan also calls for a 5 percent salary reduction for all faculty and staff members, except those who lose medical coverage. The salaries of senior administrators will be reduced by 7 percent. Kelley will receive a 10 percent reduction in salary.

"We have to hold the reality of the difficulty of these adjustments that we're making in one hand," Kelley said. "But as we hold these in our hand and seek to understand what we're going to do with these circumstances, we need to realize that God gave us two hands."

Kelley pointed to God's provision for the seminary in the past as evidence for His faithfulness.

"If there's anybody on earth that has been prepared for such a time as this, it ought to be this 'School of Providence and Prayer,'" Kelley said. "When Hurricane Katrina put the city and the seminary under water ... God was enough to see us through. He will do so in these times as well."

To date, the North American Mission Board, Southern and Southwestern seminaries, Woman's Missionary Union and LifeWay Christian Resources also have announced budget cuts.

Romo, 79, led the way for Baptists' ethnic ministries

Cumming, Ga.—Oscar Romo, a pioneer in starting ethnic Southern Baptist churches, died Jan. 16 from complications related to Parkinson's disease. He was 79.

Romo worked for the then-Southern Baptist Home Mission Board from 1965 until his retirement in 1995. He challenged the conventional wisdom that the United States is a "melting pot," viewing the country instead as a national "mosaic" blending various peoples, cultures, languages and perspectives.

"It is said that America is a melting pot where the English language is the 'language' and the 'Anglo' (European) culture is superior," Romo wrote in a 1993 book, "American Mosaic Church Planting in Ethnic America." "In reality, there are 500 ethnic groups who daily speak 636 languages of which 26 are considered major languages."

While the SBC is predominantly white, most of the denomination's growth in recent decades has been among ethnic groups. Of 1,455 new churches started in 2007, more than half were ethnic or African-American. Out of 44,696 Southern Baptist congregations, according to NAMB, 9,338 are classified as non-Anglo.

Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, said Romo "helped Southern Baptists grow beyond our roots to embrace men and women from 'every tongue, tribe, and nation.'"

"His passion for what we now call 'people groups' helped our churches value and engage in ethnic ministry," Stetzer noted. "Today, when we see that a majority of SBC church plants are non-Anglo, we know that Oscar Romo is a big part of that growth."

Bob Sena, a church planting coordinator for NAMB, said that while Romo was proud to be Hispanic, he was committed to the Great Commission of reaching all people groups, and thus had a global impact. Although people groups are integral facets of NAMB and the International Mission Board strategy today, Sena insisted Romo was on the leading edge.

"He was a pioneer for sure," Sena said. "But unlike some pie-in-the-sky guys, he was also practical and focused on finding, training and encouraging ethnic leaders."

Romo is survived by his wife, Merry, two children, and three grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Zoe, in 1991.

Romo was a member of Johns Creek Baptist Church in Alpharetta, Ga., where his funeral was held Jan. 19.

Compiled from reporting by Associated Baptist Press and Baptist Press

Recent tax rule changes highlight need for estate reviews

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—The start of 2009 brought with it the promise of change after a tumultuous year prior. With the United States economy sinking to levels not experienced since the Great Depression, it would be difficult to find someone whose assets did not decline in value in 2008.

While Americans await a turnaround of the U.S. financial markets, Jan. 1 signaled an immediate change in the federal estate tax rules. One Kentucky Baptist leader called the changes “some of the most significant ... that we’ve had.”

“There has never been a time like this in the lives of people who have anything of value,” said Barry Allen, president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, a financial services provider affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

At issue is the change in the federal estate tax, or the so-called “death tax.” In 2001, Congress enacted a 10-year rollback plan that would increase exemption amounts each year through 2009, while decreasing the estate tax rate most years.

On Jan. 1, the estate tax exemption amount jumped from \$2 million to \$3.5 million. The tax rate was held at 45 percent.

What exactly does that mean for taxpayers?

According to Allen, the taxable estate of those Americans who die in 2009 will be exempt from federal taxes for any amount less than \$3.5 million, or \$7 million for couples. Any amount beyond that total will be taxed at a 45-percent rate.

While this year’s change is seen as significant, next year brings an even greater advantage for taxpayers. Congress’ plan calls for a one-year repeal of the estate tax. In 2011, the exemption would return to an amount of \$1 million and a rate of 55 percent.

However, as Allen pointed out, President Barack Obama has the estate tax on his radar, which is generating some controversy.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that Obama and Democratic leaders plan to unveil a proposal next month that would lock in the estate tax rate and exemption amount that took effect Jan. 1. Allen suggested that the president’s plan may call for the exemption amount to adjust annually to account for inflation.

“I think what Obama’s saying is if you keep it right here, you’re going to exempt 95 percent of the American population from estate tax,” Allen said, adding that only the super-wealthy would be taxed.

History calls for action

But, the message Allen has for Kentucky Baptists is the recent “death tax” changes coupled with the decline in estate values should convince everyone to review their estate plans.

“This is a point in history that you need to review your plan,” he insisted. “If you don’t have a plan, you need to have a plan.”

Allen said he understands that even though most Kentucky Baptists do not have \$3.5-million estates, it still is important for each individual to develop a plan for how his or

her assets will be distributed at their death.

“Whether or not you have \$3.5 million, you need to know what the rules are (and) how it affects you one way or the other,” he explained.

Estate planning consultation is one of a number of financial services offered by the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, Allen pointed out. Because the KBF is subsidized by Cooperative Program funds, consultation services are provided free of charge to all Kentucky Baptists, he noted, adding that there also is no obligation.

KBF “has a service that’s available to (KBC church) members that’s very unusual and could be very helpful,” he said.

The consultation sessions are just that: opportunities for Kentucky Baptists to develop an estate plan. Once that is accomplished, KBF can then make referrals to estate-planning attorneys to draw up the documents. Foundation staff do not write wills, Allen emphasized.

“Basically, the consultation is to make sure that they have the necessary documents in place to accomplish ... what they would consider to be God’s purposes for their possessions,” he said.

It also is intended to save Kentucky Baptists money, Allen added. KBF Trust Counsel Laurie Valentine, who previously was an estate-planning attorney with a private Florida law firm, noted that multiple consultation sessions could add up to several hundred dollars.

“When I left private practice 15 years ago, I was charging \$200 an hour for estate planning and pro-

bate work,” Valentine recalled, adding that fees vary among law firms.

Both she and Allen emphasized the importance of seeking the advice of a professional when putting together an estate plan. The costs of such services has led to a surge in legal document Web sites that offer inexpensive alternatives to attorneys. Valentine said she understands the lure, but discouraged the use of such sites.

“Some of these, as I understand it, are fairly interactive,” she said, “but it’s still not the same as talking across a table with someone who knows the ins and outs of Kentucky law.”

Seminars available

Kentucky Baptist Foundation also offers numerous financial-planning seminars that are available to churches at no cost. The Christian Estate Planning Basics seminar is their most popular offering, Allen noted, “and it’s certainly the most timely for now.”

Allen and Valentine promote the seminars across the state as a way for pastors to plant the estate-planning seed in the minds and hearts of church members. They said the two of them are booked for sessions across the state through February.

Recognizing the biblical principle that all possessions belong to God, Allen noted that maintaining a responsible estate plan is merely one aspect of living as a Christian.

“If we believe that it all belongs to God, then we’ve got to use it appropriately for His purposes, and to do that in a responsible way,” Allen said.

Kentucky Baptist pastors or laypeople interested in scheduling a private consultation or a seminar for their churches can contact the Kentucky Baptist Foundation at (502) 489-3533, or toll-free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3533, or visit their Web site, www.KyBaptistFoundation.org.

McNeal urges church leaders, staff to ‘use a different scorecard’

Continued from page 1

and Indonesia. Believers in these churches are living life together and being “who they are in real life” as they share Christ with others.

Indian Christians do not think of the church as a “what,” McNeal pointed out, “it’s a who.”

“The church is the people of God, partnering with Him in His redemptive mission in the world,” he said. “It’s always being played out in the world.”

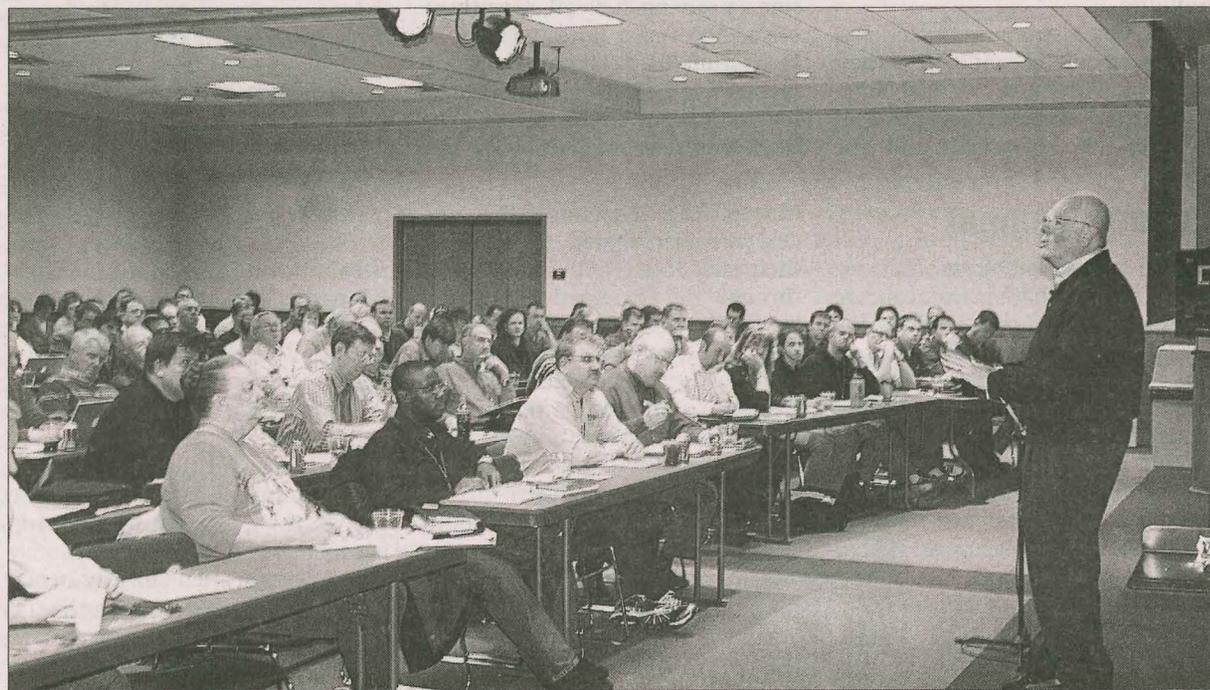
Missional churches are concerned with what is going on in their local communities and look for ways to engage non-believers through service, McNeal noted.

