

Shine like stars in the world
Philippians 2:15

WESTERN Recorder

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FOR THE RECORD

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Sneak Previews

Kentucky Baptists, police officers get early look at 'Courageous'

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—Michael Jacobs was a 23-year-old police officer when he pulled into a parking lot one night while on patrol in his cruiser.

Years earlier, Jacobs had accepted Christ as his Savior. But like so many young adults, he fell away from his faith after high school. A few years later, having served two years on the police force, Jacobs said he already had

seen plenty of "stuff you just want to forget."

But in his police cruiser in that parking lot, Jacobs recommitted to living his life for Christ.

"I just wasn't living for Him," Jacobs recalled. "I knew I couldn't do it without the Lord."

Now a 40-something veteran of the Louisville Metro Police Department, Sgt. Jacobs is considered a role model
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Jill and Greg Aylor (left) and Jason and Candy Whaley take in a screening of "Courageous" at First Baptist Church of Cold Spring last week. The Aylors and Jason Whaley are all police officers with the Erlanger Police Department who were invited by the church to see the movie which opens in theaters Sept. 30. (Photo by Drew Nichter)



'PRESENT BIBLE' Owenton native Autumn Adkins (third from left) competes in the youth division of the National Invitational Youth Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament in Birmingham, Ala. Adkins placed second in the competition. (Alabama Baptist photo)

Owenton teen takes second place at national Bible drill

By Robin Bass
Partnerships Director

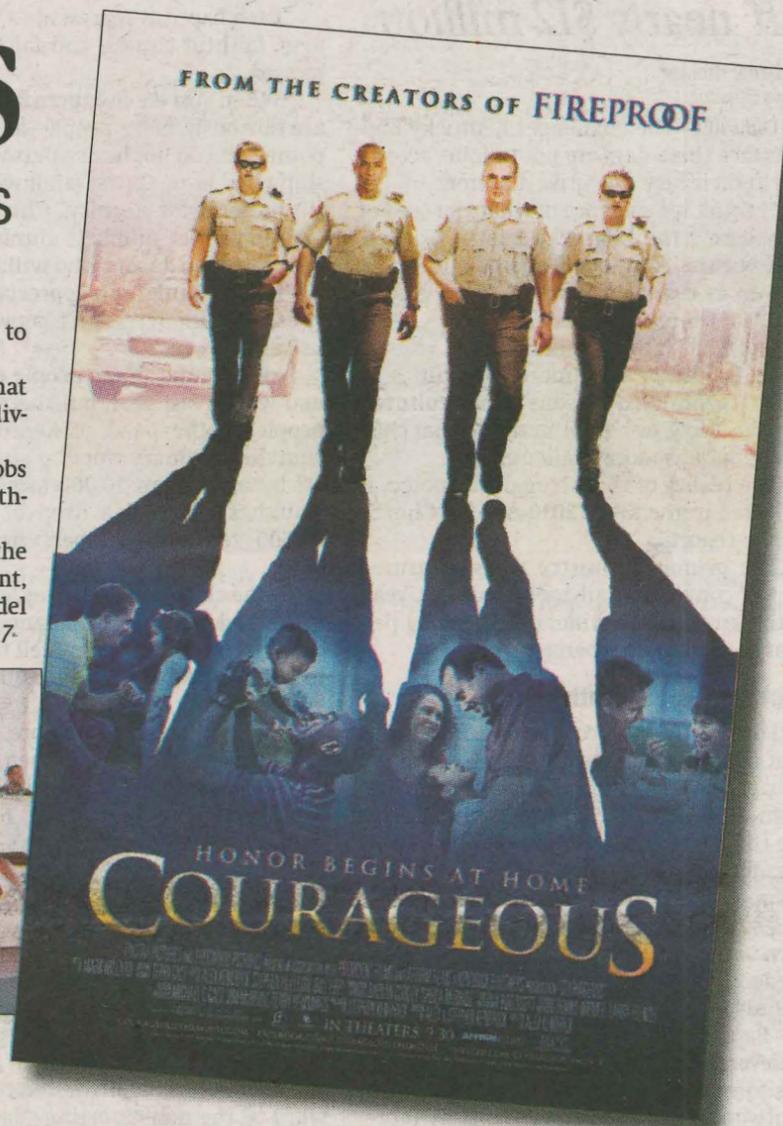
Owenton—Fifteen-year-old Autumn Adkins has been doing Bible drills for as long as she can remember.

Even before she was allowed to compete at the associational level, Autumn would practice alongside her much-older brother. At age 6, she recalled snapping to attention with a magazine between her

hands—mimicking his response to "present Bible."

Nine years, six trips to state-level competition and countless hours of scripture memorization later, Autumn achieved her highest honor when she placed second in the National Invitational Youth Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament in Birmingham, Ala., June 24.

□ See Autumn Adkins ... Page 2



'Red alert'

Southern Baptists' World Hunger Fund down to six-month aid level

By Mark Kelly
Baptist Global Response

Nashville, Tenn.—Southern Baptists face a "red alert" crisis in their World Hunger Fund, just as a massive drought/famine cycle threatens almost 11 million people in the Horn of Africa, a Southern Baptist humanitarian leader announced last week.

The situation is compounded by greatly increased needs around the world, while giving to the World Hunger Fund has sharply declined, according to Jeff Palmer, executive director of Baptist Global Response.

"We are now at a 'red alert' time for our human needs funding," Palmer said. "The overseas hunger relief fund is down to \$4.1 million dollars—enough to meet the needs of Southern Baptist international hunger projects for six months. These projects help the poorest of the poor, the most neglected and marginalized and some of the most lost people groups in the world.

"We are approaching a baseline where we are going to have to start



HELP NEEDED Southern Baptists face a "red alert" crisis in their World Hunger Fund, just as a massive drought/famine cycle threatens almost 11 million people in the Horn of Africa.

denying funds to critical projects," he added.

Southern Baptists donated \$4.3 million to the World Hunger Fund in 2010, only 40 percent of what they gave during a 12-month span a decade earlier, according to numbers supplied by the Southern Baptist
□ See Hunger Fund Red Alert ... Page 6

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Slumping ACP numbers are 'grave' concern' for new KBC exec

Baptisms at lowest point since 1994, undesignated receipts off nearly \$12 million

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—The challenges Kentucky Baptists face these days are not unique, according to their new executive director.

"I think it's evidence of what you see not only across the Kentucky Baptist Convention but the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as evangelicalism in North America," Paul Chitwood noted.

Just what is that challenge?

"It is just getting more difficult ... to reach unchurched persons in our culture," he said. "Now, we've got to rise to that challenge, but it is more challenging."

The reality of that struggle, he noted, is reflected in the KBC's 2010 Annual Church Profile report.

The primary ministry areas measured by the convention all took a hit last year, with percentage declines of less than 1 percent to more than 9 percent.

Baptism decline continues

Likely the most concerning number is that of baptisms. Kentucky Baptist churches baptized 752 fewer new believers in 2010 from 2009. The 14,575 reported baptisms are the fewest since 1994 and denotes only the fourth time since 1970 they have dropped below the 15,000 mark.

The decline in baptisms "is a grave concern for me," noted Chitwood, who succeeded Bill Mackey as KBC executive director July 1.

"Baptisms are our best indicator of new believers coming to Christ and being willing to make a public profession" of faith, Chitwood said. "So, every baptism represents eternity."

Last year's 14,575 baptisms fell considerably shy of the 20,000-baptism goal aimed for in year one of a three-year extension of

the Kentucky Baptists Connect initiative. The original plan, which ran from 2004-09, sought 25,000 baptisms per year.

While fewer baptisms is a cause for concerns, each person who was baptized in 2010 is a cause for celebration, Chitwood said.

"Each baptism represents a faithful witness, faithful church and faithful Savior," he said.

"When you see numbers fall, then there are obviously more people—at least at this point—who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (and) will not enjoy His presence for eternity," Chitwood added. "When you see numbers climb, then there are more who do and who will."

"I don't think I can appreciate the gravity of that number. I don't know that any of us but God can."

Not only did fewer people enter baptismal waters last year, but there were fewer people in the pews of Kentucky Baptist churches. Primary worship attendance fell off by more than 10,000 attendees, while churches reported a drop of more than 34,500 resident members from 2009 to 2010.

In the classrooms, Sunday School enrollment and average attendance both were down sharply. Enrollment fell from 300,527 to 286,128 people from in 2010, while average attendance was 151,328, down from 165,635 people the year before.

The missions units for men and women also took a hit in 2010. Baptist Men on Mission participation was off 6.29 percent from 2009, while Woman's Missionary Union saw its reported membership fall by 9.1 percent.

It should be noted, however, that a change in the KBC's ACP reporting process likely had a more negative effect than usual on the 2010 statistics. In years prior, with churches that customarily reported their numbers, but failed to do so in a given year, those churches' statistics were rolled forward to the non-reporting year, representing an "accurate reflection" on the church's current-year numbers, Chitwood said. That method was eliminated with the 2010 ACP report, likely revealing more glaring de-

Kentucky Annual Church Profile Statistics

Category	2010	2009	+/-	% +/-
Total membership	754,773	760,667	-5,894	-0.8%
Resident membership	507,347	541,887	-34,540	-6.4%
Total baptisms	14,575	15,327	-752	-4.9%
Other additions	13,198	13,683	-485	-3.5%
Worship attendance	241,472	251,505	-10,033	-4.0%
Sunday school enrollment	286,128	300,527	-14,399	-4.8%
Sunday school attendance	151,328	165,635	-14,307	-8.6%
Discipleship training	61,601	62,031	-430	-0.7%
Music enrollment	55,480	58,392	-2,912	-5.0%
Woman's Missionary Union	29,743	32,720	-2,977	-9.1%
Baptist Men on Mission	12,105	12,917	-812	-6.3%
Undesignated receipts	\$321,469,802	\$333,433,444	\$11,963,642	-3.6%

clines than in years past, he noted.

He did clarify, however, that method never was used for baptism numbers.

Economy impacts receipts

Nor would it likely have had much of an on Kentucky Baptists' undesignated receipts total. Churches reported \$321,469,802 in undesignated receipts in 2010, down nearly \$12 million from 2009.

The drop in receipts is not surprising given the economic uncertainty of the past few years that includes recession, rising unemployment and an ongoing national-debt crisis.

The issues of giving and stewardship are points of emphasis for the new exec. At the KBC annual meeting in Lexington last November, Chitwood, while still pastor of First Baptist Church of Mount Washington, spoke in favor of the recommendations presented by the Kentucky Great Commission Task Force.

That group's report identified a dearth in churches' undesignated receipts and their percentage giving through the Cooperative Program. It urged all Kentucky Baptists to focus more on giving to kingdom causes and spawned the "More for Christ" emphasis, which was unveiled in full detail

back in the spring.

Chitwood has reiterated his commitment to the goals of the Great Commission Task Force, saying he wants to align its recommendations with the work of the convention. Doing so, he predicted, "will result in a greater investment in kingdom work."

Chitwood called the "More for Christ" emphasis a timely plan that addresses the spiritual nature of the problem with regard to stewardship and generosity.

