

WESTERN Recorder

September 24, 2013

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

Volume 187, Issue 36



An aerial view shows the extensive damage to a road in Colorado due to flooding in mid-September. (Photo/U.S. Army Sgt. Jonathan Thibault)

Kentucky Disaster Relief team heading for Colorado in response to flooding

Louisville—A Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief flood recovery and damage assessment team is being deployed to Longmont, Colo., this week in response to record flooding across Colorado.

The Disaster Relief team, consisting of 14 Kentucky Baptists, was to depart Sept. 24 and expected to begin ministering on Sept. 26, according to Coy Webb, disaster relief director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention. The team, led by Bob Perkins, a member of Simpsonville Baptist Church, includes four assessors who also are trained chaplains.

"It has been a tough year for residents of Colorado as wildfires and now floods

have left many without homes," Webb said. "There are still over 200 missing and unaccounted for across Colorado, and many homes have been severely damaged by raging waters.

"The response will be difficult because of bridges and roads being washed out and the approach of winter weather along the Rockies and plains," he added.

The Kentucky team will be joining Southern Baptist DR volunteers from at least four other state conventions already at work providing aid to survivors of destructive flooding in Colorado's Front Range. The

□ See Colorado ... Page 3

"It's been a tough year for residents of Colorado."

Coy Webb

Mitchellsburg youth minister, wife killed in Danville robbery

Danville—Michael Hockensmith, 35, a part-time youth minister at Mitchellsburg Baptist Church in Parksville, and his wife, Angela, 38, both of Stanford, were killed Friday morning during a robbery attempt at their pawn shop, ABC Gold, Games and More in Danville.

A third victim, Daniel Smith, 60, a gold buyer from Richmond who local authorities think may have been the target, was also killed.

At a candlelight prayer vigil held Sunday evening at the Boyle County Courthouse, Mitchellsburg pastor Brett Benton urged those in mourning to seek solace through prayer.

"Let us accept Jesus Christ and turn to Him for our healing because there is no other way but to lay this at the foot of the cross," Benton is quoted as saying in the Lexington Herald-Leader.

Earlier that day, Benton said his congregation had come together for a time of healing, "hugging together and praying together."

"It was a very emotional day," he told the Western Recorder. "It was the beginning steps of healing. We are continuing to pray, lean on each other for strength, and lean on God for His strength."

The new pastor described the Hockensmiths as very energetic and loving

□ See Mitchellsburg ... Page 2

Family Foundation, Ky. Baptist churches teaming up to become 'MARRIAGE SAVERS'

By Drew Nichter

Louisville—During the 2012 presidential election, neither Barack Obama nor Mitt Romney discussed the central problem facing the United States today, according to Mike McManus.

"It's not jobs; it's the collapse of marriage," the president of Marriage Savers claimed.

In the past 40 years, about one out of every two marriages in the U.S. has ended in divorce.

The so-called "children of divorce," McManus pointed out, are far more likely to get pregnant as teenagers, get kicked out of school, end up in jail or even commit suicide. "It's just horrific," he said.

It's a troubling trend McManus is determined to see reversed.

McManus will share his five-pronged approach to saving troubled marriages with Kentuckians next week.

The Family Foundation of Kentucky is hosting the Kentucky Ten-City Marriage Tour next week.



Mike and Harriet McManus are co-chairs of Marriage Savers.

McManus will lead two seminars per day across the Bluegrass State Sept. 30-Oct. 4.

Greg Williams directs marriage outreach for the Family Foundation and coordinates the work of its offshoot group, the Kentucky Marriage Movement.

He said the seminars are geared toward equipping pastors and lay leaders who want to take a more active role in mentoring married couples in crisis.

More importantly, the Marriage Savers ministry targets premarital couples and even teenagers to provide them with a model for strong marriage to carry with them into their own relationships.

"If all we did was just try to

□ See Marriage tour ... Page 2



MARRIAGE SAVERS
Preparing, Strengthening
and Restoring Marriages

Background photo by Rodrigo Valladares/sxc.hu

Ditch
the
cord.

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KBC fiscal year closes with 30% of churches increasing CP gifts

Louisville—Fiscal year 2012-13 came to a close with about 30 percent of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's 2,400 member churches increasing support of missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program during the year.

Kentucky Baptists gave \$21,779,851 to missions and ministries through the unified giving program Sept. 1, 2012 through Aug. 31, 2013.

"Kentucky Baptists obviously still believe in cooperative missions," KBC Executive Director-Treasurer Paul Chitwood said.

"As we have made sacrifices to use more of our missions dollars to take the gospel to the nations, it is gratifying to see nearly one third of our churches now increasing their gifts.

"I believe that qualifies for the beginning of a Great Commission Resurgence," he added.

Receipts for August were just a few dollars shy of \$2 million in July, exceeding the monthly budget goal of \$1,833,333.

The annual budget goal for support through the Cooperative Program was \$22 million.

"With CP receipts coming within 99 percent of budget year, we were able to fund all of our ministry areas by containing our fixed personnel costs," noted Lowell Ashby, KBC's business manager and leader of the finance & business services team.

Messengers to the KBC Annual Meeting approved increasing the annual goal for Cooperative Program giving for Fiscal Year 2013-14 to \$22.5 million.

"The higher goal gives Kentucky Baptist congregations the opportunity to join 725 of their sister churches that increased their gifts through CP during the past year," Ashby said. "We thank all our churches and individuals

"Kentucky Baptists obviously still believe in cooperative missions. ... (It's) gratifying to see ... our churches increasing gifts."

Paul Chitwood

Kentucky Baptist CP gifts at a glance

Giving for Aug. 1-31, 2013 & Year-to-Date



Monthly budget goal:	\$1,833,333
Actual giving:	\$1,999,902
Over budget:	\$ 166,569
Year-to-Date budget goal:	\$22,000,000
Year-to-Date actual giving:	\$21,779,851
Under budget:	\$ 220,149

who partner with the Cooperative Program to reach the world for Jesus Christ."

KBC recently released the new Cooperative Program brochure, which contains information on how CP works and the budget allocations for the gifts that will be given during Fiscal Year 2013-14.

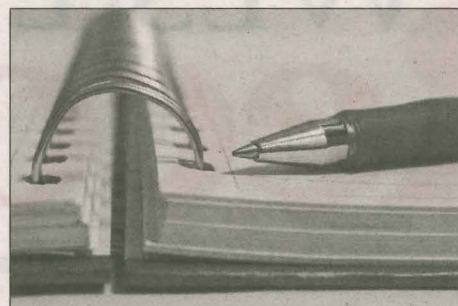
October is Cooperative Program month in many Southern Baptist churches.

"I hope Kentucky Baptists will take this opportunity to learn more about how CP works and the many missions and ministries that are supported through those gifts," Chitwood said.

KBC Mission Board staff are available to speak at KBC-affiliated churches at no charge to the congregation. Schedule a speaker online at kybaptist.org/cp by clicking on "Schedule a Speaker." Schedule by phone

at (502) 245-4101 or 1-800-266-6477 (toll-free in Kentucky).

Order free brochures and other resources, and download free CP videos online at kybaptist.org/cp. Questions? Email communications@kybaptist.org or call (502) 489-3374 or 1-866-489-3374. (KBC)



Take note ... KBC workshop for ministry assistants slated for next week

Louisville—Ministry assistants and secretaries serving in Kentucky Baptist Convention affiliated churches, associations, agencies and institutions are invited to a day-long workshop Oct. 3 in Louisville.

The event will begin at 8:30 a.m. (EDT) at the Kentucky Baptist Building in Louisville.

Participants can choose four hour-long conferences from a list of 12 that include topics such as church security, managing committees via Facebook, Excel and Google Docs.

Fees are \$25 per person for members of the Kentucky Baptist Secretaries Association; non-members pay \$35 per person.

Register online for the workshop at www.kybaptist.org/ma.

The Kentucky Baptist Secretaries Association provides ministry assistants and secretaries serving at KBC-affiliated churches, associations, agencies and institutions a fellowship for spiritual growth, skill development, networking and support.

Register at www.kybaptist.org/kbsa and complete the online survey for \$5 off annual dues of \$15 per person.

Many KBSA members are also part of NASBS, National Association of Southern Baptist Secretaries, which holds its conference biennially.

In addition to online registration for the Oct. 3 event, participants can receive details by email at minasst@kybaptist.org or by phone at (502) 489-3571 or 1-866-489-3571. (KBC)

Mitchellsburg

Continued from page 1

people. "They would be there for anybody whom they could help out," Benton said.

Benton had attended Clear Creek Bible College in Pineville with Hockensmith and the two had reconnected at the church.

Also in the store at the time of the shooting were the Hockensmith's two children, Andrew, 9, and Naomi, 1. Andrew was homeschooled and the children often spent time at the store.

According to Steve Divine, co-owner of the store and a family friend, Andrew carried his baby sister into the office, locked the door and called 911 describing what he said was a robbery, reported the Advocate Messenger.

Although a sign on the business identifies it as a pawn shop, Divine told the Boyle and Madison County newspaper that since he and the Hockensmiths

purchased the store a few months ago, they were in the process of revamping the store into more of a thrift shop.

The suspect is still at large and a \$10,000 reward is being offered for information leading to an arrest, according to the Danville Police Chief Tony Gray.

Director of Missions Jim Clontz, in expressing the grief and condolences of sister churches, said, "South District Baptist Association has been profoundly affected by the murder of one of our ministers and his wife. We are especially grieved that their children, Andrew and Naomi, must now face a future without a dad and a mother. Please join us in praying for them."

A memorial fund has been established with PNC Bank to help family members pay for funeral expenses and to start a trust fund for the children, who are living with grandparents.

At press time, funeral arrangements were pending at Southern Oaks Funeral Home in Somerset. (WR)

Marriage tour

Continued from page 1

help marriages that are in crisis, for every one we help, there's 100 coming along that are going to end up in the same shape," Williams said. "So, the idea is to reach younger kids."

Through Marriage Savers, McManus shares his Community Marriage Policies to challenge church leaders across denominations to strengthen their marriage ministries.

The five steps include: preparing premarital couples; marriage enrichment; restoration for marriages in crisis; reconciling separated couples; and offering tools to help step-families succeed.

The marriage tour will make five stops at Kentucky Baptist churches. McManus said he sees this as an opportunity to equip those church leaders to act on a 2010 Southern Baptist Convention resolution that highlighted "the scandal of Southern Baptist divorce."

It noted that in states in which Southern Baptists predominate, divorce rates

are considerably higher. It also points out that divorces have accelerated in SBC churches primarily because of "cultural accommodation."

