

Shine like stars in the world
Philippians 2:15

WESTERN Recorder

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FOR THE RECORD

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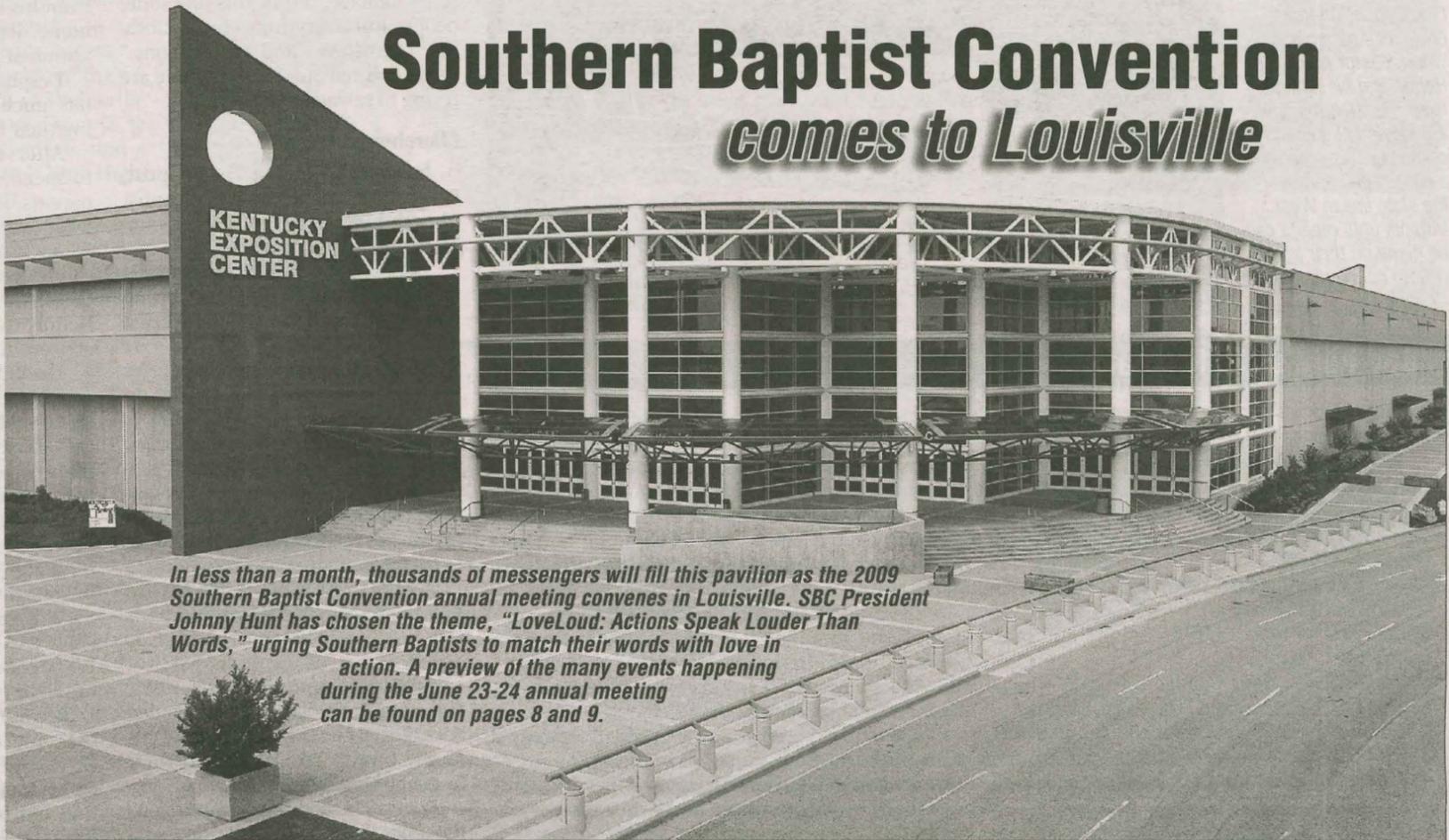
Baptists

SBC leader applauds recent conference addressing creation care. *Page 10.*

Issues

Could the Bible Belt really be a 'hot spot' for the seven deadly sins? *Page 12.*

Southern Baptist Convention comes to Louisville



In less than a month, thousands of messengers will fill this pavilion as the 2009 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting convenes in Louisville. SBC President Johnny Hunt has chosen the theme, "Live Loud: Actions Speak Louder Than Words," urging Southern Baptists to match their words with love in action. A preview of the many events happening during the June 23-24 annual meeting can be found on pages 8 and 9.



Convention theme urges Southern Baptists to "Live Loud," match words and deeds. *Page 8.*



Pastors' Conference: Mike Huckabee seeks to encourage pastors to see the world through Jesus' eyes. *Page 8.*

Eleven Kentucky Baptists tapped to fill roles on SBC boards and committees. *Page 9.*

Convention shuttle service and parking arrangements finalized. *Page 9.*

Several E. Kentucky churches damaged in recent flooding

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

Belfry—Mark Helton expects to be a resident of West Virginia for several months, but for the pastor of First Baptist Church of Belfry, that is a good thing.

First Baptist Church of Williamson—just east of the Tug Fork that divides Kentucky from West Virginia—has offered Helton the use of its parsonage after a flood wiped out the one owned by First Baptist, Belfry.

The West Virginia congregation just called a pastor who owns a home, leaving its parsonage available for emergency housing.

"We'll just take enough to live there," said Helton, a graduate of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "You try to praise God even in the midst of hard times."

Helton was not the only victim of flash floods that struck Eastern Kentucky earlier this month, along with a tornado in the Richmond area.

The city of Richmond and a dozen counties declared states of emergency after the storms, noted Buddy Rogers, public information officer for the state division of emergency management.

Rogers said the counties hit hardest by flooding included Pike, Floyd, Breathitt and Owsley.

State workers and crews from the Federal Emergency Management Administration were just beginning assessments last week, so damage estimates were not available.

However, the Associated Press reported that 1,700 homes in Pike County alone were damaged by flooding and mudslides.

"We're trying to get housing for those displaced people in order to resolve these housing issues," Rogers said.

In the Richmond area, approximately 150 homes, barns and other structures were destroyed or damaged, according to Kelley McBride, public information officer for Madison County's emergency management office.

Kentucky Baptist Men on Mission led an active response to the twin emergencies with projects in four areas, the last of which were wrapping up last weekend.

They included feeding teams in Belfry (Pike County) and Langley (Floyd); mud-out teams in McVeigh (Pike) and Langley; and a chainsaw and debris clean-up crew in the Rich-

mond-Kirksville area.

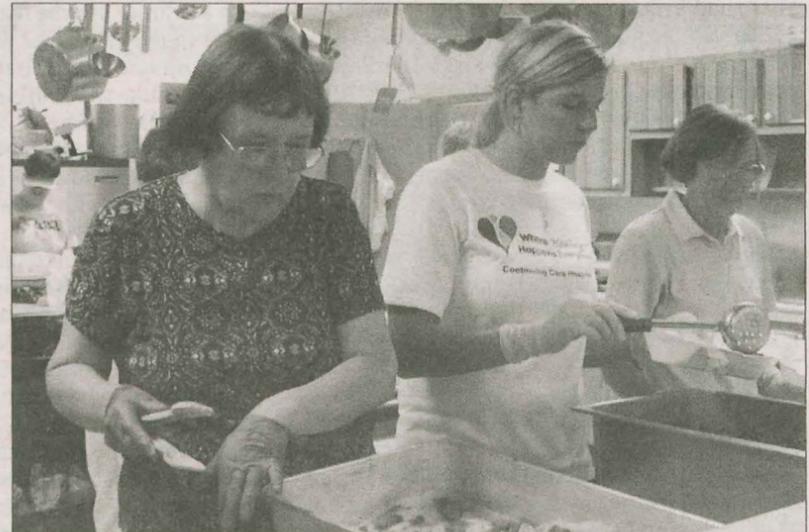
Coy Webb, Kentucky Baptist Convention's disaster relief associate, said more than 100 volunteers were involved in the four areas.

He estimated the teams would complete nearly 100 mud-out and chainsaw jobs while serving more

than 11,000 meals.

The state convention department also coordinated the delivery of food to local volunteers in Jackson (Breathitt County), who served more than 4,000 meals there.

While the latest storms did not
□ See Eastern Kentucky ... Page 2



HELPING HAND A group of volunteers prepares meals for Eastern Kentucky residents forced from their homes by the recent storms and flooding. The group, which also provided housing and clothing to displaced residents, were mobilized by MSC missionary Lewis Faulkenberry, who directs the Hazel Green Mission Center in Wolfe County. (Photo courtesy of Lewis Faulkenberry)

Eastern Kentucky churches cleaning up after recent floods

LEFT BEHIND The raging flood waters that swept through parts of Eastern Kentucky recently left a gret deal of destruction in its path. The flooding took out a large section of First Baptist Church of Belfry's parsonage, where Pastor Mark Helton and his family lived. The Heltons now are staying at a church parsonage donated by a church just across the state line in West Virginia until repairs can be made on their home. (Photo courtesy of Mark Helton)



'God held us in His hand'

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

Kirksville—Melissa Barker never saw the tree that nearly smashed into her car, but emerging unharmed from the May 8 tornado that swept through Central Kentucky has her praising God.

Barker found herself trapped in the storm southwest of the city after leaving her job as a middle school teacher in Richmond and picking up her 1-year-old son.

The vicious winds pushed her 2005 Nissan Armada off the road and started rocking it.

Finally, the SUV was deposited about 10 feet down a driveway as trees crashed all around it. A barn fell onto Ky. 1295 not too far behind her.

After the storm passed, another driver who stopped told her he thought a large tree would wallop her door, but at the last minute winds lifted it over her vehicle.

"I didn't think Seth and I were going to make it," said the resident of Kirksville, located about 10 miles southwest of Richmond. "I know God held us in His hand. It was a miracle we weren't hurt."

Barker's escape is one of three dramatic incidents involving members of Kirksville Baptist Church.

Pastor Butch Pennington called the odds of three members of the same church being involved in close calls "a million to one."

"It was a sign God's hand was on us," the pastor said. "All three could have been killed."

Not only were three members spared, the arrival of a missions team from Mississippi to help renovate the church's old sanctuary proved divinely timed.

A contingent of 28 volunteers from Jackson County Baptist Association in Pascagoula, Miss., had been scheduled to arrive in April.

The two groups formed a partnership three years ago after members of Kirksville Baptist traveled to the Gulf Coast to help with Hurricane Katrina clean-up and reconstruction.

However, Pennington asked if they could postpone the visit a few weeks because of some clean-up left over from last winter's ice storm in Kentucky.

The group arrived just after the tornado hit about 5 p.m. that Friday. Pennington immediately asked 10 volunteers to switch from framing rooms for offices and Sunday school space to storm clean-up.

Those volunteers helped with such tasks as cleaning up yards, cutting up downed trees, placing tarps on roofs and counseling victims.

So did various disaster relief workers from around the commonwealth, along with about 35 church members.

"God always has everything worked out," Pennington said of the change in the Mississippi team's plans.

Though glad the tornado didn't touch the church building, members are especially delighted about Barker and two other members escaping harm.

Kirksville resident Margie Grant was driving her sister's car home from Richmond, where they had gone for dinner, when the rain became so heavy she could barely see.

"The next thing this big tree fell in front of me," Grant recalled. "It was huge. The car started rocking and trees were laying on the back of it. A man behind me said (later) he could see the funnel cloud pass over."

"It was an experience. We sat there for a long time before anybody came. For awhile I thought, 'Are we going to be here all night?'"

Finally, a police officer and other rescuers, including one of her nephews, showed up with chainsaws to cut away the trees so she could get out of the car.

Still, she asked her nephew to drive the car away from all the damaged trees until it was clear enough for her to drive to her nearby home.

"I was praying and thanking the Lord He saved us," Grant said of her post-storm reaction. "I know it was a miracle that tree didn't hit us. If I had been a second or two faster, it would have crushed us. It didn't damage (the) car at all."

Avonda Noe of Lancaster was about six miles southwest of Richmond on Ky. 52 when she stopped at the intersection with Ky. 1295 and pulled in front of a house situated next to an automotive repair garage.

As she sat there, chairs, a bicycle and other debris came shooting out of the gap between the two buildings.

When the winds died down, the concrete block garage lay in rubble.

"I don't know how long it lasted; it may have been a minute, maybe five," Noe recalled. "I was beginning to get scared when it calmed down. I looked up and said, 'That looks like a tornado; that looks like that building is gone.'"

While Noe came through the storm unscathed, her car sustained an estimated \$2,400 in damage, including a slashed tire. However, the high school librarian is grateful that she didn't suffer any harm.

"It just makes you realize the Lord takes care of you," Noe said. "He guides you."

Tragically, not far from where Noe pulled off the road, two people died after the tornado turned over their mobile home.

For Barker, those deaths emphasized how fortunate she is to be alive. A "nervous wreck" since the incident, she said that her heart breaks for the two victims and those who have been left homeless.

"If it comes to that, I'll be ready," she said of her brush with death. "But I'm thankful God took care of us and I'm able to be with my children and husband."

Continued from page 1

approach the scope of January's ice storms, which affected 102 of Kentucky's 120 counties, for some people Webb said these storms were much worse.

"With the ice storm people had some damage, but in this one some people lost everything—food, clothing, furniture and possessions," Webb pointed out. "Some people are trying to salvage their homes."

Churches damaged

In addition to the First Baptist, Belfry parsonage, Lerose Baptist Church in Booneville (Owsley County) sustained flooding damage.

Webb said it was a particularly devastating blow, since the church had major damage when pipes burst during the ice storm.

Members were preparing for the first post-renovation service on Mother's Day when the floods hit.

In Enterprise Baptist Association, which covers Floyd County, First Baptist Church of Maytown had five feet of water on its lower level. However, the water receded quickly, according to Director of Missions Tom Biddle.

First Baptist Church of Martin had to cancel services on Mother's Day because it was surrounded by water.

And, although Licking River Baptist Church in Salyersville avoided damage, Pastor Dustin Sims and his family had to be taken from their home by boat, Biddle said.

Robert Finch, director of missions for Pike Baptist Association, said aside from First Baptist, Belfry, only two churches in his region were affected by the floods. They were First Baptist Church of Forest Hills, which temporarily lost water and gas service; and Sidney Missionary Baptist Church, which sustained minor mud damage.

