

Shine like stars in the world
Philippians 2:15

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FOR THE RECORD

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Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference 2011

'More for Christ' theme permeates event



Elizabethtown—In the first gathering of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's "More for Christ" era, approximately 1,300 state church leaders gathered in Elizabethtown last week for the annual Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference.

Focusing on the "More for Christ" theme, adopted by KBC messengers as a convention-wide focus to fulfill the Great Commission, several Southern Baptist speakers challenged Kentucky ministers to look inward while taking the gospel of Christ outward.

"WWJD?" isn't just four letters on a popular bracelet. It's a question all Christians must ask when trying to reach this generation for Jesus Christ, pastor **Fred Luter** urged.

"What would Jesus do about

this generation?" the pastor of New Orleans' Franklin Avenue Baptist Church asked Kentucky Baptists.

Noting that Southern Baptist entities like the seminaries, LifeWay Christian Resources and the North American Mission Board have plenty of ideas for how to reach the lost, Luter recommended consulting an expert on the topic: Jesus Christ.

Luter pointed out three traits of Jesus' ministry on earth, described in Matthew 9:35-38 that Christians today must adopt in order to reach the unchurched.

■ Jesus was concerned. "Jesus had a genuine concern for people," Luter said. "People are not just a statistic to Jesus."

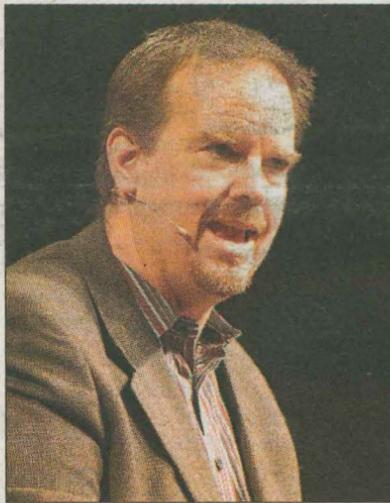
■ Jesus was compassionate. Al-

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"I believe God has a plan for you, and He wants you to bring fruit to His table."

SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page

Page 2



"The Bible doesn't describe the gift of evangelism; it talks about the responsibility of evangelism."

LifeWay Research President Ed Stetzer

Page 3

NAMB missionary Polak busy reaching Indy's inner city

By Mickey Noah
North American Mission Board

Indianapolis—Robert Maul is the modern-day version of the widow best known for her "mite," who Jesus described in the Gospel of Luke as having "put in more than all of them." For all these people have put in gifts out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

A 62-year-old, tall, slender African American, Robert foraged the sidewalks, curbs and streets of Indianapolis, pocketing lost coins—picking up a penny here, a nickel or a dime there. His painstaking work—all on foot—would add up to a sacrificial \$25 contribution to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. Also, Robert was homeless.

Poor in the pocketbook but not in spirit, Robert is a former heroin addict who liked to fight. He served five different sentences in an Indiana penitentiary. He slept under bridges and interstate overpasses. But through the ministry of missionary Tom Polak—jointly funded by the North American Mission Board and the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana—Robert was redeemed by the Lord.

Tom and Marla Polak are only two of more than 5,000 missionaries in the Unit-

ed States, Canada and their territories supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are among the NAMB missionaries featured as part of the annual Week of Prayer—this week—March 6-13.

With the theme of "Start Here," the goal of this year's Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is \$70 million, 100 percent of which benefits missionaries like the Polaks.

"Robert came to a block party we had about a year ago," Tom Polak recalled. "He came, had his lunch, listened to music and somewhere along the line, somebody witnessed to Robert and shared the gospel. He was saved that day, a Saturday. The next day, Robert was in our church service and he began to come every Sunday.

"He was baptized and he's been very faithful," Polak said of Robert. "Now, a year later, you see the growth in him—he's very genuine, very sincere. He's really been quite an encouragement to me to see what God can do in a person's life."

In 1995, Tom and Marla Polak left a Kansas City, Mo., ministry for Indianapolis, where Polak began serving as director of the

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NAMB Week of Prayer missionaries Tom and Marla Polak

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS
MARCH 6-13, 2011

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FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

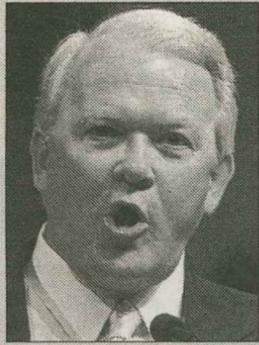
START HERE.

NATIONAL GOAL: \$70 MILLION
WWW.ANNIEARMSTRONG.COM

SBC leader warns against 'tragedy of uselessness'

By Robin Bass
Partnership Editions Director

Elizabethtown—Preaching from a parable that Frank Page said often is “glossed over,” the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee president recalled one of Jesus’ messages of warning and promise to those at the Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference in Elizabethtown last week.



Frank Page

This parable “has power,” Page said. “It has an expression of hope that we must hear.”

In the biblical account found in Luke 13, Jesus tells the story of a rather unproductive fig tree. The so-called fruit-bearing tree has been barren for three years wasting valuable soil and space in the garden. In his frustration, the owner commands the tree to be cut down.

Like the fig tree, Page said every person was planted in this life for a purpose—to bear fruit.

“I believe God has a plan for every man, woman (and) child on this earth—to give you a hope and future,” Page continued. “I believe God has a plan for you, and He wants you to bring fruit to His table. I believe there are people He wants you to lead to Christ, and He wants you to bring that soul into the kingdom.”

“I believe your church has a purpose. I believe this convention has a purpose. It is to bring forth fruit for the kingdom of God. No, it’s not just to do a bunch of programs and rearrange the chairs on the Titanic.”

But turning people’s focus to everything except bearing the fruit of leading others to Christ is exactly what Southern Baptists are doing, Page said.

“Satan has a plan,” Page noted. “As long as he can keep us occupied with secondary and tertiary issues and not concentrating on what really matters, he’s won the battle. We don’t have to do anything wrong. We just have to not do what’s right.”

The fig tree became an object of hindrance, much like regular church folks who are not guilty of some egregious crime—they just do nothing.

“I believe, to Jesus, the crime of all crimes is uselessness,” Page said. “Satan’s plan is to take someone from excitement to uselessness. He’s got a plan beyond that. He wants to move them into negativity. It’s his plan and he’s good at it. There are some of us that are one tragedy away from uselessness.”

Page spoke of the tragedies in his own life, first losing his mother and then his oldest daughter more than a year ago. Page said he understands the meaning of suffering, but God’s grace, while never abundant, always was sufficient.

“Jesus teaches us much about suffering. He said sometimes we do cause our own suffering; that sometimes suffering is a direct result of something we did or did not do,” Page explained.

Jesus said sometimes you suffer not because of what you did wrong but because of what you did right. “Suffering comes for many reasons,” Page said, explaining how first Jesus had to refute bad theology that states where there is suffering there is much sin.

While suffering might not always be an indicator of sin, Page said uselessness certainly is. It is a sin that destroys and zaps one’s spiritual vitality. “It is a sin that will destroy the inner power of any church of any family of any person.”

“What do you and I deserve?” Page asked. “To be cut down and cast out? I know that’s what I deserve.”

But the message of hope is that like the gardener who interceded on behalf of the fig tree, Jesus is asking his Father to give Southern Baptists one more chance, Page noted.

“I believe right now (Jesus) is saying to the Lord about Kentucky Baptists, ‘Father let’s give them another chance.’ And He’s saying it about you personally. ‘Let’s give that man, that woman, another opportunity. Maybe they need a little fertilizer and then maybe Father they will bear fruit next year. Just maybe that church will come alive. They think their best days are behind. They’re just holding on until Jesus takes them home.’”

But Page cautioned: “Don’t you ever believe that.”

“I don’t believe the best days of Kentucky Baptists are in the past,” he said. “I don’t believe the best days of the Southern Baptist Convention—as messed up as we are—are in the past. The church is ready to get it right.”

Presenters stress church, community

Elizabethtown—In speaking to Kentucky Baptist church leaders at last week’s Evangelism Conference, **Mark Mittelberg**, former evangelism director at Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois and author of “Becoming a Contagious Christian,” addressed the tendency of most Christians to say evangelism is someone else’s job.

Defining it as a “spiritual math problem,” Mittelberg asserted, “If we are going to reach a community for Christ, the ratios are wrong in terms of how many of our people typically enroll in the enterprise of fulfilling the Great Commission.”

In most churches, only two out of 100 people say they have the gift of evangelism, he noted, “Let’s be honest: Half of those are obnoxious.”

But if the church is serious about reaching its community for Christ, “somehow we’ve got to figure out how to unleash the entire congregation,” he said.

One problem, he said, is taking a particular model of evangelism and saying everyone has to do it that way.

“Let’s quit pointing fingers at each other,” Mittelberg urged. “Let’s realize we are all members of the church to which Christ gave the Great Commission. We are all called to this adventure of evangelism.”

“Today, we are sitting around strategizing and about to have a nervous breakdown on how to reach all these different subgroups,” said **Herb Reavis**, pastor of Florida’s North Jacksonville Baptist Church.

“Isn’t the issue really what kind of church does God want?” he asked, “because if God doesn’t show up, you can’t have church.”

Pointing to Revelation 1:9, Reavis

asserted that the kind of church God attends produces a dynamic Christian. “The goal of the church is to see people coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and become devoted, fully functioning, mature disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Reavis urged pastors to teach their people that pressure produces perseverance and that God prizes faithfulness.

The church God attends also gathers on a special day—the Lord’s Day—fulfills the unique responsibility of being light in the darkness, and worships a living Savior, providing hope and courage, Reavis said.

Native Kentuckian **Rick Howerton**, despite growing up a preacher’s kid, said he didn’t experience true Christian community until he stepped on the Morehead State University campus.

“I found a group of believers that was so excited and so unified and so passionate about Jesus,” recalled Howerton, who now develops small-group curricula for Serendipity House.

Church growth is dependent upon a “healthy Christian community,” he said.

In addition to the five characteristics of the early church described in Acts 2, Howerton said there are four other traits churches must adopt to promote biblical community.

■ Understand the difference between running an organization and creating a community. “Are we running an organization or are we seeing lives transformed?” Howerton asked.

■ Make disciples, not just church members. “There’s a huge difference between signing people up and growing people up,” he said, adding

that spiritual growth resolves the immaturity that so often impedes the creation of community.

■ Create an environment of grace. “Biblical community cannot exist in an environment where grace has been eradicated,” Howerton noted.