McManus' question to Kentucky and Southern Baptists is: "What is your strategy to do something about this?"

"Somehow, divorce has almost become a respectable sin," Pastor Brandt Lyon lamented. His Twelve Oaks Baptist Church in Paducah will host a Marriage Savers session Oct. 3.

Marriage and divorce is one of the most difficult issues pastors face, he said.

"Our culture tends to be very individualistic," he said. "That's not any big news, but it has so permeated even our churches.

"If we can get rid of that individualism and begin to look to one another and healthy love and respect between each other, I think we can see some marriages rebuilding," he added.

Lyon said he is looking forward to getting practical resources to bolster his own pastoral marriage counseling and equip others in his congregation to become marriage mentors. (WR)

Kentucky Ten City Marriage Tour

Monday, Sept. 30

Northern Kentucky

9 a.m.-11 a.m.
Florence Baptist Church
642 Mt. Zion Road
Florence

Eastern Kentucky

2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.
First Church of God
576 Sunset Drive
Morehead

Tuesday, Oct. 1

Central Kentucky

9 a.m.-11 a.m.
Centenary United
Methodist Church
2800 Tates Creek Road
Lexington

South central Kentucky

2:30 p.m.-4 p.m.
Corinth Baptist Church
1671 Old Whitley Road
London

Wednesday, Oct. 2

Elizabethtown

9 a.m.-11 a.m.
Grace Heartland Church
801 Pear Orchard Road
Elizabethtown

Louisville

2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.
Southeast Christian Church,
920 Blankenbaker Pkwy.
Louisville

Thursday, Oct. 3

Owensboro

9 a.m.-11 a.m.
Good Shepherd
Assembly of God,
3031 Bittel Road
Owensboro

Jackson Purchase Region

2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.
Twelve Oaks Baptist Church
2110 New Holt Road
Paducah

Friday, Oct. 4

Pennyrile Region

9 a.m.-11 a.m.
Hillcrest Baptist Church
920 Skyline Drive
Hopkinsville

Bowling Green Area

1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
Rich Pond Baptist Church
200 Brad Ave.
Bowling Green



GuideStone to add court battle against contraceptive mandate



Court action against the abortion mandate in the health care law will be waged by GuideStone Financial Resources, President O.S. Hawkins tells members of the SBC Executive Committee Sept. 16. (Photo by Morris Abernathy)

By Roy Hayhurst

Nashville, Tenn.—GuideStone Financial Resources has renewed its vow to fight the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive/abortifacient mandate, now looking to court action alongside efforts in Congress and before federal agencies.

The need to fight arises from the Obama Administration's requirement that all employers who provide health benefits also must cover contraceptives. The mandate covers all FDA-approved contraceptives, including those that cause early abortions.

"Our plans have strict prohibitions against the coverage of any of these abortifacients that are out there," GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins told members of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Sept. 16. "And yet, (the

Obama Administration) wants to tell us that we not only have to provide (abortifacients), but without cost to anybody that wants them.

"But the truth is, we're not going to do it. We're in a fight."

Hawkins told Executive Committee members that litigation is the latest front in GuideStone's three-pronged fight to protect church health plans. More than 1 million pastors and church workers depend on church plans for their health benefits.

GuideStone also has been working with a broad coalition of religious denominations on both the regulatory and legislative fronts.

Advocacy on the regulatory front yielded the exemption to the contraceptive mandate for churches and church auxiliaries but it did not go far enough,

Hawkins said. The contraceptive mandate offers a narrow exemption to churches and church auxiliaries—including most Southern Baptist boards and seminaries—but not other ministries such as colleges and charities.

On the legislative front, Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., introduced the Church Health Plan Act of 2013, which would help church health plans regain some protections lost under the health care reform law.

Republicans, however, have expressed reluctance to pass legislation that would offer technical fixes to the health care reform law as they say they are working to repeal it, Hawkins said.

"We have a huge challenge preserving church health plans as we have known them for over 100 years," he told the Executive Committee. (BP)

Fastest-growing and largest churches

Southern Baptists hold 24 of top 100 in the nation



NewSpring Church in Anderson, S.C., which has an average 2012 Sunday attendance of 23,055 among its eight locations, is the fourth largest in the U.S.

By Diana Chandler

Nashville, Tenn.—Southern Baptist churches hold 24 spots among the 100 fastest-growing and 100 largest churches in the U.S., according to Outreach magazine lists drawn from LifeWay Research data.

NewSpring Church in Anderson, S.C., tops SBC churches in both categories, ranking as the second fastest-growing and the fourth largest church in the nation among all denominations, Outreach reported in a special edition released in September. With eight locations, NewSpring Church recorded an average 2012 attendance of 23,055. Its increase of 7,072 in attendance merited a growth rate of 44 percent.

The three largest churches in the U.S., according to Outreach, are Lakewood Church in Houston, North Point Ministries in Alpharetta, Ga., and Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Ill., respectively, all nondenominational congregations.

The three fastest-growing are, respectively, the nondenominational Triumph Church in Detroit, the SBC's NewSpring Church in Albuquerque, N.M., Outreach

reported.

While the lists rank size and numerical growth, rather than spiritual growth among individual members, the numbers are instructive to pastors, LifeWay Research President Ed Stetzer wrote in Outreach.

"People seem to eagerly await the lists so they can learn from these churches about what God is doing to build His kingdom across the United States," Stetzer wrote. "On the other hand, there are those who complain about the lists. They seem to think this is a way of exalting 'big churches' in an effort to make them look better than the churches that are not on the list, when nothing could be further from the truth."

"These lists feed our hunger to learn, as we study the churches on them to learn more about the ways God is working," Stetzer wrote. "I hope these lists encourage you and challenge you. I hope, like me, you read them and celebrate the ways God is working. I hope they challenge you to think through your own strategy to reach your community with the gospel."

The annual lists rank churches by attendance rather than membership rolls and are based on a self-reported survey, not an independent investigation, Outreach reported. The lists are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, but are based on information which LifeWay sought to verify as reported by pastors, church officers or staff members, Outreach reported.

Other top ranking Southern Baptist churches on the 100 largest list are sixth-ranked Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif.; 11th-ranked Second Baptist Church in Houston; and 15th-ranked Woodlands Church in The Woodlands, Texas, Outreach reported.

Joining NewSpring among the 100 fastest-growing churches are Southern Baptist-affiliated First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, N.C., ranked 14th; Elevation Church in Matthews, N.C., ranked 15th; and 20th-ranked theChurch.at in Broken Arrow, Okla.

Senior pastor Perry Noble, who began NewSpring Church (NewSpring.cc) 13 years ago with only 15 members, said God intends for the church to be a movement rather than an institution.

"A movement is focused on moving forward. To move the church forward means not holding onto the past," Noble said in a question-and-answer article in Outreach. "We desire progress. We want the numbers to go up. When some people object, 'It's not about the numbers,' I say, 'Hey man, why don't you empty out our checking account and give me all our money if it's not about the numbers?'"

"The numbers matter to God because people far from Him are of far greater value than money," Noble said. "I also believe a movement helps people in your church take their next steps in their walk with Christ. The church can't move forward unless the people are moving forward in their love for God."

Noble also promotes community as vital to church health and growth.

"Did you know that the phrase 'one another' appears more than 50 times in the New Testament alone? So either God has a stuttering problem or He's trying to emphasize a point," Noble wrote in an excerpt Outreach printed from his book, "Unleash!: Breaking Free From Normalcy."

"We need one another in order to live the unleashed life," Noble wrote.

Top-ranked churches tended to have multiple campuses, Outreach noted. Among the 100 largest, only 12 have a single campus, and among the 100 fastest-growing, 42 have single campuses, Outreach reported. (BP)



An aerial view shows flood damage in Colorado, Sept. 14, due to heavy rains. Volunteers with Kentucky Disaster Relief are heading to the region to help with assessment and recovery efforts. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Wallace Bonner)

Colorado

Continued from page 1

combination of steep mountains and heavy rains created torrents that washed out homes, bridges and roads from Estes Park to Boulder and beyond.

Communities as far east as Greeley and Dearfield also suffered flood damage from rains that began Sept. 10. The storm peaked on Sept. 12, when Boulder received more than nine inches, double the previous one-day record, according to the National Weather Service.

"Things are going well as we are gearing up for clean up and recovery,"

said Eddie Blackmon, North American Mission Board SBDR coordinator. Blackmon is serving in Longmont with Colorado Baptist Disaster Relief Director Dennis Belz.

A NAMB mobile command center was headed to Longs Peak Baptist Church in Longmont to serve as the overall incident command center. NAMB is also dispatching a recovery unit and a semi-load of supplies.

Volunteers from the Missouri Baptist Convention and Texas Baptist Men will staff incident management teams in Longmont and Loveland respectively, Blackmon said. Oklahoma Baptist SBDR volunteers are en route to man another team in Boulder. (M/R/NAMB)

Love letters

Guest Article from Michelle Chitwood, wife of KBC Executive Director-Treasurer Paul Chitwood.

I can remember the first love letter I wrote to my husband. It was Valentine's Day 1982. I was in the 6th grade. I carefully picked out the perfect card for Paul.

Together We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

It was adorned with the famous comic strip character Ziggy.

I smuggled the card to school the next day and asked my friend to address it since she had much neater handwriting. Nervously, I had her deliver the card to Paul. He took the card from her and headed to history class.

My bold trip to Hallmark so long ago paid off. Thirty-one years ago I would have never believed that I would be married to the boy I sent that card to. I also would have never believed that God would bless me with the privilege of being a minister's wife.

When Paul's role changed from being a pastor to directing mission work in our state and encouraging our pastors, my role changed, too. I prayed that God would give me guidance. I prayed that I could help encourage the ministers' wives of Kentucky and also help each of us realize the important role we have as the biggest encourager in our husband's life.

So, ladies, I would like to invite you meet me at the Ministers' Wives luncheon during the annual gathering of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Our luncheon will be a time for you to be encouraged and for each of us to learn to be a better encourager to our husbands.

Kathy Litton, from Flourish Ministries, will be our guest speaker. Kathy has an amazing story to share about how God's grace has empowered her through grief, loss and constant change. Lunch will be provided, as well as a few other gifts and surprises.

Planning this luncheon has been amazing. I have learned so much about how our Baptist family adores its ministers' wives. Because of the Cooperative Program and the generosity of our Kentucky Baptist and Southern Baptist institutions and agencies this is a free event.

