

WESTERN Recorder

February 24, 2015

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

Volume 189, Issue 4

Louisville woman engaged after GenSend

By Jim Burton

Perhaps this is only supposed to happen in movies. But with a little help from Google and one click of a mouse, Sarah Reese found her life's direction and eventually her husband.

The North American Mission Board can't guarantee the same result for every college student. But NAMB can guarantee that checking out Generation Send (GenSend) can be life changing for college students and the cities they serve as summer missionaries.

The Louisville native thought she had her life figured out. After high school mission trips to the Philippines and Guatemala, she became further engaged in city-reaching back home during her senior year in high school in a Louisville community called Portland. The area is rough, Reese said, but through a Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club, she was able to minister by tutoring inner-city kids and doing Bible studies with the girls.

"I had been overseas," Reese said, "but 25 minutes down the road from me people were broken."

The tutoring pointed her toward education as a college major at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va. During a church-planting emphasis week there, her plans began to change. She never saw herself in a "traditional" church ministry role.

"If I am the cornerstone of the church and the church is the vessel that I want to accomplish My purpose with," Reese said paraphrasing the words of Jesus, "it would not make sense for you not to be a part of that."

That's when she Googled.

GenSend Portland

Reese applied for a GenSend appointment

through NAMB, which assigned her to Portland. GenSend is the student portion of NAMB's Farm System, assisting churches in the discovery, development and deployment of everyday missionaries.

"I came to Portland (in summer 2013), and the Lord woke me up to the need for healthy bodies of believers to exist within America," Reese said. "Coming from the South, it's hard to fathom that within America there are places where healthy (church) bodies don't exist."

"When you see the darkness and the idolatry and the lostness, the gospel is not planted like it needs to be planted," she added.

Her assignment sounded relatively simple: go, live and learn how to do life in Portland. The formula NAMB gave the team she joined was also simple. Identify the city, invest in relationships, invite people into your biblical community and increase through sustainable discipleship.

The objective was not so much to start a church in one summer as it was for the students to learn how to be a biblical community and to discover the foundations of church planting.

Reese said the city has a strong liberal socio-political bent. She often runs up against religious pluralism, which espouses multiple pathways to know God. Consequently, she doesn't find hostility toward the gospel. Mostly, it's apathy.

"Oh, you're a Christian," people will say to Reese. "Good for you."

That response represents what she calls a facade of tolerance.

"I had never been exposed to that where I was looking into the face of a real person who believes that (pluralism)," Reese said. "Going overseas did not prepare me for the culture shock I'd find within our own country."

□ See GenSend Experience ... Page 8



2015 Send North America Week of Prayer missionary Sarah Reese served in Portland, Ore. Reese will complete her studies this year at Liberty University and plans to be part of a church planting team in Denver. (NAMB photo by Susan Whitley)



Fire destroyed the sanctuary of Mill Creek Baptist Church on Feb. 18. Pastor Larry Sowders said the congregation will worship in the gymnasium and fellowship hall that were not damaged by the fire.

Fire destroys Bell County church

By Myriah Snyder

Stoney Fork—"We've got so much left," the pastor of Mill Creek Baptist Church in Bell County said after a fire destroyed the church's sanctuary on Feb. 18.

A loud "boom" followed by smoke coming from the building was witnessed by a member who lives across the street on Wednesday morning. He immediately called the fire department.

By the time the fire was extinguished, the only things left standing from the structure built in 1976 were the basement walls and the outer walls of the sanctuary.

The winter storm will make it hard to find the cause of the fire, although they assume it was electrical, Mill Creek Pastor Larry Sowders said.

Sowders said that although these things have to be decided by the congregation, "Everyone's positive we'll definitely build it back."

Sowders said that the church will continue to worship in the gymnasium and fellowship hall that were not damaged by the fire.

"We've got a place where we can stay on our own ground and worship and not have to leave. I think that is so soothing for the elderly folks that just love that church and have been a part of it," Sowders added.

Most of the congregation is "devastated," he mentioned. The church formerly had a school, and the church has influenced

□ See Church Fire ... Page 12

Is electronic giving catching on among Ky. congregations?

By Myriah Snyder

Louisville—As bills are increasingly paid online, more banking transactions done via the internet, and direct deposit becoming the norm, Baptist churches across the state are beginning to embrace the times and offer an alternate way to

give tithes and offerings.

"I think churches are going to have to realize that we have to change with society, and that is where we are headed," Mike Williams, associate pastor/administrator at Lone Oak First Baptist Church in Paducah, said.

Through the company SecureGive, Immanuel Baptist

Church of Lexington uses an app, online giving and provides a kiosk in the church's foyer, said David Bourne, church administrator.

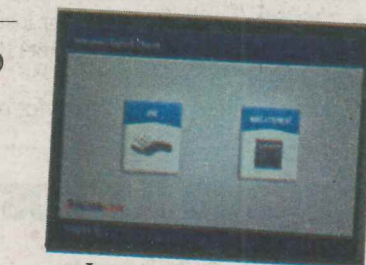
Recently, they implemented the "text-to-give" system.

Various other programs are available for electronic tithing including SecureGive, EasyTithe,

E-giving and more.

Bourne compared the system to any online bill payment system, saying that it was "simple and easy to use." Additionally, the electronic tither can set his/her giving to be reoccurring.

Immanuel has been using electronic giving for about seven



years. In the last three years, their online giving has jumped from amounting to 10 percent of their

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Week of Prayer for

SEND
NORTH AMERICA

& the Annie Armstrong
Easter Offering

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Young church recognized for sacrificial CP giving

By Robin Cornetel

Louisville—New City Church may be one of the youngest church plants in Louisville, but it stands tall as one of the top missions givers in the state.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention recognized New City for its per capita giving to the Cooperative Program, the vehicle through which Southern Baptists share the gospel in Kentucky and around the world.

"Much like the story of the widow's mite found in Mark 12:41-44, New City Church has given its offerings in obedience to Scripture and with discipline that is worthy of recognition, particularly for such a young church plant," said Curtis Woods, the KBC's associate executive director for convention relations and communications.

New City began holding worship services at the KBC's Louisville headquarters in early 2013. It has since

moved to the Down Syndrome of Louisville building and hopes to one day find a permanent location downtown near the city's large international refugee population.

"While other Kentucky Baptist churches may contribute more substantial amounts to the Cooperative Program due to their sizable memberships, New City has given sacrificially from the small amount of tithes and offerings it does receive," Woods said.

New City's overall CP gift during the 2013-14 fiscal year was \$10,919. The average amount from each member, or its per capita amount, was \$295.10.

On top of CP gifts, New City gave more than \$2,000 last year to national and international missions through the Annie Armstrong and Lottie Moon offerings.

T.J. Francis, one of three pastors serving at New City, said that without the Cooperative Program, "I don't believe any one church could scratch the surface of



Curtis Woods (left), associate executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, presents a Cooperative Program award recognizing New City Church as No. 2 in the state in per capita giving. Pastors are Rob Allen, John David Trentham and T.J. Francis.

answering the call of the Great Commission. I think we take the greatness out when we try to do it as individuals."

Among New City's core values, Francis said, is a desire to be strategically

missional, which explicitly states giving through the Cooperative Program. Francis illustrated those beliefs when he presented the KBC with the church's first CP check at the May 2013 Mission Board meeting.

Francis, who is a full-time staffer at New City and an adjunct professor of worldview and culture at Boyce College, works in harmony with part-time pastor John David Trentham, an assistant professor of leadership and discipleship at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and lay pastor Rob Allen, who is director of guest relations at Crossings Ministries. Each holds the title of "pastor" to maintain a holistic atmosphere where one man is not over the others.

The top four per capita Cooperative Program giving Kentucky Baptist churches are: Countryside Church, Morganfield, \$311 (average per member); New City Church, Louisville, \$295.10; Mexico Church, Marion, \$268; and Good Hope Church, Campbellsville, \$238. (KBC)

Church reaches 'poverty stricken' area with Super Bowl event

By Myriah Snyder

Pineville—A weekend that started in cancellations and chaos ended with 14 coming to know Christ.

New Heights Baptist Church in Pineville hosted a service on Saturday, Jan. 31, and a Super Bowl party on Sunday for the community.

Their goal was to "take the edge off church as usual" to reach the poverty-stricken area to which the church ministers, Jeff Day, music director at New Heights, said.

Pastor Mark Elkins teamed up with Evangelist Steve Paysen for what was originally going to be a four-day, old-fashion revival.

"We've never done that before, and there's a reason why," Elkins said. "But I'm always up for trying new things."

They both agreed that this was an evangelistic event targeting lost people.

A friend asked Elkins, "Mark, can lost people worship?"

"God was saying you're asking people to do something that they're not capable of doing and it creates barriers," Elkins explained. "We needed to come up with something to remove the barriers."

So, he took the pamphlet that he'd been handing out and threw it away.

"If we're going to do this for lost people, then what would it look like, feel like, sound like?" he pondered.

They decided to have a service on

Saturday night where they would give out gift cards and food and Paysen would preach, and then hold a Super Bowl party on Sunday evening.

They started with what at first seemed an unpopular idea: changing the music to secular music. "If they can't worship, why should we sing worship music? If that's going to bring barriers, then let's remove all the barriers," Elkins said.

"The thought was let's get some good, clean, hand-clapping, toe-stomping music where people are relaxed and comfortable," he continued. "When Steve stands up, he'll be able to stand up in the freedom of the Lord and preach the Word, and we'll just let God do the rest."

They played songs such as "Happy" and some older 50s and 60s music.

With \$500, just enough to cover renting the theater, things started to fall into place. A worship leader from a local church agreed to do the music, a truckload of non-perishable food items to give out was arranged, other donations came in and a company was going to donate chicken for the families that came.

"It was obvious at that point that God was in it," Elkins commented. "Things were starting to fall together, and I was getting more and more confident every day."

Within a week of the big event, however, things unraveled. The worship leader backed out; the non-perishable items and the chicken were no longer



Left, the New Heights worship team performs secular music prior to the message.

Below, 80 families received a week's worth of food.



available.

"At that moment I stopped and said, 'All right God. What are you saying? What are you doing? What do you want us to do here?'" Elkins said.

"I just left it in His hands," he continued. "It wasn't comfortable. I was just trusting Him."

Then, money and gifts started coming in from church members and unexpected sources. With the help of the local radio station and New Heights' worship team, the music came together. In the end, they had enough to send 80 families home with food for a week. Drinks and pizza were donated. The church gave out gift cards and an iPad mini.

Paysen preached Saturday and 11 people responded to God's call. During the service on Sunday, "dozens of people" responded at the invitation, Elkins said.

During halftime on Sunday night, Elkins baptized two. When he extended an invitation for anyone else who knew they

were saved but had yet to be baptized, a 10-year-old girl responded and with her mother's permission was baptized that night.

At the same time, two teenage girls were outside—one talking to her father and the other to her youth pastor. Both committed her life to Christ.

"It was just the Spirit of God," Elkins said. "It wasn't necessarily the method or approach that we used, it was just that we tried our best to honor God, and God honored us." (WR)

Engage KY Lostness tour planned March 20-21 for northern Kentucky

By Robin Cornetel

Northern Kentucky—Much like the rest of the state, a majority of Northern Kentucky's 370,000 residents are lost and in need of the gospel, said a Kentucky Baptist missions leader.

"The hearts of our pastors are breaking. They've heard the statistics; they know that thousands are headed toward an eternity apart from Christ," said Doug Williams, missions strategist at the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

"Kentucky's pastors want to make a kingdom impact, it's just knowing where to start."

Williams estimates about half of people living in Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties are "religiously unaffiliated."

In an effort to help pastors reach their Judea for Christ, Williams said the KBC's missions mobilization team has organized a series of lostness vision tours called Engage KY. The next tour will be held in northern Kentucky March 20-21.

A second spring vision tour is scheduled for Lexington on May 18-19.

Through panel discussions and bus tours, Williams said Engage KY participants learn about the unique ethnic and socio-economic make-up of their region. They also are introduced to local churches and ministries seeking to cultivate lasting, gospel-centered partnerships.

Last fall, a packed travel bus toured Louisville's international refugee and low-income communities, stopping

along the way at several Muslim mosques and Buddhist temples to pray.

During the two-day event, participants heard about several short- and long-term church discipleship opportunities.