While it is a good start, Chitwood predicted it will take more than the three-year "More for Christ initiative to fix what ails Kentucky Baptists.

"I think it will take a genuine discipling process," he suggested, "and that will entail—it has to entail—repentance."

Chitwood said he understands the importance of the ACP report and regrets that the numbers have declined. However, "a pastor cannot live and die by statistics," he noted.

"Obviously numbers are important as they offer one means—but not the only means—of evaluating our kingdom impact," Chitwood pointed out.

But, he reminded, "you have to do your work and trust God for the harvest and the increase."

Louisville museum to celebrate life, work of prolific blind hymn writer

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—The name Fanny Crosby might very well elicit a look of uncertainty or a shrug of the shoulders when mentioned to the average churchgoer.

But in most traditional-worship settings, it's likely that same person has praised God in song hundreds of times thanks to Crosby.

Considered one of the most influential blind Americans and a celebrity in her day, Crosby is one of the most prolific hymn writers, having penned some of the best-loved selections ever included in Baptist hymnals.

The Museum of the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville will honor Crosby's legacy with a celebration Aug. 13. The event is free and will include a number of choral performances and audience sing-alongs of Crosby's hymns.

While Crosby's name may not evoke much reaction, her hymns certainly do. Songs such as "Blessed Assurance," "To God Be the Glory" and "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior" are just three of the more than 9,000 hymns Crosby wrote.

"In her lifetime, she was a celebrity—ev-

erybody knew about her," Katie Carpenter, a spokeswoman for the American Printing House for the Blind, said of Crosby, who lived from 1820-1915.

Earlier in her life, Crosby wrote poetry, more than 1,000 poems in all. It wasn't until she was in her 40s that she began writing hymns. In fact, Crosby wrote so many hymns, hymnal publishers requested she use pseudonyms for many of them so her name wouldn't dominate their hymnals, Carpenter noted. More than 200 aliases were attached to Crosby's songs.

Later in life, Crosby became a social advocate, lobbying for the rights of the blind and the urban poor and underprivileged. Much of the money she earned from her celebrity status was given to those causes.

It's been said that Crosby thanked God for her blindness, Carpenter noted, stating that "if she could've seen, she would probably have been far too distracted by what she was seeing to do the kind of work she did."

The celebration of Crosby's life is set for Aug. 13 at 11 a.m. at the American Printing House for the Blind. The event is free, but reservations are required. To reserve a spot, contact Katie Carpenter at (502) 899-2213 or by e-mail, kcarpenter@aph.org

Autumn Adkins

Continued from page 1

The event drew participants from 11 states who competed in the categories of Youth Bible Drill (grades 7-9), High School Bible Drill (grades 10-12) and Youth Speaker (grades 10-12). Autumn was invited to participate in the national youth drill after taking first in April at the state qualifying round in Elizabethtown.

"It was very exciting," Autumn said of the national tournament. "I had worked hard for it and it definitely made my parents proud."

But, Autumn noted, participating in Bible drills is much more than winning competitions. The monthly, weekly and sometimes daily practice schedule provides its own rewards.

"It's also about hiding His word in our hearts and, when tested, being able to give a testament of your faith," Autumn said. Someone recently tested her, and Autumn said she was glad to have that knowledge base to defend her Christian beliefs.

Kristi Adkins, Autumn's mother, said she and husband, Robby, never presented Bible drills as an option for her two children. Sure, they could choose whether or not they wanted to compete against other students, but it was decided early on that learning the material would be a part of their studies.

"I wanted them to do this so they could handle their Bibles well and to know how to find scripture," Mrs. Adkins said. "It's not just about memorization. We're constantly saying, 'What does this mean?' How would you use that to witness to someone? It's not about winning."

The couple is so committed to the Christian life skills developed through Bible drills that they coach about 20 children and youth at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Owenton.

As youth minister at the church, Robby Adkins focuses on the middle-and high-school students, while Kristi provides instruction for younger children. Mrs. Adkins said no child is too young to begin learning about the Bible. She noted that a 4 year old at Pleasant Ridge recently stood before the congregation and recited all the books of the New Testament and three scripture verses.

"We wish more churches would participate," Kristi Adkins said.

Ky. Baptist DR volunteers help out in North Dakota

Louisville—Kentucky Baptist disaster relief volunteers will serve in Minot, N.D., Aug. 6-20 to help residents recover after destructive flooding there in late June.

Sixteen volunteers, including two chaplains, will accompany mud-out units from Northern Kentucky and Greenup Baptist associations. Mud-out units contain equipment to help volunteers remove mud and debris from flooded homes and then pressure wash walls to prevent mold.

It was estimated that more than 4,000 homes in Minot were inundated in late June when floodwaters spilled over the banks of the Souris River. Cleanup was not possible until the waters receded. The devastation has made it difficult to find housing for volunteers until now.

Kentucky Baptists are part of a larger network of Southern Baptist volunteers that will be working in North Dakota. They comprise the third largest relief organization in the United States.

Learn more about Kentucky Baptist disaster relief at www.KyBaptist.org/DR.

This year's Sturgis rally goal: Plant a church for bikers

By Karen Willoughby
Dakota Baptist Connections

Sturgis, S.D.—After this year's Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, Baptists in the Dakotas want to birth a church.

"We would like to have a church planter and core group in place in the Black Hills by the end of this year," said Garvon Golden, interim executive director of the Dakota Baptist Convention.

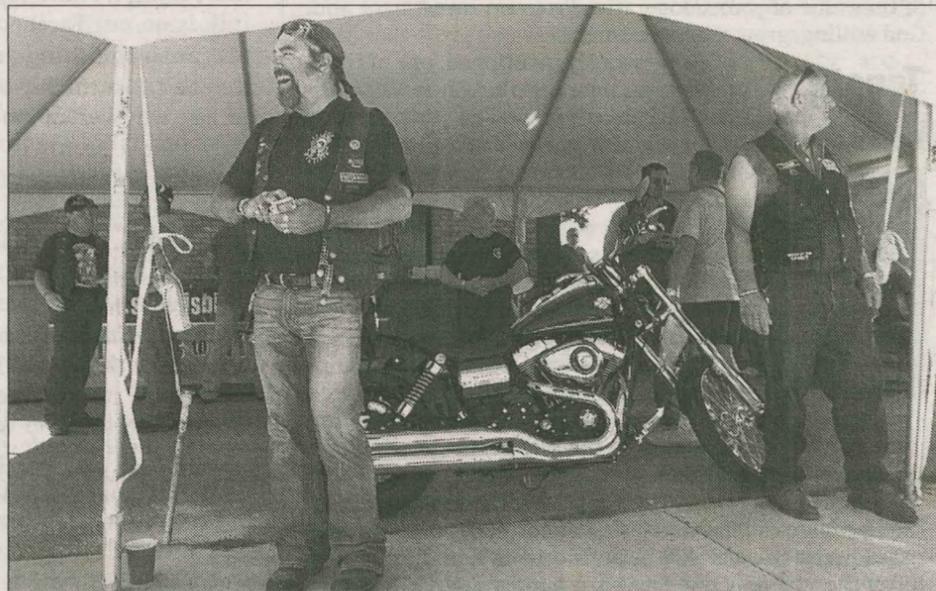
"What we envision is that this would be the first of many churches across the Dakotas and beyond started as a result of what we do here at Sturgis the first week of August each year."

Dakota Baptists' evangelism ministry at Sturgis involves about 250 volunteers who share their faith at the annual gathering of about 500,000 bikers.

The volunteers are trained in giving three-minute testimonies of the change God has made in their lives to "the affinity group we call 'bikers,'" as Golden put it. Anyone willing to listen can enter a drawing for a new Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

The annual rally in the northern part of the Black Hills in western South Dakota has, over its 71-year history, enticed many people to move to the area, but few churches are ready to meet their specific needs.

"For some, Sturgis is where the healing begins," Golden said. "We have people come to the tent who are on the fast track to unmentionable places—and they know it—and we talk with them, and they see a way out. "Their lives change, and it's a



LIFE-CHANGING TENT South Dakota pastor Roger Persing (left) and volunteer Lyn Hanson work to draw people into a hospitality tent at the 2010 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally where they can hear about God's power to change people. (BP file photo)

whole new world for them."

Some people return to their homes, but some start new lives. The church that Hopeful will start this fall in Black Hills Area Baptist Association is for those who stay.

"We need a church planter who wants to start a church for bikers," Golden said. "We're just waiting on God to send His man here, someone who is comfortable with people in the biker culture, someone who

"For some, Sturgis is where the healing begins."

Garvon Golden, interim executive director of the Dakota Baptist Convention

can start a church that multiplies itself."

While Dakota Baptists are waiting, they're busy with the final details for this year's outreach at the Aug. 8-14 rally.

"About one out of every five people we talk with makes a profession of faith," Golden said. "The Holy Spirit takes the words of the volunteers sharing their faith, and somehow turns it into just exactly what someone is needing to hear." (BP)

John Stott, 90, remembered as 'giant' of 20th century evangelicalism

London—John Stott, a major figure in evangelicalism during the 20th century who helped frame the Lausanne Covenant and authored "Basic Christianity" and a series of other popular books, died July 27 at the age of 90.

An Anglican theologian, Stott's influence spread far beyond London, where he served as rector of All Souls Church for more than 20 years. His books were popular because they were both theologically sound and easily understood.

"Basic Christianity" (1958) sold 2 million copies and was translated into more than 60 languages.

Other popular titles among the more than 40 Stott wrote include "I Believe in Preaching" (1982), "Issues Facing Christians Today" (1984), "The Cross of Christ" (1986) and "The Contemporary Christian" (1992). Stott said his goal was to "relate the ancient word to the modern world."

Stott became a rector in 1950 when evangelicalism had little influence in Anglicanism, and he helped spur its growth not only in that denomination but worldwide. He



John Stott

took sharing his faith seriously and encouraged church members to take a weekly training course in evangelism.

In 1974 Stott chaired the committee that drafted the Lausanne Covenant, a landmark document passed by 2,000-plus Christian leaders. The document outlined shared biblical beliefs and underscored the need of Christians to cooperate in missions.

Stott's death sparked a round of tributes from various Christian leaders

via Twitter. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in California, called Stott "one of my closest mentors."

"I flew to the UK recently just to pray for him & sit by his bed. What a giant!" Warren wrote.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote: "You cannot explain English-speaking evangelicalism in the 20th century without crucial reference to the massive influence of John Stott."

Author and Christian apologist Lee Strobel called Stott a "giant of the faith and a gentle, sweet soul." (BP)

BAPTIST DIGEST

Rash named Ala. executive editor—Jennifer Davis Rash has been named executive editor of The Alabama Baptist, according to an announcement by Bob Terry, the newspaper's editor and president. Rash will help make strategic decisions about the ministry of Alabama Baptists' state paper and provide executive leadership in implementing those decisions. Since 2002, Rash has served as managing editor for the weekly publication. In that role, Rash provided direction for the weekly production of the paper, as well as overseeing the four-member editorial staff and a correspondent network of more than 50 members. She has served with the paper since 1996. Prior to that, she served with the International Mission Board as a short-term missionary assigned to Caribbean Christian Publications.

