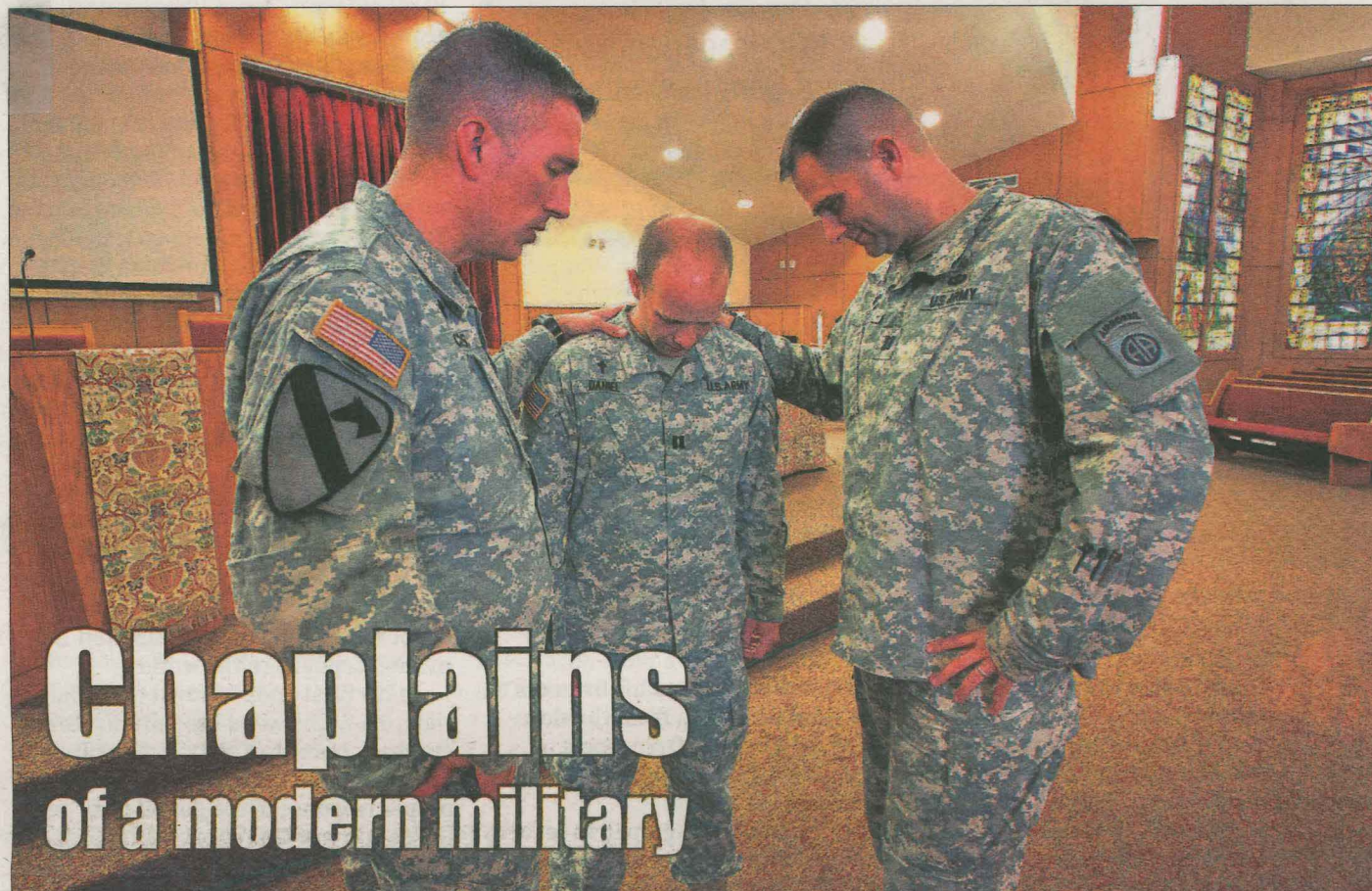


WESTERN Recorder

March 18, 2014

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

Volume 188, Issue 10



Chaplains of a modern military

U.S. Army Maj. Timothy Cross (left) Battalion Chaplain, 2nd Lt. Todd Daniel and Chaplain Cpt. Barry "Hoot" Busby (right), pray in the chapel at Fort Bragg, N.C., home of the 82nd Airborne Division. Military chaplains have responsibility to their commanding officers to provide advice, not only on the spiritual welfare of their troops, but of the spiritual temperament in their areas of operation. (Ted Wilcox/NAMB)

Churches encouraged to embrace needs, value of chaplains

By Tobin Perry

Alpharetta, Ga.—From foreign battlefields to American corporate board rooms to hospital bedsides to the front seats of police cars and more, Southern Baptists minister through their chaplains in some of the most hard-to-reach locations of North America.

"Southern Baptists have continued to see the need to send chaplains to places

where the church may not have access," said Doug Carver, the North American Mission Board's executive director for Southern Baptist chaplaincy and retired chief of chaplains for the U.S. Army. "They provide the ministry of presence, provide the good news of Jesus Christ, opportunities to evangelize and witness and sustain the faith of Southern Baptists who are in those places."

Carver notes that Southern Baptist

chaplains—serving in military, institutional, counseling, disaster relief, corporate and public safety roles—extend the evangelistic reach of SBC churches throughout North America and around the world.

Chaplaincy is one of six areas of focus for NAMB's evangelism group. He said while evangelism at times happens differently in the military and

□ See Chaplains ... Page 6

CAPITOL FAITHFUL KBC leader lauds Baptist legislators

By Roger Alford

Frankfort—Throw a stone at the state legislature, and it's likely to hit a Baptist.

Nearly half of Kentucky's senators identify themselves as Baptist, as do nearly a third of the state's representatives, a little-known fact that sheds light on why a proposed constitutional amendment to legalize casinos has failed year after year.

"I'm thrilled that Baptists from across Kentucky have gotten so involved in the political arena, said Paul Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, the state's largest religious group. Clearly, they realize the dire need to be politically engaged in a way that allows them to take bold stands on moral and biblical issues, including gambling and the sanctity of life. We must be the 'salt and light' Jesus calls us to be."

All other religious groups, including Catholics, are eclipsed by Baptists in the General Assembly, according to a directory compiled by the Legislative Research Commission that includes the religious affiliations of state lawmakers.

"Many of these lawmakers have stood against Gov. Steve Beshear's efforts to legalize casinos," said Chitwood, who is engaged in a push by Kentucky's Christian majority to "put an end to this perennial issue once and for all."

In the Senate, 16 of the 38 lawmakers identify themselves as Baptist, compared to six who have Catholic ties, five Presbyterian, one Disciples of Christ, one Episcopalian, one Pentecostal, one Assembly

□ See Capitol ... Page 3

'Changing the Channel' conference set for April 11-12

By Ken Walker

Bowling Green—For Berea College missionary Julie Dalton, attending last year's "Changing the Channel" conference helped her launch the Bates Creek Baptist Association's campus outreach.

This spring, Dalton plans to take several students to the annual Baptist Campus Ministries-sponsored event to help them learn better ways of reaching their classmates with the gospel.

Also missions director at Gethsemane Baptist Church in Berea, Dalton had long felt called to missions but wasn't sure

how that would take shape.

"It came full circle at Cedarmore," said Dalton, a Richmond native who attended several camps at the facility in Bagdad as a child.

"Even though the focus was on how students need to minister on campus and off campus, I got more from praise and worship and seeing how God ministers to them before they even go out."

Scheduled for April 11-12 at First Baptist Church of Bowling Green, this year's conference will spotlight affinity evangelism. Among speakers at the main sessions will be Brian Combs, collegiate

evangelism strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Other main speakers will be Mike Reagle, associate vice president of campus life at Eastern Kentucky University; Dee Ward, associate pastor of campus ministry at Main Street Baptist Church in Alexandria; and Dharti Lewis, lead pastor of Blueprint Church in Atlanta.

In addition, a series of breakout sessions will highlight strategies for reaching people in strategic areas like business, arts and entertainment, govern-



Illustration by Dave Di Biase

ment, and media.

"Changing the Channel is a great way to get informed about affinity evangelism," Combs said. "We had about 250 people last year and would love to see at

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Wintery blasts affect CP giving in February

Louisville—Financial contributions to the Cooperative Program declined in February, the result of a series of wintery blasts that forced many churches across the state to cancel Sunday services.

Lowell Ashby, leader of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's finance and business services team, said Cooperative Program receipts reached \$1,411,879 for the month. That was down from \$1,654,018 in February 2013, a \$242,000 drop.

"As the snow fell and the temperatures dropped in February, so did the offerings in many local churches and that obviously impacts CP giving," Ashby said. "I would attribute that to both missed and poorly attended Sunday church services. Another factor impacting CP could be anticipated increases in church utility bills and other expenses resulting from one of the worst winters in recent memory."

CP giving totaled \$10,641,123 for the first six months of the fiscal year, which began Sept. 1. That's down by \$20,442 through February last year.

The Eliza Broadus offering offset the decline, bringing in \$1,111,102 since Sept. 1, compared to \$1,106,762 over the same time period last year.

"We're hoping that as the weather moderates and spring arrives we'll see a rebound in giving to support the ministries of the local church as well as the Cooperative Program," said Paul Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. "This funding is vital to so many ministries that are helping to reach Kentucky and the world for Christ." (KBC)

KBC churches urged to take part in survey

Louisville—Southern Baptist churches are being encouraged to take part in a staff compensation survey, which will help congregations in determining appropriate salary and benefits packages for pastors and other staff members.

The survey is being conducted through May 31 online at GuideStone.org/CompensationSurvey.

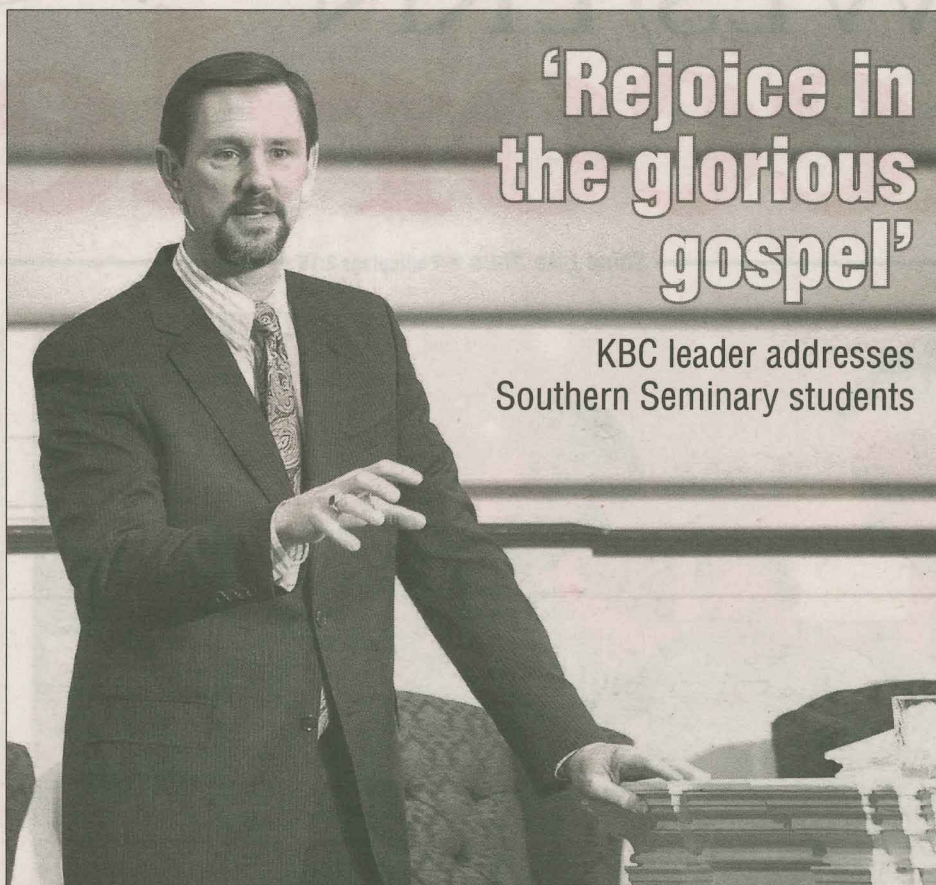
GuideStone Financial Resources, Lifeway Christian Resources and all Baptist state conventions are partnering to conduct the survey, which has been taken every two years since 1996.