One of the easiest entrance points is through local schools, and local officials and leaders also can be served through prayer and relationships. McNeal offered examples of churches across the country that have committed to meeting community needs, such as hunger.

“Missional is not social gospel on steroids,” the author explained. “It’s about blessing people with the gospel, for the sake of the gospel.”

According to McNeal, another key component of the missional church mindset is to “use a different scorecard.” Instead of measuring success by attendance numbers and other traditional benchmarks, McNeal encouraged pastors to “celebrate what God is doing away from the gathering.”

Churches can do this by recalibrating their scorecards to include existing resources of the church, such as prayer, staff, time, facilities and technology, McNeal said. Actual outcomes and life changes should be the goals of each church, he added, and those in leadership always should be concerned with relational impact.



FULL HOUSE More than 200 Kentucky Baptist pastors and staff members packed the Franklin Owen Chapel at the Baptist Building in Louisville Jan. 22. Author Reggie McNeal told church leaders that they should begin to see themselves as blessers to those in their communities and be “who they are in real life” as they share Christ with others. (Photo by Todd Deaton)

brating their scorecards to include existing resources of the church, such as prayer, staff, time, facilities and technology, McNeal said.

Actual outcomes and life changes should be the goals of each church, he added, and those in leadership always should be concerned with relational impact.

“How is it benefiting people, and are they better?” McNeal noted in

discussing the shift from programs to people development.

He then urged leaders to move from church-based leadership to apostolic leadership, which he defined as the “leadership of a movement.”

“Many of you felt called to ministry, but find yourselves becoming project managers,” he said. “Think of yourself as a missionary to a culture, and your church as your sup-

port base.”

McNeal explained that apostolic leadership requires transparency, and that such leaders are “genuinely spiritual.”

“Many of us have to recapture what it is we get up for in the morning and whether or not people can feel in us a cause worth dying for.”

With additional reporting by News Director Drew Nichter

“The missional renaissance is the biggest change since the Reformation. It’s going to be impossible in our lifetime to think of the world and church in the same way.”

Author and church consultant Reggie McNeal

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

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Servanthood: the heart of a leader

By **Erich Bridges**

Richmond, Va. (BP)—The historic rise of Barack Obama to the presidency has rekindled an old question: Who is a leader?

Is a leader someone who inspires others to follow by the power of vision and example? Is a leader a charismatic individual who attracts followers with personal magnetism? Does a leader impose authority on others by sheer force of will, or persuade them with reason?

"The enormous potential of human leadership ranges from Attila the Hun to Mother Teresa," writes Joseph Nye, a Harvard University professor and author of "The Powers to Lead." "Most everyday leaders remain unheralded. The role of heroic leadership in war has led us to over-emphasize command and control and hard military power—and downplay other styles of leadership."

In Nye's view, we need to see leaders less in "heroic terms of command" than as people who excel in "encouraging participation throughout an organization, group or network."

Doesn't sound very exciting. But for all his charisma and oratorical gifts, Obama probably would agree with Nye's definition of leadership. To succeed as a national leader, he must find ways to bring together many people with differing opinions to accomplish urgent objectives. Abraham Lincoln, the leader Obama often cites as a model, brilliantly co-opted his political opponents by bringing them into his cabinet—the "team of rivals"—during a time of great national crisis.

Lincoln, however, possessed other attributes in short supply among many contemporary "leaders": personal honesty, moral courage—and humility.

"He was a strong man, and like most men quietly confident of their strength, without vanity or self-consciousness," observes historian Paul Johnson. "He invariably did the

right thing, however easily it might be avoided. Of how many other great men can that be said?"

Not many—particularly these days. Eighty percent of Americans believe the nation faces a "leadership crisis," according to a poll conducted in September by Harvard's Center for Public Leadership.

The center, in collaboration with U.S. News and World Report, recently convened a panel of judges from various fields to select 24 of "America's Best Leaders" from more than 100 nominees.

The panel defined a leader as someone who "motivates people to work collaboratively to accomplish great things." They rated nominees based on their effectiveness in setting direction by "building a shared sense of purpose" to make a "positive social impact"; achieving results of "significant breadth and depth"; and cultivating a culture of growth by "inspiring others to lead."

Their choices recognized famous and lesser-known leaders, including educators, scientists, physicians, business executives and entrepreneurs, military officers, politicians, activists and artists.

Many of these leaders richly deserve recognition for their work. What struck me, however, was this: No religious or spiritual leader made the list of 24. Not one.

Did the panelists conclude there is not a single American religious leader motivating others to "accomplish great things"? Or was their perspective on leadership so secular that they didn't even consider religious work worthy of consideration? I don't know. But if they're open to nominations for next year's list, here's mine: Eric Reese.

Reese, 42, a Southern Baptist missionary serving in Brazil, recently received the Pedro Ernesto Medal of Merit from Rio de Janeiro, named in memory of a renowned mayor who fought poverty in the city. It's the highest honor conferred by the city

COMMENTARY

Encouragement

One of the privileges that my wife, Kay, and I have is to encourage ministers and church members. We recently enjoyed a full day of encouraging and being encouraged as we visited three different churches.

Our day began at Aberdeen Baptist Church in Aberdeen, Ohio (a Kentucky Baptist Convention church), where I was invited to share with a joint adult Sunday school class about Cooperative Program results and then to preach during morning worship. Phillip Huffman has been pastor at Aberdeen Baptist Church since summer and attended his first KBC annual meeting in November.

The church has a strong involvement in missions through international and local missions and through disaster relief ministry. Members helped in New York following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and along the Gulf coast following Hurricane Katrina.

The church provides 12 percent of its undesignated gifts to missions

through the Cooperative Program. One member shared that during their early days as a church, the KBC, through the Cooperative Program, helped the church to have a full-time pastor and they have never forgotten the benefit.

The church reaches out to children through a van ministry and adults sit with the children in worship. More than 75 youth are enrolled in Sunday school.

That afternoon, Kay and I had the privilege of participating in the ordination service of Donnie Lamb to the gospel ministry at Flemingsburg Baptist Church. I had previously met Donnie and his wife, Lora, during a revival at Flemingsburg.

Chris Beckham, pastor of Flemingsburg Baptist Church, directed a meaningful ordination service. Donnie has been called as pastor of Sharpsburg Baptist Church. It was a privilege to commend Chris for his mentoring relationship with Donnie, and to encourage Donnie in his first church.

That evening we enjoyed participating in a surprise celebration

on its citizens and foreigners.

Reese puts his life on the line daily to work with the poor in some of the most dangerous favelas (slums) of Rio, where shootouts, prostitution and drug trafficking rule the streets. He's been threatened by drug dealers and paramilitary gang members, but he's befriended them, too.

"I might be crazy," the Albany, Ga., native admitted to a reporter. "But one thing I know: I know Jesus, and I'm gonna preach His name. I'm passionate about my work. Back when I was in the Army, fighting and jumping out of airplanes ... I told God I'd do the same for Him."

And he motivates Brazilians formerly trapped in misery to do it, too.

"There are people who have overcome fear," Reese says. "There are people who have overcome the stereotypes of these communities. And they come in and they set up things and they tell me what to do. They lead out."

People like Marcia, once a prostitute and drug addict. Now she goes into dangerous places with Reese to rescue others from darkness.

"If you could see her when we met her and see her now," Reese says, voice cracking. "Only the grace of God can do that."

Reese doesn't risk his life in Rio for awards or recognition. He does it because he loves God and God's children.

Still, U.S. News and Harvard, if you're looking for someone who "motivates people to work collaboratively to accomplish great things," I'd match Reese up with all your academics, executives and politicians.

Erich Bridges is global correspondent for the International Mission Board

What are you thinking?

The Western Recorder considers letters on any subject for publication, provided they don't make a personal attack. Submit by mail to Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253; or by e-mail to Todd.Deaton@kybaptist.org.

at May's Lick Baptist Church. The church recognized 20 years of ministry by David Cheek. David is a faithful pastor, effective visionary leader, dynamic preacher of the Word of God, a sacrificial servant to the church and community, a mentor of young leaders, and a loving husband and father.

David has led the church to experience strong growth. Over the past 11 years, resident membership has increased by 30 percent, Sunday school average attendance by 20 percent and undesignated giving has increased by 150 percent. There also have been more than 363 additions by baptism and other additions.

For the 20 years of service, recognition plaques and certificates were presented by the city, county, House of Representatives, Bracken Baptist Association, KBC and Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief.

It was wonderful to celebrate with all of these pastors the progress they are achieving. Please pray for, and find a way to encourage, your own pastor and his family this week!

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

Teaching tithing as a way toward spiritual growth

By **Doug Strader**

One of the basic responsibilities of the church is to teach financial stewardship to its membership. But for some reason many pastors and church leaders are reluctant to preach and teach financial stewardship. The word "tithe" is seen by some as a negative rather than a positive principle in the modern church.