Engage KY: Northern Kentucky is designed for pastors, directors of missions and missions leaders. The first 40 registered participants will receive free accommodations. To register, go to www.kybaptist.org/engage. Deadline is March 17. (KBC)

Church gives God glory for 70 coming to Christ

By Myriah Snyder

Madisonville—Sunday, Feb. 8, is a date that the members of Grapevine Baptist Church of Madisonville will talk about for years to come. Seventy people were baptized that day.

"This event happened because 500 or 600 people just fervently plead with God for His presence," Pastor Bob Morrison said.

"There was not a special speaker or a special sermon or anything special about the day other than we spent a lot of time pleading and praying with God," he added.

Morrison challenged the southwestern Kentucky congregation with an average attendance of 500 people to "pray for the entire week, pleading with God for His presence and asking God to show up in power on the following Sunday," he said.

The following Sunday (Jan. 18), he preached on the "wheat and tares." There were 48 professions of faith that morning.

That night, there was no sermon, simply a time for testimonies, and the congregation responded to God's call with 23 more professions of faith.

On Sunday, Feb. 1, 15 people joined the church, with eight by profession of faith.

So far, the church has baptized 70 and still have more to be baptized, Morrison said.

"I think the problem that we typically have is that when people hear of something like this, they ask who



Seventy people were baptized Feb. 8 at Grapevine Baptist Church of Madisonville. Throughout the week, the church received calls from people to "let us know what was going on in their lives and how they were taking our services before the Lord," Grapevine's youth pastor Michael Jicka said.

preached, or what did he preach, or what was the sermon or what's your visitation program?" Morrison said.

"People want to give credit to the program, or to the process or to people," he continued.

"What we try to do, maybe intentionally or not, is we try to take God's glory away from Him and say, 'Well, God couldn't have done that. It must have been a good preacher. It must have been a good sermon.' And none of that is true.

"We've taken a great deal of time and effort and energy to teach our people 'it is not by might, nor by power, but by my

spirit says the Lord,'" Morrison concluded.

Throughout the week, the church received calls from people who were praying and calling the office to "let us know what was going on in their lives and how they were taking our services before the Lord," Grapevine's youth pastor Michael Jicka said.

"We've seen Him do things that I have not seen in 25 years of youth ministry that I've never seen even at camps and overseas. I've never seen anything in this setting work like that," Jicka added.

"When we prayed for the presence of God, He showed up." (WR)

CP gifts at 7-year high so far this year

Louisville—Kentucky Baptist leaders are citing the generosity of churches for an increase in contributions to support the spread of the gospel throughout the state, nation and world.

Total Cooperative Program receipts five months into the 2014-15 fiscal year stand at more than \$9.3 million. That's 1 percent ahead of the same point in the previous fiscal year.

Kentucky's 2,400 Southern Baptist churches gave more than \$2 million through the Cooperative Program in January, marking a notable milestone. It's the first time in more than seven years giving has surpassed budgeted amounts five months into a fiscal year.

"We celebrate the faithfulness and sacrificial giving of our churches," Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Paul Chitwood said. "This reflects the importance that Kentucky Baptists place on supporting the missionaries who are taking the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world."

"This is one of the most pleasant reports we've made in a while," said Lowell Ashby, leader of the KBC's Finance and Business Services Team. "I believe it shows that our churches realize that much good is coming from their Cooperative Program contributions." (KBC)

Power Lunch employee-focused ministry marks successful first year

By Robin Cornetel

Louisville—Power Lunch, a Kentucky Baptist Convention ministry geared toward employees of nearby businesses, celebrated its first anniversary with record attendance and salvation decisions.

Since last January, nearly 200 people have attended one of the monthly lunches, and 16 professions of faith in Christ have been made. Six decisions were recorded on Tuesday alone.

"Power Lunch seeks to connect with people in their life situations in a language

they can understand and in a framework that guides them toward knowledge of an eternal Jesus," said Chuck McAlister, leader of the KBC's evangelism, church planting and collegiate ministries team.

On the first Tuesday of each month, payroll accountants can be seen sharing a meal alongside heavy-machine operators.

While they dine, McAlister provides practical business advice with a biblical foundation.

"One of the most repeated comments is,

'Can you do this more than once a month?'" McAlister said.



Chuck McAlister

Sean Keeley, a financial planner with New York Life, said he stumbled upon Power Lunch while searching the KBC website for a new church home.

"I enjoy the fellowship with other believers," Keeley said, "and for the non-believers at my job, it has given me the opportunity to reach out to them with the gospel in an easily digestible way."

Keeley said he personally invited 12

co-workers to Tuesday's Power Lunch. Four of them showed up.

The ministry, which began a year ago with KBC employees delivering plates of cookies and Power Lunch invitations to nearby businesses, has already helped launch one new church plant, Louisville's New City Church.

"Now, Eastpoint Community Church is helping us follow up with new believers and helping people get engaged with church," McAlister said. "It's all part of KBC's mission to help churches reach Kentucky and the world for Christ." (KBC)

RAMCON combines missions, learning & fun

Central City—Royal Ambassadors love to challenge each other in various competitions, listen to missionaries tell about their work, and lend a helping hand to people in need. RAMCON 2015 will give boys an opportunity to do all three.

The Kentucky Royal Ambassador Missions Congress (RAMCON) will be March 21 at Temple Missionary Baptist in Central City. The event features Royal Racers, a Rain Gutter Regatta, missionary speakers, and a mission project.

RAs know about building a Royal Racers car and competing for a medal, but many have never participated in a regatta. The cost of the sailboat kit is included in the registration fee. Every boy will receive a kit to decorate and assemble before racing it down a water-filled rain gutter. Top finishers will receive a medal.

Royal Ambassadors will gather in the

church sanctuary to hear about the work and experiences of Aaron Harvie, a church planting strategist with the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board, and Robbie Gray, a Southern Seminary student and member of the Acts 1:8 Experience team that worked at Mission Adventure Camp and in South Africa last summer.

For the mission project, Royal Ambassadors are asked to bring new socks and underwear for adolescent boys. Items will be delivered to the Muhlenberg County Baptist Association and distributed through the Crisis Closet ministry.

Registration is \$15 and includes the program fee, lunch and a sailboat kit. Registration for leaders is \$10. The entry fee for Royal Racers is \$5. For information, go to www.kywmu.org/ramcon. Early bird registration ends March 13. (WMU)

Ky. Baptists urged to join church-planting in Chicago

Alpharetta Ga.—The president of the North American Mission Board and a Lexington pastor have asked Kentucky pastors to help reach Chicago's urban population with the gospel through a growing church-planting movement.

NAMB President Kevin Ezell and Ron Edmondson, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, have sent open letters to Kentucky's nearly 2,400 Baptist pastors, inviting them on a vision tour of the Windy City.

"Your leadership and involvement can make a huge difference," Ezell writes.

In his letter, Edmondson says Immanuel Baptist has agreed to become a leading church in the

effort with a five-year commitment to helping new churches in Chicago—a city where there is one Southern Baptist church for every 35,105 residents.

"There is much work to be done, and we cannot do it alone," Edmondson writes. "I am asking you to consider joining with us as we work with pastors and church plants in the great city of Chicago."

Edmondson will be leading the NAMB-coordinated vision tour of Chicago's church plants April 20-21.

Pastors who are interested in attending should email Kelly Hale, Immanuel's mission coordinator, at kellyh@ibc-lex.org by March 15. (KBC)

A remarkable work

Once per year, typically in February, I have the opportunity to attend a meeting of all of the state convention executive directors from across the Southern Baptist Convention. At this year's meeting, we heard reports from SBC President Ronnie Floyd and several SBC agency heads, including David Platt (International Mission Board), Kevin Ezell (North American Mission Board), Frank Page (Executive Committee), Russell Moore

Together We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

(Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission), and Jason Allen (Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary).

Each of these leaders brings a unique set of gifts and vision to their roles in Southern Baptist life. Hearing them report about our agencies has caused me to reflect upon the remarkable work of God through Southern Baptists.

Through the IMB, God has blessed us with the largest overseas missionary-sending agency in the history of Christianity. Through NAMB, the Lord is using Southern Baptists to multiply churches across North America to the tune of 1,000 new churches each year and has also provided a disaster relief ministry surpassed in its size and resources only by the American Red Cross. Through the ERLC, nearly 50,000 Southern Baptist churches have a strong voice in our national government and can receive resources to help them navigate the political and cultural challenges to religious liberty and Christian values. Through our six Southern Baptist seminaries, the Lord is equipping nearly 18,000 ministry students to serve in His churches and mission fields of the world.

How is all this work possible? Ultimately, God must get the credit.

The primary means that God has used is the Cooperative Program. Without the CP, the mission boards could have never grown to the size or effectiveness we see today; nor could our six seminaries be flourishing by offering the best and most affordable theological education to be found; the ERLC couldn't afford office space; and the Executive Committee couldn't hire a secretary, let alone run the affairs of the denomination.

In addition to funding the mission work of the Southern Baptist Convention, the CP also funds the mission work of each state convention. In Kentucky, churches are planted and strengthened through the various ministries of our Mission Board staff. Students at Oneida, Clear Creek, and the University of the Cumberlands are helped with their educational expenses. More than 600 hurting kids have a safe place to live and sleep through Sunrise Children's Services. Kentucky Baptists are able to stay informed about the church and denominational life through the Western Recorder. More than 10,000 kids hear the gospel at Crossings camps, the WMU continues to challenge us to give and go to the mission fields of the world, and the Kentucky Baptist Foundation helps secure the financial future of Kentucky Baptist work.

The CP is the lifeblood of a missions enterprise that is advancing the gospel in every state, the United States, and to the very ends of the earth. Thanks be to God!

Queen Elsa 'apprehended,' Harlan police report

Has all this bitter wintry weather left you a bit ... well, bitter? Need a good chuckle to warm your spirits? Last Wednesday, the Harlan Police Department issued an "all points" bulletin:

"HPD has issued an arrest warrant for Queen Elsa of Arendelle. Suspect is a blonde female last seen wearing a long blue dress and is known to burst into song 'Let it Go!' As you can see by the weather she is very dangerous. Do not attempt to apprehend her alone."

For those of you without young children in your home, Queen Elsa is the princess in the recent Disney movie "Frozen."

With snow accumulations of a foot or more in some places across the state, temperatures plunging into arctic zone ranges, and another icy blast barreling down, Harlan police—and most other Kentuckians—were fairly certain the snow queen was on the loose and had cast a "mad spell."

The gauge in my car read -4 on the way into work Friday morning, but that was balmy compared to record lows reported by our friends in the far east (Kentucky, that is).

According to the Lexington Herald Leader, temperatures ranged from minus 32 degrees near Richmond in Madison County, minus 26 in Harrison County, and minus 23 degrees in Nicholas County to minus 17 in Franklin County and minus 11 degrees in Fayette County.

Wind chills were even more bone-chilling—all the way to the Tennessee border.

Still, Harlan police didn't expect the quick response to their attempt to bring a little levity to the brutal cold. Within five hours of their fake bulletin on Facebook, the villain was apprehended just across the state line, according to a news reporter for the Claiborne (Tenn.)



After Thought

By Todd Deaton

Progress, a sister publication of the Harlan Daily Enterprise, which reported her alleged capture.

If the Claiborne police did, in fact, catch Queen Elsa, here's hoping she won't make bail! If she is extradited, it is highly doubtful she will find an eastern Kentucky lawyer who will defend her at this point—much less, find a jury that will acquit her.

Harlan police since have issued the following statement: "Wow. We were just having a little fun and didn't expect this! It has been fun and we had to have a little fun after this week's weather."

"But as a reminder, do take the precautions you need to keep you, your friends, family, neighbors and pets safe during the snow queen's mad spell."

Early Friday morning, the power went out for about an hour in our neighborhood. For some strange reason, every smoke alarm (and I think there must be six or seven) in our house started screeching. No one is sleeping in!

After we determined that there was no fire, we became more "alarmed" as our house grew colder and colder by the minute. And, we became alerted to a very real crisis that others around us might be facing. All joking aside, the brutal cold can be life-threatening in a matter of minutes.

Just stepping outside should be a rude reminder to look-in on elderly family, friends, neighbors and fellow church members who may be without heat, food or medicine. They may need steps or driveways cleared so they can move safely. Fallen branches may need to be removed.

