

WESTERN Recorder

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Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

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Decker named Ky Missionary of the Year for Cedaridge work

By Roger Alford

Louisville—Kentucky Missionary of the Year Keith Decker takes no credit for the success of the work he oversees in the foothills of Appalachia. The credit, he says, goes to the Lord.

"God blesses you in what you're called to do," Decker said. "When you're doing the Lord's work, God lets you see through His eyes and feel through His heart, and you can't help but love the work He has you do."

Decker, president of Cedaridge Ministry in Williamsburg, has been named 2013 Missionary of the Year by the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Cedaridge, created in 1993, serves as a distribution center for massive volumes of food that is given to the needy in nine southeastern Kentucky counties, but its scope goes far beyond that. The work includes making garden seeds available for families each spring for planting, providing clothing to the poor and to people who have lost their belongings to fires or other calamities, and coordinating national volunteers to build and renovate homes for the poor.

"Keith is a dedicated and faithful man of God," said Brenda Mack, a member of the Cedaridge Board of Directors. "When we started out with Cedaridge Ministry, it was totally operated in faith that God would provide each need, and God has provided. When we didn't have money to pay for heat, I would ask Keith what we could do. His response was 'Sister Brenda, God will provide.'"

Decker serves as a self-funded North American Mission Board missionary and also serves as pastor at Corn Creek Baptist Church in Woodbine, a rural community near Williamsburg. He said his work in the Appalachian foothills has been a faith-building experience, watching the Lord supply for the needs of the people he serves.

And 23 years after the ministry's humble beginning, Decker said he'd gladly do it again.

"I'll do it as long as the Lord calls me or as long as the board wants me," he said.

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"When you're doing the Lord's work ... you see through His eyes and feel through His heart."

Keith Decker

NAMB EVANGELISM SPOTLIGHT

Leaders seek multiplication among collegiates



North American Mission Board church planter Drew Griffin (center) talks with Generation Send interns John David Bailes (left) of Hendersonville, Tenn., and Andrew Gyde of Columbus, Ohio. The college interns serve through NAMB's farm system and work in New York, where Griffin is planting a church. (Laura Sikes/NAMB)

By Adam Miller

Columbus, Ohio—For decades Southern Baptist collegiate ministries have helped impact North American campuses with the gospel. As extensions of the local church and, in many recent instances, as church plants themselves, collegiate ministries have served to reach, disciple and deploy college students to push back lostness in whatever profession and community God leads them.

And now collegiate leaders want to see the multiplication DNA of evangelism, discipleship and missions infused more intentionally into each student who comes through a Southern Baptist

Convention collegiate ministry.

"We want to see a movement mentality grow among our leaders and students. That's at the core of this," Keith Wieser, lead pastor of Resonate Church in Pullman, Wash., said. "Everything is accelerated on college campuses. Friendships are accelerated. Community is accelerated. Students are prepping for the big world in a short time, and we need to see ourselves as prepping them to change that world for Christ while on campus and wherever they end up."

On March 28-30 Wieser and Resonate Church will host Southern Baptists for a first-hand look at their ministry in the Northwest. The three-day event offered attendees opportunities to learn

from Weiser and other Resonate leaders on everything from small group ministry to developing student leaders to designing high-impact fall launches. Attendees also were able to attend weekend worship services.

According to Brian Frye, the North American Mission Board's national collegiate strategist, campus ministries have an opportunity to develop best practices based on the successes of ministries across a variety of contexts.

Frye brings to this leadership role years of experience serving as collegiate metro director at University of Toledo and at Bowling Green State University. Frye also holds a Ph.D. in evangelism

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Cremation gaining acceptance, LifeWay study shows

By Bob Smietana

Nashville, Tenn.—Cremation may be the new American response to death, according to a survey by LifeWay Research.

The study, which surveyed 1,036 Americans, shows that about 4 in 10 (41 percent) say they plan to be cremated.

Six in 10 (58 percent) say being cremated won't keep you from being resurrected to live in heaven. And few (14 percent) say cremation is wrong.

The LifeWay online survey reflects the growing acceptance of cremation, which has become common in the

United States.

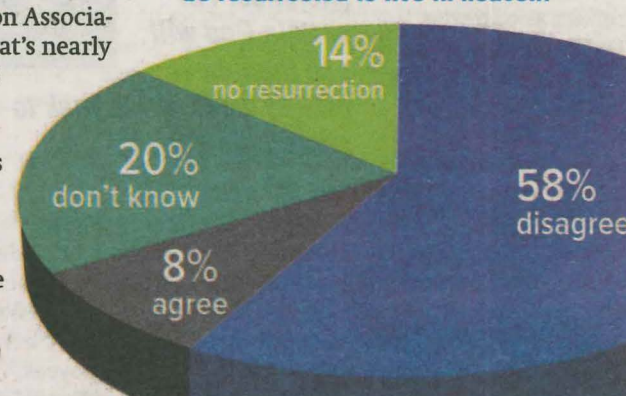
About 4 in 9 (43.5 percent) Americans who died in 2012 were cremated, according to the Cremation Association of North America. That's nearly double the rate from 1996 (21.8 percent).

LifeWay researchers found that few Americans have qualms about the practice.

More than 7 in 10 (71 percent) disagree with the statement, "I believe it is wrong to cremate a body"

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58% DISAGREE: If someone's body is cremated, there is no way for them to be resurrected to live in heaven.



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KBC fills four positions vital to spreading the gospel message

By Roger Alford

Louisville—The Kentucky Baptist Convention has filled four key positions that will be instrumental in spreading the gospel throughout the state and beyond.

Longtime eastern Kentucky pastor

Paul Badgett was hired last week as a regional consultant to help churches in the Appalachian region develop and grow. Regional Hispanic strategists Job Juarez and Heriberto Torres-Erazo were promoted to church planting and development associates. And Western Recorder news director Robin Bass was hired by KBC as a marketing and public relations associate.

All four are scheduled to begin work on April 16.

"I am delighted to have a group of people of this caliber serving Kentucky churches," said KBC Executive Director Paul Chitwood. "I'm certain God will use them in mighty ways as we seek to spread the gospel."

Badgett, who has served on numerous committees within the KBC and Southern Baptist Convention, has been pastor at Pikeville's First Baptist Church since 1999.

"He has served faithfully on all levels of Baptist life, including president of the KBC mission board and two terms on the SBC Executive Committee," said Steve Rice who leads the KBC Church Consulting and Revitalization Team.

"Although his education and denominational service are important and apparent, Dr. Badgett's strongest qualification is his pastoral abilities," Rice said. "He has successfully served as a senior pastor in a variety of churches. He has led his current church to become one of the flagship churches of our state convention. He is skilled as a communicator in group settings as well as one-on-one. His knowledge of the local church along with his exceptional ability to listen and give consultation will lead to marked success in this role."

Badgett, who was ordained at Rose Hill Baptist Church in Ashland, received his bachelor's degree from Eastern Kentucky University and followed that with a master's and doctorate from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. Before moving to Pikeville, he also served as pastor at Oakland Avenue Baptist Church and Fellowship Baptist Church.

Badgett and his wife Regina have one daughter, Angie.

Richard Harris, retired vice president of the North American Mission Board, described Badgett as highly committed to the word of God, honest, dependable, a skillful leader of impeccable character, and a man of consistent integrity.

"He is a leader with a godly servant style," said Bowling Green evangelist Don Mathis. "His positive personality and humble spirit make others very comfortable and his openness brings out

openness in others."

Juarez and Torres-Erazo have worked with the KBC for seven years. They were recommended for promotions by Church Planting Strategist Carlos De la Barra, who said both men are well known among Kentucky's ethnic community and both are committed to church planting and development.

Both also come highly recommended.

"Job is without a doubt the greatest help we have had in starting our Spanish Mission Church," said Sam Newman, minister of education and discipleship at First Baptist Church of Richmond.

Juarez has a bachelor's degree from Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana in Mexico City and master's degrees from Seminario Teologico Bautista Mexicano in Mexico City and Campbellsville University.

"Job's love for the Lord and his passion for his service are clearly evident through all that he does," Newman said. "Job is hardworking, trustworthy and has incredible people skills as he tirelessly promotes the cause of Christ."

Torres-Erazo has a bachelor's degree from Baptist University of the Americas in San Antonio, Texas, and a master's from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"I have known Heriberto to be completely reliable and trustworthy," said Tom Stokes, a member of the board of the Southern Kentucky Hispanic Association. "He is a tireless worker who has always given service beyond that which we required. He has a true heart for missions. That flows from a committed heart of love for Jesus Christ."

Campbellsville University worship pastor David Johnson described Torres-Erazo as a creative innovator and a godly man.

"Heriberto is resourceful and gifted and does not mind offering his talents to minister to other language groups when and where that giftedness is needed," Johnson said.

Bass, who has worked in the newspaper industry for two decades, has built a reputation as a great writer and photog-

rapher who is well equipped to tell the story of the KBC, its churches and its people. She has served on the Western Recorder's staff since November 2010.

Former employers paint a picture of Bass as a caring Christian, a devoted mother and a loyal and hardworking employee. She has a

bachelor's degree from Western Kentucky University.

"Robin has a very strong work ethic that sets her apart from many other employees," said Benjy Hamm, an executive with Landmark Newspapers Inc. "She also stands out for her versatility. She is an award-winning photographer who learned to become an award-winning writer." (KBC)



Paul Badgett



Job Juarez



"I am delighted to have a group ... of this caliber serving Kentucky churches. I'm certain God will use them in mighty ways as we seek to spread the gospel."

Paul Chitwood

Bass named to KBC communications staff

By Todd Deaton

Louisville—Robin Bass, news director for the Western Recorder, has accepted a position as marketing and media relations associate with the Kentucky Baptist Convention's communications team. She will begin her new duties April 16.

"Everything Robin has done career-wise over the past two decades has situated her perfectly for this key role within the Kentucky Baptist Convention," said KBC Communications Director Roger Alford. "She's an outstanding writer, a great photographer and a lovely Christian lady with a passion for telling the story of the KBC, its churches and its people. I am convinced that God has been preparing Robin for this role for many years, and I'm thrilled that she recognized this and agreed to join us in this important work."

