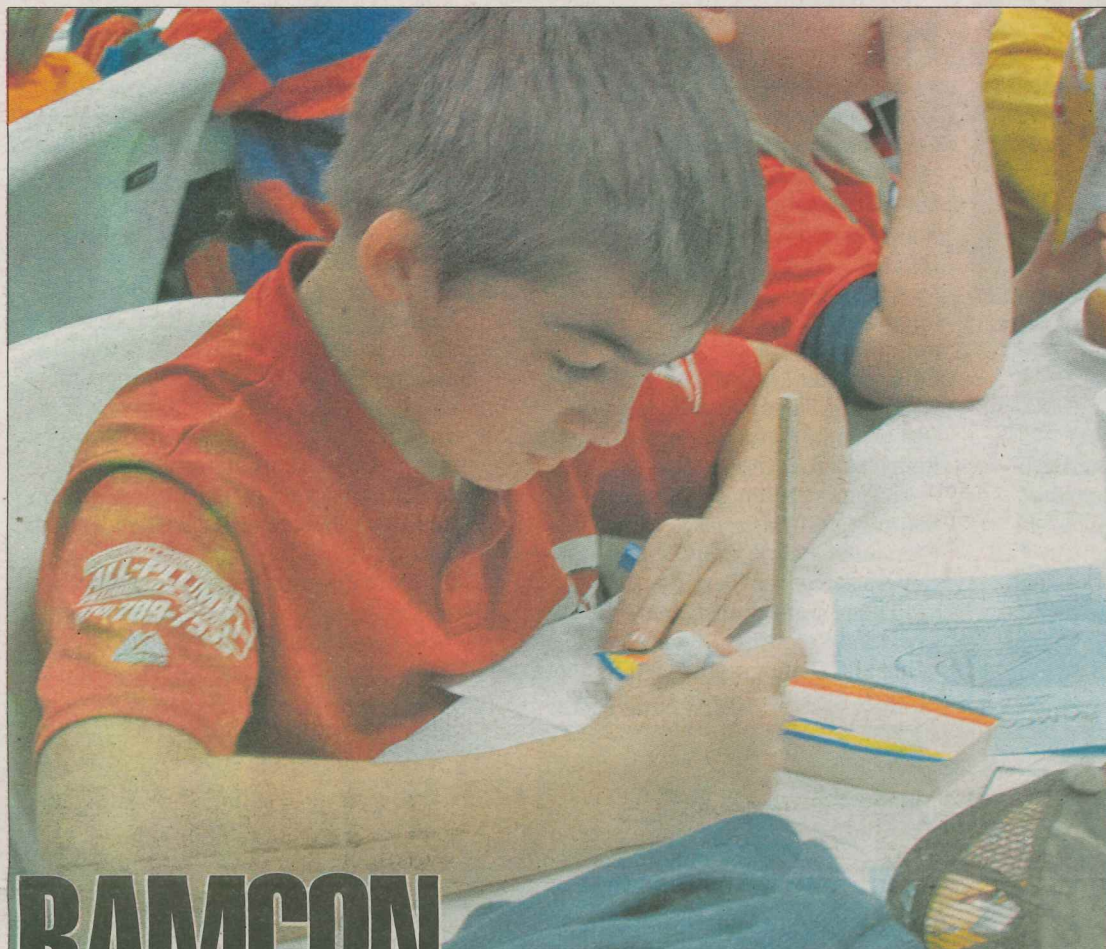


WESTERN Recorder

April 7, 2015

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

Volume 189, Issue 7



RAMCON

see photo spread of RA missions event on Page 7

Baptists credited with beating marijuana push

By Roger Alford

Louisville—Kentucky Baptists won a major legislative victory by helping to defeat a measure in the General Assembly that would have legalized marijuana.

Lawmakers concluded the 2015 legislative session March 25 without passing legislation that would have essentially bypassed the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and made marijuana widely available for medical purposes.

Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Paul Chitwood had called on lawmakers to reject the proposal, saying Kentucky shouldn't follow the lead of other states that have legalized marijuana.

The KBC has a powerful voice in Kentucky, where 1 million of the state's 4.4 million residents identify themselves as Southern Baptists. Those demographics filter into the state legislature, where almost half the Senate and a third of the House identify

themselves as Baptists.

"The success we had this year was, in large part, thanks to the stand Dr. Chitwood took on this issue," said Ed Shemelya, coordinator for the National Marijuana Initiative, an organization that opposes legalization of pot. "I appreciate his courage and leadership on this issue."

Shemelya said the fight isn't over because lawmakers are certain to be asked to pass the legislation when they reconvene next January. "We're already getting ready for next year," he said. "There's no doubt in my mind that this matter will be back again. If we can beat it down next year, we may be able to put this to rest."



Paul Chitwood

"It makes no sense to bypass the FDA and allow Kentuckians to smoke marijuana under the guise that it is somehow medically beneficial."

Supporters of medical marijuana insist the drug can be used effectively to treat symptoms of various maladies. Opponents, including Chitwood and Shemelya, point out that lots of FDA-approved drugs provide better treatment for ailments, and that marijuana use can damage the lungs, immune systems and brains of long-term users. Most importantly, marijuana has not been shown, through careful study and

□ See MARIJUANA... Page 11

SBC leader: racially segregated churches are 'blasphemy'

By Bob Allen

Nashville—Ethics head Russell Moore told 550 people at a conference March 26 he believes God is giving the Southern Baptist Convention a second chance to atone for its racist past, but "in order to do that we must repent, not just rebrand."

"Our heritage is one that comes to us, we've been told, through a trail of blood, but not all of that blood is the blood of Christ's cross," Moore, SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission president, said in the opening address of a two-day summit titled The Gospel and Racial Reconciliation in Nashville, Tenn.

Speaking on the second anniversary of his election to lead the Southern Baptist entity dedicated to issues in the public square, Moore based his message in the New Testament book of Ephesians, where the apostle Paul mediates between quarreling Jewish and gentile Christians by reminding both groups they "are united in one body through the gospel."

"The problem when we come to this text, when we're talking about issues of racial reconciliation, is that white people inevitably assume that we are the Jewish Christians in this text, and that black people and Hispanic people and Asian people and others are the gentiles," he said. "We're the regular people who are supposed to be here, and you all are welcome."

Moore said the problem with reading the text that way is: "There aren't any white people in Jerusalem in First Century A.D."

"The fundamental problem that we have when it comes to this issue in the American church, even when we understand that there is a problem, is that those of us who are white, born-again Christians tend to assume that the Body of Christ is white with room for everybody else," he said. "White people are normal, and the others that we minister to are ethnic."

Moore said if preachers do not address race "we are leaving consciences in sin" and "empowering the devil."

"We are not the state church of the Confederate States of America," Moore said. "We are not inheritors of a lost cause but of a new creation. The cross and the Confederate battle flag cannot coexist without one setting the other on fire."

□ See RACIAL RECONCILIATION... Page 9

"We are not inheritors of a lost cause but of a new creation. The cross and the Confederate battle flag cannot coexist without one setting the other on fire."

Russell Moore
ERLC President



ERLC Summit on Race

See story on Page 9

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Chitwood, other Baptist leaders on MBTS symposium's program

Kansas City, Mo.—A collection of key Southern Baptist leaders that includes Frank Page, Ronnie Floyd, Paige Patterson, Thom Rainer, Albert Mohler Jr. and David Dockery is slated to speak at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's Sept. 28-29 symposium, "The SBC and the 21st Century: Reflection, Renewal & Recommitment."

Midwestern Seminary President Jason Allen, who will also present a keynote address, announced March 18 that the symposium will be the first edition of a triennial symposium held on the Kansas City, Mo., campus. He said the symposium is designed to address the Southern Baptist Convention, its heritage, identity and future.

"This is shaping up to be one of the most consequential events in the SBC in recent years, and we are grateful to be hosting it at Midwestern Seminary," Allen said. "Nothing quite like this has been held for some time within the SBC, but I believe engaging these issues is integral to our Southern Baptist work, and the opportunity is ripe for this event to make a substantial contribution to the SBC for years to come."

"The SBC and the 21st Century' is for pastors, denominational servants,

laypersons, and anyone else who cares about our collective work as Southern Baptists," he said.

"For all those who care about the SBC and its future, this is the place to be this year. We designed the symposium for key SBC stakeholders to speak to urgent denominational matters in a way that serves the entire SBC.

"It is going to be a special two days, and I believe that God is going to use it in a profound way to impact our Southern Baptist Convention."

The event will be available via livestream, through postings on the school's website, and each presenter's paper will be compiled into a book.

"We are pleased to be partnering with B&H Publishing to produce a book that will stem from the conference. The book will be released at the 2016 SBC Annual Meeting in St. Louis," Allen said.



Ronnie Floyd



Thom Rainer

"We believe the presentations taking place at this symposium will serve to strengthen the SBC, and the release of this book will extend its reach."

Speakers and topics for the conference are as follows:

Jason Allen, "Training the Next Generation of Pastors, Ministers, & Missionaries: Southern Baptist Theological Education in the 21st Century"

Frank Page, "The Cooperative Program and the future of Collaborative Ministry"

Ronnie Floyd, "Kindling Afresh the Gift of God: Spiritual Renewal, Strategic Reinvention, & the SBC"

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Seminary, "Guard What has been Entrusted to You: Counsel to a new Generation of Southern Baptists"

Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources, "By the Numbers: What SBC Demographics Tell Us about our



Frank Page



David Dockery

Past, Present, and Future"

Albert Mohler Jr., "Southern Baptists and the Quest for Theological Identity—Unavoidable Questions for the 21st Century"

David Dockery, president of Trinity International University, "Who are Southern Baptists? Toward a Trans-generational Identity"

Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Paul Chitwood has been invited to participate on a panel discussion titled "The Future of State Conventions," along with Anthony Jordan, John Yeats, Tim Lubinus and Jim Richards.

"I am very much looking forward to Midwestern Seminary's symposium on the future of the Southern Baptist Convention," said Chitwood. "The SBC & the 21st Century: Reflection, Renewal & Recommitment' will be an important discussion to remind our generation of the Great Commission stewardship God has given Southern Baptists.

I am thankful for the leadership of seminary President, Jason Allen, and his team at MBTS."

More information on the symposium, including a full schedule of events and how to register, can be found at www.mbts.edu/sbcsymposium. (BP)



Left: Dyer talking with a Thai pastor and a tribal pastor during a break in one of the training sessions. Right: Dyer teaching a group of pastors from Laos and northeast Thailand. Below: A training group of Thai pastors and church leaders with Dyer and Putrakul.

Manchester doctor offers theological training in Southeast Asia

By Myriah Snyder

London—A Kentucky Baptist doctor is using his medical practice as a form of "tent making" to support his true calling: training national pastors on the mission field.

Kit Putrakul, an emergency room doctor originally from Thailand but now working in Manchester, and his pastor, Andrew Dyer of Corinth Baptist Church in London, recently spent two weeks in Southeast Asia conducting expository preaching and discipleship seminars.

The seminars drew approximately 60 leaders from various countries in Southeast Asia. Many traveled long distances to attend. Three years ago, Putrakul oversaw a similar event in Cambodia.

"We talked about doctrinal philosophy for expository preaching, why preaching matters, and why God's word being true makes the pastor's responsibility simply to tell people what God has said," Dyer said.

The team wanted to convey that "the pulpit must not drive us to the text, but the text must drive us to the pulpit," Putrakul added.

The team held 12 sessions, and Dyer preached every night, providing an example of expository preaching. Putrakul helped with training sessions and translating.

The ultimate purpose of the seminars was to "help equip pastors to better teach the word to their people"

and to teach small group, relational discipleship so the nationals can "better make disciples and fulfill the Great Commission," Dyer explained.

"In a lot of ways, I feel unequipped to be there," Dyer said. "There was so much that I needed to learn from them."

Buddhism heavily influences the region, and many of the pastors attending have experienced imprisonment for their faith. The day before some of the Laotian pastors came to the seminar, five of their colleagues were arrested for "practicing medicine without a license," Dyer said.

The pastors had simply prayed over a woman dying of cancer. After she passed, the authorities arrested them and set the bail for around \$1,300 American dollars, he said.

Describing it as "kind of a Paul and Silas attitude," Dyer recalled how the pastors were adamant about the bail not being paid. The pastors reportedly had stated, "God has sent us here to this prison, we know we're in His will and His plan, and He's going to take care of us while we're here. We're just going to take advantage of the situation and share the gospel."

Putrakul has been working with missions for more than 10 years. A former Buddhist monk, he was saved after coming to America for medical training. God allowed him to return to Southeast Asia for a time, before calling him back to America.



He and his wife are now members of Corinth Baptist. "In order to be a better advocate to all these national pastors, God had opened a door for me to work as an ER physician," Putrakul said.

However, he travels to Southeast Asia two to three times a year. Additionally, he oversees the curriculum that provides theological training to untrained pastors.

"The need is great in the world, but the gospel is going forth. Christ is building His church," Dyer said. "I think it's just a great encouragement for Kentucky Baptists to join Him."