The date for the luncheon is Nov. 12 at Lone Oak Baptist Church. Register online at kybaptist.org/ministerswives. Child-care will be provided upon request at the time of registration.

We will take up a special offering to help the wife of a retired or deceased minister through Mission Dignity. Mission Dignity is a ministry of Guidestone of the Southern Baptist Convention that assists retired ministers and their spouses with their financial needs. If you are not the wife of a minister, but would still like to be a blessing to a retired minister or their spouse, you can do so at missiondignitysb.org.

Marriage Savers: Curtailing divorces, strengthening families

Offering help, healing and hope to hurting families is at the very heart of Marriage Savers. Next week, pastors and church leaders from many denominations will gather in 10 cities across our state to hear from Marriage Savers how they can help slash divorce rates and strengthen marriages in their communities.

More than 10 million marriages have been torn apart by divorce in the past decade, not only devastating the dreams of these couples, but also shattering the family lives of approximately 9 million children. Divorce jeopardizes their futures by increasing the likelihood of dropping out of school, having a baby out of wedlock, growing up in poverty, and being incarcerated, statistics indicate.

The dire outlook for these families should alarm both church and civic leaders across the commonwealth, particularly since Kentucky had the third highest divorce rate in 2011 among the 50 states. With 2.54 divorces per 100 marriages, its divorce rate was higher than the national average of 1.94 divorces per 100 marriages. Meanwhile, in the past two decades the number of couples getting married has plummeted by nearly 44 percent, as many couples presumably are forgoing marriage or opting to cohabitate.

In an effort to strengthen marriages and lower the rate of marital breakups, the Family Foundation of Kentucky invited Mike McManus of Marriage Savers, who compiled the above analysis, for a 10-city tour the first week of October. Sessions are scheduled in Florence and Morehead on Monday, Lexington and London on Tuesday, Elizabethtown and Louisville on Wednesday, Owensboro and Paducah on Thursday, and Hopkinsville and Bowling Green on Friday. (See page 2 for sites and times).

The author of numerous books on strengthening marriages and reducing divorce, McManus has spent nearly three decades gathering the best and most economical ideas that any church can do to help provide and train couples with effective tools for saving endangered marriages. He also debunks the myth of cohabitation being a preparation for marriage by exposing its high rate of failure. His counsel for strengthening and restoring marriages has proven successful in reducing divorce rates in nearly 230 communities and 10,000 congregations. An estimated 100,000 marriages have been saved through Marriage Savers.

McManus visited several Kentucky cities in the mid-1990s, shortly after Marriage Savers first caught the attention of Southern Baptist leaders and Lifeway Christian Resources (then the Baptist Sunday School Board)



subsequently published his books and other materials for churches.

Elizabethtown church leaders signed a Community Marriage Covenant in 1995, and a study conducted in 2001 reportedly found an 18 percent drop in the city's divorce rate six years later. That is comparable to the average

decline in divorces seen by cities where similar covenants have been implemented, according to McManus. Nine cities cut their divorce rates by nearly 50 percent or more, follow-up surveys showed.

In Owensboro, where church leaders adopted a marriage policy in 1996, divorce rates fell by 7.8 percent, and Louisville-area churches signed an agreement in 1994 and saw a 7.6 percent reduction,

McManus noted. Because of its success, Marriage Savers returned to Louisville for a booster course in 2001. Then, in Pineville, church leaders heard about Marriage Savers and signed a covenant in 1997. By 2001, the community reportedly saw a 17.8 percent drop in divorces.

After 20 years, it is high time for our Kentucky churches to receive another marriage booster. Adopting a community pledge lays a good foundation for saving marriages, but the core of Marriage Savers is equipping enduring couples to serve as mentors in preparing engaged couples, enriching marriages and reconciling spouses. These mentors create a safety net under couples. Some have dealt with and are able to offer guidance and helpful insights in overcoming specific marital struggles, such as adultery, alcoholism, gambling, drug addictions, financial hardships, death of a child, or extended illnesses. Beyond this invaluable counsel, they can offer support to step families, which face an increasingly difficult task of blending two families.

Pastors and laypersons interested in learning more about strengthening the families in their communities are urged to attend one of the 10 gatherings, which will be less than two hours long and are offered at no cost. "The more churches involved in Marriage Savers, the more likely we are to have a greater impact on communities," McManus observed, adding that "this tour is an opportunity for us to cast the net wide."

With 2.3 million church-goers statewide—nearly half of which are Southern Baptists—and with the vast majority of first marriages being performed by clergy—our churches have a significant opportunity to make an impact upon the spiritual welfare of Kentucky by strengthening its families. "What happens in Kentucky could become a good model for other Southern states," McManus predicted.

The real reason?

Comments I read in the Western Recorder about Frankfort's fairness ordinance reminded me of a talk I had with a student years ago. The young man shared that he did not smoke because his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. He said this while eating pizza and guzzle Coke, which prompted me to suggest perhaps the real reason was because he did not like cigarettes.

That just might be the case with some Baptists who indicated the reason they opposed the ordinance was based on the Bible. Maybe they just don't like

gays. There are many other sins listed in the Bible, especially in Paul's letters, that also include gossip, jealousy, adultery, envy, slander, love of money, ... the list goes on. If the rights of a Christian business owner are restricted by having to serve gays, then what about gossips?

Our Lord One fellowshipped with socially unacceptable sinners and loved them into the kingdom. We are not told we have to like sinners, especially those who repulse us, but we are told we have to love them. Denying gays equal rights in society is in no way a loving response to them as sinners, since we, too, sin every day. Jesus says that we will be

measured by God in the way we measure others. He tells us to pray for God to forgive us in the way we forgive others. He tells us to get the log out of our own eye before we try to get the speck out of another's eye. If we are really serious about the Bible, then the Sermon on the Mount must be taken into account.

Mike Dixon
Louisville

Forum Disclaimer: Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Western Recorder's editorial staff, its Board of Directors, or the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length and will be edited for style, clarity and space. Letters must reflect a spirit of Christian civility.

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Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

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Baptists: Stronger together, serving together, sending together

By Albert Mohler Jr.

Fall brings the opening of the new school year, the energy of the season of autumn and, for Southern Baptists, the meeting of the state Baptist conventions. In coming weeks, most of our state conventions will be holding their annual meetings. Pastors and laypeople will gather from local churches and assemble as a convention of Baptist churches. There is a glory in these meetings, and they affirm our need for these state conventions and their ministries.

A younger generation of Southern Baptists may well be unaware of the importance of the state conventions and their work. They would be well-advised to attend their local state convention and catch a vision of what the Baptist churches in their states are doing together.

Americans are regularly reminded that states matter. Our political system respects the role of the individual states, and most Americans identify not only as citizens of the United States, but as residents of their respective states. This does not make our nation weaker. We are stronger because the states retain an important role in building communities and building the nation. As our national experience has shown, there is great gain in recognizing the priority of the local, even in the building of the nation.

In Southern Baptist life, the same is profoundly true of our state conventions. If the state conventions did not exist, we would have to invent them. There is a need for Baptist churches within every state to coordinate and combine their energies for the cause of the Great Commission and the task of reaching the communities in their own state and region. This does not weaken the Southern Baptist Convention—it makes us stronger.

Respect for the state conventions comes naturally to

Providing for your family

By Laurie Valentine

In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul admonishes us: “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for the members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”



Providing for family should be a key objective of estate planning. Planning how to share your estate with your family at your death is good stewardship. The costs of probating and distributing your estate and the amount of death taxes due may be greater with poor planning—meaning less to pass to beneficiaries.

For those with children under age 18, think about to whom you would want appointed as guardian if both parents died. The court-appointed guardian will make all the decisions you as a parent would be making for your children until each reaches age 18. You can include a provision in your will.

Decisions also need to be made as to whether the share you want to leave to a family member should be given to them outright or whether their share should be managed by someone else, either until they get to an older age or perhaps for the rest of their life if they are incapacitated.

Testamentary trusts are provisions in your will directing the share of a beneficiary to a trustee to hold and manage. Testamentary trusts usually include a direction for the trustee to distribute trust income to the beneficiary or use it for their benefit. You may also authorize the trustee to use trust principal for the beneficiary's health, education and other needs. Setting up a testamentary trust for a young beneficiary allows you to have their share managed by someone else beyond age 18.

Directing the share of an incapacitated or non-manager beneficiary into trust allows you to choose who will manage their share for the rest of their life, better assuring the support you intended will be there as long as they need it.

Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation.

FIRST PERSON

me. As a boy, I participated in camps and programs for children and young people. Soon after my conversion, I boarded a church bus and headed for Lake Yale, the assembly of the Florida Baptist Convention. The first real exposure I had to the scope and scale of Southern Baptist mission work came when I was a 9-year-old boy sitting in the auditorium at Lake Yale. I came back year after year, attending Royal Ambassador Camp and an assortment of camps and retreats and conferences. The imprint of those experiences remains on my life even now.

As a young man called to the ministry, I headed to Samford University where I received the gift of education for ministry from a school founded by Alabama Baptists—at least part of the tuition for my education came directly through the Alabama Baptist Convention. As a young ministerial student, I was exposed to preaching and evangelism through the Alabama state evangelism conferences and I saw the cooperative ministries work by attending the Alabama Baptist Convention annual meeting. When I was elected president of the student Ministerial Association, Samford's president, Leslie Wright, invited me to attend the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions with him. I learned how Baptists work together.

Later, as a pastor and seminary student, I saw the cooperative ministries of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and was able to participate in its work. Later, I was elected editor of *The Christian Index* and shifted my ministry to the context of the Georgia Baptist Convention. I was immersed in the life of that state convention, and I saw first hand that it was doing important work that would otherwise be left undone.

When disaster strikes, state disaster relief teams are first on the scene. When a pastor needs help, the state convention is close at hand. When strategies for reaching America's urban areas are developed, state conventions are on the front lines. State conventions remember the rural churches and are there to combine strengths and walk alongside those congregations serving the heartland.

At the same time, the state conventions have the world on their hearts. Increasingly, our leading state conventions are increasing their commitment to the support of national ministries and the reaching of the nations. Many of these conventions have taken courageous steps to send a greater percentage of Cooperative Program funds to the cause of reaching the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ. These state conventions have made sacrifices for the Great Commission cause and are mobilizing churches to reach not only their communities, but the world.

I am particularly proud of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, my own state convention. The recent move of the Kentucky Baptists to reallocate the Cooperative Program formula will vastly increase the global impact of KBC churches. This puts Kentucky Baptists where they belong—right in front, leading the way.