■ Be willing to protect the church. In many cases, church leaders pull back from discipline within their congregations, Howerton lamented. “We sometimes have to deal with the difficult people, lest we keep everyone else from experiencing the beauty of Christian community.”

Georgia evangelist **Steve Hale** spoke words of encouragement for pastors confronted by disappointment in their ministries.

“When God called you, he gave you a dream regarding your future ministry,” Hale noted. “But a lot of time, the vision we had for ministry is inconsistent with where we actually are.”

Ministers today, Hale said, are experiencing the same disappointment Joseph felt in his relationships with family, with people he thought were his friends and in his finances.

“God wants to teach us forgiveness in the midst of our isolation, ... fidelity in the midst of our injustices, ... faith in the midst of the indifference that dominates so many of our congregations,” Hale said.

“When God called us to preach, He did not call us to entertain our congregations or to reflect the shifting standards or to preach the legal correctness of our time. He instructed us to preach the word. ... God’s more concerned about what He’s doing in you, than what you are doing for Him.”

Compiled from reporting by Western Recorder staff members

Conference speakers focus on gospel sharing

Continued from page 1

though Jesus was both fully God and fully man, the compassion He showed toward others revealed the Savior’s human side, Luter said.

“Jesus felt sympathy for the people,” Luter noted. “Jesus saw their lostness and was moved with compassion.”

■ Jesus sent out a challenge. In Matthew 9:38, Jesus tells His followers to pray for more laborers to reap the harvest. “Notice that the challenge is not to the government,” Luter pointed out. “The challenge is to the followers of Jesus.”

“If we’re going to fulfill the Great Commission, ... you must accept the challenge of Jesus Christ,” Luter declared. “Let’s break the huddle, get out of the four walls and go.”

Alvin Reid, too, shared some insights for reaching the coming generation with the gospel.

“We in the United States of America are the fourth largest lost nation in the world,” noted Reid, a professor of evangelism and student ministry at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. “We are a mission field.”

The U.S. is becoming increasingly more urban and ethnically diverse, and Christianity now is a global faith, he observed. The typical Christian no longer is a white, Western male, but is just as much a Lat-

in, teenage female or a sub-Saharan African male, he noted.

Baptists are good at sharing the gospel with those whom they have something in common, who have a church background or a favorable disposition toward Christians, or who share their worldview, he acknowledged. But that population is shrinking and “we have before us a generation many of whom don’t know Christ.”

“If we are going to learn to reach this increasingly lost culture, we are going to have to engage, involve, energize and send out younger people,” Reid said, noting the potential for today’s youth to become the greatest missionary force in history.

Reid suggested four principles from Acts 11: share the unchanging truth, but do it differently and on their turf; focus more on movements and less on maintaining institutions; focus on life transformation over behavior modification, and share from a position of humility, not entitlement.

“God presents all of us with a distinct call,” said **Richard Harris**, former vice president of the North American Mission Board’s sending missionaries group. “And we’re not becoming what I think God wants us to do.”

Harris presented three steps in becoming partners in God’s purpose

to share the gospel, beginning with the heart.

■ Dedicated preparation for a partnership with the Lord.

Believers are commanded to set Christ apart in their hearts as Lord, Harris said. “If He’s Lord in your heart, He’ll be Lord in your home, Lord in your church, Lord in your business and Lord in anything else.”

Without placing the will of Jesus first, Harris said the other pieces of life won’t fit.

■ Courageous declaration in fulfilling Christ’s purpose.

“How long has it been since someone came up to you and said, ‘Tell me brother: What do you have that I don’t have?’ If they aren’t asking you, then we’re back at point one.”

Harris said the world is looking to Christians for answers and each believer must be ready to give a reason for their hope in Jesus.

■ Humble manifestation for those who become partners in purpose.

Gentleness and respect, Harris said, is how to spread the gospel.

“One reason the lost world’s not listening to us, is we come at them like we’ve got chainsaws in our hands saying repent or go to hell,” he said. “We’ve got to learn how to do it frankly, not compromise the word, and do it with love and grace.”

Compiled from reporting by Western Recorder staff members

Stetzer to Ky. pastors: 'Do your work in evangelistic ways'

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Elizabethtown—"Nobody has the gift of evangelism."

Citing a recent Barna Research study, Ed Stetzer said only 1 percent of Christians claimed to have the gift of evangelism. Comparing that to 4 percent who professed that same gift five years earlier, Stetzer compared evangelism to an unwanted Christmas present.

"Evangelism is the gift that people keep returning," the president of LifeWay Research told the crowd at last week's Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference.

"Nobody wants the gift of evangelism because it's hard," he pointed out. "The Bible doesn't describe the gift of evangelism; it talks about the responsibility of evangelism."

Echoing Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 to "do the work of an evangelist," Stetzer urged Kentucky Baptist ministers to do their work "in evangelistic ways."

"We're in an age where evangelism has fallen on hard times," Stetzer said.

Recent membership trends for the Southern Baptist Convention show the denomination in a slow decline. However, SBC numbers actually have been regressing for decades before, and if trends continue, the

convention will enter a "protracted period of decline," Stetzer pointed out.

The primary factor, he said, is Southern Baptist churches are much less evangelistically effective than they were 50 years ago.

In too many churches, Stetzer said, active and creative outreach has replaced effective evangelism.

The LifeWay Research president offered three suggestions for how church leaders might better do their work in evangelistic ways.

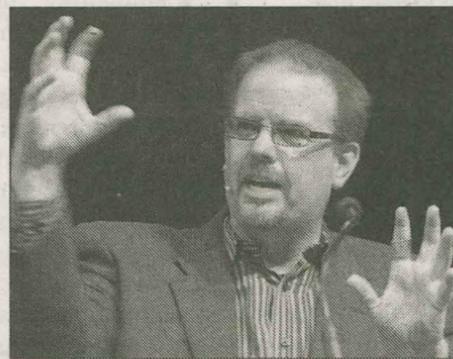
Action. The Bible "doesn't tell us to do outreach, it tells us to do the work of an evangelist," Stetzer noted.

Oftentimes, without notice, outreach becomes the enemy of evangelism. Outreach can take many creative forms—"movies, mailers and momentum"—Stetzer said, but evangelism "involves the proclamation and the communication of the good news from one individual to another or to more than one," he added.

"Evangelism involves a bloody cross and an empty tomb—and you telling them about it."

Although the world has become more hostile to the gospel message, that does not absolve Christians' of the responsibility to keep sharing it, Stetzer said. "It takes action on our part."

Labor. With so many Southern Baptist



LIKE AN EVANGELIST Ed Stetzer urges Kentucky Baptist church leaders to do their work "in evangelistic ways." (Photo by Robin Bass)

churches winning no one to Christ, Stetzer suggested the fault often lies with the pastors.

"They themselves are not winning anyone to Jesus," he said. "You cannot lead what you do not live."

In many instances, church leaders spend most of their time with fellow believers and are surprised when their relationships do not result in new Christians.

"Holiness is separation from sin, not separation from sinners," Stetzer said. "I'm hoping they accuse you (of) what they accused Jesus of: spending too much time with sinners."

Unfortunately, that often is not a popular practice among church members—the pastor hanging out with sinners. "Sometimes the choice you're going to have to make is whether or not to love the lost or love the opinion of your church members," Stetzer warned.

Focus. Ministers must maintain the focus of an evangelist in the communities they're called to serve, Stetzer noted.

According to the New International Greek Testament Commentary, in 2 Timothy 4:5, Paul encourages Timothy to continue evangelizing even though he's "in a more settled situation."

In other words, Timothy is serving a "more church area," Stetzer pointed out. And "you're in a more church area than Timothy was," Stetzer told pastors.

He said church leaders too often challenge members simply to recruit their friends and family to the church building so someone else can share the gospel with them.

Christians are not called to be "agents of recruitment, but agents of reconciliation to a world that is dead in its trespasses and sins," Stetzer said.

It's OK to use outreach tools, "but make sure that you and your people are ready to announce the good news of the gospel," he urged.

New KBC survey answers the question: 'Why do growing Sunday schools grow?'

By Ken Walker
Kentucky Baptist Convention

Louisville—There may not be a "magic bullet" for Sunday school growth, but according to the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Sunday school director, a collection of small steps can make a big difference in reaching more people with the love of Christ and helping them grow into disciples.

Through a recent survey, Darryl Wilson said he discovered that the difference between a church that is growing instead of declining in the number of people participating in Sunday school revolves around five key areas: pursuing prospects, retaining members, quality teaching, starting new classes, and leaders who take time to plan.

Wilson sent the 56-question survey to 1,440 churches where Sunday school attendance had significantly grown or declined from 2003 to 2008. Compiled in January, the study generated 319 responses from KBC congregations.

"Declining Sunday schools are doing some but not all" of the five focus areas,

Wilson said. "A growing one is more likely to be doing them all well."

"Sometimes in a declining Sunday school the outreach is good; there will continually be new members. But the retention side is terrible. A lot of people are going out the back door," he explained.

The survey evaluated a variety of factors. Among them were whether a church adequately budgets for Sunday school, trains new teachers, promotes "high attendance" Sundays, has regular planning sessions, and sets expectations for staff.

It even looked at seemingly minor matters such as whether classes start on time (they do in growing churches), and how they arrange chairs (growing ones usually meet around tables).

Wilson had help distributing and collating responses, but he analyzed the data himself. His doctoral studies included analysis of a study of more than 800 responses.

KBC's Sunday school director said he became interested in a statewide probe after reading about similar studies in recent years by noted Sunday school expert Josh Hunt and the Georgia Baptist Convention.

"I needed to look and see what churches had plateaued and declined, and ask: 'Why did growing churches grow?'"



Darryl Wilson, Sunday school department director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention

"One of the Kentucky Baptist Connect goals is to be able to help 500 non-growing Sunday schools grow by at least six percent by 2013," Wilson said. "I needed to look and see what churches had plateaued and declined, and ask: 'Why did growing churches grow?'"

Ross Ramsey, church leadership strategist for LifeWay Christian Resources, said the Kentucky survey came to the same conclusions as Georgia's. He added that new data coming from a trusted source will help Kentucky pastors see the value of its conclusions.

"It reinforces the idea that to build a church you have to build an infrastructure, which takes time," Ramsey said. "At the end of the day, it takes men and women willing to" work.

Wilson reviewed the findings in a seven-part series on his blog, Sunday School Revolutionary, found at www.KyBaptist.org/Revolutionary.