Individuals interested in being a part of a mission trip to help train pastors in discipleship and expository preaching in Southeast Asia may email inquiries to kputrakul@cciint.org. (WR)

Callam receives Campbellsville leadership award

Campbellsville—Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam was presented the Campbellsville University Leadership Award on March 25. Callam was recognized "for his dedicated and extraordinary career as an educator, theologian and ecumenist, pastor and church administrator."

He was lauded for his "leadership positions with the Jamaica Baptist Union and the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship resulting in his being the first person from the Global South to be appointed as the general secretary and chief executive officer of the BWA."

Callam, a Jamaican, was elected general secretary of the BWA in July 2007 in Accra, Ghana. He is the first person of color and the first BWA general secretary who is neither European nor American. The BWA, formed in 1905, is a fellowship of 231 conventions and unions in 121 countries and territories comprising 40 million members in 177,000 churches. Callam was the lecturer at Campbellsville University's Baptist Heritage Lecture Series on March 24 on the topic, "World Baptists: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow."

He was also keynote speaker at the spring 2015 Chapel Convocation Series. (CU)

Centershot to hold inaugural national championship

Louisville—The inaugural Centershot National Championship, a ministry for young archery enthusiasts, will be held in Louisville May 6.

Teams and individual competitors are encouraged to register online at www.centershot.org by April 11.

Since Centershot began "making Christ the target" of students' lives in 2005, more than 50 Kentucky churches have used the eight-week program in their ministry outreach.

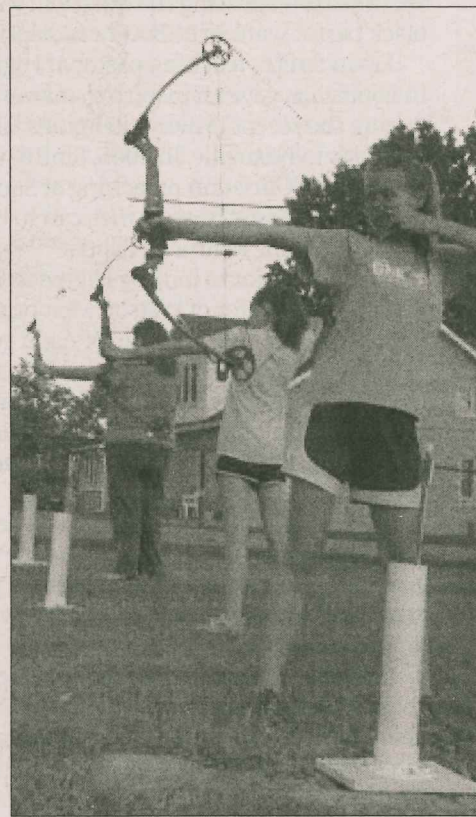
"Centershot teaches students a lifelong skill while helping churches build relationships with students and their families, so that the gospel of Jesus Christ can be shared," said Ryan Coffey, a Centershot instructor and youth pastor at First Baptist Church of London.

Coffey, who also serves as a volunteer coordinator for the tournament, said Centershot has created a new energy at his church.

"We've seen families come into our church and be baptized because of this program," Coffey said. "We've baptized three of our Centershot kids in the last six months."

Coffey said not only is the program allowing his church to connect with families in a unique way, the archery ministry has drawn new adult volunteers who might not otherwise be spiritual mentors.

The Centershot National Championship is strategically scheduled to take place in



Youth participate in Centershot at Campbellsburg Baptist Church.

the same week and city as the National Archery in the Schools Program's national tournament, which drew 10,000 young archers last year. The two events, however, are not affiliated with one another. (KBC)

Senior Living Celebrations empower senior adults

Lexington—An empowering day is planned for senior adults attending this year's Senior Living Celebrations, according to a Kentucky Baptist Convention ministry consultant.

"Our senior adults have the resources, time and gifts to help our churches reach Kentucky and the world for Christ," said Shelly Johns, KBC's women's and senior adult ministry consultant. "The Senior Living Celebrations provide a time of inspiration, equipping, networking and fun for this awesome group that is invaluable in kingdom work."

"Although many are retired, all are still needed in service to our Lord as we meet needs, spreading the gospel across Kentucky through our words and actions," Johns added.

Tim Perdue, pastor at First Baptist Church of Eddyville, and his wife, MeMe, will be among the speakers and workshop leaders at the Senior Living Celebrations. Author MeMe Perdue's workshop looks to guide seniors in "Living Your Best Life Now."

As many as 15 workshops will be available during the three one-day events, including:

■ "Connecting God's Story and Mine," led by Joy Bolton, executive director of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union.

■ "Get Up and Go," led by Marilyn Creighton, missions consultant with Kentucky Mission Service Corps.

■ "Day Trips in Kentucky," led by Ron Wilburn, a senior-adult travel consultant.

"Something new we are offering this year is free health screenings provided by Baptist Nursing Fellowship," Johns said, expressing gratitude for the ministry partnership.

Johns also said Senior Living Celebrations would not be possible without help from the Eliza Broadus Offering for State Missions.

"We want each senior to know that he or she is still enlisted and in training to show the world who Jesus Christ is and what He has done on our behalf," Johns said. "This reality should permeate every aspect of their lives: mental, social, spiritual and physical."

Senior adults are asked to send testimonies and photographs of their evangelistic outreach efforts, which will be used to encourage others. For more information, contact Johns at shelly.johns@kybaptist.org, or call her at (502) 489-3386.

Senior Living Celebrations will be held in three locations statewide. Consolidated Baptist Church in Lexington will host the first event April 27. Additional events will be held at Parkway Baptist Church in Bardstown, April 28, and First Baptist Church of Eddyville, April 30.

Entertainment will be provided by the cast of "The Stephen Foster Story," dramatist Lyndia Fuller, and special-guest vocalists Jim Booker and Alma Randolph. Brian and Rhonda Shoemaker will share their creative ministry talents at the Lexington event.

Online registration and more information can be found at www.kybaptist.org/seniorcelebrations. (KBC)

Morgantown pastor's research develops VBS strategy

By Myriah Snyder

Morgantown—A Kentucky Baptist pastor is using newly "unearthed" information on Vacation Bible Schools through his doctoral research and the Southern Baptist Archives to encourage churches to continue working to disciple children.

Roger Taylor, pastor of Aberdeen Baptist Church in Morgantown and recent doctoral graduate of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, researched the early years of VBS for his doctoral project.

"I believe, first of all, that I shed light on the subject of intentional follow-up, and I have devised a strategy that churches could go by to assist them in doing a better job," Taylor said.

He uses the acrostic "CONNECT" to illustrate his strategy:

- C**onnect with children and families.
- O**ffer service opportunities.
- N**avigate assimilation and involvement with new members.
- N**urture relationships through records management.
- E**xecute a strategy.
- C**ommunicate the strategy for follow-up and care.

Take the church's outreach strategy to a new level.

Using the acrostic, Taylor developed a pamphlet for distribution to assist churches in a VBS follow-up strategy.

Taylor's inspiration for the project was the growth of Aberdeen Baptist Church's VBS program from 37 attendees in 1996 to nearly 300 now and a Baptist think



Taylor presents his dissertation on Vacation Bible School follow-up strategies to Bill Sumners at the SBC archives in Nashville, Tenn.

tank's need for research on intentional follow-up.

"That's the hardest thing I do with Bible school is to be able to follow-up," Taylor said.

"That's what led me to Bible school," he added. "With it being through Southern Baptist means, I was close enough to the Baptist archives in Nashville to start this research."

Taylor built off the research of Homer Grice, described by Taylor as the "go-to man for Vacation Bible School in the Southern Baptist Convention." The work was compiled by Bill Sumners, director

of the archives. With this material, he constructed an "intentional VBS follow-up strategy."

"I found the real history of VBS. They were always there to help assist me in coming up with the research that I needed to unearth this," Taylor said.

Consequently, he personally presented his dissertation to the Southern Baptist Archives.

In addition to his research being given to Midwestern Seminary, he also presented copies to Southern Seminary and Criswell College, from which he is a graduate. (WR)

35 million reasons

In the wreckage and grief surrounding the crash of Germanwings Flight 9525, a sad and disturbing picture of the suicidal co-pilot continues to emerge. By all appearances, one would think that Andreas Lubitz had it all together. Lubitz, in his late 20s, was employed by a major airline, ran marathons, and traveled the world. One would hardly suspect an individual of that profile to take his own life and the lives of 150 innocent people.

Together We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

But reports indicate Lubitz was also dealing with a broken relationship and a deteriorating mental state that was sure to put his career in jeopardy.

I have found the tragic story of Lubitz and those he killed to be a harsh reminder of a universal truth: Everyone needs the gospel and they need it now. Despite the

appearance of worldly success and self-sufficiency, Lubitz was obviously a broken and hopeless young man. And, regardless of how successful and sane the 150 passengers and crew members may have appeared to be, none of them had any suspicion as they boarded the plane that they would be dead in a matter of hours. Sadly, very few of them were probably ready to face the Living God and give an account for their lives and how they had responded to God's offer of grace through Christ.

When taking my seat beside total strangers on a plane, I have often looked for opportunities to begin a spiritual conversation and present the gospel. And I have often not looked for opportunities. Flight 9525 reminds me that no matter where we are or whom we are around, our greatest concern should be for the eternal state of the souls of others. We, and they, may be unknowingly in the last moments of life.

Kentucky Baptists continue to give me reason to believe that eternity still weighs heavily upon our hearts. At the request of our convention president, Tom James, KBC Business Services Team Leader Lowell Ashby recently reported the total amount Kentucky Baptists gave to the cooperative mission work of the KBC and the Southern Baptist Convention this past year.

Lowell added together all receipts, including Cooperative Program, special mission offerings (e.g., Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, Eliza Broadus), and every category of designated giving (e.g., world hunger, disaster relief). The only figures missing from the spreadsheet are the gifts Kentucky Baptists send directly to an agency instead of routing those gifts through the KBC. No doubt that is a significant figure. But so is the figure Lowell provided.

How much did Kentucky Baptists give to our cooperative efforts to reach Kentucky and the world for Christ? \$35,522,376! Of that total, \$21,404,431 were given through the Cooperative Program.

Do Kentucky Baptists still care about the lost and still believe we can do more to reach the lost by working together? I have more than 35 million reasons to say, "Yes, we do!"

Living out a new model of racial unity

Why in the world would a black pastor want to move to a mostly white congregation? Especially after you've spent years answering the question: why in the world would a black pastor want to be Southern Baptist?

Kevin Smith, teaching pastor at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, gave an inspiring answer to that question during the recent Ethics & Religious Liberty Summit on race relations in Nashville. In 2006, Smith, who also is assistant professor of Christian preaching at Southern Seminary, became the first African American to be elected vice president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Prior to joining Highview's staff, he was pastor of Watson Memorial Baptist Church in Louisville for eight years.

Even though others counseled him that the black church needs more expository preachers, Smith quipped that his main motivation was "my grandmother's bad hermeneutics." His grandmother, he recalled, had instructed him: "Look, Kevin, you call yourself a Christian, someone who is following Jesus. Don't be like a lot of people who don't know anything about Jesus. They don't know what He taught; they don't know what He did."

"This is my grandmother's hermeneutic: God rest her soul, she said at least make sure you know the 'red letters,'" Smith chuckled, referring to King James Bibles where Jesus' words are printed in red. One day, while reading those "red letters," Smith became overwhelmed by the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21: "Father, may they (his disciples and other followers) all be one, even as You are in Me, and I in You."

Emphasizing the prayer's strong missiological thrust, he added, "So that the world may know that you sent me." Since college, Smith said he has been overwhelmed that "the lack of oneness and unity among those who call themselves followers of Jesus in the United States undercuts the missiological thrust we say we have."

While appreciative of older models, such as Lincoln Bingham, who has been committed for decades to pursuing the unity of God's people, and of models in which congregations of differing ethnicities come together for worship services, retreats and missions trips, Smith believes there is room for more models of racial unity in Southern



After Thought

By Todd Deaton

Baptist life. "We need to think at systematic levels—at the denominational level, at the state convention and associational level," he maintains. "But the reason why the church is important is because the most foundational level for us to think is at the personal, relational level."

Motivated by Jesus' prayer and by Paul's admonition to keep the unity of the Spirit, Smith pointed to the Pentecost, observing that the disciples were all in one place in one accord before the Spirit moved like a mighty rushing wind. "We do a lot of praying for revival, praying for the moving of the Spirit of the Lord," he explained. "But if it is required that we be in one accord, then to pray from discord is a futile prayer."

And, while there are some healthy, multi-ethnic, church plant models of racial unity, Smith envisions a model which explores what it looks like when people of diverse ethnicities submit to black leadership. "We've had churches for a while that have a sizable black population," he explained. "I wanted a model where leadership modeled that as well, (and) God provided a gracious opportunity (at Highview), where the pastor has a vision for the church to look like Louisville, the nations, the New Testament and, ultimately, like heaven."

Humorously describing some of the dynamics of black leadership in a white congregational setting, Smith mused at differences in preferred "heart-languages" of expressing joy in the Lord.