Information from the survey allows churches, ministers, pastor-search teams and personnel committees to review the compensation and benefits packages being offered by congregations of comparable sizes.

Results from the last church compensation survey were reviewed by more than 48,000 visitors between September 2012 and October 2013—an average of more than 100 a day.

Don Spencer, financial support specialist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention said all data submitted is kept confidential and the results are available to churches at no cost.

"But we need your help," he said. "The more participation by churches of various sizes, the better the results will be." (KBC)



Paul Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, speaks March 11 during a chapel service at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. (SBTS)

By Hayley Schoeppler

Louisville—Paul Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, posed the question, "How shall we respond to the gospel?" in a March 11 chapel service at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Preaching from Galatians 4:1-7, Chitwood, who previously was assistant professor of evangelism and church growth at Southern Seminary, encouraged believers to rejoice in the gospel, revel in the adoption secured by Christ and rest in the Spirit of God's Son.

Chitwood illustrated each of these points by a particular geographical location from his personal experience.

Beginning in Gorée Island, Senegal, an island known for its slave-trading

history, Chitwood invited his listeners to "rejoice" in redemption from the slaveholder of sin. Drawing from Gorée Island's history, he highlighted the even greater slavery of sin.

"This, friends, is the gospel; to set at liberty those that are oppressed. ... Should we not respond with rejoicing that we have been set free for the slaveowner of sin?"

"This, friends, is the gospel; to set at liberty those that are oppressed," Chitwood said, explaining this as the image that Paul gives in Galatians 4:3. "How should we respond? Should we not respond with rejoicing that we have been set free from the slaveowner of sin?"

Moving to Galatians 4:4-5, Chitwood said that his second geographical location was Chongqing, China, with a stop en route to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Through

these locations, Chitwood invited listeners to "revel" in "adoption from the orphanage of Satan."

For Chitwood, adoption has personal

meaning and a journey that began in the slums of Rio de Janeiro with a desperate young mother begging Chitwood and his wife, "Please take my daughter ... Give her hope. Give her a future," through which they began a journey that led to the adoption of their daughter, he said.

In Chongqing, China, a "baby lay tied by the ankles in a metal bed that she shared with two others." He said her first 10 months were spent like this until "the heavenly father allowed" Chitwood, "the privilege of becoming her earthly father."

Chitwood said adoption is "a prevalent theme" in Scripture, "because it so clearly depicts the gospel." Not only this, adoption itself "displays the very heart of God."

Citing James 1:27, Chitwood emphasized that the church has a God-given "assignment" to "extend" his care for the fatherless. He said that from 100 million orphans worldwide to the 7,000 children within state care in Kentucky, "the need and opportunity of adoption has never been greater."

Addressing the objection that adoption is expensive, Chitwood pointed to the \$50 billion spent on pets yearly in the United States. This sum, "in the most conservative of estimates," is enough to adopt five million of the estimated 100 million orphans in the world.

In his final "stop," drawn from Galatians 4:6-7, Chitwood brought his listeners "back home to Kentucky." Turning to spiritual application, he said that a proper response to the gospel is to "rest in the Spirit of God's Son." This Spirit, according to Chitwood, is "present within each believer's life" and moves believers to address God as father.

Rather, "This presence of the Spirit of God's Son in our life, the first—and most basic—indication of our adoption, is that we have a new way of addressing God: Father."

Chitwood concluded: "Oh the joy of having a heavenly father who lifts our lives from the gutter and loosens our bonds and gives us hope and a future. How shall we respond to His gospel? Oh rest in His Spirit." (SBTS)

Audio and video from Paul Chitwood's sermon are available at sbts.edu/resources. For those interested in foster care or adoption within Kentucky, he recommended Sunrise Children's Services (sunrise.org).

Channel

Continued from page 1

least 300 this year."

Last year marked the first time Baptist Campus Ministries sought to involve Kentucky Baptist church-based ministries, an emphasis it is expanding in 2014.

The collegiate evangelism team also put a spotlight on campuses at the RISK state evangelism conference last month at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

Among the speakers for BCM's breakout sessions at RISK were Steve Lutz, who ministers to Penn State University students and has written a book about college ministry in a post-Christian culture.

Combs said the conferences offer opportunities for churches to learn more about reaching young adults in a changing world.

"If churches aren't close to a campus they can still learn how they can reach

out to young adults," Combs said. "If they want to minister to young adults, they have to engage with them."

Paul Gibson, University of Louisville campus minister and lead planner for "Changing the Channel," said main sessions will be brief, with speakers introducing a particular concept.

Then, each will conduct breakout sessions where they will review additional details. Gibson said each speaker has considerable experience in reaching campuses and different societal spheres of influence.

For example, Reagle's breakout sessions in 2013 were so popular that BCM invited him to be a main speaker this year.

"What I've discovered about Mike is he deeply cares about students and his faith informs many decisions," Gibson said.

"Last year the students saw someone with significant influence making a difference as a Christ-follower at a major university. He brings a wise perspective on what it means to reach a college

campus."

Formerly interim campus minister at the university, Gibson assumed the position fulltime last fall. He hopes to see between 15 and 25 students from his BCM go to Bowling Green.

One of Gibson's goals is to see closer relationships formed between Louisville students and churches in that city.

The final Friday night session is labeled "Hang Out, Go Out," and will match BCM participants with church leaders from their respective areas.

"One reason we're doing this is the conference is not just for BCM but our churches," Gibson said.

"We think it will help by connecting churches with campus ministries. Hopefully, they can go back with stronger relationships so church members can come on campus and help us reach students."

Students and church staff members can register online at kybcm.org/changingthechannel. The cost is \$45, with a registration deadline of April 1. (KBC)

Cumberland football players flex muscles for local charities

Williamsburg—Numerous football players from University of the Cumberlands recently helped at Cedaridge Ministries in an effort to serve the community.

The football team members also had the opportunity to volunteer at Laurel Lake Baptist Camp, Savoy County Farm, the Tough Mudder Trail, and other places during the winter season.

"We want them to grow in a lot of areas and more than just in football," said Assistant Coach P.J. Hughes. "There are people who struggle and need help. They need to see that it isn't just about them and that there are others in the world that they can help in their own community."

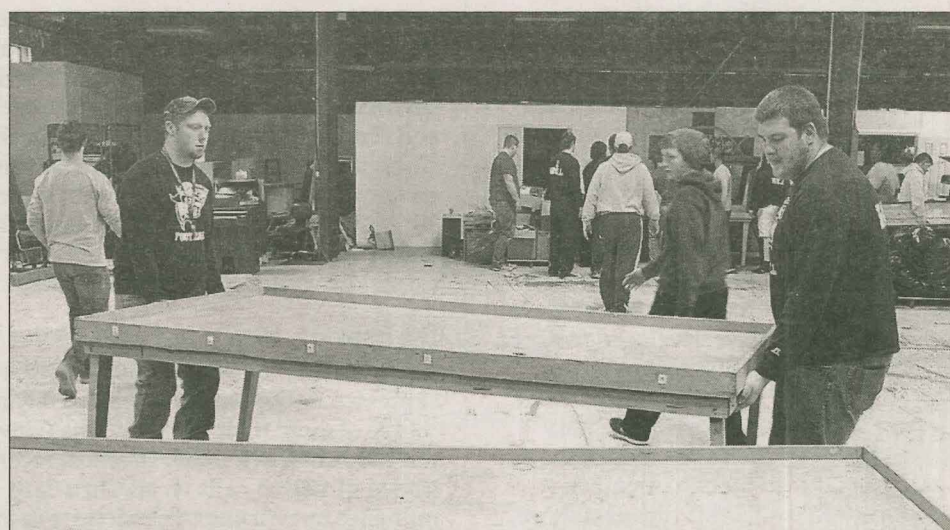
Cedaridge Ministries is a non-profit ministry that was started in 1993. It provides help to about 1,500 of the poor and homeless families of Southeastern Kentucky. They offer food, clothes, furniture and other items to assist people in need.

The warehouse that stores all of the donations needed to be organized. The group of football players cleaned off and moved tables to the center of the room to be repaired. They arranged desks, file cabinets and other furniture for easy access by people who need furniture. The emergency boxes of food were sorted and stored on shelves.

"This is awesome to have this much help," said Keith Decker, director of Cedaridge Ministries. "It's a great (to see a) combined effort of (so many) people helping."

Cedaridge Ministries cooperates with more than 355 churches. They give spiritual support as well as material help to the people who come through. Some of the volunteers are the families who have received some sort of help from Cedaridge and want to show their appreciation.

"I get so much from the community



Members of the University of the Cumberlands football team volunteer at Cedaridge Ministries. (UC)

so it's good to give back," said Paul Logsdon of Louisville, a freshman football player. "We're capable of doing this stuff

easily and we're available to help. It also helps us support the Christian heritage of our school." (UC)

Campbellsville University participating in Bucket Project

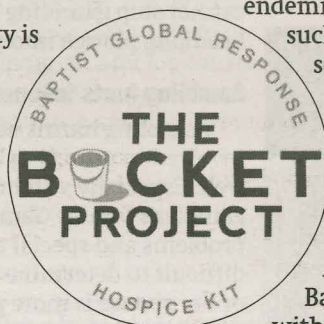
By Kevin Thomas

Campbellsville—Buckets of love from Campbellsville University will soon be raining down on Africa.

Campbellsville University is participating in a campus-wide event known as The Bucket Project—an initiative to assist Southern Baptist missionaries in Africa in helping persons with HIV/AIDS, cancer, malaria and in the last stages of other devastating diseases.

The buckets, which are packed with items such as latex gloves, multi-vitamins, bedding material and hygienic supplies to comfort and help with cleanliness, are being used in evangelization efforts on the continent of Africa.

The program is a part of Baptist Global Response, an arm of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.



BGR and its partners respond to people with critical needs, whether those needs arise from chronic conditions, like extreme poverty, contaminated water, or endemic hunger, or acute crises, such as natural disaster, personal trauma, or social upheaval.

The Texas Baptist Convention was asked last year by BGR to organize its entities. They shipped more than 1,500 buckets to Africa. This year, Kentucky Baptists were chosen to help with the aid.

Edwina Rowell, adjunct instructor for the English as a Second Language Institute, will be serving as the area coordinator for the buckets. Rowell said, "I think it's great. I have a mission's heart and I'm always ready to help with a project I feel is worthy and this is a worthy cause."

Rowell has previously served as a missionary for 17 years in the West African

countries of Burkina Faso and Nigeria, as well as the Ivory Coast.

Completed buckets and supplies can be dropped off in the Student Activities Center between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on March 27. Students—and others in the community—may bring their packed buckets to the SAC and receive free pizza that night as well as chapel credit.

The buckets will be dedicated in chapel April 9 and then placed in vans to be transported to Parkway Baptist Church in Bardstown. Parkway will then take the buckets to First Baptist Church in Murray, which will send them to port in Virginia to be placed in a sea crate for the voyage to South Africa.