Now is the time for Southern Baptists committed to the Great Commission to show up and support our state conventions, to attend our annual convention meetings, and to support every effort to reach our individual states, our nation, and the nations with the gospel.

As a committed Southern Baptist, I would not know who I am without the state conventions that have contributed so much to my life and ministry. As president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I am proud and thankful to be in partnership with every one of our state conventions, and I want my students and faculty to share this pride and gratitude.

So, as the Southern Baptists in your state head for their annual meetings, determine to join them, to pray for them, to support them in Cooperative Program giving, and to strengthen the Great Commission vision and energy you will find there. Southern Baptists will never be bolder in mission and ministry than when we strengthen these bonds and stand together. Bring the full wealth of your conviction and the full passion of your desire for reaching your state, our nation, and all nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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

Making time for a Sabbath is the way God intended

By Joe Ball

“On and on, and on, and on, and on she goes. Where she stops no one really knows” is part of the lyrics from the song “Nothing at All” from Third Days third album. At times I think it describes the life of youth workers. There seems to never be enough time to accomplish everything that needs to be done. There is always one more student to be visited, one more lesson to be studied, one more event to be planned.

The hectic pace of our summer schedules bleeds right into the start of the school year, then into the start of the new church year, and then into fall events—and on, and on, and on it goes. But for us to be the most effective, we have to take time to renew, reflect and recharge. We have to have time for Sabbath.

Even when we do take time off from work, we usually cram the time with activities, ball practice, a quick work out, a shower and then head right back to the hectic schedule having never really rested. We were not created to live like this.

So how do we find time for Sabbath?

Make it a priority. We make time for what we value. I can find time to

watch UK play or the latest episode of “Duck Dynasty.” When things are important to us, we make time. Take a moment and look back on your past week and month. What does your calendar say you value the most?

Understand it is a sin issue.

We were not created to go 24/7. God rested at the end of creation, not because He needed to, but to model its importance. He created us in such a way that we need sleep every day. He commanded us to rest in the Ten Commandments. In Mark, Jesus calls His disciples to “come away by yourselves and rest a little while.” When

we fail to take time to rest, we are being disobedient to how God intends for us to live.

Better time management. This area is the one many in youth ministry struggle with most—me included. We see blank spots on our calendars and we just keep filling them up. If we are going to prioritize down time, we need to block it out on our calendar so those times are already taken.

Take a vacation. We aren't proving anything to anybody by working all the time and not using our well-earned vacation days. You don't necessarily have to go anywhere—just get away from your routine. Do

something around the house, explore the city you live in, have a late breakfast on the deck. Just take a break.

Find an escape. Find something you can do where you don't have to think. For some, it is mowing. I've heard several guys say the time on the mower is when they unwind. They don't have to think or make decisions, and the mower is too loud to hear their phone. Lately, I've been what my good friends, Bill Hought and Steve Coleman, call “making saw dust.” These are my small woodworking projects. Other people garden, some hike or camp, some nap, still others paint or play music. Find something to do where you can get away for a bit.

Unplug. Turn off the electronics. One of the phenomena with this generation is they are always plugged in and it is affecting their rest. Their phones are never off. Text messages are coming in all hours of the night, and they are not getting enough sleep. Unless your spouse is about to have a baby, or someone in your family is gravely ill, it is just not that important. Take some time to separate yourself from the constant barrage of information. You cannot rest your mind if you are constantly checking your messages.

Joe Ball, a former youth minister at Edgewood Baptist Church in Hopkinsville, is youth ministry strategist for Crossings Ministries.

Youth Ministry Corner



Joe Ball

Boy Scouts of America or an alternative?

Churches continue to deliberate

By David Roach

Nashville, Tenn.—A 6,000-member Southern Baptist church in North Carolina has announced plans to end its 60-year sponsorship of a Boy Scout troop in light of the Scouts' vote in May to admit open homosexuals to membership.

Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., instead will sponsor a troop of the newly formed Trail Life USA, which requires adult leaders to sign a statement of faith and requires both boys and leaders to live by a code of conduct that defines "any sexual activity outside the context of the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman" as "sinful" and "inconsistent with the values and principles of the program."

Trail Life USA will accept boys who are experiencing same-sex attraction or gender confusion. It will not, however, receive into membership boys that are openly homosexual or transgendered.

"We've had very strong support from the existing families who were in the Scout program," Donald Mann, the church's associate pastor for stewardship, said, and "from within the community for what we're doing."

Calvary has joined a growing list of churches that have ended their sponsorship of Boy Scout troops and opted to support alternative groups for boys like Trail Life USA and Royal Ambassadors, the Southern Baptist missions organization for boys in grades 1-6. The tandem Southern Baptist program Challengers engages young men in grades 7-12 in missions education.

Steve Heartsill, managing editor for Royal Ambassadors at the Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham, Ala., told BP there are some parallel elements to RAs and Boy Scouts, like an award system, camping and competitions using wooden race cars. However, WMU does not view Royal Ambassadors "as an alternative to anything" and does not take a position on whether churches should continue to sponsor Boy Scout troops, he said.

"RAs is about leading boys to Christ, teaching missions and developing a Christ-like character," Heartsill said. "They come to understand that God can use them now—even in their youth—to share His love with others and make a difference."

Teaching biblical sexual morality is not specifically a part of Royal Ambassadors, Heartsill said, "but Christ-like character and virtues are emphasized."

Heartsill encouraged churches interested in starting an Royal Ambassadors program to contact the RA department at their state Baptist convention or visit www.wmu.com/RA.

Churches debating whether or not to dissolve ties with the Boy Scouts are being cautioned by the Alliance Defending Freedom. The Arizona-based Christian legal group has publicly circulated the recommendation that churches with Scout troops end their sponsorship. Otherwise, ADF stated, churches risk losing

their First Amendment right to oppose homosexuality in hiring decisions and facility rental policies.

Other organizations opposing the BSA policy change, believe churches should still sponsor Scout troops. The Association of Baptists for Scouting, for one, has stated that Boy Scouts still "presents a viable outreach option for churches if done properly."

Scouting alternative

Trail Life USA, founded by a coalition of opponents to the BSA membership policy change called On My Honor, announced its name and program details at the Nashville convention. Addressing more than 1,200 attendees, chairman of the Trail Life USA board John Stemberger said the group is not "anti-BSA."

"Our whole life is about the trail, both in the outdoors and in the journey of life

as believers," Stemberger said. "So Trail Life is a way of life that is centered on following Christ in the outdoors."

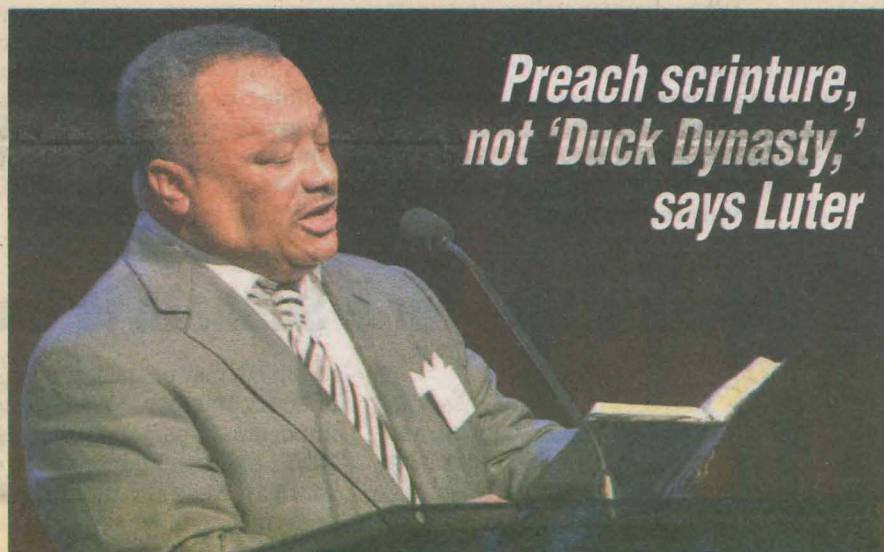
Boy Scout alternatives like Trail Life are a good option for churches that used to sponsor BSA troops, according to the Alliance Defending Freedom memo, which says, "Under threat of litigation, a church that chooses to maintain ties with BSA could face forfeiting the ability to teach biblical principles of sexual morality to its Scouts and to require them to adhere to those principles."

But A.J. Smith, president of the Association of Baptists for Scouting, said the new policy does not prohibit church-based BSA troops from making sexual abstinence a condition of membership. He also denied that the BSA policy

requires churches to affirm the moral acceptability of same-sex attraction and said that while he is "not personally entirely pleased" with the policy, churches should still sponsor Boy Scout troops.

"I believe that it is possible, even desirable, for Baptist churches to continue to utilize Scouting as an outreach ministry of the church," Smith said. "How it is done, however, must change. No longer can a church simply give meeting space to the Scouts."

"Churches must take a proactive approach to Scouting and involve members of the local congregation alongside Scout parents as leaders set expectations for leaders consistent with the values of the church." (BP)



Southern Baptist Convention President Fred Luter reads from Ezekiel 37 in delivering his sermon "How to Revive Dry Bones," during the Sept. 16 plenary session of the SBC Executive Committee meeting. (BP/Morris Abernathy)

By Diana Chandler

Nashville, Tenn.—Preaching the scripture, not politics or "Duck Dynasty," will bring revival to the Southern Baptist Convention and the nation, SBC President Fred Luter said to the SBC Executive Committee at its Sept. 16-17 meeting in Nashville.

Revival birthed through the SBC and its entities is still his heart's desire, Luter said, drawing comparisons to the prophet's vision of dry bones in Ezekiel 37:1-10.

"My ultimate goal is ... that God will send revival across America and particularly among our SBC churches," he said, "because it's so easy to get sidetracked. It's so easy to get comfortable where we are. It's so easy to rest on our laurels and all of the past things that we've done."

"My heart's desire is still that God will send revival through the churches, the seminaries, the colleges and the entities of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Revival will only come if the body of Christ realizes its dry condition, hears and responds to the word of God and is filled with the Spirit of God, Luter said in his sermon, "How to Revive Dry Bones."

"Many of us are like dead men walking. We've lost our vim, we've lost our vigor, and we wouldn't know vitality if it slapped us in the face."

"Oh, dry bones, hear the word of the Lord," Luter quoted Ezekiel 37:4.

"Pastors, the most important thing we can do on Sunday mornings in our pulpit is not to pull out the latest story from Reader's Digest, not to pull out the latest story from National Geographic, not to tell the latest story on Duck Dynasty, but the best thing we can do ... is hear the word of God."