We have just finished teaching Randy Alcorn's book, "The Treasure Principle," on Sunday evenings. What a rich study on financial stewardship! Randy does not talk excessively about tithing, but he does talk about giving above and beyond the tithe. Our people were blessed by the study of this book. As a result, some of our people have grown in their giving.

One couple in the church shared with me that they were praying about beginning to give a tithe of their income. Just recently they shared with me that on that Sunday they had for the first time given a tithe of their weekly income. That couple was so excited that they had followed through with a commitment they had made to the Lord, and they shared that they were confident that they could continue to give a tithe each week.

While I am not one of those pastors who do not preach on tithing and giving, I do not berate the people about not giving or tithing. Rather I seek to commend the people who do tithe and encourage others to trust God with their resources and become faithful to God by giving a tithe.

I believe that we should use all the tools that are available to us to encourage our people to grow in their giving. Preaching on financial stewardship is one of the primary ways to teach the biblical principles of giving.

Pastors should let their people see that they not only preach and teach about stewardship responsibilities, but they also are faithful in tithing as well. I have given the members of Farmdale Baptist Church permission to check with our financial secretary to see if I am faithfully giving my tithes and offerings to the Lord's work. As the pastor, I do not have the right to ask my people to do that which I am not committed to do myself. If we had more accountability in our Baptist churches related to our giving, I think we would be better financial stewards.

Doug Strader, retired director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's stewardship department, is pastor of Farmdale Baptist Church in Louisville



Echoing Christ's voice eases discord between spouses

Q: Although my spouse would never talk this way in public, when we are alone, the conversation sounds so hateful. It seems the only way we can get it all out is to blast each other. Then afterwards I feel awful. I hate this. How can we stop?

How couples approach one another is essential. The manner in which one spouse speaks to the other is very important. Tone of voice, facial expressions, word content, body language all can communicate absolute derision. If the word content is incongruent with tone, facial expression, body language, then the nonverbal communication carries significant more weight, and the content will not be credible.

Often couples declare their goal is to share their side or explain their view so that they can get along or have better communication. And yet the manner in which they communicate is so divisive that the more accurate goal would be to tear down or to get one up on the other.

Compared to Christ, everyone is sinful. Christ could have accurately and justly displayed people's sins and truthfully shown them and the world just how sinful they were compared to him. In other words, He could have rightfully "blasted" everyone. Yet, repeatedly, he did not do that. He did not talk to people in a derogatory manner. Yes, Christ confronted people such as Peter and Saul. He challenged his disciples on numerous occasions.

Couples need to be cautious when sharing their side, remembering both partners are sinful. Even if your words might be considered truthful, your tone of voice, expressions and gestures can reflect a destructive attitude and a vengeful heart. Because Christ is the model, if Jesus did not speak to the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, the rich young man, Peter, John the Baptist in a way that would demean, belittle, or destroy, then neither may any partner speak to her/his spouse that way.

Ask yourself, would Christ speak to my spouse this way? If the answer is no, then stop. Ask yourself, would Christ speak to me this way? If the answer is no, then stop. Imagine how Christ would speak to you to confront or challenge. Use this as a guide. Christ said his sheep know his voice. What would this voice sound like? Imagine and then echo that voice.—Valerie Vincent

Q: Recently our marriage counselor confronted my husband and me on our lack of friends. Frankly, I had always thought that having a spouse would essentially take care of both of our needs. Is this unrealistic?

In short, yes! Not only is it unrealistic, it is unbiblical. Perhaps one of the biggest marital lies passed on by our "soul mate infatuated culture" is that if we marry the right person, then all our deepest needs will be met. Sometime after the wedding, once the "romantic trance" is broken, partners begin to realize that the mate is not meeting all their needs. All too often the approach is to try to convince the mate of their need to change, and when unsuccessful, to become infected with the belief that the "true soul mate" is still undiscovered. What a recipe for disenchantment, marital unhappiness, and extramarital vulnerability!

In Philippians 4:19 we are reminded that only God can meet all our needs "according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." He is absolutely sufficient for the task. But God has given to his people a jewel called "community," so that each believer made in His image can impart to other believers something of that divine image that no one person can fully embody.

God wants married couples to have other friends. He wants the husband to have some male buddies. He wants the wife to have some girlfriends. Don't assume that this will automatically happen. Pray about whom to approach and begin building some friendships.—Scott Wigginton

Family Forum writers are:

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

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



Faith, love keys to 'ministry in hard places'

After I was asked to write an editorial for the Western Recorder about ministry in hard places, I happened to be in a group of Woman's Missionary Union ladies, some of whom were pastor's wives.

"What should I write about ministering in hard places?" I asked the group. One of the ladies—a pastor's wife—replied instantly.

"Every place is a hard place to minister," she said. "The devil is everywhere."

Of course, the devil is not as evident in Kentucky as in the far east country that someone e-mailed me about where a youth with a mission ministry was murdered by a militant Hindu group.

This is just about ministering in mid-level hard places—not the ones where the name of Jesus or God cannot be spoken aloud for fear of bodily harm. This is only about ministering in places where the culture is different, and the preacher or the person who is trying to bring about change often runs into difficulty.

Each church has its own customs and culture, and sometimes an unsuspecting newcomer runs afoul of those customs and makes ministering hard.

As a youngster in rural West Kentucky in the early 1940s, I remember a couple of Southern Seminary students who came to a neighboring church to teach vacation Bible school and hold a revival. At that time, Southern Baptists in our area had the custom of the Mourner's Bench for repenting sinners. The young men were horrified and almost refused to participate.

I heard it from a deacon of the church: "We just told them that this was the way we always conducted a revival, and if they wanted to preach in our church, then that was the way it would be." The young men gave in. I don't know whether or not anyone got saved. I imagine those young men felt that church ("rock-ribbed Baptists" that they were) was a hard place to minister.

My friend, Eileen Mullins, who has been the preacher's wife in dozens of different churches for over a half-century, says each church has its own subset of customs and values. Often she has been the one to bring awareness of the importance of supporting missions to each little church they have ministered in.

In Eastern Kentucky, ministering in neighborhoods where Primitive Baptist customs have become scripture in the psyches of residents is often difficult. For example, most people believe that a child can't be saved before they "sow their wild oats."

Ministering in a church where every member is kin by birth or marriage to all the rest is a time bomb for an outsider. A dispute over a heritage or a rift in a marriage can split the church, and taking sides often makes everyone angry at the innocent pastor.

Where nearly everybody in the community is strongly of another faith is a hard place to minister.

I came to a small church in Eastern Kentucky in 1950 that had been founded by my new husband's ancestors in 1869. We have gone through many trials, some brought on by my ignorance of the customs of that church. The church almost disbanded once, and various growth spurts have been followed by down times. Currently the church is in a new brick building—soon to be debt-free—surrounded by several park-like acres of land, and the Lord has helped the church become a loving, non-judgmental body of believers who are missions-minded and welcoming to newcomers.

The devil is everywhere to make any church a hard place to minister, but God is also everywhere, and greater than the devil. Faith, love, prayer and persistence will overcome all obstacles.

June Rice is an author, retired librarian and regular columnist for the Paintsville Herald

GUEST EDITORIAL



June Rice

Encourage each other toward contentedness

By Norman Jameson

Raleigh, N.C.—As the nation deals with the fallout of a financial system greased by greed and propped up by a trust we now know was abused, it is still for individuals to recover, to regroup and to regain control of their personal finances.

No matter how many are laid off, or which companies fall into a hole it is all theoretical until it happens to you.

In many circumstances, however, financial bondage doesn't "happen to you" as much as we initiate a personal financial crisis unto ourselves.

The typical American spends more than he or she makes each year, which means that every year, we are in greater, deeper, more debilitating debt. We don't own the things we went into debt to acquire: they own us.

They own us because we have obligated ourselves to them, to continue to work; to work even at a job we don't like; to work longer than should be necessary, to the neglect of our family or church or spiritual life; to worry about not working, all to make the payments so we can have the things "now" that we are too impatient to acquire only after saving for them.

In David Copperfield Charles Dickens wrote, "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery." If you spend each year just under what you earn, the "result is happiness," he is

saying. But if you spend just a little more than you earn each year, the result is "misery." And Americans are miserable because we're spending \$104 for each \$100 we earn.

Said poet e e Cummings: "I'm living so far beyond my income that we may almost be said to be living apart."

The willingness of Christians to accumulate debt so that we can have the things we want without waiting is another sign that we operate under the same principles as do those who claim no Christian faith. "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

Happiness, according to the parable, is not in getting what you want, but in wanting what you have. Too many of us simply are not content with what we have and we are not encouraging each other toward contentedness.

One of the goals of Christian financial counseling ministries is to free you from your debt burden so that you might be a blessing to others. When you hear an appeal for a burning need from a Christian organization, or to meet the needs of homeless, hungry, hurting people in your community, are you able to respond? Or are you shackled by debt?

Are the "things" that rob your financial freedom giving you real joy? Could you sell them and still be happy? Which would give you more joy: continued use of those things

or freedom from the debt they are drowning you with?

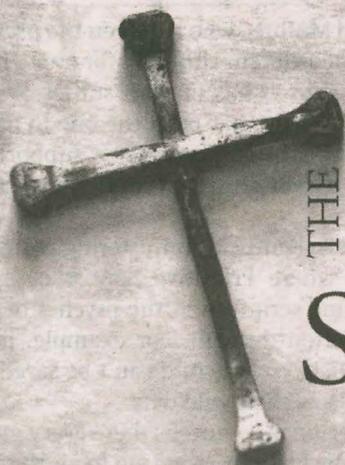
We want to share the joy with friends who have made a purchase that makes them happy. But how do you encourage a friend toward lifestyle decisions that cut against the grain of culture? It is easy to admire the new car or home entertainment center or view the pictures from the world tour; but how do we applaud the quiet, sacrificial giving of a person content and generous? How do we encourage that spirit in ourselves and in others?