Bass joined the Western Recorder's staff in November 2010 as partnership editions director and assumed the news director role last year. Previously, she served on the staffs of the Spencer Magnet in Taylorsville; the Post and Courier in Charleston, S.C.; the Citrus County Chronicle in Crystal River, Fla.; and the Lancaster News in Lancaster, S.C.

In her role as partnership editions



Robin Bass

director, Bass has been responsible for providing editorial and design services for six partnership newspapers for pioneer state conventions in Colorado, Hawaii, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania-South Jersey and Wyoming.

"Robin has been a vital part of the Western Recorder's ministry these past three years," said Editor Todd Deaton. "While we are saddened to lose her exceptional writing, photography and design skills on our newspaper staff, we are pleased that our Kentucky Baptist family will continue to benefit from her many talents. Robin truly helped the pages of the Western Recorder to shine for our readers each week, and we are going to miss her greatly."

Bass has won numerous Kentucky Press Association awards while at the Western Recorder. Most recently, she received first place in two categories in 2013: Best General News Picture and Best Front Page. She also earned third place in Best Graphic and an honorable mention for Best General News Story.

"Working with Kentucky Baptists to share the gospel through the Western Recorder has truly been a blessing," said Bass. "I am looking forward to continuing that service through the KBC."

Bass, a native of Louisville, is a graduate of Western Kentucky University. She has a daughter, Morgan, 14, and they attend Highview Baptist Church in Louisville. (WR)

Kentuckian named BP chief correspondent

Nashville, Tenn.—David Roach, a regular contributor to Baptist Press and numerous other publications including the Western Recorder, has been named BP's chief national correspondent. He will fill a position vacated by Erin Roach, his wife, who served 12 years with the SBC news service as staff writer and, more recently, assistant editor.

Roach, who has contributed news and feature articles to Baptist Press for 11 years, was among the finalists in a national search to fill a position now held by Shawn Hendricks as Baptist Press' managing editor. He will join the BP staff in Nashville on April 1.

In addition to Baptist Press, Roach has been an editorial associate for SBC LIFE, journal of the Executive Committee, since 2012 and was a news writer for Southern Seminary from 2003-09. He also has written for the Kentucky Baptist Convention; the Southern Baptist TEXAN; Florida Baptist Witness; The Alabama Baptist; LifeWay Christian Resources; Kairos Journal, an online resource for pastors; and BibleMesh, a Bible-teaching website.

"We are delighted David is joining the Baptist Press team," said Roger Oldham, vice president for convention communications and relations for the SBC

Executive Committee. "When Erin signaled her intent to be a stay-at-home mother following the birth of their second child, it was natural that we should look at David."

"The Roaches are both very gifted journalists. Erin's decision to resign from full-time employment to devote her time and energy to raising their two daughters provided an opportunity for us to bring David on board," Oldham said.

In addition to his freelance writing, David Roach was bivocational pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Shelbyville, from 2005-12, and part-time minister of music at Parkland Hills Baptist Church in Fishersville, from 2003-05.

Roach earned a Ph.D. in church history from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville in 2009. He also holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary and an undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, where he was president of the campus' Baptist Collegiate Ministry, 2001-02.

Roach served as an intern with the Executive Committee office of convention relations during his undergraduate studies; was a Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board member, 2010-13; a KBC Committee on Nominations member, 2010-12; and the Shelby Baptist Association assistant moderator, 2011-12. He also has served as an adjunct professor for Boyce College in Louisville. (BP)



David Roach

Platt: The gospel requires cultural engagement



David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala., preaches in a March 20 chapel service at Southern Seminary.

By Hayley Schoeppler

Louisville—The gospel should compel “contrite, compassionate, courageous” cultural engagement, David Platt exhorted in a chapel message at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Platt pointedly challenged younger evangelicals’ “lack of zeal” and being “strangely quiet” about certain issues in a message drawn from Genesis 1-3.

Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala., and author of a 2010 bestseller, “Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream,” spoke March 20 on Southern Seminary’s campus.

While younger evangelicals are rightly passionate about sexual slavery, orphans and poverty, Platt said too many avoid “contentious” issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage and sexual immorality that bring Christians into conflict with the prevailing opinions of the culture.

“Followers of Christ do not have the option of picking and choosing which social issues we are going to apply biblical truths to,” Platt said. “We do not have the option of choosing which battles we are going to fight and which issues we

are going to flout.”

Biblical foundations

Platt noted four biblical, gospel foundations in Genesis that lead to four cultural implications.

■ Genesis 1:26-31, Platt said God “creates us as a demonstration of His glory.”

■ Genesis 2:18-25 reveals that from the beginning “God designs us for the display of His gospel.”

■ Genesis 3, Platt noted that “God judges us by His righteous law.” Humans have “spurned” God’s authority and have the “audacity” to question God, he said.

■ Genesis 3:15, “God pursues us with His redeeming love.” Rather than waiting for humanity to take the initiative, He “seeks after the guilty,” Platt said.

Cultural implications

After establishing the four truths that form the “essence of the gospel” and the “bedrock of our faith,” Platt listed four cultural implications.

Christians should “fight abortion,” Platt implored. With his voice breaking, he noted that 130,000 babies are aborted daily around the world. “I do not believe it is an overstatement to call abortion a modern holocaust,” he said.

Platt dismissed the argument that abortion is a complex issue: “If that which is in the womb is a person formed by God, this issue is not complex at all.”

Moral or political neutrality “is not an option for those who believe this gospel,” Platt declared. “There is a battle raging in our culture, and if you and I sit idly by while millions of children—individuals in the image of God—around us are dismembered, then we are denying basic biblical truth that forms the foundation for the gospel we claim to believe.”

Christians should “flee sexual immorality,” Platt said. He challenged the audience: “God has sovereignly brought some of you to this place to hear this one clear word today: Flee, flee the sexual immorality that you’re toying with, flirting with in your life.”

Christians should “defend sexual complementarity,” Platt said, “The gospel is most clear in the world when a man and a woman come together in the

one-flesh union of marriage and unite their lives with one another in a picture of Christ’s love for His church.”

Christians should “work for justice in the world,” Platt said, while speaking “about the judge of the world.”

While commending those who have demonstrated concern, Platt said many churches have “lost sight of the gospel” in view of social injustice, quoting Luke 10:27, which requires Christians to love their neighbors.

Platt passionately described the plight of girls and women across the world hopelessly in bondage to the sex trafficking industry. He recalled a recent visit to Nepal where a young girl spat on him after he was unable to help her, knowing she may one day be sold into slavery.

“What if these were our girls?” Platt asked. “It would change the way we live.”

Christians should “give our lives and lead our churches to pursue” unreached people, Platt said.

Calling 6,000 people groups totaling some 2 billion people “the greatest injustice in our day,” Platt asked, “What is it going to take to get us to the point where the whole concept of unreached people groups is intolerable to us?”

In the midst of these cultural debates, Christians cannot be silent, Platt said.

“Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved,” he said, citing Martin Luther. Whether abortion, poverty, slavery or sexual immorality, Platt said Christians must “refuse to pick and choose.”

While recognizing individuals have limits of involvement, Platt asserted, “In our belief, let’s be consistent. In our proclamation, let’s be complete. In our leadership, let’s be clear. This gospel of Christ compels contrite, compassionate, courageous action on a multiplicity of cultural issues, and to engage with the gospel on the battlefronts across our culture as we give our lives to taking the gospel across cultures.”

Platt implored, “In the end, may it be said of us that we loved our Lord and we led His church for the demonstration of His glory and the display of His gospel amidst the most pressing issues of our day.” (SBTS)

Decker

Continued from page 1

Cedaridge serves about 5,000 people by providing school supplies, furniture, even Christmas toys in addition to the food and other necessities. Last year, some 300 people became Christians through the ministry.

“Through Keith’s faithfulness, many people have been reached,” Mack said. “He once told me he believed God allowed him to be hungry when he was younger so he could know how it felt.”

Over the past two decades, Cedaridge has arranged for more than 100 homes to be built. In addition, each year an average of five to six homes have been remodeled and another 250 to 300 received minor repairs. Some 18 million pounds of food has been given out. And the gospel has been shared with thousands of people.

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church Pastor Janus Jones, among others, recommended Decker for Kentucky Missionary of the Year.

“The Lord has multiplied his meager beginning in the basement of the associational building to a large warehouse ministering to thousands,” Jones said. “He has been giving for many years, and he just keeps on giving.”

Teresa Parrett, missions mobilization coordinator for the KBC, said criteria for receiving the award include commitment and effectiveness in evangelism, church planting or ministry, demonstration of going the second mile, outstanding performance in achieving assigned tasks, length of service, an unusual commitment to serving the Lord, positive representation of KBC and NAMB, and being a true reflection of an “On Mission Christian.”

Parrett said Decker meets those criteria and more.

“He has a heart for serving the less fortunate, and is one of the most humble persons I have ever met,” she said. (KBC)

Pro-Hobby Lobby side remains hopeful after Supreme Court arguments

By Tom Strode

Washington—The U.S. Supreme Court contemplated the right of business owners to exercise their religious beliefs last week in a case that is expected to have a long-lasting impact.

On March 25, the justices heard lawyers for the Obama administration and two corporations debate the constitutionality of the federal government’s abortion/contraception mandate, which requires employers to provide abortion-causing drugs and devices for their workers. Hobby Lobby, the nationwide retail chain, and Conestoga Wood Specialties, a Pennsylvania business, contend the federal regulation violates their owners’ consciences and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), a 1993 law protecting religious liberty.

Matt Bowman, senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defending Freedom, said his organization is hopeful the high

court will continue to give religious liberty the “high level of deference” it has had in the past.

Meanwhile, Planned Parenthood Federation of America’s president expressed optimism for the supporters of the abortion/contraception mandate.

“It was a wonderful day I think for women, and I really believe that this court understood that women have the right to make their own decisions about their health care and their birth control, and it’s not their bosses’ decision,” Cecile Richards told reporters afterward.

Supporters of Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood have said religious free exercise for Americans is in the balance as the Supreme Court ponders its decision, which is expected to be issued before its term ends in late June or early July.

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, has described it as “the most important religious liberty case in

a generation.