"(Preach) not the latest in politics, not the latest in denominational issues during the preaching time, (but) the word of God," Luter said, "... words that bring strength to brittle bones words that bring life to lifeless bones." (BP)

NEWS BRIEFS

Missing Blackaby found

Southern Baptist Bible teacher Henry Blackaby will need surgery after suffering a heart attack Thursday while driving in Atlanta, becoming confused and traveling for 29 hours before police found him Sept. 20 in Tifton, Ga., about 150 miles southeast of his home.

Blackaby, 78, had been missing since Thursday, Sept. 19, around 4 p.m. from his home in Rex, Ga., in metro Atlanta.

N.C. pastor enters Senate race

North Carolina pastor Mark Harris has declared his candidacy for the U.S. Senate, joining a race that now has at least three other Republicans who are vying for the seat held by Democrat incumbent Kay Hagen.

Harris is pastor of First Baptist Church in Charlotte and is completing his second term as president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. He was heavily involved in North Carolina's marriage amendment referendum in 2012.

Kelley, 30 years at NOBTS

Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, was honored for 30 years on the faculty during the seminary's fall convocation service.

Kelley was recognized Sept. 3 along with Gerald Stevens, professor of New Testament and Greek, who marks 25 years at the seminary. During his tenure, Kelley has served as professor of evangelism, chair of the division of pastoral ministries, director of the Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health and president. He challenged those present to remain faithful to God's call, even when that call is different than expected. "I did not ever in my life imagine the role of seminary professor for me," Kelley said. "I came to seminary to be an evangelist."

Can prayer and Bible study alone overcome mental illness?

By Bob Smietana

Nashville, Tenn.—A third of Americans—and nearly half of evangelical, fundamentalist or born again Christians—believe prayer and Bible study alone can overcome serious mental illness, according to a survey by LifeWay Research.

The survey also found most Americans (68 percent) would feel welcome in church if they were mentally ill.

Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, said Christians care about those affected by mental illness.

He's glad churches are seen as a welcome place for those with depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. But he worries some Christians see mental illness as a character flaw rather than a medical condition.

Christians will go to the doctor if they break their leg, Stetzer said. But some may try to pray away serious mental illness. "They forget that the key part of mental illness is the word 'illness,'" he said. "In a typical evangelical church,

half the people believe mental illness can be solved by prayer and Bible study alone."

LifeWay Research asked four questions about mental illness as part of a telephone survey of 1,001 Americans conducted Sept. 6-10.

Thirty-five percent agree with the statement, "With just Bible study and prayer, alone, people with serious mental illness like depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia could overcome mental illness."

Responses are split by both faith and age.

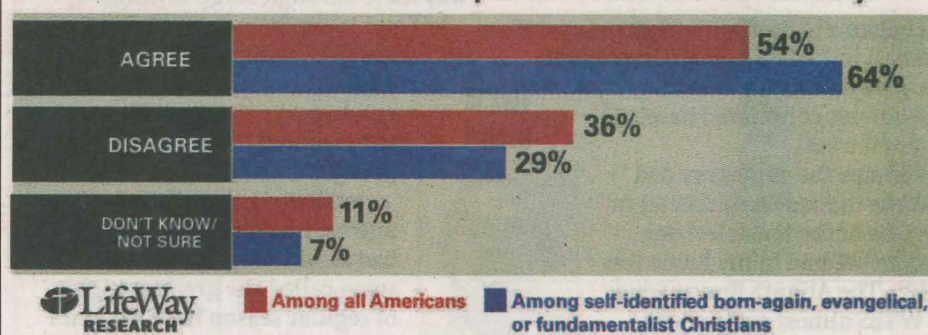
Fifty percent of those 18-29 years old say prayer and Bible study could overcome mental illness. That number falls to less than 30 percent for those 55-64.

Evangelical, fundamentalist or born-again Christians (48 percent) agree prayer can overcome mental illness. Only 27 percent of other Americans agree.

Among other findings:

■ Just over half (51 percent) say someone close to them has experienced

Christian churches should do more to prevent suicide in America today.



mental illness. That number drops to 37 percent for those over 65.

■ Fifty-four percent of Americans say churches should do more to prevent suicide. That number jumps to 64 percent among evangelical, fundamentalist or born again Christians.

Tim Clinton, president of the Forest, Va.-based American Association of Christian Counselors, said spirituality often can play a crucial role in treating

mental illness.

He called it "soul care."

Clinton hopes more churches will become open to talking about mental illness. That means taking a holistic approach that deals with spiritual, emotional and physical concerns.

That can involve counseling and medication as well as prayer and Bible study. "Churches need to be biblical communities of healing," Clinton said. (LW/BP)

Freedom from hurt

By Jonathan Merritt

Bart Millard, lead singer of the Grammy-nominated band MercyMe, is more passionate than ever about the message of God's grace. But to discover this newfound vigor, he had to confront the shame, hurt and anxiety in his own life.

In his new book with Andrew Farley, "The Hurt and the Healer," Millard explores the radical freedom that comes when we accept Christ's work on the cross and begin to live without shame. Below is a discussion of his journey and the truths he believes can help free anyone from life's deepest hurts.

JM: In *The Hurt & The Healer* you say that "our identity is not our shame." Can you unpack that for us?

BM: I preached for years that you can't earn God's favor. But for whatever reason, it was all so robotic for me, and all I was really trying to do was earn it. I was doing everything that religion told me to do. But no matter how many records were sold or people were impacted, I didn't seem to feel like I was inching closer to God. And, meanwhile, my family life was hanging by a thread. Sure, I would have told you that I was trusting Jesus for salvation and heaven, but the reality was that I was still working overtime to gain God's approval on a daily basis!

Essentially, my identity was completely MercyMe. Then, I began to realize that the same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead lives in me.

JM: What does it look like on the ground, in daily life?

BM: Today, I'm healthier than I ever have been. And MercyMe probably has a longer life ahead now because of that.

My wife and I, our new motto is: "We don't care anymore." In other words,

we're not concerned with what people think we should be. We now realize that we won't get it all right, but Somebody else did on our behalf. And it feels like the biggest exhale I've ever had in my life! This book is about how anyone can release the people-pleasing and even the legalistic God-pleasing and begin to rest in the finished work of Christ.

JM: How'd you end up connecting with best-selling author Andrew Farley?

BM: When I read Andrew Farley's book, "The Naked Gospel," it changed my life. I started tweeting about that (it) had transformed my view of the gospel. It was through Twitter that Andrew and I got connected, and we decided that it'd be fun to write a book together. At the time, MercyMe was getting ready to release *The Hurt & The Healer* album. So it made

sense for that to be the title of the book.

JM: Because we sort of seem to be wired as achievement-based, anxiety-ridden people, is it really possible to live differently?

BM: The main thing that I took away from "The Naked Gospel" is that there's

nothing that I can do, good or bad, to make God like me more, or less.

I missed the point growing up. I grew up in a church full of great people, and I'm grateful for that. But there sure seemed to be a laundry list of things to do in order to grow.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with studying the Bible or sharing your faith or supporting a ministry we love. But we don't "do" in order to get even an inch closer to God. We're close to God by what Jesus did, not something we're doing.

I came to Christ when I was 13 years old, but somehow I missed the fact that I didn't have to get God's attention. I've been learning that God is basically shouting from the rooftops: "I have been pleased with you since the day you called My name, and I've never stopped."

And the more I talk to people, the more I realize that 99 percent of the church's issues are trust-related. We don't trust that God did enough, or maybe we don't trust that He truly did it for us, individually and personally. When you give up and surrender to the fact that God is real; that He has your best interests at heart; and that His Spirit will never leave you, no matter what, it's like you become a kid with a power tool.

JM: Is there hope in this book for those who

are suffering?

BM: Yeah, I was the kid that sat in church and thought there was something wrong with me. I was hurting and maybe didn't even realize it fully. We'd have missionaries come through, or there'd be passionate revival weeks, and people would say, "This is something worth dying for!"

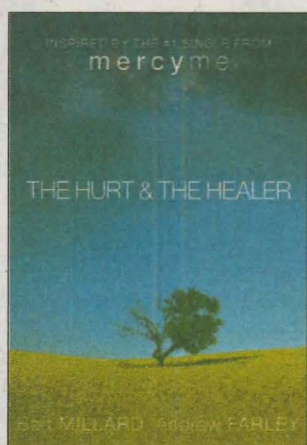
I couldn't relate. Yeah, it was worth writing songs for. But dying for? I just wasn't there. But through understanding the grace of God in a deeper way, I began to realize that hypothetically I could spend the rest of my life sabotaging everything, and yet his grace would still be enough for me. God is saying, "I am yours, and you are mine, forever."

All of a sudden, I'm done trying to tell people to stop sinning. Now, I want to tell them about their identity in Christ. And, for the first time, I have something to say that's not only something people need, but it's something that people long for. We Christians have a big problem with complicating an incredibly simple gospel.

In the last year or two, the light has switched on for me. I finally get it. This is the kind of grace that brings true healing into our broken lives. And this is something worth dying for! (RNS)



An interview with
Bart Millard of MercyMe



Decisions and results

Some decisions lead to regrets, but God is the Great Healer

I began a love affair with the game of baseball in 1982. Although basketball has always been my first love, I have always considered baseball a close second.

Perhaps the games my dad took me to made it so special to me. One of the few television stations we had in my home was WTBS. The Atlanta Braves were on WTBS almost every night from April through September. Although most Kentucky boys followed the Cincinnati Reds, I quickly fell in love with the Atlanta Braves.

I have continued this baseball love affair well into my adult life, and now enjoy taking my kids to games.

My last five years in Florida, I developed a friendship with a great high school baseball coach named Jeff Kieffer. As the 2011 major league baseball season was winding down, Jeff and I decided that if the Tampa Bay Rays were in contention for a playoff spot on the last day of the season, we would drive to Tampa for their game verses the New York Yankees.

On Wednesday, Sept. 28, 2011, Jeff and I sat at the Rays and Yankees game. After seven innings of play, the Rays trailed the Yankees by a score of 7-0. It was a school night and we were two hours from home, so at my request Jeff and I left the game.

Although it is a trivial thing, I have always regretted that decision to leave Tampa early that night. I have attended baseball games all my life hoping to see some baseball magic and history.

Baseball magic and history happened that night and I was there. Well, at least I was there through seven innings.

Jeff and I were home and in front of the television by the time the Rays won with a dramatic walk-off home run to make the playoffs. I told Jeff I wanted to cry—and I'm pretty sure he did.