No one wants to venture out long, and we're all tempted to just huddle around the fire, but frigid nights with potential power outages also may become a call to ministry.

Stay warm!

Is your congregation 'seeing singles'? 10 tips can help

A stunning fact you may not know: According to U.S. Census data, more than one-fourth of all adults have never been married (27 percent). Another six percent are widowed and 12 percent divorced or separated.

Most churches minister well to those 56 percent of adults who are married. But, do we also acknowledge the great value and importance of that "invisible" enormous multitude of unmarried adults?

I interviewed several unmarried Christian friends, and discovered 10 tips for loving and ministering to single adults who are members or guests at church.

1) See each single adult as a valued individual, ready to meet God and serve Him, with or without a boyfriend or girlfriend, fiancé, spouse or kids in tow.

2) Train greeters at church. Comments such as "Are you here alone?" or "Is it just you?" may indicate that he or she is incomplete.

3) Acknowledge single adults as

full-fledged members, not just as sideline people. Plug them into leadership and ministry roles to fit their spiritual gifts. Encourage them to serve on important church committees, projects, and men or women's ministry teams.

Fresh Ideas



Diana Davis

4) Involve singles in small groups. Many singles enjoy a small group with similar marital status and life stage. Most singles I interviewed, however, are involved in a small group of both married and unmarried. Offer choices.

5) Encourage them to make the most of their singleness.

Recognize the extra gifts they may bring to the church, such as more freedom to serve and travel, and sometimes more financial freedom.

6) Unless he or she personally requests it, don't set them up with your cousin or recommend online dating services. Avoid communicating, "It's God's will that you find a mate." That's not necessarily true. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul taught that singleness is a gift. Most singles aren't

coming to church to find a mate. They're here to worship, to serve, to support.

7) Intentionally encourage single adults to participate in church events and ministries—Vacation Bible School, church dinners. Include them in your church traditions. For example, invite singles to light an advent candle.

8) A church may provide some quality, uniquely single events, targeted to specific life circumstances. Examples: a single parents Bible study, singles mission trip, young singles retreat, single adult outreach event, mature singles' Christmas project.

9) Connect with single adults personally as a friend. Encourage them. Invite them to dinner or dessert. True fellowship often happens at the dinner table.

10) Be constantly aware of single adults all around you at work, in the grocery line, at the ball game, in your neighborhood. Invite them to your church.

As an individual member and as a church, how are you doing at reaching and including adults who are unmarried?

WESTERN Recorder

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Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

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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.

Church size: Small is the 'new big'

By Chuck Kelley

This may seem like a silly question, but do you know who Southern Baptists are?

When asked that question, many people will think in terms of our theology and doctrine. We believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. We are a people of the Book and, therefore, we read it, preach it and seek to follow its teaching as we live our lives. We are theologically conservative and hold to a distinctive Baptist theology.

Another way to address the question is to look at our mission. Who are we in terms of what we do? We answered that question at the first meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845. After voting to create the SBC, messengers also voted to create a Foreign Mission Board and a Board for Domestic Missions.

The glue that has always held us together is a common passion to call all the peoples of the world to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. The Great Commission is our DNA, literally. The glue that has always held us together and formed the basis of unprecedented levels of cooperation between completely autonomous churches is a common passion to call all the

peoples of the world to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

More money is given to our mission enterprises by Southern Baptists than any other aspect of our work as a convention. We are a people determined to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Most of us know what we believe and most of us know what we do, but how many of us know who our churches are? We have 46,000-plus churches. What are those churches like?

If you imagine that the typical Southern Baptist church is a large church with extensive ministries, you would be incorrect. One of the most amazing truths about Southern Baptists is that we are a convention of smaller churches who work together to fund and operate large, extensive ministries on a state, national and global scale.

For instance, approximately 90 percent of all Southern Baptist churches have 250 people or less attending worship on any given Sunday. Nearly 70 percent of all our cooperating churches have 100 or fewer in attendance each week. Less than 2 percent have more than 1,000 people present for Sunday worship. Clearly the Southern Baptist Convention is composed of far more smaller churches than larger churches.

There are many important implications flowing from this truth about Southern Baptist churches. Many of our pastors are bivocational pastors. They have both a secular career and a church ministry, often because the church they serve cannot afford to pay a full-time salary.

If students are serving a church during seminary, it is nearly always a small church. When students go to serve a church after seminary, that church is often a smaller church, not a large or megachurch. When we start new churches, they typically begin as small churches.

Research indicates churches with less than 1,000 people present on a Sunday morning give a higher percentage of their budget to the Cooperative Program than churches with more than 1,000 people. In other words, smaller churches are the backbone of the Southern Baptist Convention.

These churches are the source of our ministers, our missionaries and much of our funding for the Cooperative Program.

Small is the new big. Our future will be determined by how well we nurture our small churches and enhance their fruitfulness. (BP)

Chuck Kelley is president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

FIRST PERSON

Benefits of divorce recovery group

By James Stillwell

A divorce recovery workshop is an intentional blend of important information communicated through a lecture and vital support and discussion done in a confidential small group.

The workshop is designed for anyone on this spectrum:

from a person who is contemplating divorce to a person who has been divorced more than 30 years who still has "emotional baggage." And everyone in between.

The "target group" would be the person who is experiencing divorce or separation now, who needs a support system while going through the crisis. Actually, the diversity has benefits for everyone. Everyone

is either a few steps ahead or behind of wherever you are in the healing journey.

It is good for men and women to be in the same small group, as well as for the "leaver" and the "leavee" to sit across the room from one another to hear the other person's perspective. These perspectives are necessary in developing empathy for a former spouse.

Empathy is a key ingredient in the process of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the ultimate key that sets the participant free from the bondage of being chained to the past and unable to move ahead to a more positive future.

Three ingredients to a divorce recovery program are three of the points Jesus made in Matthew 18-19:

- (1) Each of us is responsible for our part in the journey of forgiveness (Mt 18:15-35).
- (2) The process of forgiveness happens most effectively when done in the context of small group support (Mt 18:19-20).
- (3) God takes marriage seriously and takes a strong stand that persons are not discarded as things, but are valued as people created in the image of God. (Mt 19:1-12).

One workshop built around these principles is held twice each year since 1993, the Divorce Recovery Workshop at Calvary Baptist in Lexington. For information check out www.divorce-recovery.net. Registration is open through March 2 for adults and children.



Estate stewardship through KBF

By Laurie Valentine

Using the Kentucky Baptist Foundation to accomplish your estate stewardship objectives can benefit both you and the Baptist causes you wish to support.

The Kentucky Baptist Foundation is the trust agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. It can receive lifetime gifts and/or gifts at death for the support of all Kentucky Baptist and Southern Baptist causes. The Foundation, as a "member of the family," has a special appreciation and affection for the mission and ministry of the causes that will be supported through your gifts. This connection assures you, as the giver, the foundation has each cause's best interests in mind as it manages the gifts made for that cause's benefit.

Many givers want to benefit more than one cause and realize that dividing their gift may result in lower total support. A single fund can be set up with the Kentucky Baptist Foundation to provide support to more than one Baptist cause. This can result in more consistent levels of support for all—each cause will have the benefit of the same level of competent investment management oversight services and the economies of centralized fund management.

Making the Kentucky Baptist Foundation the manager of your gift assures the causes you want to support are left to do what they were called to do: missions, Christian education, child care, evangelism, disaster relief, etc. You relieve their board, trustees and/or staff from day-to-day investment research, analysis, decision-making, transacting and reporting, and place those responsibilities with the organization whose mission is to provide competent, prudent financial management for the causes designated by its donors.

Let us help you discover how you can practice your financial stewardship at a deeper level.



A gathering of friends

My first column in the Western Recorder a little over 10 years ago began in this way: "No one understands youth ministry like another youth minister. That is one of the guiding principles that undergirds the group of friends that make up the Hopkinsville Youth Ministry Network."

In the years since, I have learned the uniqueness of what we had there. We were not only youth ministers in the same community, we also became friends—not just your everyday run of the mill friends, but the kind of friends described in Proverbs 18:24: "But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (NKJV). We were honestly a band of brothers.

Later in that column I described this way:

"If I have learned anything in youth ministry, it is I don't know it all and that ministry is never done in a vacuum. The network here in Hopkinsville is not just a network of ministers but a group of friends. I can honestly say that some of the guys in this area are the best friends I have on earth. We laugh, cry, pray and minister together. We challenge each other and serve as accountability partners (Proverbs

27:17). We take our wives out to eat together. We plan events with our students together. It is a rare place indeed and we all know that. The beauty is that we also present a unified front to the local churches, local schools, and community organizations. We truly speak as a united group."

Since that time most of the guys in that group have either left Hopkinsville or are no longer in ministry. I moved on to the KBC and then to Crossings; Steve left to become the youth minister at FBC Richmond; Nathan left to minister in churches in Paducah and Las Vegas only to return to Hopkinsville to teach high school. There were others who were there that left for

a variety of reasons. Several more have passed through the area in the 10 years I have been gone.

This week, most of us will gather again. We'll tell stories, we'll laugh, we'll cry, we'll pray and we'll minister. But this week it will be different. This week we will gather to pay our last respects to Bill. He was the youth pastor at Hillcrest, the life of the party, the retired Army guy who was rough around the edges, but he loved students and they loved him. He had the

largest student group in the area. He was doing multi-cultural ministry before it was a thing. He developed leaders. He spoke the truth in no uncertain terms. His false teeth were more likely to be in your glass of tea than in his mouth, and his backflip was legendary. He was an innovator, a learner, a mentor, a husband, a dad, an avid Chicago Bears fan, a friend and a frequent source of information for this column. But, most importantly, he was a follower of Jesus.

Youth ministry is a lonely job and as we said in the beginning, no one understands youth ministry like another youth minister.

I have lost count of the youth ministers from across the state that have told me in the last few days that the reason they are still in the trenches in ministry is because of Bill.

His death this past week left a terrible void in the life of many—one I am not sure that anyone can fill. I count it an honor to have been his friend. In the words of Vince Gill, "Go rest high on that mountain, Son, your work on earth is done..."

Praise God and "Go Bears!"

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

Youth Ministry Corner



Joe Ball

Operation Inasmuch prepares churches for community outreach

By Robin Cornetet

Louisville—Most people think churches are less concerned about what goes on in the community than inside their own buildings. At least that's what a recent LifeWay Research study reveals.

But what if churches could prove otherwise?

Operation Inasmuch, a national non-profit, provides tools to start a "compassion revolution" that can heal communities and energize churches. Throughout September, Kentucky Baptist churches will participate in a statewide event called Inasmuch Kentucky.

Training for this emphasis begins in March.

"Imagine what a witness it would be if Kentucky Baptists blitzed their communities, and our state, to serve others in the name of Christ. That's the goal of Inasmuch Kentucky," said Eric Allen, Missions Mobilization team leader for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

**TRULY, I SAY TO YOU,
INASMUCH
AS YOU DID IT TO ONE OF THE
LEAST OF THESE
MY BRETHREN, YOU DID IT
TO ME.
MATTHEW 25:40**

Inasmuch Kentucky encourages churches to select a single day during September to give back to their communities through missions-minded service projects, such as:

- Playground cleanup and repairs
- Delivering meals to homebound seniors

- Providing free oil changes or car clinics

- Painting and landscaping

- Free hair cuts

"The list could go on and on," Allen said. "What would happen in your

Jerusalem if your church reached out to the community in this way?"

Inasmuch experts and Kentucky Baptist Convention staff will offer training at seven locations across the state beginning at Buena Vista Baptist Church in Somerset on March 3. Training also will be offered at:

- Caldwell-Lyon Baptist Association in Princeton, March 14

- Allen Baptist Church in Prestonsburg, March 16

- Bethlehem Baptist Church in Louisville, March 26

- Green Valley Baptist Association in Henderson, March 26

- Parkway Baptist Church in Lexington, April 18

- Coral Hill Baptist Church in Glasgow, April 18

Participants will be equipped with the information needed to successfully impact lives through service projects.

Allen noted that with adequate planning, statistics reveal that as many as 60 percent of average Sunday

churchgoers typically participate in large-scale outreach events.

"Inasmuch will not only help people at their point of need and give an opportunity for believers to share Christ, it will strengthen fellowship and build family within the local church," he said.