Formerly next to the parsonage, First Baptist, Belfry now is located on a property two miles away. Although it carried insurance on the building, its pastor did not have insurance on the contents.

Helton did not have an estimate

of his family's losses, but said they included such items as a couch, love seat, two recliners and all of his college notes. He managed to salvage the family's bedroom suites and much of their clothing.

Helton said an elderly couple from his church also may lose their home, depending on a final determination of the damage.

Despite the losses, Helton said he has much to be thankful for, including their lives.

After their 7-year-old son went to spend the night with his grandparents, Helton and his wife, Chris, went to bed the evening of May 8.

At 3:30 the next morning, a call came, warning them that Pond Creek was rising, which prompted Helton to move their cars to higher ground.

The Heltons spent the next several hours nervously watching. After a wall broke in the basement, they grabbed some medications and their two cats and headed for a relative's home.

"By the time we stepped out of the house, it was waist deep," Helton recalled. "By the time we got to my in-laws, it was chest deep."

"We saw that (U.S.) 119 was shut down and you could see the current. We got our nerve up and crossed the four-lane (road)."

Recovering from the flood is not the only challenge facing Helton. He wound up with a staph infection on his hand the week after the flood that has prevented him from helping with clean-up efforts.

Still, he will have fond memories of the aftermath of the recent flood, particularly the afternoon of May 17 when numerous church members showed up unannounced to help clean up the damage at the parsonage.

"What's humbling is all the people showing up to help you when you're the one helping them," Helton noted. "To walk in Wal-Mart and have people walk up and hug you feels good. And a church offering their home free? That's a God thing. That just doesn't happen."



PATH OF DESTRUCTION ■ Above: This photo, taken by Mark Helton out the First Baptist, Belfry parsonage window, shows the "chest deep" flood waters as they swept through the town. ■ Below: A mobile home in Wolfe County is demolished by the flood waters.



Climb Higher

Evanses, 'redeemed' gay publisher, 'Fireproof' star among 2009 WOW guests

By Dannah Prather
Partnerships Editor

Shelbyville—The final evening of this year's Women of Worth Lifestyle Evangelism Conference was unique because two men were among the chief encouragers.

Pastor/author Tony Evans shared the podium at First Baptist Church of Shelbyville with his son, musician Anthony Evans Jr., to challenge the hundreds of women—and a handful of men—attending to "Climb Higher" in their Christian journey.

Referencing an array of illustrations—from an ill-tempered dog to lawn irrigation, popcorn and Niagara Falls—the senior Evans said, "Jesus wants to make Himself at home in every room of your being."

Christians referenced in Ephesians 3:13-21 were discouraged, Evans said. "Life has its way of unloading its trash on you. ... (But) nobody who is a Christian has a power problem. They have an intimacy problem."

Becoming closer to Christ through prayer, Bible study, worship and service prepares believers to receive more of His power, Evans said. "God will never give more of Himself than you can handle."

If someone wants to collect part of the Pacific Ocean, they might go to the beach with a thimble, a glass or a bucket, he said. A person can collect only as much ocean as the capacity of the container. The same principle applies to God Himself. "Intimacy expands capacity," Evans explained.

"Take capacity to be overwhelmed with His glory," he challenged.

In his second consecutive appearance at the 11th annual Kentucky Baptist Convention-sponsored event, the younger Evans



GET CLOSER TO CHRIST Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas and founder/president of the Urban Alternative, tells Kentucky Baptists and others attending last week's Women of Worth Lifestyle Evangelism Conference in Shelbyville that Christians must increase their spiritual intimacy with Christ in order to expand their spiritual capacity and then experience greater spiritual power. Supermodel Kim Alexis spoke at the previous evening's conference in Somerset. (Photos by Dannah Prather)

talked about his own struggles, encouraging the group to "dig into the promises of God," to persevere and emerge victorious.

Kentucky Baptists and guests also heard from Charlene Cothran, founder/president of Evidence Ministries, www.TheEvidenceMinistry.org. After living as a lesbian for nearly 30 years, Cothran gave her life to Christ. Now she equips individuals to reject the

homosexual lifestyle.

The publisher of a nationally-recognized gay magazine, Cothran said she "came out again"—as a believer and heterosexual—in person and through the pages of the magazine. Subscribers, advertisers and others in the pro-gay community were outraged.

There were significant financial consequences of that decision, Cothran recalled, "but peace of mind looked better. I didn't need a 'better this' or 'more of that.' I needed a Savior."

She also learned there are many gays and lesbians hungering for peace. "There are folks who are in this who want to get out," Cothran said.

She encouraged Kentucky Baptists to set aside stereotypes and fears of "guilt by association" and find common ground with people living apart from Christ. As trustees, Christians will have an opportunity to share the gospel, she predicted.

Actress Erin Bethea talked about her climb to a spiritual "base camp" when she quit a steady job with health insurance at Disney World to "do the fire movie" in her hometown of Albany, Ga. Bethea portrayed Catherine Holt in Sherwood Pictures' "Fireproof."

Recalling the many blessings she experienced during filming and after the release of the movie, Bethea said the icing on the cake was when the Magic Kingdom hired her back as the member of the kingdom acting staff. She also is co-host of "On Mission Xtra," a show produced by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board that airs on FamilyNet Television.



MY LIFE AS A DOG Erin Bethea, who portrayed Catherine Holt in the Christian film "Fireproof," tells how she went from playing a dog at Disney World to starring in one of the most successful films of 2008. A ministry of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga., Sherwood Pictures released secular films week after week in tickets-sold-per-screen last fall when the movie was released.



REDEEMED Charlene Cothran (right) is interviewed by Shelly Johns, women's/senior adult ministry associate for the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Cothran, founder/president of Evidence Ministries, accepted Christ as her Savior, rejecting homosexuality after nearly 30 years as a lesbian. Once the publisher of a nationally-recognized gay magazine, Cothran said she "came out again" as a believer and heterosexual through the same publication, drawing ire from advertisers and subscribers.



ENERGETIC PRAISE Before his father brings the message, vocalist/musician Anthony Evans Jr. shares some of his own songs, and familiar hymns and choruses, with the crowd gathered at First Baptist Church of Shelbyville. Accompanying him on guitar is Brandon Hood. This was the younger Evans' second consecutive appearance at the Kentucky Baptist Convention WOW Conference.



JUST LIKE FAMILY Kentucky Baptists from Eastern and Western Kentucky join those in the Shelbyville/Metro Louisville area in worship. The night before, a 10-year-old girl made a first-time profession of faith in Christ at the WOW conference in Somerset hosted by Beacon Hill Baptist Church.

Cabbage Patch House honors Walnut Street for service to at-risk children

By Todd Deaton
Editor

Louisville—Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville recently received the 2009 Patch Partner Award from Cabbage Patch Settlement House, a nearby community ministry to at-risk children and their families.

Walnut Street has allowed Cabbage Patch to use its activities building since the non-profit organization began an expansion project last September. All of Cabbage Patch's recreation, youth development and educational opportunities programs have been held at the church on five afternoons each week.

Programs include athletics, arts and crafts, drama, dance, Bible study, guitar, choir, tutoring, computer classes and boys and girls clubs.

According to Pastor Rusty Ellison, Wal-

nut Street was willing to assist Cabbage Patch because "they are such an important ministry in Old Louisville, and they reach hundreds of children and have done so for nearly a century. ... This is just another way we can partner with a local ministry in our urban setting as we seek to make a difference in our part of the city."

Cabbage Patch anticipates completing the multi-million dollar renovation of its 6th Street facility in October. Meanwhile, Walnut Street's staff and volunteers consider their service as part of an ongoing investment in the community according to Robert Austin, the church's activities ministry director.

"This unique partnership has meant that students in our community have had a continuous connection of support," Austin said. "It has allowed us to expand our relationships to new children and families for

the sake of the gospel."

"The folks at Walnut Street love Jesus and love kids. It just seems natural to do whatever we can to make this a better community for them."

Cabbage Patch Executive Director Tracy Holladay expressed appreciation to Walnut Street for the "gracious donation" of its facilities, without which, he noted, it would not be possible for the ministry to provide after-school programs for the 80 to 120 children and youth served each day.

"Our answer to prayer was Walnut Street Baptist Church," Holladay said. "Not only did we find a community partner, we found a spiritual family member less than a mile from The Cabbage Patch."

"Walnut Street has not been just a good neighbor, they have been our spiritual partner in meeting the needs of at-risk children and families."

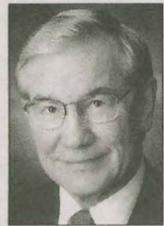


DOING GOOD In presenting the Patch Partner Award to Rusty Ellison, pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church, Cabbage Patch Director Tracy Holladay reads a thank-you note from 7-year-old Tariana, one of the children served by the community ministry.

Attend SBC annual meeting

Kentucky Baptists will have an incredible opportunity to learn firsthand about the Southern Baptist Convention and the ministries and missions supported by their Cooperative Program and missions offering gifts next month.

Partners in the Mission



By Bill Mackey

The Southern Baptist Convention will be held June 23-24 at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center in Louisville. This will be the first time in 50 years that the SBC has met in Kentucky, so it is definitely a special occasion for us.

Kentucky Baptists will be heavily involved in Crossover Louisville events in the days leading up to the convention. Long Run Baptist Association is at the very center of this emphasis. Please pray for all of those from Kentucky and other states who will be involved.

Please pray especially for the "Intentional Community Evangelism" emphasis, June 14-20. Hundreds of witnesses will be on the streets each day.

Saturday, June 20, will see door-to-door survey work, more than 30 evangelistic block parties, Hispanic and international festivals, compassion ministries, and other efforts to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Crossover Changers will repair homes, Baptist Builders will construct a community center, and 1,200 families will receive food for a week.

SBC President Johnny Hunt is an inspirational leader who will make sure that this convention has incredible music and outstanding presentations. The president will speak just before lunch on Tuesday and the convention sermon will come just before lunch on Wednesday.

You will have the opportunity Tuesday night to hear testimonies by international missionaries and an inspirational report by International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin. Your gifts support 5,500 international missionaries in 190 countries along with 400 staff persons who serve in the IMB offices in Richmond, Va.

The North American Mission Board report will be given Wednesday night, June 24. This report will include testimonies, a report by President Geoff Hammond and a focus on "Across America," a national plan to deliver the gospel using the advertising tag "Find it Here" in the weeks leading up to Easter next year.

This year's convention also is an opportunity to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. A new entrance and welcome center at the seminary will be named for former President Duke McCall during the convention.

Kentucky mission work will be featured in the Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting exhibits at St. Matthews Baptist Church. Several Kentucky Baptists also will participate in the WMU program.

It is my hope that every KBC church will elect and send their full quota of messengers. Make attending this year's convention a special event and load up your vans to bring people. You even may want to adjourn your Wednesday evening services that week in order to bring a group to the convention.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

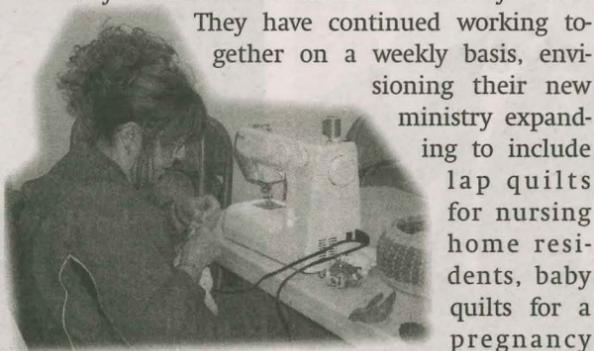
Corbin women sending dolls on mission

When Robin Reeves, a Mission Service Corps missionary in Corbin, received several boxes of material with sewing and craft supplies a few months ago through Appalachian Regional Ministries, she set them aside to figure out how she could use them in her ministry. That same week, she received two boxes of handmade dolls from the North American Mission Board to be distributed to children in Kentucky. When her friend Melany Hanrahan saw the dolls and asked if she could take them to Nicaragua for missions volunteers to give to children there, Reeves felt she shouldn't since they had been designated for Kentucky children, but she also knew what she would do with the sewing and craft supplies.

Reeves made an announcement at her church, Frankfort Baptist in Corbin, that she was forming a group to help make the dolls for Hanrahan's mission trip to Nicaragua. About 30 ladies signed up to work on Wednesday mornings and Friday evenings, using their craft-making talents to make about 300 dolls. By the time they were finished, however, the women were able to send 470 dolls and 55 baby quilts and blankets with Hanrahan and her 16-year-old daughter, Whitney, and two others from the church, who traveled to Nicaragua the first week in April.

"Not only have we had a ball, but we have gotten a lot of work done and gotten to know one another better," Reeves said. "Several ladies have come to me with tears in their eyes and shared that they had been praying God would give them a ministry in which they could use their God-given, sewing and crafting talents to serve Him," she added, noting that some had worked in sewing factories and one was a retired art teacher.

The group liked working on the project so much that they did not want their shared ministry to end.



They have continued working together on a weekly basis, envisioning their new ministry expanding to include lap quilts for nursing home residents, baby quilts for a pregnancy

center, and dolls for nearby children's homes and a Shiner's hospital. "They are so excited!" Reeves exclaimed. The ministry has been dubbed "Sewing Seeds of Kindness" since "not only are we sewing, but we are also sowing seeds for Christ," she added.

The group made 63 more dolls which left May 15 for Guatemala with fellow church member Amy Walker, who will give them to the children at an orphanage where she and her husband, Charlie, adopted their son, Landon. Last week, they also completed approximately 50 prayer squares and 50 pin cushions to give to women who attended the Grace Emmaus Women's Walk at Laurel Lake Baptist Camp.

Reeves also designed dolls to resemble each of the students whom she teaches in Sunday school, and she gave the dolls to the children as an Easter gift. "I had parents coming to me with tears in their eyes, thanking me for the dolls and what they mean to them," Reeves said.

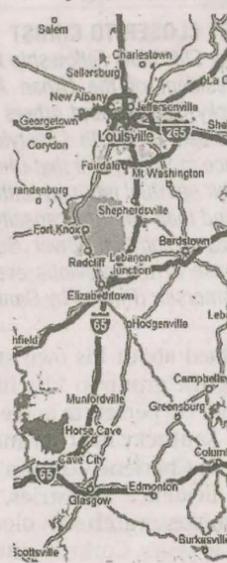
The women soon will begin working on dolls to be given away at a vacation Bible school that the church's youth will lead at Patterson Creek Baptist Church in July. Reeves, director of Christians by Choice Creative Ministries, anticipates making dolls for backyard Bible clubs, vacation Bible schools, block parties and camps in which the ministry partners with South Union/Mount Zion Association.

