

# WESTERN Recorder

January 21, 2014

Shine Like Stars \* Philippians 2:15

Volume 188, Issue 2

## 'Wonderfully' made

*Couple chooses life because God doesn't make 'mistakes'*



Josh Landrum, pastor of Knoxville Baptist Church in Williamstown, and his wife Cassie said they have been blessed throughout their oldest son's congenital heart problems. Luke (second from left), 7, has endured six open-heart surgeries and appears to be on the road to recovery after receiving a heart transplant in September. Rounding out the Landrum family are Colby, 4, and Reece, 2. (Photo courtesy of Josh Landrum)

By Robin Cornetet Bass

**Williamstown**—Josh and Cassie Landrum's lives were humming along nicely. Josh was settling into his third year as student pastor at the Baptist Church of Andover in Lexington, and the couple was eagerly awaiting the birth of their first child.

Twenty weeks into the pregnancy, however, the Landrums received news no parent would want to hear: their unborn

son's heart was fatally underdeveloped from a condition called Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome. Doctors gave the young couple three options—one was to terminate the pregnancy.

Aborting her baby, said Cassie, "was not an option for us. We knew that God is sovereign and that He was going to give us the child He designed for us. There are no mistakes."

Other options were to leave the condition untreated, or allow doctors to

perform a series of three open-heart surgeries—all before the age of two. The process would eventually reroute blood flow so the left side of the heart bears most of the work. Specialists at the University of Michigan Hospital told the couple that children diagnosed with HLHS have a 50-60 percent chance of surviving the initial procedure.

The Landrums chose to give their son an opportunity to live, and nine days

□ See 'Wonderfully' made ... Page 3

## KBC president: New law makes adoption easier

By Robin Cornetet Bass

**Louisville**—Chip Hutcheson, president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, said a new adoption law signed by President Obama last week would ease "burdens" by giving internationally-adopted children a single birth date.

"I will be forever grateful for Senator (Mitch) McConnell's efforts in helping pass this bill," Hutcheson said. "This is a common sense pro-family legislation that relieves a tremendous

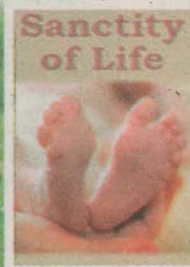
burden on families who adopt internationally."

When children are adopted from orphanages in other countries, authorities typically guess at a child's age and assign the date of birth. Sometimes these estimates are vastly inaccurate.

"While there is an existing state court process in the U.S. these families can present medical, educational and dental evidence to support a request for an amended date of birth that is appropriate for the child's true age, U.S. Agencies will not accept these amended dates," stated the American Academy of Adoption Attorney.

The Accuracy for Adoptees Act

□ See Adoption ... Page 3



## Churches, campus ministries form powerful partnerships

By David Roach

**Louisville**—As college students serve in the local church through worship, children's ministry, drama and a host of other ways, congregations around the commonwealth are learning how valuable a partnership with Kentucky Baptist Campus Ministry can be.

At Crosspoint Church in Morehead, which launched in 2008, several members of the leadership team are alumni of nearby Morehead State University and its campus ministry. BCM students also served as the worship band initially, and students who have met

Christ through the church now attend the BCM to help spur their Christian growth.

Thanks in part to students' help, the church grew to 1,000 people in attendance last year.

"Crosspoint and the BCM work together," Morehead State Campus Missionary Gene Parr said. "It's just the Lord's work. It's not something that we set as our agenda, but Crosspoint is reaping some of the students in which we've been planting seeds. At the same time, there are some students that become Christians on the campus that are just

□ See Partnerships ... Page 2



Last year, Chip Hutcheson, his wife and their grandchildren met with U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell in his office in the U.S. Capitol. Several years ago, Senator McConnell's office assisted the Hutcheson family with the adoption of Lemlem and Kashiku from Ethiopia. (Photo submitted)

Ditch the cord.

**GO MOBILE**

Kentucky Baptist news at your fingertips  
WesternRecorder.org



Find us on Facebook and on twitter  
as westernrecorder

Western Recorder 1-21-2014

# Former Boyce dean recovering God's design for broken families in his Florida community

By James Smith Sr.

**West Palm Beach, Fla.**—Jimmy Scroggins, a two-time alumnus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and former dean of Boyce College, Southern's undergraduate school, saw the devastating consequences of the moral revolution shortly after arriving five years ago as the lead pastor of First Baptist Church in West Palm Beach.

Scroggins realized he was no longer in the Bible Belt when seven of eight couples who signed up for a marriage preparation class were already living together—some after multiple marriages, some with children from multiple prior relationships in and out of wedlock and most were not even Christians.

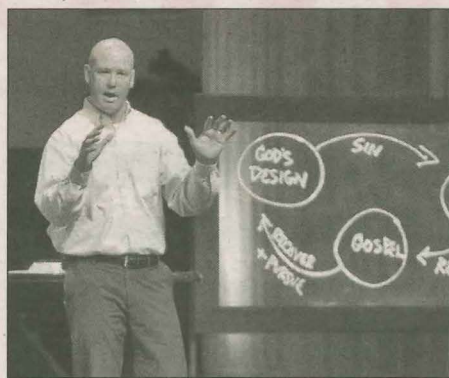
A native of Jacksonville, Fla., Scroggins' more than 15 years of pastoral ministry experiences there and in Louisville, were meager preparation for what he found in South Florida.

"I realized things were going to have to be different here and that class began a journey for me, and therefore for our church, into trying to discover what it would be like if our community felt like we really had open doors to them," Scroggins said.

## Seeing is believing

The inaugural marriage preparation class drove Scroggins to re-tool his ministry approach to communicate more clearly to people whose lives are not shaped by the Bible, with complicated, mixed-up family structures.

Scroggins developed a graphical illustration to help the couples see why their lives were broken and how the gospel is the means of recovering God's design. The illustration has become Scroggins go-to tool for gospel witnessing and teaching: God's design (for marriage, family, sex, etc.) is violated by sin that results in brokenness. People



Jimmy Scroggins, lead pastor of First Baptist Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., and former Boyce College dean, explains in a recent sermon a graphical illustration of how departing from God's design brings brokenness. (Emil Handke/SBTS)

attempt to ignore, rationalize, mitigate their brokenness until in repentance they see the gospel as the way of recovery and means to pursue God's design for their lives.

Scroggins said the illustration hit home for most of the couples in the first class, even while some initially were angry with him for asserting the notion of sin and God's standards.

"The brokenness is that part of our graphic that really grabs people because they may not agree with God's design; they may not even agree with the concept of sin; but none of them deny the brokenness," he said.

Still, no graphic fully illustrates the devastating consequences of living contrary to God's design with "severe brokenness" that may include multiple failed relationships and "all kinds of immorality" that is sometimes multi-generational.

"The brokenness is so deep that even if they turn from their sins and put their trust in Christ you're just not going to put Humpty Dumpty back together again for them," he said.

Scroggins said some of the couples in the first marriage preparation class

have become followers of Christ and have married, but some still face "tremendous challenges" because of the residue of their past choices.

## Communicating the gospel

The challenge of communicating the gospel in the midst of moral revolution dominates Scroggins' daily thoughts.

"I think about it around the clock because the people who are caught up in the moral revolution are the people who are coming to our church," he said.

Scroggins said all Bible-believing evangelicals soon will have to come to terms with the reality that their moral worldview is a minority position in American culture.

The "Moral Majority generation" that is the backbone of many Southern Baptist congregations must find ways to minister effectively to a generation that completely rejects biblical standards of morality, Scroggins said.

The path forward, he said, is for evangelicals to make gospel convictions paramount to "some of our cultural shibboleths" or "our political dogma."

"We're going to have to be careful about what parts of who we are and what we believe are truly flowing from the gospel and what parts of those are trappings of a bankrupt Bible Belt, cultural Christianity," he said.

Most people in South Florida aren't opposed to Christianity. Instead, "they see Christianity as irrelevant" to their daily life, Scroggins said.

"If our people will live as genuine, authentic, imperfect, gospel outposts then they can speak into the lives of people who don't believe in Christ and don't know Christ and they can invite them to know him. And because of the authenticity and testimony of the outworking of the gospel in their lives they will have a hearing and that is what it's going to take to penetrate lostness." (SBTS)

# Four more locations for KBC disaster relief training

**Louisville**—The Kentucky Baptist Convention has scheduled four more training sessions across the state to prepare members of Kentucky Baptist churches and volunteers with Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief to work in the aftermath of natural calamities.

Coy Webb, director of Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief for the KBC, said the importance of the training comes into focus when looking at just some of the more recent natural disasters volunteers have responded to, whether severe flooding, deadly tornadoes, hurricanes, even wildfires in the western U.S.

Volunteers from Kentucky have provided hot meals, emergency child care and clean-up assistance.

"Our volunteers have to keep their skills sharp," Webb said. "The work is just too important not to do so, and that's why we are offering this training to all volunteers, whether they're new or have been involved for years."

Training will be offered in:

■ Louisville on Feb. 7-8 at Westport Road Baptist Church, 9705 Westport Road.

■ Richmond on March 7-8 at First Baptist Church, 425 Eastern Bypass.

■ Pikeville on April 11-12 at First Baptist Church, 126 4th St.

■ Glasgow on Sept. 19-20 at Calvary Baptist Church, 307 Columbia Ave.

Fees for new volunteers are \$40 per person and include two training sessions, lunch, manual, background check, photo ID and cap. Current volunteers pay \$20/person for one class.

The training will cover chainsaw safety, basic CPR and first aid, chaplaincy, evangelism in crisis, communications, emergency child care, evangelism in crisis, flood relief, safe food, water purification and laundry unit set up.

Register at [kybaptist.org/drttraining](http://kybaptist.org/drttraining) or call Kentucky Baptist Convention toll-free at (1-866) 489-3527. (KBC)

## Partnerships

Continued from page 1  
drawn to Crosspoint."

Synergy between church plants and BCMs is a story that has been repeated in Murray, Frankfort and Lexington, according to KBC Collegiate Evangelism Strategist Brian Combs.

"I'm continually encouraged to see more local churches engaging college campuses and utilizing BCM as the great resources that it is," Combs said.

It's a natural partnership, according to Parr, because BCMs "are producing students that God can use in new and creative ways. We're also producing students that want to be a part of it when they see God doing something new and relevant."

Church plants complement the discipleship efforts of BCMs, according to Jessie Litkenhus, a student at Murray State University and intern at The Journey church, a congregation that meets

on the Murray State campus.

At The Journey, Litkenhus and other students have opportunities to be mentored by adult believers, she said, something that's not always possible at a BCM, where ministry is largely peer led.

**I'm continually encouraged to see more local churches engaging college campuses and utilizing BCM as the great resource that it is."**

Brian Combs

"I visited many of the campus ministries and the organizations that were on campus," she said. "But when I found The Journey, (adults) that were wiser were definitely there to mentor me."

Matt Johnson, pastor of The Journey, said Kentucky college campuses need church plants and BCMs working together. Before launching The Journey in 2005, he learned that fewer than 500 of the 10,000 college students in Calloway County attended church anywhere.

About 120 people, most of them students, attended the congregation's first official service. Today The Journey has nearly 400 in worship when classes are in session.