The final post includes summaries of the five key areas:

Prospects. Sunday schools must organize and implement practices that build relationships, provide care and lead to invitations. This is reflected in "high attendance" Sundays, prospect lists, worship guest registration and visitation.

Retention. In some churches, salvation

decisions in worship mask the fact that people are leaving faster than they are joining. Growing Sunday schools give attention to current enrollees.

Teaching. Life-changing Bible study and changed lives are attractive. Good teaching includes arriving early on Sundays, planning, training, and even starting class on time.

New classes. More classes translate into more people to care for, teach and reach. They require such things as training new teachers and offering off-campus Bible studies.

Planning. Growing Sunday schools include leaders who understand the importance of high expectations. The leading requirements: spending time together, planning meetings, setting goals and leader training.

One of the challenges for declining Sunday schools is they tend to be part of declining churches. Wilson said leaders can address that problem through training and leadership.

"Some of it is providing encouragement," Wilson said. "With preschool, children and youth teachers, make sure they have enough leaders to encourage them, invite them to fellowships and pray for them. That is likely to keep encouraging them."

Wilson noted he is willing to meet with associations to further discuss the survey. An immediate opportunity to learn more about the study is during the ongoing Growing Ministries Tour. The multiple-city conference meets next March 10 at First Baptist Church of Whitesburg and concludes March 24 at Living Hope Baptist Church in Hopkinsville. For a complete list of tour stops, visit www.KyBaptist.org/Growing.

While Sunday school growth isn't simple, with a multi-faceted effort it is possible, Wilson said.

"You can't be focused on one thing, you have to plug as many leaks as possible," he explained. "Slow it down to the ones you can do—making contracts, following up and caring for people."



EACH ONE UNIQUE A new survey conducted by Kentucky Baptist Convention Sunday school director Darryl Wilson suggested children's Sunday school classes like this one presents a completely set of challenges than those for adults if they are to grow.

'Start Here'

The theme for this year's Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions emphasis is "Start Here."

Partners in the Mission



By Bill Mackey

It is based on Matthew 9:36-38: "When (Jesus) saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.'" We need to get started!

"Start Here" because Jesus is our example of compassion for people who are vulnerable in lostness and do not know how to find God's plan for their lives. As we draw close to Jesus, His compassion will be evident in our lives.

"Start Here" because Jesus said there is an abundant harvest. It is in neighborhoods all over Kentucky that increasingly are comprised of people from other states and countries. We cannot connect with this mission field unless we are consistently connecting with Jesus and His heart for people.

"Start Here" because Jesus commanded us to pray to the Lord for harvest workers. In the next chapter of the gospel, Jesus sends out His disciples, door to door, to share His message. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide them and teach them what to say.

During last week's Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference, Ed Setzer, LifeWay Research director, challenged us from 2 Timothy 4:5 to do all our work in an evangelistic way. He also referenced John 15:16 where Jesus said that He had set us apart "to bear fruit." Setzer posed the question: If a believer bears no fruit, is he or she truly following Jesus?

"Start Here" because there is an estimated 258 million people in North American who do not know Christ.

NAMB's sharpened focus is to equip Southern Baptists to start churches. A local church is the best place to reach and disciple new believers and members.

Kentucky Baptists already have seen this in action. Over the past six years, 23 High Impact Churches have been planted across the state to reach the unchurched and unbelievers.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "Start Here" but don't Stop Here—It's also to Judea, Samaria and all the world.

Southern Baptists' approval of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force recommendations will result in a decrease in dollars from NAMB for Kentucky missions. Recently, we learned that NAMB will continue to help fund evangelism, church planting and ethnic work in all state conventions. The amount of that support depends on gifts given through the Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

All of us can "Start Here" by doing more in prayer, personal witnessing, ministry and giving through our local churches to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Conference speakers offer poignant, pithy words

Highlighting the theme, "More for Christ," last week's Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference in Elizabethtown addressed such diverse topics as reaching the next generation, confronting disappointment in ministry, the tragedy of uselessness, building community, enrolling every member in the unexpected adventure of witnessing, and becoming the kind of church God attends.



After Thought

By Todd Deaton

In addition to viewing a sneak preview of the upcoming Sherwood Pictures film, "Courageous," participants surely gleaned from the event's nine featured speakers, 10 breakout sessions and a young leaders' luncheon with LifeWay Research's Ed Setzer some thought-provoking words of inspiration, challenge and encouragement. Among those insights:

Alvin Reid, evangelism professor at Southeastern Seminary, suggested telling young adults: "You were made for this. God created you to worship Him and to be part of a great movement, and every day if you follow Christ, you can wake up thinking, 'Whether I'm the butcher, the baker or the candlestick maker—regardless of location or my vocation—I get to get out of bed and live for Christ and advance His movement in the way I treat people, in the way I serve people, in the way I talk about Jesus and make Him famous.'"

Steve Hale, a vocational evangelist from Woodstock, Ga.: "There are seasons in our lives when we cannot see the hand of God." But "when the lights go out and the darkness sets in, and you're inundated by disappointment, it is not how you feel, but it's Who you know ... that makes the difference," and "there's no better way to remove the darkness of disappointment in ministry than by witnessing to others and pointing them to the light."

Ed Setzer, author and director of LifeWay Research: "We want proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. ... The difficulty comes when it is easier to do the demonstration of the gospel, (and) sometimes we begin to pull back from the proclamation of the gospel. The challenge is to remind ourselves to provoke one another to love and good deeds, so we might be about both demonstration and proclamation. In other words, we should be, do and tell the Good News."

Richard Harris, recently retired vice president of the North American Mission Board: "We have this distinct call on our lives, and we find ourselves doing everything under the sun. Churches are more interested in maintaining the status quo rather than in the Kingdom's expansion. We're not becoming what I think God wants us to do. ... We've got to get back to sowing

the seed. There's a promise in this book that if we'll sow the seed, God will bring a harvest."

Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans: "My friends, if we're going to impact this world, if we're going to impact this community, if we're going to do more for Christ, we must do what Jesus did." That means being genuinely concerned about the lost and the unchurched as well as having compassion for others, he explained.

Rick Howerton, small group consultant for Serendipity House: "A perversion of Christian community alienates the unconvinced, but a biblical community is attractive even to the most cynical. ... If we want to grow a church, first we've got to build a healthy, Christian community."

Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee: "Where's the fruit? There wasn't any. The (fig) tree had done nothing wrong, but I believe to Jesus the crime of all crimes is uselessness. ... I believe that sin leads to the greatest waste of energy and effort in all of the Kingdom of God. And, how many of our people are guilty of nothing egregious and terrible, they just do nothing?"

Mark Mittelberg, author and former evangelism director at Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago: "Here's the deal I've learned: We are all weird in different ways by God's design. So, what we need to do is learn how to unleash all of us in our own 'wierdnesses.' Teach everyone to be their own eccentric selves and to share the gospel in ways that fit them."

Herb Reavis, senior pastor of North Jacksonville (Fla.) Baptist Church: "Do you honestly think there is a number that can impress God? For goodness sakes, folks, He made galaxies! ... Do you think I'm going to die and go to heaven, and St. Peter's going say, 'Whoa! Go get the Lord. He's here!' ... and Moses is going to step out from the crowd with tablets of stone and say, 'Brother Reavis, will you sign my Bible?' No siree, God prizes faithfulness."

This year's state evangelism conference concluded with a preview of the movie, "Courageous," which will open in theaters Sept. 30. By the same church that produced "Fireproof" and "Facing the Giants"—Sherwood Baptist in Albany, Ga.—"Courageous" tells the story of four police officers and their efforts to become better dads. This is another film that churches will want to rally around because, as its flyer claims, "What 'Fireproof' did for marriages—challenging spouses to honor their commitment to God and to one another—'Courageous' looks to do for families."

Pastor, don't ignore your family

By Jerry Drace

A young lady approached me with a solemn, somber expression in her brown eyes, trying to hold back the tears, as I left the church auditorium's platform after extending the invitation.

"I have a personal request," she said in a trembling voice. "Would you please speak to my daddy while you are here?"

After inquiring about the reason, the tears began to flow as she said, "I am a cheerleader and my dad has not been to any of my games this season—and my brother plays on the team as well. And he has not taken Mom out on a date in over six months. She is really hurting and needs his attention."

I saw the sadness and pain in her face. Here was a young lady in high school leading cheers for hun-

dreds during the week and what she needed was for her father to cheer for her. The concern for her brother and mother indicated that family was very special in her list of priorities.

FIRST PERSON

I told her I would be happy to ask the pastor if we could take time to visit with her father during the weekend. She looked at me with a degree of apprehension and said, "My father is the pastor."

Since 1993, my wife, Becky, and I have conducted some 300 Hope for the Home Conferences. I have heard many preachers' kids make a similar request. My father, J.T. Drace, was a pastor for 60 years and I know that look in the eyes of PKs when I see it.

It is amazing how many pastors spend time ministering to their congregations and fail to minister

to their families. One pastor told me on the way to the airport with tears streaming down his cheeks, "I spend more time with the other children and teens in my church than I do my own children." A pastor of a mega-church shared with me how he came home one night from one of those "important committee meetings" to find a note taped to the door of the refrigerator which read, "I have taken the children and gone. And you will never miss us." Suddenly the size of his church didn't matter, or all the boards on which he served. He succeeded in scaling the pastoral and denominational peaks but failed to reach the summit with his family.

For all of us who have answered God's call to serve Him in a professional capacity, may we be ever mindful that someone very close to us may have a personal request. (BP) Jerry Drace of Jackson, Tenn. has been in full-time evangelism since 1975.

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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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Why do so many Americans support same-sex 'marriage'?

By Albert Mohler Jr.

Why does same-sex "marriage" make sense to so many people? The momentum toward the full legalization of same-sex marriage seems to intensify with every passing month—or even faster. The moral divide in this nation is now seen most clearly in the distance between those for whom marriage is exclusively heterosexual and thus a settled issue and, on the other hand, those who honestly see the legalization of same-sex marriage as a moral mandate required by justice.

Given the venerable status of marriage and its universally established heterosexual character—at least until recently—the burden of argument falls on the need to explain how such a movement for a moral revolution gained credibility, cultural mass and momentum. How did this happen?

A culture does not consist only of ideas and ideologies, but no culture exists without them. Given the complexity of any culture, a comprehensive map of these ideas, moral intuitions and philosophies is impossible to create. Nevertheless, some patterns are clear enough. We can trace the acceptance of same-sex marriage to at least three major ideas that have been shaping the modern mind for some time—and are held to some extent by both social liberals and conservatives.