Jeff loved baseball more than anyone I've ever known. I felt bad for missing out on what some called the greatest night of regular season baseball, but I felt even worse for my friend.

Many OBI students have made decisions that have caused them pain. Some of our young people have had a tough road to travel due to decisions other folks in their lives have made.

As each MLB baseball season winds down, I am reminded of my decision to leave that game and will probably always regret it.

As the days pass at Oneida, many of our students remember past decisions and hurts, but praise the Lord they now have the opportunity to make simple decisions that can redirect their lives in God's kingdom. Watching our young people change their lives one decision at a time through God's grace will always mean more to me than any baseball game ever could.

I am thankful for Kentucky Baptists and other extended OBI friends who help make it possible for our young people to be in a place where simple decisions with long-lasting results can be made one day at a time.

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, a Christian boarding and day school. Website: oneidaschool.org. Phone: (606) 847-4111

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

Doing more, together

Students learn importance of cooperative giving

One of the privileges of being the Bible college of the Kentucky Baptist Convention is the opportunity it affords us to use a personal illustration with our students about the importance of giving cooperatively.

We are always presenting students with information about how they are on the receiving end of the cooperative spirit among Kentucky Baptists through gifts to the Cooperative Program and what that means for them at Clear Creek.

Our desire is for them to learn the importance of cooperative giving while they are students so they can take that mindset with them when they go to serve in a church. For many students, God sends them to serve churches in Kentucky.

During this season of the Eliza Broadus offering, we take another opportunity to present to our students how they can start their cooperative giving now. Each week in our chapel services, we highlight a video of different ministries supported by the Eliza Broadus offering.

I have heard several comments from students about how surprised they were to discover such a large number of ministries can be supported when God's

people commit to give cooperatively. The videos really encourage them to give what they can to help these important ministries.

For the last few years, we have set a campus challenge goal for every student, faculty and staff person on our campus to give to the Eliza Broadus Offering. We emphasized to them that it's not about the amount you give. The important aspect is having a willingness to give as God has blessed them and letting Him use it with what others are willing to give.

Since we have started issuing this challenge goal and encouraging our students to give cooperatively, we have met our goal each year. This really has helped our students to see the value and importance of how much more God's people can do together than by themselves.

As we have watched the videos of the different ministries supported by the Eliza Broadus offering, we are thankful for Kentucky Baptists who are committed to investing in kingdom work through their cooperative gifts to this important offering.

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

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

'In God We Trust' suit dismissed

By Gregory Tomlin

New York—A case filed by atheists who want the national motto, "In God We Trust," removed from U.S. currency has been dismissed by a federal district judge in New York.

In the Sept. 9 ruling, the judge found the presence of the national motto on currency had not created a "substantial burden" on the plaintiffs, who included 18 atheists and humanists, the New York City Atheists and the Freedom from Religion Foundation.

"While plaintiffs may be inconvenienced or offended by the appearance of the motto on currency, these burdens are a far cry from the coercion, penalty, or denial of benefits required under the 'substantial burden' standard," Judge Harold Baer Jr. wrote.

In the case, Newdow, et al., v. U.S. Treasury, the plaintiffs alleged their repeated

use of federal currency bearing the national motto forced them to endorse the existence of God each time they undertook a financial transaction. One plaintiff, a coin collector, said she was forced to stop collecting coins because she was repeatedly angered by the presence of the motto on U.S. coinage.

The lead plaintiff was atheist Rosalyn Newdow, whose son, Michael, honorary director of the Freedom from Religion Foundation, filed a lawsuit in 2002 alleging that the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance exposed his daughter to brainwashing and scorn as an atheist, thus violating the separation of church and state. Newdow lost his case in the Supreme Court in 2004.

"In God We Trust" was added to all U.S. currency in 1955, one year after President Dwight Eisenhower signed legislation adding "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance. (RNS)

Pledge's 'under God' faces court scrutiny

By Gregory Tomlin

Boston—A case challenging the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance is being weighed by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts where state law requires schoolchildren to recite the pledge daily as a patriotic exercise.

The case stems from a lawsuit filed in 2010 by the American Humanist Association on behalf of atheist parents.

David Niose, attorney for the atheist families, argued before the Supreme Judicial Court Sept. 4 that the phrase

"under God" creates two classifications of citizens, Niose argued, because it "invalidates atheism, as second-class citizenry at best and downright unpatriotic at worst." Therefore, Niose said, the practice violates the state's equal protection and anti-discrimination laws.

The use of equal protection as a legal strategy for social change is the same strategy attorneys used in the 2003 landmark same-sex marriage case before the Supreme Judicial Court.

The Supreme Judicial Court issued no timeline for its ruling in the case. (RNS)

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"THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL, BUT THE WORKERS ARE FEW." Matthew 9:37

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University of the Cumberlands instructor's life featured in new movie

By Jennifer Wake-Floyd

Williamsburg—University of the Cumberlands' adjunct instructor of religion and role model for students, Travis Freeman, has outlived the odds, not only touching students' lives, but capturing the attention of movie producers.

Freeman's unconditional love for football and his faith in Christ have motivated him after he developed meningitis and become totally blind, and because of this, many see him as an inspiration. The member of Central Baptist Church in Corbin will be the star role in an upcoming movie, "23 Blast."

At the age of 12, Freeman lost his sight. The Corbin native was a typical middle school boy whose life was consumed by football and friends.

He began experiencing migraines that lasted days at a time, sinus pressure

caused by infections, and uncomfortable pain in his left eye. Doctors assured his parents that it was minor.

His parents, however, would not give up and were determined to find answers. He was finally diagnosed with Cavernous Sinus Thrombosis, and had emergency surgery to remove an infection that had formed behind his eyes, which left him completely blind.

The type of infection that Freeman contracted is fatal for nearly 70 percent of those affected. The remaining 30 percent are frequently left in a vegetative state. Freeman pulled through, though—thanks to a community of prayers and the grace of God.

His case is the second in the world where only the eyes were affected. Even though he was only 12, he still maintained a positive outlook. He had his friends and parents by his side to support him and keep him from giving up.

But what he wanted to do more than anything was play football.

"When I first lost my sight, I didn't want my friends to come to the hospital and see me like that," Freeman said. "But Jerry Baker, my friend and starting quarterback on our football team, came to the hospital anyway and spent the day with me. It was Jerry who helped me get back into my group of friends after I lost my sight."

"This was the first point I realized I was going to be O.K.," he recalled.

Freeman played football throughout his middle school years, and he continued playing in high school. With help and motivation from Coach Faris and his teammates, he played center for the Corbin High School Redhounds.

Freeman's teammates would help him by verbally guiding him during the plays. They were always trying to help protect him, which is true team work, he said.

Throughout these trying times, Freeman looked to God for answers and relied on Him to lead the way. He was blessed to have an amazing support system from his family, friends, community and CHS family.

Years after high school, Freeman received a phone call from Toni Hoover, the mother of his former teammate, Bram Hoover. She wanted to create her first screen playwright about his life.

Freeman agreed to it, but there have been many other attempts by numerous producers in the past that never amounted to anything other than a phone call. A few years later, however, Hoover had her producers and directors ready to film "23 Blast."

Bram, who is no stranger to the

camera, carefully selected the characters with his mother and Director Dylan Baker. Bram plays the role of Travis' inspirational friend, the late Jerry Baker, and the role of Travis is portrayed by actor Mark Hapka. The movie's title was adopted from an old football play.

The film crew swarmed the small town of Corbin, and many in the community became involved as extras by filling the football stadium. Their love for Travis and his family was very apparent.

"I hope (the movie) allows me to get out the real story, which leads to the ultimate story: Christ's. There is something beyond this world and I am not going to be blind forever."

Travis Freeman

"I'm extremely excited and nervous about the movie," Freeman said. "It's an honor to think that someone felt my story was worthy of something like this."

"I hope it allows me to get out and tell the real story which leads to the ultimate story: Christ's," he said. "There is something beyond this world and I am not going to be blind forever."

Freeman said he wants to use "23 Blast" as a platform to share his story with people who are depressed and struggling and to point others to the hope of Christ.

The movie based on Freeman's life, "23 Blast," debuted in Corbin's Tri-County Cineplex Sept. 19 and at the Knoxville Film Festival Sept. 22.

Although many view Freeman as a hero, he remains humble. He says that he is just a regular guy living his life.

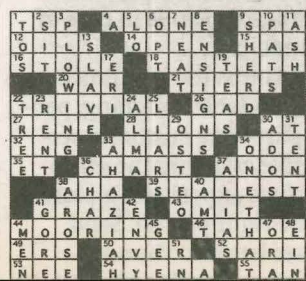
"I hope my story will be able to help those who are struggling in life to find peace and comfort in God's word," he said. (UC)

Bible Crosswords

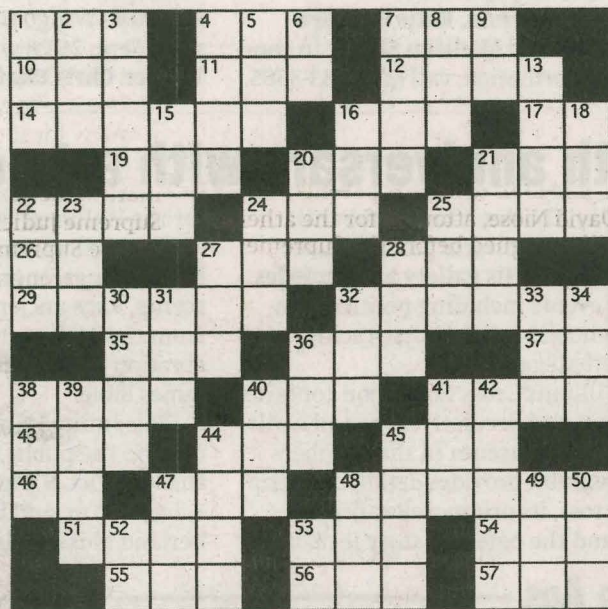
Across

- 1 Kind of walker
- 4 One that sends hisses
- 7 What the diseased woman touched on Jesus' garment
- 10 "____ no man any thing, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8)
- 11 Capture, in a way
- 12 Son of Seth
- 14 Chicken, in Dodge City
- 16 Accomplished
- 17 Laughing syllable
- 19 ____ head
- 20 "They ____ my path, they set forward my calamity" (Job 30:13)
- 21 Like 911
- 22 "The ____ enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26)
- 24 Son of ____
- 25 Oil or water
- 26 King of Bashan (1 Kings 4:19)
- 27 "Arise, take up thy ____, and go unto thine house" (Matthew 9:6)
- 28 "Write in it with a man's ____" (Isaiah 8:1)
- 29 "I saw seven ____ candlesticks" (Revelation 1:12)
- 32 "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and ____ down thine altars" (Romans 11:3)
- 35 Potato part
- 36 ____ potato
- 37 Bible language (abbr.)
- 38 "Jesus saith unto them, Come and ____" (John 21:12)
- 40 Funny person
- 41 "This is the whole ____ of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13)
- 43 Masculine nickname
- 44 Knock
- 45 Sample