"I was heavily involved in the BCM when I was a student at Murray," Johnson

said. "And I think there is incredible value to the BCM. We work with them and support them in quite a few ways. We view it as having a partnership with them; like a lot of other churches in this area."

But he added that a campus church presents opportunities for students to use their spiritual gifts, opportunities that are not always available in campus ministries.

"We have college students who are serving on a weekly basis at every level," Johnson said. "They're investing in preschoolers every single week. They're investing in elementary-aged kids. They're investing in middle- and high schoolers every week. We have some that are using their acting or their speaking abilities."

Similar church plants have been launched on the campuses of Kentucky State University, Northern Kentucky University and University of Kentucky, Combs said.

"We have a great team of campus missionaries that are passionate about their particular campus or mission field and

welcome the opportunity to help even more churches reach Kentucky and their world for Christ," he said.

## Learn more at RISK

Kentucky Baptist collegiate/young adult ministers, or other church leaders interested in learning how to partner with Baptist Campus Ministry, are encouraged to attend this year's RISK:

Changing the Channel conference April 11-12 at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

Combs emphasized that the event will be helpful to any congregation, whether they are located in a college town or not.

Online registration will be available soon. Early bird rates are \$25 per person through March 31. After April 1, the fee is \$45/person. For more, go to [bcm.org](http://bcm.org).

Reaching the collegiate and young adults also will be among the session topics offered at this year's Risk evangelism conference, Feb. 24-25 at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown. Learn more and register at [kybaptist.org/risk](http://kybaptist.org/risk). (KBC)

**"We have college students who are serving on a weekly basis."**

Matt Johnson

## 'Wonderfully' made

Continued from page 1

after Luke's birth his delicate infant chest was opened for the first time.

At that point, Josh, who now serves as the pastor of Knoxville Baptist Church in Williamstown, said he realized Luke's life "was out of our hands and in God's hands."

By Luke's second birthday, he had spent a total of nine months in the hospital and underwent a fourth unscheduled surgery to repair a heart valve. Eighteen months later Luke developed Plastic Bronchitis, a condition that causes difficulty breathing because of large, rubber-like bronchial casts. The only option was a heart transplant.

### Recognizing providence

Josh, a self-described "control freak," said he was the type of person who needed everything planned out. "But through this, God has taught me that I can't be that way—and, to be honest, it's kind of freeing."

The couple also realized they "had to turn to each other," especially when Luke needed around-the-clock care. Whenever Luke's Plastic Bronchitis condition flared up, they took turns giving 30-minute breathing treatments every four hours—day and night.

"We have tried really hard to make sure we both are—individually and together—spending time with the Lord. It may not be worshipping together at church. It may be at home. But whenever we have the time, we try to take advantage of it," Cassie said.

Josh pointed out God's providence in pairing him with a wife who is knowledgeable in medical terminology. Cassie's experience in home health and physical therapy has "allowed us to complement each other," he said, and brought peace in understanding complicated jargon.

"We've always known since we met that we were supposed to be together," Cassie said.

Having met in a church youth group, Josh said, "I don't have many memories without her."

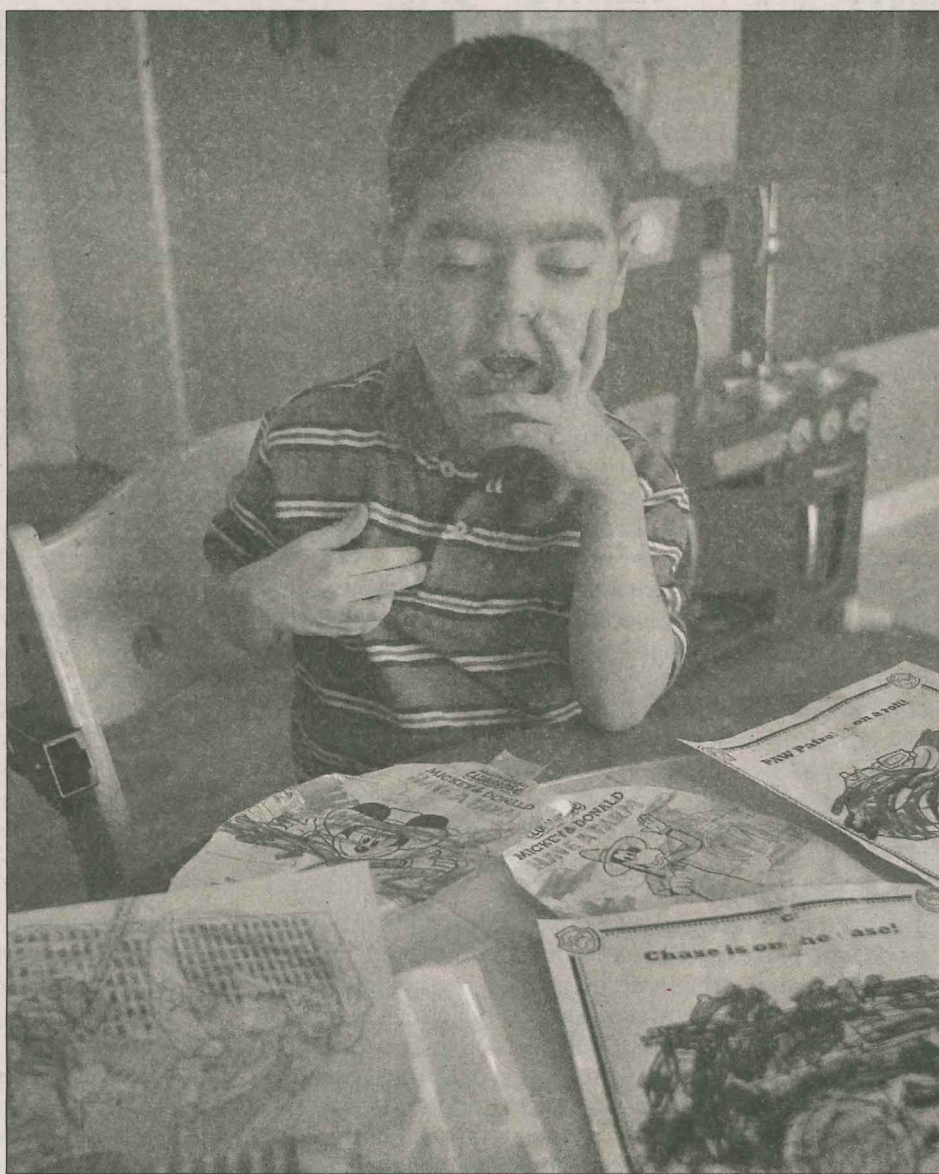
### Surgeries 5 & 6

In addition to God and their marriage bonds, the Landrums also leaned on the graciousness of others, particularly when Luke's conditioned worsened and they were appealing for him to be placed on the heart transplant list at Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

By this time, Josh and Cassie had two more children: Colby and Reece, now ages 4 and 2. The couple often called on family or church members to care for their children when Luke had a doctor's appointment or needed to be rushed to the emergency room.

Last February, Luke's became so sick from the Plastic Bronchitis that he was placed on oxygen and given a central line to receive continuous medication. The 6 year old was so weak, his parents would carry him up and down the stairs in their house.

Finally, on Sept. 13, 2013, the Landrums got a call at 1:30 a.m. saying a heart was available for Luke. They had 90 minutes to get to the hospital. Cassie said



Luke Landrum, 7, tells about his new non-profit business venture called, "Luke's Coloring Company," which seeks to bring joy to children while they are in the hospital. Grant County Parks and Recreation has joined his crusade by offering pages on their website so other children in the community can help. So far, more than 100 drawings have been taken to Cincinnati Children's Hospital. (Robin Cornet Bass/WR)

Luke excitedly talked the entire 45-minute ride.

Eighteen hours and hundreds of prayers later, Luke immersed from surgery, only to have his little chest opened for a sixth time shortly afterward to control bleeding. But within an hour, Cassie said Luke was much better. His blue-gray skin and lips had shifted to a healthy pink signaling that his oxygen levels were more normal.

Luke later told his mom that "it felt like you and daddy were opening the door and checking on me" during the transplant.

"We can't help but believe that was God wrapping him up in His arms and listening to the hundreds of people who were praying for him," Josh said. People like their former pastor, the late Tim Alexander, who while sick with cancer got out of his bed and knelt to pray for Luke.

### Giving God glory

"We truly believe God has put us in this situation to give glory to Him, to try and push others to Christ," Josh said, "whether we are in a waiting room or with

doctors, we're going to somehow point people to Christ."

While Luke was under the care of the University of Michigan Hospital, Josh and Cassie took up residence at a nearby Ronald McDonald House. There, they met families going through similar struggles.

Josh recalled a time when he ministered to father who knew his child's life-support machines would be turned off the next morning. That family continues to keep in touch and even came to Luke's birthday.

Cassie has started a Facebook page called "I Heart Luke" that not only informs people about her son's progress, but also is a witness to all that God has done in their lives. The page has more than 1,600 followers. Josh said some members of his family were touched by the outpouring of love for Luke and rededicated their lives to Christ.

"Though this entire thing, we have come to realize God's plan is much bigger than ours," Josh said. "Look at how many people have been affected by our story, people we have been able to meet and minister to, and how much of God's grace and glory is shining through."

Cassie said Luke's condition has allowed their family to cross paths with people they might never have met otherwise. "We know what they have been through," she said. "It's our chance to model a faith in a God who loves you, loves your child and your family."

### 'I can run'

A recent biopsy revealed that Luke's body is not rejecting the new heart and doctors have placed no restrictions on his activity level. On a recent afternoon, Luke raced through the house barefoot, playing with his brother.

"Look how fast I can run," said Luke, who plans to turn his need for speed into a career as a race car driver. His favorite

activities mirror most boys his age, riding four-wheelers and shooting BB guns.

Luke has even started his own non-profit business called "Luke's Coloring Company," which allows kids to help other kids but doing something they love: coloring. There is a link to free printables and directions to drop-off locations on the Grant County Parks and Recreation website at grantcountyparks.com/help-luke.

It's all about "helping kids feel better," said Luke. Already more than 100 colorful crayon masterpieces have been delivered to the children's hospital in Cincinnati.

"There's definitely a sense of relief because he feels better and can do more, but we're fighting a different disease process now," Cassie said.

Luke was prescribed 15 medications after his heart transplant and doctors say he may eventually get down to the five pills he must take for the rest of his life. Knowing that the typical life expectancy of a transplanted heart is 15-20 years, Cassie said, "We're just thankful for today."

Josh said the key to having peace about Luke's future is not necessarily in doctors or medicine, but rather realizing God is in control.

"Nobody knows when their last day will be," Josh said. "Take advantage of every moment of every single day, being conscious of giving God the glory whatever our circumstance. It might not always be fun or enjoyable to go through, but we trust that He loves us and He is going to use whatever we are going through to glorify Him and His kingdom." (WR)

## Abortion

Continued from page 1

requires federal agencies to recognize amended birth records and changed names cited in state court orders. According to McConnell's office, this law ensures that when a child applies for a Social Security card, driver's license or passport one date of birth is recognized.

McConnell said he was proud to be a co-sponsor of the bipartisan bill, which passed Congress last month.