A progressivist understanding

One of the ideological engines of our social revolution is the idea that history reveals a progressive liberation of people who have suffered oppression. In this view of history, one prejudice after another has fallen as we have come to terms with the demands of justice. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

In other words, history reveals an inevitable, though tortuously long, arc toward justice and fairness. Over the course of history, innumerable superstitions and prejudices have been discarded. Slavery, once considered a social and economic necessity on both sides of the Atlantic, was overcome in Western democracies. Women demanded

and were granted the right to vote. The world of Jim Crow gave way to the world of racial integration and civil rights. America has elected its first African-American president. History marches on.

For obvious reasons, the movement to normalize homosexuality attached itself to this idea of historical progress. This was a natural and inevitable development, and those who formed the strategy for this movement used the most powerful tools at their disposal. The progressivist vision of history was there for the taking, and the gay rights movement took it up with enthusiasm.

Americans are naturally drawn to this understanding of history. It plays to our belief that our generation is in some way morally superior to the generations who preceded us. Liberals feast on this understanding of history and make it their main argument in any number of debates. But conservatives are shaped by this narrative, as well. Conservatives accept the undeniable fact that history tells a story that we should celebrate at countless turns.

But the problem with the progressivist understanding of history is that it cannot stand alone. It cannot be the only narrative. There has to be some means of identifying what is truly a manifestation of oppression and what is a structure necessary for human flourishing. If the only story we have is the narrative of liberation from oppression, then, as Karl Marx understood, all that remains is an unstoppable revolution that dissolves all bonds of relationship, kinship, tradition and moral order. Should children be liberated from the authority of their parents? Should all prisoners be liberated from their cells? Should human beings be liberated from the obligations of family and kinship?

The progressivist understanding of history must be checked by a recognition that liberation from oppression is not the only true and compelling narrative. The affirmation and preservation of moral obligations and commitments must be the companion narrative. But, in order to understand why so many among us see something as morally revolutionary and socially subversive as same-sex marriage to be something to demand and champion, consider the fact that many of our friends and neighbors see same-sex marriage as only the next logical step in overcoming prejudice and discrimination. It is the only story they know, and it is powerful.

A radical individualism

Paired with the progressivist understanding of history is a vision of individualism that is virtually unprecedented in human experience. An affirmation of the importance of the individual is written into the fabric of modern thought. Our understanding of human rights, of individual liberty, and of personal responsibility are central to the American self-consciousness. Add to this the fact that the rise of the therapeutic worldview has recast human experience as a continuous project of individual self-discovery and self-definition.

But, if individualism was central to the American experience from the beginning, the current form of this idea is far more radical than previous generations could imagine. The current form of individualism includes the claim that we can define ourselves even in terms of gender and sex. This individualism is titanic in its reach, producing what psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton once described as the "Protean Man." We demand the total right to define ourselves.

Once again, we must recognize that the opponents of same-sex marriage have also been drinking heavily at the springs that feed this powerful idea. Many conservatives have bought into their own form of expressive individualism, taking refuge in the structures of social order only when convenient, bending moral codes to our own individualistic demands, forfeiting moral obligations when they conflict with our favorite project—ourselves.

The control on the destructive force of expressive individualism is the reality of moral obligation and the goodness of true self-knowledge. As Christians know—and must always remember—we are known before we ever emerge to know. Our Creator knew us before we even came to be, and He established our identity before we came to know ourselves. True happiness can come only by embracing with gratitude the identity we are given by the Creator. This idea—now reaching even to sex and gender—is anathema to the modern mind.

A claim of moral autonomy

Throughout most of human history, moral principles were considered to be objectively true and inviolate. The universe was understood to be ruled by a moral law established by a divine Lawgiver and Judge. That understanding

FIRST PERSON

Singles and death of a mother

By James Stillwell

Q: My mother recently died. My father died a few years ago. My siblings also have died. Do you have any words of advice for me as I, a single person, face my own immediate future as well as any long-term planning?



FAMILY FORUM

A: Your situation brings to mind a helpful book by single adult Harold Ivan Smith, "Grieving the Death of a Mother," in which he talks about the process of dying, the time of passing, the process of mourning, the rites of burial, the journey of grief, and remembering and honoring your mother. I recommend his books as gentle guides through the sometimes turbulent journey through "grief country."

Part of your situation is related to the journey of "what to do with the rest of your life" when you may be looking at the future without a spouse by your side. While couples have one another to help them dialogue about their dreams for what God can do with and through them throughout their mature years, you may want to seek out a trusted pastoral adviser as well as trusted friends to help you spiritually and mentally envision what that might look like.

As Paul alludes to in 1 Corinthians 7, you have freedom to serve God in ways that you might not if you had a spouse. You need not ponder your hopes and dreams in a vacuum. Reach out to wise people who can at least part of the way take the journey with you.

To help you on your grief journey, think about what good causes were near and dear to your mother. Perhaps a memorial can be set up that will be a living source of hope for people for many years to come.

Speak your mother's name to others. Tell her stories. Recall her gifts to others that come rushing back to your memories. Treasure and give thanks for those memories. Plan for the rest of your life in such a way that she would be proud, God will be honored, and the world will be blessed.

James Stillwell is minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington.

Benefits of credit cards

By Jeremy White

Any regular reader of this column knows that I've often mentioned the dangers of credit cards. Unfortunately, many people have fallen prey to the lure of easy credit and impulse buying with credit cards.

The high interest rates on credit cards and the significant late fees can cause a tremendous burden on many families. The credit card companies know that people will spend more with a credit card than they will with cash.

With the above warnings in mind, credit cards may provide benefits. It's not the use of credit cards that is a problem, but their misuse. Here are some of the benefits that using credit cards can provide—as long as you pay off the entire balance each month:

- **Holding on to your money longer.** Depending upon when you buy in the billing cycle, you may have up to 45 or even 60 days until payment is actually due.
- **Easier accounting.** Credit card provides a tracking of your purchases for entering into your budget or for a year-end summary.
- **Rewards.** Many credit card companies will pay you a percentage of purchases either in cash, airline tickets, or other merchandise rewards.
- **Extended warranty protection.** Some credit cards provide additional warranties on purchases.
- **Travel benefits.** If you buy airline tickets or car rental, you may have additional insurance provided.
- **Saving postage.** Calling toll-free numbers and paying with credit card or online can avoid postage.
- **Replacement of damaged or stolen goods.** Some credit card companies provide additional protections because of their relationships with the vendor in providing replacement coverage.

These benefits would be cancelled out if you paid high annual fees, interest charges or late fees. If you cannot be disciplined, then simply stay away from credit cards entirely. As believers in the Lord, we don't place our dependence or gain any self-esteem from having credit cards. You can't serve your Master and your Master Card at the same time.

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



FINANCIAL FORUM

has given way to the belief that most, if not all, moral principles are the products of social construction—we make them up as we go along.

While most criticisms of moral relativism are directed at individual conduct, on the larger scale, the entire society is increasingly convinced that moral principles must give way to new understandings, findings and insights. When this idea is added to the progressivist understanding of history and the radical form of modern individualism, we have a recipe for moral revolution.

And, as with the other ideological factors we have considered, this one is also affirmed, to some degree, by both liberals and conservatives. There can be no doubt that some understandings of moral principle were indeed shaped by prejudice and ignorance, leading to great human suffering. Fear of minorities has led to scapegoating and hatred, cloaked in the language of moral rectitude. These things must give way to moral progress and be denounced with moral fervor.

But, once again, not all moral principles are examples of oppression. To the contrary, human life is only possible within the context of enduring moral laws and principles that liberate all human beings to their true humanity. This is where those who support same-sex marriage and those who oppose it face each other across a huge gulf of understanding. One side sees a moral mandate to liberate marriage from its heterosexual limitation. The other side sees natural marriage as a liberating, God-given institution for human flourishing. There is precious little shared ground in this debate.

Same-sex marriage is not an idea that emerged from a vacuum. The project of normalizing homosexuality has deep roots and ideological momentum. The elites, the entertainment culture, the news media and the educational establishment celebrate all three of these ideas as central to the modern experience and as ideological propulsion into a better future.

So, when we wonder how it came to be that so many among us now favor same-sex marriage, we must remember that, to some extent or another, virtually all of us have embraced the ideas that make such a moral revolution thinkable. And ideas, as Richard Weaver famously reminded us, have consequences. (BP)

Albert Mohler Jr. is president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

Who was Annie Armstrong?



- Native of Baltimore
- Lived from 1850 to 1938
- Advocate for Southern Baptist missions
- Helped form Woman's Missionary Union in 1888, for which she served as the first corresponding secretary and worked without pay in that position
- Friend of Lottie Moon; helped start the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

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NAMB's Polak serves inner city of Indianapolis

Continued from page 1

Metro Baptist Center in the inner city, and as pastor of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship.

"We are here helping people, ministering to people, praying, evangelizing and giving people a place to go," he said. "We minister to the people who live in the downtown Indianapolis area, who are homeless, low-income people—people who are struggling."

Although 52-year-old Polak leads an inner-city church and admits "we don't have a lot," he encourages new Christians like Robert to find a way to give.

"These are people who themselves are standing on the corners asking for money. These are people who are homeless. But I encourage them to give what they can to Annie Armstrong. I tell them the money is going to missionaries who are sharing the gospel around the country."