"The bottom line, though, is the community of friendship, of doing life together," he said. "In Southern Baptist life in general—whether I'm in east Tennessee or Kentucky—I just love the magical moment of preaching the gospel, exalting the Lord Jesus Christ, and having some old, white lady come up and say, 'I grew up in a racist family. ... I've been in some wrong places. But that gospel was so good, and you are my brother,'" he said.

So, why would a black pastor want to pastor a white church? "I'm only 48, but I want to die trying to do what Jesus called us to do and obey the Scripture, rather than die being comfortable in being a maintainer and making excuses," Smith concluded. And, in living out a new model of racial unity, he's inspiring all Southern Baptists.

Boost up follow-up for Easter and beyond

When a first-time guest completes a guest registration card at your church, what happens next? The most common answer: absolutely nothing.

No, it's not an intentional oversight, but without an ongoing, immediate follow-up plan, your church may miss the opportunity to reach guests for Christ and include them in your church family.

Need fresh ideas? Tweak some of these to fit your church:

- First-Time-Guest Online Survey. People love to give an opinion! Create a brief survey on your website. (See a sample at dianadavis.org.) Carefully study responses.
- Same-Day Contact. A specially trained volunteer can make a brief phone call to each guest on the Sunday

afternoon they visit your church.

- Email & Snail Mail. Assign volunteers to send a swift, personal email or handwritten card to each first-time guest.

Fresh Ideas



Diana Davis

- Small Group Personal Invitation. Provide contact info to an appropriate small group or Sunday School class for each family member. A member of that small group may offer to meet the guest at a specific door to escort them to class.

- A Personal Touch. Examples: An Indiana church delivers three coupons for a free drink in their coffee area, encouraging the guest to return for three consecutive Sundays. In a different church, their volunteers deliver a church coffee mug to the guest's door before they get home from church.

A baking volunteer at First Baptist, Garland, Texas, prepares fresh homemade cookies for each first-time guest, then a delivery volunteer simply knocks on their door and gives them delicious cookies and a goodie-bag of church info.

- Pastor's letter. Many pastors prepare a warm letter or email to welcome first-time guests; some even jot a handwritten note. Pastor Traylor at Olive Baptist, Pensacola, Fla., often texts or phones first-time guests on Saturdays, inviting them to come back on Sunday.

Notice that church members—not just ministry staff—accomplish the majority of follow-up. Newcomers desire relationships, and relationships provide evangelistic opportunity. When God brings a first-time guest to your church this Sunday and they complete a guest registration card, what will happen next?

"The harvest is abundant ... pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2).

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Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

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Anticipating our eternal home: What will it be like in heaven?

By Randy Alcorn

I once heard a pastor make a startling confession: "Whenever I think about heaven, it makes me depressed. I'd rather just cease to exist when I die." I tried not to show my shock as I asked him, "Why?"

"I can't stand the thought of that endless tedium. To float around in the clouds with nothing to do but strum a harp—it's all so terribly boring. Heaven doesn't sound much better than hell."

Where did this Bible-believing, seminary-educated pastor get such a view of heaven? Certainly not from Scripture, where Paul said to depart and be with Christ was "far better" than staying on earth (Phil. 1:23). Though my friend was more honest about it than most, I've found that many Christians share the same misconceptions.

More than 30 years ago, I began studying what Scripture tells us about eternity and have written about heaven ever since. In a day when speculation and subjectivism about heaven run rampant, I've found it exciting and refreshing to carefully examine what Scripture says.

Let's examine the biblical answers to some questions people have about heaven:

1. Will we have bodies? Will we eat, drink, travel and play?

Many people imagine that we will remain disembodied spirits in the afterlife and that heaven won't be a tangible, earthly place.

Given the consistent physical

descriptions of the present heaven and those who dwell there, it seems possible—though this is certainly debatable—that between our earthly life and our bodily resurrection, God may grant us some physical form that will allow us to function as human beings while in that

FIRST PERSON

unnatural state "between bodies," awaiting our resurrection. Just as the intermediate state is a bridge between life on the old earth and the new earth, perhaps intermediate bodies, or at least a physical form of some sort, serve as bridges between our present bodies and our resurrected bodies.

Revelation 21:1 says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." This eternal heaven, the new earth, is our true home, where we will live forever with our Lord and one another.

In my book "Heaven," I develop biblically why I believe that on the new earth there will be natural wonders, animals, trees, rivers, cities, houses and architecture. We will laugh, eat and drink, tell stories, make crafts, build, garden, care for animals, play, enjoy sports and physical activities, and tend and manage the earth.

We will collaborate, research, invent, read books and write them, create and perform dramas, compose music and perform it, all to God's glory. Why? Because we will still be physical beings created in God's image, which means we are creative and intelligent. And, we will

be restored to a new earth without sin and death—to fulfill God's original plan of stewarding the material universe to His eternal glory.

2. Will we still be ourselves with our memories of this life?

After Jesus rose from the dead, He said to His disciples, "Look at My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself! Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." Having said this, He showed them His hands and feet" (Luke 24:39-40). The resurrected Jesus did not become someone else; He remained who He was before His resurrection. His old body was the same body made new. Our bodies will be the old ones made new, just as the new earth will be the old earth made new.

You will be you in heaven. Who else would you be? If Bob, a man on earth, is no longer Bob when he gets to heaven, then, in fact, Bob did not go to heaven. If we weren't ourselves in the afterlife, then we couldn't be held accountable for what we did in this life. Judgment day would be meaningless. Scripture is clear that our personal history and identity will endure from one earth to the next. If you trust in Jesus, you'll be you in heaven—without your bad parts—forever.

3. Won't heaven be boring?

Sadly, even among Christians, it's a prevalent myth that heaven will be boring. Sometimes we can't envision anything beyond strumming a harp and polishing streets of gold. Satan's most basic strategy, the same one he employed

with Adam and Eve, is to make us believe that sin brings fulfillment. However, in reality, sin robs us of fulfillment. Sin's emptiness inevitably leads to boredom.

Psalms 16:11 says, "You reveal the path of life to me; in Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are eternal pleasures." Everything good, enjoyable, refreshing, fascinating and interesting is derived from God. God promises that we'll laugh, rejoice, and experience endless pleasures in heaven.

4. Will we know our loved ones and have ongoing relationships with them?

Scripture gives no indication of a memory wipe causing us not to recognize family and friends. Paul anticipated being with the Thessalonians in heaven (1 Thess. 4:13-18), and it never occurred to him he wouldn't know them. If we wouldn't know our loved ones, the encouragement of an afterlife reunion would be no encouragement at all. Relationships among God's people will resume in ways even better than what we've known here.

So, will you join ranks with those who, as Peter describes, "wait for the new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell" (2 Pet. 3:13)? Jesus' death and resurrection made the way for us to be restored to the Father in our eternal home. If you know Jesus, I look forward to meeting you there! (BP)

Randy Alcorn is founder of *Eternal Perspective Ministries* and author of 40 books. This article first appeared in *Mature Living*, published by LifeWay Christian Resources.

Jesus put things in order & walked out of the tomb

By Michael Kelley

What does it look like to rise from the dead?

We've all seen the TV dramas in the operating room when the heart monitor suddenly goes flat with the ominous and unceasing tone. Then the shock paddles are brought in and the formerly and technically dead person is brought back to life. Maybe it's like that—jolts running through the body.

Or, maybe it's the way most of us feel on a particularly early morning when the alarm clock goes off. We jump out of bed, but as we switch the near blinding light on, it takes a few moments to rub sleep out of our eyes. We have a sense of weakness in our hands and fingers as the blood starts to get going again, until we can eventually stagger to the bathroom to turn on the shower. Maybe it's like that, only greater—we need a couple of hours to regain control of our faculties and get some strength to just sit up.

But something tells me that Jesus didn't stumble out of the tomb. Something tells me He didn't cough and gurgle, or need the blood flow to return to His extremities on Easter Sunday morning. Sure, His death was messy. Undignified. Bloody. Gruesome. Embarrassing even. But His resurrection? That was different.

I love the fact that John, right in the middle of his Easter morning account, drops a little detail into the narrative that not only describes the resurrection of Jesus, but helps us see it. Feel it. We see Mary coming to the tomb—hopeless and despondent, her faith dying with Jesus. We hear the night sounds starting to fade as the sun begins to rise. We sense the stillness—the emptiness—of the air. We see her tears and feel the crushing weight of her even greater grief as she discovers in the darkness of the morning the stone rolled away. We hear her shrill cries as she sobs out her testimony to Simon Peter and John that grave robbers have stolen the body. Then comes the running.

We hear the panting. We feel the hot breath. We see the younger outrun the older. Then, by the first rays of light, we see along with, first, John and then Peter, that

the tomb is indeed empty. That's when we get the detail:

"The wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself" (John 20:7).

It's a curious little detail to include, don't you think? John was there; he saw the whole thing. It's possible that the memory was so ingrained into him that he wanted to record every last detail.

But maybe too, buried in this little detail, is a commentary about the nature of the risen Lord. Jesus was raised to life, and when He was, He took on the dignity befitting Him. He simply got up in an unhurried manner. Like the Lord of All Creation that He is, He took a few moments

to put things in order, even going so far as doing something like making His bed. Jesus didn't stagger and stumble, bleary-eyed and numb from the coils of death; He rose as a conquering hero. And He strode out of the tomb like He owned the place. Because He does.

This is not like the resurrection of Lazarus whom Jesus pulled out of death. Just a few chapters earlier in this Gospel, he came out of the grave "bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth" (John 11:44). Jesus Himself gave the order to "loose him and let him go" because Lazarus couldn't do it himself.

Jesus took a few moments to give us a little glimpse into the fact that centuries before the cross and the tomb, creation was broken by sin. It was set in a spiral of disorder where up was down and left was right. Everything was flipped on its head, but when He stepped out of the tomb, He announced to that broken creation that He was setting everything back the way it was always supposed to be. Out of disorder and into order. Out of death and into life. Out of brokenness and into wholeness. And maybe that reordering started with that simple act of taking what might have otherwise been a wrinkled, tattered mess, and folding it up neatly.

Then He walked out into the light.... (BP)

Michael Kelley is director of discipleship for LifeWay Christian Resources. This article first appeared in *HomeLife* magazine published by LifeWay Christian Resources.

Handling 'out of control' teens

By Scott Wigginton

While every teenager pushes against authority to some degree, an "out of control" teenager typically goes beyond occasionally talking back, breaking curfew, or being disobedient to behaving in ways that may radically disrupt family life and even put the teen's life and future in some danger. In such cases, it



is the parent's God-given responsibility to love and wisely strategize to re-establish authority and proper boundaries.

Parents must first determine the reasons for the misbehavior. Are the rules unclear? Have you been unwilling to spend time with your teenager to prioritize the relationship? Has your teenager been allowed too much freedom and become accustomed to having their way? Is he dealing with pleasurable behaviors that are potentially addictive? Is she depressed or using substances? Are they angry at you for some reason and seeking to express it?

After determining the underlying reasons for the acting out, parents must talk with teenagers and clearly establish expectations as well as specific consequences. Put it in writing. Make sure you address possible loopholes. With this contract, make sure the teenager has input and that you include both positive and negative consequences. They need to know what to expect when you "catch them doing something right!"

Finally, make sure you are consistent in following through. Teenagers need to know that you are willing to do the extra work and follow through that good parenting requires. Avoid empty threats, different reactions to the same behavior, and lack of unity in parental responses.

Just as your Heavenly Father loves His children with clear expectations, so should loving parents care less about being liked and more about finding the proper balance between law and grace. Teenagers are not supposed to be in charge of your family; you are.

UC students bring healing, hope to NYC

By Abby Cherry

Williamsburg—Hurricane Sandy struck New York City Oct. 28, 2012, leaving billions of dollars of damage, millions without power, and thousands upon thousands of destroyed homes. From flooded Subway systems to no lights on Broadway stages to hauling the NY Stock Exchange, life was interrupted for days following Sandy's destructive visit. While NYC was on the path to recovery in a few short weeks, not everyone was afforded such a quick turnaround.

Since the disaster struck, more than 4,600 Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers have helped rebuild and repair broken homes, and, above all, watched 27 lives be transformed through the power of Christ. This spring break, students from the University of the Columbians again served in NYC alongside nearly 100 other U.S. college students.

Sixteen UC students worked on two separate teams at three locations, working on projects including siding houses, hanging and finishing drywall, doing trim work, and cleaning up trash. The group worked 559 volunteer hours with a monetary value of \$11,444.

"The people that I have gotten to meet are definitely my favorite part of the trip," stated UC junior Blake Reams, of London, a two-year SBDR veteran. "Not only have I been able to build

relationships with those that I am working alongside of, but it's also just really humbling to sit and listen to the stories of the homeowners, and to really hear all that they have been through."

"A lot of times when people think of disaster relief, they think it only lasts for a couple months, and when the hype dies down, they assume everything is fixed," stated UC sophomore Kaitlin DeJarnette, of Alexandria. "However, many people continue living with homes that are battered by the storms for years after. One of our crew chiefs said that there were still homes to this day that haven't been touched, and honestly that was a surprise."