Reeves and Hanrahan were asked by Wolfe Creek Baptist Church to share about their ministries during a Baptist Women's Day service. Reeves used one of the dolls to share the plan of salvation and to demonstrate how easy it was to witness to people using its colorful bead necklace. That evening, Pastor John Justice called to tell her that 13 decisions to follow Christ had been made as a result of her testimony.

Calling her new venture a "God thing," Reeves praised God for the women who had a passion to get it started. Reeves said she hopes their story will inspire others to "get into that old sewing box, dust off the machine, and open the craft cabinet" and use their God-given talents to serve Him ... *along the Way.*

Along the Way

By Todd Deaton



New church buildings going up

By Diana Davis

It is exciting to watch many new and growing churches across Kentucky that are beginning construction on buildings. Need fresh ideas for those eventful construction days?

Cross on top

Builders often erect a tree on the roof during construction. Why not top your construction project with a large cross made of 2-by-4s instead?

Weekly photo update

Designate a volunteer photographer to capture building progress and action photos of each volunteer. Submit unique photos to local newspapers. Show weekly photos in pre-worship audio-visuals, Web site or newsletter, and create a photo journal for the building dedication.

Coming soon

Invest in a professional sign to inform curious passers-by about the project. A hand-delivered memo to residential and commercial neighbors can let them know what's happening and invite them to worship.

Steeple-setting ceremony

If your building plans include a steeple or exterior cross, plan an informal celebration for members at the time of its installation.

Plumbers lunch bell

Provide a hot lunch or box lunch for every different work crew, i.e. painters, electricians, landscapers. Include a note of thanks, a witness tract and an invitation to worship. Challenge church members to personally invite workers.

Rafter writing

When framing is complete, invite church members for a special ceremony. Encircle the building for prayer; then distribute permanent marking pens. Play Christian music while everyone writes his or her name with a prayer or Scripture on studs or rafters.

Grab a hammer

Involve different groups in the church when possible. Examples: single adults paint, fathers and sons install doors, sweeping senior saints ("Triple S Club") sweep the site each Friday, kids collect pennies for a piece of Christian art, teens plant trees, etc.

Isat by a little boy in a new church foyer after a church service recently. "See that door?" he pointed. "Me and my dad put up that door." What a joy to work together to God's glory. Grab a hammer.

Diana Davis is author of "Fresh Ideas for Women's Ministry."

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"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." Romans 14:19

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Living single in a couples' world

By James Stillwell

Q: *Nobody seems to understand how hard it is to live single in a couples' world. Family reunions are things to be avoided. The inevitable question comes up: "When are you going to settle down and get married?" What is a single person to do?*



A: One person I know (in her 70s, and she's done quite well without being married so far) says with a twinkle in her eye, "I haven't met a man yet who deserves all that I have to give." Sometimes you just need a good comeback phrase that makes the questioner re-examine their assumptions. Sometimes the presence of a single person is threatening to a married person in a married world. You do not fit into their neat and tidy conceptual world.

The Apostle Paul said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am in, therein to be content." Paul knew what it was like to be single. He knew contentment beyond most people's experience. Contentment and happiness are not dependent upon weddings, rings or being married. Find your contentment in that which cannot change. Any married person, unless they die at the same exact time as their spouse, will one day be single again. Jesus said we will be like angels in heaven and that there will be neither marriage nor giving in marriage.

Realize that when God spoke the words, "It is not good that man should be alone," God was referring to the value of community. We have community with God through Christ by the Spirit. We have community with one another in the Body of Christ. When authentic relationships are present, Christ shows up ("where two or three are gathered in His name").

To meet other single adults, check out churches within an hour of where you live and see what they offer in fellowship opportunities. For example, on June 6 at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, an area-wide single adult conference will be featuring musician Tara-Leigh Cobble. These opportunities are ways to connect and find lifelong friendships that model the Kingdom of God to the church and to the world.

James Stillwell is minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington. Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253 or e-mail wesrec@kybaptist.org.

Southern Baptists need methodological diversity

By Stephen Wilson

When I read the Great Commission Resurgence document, commitment No. 8 caught my attention: The need for Southern Baptists to commit to methodological diversity from a biblically informed perspective.

FIRST PERSON

Regardless of how one may feel about the Great Commission Resurgence document, this particular point articulates well my own concern that Great Commission activity among Southern Baptists has largely stalled in the early 21st century. In fact, total membership in Southern Baptist churches has registered a slight decline and the number of reported baptisms usually drops from the number recorded in the previous year in many multi-year cycles. While perhaps many reasons may account for this phenomenon, part of the discussion in the convention should address the role of evangelism methodology for these declines.

No one methodology can account for all evangelism and discipleship. That is clear from first-century Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, the Apostle Paul openly acknowledges his different methodological approach to evangelizing different people groups in antiquity. Paul was a living example of one who possessed a biblically informed perspective on evangelism and disci-

pliship. Unfortunately, many of us in Southern Baptist life do indeed assume that a particular program or approach has wide application to all people groups—but that is not an adequate reflection of reality.

A case in point is our slow embrace of social networking through the Internet. Our strategy for evangelizing and teaching the young must make use of these vehicles for social networking. I have personally watched my own teenage son and daughter forego nearly every possible means of communicating except those that are provided through the Internet. They hardly use telephones and personal conversations to communicate. In fact, for that matter, I rarely see them watching television, listening to the radio or reading magazines. They entertain and communicate almost solely through the various social networking systems originating from the Internet—YouTube, Twitter, MySpace and Facebook.

Southern Baptists have hardly penetrated these networks for either evangelism or discipleship.

But others have. One Internet site has made the claim that one of eight couples who marry now meet on the Internet. In my area of West Kentucky, hard-pressed but clever real estate brokers are making use of these social network systems to find customers.

In the book "Millennial Makeover," authors Morley Winograd and Michael Hais, two Democratic Party operatives, revealed how the Democratic Party turned out young voters to play a decisive role in the

2006 and 2008 national elections. The strategy of the Democratic Party operatives was to penetrate the Internet social networks with various Democratic Party-friendly messages. The strategy worked. In 2008, millennial generation voters turned out 2:1 in favor of Barack Obama and played a major role in his election.

Some of these social networks on the Internet have as many as 200 million subscribers and members. Southern Baptists, however, have little substantial presence within these networks. With the exception of some local church youth pastors who are beginning to penetrate this vast social networking system on the local level, no association-wide, statewide or convention-wide Baptist entity has a fully developed plan and means to truly provide a gospel outreach to the millions of souls within these networks.

Penetrating Internet social networks with the gospel remains only a part of the many limitless methods that Southern Baptists might use to evangelize, disciple and teach. Much more study and strategizing remains for Southern Baptists to ponder in the early 21st century. Some of the convention-wide soul-searching that must take place is a coherent strategy of how the many Southern Baptist blogs might be used in a more constructive and positive manner. Much work in terms of methodology remains, but the Lord never said that the Great Commission would be easy.

Wilson is vice president for academic affairs at Mid-Continent University and a member of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Lesson learned: The customer is always right

By Tom Ehrich

I was in a hotel 500 miles from home when my Apple iPhone refused to recharge.

I felt strangely stranded, unable to manage my business, to communicate with family or to negotiate the scheduling intricacies of this trip.

I went to a nearby AT&T store, the carrier that handles iPhones. "Can't help," the clerk said. "Try the Apple store."

I drove 20 minutes to an outlying mall and found the Apple store. "Can't help," one clerk said. "I'm a trainer. Try the concierge."

Can't help, the concierge said. Make an appointment with the "Genius Bar." (Don't ask.)

I drove across the street to another AT&T store, steaming and prepared to abandon Apple technology. "Sure, glad to help," the clerk said. He pushed some buttons and fixed the problem. I immediately felt better about my iPhone and confident about this trip.

Lesson learned: Every enterprise ultimately depends on customer service. Good technology can't run faster than poor customer service. Clever marketing can't erase a bad shopping experience.

Customer loyalty won't survive surly clerks, endless telephone trees, unanswered e-mails, and return and warranty procedures that favor the vendor.

Customers have too many other choices. They don't need to endure clueless systems and irritable staff. Just consider the reputation U.S. automakers got for slick sales staffs, bait-and-switch "closers" and point-of-sale pressure to tack on unwanted extras.

In my consulting work with churches, time and again I see the cumulative impact of poor customer service:

- Uninterested ushers.
- Parishioners who form tight circles.
- More attention paid to setting the table than to greeting guests.
- Fussy liturgy designed for insiders.
- Facilities with poor signage (or Web sites).
- Members fighting each other.
- Music that pleases only the trained musician.
- Clergy who don't call. The list is long.

When I ask former congregants why they worship elsewhere or stay home on Sunday, that's the list they recite, detail by detail. Some were hurt, some were offended. Some said, "Who needs this?"

It wasn't doctrine or change that drove them away. In a world of many choices, the quest for faith simply won't tolerate poor customer service. People stay where they are treated well—and leave where they aren't.

Pay attention to details, I tell church leaders. Look at how you respond to visitors, for example. Reconsider the maze you impose on anyone asking for care. Watch people's faces sag as they sit through worship. Don't let the prickly long-timer force you to stick with methods that clearly aren't working.

Be customer-driven, not provider-driven, I tell them. Visit a successful church and see lively gathering spaces, helpful signage, friendly greeters, cheerful atmosphere, worship designed to help people worship, leaders who are excited and not dodging bullets—that list is long, too.

This is more than advice for institutional leaders. I think it applies to us as individual believers, as well. It is good to tolerate difficult people and to place ourselves in challenging situations. But we don't have to tolerate institutions that thwart us and clearly are serving only themselves.

Enabling isn't the same as loyalty. No faith community will be motivated to serve effectively as long as its constituents excuse mediocrity.

In order to expect more, of course, we ourselves have to give more. For we play both parts: "customer" and "provider." We cannot receive what we aren't willing to give. (RNS)

Tom Ehrich is the author of "Just Wondering, Jesus." He is a Protestant minister based in New York, a church consultant and founder of the Church Wellness Project, www.ChurchWellness.com.

Retirement ... then what?

By Jeremy White

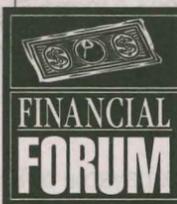
Dreams of retiring sound so alluring. The commercials show tanned, gray-haired couples walking the beach and laughing. Many people find that retirement has many positives, but can have some downsides, too. That 'honey-do' list, which seemed so long while you were working, can be completed rather soon. Then what?

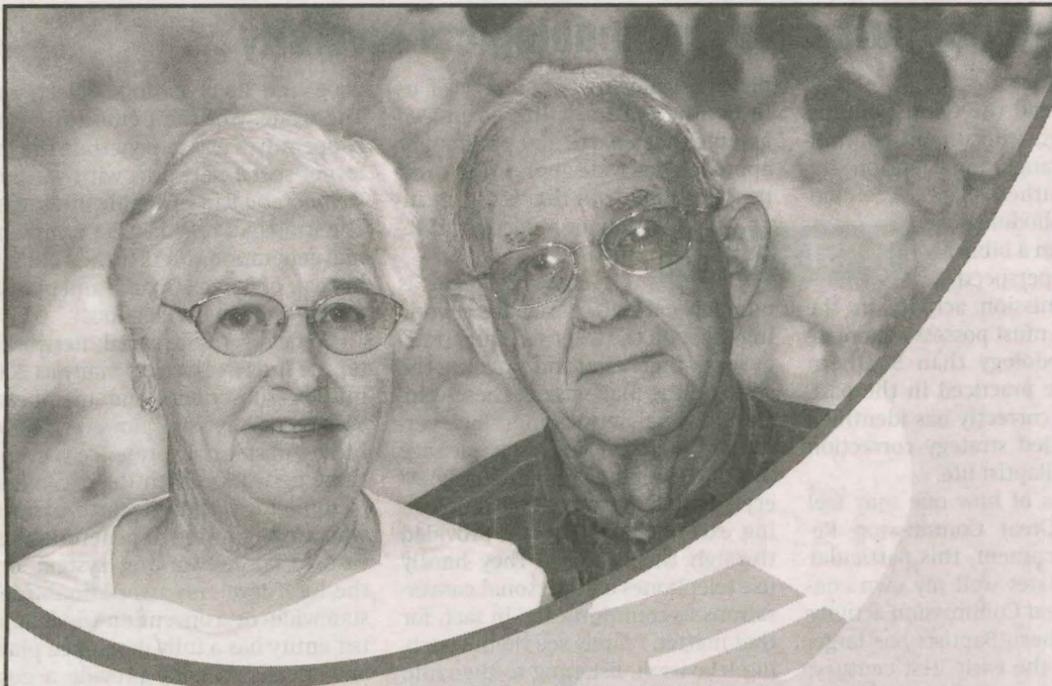
The American Society of Actuaries says that a 65-year-old man will likely have another 17 years to live. For women, it is 20. You may have a long time to fill your "then what." Here is some counsel as you contemplate retirement:

- Think about what you are retiring to, not just from.
- Use your skills somewhere. Those in their 50s, 60s and older have so much experience, the wisdom and skill with which to benefit others. Look at the inspiring biblical examples of older people, such as Noah, Simeon or Moses. They did not stop at 62 or 65.
- Have a grand vision for retirement. Do not just work all your life to save for fishing, golf and gossip at the coffee shop. Ask, "What would God have me do with this time of my life?"
- Find a part-time job or volunteer position that is so meaningful that it does not seem like a job. Medical studies have shown that it is healthy to continue work of some type, particularly with men.
- Do not think you are too old to continue contributing. Consider well-known modern examples of great achievement in later years, such as Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter and Mother Teresa.

Go ahead and retire from that job of 25 years, travel a bit, enjoy some golf, slow down and spend time with the grandchildren. Then, take on a new career, volunteer for missions, serve on charitable boards, turn your hobby into a part-time business, help your children in their business, or do more at your church. Your "then what" will be full.

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant with Blythe, White & Associates in Paducah.