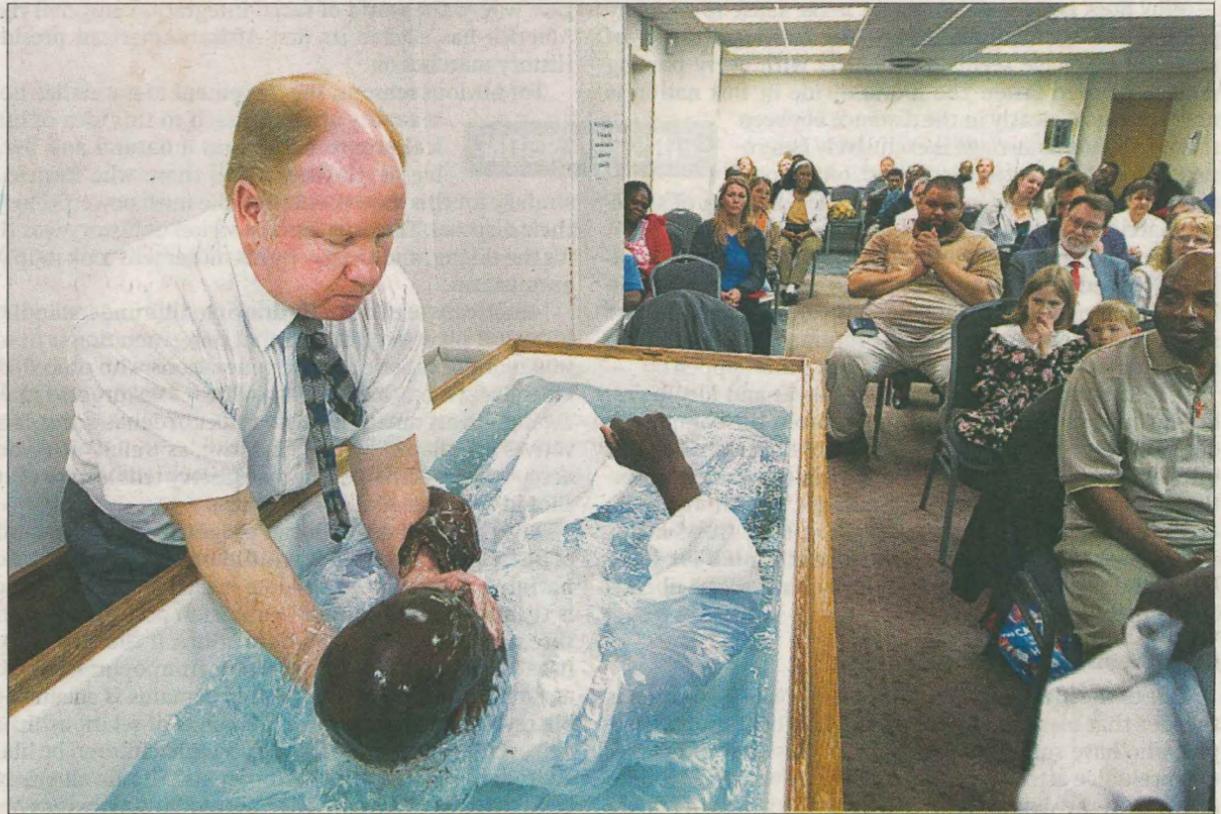
On that Sunday, Robert had a surprise for Polak.

"Robert calls me over and he hands me this large cylinder and it has some weight to it. I asked him what it was, and he told me it was his offering. 'I've been finding this money and have been dedicating it to the Lord,' Robert told me. I thought of the woman with the two pennies who gave all she had," Polak recalled.

"That's Robert."

Polak said Christians don't always meet the "Roberts" of the world. "We may see them on the corner or may bump into them downtown, but do we see them as people who may have made mistakes, maybe have issues or problems? You know God loves these folks and has a plan for them, and He can use them in many ways."

On a typical day, Metro Baptist Center offers a food and clothing pantry for the needy, as well as job placement services and substance



NEW LIFE IN CHRIST NAMB missionary and pastor Tom Polak baptizes Joe Massey during a recent service at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship in downtown Indianapolis. (Photo by Ted Wilcox/NAMB)

abuse assistance. Polak and his staff not only try to minister to a person's physical needs, but also to their spiritual needs.

"When a person comes in and they are in need and hurting, they see we're here for them. They see a genuine concern in us," Polak said. "That makes them more open to hearing the gospel and for prayer. They're more apt to open up and tell you where they're coming from and what their real needs are."

In addition to harvesting the "Roberts" for Christ, Polak also is encouraged by the mission groups—seven last summer—that travel to Indianapolis from Southern Baptist churches around the United

States—especially youth groups—using sports and construction ministries to reach lost people.

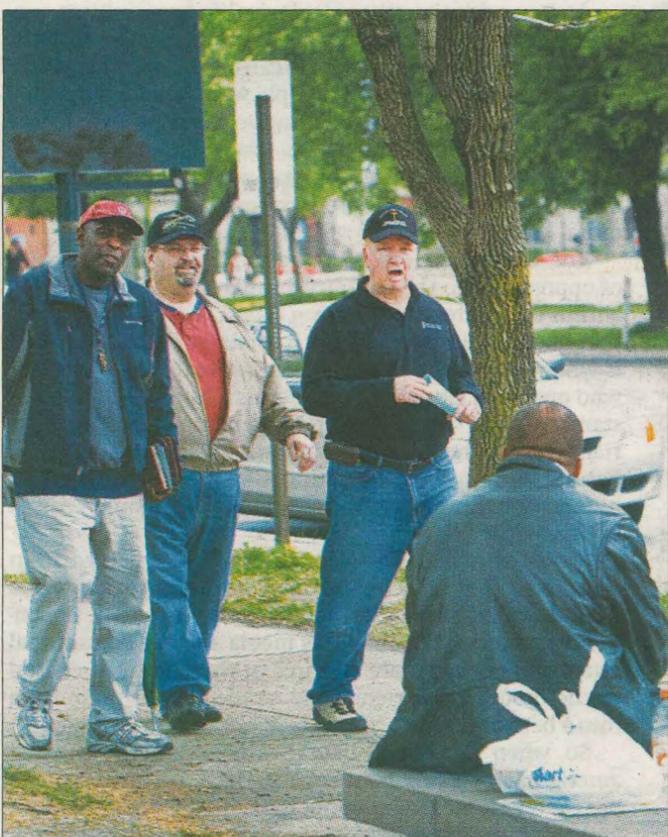
Born and raised in Syracuse, N.Y., Polak earned a bachelor's degree from Howard Payne University in Corpus Christi, Texas, and an M.Div. degree from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. Although he went to school and served as a pastor in Texas and Missouri, he said he's more comfortable in the North.

"I'm in a place where I feel God has called me. I have a great assurance that God wants me here for this time and that's a great feeling," he said. "I like using my talents and abilities on the things God has gift-

ed me with, so I'm able to put them into practice and help people.

"Indianapolis is a wonderful city," Polak added. "It's a clean city, an active city with many activities and things to do. The Christian organizations here work together well. We see tremendous needs of homelessness, mental illness and drug addiction. But we're trying to address these issues. We have about 80 churches in central Indiana working together."

Tom and his wife, Marla, a native of Topeka, Kan., an occupational therapist and a graduate of the University of Kansas, have five children: Hannah, Rachel, Caleb, Moriah and Joel.



ON THE STREETS Tom Polak (right), a North American Mission Board missionary and pastor of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship in Indianapolis, street witnesses in downtown Indianapolis with church members Mark Kline (left) and Joe Massey. (Photo by Ted Wilcox/NAMB)

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Derby

Study examines participation of ethnic churches within SBC

By Erin Roach

Nashville, Tenn.—The Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee released a review of ethnic church and ethnic church leader participation in the convention Feb. 22, setting forth recommendations "to foster conscious awareness of the need to be proactive and intentional in the inclusion of individuals from all ethnic and racial identities within Southern Baptist life."

Based on a motion presented at the 2009 SBC annual meeting in Louisville, an Executive Committee study group examined "how ethnic churches and ethnic church leaders can be more actively involved in serving the needs of the SBC through cooperative partnership on the national level."

The group reviewed all resolutions adopted at annual meetings regarding ethnic participation and relationships; analyzed the ethnic identities of program personalities on the platform at recent annual meetings; studied the ethnic identities of entity staff, mission board personnel, seminary faculty and recent graduates; and heard testimonies from ethnic leaders.

Also part of the study was a review of the numbers of ethnic congregations and ethnic members within the convention, pictorial representations in convention literature, coverage of ethnic diversity in convention publications and a review of the ethnic identities of convention committees, boards and commissions.

The Executive Committee found that on numerous occasions through resolu-

tions adopted at annual meetings, the SBC expressed a desire to see "greater ethnic participation" in SBC life. The report included 11 resolutions dating back to 1961.

"The convention has seen steady, significant growth in the number of churches and church-type congregations identified as primarily non-Anglo congregations," the report noted, adding that since churches have never been asked to report on the ethnic composition of their memberships, it was impossible to know with certainty the number of individual church members of any ethnic group.

"In spite of the convention's frequent affirmations expressing its desire to see greater ethnic involvement and participation in SBC life, the convention has not adopted a consistent means by which it can ascertain participation of ethnic churches and church leaders in convention life," the report stated.

Few ethnic leaders in elected roles

Anecdotal testimony indicated that the percentage of ethnic church leaders involved in visible, elected roles in SBC life has lagged behind the percentage growth in the number of ethnic congregations.

"One reason for such a perceived lag ... is that many of our ethnic brothers and sisters have been more active in their respective ethnic fellowship ministries than in local Baptist associational ministries and/or cooperating Baptist state convention ministries," the report said.

Another reason for the perceived lag, the Executive Committee found, is that the convention had failed to develop a



broad-based strategy to keep the issue before convention leaders in the nominating and hiring processes at various levels of the convention.

The Executive Committee, though, affirmed past processes in which the concept of "quotas" was resisted, choosing instead to support the selection of Southern Baptists "who are well qualified, without regard to any of the unalterable personal characteristics which God has bestowed upon them."

Recommendations for messengers

In light of its findings, the Executive Committee will present a series of recommendations to messengers at this year's SBC meeting in Phoenix, including requests that:

- Entities annually submit a descriptive report of participation of ethnic churches and church leaders in the life and ministry of each entity.

- The SBC President's Notebook given to each newly elected president encourage him to "give special attention to appointing individuals who represent the diversity within the convention, and particularly ethnic diversity" among his appointees to various committees.

- The SBC president report the total number of appointees that represent the ethnic diversity when names for commit-

tees are released.

- The SBC President's Notebook encourage the president to promote the selection of annual meeting program personalities that represent the ethnic diversity within the convention.

- The Committee on Order of Business consider the ethnic identity of program personalities for annual meetings.

- The Committee on Nominations form be amended to provide a place where a nominee may indicate his or her ethnic identity.

- The Committee on Nominations include in its annual report the number of individuals among its nominees that represent the ethnic diversity within SBC life.

- Entities give due consideration to the recruitment and employment of qualified individuals who reflect well the ethnic diversity within SBC life.

- The Executive Committee, through its various publications and news outlets, continue to provide news coverage of interest to individuals of all ethnic interests and highlight what God is accomplishing through Baptists of "every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

- The Executive Committee receive a report from EC staff each year during its February meeting concerning the participation of ethnic churches and ethnic church leaders in the SBC. (BP)

LifeWay bookstores announce end to warning labels for evangelical books

By Richard Yeakley

Nashville, Tenn.—Southern Baptist bookstores have quietly suspended a 4-year-old program that warned customers to read with "discernment" books by several up-and-coming authors whose books "could be considered inconsistent with historical evangelical theology."