Moore noted, “If the federal government can force organizations and businesses to pave over their own consciences, to choose between being believers and being citizens, what will stop the government from imposing its will on anyone’s conscience next?”

“As Christians, soul liberty is about more than political principle for us,” Moore said. “We believe, as our Lord commands, that we should render unto Caesar that which belongs to Caesar. The conscience does not bear the image of Caesar, and cannot be swept into the federal treasury by government fiat.”

The justices heard arguments about the mandate after more than 2 1/2 years of protests by pro-life and religious freedom advocates. In implementing the 2010 health-care reform law, the Department of Health and Human Services announced in August 2011 a proposed rule requiring employers to pay for

coverage of contraceptives, including ones that can induce abortions. Objections to the regulation failed to produce either a withdrawal from HHS or adequate conscience protections requested by religious liberty proponents.

HHS provided an exemption to the rule for churches and their auxiliaries, but did not extend it to non-church-related, non-profit organizations and for-profit companies. The administration also offered an accommodation for non-church-related religious organizations, but critics said it was inadequate because it still forces such groups to provide access to the drugs through third parties.

More than 300 parties—some non-profit and some for-profit—have combined to file 94 lawsuits against HHS, according to the Becket Fund. The consolidated case the justices heard March 25 involves for-profit businesses. The non-profit cases have yet to work their way up to the high court. (BP)

Protecting biblical marriage

The Gospel of Matthew records Jesus saying, "At the beginning the Creator made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and

Together
We are the KBC

Paul Chitwood

mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." In so doing, Jesus confirmed that God's definition of marriage had not and has not changed from creation. America's definition of marriage, however, is rapidly changing. Hardly a week goes by without one or more phone calls to the Kentucky Baptist Convention building requesting information on how churches should respond to gay marriage. A federal court judge recently ruled that Kentucky must recognize gay marriages performed in other states. Although gay marriage licenses are not yet issued in the commonwealth, the day of our constitutional definition of marriage being overturned, and gay marriage being forced upon our state, probably isn't very far away. In light of this probability, many are rightly concerned about how to protect biblical marriage in the local church.

To that end, we have planned a conference entitled, "Protecting Biblical Marriage: Practical and Legal Issues For Your Church." The two-hour event will take place May 22, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., at Crestwood Baptist Church in Crestwood. We plan to address not only the breakneck speed of our society's abandonment of the biblical definition of marriage, but also what that abandonment may mean for churches that refuse to surrender their biblical convictions on this issue. We will also equip churches to address the practical side of this issue by providing sample bylaws and legal counsel.

Presenters for the conference include Al Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Andrew Walker, director of policy studies for the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission; and Augie Boto, executive vice president and general counsel for the SBC Executive Committee. They will be joined on a discussion panel by Bill Langley, pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, and Curtis Woods, KBC's associate executive director for convention relations.

While we are not excited about the need for this conference, we are thrilled that God has given us men like these to provide wise counsel for our churches. In all likelihood, gay marriage is here to stay. How churches respond to that reality will determine whether a true witness of the gospel will also remain.

Who should attend the Protecting Biblical Marriage conference? Pastors, lay leaders, and anyone else who is concerned about how the local church needs to respond to our cultural and legal redefinition of marriage. If unable to attend in person, the event can be viewed live via the web, and videos will be posted after the event at kybaptist.org/marriage.

Paul Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

'God's not dead' inspiring, thought-provoking

I have received some strange emails and text messages as of late. They state simply: "God's not dead." After seeing the movie, I understand why.

I had not planned on seeing the movie, I must confide. The main plot sounded ... well, like a bit of a cliché: A young believer goes off to a secular university where his faith is challenged by an atheistic philosophy professor. After receiving a few of these odd messages and hearing favorable comments by friends though, I took my family to see it last week. My friends were right. It is an inspiring, courage-instilling and thought-provoking film that shows how one person can make a difference.

In the movie, Josh Wheaton refuses to write "God is dead," as his professor instructed. Subsequently, he is challenged to defend his position before the class, at the risk of failing the course and jeopardizing his dreams of attending law school. When asked by a foreign exchange student why he wouldn't yield like the others, Josh asserts, "I just think of Jesus as my friend. I don't want to disappoint Him, even if everyone else thinks I should. See, to me, He's not dead. He's alive. I don't want anyone to get talked out of believing in Him because some professor thinks they should."

Time constraints, though, do not allow the philosophical arguments to be developed as fully as some might like and, hence, they primarily serve as foundational building blocks for Christian apologetics. It must be noted, however, that the format is a movie made for entertainment and not an actual philosophy class. Josh's case for God points the way for further study and deeper reflection, and his argument provides a catalyst for capable youth ministers to encourage teens to "always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you."

For the Christian, the veracity of 1 Corinthians 1:18 rings clear: "For to those who are perishing the message of the cross is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is God's power." In this passage, Paul—like the movie's main character—challenges: "Where is the philosopher? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Hasn't God made the world's wisdom foolish? For since, in God's

wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of the message preached." Through Josh's debate with his professor, viewers are led to reaffirm "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."

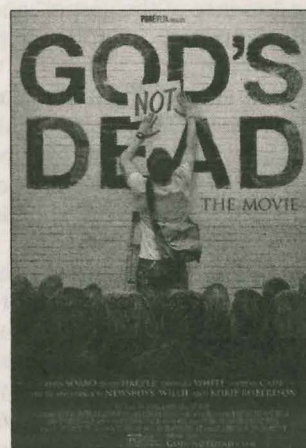
Spoiler alert! Through the various subplots, viewers perhaps encounter the most intrigue as young believers find courage to stand up for their faith, despite apparent difficulties and consequences. Ayisha, a Muslim girl, struggles with revealing her conversion to Christianity to her father and sacrificing a relationship with her family. Mina, the antagonistic professor's girlfriend, must come to grips with leaving him because he continually belittles her belief. Amy, an over-zealous and confrontational reporter, through interviews with Willie and Korie Robertson of Duck Dynasty and later the Newsboys, finds strength and hope to face a terminal diagnosis.

But, for my family, one of the most striking and thought-provoking scenes was an exchange between Mark, a callous and crass businessman, and his mother with dementia. When he challenges her with the problem of evil and why the wicked seem to prosper, she replies with unexpected lucidity: "Sometimes the devil allows people to live a life free of trouble because he doesn't want them turning to God. Their sin is like a jail cell, except it is all nice and comfy and there doesn't seem to be any reason to leave. The door's wide open. Till one day, time runs out and the cell door slams shut, and suddenly it's too late." Wow! Profound insight!

My hunch, though, is that most of those in the audience were likely believers and not seekers—unless invited by a friend. Even so, the movie has a place in inspiring courage to stand on the Truth and make a difference. And with the hymnist, we leave boldly proclaiming, "My faith has found a resting place, Not in device nor creed; I trust the Ever-living One, His wounds for me shall plead. (It is) Enough for me that Jesus saves, This ends my fear and doubt; A sinful soul I come to Him, He'll never cast me out. I need no other argument, I need no other plea, It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me."

After
Thought

By Todd Deaton



He gave His blood; let's give ours on Good Friday

By David Garrard

The Red Cross is nothing if not persistent. Once they know your type (O+ for me), they are relentless.

As soon as 56 days have passed, you are going to get a call. The message is always the same: "We are experiencing a severe shortage of blood and your type is in high demand. Please give."

I try to answer the bell, and so last spring I found myself sitting in the prep room at the Red Cross office in St. Matthews. That's when it dawned on me: It

was Good Friday.

Hmm ...

I asked my friend, Joe, "Do you have many Christians giving blood on Good Friday?"

He said, "Not really."

Hmm ...

My iron was good and my temperature and blood pressure normal, so I moved on into the big room, got hooked up and started my donation.

As I sat there, I began to think. Wouldn't it be cool if Christians gave blood on Good Friday? After all, blood was given for us on that day 2,000 or so

years ago.

An idea began to form.

I understand that giving blood is not for everybody, and not everybody who wants to give can. However, if you are able, I would like to invite you to join me in giving blood on Good Friday this year. Call the Red Cross today at (800) 723-2767 and make an appointment.

Let's flood the Red Cross with Christians giving blood on Good Friday in honor of Christ.

And when you sign in, if there is a place that asks who you are giving for, write in the name 'Jesus.'

FIRST PERSON

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Letters to the editor:

The Baptist Forum section of the Western Recorder provides an opportunity for Kentucky Baptists to express their viewpoints. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Western Recorder's editorial staff, its Board of Directors, or the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length and will be edited for style, clarity and space. Letters must reflect a spirit of Christian charity and civility.

Is the SBC relevant to a 21st-century world?

By James Draper Jr.

A good question and one worth asking: Does our SBC have anything significant to say to this 21st century? I ask the question here in response to the contemporary idea that the age of denominationalism is past.

It does us no good—and actually does us harm—to dwell on our size, numerical goals and our heritage. We can't live in the past. Our heritage is only as meaningful as its most recent application, meaning that all we have done in reaching the nations for Christ does not guarantee us relevance in the future. Being "Great Commission People" and "People of the Book" means daily seeking opportunities to engage the world with the power of the gospel but in humility and with a heart of service.

It is easy for us to point to all that we feel is "wrong" about the SBC. Yes, there are some things that need to be changed but mostly we need to refocus. Every individual Southern Baptist has the ability to decide whether to be part of the problem or part of the solution. The solution is found in engaging the world with the power of the gospel in humility and service.

"What relevancy does the SBC have today?" Here's my answer:

The SBC foundationally has a vision for missions and evangelism. Taking the gospel to the nations is in our DNA. Never could our denominational forefathers have predicted the geopolitical complexities of the 21st century, but the SBC is structured to literally reach the "uttermost" parts of earth.

There is strength in our cooperative efforts. We can do more together than we can by ourselves. Get beyond the cliché that many people have made this statement to be and contemplate its weight.

We have more missionaries under appointment and more volunteers serving around the world than any other evangelical denomination. No one church, especially the smaller churches that comprise the majority in the SBC, can so completely cover the globe with resources, but together they can.

The irony is that these totals are the tip of an iceberg. There

is no reason why Southern Baptists couldn't involve thousands more missionaries and give billions of dollars to support them through the Cooperative Program and our missions offerings. We have the resources; we just have to give them.