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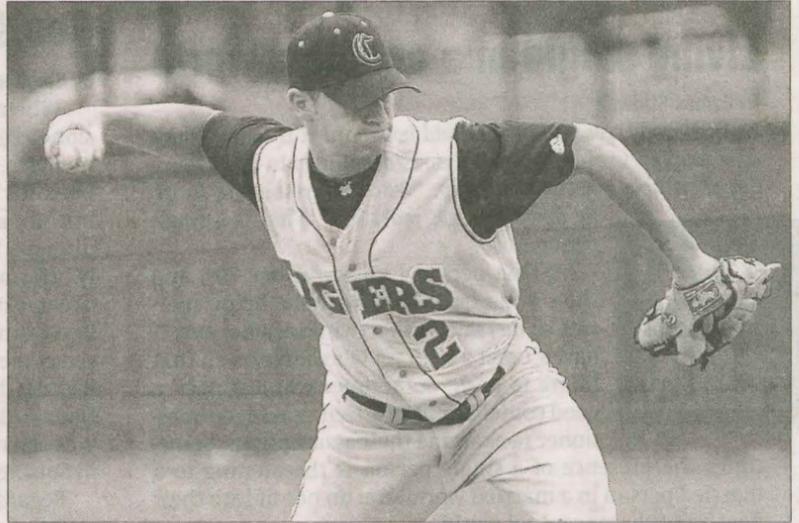
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RUBBER ARM Campbellville senior pitcher Bryan Fuller threw 21 straight scoreless innings in a 26-hour stretch to lead the Tigers to their first-ever NAIA World Series appearance. The feat has earned Fuller and the team national attention from regional sports radio shows to ESPN's SportsCenter. (Campbellville University photo)

CU pitcher hurls his way to national recognition

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Campbellville—Kansas City Royals pitcher Zack Greinke did not allow a single run in the first 24 innings he pitched this season—an amazing feat. He did this over the course of four games with at least five days between each start.

Campbellville University senior pitcher Bryan Fuller nearly matched Greinke's accomplishment—in little more than a day.

Fuller, a senior who has pitched out of the bullpen almost exclusively during his four years at CU, threw 21 consecutive scoreless innings over three games recently to lead Campbellville to the school's first-ever NAIA World Series appearance.

In the process, Fuller has become a national sensation, getting calls from outlets all across the sports media spectrum, including ESPN and Sports Illustrated.

The team even welcomed ESPN's "Outside the Lines" program to campus the day before the team left for the World Series in Lewiston, Idaho.

The ESPN crews filmed the Tigers' practice, and reporter Jeremy Schaap interviewed Fuller and head coach Beauford Sanders.

"It's just been a whirlwind. It's craziness. I never would have dreamed it," said Fuller, a Lewisburg native who graduated earlier this month from the Kentucky Baptist college.

"I never would have thought Peter Gammons would say my name," Fuller said of the Hall-of-Fame sportswriter and ESPN baseball analyst.

Video of the final pitch of the 222 he threw in his amazing stretch even can be found on YouTube. The video had been viewed nearly 1,000 times as of last Friday.

How it happened

Facing elimination in the opening round of the NAIA Baseball National Championship May 14, Fuller was called upon—as he usually is—to get the final nine outs in a blow-out win against Lindenwood (Mo.) University. He did so without allowing a run.

That set up a rematch with Kansas Wesleyan University only 45 minutes later. KWU had won 26 straight

games and a day earlier had knocked Campbellville into the losers' bracket of the tournament.

Coach Sanders said he decided "pretty quickly and easily" to let Fuller start the game, something the senior had only done four times before in his Campbellville career.

The role change didn't seem to matter. Fuller allowed eight hits in the complete game shutout as Campbellville cruised, 11-0.

The win set up yet another game with Kansas Wesleyan the following day—this time for a berth in the NAIA World Series.

Sanders said he had every intention of starting pitcher Marc Wilson the next day—but he soon got other ideas. His assistant coaches and the starting catcher began lobbying for Fuller to start a second straight game.

After warming up the next day, Fuller convinced his coach to give him a shot, for a couple of innings at least. Sanders said he would let the senior go no more than two innings, then replace him.

Two innings passed, then three, then six, then eight. By the ninth inning, Fuller had barely thrown more than 70 pitches.

"It was just effortless the way he was throwing the baseball," Sanders said. "It was just smooth (and) rhythmic. It wasn't a grind for him."

With men on first and second and one out in the ninth—and a World Series bid on the line—Fuller came through, inducing a double play ground ball that clinched a 4-0 win.

The adulation began with a dogpile at the pitcher's mound and has continued with the national attention. But, Fuller insisted, his plans for the summer remain the same—take a golf trip with his best friend, get married in June, honeymoon, then look for a job with an accounting firm in Nashville.

He did, however, leave open the possibility of a return to the diamond. Shortly after his streak, Fuller received an e-mail from the president of an independent baseball league. "If I get an opportunity to play baseball, I'll definitely explore that, because I don't want any regrets."



KENTUCKY BAPTISTS
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Top 100 KBC churches in total baptisms for 2007-08

1 Hillvue Heights, Bowling Green.....503	28 Fairview, Ashland.....53	55 Central, Hawesville.....34	81 Beechland, Louisville.....27
2 St. Stephen, Louisville.....325	Hill Top Missionary, Pine Knot.....53	Crestwood.....34	Hickory Grove, Independence.....27
3 Valley View, Louisville.....244	Porter Memorial, Lexington.....53	Freemont, Boaz.....34	Lifesong, Ashland.....27
4 Mill Creek, Radcliff.....199	31 Russell First.....51	Imani, Lexington.....34	Red House, Richmond.....27
5 Highview, Louisville.....128	32 Pikeville First.....50	New Light, Cadiz.....34	Westport Road, Louisville.....27
6 Binghamtown, Middlesboro.....109	33 Hillcrest, Hopkinsville.....49	60 South Jefferson, Louisville.....33	86 Bellview, Allegre.....26
7 Consolidated, Lexington.....106	34 Bellevue, Owensboro.....48	White Stone Quarry, Bowling Green...33	Bruners Chapel, Harrodsburg.....26
8 First Gethsemane, Louisville.....87	35 Immanuel, Lexington.....46	62 Shively, Louisville.....32	Calvary Memorial, Hopkinsville.....26
Somerset First.....87	36 Crossland Comm., Bowling Green.....45	63 Hope Community, Frankfort.....31	Community Fellowship, Hickory.....26
10 Zion, Henderson.....83	37 Ohio Valley, Ledbetter.....44	64 Bardstown Junction, Shepherdsville.....30	Frankfort, Corbin.....26
11 Hawk Creek, London.....76	38 Ashby Lane, Louisville.....41	Bell Co. Forest Camp, Middlesboro.....30	His House Ministries, Mayfield.....26
12 Hardin.....74	Buck Creek, Calhoun.....41	Crab Orchard.....30	Piner, Morning View.....26
13 Florence.....69	Central, Corbin.....41	Crosspoint, Morehead.....30	93 Camp Pleasant, Frankfort.....25
Living Hope, Bowling Green.....69	Franklin Crossroads, Cecilia.....41	Erlanger.....30	Eastwood, Bowling Green.....25
15 Parkway, Bardstown.....67	42 Henderson First.....38	Frankfort First.....30	Faith, Myra.....25
16 Mount Washington First.....66	Lone Oak First, Paducah.....38	Hunsinger Lane, Louisville.....30	Liberty, Russell Springs.....25
17 Trace Creek, Mayfield.....64	Mountain Ash, Williamsburg.....38	Oak Grove, Puryear, Tenn.....30	Mays Lick, Mays Lick.....25
18 Severns Valley, Elizabethtown.....63	Shelbyville First.....38	72 Calvary, Glasgow.....29	Meadow Land, Bowling Green.....25
19 Garner, Rush.....62	46 New Work, Hopkinsville.....37	Horse Creek, Manchester.....29	Mount Nebo, Louisville.....25
Little Flock, Shepherdsville.....62	Oak Grove First.....37	St. Matthews, Louisville.....29	New Bethel, Barbourville.....25
21 Galilee, Louisville.....60	48 Campbellsville.....36	Vine Grove.....29	New Hope Comm., Elizabethtown.....25
Northside, Mount Vernon.....60	Main Street, Alexandria.....36	76 Calvary, Lexington.....28	New Horizon, Glendale.....25
23 Forks of Elkhorn, Midway.....58	50 Calvary, Princeton.....35	Liberty, Auburn.....28	South Carrollton.....25
24 Grace, Murray.....57	Eubank.....35	Oneida.....28	
25 Central, Winchester.....55	Greater St. Mark, Louisville.....35	Rose Hill, Ashland.....28	
Hill Street, Louisville.....55	Sand Spring, Lawrenceburg.....35	St. Paul Missionary, Louisville.....28	
27 Richmond First.....54	Spring Bayou, Kevil.....35		

Top 100 KBC churches in worship attendance per baptism

1 The Garden of Hope, Covington..... 1.00	26 Hosman, Pineville..... 3.18	51 Garner, Rush..... 4.03	76 New Beginning, Louisville..... 4.71
2 Mount Zion, East Bernstadt..... 1.17	27 Berean, Elizabethtown..... 3.26	52 Pathway, Beaver Dam..... 4.13	Richardsville, Bowling Green..... 4.71
3 Greasy Creek, Four Mile..... 1.20	28 New Light, Cadiz..... 3.32	53 Flat Rock, Orlando..... 4.20	Sparta..... 4.71
New Home, Manchester..... 1.20	29 Crossroads Missionary, Calhoun..... 3.33	54 New Hope, West Liberty..... 4.23	79 Old Straight Creek, Pineville..... 4.75
5 Mill Creek, Radcliff..... 1.26	Peaks Mill, Frankfort..... 3.33	55 Woodstock, Somerset..... 4.24	Wrigley..... 4.75
6 Bell Co. Forest Camp, Middlesboro 1.37	31 New Jerusalem, Cadiz..... 3.40	56 Liberty Missionary, Corbin..... 4.33	81 New Mount Carmel, New Concord 4.76
7 Greater St. Mark, Louisville..... 1.49	32 Oakwood Avenue, Cynthiaiana..... 3.46	Zion Brick Missionary, Slaughters... 4.33	82 Payneville..... 4.80
8 Victory, Henderson..... 1.50	33 Mossy Gap, Williamsburg..... 3.50	58 Garmead, Middlesboro..... 4.36	83 Victory, Shepherdsville..... 4.95
9 Freemont, Boaz..... 1.59	34 Cedar Hill, Owenton..... 3.57	59 Butler..... 4.38	84 Beech Grove, Owenton..... 5.00
10 Newtown, Pineville..... 2.07	35 Hill Top Missionary, Pine Knot..... 3.58	60 Grace, Murray..... 4.39	Bennetts Fork, Middlesboro..... 5.00
Oakland Avenue, Covington..... 2.07	36 South Carrollton..... 3.60	61 Central, Hawesville..... 4.41	Cadentown, Lexington..... 5.00
12 Walker..... 2.14	37 Ohio Valley, Ledbetter..... 3.64	Cherry Hill, Central City..... 4.41	Friendly Grove, Philpot..... 5.00
13 Big Spring, Vine Grove..... 2.27	38 First Hispanic, Carrollton..... 3.75	Dixie Park Cornerstone, Berea..... 4.41	Gospel Fellowship, Payneville..... 5.00
14 Gloryway, Whitley City..... 2.50	Sassafras Ridge, Hickman..... 3.75	Richland, Madisonville..... 4.41	Minerva, Maysville..... 5.00
Stone..... 2.50	40 Rockholds First..... 3.83	65 LaFayette..... 4.47	Mission Vision, Whitesville..... 5.00
16 Sulphur Springs, Marion..... 2.69	41 Buttonsberry, Island..... 3.89	66 White Hall, Manchester..... 4.50	Mount Hermon, Louisville..... 5.00
17 Bethlehem, Corbin..... 2.70	Calvary, Uniontown..... 3.89	67 Beargrass, Louisville..... 4.55	North Evarts Missionary, Evarts..... 5.00
18 Young Grove, Dewitt..... 2.78	43 New Bethel, Barbourville..... 4.00	Mount Eden, Shepherdsville..... 4.55	Nueva Vida, Bowling Green..... 5.00
19 Bethel, Anchorage..... 2.80	Acton, Campbellsville..... 4.00	69 Pleasant Home, Glencoe..... 4.58	Pollard, Ashland..... 5.00
20 Decoursey, Covington..... 2.86	Aflex..... 4.00	70 New Banklick, Walton..... 4.61	Rockbridge, Willisburg..... 5.00
21 Oneida..... 2.93	Bethel, Campbellsville..... 4.00	71 Calvary, Clay City..... 4.63	Sandusky Chapel, Monticello..... 5.00
22 Mount Zion, Beaver Dam..... 2.94	Dunlap, Middlesboro..... 4.00	72 Oak Grove, Puryear, Tenn..... 4.67	97 Bardstown Junction, Shepherdsville. 5.07
23 Ashby Lane, Louisville..... 3.12	First Corinthian, Frankfort..... 4.00	McGrady Creek, Olaton..... 4.67	Middle Creek, Hodgenville..... 5.07
24 Clermont..... 3.16	Grace Fellowship, Seco..... 4.00	74 Calvary Memorial, Hopkinsville..... 4.69	99 Ledbetter, Kirksey..... 5.20
25 Galilee, Louisville..... 3.17	Mount Calvary, Yosemite..... 4.00	New Heights, Pineville..... 4.69	Seventh Street, Lexington..... 5.20



SBC ANNUAL MEETING
JUNE 23-24 LOUISVILLE

Huckabee to pastors: See world through Jesus' eyes

By Mark Kelly

Louisville—When Mike Huckabee takes the podium at the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference June 22 in Louisville, he will be standing at the intersection of the SBC annual meeting's two major themes.

The Pastors' Conference theme—"What if?"—challenges participants to trust God and engage a lost world, rather than retreat from seismic cultural changes and economic uncertainty. The Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting theme, "LoveLoud," calls on Southern Baptists to match their words with acts of love for a lost world.

Huckabee, the former Arkansas governor who made a strong showing as a dark horse candidate in the 2008 presidential primary elections, plans to challenge conference participants to imagine the difference God can make when believers trust Him and reach out to people in crisis.

"I hope to discuss the 'what ifs' of believers seeing their mission as taking their convictions from church to the world, rather than using church as a place to retreat from the world," Huckabee told Baptist Press.

Claims of believing the Bible is God's inerrant Word ring hollow if churches fail to match their words with deeds, Huckabee added.

"We either believe the Bible or we don't. The Bible says we're to be the salt of the earth and light of the world," he pointed out. "If we don't put that into practice, then our words are empty when we say the Bible is God's Word."

God's agenda, not the world's

Huckabee cautioned that, in a time of economic stress and cultural upheaval, believers need to be sure their attitudes toward a lost world are shaped by the love of Jesus, not the opinions of people who have their own agenda for influencing society.