"I hear from many Kentuckians who are struggling to adopt children internationally and have requested assistance from my office," the senator said. "This measure will help many of those families."

Hutcheson approached McConnell in 2013 about reconciling federal and state documents with conflicting birth dates.

"We have two grandchildren who were adopted from Ethiopia, and one of them has an error on his birth certificate from that country," Hutcheson said. "Now all the red tape will be eliminated in rectifying that situation so that he will have an accurate record throughout his life."

Problems that may result from not recognizing a child's amended birth date include improper placement in school, inability to obtain a passport, and the possibility of identity fraud. (WR)

## Keys to good leadership

Jesus said, "No one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins" (Mark 2:22).

I recently had the opportunity to lecture to a group of doctoral students on the topic of leading organizational change. Leading change in an established organization, whether a church, business, missions agency, academic institution, etc., can be risky business. It's a lot like putting new wine into an old wineskin. Successfully moving the organization forward, without rupture, requires a wise, careful and deliberate leader.

I have found that the following key steps can keep leaders on track and help ensure a healthy, successful transition.

First, good leaders raise awareness of the ongoing or impending crisis that requires changes to be made. In his book, "Good to Great," author Jim Collins uses the phrase, "confront the brutal facts," to describe crisis awareness. Leaders and/or followers who remain unaware of the crisis will have little motivation to initiate or even tolerate change.

Second, good leaders work hard to build consensus and a coalition of support to carry the organization through change. Especially during organizational transitions, leaders need strong support and appropriate accountability.

Third, good leaders give clarity, painting a clear picture of the current state of the organization and a clear vision for the future state of the organization. Solomon wrote, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). I would add that, where vision is not clearly communicated, the opportunity to bring healthy change to an organization also perishes.

Fourth, good leaders focus on effective communication. In "Managing Transitions," William Bridges writes that leaders must "give people the information and do it again and again." He also notes, "It isn't the changes that do you in, it's the transitions."

Fifth, good leaders have a high level of commitment. Organizations are led by and comprised of people. Since most people instinctively resist change, we should not be surprised that organizations resist change. Thus, leading change is hard work. While organizational change is not accomplished by the sheer power of will, organizational change will not be accomplished apart from the sheer power of will. The leader must be committed.

Finally, good leaders take time to celebrate wins. Celebrating wins maintains momentum and establishes credibility for ongoing change. These celebrations also become opportunities to acknowledge and reward people in the organization who have sacrificed and worked hard to help make the transition.

Paul Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

## Hitching a ride into outer space

I'm going into space on a rocket soon. OK, maybe not physically, but at least my name is "going where no man has gone before" aboard an unmanned, robotic NASA mission to an asteroid in 2016.

No, I'm serious. I read it on the Internet. I know the whole concept kind of sounds like the Andy Griffith episode where Sheriff Taylor asks a curious-acting stranger in town, "You think one day man's gonna walk on the moon?" When the stranger replies, "Why sure!" Andy quips, "Boy, you're already there!" Maybe I am, or will soon be, and I have a certificate to prove it.

NASA's OSIRIS-REx (Origins-Spectral Interpretation Resource Identification Security Regolith Explorer) mission and the Planetary Society are teaming up to allow people's names to hitch a ride to Bennu, a near-earth asteroid, spend 500 days hurling through space, and then return to earth in a capsule in 2023. Pretty cool! NASA has taken thousands of names on past missions, including the deployment of the Mars rovers. Hate I missed that one! Maybe I can take a trip to Jupiter or Saturn, even if in name only.

From what I gather, Bennu, which has a diameter of approximately 490 meters, or slightly larger than five football fields—was only discovered in 1999. The asteroid was named by Michael Puzio, a third-grader from North Carolina, who was among about 8,000 students from around the world who participated in a "Name That Asteroid!" contest. Bennu reportedly refers to an Egyptian mythological bird associated with the sun, creation and rebirth. According to NASA's website, "The OSIRIS-REx mission goal is to address basic questions about the composition of the very early solar system, the source of organic materials and water that made life possible on Earth, and to better predict the orbits of asteroids that represent collision threats to the Earth."

Incidentally, the Planetary Society, the organization founded by Carl Sagan, Bruce Murray and Louis Friedman to inspire and involve the public in space exploration and education, was in Baptist news recently. Ken Ham, president and founder of Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum, will be engaging Bill Nye, "the Science Guy" and



## After Thought

By Todd Deaton

CEO of the Planetary Society, in a sold-out debate on creationism and evolution Feb. 4. (A live stream of the event is available at [debatelive.org](http://debatelive.org).) It's an important discussion for Christians because, as Rob Phillips, an apologetics leader with the Missouri Baptist Convention, noted in a recent BP article: "If creation is true ... life is not only meaningful but everlasting. We are created in the image of God, for a relationship with God, and with the divine purpose of knowing our Creator and living with Him beyond the grave. Death is no longer our destiny but a defeated enemy."

For me and other Christian believers—although Nye's and Ham's debate should provide a fascinating discussion regarding the origins of the universe—since we know from biblical revelation that God created the asteroid, the planets, the Milky Way and all the other galaxies out there, there is an even more urgent consideration prompted by the "Messages to Bennu" project:

Where will you be taking the name of Jesus in 2014 and beyond? There's an old hymn that urges us:

*"Take the name of Jesus with you,  
Child of sorrow and of woe;  
It will joy and comfort give you,  
Take it then where'er you go.  
"Precious name! Oh, how sweet!  
Hope of earth and joy of heav'n;  
Precious name! Oh, how sweet!  
Hope of earth and joy of heav'n.  
"Take the name of Jesus ever,  
As a shield from every snare.  
If temptations round you gather,  
Breathe that holy name in prayer."*

These words are a great reminder that no matter where we go in life this year or the next, Jesus goes with us, and we can call out His name and find comfort, assurance and deliverance anytime, anywhere—even on some asteroid in a far-flung galaxy. He knows our name, and will hear our prayers. And, as 1 Peter 5 affirms, you can cast all your cares on Him, because He cares about you. Now, that's a name worth taking places!

## Make a plan to start reading the Bible this year

By David Roach

There is no wrong place to start reading the Bible.

The book of 2 Timothy says that "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). While the apostle Paul wrote those words specifically about the Old Testament, they apply to the New Testament as well.

Regardless of where you begin reading, God guarantees that the words on the page are true, sent from Him and powerful to change your life.

Still, different Bible reading plans are better suited for different people. Here are a few methods to consider:

■ Read through the entire Bible in a year using a reading calendar. You can

find many plans online for covering every single verse in one year.

■ To read at a slower pace, use a one-year plan, but only read half of the assignment each day. This helps some people understand and apply what they read more effectively.

### FIRST PERSON

■ Start in one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) and read a chapter each day. These books are a great place to learn about following Jesus.

■ Start at the beginning. Begin with Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and read Scripture in the order it is presented. Go at your own pace.

■ Have the Bible emailed to you. Through a website such as Bible Gateway, you can have daily Scripture readings sent directly to your inbox. Without having to carry around a copy of the Bible, you can still read through either

the New Testament or the entire Bible in a year.

■ Use a chronological Bible to read Scripture in the order it occurred. Though standard Bibles are roughly chronological, some events happened in a different order than they are ordered in the Bible. For instance, the events in 1 Chronicles happened before the events in 2 Kings even though standard Bibles place 2 Kings first. A chronological Bible helps you understand the timing of Scripture's storyline.

Beyond these, there are many other ways to approach the Bible which you can discover through a quick Internet search. They help you experience the blessings that come from studying the greatest book ever written. May it be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105). (BP)

David Roach is a writer in Shelbyville.

WESTERN Recorder

Box 43969  
Louisville, KY 40253

DR. TODD DEATON  
Editor

ROBIN CORNETET BASS  
News Director

THOMAS C. TOWNSEND  
Marketing & Business Manager

Shine Like Stars \* Philippians 2:15

Board of Directors:

Wayne Spivey (chairman), Harrodsburg;  
Bill Ellis (vice chair), Lexington;  
Lanna Kilgore (secretary), Bowling Green;  
Bill Bartleman, Paducah;  
Duane Bolin, Murray;  
Billy Compton, Mount Washington;  
Bill Edmonds, Louisville;  
Chip Hutcheson, Princeton;  
Paul Nunn, Prestonsburg;  
Rick Robbins, Florence;  
Larry Rowell, Campbellsville;  
Dan Summerlin, Paducah.

Western Recorder is published weekly 47 weeks a year by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. It will not be published Jan. 7, July 8, July 22, Dec. 2 or Dec. 30. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky. (USPS 679-380)

For general information or to give news tips, call (502) 489-3535; or email: [news@westernrecorder.org](mailto:news@westernrecorder.org).

POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to: Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253.

To subscribe: Send \$15 for a one-year, individual subscription or visit our website and subscribe to our electronic-only edition at \$10 per year. Group subscriptions (church budget plan) are \$10 per year.

Letters to the editor:

The Baptist Forum section of the Western Recorder provides an opportunity for Kentucky Baptists to express their viewpoints. 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 charity and civility.

## An open letter: Have we lost our first love?

By Thom Rainer

I could be writing to a broader audience. Perhaps I should be. And I know many outside our denomination will read this brief letter. I hope those readers will bear with me as I have a "family discussion."

Please hear me clearly. I am not writing out of any sense of superiority. Indeed, many of you could put me to shame. But my heart is breaking with what I perceive to be a loss of passion for those who do not know Christ. Many of you have seen the numbers. We are reaching fewer people for the gospel today than we did decades ago when we were a much smaller group.

### The first love

Where is the passion in most of our churches to reach the lost? Where is the passion among our leaders, both in our churches and in our denomination? Jesus told those at the church at Ephesus that they had sound doctrine, that they hated evil (Revelation 2:1-7). But He also told them they had lost their first love. When we truly love Jesus with all of our hearts, we can't help but tell others about Him. We can't help but share the good news.

I thank God for our contending for the faith. I thank God for our affirmation of the total truthfulness of Scripture. I thank God for orthodoxy. But I pray that it is not becoming a dead orthodoxy—an orthodoxy that has lost its first love.

### The purpose of the letter

The purpose of this letter is not to chastise. I am a messed up sinner who has no right to look at the splinter in the eyes of my brothers and sisters when I need to deal with the plank in my own eye. I need to fall more deeply in love with Jesus. I need to share His love as part

of my very being. In His power I must do more and I must do better.

No, the purpose of this letter is simply to share a broken heart, and to express a heartfelt desire to change. I must love Jesus more deeply and tell others about Him more often. I must show Christ's love not only with my words, but with every action and interaction I have. I must be more like Him every day.

I have no proposal. I have no new programs for now. I simply have a burden.

And as a commitment to God first, but then a commitment to you, I am asking God to lead me to love Him more deeply than I ever have. I am asking God to put people in my life where I can show His love, and tell them about my Savior.

### It must begin with me

My life's desire is to glorify God by loving Him with all my heart. And I have no right to say that unless I am so much in love with Him that I "am unable to stop speaking about what (I) have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Evangelism must be as natural to me as breathing.

Pastors, will you join me in this plea? Will you be an evangelistic example for the churches God has called you to serve? Laypersons, will you pray for evangelistic hearts in your own lives? I must make that prayer a part of my life every day.