Rogers' birthday to be celebrated—The Adrian Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tenn., will celebrate the late pastor's 80th birthday Sept. 18. The event will commemorate

the life of one of the most influential Southern Baptist leaders and an architect of the convention's conservative shift in the late 1970s. In addition to recognizing Rogers' ministry, the event will serve as the launch of the institute's new online program, the Adrian Rogers School of Global Leadership. The website will feature training from Rogers for pastors who are unable to attend seminary due to cost or inaccessibility.

Brewton-Parker taps Simoneaux as president—Longtime Georgia Baptist educator Mike Simoneaux has been named president of Brewton-Parker College. Simoneaux, an administrator at Truett-McConnell College for the past 12 years, has been at Brewton-Parker since February when BPC trustees named him acting president. He was serving as Truett-McConnell's vice president for advancement at the time. Both Brewton-Parker and Truett-McConnell are affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention. BPC search committee chair

Lynda Yawn of Statesboro, Ga., said the election was unanimous. Simoneaux will begin his new role immediately. Simoneaux, 72, said he is honored to be named president of the institution. "I look forward to continuing the rich heritage of Brewton-Parker. ... We believe that the college's brightest days are ahead of us as we strive to honor Jesus Christ in everything we do."

Zimbabwe Baptist seminary principal fired—The principal of the Baptist Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe has been fired for refusing to accept changes made to the school's governing documents. Henry Mugabe said he received his termination letter after he concluded a sermon at his church's revival service July 2. According to a series of e-mails and documents, the controversy stemmed from conditions for transfer of school property from the International Mission Board to the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe. The official reason for Mugabe's termination is insubordination, based in part on his refusal to meet

with a new council formed by the Baptist convention to replace the seminary's board of trustees. Mugabe said the dissolved board of trustees, not the convention, were his employers and he was under no obligation to attend the meeting.

Buckner CEO retires, replacement named—Ken Hall, chief executive officer of Buckner International since 1994, announced his retirement from the Dallas-based organization during a July 22 meeting of the board of trustees. His retirement is effective April 30, 2012, when President Albert Reyes will assume the CEO title. Hall, who was elected to the position in 1993, served as president and CEO of Buckner until 2010, when Reyes was elected president. Hall has continued serving as CEO. With his retirement, board members named Hall president emeritus as of May 1, 2012. During Hall's tenure at Buckner, the organization grew to serve more than 400,000 people annually through an array of ministries around the world.

Church planting key to growth

There are five key areas I plan to focus upon as I begin to serve Kentucky Baptists. While many other important roles for the Kentucky Baptist Convention will always exist, these are "opportunity areas" that can help us ensure you of the value of your Cooperative Program investment and, God willing, grow that investment.

Together We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

As previously mentioned, one of those areas is embracing the Great Commission Task Force report. The second area is strengthening the relationship between the KBC and local churches and their pastors.

The third opportunity concerns new church starts. My involvement in six church plants in the United States (two of them ethnic churches) has helped me to better understand the realistic challenge and incredible opportunity available in church planting. In fact, I'm convinced that church planting is absolutely necessary to turn the tide of the growing loss in the United States.

According to North American Mission Board research, the church-to-population ratio peaked at one Southern Baptist church for every 430 persons during World War I, but today there is only one Southern Baptist church for every 6,194 people. In Canada the ratio is a dismal one Southern Baptist church to 123,971 people.

Certainly there are other evangelical, gospel-centered churches reaching out to the unchurched in North America. Yet, there are still an estimated 259 million people in the U.S. (more than 2 million in Kentucky) who do not have a personal relationship with Christ.

If every church building in America was filled with a capacity crowd this coming Sunday, millions would be left without a place to worship. That is to say, established churches working harder at outreach will never be enough to reach the lost. Established churches must also seek to plant new churches.

Let's consider it from another angle. NAMB reports that 769 churches were planted in the SBC this past year. Since we have 45,727 churches, that means we planted at a rate of 1.68 percent last year. When you factor in the number of churches closing, that rate is below what is needed for growth. While our ultimate goal is not to grow the number of Kentucky Baptists or Southern Baptists, that number is one indicator of our effectiveness at reaching people for Christ and discipling them in a local church. We are losing effectiveness and, most importantly, more people are remaining lost from God's family.

Church planting is not the only way to take back the Kingdom ground we are losing, but it is one of the ways God has always used to advance the gospel. Thus, it must be one of the ways Kentucky Baptists seek to advance the gospel. Will you help us take back the ground?

Paul Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Seeing the face of Jesus in others

Last week in a bizarre news report from Anderson, S.C., an engaged couple claimed to have seen what looks like the face of Jesus on a Wal-Mart receipt. I have to admit after seeing the video (a link is on our Facebook page) one can indeed make out an astonishing image of two eyes, a nose, a mouth and a thickly bearded face. I will not venture to say whether or not it is Jesus—only that it seems to have made a meaningful spiritual impression on Jacob Simmons and Gentry Lee Sutherland. What I can say for certain is that I saw Jesus last week, not on a piece of paper but in the faces of about 50 college students freshly back from their Acts 1:8 leadership experience and in the faces of about 20 volunteers from Somerset who were helping renovate a house for furloughing missionaries.



After Thought

By Todd Deaton

Working through their Baptist campus ministry organizations, the students experienced national and international missions this summer for eight weeks (full story in next week's issue). Speaking to a full chapel at the Kentucky Baptist building, here's how these inspiring young people described the impact of their Acts 1:8 leadership experience: "expected really good friends, but came away with a family" ... "serving God's people, while all the time others are pouring their lives into us" ... "excited to see what God has planned" ... "having a lot of fun together, being intentional, keeping each other accountable, but also encouraging one other" ... "developing a passion for the lost" ... "seeing how important it is to come together in a community to accomplish great tasks for the Lord" ... "learning about the importance of making disciples" and ... "seeing everybody needs to hear the Good News."

Sitha experienced the joy of building relationships with fair workers through a ministry of First Baptist Church of Shelbyville and the thrill of watching someone be baptized immediately. "We all have fairs in our communities. Why aren't we reaching them?" Sitha challenged. Matt met missionaries in Ecuador who have seen the number of churches there increase from two to 50 in 20 years and soon will be launching a Bible college. To reach the whole world for Christ, we can't just make disciples through addition; we have to do it through multiplication, Matt discovered. Bailey shared a heartbreaking experience of witnessing to a Buddhist woman in New York City who, though she had been in the United States for two years, had not heard about Jesus. While disappointed she did not accept Christ, Bailey is

learning to "trust God is faithful to send others to water the seed that was planted." Jeremy saw an answered prayer as the students asked God to "provide friends" on a campus in Istanbul. "And He did!" Jeremy exclaimed, telling how God opened a door for them to interact with an English class. Tyler described how being "a dumb foreigner" by "asking stupid questions" allowed his team to initiate purposeful conversations with students in East Asia. More than 220 people were interested in hearing more about the gospel and five accepted Christ, he rejoiced.

On Friday, I talked with a missions team from Beacon Hill Baptist Church in Somerset, led by Pastor John Mark Toby, as they finished cleaning, painting, replacing appliances, rewiring and landscaping at the former parsonage of Watson Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville. The project is more than just a hands-on demonstration of how Baptists do missions and of cooperation between a white congregation and a black congregation, remarked Kevin Smith, pastor of Watson Memorial. In providing a stateside residence for a furloughing missionary family, their efforts will "put a closer face on the Cooperative Program for many Kentucky Baptists," he explained. Larry Middleton, the church's outreach director, added, "This is a glimpse of the kingdom and of the unity of the body of Christ—churches working together so the gospel will be spread. It's a great example for our community."

And, Kentucky Baptists' new executive director, Paul Chitwood, was there. His former church, First Baptist of Mount Washington, has agreed to assist by providing furnishings for the missionary residence. "Combining manpower and resources to get the job done is a great example for all our churches," Chitwood noted. "And, the end result will be a great blessing to missionary families for years to come," he said. Calling the joint effort "a kingdom project," Toby agreed, "It helps a sister church; it helps our missionaries; it helps Kentucky Baptists."

As for their having seen Jesus staring back at them on a store receipt, the Anderson couple had just heard a sermon in which their pastor asked, "If you know God, would you recognize Him if you saw Him?" It's a great question. But, I won't be rushing out to shop at Wal-Mart yet. I believe a better place to see Jesus is in the faces and actions of our college students and the missions teams from our churches who are serving others in His name through numerous state and international projects this summer.

WESTERN Recorder

Box 43969
Louisville, KY 40253

DR. TODD DEATON
Editor

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News Director

THOMAS C. TOWNSEND
Marketing & Business Manager

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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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MISSIONARY HOME A missions team from Beacon Hill Baptist Church in Somerset works on the former parsonage at Watson Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville that will be used to house furloughing missionaries, who then will be available to speak in Kentucky churches. Among the group are Pastor John Mark Toby and KBC executive director Paul Chitwood (standing, far left) and Larry Middleton and Kevin Jones of Watson Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville (standing, center). At left, Rabon Warren and Marvin Reynolds, retired worship pastor at Beacon Hill, roll a fresh coat of paint on the back porch. Reynolds' son serves as an International Mission Board worker in East Asia.

Seeing churches as generational mission labs

By Erich Bridges

You're just entering your prime. You're not older; you're better. You hit the gym with a vengeance. Aches and pains? If you've got 'em, you're not admitting it to yourself or anyone else. You've got big plans for the future. Sixty is the new 40. "Retirement" is not part of your vocabulary.

You're a boomer, of course. You and your generational comrades have been turning the world upside down since you were pimply teens. So you're not going to let little things like age, gravity or mortality slow you down.

Of five emerging trends in American churches cited by LifeWay Christian Resources President Thom Rainer in the summer issue of Facts and Trends, this one struck me: "Senior adult ministries in churches will experience steep declines."

Wait a minute. The U.S. population is aging, right? Senior adult ministry ought to be a growth industry. To the contrary: Boomers don't do "senior."

"As the large baby boomer generation moves into their older years, they will resist any suggestion that they are senior adults, no matter how senior they may be," Rainer explains. "Unfortunately, many churches are slow to adapt to new realities. If they do senior adult ministry the way they've always done it, it will be headed for failure."

It makes perfect sense if you understand the boomer psyche. As a generation, we are deep in denial about aging. In our minds, we're still hip, young and wrinkle-free. And to be fair, medical science has added quite a few years to our potential life spans. In many cases, we really do have more energy and vitality than our parents had when they hit 50 or 60. So we don't need no stinkin' shuffleboard. We're just getting started.

New York Times writer David Brooks recently lamented that so many college grads are being "sent off into this world with the whole baby-boomer passion in their ears ... are told to: Follow your passion, chart your own course, march to the beat of your own drummer, follow your dreams and find yourself. This is the litany of expressive individualism, which is still the dominant note in American culture."