For more information on how you can participate, contact Rowell by email at erowell@campbellsville.edu or phone (270) 849-5588.

A list of bucket supplies can be found at bgr.org. The website also has a list of 19 collection points for buckets in Kentucky. Completed buckets can be purchased at bgr.gostorego.com. (CU)

UC students serve in Pikeville with Mountain Outreach

Williamsburg—Nearly 50 University of the Cumberlands students, staff and faculty are serving with Mountain Outreach during spring break this week—more than ever before.

"We were personally invited by (the) Pike County judge executive," said Marc Hensley, MO director.

The 39 students and 10 other volunteers will be helping two senior adults, one by repairing and modifying her wheelchair ramp and the other by replacing a shingle roof with metal. Students will also be replacing the ceiling, floors and doors, as well as painting and cleaning out a community center in Pike County.

"I'm excited to work, help the people, share the word with someone, and see their faces and how happy they are after how we've helped," said Lauren Hooks, a freshman at the university. (UC)

Capitol

Continued from page 1

of God, one Methodist, and six others who describe themselves as Protestant or Christian.

In the House, 38 of the 100 lawmakers are Baptist compared to 15 who are Catholic, six Methodist, five Church of Christ, four Presbyterian, one Church of God, one Unitarian Universalist, one African Methodist Episcopal, 20 who describe themselves as Protestant or Christian, and six who cite no church affiliation.

"The numbers aren't surprising, considering Kentucky is home to more than a million Southern Baptists and a larger number of other Baptist groups," Chitwood said. "That's a powerful voting bloc that has the capability to change the face of politics in the state."

Baptists also hold powerful leadership positions in both the House and Senate.

In the Senate, Democratic Caucus Chairman Johnny Ray Turner lists his religious affiliation as Baptist, as does Democratic Whip Jerry Rhoads.



KBC's Committee on Public Affairs met in Frankfort recently and heard from state legislators Rep. Tim Moore, of Elizabethtown, Rep. Tom Riner, of Louisville, and Senator Ernie Harris, of Crestwood, on moral issues of concern to Kentucky Baptists. (Todd Deaton/WR)

Baptists lead seven Senate committees, including the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee chaired by Independent Bob Leeper of Paducah, the Senate Transportation Committee led by Republican Ernie Harris of Crestwood, the Senate Judiciary Committee led by Republican Whitney Westerfield of Hopkinsville, the Senate Education Committee led by Republican Mike Wilson of Bowling Green, the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee led by Republican Jared Carpenter of Berea, the

Senate Enrollment Committee led by Republican Sara Beth Gregory of Monticello, and the Senate Economic Development, Tourism and Labor Committee led by Republican Alice Forgy Kerr of Lexington.

Democratic House Speaker Greg Stumbo identifies himself as Baptist, as does Democratic Floor Leader Rocky Adkins and Republican Floor Leader Jeff Hoover.

Baptists also hold seven chairmanships in the House, including the House

Natural Resources and Environment Committee led by Democrat Jim Gooch, the House State Government Committee led by Democrat Brent Yonts of Greenville, the House Economic Development Committee led by Democrat Ruth Ann Palumbo of Lexington, the House Transportation Committee led by Democrat Hubert Collins of Wittenburg, the House Enrollment Committee led by Democrat Susan Westrom of Lexington, the House Labor and Industry Committee led by Democrat Rick Nelson of Middlesboro, and the House Elections, Constitutional Amendments and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee led by Democrat Darryl Owens of Louisville.

"Holding so many leadership positions gives Baptists incredible sway inside the Capitol," Chitwood said. "I acknowledge that not all of our Baptist lawmakers take strong stands on moral issues, as Baptists should. For those who don't, I encourage them to reassess their priorities and hold tightly to biblical principles each time they're asked to vote or consider introducing new legislation." (KBC)

Our Values

Since the mission of the Kentucky Baptist Convention is summarized by the statement: "Created by churches, for churches, to help churches reach Ken-

Together We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

strive to be:

Trustworthy. We can be relied upon as a resource to ease ministry pain, not create more. "Like a broken tooth or a lame foot is reliance on the unfaithful in a time of trouble" (Proverbs 25:19).

Encouraging. We find joy in ministry and in helping others find joy in theirs. "Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother" (Romans 14:13).

Accountable. We strive to make a Kingdom difference, understanding that ministry is not simply about activity, but about proclaiming and expanding the Kingdom of God. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23).

Mature. We are actively responsible for our own spiritual formation. "Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

Sensitive. We listen humbly to diverse voices, seeking understanding and reconciliation. "Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

KBC churches deserve the best from their Mission Board staff. Thankfully, I could not be more pleased by the team of servants God has given us. Our staff members are a diverse group of men and women who love the Lord, His word, His churches, and His work. Each is uniquely gifted and feels a strong sense of calling to their ministry. I am humbled by the privilege of working alongside such a devoted group of servants.

We pray regularly God will use us to encourage pastors and leaders in their work. We long to see new churches birthed and existing churches strengthened. We desire for the lost come to a realization of the truth of the gospel and be saved. And we want very much for God to receive the glory He is due:

"Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name" (1 Chronicles 16:28-29).

Paul Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

ERLC: The criminal, economic impacts of gambling

Public resistance to tax increases, the political power of gambling interests, and the growing pursuit of easy money have led to the legalization of some form of gambling in the District of Columbia and every state except Utah and Hawaii. An enormous increase in the amount of money Americans are betting has accompanied the wildfire growth of gambling in America. In 2012, Americans spent \$91.9 billion on all forms of legal gambling in the U.S. and lost \$37.3 billion. It is time to take a closer look at this issue and to develop a response.

The issue

Since 1890, the Southern Baptist Convention has formally expressed its opposition to legalized gambling. Over the course of more than 100 years, the Convention has adopted 14 resolutions on this issue. The most recent resolution was passed in 1997. It calls on all Christians "to exercise their influence by refusing to participate in any form of gambling or its promotion." In addition, the resolution urges "political leaders to enact laws restricting and eventually eliminating all forms of gambling and its advertisement."

While the advocates of legalized gambling promote it as an economic development tool and as a supposedly painless source of tax revenue, there are numerous biblical, ethical, and social reasons why gambling is not an acceptable activity. Below are some of the most obvious reasons.

Gambling violates biblical principles

While the Bible contains no "thou shalt not" in regard to gambling, it does contain many insights and principles that indicate that gambling is wrong. For example, the Bible emphasizes the sovereignty of God over human events (Matt. 10:29-30); whereas gambling looks to chance and luck. The Bible indicates that man is to work creatively and use his possessions for the good of others (Eph. 4:28); gambling fosters a something-for-nothing attitude. The Bible calls for careful stewardship; gambling calls for reckless abandon. The Bible condemns covetousness and materialism (Matt. 6:24-34); gambling has both at its heart. The moral thrust of the Bible is love for God and neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40); gambling seeks personal gain and pleasure at another person's loss and pain.

Gambling contributes to crime

The growth of crime in those states and cities that legalize gambling is easily demonstrated. The most comprehensive study to date concludes that after three or four years, counties with casino gambling experience increases in rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, auto theft, and human trafficking compared to counties without casinos.

Many careful studies on gambling point out frequent incidents of corruption related to gambling. Police are the most immediate targets for corrupting influences. Since police operate at the entry point of the criminal justice system, they are both more available and more desirable as targets of gamblers seeking to make payoffs and bribes. But gambling corruption is by no means limited to the police. Elected officials as well as individuals in the gambling business are also subject to the corrupting influence of gambling.

Organized crime benefits from the expansion of gambling as well. William Webster, a former FBI director, said, "I really don't see how one can expect to run legalized gambling anywhere without serious problems. ... Anytime organized crime sees an opportunity to put a fix on something, to get an edge on something, it'll be there. And gambling is still the largest

source of revenue for organized crime."

Gambling disrupts economy

Until recently, business and labor leaders have led many of the successful efforts to prevent gambling from entering states and communities because they realized that gambling is bad for the economy and especially bad for relatively low income laborers. Unfortunately, many current business and labor leaders have become either neutral or supportive of gambling because of its alleged economic benefits.

However, increased gambling always results in increases in unpaid bills, embezzlement, bankruptcy, and absenteeism from jobs. In addition, gambling does not help a state's economy in any appreciable way. A lottery returns to the state an average of only about 32 cents of every dollar taken in. The remainder goes to prizes and administration. In only three or four states does the revenue from lotteries, casinos, pari-mutuel betting, and any other existing forms of gambling contribute more than 3 percent to a state's total budget. The minimal contribution that gambling makes to a state's economy is more than offset by the social and personal problems it creates.

Gambling destroys lives

Gambling corrupts and hurts people in many ways. The something-for-nothing craving which gambling stimulates undermines character. The hope of winning a fortune causes some to embezzle and steal for a gambling stake. Gambling appeals to the weakness of a person's character and develops recklessness, callousness, and covetousness. Some gamblers become psychologically addicted to gambling so that they cannot stop gambling and find themselves in a headlong plunge into personal catastrophe.

Gambling hurts innocent people

Gambling harms not only those directly involved in gambling but innocent people as well. Especially vulnerable are members of the gambler's family. Gambling creates financial problems and special tensions in the home. It is difficult to determine whether the gambler or his or her spouse is more physically, mentally, and emotionally damaged by the ravages of a gambling binge.

The children of gamblers suffer when a gambling parent loses the money for such necessities as food, rent, clothing, and medicine. They suffer when a gambling parent abandons them in cars, with neighbors, or in gambling daycare centers while they satisfy their gambling addiction. Communities are hurt by the presence of gambling as increasing numbers of people become addicted to gambling and prey on their communities to support their gambling addictions.

Gambling defies justification

Among the arguments advanced to justify gambling is the one that says that all of life is a gamble or a risk. But risk-taking in gambling is different from the risks involved in the normal routine of life. The risks in gambling are artificially created. In other ventures, the risk is part of the creative process. For example, the contractor risks labor and capital to build a house and make a profit. Unlike the gambler, he assumes a risk that is necessary to society's economic life, and he relies on more than chance in seeking to make a profit.

It is also argued that some people like to spend their recreation money betting on horses or playing slot machines, just as others prefer to spend theirs for a round of golf or a movie.

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(Illustration by Chris Johnson)

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Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

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Feel like a lost ball in high weeds?

By Joe Ball

"Don't get lost in the weeds" is a phrase that could normally be the mantra for my golf game. If you have seen me play, you understand why. Lately, it also has been the catch phrase of the season at Crossings Ministries as we prepare for the upcoming summer.

It can also serve as a reminder for those in youth ministry to not get caught up in the pressing needs of the here and now, and forget there is a higher purpose.

Don't lose focus on the big picture. It is easy when you are in "the weeds" to only see the weeds. But sometimes we need to take a Google Earth view of our situation. We need to refocus ourselves on our vision of the big picture.

Sure there are things that cloud our vision like collecting deposits for camp, DNow planning, figuring out how snow days will affect our summer calendar, and attending meeting after meeting, after meeting.

We must remember that these things are all parts of the bigger picture of helping students grow in the faith.

Discipleship of students is a marathon, not a sprint. Sometimes the messiness of student ministry gets to all of us. Students seem to regularly take two steps forward and three steps back. Just when you think he or she is beginning to figure this all out and take their relationship with Jesus serious, something comes along and knocks them off course. Honestly, that is life in student ministry.

By taking time to look at where they have come from on their journey, we can usually see that over time they are growing in their faith and looking more and more like Jesus. We just have to be able to see through the weeds of the moment and look at their long term journey of discipleship.