Have we lost our first love? Is that love reflected in how we share the gospel of Christ every day?

May God break me until I am all His, telling others about His Son every day.

And may the sharing of the good news of Christ once again become the focus of all our lives in the churches of our denomination.

Thom Rainer is president of LifeWay Christian Resources. The open letter was posted Jan. 13 on his blog, [ThomRainer.com](http://ThomRainer.com).

## Praying for your spouse

By Valerie Vincent

*I know I am supposed to pray for my spouse, but I am not sure how or what I should pray.*

Praying for others is one of the privileges Christians have to show their love for one another and to encourage and to build up one another. Sometimes it is easy to pray for those who are sick, injured or struggling. Our spouses need our prayers even when they are doing well. Praying for our spouse can also help shape our attitude toward our spouse, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our own heart. It can be helpful to start with Scripture.

Here are some sample prayers from Ephesians and Colossians edited for your spouse:

"I pray that, according to the riches of (God's) glory, he may grant that (your spouse's name) may be strengthened ... with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in (your spouse's heart) through faith, as you are being ... grounded in love."

I pray that (your spouse's name) "may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that (name) may lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him. ... May (he/she) be made strong ... and may (he/she) be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father."

Personalize your prayers considering the needs, desires, fears, worries, hopes and challenges your spouse is facing in life. Written prayers can bring encouragement and blessing to your spouse, allowing the opportunity for the prayer to be read and reread. Valerie Vincent is a Christian counselor with Hardy Day & Associates in Louisville.



## My last column

By Jeremy White

Humbled and honored. These words describe my feelings of writing about family financial matters in this column for the past 15 years.

As a child, I remember seeing the Western Recorder lying around our house. My grandparents have read it for more than 60 years. So, I have been aware of this fine paper for a long time and appreciated the many gracious comments from readers.

I have a greater respect for those who must write a regular column. It is difficult to think of something new and interesting as a deadline looms and I feel some of the topics may have been a bit repetitious. But the basics of any skill need to be repeated and instilled in us. For one last time, here are the financial fundamentals:

- God owns it all and loans it to us as managers temporarily. Money is a tool, a test and a testimony.
- Giving is a privilege and a responsibility. It's the best antidote for selfishness and an affluenza-afflicted American culture. Giving cheerfully provides joy and builds future, eternal rewards.
- Spending less than you earn consistently over a long period of time is how to build wealth.
- Contentment is more important than financial independence or financial freedom.
- Debt, while not sinful, can be a brutal master.
- God's word remains relevant with its many principled solutions to today's financial challenges.

One of my recurring prayers about writing articles and books is this: The Lord would use the right words to reach the right people at the right time.

Writing a regular column, much like preaching a sermon, provides the opportunity to share experiences and family anecdotes within the context of what the Lord has been teaching me.

In a way, my prayers have been answered then. I am the one who needed to read and benefit from these columns. Thank you for reading along.

Jeremy White is a CPA at BlytheWhite in Paducah.



## Knowing 'starting points' matters in reaching youth

By Joe Ball

I had the opportunity at the first of December to attend a meeting at the LifeWay Christian Resources offices in Nashville. During one of the sessions, they previewed their three lines of curriculum: Bible Studies for Life, Explore the Bible and The Gospel Project.

While each have the same five core values—rooted in scripture, focused on Christ, flexible for group size, empowering for leaders and crafted with a purpose—they have different starting points, and that starting point determines how they are to be used and evaluated.

That got me to thinking about what we do in youth ministry and how we best do it.

Most of us have three distinct times of programming: Sunday morning, Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. How do we distinguish the uniqueness of each time and what we offer students?

The simplest answer is by understanding the starting points.

### Sunday morning

Traditionally, this is the Sunday School hour. In most churches the students are studying the same line of curriculum as the rest of the church, the students are primarily "church kids," and it may be the most "sacred cow" hour on the church calendar. It still serves a purpose and it is necessary for a healthy ministry, but how do we best utilize this hour in a way that makes it different from the other programming times.

At its core, Sunday School is about connections—connecting participants in an open-group format to other participants and ultimately to Scripture. It is part of the discipleship process, but not meant to be the primary discipleship piece.

### Sunday nights

For some, this is a combination of mission, music, creative ministries and discipleship studies. For others, it is a time of worship. Each of us needs to answer the

question, "What purpose do I want to achieve with this time slot?"

We cannot effectively evaluate it unless we know what we expect from it. The format and purpose needs to be different from both what we do on Sunday mornings and on Wednesday nights. If they are identical, it should only be because we have a completely different audience. Otherwise what is the point of meeting?

Knowing the starting point is imperative if this time slot is going to be effective. We have to understand that a different starting point and a different purpose may not attract every student or meet the needs of their parents—and they may opt not to come. And that is OK.

### Wednesday nights

For most churches in Kentucky, this is the time when we have the largest gathering of students and our best chance to attract lost or unchurched students. On the flip side, it is also when we have the smallest percentage of church kids. This shift in audience makes our starting point radically different.

What are we planning, doing and providing that meets the spiritual needs of the students attending Wednesday night events? How are we providing a safe place for our students to bring their lost friends?

Are we presenting them with the truth of the gospel? How are we building relationships with students that make it easier for them to return?

As we begin the New Year, let's take an honest evaluation of what we are offering our students, volunteers and their families. Let's look at the programming times we have and ask ourselves what are the desired outcomes of each time slot. Ask the hard questions. Does the program we offer best meet the needs for the audience at that particular time period?

There are many ways to run a youth ministry, but unless we know where to begin, it makes it harder to get where we need to be.

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

### Youth Ministry Corner



Joe Ball

GRIDIRON  
Men's Conference®

# BE THAT MAN

JUNE 13-14, 2014 / BJCC ARENA / BIRMINGHAM, AL

BE YOURSELF



UNCLE SI  
ROBERTSON  
WITH ALAN ROBERTSON

BE INFLUENTIAL



DAVE  
RAMSEY  
WITH RACHEL CRUZE

BE A LEADER



STEVE  
FARRAR

BE REAL



RICK  
BURGESS

BE PURE



PHIL  
WALDREP

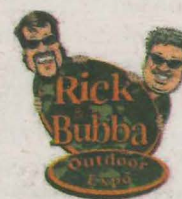
WORSHIP



CHARLES  
BILLINGSLEY

Join thousands of men Father's Day weekend as we dig into God's word to learn what it means to "Be That Man," the man that God has called you to be.

WWW.GRIDIRONMEN.ORG / 800.475.0814



All paid participants will receive a free pass to the Rick & Bubba Outdoor Expo, the same weekend in the BJCC Exhibition Hall!

See yourself as God sees you.

WOMEN  
OF JOY™

3 Days 2 Nights 1 Purpose

Womenofjoy.org  
(1.800.475.0813)

Come peek into a new mirror at the Women of Joy conferences in 2014!  
Louisville, KY — April 11-13  
Pigeon Forge, TN — April 25-27

Pigeon Forge



Marian  
Jordan



Candy  
Wood Lindley

Louisville



Sheri  
Rose  
Shepherd

Both locations



Margaret  
Feinberg



Nancy  
Stafford



Rachel  
Ramsey Cruze



Christy  
Nockels



Chris  
Tomlin



Charles  
Billingsley

# BEYOND BEAUTIFUL

# Federal bill would protect state marriage policy

By Matthew Hawkins and Andrew Walker

**Washington**—Federal legislation to protect state authority in crafting state marriage policy has been introduced in Congress by Rep. Randy Weber, of Texas.

The proposed legislation would mandate that the federal government recognize marriages based on where a couple resides, not where their wedding was performed or celebrated.

The State Marriage Defense Act of 2014 (H.R. 3829) seeks to clarify state authority in the wake of the Supreme Court overturning section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act last summer.

In the DOMA decision, the Supreme Court addressed the following situation: Edith Windsor was considered "married" to her lesbian partner in her state of residence, New York, and filed taxes accordingly. But the couple's "marriage" was not recognized for tax purposes by the federal government. Edith Windsor sued the federal government on the grounds that the "death tax" on her deceased partner's estate was discriminatory against her as both the heir and spouse, and the court ultimately sided

with Windsor.

Weber's bill, filed Jan. 9, would require the federal government to levy taxes based on the marriage law of New York, which happens to recognize same-sex marriage, but not permit federal agencies to presume same-sex marriage upon states where it is not recognized. While striking down section three of DOMA, the Windsor decision did not create a definition of marriage for the federal government.

**The question remains ... how would (the federal government) recognize ... state authority in making marriage policy.**

In the fallout from Windsor, the question of whether the federal government would recognize same-sex marriage was resolved, but the question remains unanswered concerning the federal government's jurisdiction on how

it would recognize same-sex marriage and the larger question of state authority in making marriage policy.

In the absence of federal definition, many people believe that a state's definition should be the basis for assigning federal benefits.

Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research with the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, noted, "Our country and our

courts will soon experience a chaotic clash of marriage laws and regulations. At this time, the federal government is not capable of responding to the situation developing in the states. The Weber bill will provide crucial guidance to policymakers and agencies at the federal level as states and concerned citizens attempt to navigate the crumbling landscape of marriage in the country."

Weber, in a prepared statement on the rationale for his bill, said, "The 10th Amendment was established to protect state sovereignty and individual rights from being seized by the Federal Government. For too long, however, the Federal Government has slowly been eroding state's rights by promulgating rules and regulations through federal agencies.

"I drafted the State Marriage Defense Act of 2014 to help restore the 10th Amendment, affirm the authority of states to define and regulate marriage, as well as provide clarity to federal agencies seeking to determine who qualifies as a spouse for the purpose of federal law. By requiring that the Federal Government defer to the laws of a person's state of legal residence in determining marital status, we can protect states' constitutionally established powers from the arbitrary overreach of unelected bureaucrats." (BP)

## Federal judge strikes down Oklahoma same-sex marriage ban

By Michael Winter

A federal judge ruled Jan. 14 Oklahoma's voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage violates the U.S. Constitution.

Same-sex marriages won't happen in the state immediately, though, because U.S. District Judge Terence Kern stayed his ruling pending an appeal. After a similar judicial decision last month in Utah, more than 900 same-sex couples got married in that state before the U.S. Supreme Court halted the weddings until the issue is settled.

Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt called Kern's ruling "a troubling decision" and said the high court had recently noted "it is up to the states to

decide how to define marriage, not the federal government."

In 2004, Oklahoma voters approved adding the definition of marriage as one man joined with one woman to the state constitution.

Kern ruled that the 2004 amendment violated the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution, calling the ban "an arbitrary, irrational exclusion of just one class of Oklahoma citizens from a governmental benefit."

"Excluding same-sex couples from marriage has done little to keep Oklahoma families together thus far, as Oklahoma consistently has one of the highest divorce rates in the country," Kern wrote in his 68-page opinion.

Gov. Mary Fallin criticized the decision, saying, "The people of Oklahoma have spoken on the issue," with 75 percent of voters supporting the traditional definition of marriage.

"I am disappointed in the judge's ruling and troubled that the will of the people has once again been ignored by the federal government," she said.