#173



By Evelyn Boyington



#174

- 46 Revere(d) state (abbr.)
- 47 Douglas is one
- 48 Thing to be controlled
- 51 Average
- 53 ____-Gurion
- 54 Sprightly one
- 55 "He walketh through ____ places, seeking rest" (Luke 11:24)
- 56 Breadcrust, for example
- 57 Throw away
- Down**
- 1 "They rejoiced with exceeding great ____" (Matthew 2:10)
- 2 ____ struck
- 3 Painful cries
- 4 In a short time (arch.)
- 5 "A time to rend, and a time to ____" (Ecclesiastes 3:7)
- 6 Liquid measure (abbr.)
- 7 Son or daughter, most likely
- 8 "He that keepeth my works unto the ____, to him will I give power" (Rev. 2:26)
- 9 "Show Me" state (abbr.)
- 13 "Their tongue is as an arrow ____ out" (Jeremiah 9:8)
- 15 Put a match to
- 16 Tribe of Israel
- 18 Furniture wood
- 20 Consumed by, with "for"
- 21 Paul and Silas prayed and ____ in prison
- 22 Captain's journal
- 23 Times past
- 24 "Whom do ____ say that I am?" (Mark 8:27)
- 25 "Therefore shall he ____ in harvest, and have nothing" (Proverbs 20:4)
- 27 "The Lord shall hiss ... for the ____ that is in the land of Assyria" (Isaiah 7:18)
- 28 Seed
- 30 Part of church calendar
- 31 Tie-____
- 32 "A living ____ is better than a dead lion" (Ecc. 9:4)
- 33 Mother's advice concerning broccoli
- 34 ____ run
- 36 Chance (arch.)
- 38 Item on an AKC document
- 39 Duke of Edom (Genesis 36:43)
- 40 Rage against
- 41 Far from brainy
- 42 "He shall show you a large ____ room furnished" (Luke 22:12)
- 44 Tim, for one
- 45 Post
- 47 ____ cry
- 48 Perfect score, sometimes
- 49 Father of Hophni (1 Samuel 1:3)
- 50 "Mayberry ____" (former TV show)
- 52 Publishing person (abbr.)
- 53 I live

It's building(s) time

Five new buildings under construction at Crossings camps

I not sure what you thought when you read the headline to this column.

Perhaps it was excitement, or maybe you thought, "What is the cost? How long will it take?"

In the church world, I am sure there are certain thoughts that come to mind when a building project begins, and I am sure all of us have a varied story and past on how building projects go.

In the camping world, buildings continue to be an ongoing part of our lives at Crossings. Including Jonathan Creek and Cedar-moore, we maintain a lot of different buildings—more than 60 of them. During the past decade many have been torn down and replaced with new structures, so honestly the properties are continuing to look modernized.

Currently, we are in the process of adding five new buildings to the properties. Two lodges at Cedar-moore, two lodges at Jonathan Creek and a new worship center at Jonathan Creek are all currently in motion.

The fun part is the growth they represent, not the building itself. Most importantly, the fun part of the growth is the fact that each year God is

allowing us to present the gospel to more and more students. This in turn is producing a growing trend of more students accepting Christ as Lord and Savior each year, a trend that more stu-

dents feel called into ministry each year, and more money is given to missions each year.

While new buildings are more easily maintained and much more preferred by our guests, our prayer is that we do not become known for our buildings. The fact is all buildings will come and go, but the spiritual life change that happens to the people is what lasts and that is our purpose.

Perhaps a vivid picture of what God has done is that we now see more decisions for Christ in one summer than we had in total camp attendance years ago. Another fun fact is that the buildings in progress now are already booked with campers for 2014.

Buildings to us represent more opportunities for more people to hear the gospel and that is something to be excited about.

Crossings Ministries



David Melber

David Melber is president of Crossings Ministries. Contact Crossings at (502) 491-7000 or GoCrossings.com.

**CALENDAR
OF EVENTS**
September

- 24 Reaching the Summit, Central Baptist Church, Hawesville.
- 24 Committee on Nominations, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 26 Kentucky Baptist Foundation Board of Directors meeting, KBC Building, Louisville.

October

- 3 Ministry Assistant's Training Workshop, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 8 Committee on Credentials, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 10 Ministers in Transition, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 15 Administrative Committee, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 15 Men's, Women's Choral concert, Parkway Baptist Church, Bardstown.
- 17 Committee on Resolutions, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 19 1:8 Leadership Experience orientation, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 22 Committee on Nomination, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 24 DiscipleShift 1 Conference, Eastside Community Church, Richmond.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BENTON**—New Zion Church will hold a pastors/deacons/wives retreat Sept. 27, 6 p.m. A meal will be provided. **Rodney Wallace** is pastor.

■ **BEREA**—White Lick Church will hold a men's fish fry Sept. 28, 5:30 p.m., with **Narrow Road** in concert. For more information, call (859) 925-4641. **Wayne Dunn** is pastor.

■ **BREMEN**—Bethlehem Church will hold their 160th anniversary homecoming Sept. 29, 10 a.m., with guest speaker Brodie Ambrose and the **Johnson Family** in concert. For more information, call (270) 543-6201. **Leroy Rearden** is pastor.

■ **CADIZ**—Canton Church will hold revival services Sept. 29-Oct. 2 with guest speaker and singer **Steve Warren**. **Damian Phillips** is pastor.

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Saloma Church will hold Sunday revival service Sept. 29, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., with guest speaker **Walt Davis IV**. **John Chowning** is pastor.

■ **CECILIA**—Cecilia Church will host the Severns Valley Association annual meeting Sept. 29, 4:30 p.m., with guest speaker **Paul Chitwood**, KBC executive director. **Eric Oliver** is pastor.

■ **FRANKFORT**—Crestwood Church will hold movie night with "Letters to God" Sept. 27, 7 p.m. **Michael Hail** is pastor.

■ **LA GRANGE**—Buckner Church will celebrate its 55th anniversary Sept. 29, 11 a.m., with the **Dalton Gang** in concert, followed by a meal.

Call (502) 222-1735 for more information. **Lynn Traylor** is pastor.

■ **LEXINGTON**—East Hickman Church recently called **Brian Iverson** as pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Farmdale Church will hold a retirement party for pastor **Doug Strader** Sept. 29, beginning with his last sermon at 10:50 a.m., followed by a meal, then a cake and punch reception.

Hurstbourne Church will hold Celebrate Missions dinner Sept. 26, 6:30 p.m., with guest speaker **Linda Cooper**, Kentucky WMU president.

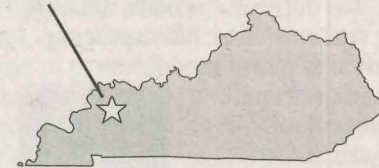
Maple Grove Church will hold breakfast movie night Sept. 27, 6:30 p.m. **Raymond Hayes** is pastor.

Parkland Church will hold a free community dinner Sept. 26, 5 p.m. **Tom Curry** is pastor.

■ **MORGANFIELD**—First Church will hold a community lunch and clothes give away Sept. 28, 11 a.m. **Tim Leadingham** is pastor.

■ **MOUNT WASHINGTON**—First Church will hold Car Care Day Sept. 28, 9 a.m. **Billy Compton** is pastor.

■ **OWENSBORO**—First Church will host Reunion Concert Sept. 29, 5:15 p.m., with **Martin Allen, Jon Brennan, Katie Brennen Herron, Dave Hunt** and **Madison Silvert** in concert. For more information, call (270) 683-3505.

Spotlight on ...**MADISONVILLE**

Victory Church will host author **Gary Chapman** in a marriage conference called "The Marriage You've Always Wanted" Sept. 28, 9 a.m. Chapman is author of "The 5 Love Languages." **Kris Goodman** is pastor.

Paul Strahan is pastor.

■ **SOMERSET**—First Church will host the **Newsboys** and **For King and Country** in concert Sept. 29. For more information, call (606) 678-5106. **French Harmon** is pastor.

■ **WILLIAMSTOWN**—Knoxville Church will hold a youth rally Sept. 25, 6:30 p.m. **Josh Landrum** is pastor.

■ **WINGO**—Wingo Church will hold revival services Sept. 26-28 with guest speaker **Rick Walker**. **Chris Clark** is pastor.

Cumberlands celebrates 125th anniversary with art collections

Williamsburg—University of the Cumberlands is presenting several unique art exhibits at the Cumberland Museum in honor of the university's 125th Anniversary Homecoming. The exhibits include the Charles Kelly photo gallery, the Carl Williams Cross Collection and the Biblical Art Showcase.

The Cumberland Museum will feature a wide range of historical events captured by photographer Charles Kelly. Over the years, Kelly has photographed many famous figures and athletes, such as Martin Luther King Jr.,

Hank Aaron, Ray Charles, Vince Lombardi, Paul "Bear" Bryant, President Jimmy Carter and Alan Greenspan. His gallery also includes a spectrum of events including political conventions, automobile racing, horse racing, baseball and basketball games.

The Carl Williams Cross Collection contains over 7,000 pieces and decoratives the tall walls of the Cumberland Museum in the Cumberland Inn. The exhibit provides detailed descriptions of each cross, its origin, relevance to Christianity, and the personal story it carries

for the Williams family.

The Biblical Art Showcase includes biblical leaf etchings, engravings and hand-painted scenes. Rare ancient artifacts and manuscripts from the 14th century are on display in celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible.

This limited-time event, which is free and open to the public, will be shown daily through Oct. 6, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.—6 p.m. and by appointment. The Cumberland Museum is located off I-75, exit 11. (UC)

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: 15 passenger bus, 2005 Ford, 9,625 miles, excellent condition, \$29,000. Hurricane Baptist Church, (270) 350-1334.