Chris Rodgers, the director of product standards and customer relations for LifeWay Christian Stores, said the warnings were discontinued because they were "irrelevant to our customers."

"There was little to no interest in it," Rodgers said. "No one asked about the authors."

The program flagged the writings of several emergent authors with labels that advised readers to exercise caution and "extra discernment" when reading particular books.

The labels provided the address to a website where readers could learn more about the work or author; the website has since been disabled.

The program recently came under attack in a blog post from Christian musician Shaun Groves, who was upset that LifeWay was willing to warn customers about a book but still continued to sell it.

The label read: "Read With Discernment. This book may contain thoughts, ideas or concepts that could be considered inconsistent with historical evangelical theology. Therefore we encourage you to read it with extra discernment."

LifeWay, the official publisher and book store of the Southern Baptist Convention, downplayed the program and the decision to end it, saying the labels were not warn-

ings but rather an attempt to provide customers with more information.

"They were not warnings; there is no way at all you could read those as warnings," Rodgers said. "The program has been called controversial, (but) the only real controversy was the Groves blog."

But some authors of the marked books, including popular authors Rob Bell, Donald Miller, Brian McLaren and William Young, were happy with the decision to terminate the program.

McLaren, a sometimes controversial emergent author whose books were flagged, said a decision to censor writings by another Christian went against the Baptist tradition of personal conscience.

"I think it is concerning when, especially a Baptist bookstore acts as if a central organization can make decisions on which books are accepted and rejected," McLaren said. "Yes, I am very pleased" to see it ended.

Young, who wrote the New York Times best seller "The Shack," said he wasn't bothered by the program, but still thought LifeWay made "a good move" in ending it.

When Young heard his book had been labeled, he shared a laugh with his family and friends. "Like most people are saying, 'Put it on every book, or you put it on no book,'" Young said.

Young said he feels, however, that LifeWay had good motives and understands the difficulty of the company's situation.

"Lifeway has a tough job. They have to figure out how to be a part of a world in which ideas are larger than their community, but still maintain their allegiance to their denomination," Young said. (RNS)

SBC to partner with states for CP promotion

Nashville, Tenn.—The Southern Baptist Convention will partner with a network of state Baptist convention stewardship directors to produce Cooperative Program and stewardship materials, according to Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee.

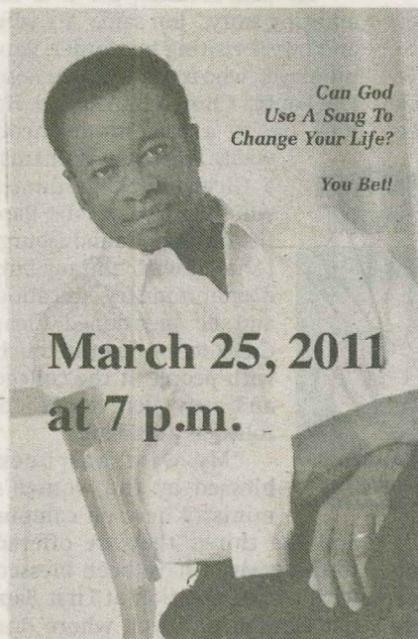
Page's announcement came late last month at a meeting of the Stewardship Development Association, a national consortium of state stewardship specialists.

"SDA will be our preferred provider for production of stewardship and Cooperative Program materials," Page said. "You are much better at some things than we are. We can't keep doing what we've been doing."

Last November, as a cost-cutting measure, Page eliminated the EC's Cooperative Program and stewardship division and moved responsibility for CP promotion into his office. Several staff positions were deleted in the move, including those with primary responsibility for production of CP materials.

The partnership is in keeping with the Great Commission Resurgence report adopted by the SBC last June. Component Six of that report encouraged the EC to work with state conventions in CP and stewardship education and develop a strategy for increasing church "participation and investment" in the Cooperative Program. (BP)

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NAMB enlists partners for youth, children's missions initiatives

Alpharetta, Ga.—North American Mission Board leaders announced recently they will partner with fellow Southern Baptist entities in coordinating missions programs for both children and youth.

NAMB officials said the entity will partner with Woman's Missionary Union for the day-to-day operations of the Royal Ambassadors missions education organization. The mission board also will begin collaborating with LifeWay Christian Resources on the World Changers and PowerPlant student mobilization initiatives.

The two partnerships follow NAMB's recent organizational restructuring made to support the entity's "Send North America" strategy to assist Southern Baptists in reaching North America through mobilizing and equipping churches and missionaries for evangelistic church planting.

Kentucky WMU Executive Director Joy Bolton said the organization is excited about about bringing the Royal Ambassadors program under the WMU umbrella. RAs educates boys in grades one through six about world missions.

"We feel this will allow us to do a more effective job in helping churches develop missions education for children and youth," Bolton said.

Previously offering missions curricula just for girls, Bolton said Kentucky WMU now will be a one-stop shop of sorts for churches seeking missions education resources.

"It will make it easier for them in both ordering and receiving information and (getting) help with leadership development," she noted.

Bolton said the transition of bringing the RA program into the WMU fold has not yet begun. That process will be dictated by the group's ex-

ecutive board at its March 24 meeting.

"We believe missions education is a key part of equipping churches for reaching North America—and the world—for Christ," said Kevin Ezell, NAMB's president. "This partnership means churches will continue to receive top-quality material and it allows us to utilize WMU's expertise and singular focus in this area."

"We feel this will allow us to do a more effective job in helping churches develop missions education for children and youth."

Joy Bolton, Kentucky WMU executive director

NAMB will maintain its missions education ministry assignment, will continue to operate its Baptist Men's ministry work and will maintain close ties with the development of Royal Ambassadors curriculum.

Meanwhile, the shift in responsibility for World Changers and PowerPlant from NAMB to LifeWay is scheduled for 2012, and will not affect the 2011 summer projects.

Under the partnership, World Changers and PowerPlant will build on LifeWay's existing student

mobilization efforts through Centrifuge and M-fuge. However, while Centrifuge is geared more as a summer worship and Bible study camp, and M-fuge is geared more toward a missions/camp experience, World Changers and PowerPlant have more proactive "hands-on" mission experiences—offering students opportunities to share the gospel and participate in church planting.

LifeWay President Thom Rainer said the partnership complements the vision held by both entities to engage people at their place of need and share the love of Christ.

"Streamlining our ministry endeavors in this manner will only serve to advance our kingdom effectiveness," Rainer said. "Southern Baptists will see the productivity of both of these great outreach ministries escalate in the days ahead through this partnership." (BP)

'I can't change without prayer'

Prayer box at Oneida Baptist Institute illustrates what's on students' hearts

By Paul Davidson, OBI campus minister

At OBI, prayer is important. Among other things, we have a prayer box into which our students can drop their anonymous written requests. Here's a sample of what's on their minds and in their hearts.

"I need prayers for my grades. I am looking forward to getting a 4.0 this quarter. I am taking an AP class, which is not that easy. Pray for the teacher so that he gives us quizzes as he says he will, so that he can tell us to study the right chapter or part. And I would like to improve my English. Just pray for my education, my future."

"Please pray for me. I'm in the middle of a battle. A lot of the guys around me say there's nothing to this Jesus stuff. I want to stay strong in my faith, but it's not easy."

"My younger sister is 13 years old and thinks she is in love. I don't want her to be hurt by a guy or do something that she would regret in her life. I live so far away from her. I don't exactly know what is going on. ... I just hope God is looking after her and taking care of her. I would be happy if you pray for her that God would be with her."

"Please pray for my family. They're having a really hard time right now financially. And pray for me that I don't get sent home. I have problems with my anger and sometimes I just react and then regret it later. I've done so many things over the past two years that I'm afraid that if I do anything else, they'll just send me home."

"Pray for God to help me when I take my TOEFL." (Test of English as a Foreign Language, re-

quired of most international students when they apply to an American university.)

"I want to pray for my parents that sent me here to get a better education. God bless them. Pray for my dad who lives away from my family in order to make money. Pray that he won't feel lonely, and I want God to protect him and help him make wise decisions in his life. I need to pray for my mom. I just want her to be OK. Pray for her so that the project she is working on right now goes the way she wants it. She is most of the time worried. Pray for her so that God will help her through everything and avoid everything that can upset her."

"I just broke up with my boyfriend back home three or four days ago. I am not sure if it is the right choice. ... It is a long-distance thing. So it is hard for me to choose. ... I would like prayer for it so that God guides me with my relationship decisions. Please pray for me so that God helps me find the right guy, a Christian who believes in God."

"I would like for you to pray for me because I am trying to change and become a better person. I am praying for myself, but I also want you to pray for me because I need all the prayer I can get. I can't change without prayer, so please pray for me and my situation."

Oh, look! It's our time for prayer. Won't you join us?

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

This is Oneida



W.F. Underwood

A new direction

Clear Creek student excited to be following God's call

First-year student Jon Carter, from Ohio, is glad to be here. There was a time in his life, though, where his world was shaken and he could not see any direction in his life. follow

"I was raised in church," Jon recalled. "My father was a deacon and served as an assistant youth pastor, so I was used to being in church. When I turned 16, my father was diagnosed with cancer. It was a life-shaking event for me and my family. My father eventually passed away. I did not know what was ahead for me; I had no direction in my life."

"I was leading praise and worship in my church at the time," Jon said. "During one service, we were singing a song titled, 'You Alone.' One of the lines in that song simply says: 'You alone the Father God.' God began to use the line from that song to convict my heart about a personal relationship with Him. It was then that He confirmed in my heart that He would be my Father; that He was sufficient for everything that I would need in my life. That day I committed my life to the Lord, and He began to give me direction in my life."

That direction eventually led Jon and his family to Clear Creek.

"My call to Clear Creek is an amazing story," Jon said. "My wife and I were visiting her father, Ronnie Mayes, who is the pastor at Rose Hill Baptist Church in Ashland. He took me to a pastors' luncheon where I met Stan Williams, a Clear Creek graduate, who is pastor of First Baptist Church, Cannonsburg. I shared with him my burden for ministry education and he mentioned Clear Creek to me. I got in touch with people at the college and now here I am enrolled as a student."

"My wife has been blessed by the women's ministry here on campus and the things that are offered to the wives. I have been blessed with a staff position at First Baptist Church of Loyal, where one of my professors, Dr. Roy Lucas, serves as pastor."

"We could not be in a better place than Clear Creek—right in the center of God's will."

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

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After Westboro's win, uncertainty about what lies ahead

By Adelle Banks

Washington—In an 8-1 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last week that the protesters from Westboro Baptist Church have First Amendment rights to protest military funerals.