It sounds good, but encourages boomeristic self-involvement at the expense of service to others—and to God. Here's a thought: Instead of passing on our worst trait,

what if we boomers reinvented "senior adult ministry?" Rather than waiting for churches to minister to us, what if we turned them into laboratories where boomers mentor our successors, the Millennials, to reach our communities and nations with the love of Christ?

Another trend Rainer highlights: "Our nation will see the emergence of the largest generational mission field in more than a century. According to our research, the Millennial generation, those born between 1980 and 2000, will have a very low Christian representation. Our estimates are that only 15 percent are Christian. With a huge population of nearly 80 million, that means that nearly 70 million young people are not Christians.... They are not angry at churches and Christians. They simply ignore us because they do not deem us as meaningful or relevant."

In this sea of spiritual lostness, churches are floundering to stay afloat.

"The facts are, evangelical Christianity, not to mention mainline Christianity, is declining in America," Rainer commented in a story earlier this year. "Why? One of the primary reasons is the church has become more about what we can do for our members than what we can do to reach out beyond."

But Christian Millennials are asking, "What can we do to become incarnational in our communities? What can we do to reach the nations?"

Christian boomers, who have participated in the historic expansion of the gospel across the globe, can help answer those questions. As a group, Millennials respect their parents and other elders and value relationships with them. That goes double for Millennials in the church—if churches make the effort to nurture that influence.

"They have learned from older people all their lives, and they don't want to stop now," Rainer writes. "They want to be led and taught in their places of work, in their churches and in their families. They particularly want to learn from couples who have had long and successful marriages. Many Millennials see such examples as heroes to emulate."

That's right, boomers. We can be mentors, even heroes, to Millennials who are searching for godly models of missional servanthood. I can't think of a better way to defy aging. It sure beats denial. (BP)

Erich Bridges is IMB global correspondent.

Rather than waiting for churches to minister to us, what if we turned them into laboratories where boomers mentor our successors, the Millennials, to reach our communities and the nations with the love of Christ?

Emotional regulation for couples

By James Stillwell

Q: I seem to put my spouse on the defensive all the time and I don't mean to. What's going on?

A: There are two ways of looking at potentially negative subjects coming up in a conversation. The positive way is to approach the subject with a calm, objective, puzzle-solving, "what's this?" attitude and simply notice without judgment. The other is to bring up a potentially negative subject with a "what's this!" attitude, where the other person is under suspicion, condemned and declared wrong before there is any problem-solving.

One way to deal with this common communication problem is to transform your "what's wrong with what you do" feelings into "what I need right now." Move away from blame and criticism toward expressing the longing within your heart now. When you do, you take a powerful step, owning your emotions and desires, instead of casting everything in "black and white" categories and seeing your spouse as the enemy.

Try calm, centered statements such as, "What I really need you to do..." rather than going into a rant about how your spouse "always" or "never" does something, recounting "how many times" you have asked them. Stay in the present, instead of living in the past. This approach allows you both to find a safe emotional space for problem-solving rather than immediately going into a negative, escalating conflict. A positive perspective looks at the "big picture."

Before you "jump off the deep end" by allowing the mental critic in your head to take over, take a deep breath. Look deep within, find out what you really want, and express it calmly. "Speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), if tried in our most intimate relationships, will become a habit we bring with us into the wider world. In this way you are both "down-regulating" your emotions to be able to deal with issues clearly and successfully, instead of ramping up for battle. Allow space for a Spirit-filled relationship rather than one that devolves into the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:13-26).

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



What not to be cheap about

By Jeremy White

Because I frequently write and speak about financial topics such as the importance of spending less than you earn, people assume that I am a cheapskate. I beg to differ. Although I do tend toward living "fiscally conservative," I am extravagant in areas that are important to me.

One should not judge financial wisdom solely by the test of saving or spending. I like the quote by Owen Young: "If one spends what he should prudently save that should be spent. But if one saves what he should prudently spend that is not necessarily to be commended."

The following are examples where you should be unafraid to spend more than the lowest price:

Safety and security. Don't scrimp on something that is vital to your family's safety or your personal security.

Giving. Be hilariously generous in giving. Err on the side of giving too much rather than giving too little.

Long-term assets. Don't take shortcuts or a cheap route on choosing construction materials for a home or buying something that is going to last a long time.

Vacations. Family vacations can be significant sources of memories and great times of bonding. Take one, spend some, and enjoy it; I doubt you'll regret it later.

There may be other areas of your life where buying a lower quality, lower cost item is fine. Whatever the expenditure, find those things in your life that are not significant and spend less on them so you can spend more on items that are more important.

Proverbs 27:23 says, "Know well the condition of your flocks and pay attention to your herds." If we are to change the cultural context of this verse you could rephrase it to say, "Know where your spending is, how much it is and what is important for you to spend."

Jeremy White is a CPA with Blythe White and Associates in Paducah.



Strengthening and equipping pastor's wives

By Kathy Litton

A ministry wife exists in a rare environment. To live and work alongside one's husband in Kingdom work is a precious, unique calling. Yet few career tracks in the marketplace have a dynamic quite like that of being a minister's wife.

In ministry, a man's wife is closely associated with and personally connected to his work. In corporate culture, the 40-plus hours a man spends in his workplace has little or nothing to do with his wife. We pastors' wives are partners in our husbands' vocations like few others. We serve as supportive companions with varying degrees of intentionality, involvement and energy to extend our pastor husbands' work and calling. We are a key influence in their effectiveness.

Yet, while a pastor's ministry assignment is clear, the wife's rarely is.

Much is expected of us, spoken or unspoken. Juggling our homes while attempting to balance ministry is demanding. We have valid concerns for our families and finances. We have jobs we go to, and we serve in our ministries. We have our own health and family crises to live through. While many know the joy of a vibrant church with busy happy demands, others serve in hard places with little fruit.

Ministry life may be a strange culture to our experience. We have uncertainties about our role and our calling. Our behind-the-scenes influence

with our husbands is powerful, and we want it to be godly and encouraging. Fostering our own spiritual life with the Word and prayer is a daily struggle. We often feel inadequate, ill-prepared and overwhelmed. While unknown to those around us, we have seasons when we are empty and depleted.

Our pastor-husbands grasp the notion that we are key in their effectiveness. They realize the intimate connection their wives share in their calling to advance the gospel. Our husbands would be the first to testify to the critical role we play in their lives and to the ministry. They know how much love, strength, encouragement, joy, companionship, wisdom, confidence, hope, faith and even fun they draw from us.

Most understand the incredible sacrifices and investments of their wives as well as the various demands and expectations placed on them. They recognize how few deposits are made into our lives—with constant withdrawals occurring. When that is the case—as it is far too often—struggle, strain and crisis may occur. It is no secret today that many ministry families are at a breaking point.

Ministry wives represent a great deal of leadership and influence within the local church and the Kingdom of God. These women fulfill this role with far too little support, training or encouragement. Under the leadership of the North American Mission Board,

a new ministry for pastors' wives has emerged, designed to strengthen, support, train and encourage women in this critical role.

How can we strengthen and equip ministry wives?

She longs for encouragement, support and prayer. Since she exists in a rare environment, an understanding friend would refresh her soul. She or her family may need loving care in a sensitive, family or personal crisis. She can receive helpful training in her arena of ministry as well as leadership development to increase her influence and impact. With these investments, she will be empowered to partner more fruitfully and effectively with her husband to advance the gospel.

In my new role as director of this ministry, I am engaging ministry wives across the country to hear hearts as we identify issues and needs. Workgroups are being formed to develop practical strategies to strengthen ministry wives across a broad spectrum of needs. With collaboration and partnerships across Southern Baptist life, I believe we can equip ministry wives more intentionally.

She is key. For far too long she has gone under-supported in her role. By strengthening her, I believe we strengthen our ministry to advance the gospel. (BP)

Kathy Litton is national director of NAMB's ministry to pastors' wives. Her husband is Ed Litton, pastor of First Baptist North Mobile in Saraland, Ala.

FIRST PERSON

Reaching the world through Lottie Moon

International missions offering fueled by churches of all sizes

By Don Graham
International Mission Board

Coushatta, La.—A little church with a big secret sits on a sleepy stretch of U.S. Highway 71 in northwest Louisiana.

Fairview Baptist Church averages only 150 people in worship on Sunday mornings, but the congregation gave more to international missions through the 2010 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering than any other church in the Southern Baptist Convention—\$832,821.37 to be exact.

And it was one especially generous donation—\$800,000 from an anonymous church member—that rocketed Fairview to the top giving spot.

Large gifts from churches like Fairview helped the International Mission Board bring in the fourth-largest Lottie Moon offering last year, topping \$145 million. Named for Southern Baptists' most celebrated missionary, the offering supports nearly 5,000 IMB missionaries for their housing, salaries, medical care and children's educations, among other needs.

In 2009, that support enabled missionaries and their national partners to baptize more than 360,000 people and start more than 29,000 churches overseas.

"We're here to invest in the kingdom," Fairview pastor Matt Endris said. "We're not here to hoard money in storehouses. ... We've got people who are faithful to Christ and they have a vision for the Great Commission and, as a result, they're putting their money where their mouth is."

Fairview's \$832,000 offering is nearly a 3,700 percent increase over the \$21,375 the church gave to Lottie Moon in 2009. To be fair, Endris acknowledged the church has a

unique advantage. It's located in an area rich with natural-gas deposits that geologists call the Haynesville Shale. Rising energy prices and new drilling technology have birthed a natural gas "gold rush" in the area, and local landowners are cashing in—including some members of Fairview Baptist.

"We had some individuals in the church, who, out of what the Lord had given them, committed large sums of money to Lottie Moon," Endris explained. They are "just very generous people who've got a heart to give."

Obeying God's command

Endris is among a handful of people who know the identity of the donor who gave the \$800,000, and arranged an e-mail interview for this story. When asked why he or she chose to give such a large sum to support the work of Southern Baptist missionaries, the individual humbly responded by citing two Bible verses: 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, "He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully ... for God loves a cheerful giver," and Acts 1:8, "You shall be my witnesses ... even to the remotest part of the earth."

"It's a command, not a question," Endris noted. "It's not 'if' we go, but 'when and how' we go, because we are to reach the ends of the earth. It starts at home and works its way out."

Fairview wasn't the only big Lottie Moon giver in 2010. Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., raised more than \$618,000 to support Southern Baptist missionaries serving overseas, placing second in overall giving. On the opposite end of the spec-

The drought in the region is the worst since 1951, noted Abraham Shepherd, who with his wife, Grace, directs BGR work in northern Africa. He pointed to a USAID analysis that shows the drought has driven up food prices and weakened livestock, thus increasing malnutrition, hunger and famine.