I know a family that lives on the husband's salary, and all income from an artistic side business goes to a Christian orphanage that has reached across the ocean and touched their hearts. I remember having lunch in the home of a fellow church member and being surprised at how modest it was for a doctor's house and how old were the cars out front. Then I learned about the weeks he spends overseas each year at medical missions clinics.

When you see that your church's income is well short of budget; when you learn that human services charities that serve the homeless and hungry have less money and more need; when a child cannot attend camp; when you find out a neighbor sits in the cold and dark because there is no money for utilities are you in a position to help?

Are we as Christians in a position to encourage that kind of investment among ourselves over the shiny trinkets that most often draw our admiration?

Norman Jameson is editor of the North Carolina Biblical Recorder



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Evangelism Conference

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February 23-24, 2009

Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington (EST)

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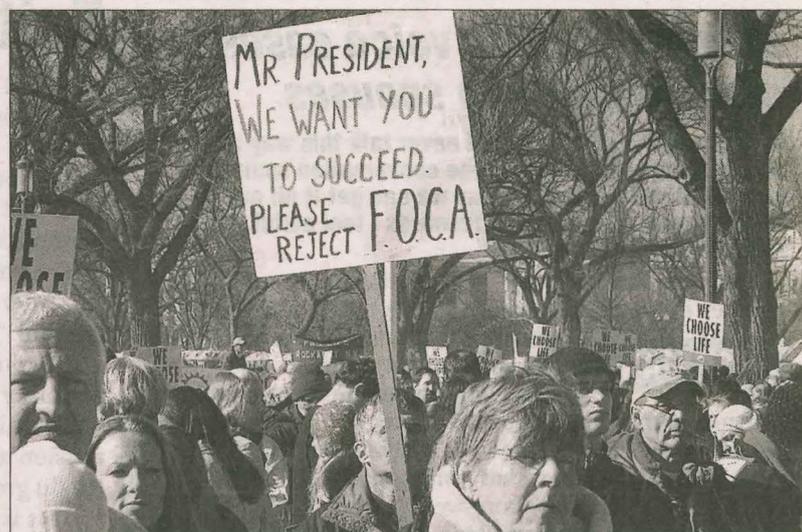
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CHOOSE LIFE Among various signs carried by participants in the annual March for Life in Washington Jan. 22, this sign urged President Obama to oppose the Freedom of Choice Act, which would overturn all restrictions on abortion and abortion funding at all government levels. (BP photo by Tom Strode)

President Obama reaffirms support for abortion rights

Washington (BP)—President Obama reaffirmed his support for abortion rights on the 36th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade ruling.

In a written statement released two days after his inauguration, Obama said Jan. 22 he remains "committed to protecting a woman's right to choose." The anniversary reminds Americans the 1973 Supreme Court opinion "not only protects women's health and reproductive freedom, but stands for a broader principle: That government should not intrude on our most private family matters," he said.

The president issued his declaration of support for abortion rights on a day when tens of thousands of pro-life advocates gathered in Washington for the annual March for Life. Young people made up much of the crowd, which rallied on the National Mall before walking to the Supreme Court building.

The march has been held every year since 1974 to mark the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the lead decision in a pair of rulings that struck

down all state bans on abortion and legalized the practice throughout all stages of pregnancy.

Obama's statement contrasted markedly with one issued seven days earlier by the outgoing president. In a proclamation declaring Jan. 18 as National Sanctity of Human Life Day, George W. Bush said every human life "is a gift from our Creator that is sacred, unique and worthy of protection."

In his Jan. 22 statement, Obama said of abortion, "While this is a sensitive and often divisive issue, no matter what our views, we are united in our determination to prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce the need for abortion and support women and families in the choices they make." He called for "common ground" in expanding access to "affordable contraception, accurate health information and preventative services."

Obama is expected to rescind by executive order or support legislative efforts to reverse several pro-life measures supported by Bush.

Pro-life policies top ERLC agenda

Washington (BP)—The defense of pro-life policies is the most urgent of the "substantial challenges" facing Southern Baptists and other social conservatives in the new Congress, leaders of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission say.

Writing on the Southern Baptist entity's Web site, ERLC President Richard Land and Vice President Barrett Duke said they expect much of their focus this year to be on preventing the overthrow of laws protecting unborn life, marriage and free speech, as well as other policies supported by Southern Baptists.

The largely defensive posture is a result of President Barack Obama's administration and an increase in the number of liberals in Congress, they pointed out.

"Our greatest concern is the likelihood that many pro-life advances under President Bush's administration will be rolled back," Land and Duke wrote. "Obama's

pledge to sign the Freedom of Choice Act would do that very thing. This pernicious bill would invalidate all limits on abortion."

The ERLC and other pro-life organizations, they noted, will need to resist efforts to overturn such bans as those on federal funds for destructive embryonic stem-cell research, Medicaid-backed abortions and organizations that perform or promote abortions in foreign countries, which Obama rescinded Jan. 23. Land said the decision "may just be the first step in (Obama's) fulfillment of that campaign pledge to his radical pro-abortion supporters."

Land and Duke reiterated their support for a pro-life measure, the Pregnant Women Support Act, which would seek to reduce abortions by numerous initiatives, including requiring informed consent for all women considering abortion and establishing grants for colleges to provide services to pregnant and parenting students.

Tim Tebow's powerful witness

Star QB uses fame to point others toward Jesus Christ

Even though you may not be a college football fan, you more than likely have heard the name Tim Tebow. He is the well-known quarterback of the University of Florida Gators. He comes from a strong Christian family that has lived a life of missionary service which has shaped this young man's entire persona.

Tebow's story is unique in the fact that he would not even be alive had his mother listened to the counsel of doctors who said she should have aborted him due to medical complications. Through his birth and a life of homeschooling, football success, including a Heisman Trophy award and two college football national titles, one has to ask, "What else can he accomplish?"

What is most amazing is that by Tebow's own words, football is not even one of his top three priorities. He explained that his life is ordered this way: his personal relationship with Jesus Christ, family, school—then football.

Beyond Tebow's superhuman ability on the field, commentators talk just as much—if not more—

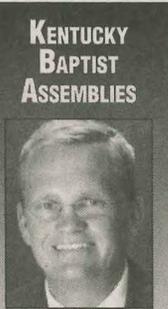
about his life off the field. In today's world, it is rare that Christian values such as integrity, community service, self-discipline and mission trips are given such a spotlight.

Crossings Camps has the privilege of ministering to thousands of young people each year. In my opinion, these students are continually seeking after role models in our society. Unfortunately, the majority of those who are portrayed as role models do not have the Christian qualities that Tebow displays. Typically, sports figures display some of

the most self-centered actions of all. As a parent of five children, I always am looking for examples of people who follow Christ to help spur my children toward a godly life.

In spite of tremendous attention, I would imagine that Tebow would quickly point people away from himself toward Christ as the One to imitate. I am thankful that for once, our media has placed high prominence on someone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

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



David Melber

KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES

For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

By Evelyn Boyington

Across

- 1 KJV verb
- 5 Mouthfuls of chewing gum
- 9 Linking verb
- 12 Tribe of Israel (var., N.T. spelling)
- 13 Son of Rehoboam (1 Chronicles 3:10)
- 14 Body of water, in Boulogne
- 15 "Can any understand the _____ of the clouds?" (Job 36:29)
- 18 Note on the diatonic scale
- 19 Parched
- 20 Diminutive ending (pl.)
- 22 "The Lord is thy _____ upon thy right hand" (Psalm 121:5)
- 25 Printer's measure
- 27 Of flying (prefix)
- 28 "The lot is cast into the _____" (Proverbs 16:33)
- 29 Misplace
- 31 Subject of Kilmer poem
- 33 "That through your mercy they also may _____ mercy" (Romans 11:31)
- 35 Boat ends
- 37 "The _____ of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23)
- 38 It can be cold and hard
- 40 When Columbus is feted (abbr.)
- 41 Stagger
- 43 "_____ with thine adversary quickly" (Matthew 5:25)
- 45 "They could not drink of the waters of _____" (Exodus 15:23)
- 46 "It is a _____ thing that the king requireth" (Daniel 2:11)
- 48 Workout zone (sing.)

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45					46	47					
48			49		50				51	52	53
54		55		56				57			
58					59				60		

- 49 The act of washing out or flushing
- 54 Crafty
- 56 Roof edge
- 57 _____ Bator (Mongolian capital)
- 58 Three (comb. form)
- 59 Lea languishers
- 60 Part of la famille

- 21 "Thou shalt not be afraid for the _____ by night" (Psalm 91:5)
- 22 Trudge
- 23 In move-in condition
- 24 "All that were strong and _____ (2 words) war" (2 Kings 24:16)

Down

- 1 Used to be
- 2 "The child shall play on the hole of the _____" (Isaiah 11:8)
- 3 Sunday speech (abbr.)
- 4 "I give unto you power to _____ on scorpions" (Luke 10:19)
- 5 Dry valley or ravine, except in the rainy season
- 6 "The one who says he _____ in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6, nas)
- 7 Loud, continuous noise
- 8 Wise man
- 9 "I _____ he that liveth" (Revelation 1:18)
- 10 Adjunct to a resume
- 11 Historical periods
- 16 Son of Gad (Genesis 46:16)
- 17 Aver

- 26 Promontory; headland
- 30 Fairy-tale beginning
- 32 This (Sp.)
- 34 Grandson of Sheshan (1 Chronicles 2:35)
- 36 Father of Abraham (Luke 3:34)
- 39 Realize success
- 42 Number of months baby Moses was hidden before his mother put him in an ark (Exodus 2:2)
- 44 Elaborate dress
- 45 "Thou shalt be ... as he that lieth upon the top of a _____" (Proverbs 23:34)
- 47 Matures
- 50 Not polished
- 51 _____ de la Cite, in Paris
- 52 "All that handle the _____, the mariners" (Ezekiel 27:29)
- 53 Compass dir.
- 55 Part of a century (abbr.)