Being bogged down in minutia can drain your spirit.

Youth Ministry Corner



Joe Ball

Most of us in youth ministry are relational by nature, and the minutia of ministry can be time consuming and draining. Personally, I am more exhausted at the end of a day of meetings than I am from a day of physical demanding ministry alongside students. But the mundane must be done. Deposits have to be paid, hand-outs need to be copied, vans need to be reserved, and fall youth events have to be put on the church calendar. They are all important and need our attention, if we are going to be effective at ministry. We cannot get lost in the weeds of routine.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. We try to do too much on our own, and sometimes when we get lost in the weeds it is for that very reason. Ministry is not intended to be done in a vacuum. We need others to help us.

Take a look at your situation, what are the things that bog you down, drain your energy, make you feel like you are lost in the weeds. Now, to whom do you need to hand off some of that stuff? Who do you need to recruit to be on your staff that is gifted in the areas of your weakness?

There is an old leadership adage that says, "Recruit to your area of weakness." Sometimes we hang on to things because we don't trust anyone else to do it, and sometimes it is because we are too prideful to ask for help. Neither is healthy or effective.

Each of us will spend time in the weeds. Being in the weeds isn't a bad thing. If I am in the weeds on the golf course, at least I am on the golf course! It is how we handle being there that matters. Let us not let our time in the weeds rob us of the big picture view of what we have been called to do.

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

Gambling

Continued from page 4

Gambling obviously provides a kind of recreational excitement for some, but the cost to individuals, families, the economy, and society is too high to justify it.

Some societal answers

Seen in this light, gambling is personally selfish, morally irresponsible, and socially destructive. Therefore, gambling must be vigorously resisted. Such resistance requires an understanding of the problem, a workable plan of attack, and a personal commitment to work against gambling. The gambling problem results from two interrelated factors: (1) Many people have a desire, often a compulsion, to gamble, and (2) most of these people have access to gambling opportunities.

The ultimate goal of a plan of action is to control the desire to gamble and eliminate the access to gambling opportunities. When the desire to get something for nothing and the opportunity to gamble go hand in hand, resistance to one requires resistance to the other. To attempt to eliminate the desire without abolishing the opportunity is to invite failure. It is a matter of record that as gambling becomes more accessible, more people gamble. Thus, legalization is not the answer to the gambling problem. Instead, it is one primary cause of the gambling problem.

Any adequate plan to deal with gambling must be both extensive and comprehensive. It must be extensive enough to include the spiritual, educational, and legal approaches. It must be comprehensive enough to incorporate the family, the world of work, community clubs and organizations, the church, and government.

Evangelization

A vibrant, growing relationship with Jesus Christ is the only adequate basis for a stable personal life and a sound society. Members of Gamblers Anonymous acknowledge that in order to prevent relapse it is necessary to experience certain personality changes within themselves, and that this involves response to spiritual principles in order to make the changes permanent.

Moral arguments, economic self-interest, guilt, shame, and other motivations will not prevail against the gambling urge or solve society's gambling problem.

Education

Families, churches, schools, labor unions, businesses, and community organizations can all contribute to an educational program in opposition to gambling. Such education should be specifically designed to result in action. The dangers of gambling should be exposed in such a dramatic way that people will cast it out of their lives and communities. People can be led to understand that it is in their best personal interest to refrain from gambling and that it is in society's best interest publicly to oppose gambling.

Rehabilitation

For those addicted to gambling, education alone will prove powerless to deal with their problems. They need psychological help. People gamble for many reasons, and no simple and easy solution covers all cases. Pastoral counseling, psychological care, or participation in a group like Gamblers Anonymous can prove helpful. The community and the church can sometimes work together in providing programs to seek out and help the compulsive gambler and his or her family.

Legislation

When gambling opportunities are available, both the reformed gambler and the potential gambler are tempted. Since gambling is corruptive and harmful, concerned citizens should work for laws to control and eliminate gambling. Effective legislation both by the states and by the federal government is needed.

Anti-gambling legislation will be effective only to the extent that it is backed up by effective law enforcement. Legislation without enforcement fails to deter gambling and stimulates disrespect for the law. A responsible public will insist on, and be willing to pay the price for, strict and efficient law enforcement. Further, the courts must be encouraged to take seriously gambling cases and levy appropriate sentences. For genuine gambling addicts, rehabilitation treatment can be far more effective than jail sentences.

Upcoming marriage events

By Valerie Vincent

There are several marriage events being held regionally to help you focus on growing, caring for, or restoring your marriage. Many couples who divorce say they tried everything, but did they really?



Simply trying harder with the same approach, same attitude, or the same skill sets is not the same as trying with new skills, new understanding, and a new attitude. Here are some options:

MERCY—The Marriage Education and Resource Center (MERCY) is a Christian-based organization that seeks to help couples have healthy and successful marriages. The following workshops are offered in the Louisville area: April 26, Crucial Conversations, May 17, The Need Bank, and June 21, Resolving Everyday Conflict. For more information, visit MercyKy.org.

Kentucky Marriage Movement—Kentucky Marriage Movement seeks to encourage the biblical model of marriage and to see marriages strengthened in every home and church across Kentucky. Below are a list of upcoming events. For more information, visit KentuckyMarriage.org.

■ Love & Respect Conference—May 2-3, Lexington, and May 9-10, Paducah.

■ Love and Lordship: A Relationship Encounter—March 21-22, Lexington.

■ The Art of Marriage Conference—April 11-12, Northern Kentucky, April 25-26, Lexington, and May 16-17, Lexington.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend—Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend offers married couples an opportunity to learn a technique of loving communication that they can use for the rest of their lives. Upcoming events: March 21-23, Cincinnati, May 2-4, Indianapolis, and July 18-20, Cincinnati. For more information, visit WWME.org.

FamilyLife—FamilyLife, an organization rooted in Campus Crusade for Christ, seeks to develop godly marriages and families. Upcoming Weekend to Remember events: March 14-16, Cincinnati, and April 4-6 Indianapolis. For more information, visit FamilyLife.com.

Retrouvaille—Retrouvaille is for couples who are considering separation and those who have already separated or divorced, but want marriage help. Upcoming events: April 4, Cincinnati, Aug. 1, Indianapolis, and Aug. 15, Owensboro. For more information, visit Retrouvaille.org.

Valerie Vincent is a Christian counselor with Hardy Day & Associates in Louisville.

Some personal answers

- Recognize that you cannot get something for nothing.
- Remember that in gambling somebody always gets hurt.
- Refuse to participate personally in even small or occasional gambling ventures.
- Get the facts about existing laws related to gambling, problems of enforcement in your area, and the current mindset on what changes are being made or should be made.
- Arouse public opinion to the fallacy of arguments for legalized gambling and to any weakness in the enforcement of existing laws.
- Bear testimony without being judgmental to friends or acquaintances who may gamble occasionally.
- Actively support laws, lawmakers, and law enforcement officials who oppose gambling.
- Work within civic, community, and business organizations to prevent their sponsorship of gambling in the community. (ERLC)

This article first appeared online at erlc.com and is reprinted by permission of the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

'BATTLE FOR SOULS': Crimean pastor calls for prayer, Bibles

By Nicole Lee

Crimea, Ukraine—Crimean pastor Kostya Bakonov said he believes the conflict in Ukraine is not only a political battle, but a battle for souls as well, calling for more Bibles and more prayer.

In the middle of what some are calling the biggest crisis between Moscow and the West since the Cold War, Ukrainian Christians are not panicking, but are on the offensive by praying.

Ukrainian's new Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, has warned that the country is "on the brink of disaster," with Crimea's multiethnic population battling over decisions concerning its future while NATO and Russia stand on opposing sides.

Bakonov, who leads a church in the Crimean city of Simferopol, said that all across Ukraine churches are calling for prayer vigils to ask God for peace in their country and for His name to be glorified.

"In our church we have a prayer chain 24/7," he said, asking believers worldwide to join them in praying for their country. "I fervently believe the crisis in Ukraine is not only about the political stability in

the country and region but also for the souls of men."

After protesters in Kiev saw president Viktor Yanukovich removed in late February, the Russian majority of Crimea began challenging the authority of Ukraine, voting Sunday to succeed from Ukraine and return to Russian rule.

About 97 percent of the population speaks Russian as their first language, according to a Kiev International Institute of Sociology poll.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has maintained his right to defend the Russian people of Crimea and was asked to do so by Yanukovich, whom Putin claims is the rightful Ukrainian president. Ukrainian and Western governments support the legality of the current government and have warned that Russia's action on Ukrainian soil is a declaration of war.

In the face of escalating tension and increased media speculation, Bakonov said his motto has become "less news and television, more Bible and prayer."

"Yes, we are concerned about the situation in Crimea, but I encourage our congregation of 800 believers by the word of



A local pastor in Simferopol has called on believers across the country to pray for peace. Here believers gather, lifting their hands in praise and prayer. Simferopol is located in the Crimea region of Ukraine. IMB file photo

God," he said. "I continue to preach the gospel to the people of Crimea and beyond."

Despite constant changes and rising tensions, Bakonov is most concerned for the spiritual outcome of this time of unrest. But he said many people in the country are spiritually open because of the ongoing hostilities.

"Many people in Ukraine have been searching for answers and are seeking the answers from churches and ministers. We praise God that He is opening hearts to reveal Himself," Bakonov said.

He asks for prayer for peace in the region and for the leaders involved in decision-making, including Putin and Ukrainian president Alexander Turchynov.

Bakonov said Turchynov is a strong believer in Jesus and prays that Turchynov will boldly and righteously lead the country and seek godly counsel. Turchynov is a Baptist lay preacher who frequently speaks in local churches.

"The changes going on in Ukraine are a second chance from God for the people to turn to God and seek Jesus," he said. (BP)

Chaplains

Continued from page 1

organizational contexts where chaplains serve, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ is a critical part of any chaplain's ministry environment. In 2013 SBC chaplains presented the gospel to over 125,000 people and baptized more than 3,700.

"When chaplains preach during our worship services here on post at our Protestant services, they have the freedom to preach a powerful evangelistic message," said Col. Jeff Houston, the installation chaplain at Fort Campbell. "We regularly baptize folks who have come to trust Jesus Christ as their personal Savior."

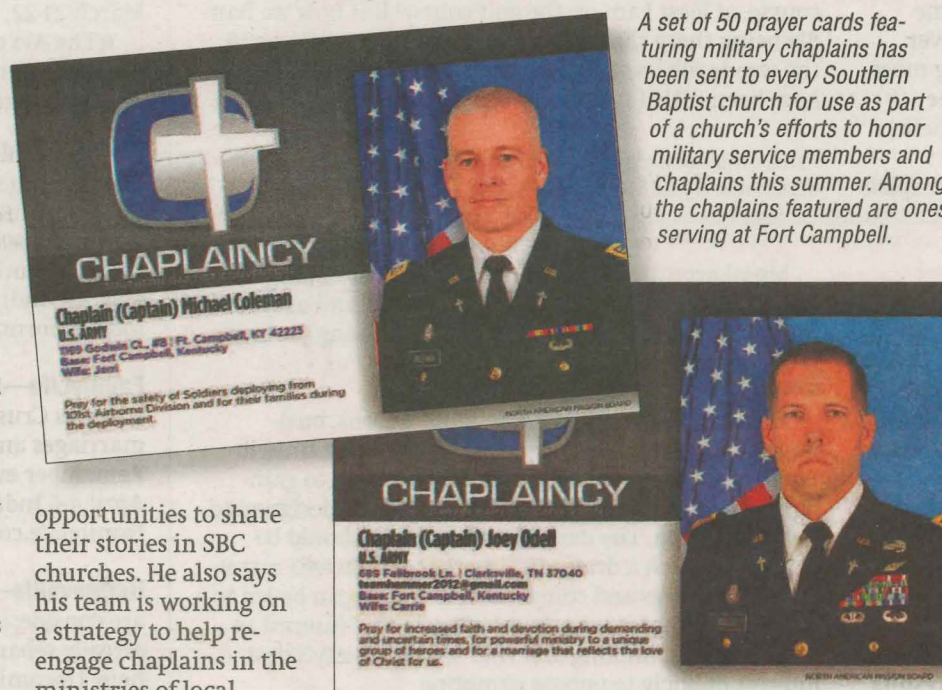
Often the critical places and times when chaplains serve provide open doors for ministry that aren't available to the local church.