But does that mean more protests from religious groups are ahead? Or more efforts to limit them?

The majority determined that Fred Phelps and members of his small church in Topeka, Kan., had free-speech rights to picket within 300 feet of the funeral of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder, who was killed in Iraq in 2006.

The court's lone dissenter, Justice Samuel Alito, argued it was wrong for protesters to continue "inflicting severe and lasting emotional injury on an ever-growing list of innocent victims."

Legal experts differ on whether Westboro now will be a role model for other religious groups with strong views that may be deemed offensive.

John Whitehead, president of The Ruthford Institute, which filed an amicus brief

in support of Westboro's right to protest, said the decision could provide more room to air unpopular religious views.

Whitehead already is defending a street preacher who police told to stop preaching with a handheld microphone on a public sidewalk outside last year's Apple Blossom Festival in Winchester, Va.

"I think it's going to protect those kinds of people," Whitehead said.

But Ira Lupu, a church-state expert at George Washington University Law School, said there probably are few groups comparable to Westboro that would seize on this case because the group's hate-filled signs are just too extreme.

"People just don't do that," Lupu said. "Everybody hates you if you do that. That's the inhibitor, not the law."

Westboro, however, stands ready to "quadruple" its protests at military funeral protests, Margie Phelps, the lead attorney for the church, told reporters, according to ABC News.

The high court's ruling protected Westboro from a claim by Snyder's father that

he deserved financial compensation for emotional distress, defamation and "intentional infliction of emotional distress" caused by the church members' appearance at his time of grief.

Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority, said even "hurtful speech" on public matters cannot be stifled.

"Speech is powerful," he wrote. "It can stir people to action, move them to tears of both joy and sorrow, and—as it did here—inflict great pain. On the facts before us, we cannot react to that pain by punishing the speaker."

Roberts pointed out that Westboro members never entered the church property where the funeral occurred, weren't violent and didn't yell. Lupu and Whitehead agreed that if Phelps' protesters had been more physically disruptive, the decision could have been different.

"Simply put, the church members had the right to be where they were," Roberts said.

Alito, however, forcefully disagreed. "In order to have a society in which pub-

lic issues can be openly and vigorously debated, it is not necessary to allow the brutalization of innocent victims," he wrote.

While Roberts noted that not all speech is legal at all times and in all places, Maryland did not have an anti-picketing law on the books at the time of Snyder's 2006 funeral. The state passed such a law, joining dozens of others, following the controversial protest.

Lupu said the greatest repercussion from the decision could be more local with state lawmakers following Maryland's lead to pass laws restricting the location of the protests.

If the Supreme Court had not sided with Westboro, it would have owed Snyder millions of dollars. But with "anti-picketing laws, if you violate them, you get arrested, you get fined, maybe you go to jail for 30 days. You could survive that," Lupu said.

Whitehead, who said he supports Phelps' rights but not his message, said such laws nevertheless have to be "carefully drafted"—or they, too, could be the subject of a court case. (RNS)

Texas prison chaplains in danger

Austin, Texas—Facing a budget deficit, Texas lawmakers are considering eliminating all professional prison chaplains, a move that could affect the way volunteers from churches minister in that arena.

With Texas facing a \$15 billion budget shortfall, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice faces \$459 million in cuts. The proposed budget before the House eliminates all \$4.6 million allocated for the state prison chaplaincy program.

If included in the final state budget, all professional prison chaplains would lose their jobs. Fifty-five of the 120 chaplains are endorsed by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

In addition to their counseling duties, chaplains are charged with managing prison religious programs that serve as the gateway for volunteers to serve in prison ministries. Chaplaincy also ensures prisoners have the religious freedom guaranteed to them in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

"Professional chaplaincy in the military and prisons is the way that protection is provided for constitutionally guaranteed religious liberty," said Suzii Paynter, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. "Professional chaplaincy is a priority; other things need to be cut before we cut something that protects the right to worship and practice your faith while incarcerated." (ABP)

Land: Reform immigration soon

Washington—The federal government needs to enact immigration reform soon before it becomes even more problematic to resolve, Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land said recently in the nation's capital.

The president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission joined other religious leaders who favor comprehensive immigration reform in a symposium at Georgetown University.

"If we don't deal with this issue successfully soon, it will be more difficult and more painful to deal with it later," Land said.

Americans are ready for reform, even if public policymakers are not, Land said.

"I think the American public in general is well ahead of its elected representatives on the issue of comprehensive immigration reform," he said. "They are ready for their elected representatives to behave like

statesmen rather than politicians."

The discussion among Land and representatives from Roman Catholic and Jewish organizations came three and a half years after Congress last voted—unsuccessfully—on an immigration reform bill, and the other panelists indicated they believe the effort to approve comprehensive reform still may be in its early stages.

"This is a long-term struggle," said Kevin Appleby, director of migration and refugee policy for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

An immigration reform bill will not be "a silver bullet," noted Appleby, who added that the issue will continue to be addressed. Land and Appleby both cited concerns about illegal immigration among Americans that go deeper than jobs and the economy. (BP)

Recognizing 'glorious opportunities'

Words of late preacher resonate with history of Ky. camp ministry

I recently came upon the following quote: "Life is filled with glorious opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems."

That quote is from the late Jerry Falwell and is just one of his many famous quotes that are on display at his burial site at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

I must say I am quite the fan of good quotes, whether they are from politicians, Christian leaders or even sports figures. Such quotes certainly provide food for thought and potentially spur us to new ways of thinking.

Falwell's quote in particular struck me as our ministry certainly has seen days that most would have said were filled with insoluble problems. We actually were birthed as a separate entity due to the belief that we did, in fact, have such insoluble obstacles which certainly would prevent us from being a financially effective camp ministry.

Now some 14 years later, by God's amazing provisions, the camp ministry that is taking place at Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek is larger than ever, impacting more churches than ever and helping send the gospel to more countries than ever. Few

ever would have imagined in the mid-1990s that the camps would have the attendance and global impact that we see now each year.

Every year that passes we have witnessed God grow this ministry and, more importantly, grow the numbers of decisions for Christ, the numbers of students called to full-time ministry, and the number of dollars given to missions causes around the world.

As we do reflect back over the past 14 years, the amount of change we have faced is difficult to ponder, and as we look forward to the next 14 years, the magnitude of the "insoluble problems" that are bound to come our way make me just a little nauseous.

Nevertheless, God always continues to prove His faithfulness, a fact that certainly will not change in the coming years. The only question is whether we will see glorious opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems.

Ky. Baptist Assemblies



David Melber

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

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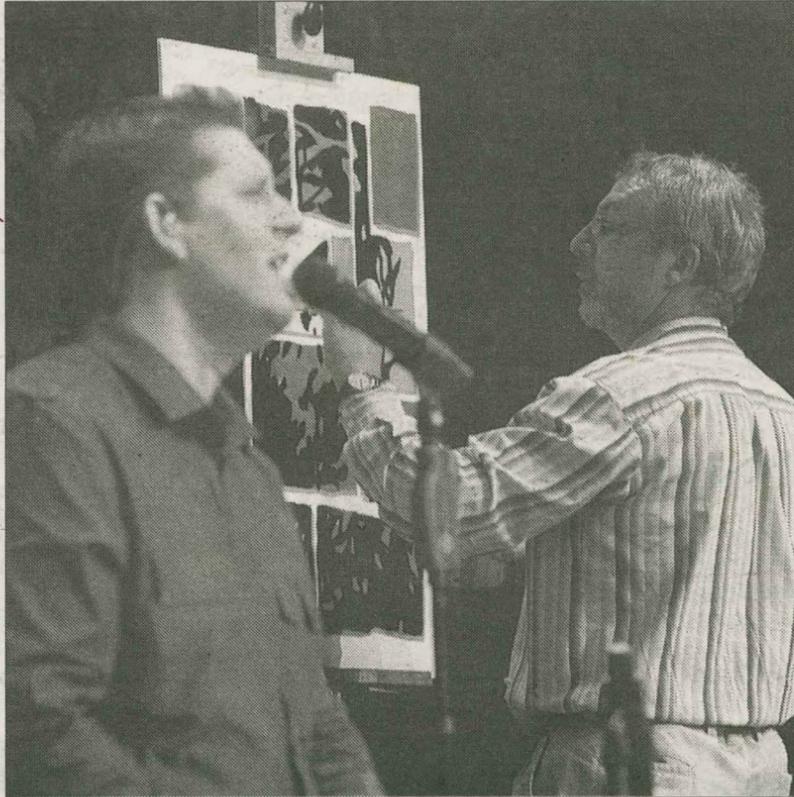


CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March

- 10 Developing Multi-Housing Ministries That Last, Crestwood Baptist Church.
- 10 Growing Ministries Tour, First Baptist Church, Whitesburg.
- 11 Developing Multi-Housing Ministries That Last, West Union Baptist Association, Paducah.
- 12 All-State Youth Choir and Orchestra Auditions, First Baptist Church, Mount Sterling; First Baptist Church, Scottsville; First Baptist Church, Walton; Lewis Lane Baptist Church, Owensboro; Lone Oak First Baptist Church, Paducah; Parkland Baptist Church, Louisville; Rose Hill Baptist Church, Ashland.
- 12 Disaster Relief Regional Training, May's Lick Baptist Church.
- 12 Region 8 RA Congress and Rally, First Baptist Church, Russell.
- 12 Vacation Bible School Clinic—East, Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington.
- 15 Growing Ministries Tour, Horse Cave Baptist Church.
- 15 Understanding Other Beliefs, Oldham-Trimble Baptist Association, Crestwood.
- 16-20 Adult Kentucky Changers West, TBA.
- 17 Growing Ministries Tour, Northside Baptist Church, Mayfield.
- 19 Hispanic Woman's Missionary Union and Evangelism Conference, First Baptist Church, Mount Washington.
- 19 Region 6 RA Congress and Rally, Kirksville Baptist Church, Richmond.
- 21-22 Welcome to Kentucky, Hilton Garden Inn & Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 22 Pastor-Staff Forum, Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington.
- 24 Growing Ministries Tour, Living Hope Baptist Church, Hopkinsville.
- 25-26 Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union Annual Meeting, First Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

Visual worship



Missionary artist Kerry Jackson (background) paints a portrait of Jesus while Jeane Bope (foreground), a member of This Hope, leads Kentucky Baptists during a praise and worship time at last week's Evangelism Conference at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown. Jackson is president of Drawing to the Rock Ministries, a North American Mission Board-certified missionary to cultural creatives, and a church planter in Atlanta. Worship leaders This Hope, a five-piece group originally from Alaska, now also is based in Atlanta. The annual Evangelism Conference last week also featured a number of breakout session classes ranging church and personal evangelism to women's, student and children's ministries. According to the Kentucky Baptist Convention's evangelism team that coordinated the event, approximately 1,300 people attended the conference over its two days. (Photo by Robin Bass)

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

Spotlight on ...