"The month of September was selected for Operation Inasmuch to coincide with the annual state missions emphasis and the Eliza Broadus Offering," Joy Bolton, executive director of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, said. "Suggestions for making Operation Inasmuch a part of your state missions emphasis will be included in the 2015 Season of Prayer for State Missions promotional materials.

"This is a wonderful way to include local ministry as part of putting feet to your prayers for reaching the lost in Kentucky," Bolton said.

To register for one of the seven regional training dates offered in March and April, go to www.kybaptist.org/inasmuch. (KBC)

Electronic giving

Continued from page 1

offerings to 22 percent now.

Living Waters Community Church in Oak Grove utilizes a kiosk that they call the "Donation Station" along with their online system.

Many of their younger members are "more comfortable" with it, Pastor David Corum said. "The more options are made available, the better. We are creating an atmosphere where giving is the norm," Corum added.

Lone Oak First Baptist noted that their first-time givers are using the system more and the dollar amount that comes in through electronic giving is increasing.

Troy Richards, pastor of East Hartford Baptist Church said that not only has online giving seen an increase in the last two years, but also that it has helped with consistency in giving.

Many times people cannot attend because of vacations or work obligations. This provides them with a way to give

when they cannot be physically present, Richards noted.

"I see less and less people writing checks. We are trying to make sure that we stay on top of that so it doesn't hurt the giving in our church," Richards said.

Churches are promoting electronic giving through social media, weekly bulletins, newsletters and reminders from the pulpit.

Immanuel uses personal testimonies during the offering time and has put together videos showing their congregation how to use the system.

Another way the electronic system is productive is with payments.

Immanuel has their system set up to take payments for mission trips, youth trips and even for its preschool program.

Immanuel member David Rose uses the app to pay for his children's mission trips because it is "convenient."

Electronic giving will be "at the heart" of Concord Baptist Church in Hopkinsville's upcoming stewardship campaign, according to Pastor Dennis Wilder.



Immanuel Baptist Church of Lexington uses online giving and provides a kiosk in the church's foyer.

"E-giving makes it easy for anyone who does online banking to have their tithes electronically debited from their bank account on a specific day each month or week.

"So even if they are away, for whatever reason, they can keep their commitment they made to God," Wilder said.

"Our pastor said it great when he said, 'When God prompts someone to give, we want to make sure there is every way possible and it's available to give,'" Bourne said.

"If my son is sitting in the church service and God prompts him to give, I guarantee you he doesn't have a checkbook with him, but he will have a debit card," he added.

Other churches also are finding that millennials are the ones that this system is being of the most value.

"We feel we have given our millennials an opportunity to give in a manner that fits their lifestyle," Bill Edmonds, member at Jeffersontown Baptist Church, said.

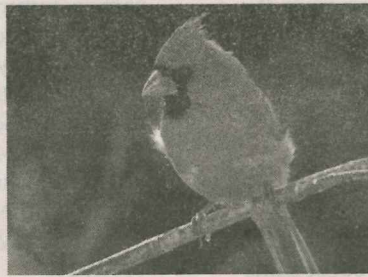
Jeffersontown Baptist began their electronic giving program in July, and it has continued to grow, Edmonds said.

Williams added, "We began to do this because we started hearing requests from church membership. We have had young couples say they don't even know where their checkbook is. They don't even use a checkbook.

"I really think the day of envelopes and checks and cash giving is going to go by the wayside at some point.

"We've got to move along with the times and offer people the opportunity to give conveniently." (WR)

Engage KY: Vision Tour



Who? All pastors, DOMs and mission leaders who are interested in learning more about ways to engage their Judea with the gospel.

What? Engage KY is a series of lostness vision tours of certain cities/regions in Kentucky designed to develop strategic partnerships with new and existing churches and/or ministries for gospel advancement in our Judea. Get acquainted with areas of lostness in KY and how your church and/or association can engage that lostness through meaningful gospel partnerships.



When and Where?

- March 20-21, 2015 in Northern KY
- May 18-19, 2015 in Lexington

Engage KY: Vision Tours are free, but registration is required.

ACCOMMODATIONS: A complimentary hotel room (double occupancy) will be provided to the first 40 registrants.

TO FIND OUT MORE & REGISTER

www.kybaptist.org/engage

or email us at partnership@kybaptist.org

502-489-3529 / 866-489-3529 (toll free in KY)

Auditions for All-State Children's Choir

Louisville—Always dreamed of your child being one of the angelic voices that make up the Kentucky Baptist All-State Children's Choir?

Don't delay because the deadline for submitting audition recordings is Feb. 25.

The All-State Children's Choir is open to 4th, 5th and 6th grade students who are active participants in the music program of a Kentucky Baptist church. Auditions are to be prepared by the child's minister of music or choir director, and submitted to the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Worship team.

Members of the choir will participate in a rehearsal retreat at Cedarmore April 24-26 and present two concerts on the last day of the retreat.

For information, go to www.kybaptist.org/worship and click on All State Children's Choir. For questions, email Roxanne Nanney, choir coordinator, at rlanney@bbtel.com. (KBC)



Expressions of gratitude through high praise and generosity

By Paul Badgett

Just as the Apostle Paul expressed gratitude for the church at Philippi for their "partnership in the gospel," expressions of gratitude are due to First Baptist Church of Russell for the high praise they offer the Lord each week and their generosity in giving to missions.

First Church, Russell, recently surpassed the \$2 million mark in Cooperative Program giving. The church's Cooperative Program giving has increased 73 percent since 2000.

However, Cooperative Program giving is not the only thing that has increased. Attendance has also. Since 2000, worship attendance has increased by nearly 65 percent, and First Church has quickly become a flagship church in the East region.

The church has seen steady growth under its current leadership, but none of the church leaders assume any credit for the growth.

The church quickly points this out: "Ken Gowin is not responsible—God is responsible for the growth of this church!"

And, while they have a wonderful place to worship, what impresses visitors the most is the beautiful worship that takes place within their facility.

Worship is led at First Church by Jim Wilcox. When he came, the church had only a 22-voice choir. Today, it enjoys a choir of 120. While some churches seem to be giving up on the concept of a choir, Jim and First Russell, believe the choir is an important aspect of their overall

Regional SPOTLIGHT



Paul Badgett
East



worship experience.

Ken Gowin and Jim Wilcox make a wonderful team. The pastor and worship leader have a close working relationship with each other as they regularly plan together a weekly order of service.

The Bible says, "Behold, how good and pleasant, it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). Ken and Jim give testimony to the truthfulness of this passage.

As my wife and I were leaving a recent service at First Russell, a friend said to me, "God is doing something special here." When people visit they enjoy not only a terrific worship experience, but also they experience the wonderful presence of God's Holy Spirit.

Mark Maynard, of the Daily Independent in Ashland, in quoting Wilcox, in his article, "Goal of choir at Russell church," observes, "For this church ... it is not about high performance but high praise. Our worship is not designed to bring people to their feet but to bring them to their knees."

Scroggs, missionary, Haven of Rest director, dies

INEZ—The head of an organization that ministers to the families of federal prisoners at Big Sandy penitentiary in eastern Kentucky died Feb. 16.

Harold Scroggs was the director of Haven of Rest located near Inez.

He is survived by his wife, Joyce, a co-director of the Inez ministry.

Harold and Joyce Scroggs, originally from South Carolina, became directors of the ministry more than two years ago. They served to share God's love through meeting physical needs and providing a safe place of encouragement for families coping with a loved one who is incarcerated.

The couple also held a chapel service

each Saturday evening and provided housing for mission teams that helped with Vacation Bible School, Backyard Bible Clubs, block parties and various community ministries to the elderly and needy.

Since 2004, Haven of Rest Ministries has hosted families from across the country who visit their imprisoned loved ones at the Big Sandy federal penitentiary.

A memorial service for Harold Scroggs was held Sunday at his home church in South Carolina.

Tom Biddle, director of missions for Enterprise Baptist Association, said a "celebration of life" service will be held in Scroggs's honor. (KBC)



Harold Scroggs

Campbellsville UNIVERSITY



Christmas Break Missions Work Three baptized during Taiwan mission work

Drew O'Neal, Bethany Thomaston, Matt Savage (leading the class above) and Jeremy Cheatham worked with a native Kentuckian, in Taipei, Taiwan Dec. 14 through 28. They spoke to several hundred junior high, high school and college students, teaching ESL and sharing testimonies on the subject of "what Christmas means." These student served leaders also had the opportunity to hold worship services with the local church and worked with small groups in one-on-one conversations. Additional mission trips from CU included those to Grand Isle, Louisiana, Guatemala -- two different groups -- and Northern Ireland.

Please pray for students, faculty and staff who will be traveling over spring break March 9 - 13

Planned mission work over spring break includes: the CU football team will go to a prison ministry in central Florida. About 20 students will share ministry among collegiate spring breakers for Beach Reach in Panama City, Fla. A team of 10 will work with "Homes from the Heart" in El Salvador. This organization builds houses for families who have had their homes destroyed in mudslides. A team of eight will work through the North American Mission Board "SEND" emphasis to reach under-served areas in Cincinnati, Ohio. A group from the School of Education will travel to Belize over spring break and to Italy in May.

Recent speakers in weekly Chapel services

Protect the Sabbath as a day of rest

Dr. Matthew Sleeth, founder and executive director of Blessed Earth, challenged the community of Campbellsville University



to rest more. The Sabbath is a day the Holy Bible commands people to rest. Through Exodus 20:8-11, Sleeth showed God commanding His people to take a day off.

Mustard Seed Ministry

Ron Edmondson, senior pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky., specializes in organizational leadership as well as consulting with church leaders. His experience in leadership led Edmondson to restart one church and contribute to the planting of two others. He created a non-profit ministry titled Mustard Seed Ministry, which focuses on family, marriage, parenting and leadership seminars.



Campbellsville University Life Teams stand ready to assist you and your church in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ!

To schedule a group, contact:

Dr. G. Ted Taylor, director of church outreach, CU FIRST CLASS and professor of theology. Call or text **865.235.4827**

Wes Carter, asst. director of church outreach
Call or text **270.849.7575**

www.Campbellsville.edu



GenSend Experience

Continued from page 1

Mobilizer

Spending the summer in Portland hooked Reese on urban church planting, and she wanted other students to have the same experience. She became a NAMB GenSend Mobilizer. Her assignment was to recruit 10 students from her university to go back to Portland, one of 32 Send North America cities.

Reese returned to Portland for the summer of 2014 with a team. Three other teams also went to Portland. With 42 students on the ground, two teams focused on two areas of urban Portland: Saint Johns and The Pearl District. Neither is impoverished as some envision inner cities to be. Reese worked in the Pearl District, an area she describes as "super wealthy" with many young urban professionals. The student's work was foundational for church planters who would eventually be coming to those areas.

"The Lord has convicted me that being part of church is what we're called to do," Reese said. But like most Millennials, she believes that church can't be the way it's always been.

One of those differences is how Millennials view the Church. They see the Church as the body of Christ forming authentic biblical communities.

"The body of Christ is a very biblical term," Reese said. "My devotion needs to be to His (Jesus) bride, the Church. Church planting is how we bring the bride to places where She's not."

"Everyone needs the gospel. The white, middle-class suburban church-going little girl needs the gospel just as much as the little girl on the streets of Pacux, Guatemala, who is starving."

Sarah Reese, 2015 Send North America Week of Prayer missionary

Denver Bound

Denver is similar to Portland in many respects. But there is one major difference. Jonathan Hunt is there co-planting with a lead church planter through Send North America: Denver. Reese met Hunt during NAMB's Send North America Conference in 2013.

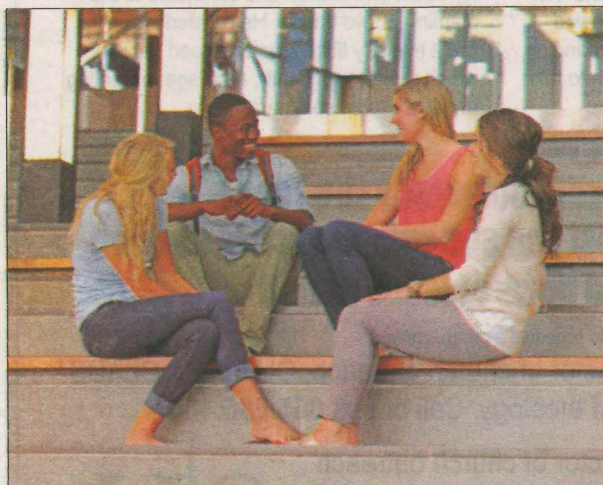
He was a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary student in Louisville and attended Highview Baptist Church, as did Reese's family. But they didn't

know each other then. The couple became engaged in the summer of 2014.