Last week's solution

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38		O	W			A	W	L						
40	R	E	M	E	M	B	E	R		A	G	E	D	
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Solving the puzzle

Sunrise staff discovers how to appropriately help teen

Sunrise Children's Services ministers to kids every day whose behavior is difficult to understand. Our caring staff members often have a complex puzzle to solve to uncover the root of a child's problems.

Cheryl, 15, was a misunderstood young woman when she arrived at our Glen Dale Center. The staff was told she had failed in many foster homes and residential programs because of her uncooperative and defiant behavior toward authority figures.

But those working with Cheryl began to notice other things about her. She had obsessive-compulsive tendencies. She struggled in school with perfectionism that hindered her ability to change tasks.

Cheryl actually was suffering from autism that had gone unnoticed her entire life. Unknowingly, she was dealing with an incurable disease without the love and care of a family.

The Glen Dale staff changed its approach to Cheryl's treatment, understanding that she experienced her world differently than

other teenagers. Progress was slow, but in slightly less than a year, she had improved her ability to stay on task and interact well with her peers.

When she was ready to graduate from Glen Dale's program, Sunrise worked hard to find a foster family that would love Cheryl with her special needs and provide her with the support she required to succeed. God provided such a home for Cheryl.

As Psalm 10:17-18 says: "You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more."

Please remember to pray for Sunrise Children's Services as we seek to help all the children in our care "terrify no more."

To find out more about our ministries to hurting children in Kentucky, visit www.Sunrise.org.



Bill Smithwick

SUNRISE CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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

Protestants' denominational ties fluid

Phoenix (ABP)—Protestants in the United States are about as loyal to their brand of toothpaste as their denomination, according to one research firm.

A new poll by Ellison Research asked churchgoers who attend worship services at least once a month the denomination of the church they most often attend. Instead of broad terms like Baptist or Methodist, the survey asked for specific denominational brands, like "Southern Baptist" or "Free Will Baptist." Researchers then asked respondents what role that denomination would play if they had to find a new church.

Just 16 percent of Protestants surveyed said they are exclusively loyal to one denomination, while more than half (51 percent) preferred one denomination but would be open to another. By comparison, 22 percent of Protestants said they would use only one brand of toothpaste and 42 percent indicated a preference for one brand while being open to others.

Similar levels of brand loyalty exist for bathroom tissue (19 percent would consider only one brand and 40 percent had a preferred brand), pain reliever (16 percent and 42 percent, respectively) and soft drinks (14 and 56 percent).

Ron Sellers, president of Ellison Research, said religious denominations face what most companies face in trying to develop brand loyalty—consumers with many different options who may not perceive strong differences among them.

"Church denominations certainly are not the same as hotels or soft drinks, but some of the same rules apply," Sellers said. "The brands that develop stronger loyalty tend to do a better job of differentiating themselves from other brands and demonstrating key elements of the brand very clearly."

Bill Leonard, dean of the divinity school at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., called the research a "bizarre, yet telling illustration" of what scholars have known for decades.

"Fewer religious Americans think of their primary religious identity in terms of a denomina-

tional identity," Leonard noted. "Loyalty to local congregations as the primary source of religious identity seems to be increasingly normative."

He added, "Many folks can switch denominations as readily as toothpaste, I suspect."

A matter of choice?

Six in 10 active Catholics said they would attend only one denomination, but researchers said the gap between Protestants and Catholics on the issue might be due less to brand loyalty than the number of choices. Unlike Catholics, Protestants in the United States can choose from many denominational groups similar in doctrine and practice.

Individuals who worship at non-denominational churches show higher loyalty to remaining non-denominational than other Protestants show to their mother church. Twenty-nine percent of current non-denominational worshippers said they would attend only a non-denominational church, while 32 percent said they had a preference but would consider joining a church affiliated with a denomination.

Evangelicals were a little more sectarian than Protestants in general. Nineteen percent said they would consider only one denomination, 50 percent have a preference but would not rule out a different choice, and 11 percent said they do not really pay attention to the denomination when they consider what church to attend.

Overall, 11 percent of Americans said they have a small number of denominations they would consider, with no particular preference among them. Another 6 percent said they had no particular preference, but there are some denominations they would avoid. Nine percent said the denomination does not matter.

Ellison said denominational leaders "face many of the same challenges as do the leaders of brands such as Coke, Chevrolet or Home Depot" in attracting worshippers.

You do the math

For all that Oneida offers its students, this boarding school is quite a bargain

By Michael Spencer, campus minister

As I write this, it is a federal holiday in Kentucky's public schools, but Oneida's students are still in class. Many students ask why we don't take a day off like their schools back home. We tell them simply, "We don't take off for public school holidays so you can graduate earlier and enjoy breaks while other students are still in school."

OBI often lets out a week or more before our public school neighbors. We don't take off for the usual array of holidays or for inclement weather. Since we almost all live within easy walking distance of campus, we just keep on going. Staying at the job and finishing as soon as possible is just one of Oneida's unheralded advantages.

Here's another: How much does it cost for you to have your teenager at home? Driving? Eating out? Going to the movies? How much does all of that add up to in a month for an average family? How much does it cost for a student to be at OBI for that same month—without a car, gas or eating out? Where the maximum spending money allowed from the student bank is \$60 per month?

Every child is different, but it would be a mistake to say Oneida is "too expensive." We are one of the least expensive private schools in the United States, with a cost of \$535 a month for a U.S. boarding student. For many families, it would be less expensive to have a child here than living the typical American suburban teenage lifestyle at home (do the math and see for yourself).

OBI provides education, work experience, so-

cial life, sports and spiritual development all in one package. If a student is with us, he or she experiences many aspects of our program at once. Yes, a child may choose what to do and not do, but no student has the option of "doing nothing." They all must work or be involved in a sport or fine art. Every student attends church and chapel. Unless the student is on the honor roll, he or she participates in study hall. All of this comes from one source, along with things like tutoring, access to the computer lab, opportunities for enrichment programs, special campus events, and optional involvement on Oneida's farm.

We easily can "brag" about these opportunities because they are rare. OBI students may not realize it but they are richly blessed to have safety, security, activity, spiritual nurture, social outlets, vocational training and many other experiences available to them in one setting.

It's unfortunate that many people see boarding school as a negative. In fact, OBI is a collection of the best experiences any student can have, all at a great price and in a great environment.

Of course, the greatest unseen blessing of Oneida is this: The Holy Spirit is active and at work on our campus. Students are saved, encouraged and disciplined every week. Many who have never heard the gospel are evangelized. That may not make the evening news, but it's important to our heavenly Father, our many friends and to those who ultimately are changed.

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

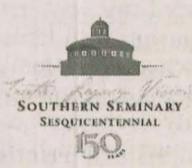
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2009



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Stephen Nichols
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Martin Luther King, Jr. with Henlee Barnette (left) and Nolen Flowington (right).

New year, new semester

Spring semester brings larger-than-usual class

January always is an exciting time around campus even though we are in the midst of what some would call the "winter blues." Most everyone is excited about being back to work after the Christmas break. Returning students are eager to start a new semester. One student actually told me he was "tired of being on a break from classes and ready to get back to my studies." I believe he is excited to be back.

New student orientation takes place the week before classes start. This time always brings a sense of excitement to our campus as we see the enthusiasm of new students ready to begin their studies as they follow God's call on their lives.

This year, we praise the Lord for a larger spring class than in previous years. We are proud to welcome 17 new degree-seeking students who have affirmed to us they are following God's call to Clear Creek. We count it an honor to be used of God to provide training for these students.

God continues to call our students from all walks of life, all over the country, and to different avenues of study. Nine of these stu-

dents will live on campus and study full time. Two of them will enroll as commuters spending one night a week away from home. Six of our new students will study entirely online.

The average age of our spring semester class is 36 years old.

Twelve of our students are married and five are single. We have nine students from Kentucky, three from Tennessee, four from North Carolina and one from Maine.

Some of the students' previous occupations include: pastor, associate pastor, youth minister, retail manager, restaurant manager, real-estate appraiser, construction worker, retail worker, HVAC mechanic, disability claims examiner, postal carrier, and business owner.

Thank you for your support which enables us to fulfill our mission to equip these God-called students for ministry. Please pray for them as they continue to follow His call in their preparation for Kingdom work.

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.cbbc.edu; e-mail: dfox@cbbc.edu

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Donnie Fox

Obama calls for 'new era of responsibility'

Continued from page 1

lions of Americans who didn't vote for him who are still gratified that page has been turned."

Obama commented on the barrier-breaking event for America when he said "our liberty and our creed" is why people of all races and faiths "can join in celebration across this magnificent mall. And why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath."

The economy's woes call for "bold and swift" action, the new president stated. He lauded the free market, saying its ability "to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched."

He said the country could defend both its "safety and ... ideals," in an apparent criticism of President Bush's anti-terrorism policies that were attacked by civil liberties advocates.

The United States "is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and we are ready to lead once more," Obama remarked. He said America will "begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan."

Americans "will not apologize for our way of life nor will we waver in its defense," the president declared. He told terrorists, "Our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken. You cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

Obama told Muslims, "We seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect."

He also honored U.S. military forces who are serving overseas as well as the "fallen heroes" buried in Arlington National Cemetery. He said their "willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves" is the "spirit that must inhabit us all."