"When we walk into the room of someone who is not a Christian, our approach is to provide pastoral care," said Jim Wright, a Southern Baptist chaplain serving as the director of pastoral care at Baptist Hospital in Paducah. "But eventually the missionary aspect will come out. We've had many opportunities to lead people to Christ."

Carver notes that NAMB's chaplaincy team is focused on four main areas over the next year. First, NAMB will focus on providing care, support and appreciation for chaplains on the field. Carver noted that when chaplains are fulfilling their pastoral roles, they're often doing so in some of the most difficult circumstances.

"It's those critical, and often tragic, moments of life that chaplains provide an invaluable ministry of the presence of God to those seeking peace, comfort, and hope in a particular life situation. Obviously," he added, "when our chaplains are engaged in that demanding and emotionally draining role, they need pastoral care themselves."

Carver says embracing chaplains will mean giving them more frequent



A set of 50 prayer cards featuring military chaplains has been sent to every Southern Baptist church for use as part of a church's efforts to honor military service members and chaplains this summer. Among the chaplains featured are ones serving at Fort Campbell.

opportunities to share their stories in SBC churches. He also says his team is working on a strategy to help re-engage chaplains in the ministries of local churches once their chaplaincy ministry concludes.

Second, NAMB's chaplaincy team will continue to educate churches on the ministry of all of its chaplains and about their own opportunities to serve the military. As part of that effort, NAMB has produced a toolkit (www.namb.net/Honoring-Military-Service-Members-and-Chaplains/) to help churches honor and appreciate chaplains in their midst. NAMB is also encouraging churches to adopt chaplains.

"Often, our churches don't realize that they have chaplains and veterans in their midst," Carver said. "We want to increase the awareness so that chaplains can help local churches in their evangelistic efforts."

NAMB will continue to come alongside of churches and help them reach out to the military community among their members and around them.

"Just because of the way God works, those serving in the military are often searching spiritually," said Gary Sanders, the founder and president of Military Missions Network and the pastor of military missions at First Baptist Church of

Norfolk, Va. "It is a tremendous opportunity to share the love of Christ with them because they are looking for relationships, they are looking for stability, they are looking for hope. And of course all of those things can be found in God through Jesus Christ."

Sanders' own ministry at FBC Norfolk is an example of this. Among other service opportunities, FBC Norfolk provides their building and childcare for military Family Readiness Groups.

"Just by serving the military that opens all kinds of doors of getting to

know them and to get into conversations with them about Christ," Sanders said. "We serve them in word and deed."

Third, Carver and his team are developing a strategy to help pastors and denominational leaders incorporate chaplains into their ministry plans. Often, Carver says, chaplains have ministry expertise that can help in other efforts, but those planning the efforts don't know of their availability.

Fourth, NAMB chaplaincy is working toward a long-term strategy of developing a church plant ministry near every U.S. military base in the world. At this point, Carver says, NAMB is in the process of talking with leaders in each North American region about what it would take to increase military ministry around U.S. bases.

NAMB recently made the strategic move to appoint a military church planting catalyst to help foster church plants to better serve members of the military and their families. U.S. Marine Reserve Captain Endel Lee accepted the position in January. Lee brings a 33-year career as a reservist, 20 as a chaplain to the work. Lee has also served as the national Southern Baptist Disaster Relief chaplaincy coordinator since 2006.

Carver notes that, although there are strong military-focused churches and Christian organizations already supporting many of these bases, there aren't nearly enough to properly reach these military communities with the gospel. (NAMB)



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Spring break students highlight for Sandy relief volunteers

By Sara Shelton

New York—One of the highlights of the continued Sandy Rebuild effort is the arrival of college students, using their spring breaks to serve the people of Staten Island, N.Y., according to at least one volunteer couple.

This year Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers, including Ronda and Randy Corn, will welcome nearly 200 students from more than six states over a two-week period to assist in the cleanup and rebuild work on the island.

When the Corns arrived in Staten Island in November 2012—just five days after Hurricane Sandy made landfall—they didn't think they would still be there today.

"Randy and I have been here since the beginning," Ronda Corn said, "and we plan to stay until the end. There's still such a mess here. Homes are gutted and unlivable. People are displaced. Below the surface there is just so much hurt. Time has passed and media attention has faded, but the people here still need so much help."

Serving under local construction team leaders and fellow SBDR volunteers, students will hang sheet rock, tile floors, install doors, put up walls—anything to help homes become livable once again.

"The students work with a construction team leader and learn a lot about skilled labor," Corn said. "It's hard work but really an awesome experience."

The experience is a stark contrast to the way many college students spend



Louisiana State University students Skyler Hollins (left) and Taylor Christian wield sledgehammers to remove flooring from a Staten Island home flooded by Hurricane Sandy's storm surge. More than 500 students volunteered part of their winter breaks to work with SBDR volunteers last year. Registration for this year's Sandy Rebuild effort is now open for spring breaks and summer. (NAMB)

spring break. SBDR built a volunteer village on a three-acre field on Staten Island, complete with shower, kitchen and water units. Students will camp in tents built specifically for Sandy Rebuild workers. With New York closing out one of its roughest winters yet, volunteers

face the difficult challenge of braving the elements.

"Weather conditions this season haven't made our work easy, and we've tried to prepare students for the potential wet and cold weather we've seen all season," Corn said. "They're all still

excited to serve. For all of us, it's not about the project itself; it's about the people. That's been our motto from day one, and keeping the hearts of the people we're serving in mind has helped tremendously on the difficult days."

It's not just the hearts of the people they're serving, but the hearts of the college students as well that the Corns and their team hope to see changed.

"Our main goal is that the gospel goes out to the people, both the ones we're serving in Staten Island and the college students here doing the work," Corn said. "There are opportunities for the body of Christ to minister both inside and outside our camp."

Last year the Corns met a student named Belle. Though she didn't know Christ, she signed up to serve with her fellow students. She returned to her campus after the week with a new curiosity about Christ and, after talking with her group leader, placed her faith in Christ. This year, Belle is returning to serve and share what Christ did in her life through service to Staten Island last year.

"It's an incredible story," Corn said. "This girl came to know Christ, and since then, has been walking with her roommate as she begins to seek Christ in her own life. She's even kept in touch with the homeowners she served last year, helping point them to Christ as well. Just one story like this—one soul coming to know the Lord through serving here—that makes all the difference."

For more information, visit namb.net/sandy. (NAMB/BP)

Survey finds growth, lay participation, vitality in multisite church model

By Adelle Banks

The majority of multisite churches are growing, according to a new study, and they are seeing more involvement from lay people and newcomers after they open an additional location.

Nearly one in 10 U.S. Protestants attends a congregation with multiple campuses, according to findings released March 11 in the "Leadership Network/Generis Multisite Church Scorecard."

The report cites new data from the National Congregations Study, which found there were 8,000 multisite churches in the U.S. in 2012—up from 5,000 in 2010—including churches with more than one gathering on the same campus. Churches that have created worship space in a separate setting now exist in almost every state, several Canadian provinces and dozens of other countries.

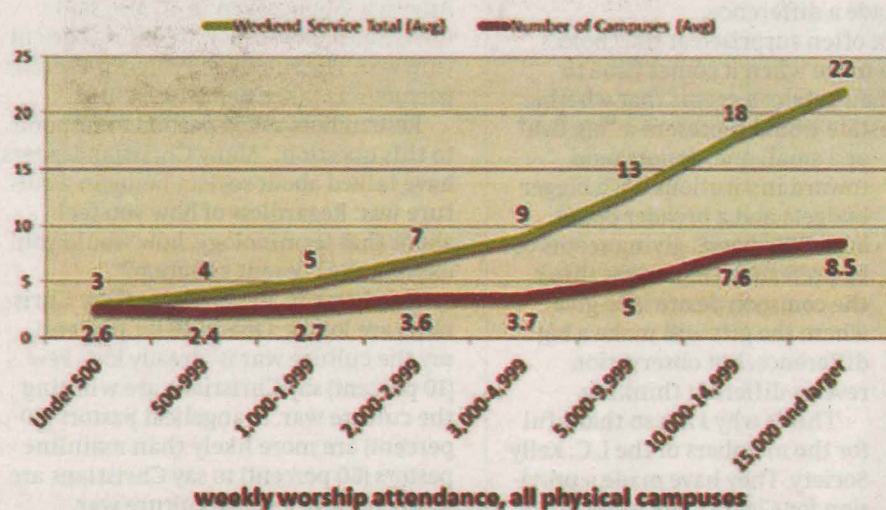
Multisite churches typically operate with a main campus headed by the senior minister and one or more satellite locations. In some settings, attendees at the satellite location watch the same sermon that is beamed in from the central location but have their own dedicated on-site pastor, music or small group meetings.

The scorecard examined 535 responses to a survey of multisite churches that had created worship space in a separate setting.

Among the findings:

- By the end of 2013, the average church has grown 14 percent since it went multisite.

The Larger the Church, the More Campuses and Services it Has



- The vast majority (88 percent) report increased lay participation after having multiple locations.

- It's still a relatively new phenomenon: 60 percent had opted for the multisite model in the last five years.

- Almost half (47 percent) have a location in a rural area or a small town.

- One in three (37 percent) started being multisite through a merger of different congregations.

Although megachurches (congregations with 2,000 or more weekly attendees) were pioneers of the multisite concept, churches with as few as 50 people

and as many as 15,000 have tried this approach, said Warren Bird, director of research at Leadership Network, a Dallas-based church think tank.

Multisite is also an international phenomenon: One-third of the congregations on Bird's list of international megachurches are multisite.

The report points out some of the challenges of juggling more than one campus for worship. Researchers found in 2010 that one in 10 multisite churches they surveyed had closed a location.

In this survey, some said rented space in public schools—popular options for

multisite churches—are "one of the toughest places to launch" a site.

"I can only guess that the climate of churches renting public facilities is getting more and more difficult with the number of school boards that are declining to rent either on Sundays or to religious groups on the increase," Bird said.

Jim Sheppard, CEO of Generis, an Atlanta-based consulting firm that sponsored the report, warned that it is important to have a "good, sound contract" in whatever location a church picks to set up a temporary worship space.

"If your initial location is a public school, don't over estimate the relationship," he wrote. "People can change, politics can get involved and you might be forced out sooner than expected."

Multisite church leaders report that they are finding a greater percentage of "unchurched" people in their new locations than at the original location.

"Historically, a church's greatest impact on the community is in its early years, and so the same thing is happening with a new campus," Bird said.

Both independent congregations and those affiliated with denominations are embracing the multisite concept. Some regional denominational groups, including the United Methodists, consider mergers and other multisite options as part of their revitalization strategies.

"One of them is vibrant but needs facilities," Sheppard said of some merging congregations in a webinar about the report. "The other one lacks vibrancy but has facilities." (RNS)

Plan B

Understanding that our plans are not always God's plans

Have you ever made plans that just did not work out the way you expected?