While noting that the Supreme Court has not yet ruled on whether same-sex marriages can be banned, Kern said the high court "now prohibits states from passing laws that are born of animosity against homosexuals ... and prohibits the federal government from treating opposite-sex marriages and same-sex marriages differently." (RNS)

## NEWS BRIEFS

### No. 1 persecutor: N. Korea

Open Doors ranked North Korea as the world's top persecutor of Christians for the 12th consecutive year. The report also showed Islamic extremism as the driving force for Christian persecution in 36 of the 50 countries at the top of the organization's World Watch List. Others in the top 10 were: (2) Somalia; (3) Syria; (4) Iraq; (5) Afghanistan; (6) Saudi Arabia; (7) Maldives; (8) Pakistan; (9) Iran; and (10) Yemen.

### Transgender restrooms

California voters in November could decide whether to repeal a transgender restrooms law allowing students to choose which restroom or locker room they'd like to use based on what gender they believe they are. County election officials have until Feb. 24 to review the signatures, collected by a coalition of conservative groups called Privacy for All Students, and determine whether the issue qualifies for the ballot. California's transgender law followed a similar "transgender rights" directive issued last year by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

### Pastor charged with murder

Richard Shahan, former children and families pastor at First Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., has been charged with the murder of his wife who was found dead in their home in July 2013. He was arrested Jan. 1 attempting to board a flight to Frankfurt, Germany at the Nashville International Airport. The Alabama Baptist reported that Shahan was planning to serve three years with Bible Mission International in Germany to develop teaching and discipleship materials for former Soviet countries.

### SWBTS's first black grad dies

Marvin Griffin, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's first African American graduate, a longtime pastor and trailblazing civic leader, died Dec. 25 at age 90.

Griffin and L.F. Hardee became the first two African American graduates from Southwestern in 1955, paving the way for hundreds. Griffin held his longest pastorate at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, where he served from 1969 until 2011, when he retired from the pastorate at age 88.

In 1988, Griffin led the church to create the East Austin Economic Development Corporation to provide affordable housing, care for senior adults, a child-development center and other services in its neighborhood. In addition, Griffin expanded Ebenezer's outreach ministry through radio and television, established a tape ministry, and housed at Ebenezer the first "Meals on Wheels" program in East Austin.



Marvin Griffin

**9Marks**  
at Southern  
Building Healthy Churches

IX

+



February 28-March 1, 2014  
at Southern Seminary

**Biblical Theology**  
To encourage and equip church leaders  
to know God by knowing how the Bible  
tells his one story.

**Speakers**  
Mark Dever, Albert Mohler,  
Greg Beale and others

Come to the KBC pastors'  
reception at the conference  
for fellowship and networking

Registration ends February 21  
Exclusive KBC discount  
Use code **KBC 20** when registering

To register or for more information, visit  
[www.sbts.edu/events](http://www.sbts.edu/events)

## Year-round resolutions

### Oneida: where students have fresh starts anytime of the year

I spent the night of Dec. 31 at my sister's home in Mercer County. I would say that I am embarrassed to tell you I went to bed at 10 p.m. and didn't even stay up late enough to watch the ball drop—but I'm not.

The turn of the calendar from one year to the next has never meant much to me. New Year's Day usually means the day off from work and some decent football bowl games, but other than that Jan. 1 is one out of 365 days of the year.

As we sat around my sister's living room, the topic of New Year's resolutions came up. My wife, as she does most every year, wanted each person in the room to say what their resolutions would be. My youngest son said, "I am going to play with our three dogs more."

Shortly after we acquired three dogs in August, a co-worker told me they were concerned about my judgment and ability to lead a school since I had acquired the three dogs.

Other resolutions were pretty typical, such as spending more time with family, eating better and exercising.

Then it was my turn. My wife knows me well enough to know I don't like to make New Year's resolutions, but I love her for continuing to ask each and every Dec. 31.

Now that we are at the end of January, I wonder how many of us have kept our resolutions. Most folks make it a few days or maybe even a few weeks, but rarely uphold their resolutions

much longer than that.

Jan. 1 seems like the natural time to do something because we have probably eaten poorly, been lazy, or encountered relational problems with family members during the holidays. If we are serious about doing something, we shouldn't have to wait until the turn of the calendar.

We have new students arrive throughout the school year who come from different backgrounds and places, but they all seem to have goals and resolutions when they enroll. Perhaps they want better grades, better relationships or new friends, but each and every student has the opportunity to determine a new course of action.

Oneida is a place of not only second chances, but in many instances a second, third and fourth chance. Oftentimes, we can accept and minister to students that other schools cannot or will not accept.

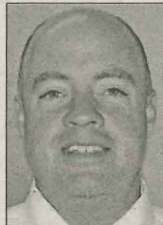
There are consequences to sin and our mistakes, but the Lord forgives us and we should forgive one another.

We do our best to forgive our students, both the ones we have and the ones who have yet to arrive. We want each of our students to have a clean slate and fresh start.

Some problems are small and some are bigger, but no problem is bigger than the Lord's forgiveness.

Praise the Lord that he gives each of us a clean slate each and every day.

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

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

## An invitation

### Student thankful for invite to church as a teenager

Most of the statistics we read about church attendance point out that many people do not go to worship because they simply are never invited.

John Hoegg, a new student from Ontario, Canada, is thankful for that invitation he received many years ago that led to his personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

"I was not raised in church at all during my younger years and leading up to my teenage years," said Hoegg. "When I was about 15, I received an invitation from a local church that was actually right down the street from my house in Ontario where I grew up.

"They were having a series of evangelistic meetings and they were canvassing our neighborhood inviting people to church. It was during those meetings that I heard the gospel message for the first time in my life. I realized that I needed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and I accepted Christ as my Savior two months later there at the church.

"I stayed in the Ontario area as I grew up," Hoegg said. "I met my wife, Melissa, at medical school in Buffalo,

New York where I was studying to be a nurse. She was from Buffalo and we moved there when we got married. We got involved in a local church in the area and I began to feel that God was

calling me into the ministry. We finally surrendered to God's call and started looking for a Bible college to get some training.

"Since I had no connections with anyone associated with a Bible college or anything like it, I went to the Internet to try and find a place where God would have us to train," Hoegg said.

"We literally searched all over the United States to find a college that we felt would be

appropriate for our whole family. It was important to me that my wife and children, Caitlyn and Charlie, have a place to live where they would feel comfortable.

"We are so thankful that the Lord led us to find Clear Creek on the Internet. This is a great place for families. Tuition is very affordable and there are a lot of things for families to do on campus at the Family Life Center."

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

## Dodgeball tournament draws 1,000

### 29 participate in baptism party two weeks later

By Connie Davis Bushey

Knoxville, Tenn.—"It's not about the dodgeball tournament. It's (about) using it as a tool for hundreds of students to hear about Jesus," said Bobby Thompson, student pastor at Grace Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn.

The annual tournament has become the church's largest and most effective outreach event for middle school and high school students, explained Thompson, who recently saw 42 students make professions of faith at the event. Two weeks later on Nov. 13 at a baptism party 29 students were baptized.

The tournament drew about 800 students and more than 1,000 people including parents and volunteers.

Response is up from last year, which saw about 500 participate in the tournament, 10 students make professions of faith, and 21 be baptized.

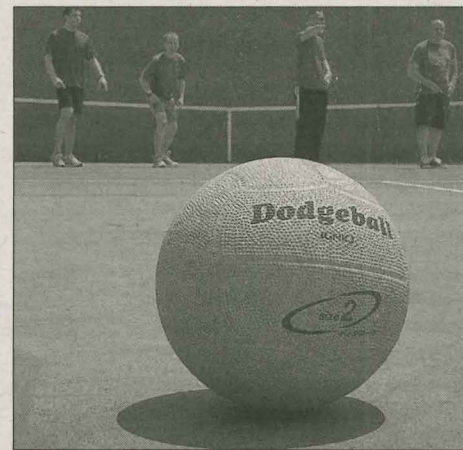
"It has really taken off," said Thompson said.

The dodgeball tournament is successful mainly because of the regular participants of the Grace Student Ministry, explained Thompson. The ministry draws about 350 middle school and high schools students to activities.

He said he teaches them for weeks prior to the event about missions and challenges them to use the tournament as a way to share their faith.

To emphasize that focus of the tournament, one rule is that each seven-member team has to have at least one member who doesn't regularly attend church, said Thompson, who got the idea for the event from a minister friend in Texas.

The church helps students in inviting their friends by providing T-shirts for the students to wear, posters to place on their lockers, and invitation cards.



Dodgeball is fast becoming a popular social sport for adults, like the enlisted men above in a photo taken by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Soo C. Kim. A Knoxville, Tenn., church used the sport to attract teenagers recently. (U.S. Air Force)

The event includes door prizes and music by the Grace Student Ministry praise and worship band. This year Nathan Smith, an evangelist of North Carolina, presented the gospel and asked students to make spiritual decisions. The entire event lasts about four hours, Thompson said.

On the Wednesday night following the tournament, students learn more about making a commitment to God and are encouraged to make decisions if they feel the Lord leading them.

During the following weeks, Thompson and a team "dedicated to following up" make contact with students who indicated they made spiritual decisions. If they go to another church, students are encouraged to attend that church, Thompson said.

Ron Stewart, senior pastor of Grace, said the dodgeball tournament is one way for the church to "reach teenagers in the 21st century with the gospel" by following the Apostle Paul's directive to Christians from I Corinthians 9:22. (Baptist & Reflector)

## Supporters win Robertson's return to show

By Erin Roach

Nashville, Tenn.—In an unusual win for social conservatives, "Duck Dynasty" patriarch Phil Robertson has been reinstated to one of television's most popular shows.

"While Phil's comments made in the interview reflect his personal views based on his own beliefs, and his own personal journey, he and his family have publicly stated they regret the 'coarse language' he used and the mis-interpretation of his core beliefs based only on the article," A&E said in a statement Dec. 27 regarding an interview of Robertson in GQ magazine.

A&E reiterated they do not share his views, "but Duck Dynasty is not a show about one man's views. It resonates with a large audience because it is a show about family ... a family that America has come to love. As you might have seen in many episodes, they come together to reflect and pray for unity, tolerance and forgiveness. These are three values that we at A&E Networks also feel strongly about," the statement said.

A&E consulted with the Robertson family and "numerous advocacy groups"

before deciding to let Robertson back on the show.

"We will also use this moment to launch a national public service campaign (PSA) promoting unity, tolerance and acceptance among all people, a message that supports our core values as a company, and the values found in Duck Dynasty. These PSAs will air across our entire portfolio," A&E said.

Just 10 days earlier, A&E said it had placed Robertson "under hiatus from filming indefinitely" after the network learned of his comments describing homosexual behavior as sinful in the GQ article. In that announcement, A&E said its networks have always been "strong supporters and champions of the LGBT community."

In a statement to Fox News Dec. 28, the Robertson family said it was "excited to keep making a quality TV show for our dedicated fans, who have showed us wonderful support. We will continue to represent our faith and values in the most positive way through 'Duck Dynasty' and our many projects that we are currently working on. The outpouring of support and prayer has encouraged and emboldened us greatly." (BP)

## Woman finds relief through Mission:Dignity

By John Ambra

**Dallas**—Anna Streeter had three hot dogs and one bottle of apple juice in her refrigerator. She was hungry and wanted to go to the grocery store, but her bank account was as empty as her icebox.