'I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR' First lady Michelle Obama holds President Abraham Lincoln's inaugural Bible as her husband, Barack, takes the oath of office to become the 44th president of the United States. (RNS photo by Noah Murray/Newark (N.J.) Star-Ledger)

Land said he "was struck by the muscularity" of Obama's speech "in its statements about national security and its statements about defeating worldwide terrorism and his strong affirmation of the market as an extraordinary engine for creating wealth and opportunity."

Obama commended Bush not only for his service as president but for the "generosity and cooperation" he had demonstrated during the transition.

Southern Baptist Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California, delivered the invocation during the inauguration ceremony.

In his prayer, Warren expressed rejoicing in the inauguration of the

first African-American president, saying, "And we know today that Dr. King and a great cloud of witnesses are shouting in heaven."

The pastor closed by leading the National Mall crowd in reciting the Lord's Prayer.

Land said, "I was proud of Rick Warren for praying as an orthodox and devout Christian would pray—in the name of the One who changed his life, Jesus."

As his first official act, President Obama issued a proclamation declaring Jan. 20 as a National Day of Renewal and Reconciliation. He urged Americans "to serve one another and the common purpose of remaking this nation for our new century."

In Warren, Obama reaches out to Graham's likely successor

Washington—Rick Warren, the California pastor chosen by President Barack Obama to pray at his inauguration ceremony Jan. 20, is so influential a Christian leader and author that he has dramatically affected thousands of churches without ever stepping inside them.

Jim Miller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Metuchen, N.J., has seen the impact firsthand.

"I normally baptize 12 people a year, give or take," said Miller, whose church is one of 400 in New Jersey to have participated in one of Warren's "40 Days of Purpose" workshops. "We have up and down years. Following that '40 Days of Purpose,' I had about 25" baptisms.

President Obama's selection last month of Warren—a social conservative seen as less partisan and more mainstream than the likes of James Dobson and Pat Robertson—was widely viewed as an effort to reach out to conservatives who opposed Obama in the election.

With the runaway successes of his "Purpose-Driven Life" books and as founder of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., Warren is probably the most popular American Christian leader—"certainly the best-known exponent of evangelical Christianity of the megachurch variety," noted William Martin, senior fellow for religious studies and public policy at the James A. Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University in Houston.

Warren shares some traits with the man known as the "pastor to presidents," Billy Graham, who participated in the inaugurations of every president since Dwight D. Eisenhower, although poor health kept the 90-year-old evangelist away this time around.

Like Graham, the most famous American evangelist of the 20th century, Warren has reached across political lines. Last year, he invited both Obama and GOP presidential nominee John McCain to his church for a public forum.

In his introduction, he said both were patriots.

"Warren takes some fairly firm positions that might work against universal cooperation, but he shares with Graham that he's not mean-spirited," Martin said, noting Warren's support for programs to help people with AIDS.

"He is a person of broad spirit and is capable of adjusting. (He has) said, 'We're going to be concerned less with how people got this disease than with ministering to them as Jesus would.'"

Warren, like Graham, has drawn criticism over the years from conservative Christians for not being conservative enough. Sixteen years ago, a group of evangelical leaders complained about Graham's decision to accept Clinton's invitation to pray at his inauguration.

Signals of religious outreach

Last week, when President Obama rose to speak between the prayers offered by Warren and civil rights veteran Joseph Lowery, he indicated—without ever saying a word—the breadth of the religious outreach ahead in his administration.

Though Warren's prayer contained touches of inclusivity, it was nonetheless explicitly and solidly Christian, ending with the Lord's Prayer. Meanwhile, when Lowery, a United Methodist, closed the swearing-in ceremony, he remarked on the rainbow of races and religions Obama will represent as president.

Randall Balmer, professor of American religious history at Columbia University's Barnard College, said the new president's choices for who offered the invocation and benediction at his swearing-in might offer a glimpse of his plans.

"If the inauguration is any indication ... he's going to keep one foot planted firmly within the African-American church and perhaps venture—at least make some feints—in the direction of the evangelicals," Balmer pointed out.

During the ceremony, Warren reflected his evangelical beliefs—praying in the name of Jesus, in multiple languages—and the compassionate voice of Obama.

"Warren comes in as this divisive figure ... but at the same time, I think he emphasized things like compassion, mercy, love to everyone," said John Fea, a historian of American religious culture at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa. "Those sort of general ... compassion themes are the kinds of things that Obama has been pushing."

Warren is only the latest Southern Baptist to pray at a presidential inauguration. Evangelist Graham delivered the invocation at President George H.W. Bush's inauguration in 1989 and at President Bill Clinton's inaugurations in 1993 and 1997. Graham's son, Franklin, delivered the invocation at President George W. Bush's inauguration in 2001.

Compiled with reporting from Religion News Service, Baptist Press and Jeff Diamant of the Newark (N.J.) Star-Ledger

RENEWAL

This retreat will include messages from God's Word, Kingdom-focused prayer, God-centered worship, and opportunities for dialogue. It is designed for pastors, prayer leaders, local church staff and ministry leaders and should provide a ripe atmosphere for God to speak and work.

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PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist missionaries and ministries:

Appalachian Pregnancy Care Center of Pikeville.

Kay Hammond and the churches of Pike County minister through this center that offers pregnancy tests, material support, prayer, counseling and other services to individuals who find themselves in unplanned or unwanted pregnancies. Pray for the staff to be bold and confident in their witness to every client and family member. Pray that the ladies to whom staff members minister will be receptive to the gospel of Jesus. Pray that they will be effective in teaching young ladies abstinence until marriage.

Mission Service Corps missionary Pauline White of Cumberland.

Pauline serves as director of Shepherd's Pantry in Harlan County. She coordinates volunteers and supplies to help more than 250 families each month. Pray for the spiritual and physical needs of those who receive hunger assistance. The economic times have been extremely hard on the area, so pray for additional food and resources to pay for heating costs.

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.

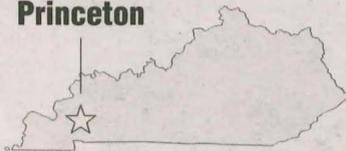
MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

- **BOSTON**—Mount Moriah Church recently called **Jacob Brothers** as pastor.
- **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Campbellsville Church honored Pastor Emeritus **J. Chester Badgett** on his 94th birthday Jan. 18. He served the church as pastor from 1950-80.
- **DANVILLE**—Willow Grove Church recently ordained **Keith Hamm, Johnny Smith, Doug Tapp** and **Kevin Yaste** as deacons. **Chris Blevins** is pastor.
- **HENDERSON**—Immanuel Temple celebrated longtime member **Wau-nita McDaniel's** 90th birthday with a reception Jan. 24. **Michael Eldridge** is pastor.
- **WILLIAMSBURG**—**Jeremy Harrill Lynch**, a member of Main Street Church, received a Master of Arts in Missiology degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Dec. 13.

Spotlight on ...

Princeton



Southside Church will host the West Kentucky Evangelism Conference Feb. 2. Featured speakers include **Ergun Caner**, president of Liberty Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Va.; **Bill He-nard**, pastor of Porter Memorial Church in Lexington and SBC first vice president; and **Her-shael York**, pastor of Buck Run Church in Frankfort. For more information about the conference, call (270) 365-5510.

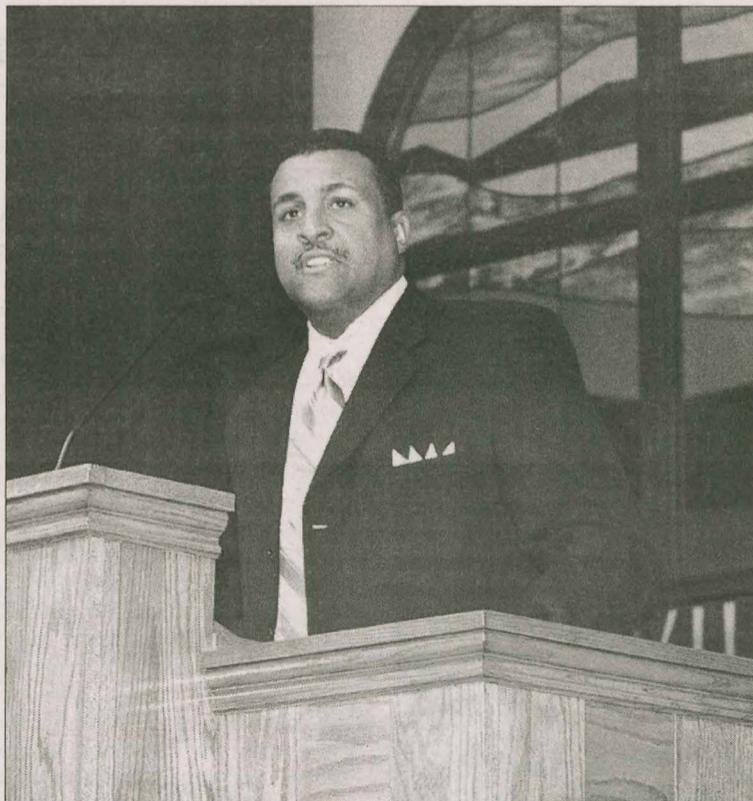
Welcome

Perryville Baptist Church

Church Newsletter Plan

Doug Davis, Pastor

Dual celebration



Gerald Smith, pastor of Farristown Baptist Church in Berea, delivers a message to students, faculty and staff at University of the Cumberlands' Founders Day Convocation Jan. 19. The annual celebration marks the founding of the Williamsburg college, and to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., on the holiday that bears his name. Smith, who also is an associate professor of history at the University of Kentucky, spoke of God's continuing guidance, highlighting African Americans' struggle for equal rights over the years. He urged students to have the courage and conviction to "step up and step out," as those did who helped shift the tide of American culture. Cumberlands' Director of International Relations Rick Fleenor also offered an abridged version of the university's 120-year history at the convocation. He noted the spirit of endurance the institution has demonstrated even through difficult times, and echoed John Siler's words to the first graduating class in 1893, comprised of only four young men: "Go forward, young men, this school will never die. We will pass on, but the college itself will live." (University of the Cumberlands photo)

KBC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2009

- 28-31 Southeast Conclave, Atlanta.
- 30-31 Preschool/Children's Ministry Meeting, Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 30-31 Regional Women on Mission Retreat, Laurel Lake Baptist Camp, Corbin.