Southern Baptists have a heart for soul-winning. We take seriously God's mandate to share the good news of salvation. All ministries are important and have their place, but the greatest service we can provide to a lost world is personally introducing people to the Lamb who sits on the Throne. We have a long way to go to implement this vital soul-winning strategy, but it is in our hearts to do so. We just need to do it.

We love the local church. We understand that simply leading others to salvation is only part of the process. Jesus created the church—His bride—to be an integral element in His relationship with us. It is through the church that we grow spiritually. From the church we are sent out, and to the church we bring the lost for refuge.

We have a clearly defined doctrinal base. The Baptist Faith and Message outlines the area in which we move theologically and is a statement of "our faithfulness to the doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture."

Southern Baptists celebrate the autonomy of the local church. There is no hierarchical structure to force conformity on issues. Autonomy creates enormous freedom, and also tension (our structure actually invites controversy!). No action by the SBC or its entities is binding on any church. We volunteer to cooperate and when we do it creates a bond of steel.

We have developed the most effective theological training anywhere in the world through our seminaries with more than 16,000 students enrolled. In fact, all six of our seminaries rank in the top 15 largest seminaries in America. Men and women are formally being developed to impact the world with the gospel and that impact will be felt for generations to come.

Resources provided by Southern Baptist entities have had a significant global impact in cultures worldwide and beyond our denomination.

Am I boasting? Absolutely not! I trumpet God's blessings on us as a people and recognize that He has worked through us in spite of ourselves. Can we do more? Absolutely! Think how God would use us if we totally and humbly submitted ourselves individually and corporately to His leadership.

Is the SBC a lost cause? Absolutely not! Remember, the story we are sharing with the world is one of grace, redemption, restoration and usefulness. Let's extend grace to each other and stay on point to be used of God. If we will, I believe that not only will good come from the SBC, but that the best is yet to come. (BP)

James Draper Jr. is interim president of Criswell College in Dallas, president emeritus of LifeWay Christian Resources and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

What good is Christian apologetics?

By Rob Phillips

Apologetics simply is a reasonable defense of the Christian faith. God calls all believers to defend the Christian faith with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-16). But what good is Christian apologetics? Here are four applications:

Build—The Bible, history, archaeology and other sources help establish that a real person named Jesus burst onto the scene 2,000 years ago. He claimed deity, performed miracles, spoke the truth, modeled compassion, died on a Roman cross, was buried and rose on the third day. His coming to earth was the most important event in history.

Apologetics helps us know who God is; who we are; why there is purpose in life; how we can be restored to a right relationship with our Creator; why we can face death without fear; and what God is doing about evil in the world.

Defend—Christianity is under attack on many fronts. We can go a long way in defending the faith by clarifying the Christian position on matters of faith, answering objections and clearing away difficulties. The Bible teaches that there is one true and living God who exists as three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We do not worship three separate gods, or even one God who shows up sometimes as Father, Son, or Holy

Spirit. Defending the faith against mischaracterizations is an important function of apologetics.

Challenge—Sometimes Christians have to go on the offensive by challenging critics to provide evidence for their unbiblical beliefs. For example, when a moral relativist boldly declares, "There is no absolute truth," a good response is, "Are you absolutely certain about that?"

We have significant manuscript evidence that the scriptures have been carefully copied and faithfully preserved. The Qur'an even states in several places that the sacred writings of the Jews and Christians faithfully attested to the truth of Islam. Sometimes the best defense of the Christian faith is to hold critics accountable for their unbiblical views.

Persuade—Ultimately, Christian apologetics finds its greatest application as an effective means of evangelism. When we build a positive case for Christianity, defend Christianity from attacks, and challenge critics to defend their views, we can bring them to a point of commitment to Christ.

We should never coerce another person to trust in Jesus. That's the work of the Holy Spirit (see John 16:7-11). But we should eagerly invite our unbelieving friends to receive Christ and thus pass from death unto life (John 5:24). (BP)

Rob Phillips is communications director at the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Teach your children well

By David Garrard

Last week in worship we focused on Deuteronomy 4-6 and the commands God gave the Israelites to teach their children about God. I asked kids



at church to tell me what they had learned about God from their parents. One fifth grader said, "God never sends something your way that you

can't handle." Another replied, "Always treat everybody the same because that is what God does."

What would your kids say? Would they be able to answer that question? What have your children learned from you about God?

Based on the passage, here are five things God told parents to do:

Love God. Jesus said that loving God with all of our heart, mind and strength should be number one.

Love the one true God. Remember that there is only one real God. Don't let anyone or anything take God's place in your life and become an idol.

Do what is right. The Ten Commandments tell us how to live in a right relationship with God and with others. Your example can help your children see and understand that life goes better when we do what is right.

Teach your children about God. Be as concerned, committed and involved in their spiritual education as you are in their academic development.

Talk about God every day. The Scriptures are clear that as parents we are to talk about God on a daily basis—not just once a week when we are at church. Truth about God is so important that it should be present everywhere in our lives.

Talk to God every day. Pray for your kids. Ask God to help you teach them. Ask God to be at work in their lives.

David Garrard is minister to children at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville.

Retirement planning with a twist

By Laurie Valentine

Cutbacks in the potential to make deductible retirement plan and IRA contributions have left many executives and professionals looking for tax relief in their highest earning years. Many are also looking for a supplementary retirement savings vehicle that permits tax-free growth of their nest egg.



A "retirement unitrust" may be the right planning tool for such individuals, if they are motivated to benefit charitable causes, as well as themselves.

A "retirement unitrust" is a charitable remainder trust that pays the lesser of the net income generated by the trust assets or the unitrust amount (designated percentage of trust asset value, as revalued each year) until a triggering event designated in the trust agreement converts (flips) the trust into a standard charitable remainder unitrust. The benefits: a current income tax deduction equal to the present value of charity's future remainder interest; lower income until retirement; "supplemental" retirement income; and a significant ultimate gift to one or more charitable causes.

Example: Dr. John Brown, 50, transfers assets worth \$100,000 to a unitrust that will pay him the lesser of the net income or 5% annually (the "unitrust amount") until 2032 when he turns 68 (the "triggering event"), at which time the unitrust will "flip" (convert) to a standard unitrust paying him 5% each year. If his \$100,000 gift is invested to produce an average annual return of 2.5% yield (income) and 5% capital appreciation until the triggering event, the trust will grow to \$244,500 by 2032. His unitrust income will also take a big jump from \$3,685 in 2031 to \$12,030 in 2032, with potential for that to increase as the value of the trust assets increase in later years.

He can also add to the unitrust in future years—think "charitable IRA," but without the ceiling on contributions an IRA has—entitling him to additional income tax deductions equal to the value of the charity's remainder interest in the additions.

Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation.

Collegiate

Continued from page 1

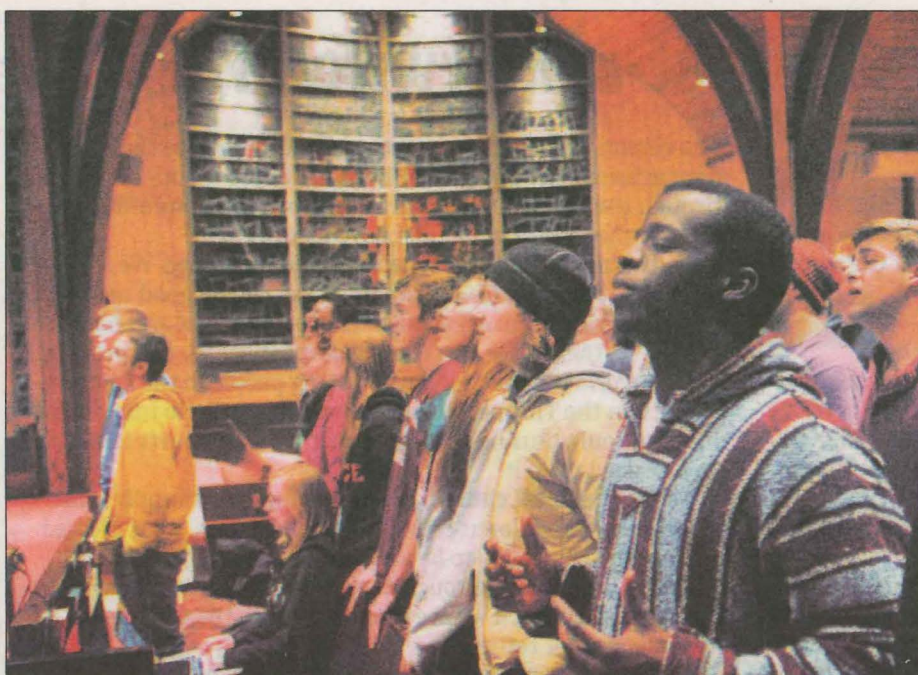
and church growth from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He continues to serve as a collegiate strategist for the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio.

"We have an opportunity to impact the lives of nearly 21.7 million students on college and university campuses in North America, and we want to learn from those who are leading the way," Frye said. "We want to multiply nationally what's happening locally. Wherever we see God working we want to learn from what He is doing through collegiate ministry. Then we are working to take best practices, principles and innovations thriving in one place and diffuse and contextualize them across many others."

Mike McQuitty, collegiate ministry director for the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, said he believes campus ministry is at its most effective when people focus and build on the basics of gospel ministry.

"There are some fantastic ministries out there," McQuitty said. "I think what we need to do is keep building in our disciple making, evangelism, leadership development and to see students stretch their wings and do what God has called them to."

"We need to maintain focus on the fundamentals of making disciples who make disciples to see people bear spiritual fruit. It's always been the basics: reaching students for Christ, helping them use their gifts, learning to be



Jeff Mburu (center), a student at Hampden-Sydney College in Farmville, Va., worships with other college students following a day of service during Sandy Rebuild efforts. (Laura Sikes/NAMB)

those multiplying disciple makers."

With campus ministry leaders throughout the United States and Canada, Frye said implementation of national strategy for collegiate ministry will seek to:

- Bring collegiate ministries together toward a shared vision for reaching the 21.7 million college students in North America.

- Accelerate church planting efforts on or near college and university campuses.

- Develop systems and processes to maximize resources.

Frye believes communicating

urgency, multiplying efforts and strengthening the essentials are all a matter of good stewardship of Southern Baptist resources and God-given opportunities.