Hopkinsville



First Church will host its "Big Girls Don't Whine" women's spring brunch March 26, 10 a.m., with author **Jan Silvious** as guest speaker. Tickets are \$12 per person or \$10 for groups of 10 or more and can be purchased by calling (270) 886-1216 or sending an e-mail to FBCHopkinsville@bellsouth.net. The deadline to register is March 18.

- **COX'S CREEK**—Hobbs Church ordained its pastor, **Bill Daniel**, to the gospel ministry Feb. 27.
- **LOUISVILLE**—The Christian Business and Professional Women's group will host a networking business expo and luncheon March 10, 11:30 a.m. at the Hurstbourne Country Club. The cost is \$13. To make reservations, contact **Kim Fusting** at (502) 267-7066 or CBPWEast@gmail.com.
- **MAYSVILLE**—**Gary Ralls** recently resigned as pastor of Calvary Church. The congregation recently called **Ron Taulbee** as pastor.
- **SALYERSVILLE**—First Church will hold revival services March 13-15 with **Dave Hammond**, pastor of Faith Church in Myra, as evangelist. **Chad Brand** is interim pastor.

'Other Beliefs' conference March 15

LaGrange—Kentucky Baptists interested in learning how to better relate to people from other religious backgrounds are encouraged to attend the "Understanding Other Beliefs" Conference March 15 at La Grange Baptist Church.

Participants can select from three topics: "New Age Spirituality" led by Don Metcalf; "Comparing Mormonism and Christianity" led by Bill Ellis; and "What on Earth is the Next

Generation Thinking?" led by Dave Meredith. Facilitators are certified in their areas of teaching by the North American Mission Board.

The free event is sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention's evangelism growth team and is made possible through Kentucky Baptists' gifts through the Cooperative Program. Advanced registration is not required. The conference begins at 6:30 p.m.

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SEEKING: Bivocational youth minister to lead our youth to be mature Christ followers. Is the Lord leading you? Please send resumé to Turner Ridge Baptist Church, 60 McGraw Road, Falmouth, KY 41040; or send e-mail to daleannbeighle@yahoo.com.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for a conservative, cooperative, Southern Baptist church. Contact Stan Pinson, Wildwood Baptist Church, (606) 324-6771; or e-mail: onefurnitureman@yahoo.com.

SEEKING: Interim youth director to lead our young ladies and young men to a better understanding of God's will for their lives. This position is planned to begin June 1, 2011. Please indicate your interest by forwarding your resumé with a recent photo to Glasgow Baptist Church, 401 S. Green St., Glasgow, KY 42141, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music and youth at First Baptist Church, Sturgis, Ky., to lead congregation in singing through a combination of traditional and contemporary music, and to plan and promote youth activities. Send resumé or request job description: First Baptist Church, 802 N. Adams St., Sturgis, KY 42459; or e-mail to fbcbsturgis@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth, children and families. Woodburn Baptist Church is a growing, medium-sized, multi-generational and multi-site SBC church. Proven strengths in leadership and administrative management skills are essential. Previous successful experience in local children and student ministries, and an applicable bachelor's degree are required. Pursuit of a seminary degree is preferred. A detailed job description may be found on our website: www.woodburnbaptist.org. Submit a cover letter and resumé via e-mail to: personnel@woodburnbaptist.org; or by mail to Woodburn Baptist Church, PO Box 38, Woodburn, KY 42170, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of education/associate pastor for Olive Branch Baptist Church in Hanson, Ky. Resumés should be sent to: Olive Branch Baptist Church, 400 Olive Branch Church Road, Hanson, KY 42413; or e-mail to olivebranch552@bellsouth.net. For more information, call Bro. Gary Taylor at (270) 332-8251. Job descriptions are available.

SEEKING: Part-time bookkeeper for Fern Creek Baptist Church (approx. 15 hours a week). Applicant must be a spiritually mature Christian and active church member, have several years of experience, and have strong accounting skills. Send resumés to Fern Creek Baptist Church, 5920 Bardstown Road, Louisville, KY 40291, Attn: Personnel Committee; or e-mail to Linda@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resumés will be received through March 25. Questions? Call (502) 239-0316, ext. 103 (Linda Barnes Popham, pastor).

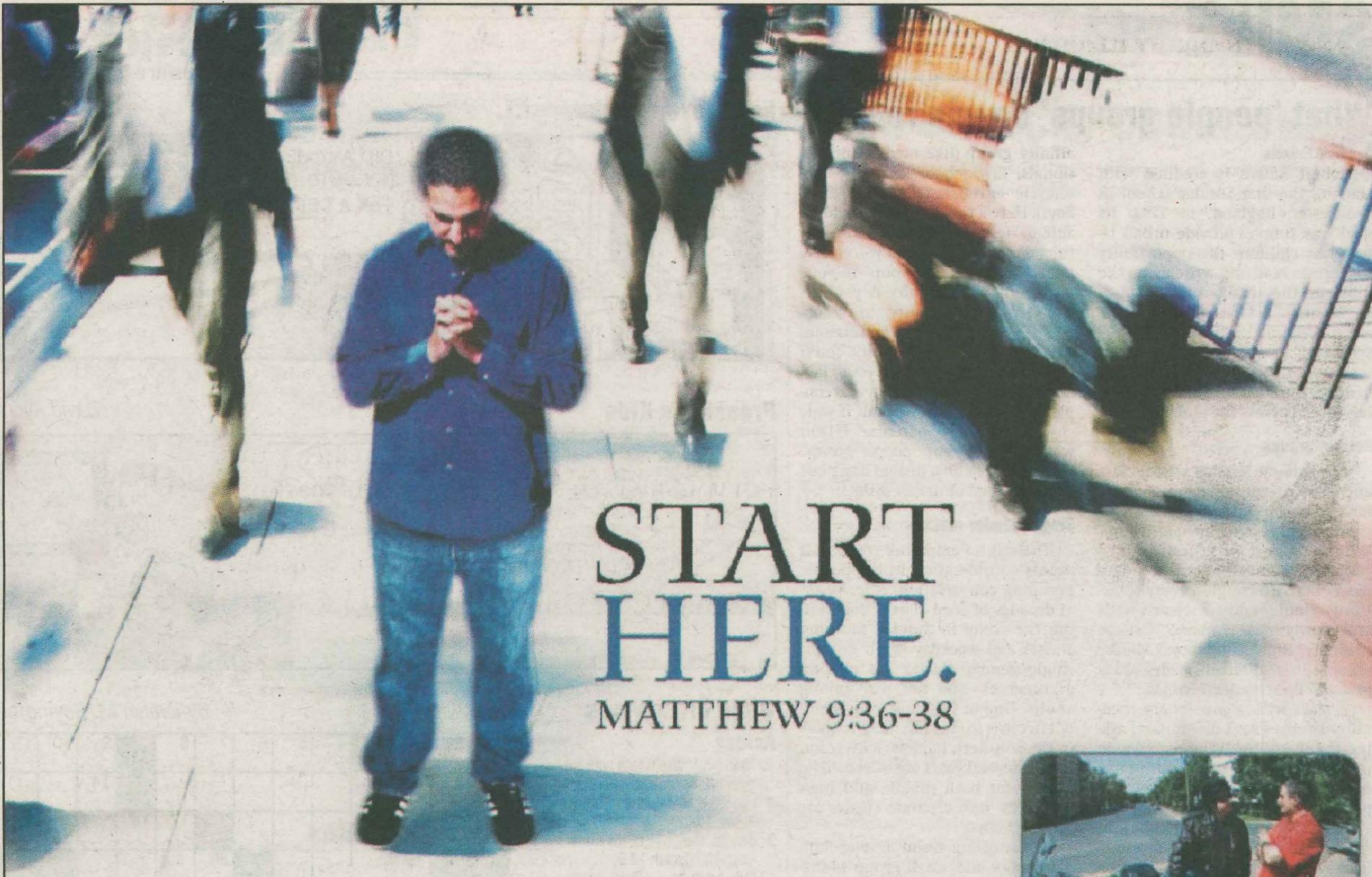
SEEKING: Senior pastor for SBC- and KBC-affiliated Northside Baptist Church, Elizabethtown, Ky. Minimum requirements: Master of divinity degree; 5-7 years senior pastor experience to lead two ministerial and six support staff while shepherding a 500-plus congregation; comfortable with blended style of worship and affirming of SBC-adopted Baptist Faith & Message. If you are interested in pursuing God's continued call on your life as a senior pastor, please submit your resumé, along with photo and the number of current church members under your pastoral care, ministerial staff you have led or currently lead, and two or more recent sermons on DVD. You may submit your resumé prayerfully and confidentially to: Search Committee, PO Box 1121, Elizabethtown, KY 42701.

SEEKING: Pastor for Reid Village Baptist Church. Please send resumé and audio/video sermon to eddie.ratliff@roadrunner.com; or mail to Pulpit Committee, 1957 Winchester Road, Mt. Sterling, KY 40353.

SEEKING: Minister of worship and education for First Baptist Church of Blountville, the county seat of King sport and Bristol, Tenn. FBC has two blended morning worship services; minister will be responsible for coordinating all musical presentations, leading some groups, as well as planning special events such as our Spirit of Christmas dinner theater. Education will include working with teams to coordinate Bible study, VBS, camps and adult education opportunities. Please submit resumé to Minister Search Team, PO Box 587, Blountville, TN 37617; or online at fbcbtn@embraqmail.com.

SEEKING: Exciting, passionate leader to direct children's ministry and oversee daily activities of family life center. Must have vision and desire to share the love of Christ with children and families through God-given spiritual gifts. Experience preferred, college degree a plus. Please send cover letter and resumé to: Search Committee, Marion Baptist Church, PO Box 384, Marion, KY 42064; or e-mail to: searchcommittee@marionbaptistchurch.com.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music who will be responsible for planning weekly worship services, working with the adult choir and all instrumentalists, and overseeing the entire music ministry of the church. Contact Pastor Rodney Bice at Bardwell Baptist Church, (270) 628-3645; or bbcpastor1@windstream.net.



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