When it comes to our vacations Angie and I are planners, but we will readily admit some of our very best vacations were the ones in which we just went wherever the next day took us.

Before our children came along, we took a trip one year in October to Pennsylvania and New Jersey. From day to day we did not really know where our next stop would be, but it was one of our favorite vacations ever. It seems as if after the kids arrived we became a little more intentional with planning in every aspect of our lives, including vacations.

As I lead at Oneida, I find myself making both short- and long-term plans for this ministry. One of my favorite parts of the job thus far has been traveling the state with our choir and visiting different churches. It makes for some early Sunday mornings, long bus rides, and long days, but it is a lot of fun. Some of this year's choir trips had already been scheduled before I arrived. Many others have been scheduled throughout the school year.

I not only enjoy meeting people who already love Oneida, but also introducing people to our ministry. I enjoy getting to be with our students and hearing them sing, and I enjoy the privilege of preaching in different churches.

One of the trips we scheduled was a morning and evening visit to two different churches in Frankfort. One of those churches I had visited before and is served by a dear friend of mine. The

other was a church I didn't know anything about and was looking forward to visiting for the very first time. We made our travel plans and our friends in Frankfort made their plans to accommodate and feed us. Although we had our plans, I now know the Lord had other plans.

On the Saturday evening before we left for Frankfort, I made the decision to cancel our trip because of the impending winter storm moving into central and eastern Kentucky. I thought we could get to Frankfort OK, but would potentially run into dangerous roads on our return trip home. I felt

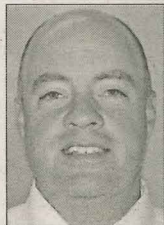
awful about canceling. When I talked with my pastor friend, he understood, but had also just pulled three hams out of the oven that were planned for our lunch on Sunday. The poor fellow is probably still eating leftover ham as you read this.

On that Sunday morning in Oneida, the weather was still OK so I decided to visit a local church. Although visiting this church was not in my original plans, the Lord used my visit there in a powerful way. I had experienced one of my most difficult weeks on the job and the Lord spoke to me in a powerful way as I listened to someone else preach the gospel that day. I also got to meet and reconnect with many Oneida graduates in that great, little church.

Our plans are not always God's plans. Please allow the Lord to carry out His plan for your life—even if it means your plans change.

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

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

Small pond giving

Mayberry lesson: Big differences can be made at small places

Is there anyone who does not appreciate the old Andy Griffith shows? Besides good clean entertainment, there were many life lessons to be learned from Andy and the Mayberry residents.

One recurring theme was the idea of a "big fish in a small pond" and the contrasting "little fish in a big pond." Usually this scenario was highlighted by a Mayberry local who traveled to Mt. Pilot, Raleigh and beyond, and found life in the big city to be quite different compared to their familiar hometown.

It is tough being a small fish in a big pond. Much to be preferred is the reverse—to be found in a situation where your influence and assistance make a difference. The big fish in a small pond is a game changer. The small fish goes unnoticed in the ocean except for the brief instant when he is swallowed up.

Barney Fife moved up from the sheriff's office to the FBI and found himself to be a rather small fish. Andy had 15 minutes of fame in Hollywood and didn't fare much better.

In Mayberry, though, Andy and Bar-

ney made a difference.

I am often surprised at the choices people make when it comes time to plan their estate. It seems that whether their estate would represent a "big fish"

or a small one, donors tend toward institutions with bigger budgets and a broader donor base. "Big pond" giving seems to be preferred. One might think the common desire is to give where the gift will make a big difference, but observation reveals different thinking.

This is why I am so thankful for the members of the L.C. Kelly Society. They have made a provision for Clear Creek in their

estate plans. Rather than have their estate swallowed up in the pool of resources enjoyed by more affluent institutions, Kelly Society members have chosen to make a big difference in a small school. They will be long remembered not only for their generosity, but for their wisdom. The estate they have worked a lifetime to achieve will work for the Lord long after the donor's labors have ended, and it will always make a difference.

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@ccbcc.edu.

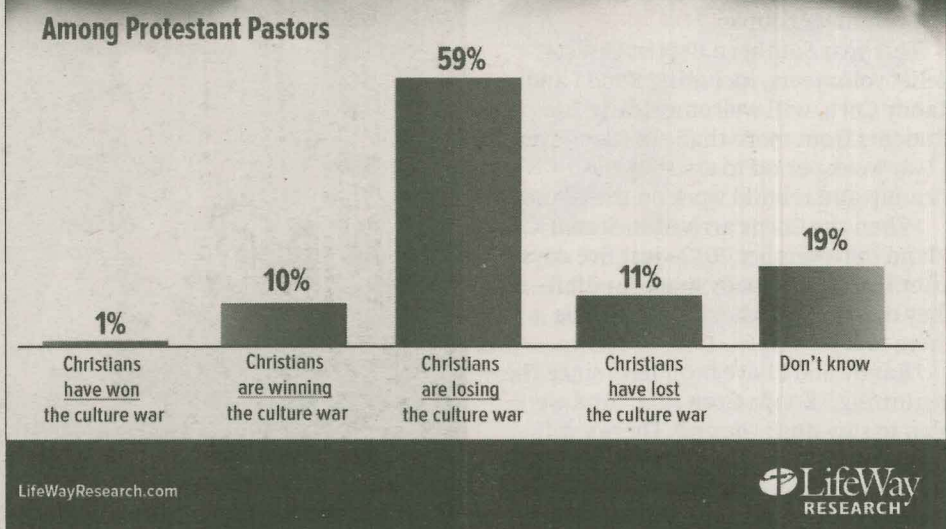
Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

LifeWay survey: Religious liberty in U.S. on the decline, say pastors

Many Christian leaders have talked about society being in a culture war. Regardless of how you feel about that terminology, how would you explain the current situation?



By Bob Smietana

Nashville, Tenn.—Most Americans say religious liberty is important, but they don't always agree on how much liberty is enough or too much.

Religious liberty is the issue at the heart of the upcoming Supreme Court hearings between Hobby Lobby and the Obama Administration over the HHS contraceptive mandate. It's a dispute that is unlikely to go away, no matter what the Supreme Court decides.

American preachers, it turns out, are more than a bit uneasy about religious liberty these days, according to a survey by LifeWay Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The survey found that seven out of 10 senior pastors at Protestant churches said religious liberty is on the decline in America. About seven in 10 also said Christians have lost or are losing the culture war. The survey of Protestant senior pastors was taken Sept. 4-19, 2013.

Researchers asked pastors to respond to this question: "Many Christian leaders have talked about society being in a culture war. Regardless of how you feel about that terminology, how would you explain the current situation?"

Nearly six in 10 (59 percent) say Christians are losing. One in 10 (11 percent) say the culture war is already lost. Few (10 percent) say Christians are winning the culture war. Evangelical pastors (79 percent) are more likely than mainline pastors (60 percent) to say Christians are losing or have lost the culture war.

Culture shifts

Some of the unease about religious liberty is due to shifts in American culture and church practice, said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research.

In the 1960s, nearly two-thirds of Americans were Protestants. Today, they make up less than half of the population, according to the General Social Survey.

Fewer Protestants means less cultural power, Stetzer said.

In the past, he said, Christians—and Protestants in particular—took it for granted that Americans would look to the church for guidance on moral issues. Churches, he said, were seen as being

good for society and so they were given special privileges—like exemptions from taxes and other laws.

That's no longer the case, as the government and culture no longer defer to Protestant Christians, which makes pastors and their congregations nervous.

That's not all bad news, Stetzer said.

"The fact that 'Christian' is not just a demographic category can have a positive side," Stetzer said, as it means that Protestants and other Christians have to be more active in living out their faith.

But it also has political and social consequences, as a sizable number of Protestants and other Christians run into conflicts with societal norms on issues like sexuality and marriage and other issues.

Protestants (and like-minded religious people) have to think through a new strategy that defends their religious liberty but also acknowledges that conflict, Stetzer said.

Several recent court battles also may play a role, said Thomas Kidd, professor of history at Baylor University.

Kidd pointed to the Hobby Lobby case as well as the Supreme Court's 2012 Hosanna-Tabor ruling. Both involve disputes between the government and religious groups over exemptions from federal law. In both cases, religious liberty was seen as less important than other issues—like nondiscrimination or health care, Kidd said.

"There's a real sense that something has changed dramatically," he said. "Some questions about the meaning of religious liberty are now in play."

Most Americans concerned

LifeWay researchers found similar concerns about religious liberty in a telephone survey of 1,001 Americans, conducted Sept. 6-10, 2013.

More than half (54 percent) agree with the statement, "Religious liberty is on the decline in America." About four in 10 (38 percent) disagree.

Half (50 percent) also agree with the statement: "Christians increasingly are confronted by intolerance in America today." Thirty nine percent disagree.

Researchers also found about a third of Americans (34 percent) say Christians complain too much about how they are treated. (LifeWay)

Crazy Love makes impact on athletes

By Bailey Foxworth

Campbellsville—It has been almost five years since the inception of Crazy Love, an athletics-based ministry that serves to bring God's word to athletes of Campbellsville University.

The brainchild of now graduates Jordan Cornett, Kristi Ensminger, Courtney Danis and Alex Jane Clemmons, Crazy Love started in 2009 as a way for athletes to engage in Bible study with their teammates, and to reach out to other athletes on campus.

In recognizing the impact Crazy Love has made, Ted Taylor, director of the Big Maroon Club and director of Crazy Love, organized a luncheon for athletes. The event allowed the athletes to thank faculty and community sponsors.

Sponsors have donated thousands to provide Crazy Love with materials for Bible study, including FCA Competitor's Bibles, literature, workbooks and videos.

Sophomore Meg Brown, current chair of Crazy Love, said the mission of Crazy

Love is to bring the gospel to the sports teams and to provide athletes with a means of fellowship and Bible study.

There are 13 teams and 75 athletes on campus who participate in Crazy Love Bible studies.

Cornett, a former member of the CU Lady Tigers softball team, said she was very excited to see the continuation of the ministry.

"Today was such a blessing to me. I think back to my sophomore year when (we) were just dreaming about a way to reach our teammates. To see how the Lord has taken that dream and turned it into a campus-wide movement that continues to grow five years later is incredible.