As surprising as it is to hear of homes still untouched, UC students were pleasantly astonished by another encounter: meeting someone from their own backyard.

As volunteers serve they are given a crew chief who has been trained and equipped by SBDR. One of the UC teams was blessed to work under Dave Hammond of Immanuel Baptist Church of Corbin. IBC is a local church that many UC students claim as their place of worship.

Hammond said, "It really was such a pleasure to work with students so close to home. It's evident that God is truly working in our church, on the UC campus, and in places near and far to home."



Whether helping an elderly couple with siding their house, praying over a homeowner whose house was sitting in three feet of water for weeks or making connections with a local church from over 700 miles away, it was clear that even in the midst of the most pressing and troubling of times God was still faithful.

Although damage and disaster struck the hearts of the people of NYC, it was the message of Jesus who was able to overpower the storm and bring help. (UC)

Southern VP named to SBC Committee on Resolutions

Columbus, Ohio—Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd has named the members of the Committee on Resolutions for the June 16-17 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio.

Among those serving on the committee is Matthew Hall, vice president for academic services, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville; Clifton Baptist Church, Louisville

Floyd named Steve Gaines of Tennessee as committee chairman.

Gaines is senior pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova.

Proposed resolutions may be submitted as early as April 15 but no later than 15 days prior to the SBC annual meeting, giving the Resolutions Committee a two-week period in which to consider submissions. Resolutions may not be submitted during the annual meeting.

The resolutions must be accompanied by a letter from a church qualified to send a messenger to the SBC annual meeting certifying that the individual

submitting the resolution is a member in good standing.

Resolutions preferably should be submitted by email or mailed to the Committee on Resolutions in care of the SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203.

The drafts must be typewritten, titled, dated and include contact information for the person and his or her church. No person will be allowed to submit more than three resolutions per year. (BP)

Baptist Bikers with evangelistic purpose

Somerset—Kentucky Baptists with a fondness for motorcycles are needed to help form a new evangelistic outreach geared toward fellow bikers.

The Kentucky Baptist Bikers held its initial planning meeting at Sonny's Restaurant in Somerset on April 6.

"We are not a club. We are a connection," organizer Randy McPheron, director of missions at Rockcastle Baptist Association, said. "Our purpose is to connect bikers across the state for missions and ministry."

Kentucky Baptist Bikers is looking to hold two rides this year, as well as starting a ministry that helps stranded bikers.

This spring, "A Ride for Missions Awareness" will take bikers on tour of Kentucky Baptist organizations, such as Sunrise Children's Services and Oneida Baptist Institute, and call attention to the spiritual and financial support required to maintain their Kingdom work.

A fall ride called, "A Ride for Revival," takes bikers on a cross-state tour beginning in Pikeville and ending in Paducah. At four points, local Baptist associations will coordinate revival services with guest preachers and music.

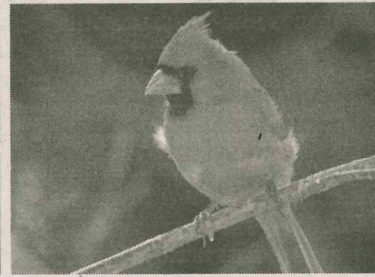
Through the "Bikers Helping Bikers Ministry," McPheron hopes to create a network of Kentucky Baptists who can meet the needs of stranded bikers and open doors to sharing the gospel. The process of building the network will take time, he said, but the goal is to have teams of willing volunteers who are able to provide gas, trailer transportation or mechanical help within the county they live.

An avid biker, McPheron said there's one common trait among this affinity group: They like to talk and they appreciate a good story.

"We want this to be about intentional evangelism," he said. "Fellowship is great, but we want guys on the back of motorcycles that are discipled and prepared to tell people about Christ."

To learn more about Kentucky Baptist Bikers, contact Randy McPheron at randymcpheron@gmail.com or by phone at (606) 215-4013. (KBC)

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?

• 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)

RAMCON



More than 190 attend state missions event

RAMCON, a state missions event for Royal Ambassadors, was held March 21 at Temple Missionary Baptist Church in Central City, with the help of RA and Woman's Missionary Union leaders from First Baptist Church of Central City. More than 190 Royal Ambassadors and leaders attended.

The boys heard two missionary speakers: Aaron Harvie, a church planting specialist with the North American Mission Board, and Robbie Gray, a member of the Experience 1:8 team that served at Mission Adventure Camp and in South Africa last summer.

Attendees brought new socks and underwear to be used at the Muhlenberg County Baptist Association Crisis Closet. They also participated in Royal Racers and the Rain Gutter Regatta.

From top, counterclockwise: Jon Auten, Kentucky WMU RA consultant, leads the Royal Ambassador Pledge. Jim Brewer, RA leader at FBC Central City, and Jamie Reynolds, DOM at Three Forks Association, get the boats checked in. Rick Gastineau, RA Representative on the Kentucky WMU Board, talks with an RA Leader. The Lads are ready for the racing to begin.



Cooperative Program Sunday slated for April 12

By Robin Cornet

Park City—Robbie Perkins is a huge Cooperative Program supporter, but there was a time when that wasn't the case.

"I thought they were just giving money to line some bigwig's pocket," said Perkins, pastor of Park City Baptist Church. He was convinced his church could have a greater Kingdom impact on its own.

Perkins talks about his change of heart in a new Kentucky Baptist Convention promotional video. It is one of many resources available for use during Cooperative Program Sunday April 12.

"I began to understand this isn't going to make somebody rich; this is going to

spread the gospel in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth," Perkins says in the video. "When I began to understand that, my heart began to change. ... God was taking me from a local-church mindset to a kingdom mindset."

Understanding how the Cooperative Program works was the first step, Perkins recalled. The Cooperative Program is the vehicle that allows Southern Baptists to pool a portion of their tithes and offerings to help finance the spread of the gospel in every state, across the country around the world.

Through his discovery about the power of the Cooperative Program, Perkins said he has seen a need to educate his church

members. As a result, Park City Baptist has steadily increased its contributions to CP.

"God opened up the Cooperative Program to me," Perkins said. "I'm a believer in it, not only because I believe in what it's doing, but because it has blessed me" through KBC staff consultants, educational training events and seminars.

Perkins said he came to understand that Kentucky Baptist churches can do "so much more" together than alone.

To download the video, "Change of Heart," go to www.kybaptist.org/cp. Other CP videos, promotional materials and resources are available at the same web page. For a comprehensive look at the CP, check out the SBC's page at www.sbc.net/cp. (KBC)



Robbie Perkins

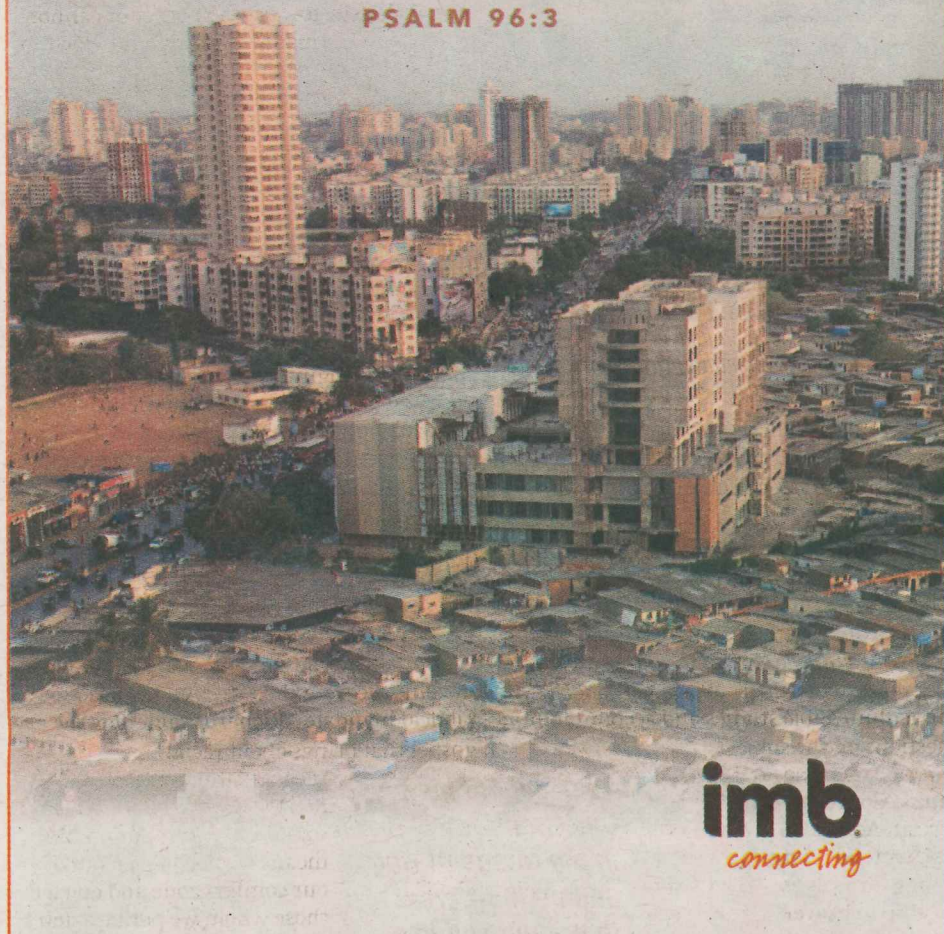
"My heart began to change. ... God was taking me from a local-church mindset to a kingdom mindset."

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Hurstbourne pastor Cameron Debit and Southern Seminary students Evan Sams, Justin Williamson and Chase Grubb took part in the #LouSnowHelp Twitter campaign March 5-6.

Seminary to serve Louisville in third annual '1937 Project'

By Mackenzie Miller

Louisville—The seminary community will honor the role that Southern Baptist Theological Seminary played in the city's recovery during the 1937 Great Flood by serving Louisville in its third annual 1937 Project, April 18.

"We are a part of this community not by accident, but by God's providence, and that means we have some responsibility to this community," said Southern Seminary President Albert Mohler Jr. during a March chapel service.

The 1937 Project is a campus-wide outreach as part of Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer's Give A Day week of service, which Southern Seminary has participated in since 2013. The seminary's effort is designed to practically meet the needs of Louisville residents by showing continued care and love for neighbors and non-profit organizations in the city.

The 1937 Project's past two years have included helping restore homes in the community, painting, cutting down trees in Seneca Park, and praying over various organizations like the Exploited Children's Help Organization. Fischer recently wrote to the seminary in gratitude for its continued service to the community.

"I want to thank you and your team at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for your ongoing participation during our Give A Day week of service," he wrote. "Louisville is continually being recognized for its compassionate work because of people like you who work daily to help those less fortunate."

The Great Flood of 1937 devastated Louisville, with the Ohio River reaching so far inland that rescue teams saved people from the second story windows of downtown buildings. During the crisis, Southern Seminary buildings were used to house orphans and flood victims and seminary president John R. Sampey invited the mayor to use his office for an extended time.

The 1937 Project's creation is one way the seminary community continues to keep its eyes open for ways to serve and further gospel witness year-round.

On March 5-6, due to record amounts of snow, Fischer created the

#LouSnowHelp Twitter campaign as a way of crowdsourcing non-emergency help. It was a mechanism by which citizens could connect, serve one another, and cultivate furthered compassion throughout the city. Shortly after its creation, the hashtag was trending on social media.

After shoveling a foot of snow from his driveway, Cameron Debit, lead pastor of Hurstbourne Baptist Church and a Southern Seminary alumnus, checked his Twitter feed, saw the #LouSnowHelp campaign, and offered to help.

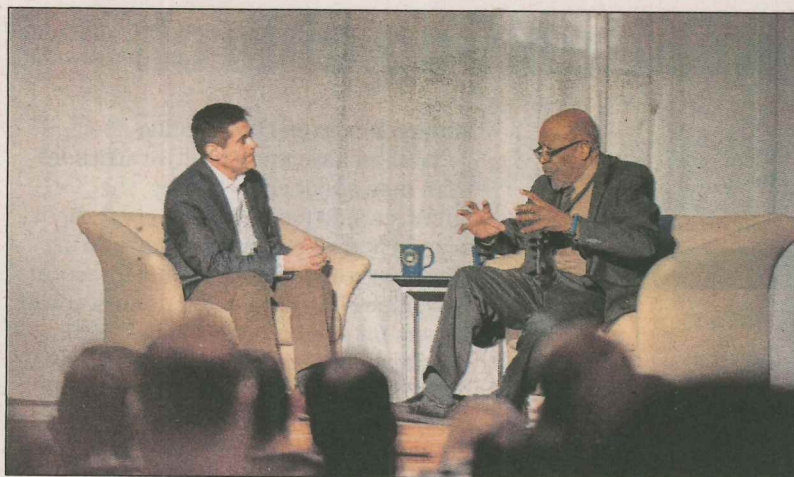
He recruited his three roommates, seminary students Justin Williamson and Chase Grubb and Boyce College student Evan Sams, to serve with him. They were joined by additional members of Hurstbourne: Brittney Greer, Kip and Nate Eatherly, and Lamont Breland.