"We have a major opportunity and major responsibility to reach one of the largest mission fields in North America, and to deploy students to push back lostness throughout our communities," Frye said. "We want to champion and multiply what's working so we can be the best possible stewards of what God has given us." (NAMB)

To learn more about opportunities through Send North America, visit www.namb.net/mobilize-me.

Cremation

Continued from page 1

after someone dies."

Only 3 in 10 (30 percent) disagree with the statement, "I plan to have my body cremated when I die." Forty-one percent agree, while 29 percent do not know.

Scott McConnell, vice-president of LifeWay Research, said cremation fits the way most Americans live these days.

"Few people stay in the same place all their lives, so they don't have strong connection to a place they want to be buried," he said. "Cremation is also often less expensive and many of the social taboos about cremation are fading."

The survey found that few Americans think cremation has any consequences for the afterlife. Fifty-eight percent disagree with the statement, "If someone's body is cremated, there is no way for them to be resurrected to live in heaven." Fourteen percent say there is no resurrection to live in heaven.

Evangelical Christians have been wary of cremation in the past. In Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee, the cremation rate is among the lowest in the country, at 23.9 percent, according to CANA. By contrast, in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington, the cremation rate is 60.3 percent.

Self-identified born-again, evangelical or fundamentalist Christians are most likely (27 percent) to say cremation is wrong. They're also (70 percent) most likely to disagree when asked if cremation would keep someone from being resurrected to live in heaven. (LifeWay)

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Church responds after mudslide

By Joe Conway

OSO, Wash.—Oso Community Chapel is the only church on a 30-mile stretch of State Route 530, the roadway sliced in half March 22 by a massive landslide in Oso, Wash., that killed at least 14 people and destroyed some 50 homes.

None of Oso Chapel's 80 members were injured and none lost their homes, said pastor and church planter Gary Ray. But in the rural community of 500 along the Stillaguamish River, all of the members of the Southern Baptist church know people affected by the tragedy.

"We are the only church on the only road through here," Ray said. "The church is less than two miles from the impact area." Ray planed to host a community response meeting at the church March 26 to determine next steps in the response to survivors.

"The roads are blocked, the power is out and communication is a challenge. We want to mobilize the church and the community to support the recovery work," Ray said. "We want to be able to do anything we can to help with an eye to long-term community support and rebuilding. This area is highly unchurched."

Northwest Baptist Convention Disaster Relief Director Gary Floyd said he is supporting Ray's efforts and asks people to pray for the relief work.

"This is currently a local response," Floyd said. "The biggest thing I would ask people to do now is to pray for Ray and his wife, Tina, and for the recovery efforts. Local emergency management has had to suspend work because the ground is unstable and more rain is moving in."

The death toll was at 14 last Tuesday



An aerial view shows the deadly mudslide in Oso, Wash., March 22. The slide covered a square mile in a rural community about 55 miles northeast of Seattle. (U.S. Navy)

morning, with as many as 178 missing, Floyd said. At least 50 structures were destroyed, 35 of which were primary residences, he said.

"The nature of the response will take time to tell what is needed," Floyd said. "Gary is doing a great job coordinating things. One thing is certain; the rebuild effort will take three to five years. There will be opportunities to help well into the future." (BP)

World Vision reverses gay hiring decision after Christians speak out

Federal Way, Wash.—World Vision U.S. is reverting to its longstanding conduct policy of requiring faithfulness within the biblical covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, expressing regret with an earlier decision to hire legally married gay Christians.

World Vision U.S. President Richard Stearns and board chairman Jim Bere announced the reversal March 26, just two days after drawing ire from the Christian community by saying World Vision would begin hiring legally married gays.

"Today, the World Vision U.S. board publicly reversed its recent decision to change our employment conduct policy," they said in the letter. "The board acknowledged they made a mistake and chose to revert to our longstanding conduct policy requiring sexual abstinence for all single employees and faithfulness within the biblical covenant of marriage between a man and a woman."

"We are brokenhearted over the pain and confusion we have caused many of our friends, who saw this decision as a reversal of our strong commitment to biblical authority," the board reported.

Hiring married gay Christians would have broken with the ministry's commitment to biblically traditional marriage, and was made

without adequate counsel with ministry partners, World Vision said.

"In our board's effort to unite around the church's shared mission to serve the poor in the name of Christ,

we failed to be consistent with World Vision U.S.'s commitment to the traditional understanding of biblical marriage and our own statement of faith, which says, 'We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative word of God,'" the letter said. "And we also failed to seek enough counsel from our own Christian partners. As a result, we made a change to our conduct policy that was

not consistent with our statement of faith and our commitment to the sanctity of marriage."

World Vision confirmed its commitment to the biblical view of marriage and asked for the Christian community's continued support.

"We commit to you that we will continue to listen to the wise counsel of Christian brothers and sisters, and we will reach out to key partners in the weeks ahead," the letter said. "While World Vision U.S. stands firmly on the biblical view of marriage, we strongly affirm that all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are created by God and are to be loved and treated with dignity and respect." (BP)

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization that is motivated by a faith in Jesus Christ to serve the poor and oppressed in nearly 100 countries by providing emergency assistance to children and families affected by natural disasters and civil conflict.
(Source: worldvision.org)

NEWS BRIEFS

Roberts joins Truett-McConnell

Phil Roberts, former president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 2001-2012, has joined the faculty of Truett-McConnell College. He will teach in the new master of arts in theology program beginning this fall.

Roberts served seven years at the North American Mission Board where he was vice president of the strategic cities strategies group and, earlier, as director of the interfaith evangelism team. Roberts also has been on the faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Truett-McConnell College, located in Cleveland, Ga., is affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Pres. Bush at LifeWay event

Former President George W. Bush will be among the speakers at "The Main Event," a conference for men Aug. 1-2 in Nashville sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources.

Bush will take the stage along with Bobby Bowden, the winningest football coach in NCAA history; three-time NASCAR champion Darrell Waltrip; retired U.S. Army Maj. Jeff Struecker, whose battlefield heroics were immortalized in the film "Black Hawk Down"; LifeWay President Thom Rainer; and others.

Michael W. Smith will lead worship.

The theme for The Main Event is from Isaiah 53:5—"by his stripes we are healed," which LifeWay men's ministry leader Jason Ellerbrook says is about "honoring the wounded warrior."

Registration will be capped at 10,000 and organizers are expecting the event to sell out well in advance of August. Visit lifeway.com and search for "The Main Event."

NAMB set 2015 Send date

The North American Mission Board is developing plans for its 2015 Send North America Conference slated for Aug. 3-4 at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville. This will be the third time NAMB has hosted the conference to encourage, equip and mobilize lay leaders in local congregations to penetrate lostness in North America.

Nearly 2,000 people attended the Send North America Conference at First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga., in 2012. The attendance more than doubled in 2013 at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas.

"We want to see churches partner together to impact lost communities in North America," said Aaron Coe, NAMB's vice president for mobilization and marketing. "The Send Conference is simply an opportunity for like-

minded pastors, leaders and church members to gather in one place and build a vision for reaching people with the gospel. The 2015 conference is really about engaging and mobilizing the person in the pew to live a life on mission."

New mental health ministry

Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren is starting a new mental health ministry following the suicide of his son Matthew, who at age 27 shot himself in April 2013 after years of struggling with severe depression.

According to a WORLD News Service report, Warren will team up with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, Calif., and the National Alliance on Mental Illness to raise awareness and remove misunderstandings against mental illnesses within the faith community. On March 28, the three groups will host The Gathering on Mental Health and the Church, a daylong event at Saddleback that will cover a wide range of mental health issues, from bipolar disorder to eating disorders.

Warren said he hopes the conference will educate family members of people living with mental illness, encourage those who are struggling, and motivate other churches to create similar mental health ministries.

CP reports now online

In an effort to give more visibility to the work of SBC entities, the Cooperative Program 2014 Ministry Reports are now available to all Southern Baptists in an easily-accessible, online format, viewable at SBC.net.

The Executive Committee had previously made these reports available to Executive Committee members and state Baptist paper editors in a printed format. Now these reports are being made available to the general public online in a digital format.

"This new platform gives every Southern Baptist an opportunity to see firsthand the good work our SBC entities are doing," Ashley Clayton, vice president for Cooperative Program and stewardship, said. "It brings to life ministry reports that the Executive Committee was already compiling as part of its own ministry assignment."

Reports are available from the SBC entities which receive Cooperative Program funds: International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, six SBC theological seminaries, and the Council of Seminary Presidents. GuideStone Financial Resources does not receive CP dollars, but also submits reports.

(Compiled from reports by Baptist Press)

Have a good cry

Take time to weep, then put the past behind and look forward

Psalm 126:5 says, "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy."

As a young man, I watched from a distance as my parents poured themselves into Oneida's ministry and students. One particular student my parents greatly invested in seemed to break my parents' hearts with the poor decisions he repeatedly made. During one of those difficult times, I made a gift for my mom that was inscribed with this verse from Psalm 126:5.

John 11:35 says, "Jesus wept."

Jesus' friend, Lazarus, had died, but was this why He wept? Jesus knew He would soon bring Lazarus back to life. I believe Jesus wept in part because of the lack of faith Mary exhibited in questioning Him. There is a difference between crying and weeping. Jesus wept, which is more than just crying.

When was the last time you had a good cry? I am not really a crier, and can't really recall the last time I did have a good cry. Unfortunately, young boys are often taught that men shouldn't cry.

Have you ever watched a movie that made you cry? Have you ever tried to hide crying from the people watching the movie with you? Having a good cry can be both therapeutic and liberating.

Although I wouldn't call it a "good cry," I did see my oldest son recently cry at a time I was not necessarily expecting him to cry. We were walking out of a gym from a ball game of a team that he and I both love. Our team had lost and my son cried as we left the building. An elderly lady who was a fellow

fan caught my eye because she had noticed my son crying as well. She gave me a sad, but comforting look that said, "I feel bad for your little boy and I want to cry, too."

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

During this school year, I have witnessed many of our students cry. I have seen kids cry after their team lost an athletic event. I have seen kids cry when some of their friends have left Oneida. I have seen kids cry in chapel and church services.