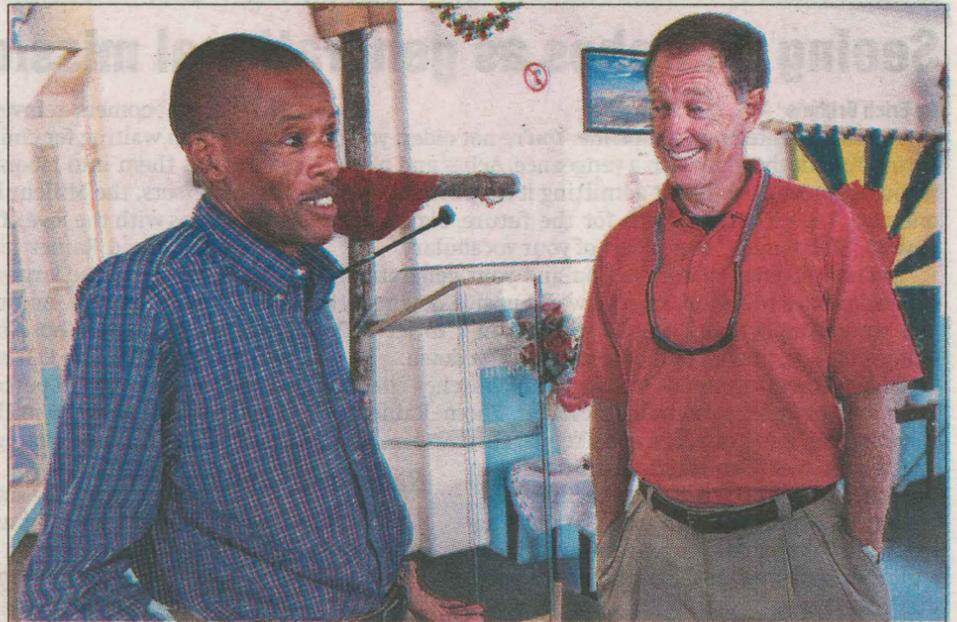
Hunger projects in the Horn and eastern Africa have totaled more than \$250,000 just in the past two years, Palmer said.

"Southern Baptists, who care so deeply about people in need, have given very generously to the World Hunger Fund in years past," Palmer said. "They are able to give in confidence because every dollar donated to the World Hunger Fund is used 100 percent to help hungry people."

"Now it looks like the World Hunger Fund has become the best-kept secret in Southern Baptist life," he added. "It's a secret that needs to get out for the sake of millions whose lives and destinies are threatened by hunger or starvation."

While World Hunger Sunday is scheduled in Southern Baptist churches for Oct. 9, the dual crises in Africa and the fund itself call for a daily response to people in desperate need right now, Shepherd noted.

"Southern Baptist family, invite Jesus to your dinner table. Take Him out to lunch, and in His name, give His portion to millions of people affected by the hunger crisis," Shepherd urged. "We can eat when we are hungry, but they cannot. Would you care to make a difference?"



GLOBAL FOCUS Bryant Wright (right), pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, talks with Pastor Stanley of Berea Baptist Mission Church during a visit to Johannesburg, South Africa. Wright has led Johnson Ferry to become one of the convention's strongest supporters of international missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Last year, the church gave \$618,232 to help fund the work of the nearly 5,000 Southern Baptist missionaries serving overseas. (IMB photo)

trum from Fairview, Johnson Ferry averages 4,500 in Sunday morning worship.

"Historically it began with our senior pastor," Brian Fox, a missions pastor at Johnson Ferry, said of Bryant Wright's commitment to missions giving. Wright, currently serving as president of the Southern Baptist convention, has "set the standard that we've been blessed to follow over the years," Fox said.

"We want to do everything we can to get as much of our resources onto the foreign mission field, to see that unreached people groups around the world have an opportunity to hear the good news," Fox added.

"That is why Lottie Moon and (the IMB) is such a priority to us."

Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, and Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., also ranked among the top five churches in giving to Lottie Moon last year, contributing \$600,030 and \$513,679, respectively. Both have held a top-five ranking the past four years, giving a combined total of more than \$4 million to the offering during that time.

"People talk about a purpose-driven church; we're a mission-driven church," said Prestonwood's executive pastor Mike Buster. (BP)

Hunger Fund Red Alert

Continued from page 1

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. The ERLC focuses on hunger awareness as a moral/social issue. The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention distributes donations to the World Hunger Fund to the International (80 percent) and North American (20 percent) Mission boards.

"Last year was the lowest that donations to the World Hunger Fund have been in 20 years," Palmer said. "This is very disturbing, seeing the huge need of the crisis looming in the Horn of Africa. Our Southern Baptist avenue of seeing the lost, last and least be helped both physically and spiritually, is about to dry up."

African crisis worst in 60 years

Recent news reports have heightened interest in the crisis in the Horn of Africa and neighboring countries in eastern Africa, where the United Nations estimates about 770,000 people have fled to refugee camps and about \$1.3 billion will be needed to address the crisis. The region suffers from long-term cycles of severe hunger, sharpened now by decades of failed crops, economic crises and climatic changes.

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FILM DISTRICT ENTERTAINING

'Courageous' screenings

Continued from page 1

to his fellow officers. With that status among his peers, he said he knows he is being watched and is held to a higher standard.

"If you profess to be a Christian, you have to live it," he explained.

Jacobs and his wife, Rayann, were among the dozens of law-enforcement personnel, Kentucky Baptist ministers and their spouses who got a sneak peek at "Courageous," the new film from the producers of "Fireproof" and "Facing the Giants." The

movie opens in theaters nationwide on Sept. 30.

The early screenings are the plan of LifeWay Christian Resources which is helping to promote the film, especially among church leaders and law-enforcement officers in strategic communities nationally.

Eddie Clay is LifeWay's Kentucky church consultant. He has arranged a handful of "Courageous" screenings across the state, including two last week—one at First Baptist Church of Cold Spring, the second at Louisville's Highview Baptist Church.

Between the two showings, dozens of law-enforcement personnel and ministers from around the state got a first look at the film, produced by Sherwood Pictures, the film ministry of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga.

The movie focuses on a group of five

men, four of them police officers, who face adversities both on the job and at home. After one of the officers experiences a family tragedy, he exhorts the others to strive to become better fathers, husbands, police officers and men—and to hold each other accountable in doing so.

"I thought it just related extremely well to life and some real-life issues that families deal with," said Ronny Raines, pastor of First Baptist, Cold Spring.

"There are some scenarios in the movie that are just what we find on a Sunday morning or any given week in the life of the church," he said, "and those are portrayed very, very well."

The northern Kentucky pastor said the movie is a timely one in light of the struggles families face and the inadequate representations of fathers in today's media-driven culture.

'Realistic' portrayal

Jacobs agreed. He said the depiction of the police officers—both at home and on the job—was "very realistic."

Jacobs explained that the time he has at home away from his job does not belong to him at all. "Your free time is not really your time; it's your kids' time." The Jacobses have four children ranging in age from 9 years old to 18 months.

Even his kids' time can become work time at any given moment. It is not uncommon, Jacobs said, for him to be called out after hours to respond to a call. "That's time I can't get back," he noted.

Reflecting on "Courageous" and its message, Jacobs admitted he's been "in transition" during the past year, trying harder to put his family ahead of his profession.

"I had been putting my career first," he said. "I think this movie will be a catalyst for me to change things."

Sgt. Jacobs said he will encourage his fel-



INTRODUCTIONS Ronny Raines, pastor at First Baptist Church of Cold Spring, welcomes those attending the "Courageous" screening at the northern Kentucky church July 28. (Photo by Drew Nichter)



MOVIE NIGHT Dozens of law-enforcement personnel and their spouses gathered at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville last weekend for an early screening of "Courageous." The previews are meant to draw more people to theaters for the movie's opening weekend. (Photo by Robin Bass)

low officers to see the movie when it hits theaters next month. "I really hope I can use this as a tool," he said. "You don't have to be a Christian to appreciate the values."

First Baptist, Cold Spring already has a theater rented out in a nearby town Oct. 2 to show the movie as an outreach event.

And according to Eddie Clay, that is exactly what the early showings are meant to do—spread the word. He said LifeWay's aim is to see "Courageous" become the top movie at the box office after its first weekend.

With additional reporting by Partnerships Director Robin Bass

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Florence Area Accommodations

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COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

Poll: Americans want religious presidents

But remain vague on details of candidates' faith

By Nicole Neroulis

Washington—Americans want their presidents to be religious, but many have trouble identifying the faiths of President Obama and leading GOP contender Mitt Romney and Rep. Michele Bachmann, a new poll shows.

A majority of Americans (56 percent) say it's important for a presidential candidate to have strong beliefs, even if those beliefs differ from their own, according to the poll conducted by Public Religion Research Institute in partnership with Religion News Service.

Yet the religious groups most firmly behind this point—white evangelicals (73 percent) and ethnic minority Christians (74 percent)—often falter when asked about politicians' religions.

For instance, just 44 percent of white evangelicals know that Romney is a Mormon. At the same time, more than eight in 10 evangelicals say Mormon religious beliefs greatly differ from their own.

Even fewer ethnic minority Christians (21 percent) knew Romney's religion. And only one in three Americans can correctly identify Obama's Christian faith. Consistent with previous polls, about one in five (18 percent) Americans think Obama is Muslim.

Daniel Cox, research director for PRRI, said Romney's Mormonism could be a liability: Of people who say Mormon beliefs are significantly different than their own, Obama currently leads Romney, 49 percent to 28 percent.

"Because views about the Mormon faith

are tied to political support, Romney will need to address these perceptions as Americans learn more about him during the campaign," Cox said.

Still, observers cautioned that perceptions can change over time, or even take a back seat to other factors like party loyalty or pocketbook concerns. And for Republicans, simply beating Obama could be the most important factor of all.

White evangelicals "are going to be more likely to vote Republican, even if the party nominates someone who isn't known for strong faith commitments," said Gary Scott Smith, an expert on presidential religions at Grove City College in western Pennsylvania.

In other findings:

- Just four in 10 Americans can correctly identify Romney's religion; 46 percent say they don't know. When asked Obama's religious beliefs, a full 40 percent of Americans said they didn't know.

- White evangelicals are the group most likely to say they don't know what Bachmann's beliefs are (51 percent), even though she attends a Baptist church, and only 35 percent say she has similar religious beliefs to them.

- At a little more than 70 percent, Republicans and Tea Party members are significantly more likely than Democrats (51 percent) to say it's important for a presidential candidate to have strong religious beliefs. Tea Party members (46 percent) are even more likely than Republicans as a whole (38 percent) to say it is "very" important for a candidate to have strong religious beliefs.

- People who say it is important for a candidate to have strong religious beliefs tend to prefer Romney to Obama, 43 percent to 36 percent, or Bachmann over Obama, 44 percent to 38 percent, in head-to-head matchups. (RNS)

God tops Congress in approval survey

Washington—More than half of U.S. voters approve of God's job performance, according to a new poll, making God more popular than all members of Congress.

The poll—conducted by the Democrat research firm Public Policy Polling—surveyed 928 people and found that 52 percent of Americans approved of God's overall dealings, while only 9 percent disapproved.

Questions about God were asked as part of a larger survey assessing American opinions of congressional leaders in the midst of the debt-ceiling debate in Washington.

God's approval rating exceeded that of House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio,

as well as both Democrats and Republicans in Congress, with each party receiving only a 33 percent approval rating.