February

- 6-7 Region 3 Disaster Relief Re-certification and Training, Living Hope Baptist Church, Bowling Green.
- 6-7 Deacon/Pastor/Spouse Retreat, Griffin Gate Marriott Resort, Lexington.
- 16 Church Retirement Plan "Reality Check" Conference, Lone Oak First Baptist Church, Paducah; Lexington Avenue Baptist Church, Danville; Eagle Heights Baptist Church, Somerset.
- 17 Church Retirement Plan "Reality Check" Conference, Second Baptist Church, Hopkinsville; First Baptist Church, Hindman; First Baptist Church, Madisonville.

- 18 Church Retirement Plan "Reality Check" Conference, First Baptist Church, Bowling Green; First Baptist Church, Pikeville.
- 20 Church Retirement Plan "Reality Check" Conference, Ninth & O Baptist Church, Louisville.
- 23-24 Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference, Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington.
- 26 Church Retirement Plan "Reality Check" Conference, First Baptist Church, Mount Sterling.

March

- 4-18 College Blitz, Habitat for Humanity, Morehead.
- 6-7 Creative Ministries Festival, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.
- 7 RA Congress Region 1, Bellview Baptist Church, Paducah.
- 7 RA Congress Region 3, First Baptist Church, Mount Washington.
- 7 Hispanic Evangelism Conference and Hispanic Women's Event, Parkland Baptist Church, Louisville.

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

Mid-Continent taps Gibson for VP role

Mayfield—Mid-Continent University recently named Jim Gibson as the school's vice president for external relations.

According to a Jan. 21 news release, Gibson will direct the areas of media and church relations, marketing and alumni support, as well as developing financial support for the Mayfield university.

Gibson previously was director of music, publishing and recording with LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville and spent a number of years in the Christian music publishing industry. He also has served in music ministry on the local church and denominational levels.



Jim Gibson

Over the years, Gibson has been involved in the development of several notable hymnals.

Among others, he was consulting editor of The Christian Life Hymnal from Hendrickson Publishers, and served on the Executive Selection Committee for LifeWay's 2008 Baptist Hymnal.

Gibson's "depth and breadth of experience in Southern Baptist life, along with his business expertise over these many years well qualifies Jim for helping move the university forward into the future," said Mid-Continent President Robert Imhoff.

Gibson and his wife, Barbara, are members of Cadiz Baptist Church.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FREE: Oneida Baptist Institute has three nice organs in working condition when donated. They are free, but you must pick them up. Contact Missy Nichols, donations coordinator, (606) 847-4111, ext. 248. Leave voicemail if no answer.

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: Full-time minister to students to minister alongside four other full-time pastors at First Baptist Church of Tullahoma, Tenn. The minister will focus on middle school, high school and college students. First Baptist seeks to be conservative in its theology and progressive in its methodology. Send resumé to Dr. Herb Hester, pastor, 108 E Grundy St., Tullahoma, TN 37388. (931) 455-5461.

SEEKING: Director of missions, Texas County Baptist Association. Submit resumé by 2-15-2009 to Gordon Rhodes, 16097 Horseshoe Drive, Houston, MO 65483; or call (417) 967-5942.

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: 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.

SERVICES: Experienced tax practitioner seeks to help ministers with tax returns, housing allowance and basic record-keeping. Contact Bro. Grant Mathes at (502) 859-0359.

Christian QB Kurt Warner poised for yet another miracle

Veteran quarterback leads Cardinals to 1st-ever Super Bowl

Phoenix (BP)—Kurt Warner's autobiography is titled, "All Things Possible: My Story of Faith, Football and the Miracle Season." The veteran quarterback is at the center of yet another miracle season, leading his underdog Arizona Cardinals to their first-ever Super Bowl appearance.

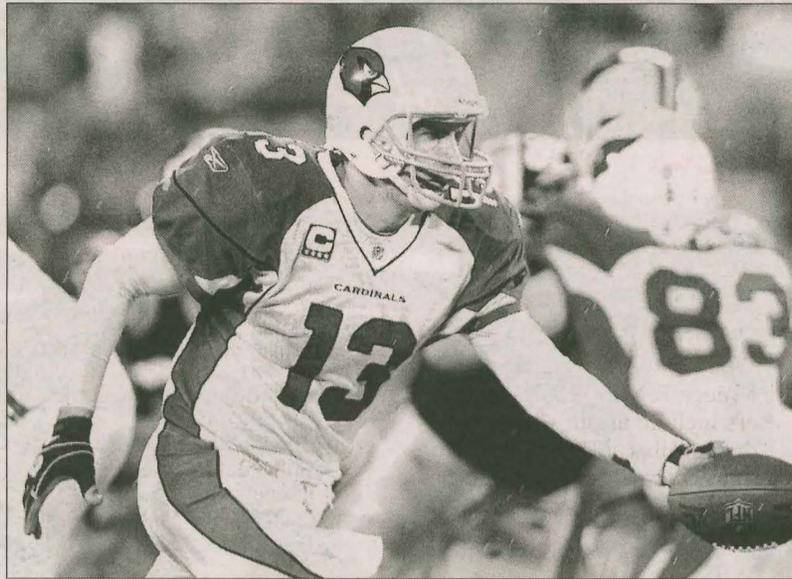
Warner's Cardinals turned in their third upset in as many weeks Jan. 18, shocking the Philadelphia Eagles, 32-25, in the NFC Championship Game with a late-game drive engineered by the Christian QB.

The Cardinals now are set to square off with the Pittsburgh Steelers in Super Bowl XLIII this weekend at Raymond James Field in Tampa, Fla. The Steelers earned their spot with a 23-14 victory over the Baltimore Ravens.

Warner wrote his autobiography after leading the St. Louis Rams to their first Super Bowl title in 2000. Now, nearly a decade later, the 37-year-old signal caller is taking another first-time team to pro football's biggest game—but he still has not forgotten his power source.

"I never get tired of saying it," he told a stadium full of Cardinals fans and a national TV audience after the Jan. 18 victory. "I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for allowing me to be here and do the things I do."

An undrafted quarterback out of the University of Northern Iowa, Warner experienced some success in the Arena Football League and with NFL Europe. Then he secured



'ALL THINGS POSSIBLE' Kurt Warner, who has been outspoken about his faith in Jesus Christ throughout his pro football career, will lead the underdog Arizona Cardinals against the heavily favored Pittsburgh Steelers in Super Bowl XLIII this weekend. It will be Warner's third Super Bowl appearance. (BP photo by Bob Carey)

the backup role to Trent Green with the Rams entering the 1999 season.

When Green went down in the preseason with an injury, Warner took the reins and blazed a path few will forget. In leading the Rams to a 13-3 record, he produced one of the greatest seasons for any quarterback in the history of the National Football League, leading the Rams to victory in Super Bowl XXXIV. Along the way, he was awarded NFL MVP and Super Bowl MVP.

For the next two seasons, Warner was at the top of football, taking his Rams back to the Super Bowl in 2001 and earning another NFL MVP.

But Warner's stellar career slipped. The Rams released him. He lost his starting job with the New York Giants, then had two average seasons with the Arizona Cardinals.

As Warner was facing the twilight of his career, some likely thought he was more of a "flash in the pan" than a bona fide NFL superstar.

This season, Warner got back on track. His stellar play put him in the discussion for NFL MVP award.

But Warner the player is not as impressive as Warner the person. In the three times he has lost his starting job, he has enthusiastically taken on the role of backup, cheerleader and even mentor to the younger men who moved ahead of him on the depth chart—all without losing the competitive fire that has helped him return to a starting role.

Warner's charitable work also has been well profiled. In a recent Sports Illustrated article, columnist Peter King offered example after example of Warner's character. King

shared a personal anecdote of a time when he asked Warner to send an autographed item to a fan who was serving in Iraq. Not only did he send him an autographed mini-helmet, upon hearing that the young man was home on leave, he attempted to call him five times.

Other examples of Warner's commitment to help people include funding a recreation center in a children's hospital, spending Christmas day with foster children who have no families, championing Habitat for Humanity, and taking "Making a Wish" families to Disney World.

The key to understanding Warner as a person is to look at the source of his strength: Jesus Christ. In 1996, when Warner was dating his future wife, Brenda, her parents were killed in a tornado. In an interview several years later, Warner discussed the impact that event had on his life.

"That situation showed me that you don't know what is going to happen tomorrow," Warner recalled. "You have to live life for today and for this moment. It was at that point that I realized the Lord needed to be at the center of my life. I couldn't wait until tomorrow or next year. It needed to be right now."

As the accolades have rolled in this season, Warner has been quick to give the glory to God. After a Monday Night Football win in November, Warner was asked, "With all the ups and downs, when something like that is happening at the end of the game, where does your mind go?"

Warner responded, "My mind goes to how awesome God is. He blesses me over and over again. I just can't say enough about the position He puts me in."

Compiled from reporting by Brett Maragni and Art Stricklin of Baptist Press

"I never get tired of saying it. I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for allowing me to be here and do the things I do."

Arizona Cardinals QB Kurt Warner in a nationally televised interview after his team earned a spot in Super Bowl XLIII

NFL Commissioner Goodell: League responsible to fans and communities

By Art Stricklin
Baptist Press

New York (BP)—Roger Goodell, the eighth commissioner in the National Football League's 89-year history, is just completing his third year as the top executive in America's most popular professional sport.