I am sure there have been many other instances when our students have cried. I am sure our faculty and staff, who get to work much more closely with our students than I do, have seen much more crying than I have.

Our young people come to Oneida from all different places, experiences, and backgrounds. Many of them have experienced difficult and unfair things in life. While there is nothing wrong with crying, we do have to move on at some point and look toward the future and plans that the Lord has for us. Drawing from our own experiences, we try to teach our students that many times we need to leave our past behind us and look forward to what lies ahead.

Once we receive our eternal crowns and are in the permanent presence of our Lord, there will be no more crying. Until we reach that wonderful place we call heaven, we must do our very best to fix our eyes on Christ and glorify Him—no matter what happens to us in this life. Have a good cry when necessary, but reap in joy!

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

Paying it forward

Clear Creek student prepares to help others with similar past

Student Cory Counts sees his time at Clear Creek as preparation to help those who are going through some of the same things he experienced.

"I remember attending church as a youngster with my dad and we would often talk about salvation," said Counts. "When I was 15 years old, I remember being in a church service and felt convicted about my sins. I told my dad that I needed to stay after the service and talk to my pastor. That day I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ."

"I was very excited at this time of my life," Counts said. "I started studying my Bible, going to church regularly, and was focused on living my life for the Lord."

"But there was a time after this where I allowed myself to get drawn into some things by running with the wrong crowd, and I ended up outside of the will of God with my life."

"Deep down I knew that the way I was living my life at the time was wrong," Counts said. "I knew I was just running from the Lord. I was really ashamed, but just kept finding myself

being drawn down the road further than I knew I should be going," he said.

"I thought college would be good for me, so I enrolled in classes but things just kept getting worse and I ended up dropping out," Counts recalled.

"I attended a conference with my dad during this time and the Holy Spirit just broke me," Counts said. "I remember crying out to the Lord to help me and I recommitted my life to the Lord."

"I got to a point where I was learning a lot and felt like God was calling me to minister to people who had been through some of the things I had gone through. I began to talk to my pastor, who is a Clear Creek alumnus, and he told me I needed to check out the college. We visited the campus and I felt so much joy about coming to a place like this—a place where I could study for ministry."

"I am glad to be here preparing now so I can be equipped to minister to people who are experiencing some of the things I have experienced," Counts said.

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

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

SEEKING: Associate Editor Western Recorder

The Western Recorder is looking for an associate editor who is a capable news reporter and writer, creative page designer, and skilled photographer. Specifically, the experienced journalist must:

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'Insanity of obedience' explored by Ripken in latest book

By Tess Rivers

Richmond, Va.—Biblical obedience to God is insane. That is Nik Ripken's conclusion after 15 years of research and hundreds of interviews with persecuted believers around the world.

In Ripken's latest book, he asks:

■ Why else would a man like Dmitri,* imprisoned for leading an illegal house church in Russia, insist on singing a praise song to Jesus every morning for 17 years, even as prison guards beat him and fellow inmates ridiculed him?

■ Why else would Christian workers in a Muslim country gather to share communion after a Muslim extremist shot and killed three colleagues?

■ Why else would Ripken move his family from the comfort of a small Kentucky town to settle in Africa where they encountered sickness, death and unspeakable suffering among their neighbors?

Insanity is the only plausible explanation by the world's standards, Ripken states in "The Insanity of Obedience." But for Ripken and other believers choosing to stay in difficult places to share the gospel, their belief in the power and love of

Christ enables them to persevere.

Ripken's first book, "The Insanity of God," recounts his personal journey to relieve human suffering in war-torn Somalia, the appalling sorrow he experienced and his struggles with a God who would allow His followers to endure such pain on His behalf.

It also raises challenging questions for evangelical believers in the West: What is the cost of obedience? How can U.S. Christians come alongside persecuted believers and ignite churches to be serious about fulfilling the Great Commission?

Ripken answers these questions in his latest book.

Persecution redefined

In "The Insanity of Obedience," Ripken challenges how American Christians commonly define persecution in what he calls a "post-Pentecost" era—an environment in which the gospel has been preached widely, churches are present and Christian literature and education are easily accessible.

"Often pastors say to us, 'Persecution is coming to the church in America.' When asked to explain ... the response

often revolves around conservative evangelical stances on homosexuality and abortion," Ripken writes. "But the U.S. church's stance opposing these activities and lifestyles is the same as conservative Islam."

In a "pre-Pentecost" or "Old Testament" environment, Ripken explains persecution is perceived differently. Approximately 9,000 people groups representing nearly 4 billion people live in settings where there are few believers and few, if any, churches. In some places, the gospel message has not been shared because there is no believer to share it. In other places hostile to the gospel, believers who share their faith do so at their own risk.

Ripken suggests that churches in the West do not face significant persecution as they become less and less a threat to a spiritually lost world. However, in pre-Pentecost settings, religious persecution comes not from taking a stand on social and cultural issues, but from making Jesus known to those who have little or no opportunity to hear about Him otherwise.

Discipleship approaches also differ, Ripken writes. Persecuted churches use a "New Testament house church style" of discipleship out of the necessity—believers bond in small groups to endure persecution together, Ripken notes. They learn together, teach each other, and model what being a believer in Christ means.

As non-believers see followers of Jesus meeting human needs and alleviating suffering, the love of Christ becomes tangible—drawing outsiders in the group to learn more, Ripken said.

Ripken contrasts this approach with some Western-based discipleship programs that are essentially "information transfer."

True discipleship, coming alongside each other, is messy, inconvenient and rarely goes according to plan, he said, but it is necessary to life transformation and being obedient to God.

Obedience that influences

Dmitri learned this lesson in a Russian jail cell, Ripken shared. Every morning for 17 years, he stood at attention by his bed, faced the East, lifted his hands to heaven and sang a praise song to Jesus. He was beaten by his captors and ridiculed by fellow inmates, who often threw food and human waste into his cell in attempts to stop his singing.

Then, one day, after finding a piece of paper on which Dmitri had written every Scripture reference, Bible verse, story and song he could recall, his jailers beat him severely and threatened him with execution. As they dragged him from his cell down the center corridor toward the courtyard, Dmitri heard a strange sound. The 1,500 hardened criminals who had ridiculed him for nearly two decades stood at attention by their beds. They faced the East, raised their arms and began to sing the song they had heard Dmitri sing to Jesus every morning.

"Who are you?" a guard demands to Dmitri.

"I am a son of the Living God, and Jesus is His name!" Dmitri replies.

They returned Dmitri to his cell. Some time later, he was released and told Ripken his story.

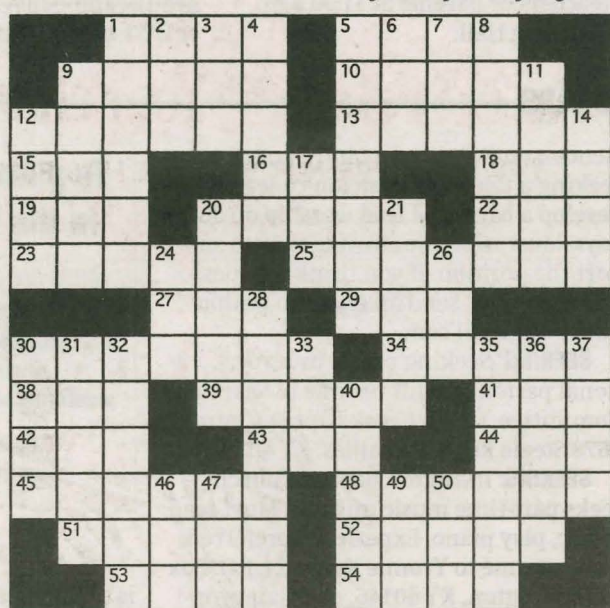
That's the kind of influence for which Christians should strive, Ripken states. But, it only comes through "insane" obedience to God. (BP)

*Name changed.

Bible Crosswords

Across

- 1 "The ____ trees of the wheels were joined to the base" (1 Kings 7:32)
- 5 Ingredient in some cereals
- 9 Father of Kish (1 Samuel 9:1)
- 10 "____ up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6)
- 12 Achieve success (colloq.)
- 13 "Mount Sion, which is ____" (Deuteronomy 4:48)
- 15 Fuss
- 16 Let go, not so nicely
- 18 Greek letter
- 19 Utility org. for noncity dwellers
- 20 Main rooms of ancient Roman house
- 22 Poetic contraction
- 23 Support one's alma mater
- 25 Job requirements
- 27 Stack or rack
- 29 "Ye shall go out with joy and be ____ forth with peace" (Isaiah 55:12)
- 30 Side and back, to name two
- 34 Narrow, deep pass
- 38 The style of (suffix)
- 39 Accustomed oneself, with "into"
- 41 Son of Benjamin (Genesis 46:21)
- 42 Push, and even shove
- 43 Inhabitant, e.g. (abbr.)
- 44 "Ye shall be hated of all ____" (Matthew 10:22)
- 45 Hope for all generations: Jesus has ____ from the dead!
- 48 Saturated with liquid, with "up"



#193

- 51 "Laying up in ____ for themselves a good foundation" (1 Timothy 6:19)
- 52 "For we which have believed do ____ into rest" (Hebrews 4:3)
- 53 Taken to court
- 54 "Call ye upon him while he is ____" (Isaiah 55:6)

Down

- 1 Europe, in particular, to Americans
- 2 Hours in the day, to a centurion
- 3 O.T. book
- 4 "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine ____" (Isaiah 45:4)
- 5 Brother of Caleb (Joshua 15:17)
- 6 Linking verb
- 7 Black liquid
- 8 Tribe of Israel
- 9 Actress Eve
- 11 "But I will shew thee that which is ____ in the scripture" (Daniel 10:21)
- 12 River in Switzerland
- 14 Fashion designer Byron
- 17 Son of Benjamin (Genesis 46:21)
- 20 "Now it is high time to ____ ... now is our salvation nearer" (Romans 13:11)
- 21 "____ you ways and your doings" (Jeremiah 7:3)
- 24 Exclamation of surprise
- 26 Fuss
- 28 Ached
- 30 Watery animal fluid (pl.)
- 31 Alexander and others
- 32 Forgives; pardons
- 33 Compass dir.
- 35 "The third part of an hin of oil to ____ with the fine flour" (Ezekiel 46:14)
- 36 "Be of good ____; I have over-come the world" (John 16:33)
- 37 "Naphtali is a ____ let loose" (Genesis 49:21)
- 40 Industrial center in Germany
- 46 French coin
- 47 Before
- 49 "As the body is ____, and hath many members" (1 Corinthians 12:12)
- 50 School org.