She wasn't used to needing to ask others for assistance. For more than 30 years, she had graciously ministered to those in need through the work of Southern Baptist churches. But now, at age 84, she had little left to live on besides a small pension and a modest Social Security check. Then, unexpected major repairs on her 21-year-old car and several medical bills used up the little she had saved. If she was going to survive, she needed to get help.

Filled with belief that God would provide, Streeter called to check on her application for Mission:Dignity, which provides financial assistance to retired pastors, workers and their widows.

Streeter was relieved to discover she was eligible for assistance, but discouraged to learn that her check wouldn't arrive for three weeks.

After a long silence, Streeter asked, "Is there any way to get it sooner? I don't have any food."

James 1:27 reminds Christians to care for their widows in need, and that is exactly what the team from GuideStone's Financial Assistance department, which administers Mission:Dignity, did next.

They gathered a few gift cards for emergency groceries, picked up lunch and headed to Streeter's home.

When she opened the door and saw the smiling faces and assistance from Mission:Dignity, she began to weep.

Mission:Dignity serves about 2,000 retired Southern Baptist pastors, workers and their widows who are struggling to meet their own basic needs.

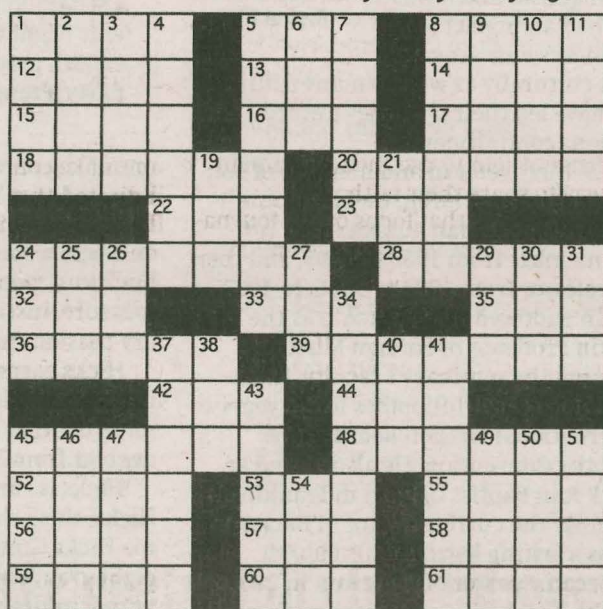
GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said, "More than 60 percent of the people we serve are widows—with one in four being a pastor's widow over age 85. When our donors give, they join us in serving as Christ's hand extended to these faithful servants." (GuideStone)

Donations may be sent to [missiondignitysb.org](http://missiondignitysb.org), or to Mission:Dignity at 2401 Cedar Springs Road, Dallas, TX 75201.

## Bible Crosswords

### Across

- 1 Woolly ones
- 5 Under the weather
- 8 Mull over
- 12 Imply
- 13 Feminine Israeli name
- 14 Covenant
- 15 Make null
- 16 Attila, for one
- 17 Zone
- 18 "As newborn babes, \_\_\_\_\_ the sincere milk of the word" (1 Peter 2:2)
- 20 "\_\_\_\_\_ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11)
- 22 Cable, for one
- 23 Hairpin curve
- 24 "In thy fear will I \_\_\_\_\_ toward thy holy temple" (Psalm 5:7)
- 28 Temporary dwellings
- 32 "For Adam was first formed, then \_\_\_\_\_" (1 Timothy 2:13)
- 33 Gratuity
- 35 Vowel trio
- 36 "To be a reproach and a proverb, a \_\_\_\_\_ and a curse" (Jeremiah 24:9)
- 39 "The dragon shalt thou \_\_\_\_\_ under feet" (Psalm 91:13)
- 42 \_\_\_\_\_ drum
- 44 "Ye \_\_\_\_\_ of your father the devil" (John 8:44)
- 45 Graven image, perhaps
- 48 Mental pictures
- 52 Hope
- 53 Donkey
- 55 Disreputable establishment
- 56 Sheltered side
- 57 "A faithful witness will not \_\_\_\_\_" (Proverbs 14:5)
- 58 Appliance



#185

59 "The day of the Lord is \_\_\_\_\_" (Joel 3:14)

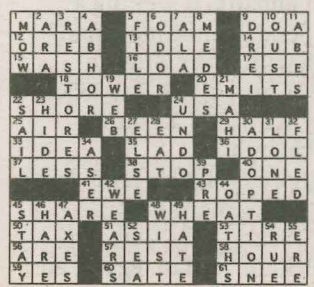
60 Sra, in Sarasota

61 Left

### Down

- 1 Son of Gera, the second judge of Israel (Judges 3:15)
- 2 "Woe to them that are mighty to drink \_\_\_\_\_" (Isaiah 5:22)
- 3 "The Creator of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth, fainteth not" (Isaiah 40:28)
- 4 Group of philosophers who met Paul at Athens (Acts 17:18)
- 5 "They that do such things shall not \_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21)
- 6 President Hoover's wife, familiarly
- 7 Masculine name
- 8 Rough; earthy
- 9 Mata \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Summers, in Nice
- 11 Reporter's question
- 19 Stadium sound
- 21 Honolulu's time zone
- 24 \_\_\_\_\_ paint
- 25 Eggs
- 26 Father of Serug

#184



By Evelyn Boyington

## 'Getting' vs. 'having to'

### Having the discipline to respond more positively

There is blessing in saying "I get to" rather than "I have to." I have been trying to discipline myself to choose the more positive phrase when talking of things I need to do, as well as encouraging our kids to speak in terms of "I get to" in their speech.

One area I think seems to be changing in our culture is in regard to work. People usually say, "I have to go to work." Well, it may be true that our obligation means we have to, but I say we all should be speaking in terms of being able to work.

It is a biblical principle to work. We are to work as unto the Lord in all things. Therefore, it should not be from a position of compulsion, but an exercise of privilege.

It really does matter how we say things and I don't think anyone would argue that our choice of words reveals much of what we think and value. When others hear how we say what we say, it always communicates something. I know I have been misunderstood

many times when I have said something in a way that is misleading or just simply incorrect. Perhaps now what I am trying to communicate—versus what is communicated—may be inconsistent.

I am so thankful for the ministry position that I have and I pray my attitude always reveals one of thanksgiving to the Lord for the blessing of working in ministry. As I use my words, I want to always communicate a thankful attitude that reflects it is a blessing to serve. "I get to" sounds much better than "I have to."

As we are in a new year, people make all kinds of resolutions about what they want to do. This

should not be a resolution, but simply a response to what the Bible says.

We are blessed to be able to work, after all the Lord works continually. May we all seek to demonstrate not just in actions, but with our words that we feel privileged to serve Him joyfully in all we do.

David Melber is president of Crossings Ministries. Contact Crossings at (502) 491-7000 or [GoCrossings.com](http://GoCrossings.com).

### Crossings Ministries



David Melber

## Pray and give

### Associations, ministries dependant on generous giving through EBO

The Eliza Broadus Offering includes an allocations section we call "Associations and Special Ministries." This year, \$125,000 has been designated to provide \$500 grants to each of our 70 Baptist associations (\$35,000) and a variety of grants (totaling \$95,000) to ministries across the state that apply to Kentucky WMU for funding.

Please pray for the Kentucky WMU Finance Committee, which meets next week to discuss the grant applications, as they prayerfully help as many ministries as possible. Requests from 91 ministries have been received, totaling \$284,640. Pray for wisdom in this process.

Each ministry that receives EBO funding is required to complete an accountability form explaining how the funds were used. No ministry can apply for subsequent grants without completing a form for the previous grant.

We are grateful for your generous giving and consider this to be an important part of being accountable to the Lord and to you for how EBO funds are used.

I always enjoy reading the applications, as well as the accountability forms. I am challenged by many of the applications and the vision for ministry that each one represents.

I wish we had more funding available. The only way this will happen is to see a significant increase in our state missions giving. The offering goal has stood at \$1,250,000 for the past three years.

Will you increase EBO giving this year?

Some of the special ministry areas that have received funding include:

- Association sponsors for Kentucky Changers
- Crisis Pregnancy ministries
- FamilyFEST
- Ministry to special needs

adults

- Prison ministries
- Evangelistic outreach and materials

- Ministries to the homeless
- Ministries to low income families
- Friendship International
- Hispanic ministries
- Deaf ministries
- Migrant ministries
- Baptist Center ministries
- Quilting ministry
- Equestrian ministries
- Ministries at Job Corps Centers
- Addiction ministries

Please pray for these ministries and our Kentucky WMU Finance Committee and Executive Board. More than ever, make a difference as you pray and give!

Joy Bolton is executive director-treasurer of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, P.O. Box 436569, Louisville, KY 40253; (502) 489-3534; [kywmu.org](http://kywmu.org)

### EBO at Work



Joy Bolton

## Your church newsletter and the Western Recorder

Mailed to every church family  
for about the price of a postcard!  
For more information, call (866) 489-3535.





## January

- 23 *Shepherding the Shepherd*, Hilton, Lexington.
- 30 Administrative Committee, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 30 Ky. WMU Winter Committee meetings, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 31 Imagine Preschool and Children's Ministry Conference, Parkway Baptist Church, Bardstown.

## February

- 6 Administrative Committee, KBC Building, Louisville.
- 7 Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training, Westport Road Baptist Church, Louisville.
- 8 Disaster Relief Training, Westport Road Baptist Church, Louisville.
- 10 SEND>>> St. Louis Vision Trip 2014.
- 24 RISK 2014: State Evangelism Conference, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

## What's happening?

Send church and association events to: **Mountains to the Mississippi** in care of: [sitha.salyers@westernrecorder.org](mailto:sitha.salyers@westernrecorder.org).

## Leaders of the band

The Kentucky Baptist Music Conference elected new officers for 2012. From left are Ed-die Russell, vice president, of Harrodsburg Baptist Church; Bob Blankenship, president, of Edgewood Baptist Church, Nicholasville; and Steve Skaggs, of Muldraugh Hill Baptist Church, Lebanon. (KBC)



## Evolution debate to stream live

**Petersburg**—The Creation Museum will offer free online streaming of their sold-out debate on evolution between museum president and Christian author Ken Ham and Bill Nye "the Science Guy," a popular TV personality and evolutionist.

Tickets to the Feb. 4 debate, being held in a 900-seat lecture hall, sold out in two minutes, according to a museum press release. The men are scheduled to take the stage at 7 p.m.

For more information about the live streaming debate and receive email updates, viewers must register online at [creationmuseum.org](http://creationmuseum.org). The debate will be live streamed via [debatelive.org](http://debatelive.org).

Organizers are encouraging viewers to watch at home, or better, "organize to show the live stream to your small group, your youth group, or even your entire church."

The event may be rebroadcast to groups so long as no admission or other fees are charged.

The event, sponsored by Answers in Genesis, also will be recorded for DVD and digital download distribution to help offset costs in organizing and sponsoring the debate. (Creation Museum)



Ken Ham



Bill Nye

## Hicks, retired Southern prof, dies

**Louisville**—Wade Bryant Hicks, retired professor of missions at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, died Jan. 12. He was 88.