Reese changed her major at Liberty to women's ministry and hopes to focus on developing girls and women as disciples. In a church planting context that can mean any number of development ministry avenues for women.

"Everyone needs the gospel," Reese said. "The white, middle-class suburban church-going little girl needs the gospel just as much as the little girl on the streets of Pacux, Guatemala, who is starving."

"The gospel is the foremost need." (NAMB)



An outgoing personality served Sarah Reese well on mission trips to the Philippines and Guatemala. Reese, a 2015 Send North America Week of Prayer missionary, is completing her studies at Liberty University. (NAMB photo by Susan Whitley)

2015 Week of Prayer missionary for Send North America Mark Lashey (right) shares from the Bible with Bob Trovinger at the Middletown, Del., Peach Festival. Lashey's church plant, LifeHouse Church, sponsors a parade float and booth at the annual festival. (NAMB photo by Colby Ware)



No longer running, Lashey is planted in Delaware

By Jim Burton

Middletown, Del.—Mark Lashey had zero desire to live in Delaware. There was no sweet tea, no biscuits. Children there didn't say sir and ma'am. The Northeast seemed cold in terms of relationships, not to mention climate.

Yes, he understood his wife, Tammy, wanting to raise their children close to her parents, but the state held no other attraction for him.

Then he started praying during his regular neighborhood jogs. Through his praying, God gave Lashey a burden for the community.

"There were times I would cry as I was running and praying for people," Lashey said. "When I started praying for the people in this community, I started loving them."

When the Lasheys moved to Delaware a few years after college, he was working as an accountant. Corporate America was good to the Lasheys, but their passion was music. With Tammy's sister, Stephanie, and her husband, Rob Leight, the two couples formed Calling Levi.

Along with a sound technician and nanny, the couples traveled for 10 years throughout the U.S., including Alaska, singing in churches and at special events. Most of their engagements were in the South.

Lashey thought that music would be his ticket out of Delaware, and he wanted to move back to the Bible belt where he spent many of his formative years in a military family.

"Every weekend we were traveling south," Lashey said as he continually rationalized the move, particularly as Calling Levi was on the verge of signing with a record label. "God was saying to us, 'No, you are to stay in Delaware.'"

Now Lashey knows why: "It was for such a time as this."

Their community was a burgeoning suburbia comprised of four towns: Middletown, Odessa, Townsend and Smyrna. Lashey learned that about 130,000 people lived within 15 miles of his family. Other families there were commuting to Philadelphia, Wilmington, Dover, Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and even New York City for work. The families are mostly young and raising children.

"We prayed as we lived here that God would plant a church in our community," Lashey said, not realizing that God was calling a singing accountant to do something that pastors from the South were not willing to do—start a church in Delaware.

Home Bible studies

The Lasheys and Leights started a Tuesday night home Bible study that they called LifeHouse based on John

10:10. Fifteen came to the first meeting.

"It wasn't pretty," Lashey recalled. "It was raw."

The Bible study grew to about 100 attendees. Soon they were meeting at the Townsend Firehall on Tuesdays, which had space for their growing gathering. As the Bible study expanded, so did the team's vision. LifeHouse would become a new church, and it launched Feb. 12, 2012.

By August 2012, they were able to rent space at a school. The growth continued, and now average attendance is 650; about 200 are sixth grade or younger. Those 10 years of building relationships in the community are now bearing fruit.

"Our community is very receptive to the gospel," Lashey said. "They are (spiritually) hungry."

Neither accounting nor music ministry prepared Lashey for explosive growth. Not only did he not want to live in Delaware, Lashey didn't want to be a pastor. He had begun online seminary studies while with Calling Levi, but that was out of his hunger to better know God's word. His family had been traveling about 45 minutes one-way

to attend the closest Southern Baptist church.

When the members of Calling Levi became the core group for a new church, little about the experience was conventional. Lashey had no church planter training, but he received much coaching from David Jackson, Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware's Team Strategist for Church Multiplication.

BCM/D's June Holland prepared them for children's ministry.

Since the launch, the North American Mission Board's Farm System has provided one church planting intern and several student missionaries.

Lashey knows that their rapid growth is not typical for a new church, which is more reason to celebrate and pray.

"Hundreds of people have made professions of faith," Lashey said. "Between 150 and 200 have been baptized by immersion. We are blown away."

One of those conversions was Mike Wright, a former college wrestler who was teaching at the elementary school where LifeHouse met on Tuesday nights. He inquired about what was happening, and joined them the next week. Then he attended an Easter service.

"He started running after Jesus," Lashey said.

Today, Mike is the husband of Sheri Wright, LifeHouse's media director and the former technician for Calling Levi. No longer is Lashey longing to leave Delaware. The state has become his home, and he plans to be there a long time as pastor of LifeHouse.

"I anticipate continued growth," Lashey said of the new church. "We want to be involved in church planting."

"My heart is not to build a mega church. We've not been focused on building a church, we're building the kingdom of God." (BP)

SBTS grad driven by love in LDS dominant Utah

By Jim Burton

Herriman, Utah—You've looked out the front window of your home and seen them coming. Two young males wearing white shirts and black ties are riding bikes in the neighborhood. When they knock on your door, what do you do?

North American Mission Board missionary Travis Kerns would encourage you to love them. That's what he has learned to do.

His love for Mormons grew to the point that he now lives 35 miles from downtown Salt Lake City and serves as city missionary for NAMB's Send North America: Salt Lake City.

Kerns has something most Southern Baptists don't have, a Ph.D. in applied apologetics with a focus on Mormonism from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. During his undergraduate studies in 1996, he had a class on new religious movements, and Mormonism was the first they studied.

"It took hold of my heart," Kerns said of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "In school, every paper I wrote was geared toward Mormonism."

When he began teaching at SBTS in 2007, Kerns started taking students to Salt Lake City. On the flight home after his sixth trip there in 2012, Kerns said there were fires on the mountains.

As he viewed the smoke filling the Salt Lake Valley during the plane's ascent, it became a fresh vision.

"What it said to me was that this city is on fire and burning," Kerns said. "I just lost it, started crying like a baby."

Deep Southern Baptist roots

Kerns grew up in Greenville, S.C., where his family attended First Baptist Church of Taylors. He's the product of missions education, having been a Royal Ambassador.

"I was Baptist born and Baptist bred and when I die I'll be Baptist dead," Kerns said. His dad led him to Christ in their home when he was 9 years old.

"I wasn't baptized until I was 14," Kerns said, as his pastor wanted him to be sure of his decision. "I saw a lot of my friends walk the aisle and get baptized and nothing really changed in them. So I didn't want to do it for the sake of doing it."

Kerns chose to attend nearby North Greenville University. He enrolled as a business major, but that soon changed.

"In my freshman year of college, something in me just clicked, and I fell in love with the New Testament, Jesus and people in the church," Kerns said.

Being Southern Baptist in upstate South Carolina had its advantages, as there were many relationships and connections. That same dynamic is true for Mormons in Salt Lake City.

"Utah is 70 percent LDS," Kerns said. "LDS members run the state government. The majority of judges, police officers, firefighters, lawyers, real



Top, 2015 Send North America Week of Prayer missionary Travis Kerns (standing) meets with (from left) Phil and Ashley Smith, Staci Kerns and Kristen Helton as his son, Jeremiah, plays. The Smiths moved from Texas to help lead worship and serve with the church planting launch team for Lifestone Church in the city. Helton is working with Lifestone, too.

Right, Kerns (left) meets with James Thompson, a former neighbor. Their sons are friends and attend church with the Kerns. Kerns is a city missionary for Send North America: Salt Lake City. (NAMB photos by John Swain)

estate agents and bankers are LDS. Almost everyone here is LDS."

When Kerns moved into a home with his wife, Staci, and their son, the neighbors already knew it was the "NAMB" house.

"The LDS Church does research when real estate transactions are done," Kerns said. "Plus, we didn't show up at the meeting house on Sunday."

Mormons attend meeting house (comparable to church) meetings based upon their residence. Between Logan and Provo, Kerns estimates there are 4,164 meeting houses or halls.

"It's so Mormon here, many have never met or heard from anybody who is not Mormon," Kerns said.

Church planting challenge

Southern Baptists are the largest Protestant denomination in Utah, but the presence is minimal. Most Protestant churches run between 50 and 100 people.

"The hardest part about any Christian church (in Utah) is that the average tenure for pastors is 14 months," Kerns said. One key to success, he believes, is to keep showing up.

As city missionary for Send North America: Salt Lake City, one of 32 Send North America cities, Kerns oversees church plants in the metropolitan area.

"The Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention has a goal that by 2020 they



want to double the number of churches (in the two-state convention)," Kerns said.

"That means another 150 churches. We want to be one third of that number, 50 new churches by 2020."

By 2014, there were 18 active Southern Baptist church plants through Send North America: Salt Lake City, with 12 having started within the year.

Kerns spends much of his time mentoring the current church planters while recruiting and assessing future church planters.

Utah County, which Kerns calls the cultural capital of Mormonism and the home of Brigham Young University, garners most of his attention.

The cultural challenges translate into logistical challenges. Whereas in most major cities church plants can meet in public schools, that does not happen in Utah.

The new churches spend much money on rent, typically commercial space. The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and

Cooperative Program help new churches meet those challenges.

"Utah is 70 percent LDS. LDS members run the state government. The majority of judges, police officers, firefighters, lawyers, real estate agents and bankers are LDS. Almost everyone here is LDS ... Many have never met or heard from anybody who is not Mormon."

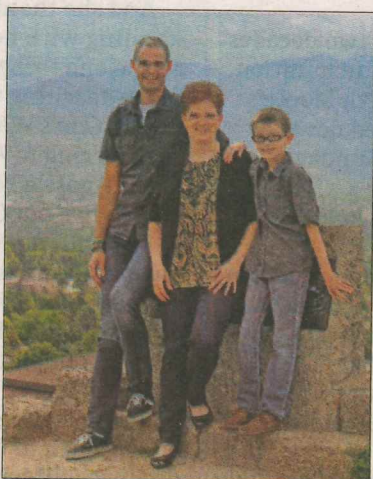
Travis Kerns
NAMB missionary to Salt Lake City

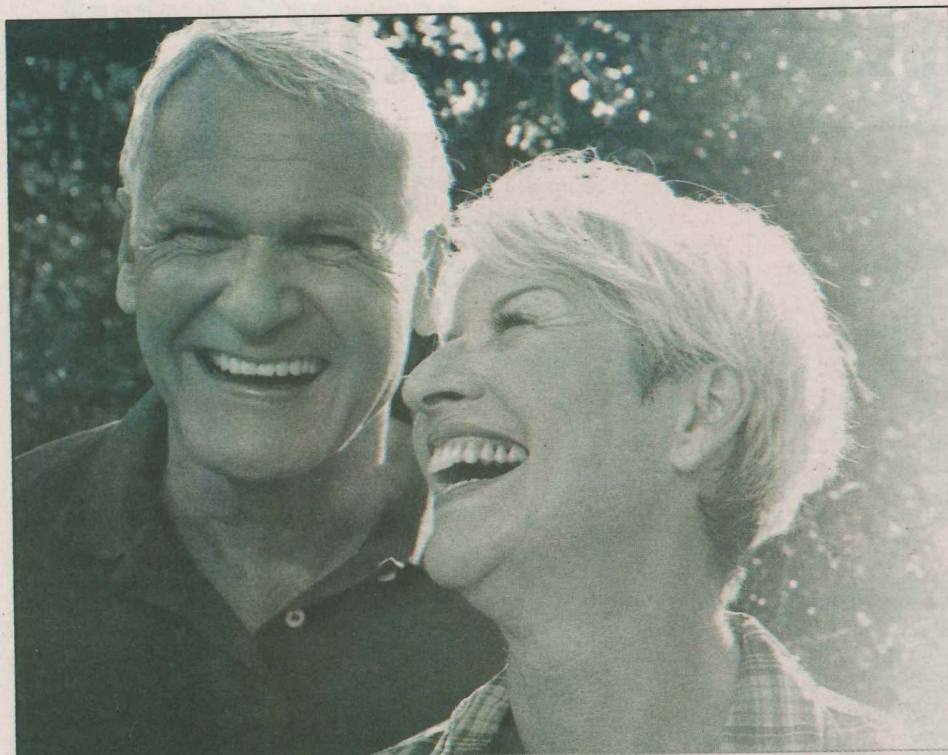
"That money goes directly to our church plants to help them reach people," Kerns said. "Without CP and AAEO, there would be no Send North America: Salt Lake City."