But nobody has moved faster to make bold decisions to raise the conduct bar on player behavior and punish those who fall short. He has called for higher standards among fans who attend games and banned alcohol in NFL locker rooms and all team meetings. The NFL is not problem free in this area, but Goodell has sent a clear signal that his league will not tolerate continued misbehavior by players on or off the field, or by fans in the stands.

Goodell also has been responsive to concerns about how the league treats people of faith. In 2008, Goodell prevented churches from showing Super Bowl XLII to large gatherings but permitted such for-profit enterprises as restaurants and sports bars (venues that potentially would be selling beer or other products featured in Super Bowl ads). However, he reversed that decision and lifted those restrictions on congregations. Goodell agreed to an interview with Baptist Press in advance of this weekend's Super Bowl XLIII.

BAPTIST PRESS: Are there some great things NFL players do in the community or with different groups that most fans overlook because other negative items get more publicity?

NFL COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODELL: I am proud of the many, many players who positively contribute in different ways to their communities. Every Tuesday during the season, on their one day off from game preparation, many NFL players take part in community activities, either with their teams or through their own foundations. From serving meals to the underprivileged to hosting youth football clinics, volunteering is a part of many players' weekly routine. While these activities are sometimes overlooked by fans or the media, they mean a lot to each community. It is a core part of who we are as a league.

BP: It seems like since taking over the job you have worked hard to uphold a high standard for everyone associated with the league. Is this a correct assumption? Why is that important to you and the league?

GOODELL: It is important that all of us representing the NFL understand that it is a privilege, not a right, to be associated with this game and this league. We have a responsibility to our fans and our communities. We are all accountable.

BP: Are NFL players role models to others or in the community?

GOODELL: Our players are role models and understand the responsibility they have publicly to our communities and the important role they play in them.

BP: What do you think it means to NFL fans, young and old, to see how players conduct themselves on and off the field?

GOODELL: It means a tremendous amount to fans to see how NFL players conduct themselves on and off the field. Players and teams represent their communities—from the way they play, the way they manage their image and the way they're active in their community. Fans, young and old, look up to NFL players and that is why they are held to higher standards by the league and, most importantly, by themselves.

BP: Before the 2008 season, you unveiled a separate code of conduct for fans. Why did you feel this was important?

GOODELL: The goal was to make sure that every fan that attends an NFL game has a positive experience. We don't want anyone to stay away because of a bad experience. The reality is that one individual can create an unfortunate experience for a number of people. So we have been focused on fan conduct and making sure that our fans can come to the stadium on game day and enjoy the experience.

BP: What type of feedback have you received from this new policy?

GOODELL: The reaction has been quite positive from our fans and we are making improvements. This is something that is going to happen over a long period of time, but we are making adjustments.

BP: As a family man and father, what does it mean to take a family to an NFL game without fearing trouble or problems?

GOODELL: Creating a positive experi-

ence for all fans who attend our games is important. The goal is—throughout the whole experience—making sure that they feel safe, that they're comfortable and that they can enjoy the game.

BP: Last year, an ESPN commentator spoke about going to a college basketball playoff game with his daughter and finding it refreshingly tame and problem free because of the lack of alcohol sales. Has the league or individual teams considered having certain alcohol-free sections in NFL stadiums for this reason? Are there some teams that do this already?

GOODELL: These are team issues, so you would have to check with the teams.

BP: How did your early 2008 trip to visit U.S. troops in Afghanistan affect you in relation to football and sports and the role which they play?

GOODELL: What impressed me so much is of all the men and women we met at so many different bases, not a single one complained about anything—not their missions, not about how long they were there, nothing. It's inspiring. We are so fortunate to have so many great people in service to our country. And I felt how meaningful and important the NFL is to these people.

BP: What role, if any, does personal faith play for individual coaches and players in the NFL?

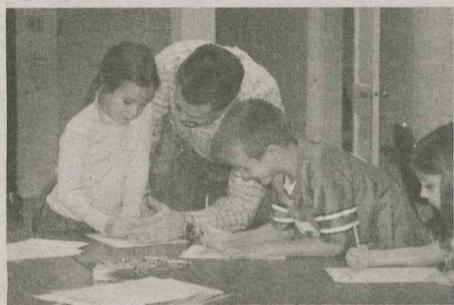
GOODELL: That's a personal question better answered by the men themselves. But I know that for many players and coaches it's an important aspect of their lives.

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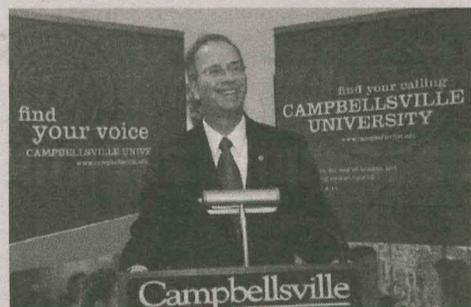
*introduces a few members
of the Next Generation
of Christian Servant Leaders*



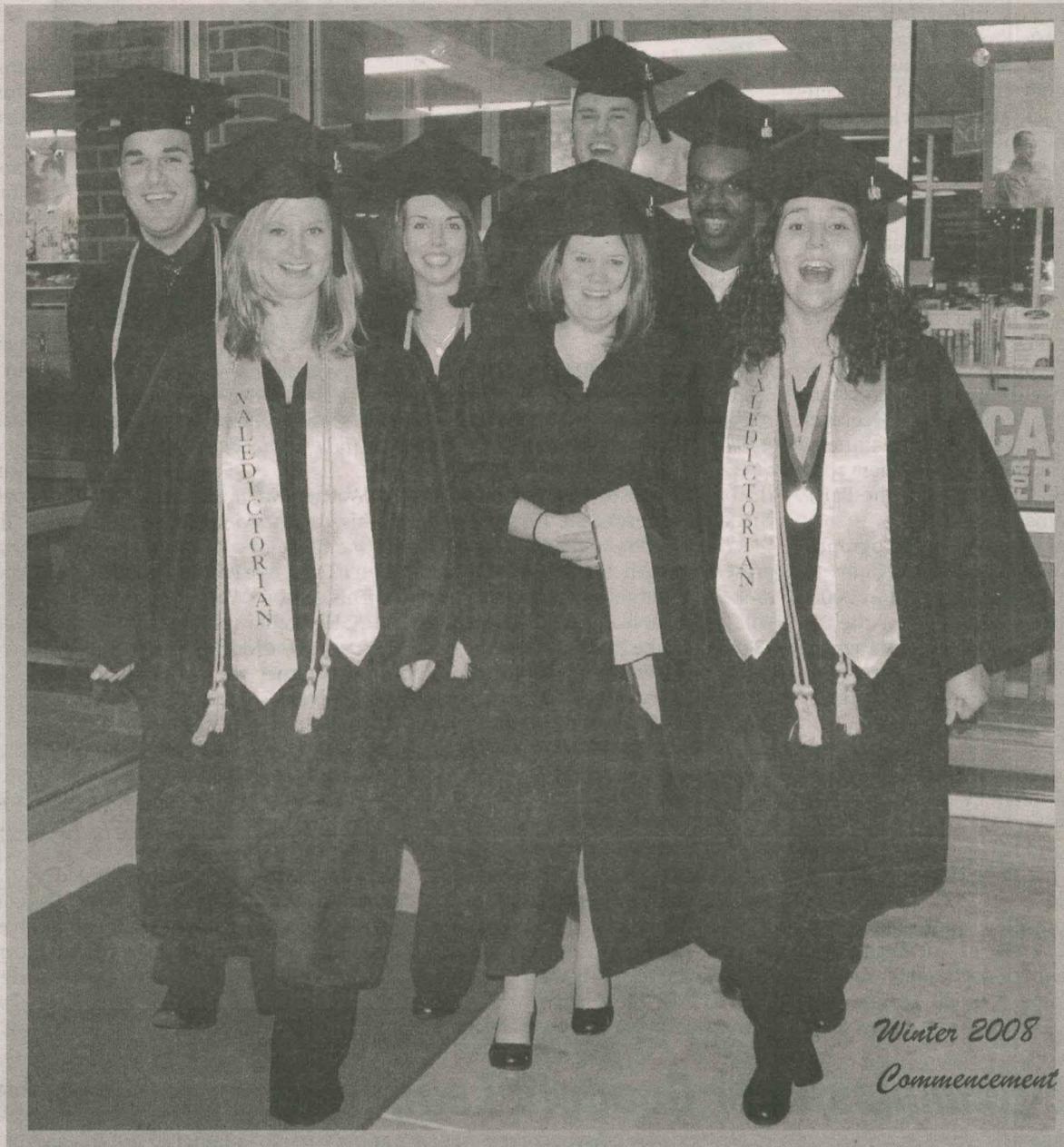
Dr. Bill Henard, pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, spoke to 139 graduates during CU's December Commencement in Ransdell Chapel. Henard is immediate past president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and current first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.



Servant leadership is demonstrated above as a member of the CU football team works with a children's reading program in one of the team's service activities helping local school children.



"So long as we stay connected to the mission, grounded in the teachings of Jesus Christ, we will keep to our path of preparing the next generation of servant leaders."
- Dr. Michael V. Carter, President



*Winter 2008
Commencement*

Above, members of the next generation of Servant Leaders pause to share a bit of joy before getting their degrees. Pictured are, front row: Christie Nicole Bagley, a co-valedictorian; Emily Phan and Daniela Noelani Johnson, also a co-valedictorian. Second row -- Clint Warf, Lindsey Huff and James Walker. In back is Travis Kennon.



Servant Leaders above help restore homes in New Orleans on the fall break missions trip.

Music students at right serve by performing in the annual CU Christmas Tapestry -- it sets the tone on campus for all activities that the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ is the reason for everything in the season.



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