"We shouldn't look at the world through the eyes of the economist, the pundit, the politician, the advertiser, the movie-maker, or the entertainer," he said. "We should see the world through the eyes of Jesus."

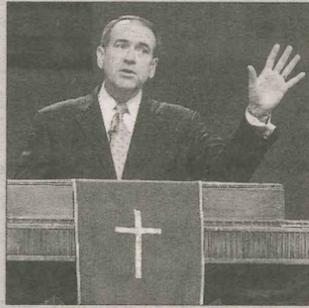
Pastors' Conference President Ed Litton said Huckabee is a great example of how different things could be if Christians truly live out the mind, love, spirit and purpose of Christ—which highlights the conference watchword: "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Philippians 2:2).

"In all the years I've known Mike Huckabee, I've watched him stand between the church and the culture and represent Christ in the face of opposition," Litton noted. "He's firm about the truth he believes, but he always loves his enemies."

Southern Baptists need to hear what Huckabee has to say about the "What if?" theme "because he is showing us how to take the gospel to this nation—living it in front of them," Litton added.

"It's one thing to say, 'This is what we ought to do,' but Mike engages the culture," Litton said. "If we could learn from him how to treat one another, much less our enemies, we'd go a long way in this convention."

Huckabee, himself a former Southern Baptist pastor, is scheduled to speak June 22 at 3:45 p.m., at the Kentucky Exposition Center. (BP)



Mike Huckabee

'LoveLoud'

Convention's annual meeting theme urges Southern Baptists to match words with deeds

Louisville—Actions do speak louder than words—and Southern Baptist Convention President Johnny Hunt said he believes it's time a lost world sees Southern Baptists match their words with love in action.

That is the conviction behind the theme of the 152nd session of the Southern Baptist Convention scheduled for June 23-24 in Louisville—"LoveLoud: Actions Speak Louder Than Words."

"Across America, people are thinking less and less of Christian groups," said Hunt, pastor of the Atlanta-area First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ga. "I think it's because we always talk about what we believe and don't spend near as much time demonstrating it. If it's really all about the glory of God, we ought to be doing things that cause people to see our good works and glorify our God in heaven."

With that in mind, Hunt said, the watchword for the annual meeting is Matthew 5:16—"In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

The conservative shift in Southern Baptist life made it clear that Southern Baptists are "a people of the Book," Hunt said. "But ever since, it seems like we have done less with what we believe than we were doing before. The numbers all substantiate that.

"We can stand, week to week and in our annual meeting, and talk about what we believe or we can begin to love loud and let people see a demonstration of our declaration," Hunt urged. "We have declared that we are a people of the Book, but it's time to demonstrate what that means. The world is still waiting and watching."

'Call to action'

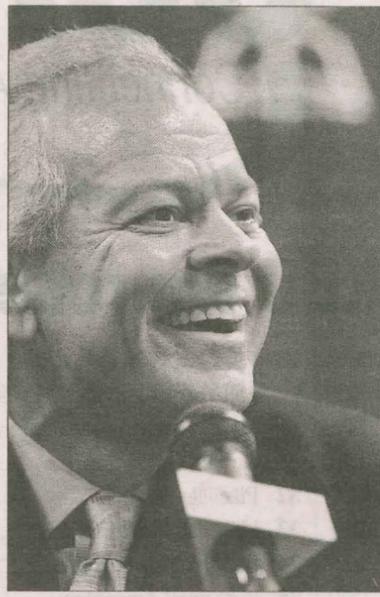
The annual meeting program has been designed as a call to action for a "Great Commission Resurgence," Hunt noted. Just as the "conservative resurgence" was driven by a plan to elect presidents who would make conservative appointments, a Great Commission resurgence also requires a specific plan of action, he added.

"My presidential message will be a 'State of the Convention' address," Hunt said. "I will focus on what, from where I sit, we must change if we are to see a Great Commission resurgence among Southern Baptists."

Hunt's address will be reinforced by a message from Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., who recently laid out what he sees as "12 axioms" of a Great Commission resurgence. Akin's call to action will be followed by messages on three critical issues:

Vance Pitman, senior pastor of Hope Baptist Church in Las Vegas, will speak on the vision of the Kingdom of God.

David Platt, senior pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham,



"We have declared that we are a people of the Book, but it's time to demonstrate what that means. The world is still waiting and watching."

SBC President Johnny Hunt

ham, Ala., will talk about connecting with the culture.

Jeff Crook, pastor of Blackshear Place Baptist Church in Flowery Branch, Ga., will address the issue of evangelism.

Pitman, Platt and Crook not only speak as pastors whose ministries God is blessing, they also represent a younger generation whose voice needs to be heard, Hunt explained.

"We come across to the younger generation that we know they are there and we're glad to hear what they are doing, but I'm not sure we have allowed them to speak into our life as a convention," he added. "We need to hear what they can bring to the table, what we can learn from them. Some may say, 'This younger generation is so different. They are our problem.' But if they are our problem, Southern Baptists have no future. We better come to the table of reasoning."

As he has traveled to speaking engagements across the country, Hunt said he has seen that the need for dramatic change in the Southern Baptist Convention is widely recognized.

"What we are presenting is not just what we want to see done but what I am hearing as I crisscross the convention. Grassroots Southern Baptists know there needs to be a change," Hunt said. "We are a declining denomination. Sometimes it comes across that we are maintaining an institution instead of instituting a movement."

"We've got to turn this thing around. The bow of our ship—the old gospel, Southern Baptist Convention ship—is floating low in the water," he noted. "There evidently are some things we need to remove so we can get higher, and there are some things we need to add so we can move toward our destination."

"This year's program leads us to embrace what we believe would be a Great Commission resurgence. It calls us to action," Hunt concluded. "If we buy into what we are going to present, I believe it has a chance to start a major turn in our denomination."

Convention highlights

Among the highlights of this year's annual meeting:

■ The North American Mission Board will cast special attention on God's Plan for Sharing (GPS), the denomination-wide evangelism emphasis that launches nationally in 2010. Pastors and church representatives can visit NAMB's exhibit to pick up an "Across North America" church implementation guide. The guide will help local churches blanket their community with the gospel leading up to Easter 2010.

In addition, a newly designed and revitalized version of the Web site, GPS2020.net, will be launched at the convention. NAMB staff will demonstrate the updated site and show pastors how to find the resources they need to successfully implement GPS in their churches.

■ John Marshall, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Springfield, Mo., will deliver the convention sermon Wednesday morning.

■ The International Mission Board report and presentation is scheduled for Tuesday evening. The North American Mission Board report and presentation is set for Wednesday evening.

■ Congregational praise and worship will be led by Scott Allred, minister of music at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, Ala.; Scott White, senior minister of music and worship at First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ga.; Dan Odle, associate pastor for music and worship at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville; and songwriter, worship leader and producer Paul Baloche of Lindale, Texas.

■ Online registration is available at www.SBCAnnualMeeting.net so messengers can avoid lines upon arriving at the convention. The Web site gives each church a messenger reference number form to be printed out and presented by each messenger at the registration booth in exchange for a name tag and a set of ballots. The appropriate church-authorized representative must complete all online registrations. The traditional registration method also is available. Registration cards are available from state convention offices.

■ Messengers who wish to propose resolutions must submit them at least 15 days prior to the annual meeting, giving the Resolutions Committee a two-week period in which to consider them. Detailed guidelines on submitting resolutions are available at the annual meeting Web site. Resolutions may be submitted online but must be followed up by a letter of credentials from the submitter's church. (BP)

Eleven Ky. Baptists tapped for SBC roles

Louisville—Eleven Kentucky Baptists have been selected to serve on Southern Baptist Convention boards and committees.

SBC President Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ga., appointed five Kentucky Baptists to serve on committees during the SBC annual meeting June 23-24 in Louisville.

The Kentuckians named to the committees are:

Trevor Barton, pastor of Hawk Creek Baptist Church in London, Committee on Committees.

David Hardy, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Cunningham, Tellers Committee.

Mike Harris, a member of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Committee on Committees.

Rick Mann, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Russell Springs, Credentials Committee chairman.

Randy Shaw, pastor of Calvary

Baptist Church in Glasgow, Credentials Committee.

The Committee on Committees is responsible for nominating members to the Committee on Nominations, who will then nominate trustees next year to serve on the boards of SBC entities. The Credentials Committee is responsible for issues concerning the credentials of SBC messengers. The Tellers Committee is responsible for collecting and tabulating ballots cast by messengers during SBC business sessions.

Members of the 2008-09 Committee on Nominations, including **Michael Carter**, pastor of Mackville Baptist Church, and **Michael Lavender**, a member of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, nominated six Kentucky Baptists to serve on various SBC boards.

Kentuckians nominated to a first term of service are:

Charlie Davis, pastor of Hunsing-

er Lane Baptist Church in Louisville, International Mission Board. He succeeds Tim Alexander, pastor of Florence Baptist Church.

Larry Purcell, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Hopkinsville, LifeWay Christian Resources. He succeeds Bill Henard, pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington.

Kentuckians nominated for a second term are:

Corey Abney, teaching/preaching pastor of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Golden Gate Seminary.

James Blount, a member of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Southern Seminary.

Darren Gaddis, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Corbin, GuideStone Financial Resources.

Stephen Wilson, a member of Lone Oak First Baptist Church of Paducah, SBC Executive Committee.



Shuttle service, parking options finalized for SBC

Louisville—Plans for shuttle service and parking at the Southern Baptist Convention have been finalized. R. Clark Logan, SBC Executive Committee's vice president for business and finance, recently reported that shuttle service for the annual meeting still is scheduled for all specifically named hotels in two areas: KFEC/Airport Hotels and Downtown Hotels.

However, shuttle service has been consolidated for the Hurstbourne Area Hotels "due to low registration in several hotels and in an effort to be the best stewards of resources," Logan said, noting that four hotels will receive service instead of the original eight.

Shuttle service will begin June 21 at 3 p.m., and is complimentary from the hotels to the Kentucky Exposition Center on Sunday and Monday. Once at the center, shuttle passes can be purchased for \$10 at the Shuttle Booth located in the main lobby.

Concerning parking at the Kentucky Exposition Center, Logan said messengers "driving to the convention site will find that there is adequate parking available."

The cost per vehicle to enter the KFEC parking lot is \$6 per visit, Logan pointed out, but arrangements have been made for special parking passes with in/out privileges to be sold in the convention lobby.

To purchase a parking pass, messengers must bring the receipt card received at the toll gate upon their initial entry to the facility to the Parking Pass booth in the lobby. The passes are priced as follows:

- 4-day pass sold on Sunday: \$30.
- 3-day pass sold on Monday: \$21.
- 2-day pass sold on Tuesday: \$12. (BP)

Louisville church to host NAAF gathering

Louisville—In a break from earlier years, the National African American Fellowship's annual meeting will take place at a local church rather than the convention center where the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting will be held.

The NAAF sessions, held each year prior to the SBC, will begin June 21, 6 p.m., at First Gethsemane Baptist Church in Louisville, where T. Vaughn Walker is pastor.

The evening's guest speaker will be Lincoln Bingham, pastor of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church in Louisville, and 2008 recipient of the Kennedy-Boyce Award for his work in racial reconciliation over the last 50 years. St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church's Sanctuary Choir will lead the praise and worship times.

NAAF's business session will be June 22, 4 p.m., followed by the annual banquet at 6 p.m., both at First Gethsemane's Center for Family Development.

Meeting in a local church "puts our convention in touch with the church and exposes our fellowship to persons who would not normally notice a meeting going on," said Michael Pigg, NAAF president and pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church in Lithonia, Ga.

"I'm encouraging all African-American pastors to come enter into a discussion of fresh leadership that will impact our churches during this new time," Pigg continued. "This is an exciting time and we want you to be a part of what God is doing."

During the business session, fel-

lowship members will discuss ways to better serve and strengthen African-American churches.

The NAAF "seeks to encourage African-American churches to participate in Kingdom building through the Southern Baptist Convention," Pigg wrote in an invitation to pastors and members of African-American Baptist churches. "In order to accomplish this goal, we need your attendance and support.

"We need you to come, to hear and be a part of the great things God is doing," he added.

Tickets for the June 22 banquet are \$25 each. Call or e-mail reservations by June 15 to (757) 539-3324 or T.McBride@naafsbc.org. Only a few tickets will be available at the door. (BP)

SBC PREVIEW

Pastors' Wives Conference—June 22, 8:30 to 11:20 a.m., rooms South B101-105 at the Kentucky Exposition Center. Theme: "Women of Truth." Keynote speakers: Mary Kassian, distinguished professor of women's studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, and Elizabeth Luter, women's ministry leader at Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, where her husband, Fred, is pastor.

Directors of Missions Conference—June 21-22, Fern Valley Hotel and Conference Center. Theme: "Servant Leaders Forgive." Keynote speakers: Ken Hemphill, national strategist for the SBC's Empowering Kingdom Growth, will lead worship June 21, 10:30 a.m. Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources, will speak that same day at 1:30 p.m., followed by O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources, at 3 p.m.

Evangelists' Conference—June 19-21, Galt House hotel. Theme: "Mounting Up as Eagles." Keynote speakers: Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research, will speak June 19, 2 p.m. Joyce Rogers, widow of pastor Adrian Rogers, will speak later that same day at 6 p.m. Ken Weathersby, North American Mission Board's senior strategist for evangelization, will speak at a breakfast session June 20, followed by Ergun Caner, president of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Va., later that day at 6 p.m. Johnny Hunt, Southern Baptist

Convention president and pastor of First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Ga., will preach at a worship service June 21, 9 a.m. in rooms South C201-203 at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

Seminary luncheons—The six Southern Baptist seminaries will host luncheons for alumni and guests June 24. **Golden Gate:** 12:30 p.m., room South C202 at the Kentucky Exposition Center. Tickets \$10, (888) 442-8709. **Midwestern:** noon, room South C203 at the Kentucky Exposition Center. Tickets: (816) 414-3720. **New Orleans:** noon, rooms South B102-103 at the Kentucky Exposition Center. Tickets: \$17.50 before June 15, \$20 after June 15, by mail or at the NOBTS booth. **Southeastern:** noon, rooms South C204-205 at the Kentucky Exposition Center. Tickets: \$20, (919) 761-2203 or www.sebts.edu. **Southern:** 12:30 p.m., Southern's Heritage Hall and main gymnasium. Tickets: \$18, (502) 714-6500. **Southwestern:** 12:30 p.m., rooms South B104-105 at the Kentucky Exposition Center. Tickets: \$10 before June 1, \$15 after June 1, (877) GO-SWBTS or www.swbts.edu/SBCLunch.