"There's been no shortage of resources when I've asked. It's because of the generosity of Southern Baptists."

Kerns was close to tenure at SBTS when he accepted the call to lead Send North America: Salt Lake City. Through his research, Kerns has built relationships with many LDS leaders.

"In 18 years of doing this, I've only seen two people convert from Mormonism to Christianity," said Kerns who notes that on average it takes from two to seven years for most Mormons to convert, the majority being much closer to seven years. "Being around leaders of the LDS church to share my faith with them drives everything that I do." (NAMB)





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LifeWay President and CEO Thom Rainer presents Beth Moore with a collage created from the covers of each of her Bible studies. The artwork represents two decades' worth of work and biblical inspiration. (Photo by Kent Harville)

Beth Moore celebrates 20 years with LifeWay

By Carol Pipes

Nashville—This year LifeWay Christian Resources is celebrating 20 years of ministry partnership with author and Bible study teacher Beth Moore.

"Today we are honoring Beth Moore, but more important than that we are giving glory to God for His work through this ministry," said LifeWay President and CEO Thom Rainer at a special chapel celebration Feb. 11.

"Beth Moore's ministry has reached millions," Rainer said. "Untold men and women have come to Christ because of her influence both directly and indirectly."

"She has been a stalwart for the word of God, never compromising. And when all is said and done, the impact of Beth Moore can only be measured in eternity's grasp. We are privileged to honor her this day."

Rainer presented Moore with a piece of art created from tiny pieces of paper from the covers of each of her Bible studies.

The artwork represents two decades' worth of work and biblical inspiration.

A little known fact is Beth Moore's first manuscript was turned down by LifeWay, then the Baptist Sunday School Board.

But that decision didn't hold for long.

Lee Sizemore, then a video producer at the Sunday School Board, made a trip to Texas to hear the young, energetic Bible study teacher at Houston's First Baptist Church. Moore was soon asked to give the manuscript back.

LifeWay published Moore's first Bible study—*A Woman's Heart: God's Dwelling Place*—in 1995. Today, her

studies have reached more than 21 million women worldwide.

Over two decades, Moore's ministry has extended to 17 Bible studies translated into 17 languages, along with numerous books and 166 Living Proof Live events.

During the celebration, Moore reminisced about the first study.

Her husband Keith surprised her by taking her to the Houston LifeWay store and showing her the finished product on the shelf. "There it was, the ugliest cover I ever loved," Moore said. "We bought every copy in the store."

"What began as a publishing relationship turned headlong and heartlong into a ministry partnership," Moore told employees.

"I'm so filled with memories and thankful for all the people who I've worked with over the years. I can't thank you enough for the joy to partner with you."

Through tears and laughter, Moore thanked her family for their support and encouragement through the years.

And she thanked LifeWay for standing with her and allowing her to do the one thing she feels most called to do—teaching women how to love and live on God's Word.

Referring to Acts 20, Moore pointed to the Apostle Paul as an example of how to live out God's ministry calling.

To fulfill our calling, she said, we must make an emotional investment, be compelled by the spirit, and be determined to finish the task.

"Our temptation is to be compelled by our culture," Moore said. "But if you and I are compelled by culture and not by the spirit of God, whatever we produce will have the shelf life of a head of lettuce. Only what is compelled by the spirit will last." (BP)

Platt compelled by '5 desires' for International Mission Board

By Art Toalston

Orange Beach, Ala.—David Platt has “five desires that are driving me” as president of the International Mission Board.

Platt, speaking to editors of Baptist state papers Feb. 10, listed the desires that are key to him at the six-month point of his leadership of Southern Baptists’ overseas missions initiatives:

1. “to exalt Christ”
2. “to mobilize Christians”
3. “to equip the church”
4. “to facilitate church planting”
5. “to play our part in the accomplishment of the Great Commission”

“It’s not tolerable” that billions of people have never heard the name of Jesus, Platt said with resolve, or for children to be unreached by the gospel while facing a life expectancy of less than eight years in parts of the world—or for 10-year-old children to face the horror of sex trafficking.

While the IMB supports 4,800 missionaries with a budget of nearly \$300 million a year, Platt noted, “I’m convinced it’s a critical time for the SBC and IMB.”

The missionary force is down from a record 5,600 missionaries less than a decade ago. Unless Southern Baptists make sacrifices to rise to God’s call to reach the nations, to “think creatively” in their missions methods and to build on the blessings God has given the Southern Baptist Convention, Platt said.

Platt spoke of his view of the Cooperative Program channel by which Southern Baptists support missions globally, nationally and in their states.

“... I’ve been reminded in a fresh way, in

a needed way, of the stewardship God has entrusted to the SBC and the value of the Cooperative Program,” Platt said.

To young pastors who might voice uncertainty about an “institutional” SBC compared to other missions networks, Platt reflected, “I praise God for continuing to grow relational networks to get the gospel to people who have never heard.

“And the same time, can you realize what God has given to the SBC?” he said, pointing to “conventions of churches, united together, with six strong seminaries who are raising up and training thousands of leaders every year (... and) the North American Mission Board and International Mission Board that are together spending half a billion dollars on the spread of the gospel and the planting of the church in North America and the nations (... and the ERLC” as an advocate for religious liberty.

“And the Cooperative Program,” Platt said, “(is) an engine that fuels all that.”

Platt said he believes in the unique stewardship that God has given to the SBC and the Cooperative Program. He set forth his key desires as IMB president:

“to exalt Christ”

“We are tempted at every turn at church and in missions to do things in man-centered ways instead of Christ-guided ways ... to develop our own plans and then go to God’s word for permission to justify the plans we’ve come up with,” Platt said. Rather, “our responsibility is to go to the word for direction. ... We don’t exalt Christ by pragmatic methods that are just focused on what we think works

(but on) what God has said in His word that lasts throughout time.” Scripture, he said, must drive “the content of what we preach and the methods by which we spread (His) word.”

God has provided a plan for how the gospel is to spread, he said, by making disciples and forming them into churches that are “reproducing by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

“to mobilize Christians”

Platt said he prays for followers of Christ to increasingly realize “that global missions is not just a compartmentalized program of the church for a select few people. ... It’s the very purpose for which we were created.”

God’s intention should stir people to consider: “How does that affect the way I pray? How does that affect the way I give? How does that affect opportunities I seek out to go and be a part of what God is doing around the world? And even if I don’t move somewhere else, how do I deliberately stay to spread the gospel among the nations.

“There are ways that God in the global marketplace has sovereignly ordained for opportunities and avenues to be opened up,” he said. “I don’t want the IMB to be a funnel that ... only a few people can squeeze through in order to get involved in God’s global plan.”

“to equip the church”

“When you look at the New Testament, the local church is the agent that God has promised to bless for the accomplishment of the Great Commission. It’s the churches

sending out missionaries,” Platt said.

The IMB can help churches as they pray “to send out people and to shepherd them as they go,” Platt said. “It makes all the difference in the world when those who go overseas are intimately connected with a local body of believers to pray for them, loving them and sending them.”

The IMB must not say to churches, “We can do this mission. If you’ll just send us missionaries and money, we’ll take care of it for you,” Platt said. “There’s a more biblical way. That’s to come alongside a local church and say, ‘Actually, you can do this. And here’s how we can help.’”

“to facilitate church planting”

The IMB can provide critical coordination for churches in sending missionaries, he said, citing two examples:

- matching missionaries from various churches—couples, retirees, singles—to where the need for the gospel is greatest.
- helping churches with “how we most wisely get there” and “once we get there, how we best share the gospel.”

“to play our part in the accomplishment of the Great Commission”

The Great Commission “can be accomplished and one day will be accomplished,” Platt said, citing the book of Revelation, chapters 5 and 7.

“As president of the IMB, I’m not living or leading for the perpetuation of this organization. I am living and leading for the day ... when we’re not talking about unreached peoples anymore; instead, we’re talking about the return of the King.” (BP)

The Great Commission and discipleship

Financial stewardship at heart of Kingdom advancement

Early in Matthew’s Gospel (4:18-20), Jesus called the first two of his disciples, namely, the fishermen brothers, Peter and Andrew. He called them to leave their nets and to follow him to become fishers of men. Matthew’s Gospel closes dramatically and forcefully with the resurrected Jesus giving his eleven disciples the Great Commission.

As critical as the concern for man’s salvation is in the Great Commission, we in the church have been so preoccupied with the lost world we have failed to focus on that aspect of the Great Commission that is the call to be brought under Christ’s discipline and to be taught to obey all that has been commanded by the one to whom all authority had been given.

The call to discipleship is the call to submit to the kingly rule of God in our lives (6:33).

Therefore, we in the church must realize a lot of spiritual maturing had to take place between Jesus’ call to Peter and Andrew to become fishers of men and his commission to them and the others to go and make disciples of all nations. The same is true for us today. There’s a huge amount of teaching from Jesus between Matthew 4 and Matthew 28. Before we can effectively go and teach others to be obedient to Jesus and all he commanded, we ourselves must become obedient, and we have not.

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Barry Allen

I agree with Henry Blackaby’s assessment of where we are as Southern Baptists and where we ought to go from here. He has said, “If Southern Baptists want to see a Great Commission Resurgence, we need to focus on the relationship between disciples and the living Lord Jesus, not launch a new emphasis on evangelism. Southern Baptists have focused on evangelism and missed discipleship. The heart of the Great Commission and discipleship is to teach them to practice everything I have commanded you.”

Finally, at the heart of discipleship is financial stewardship for Kingdom advancement about which Jesus had more to say than any other discipline (6:19-21, 24).

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

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EBO helps Kentucky ministries

Through grants, Ky. Baptists have part in many ministries

February is an exciting time across the state for our Baptist associations and ministries when grant checks from the Eliza Broadus Offering arrive in the mail.

These grants are made possible by your generous giving and are given after prayerful consideration by the finance committee of Kentucky WMU. A link to a complete list of this year’s grants is found online: www.kywmu.org/eboallocations.

I enjoy reading stories shared on the applications. Mark Back told us that one man, reached through the Liberty & Iron Men’s Ministry had never “felt so loved” and enjoyed being in God’s creation with brothers in Christ. Another man followed Christ in believer’s baptism after the gospel was shared and baptism was explained.

Christian County Love in Action was a week of community missions allowing people to go on a mission trip at home. Fourteen ministry teams had Backyard Bible Clubs in four locations; three block parties totaling about 1,700 people; and over 2,000 cookies delivered to hospitals, nursing homes, businesses, etc. An evangelism team went door-to-door with a rally on Friday evening with 800 in attendance. Many prayed to receive Christ.

The Answer Center in Green Valley Association distributed clothing, household items and school supplies to

people in need.

Last year they gave 448 Bibles, 480 booklets and tracts, and saw 13 people pray to receive Christ at the center. Ministries at the center also include Kid’s Corner and Life Change at the Henderson County Detention Center.

EBO at Work



Joy Bolton

Baptist Fellowship Center in Louisville serves more than 300 children through after-school and summer activities. Through the children’s activities last year, four children and seven adults accepted Christ as Savior.

New Hope Pregnancy Center in Shepherdsburg presents the

gospel and a Bible is included in the Welcome Bag of every new client. All clients watch a video presentation of the gospel before they begin the Incentives Program, a program to earn maternity/baby items on a weekly basis.

One mother who battled drug addiction enrolled in the program and was excited to share the complete change in her life. She is now employed, going to school and is grateful for New Hope. Another who had struggled with addiction, divorce, infant loss and trouble with the law is now attending church with one of the volunteers.

EBO grants allow us to have a part in many ministries across Kentucky. Keep praying and giving!

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

A virtuous woman

Celebrating her 18 years of faithful service to OBI's students

Our dean of students, Judy Lawson, went to be with the Lord recently. While I am deeply saddened, I also rejoice in knowing Judy has received her eternal reward and is now in the presence of her Lord. During her 18 years of faithful service, Judy brought great joy to the students and adults of Oneida.