"In Louisville, many people are skeptical and even hostile toward conservative Christianity, but with our city's desire to be known as 'The Compassionate City,' a major connection point is service," Debit said. "So I found our efforts to be a remarkable bridge to our city's residents. We garnered lots of good will and opened up channels of gospel dialogue."

The requests took Debit and his team all over the city, including the Hurstbourne community, the St. Matthews area, Bardstown Road, and a mobile home park near the Outer Loop. Throughout March 5-6, they were able to serve more than eight homes and one stranded motorist. Any families they were unable to help, they connected to someone else in their area who could. The snowstorm was an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ to the city of Louisville, he said.

As Debit's team responded to many of the requests that came in, many others in the community were encouraged to serve also. They made such an impact that WDRB News caught wind of their efforts and featured Debit and his team on the news.

If a church or organization would like to submit a potential project, visit sbts.edu/1937. The April 18 event will begin at 8 a.m. with sign-in, breakfast, and a send-off rally. Most projects should end before 1 p.m. (SBTS)



Top left: Russell Moore (left) interviews John M. Perkins on "The Civil Rights Movement after 50 Years" during the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's "Gospel and Racial Reconciliation" summit. **Top right:** Trillia Newbell, the ERLC's director for community outreach, spoke on "United: Captured by God's Vision for Diversity." **Bottom:** A panel discussion on "Key Issues in Racial Reconciliation: Poverty, Fatherlessness, Criminal Justice and Urban Ministry" featured (from left), Walter Strickland, Dhati Lewis, Kevin Smith, Tony Evans and Dean Inerra during the racial reconciliation summit March 26-27 in Nashville. (Photos by Alli Rader)

Racial Reconciliation

Continued from page 1

Moore said Southern Baptists need not just conservatism, but "the sort of conservatism that knows what to conserve."

"If what we're conserving is 1950s Dixie, then we're conserving something other than the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we will be fighting God, and we will not win," he said. "For a people who have all the marks on our history that we have, it seems to me that God is working and God is giving us another chance to get this right. In order to do that we must repent, not just rebrand."

Moore said the problem is not that black, white, Hispanic and Asian churches are openly hostile toward each other or cannot come together in a meeting or joint worship service, but the message that worshipping separately sends to unbelievers.

"The problem is that Sunday morning, when we are signifying to the rest of the world, 'here is a picture of the Kingdom of God,' we gather with the same people we would gather with if Jesus Christ were still dead, and that's blasphemy," Moore said.

This is the second year the ERLC has held a summit for pastors and church leaders on pressing social issues facing the church. Moore had originally planned to address race at next year's summit but moved it up a year after the deaths of black men killed in clashes with police in Ferguson, Mo., and Staten Island, N.Y. (BNG)

View of God's image urged at racial reconciliation summit

By Tom Strobe

Nashville—Racial reconciliation in the church calls for a strong view of the image of God in all people, a deep commitment to understanding others and an intentionality in achieving diversity, speakers said on the second day of a Southern Baptist-sponsored leadership summit.

Black, white, Asian and Iranian pastors and leaders addressed racial disunity March 27 during the event conducted by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

After several presenters focused on the centrality of the gospel of Jesus in solving racial divisions, speakers on the final day provided further application of the Gospel to the issue.

Christians must see the image of God in all people without minimizing their differences, African-American speakers said.

Jesus "gave me Himself," author and ERLC staff member Trillia Newbell told the audience. "But what He didn't do was strip me of my brown skin. He has created me in His image."

"If anyone ever told you to be color blind, don't," she said. "Don't be color blind, because He has created us uniquely for our good and for His glory."

Hip-hop artist and author Trip Lee said Christians must "fight for gospel love and understanding."

Recalling a Christian who told him, "I don't even see you as black," Lee said the comment was unhelpful, though he appreciated what his friend was trying to say.

"Experience matters," Lee said. "You cannot love others if you dismiss or ignore their experience."

The experiences of blacks in the United States are different than those of whites, he told attendees. Some Christians carry burdens other Christians do not, he said.

"How can I possibly bear my brother's burdens if I don't know what his burdens are?" he asked, adding, "Understanding one

another helps us to love one another.

"We have to seek that understanding, and only the gospel can produce the kind of sacrificial love that labors to do that."

Washington, D.C., pastor Thabiti Anyabwile said believing the Bible's teaching on God's image in all human beings affects racial reconciliation.

"You cannot be a Christian renewed in the image of God and be indifferent to or opposed to reconciliation in the body of Christ," he said. "The reconciliation flows necessarily from the saving and sanctifying work of the Lord. You can't break those two things apart without breaking the cross. You can't break those two things apart without opposing the Spirit's ongoing work in the church. You can't break those two things apart without breaking ourselves."

Anyabwile, the pastor of newly planted Anacostia River Church, addressed the image of God in His original creation, in its "distorted reflection" when sin entered the world, the re-creation of sinners in God's image through the work of Christ and the final image-bearing in the glorification Christians will experience upon Jesus' return.

Racial reconciliation "must begin with our learning the habit of seeing each other as together made in the image of God and therefore possessing inestimable, unfathomable dignity and worth and preciousness," he said.

The people who should be best able to speak the truth about racial disunity are "the people who believe this book and believe this gospel," he said.

"If racism does not exist, it will be the first sin produced by the fall that was completely cured apart from the gospel," Anyabwile said. "We're only practicing self-deception if we think racism has vanished or we think it has just vanished from our hearts. No, the potential for it lurks."

Reconciliation among Christians of different skin colors and ethnicities requires the renewal of their minds, he said. The race issue is "one of the most underdeveloped areas of Christian

discipleship in the United States," Anyabwile said, pointing to a lack of Sunday School curriculum, Bible studies and accountability questions on the subject.

Fred Luter, the Southern Baptist Convention's first African-American president, asked attendees if racism among Christians is the reason worship in heaven is not reflected in the American church.

He preached from Rev. 5, which describes worship of the Savior who has redeemed people from every tribe, language, people and nation.

"What we are praying for right now in our churches will one day be a reality ... when all of God's sons, when all of God's daughters, when all of God's children will be gathered at the throne, from every nation, from every tribe, from every tongue, from every race, from every nationality ... red, yellow, black and white, we're all precious in His sight, and the reason that we shall be able to do that is because of God's grace in our life," Luter said.

"That is the way it was intended when God created the church, and that is definitely the way it is going to be when we all get to heaven," he told the audience.

"The church should be Exhibit A" for "racial reconciliation in the kingdom of God," said Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans.

"How can we say that we love God, whom we've never, ever seen, yet hate our brothers and sisters that we see every day?"

Speakers called for purposefulness and suggested practical actions to gain racial reconciliation and diversity.

Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention of Texas, said Christians must repent of racism, pray for gospel oneness and act intentionally. The SBT is conducting its "Look Like Heaven" emphasis to foster racial unity.

"There is no silver bullet" to racial

"You cannot be a Christian renewed in the image of God and be indifferent to or opposed to reconciliation in the body of Christ."

Thabiti Anyabwile, pastor of Anacostia River Church in Washington, DC

reconciliation, just a process, he told attendees.

"(I)f we are not seeking to help our churches and help our convention and help our organizations and neighborhoods to look like heaven, then we are failing a biblical mandate," Richards said. "It is the gospel that brings about racial

reconciliation.

"We have to be intentional. ... Intentionality means we need to get out of our comfort zone and engage those whom we perhaps don't know."

Lee included the following in his suggestions for fighting for reconciliation and unity:

■ "Don't treat people who are different too different."

■ "Don't assume stereotypes."

■ "Try not to flock with people who look like you all

the time.

■ "Intentionally look to understand. Go deep relationally. Ask questions."

■ "Persevere through difficulties and growing pains. ... We've got to give one another room to grow and understand."

■ "You should ask yourself if you have assumptions about other races" and socio-economic groups.

■ "Meditate on Scripture and pray that God will give you a passion for that unity, but remember that only the Gospel can produce that kind of sacrificial love and unity. And we want to put that Gospel on display for the world to see."

Newbell, the ERLC's director of community outreach, expressed five desires for attendees and their churches: (1) A "robust understanding" of the image of God; (2) an overcoming of fear in discussing racial issues; (3) churches that confess sin; (4) hospitality and love for neighbor; and (5) a knowledge of the gospel as "race transcending."

Other speakers included Kevin Smith, assistant professor of preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and teaching pastor at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, and Afshin Ziafat, lead pastor of Providence Church in Frisco, Texas. (BP)

LifeWay Poll: Americans see value in attending church

By Lisa Green

Nashville--The overwhelming majority of Americans say they find value in attending church, a new LifeWay Research study shows.

Two-thirds of Americans think attendance is admirable; only 11 percent consider church useless.

Even among nonreligious people, 80 percent believe church attendance is acceptable, and 43 percent label it admirable. Just 29 percent call it useless.

But despite their professed fondness for church, Americans are more likely to believe attendance is declining (55 percent) or the church is dying (42 percent) than growing (36 percent) or thriving (38 percent), according to the LifeWay survey of 1,000 Americans from Sept. 19-28 of last year.

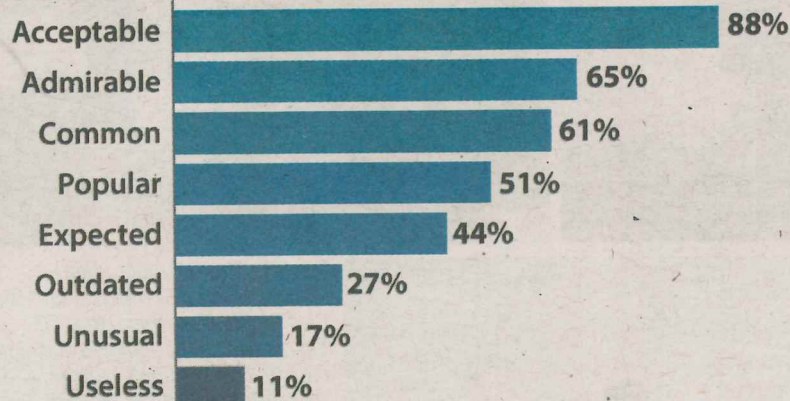
"Americans have a much more optimistic view of the people and practice of attending church than they do of the health of the church," said Scott McConnell, vice president of the Nashville-based LifeWay Research. "Church attendance is much like regular exercise and driving the speed limit. People do not live out everything they admire."

Confirming McConnell's assertion that Americans' churchgoing is at odds with their behavior, even on Easter, traditionally the best-attended Sunday of the year, large segments of the population say they don't plan to attend, previous LifeWay research has found.

Their attitudes reflect the mixed

Among Americans:

"Church attendance is..."



trends of the past 50 years. While many mainline denominations have lost membership, some have grown. And while more people are Christian today than in 1970, Christians make up a smaller share of the burgeoning population, according to a study from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Some say church is out of date

Faced with those trends, many churches have shifted toward contemporary worship styles and new outreach methods, although 27 percent of Americans still think church attendance is outdated, LifeWay research found. That belief is even more pronounced among the nonreligious (42 percent), Catholics (31 percent) and people 25 to 34 years old (34 percent)

who are among the Millennial generation in which fewer claim religious affiliation or profess belief in God, according to the Pew Research Center.

Young adults, like most Americans, don't see church attendance as an assumption in today's culture. While 54 percent of those over 65 describe churchgoing as an expectation, that viewpoint is in the minority for every other age group—a sign that those who attend are making a personal choice rather than responding to societal pressure.

That's a positive finding, McConnell said. "I don't think evangelicals would want that to be the reason people go to church anyway."

Women & men on churchgoing

Women have more positive attitudes than men about churchgoing, the LifeWay study found, with 69 percent of women and 63 percent of men viewing attendance as admirable. Only 9 percent of women consider church useless, while 14 percent of men hold that opinion.

Larger shares of women also believe in the health and vitality of the church. Forty percent of women say the church is growing, and 41 percent describe it as thriving. Among men, only 32 percent think it is growing, and 34 percent label it thriving.

LifeWay Research also found significant differences along ethnic and racial lines.

Although most Hispanics believe going to church is expected (55 percent), attendance is considered useless by 1 in 5—almost double the rate of the population as a whole. Whites are among the least likely to consider church useless (8 percent), but 60 percent believe the church is declining.

In contrast, most African-Americans believe the church is growing (55 percent) and thriving (56 percent). More often than other groups, they describe church attendance as common (74 percent) and popular (61 percent).

"The longevity of the Christian church proves it is not a fad," McConnell said. "Some Americans feel cultural expectations to attend church, but our recent research shows that those who actually do attend hold more closely to the teachings of Jesus Christ." (BP)

LifeWay pulls 'heaven visitation resources'

By David Roach

Nashville--LifeWay Christian Resources has stopped selling all "experiential testimonies about heaven" following consideration of a 2014 Southern Baptist Convention resolution on "the sufficiency of Scripture regarding the afterlife."