Hispanic Baptist Fellowship—June 15-22. Theme: "Rekindling the Fire of God." Participants will be involved in Crossover Louisville activities June 15-20. The group's annual business meeting will be held June 21, 2:30-4 p.m., at Parkland Baptist Church. Hispanic Prayer Encounter for Awakening and Revival June 22, 7 p.m., in the SBC Prayer Room at the Kentucky Exposition Center's room South C105.

Debbie Brunson * Jeana Floyd * Donna Gaines
Susie Hawkins * Janet Hunt * Diane Strack

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SBC leader applauds environmental forum's 'common ground'

By Bob Allen

Duluth, Ga.—A vice president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission said he was both challenged and encouraged by a three-day conference on Christians and the environment at an Atlanta-area megachurch.

"You know, whether you believe in human-induced global warming or whether you're like me, really skeptical about that, there is one thing we can agree on, and that is the earth is the Lord's and everything in it," Barrett Duke, ERLC vice president for public policy and research, said during the May 13-15 Flourish conference at Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Ga.

Duke said recognizing that truth "in itself should lead us to think about how we're treating God's creation."

"We have a responsibility that the Lord has given to us," he said. "This is given to us in trust."

"We are stewards of all of creation, because none of it belongs to us," Duke acknowledged. "We must treat the things the Lord has given to us in an appropriate and responsible manner."

"I have to confess that I haven't done not only all that I should but not even all that I could," he added. "The 'should' is way out there somewhere; the 'could' is right here. And yet I still have lots of room to make up for in my own life as I consider God's call on my life to be a good steward of all the Lord has entrusted to me."

Duke's irenic tone delighted Jonathan Merritt, a lead organizer of the conference

and national spokesman for the Southern Baptist Environment and Climate Change Initiative. In March 2008, the group issued a declaration criticizing the nation's largest Protestant faith group as too timid on issues of the environment.

Though not officially attached to the Southern Baptist Convention, the declaration was signed by several high-ranking denominational officials, including current SBC President Johnny Hunt.

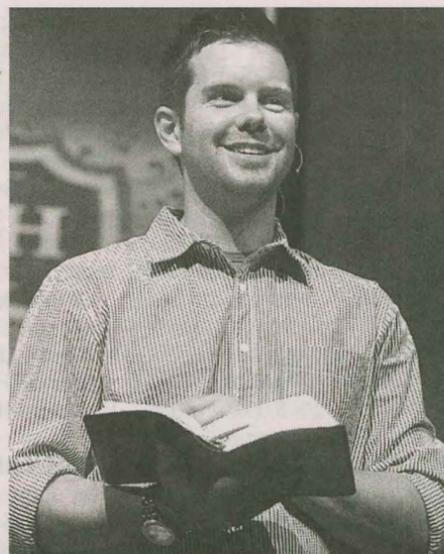
ERLC head Richard Land, however, distanced himself from the initiative. He issued a statement explaining he would not sign a document not "supported by the broadest possible consensus among Southern Baptists."

The SBC adopted pro-environmental resolutions in 1970 and 1983.

Recent resolutions on the subject were more conservative. A resolution adopted in 2006 opposed public policy solutions "based on questionable science, which bar access to natural resources and unnecessarily restrict economic development, resulting in less economic opportunity for our poorest citizens."

A 2007 resolution on global warming urged Southern Baptists "to proceed cautiously in the human-induced global warming debate in light of conflicting scientific research." Seeking clarification before casting a vote, Wiley Drake, at the time SBC second vice president, summarized the resolution's message as, "We don't believe in global warming."

Duke did not sign the Southern Baptist



CREATION CARE Organizer Jonathan Merritt reads Scripture at the inaugural Flourish conference in suburban Atlanta. "At this conference we were able to both glorify God and put creation in its rightful place," Merritt said.

Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change, either. His name appears instead on an open letter endorsing A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming.

That document was produced by the Cornwall Alliance to dissent from a call to action on climate change by The Evangelical Climate Initiative in 2006.

Against that backdrop, Duke commend-

ed organizers of the Flourish conference for "finding a common ground" in the debate over global warming.

"They're saying, 'The global warming thing is important from one perspective or another, climate change is important.'" Duke said, "But wherever you are on that question, we can all agree that we can do better as stewards of God's creation without even having to think about the policy aspect."

He said organizers, including former Evangelical Environmental Network head Jim Jewell and Rusty Pritchard, who taught environmental studies for seven years at Emory University in Atlanta, "are to be congratulated for your vision of seeing a way to bring all of God's people together in an effort that really does matter, in an effort that finds common ground for us that unites us rather than divides us."

Merritt, who serves with his father on the staff of Cross Pointe Church, said he would have preferred a larger crowd, but with exhibitors and presenters numbering just under 200, he noted it still was the largest creation-care conference ever put on.

Merritt said he thought the inaugural conference went extremely well.

"A lot of times the evangelical church has glorified the Creator but neglected the creation," Merritt said. "At this conference we were able to both glorify God and put creation in its rightful place. I don't think there is another conference that does this quite like this venue." (ABP)

Baptist Men, RA numbers jump 6 percent in 2008, Ky. ranks eighth in nation

Alpharetta, Ga.—Although total church membership, Sunday school attendance and the number of baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention declined in 2008 from 2007, participation by men and boys in Baptist Men's ministries and Royal Ambassadors jumped almost six percent last year.

According to data collected for the Annual Church Profile by LifeWay Christian Resources, the number of men and boys enrolled in Baptist Men and RA programs in SBC churches jumped to 403,575 in 2008, compared to 381,355 in 2007.

The top 10 states in terms of the number of Baptist Men and RAs are: Georgia, 81,496; North Carolina, 52,993; Tennessee, 35,641; Alabama, 33,480; South Carolina, 29,630; Mississippi, 23,970; Florida, 19,395; Kentucky, 13,638; Virginia, 10,476; and Louisiana, 10,318.

Georgia and Tennessee led the way in chalking up the largest increases in Baptist Men and RA growth in 2008. Georgia men's ministries grew 21.2 percent last year, a one-year addition of 15,700 men and boys. Among Tennessee's 3,000 SBC churches, 297 showed a 50 percent or more increase in men's ministry—an overall 17 percent growth rate for the state convention.

"The emphasis on the Royal Ambassador Centennial last year may have contributed to this upswing," said Jim Burton, team leader for missions education at the North American Mission Board. "We heard from many churches in 2008 that realized they needed to re-prioritize teaching boys about missions and developing men to be their leaders."

The 2008 ACP statistics represent two consecutive years of positive growth in the number of those participating in the Baptist Men and RA ministries in SBC churches—the longest period of sustained growth over the last decade, Burton noted.

"We celebrate this evidence of churches prioritizing the development of men and boys in missions. Historically, we know the best indicator of children maintaining their family's faith tradition as adults is the example of their fathers," Burton said. "That's why we are focusing on the development of men who are passionate about missions, challenging them to live their faith in ways that are tangible and dynamic." (BP)

King, pioneer of Baptist disaster relief work, dies

Murfreesboro, Tenn.—Archie King, a key leader in the early development of Southern Baptist disaster relief work, died May 12 at his home in Murfreesboro, Tenn., following an extended illness. He was 86.

King was the first disaster relief director for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and one of only a few to attend the first national Southern Baptist conference on disaster relief in 1977.

In 2003, King was honored by the

North American Mission Board for his leadership in disaster relief as the third recipient of the national Bob Dixon Disaster Relief Award.

During King's tenure, the state organization responded to 20 disasters—from floods, hurricanes and tornadoes to ice storms and droughts—bought mass feeding and other types of equipment, grew in number of volunteers, and developed specialized response teams.

A native of Hartsville, Tenn.,

King was a graduate of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He served as director of the TBC Brotherhood department from 1977 to 1988 and continued for an additional year in 1989 as the interim department director.

King is survived by his wife of 58 years, Mary, six children, 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. (BP)

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Experts weigh in on study that suggests the Bible Belt is a 'hot spot' for sin

By Nicole Neroulis

Manhattan, Kan.—Las Vegas may be known as "Sin City," but when it comes to transgressions per capita, parts of the Bible Belt may burn much hotter, suggests a new study by Kansas State University geographers.

The project, conducted by four graduate students in the university's department of geography, maps out "hot spots" for Christianity's seven deadly sins—lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride.

The hot-spot data is based on federal statistics such as sexually transmitted disease rates for lust, theft rates for envy and violent crime rates for wrath.

Researcher Ryan Bergstrom emphasizes the project was intended as a secular mapping exercise, but faith leaders have been gradually discovering it through word of mouth. Many express surprise and disbelief at findings that show America's deep South as suffering from more overall sinfulness than southern Nevada.

Joel Hunter, pastor of Northland Church in Longwood, Fla., speculated the results could mean that regional stereotypes about morality have been greatly exaggerated.

"Perhaps Las Vegas is known for its tourist industry but the residents are in reality more sedate and conservative," he said. "And perhaps Florida is known for its retirees but our residents are more 'out there' with our appetites."

Craig Gross of XXXChurch, a national anti-pornography mission, said the project's findings were consistent with his own experiences, both as a Las Vegas resident and a pastor frequently asked to speak at evangelical churches nationwide.

"Every city is Sin City nowadays, with the availability of everything online and the world we live in," he said. "It's on display more here in Las Vegas, but the temptations are everywhere. It doesn't surprise me that in the Bible Belt, where you're keeping it more from other people, that it's going on more than people think."

But most experts, including the researchers themselves, advise people not to take the study seriously as a reliable measure of saintliness to wickedness, given the difficulty of finding ways to accurately quantify each of the sins.

Measuring sin

Sloth, the sin of not realizing one's potential and perhaps therefore the hardest of the seven to quantify, was mapped as the total expenditures on arts, entertainment and recreational activities compared to employment per capita. That's a particularly dubious method, noted Mark Biddle, a professor at Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va.

"You certainly wouldn't measure (sloth) by trips to the theater; it has more to do with, let's say, someone who had a musical talent or a bright kid who just didn't work in school," he said. "I would have measured it more by high school dropout rates or college completion rates, but even that would have been incomplete."

The concept of the deadly sins is less prevalent in Jewish tradition, but the definitions—and critiques of the study's weaknesses—are basically the same, said Solomon Schimmel, professor of Jewish education and psychology at Hebrew College in Massachusetts.

He agrees with Biddle that the study's "wrath" manifestation—incidents of violent crime—comes closest to the source, but falls short by overlooking all the uncontrollable anger that does not culminate in bloodshed, such as road rage.

"Someone can lose his temper without hitting anyone," Schimmel said, adding that measuring lust as a reflection of sexually transmitted disease cases also overlooks a large segment of sinners.

Ultimately, no map could accurately pinpoint America's modern-day equivalents of Sodom and Gomorrah, Biddle said, unless researchers someday develop mind-reading capabilities.

He concluded, "Jesus says that it doesn't matter if you act on it or not for it to be a sin." (RNS)

Majority of Americans consider themselves 'pro-life,' poll says

Washington—For the first time since pollsters posed the question in 1995, a slim majority of Americans consider themselves "pro-life," according to a new Gallup poll.

Fifty-one percent of respondents describe themselves as "pro-life," while 42 percent said they are "pro-choice."

The findings were based on answers to Gallup's annual Values and Beliefs survey, which was conducted earlier this month.

Last year, 50 percent of respondents described themselves as "pro-choice" and 44 percent as "pro-life." The previous high-water mark for the "pro-life" category was 46 percent, reached in 2001 and 2002.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, hailed

the findings and said younger members of the anti-abortion movement contributed to the shift. "One cannot attend the pro-life rallies that I attend across the country and fail to notice the youth, the energy and the commitment of the men and women, boys and girls in attendance."

Pollsters found comparable shifts in views about abortion's legal status. Almost the same percentage of Americans say the procedure should always be illegal (23 percent) as say it should always be legal (22 percent). In the previous four years, more Americans favored unrestricted abortion.

The change in "pro-life" identification occurred across Christian affiliations, with a seven-point increase among Catholics and an eight-point increase among Protestants. (RNS)

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Meet the class of 2009, part 6

Faculty and staff members' children also have to make adjustments at OBI

For several weeks I have shared how Oneida has helped some of the students God has sent our way. Normally I do not include children of our faculty and staff, but this time I'll make an exception. Adjustment to life at Oneida can be a challenge for dorm students, but our faculty and staff have to adjust, too.

Occasionally staff members join us who are not as prepared for full-time ministry as they thought they were. The long hours, demands on their emotions, limited income and other challenges prove to be obstacles too big to overcome—and they are not with us long. Fortunately, that does not happen often.

However, the children of staff also go through serious adjustments to being in a rural setting, giving up friends, changing schools and accepting that their parents will be giving large amounts of time to our students. I thought you would enjoy hearing from one of our staff children. I will call her "Hannah"—and that is her real name!

"I was raised in a house of four children by two fantastically loving parents. My sister and I were 'sheltered, little home-schooled kids' all through middle school. ... Dancing and the arts consumed my life at the beginning of high school. ... Our entire family worked odd jobs for the company director to cover the cost of tuition.

"Suddenly, my dad lost his job. We knew God would provide. ... My parents began looking into ministry positions. The next thing I knew, I came home to an OBI pamphlet on my bed and mom saying, "Read this and tell me what you think. We might go for a visit." Well, we visited.

This is Oneida



W.F. Underwood

"During the long car ride, the spiteful child inside me uttered, 'Oh, come on! You don't want to work at a school this far out in the boonies.' After missing our exit, I moaned, 'Look at the sign! It says 'Booneville!' ... Talk about being 'in the boonies!' ... The first lesson Oneida taught me was 'don't judge a book by its cover' because here I am (three years later) and I couldn't be happier.

"At OBI I've learned the value of true friendship and ... the importance of active Christianity. Students and staff have taught me to love and to work hard at relationships. I've begun to understand what it takes to stand on my own two feet. I desperately want to dedicate my (life) to what really matters: God and people. I've been given opportunities of leadership and I've been taught to step into these roles. I've been respected and nurtured. We've had good days and bad, but both have been harnessed to create a world where I could learn to give and receive.

"To recount all that this school has contributed to my life would require me to put every moment of the last three years down on paper. It would be impossible. I've learned the definition of 'bush-hogging,' the taste of squid and the joy of wrestling in the grass. Any time I've needed life advice, help with homework or just an encouraging word, the staff and students were there to provide it. This community is my family. Thank you."