FOR SALE: Sound/video/theatrical lighting. JCA Media, LLC, well known in KBC with 20+ years experience installing quality equipment at reasonable pricing. Contact: Jim Cottrell, owner, Elizabethtown, (270) 862-9586, or (270) 312-7492; Rusty King, project manager, Nashville, Tenn., (615) 972-8869; or Amy Cottrell, operations manager, Louisville, (502) 802-4310. Jcamedia.com. References available.

SEEKING: White Stone Quarry Baptist Church is now accepting resumés for senior pastor. Applicants must proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and must uphold the doctrines of the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. A minimum of 1 to 3 years experience preferred. Need an energetic person to lead while working to reach the unchurched in a growing community. Send resumé to whitestoneapplicant@gmail.com, or mail to: White Stone Quarry Baptist Church, Attn. Search Committee, 2764 Blue Level Road, Bowling Green, KY 42101. Resumés will be accepted through Oct. 15.

SEEKING: Ferguson Baptist Church in Somerset is seeking a part-time minister of music. Submit resumé to fergusonkbapt@yahoo.com or mail to:

P.O. Box 247, Ferguson, KY 42533. For questions, call the church at (606) 679-1690.

SEEKING: Southside Baptist Church in Princeton is seeking a full-time student and children's minister. Seminary training and experience preferred. Email resumés to mark@southsidebaptist.com, or mail to: Southside Baptist Church, Attn. Mark Williams, P.O. Box 684, Princeton, KY 42445. For more information about Southside, visit southsidebaptist.com.

SEEKING: Okalona Missionary Baptist Church in Nancy is seeking a full-time pastor, called by God, to lead the congregation according to God's will. Send resumés to: Resumés, P.O. Box 99, Nancy, KY 42544. Deadline for receipt is Sept. 30.

SEEKING: Grace Baptist Church, in Lexington, is seeking a part-time minister of music to direct adult choir, lead worship service and guide children's music programs. Mail resumés to: Minister of Music Search Committee, 811 Bryan Ave., Lexington, KY 40505, or email to dfoley@gbclxington.org by Oct. 6.

SEEKING: Stithton Baptist Church in Radcliff is seeking a full-time/part-time children's ministry director. Formal training and experience are preferred. Email resumés to pastorgc@stithton.org, or mail to Stithton Baptist Church, 95 Park Ave. Radcliff KY 40160. For more

info about Stithton, visit stithton.org. Phone: (270) 351-6055.

SEEKING: Watson Memorial Baptist Church is actively praying and searching for a pastor under the guidance of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Review the job description and submit your resumé online at watsonmbc.org, or mail to Watson Memorial Baptist Church, P.O. Box 91074, Louisville, KY 40291. Resumés delivered by any other means than listed above after Sept. 9 will not be accepted.

SEEKING: New Hope Missionary Baptist Church of Caneyville is seeking a bivocational pastor, preferably one who lived in the community. More details and application instructions can be found at newhopecaneyville.org/pastor-needed.

SEEKING: Floyd Switch Baptist Church, in Eubank, is accepting applications for a part-time paid youth minister. Mail resumé to pastor David Gambrel at 171 Pleasant Point School Road, Waynesville, KY 40489. Or email to floydswitch@yahoo.com. Must be received by Oct. 22.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Louisa, a vibrant mission-minded church is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to Pastor Search Committee, 301 West Pike St., Louisa, KY 41230.

SEEKING: Vine Run Baptist Church, located in rural northern Kentucky, is seeking a pastor. Mail resumé to Vine Run Baptist Church, 8805 Warsaw Road

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SEEKING: Bellevue Baptist Church in Owensboro is seeking an administrative pastor. Role entails assisting senior pastor in leading staff and congregation. Must have the ability to effectively manage resources for the purpose of spiritual and numerical church growth. Bellevue is a contemporary church averaging around 1,300 in combined ministries. Email resumés to Greg Faulls in care of kmidkiff@bellnet.org.

SEEKING: East Louisville insurance agency seeks dependable, outgoing, people person as a part-time customer service representative assisting the office manager. Insurance experience a plus, but will train the right person. Send resumé and cover letter to rhonda. loader@clufh.com. Email only.

1,000 FORMER MISSIONARIES ON *'Ready Reserve'*

By Susan O'Hara

Richmond, Va.—They had been back in the United States for two years. They were comfortably settled in South Carolina, running a tourism company, working in their church and caring for their grandchildren.

Then an urgent email arrived. A Southern Baptist teacher who directed an English-language center in North Africa and the Middle East had died unexpectedly. Three months had passed and no one was there to keep the center running.

Charles and Laura Kingman*, former IMB workers, had interacted with many people during their six years as regional volunteer strategists for North Africa and the Middle East. The email asked if they knew someone who could direct the center and teach English until new personnel could be appointed and trained.

It ended with the notation: "It would be really nice if it were you."

"I could do this," Laura thought.

"I have the background. I'm a retired English teacher."

But it was only a passing thought, and she began thinking through who else might fill the position.

Charles prayed about the opportunity but decided that uprooting their lives and moving didn't fit God's current

plan. They already had a trip to the Middle East scheduled with one of their tour groups. Committing to work at the center would mean three extra months abroad.

But a few days later, he'd changed his mind, believing that God wanted them to go.

They called the team strategy leaders and said they would come.

In February, the Kingmans took their tour group overseas. By March they were at the center, teaching and directing the work.

The Kingmans are members of IMB's Ready Reserve, a volunteer partnership between IMB and former field personnel.

The Ready Reserve includes a database of former personnel who can be called upon to fill immediate short-term needs on the field or to serve in the U.S. in advocacy and mobilization.

In this case, there was no time for new personnel to be trained to run the center and current workers had other responsibilities.

"(The teacher's) absence left a huge void in the school where she taught," said Doug Floyd, IMB director of personnel relations. "That particular ministry was in danger of closing because of the lack of personnel."

But Ready Reserve held the answer.

The Kingmans already understood the culture and environment. They

arrived on a Saturday and started work the following Monday.

"All the orientation we got was how to get from our apartment to the school, how to get to the grocery store and maybe a restaurant," Laura said.

IMB President Tom Elliff announced the Ready Reserve at an emeritus missionary celebration in Ridgecrest, N.C., a year ago. The reserve is by invitation only, with all emeritus missionaries invited to participate. Other former personnel are invited on an individual basis.

Currently about 1,000 former personnel are in the Ready Reserve, with more personnel continually being added.

"These are people who are heavily invested in the IMB," Floyd said. "Even though they've retired and gone back to their home churches and the U.S., ... they still have that missionary call and want to stay close to what we are doing."

When an urgent need arises, field leaders can look at the database and go directly to the Ready Reservist, asking him or her to fill that need until someone can take the position permanently.

The Kingmans kept the language school running through the semester, giving IMB time to train a new couple during the summer.

"Ready Reserve is exactly what it says," Laura said. "We're ready to go, shortly." (IMB)

*Name changed.

Religious diversity is increasing at the office, and so are pitfalls

By David Gibson

The American workplace, like the rest of U.S. society, is becoming more religiously diverse and that is raising concerns about employer accommodations for believers—and increasing the odds for uncomfortable moments around the water cooler.

Yet one potential flashpoint among workers does not involve new immigrant faiths, but rather two indigenous communities: white evangelicals and unaffiliated Americans who constitute one of the fastest-growing segments of the population.

A major factor contributing to workplace conflict, according to a survey recently released, is that evangelicals—whose religious identity is tied to sharing their beliefs—are much more likely to talk about their faith at work than other religious and nonreligious groups.

In fact, half of white evangelical Protestants said they share their beliefs with co-workers, compared to 22 percent of workers overall, according to the 2013 Survey of American Workers and Religion, sponsored by the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding.

And one-third of evangelicals said they discuss religion frequently,

compared to 14 percent of non-Christian believers, 10 percent of Catholics and 7 percent of white mainline Protestants. Moreover, nearly 9-in-10 white evangelical employees say they are somewhat or very comfortable when the issue of religion comes up in the workplace.

Conversely, the research found that nonbelievers are reticent to discuss religion and 43 percent of them say they feel somewhat or very uncomfortable when the topic comes up.

"This suggests the potential for workplace clashes between atheists and evangelical Protestants," the report says.

The survey, released for Labor Day, was conducted in March and April by the Public Religion Research Institute, which questioned more than 2,000 American adults in both English and Spanish. The poll has a margin of error of 2.8 percentage points.

Given the findings, it is perhaps not surprising that both nonbelievers and evangelicals shared a heightened sense of bias: Nearly 6-in-10 atheists said they think people look down on their beliefs, and nearly 6-in-10 of white evangelicals agreed that discrimination against Christians has become as big a problem as discrimination against other religious minorities.

"There's a clear sense in the data, especially among white evangelicals,

that other workers' needs are being taken care of and theirs are not," said Robert Jones, head of the Public Religion Research Institute.

Jones added that along with their growing numbers, the "nones" are also increasingly confident in proclaiming their lack of religious affiliation, which in turn contributes to the potential for workplace interactions—and conflicts—over religion.

David Sikkink, a sociologist of religion at the University of Notre Dame who reviewed the report, also noted that while most believers—as well as nonbelievers—don't look to the office as a place to find meaning and direction in their lives, evangelicals often take the opposite view and see the workplace as a venue for living out their religious identity.

"Evangelicals want to be different somehow, to take a stand, and to show that God is working in their lives through them," Sikkink said.

He said that does not always mean sharing the specifics of their faith, but can instead be demonstrated by the way evangelicals deal with workplace problems, or simply in their focus on developing friendships with their co-workers. Still, the endpoint of such relationships is a conversation about faith, "and

eventually that may rub the nonreligious the wrong way."

Overall, the incidence of workplace conflicts and discrimination over religion seems to be a fairly significant issue, according to the survey, with one-third of respondents reporting that they have seen or experienced incidents of religious bias in the workplace.

The most frequently cited problems were not interactions with co-workers but instead related to a failure of companies to provide sufficient accommodations for believers, especially non-Christians. Half of those respondents said that their

employers are ignoring their religious needs.

On the other hand, while the Tanenbaum report says that American companies need to do more to accommodate religious believers, it also found strong incentives for businesses to adapt: The survey showed that employees at companies that were sensitive to religious needs reported better morale and were much less likely to look for another job.

"With a growing number of nonreligious workers and a growing number of workers who are not Jewish or Christian, many employers are just figuring out how to navigate these waters," said Jones. (RNS)

"Nonbelievers are reticent to discuss religion and 43 percent of them say they feel somewhat or very uncomfortable when the topic comes up."

"A major factor contributing to workplace conflict ... is that evangelicals ... are much more likely to talk about their faith at work."

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