#192

By Evelyn Boyington

Love is something you do

Couple assisted in stewardship goals by Ky. Baptist Foundation

When I think of this special couple we were able to assist in stewarding their estate, I am reminded of all the ways across the years they have demonstrated their love for Christ, their children and grandchildren, their church and their local community. They will be among the sheep to which the King will say, "Come, you who are blessed of my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat ... Then the righteous will answer Him, when did we see you hungry and feed you ... The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:34-40).

This couple is the epitome of kingdom-minded stewards who love Christ and show it with their time, talents and treasures. For them, love is not something about which they talk, it is something they do.

When they decided to move from the farm to town, they sought the assistance of Laurie Valentine, our trust counsel, to work with their own legal and financial advisers in exploring ways of making a legacy gift as

part of the sale of the farmland on which they lived. The ultimate plan was a win for them, a win for their family and a win for their church.

They donated, prior to the sale, a portion of the appreciated farmland on which they lived to a charitable trust for which the Kentucky Baptist Foundation is the trustee. The trust received that portion of the sales proceeds, and they received the balance. From the trust they will receive income for the rest of their lives. At the death of the second to die, the remainder in the trust will establish an endowment that will provide a perpetual stream of

income to their church. In addition to the joy they experienced in knowing they were making a lasting difference in the world for the cause of Christ, they also received the following tangible benefits: an income tax deduction which can be used over a total of six years, a reduction of the capital gains tax on the real estate sale and the conversion of the real estate into income for both of their lifetimes.

Remember: Love is something you do. Please give us the privilege of assisting you. Call us toll free.

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Barry Allen

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

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF



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.
- 11 Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training, Pikeville Baptist Church, Pikeville.
- 11 RISK: Changing the Channel, First Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

CADIZ—New Hope Church recently called Bock White as pastor.

CECILIA—Cecilia Church will hold a traditional Passover meal led by Messianic Rabbi Vann Lanz April 12. Eric Oliver is pastor.

CENTRAL CITY—Muhlenberg County Association will sponsor KidsFest April 12, 2 p.m., at the Muhlenberg County Convention Ag Center with carnival games, prizes and food.

DANVILLE—Willow Grove Church will hold a Believers Rally April 6, 6 p.m., with guest speaker Jim Coldiron of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Johnny Thompson is pastor.

GREENVILLE—Second Church will hold women's bunco April 10, 6 p.m. Ray England is pastor.

LEXINGTON—Boone's Creek Church will host Associational Youth Rally April 12, 6:30 p.m.

LOUISVILLE—Bethlehem Church will hold

Stamping and Scrapbooking April 12, 9 a.m. For more information, call (502) 968-4798.

Steve Thompson is pastor.

St. Matthews Church will host the Classics and Hymns Tour featuring Twila Paris and Steve Green April 6, 6 p.m. For more information, call (800) 965-9324. Greg Barr is pastor.

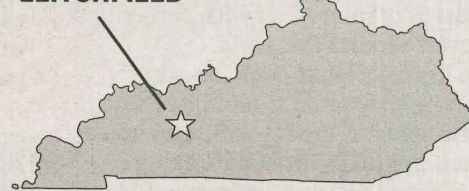
MAYSVILLE—Central Church will hold an Easter egg hunt April 12, 11 a.m. Mark Powell is pastor.

MOUNT WASHINGTON—First Church will host The Inspirations in concert April 10, 7 p.m. First Church also will hold Daughters of the King Spring Fling April 11, 6 p.m. For more information, call (502) 538-7361. Billy Compton is pastor.

VERSAILLES—Versailles Church will hold an Easter egg hunt April 12, 10:30 a.m. Michael Cabell is pastor.

Spotlight on ...

LEITCHFIELD



Leitchfield First Church will hold Keep Your Tweet Sweet April 26, 7:45 a.m., with guest speaker Athena Sholar. The women's conference will have workshops about effective communications. Registration deadline is April 20. For more, call Pamela Miller at (270) 259-6573. Douglas King is pastor.

Campbellsville plans art scholarship competition; grants awarded April 5

By Joan McKinney

Campbellsville—Campbellsville University is searching for talented high school seniors to compete for two art scholarships worth a total of \$6,000 each. The art scholarship competition and workshop will be April 5, 10 a.m. in room 100 of the Art Building, 205A University Drive, in Campbellsville.

Performance grant scholarships also will be awarded to students who might not be chosen for the competitive art scholarships.

Registration and submission of a portfolio will begin at 10 a.m. in the art building with a free workshop in ceramics at 10:30 a.m. in Gosser Fine Arts Center. A brunch will be provided for students, teachers or parents at 11:30 a.m. in the Winters Dining Hall.

Interviews with students and examination of portfolios by art faculty are at 12:15 p.m., with winning recipients announced at 2 p.m.

Questions concerning the competition should be directed to Linda Cundiff at (270) 789-5268 or ljcundiff@campbellsville.edu; or Davie Reneau, associate professor of art, at dreneau@campbellsville.edu or at (270) 789-5267, or CU's switchboard at (270) 789-5000. (CU)

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

FOR RENT: Planning your beach or Smokies vacation? Check with us first. Family ministry offering discounted rates for weeks in 2014. staciegillenwater@gmail.com.

FOR SALE: Hammond organ. Home size. Excellent condition. Good for small church. Well maintained. Moving. Must sell. Call (270) 769-0414.

RESOURCES: Looking for help with anger management? Our ministry's goal is to help people suffering from the pain of sinful anger. Howard Floss, co-author of "Breaking the Anger Cycle," is available to speak to congregations and marriage workshops about taking steps toward changing behaviors and saving marriages. Visit howardfloss.com.

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

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: Part-time minister of music at First Baptist Church in La Center. Duties include selecting music for morning and evening services on Sunday and leading the choir in rehearsals and performance. Complete job description available upon request. Salary negotiable. Contact First Baptist Church-La Center at (270) 665-5408.

SEEKING: Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church in Midway seeks full-time student minister for middle/high school and college programs. Experience as a student minister and relevant college degree required. Communicates well with parents and volunteers. Joyful spirit and good sense of humor. Self starter. Organizational and administrative abilities. Send resumé, letter and references to office@forksbaptist.org.

SEEKING: A splendid opportunity to serve in Appalachia. Three Forks Baptist Association is now accepting resúmes for the position of director of missions. Resúmes will be accepted through May 14. For more information, visit threeforksbaptist.com. Questions? Or to submit resumé, contact Tony Brown at (606) 634-0104 or email tony.brown@whitesburgfbc.org.

SEEKING: Sharon Baptist Church in Mayfield is accepting resúmes for a full-time pastor. Candidate needs to have a passion for preaching the gospel and reaching the lost. A degree is preferred, but not required. Send resúmes to Ralph Steel, 20 Terri Aire Drive, Mayfield, KY 42066. Resúmes will be accepted through April 15.

SEEKING: Water's Edge Church in

Henderson (watersedgechurch.org) is seeking a talented musician/co-leader to develop a band and lead worship on Sundays. Must raise your own money to support the position. If you think this position is for you, send an email to pastor-nate.we@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Seeking pastor or bivocational pastor. Submit resumé to Search Committee, Glen's Creek Baptist Church, 4678 Steele Road, Versailles, KY 40383.

SEEKING: Irvington Baptist Church seeks part-time music minister. Must read music, play piano. Experience preferred. Send resumé to Yvonne Kennedy, P.O. Box 101, Irvington, KY 40146, or email yvonnekennedy28@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Glasgow Baptist Church is searching for someone with at least three years' experience leading worship in a church. Candidate must have experience leading a team of volunteer musicians and vocalists. Candidate must have a bachelor's degree, preferably in worship and/or ministry. A desire, but not required, would be to have seminary work or degree. Accomplished with at least one instrument and basic knowledge of multiple instruments, strong vocal ability and strong leadership skills. This person will also provide leadership with regard to all church media including, but not limited to local access TV, radio, website and social media. In addition, he will provide pastoral care and spiritual mentoring to all volunteers in the worship and media ministry, and lead them toward a lifestyle that is an example of godliness to the world and the body of Christ. This is a full-time position. Send resumé to Glasgow Baptist Church, 401 S. Green St., Glasgow, KY 42141, or email them to worship@glasgowbaptist.org. In addition to a resumé, send the link of an online video of you leading worship.

SEEKING: Living Hope Baptist Church

To place an advertisement in the Western Recorder:

Rates are available upon request. Call (502) 489-3428; or visit westernrecorder.org



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

is seeking part-time music/youth minister. Traditional, Southern Baptist. Contact: bpylesjr@windstream.net.

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

SEEKING: Fitzpatrick First Baptist Church of Prestonsburg is seeking a full-time associate pastor/minister of youth and children to aid the senior pastor in ministering to our growing church body while concentrating on the youth, children and their families. Experience needed in leading and growing a youth/children's ministry that is focused on evangelism and discipleship. Submit resúmes by mail to Fitzpatrick FBC, P.O. Box 410, Prestonsburg, KY 41653, or email fitzpatrickfbc@att.net. Attn: Pastor Tommy Reed. Must include four references, which will be contacted.

SEEKING: Rosemont Baptist Church in Lexington is seeking a part-time minister of children and families. Send resumé to rosemontbc@windstream.net, or to Attn: Pastor at 556 Rosemont Garden, Lexington, KY 40503. For more, call (859) 277-6147.

Overcoming fears, volunteer leads sex-trafficking ministry

By Ann Lovell

Richmond, Va.—At midnight on a cold Friday in January, Loree Becton stands on a street corner along Jefferson Davis Highway in Richmond, Va.—an area notoriously known for prostitution and crime.

She's come a long way.

Until a few months ago, Becton—wife of Mark Becton, pastor of Grove Avenue Baptist Church in Richmond—had to whisper the word, “prostitute,” and would turn red-faced when she did. Now, she is here among them, praying for an opportunity to tell the women of the streets how much they are loved.