Tragically, some staff children do not make the transition to being at Oneida. This young lady graciously accepted the opportunities Oneida offered her and her parents.

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

In his own words

Graduating senior Bowling offers one final goodbye

Our seniors conduct the last chapel service of the academic year. The following words are from senior Keith Bowling from Somerset who shared some final thoughts about his graduation from Clear Creek during the senior chapel service.

"I truly count it an honor that God has allowed me to attend Clear Creek Baptist Bible College.

"When I think of how God has allowed me to attend here, I am reminded that God is the God of second chances. I think back on a time in my life when we moved from Indiana to Kentucky and I quit school and went to work.

"When God called me into the ministry, I knew I needed to get some training. God gave me a second chance to come to Clear Creek and get the education I needed for His calling on my life.

"I have experienced such great camaraderie during my time here. It is wonderful to come to a place where everyone loves you, will even cry with you at times, and will pray with you during all the situations you face during your time here—from the students all the way to the president.

"I have never been in a place where everyone has such a loving attitude toward each other. I experienced that attitude when I first came to campus.

"I can remember going in to (New Testament Professor) Dr. Lucas's office the first day I was here

on campus. I had been out of school for 26 years and I did not even know how to study. I laid my books down on his desk and I told him, 'I can't do this.'

"The first thing he said after laughing at me was, 'Let's pray.' That's the attitude of everyone here at Clear Creek. All these people are here to help you through any obstacle you are facing.

"I am thankful for the lifetime friendships I have gained throughout my years here.

"I cannot believe that four years have passed by so fast. I thank the Lord for bringing me to a place like Clear Creek Baptist Bible College and allowing me to experience the love that has been shown to me over the years."

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

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

N.H. gov. requests church protections in gay marriage bill

Concord, N.H.—New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch said May 14 that he would sign legislation legalizing same-sex marriage as long as religious groups would not be forced to “violate their deeply held religious principles.”

State lawmakers said a bill with those protections could reach Lynch’s desk within weeks, thus making New Hampshire the sixth state—and the fourth in the past two months—to allow gay marriage.

Lynch, who had opposed gay marriage, said in a statement that “my personal views on the subject ... have been shaped by my own experience, tradition and upbringing. But as governor of New Hampshire, I recognize that I have a responsibility to consider this issue through a broader lens.”

Lynch proposed that religious organizations, associations and societies—as well as individuals and non-profits managed, directed or supervised by a religious group—not be required to provide services, accommodations, facilities, goods or privileges to gay couples as a result of the gay marriage bill.

Lynch also said the proposed legislation should not require fraternal benefit societies to change their admission standards. (RNS)

Searching for ‘common ground’ on abortion debate

By Adelle Banks

South Bend, Ind.—Will President Obama’s plea for “common ground” on abortion during his much-anticipated speech at the University of Notre Dame May 17 persuade ardent abortion opponents to work with the new president?

At first glance, it doesn’t seem likely.

“Each side will continue to make its case to the public with passion and conviction,” Obama said to a mostly receptive audience at the nation’s flagship Catholic university. “But surely we can do so without reducing those with differing views to caricature.”

But Obama’s entreaties for “open hearts” and “fair-minded words” may fall on deaf ears and minds already made up on the polarizing issue.

“No one in the pro-life movement believes his promises about abortion reduction,” said Deal Hudson, director of InsideCatholic.com, a conservative Web site, and a former GOP adviser. “Every decision he’s made thus far would do nothing but increase the number of abortions.”

Hudson cited Obama’s decision to open federal funding to international groups that provide abortions, for example.

Other critics say Obama administration policies speak louder than his words.

Chuck Donovan, executive vice president of the Family Research Council, criticized the administration’s funding of embryonic stem cell research and plans to reduce conscience protections for health-care workers. An FRC representative met with the White House recently to plan ways to reduce abortions.

But, according to Donovan, “To be credible, that plan would have to begin with reversing every decision Obama has made on abortion to date.”

Of the president’s call to base policies on “sound science,” bioethics specialist Wesley

Smith said: “(H)ow about starting with the biological fact that embryos and fetuses are living human organisms? ... Pretending that human embryos and fetuses are not ‘human life’ ... may not resolve these contentious ethical issues, but if our policies are going to reflect ‘sound science,’ so that we can create policies based on ‘clear ethics,’ then the biological facts should quit being fudged.”

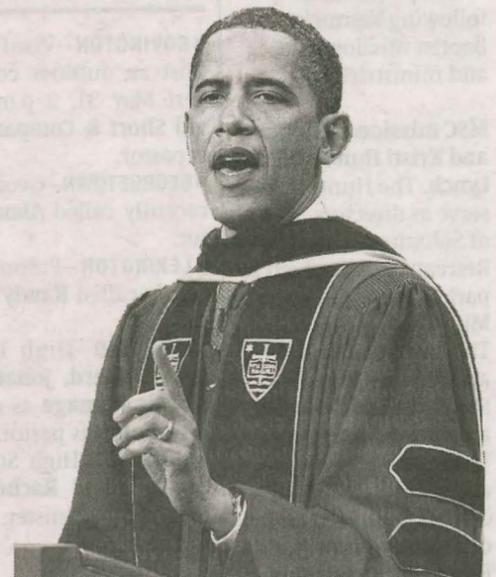
While Obama says “moderate things,” his administration “acts immoderately,” Smith added. When the president has had the opportunity to “steer a moderate course,” he has “rejected the moderate course,” Smith pointed out.

Obama’s pragmatic efforts are up against ideological stances that both sides acknowledge may be “irreconcilable.”

Obama’s “recent budget proposal to Congress fails to respect the consciences of taxpayers who are morally opposed to funding the destruction of human life,” noted Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, which supports pro-life candidates. “Further, in working and advocating to fully fund abortions, the president undermines his own purported goal of reducing the ‘need’ for abortion.”

Americans should receive leadership from “someone who will help find common ground through civil discourse,” Dannenfelser added. “Yet there is no evidence of an open mind in President Obama’s recommendation that Congress fund abortion on demand with taxpayer dollars. ... True common ground exists. He is just not standing on it.”

A new Gallup poll even shows that 51 percent of Americans now consider themselves “pro-life” compared to 42 percent who say they are “pro-choice.” The change from recent years, when more people called themselves “pro-choice,” nevertheless shows a continuing polarization that may make com-



PRESIDENT’S PLEA U.S. President Barack Obama addresses the abortion issue during commencement ceremonies May 17 at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. Many pro-life advocates do not believe common ground can be reached between those on either side of the polarizing issue. (RNS photo by John Gress/Reuters)

mon ground hard to find.

Randall Terry, a longtime abortion opponent, set up an office in South Bend, Ind., to protest the speech weeks before it occurred and provided tickets to three people who shouted such statements as “Stop killing children!” at the president before they were removed from the arena where he spoke.

“You can’t work with somebody on the issue of child killing who wants to kill children,” Terry said. “Abortion is murder. How can you work with people who want to murder the ones you want to defend?” (RNS)

With additional reporting by Baptist Press

Mississippi Baptist Minister to Host

Rose Parade

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NATIONAL NOTES

Gallup: Only churchgoers remain Republican—A new Gallup Poll shows that Republicans have lost support across every major demographic group with one exception: regular churchgoers. Since the beginning of the Bush administration in 2001, the GOP has lost self-identified Republicans across the board. Only regular churchgoers, followed closely by self-identified conservatives and older Americans, have remained with the party in large numbers. In 2001, Americans were nearly evenly split in party identification, with 45 percent identifying as or leaning Democratic, and 44 percent identifying as or leaning Republican. Those figures now are 53 percent Democratic and 39 percent Republican.

Okla. governor signs monument bill—Oklahoma’s Democratic governor ignored pleas of fellow Baptists to veto a measure authorizing erection of a Ten Commandments monument on the state Capitol grounds. Gov. Brad Henry signed the bill without comment May 18, clearing the way for a privately funded monument recognizing the Ten Commandments’ influence on America’s legal system and society. Groups including Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty both had encouraged Henry, a member of First Baptist Church of Shawnee, Okla., to veto the bill. It is modeled after a Texas law the U.S. Supreme Court ruled constitutional in 2005. The bill’s sponsor, Republican House member Mike Ritz, a member of Arrow Heights Baptist Church in Broken Arrow, Okla., indicated his family would pay for placement and upkeep of the monument.

Kansas abortion override fails—The Kansas Senate failed in an effort to override a veto of legislation that would have required greater accountability by late-term abortion doctors. On May 7,

the Senate voted to overturn former Gov. Kathleen Sebelius’ veto, leaving it two votes short of the two-thirds majority required for an override. Sebelius vetoed the bill April 23, five days before she was confirmed as secretary of Health and Human Services under President Obama. The measure would have required doctors to provide the medical diagnoses they used as the bases for performing late-term abortions.

Okla., Minn. take stand against cloning—The Oklahoma legislature has unanimously approved a bill to prohibit all forms of human cloning, while Minnesota’s governor has signed a bill prohibiting the use of state funds for human cloning. Oklahoma’s House of Representatives voted for the measure May 15, and the Senate passed the bill the same day. In Minnesota, Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed a bill May 16 that included a prohibition against the use of state funds for human cloning. The measure, which became law as part of legislation funding higher education, bars the University of Minnesota from using state money to pursue human cloning. The ban applies to cloning for both research and reproductive purposes.

GQ: Pentagon war reports quoted the Bible—The Pentagon included Bible verses on the covers of confidential reports at the start of the Iraq war, featuring photos of soldiers and quotes about “the full armor of God” and seeking divine help, GQ magazine reported. The magazine’s Web site features images of covers of the “Worldwide Intelligence Update” from 2003. One report, with a photo of a tank, quotes Ephesians 6:13, which begins, “Therefore put on the full armor of God.” Another, with a photo of then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, quotes 1 Peter 2:15: “It is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.”

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist missionaries and ministries:

MSC missionaries Rick and Kristi Hunter of Lynch. The Hunters serve as directors of Solomon's Porch Retreat Center, which is part of Meridzo Center Ministries in Lynch. They host teams from all over the United States that come to the area for mission trips. The center also serves as a great location for conferences, retreats or a family getaway. Pray that the Hunters will recognize God's activity around them and help mission teams participate with God in accomplishing His will. Also pray for spiritual awakening among the people of Eastern Kentucky and for new works that need to develop.

Hope Unlimited Family Care and Medical Clinic in Paducah. The center seeks to promote sexual integrity and purity through prevention by education, intervention in crisis, and restoration for healing. The clinic staff empowers men and women to make life-affirming decisions by offering pregnancy testing, education, Christian counseling, anger management classes, ultrasounds, obstetric exams, abortion alternatives, adoption opportunities, and Bible studies. Pray that God would send a nurse practitioner or medical doctor to the clinic enabling additional ministry. Pray that young women and their families would come to experience the forgiveness and salvation of Jesus Christ through the love and witness of center volunteers.

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.

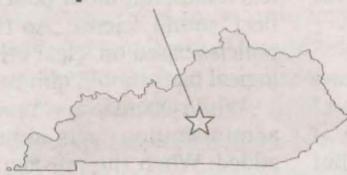
MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

- **COVINGTON**—Visalia Church will host an outdoor cookout and concert May 31, 2 p.m., featuring **David Short & Company**. **Tom Prather** is pastor.
- **GEORGETOWN**—Georgetown Church recently called **Alan Redditt** as pastor.
- **LEXINGTON**—Palomar Church recently called **Randy Johnson** as pastor.
- **MAYFIELD**—High Point ordained **Todd Ballard, Jonathan Grant** and **Shayne Ramage** as deacons May 17. **Rick Hatley** is pastor.
- **SOMERSET**—High Street Church recently called **Rachel Requelme** as children's minister. **Ed Amundson** is pastor.

Spotlight on ...

Campbellsville



Saloma Church will host **New Life Voices** in concert May 31, 6 p.m., with a potluck meal and fellowship time at 5 p.m. **John Chowning** is pastor.

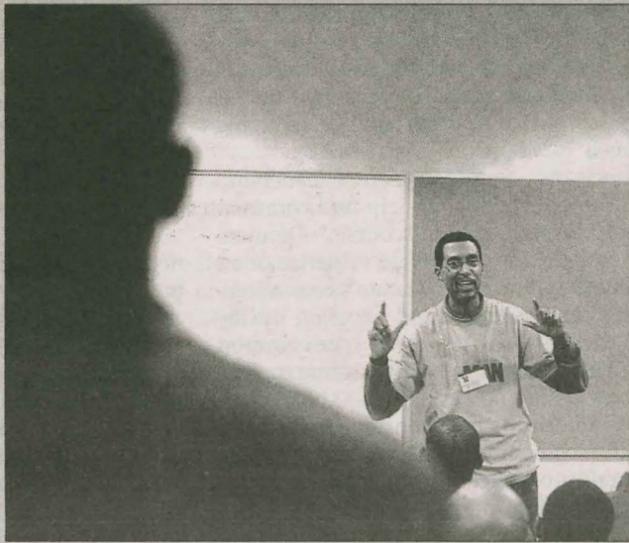


CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June

- 6 Church Weekday Education Seminar, Crestwood Baptist Church, Crestwood.
- 13-20 Kentucky Changers, Princeton.
- 14-21 All-State Youth Choir/Orchestra Retreat & Tour, Campbellsville University.
- 15-19 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, CedarCrest Camp, Bagdad.
- 19-20 Mother/Daughter Overnight, CedarCrest Camp, Bagdad.
- 22-26 Mission Adventure Camp for Girls, CedarCrest Camp, Bagdad.
- 25-27 Pursuit Student Leadership Academy, Campbellsville University.
- 26-27 Acteens Splash, Jonathan Creek Conference Center, Hardin.
- 26-27 Girls in Action Camp, Jonathan Creek Conference Center, Hardin.
- 26-27 Mother/Daughter Overnight, Jonathan Creek Conference Center, Hardin.
- 26-27 Catch the Excitement State Missions Event, Kentucky Speedway, Sparta.
- 27-7/4 Kentucky Changers, Frankfort/Lawrenceburg.
- 29-7/1 Express Mission Adventure Camp for Girls & Boys, CedarCrest Camp, Bagdad.