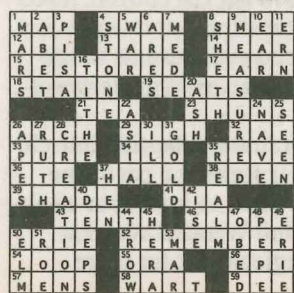
"It just goes to show that this isn't anything that a person or people are doing as we have all graduated and gone. It is the Lord working and moving in the hearts of Christian athletes to share the gospel with their teammates. Nothing makes me happier than knowing God did that." (CU)

Bible Crosswords

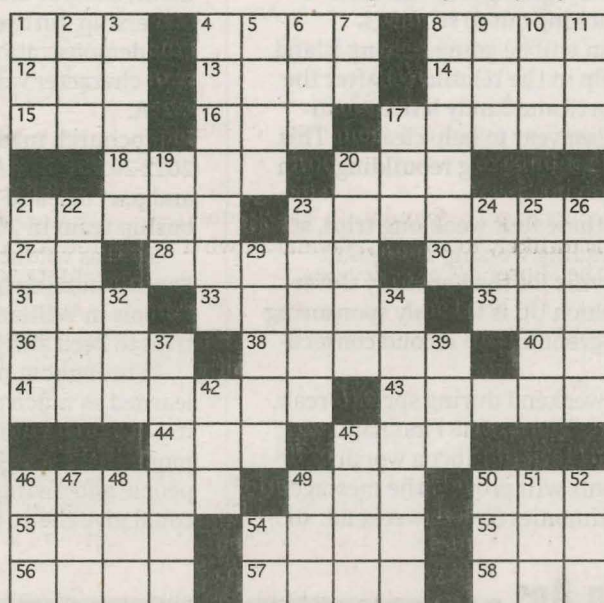
Across

- Wrath
4 Send out
8 "They made a calf ... and offered sacrifice unto the ____" (Acts 7:41)
12 From or to a distance (prefix)
13 "He maketh the storm a ____" (Psalm 107:29)
14 Bog
15 He thought Hannah had been drinking
16 Bold alternative
17 Disobey a road sign
18 "Do good to them that ____ you" (Matthew 5:44)
20 Lady of Spain, perhaps (abbr.)
21 "In thee, O Lord, do I put my ____" (Psalm 71:1)
23 "____ God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12)
27 Clarifying abbr.
28 From here one has a bird's-eye view
30 Ripped apart (arch.)
31 Feminine name
33 "There is a ____, the streams whereof shall make glad" (Psalm 46:4)
35 Little lamb's cry
36 Land measure
38 AKA Cephas
40 Title of respect (abbr.)
41 What Demetrius the silversmith made (Acts 19:24)
43 Children of the vindicated Job: ____ sons and three daughters
44 Number of pieces of silver belonging to the woman in the parable of the lost coin

#191



By Evelyn Boyington



#192

- 45 Cash cow (abbr.)
46 Isle of ____, in the English Channel
49 Arafat's assoc.
50 Not a lot
53 Buffalo's lake
54 ____ Window (Hitchcock film)
55 Before
56 Coffin
57 "____ it even to the foundation thereof" (Psalm 137:7)
58 Tribe of Israel
Down
1 Believer in (suffix)
2 Cousin, e.g.
3 U.S. statesman Root
4 "I will ____ you abroad among the nations" (Nehemiah 1:8)
5 Actor Alan
6 "They angered him ... so that it went ____ with Moses" (Psalm 106:32)
7 Britain's John Major, once (abbr.)
8 "That I may ____ unto you some spiritual gift" (Romans 1:11)
9 "I must ____ in this land" (Deuteronomy 4:22)
10 Mine find
11 What Fred Astaire did?
17 Hit's inits.
19 Good king of Judah
20 Storm hazard
21 Son of Japheth (Genesis 10:2)
22 Toothbrush brand
23 "What ____?"
24 The Great ____ (name for God)
25 "For he knoweth our ____; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14)
26 Pine
29 What sour grapes do, hopefully
32 To blunder
34 "I will ____ health unto thee" (Jeremiah 30:17)
37 One or the other
39 Jerky movement during sleep (abbr.)
42 "I will spread my ____ upon them" (Hosea 7:12)
45 Exclamation of pity
46 Sticky trap
47 Son of Bela (1 Chronicles 7:7)
48 Give (Scot.)
49 Legume
50 "I have ____ you with milk" (1 Corinthians 3:2)
51 Tide competitor
52 Benign skin tumor
54 B & O, e.g.

Legacy giving through CP

Numerous ways to invest with 'eternal implications'

Since the inception of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation in 1945 there have been those who chose the Cooperative Program as an object of their legacy gifts. For them it was the simplest and most efficient way to express their love for Christ and his mission in this world through the various missionary, educational and benevolent ministries of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Today, the earnings from the combined endowments for which the CP is a beneficiary represents the second largest source of CP giving through the KBC. Only one church gives more. The difference is CP endowment giving is perpetual.

Traditionally, the CP is supported primarily by the collective giving of the churches. However, there are ways individuals, not just churches, can support the CP directly through the Kentucky Baptist Foundation. Let me encourage you to consider prayerfully one or more of those ways. Cooperative Program Sunday is April 13, which provides a timely occasion for you to begin your consideration.

If your goal is to make a gift at death, then consider a bequest in your will or a beneficiary designation of life insurance or retirement assets. If your goal is to avoid capital gains on the transfer of

real estate, then consider a real estate gift. If your goal is to avoid the potential double taxation at death of your retirement assets, then consider gifting those assets at death. If you goal is to make a simple gift now, then consider an out-

right gift of cash or appreciated securities. If your goal is to make a gift larger than you ever dreamed possible, consider a life insurance gift. If you desire flexibility in timing the decision as to what charities will benefit from your gifts versus the tax advantaged timing of your gifts, consider a donor advised fund. If your goal is to make a gift now, but receive in return a fixed

income for life, consider a charitable gift annuity. If your goal is to make a gift now and create a hedge against inflation over the long term, then consider a charitable remainder unitrust. If your goal is to reduce the cost of passing assets to your heirs, then consider a charitable lead trust.

A legacy gift to the KBF for the perpetual benefit of the CP is an investment with eternal implications that will be working literally 24/7 to connect people all over the world to Jesus Christ. Please call us toll free to assist you.

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

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Barry Allen

Meet me in Winchester

Talk with missionaries & ministry leader at WMU Annual Meeting

The highlight of the Kentucky WMU Annual Meeting for many is meeting missionaries. This year's event, April 4-5 at Central Baptist Church in Winchester, provides plenty of opportunities to do just that.

You can meet and hear from missionaries in all of the general sessions. Plus, the Friday evening session of the Kentucky WMU Annual Meeting includes something new—a Kentucky missionary commissioning service. About a dozen Kentucky missionaries will share brief testimonies about their call and be commissioned for service among us. In addition, we will recognize the Kentucky Missionary of the Year. Come and encourage these new missionaries by your presence in this special service.

Following the commissioning, we have asked Gordon Fort, the senior vice president for the Office of Prayer Mobilization and Training at the International Mission Board, to bring a message and missions challenge. We will give an invitation at the end of the service and pray for God's Holy Spirit to move among us, calling others to mission service.

You can also meet missionaries and ministry leaders by attending conferences on Friday and Saturday. Leaders from several Kentucky ministries that received an EBO grant this year will be with us including:

EBO at Work



Joy Bolton

- Amy Wilhelmus, Moore Activity Center, Covington.
- Harold and Joyce Scroggs, Haven of Rest Family Ministries, Inez.
- Kay Hammond, Appalachian Pregnancy Care Center, Pikeville.
- Stacey Burton, Kingdom Kids Ministry, Pulaski Baptist Association, Somerset.
- Keith Decker, Cedaridge Ministries, Williamsburg.

Additional Kentucky conference leaders include:

- Larry Gritton, Oneida Baptist Institute.
- Beth Arnold, BREAK (Bible Release-time Education Association of Kentucky).
- Peggy Murphy, Kentucky Changers.
- Charollette Rock, Dementia: A Ministry and Need.
- Jay and Cheryl Hatfield, Hardcore Battle Plan.

Other program guests as well as the Kentucky WMU missions consultants will also lead conferences. There will be a variety of activities throughout the two-day event. Pre-registration is not required to attend, but meal reservations are due by March 25.

For additional information and online registration, go to kywmu.org/annualmeeting.

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



March

- 18 Get Acquainted Day, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 22 Seminary for a Day, Corinth Baptist Church, London.
- 22 Seminary for a Day, Immanuel Baptist Church, Glasgow.
- 23 Women's Chorale Concert, Farmdale Baptist Church, Louisville.
- 27 Basic Training for Church Planters, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 29 VBS Clinic, Crestwood Baptist Church, Crestwood.

April

- 1 Power Lunch, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 4 Kentucky WMU Annual Meeting, Central Baptist Church, Winchester.
- 8 Committee on Nominations, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 10 Ministers in Transition, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 11 International Mission Team Leader Training, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BREMEN**—Mount Pisgah Church will hold revival services with speaker **Noah Oldham**, of August Gate Baptist Church in St. Louis, March 23-26. **Bill Burszytynski** is pastor.

■ **GREENVILLE**—Woodland Church will hold Children's Training March 22, 9 a.m. **Clifford Lovell** is pastor.

■ **KEVIL**—Newton Creek will hold the 10th Annual Women's Breakfast with guest speaker **Judy Chapman** and special music by **Bernice Belt** March 22, 8 a.m. For more information, call (270) 462-3353. **Wayne Carter** is pastor.

■ **OWENSBORO**—Ridgewood Church recently

called **Randy Stallings** as pastor.

■ **RICHMOND**—Red House Church will host the Bates Creek Baptist Association Spring Training March 21, 6:30 p.m., and March 22, 9:30 a.m. **Deron Cobb** is pastor.

■ **SOMERSET**—Beacon Hill Church will host Pulaski Baptist Association Vacation Bible School Training March 22, 9 a.m.

Beacon Hill Church will also host a round-table event for ministers of music, worship leaders March 27, 10:30 a.m., with guest speaker Jason Stewart, KBC worship specialist. **Donavon Burton** is pastor.

UC students take part in spring break missions

Williamsburg—University of the Cumberland's students are rallying together with Baptist Campus Ministries to travel to various destinations during spring break for mission trips. Students will be going around Kentucky, Toledo, Ohio, Panama City Beach, Fla., and Long Island, N.Y.

"I'm really excited about the way God brought together the ministries," exclaimed UC's BCM Director Dean Whitaker. "To see where God is at work and the students' willingness to His work is wonderful."

The Kentucky Social Justice team will be traveling to Galilean Home for Children in Liberty, Kentucky to help the staff and spend time with the children living in the home. Then the group will go to Refuge for Women in Lexington, Kentucky. The ministry helps women transition from a life in human trafficking and poverty into a life of spiritual and emotional stability. Finally, the group will be going to Laurel Lake Baptist Camp to help with maintenance and repairs before the camp opens for the summer.

Another BCM team will be heading to a Send City, Toledo, Ohio, to help in church planting and spreading God's love and word to help revitalize areas where people are in

the most need. The group will be spending time doing worship, working in clothing and food banks, and planting churches with a local church planting association.

A third team will be heading to Panama City Beach, Florida to participate with Life-way, a Southern Baptist Education program that reaches out to visiting college students who are on spring break. They will be spreading their ministry, giving free van rides to people, and reaching out to students.

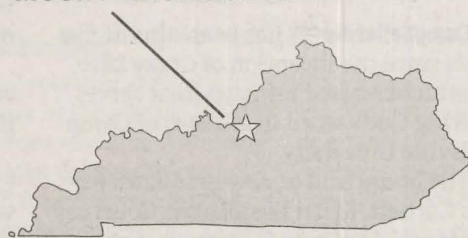
The last team will be going to Long Island, New York to help in the rebuilding after the devastation Hurricane Sandy left. A team from UC went last year to help cleanup. This year, the team will be doing rebuilding with homeowners.

Along with these four weeklong trips, students will be leading worship at the Galt House in Louisville for the Kentucky Governor's Cup, in which UC is the only sponsoring college for the event for the second consecutive year.

The second weekend during spring break, students will be going to the First Baptist Church in Greenup to conduct a worship service. The students will provide the message, music, and testimonies for the weekend. (UC)

Spotlight on ...

MOUNT WASHINGTON



First Church will host an American Red Cross Blood Drive March 20, 12:30 a.m. **Billy Compton** is pastor.

UC's Upchurch named MSC Champion of Character

Williamsburg—Jessica Upchurch, a senior with the University of the Cumberland's Women's Basketball team, has been named the Mid-South Conference Women's Basketball Champions of Character.

The award is voted on by the conference's athletic directors and is chosen based on their academic and athletic achievement, campus and community leadership, future ambition and demonstration of the five core character values of the NAIA.

Upchurch made academic all-conference 2012-2014, was NAIA Scholar Athlete this year and part of a Mid-South Conference Championship team in 2012.