For Becton, a ministry to human trafficking victims in Richmond began in June 2011 with a simple prayer of surrender.

“Lord, I give up!” Becton prayed. “I surrender to whatever it is you want me to do.”

First, she had a lot of learning to do.

Facing the problem

Human trafficking is the illegal trade of people—especially women and children—for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor. The U.S. State Department estimates that 600,000 to 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across international borders each year.

Domestically, human trafficking is difficult to quantify, explains Krystal Gandola, a spokesperson for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

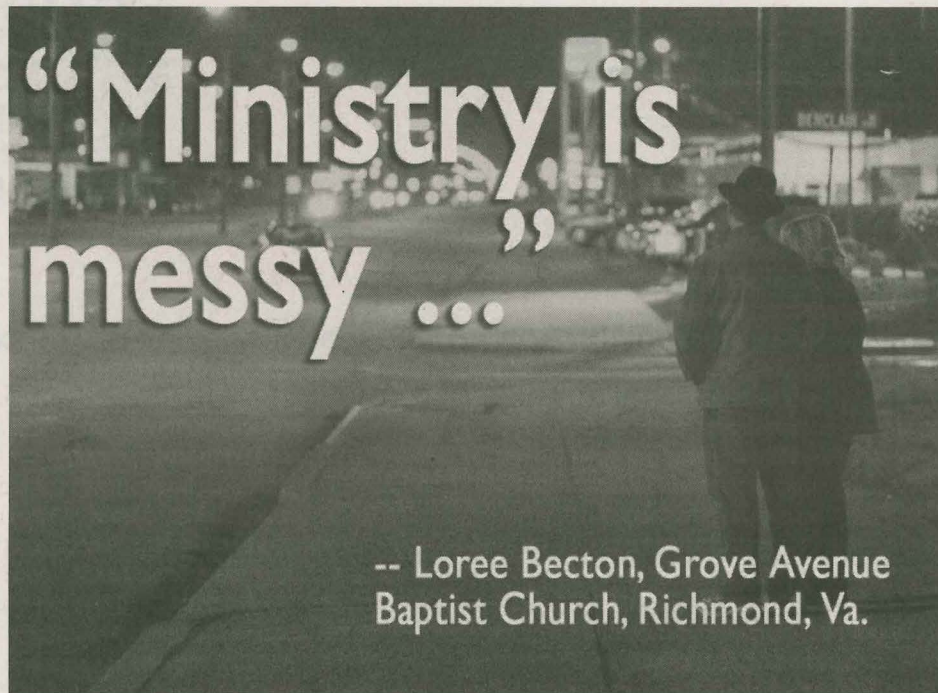
“No one knows with certainty the exact number of children victimized through sex trafficking in the United States,” Gandola says. “We believe that child sex trafficking is a missing child issue.”

Of the 60,000 missing child cases reported to NCMEC between 2008 and 2012, more than 48,000—or 81 percent—are endangered runaways. These children, many of whom were in the child welfare system when they ran away, left home voluntarily but are unable to care for themselves. They are particularly vulnerable to the “manipulation and false promises” of traffickers, Gandola explains.

If this information wasn't alarming enough for Becton, the local snapshot was even more distressing. Until as recently as September 2013, the Polaris Project—a non-profit organization addressing human trafficking on a global scale—identified Virginia as one of the “dirty dozen” U.S. states that did not effectively address human trafficking within its borders. According to the Polaris definition, the state failed to provide adequate legislation against human trafficking, training on human trafficking for law enforcement officers or safe harbor for victims.

“Could this really be happening in my own back yard?” Becton wondered.

“Yes,” says Sara Pomeroy, director of the Richmond Justice Initiative, a non-profit, faith-based organization involved in local anti-trafficking efforts. “The intersections of Interstates 64, 95 and



295—and the city's proximity to Washington, D.C.—make Richmond attractive to traffickers.”

Asking the questions

Armed with this information, the question for Becton then became, “What do we do now?”

Initially, she waited.

“For several months after that initial prayer of surrender, a number of women began approaching me, asking, ‘How is your church involved with human trafficking?’” Becton recalls. “I told them, ‘We’re not!’”

Then Becton began to explore a ministry to exploited women in Thailand. As she learned more about this type of outreach, she began pursuing ways she could become more involved in reaching exploited women in Richmond and around the world.

Becton's first step involved gathering a group of women together for prayer. The small group began meeting regularly, praying that God would show them the specific steps He wanted them to take.

Soon, the “Precious to God” ministry—based on Psalm 72:14—was born.

“Psalm 72:14 in the Holman Bible says, ‘He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious in His sight,’” Becton says. “That verse is a powerful promise of what God wants to do among trafficked women.”

Becton and her team also began talking with law enforcement and researching the work of others involved in the fight against exploitation in the city. She

soon learned that a number of churches and organizations are involved in pieces of the fight against human trafficking—prevention, intervention and aftercare—but no single organization is tying it all together.

“We don't want to duplicate what others are doing,” Becton says. “I see Grove Avenue as somehow playing a role in linking these organizations together.”

Taking some risks

Becton got a glimpse of what this

kind of cooperation could look like during the June 1, 2013, “Sexpo” at a Richmond hotel—a small tradeshow of local porn stars and erotica exhibitors. When some local churches and anti-trafficking organizations learned of the event, they began to pray together about how best to influence those attending the convention.

Anastasis International Ministry, a local group that focuses on helping women who are hurting, purchased a booth at the tradeshow and offered free foot massages and gift bags provided by New Life Women's Center, a ministry of Cornerstone Assembly of God. Others—including the team from Grove Avenue—bought tickets and prayer-walked inside the exhibit hall.

To avoid drawing controversy and to facilitate quiet gospel-focused conversations, none of them openly identified themselves as Christians or affiliated with a particular church. As the team from Anastasis was setting up their booth, they heard several exhibitors say, “I wonder where all the Christians are. I thought ... they'd be here protesting.”

The women of Anastasis said nothing. They finished their set up and offered foot massages throughout the afternoon. Toward the end of the day, they heard some of the exhibitors say again, “Where are the Christians? Where is the church? I thought sure the churches would be here lined up outside with their signs.”

The women of Anastasis smiled and decided to enter the conversation.

“We're the church,” group members said. “And we've been here the entire time.”

Moving forward

It is these kinds of face-to-face conversations that Becton desires to have with hurting women. That's how she met Valerie Carter, associate pastor for “glocal” (global/local) ministries at Bon Air Baptist Church in the Richmond area. For several years, Carter and a small group from area churches have been prayer-walking the red-light districts of Richmond one Friday night a month.

Over the years, Carter and her team have had countless conversations and prayer with women and transvestites who work in the red-light district along Jefferson Davis Highway. Currently, Carter and another team member are regularly following up with two young women they met a few months ago.

Although the number of changed lives is difficult to quantify, Carter trusts that God is working in the lives of those she's had the opportunity to meet.

“We never know how many women or men have sought help because of the move of God on their lives and our presence with the light of Christ in a dark place,” Carter says.

Although Becton has prayer walked with Valerie's team on several occasions, she has yet to develop relationships with women on the street. In fact, she has yet to see the same person twice.

“The face to face has not gone as well as I would have liked,” she acknowledges. “But we continue to pray for opportunities to share Jesus one-on-one.”

In an effort to facilitate more conversations in the red-light district, Becton's team has begun “prayerdriving” Jefferson Davis Highway and other areas during the day.

“We realize that we must pray over the area during the daylight hours if we ever hope to reach women at night,” Becton says. “By doing this, we are trusting God's Spirit to go before us and lead us to those He wants us to meet.”

The team is also exploring several other options to facilitate face-to-face discussions, including beginning Bible studies with women in the red-light districts, contacting women who advertise escort services through various websites,

offering to pray with women arrested for prostitution and meeting women jailed for prostitution as they are released.

Becton said she knows that all of these options are fraught with danger and difficulty.

“We've found that there is no real safe place for women to go when they are released from jail,” she says. “There are a couple of organizations in the city that offer some level of aftercare to exploited

women, but they are not equipped for long-term residential care.”

In the face of such challenges, Becton and her team continue to press forward one step at a time.

“Ministry is messy,” she explains. “I want a concrete plan, but that is not how the Lord has been leading us.”

So, for now, Becton and her team continue to pray.

They pray for increased awareness of human trafficking among believers.

They pray for strong relationships among churches and like-minded organizations that are involved in the fight against trafficking.

Most of all, they pray that God will lead them to come alongside hurting women to show them His love.

“We can only take it a step at a time,” Loree says. (BP)

To learn more, visit OneLifeMatters.org. To connect with Loree's team, email precious2god@verizon.net or visit their Facebook page, *Precious to God*.

“No one knows with certainty the exact number of children victimized. ... We believe that child sex trafficking is a missing child issue.”

Krystal Gandola

“Ministry is messy. I want a concrete plan, but that is not how the Lord has been leading us. We can only take one step at a time.”

Loree Becton

A PERSONAL PLEA TO PASTORS AND STEWARDSHIP LEADERS



IS YOUR CHURCH PREPARED FOR:

- ♦ The "silent tsunami that has already broken -- unnoticed and miles off the coast"?
- ♦ The continuous decline in traditional sources of giving?

DID YOU KNOW;

- ♦ Older church members give 4 times more than younger members?
- ♦ Older members give 46% of offering plate dollars but account for only 19% of church membership?
- ♦ Each younger generation gives significantly less of its income to ministry?
- ♦ The largest generational transfer of wealth is taking place before your very eyes -- \$41 trillion?

HOW MANY:

- ♦ Of your long time, faithful members have died in the past year, 2 years, 3 years, etc.?
- ♦ Of them included the church in their estate plans?

LIFEWAY RESEARCH REPORTED IN FEBRUARY 2013:

- ♦ 72% of Southern Baptist pastors believe every adult member should include the church and other ministries in their estate plans, **BUT**
- ♦ 86% stated they had not provided their congregations with any basic information on estate planning in the past year.

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE:

- ♦ Please call me to discuss how we can assist.
- ♦ I can provide you references of other churches we have assisted.

Your Ministry Partner,
Barry G. Allen

For additional information contact:

Barry Allen, President and CEO
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