The funeral service for Judy was really a celebration of life and a time of worship. The service was held in our chapel, and Judy was then laid to rest up on Cemetery Hill just behind the chapel.

Many former staff members and students attended, as well as most of our student body and faculty and staff. This large crowd, who gathered to show their love and respect for Judy, was indicative of a life well lived that had impacted so many for the cause of Jesus Christ.

A former OBI teacher preached Judy's funeral and five of our students gave their lives to Christ during the service. I know this would have pleased Judy tremendously.

The rain did not stop a large group from climbing a muddy Cemetery Hill for the interment.

Judy's life and ministry reflected Proverbs 31:26-31 which says, "She is clothed with strength and dignity, she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her

household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."

Judy served faithfully in our ministry as a houseparent, dean of students, and admissions counselor during her 18 years at Oneida. I had the privilege of having a weekly meeting with her for the last year of her service.

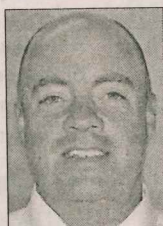
I was often amazed by her wisdom, resolve, and ability to minister to our students throughout difficult situations. We sometimes discussed some unpleasant incidents, but I always knew we would somehow laugh together and I would always leave her office encouraged.

I am going to miss my friend, Judy. I know we will all miss her tremendously, but we will honor her memory by continuing the Lord's work here in this special place. Judy, without a doubt, helped make this a special place.

She was a great source of strength, support, and encouragement for me personally, and she touched countless lives in her Oneida ministry.

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

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

Playing to a different crowd—Part 2

Student leaves musical aspirations for God's calling

"I tried to reason with God about my calling to preach," said Haller. "I said, God, I'm playing guitar here in the church. I'm doing something. Isn't that enough? I'm playing guitar and I'm going to Sunday School. I was even teaching every now and then. It wasn't enough.

"I started taking a class on the Book of John. I learned a lot and really enjoyed it," Haller said. "I shared with my wife Angie what I felt like God was calling me to do and she was very supportive.

"The man who taught another class that I also took had attended Clear Creek, and he told me that they offered some of their programs completely online. That sounded good to me since there was no way that I could just quit my job at the Post Office and hope that our bills would be paid.

"I called our pastor and I asked if Angie and I could meet with him and talk to him. I shared with him how I felt God calling me to preach.

"I told him that I also was looking for my best option at getting an education and told him about Clear Creek. He was very supportive and I

applied for admission at Clear Creek.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed the classes that I have taken online at Clear Creek," Haller continued.

"I definitely think that the classes that I have taken at Clear Creek have really helped prepare me for ministry.

"Now that I am pastor of a church and preaching on a weekly basis, I have a lot more confidence to do that

because of what I have learned through the classes that I have taken. I feel prepared to do ministry."

"To anyone thinking about taking classes at Clear Creek I would encourage them to try it," said Haller. "I didn't know what to expect when I started. I had been out of school for quite some time and the idea of going back to school was daunting.

"The convenience of online classes was very appealing to me. I worried about the cost which I shouldn't have because God has a way of providing."

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; ccbbc.edu; email: dfox@ccbbc.edu.

Church Fire

Continued from page 1

many families. He has received many calls from people who have moved out of state.

"It's a sentimental loss," he said. "When we got to the gymnasium the other day, people were weeping and crying."

Jennifer Blankenship, a member who grew up and was married in the church told WYMT-TV, "I was devastated. I was just praying that it was a mistake, that it was just smoke from one of the units outside. Anything but an actual fire."

Although the question of why this would happen has been brought up, Sowders is encouraging the members to not let this "push them apart," but rather use it to "pull them together."

The community, and even other parts of the world, has rallied around the church. He received a call from a church in the Philippines saying they wanted to help and letting him know they were praying, Sowders said.



Fire destroyed the sanctuary of Mill Creek Baptist Church on Feb. 18. Only the basement walls and outer walls of the sanctuary remain.

Additionally, the community and other surrounding churches have offered their help by preparing teams, donating a piano, lending a sound system and other ways.

"I think that church has been such a community outreach that people now are wanting to know what they can do to help," Sowders said.

"You can't out give the Lord," he added. "The people are responding back." (WR)

Despite ice storm, Exec. Committee moves ahead

By Art Toalston

Nashville—"Brrrrr," Hawaii pastor Chris Metcalf responded to the roll call Feb. 16 for the SBC Executive Committee's evening session in frozen Nashville.

Metcalf, pastor of Lihue Baptist Church in Hawaii, was among 44 EC members who comprised a quorum to conduct business in behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention, which will hold its annual meeting June 16-17 in Columbus, Ohio.

"Welcome to cold and frosty and snowy Nashville, Tenn.," EC chairman Mike Routt, lead pastor of Colorado Springs' Circle Drive Baptist Church, said in opening the EC meeting.

"If you have one inch of snow, it shuts down the entire city," Routt quipped.

The EC's quorum requirement is half of its 82 members—plus one—representing 34 state and multi-state regions throughout the nation.

A state of emergency to deploy the National Guard was declared mid-afternoon on Feb. 16 as ice, sleet and snow gripped the region. Drivers on several interstates faced lengthy closures due to accidents. EC officers and EC President Frank Page decided Sunday (Feb. 15) to move forward with the Feb. 16-17 sessions since members of the Cooperative Program Committee and a number of other EC members had arrived in Nashville that day. Canceled flights and treacherous road conditions prevented nearly 40 other EC members from traveling to Nashville during the day on Feb. 16.

Once the meeting was underway, a sense of Baptist normalcy eased over the auditorium in the SBC Building, buoyed by Page conducting a resolute singing of "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" by EC members and other attendees—including mission board presidents David Platt of the IMB and Kevin Ezell of NAMB and a number of state Baptist convention presidents and executive directors.

SBC President Ronnie Floyd, in his message Monday night, drew from Jesus' words, "I Will Build My Church."

Floyd challenged Southern Baptist leaders to build momentum for the annual meeting in Columbus; to tell "the compelling story" of Southern Baptists

with conviction and clarity; to stand for religious freedom amid onslaughts by ISIS against Christians and other Mideast minorities; and to encourage other like-minded congregations to become Southern Baptists.

Floyd also continued his often-voiced yearning for spiritual awakening in America to reverse the nation's moral demise and to stir Christians to take the gospel to the world's unreached masses.

Noting the "Great Awakening" theme for the SBC annual meeting, Floyd said he knows of no other solution "than God coming down and meeting with us powerfully and miraculously like only God can do."

Page, in his EC report, recounted the work of the EC staff's five divisions during 2014 and looked forward to the year ahead. He reported that a CP promotion campaign called Great Commission Advance will launch in 2015 and conclude at CP's 100th anniversary in 2025, while the work of various advisory councils continues in an effort to increase the involvement of ethnic and other subgroups in the SBC.

In their business session Feb. 17, EC members approved recommendations to the annual meeting, including:

- a new name, Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention, from the former Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, in view of the seminary relocating its primary campus to the Los Angeles area from the San Francisco area.

- an amended North American Mission Board ministry statement to include planting churches overseas in agreed-upon instances with the International Mission Board, akin to an amended IMB ministry statement in 2011 to allow the IMB to assist with unreached people groups in the U.S. and Canada. EC members were told that the amended NAMB statement will relate particularly to military chaplains stationed at bases overseas.

- SBC bylaw amendments to allow for the potential use of electronic voting devices in the convention hall, after this year's meeting in Columbus, and to establish a quorum for voting on all matters of SBC business as those present at the time of a ballot. (BP)

1 city, 2 yearnings grip Ronnie Floyd

By Art Toalston

Orange Beach, Ala.—One city is central to everything Ronnie Floyd says and does as the Southern Baptist Convention's president: Columbus.

Two overarching matters are tied to Floyd's focus on Ohio's capital, site of SBC's annual meeting in June:

- prayer for spiritual awakening in America.

- reaching the world for Christ.

"Hopefully and prayerfully we're going to see the Lord really impact us," Floyd told Baptist state paper editors during their Feb. 9-12 sessions in Orange Beach, Ala.

"Southern Baptists need to enter a time of clear agreement ... that the number one need in America is a mighty spiritual awakening," Floyd said.

Distinctive facets Floyd noted of the June 16-17 annual meeting include:

- a Tuesday evening session to be permeated by prayer, building on the convention's "Great Awakening" theme.

- a Wednesday morning "church and missionary sending celebration" of Southern Baptists' work toward fulfilling the Great Commission—and a call to heighten their efforts even more to reach the nations for Christ.

"I think there's a general growing positive attitude about the future of the Southern Baptist Convention," Floyd said in listing several "great things I see today in Southern Baptist life."

"I firmly believe that people are believing more and more in who we are

and what we are about," said Floyd, pastor of the multi-campus Cross Church in northwest Arkansas.

Pastors and leaders under 40 years of age accounted for nearly 25 percent of the messengers at last year's SBC annual meeting in Baltimore, up 4 percent from the previous year in Houston, Floyd reported from an assessment of messenger data.

More than 10,000 multi-ethnic churches are among the 46,000-plus churches in the SBC, Floyd added.

"The Southern Baptist Convention is changing at every level. I think that's a good thing," Floyd said. "(Baptist) associations are changing, state conventions are changing, national SBC entities are changing, churches are changing."

The change may be slower than some might advocate, he said, "but we can be thankful today that at least there is a spirit of change that is being embraced by the convention (versus) a spirit of resistance."

In addition to prayer for revival in America and a deepened commitment to the Great Commission, Floyd said another feature of the Columbus annual meeting will be a Wednesday afternoon panel discussion on "The Supreme Court and Same-Sex Marriage: Preparing Our Churches for the Future."

"We're going to petition the God in heaven" to pray about things "we always wring our hands about," from baptisms and giving to America's moral decline and the world's lostness." (BP)

Legislator seeks KBC's help in opposing same-sex marriage

By Robin Cornetel

Frankfort—The executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention will pen a letter explaining the potential social consequences if the U.S. Supreme Court legalizes gay marriage.

Rep. Tom Riner (D-Louisville) requested the KBC's support on the issue during the organization's public affairs committee meeting Feb. 12 at the Kentucky State Capitol in Frankfort.

"It would be great to have a statement (from the KBC) that would define some of the possible consequences to the social fabric if the court rules in a way that would strike down all of our constitutional amendments on marriage," Riner told committee members.

The committee voted unanimously to have KBC Executive Director Paul Chitwood write the letter on behalf of the state's largest religious organization with more than 700,000 members in some 2,400 churches. Riner said the statement would accompany his amicus brief asking the high court to carefully consider the outcome of its decision.

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear four consolidated cases on same-sex marriage in April, including one from Kentucky. A ruling is expected in June that could legalize gay marriage nationwide.

"Should SCOTUS undermine the constitutions of a majority of states by mandating same-sex marriage at the federal level, the consequences for religious liberty in the U.S. could be devastating," Chitwood said. "We are very concerned and plan to express our concerns."

Committee members also heard from Rep. Tim Moore (R-Elizabethtown) who asked the KBC to help educate and motivate Kentucky Baptists to speak out on behalf of godly principles in all aspects of political and social arenas.

"We need more believers to step out and step up," Moore said. "God Almighty expects us to advocate and declare truth. We need men and women of God who are



Rep. Tom Riner appeals for support from the KBC to support his amicus brief to the Supreme Court opposing same-sex marriage. Riner was a guest of the KBC's Committee on Public Relations meeting at the state capitol.

willing to stand in the gap and declare what truth is and God, in His timing, will prevail."

Moore said he receives more letters and calls from residents concerned about horse-related legislation than about bills that affect morality and religion.

"... Those horse folks are passionate and organized," Moore said. "We should be more passionate about serving Jesus Christ and about His truth prevailing in every sphere of human influence."

In an update on payday lending legislation, Committee on Public Affairs Chairman Rick Hardison said Kentucky Baptists may have little influence on Senate Bill 32 since it is unlikely to make it out of committee and to the Senate floor for a vote. The bill has been in the Senate's Committee on State and Local Government since Feb. 3.

Senate Bill 76, relating to the physical privacy of students, was voted down in committee Thursday, 6 to 3. The bill stated that, at no time, would students of opposite biological genders be allowed in the same bathroom or locker room simultaneously.