LifeWay told Baptist Press about its decision to halt sales of heaven visitation resources March 24 in response to an inquiry about the book "90 Minutes in Heaven" by Don Piper, which is being made into a movie slated for release this fall.

The book recounts Piper's supposed experience of heaven following a severe auto accident and has sold 6.5 million copies in 46 languages.

"Last summer, as we began developing LifeWay's new structure and direction—what we've now identified as One LifeWay—the role of heaven visitation resources was included in our considerations. We decided these experiential testimonies about heaven would not be a part of our new direction, so we stopped re-ordering them for our stores last summer," LifeWay spokesman Marty King told Baptist Press in written comments.

"Now that we've begun implementing the new direction, the remaining heaven visitation items have been removed from our stores and website and will not be

replenished.

"We have more work to do aligning the LifeWay Retail Division with LifeWay's vision and core values so we covet your prayers as we continue to provide trustworthy Biblical Solutions for Life," King said.

Though LifeWay "was not mentioned in the SBC resolution affirming the sufficiency of biblical revelation and affirming the truth about heaven and hell," King told BP in an interview, "the resolution was approved overwhelmingly and was considered during our process."

The resolution, adopted by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in June, warned Christians not to allow "the numerous books and movies purporting to explain or describe the afterlife experience" to "become their source and basis for an understanding of the afterlife."

The resolution did not list specific book or movie titles, but it seemed to describe works like "90 Minutes in Heaven," "The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven" by Kevin and Alex Malarkey and "Heaven Is for Real" by Todd Burpo along with its companion movie released last year by Sony Pictures.

The resolution affirmed "the sufficiency of biblical revelation over subjective experiential explanations to guide one's understanding of the truth about heaven and hell." (BP)

Indiana bill affirms 'inclusion' of religious beliefs

By Diana Chandler

Indianapolis, Ind.--Indiana's leading Republican lawmakers pledged March 30 to introduce language to the state's new religious freedom bill to clarify it does not allow discrimination against homosexuals, but seeks inclusion of religious diversity.

House Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President Pro Tem David Long said backlash generated by the state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, signed into law March 26, is based on a misrepresentation of the bill instead of its intent, design and effect.

"What we had hoped for with the bill was a message of inclusion, inclusion of all religious beliefs," Bosma said in a video of the press conference posted on the Indianapolis Star website. "What instead has come out is a message of exclusion, and that was not the intent and hopefully not the effect. But to the extent it is, we're intent on righting that."

The law, effective July 1, "sets a standard of review for a court when issues of religious liberty and other rights collide due to government action," Bosma said. Specifically, the bill prohibits a governmental entity from "substantially" burdening "a person's exercise of religion" unless the entity "demonstrates that application of the burden to the person: (1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest."

The law is the latest in a line of 20 religious freedom bills at the state level patterned after the 1993 federal Religious

Freedom Restoration Act that passed with broad bipartisan support. Another 11 states have religious liberty safeguards.

While Southern Baptists applaud the Indiana bill, vocal opponents have threatened economic, social and political backlash. Angie's List CEO Bill Oesterle has said he will cancel the company's planned \$40 million expansion of its Indianapolis headquarters while Apple CEO Tim Cook opposed the law and others like it in a March 29 Washington Post editorial. Thousands of people protested the law in downtown Indianapolis March 28.

Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd said religious liberty for everyone must always be preserved.

"It is one of the major core values of our country which must never be compromised or distorted in any way," Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, told Baptist Press.

According to the Indiana Republican Caucus, the law "establishes a judicial standard of review which will provide the courts with clear guidance on how to resolve any matters that come forth surrounding religious freedom."

State versions of the law are fueled by Hobby Lobby's 2014 victory over a provision of the Affordable Care Act regarding contraception, when the U.S. Supreme Court granted the Christian-owned company a victory based on the federal RFRA.

The Indiana bill does not mention sexual orientation, but opponents have expressed concern that it might be used to deny services to homosexuals based on religious reasons. (BP)

Marijuana dangers can't be ignored, critics say

By Tom Strode

Washington, D.C.—The growing support for legalizing marijuana among Americans and lawmakers remains unwise but not unexpected, Southern Baptist ethicists say.

Marijuana's inroads have been demonstrated already in March by a new public opinion poll that shows for the first time a majority in the United States favors legalization of the drug. Democratic and Republican senators also introduced last month for the first time a bill to lift the federal ban on medicinal use of marijuana.

These developments follow the accelerating legalization of marijuana during the last two decades. Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana, beginning with California in 1996. D.C. and four of those states—Alaska, Colorado, Oregon and Washington—also have legalized recreational use of marijuana. Fifteen states—10 with legalized medical marijuana and five without—have eliminated jail time for possessing small amounts of the drug, according to the Marijuana Policy Project.

MPP, a leading promoter of marijuana legalization, is seeking to end bans on the drug in 12 more states by 2019. It is campaigning to gain approval of legalized marijuana initiatives in five states next year.

Meanwhile, the federal government continues to classify marijuana as a Schedule I drug. Substances in that classification are considered to have "no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse," according to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Schedule I consists of "the most dangerous drugs" and have the potential for "severe psychological or physical dependence," the DEA says. Other Schedule I drugs include heroin, LSD and ecstasy.

Schedule I status for marijuana—and a continuing ban on even its medicinal

use—is warranted, said Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

"Those who classified it as a Schedule I drug understood just how dangerous it is," Duke told Baptist Press in written comments. "To ignore this danger for the sake of those who might be helped is to likely unleash its destructive power well beyond any possible medicinal value it might have."

The evidence of marijuana's harmful effects includes its status as the most prevalent drug involved in criminal activity, Duke said. In addition, more teenagers enroll in addiction treatment with a principal diagnosis of marijuana dependence than all other illegal substances put together, he said.

"We are not acting responsibly to these kinds of realities or to the clear devastation this drug is causing if we make access to it easier," Duke told BP. "Easier access to marijuana is bound to lead to more widespread use of it for recreational purposes, with all the attendant problems, including addiction, personal problems and family breakdown."

Americans "would be better served if Congress retained the Schedule I classification and simply instructed the appropriate government entities to conduct studies to assess the potential medicinal benefits of marijuana," he said. "Until such studies have been conducted and the benefits are seen to clearly outweigh all the known negative effects, we should continue to make access to marijuana more difficult, not less so. Some members of Congress already are seeking to remove marijuana from its Schedule I classification."

"To ignore this danger for the sake of those who might be helped is to likely unleash its destructive power well beyond any possible medicinal value it might have."

Barrett Duke, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission vice president for public policy

On March 10, Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., introduced a bill, S. 683, that would move the drug to Schedule II, thereby declaring it

has accepted medical value. It also would repeal federal penalties for medical marijuana and allow Veterans Administration physicians to prescribe the drug for veterans with serious illnesses. Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky is the lead Republican co-sponsor. In February, Democrats in the House of Representatives introduced two bills to legalize marijuana.

The General Social Survey—a highly regarded, bi-annual public opinion poll—found Americans' barrier-breaking support for legalization of marijuana in research conducted last year. Released March 4, the survey found 52 percent of respondents favored legalization, 42 percent were opposed, and seven percent were undecided, The Washington Post reported.

Americans' increasing support for legal marijuana "should not surprise us," said Ben Mitchell, provost and professor of moral philosophy at Union University in Jackson, Tenn. "We are living in the shadow of the 1960s cultural revolution whose motto was 'satisfy every desire.' Most Americans embrace that motto today."

The changing landscape on marijuana legalization will present challenges for churches, Mitchell said.

"Unfortunately, churches in those states where marijuana is legal will increasingly have to help individuals, families and communities repair the shattered lives created by the drug," he told BP in a written statement. "Make no mistake about it, marijuana use will leave personal and social scars."

Marijuana

Continued from page 1

testing, to be safe and effective enough for FDA approval.

"It makes no sense to bypass the FDA and allow Kentuckians to smoke marijuana under the guise that it is somehow medically beneficial," Chitwood said. "If derivatives of marijuana are ever approved by the FDA to be safe and effective, by all means, we would support their legalization. Obviously that hasn't happened yet. To the contrary, we know that marijuana is a gateway drug that often leads its users to even harder drugs that are claiming thousands upon thousands of lives through overdose."

House Speaker Greg Stumbo sponsored a bill that would have allowed Kentuckians to obtain marijuana, but only with a doctor's prescription. Already, nearly half of all U.S. states have passed similar legislation.

"I'd like to believe the prescription requirement in the bill would limit its use, but we have seen in the past how willing wayward doctors have been to hand out prescription narcotics," Chitwood said in comments at the start of this year's legislative session. "Thankfully, lawmakers saw this for what it was: another step in the push by pro-marijuana advocates to legalize marijuana altogether."

Chitwood said his opposition isn't because he lacks compassion for the sick, but because of the problems and risks associated with marijuana use. "For now, we have so many drugs that are better options," he said. (KBC)

Give to God and Caesar

Legacy giving spiritually motivated, not tax-motivated decision

Legacy giving by Christians is distinct because it is spiritually motivated, not tax motivated.

But much legacy giving is driven by tax avoidance, not biblical stewardship principles. As Americans we still enjoy the most favorable tax system in the world in terms of encouraging and facilitating charitable giving. So without question we should seek to maximize the available tax benefits in our giving. But, at the end of the day Christians must recognize God will hold us accountable for how we steward what He has entrusted to us. And, a legacy gift is a gift you can't put in the offering plate; it is a gift out of your assets, not your income, and it is made in light of your overall estate and financial plans.

It is important to remember charitable giving in America preceded all of our current tax systems. Many charitable organizations were created and continuously funded through generous outright gifts, bequests in wills and life income gifts before the establishment of the modern federal income tax in

1913, the federal estate tax in 1917 and the federal gift tax in 1935.

I am pleased to acknowledge those whom the KBF has had the privilege of assisting have demonstrated their primary motivation to give was not the tax savings opportunities, but the opportunities to make an impact, to make a lasting difference, to leave a legacy of their love for Christ and His mission in this world through their churches and other Christian ministries near and dear to their hearts.

Having said that, taxes can play an important role in the size and the timing of legacy gifts. Inherent in the mission of the KBF is to facilitate the making of legacy gifts by simplifying the process and ensuring each giver is maximizing the tax savings opportunities available. To that end the KBF makes available to all Kentucky Baptists confidential estate and charitable gift planning consultation.

Please call toll free Laurie Valentine, our trust counsel, for assistance in fulfilling the teaching of Jesus to "give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21).

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

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Barry Allen

Exciting opportunities

Sending forth the gospel for first time to lost locations

This year marks one of the most exciting opportunities that we have ever experienced in the life of Crossings. Over the last year as the Lord has been working on our ministry focus, we have been led toward unreached people groups—specifically groups that have never had access to the gospel. There are many obstacles in such a goal, which is the reason such groups still exist today nearly 2,000 years after Christ's time on earth.

Throughout the last 15 years, we have been involved in numerous projects across the globe with the purpose of taking the gospel to the lost. These various mission efforts have been such a blessing to see how God works through the lives and efforts of our campers, our staff, and our international partners.

As the Lord worked in our hearts on leading us to this partnership with the International Mission Board, we have all been so challenged by the reality that people exist today without any access to the gospel. There are no

churches, no local believers, no Bibles, and the list could go on. It raises the question, how can it be that in 2015 with all the resources available in our country that groups still exist without any hope of accessing the gospel?

In light of these facts, we felt compelled to proceed towards a mission partnership that would passionately pursue, by whatever means necessary, a plan to see the gospel go where it has not gone. Without question, we will face and have faced many obstacles to this effort, but the end result is worth it: That God would receive the glory, the praise,

the worship that only He deserves. That He would redeem and save a people for His glory and name.

Please pray for us to this end that we will be faithful to pursue God with all our hearts and that His name will be proclaimed where it has yet to be preached. That the preaching of the gospel would see a great harvest in unreached locations and the church would be established for the first time in the lost locations.

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

Crossings Ministries



David Melber

Too much water, too little water

Overcoming the many challenges caused by recent wintery weather

The winter brought plenty of challenges to our campus. In a recent article, I shared about our historic snow day.

Within a few days of overcoming the challenges from the snow, we dealt with flooding.

Angie has been saying she is going to get the Army Corps of Engineers to reroute the river so that our athletic fields are not in a flood plain and so our campus will no longer be land-locked.

In the meantime, we deal with flooding from time to time that cuts some of our staff off from the campus unless they make it over to campus before the water covers the bridge.

As I sat at home watching a Kentucky basketball game on a recent Saturday evening, I received a phone call saying the river was rising. So I packed a bag and made my way over to campus.

After arriving on campus, I dropped my gear off in an Anderson Hall room (the same room Dr. Barkley Moore used), and headed out to check on our crew moving equipment from the flood prone area to the top of the hill on campus.

I headed to the boys' dorm and chatted with our dean of boys, who happens to be an Oneida graduate.

Mr. Kelsey does a nightly devotion with some of the boys, so I was

privileged to sit in for this time of Bible study.

I then headed to check in on the girls' dorm and eventually back to our flood crew.

After the water receded, we soon found ourselves without water on our campus.

In an instant we went from too much water to too little water.