"Bryant Hicks was a man of deep passion and great energy, who shared that passion and energy with his students," said Albert Mohler Jr., president of the seminary. "He helped to shape a generation of Southern Baptist missionaries."

Adam Greenway, dean of the seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry, said "He had an impact on countless students who are today serving cross-culturally as well as many future pastors who have led their churches toward greater missions commitment."

Hicks, a U.S. Navy veteran and member of Louisville's Lyndon Baptist Church, taught at Southern Seminary for more than 40 years, as a full-time faculty member from 1965 to 1993, and then as a senior professor from 1994 to 2006. In 1983, he assumed an endowed professorship as the M. Theron Rankin Professor of Foreign Missions.

Before joining the seminary's faculty, Hicks was a missionary to the Philippines for 10 years with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. He also served as pastor of Buck Run Baptist Church in Frankfort.

Hershael York, the current pastor of Buck Run, said Hicks has a lasting legacy at his church.

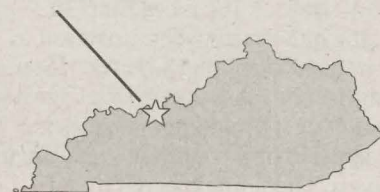
"When I became pastor of Buck Run in 2003, I learned that he, too, had served there and was



Bryant Hicks

## Spotlight on ...

## CLOVERPORT



**David Stoval**, director of missions of Blackford-Breckenridge Association, announced he will retire May 31.

■ **INDEPENDENCE**—Beechgrove Church will hold their annual chili cook-off Jan. 25, 5:30 p.m. **Daniel Hillard** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Parkland Church will hold a free community dinner Jan. 30, 5 p.m. **Tom Curry** is pastor.

St. Matthews Church will hold Dad/Daughter Banquet Jan. 24, 6:30 p.m. **Greg Barr** is pastor.

■ **SOMERSET**—First Church will hold Parents Night Out Jan. 24, 6 p.m. Preschoolers-5th grade will be treated to a snow party. **French Harmon** is pastor.

one of the most beloved pastors that Buck Run had ever had. Though his tenure had ended nearly 50 years earlier, he and Peggy still held a special place in the hearts of Buck Run members. Dr. Hicks had, in large measure, instilled in Buck Run the missionary passion that it still holds today.

Hicks earned a bachelor's degree from University of North Carolina, and the master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southern Seminary.

Hicks is survived by his wife, Peggy Hicks, their children, Wade Hicks Jr., Bonnie Hicks Ginter and Lee Greene Hicks, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. (SBTS)

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**RESOURCES:** Website help by a U.S.-based missionary. Websites for churches, ministries, non-profits and small businesses. Contact Jim at (502) 410-4214. [longviewnet.com](http://longviewnet.com).

**SEEKING:** First Baptist Church of Paris is seeking a full-time minister of music and education, experience and education preferred. Send resumé to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 327, Paris, KY 40362, ATTN: Gary Ellcessor, or email to [fbcbrogary@att.net](mailto:fbcbrogary@att.net).

**SEEKING:** First Baptist Church of Paris is seeking a full-time minister to students and families. This person will be working with all ages, from preschool to senior adults. Send resumé to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 327, Paris, KY 40362, ATTN: Gary Ellcessor, or email to [fbcbrogary@att.net](mailto:fbcbrogary@att.net).

**SEEKING:** Tunnel Hill Baptist Church in Elizabethtown is seeking a part-time youth director. Approx. 20 hours per week. Submit resumé to [tunnelhillbaptistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:tunnelhillbaptistchurch@gmail.com) no later than Feb. 1.

**SEEKING:** Gamaliel Baptist Church is in search of the man that God has chosen to be our new pastor. If you are that

man, or you know him, forward a resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Gamaliel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 148, Gamaliel, KY 42140, or email to [gamalielbaptist2013@gmail.com](mailto:gamalielbaptist2013@gmail.com). Deadline Jan. 31.

**SEEKING:** Part-time student minister (6th-12th). South Jefferson Baptist (Louisville) is seeking God's person to lead the student ministry to our church and community. Education required. Musicianship a plus. Send resumé or info requests to Jerry, [southjeff@mysjbc.org](mailto:southjeff@mysjbc.org).

**SEEKING:** Bethlehem Baptist Church, located in a small, rural area outside Springfield in Washington County, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to [bobbyjoe.mattingly@washington.kyschools.us](mailto:bobbyjoe.mattingly@washington.kyschools.us) or mail to Bobby Joe Mattingly at 1615 Jimtown Road, Springfield, KY 40069. Include a DVD/CD if available.

**SEEKING:** Christian Values Technology Company seeks mature business professionals for high-income opportunity. Home-based office. Hands on support and apprenticeship style training. For complete information, call Keith at (888) 395-6557.

**SEEKING:** Living Faith Baptist Church

in Hartford is accepting resumes for a senior pastor. We are a young and thriving church that will benefit from an enthusiastic individual with spiritual maturity. Candidate needs to have a passion for proclaiming the gospel and reaching the lost. A degree is preferred, but not required. Send resumé to Kevin Burt, 75 Mount Carmel Church Road, Utica, KY 42376, or email to [rbsautomotive@bellsouth.net](mailto:rbsautomotive@bellsouth.net). Resumes will be accepted through Feb. 28 and confirmation will be sent when received.

**SEEKING:** Forest Park Baptist Church is seeking a part-time minister of music. Resumes with references may be mailed to Forest Park Baptist Church, 520 Old Morgantown Rd., Bowling Green, KY 42101, or emailed to [office@forestparkbaptist.org](mailto:office@forestparkbaptist.org). For further information, contact the church at (270) 843-3419 or Debbie Lanham at (270) 782-9187.

**SEEKING:** Jefferson Baptist Association, south of St. Louis, Mo., is looking for a full-time director of missions. Requirements: Degree from an SBC-affiliated seminary and senior pastor experience. Full salary and benefits package. Send cover letter and resumé by Feb. 28 to

## To place an advertisement in the Western Recorder:

Rates are available upon request. Call (502) 489-3428; or visit [westernrecorder.org](http://westernrecorder.org)



Claims made by advertisers are not necessarily those of the Western Recorder's staff or directors.

[domsearchteam@gmail.com](mailto:domsearchteam@gmail.com).

**SEEKING:** Eubank (Southern) Baptist Church, congregation of approximately 300, located in Eubank, is seeking a senior pastor. Send printed (no email) formal resumé with cover letter to Eubank Baptist Church, P.O. Box 3356, West Somerset, KY 42564. Resumes accepted until March 31.

**TRAVEL:** Hundreds of Bible land departures catering to Southern Baptists—Israel, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Britain, Jordan, Egypt, etc. [pilgrimtours.com](http://pilgrimtours.com) (800) 322-0788.



Christians are bad tippers.

There are more cats in the U.S. than evangelicals.

Young people are abandoning the church.

# Commonly used bad 'facts'

By Bob Smietana

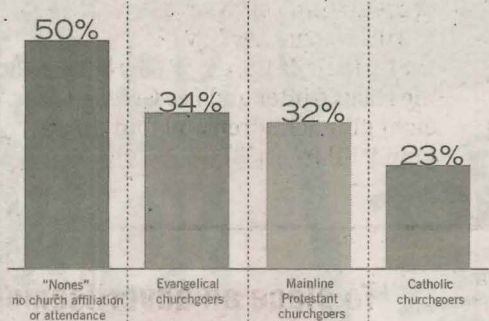
**Nashville, Tenn.**—Sometimes a preacher or conference speaker gets things wrong. Maybe not in theology, but in facts.

Like this one, which came halfway through one preacher's sermon on marriage recently: There's no difference between people sitting in these pews and everyone else when it comes to divorce, the preacher told the congregation.

It made a great sermon illustration. Only it's not true, said Bradley Wright, a sociologist at the University of Connecticut and author of "Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites ... and Other Lies You've Been Told."

## The truth about: Divorce Rates in America

The truth is when church attendance is factored in the results, believers who attend church are less likely to divorce than people who do not show up.



Source: General Social Survey (GSS)

Wright, who has been writing about faith and divorce rates since 2006, looked at statistics from the General Social Survey, a national random survey of Americans taken since the 1970s. Half of the "Nones"—people who claim no religious identity—were divorced. Only 42 percent of self-identified Christians—and members of other faiths—were divorced.

Catholics (35 percent) were least likely to divorce, followed by mainline Protestants (41 percent) and evangelicals (46 percent), Wright reported.

Believers who show up to church every week were even less likely to divorce. Wright found that only about a third of evangelicals (34 percent) and mainline Protestants (32 percent) and a quarter of Catholics (23 percent) who go to church are divorced.

Still, the myth that churchgoers divorce at the same rate as everyone else persists. Wright thinks people pay more

attention to bad news than to good news.

Mark Regnerus, a sociologist at the University of Texas in Austin, said a "confirmation bias" might be at work. In other words, people like statistics that reinforce their beliefs. If people are fearful that marriages are in trouble, he said, they'll tend to believe statistics that confirm those fears, even if those statistics aren't exactly right.

Regnerus said using bad statistics about marriage can be appealing because bad news can motivate people to action. But it can also undermine the credibility of a pastor's message.

"Bad news can be galvanizing. But we trust our pastors to tell us the truth," Regnerus said.

## Are Christians really bad tippers?

Marriage isn't the only subject where perceptions about Christians don't match the statistics. It's also the case with tips believers leave servers at restaurants.

Earlier this year, Alois Bell of the World Deliverance Ministries Church in Granite City, Ill., and a group of friends went to Applebees. Their server, Chelsea Welch, added an automatic tip to the bills in keeping with company policy.

Bell was not pleased. "I give God 10 percent," she wrote on the bill. "Why do you get 18?"

Welch posted the check on Facebook and it went viral. She eventually was fired, while Bell apologized (indicating she'd left a cash tip) after her note made headlines.

Turns out Welch isn't the only server to have a bad run-in with church folks.

Karen Swallow Prior, an English professor at Liberty University, worked her way through college as a waitress. Christians were notorious for being bad tippers, she wrote in a piece for Christianity Today's website.

"Knowing there would be little, if any, tip left at the end of their meal, the servers saw the Christians' robust attempts at 'friendliness' instead as pushy and arrogant," Prior said.

But a study from Michael Lynn of Cornell University and Benjamin Katz of HCD Research, showed that, overall, Christians are pretty good tippers. Their online survey of 1,068 Americans found that the average Christian tipped 17 percent for good service. Only 13 percent of Christians left a smaller tip for good service.

There are a lot Christians out there—and since people tend to remember bad news, a few bad tippers give all the other Christians a bad name.

## The sky is falling phenomenon

Statistics about the future of the church also give pastors and other church leaders a hard time. Like this one: "94 percent of Christian young people leave the church never to return," which was used to promote a major Christian conference several years ago.

It's partly true—many young people do tend to drop out of church. A 2009 LifeWay Research study of 1,000 young Protestants found that seven of 10 stopped attending church for a time after high school.

A few more details: The students surveyed had all attended church for at least a year in high school. Most dropped out because of a life change—such as going to college—and just over a third had come back to church by age 30.