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



'Be the Man'

Kentucky Baptists played a prominent role at the recent Be the Man conference at LifeWay's Ridgecrest Conference Center near Asheville, N.C. More than 450 men attended the annual gathering for black men which seeks to resource churches while countering the negative stereotypes that keep many men from attending church. The conference, which began in 2003, is a joint effort of LifeWay Christian Resources and the North Carolina Baptist Convention. **Left:** There was standing room only as Kevin Smith, pastor of Watson Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville, talked about discovering the lost greatness of masculinity during a breakout session. **Right:** Joe Leavell, music minister at St. Stephen Church in Louisville, led the praise and worship sessions at the conference. (LifeWay photos by Kent Harville)



Ky. Baptist Convention to offer additional DR training events

Louisville—Kentucky Baptist disaster relief volunteers and those interested in becoming volunteers now will have two additional training and recertification opportunities in June and September.

The first session will be held at Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green on June 9, 6:30-9:30 p.m. CDT. A second event will be held at First Baptist Church of Richmond on Sept. 26, 9 a.m.-noon.

According to Kentucky Baptist Convention's Disaster Relief Associate Coy Webb, all Kentucky Baptist disaster relief volunteers are required to undergo recertification classes in order to comply with new regulations from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, American Red Cross, Homeland Security and the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board.

Those interested in becoming volunteers also are required to attend the training events to receive certification, he said.

The KBC planned a series of 16 recertification events during 2009 and 2010, but has since added the two new events "to meet the growing interest in volunteering for disaster relief," Webb noted.

Eight training events already have been completed this year, with an additional eight events to

be held in 2010. Those include:

- Jan. 22-23, Second Baptist Church of Madisonville, chaplaincy training.
- Jan. 23, Second Baptist Church of Madisonville, all volunteers.
- Feb. 5-6, Ninth & O Baptist Church in Louisville, chaplaincy training.
- Feb. 6, Ninth & O Baptist Church in Louisville, all volunteers.
- March 5-6, Red House Baptist Church in Richmond, chaplaincy training.
- March 6, Red House Baptist Church in Richmond, all volunteers.
- April 9-10, First Baptist Church of Hazard, chaplaincy training.
- April 10, First Baptist Church of Hazard, all volunteers.

Registration for the June 9 and Sept. 26 events is \$40 and includes a training manual, identification card, hat and mandatory background check. Registration for the 2010 events is \$20 for returning volunteers and \$40 for first-time participants.

For more information, visit www.KyBaptist.org/DRTraining or contact the KBC's Baptist Men on Mission department at (502) 489-3527 or toll free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3527.

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SEEKING: Full-time pastor with the capacity to preach sound biblical doctrine and cast a vision for a 1,000-plus-member church, as well as lead and mentor a highly capable, competent and motivated staff at Parkway Baptist Church, Bardstown, Ky. Please submit resumé to PO Box 755, Bardstown, KY 40004.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music. Some responsibilities include leading blended worship services, working with praise band and choir, assisting audiovisual team in preparation for worship. Seminary degree and prior experience required. Send resumé to Red House Baptist Church, 2301 Red House Road, Richmond, KY 40475, Attn: Alex Poulter; or e-mail dawn@redhousebc.com.

SEEKING: Full-time children's pastor to lead our loving and growing congregation in preschool and children's ministries to community and church families. Please send resumé to Children's Pastor Search Committee, Campbellsville Baptist Church, PO Box 530, Campbellsville, KY 42719; or e-mail to BradL@cvillebaptist.com.

SEEKING: Part-time director of missions for Franklin Baptist Association. Please send resumé to DOM Search Committee, PO Box 1093, Franklin, KY 40602.

SEEKING: Bivocational minister of music for Rosebower Baptist Church. If you are interested, please send resumé to: Search Committee, Rosebower Baptist Church, 1120 Tyree Road, Paducah, KY 42003.

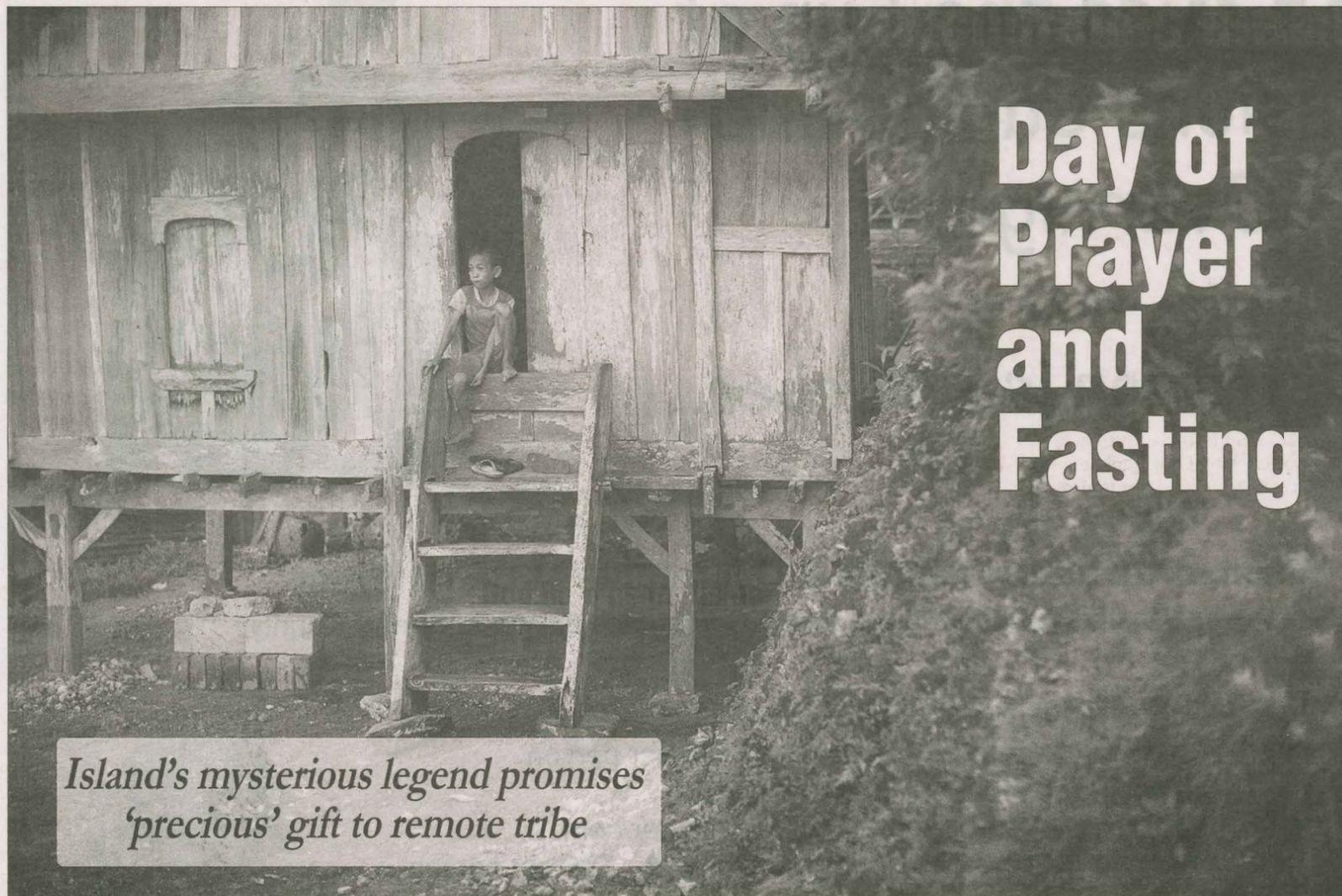
SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth and children for First Baptist Church, Prestonsburg, Ky. Send resumé to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 756, Prestonsburg, KY 41653. E-mail: jcw8855@bellsouth.net.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth (7th-12th grades) for conservative SBC church. Ministry experience needed. Please e-mail your resumé to fbchr@brick.net; or mail to 2735 High Ridge Blvd., High Ridge, MO 63049. www.fellowshipbaptisthr.org.

SEEKING: Senior pastor for Steubenville Baptist Church, Monticello, Ky. Send resumé to Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 1553, Monticello, KY 42633; or e-mail resumé to sbcpastorsearch@hotmail.com.

SEEKING: Instrumentalist for east end congregation—contemporary and traditional music. Send resumé to Melbourne Heights Baptist Church, 3728 Taylorsville Road, Louisville, KY 40220, Attn: Personnel Dept. You may call the church at (502) 454-4681 to set a time for an interview; hours and pay will be discussed at the interview.

TOURS: Israel Pilgrimage plus Egypt. Nov. 9. For a brochure, contact Pastor Jack Studie: (270) 889-7604; or jstudie@aol.com. Experience you can trust.



Island's mysterious legend promises 'precious' gift to remote tribe

Day of Prayer and Fasting

May 31 is Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization

Pacific Rim—The Sayang* are just one example of the many people groups around the world who live in places or cultures where it is especially difficult to share the gospel—and often dangerous for those who believe.

Geographic isolation, physical hardship, threats of violence and lack of freedom and resources are among the largest barriers separating the lost from the opportunity to know Jesus.

That is why Southern Baptists are coming together to show their love for lost people living in hard places during the Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization. On May 31, churches across the United States will unite in earnest prayer, asking God to move powerfully among the most spiritually dark places on the planet.

"The Holy Spirit knows no barriers when we get on our knees," noted Gordon Fort, vice president of the International Mission Board's overseas operations. "Among these 'pockets of lostness' where there are no churches, no Christians, no Bibles and no way of reaching the people living there—prayer is the one thing we can do.

"It's the key that unlocks doors, turns hearts and prepares the way of the Lord."

Use this article as you pray for the Sayang and others living in those hard places. A new DVD focusing on the Day of Prayer is available free of charge from the IMB by calling (800) 999-3113, or by downloading the video at IMB.org/DayofPrayer. Other resources can be found at that site to help churches, small groups or Sunday school classes pray for those in hard-to-reach places. (BP)

*Name changed for security reasons

By Don Graham
International Mission Board

Pacific Rim—No one knows when the legend began. But generations of Sayang* have waited for its promise to be fulfilled.

For more than five centuries, they have eked out their existence on a remote South Pacific island, virtually cut off from the outside world. Here, the Sayang have survived as farmers, growing crops on rocky soil nearly too poor to farm. Rain has been the only source of fresh water. They have had no electricity or phone service, not even a doctor.

Twice government troops have tried to force the village of 10,000 to relocate—once at gunpoint. But the Sayang refuse to leave because they are bound by the legend's promise—the arrival of a foreigner bearing a precious gift.

In 1967, a German tourist stumbled upon their village. He was the first foreign visitor in the history of Yang Jauh.* He left behind his signature and photograph but nothing more. Then in 1986, a Japanese scientist came. She, too, left only her signature and photograph.

Nearly 20 years would pass before Yang Jauh village saw another outsider—Southern Baptist worker Michael Martin.

Would the legend finally be fulfilled?

Agus* remembers Martin's arrival vividly. His father had taught him the legend as a boy, and it was his father's voice that echoed in Agus' mind as he hurried to the house where Yang Jauh's elders had gathered to receive their latest visitor.

Martin sat waiting. The North Carolina native had spent the past three hours navigating some of the island's roughest roads to reach the village. He'd heard about it by chance, through a Sayang student who attended one of the English classes Martin taught in town. Nobody else he had talked to on the island knew of Yang Jauh, much less the Sayang. As far as Martin could tell, they weren't on anybody's map except God's.

As he spoke with Agus and the elders, Martin worked up the courage to ask a question that had bothered him since his arrival. Why did these people live in such an inhospitable place in the middle of nowhere.

Agus gazed intently into Martin's eyes and replied, "Our village has a story that has been passed down through generations. My father

told it to me as a child and his father told him.

"That one day a foreigner with white skin will come to our village and reveal something precious to us."

Silence filled the air. Martin could feel goose bumps race down his back. Agus and the elders stared expectantly at him, waiting.

Something precious?

After a few moments, Agus stood and removed a tattered notebook from a shelf. The first page held a yellowed photograph of the German tourist, his signature and the date he came to Yang Jauh.

Agus pointed to the picture and looked at Martin. "He didn't reveal anything precious to us."

Below the German was another photograph, this one of the Japanese woman. She also had signed and dated the book. Agus pointed to her picture. "She didn't reveal anything precious, either."

Martin did not say a word. Agus felt his heart beginning to sink. Perhaps this man was not the one they had been waiting for.

"I was afraid something got lost in translation—this was too good to be true," Martin recalled. "I know a lot of people probably would have jumped on that and laid out the plan of salvation. But I wanted to learn more about this story and the culture. Their worldview, their mindset, is very different from ours."

That night, Agus had a dream.

"I saw a big field in front of my house where everyone ran and gathered to see a helicopter come," he said. Suddenly, Martin "appeared and lowered a rope to me. Then the helicopter rose slowly into the air—I grabbed the rope and was lifted up. Everyone watched."

Though he did not understand what the dream meant, Agus felt compelled to strike up a friendship with Martin. Agus repeatedly shared the story of the legend to make sure Martin understood. Little by little, Martin shared the gospel with Agus.

Then one day Martin got the news he had been praying for. Agus had surrendered his life to Jesus Christ, becoming the first Christian in Yang Jauh's history.

"I'm excited because I've taken Jesus into my heart," Agus told him. "I am a follower of Jesus the Messiah."

Convincing others

Since his conversion, Agus has been working to help Martin convince others that Christ is the precious gift the Sayang have been expecting. But it hasn't been easy. Many in Yang Jauh—even Agus' younger brother—believe the legend refers to some sort of financial gain. Others have lost faith in the story altogether.

"A lot of people know the legend, but they're not brave enough to talk about it," Agus said. "Jesus is the one that can bring peace and calm to this place. That is what my people are looking for."

But the ministry among the Sayang still is in its infancy. So far, the language barrier has kept Martin from spreading the gospel on a broad scale, though it hasn't stopped Agus from sharing one on one.

"He's looking for ways that the Bible intersects his culture," Martin said of Agus. "He really likes the story of Noah and the ark because the Sayang also have a story about a great flood that covered their island."

Martin said he believes the Sayang are open to the gospel. He plans to distribute hundreds of cassette tapes containing key Bible stories recorded in their language, believing the tapes could be a tipping point.

"We're on the verge of this people group being able to hear the gospel in their heart language on a large scale for the very first time," he noted. "Each time I go out to the village someone new has had a dream and has questions about who Jesus is, why we're coming and what this precious thing is that we have to share with them."

"God's plan for the Sayang started hundreds of years ago before I ever showed up. I'm just glad to know that I can be a small part of it."

*Name changed for security reasons



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