"This bill offered a better solution for schools that wanted to protect all students and not just transgender students seeking to use bathrooms or locker rooms of the sex with which they more closely identify," Hardison said.

S.B. 76 was sponsored by Sen. C.B. Embry, a Kentucky Baptist from Butler County. (KBC)

In awe of generosity

Baptist giving has helped build colleges, benevolent ministries

This is an expression of gratitude for the generosity of Kentucky Baptists—based on what I have observed since January 2014.

Your gifts created great churches, colleges, denominational offices, schools and other facilities across the commonwealth. You should be proud.

During the EQUIP Tour last September, we visited eight beautiful, modern churches from Madisonville to Prestonsburg, from Williamstown to Somerset. At each location, Baptist donors endowed magnificent sanctuaries.

Meanwhile, every night last year, you helped Sunrise care for about 600 needy children.

Since November, our advancement team or our ministry leaders have visited with several KBC affiliates to learn best practices for raising funds on Sunrise's behalf. What is most impressive—from Southern Seminary to Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, from the KBC offices in Louisville to the University of the Cumberland—is how thoroughly Baptist donors like you have transformed one institution after another into state-of-the-art facilities.

Since 2008, you also helped 224 Sunrise children obtain forever families through our Foster-to-Adopt

Program.

Today, students at Southern or Clear Creek or at Baptist universities in the state learn in environments that honor their mind-body-spirit needs, as I did at Georgetown College decades ago.

And during 2014, 39 Sunrise youths enjoyed that same support while they

earned their GED or graduated from a Kentucky high school.

Dean Jim Bergman introduced me to this gratitude when I was at Georgetown. Last week, his son, David Bergman, reminded me how Baptist fathers and sons still pass

the torch. David is alumni director and assistant to the president for development at University of the Cumberlands. Truly, helping Baptists advance education in Kentucky is in the Bergman DNA.

So I remain in awe of your generosity, Kentucky Baptists. It is my job to keep reaching out to you, asking you to give to Sunrise. And what I'm learning makes me grateful for such a duty. It makes me very proud of you.

Randy Greene is vice president for marketing and advancement at Sunrise Children's Services. To discuss a donation to Sunrise, contact him at rgreene@sunrise.org.



Southern launches 'Global Campus'

By Craig Sanders

Louisville—Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has launched its new Global Campus for students serving in ministry around the world to complete a master of divinity degree through distance learning options.

"We do not merely want to have a program that allows people to access Southern Seminary online," President Albert Mohler Jr. noted in announcing the

Global Campus in chapel Feb. 12 during the seminary's Great Commission Focus. "Our ambition is bolder than that—it is to reach the nations."

Through the Global Campus, students can earn their M.Div. entirely through Southern Seminary Online or one of the institution's nine extension centers. Other distance learning options include hybrid modular, conference, mission trip or J-term courses and the Ministry Apprenticeship Program.

The digital age has opened new opportunities to provide theological education to anyone regardless of location, Mohler said.

"We want to make certain that the reach of Southern Seminary's theological education is not bounded by physical distinctions that new technologies have allowed us to overcome."

The Global Campus tagline, "From Louisville to Laos," emphasizes Southern's commitment to providing quality theological education wherever students are serving, seminary leaders say. (BP)

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Length of creation days draws debate

By David Roach

Nashville—An article by a popular evangelical blogger arguing that the six “days” of creation in Genesis were not literal 24-hour periods has prompted discussion among Christians about the earth’s age and whether orthodoxy necessarily entails believing in a young earth.

Justin Taylor, senior vice president and publisher for books at Crossway, posted a blog article Jan. 28 arguing that there are “biblical reasons to doubt the creation days were 24-hour periods.” The article, which was shared online 15,000 times in two weeks, also noted famous people from church history who do not believe Genesis describes six 24-hour days.

“I want to suggest there are some good, textual reasons—in the creation account itself—for questioning the exegesis that insists on the days as strict 24 hour periods,” Taylor, a Ph.D. student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote. “Am I as certain of this as I am of the resurrection of Christ? Definitely not. But in some segments of the church, I fear that we’ve built an exegetical ‘fence around the Torah,’ fearful that if we question any aspect of young-earth dogmatics we have opened the gate to liberalism.”

“Defenders of inerrancy” who did not believe in six 24-hour periods—like Augustine, J. Gresham Machen and Carl F.H. Henry—“show that this is not the case,” Taylor wrote. “And a passion for sola Scriptura provides us with the humility and willingness to go back to the text again to see if these things are so.”

The BF&M & creation

Southern Baptist seminary professors—though divided on whether Taylor’s conclusion is correct—agreed that old-earth creationism falls within the bounds of the Baptist Faith and Message. However, they distinguished old-earth creationism from theistic evolution.

Old-earth creationism contends that God brought the world into existence from nothing by His direct action and not evolution. Old-earth creationists say the earth is billions rather than thousands of years old and that the “days” of Genesis 1 were not 24-hour periods. Theistic



evolutionists claim God used evolution to create, directing the process but not simply speaking things into existence. Young-earth creationists believe God created the world from nothing between 6,000 and 50,000 years ago in six literal days.

Jason Duesing, provost at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, told Baptist Press he disagrees with Taylor’s blog post but believes it “is helpful because it reframes a well-worn debate topic back to what the text actually says.”

“As the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 does not specifically address the age of the earth, much like the finer points of eschatology, it is a secondary matter to determine what SBC seminary professors believe about the issue. I do not mean to imply it is not important for under the BF&M, SBC faculty must affirm the creation and existence of a literal Adam and Eve and see no room for the affirmation of theistic evolution,” Duesing said. “Personally, I remain convinced that the young-earth view best accounts for the plain reading of the Bible, and while I have not polled the faculty at Midwestern on this topic, I suspect the majority of the faculty would as well. For those who hold to an old-earth view, I support the legitimacy of their doing so and enjoy the sharpening that comes from healthy dialogue, even as their conclusions and implications do cause me some good natured head-scratching.”

“In the end, I see this as an intramural discussion among creationists and hope that such only serves to bind us closer together in refuting that which is clearly contrary to Scripture, the theory of evolution,” Duesing said.

An old earth?

Taylor presented biblical considerations

that lead him to believe the “days” of Genesis 1 were longer than 24 hours:

■ “The seventh ‘day’ is not 24 hours long.”

God’s creation “rest” was not limited to a 24-hour period, Taylor wrote, noting that Hebrews 4 underscores this point.

■ “The ‘day’ of Genesis 2:4 cannot be 24 hours long.”

“After using ‘the seventh day’ in an analogical way ... we read in the very next verse, Genesis 2:4: ‘These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day (yom) that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,’” Taylor wrote. “The precise meaning of this is debated. But what seems clear, if we believe the Bible does not contradict itself, is that this (singular) ‘day’—in which the creation events (plural ‘generations’) occur—cannot refer to a single 24-hour period.”

■ Genesis 2:5-7 assumes that the “day” described in Genesis 2:4 was longer “than an ordinary calendar day” because it included natural “seasons and rain cycles” that take longer than 24-hours.

Taylor argued that God does not want readers of Scripture to substitute the word “eons” or “ages” when they see the word “day.” But neither does He want readers “to think of precise units of time, marked by 24 exact hours.”

Ken Keathley, professor of theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and coauthor of “40 Questions About Creation and Evolution” (Kregel), told BP he agrees with Taylor and is “convinced that the 24-hour interpretation does not do justice to all that the text says.”

The old-earth interpretation of Genesis 1-2 is becoming increasingly popular among Southern Baptists, Keathley said.

“A significant change is happening now.

The arguments in ‘The Genesis Flood’ have not stood the test of time, and very few young-earth advocates use them. More and more pastors and leaders are realizing that the Genesis text does not lend itself easily to the young-earth position. Many of the strongest proponents of the old-earth interpretation are Old Testament scholars,” Keathley said.

A young earth?

James Hamilton, professor of biblical theology at Southern, disagrees with Taylor.

In a Feb. 9 blog article responding to Taylor, Hamilton cited as a key passage in the debate Exodus 20:10-11—“But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the foreigner who is within your gates. For the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.”

The “most natural reading of Exodus 20:10-11 seems to be that the six days of creation followed by the Sabbath day of rest was a cycle of the same kind of seven day week that was to become the pattern of Israel’s experience,” Hamilton wrote.

“It’s hard for me to imagine someone coming to some other kind of conclusion unless he seeks to accommodate extra-biblical considerations from philosophy (a la Augustine) or science (a la contemporary old earthers).”

Ken Ham, founder of Answers in Genesis, wrote in a blog that Taylor’s “real motivation is that outside influences have already led him to postulate whatever reasons he can try to muster not to be adamant about six literal days of creation in Genesis 1.”

Ham added, “When Christian leaders today are rejecting a dogmatic stand on six, literal, 24-hour days of creation and a young earth, if you search their writings or question them, you will find that ultimately their thinking is being controlled by the belief in an old earth/universe (billions of years). ... You simply do not get the idea of millions or billions of years from Scripture—it comes from outside Scripture.” (BP)

Answers in Genesis files lawsuit against state government

Petersburg—Answers in Genesis is suing the government of Kentucky for alleged discrimination in refusing to extend a sales tax rebate incentive program to the Ark Encounter theme park the apologetics ministry is building in northern Kentucky.

The state’s decision to deny the tax incentive based on AiG’s status as a religious organization is against the law and violates legal precedent, the lawsuit asserts.

“The state was so insistent on treating our religious entity as a second-class citizen that we were simply left with no alternative but to proceed to court,” AiG president Ken Ham said. “This is the latest example of increasing government hostility towards religion in America, and it’s certainly among the most blatant. Our organization spent many months attempting to reason with state officials so

that this lawsuit would not be necessary.”

Freedom Guard, a non-profit law firm dedicated to freedom of religion, and the Center for Religious Expression are providing free legal representation to AiG in the case.

“It’s very well established in federal and state law that religious organizations get to be treated just like any other in a program like this,” said Freedom Guard chief counsel Mike Johnson, “when you have a facially neutral ... tax incentive program, that the government effectively opens it to all applicants. Just because an applicant happens to be religious does not mean that they can be treated differently. They can’t be excluded from a program just because of their viewpoint.”

The AiG website includes a video clip from a December, 2012 press conference, in which Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear

called the Ark Encounter “a huge deal,” and said “the law doesn’t allow us to discriminate about the entertainment subject matter of theme parks as long as it’s legal and in good taste. ... I think it’s clear that this is an economic development project that our laws don’t allow us to discriminate as to the entertainment subject matter of a theme park and as long as it is legal, and it meets all of our criteria, I think it’s clearly constitutional.”

Kentucky granted preliminary approval in 2014 for AiG to receive a rebate of some of the new state sales taxes the Ark will generate after it opens in 2016, but “secularist organizations exerted tremendous pressure on state officials” to rescind approval,” AiG’s press release said.

“Anti-Christian groups objected to AiG’s statutory right to limit its hiring to people of the Christian faith, and to the content of

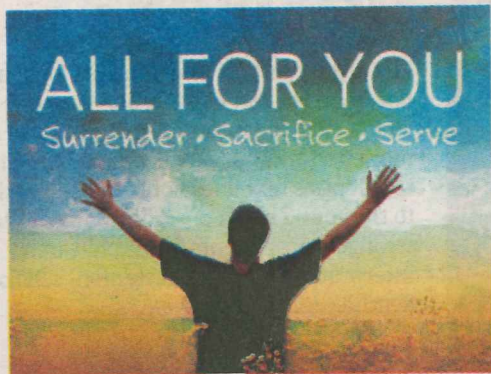
the messages that will be presented at the Bible-themed park. Bowing to this pressure, state officials (including Gov. Beshear) announced a reversal on Dec. 10,” the press release reads.

Beshear and Robert Stewart, secretary of the tourism, arts, and heritage cabinet, are named as defendants in the lawsuit.

State officials have not commented on the lawsuit. Gil Lawson, spokesperson for the tourism cabinet, provided a copy of a Dec. 10 letter to an AiG attorney explaining denial of tax incentives.

“There are two reasons for this conclusion,” the letter reads, “(1) the Commonwealth will not grant incentives to a company that intends to discriminate in hiring its employees based on religion; and (2) It is a violation of the Constitution for the Commonwealth’s incentives to be used to advance religion.” (BP)

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