God also polled significantly higher than the scandal-ridden media baron Rupert Murdoch. Only 12 percent of those polled viewed him favorably, compared to 49 percent of respondents who viewed him unfavorably.

The poll also gauged God's handling of specific "issues." When asked to rate God on the creation of the universe, 71 percent of voters approved and only 5 percent disapproved. Respondents also were generally appreciative of God's governance of the "animal kingdom," with 56 percent approving and 11 percent disapproving. (RNS)

Tell me a story

All good stories pale in comparison to the 'old, old story' of Jesus Christ's love

By Paul Davidson, OBI campus minister

Do you love a good story? I love to hear one, read one, watch one and tell one. If a story is really good, I don't ever want it to end. I want to hear, read or see the next chapter, the next book or movie in the series. I want it to go on and on.

Stories are powerful. They grab my mind and grip my heart; they expand my world and give me windows into the bodies and souls of other people so I can live a richer, fuller, more compassionate and Christ-honoring life. Stories, either true or fictional, convey truth in ways that merely stating a truth in bald, propositional form cannot.

Jesus knew this, so He told stories about His Father and His kingdom. Instead of simply saying, "God is love," Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son which demonstrated what the love of God looked like. That 2,000-year-old story is powerful and classic even today.

I (or should I say "you and I?") are not the only ones who love stories. Best-seller lists and box-office receipts bear witness to the fact that people of all ages—especially teenagers—love stories, even those with a spiritual dimension to them (as the "Twilight" and "Harry Potter" series demonstrate).

In our chapels this summer, we tried to take advantage of the love our students have for stories by periodically using movies as extended "sermon illustrations." We showed three movies in installments and talked about the spiritual lessons to be learned from the stories we saw. We discussed the scriptural truths contained in the

stories and the way the people in them are similar to each of us.

Each movie was chosen to let us see how God worked in other people's lives, bringing them to Christ and helping them walk with Him through the challenges of life. I think it is safe to say that at the end of summer school, the students, as well as their teachers, were glad we had watched "Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story," "Faith Like Potatoes" and "WWJD: What Would Jesus Do?" I know I was.

I also was glad for another privilege I had this summer: listening to the life stories of teenagers who came to our campus for admission interviews. Each young man and his family came with a unique and important story. Some came with academic needs as a central part of their stories; others came with fractured or dysfunctional family relationships as the setting for theirs. Some came with physical needs that we needed to hear about and discuss.

Above all and in each of them there was a greater story that was readable: Here was a precious young life, scarred by living as a sinner in a sinful world, but loved by his Creator and needing the hand of the Master Author to edit the story and lead in the writing of the next chapters.

That's why we're here at OBI: to "tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love." The whole world—every person, every generation, every tribe and tongue—needs to hear that story. We love to tell it. We love to watch the Lord write the next chapters in these life stories. Thanks for helping us do so.

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

This is Oneida



W.F. Underwood

God always provides

Cleveland experiences God's provisions while on campus

It didn't take long for first-year student Novie Cleveland to experience God's provision when he moved his family to campus. Many of our families face some unknowns when they make the transition. But Cleveland found out quickly that wherever God does lead, He always will provide.

"I was really stressed about finding a job when we first moved to campus," Cleveland recalled. "I left a really good job making good money in South Carolina when we left to come to Clear Creek. I am a pretty good maintenance person. I did all the things around our house to keep it up, so I was praying that God would open up an opportunity for me to work in the maintenance department when I got to campus."

"I was here on campus just about a week when I got a job interview with the maintenance department. Not very long after the interview they called me and offered me a job."

"Not long after I arrived on campus," Cleveland continued, "I was also approached by New Testament professor Dr. Roy Lucas about serving as children's minister at First Baptist Church of Loyal, where he

serves as pastor. At first I just brushed it off because I felt that youth ministry was my calling. But the more I thought about it, I found myself thinking about different things I could do with the children to minister to them, and I felt drawn to the position.

"I felt that God wanted me to take the position for now to teach me some things about serving in the local church," Cleveland noted. "I also get to learn through being able to serve alongside Dr. Lucas and learning about ministry from him as he gives me opportunities to do different things in the church."

"Recently we experienced a week where we were really stretched for money," Cleveland said. "It was the beginning of the week and I went to check my mailbox. There was a check in there for \$400. We had no idea it was coming. It was like we worried for nothing wondering if we were going to make it to the next pay day."

God always provides.

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@ccbbc.edu

NATIONAL NOTES

DADT repeal certified—President Obama and Pentagon leaders have certified that the U.S. military is prepared for open homosexuals to serve in the armed services. The certification means only a 60-day waiting period remains before final repeal. In compliance with a law enacted in December, the move certified that revocation of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell law would not impair military effectiveness. Critics of the reversal warn it will result in infringements on religious liberty, as well as cause harm to the readiness, privacy and retention of service members. The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and other pro-family and conservative organizations opposed the repeal of DADT.

Willow Creek cuts ties with Exodus—Willow Creek Community Church, a megachurch in suburban Chicago, has quietly ended its partnership with Exodus International, an "ex-gay" organization. Willow Creek decided to sever ties with the Florida-based ministry in 2009, Christianity Today reported, but the decision only became public in June. Church officials described the move as a shift in approach rather than a change in belief. A church spokeswoman said the church continues to welcome those who are attracted to people of the same sex. Alan Chambers, president of Exodus, sees the move as a disappointing trend. "There are Christians who believe like one another who aren't willing to stand with one another, simply because they're afraid of the backlash people will direct their way if they are seen with somebody who might not be politically correct," he told CT.

'Jesus came to work that day'

Anesthetized pastor's operating room words still speak hope five years later

By Norm Miller

Richmond, Va.—Pastor Mark Becton's skin cancer surgery five years ago continues to touch lives—not medically, but spiritually.

Becton, pastor of Grove Avenue Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., underwent surgery in August 2006 to remove the skin cancer and—while under general anesthesia—quoted Scripture and spoke words of encouragement heard by three medical professionals in the operating room.

Anesthesiologist Gail Heppner heard Becton and thought he wasn't completely sedated, so she upped his dosage. But Becton continued. When Heppner turned down the volume of the monitors and the music playing in the background, Becton's words became clearer to her.

"He is not only talking, he is completely articulate, clear as a bell," Heppner said. "As I listened, I felt this is not a man preaching, this is not a man in prayer—this is the Holy Spirit."

Heppner recalled what happened during the pastor's surgery at both of Grove Avenue's worship services in September 2006 which were televised locally and via satellite. More than 2,000 requests for DVD copies of the service have been made from around the world.

"I know there are Christians in the room in pain. Some feel empty and used up (and) guilty because they feel they

have nothing left to give God," Heppner said, recalling Becton's words.

Becton's words shocked nurse Carol Miller, who also addressed the Grove Avenue congregation during the September 2006 service.

A week before the surgery, Miller had voiced the same words to Heppner—that she felt "empty, used up and guilty" because she had nothing left to give to God.

Miller noted her suspicion at how Becton knew the words she had spoken to Heppner a week earlier. "Dr. Becton didn't know me," she told the Grove Avenue congregation. "Where did he hear that from?"

Nurse: "I'm listening"

Equally stunned was Heppner, who had asked two others to pray for Miller. "At that point, the scientist in me was gone," Heppner said, noting that she "nearly burst into tears" over what her patient had said.

Miller's reaction in the operating room was, "OK, I'm listening, I'm listening."

"I was so filled with pain, this agonizing, grief-stricken pain, this weight of the world in my heart," said Miller, whose husband died Christmas 2001 and whose daughter died a year later. "My heart was dried up and empty. That's the way I felt. ... I came to work every day and smiled. I went to church and prayed about it. But

when Dr. Becton started speaking, you could feel the Holy Spirit in that room. Jesus came to work that day to take the burdens from my heart."

"Carol, let me have it, all your hurt and pain, just give it up," Becton told her while sedated during the surgery.

"And that's what I did," Miller said.

"We put Dr. Becton to sleep, and everything went as normal," said surgeon Burton Sundin, the third medical professional who was impacted by Becton's words in the OR five years ago. "We were waiting for the pathology to come back on his specimen, and the Holy Spirit spoke through him. He began to say things—the Holy Spirit began to say things—through Dr. Becton to me."

Sundin recalled Becton's words: "Dr. Sundin, you were delivered to me specifically to be my surgeon. And God has great plans for you and your life. And he has given you many gifts. They are His gifts, and He wants to use them through you, for Him. He has chosen you specifically to be His servant. ... God hears your prayers. He is near."

Sundin had prayed before Becton's surgery for relief from job-related feelings of burnout and despair.

"Disease seemed to be winning its battle against me," he said. "Patients were unhappy and my life was in a total turmoil. I was dealing with the day-to-day toil and turmoil of being a young surgeon and trying to get my practice going."

"The day before Dr. Becton's surgery, I left late with work on my desk piled to the ceiling. I was broken and I was seeking God even though I've always been a Christian."

"Some people will say it was the drugs talking or it just happened," Sundin said. "But it lifted the heaviness from all of our hearts."

Pastor humbled

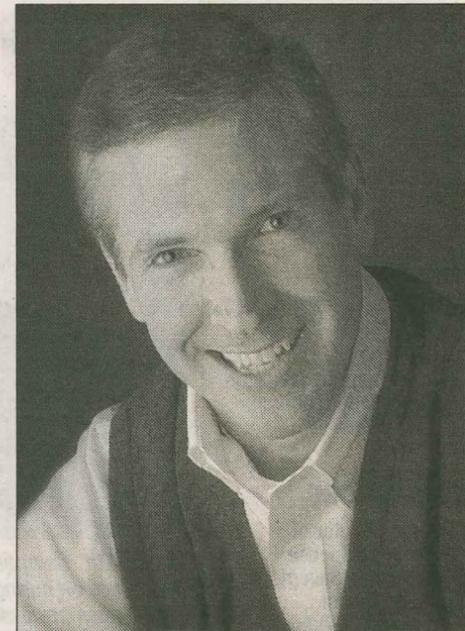
Becton, in a telephone interview with Baptist Press this year, said former International Mission Board president Jerry Rankin attended Grove Avenue that September 2006 Sunday and later called to advise him.

"Dr. Rankin said he was in awe in of what God had done," Becton recalled. "And he warned me of two things. One was that those of us who were involved in the event would go through spiritual attacks and that Satan would try to discredit the story."

"The other was to make sure the experience didn't become the only story of my life," noted Becton, who has spoken about the event only twice publicly.

"My heart was dried up and empty. That's the way I felt. ... But when Dr. Becton started speaking, you could feel the Holy Spirit in that room. Jesus came to work that day to take the burdens from my heart."

Carol Miller, an operating room nurse whom God spoke to through Pastor Mark Becton.



Mark Becton

Months afterward, Becton shared the experience at a pastor's request while preaching at a revival. A church member, who'd prayed for years regarding her husband's salvation, saw her spouse give his life to Christ after hearing Becton's story.

Other spiritual results were immediate and others ongoing. More than 50 family members of the medical professionals involved in Becton's surgery attended Grove Avenue to hear the account. After each service, about three-quarters of those in attendance came forward to pray and recommit their lives to Christ, Becton said.