The cold weather had caused pipes to freeze, which led to leaks, which led to a supply issue.

We went nearly two days on our campus without water.

It was a bit of a challenge in my own home as Angie had the kids carry in snow to be boiled in order to flush toilets.

On day two, I heated some water in order to shave. While it was challenging, we managed.

Even tougher to manage was 225 kids in the dorms and 450 people to continue to feed. Our people pitched in and did what was needed to keep us up and running.

New Salem Baptist Church even sent over a couple of pallets of Gatorade by way of one of their members who happens to be one of our trustees.

I continue to be amazed at the Lord's provision for this place.

Thank you for what you do to help us keep our doors open so that lives might be changed.

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

Family influence

Student thankful for home and educational influences

Student Ben Everly, from Owensboro, is thankful for family influences in his personal and educational life that showed him what the love of Christ is all about.

Ben is one of three children and has fond memories of his time spent with his grandmother.

"My grandmother was my rock in my childhood," said Everly. "Ma, as she was known by my family, was where I found the unconditional love that later on in life I would encounter again in my relationship with Christ.

"I had a lot of emotions going on in my life growing up and Ma eased my hurts, and I could tell she felt my pain.

"I went to church with my grandparents as a baby, but when my mom started attending church, my siblings and I went with her," said Everly. "I made a profession of faith at a young age and was baptized. I began to grow in understanding but thought I was saved, so I never made a real decision because I didn't fully understand about giving your life to Christ.

"Ma had a stroke, leaving her

crippled and unable to speak. She eventually passed away.

"I continued to attend church with my Granddad for another year before going back to attending church with my mom. I was 15 years old and knew that I was unsaved.

"Alone in a room, I asked Jesus to be my Savior and I surrendered my all that night. I found out a year later that meant being surrendered to ministry.

"I became very prideful and started doing things my way, instead of God's," said Everly. "I did a lot of damage to my witness. Over the next few years, I had to gain back the trust of betrayed friends and family. I never thought I would be a minister after some of the things I had been involved with. But Praise God, He isn't done with me!

"Clear Creek is like a family and they have been a great support during some of my toughest times. It has been a huge blessing to be here and, Lord willing, I will graduate in a couple of years.

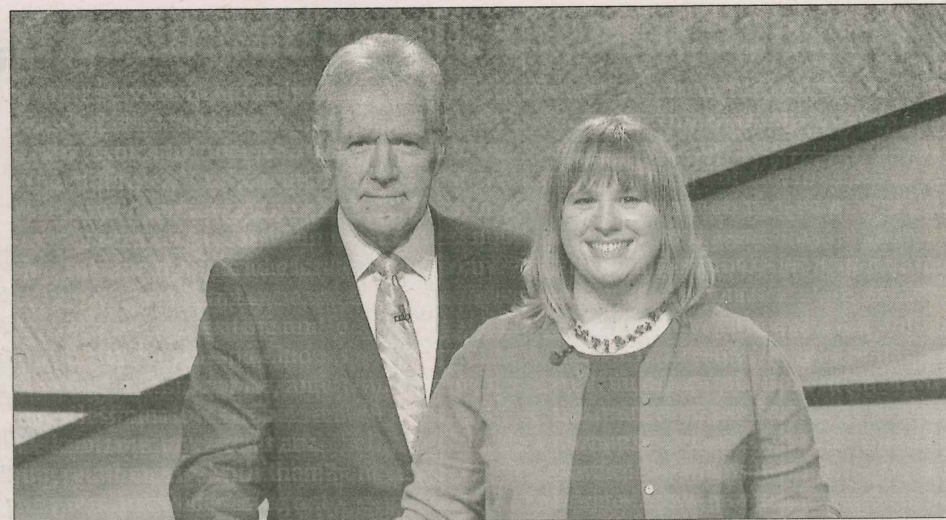
"For those who may be considering Clear Creek, come be blessed and be a blessing!"

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



Louisville music director wins on 'Jeopardy!'

By Myriah Snyder

Louisville—A Kentucky Baptist music leader and seminary student, Jacqueline Hawkins, advanced three rounds on the "Jeopardy!" game show on March 25-27.

"I've always been a fan of the show as long as I can remember. I used to watch it every night with my dad growing up, and we would shout out answers," Hawkins said. "Trivia and question games have always been something that I have been interested in."

Hawkins, who has been music director at South Jefferson Baptist Church in Louisville since 2009 and is pursuing a Master of Arts in worship leadership at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was chosen out of around 100,000 applicants for the game show.

Months later, she traveled to the suburb of Los Angeles where "Jeopardy!" is filmed to compete.

"When I was preparing to go out to

L.A., it was very surreal and I was overwhelmed, but as soon as I was at that podium and looking at the board, it was just completely automatic," she said.

Advancing in Wednesday's and Thursday's rounds, the hardest question, and the one that ended her time on the show was, "What company or mode of transportation used the book of Hosea to come up with its name when it was created in 1948?"

"I didn't know of any Israeli airlines, and I could not think of a response to that clue," Hawkins said. However, according to Louisville's Courier-Journal, she still left with around \$35,000 in prize money.

The Courier-Journal also reported that a viewing party was held at South Jefferson.

"It was absolutely a blessing to appear on the show," Hawkins said. "When I look at every step of it, I just definitely see God's hand." (WR)

Covington Sunday School class turns 50

Covington—A Sunday School class in Covington celebrated 50 years since its founding under the same teacher.

Smith Gibson, a retired dermatologist in Northern Kentucky, and his wife Lucille joined Latonia Baptist Church in 1957. In 1965, Lucille was approached by their pastor, Bill Turner, and asked if she and her husband would start what would become known as the "Young Married Class."

On March 22, current and former members, along with part of Latonia's congregation gathered to celebrate the anniversary.

"As we celebrate almost 50 years of fun, fellowship and life together, it seems fitting to take a pause, here in the middle, to look back," Gibson told the class. "We certainly have not reached the end of this journey, but we have simply chosen to reflect back over Part 1 of our experiences together," he continued. "We all look forward to Part 2 and after that,



Gibson addresses crowd gathered to celebrate 50th anniversary of his Sunday School class.

the Future Part, where we celebrate in the presence of the Lord and once again fellowship with those class members who await us."

"You see, time spent together in fellowship as brothers in Christ is a gift from God, so it deserves to be celebrated," said the 92-year-old veteran of World War II.

"For thousands of hours we have eaten and fellowshiped together," he noted. Recalling Jesus' words in Matthew 18:20, "Where two or more are gathered together in my name, there am I among them," Gibson added, "Again today, we thank Jesus for His presence among us." (WR)

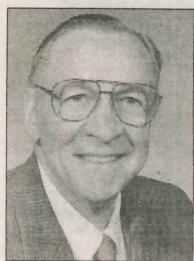
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OBITUARIES

William Cromer Jr., Southern professor

William R. Cromer Jr., a retired faculty member with the longest-serving tenure as a Christian education professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, died on March 25 in his

Louisville home at the age of 91.

Born in Atlanta, Ga., in 1923, Cromer was committed to Christian education and the training of Southern Baptist teachers and ministers. During Cromer's 41-year tenure, more than 10,000 students came through the seminary and more than 4,000 sat in his classroom, estimated Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, during Cromer's private funeral service on March 28 in the school's Alumni Memorial Chapel.

"The multiplied, countless half-lives of Dr. William Cromer's influence are now being transmitted to generations of people who may never know his name in this life, but will know a minister who was taught by him in seminary," Mohler said. "When we get to heaven we're going to find out that Dr. Bill Cromer didn't just teach 4,000 students, but those beyond number and limit, and he taught them faithfully."

Cromer was buried in the seminary plot at Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville, an honor given to professors who retire from the seminary. His family also requested that expressions of sympathy be made to the seminary's William R. Cromer Jr.

Scholarship Fund.

He earned his master of divinity and doctor of education degrees from Southern Seminary, and was among the first graduates of the School of Religious Education, later made part of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry. He was installed as the Gaines S. Dobbins Professor of Christian Education in 1993.

After he retired from teaching in 1995, Cromer served as senior professor of Christian education and leadership for 10 years, and as retired professor until his death.

He was the business manager of the Review and Expositor, a former academic journal of Southern Seminary, intermittently for 17 years until 1989. He wrote three books on church leadership and published numerous articles and curriculum materials. The scholarship fund was established by the 1994 December graduating class.

He taught for many years at the annual Rec Lab program at Lake Yale Baptist Assembly in Florida.

Cromer was a longtime member of St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, and often served as the minister of music or the minister of education in various churches over 30 years, including Third Avenue Baptist Church, Bethany Baptist Church and Shawnee Baptist Church. He also served in U.S. Naval Intelligence during World War II.

He was predeceased by his wife of more than 50 years, Lois Spencer Cromer, and is survived by his three children, Bill, Dan

and Brian; eight grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. (SBTS)

Mary Lou Crutcher, WMU leader

Long-time Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union leader Mary Lou Crutcher died March 28 at The Forum at Brookside. She was 82.

A former member of the Kentucky WMU Mission Board,

Crutcher was an active member of Friendship International, an outreach ministry to internationals in the Louisville area. She also led mission trips to China for the national WMU organization.

Crutcher grew up in Frankfort and was preceded in death by her husband, Robert Donald Crutcher, who was an Elizabethtown native and served as minister of education at Severns Valley Baptist Church.

She was a graduate of Bridgeport High School in Frankfort, Georgetown College, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. She served as minister of education at First Baptist Church in Pineville and First Baptist Church in Newport, Tenn. Later, she spent 25 years in social work in various agencies. She was director of social services for the school system in Birmingham, Ala., for 12 years. She also was employed by Dehoney Travel as a travel coordinator.

In retirement, she served in numerous

volunteer roles through the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Kentucky WMU and her church, Hurstbourne Baptist in Louisville. She has requested that expressions of sympathy be made through the Kentucky WMU Heritage Fund.

Mildred Fann, NAMB missionary

Former missionary and Sunday School teacher Mildred Frances McAllister Fann died March 23. She was 84.

Fann, a native of Shelbyville, graduated from Waddy High School and attended Georgetown College, where she met her husband Delbert. The two were married in 1950. He attended Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Fanns served as a language missionary couple with the North American Mission Board, working directly with the Navajos in Utah, New Mexico and Arizona. She taught English and Bible to Native Americans in the cities and on the reservations.

Later, they oversaw a Southern Baptist ministry to multiple ethnic groups, training and encouraging pastors. They finished their career working for Golden Gate.

The two retired in Shelbyville. They were members of Waddy Baptist Church, and Fann taught a Sunday School class.

She was preceded in death by her husband and is survived by two daughters, four grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Expressions of sympathy may be made to Sunrise Children's Services.

Right in the middle of the store...

By Patricia James

Fort Worth, Texas—While straightening the shelves at our LifeWay Christian Store in Fort Worth one day during the winter, I looked up and saw a lady in the Bible section who looked completely lost. I went over to her and asked if I could help.

Asking some additional questions, I learned she wanted a Bible but had never read one before or even been to church. She was starting from square one.

I then began to explain to her what kind of book the Bible is—a uniquely inspired one—and why it's so important for us to read it. She seemed receptive.

She said she had looked at some of the student Bibles, but just didn't know which one to get.

So we walked back over to the student Bibles, and I showed her a life application Bible—the one that first helped me understand the Scriptures and learn how to apply them to my life. After showing her some of its various features, she said she loved it and took it into her hands.

The whole time I was talking with her, all I could hear in my head was Jesus saying, Tell her about Me, tell her about Me.

So, I walked her over to a quiet corner in the Bible section and began to share Jesus with her.

After I had explained the gospel, I began to tell her a little bit of my own story.

As it turned out, she and I shared a similar struggle, and I could see that what I was saying was resonating with her.

I went on to tell her about the freedom I had found in Christ, and how I now had peace and joy where there had once been anger and bitterness.

We set off across the store talking about how God's forgiveness enables us to forgive others, and how we all desperately need God's forgiveness.

I told her about how Jesus wants to come into our lives and take away the anger, bitterness and sadness, and replace it with His love, joy and peace. I told her Jesus wants her to know Him, and all she had to do was turn to Him in faith, asking for His forgiveness, and He would come into her life forever. Then I asked her if she wanted to know Jesus like I did, and she said she did.

So, right in the middle of the store on a Saturday afternoon, she asked Jesus to come into her life. When she said "Amen" and looked up at me, the anger and bitterness had disappeared from her eyes and only peace remained.

Sometimes I get discouraged when I feel like we're not making a big enough impact. But then there are days when I get to witness God change a customer's life through our ministry at LifeWay.

Thankfully, these days far outweigh the others and they remind me to keep serving God faithfully in the down times knowing that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. (BP)

FIRST PERSON**Casting Crowns' singer faces cancer surgery**

By Laura Erlanson

McDonough, Ga.—Mark Hall, lead singer of contemporary Christian band Casting Crowns, underwent surgery to remove a kidney March 11. Doctors found a solid mass there earlier this month and were 90 percent certain it was cancer.

After removing the kidney, doctors determined that the mass was cancer and that it had been fully encased in the kidney.