She has volunteered at her church, Stanford Baptist, nursing homes and elementary schools in Williamsburg, and taken mission trips to Peru and Jamaica.

"Throughout my college experience, I have learned so much about myself and what I want to achieve in my life," Upchurch said. "Even more, I have developed a passion for helping people and giving people the best thing you could give them: love." (UC)



Jessica Upchurch

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR RENT: Two condos for rent in Destin, Fla. Two bedrooms, two baths, sleeps six, 10 percent discount for first-time guests. (423)309-4422 lbrammer@charter.net

RESOURCES: Ever dream of reading Scripture in the original? Learn NT Greek or Hebrew this summer from home and see the Bible come alive. Online. 8 weeks. \$800. Erasmuscademy.com or call (718) 499-0077.

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. Resumes will be accepted through Feb. 28 and confirmation will be sent when received.

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.

SEEKING: Central Baptist Church of Paris is seeking a full-time associate pastor of families and youth. Send resumé to Central Baptist Church, Attn: Charles Courtney Jr., 829 High St., Paris, KY 40361, or email to youthcbc@bellsouth.net. Resumes will be accepted until March 31 or until filled. For further details regarding the job description, visit our website at cbcparis.org.

SEEKING: Highland Avenue Baptist Tabernacle Church is seeking a part-time youth pastor, 15-20 hours weekly. For more, call (859) 781-4510, or email pastor-habtc@fuse.net.

SEEKING: The Pastor Search Committee of Second Baptist Church, Madisonville, prayerfully seeks a southern Baptist minister for pastoral position. Send resumé to Second Baptist Church, 633 Bishop Street, Madisonville, KY 42431-1379, or contact Clarence Berry, search committee chairman, at (270) 841-8308.

SEEKING: Oakland Baptist Church, in Oakland, is seeking a part-time music minister to direct our praise teams and choir in blended worship. All applicants can learn more at obclive.com, or by contacting us at (270) 563-4011. Send resumé to Oakland Baptist Church, P.O. Box 154, Oakland, KY 42159, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Auburn Baptist Church is

seeking a pastor or bivocational pastor. Send resumé to Pastor Search Committee in care of tcorum@logantele.com.

SEEKING: Walnut Street Baptist Church, in the heart of urban Louisville, is seeking a senior pastor to lead our church and the staff to significant ministry. Walnut Street offers every facility to reach our urban community including a television ministry. Written communication should be sent to: WSBC Pastor Search Team, c/o Marilyn James, 8313 Alpena Way, Louisville, KY 40242 or via email: pastorsearch@walnutstreet.org.

SEEKING: The Community Church at Cedar Springs, located in the rural community of Cedar Springs near Brownsville, is seeking a part-time or bivocational senior pastor. If interested, send resumé to Phillip Coleman at phillip.coleman@wku.edu. For more, communitychurchlovesyou.com.

SEEKING: Cynthiana Baptist Church is seeking a part-time worship leader (minimum 15 hours per week). Send inquires and/or resumé to hozacanuc@gmail.com, or to CBC, 212 East Pleasant St., Cynthiana, KY 41031. Attn: Personnel.

SEEKING: Pleasant Point Baptist Church in Kings Mountain is seeking a part-time youth minister. Call (606) 416-3994. Visit us at pleasantpointbaptist.com.

To place an advertisement in the Western Recorder:

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SEEKING: Liberty Missionary Baptist Church, in London, is seeking a bivocational pastor. This person must be an enthusiastic soul winner, boldly preach the word of God, a good shepherd to the congregation, willing to reach out to the community, a person who loves people, able to lead by example, and someone interested in growing the church. If you feel that God is leading you to apply for this position, send your resumé to the following email: smurray@napierlawoffice.com.

SEEKING: Sacramento Baptist Church in Sacramento, is seeking a part-time youth minister. 12 to 15 hours per week. If interested email Wendell Wood at wbhewood@sbcglobal.net for more information.

UNEQUALLY YOKED?

Christians increasingly navigate interfaith marriage

By Ken Camp

Not that long ago, many Baptist youth ministers warned students about the dangers of interdenominational dating. After all, it could lead to marrying a Methodist, and would a child from that home be sprinkled or immersed?

Today, students are more likely to raise questions about a Christian marrying someone from a non-Christian religion. And ministers probably discover young people who wonder why that would matter.

"Generationally, it is becoming less and less an issue," said Kyle Reese, pastor of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla. "Attitudes are evolving in every generation," he said. "Students don't give it a second thought. They attend multifaith, multicultural, multi-racial schools."

Interfaith unions account for more than four out of 10 marriages in the United States, according to Naomi Schaefer Riley, author of "Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage is Transforming America."

Riley, a Conservative Jew who married a former Jehovah's Witness, includes in her reckoning marriages of Protestants and Catholics and marriages of mainline Protestants to evangelicals. Other researchers who define interfaith marriages in terms of crossing the lines of major world religions still estimate about one-third of American marriages qualify.

Interfaith marriages are growing increasingly common in every part of the country and without regard for educational status or income level, said Riley, a former Wall Street Journal editor who commissioned a polling firm to survey 2,450 Americans, adjusted to produce an oversampling of interfaith couples.

While interfaith marriages can help some groups—such as American Muslims—assimilate into the mainstream culture, they also "come at a heavy price," Riley wrote in an op-ed article in The New York Times.

"They are more likely than same-faith unions to be unhappy, and, in some circumstances, to end in divorce. They also tend to diminish the strength of religious communities, as the devout are pulled away from bonds of tradition and orthodoxy by their nonmember spouse," she said.

Challenges for evangelicals

Evangelical Christians who marry outside their faith particularly face challenges, Riley noted.

"While roughly a third of all evangelicals' marriages end in divorce, that figure climbs to nearly half of marriages between evangelicals and nonevangelicals," she wrote. "It is especially high—61 percent—for evangelicals married to someone with no religion."

Practically speaking, one of the primary issues engaged couples from different faiths face is the reaction of their parents, said Reese, whose congregation includes several Baptist/Catholic couples and some Baptist/Jewish families.

"The first issue an interfaith couple has to deal with is what their future



in-laws think about the faith their child is marrying into," he said. "It's typically the biggest deal with parents-in-law."

Love-struck couples who fail to see the importance of their religious differences need to face reality, said Michael Smith, pastor of Central Baptist Church of Fountain City in Knoxville, Tenn., and co-author of "Mount and Mountain," two volumes of dialogue between the Baptist minister and Rabbi Rami Shapiro about the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.

"I sometimes deal with couples who treat the differences as 'no big thing.' Later, as they deal with parents and grandparents, clergy or other religious leaders, the arrival of children and the questions their children ask, the differences become a big deal," Smith said.

Obviously, the subject takes on greater importance when in-laws question whether a non-Christian spouse is headed for hell and leading their grandchildren down the same path.

"Interfaith couples almost inevitably deal in some way with the matter of exclusivity," Smith said. "Is Christ the only way to salvation? More precisely, is Christ as known in the church the only way in which God makes God known and draws persons to God?"

Sometimes, a Christian who has been taught Christ alone offers salvation may reconsider that theology once he or she enters a romantic relationship with a non-Christian, he observed.

"In my experience, the Christian spouse often chooses to be silent on the matter or to function as if his/her spouse is an exception to the rule. Others choose to reshape their belief to make room for God's salvation to be found within other faith traditions," he said. "I find the matter tends to become more acute with the arrival of children."

The 'December Dilemma'

Riley noted her research showed less than half of interfaith couples discussed—prior to the wedding—the faith in which they wanted to raise their children.

Issues surrounding the religious instruction parents offer in an interfaith household can cause marital stress, said Randall Maurer, professor of psychology and family ministry at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology in Abilene, Texas.

"Regardless of the intentions of the parents to expose their children to multiple religious perspectives, the family has to face the very real 'December Dilemma,'" particularly in Christian/Jewish marriages, Maurer noted.

"The holidays have to be worked out, which can be quite complex and involve not only religious observances but deeply felt family traditions and heritage. Though it is difficult to draw clear conclusions, it appears that children equally exposed to multiple religious perspectives without becoming at home in one tradition very often choose to not consistently practice any faith later in life."

Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church seeks to make children from interfaith families—and their parents—feel "at home," Reese noted. Interfaith couples who attend his church want their children to receive real religious instruction, not a watered-down version of Christianity, but they also want the faith tradition of the non-Christian parent to be treated respectfully, he observed.

"We unapologetically preach Jesus as the way," said Reese. But the church seeks to bear witness of Christ in a hospitable way that draws people in rather than pushes them away, he added.

That can be challenging for some evangelical Christians, even when they try to extend hospitality to interfaith families, Smith noted.

"Interfaith couples ... often find it difficult to enjoy meaningful friendships with Christian couples, mostly because the solely Christian couple often communicates ... that the partner from another tradition is unsaved," he said.

Churches may wrestle with the best way to approach the issue of interfaith marriage, Reese concluded, but they cannot afford to ignore it if they expect to remain relevant. (ABP)

Wedding bells?

Interfaith couples considering marriage should talk early

By Ken Camp

Knoxville, Tenn.—Ministers who provide premarital pastoral counseling to interfaith couples should help them think seriously about their faith and the faith of a future spouse, a Baptist pastor with experience in interfaith dialogue suggests.

"I've found it best for couples to work out ahead of time how they intend to practice their individual tradition and respect the other's tradition in the context of their early marriage," said Michael Smith, pastor of Central Baptist Church of Fountain City in Knoxville, Tenn. "We've largely come to admit that couples do well to discuss money, decision-making and sex. Religion, too, must be placed on the table for conversation."

Smith is the co-author of Mount and Mountain, a two-volume series that records his conversations with Rabbi Rami Shapiro regarding the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.

When he counsels couples preparing to enter an interfaith marriage, Smith urges them to take several steps:

Chart the journey.

"Identify what has brought you together, brought you to this point, and will keep you together in the first five years of your marriage," he said.

Discuss what matters.

"Talk through your religious journey in my presence, and let's keep talking and reflecting until we've identified what about your tradition is vital to you, what you enjoy but could do without, and what each of you may choose to go ahead and lay aside now," he tells couples.

Consider the in-laws.

"Talk through how your family feels about this marriage and role-play how you might respond to them in various situations."

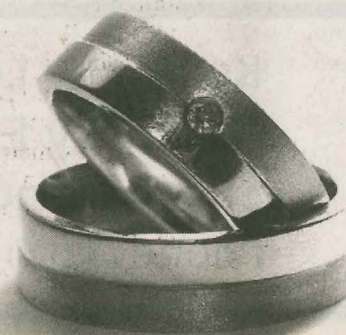
Think about the children.

"Pretend your first child has been born, and the two of you are talking through how to involve him in your respective traditions."

Nurture the relationship.

"What do you need to say and do for each other now and on an ongoing basis in order for each to feel blessed by one another?" he asks.

(ABP)



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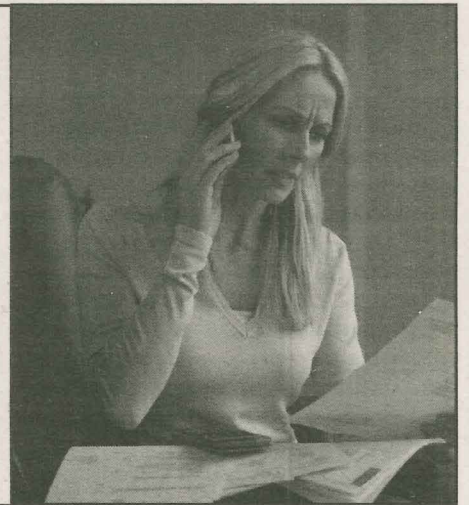
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