The pastor said what God did that day spread through the medical communities in neighboring cities as it became front-page news in the Richmond Times Dispatch five years ago.

Becton said he considers himself an unlikely candidate for what God did in the operating room. He also thinks "it's unlikely that this would come from our church, which has a great reputation of proclaiming conservative biblical truth. For this to happen here would be unexpected."

Not sure of all the reasons why God did what He did, Becton said members of Grove Avenue Baptist Church have a renewed passion for sharing the gospel and the love of Christ at home and abroad. That's due, in part, he said, to another message he received and enunciated during the surgery: "Time is short, and many must come."

In the five years since, Grove Avenue members' efforts in discipleship, missions and ministry have grown appreciably. A church missions program that already had seen 700 people come to Christ helped plant eight churches.

Local ministry is expanding as some schools now request Grove Avenue's assistance with fall festivals, helping the church reach the world in the city of Richmond. Some 27 foreign languages are spoken in the various homes of local school children.

Becton added that some Grove Avenue members who now are prayerwalking in the city have met people from other churches on the streets doing the same thing.

"We're having a hard time keeping up with what God is doing in the lives of our members," Becton said. "We have a sense that God is doing things deeper than I could see or records could show."

Becton said every retelling of the story, whether public or private, elicits smiles and even tears of amazement. "For those who have a relationship with Christ, their faith is stirred. And for those who don't, there's a sense of awe." (BP)

"He is not only talking, he is completely articulate, clear as a bell. As I listened, I felt this is not a man preaching, this is not a man in prayer—this is the Holy Spirit."

Anesthesiologist Gail Heppner, who witnessed Pastor Mark Becton speak to her and others during a medical procedure five years ago in which he was under general anesthesia

Parents' influence

Parents who model stewardship will have children who do likewise

Did you read the article in the July 22-24 edition of USA Weekend titled "You don't have to be rich"? What testimonies billionaire couple Bill and Melinda Gates gave in an interview about how every American can give regardless of one's financial station in life.

As you most likely know, Bill Gates dedicated his life to revolutionizing technology and became the richest man in the world. Then he decided to give half his fortune away to improve education and combat poverty and disease. Now, the Microsoft co-founder and his wife have a new mission in life, namely, to encourage others, rich and otherwise, to pitch in, too.

Melinda testified: "The more you get engaged and the more you learn about giving back, the more you want to do." She advised we "take some small step to give something of yourself and see where it leads you."

What really grabbed me was their testimony about why they do what they do. When asked what motivated them to help on such an astonishing scale, both Bill and Melinda had the same reply: their parents.

Bill stated: "I think the easiest way to

develop strong beliefs is when you see your parents not only espousing those beliefs but acting on them. ... Both of us grew up in families big on giving back."

Melinda said "her family also emphasized service to others. ... That's why some find it hard to believe this came so naturally to us to give back, ... but when you grow up in families like that, of course we're going to, ... that's where we come from."

I, too, had Christian parents who began teaching me at an early age—and holding me accountable—about the importance and the role of Christian financial stewardship in my relationship to Christ and to other human beings. Most everything I know and practice in the Christian discipline of financial stewardship can be traced to my parents' example. The Bible was their source, and God's Holy Spirit was their strength and guide.

Oh, God, give us Christian parents who model biblical stewardship for their children.

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Barry Allen

Barry Allen is president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, PO Box 436389, Louisville, KY 40253; toll-free (866) 489-3533; www.kybaptistfoundation.org



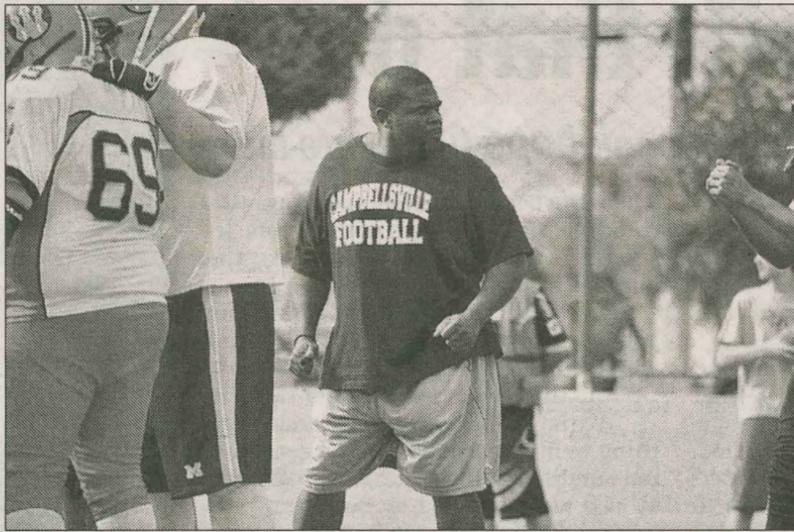
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August

- 20 Super Saturday-Hispanic, First Baptist Church, Hopkinsville.
- 27 Super Saturday, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

September

- 8 Retired Director of Missions/Spouse Luncheon, Severns Valley Baptist Association Office, Elizabethtown.
- 10 Super Saturday, Lone Oak First Baptist Church, Paducah; Porter Memorial Baptist Church, Lexington.
- 10-17 MissionsFEST, Bell County Baptist Association, Middlesboro and Pineville.
- 17 Super Saturday, Bellevue Baptist Church, Owensboro; First Baptist Church, Prestonsburg.
- 19-20 Kentucky Baptist Ministers' Golf Tournament, Cherry Blossom Golf & Country Club, Georgetown.
- 21-23 Missionary Retreat, Mammoth Cave National Park.
- 23-24 Men's & Women's Chorale and Wind Orchestra Retreat, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.
- 24 Children in Action Day Camp, Buck Creek Baptist Church, Calhoun.
- 24 Men's Chorale Concert, First Baptist Church, Hodgenville.
- 28-10/2 Adult Kentucky Changers—East, Louisville.



INTENSITY Campbellsville University head football coach Perry Thomas gets his game face on during a clinic led by him and assistant coach Ricky Gehres for a start-up Brazilian professional football team, the Vila Velha Tritons. (CU photo)

Campbellsville coaches help Brazilian pro team

By Chris Megginson
Campbellsville University

Vila Velha, Brazil—Coaching a football clinic in July is nothing new for Campbellsville University head coach Perry Thomas or assistant Ricky Gehres. Coaching on a Brazilian beach—now, there's a new experience.

The two Tiger coaches traveled to the beach of Itaparica in Vila Velha, Brazil, recently to lead a clinic for a start-up Brazilian professional football team, the Vila Velha Tritons.

"I'm loving Brazil," Thomas told sports reporter Guido Nunes of Globo Esporte. "I had no idea that football was played here. ... I am very excited to see the organization of football in a country that has so much tradition."

Before leaving for the trip July 20, Thomas said he and Gehres were excited to experience a new country and help the sport of football grow. Tritons head coach/quarterback Bruno Araujo was equally excited.

"It's the beginning of a new era," Araujo told Golobo Esportes. "I re-

member when we played in the sand and had the dream of playing football. Today, we see two American coaches come here and help show us that the work being done is very rewarding."

The Tritons began playing football in 2004, but did not hold their first full-pad workout until 2010, according to the team's website. After winning the league championship last season, the Tritons currently are making a run for a repeat.

Thomas' message to the Tritons was the same message he has for the 2011 Tigers: discipline is key.

"The thing we wanted to do is let them know that organization and discipline are the most important parts of building a team, and that while they are doing things right here, there are fundamental things they can continue to work on to continue to make this program grow," Thomas told a group of reporters. "I think they can learn from what we bring from our U.S. experience where football has a long tradition."

SEEKING: PRESIDENT

The Board of Trustees at Blue Mountain College, a coeducational liberal arts Christian college affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention, announces the search for its next president and invites nominations and applications for the position. Dr. Bettye Rogers Coward, the seventh and first female president, will retire from Blue Mountain College on June 30, 2012, when she will have completed 11 years as president. Dr. Coward led the College in a functioning planning process, extensive refurbishing of campus facilities, increasing enrollment, growing the endowment significantly, establishing the college's first graduate program, and developing a campus-wide wireless internet and course management system while maintaining a debt free situation. These accomplishments position a new president to take this Christian institution of higher education to new heights of excellence. Blue Mountain College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award baccalaureate and masters degrees. **Desired Qualifications:** The successful candidate will be a member of a Baptist church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, hold an earned doctorate and/or a successful tenure related to the nature of leading an institution of higher learning, and be an effective communicator. The college is seeking a president who has a passion for students and their development and a capacity for shaping and communicating an institutional vision in ways that are compelling to donors, the media, and the community and to other college constituents. He/she will be expected to be an effective manager of resources. **Challenges:** The next president of Blue Mountain College will build upon the foundation developed by the current Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff and take the institution to new heights of excellence. The new president, through hers/his leadership, will work with all of the college's constituent groups to expand the influence and educational opportunities of the college in the region and beyond. **To Apply:** Go to www.bmc.edu and follow the application process as found on the Presidential Search section. The Presidential Search Committee is committed to the highest standards of professionalism in working with candidates, sources, and references, respecting the need for confidentiality. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

Spotlight on ...

Mount Washington



First Church will hold a Back-to-School Blowout Aug. 10, 6 p.m., for middle- and high-school students with **Scott Long**, a former University of Louisville football player, as guest speaker.

mation, call (502) 589-5290.

Woodland Church will hold a back-to-school carnival Aug. 6, 4 p.m., with games and food for children and adults. **John Abel** is pastor.

■ **SALYERSVILLE**—Licking River Church recently called **Richard Greene** as pastor.

■ **SOMERSET**—Mount Victory Church recently called **Terry Phelps** as pastor.

■ **SPRINGFIELD**—Temple Church recently called **Cal Adams** as pastor.

■ **WACO**—New Covenant Reformed Church recently ordained its first deacon, **Jordan Barnes. Thomas Barnes** is pastor.

■ **WAYNESBURG**—Pleasant View Church recently called **Kyle Page** as pastor. He previously was pastor at Colesburg Church in Elizabethtown.

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Elk Horn Church recently called **Daniel Cook** as youth pastor. **Brian Rafferty** is pastor.

Lowell Avenue Church ordained **Trent Creason** to the gospel ministry July 17. **Dave Walters** is pastor.

■ **CLINTON**—Springhill Church recently called **Scott Wilkins** as pastor.

■ **CYNTHIANA**—Silas Church recently ordained **Gary Wilson** as a deacon. **Curtis Coots** is pastor.

■ **FANCY FARM**—Beulah Church recently called **Ian Carrico** as pastor.

■ **FRANKFORT**—Buck Run Church will hold a "Magnificent Monday" service Aug. 8, 6:30 p.m., with **Robby Gallaty**, pastor of Brainerd Church in Chattanooga, Tenn., as guest speaker and **The Milby Family** as guest musicians. **Hershael York** is pastor.

Crestwood Church will host the **Hilltop Trio** in concert Aug. 7, 6 p.m. For more information, call (502) 695-2088. **Michael Hail** is pastor.