The idea of anyone dropping out of church is a concern, but there's no sign that the vast majority of young people are forsaking the church.

## Left-handed people, Texans & cats

Another bad statistics was used by a megachurch pastor to promote a Christian conference: "There are more left-handed people, more Texans, and more pet cats than evangelicals in America." Actually, one-third of the claim is true.

There are more cats (and dogs) than evangelicals in the U.S. But not Texans or southpaws.

While there are about 95 million cats in the U.S., according to the Humane Society, there are between 50 million (Religious Congregations & Membership Study, 2010) and 75 million evangelicals (Pew Research).

That's more than the estimated number of southpaws—between 30 and 45 million Americans—and Texans (26.6 million, according to the U.S. Census).

Bad statistics persist because they work—at least in the short term: They can help sell books and tickets to conferences, make good sermon illustrations and get people in church fired up. The problem, said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, is that bad statistics don't solve real problems.

It's difficult to solve a problem when you don't understand it, Stetzer said.

Too many bad statistics can also undermine a leader's credibility. Get too many facts wrong, and it's harder for people to trust.

## Setting the record straight

Stetzer said Christians should view all statistics with healthy skepticism. That's especially true if a statistic is found in an advertisement. Ads, Stetzer

said, are used to sell things. They're not particularly concerned with getting the facts right. Also, be wary of any statistic that can't be verified.

"Ask, how do you know that?" Stetzer said. "If you can't think of a way to verify a statistic, it's probably not true."

Stetzer also said to beware of stats that don't match reality, noting, "It's OK to apply your own censor, to say this doesn't make sense."

It's important to realize all research is imperfect and context matters. Researchers don't have unlimited resources. They can't interview or poll everyone. Instead, they interview a representative sample of people, asking a few questions.

So go to the source. Find out who did the research, how many people they interviewed and what specific questions were asked, before assuming the research is valid.

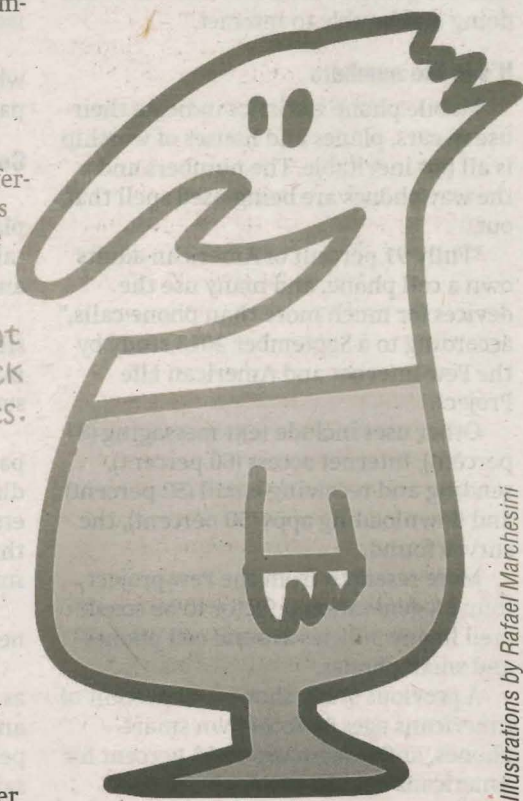
For example, a poll from professional researchers using a large sample will likely be more reliable than an informal poll taken by a professor of the students in class.

Finally, look at more than one study.

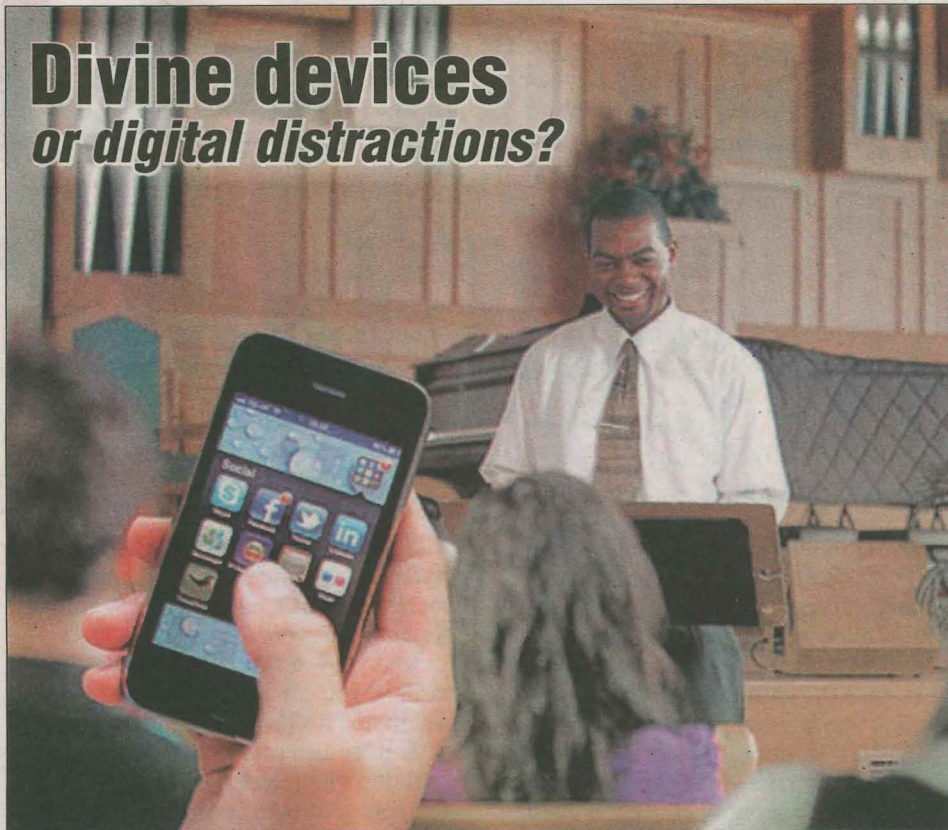
"To understand the whole picture, responsible researchers look at various studies, their methodologies, and their results," Stetzer wrote in a 2010 story about bad statistics for Christianity Today. "We reach bad conclusions when we latch onto one finding of one study, drag it out of context, and proclaim it from the rooftops without knowing whether our interpretation is justified."

Facts are our friends, as Stetzer often says. Just make sure the facts are true. (BP)

You might need to check your facts.



## Divine devices or digital distractions?



Want to Tweet that particularly provocative quote from Sunday's sermon? Go ahead, say pastors who increasingly are encouraging digital devices in worship services, which they say expands their congregation's community.

By Jeff Brumley

Alan Rudnick never was a fan of bringing phones into church sanctuaries and never did so himself—until about a year ago.

That's when he discovered bona fide uses for electronic devices during worship services at First Baptist Church of Ballston Spa, N.Y., where he is the pastor:

- Capture and upload to the Internet video of visiting missionaries.
- Allow a worshipper to post a quotation from a sermon that struck home.
- Multiply the number of people able to fellowship with the community, albeit electronically.

So, at the Ballston Spa church, as in thousands of others nationwide, the use of electronic devices not only is allowed, but also encouraged. Rudnick believes it's about time.

"I'm a modern person with a cell phone, and I get the whole tech thing," the minister said. "I figured out there were enough people in our congregation who are going to connect with what I am doing and be able to interact."

### It's in the numbers

Mobile phone statistics indicate their use in cars, planes and houses of worship is all but inevitable. The numbers and the way phones are being used spell that out.

"Fully 91 percent of American adults own a cell phone, and many use the devices for much more than phone calls," according to a September 2013 study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

Other uses include text messaging (81 percent), Internet access (60 percent), sending and receiving email (52 percent) and downloading apps (50 percent), the survey found.

More research from the Pew project found a generational factor to be considered in any policies around cell phones and smartphones.

A previous study showed 49 percent of Americans ages 18 to 24 own smartphones, and it increases to 58 percent for Americans ages 25 to 34.

### 'It's going to happen'

People bothered by the existence of cell phones in the pews must realize there's really no going back, said South Carolina-based church consultant, blogger and author George Bullard. Churches with no-cell-phone policies "have their head in the sand," he said.

It's not about being techy for the sake of being techy, Bullard insisted. Some people use their phones or tablets to give an offering online and will do so during the normal collection time.

"It allows them to actively participate in the offering, even though they are not going to put anything in the offering plate," he said.

### Bible apps, posting attendance

Many worshippers use mobile phones and tablets to access Bible apps to follow along with Scripture readings. Some use the devices to take notes on the sermon.

Churches have discovered other practical uses. Church nurseries no longer need to issue pagers to parents, but simply text them on their cell phones when issues arise.

Preachers urge members to post their whereabouts and meaningful sermon passages to social media, Bullard said.

### Complaints, distractions

Rudnick hasn't received many complaints since his church crossed the digital divide by embracing smartphones and other devices in worship.

Nor is he concerned about the possibility that some people in the pews may be playing games, texting friends or sending emails about nonchurch topics.

Christians long have used pencil and paper to jot down grocery lists and doodle during sermons, he said. Churchgoers also have been known to sleep through services—long before there were smartphones to distract them.

Either way, the benefits outweigh any negatives, Rudnick said.

"We have to remember that, as long as we don't make it a gimmick, it's just another form of communicating the gospel and interacting with the gospel," he said. (ABP)

## Baptists, culture agree about smoking: It's time to stop

By Bob Allen

While traditional Baptist morality has lost ground in terms of social acceptance on issues including sexuality, drugs and alcohol, and gambling, the American culture is becoming increasingly smoke-free.

The Southern Baptist Convention passed its first anti-tobacco resolution in 1933, urging ministers, teachers and parents to consider the effect of tobacco use and take "cooperative measures by which at least some of our young people may hope to escape the experience of an habitual slavery to tobacco."

A 1937 resolution went further, saying the prevalence of smoking among preachers, church leaders and denominational workers was "not only detrimental to the health of those who participate, but is hurtful to the cause of Christ in that it weakens the message and lowers the influence of those who are charged with the preservation and spread of the gospel."

A SBC resolution in 1984 not only urged its members to refrain from using tobacco in any form, but it further encouraged "Southern Baptists

presently engaged in the growing of tobacco, which has no use except for cigarettes and related products, to cease such agriculture and ... switch to another cash crop."

Media described this resolution as a "war on smoking" that divided Baptists in tobacco country like North Carolina, home to more than 1 million Baptists at the time.

Studies show that people who regularly attend worship services are less likely to smoke, but among various denominations the smoking rate is highest for Baptists.

Last year the smoking rate for U.S. adults dipped to 18 percent after hovering around the 19 percent to 21 percent range for most of the previous decade.

Today nearly 1,200

college and university campuses are smoke-free. Golden Gate, Midwestern, Southeastern, Southern and Southwestern seminaries all ban tobacco anywhere on campus.

Moody Bible Institute recently made news when it dropped its ban on alcohol and tobacco consumption by faculty and staff, reflecting a desire to create a "high trust environment that emphasizes values, not rules." (ABP)



(István Benedek)



# GET NEWS NOW

on your  
smart  
phone

Go to our website  
and click on the  
share icon to add  
Western Recorder to  
your home screen.

[westernrecorder.org](http://westernrecorder.org)