■ **GREENVILLE**—Second Church will host a ladies' movie night Aug. 5, 6 p.m., with a screening of the movie "Soul Surfer." **H. Ray England** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Farmdale Church will hold a "Church in the Parking Lot" service Aug. 7, 6 p.m., with a pig roast and games. **Doug Strader** is pastor.

Walnut Street Church's women's ministry will hold a "Festival of Tables" Aug. 5, 6:30 p.m. The cost of the event is \$10. For more infor-

After working on skills and fundamentals with the Tritons through the weekend, Thomas and Gehres returned to the U.S. Gehres, a former CU and European pro football player, provided training for skill positions, while Thomas worked with linemen and overall defense.

"I think it's great. I think football here in Brazil is getting bigger and bigger," Gehres told another media

outlet. "The guys are great and have been working together for several years."

Thomas said he hopes he can return to Brazil in the future to continue the work.

"I'd like to come back every year, not only to work with these guys, but to do a workshop with some of the young guys and help the sport take off," Thomas said.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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FOR SALE: Organ. Enhance your church service with an authentic Allen Theatre Organ. \$2,975. (502) 228-0279.

SEEKING: Associate pastor of student ministry for First Baptist Church of Walton, Ky. Resumes may be e-mailed to pastortj@WhereLivesAreChanged.org, or revtjfrancis@yahoo.com. Resumes will be accepted until Aug. 31, 2011. A job description may be found on the church's website: www.WhereLivesAreChanged.org.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister for Bullitt Lick Baptist in Shepherdsville. This is a paid position and will require around 20 hours per week. Resumes or questions may be submitted by e-mail to secretary@bullittlickbaptist.org.

SEEKING: Senior pastor for First Baptist Church, Hodgenville. Resumes now being accepted. Church information

may be found at www.fbchodgenville.org.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for a conservative, mission-minded church as our former pastor retired after 13 years of service. We are looking for someone who will work with all ages and lead our church in growth. Please submit resumé, references and a DVD of a recent sermon by mail to the Pastor Search Committee, Immanuel Baptist Church, 5469 North Mayo Trail, Pikeville, KY 41501.

SEEKING: Full-time senior pastor. Send resumé to pinckardchurch@aol.com; mail to Pinckard Baptist Church, 3401 Pinckard Pike, Versailles, KY 40383; or contact Eddy Litteral, (859) 229-4076. Visit our website at www.pinckardbaptist.org.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Dry Ridge Baptist Church in Dry Ridge, Ky. Dry Ridge Baptist is a Southern Baptist church with 200-plus attending weekly worship services in a fast-growing community in Northern Kentucky. Send resumé to Pastor Search Committee, Dry Ridge Baptist Church, PO Box 14, Dry Ridge, KY 41035; or e-mail to office @dryridgebaptist.com.

Is your life 'pollution free'?

By David Jeremiah

Keep your "personal space" free from pollutants. Just as America's Environmental Protection Agency is concerned about land, water and air pollution, our spiritual EPA should be concerned about toxins in three areas of life—people, places and practices.

It begins with the people we're with. When baseball great Lou Gehrig was starting his career, the Yankees sent him to Hartford to get some practice in the minor leagues. Until then, Lou had lived at home. Now for the first time in his life, he was living with a rough crowd of minor league ballplayers who cursed, drank heavily and spent their time in bars and speakeasies. Gehrig began experimenting with alcohol and consorting with the wilder men on the team. Consequently his game went into a slump.

The manager of the Hartford Senators, a small, wiry man named Paddy O'Connor, took Gehrig under his wing and mentored him like a father. One night, O'Connor invited the player to his home for dinner. "Lou," he said, "you have a great career ahead of you. Nothing can stop you, except Lou Gehrig. That gang you're traveling with is poison ..."

O'Connor talked to the young man about choosing friends and working hard, and he ended by saying, "Think it over." Gehrig did think it over. He quit the gang and went on to become one of the greatest figures in the history of baseball.

Perhaps we need to think it over, too. Think of the people you most enjoy seeing. The ones you relax with after work or on weekends. The people you call if you have exciting news or feel depressed. Do they build you up spiritually? Is your walk with the Lord stronger after you've been with them? Or weaker? One of the Bible's "EPA" regulations for the soul says, "Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Places

We must avoid toxic places, too. There's always a corner of the magazine shop at the airport that isn't healthy. If you use your Internet, there are thousands of noxious sites to avoid. If you join your friends for a movie, there are some films that can contaminate the mi-

lieu of your mind.

The Bible says, "Ponder the path of your feet" (Proverbs 4:26). "Make straight paths for your feet ..." (Hebrews 12:13). Think of these commands as God's EPA regulations for your life.

Practices

We also need to guard against toxic practices—habits in our lives that defile us. Too often we allow our culture to infringe upon our lives, creating the opportunity for Satan to influence our choices whether it be in our language, our reading material or the television shows we watch. The radios in our cars, turned to the wrong stations, can pollute the air with profanities and obscenities. Toxicity is everywhere, but we can avoid it.

Wherever we are, it is important to remain committed to pursuing righteousness, knowing that God has called us to "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). We can remain "uncontaminated" by our environment if we remain diligent and alert.

It's vital to maintain vigilance and discipline to avoid the many temptations and snares that are available in our culture. The pollutant could be anything from pornography to pessimism, but the Christian must work to preserve an environment where our Holy God can dwell. Someone said that first we make our habits, and then our habits make us.

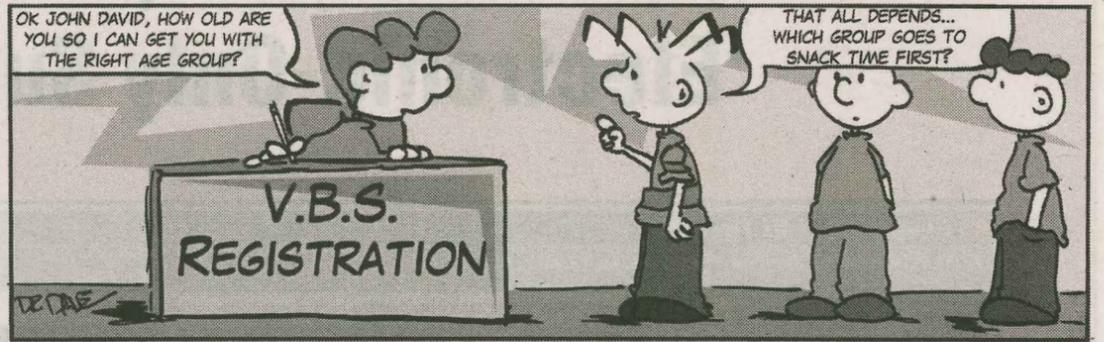
Backsliding begins with small steps, but improving the environmental quality of our lives begins the same way. Let's ask ourselves: What one thing can we do to provide a cleaner, healthier environment for our souls? How can we develop a quality system of living? What little change can yield lifelong results? Perhaps it's as simple as changing what we do on Friday nights, or meeting a Christian friend for coffee and forming a new friendship. Maybe it's installing a filter on the home computer or cancelling some of the cable services.

Keep the landscape of your life, the waters of your mind, and the atmosphere of your home healthy and holy. Give a hoot—don't pollute. (BP)

Jeremiah is the founder and host of "Turning Point for God" radio and TV, and senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, Calif.

Toxicity is everywhere, but we can avoid it. ... What one thing can we do to provide a cleaner, healthier environment for our souls?

Preacher's Kids



Joe McKeever

Fletch

Dennis Fletcher



Bible Crosswords

By Teri Grottko

Across

- 1 Belonging to the father of Leah & Rachel (Genesis 29)
- 7 Kansas City, abbr.
- 9 Son of Abda (1 Kings 4:6)
- 11 Eosinophil, abbr.
- 13 South, abbr.
- 14 Indium, chem. symbol
- 15 Son of Noah
- 17 Royal Military College, abbr.
- 18 Comes after spring
- 21 "The wall of ____" (Amos 1:14)
- 23 Beryllium, chem. symbol
- 24 City near Bethel
- 25 Bind
- 26 "Destroy ____ kings and people" (Ezra 6:12)
- 27 Preposition
- 29 Belonging to Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29)
- 33 "____ that ye refuse not him that speaketh" (Hebrews 12:25)
- 34 Village in Simeon (1 Chronicles 4:32)
- 36 Very warm
- 37 Belonging to Eve's husband
- 39 "____ are spies" (Genesis 42:9)
- 40 Iridium, chem. symbol
- 41 Before, poetic
- 43 An altar (Joshua 22)
- 45 Arsenic, chem. symbol
- 46 "It shall no more be called ... the valley of the son of ____" (Jeremiah 7:32)
- 49 "For ____ is ordained ..." (Isaiah 30:33)

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- 52 Recede
- 53 A thousand thousands, abbr.
- 55 Ordinance Officer, abbr.
- 56 Mister, abbr.
- 57 Length overall, abbr.
- 58 Mother-of-pearl
- 60 Exposure index, abbr.
- 61 Picosecond, abbr.
- 62 Convulsion
- 63 Nanogram, abbr.

- 19 Menan's son (Luke 3:31)
- 20 Brawl
- 22 Buzzing stinger
- 26 Solomon's great-grandson (Matthew 1:7)
- 28 No, old English
- 30 Ahitub's son (1 Samuel 14:3)
- 31 Equestrians
- 32 Address abbreviation
- 34 "____ begat Aram" (Matthew 1:3)

Down

- 1 "For, ____, the winter is past" (Song of Solomon 2:11)
- 2 "Eshtemoh, and ____" (Joshua 15:50)
- 3 Moza's son (1 Chronicles 8:37)
- 4 Capital of Moab (Numbers 21:28)
- 5 No, slang
- 6 Intelligent
- 7 Edge of the road, Br. spelling
- 8 Deep unconsciousness
- 9 Donkey
- 10 Duplicated
- 12 School, abbr.
- 16 Letters, etc.

- 35 Encounter
- 38 "And, lo, three ____ stood by him" (Genesis 18:2)
- 42 A race of giants
- 44 Entrances
- 46 "Another to ____ him-up" (Ecclesiastes 4:10)
- 47 Members of a Nigerian tribe
- 48 Basketball organization, abbr.
- 50 A composition in verse
- 51 Advanced mathematics, abbr.
- 54 Where a child likes to sit
- 59 San Diego's state, abbr.

Last week's solution

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
P	E	A	R	L	S	J	A	S	P	E
E	X	I	B	T	C	T	H	E	B	E
D	O	D	R	H	O	A	K	C		
A	D	S	H	E	R	B	S	L	I	E
N	U	G	R	A	Y	I	S	M	D	
T	S	A	R	S	O	B	O	E		
D	E	A	C	O	N	E	S			
B	L	O	B	P	A	C	H			
E	A	E	M	E	R	A	L	D	O	E
H	N	A	O	P	A	L	S	A	Y	E
Y	D	S	A	B	A	G	O	D		
L	A	S	S	O	E	A	G	A	T	E
S	U	R	E	T	S	N	A	R	E	D

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