Hall's wife Melanie often blogs at the band's website. There she called the pathology report a miracle, noting the encased mass had not spread inside the kidney or anywhere else.

"Glory Hallelujah!!" Melanie wrote March 15. "It was found in the earliest stage possible.... Something else interesting is that it was also determined to be a nuclear level 3 cell type, which is aggressive."

"What that means is that it was active and ready to go somewhere. This just makes all of this even more of a miracle. I wish that I could explain in words how much of a miracle it was, but it would take too many words...."

In addition to his role as Casting Crowns front man, Hall is longtime student pastor at Eagle's Landing First Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist church in McDonough, Ga.

A few days before Hall's surgery, Melanie wrote that the family was focusing on Isaiah 26:3—"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you."

In the days since the surgery, the



Mark Hall, center bottom, posted this picture on the Casting Crowns Facebook page March 16 as he was about to leave the hospital. Around him are members of the Eagle's Landing First Baptist Church student ministry team.

band has continued that theme through posts on their website and Facebook page, many of which have gone viral.

Hall is now home and healing well. And according to Melanie, the family desires for God to be glorified in this experience.

"I'm praying earnestly for you to have opportunities to share the Love of God with the people that God brings your way through this," she wrote to fans on March 14. "So many people don't understand why this would happen to Mark because he's so great and because he does so much for God."

"But many of you are getting opportunities to say God loves Mark and God loves you and God loves me. He is a just God."

"He is not a God that only gives blessing and favor on those that are 'good enough!' And in turn He also doesn't love you less when you aren't." (BP)

**CALENDAR
OF EVENTS**
April

- 9** Selah Conference, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville
- 10** Ky. Missionary Commissioning Service, Sand Spring Church, Lawrenceburg
- 10-11** Ky. Woman's Missionary Union Annual Meeting, Sand Spring Church, Lawrenceburg
- 10-11** RISK: Changing the Channel, Capital Plaza Hotel, Frankfort
- 10-11** Ky. Baptist Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training, Phases 1&2, Lancaster Church, Lancaster
- 10-11** Ky. Woman's Missionary Union Annual Meeting, Sand Spring Church, Lawrenceburg
- 16** Mission: One Day, Elkton Church, Elkton
- 17** Mission: One Day, Westside Church, Berea
- 18** Operation Inasmuch Training, Coral Hill Church, Glasgow; Parkway Church, Lexington
- 19** Ky. Baptist Women's Choral Concert, Parkland Church, Louisville
- 24-25** All-State Children's Choir Retreat, Cedarmore Camp & Conference Center, Bagdad
- 24-25** Women's Regional Retreat, Laurel Lake Baptist Camp, Corbin
- 26** All-State Children's Choir Concert, First Church, Bowling Green; First Church, Hodgenville

**MOUNTAINS TO
THE MISSISSIPPI**

COMPILED BY STAFF

CAMPBELLSVILLE—Pleasant Hill Church will hold a 175th Anniversary Celebration on April 18 at 5 p.m. and Sunday, April 19, at 10:30 a.m., with **Jeff Eaton**, son of former pastor Thurman Eaton, bringing the message.

CORBIN—First Church of Corbin has called **Austin Carty** as senior pastor. He begins duties June 1.

HICKMAN—West Hickman Church will dedicate its new building on April 19 during the 10:45 a.m. service. An open house will follow at 2:30-5 p.m. **Jason Sipes** is pastor.

PRESTONSBURG—The Enterprise Association Student Ministries Team is sponsoring a youth event at Liberty Church on April 18, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. A special worship will feature the band, "The One and the Many."

Enterprise Association also will hold an Old Fashion Spring Gospel Sing at First Church of McDowell on April 16, at 7 p.m.

CLASSIFIED ADS**To place an advertisement
in the Western Recorder:**Rates available
upon requestCall (502) 489-3428
or visit
westernrecorder.organd day care. See our website at www.rosehillashland.com to submit a resumé.

SEEKING: Horse Cave Baptist Church is accepting resumes for a full-time associate pastor with an emphasis in worship and administration. Primary qualities are to have a pastor's heart, called to the music ministry, and gifted in administration. Go to horsecavebc.org for complete job description. Send resumé to kdenton.hcbc@gmail.com or mail to 301 E Main St., Horse Cave, KY 42749

SEEKING: Pianist position available, Lexington Avenue Baptist Church, Danville, Ky. One service & one practice for \$100 weekly. Experience necessary. Call Philip Quinn at (859) 329-7056.

SEEKING: Dione Baptist Church in Harlan County, Ky., is seeking a bi-vocational pastor to lead a growing congregation with a dynamic student ministry. All applicants may send a resumé to dionebaptist@yahoo.com.

SEEKING: McDowell First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor to lead and shepherd a congregation of 150 active members in reaching community for Christ; blended worship service with worship leader, choir and audio visual media assistance; volunteer staff leading in established vibrant and growing ministries in Sunday School, outreach and mission groups for children, women and men; a caring, friendly family-oriented church in rural area of approximately 2,500 people with many unchurched; modern three-bedroom parsonage on church lot. Mail resumé and sermon DVD or CD to Paul Little, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 241, McDowell, KY 41647.

SEEKING: The Bates Creek Baptist Association, located in Madison and Garrard Counties in Kentucky, is seeking a DOM. Qualifications include 5 years of significant experience and preferred seminary degree. Resumes can be sent to TCBA, DOM Search Team, P.O. Box 69, Berea, KY 40403.

SEEKING: Beechland Baptist Church is seeking a pre-school/children's minister. This position is 20-30 per week and oversees the ministry area for birth thru 5th grade. More information is available upon request by contacting the church office at (502) 935-1313 (ask for Royce Bishop). Candidates can email resumes to bbcbishop@bellsouth.net or mail them to 4613 Greenwood Rd, Louisville, KY 40258.

FOR RENT: Two condos for rent in Destin, Fla. 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. Book now for 2015. lbrammer@charter.net (423) 309-4422.

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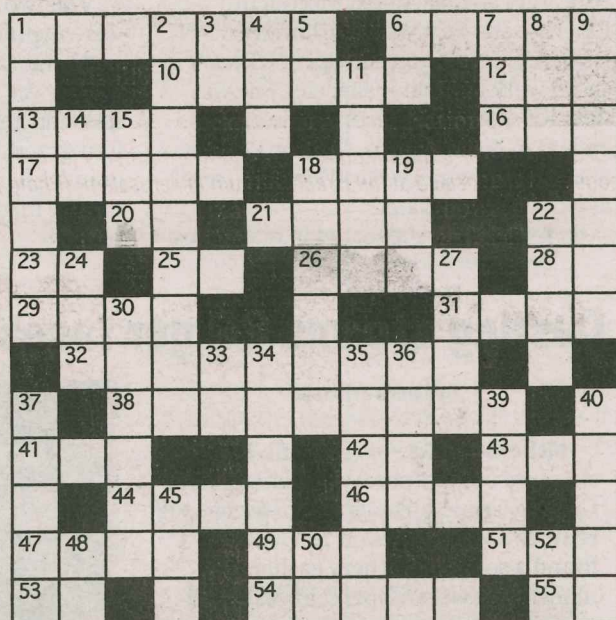
TRAVEL: SBC Hotel Accommodations. Convenient walking-distance, complimentary breakfast. Good hotels. Christiantravelers.net or 1-800-972-8952.

Bible Crosswords

By Carole Stengel

Across

- 1 "He that loveth his _____ abideth in the light" (1 John 2:10)
- 6 "They ... spake _____ one to another" (Malachi 3:16)
- 10 Anger
- 12 When you'll get to your destination, more or less, abbr.
- 13 "The _____ of the Lord ... run to and fro" (Zechariah 4:10)
- 16 "Let _____ the rich man glory in his riches" (Jeremiah 9:23)
- 17 Classifies
- 18 "We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his _____" (Psalms 95:7)
- 20 Dormitory helper, abbr.
- 21 "_____ is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10)
- 22 "Love worketh _____ ill to his neighbour" (Romans 13:10)
- 23 Plural suffix
- 25 Month, abbr.
- 26 "Good _____ from a far country" (Proverbs 25:25)
- 28 Article that precedes a vowel
- 29 "Jesus saith unto them, Come and _____" (John 21:12)
- 31 "Do not your _____ before men" (Matthew 6:1)
- 32 "The first covenant had ... a worldly _____" (Hebrews 9:1)
- 38 "For the wrath is come upon them to the _____" (1 Thessalonians 2:16)
- 41 Swine
- 42 Preposition
- 43 Noah's vessel



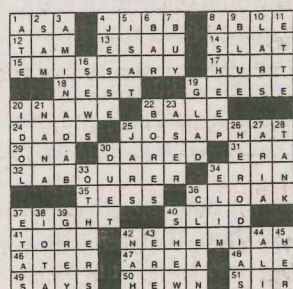
#033

- 44 Assist
- 46 "He hath a great _____ for you" (Colossians 4:13)
- 47 Nathan, for short
- 49 Tell an untruth
- 51 "The light of the body is the _____" (Luke 11:34)
- 53 And, Lat.
- 54 "A woman hath a familiar spirit at _____" (1 Samuel 28:7)
- 55 Extraterrestrial, abbr.

Down

- 1 "_____ are the meek" (Matthew 5:5)
- 2 "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better _____" (Hebrews 7:22)
- 3 Head nurse, abbr.
- 4 Make a mistake
- 5 Radium, chem. symbol
- 6 Old English, abbr.
- 7 Number of commandments God gave to Moses
- 8 European Theater of Operations, abbr.
- 9 "The Lord is high above all _____" (Psalms 113:4)
- 11 "O _____, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55)
- 14 Year old, abbr.
- 15 "Do not _____, my beloved brethren" (James 1:16)
- 18 "_____ thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12)
- 19 "A _____ commandment I give unto you" (John 13:34)
- 22 "Father, glorify thy _____" (John 12:28)
- 24 Sister, abbr.
- 27 Simon _____
- 30 Nothing
- 33 New England state, abbr.
- 34 "Ye are the _____ of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16)
- 35 "They were all _____ at the mighty power of God" (Luke 9:43)
- 36 "I am the _____ of Sharon" (Song of Solomon 2:1)
- 37 Backbone
- 39 "We spend our years as a _____ that is told" (Psalms 90:9)
- 40 Trapshooting
- 45 Narrow fish
- 48 A unit of value in Laos
- 50 Not out
- 52 "_____ shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5)

#032



Where did Jesus' trial take place?

By Stephen Douglas Wilson

The trial of Jesus Christ before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate is the most famous trial in human history. One of its most fascinating aspects remains somewhat of a mystery: Where was it held in Jerusalem?

Three of the four Gospels contain some helpful clues to the trial's location but they do not mention a clearly identifiable site in Jerusalem.

For instance, Jesus was taken to Pilate's judgment hall—the Praetorium (Matthew 27:27; Mark 15:16; John 18:28). In this context, a Praetorium was the governor's headquarters with its accompanying military escort and encampment.

Roman soldiers in the governor's service usually were housed at two locations in Jerusalem—at King Herod's Palace/Fortress Antonia near the Temple and at an encampment within or near Herod's Palace Complex at the western edge of the city. The Gospel of Mark seemingly identifies the Praetorium within one of these palace complexes (Mark 15:16).

In addition, the Gospel of John reveals that Pilate brings Jesus outside the palace proper, sets up his judgment seat on a stone pavement (perhaps in the courtyard of the palace complex or just outside it), and conducts the rest of the trial in front of some Jewish leaders who had refused to enter the palace (John 18:28; 19:13). The stone pavement ("gabbatha" in Aramaic) is thought by some to be a useful clue in solving the location of the trial.

So which of King Herod's Jerusalem palace complexes provided the locale for the trial of Jesus?

Both locations possess a long history of advocates, dating back to when Jerusalem became a Christian city during the reign of Constantine in the early fourth century. When Christians began to map out the route Jesus took from the trial to His execution at Golgotha (the Via Dolorosa—"the Way of Sorrows"), different routes emerged throughout the centuries that included the two palace locations.

Trial site: Fortress Antonia

Today virtually none of the fortress exists above ground level. Nevertheless, the current official route for the Via Dolorosa begins near the Sisters of Zion Convent where pilgrims are shown the "stone pavement" thought to be the paving stones of the Fortress Antonia where Pilate pronounced judgment on Jesus. Support for this site has included the thought that Pilate wanted his headquarters near the Temple for the heavily trafficked Passover week. Nervous Roman governors worried that crowds visiting the city during this time possessed a greater propensity for civil unrest.

Conversely, the site appears to be an unlikely location for the trial of Jesus. While today's route for the Via Dolorosa begins here, this specific route only dates back to the 18th century (although other previous routes have included this trial site from time to time).

Author Herbert Thurston has documented the evolution of the various Via Dolorosa routes over time in his work



Michael Avi-Yonah's model of first-century Jerusalem shows the Temple Mount and the Fortress Antonia (at right upper corner from the Temple) where some believe the trial of Jesus took place. The model today is located at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. (Photo by Roger Oldham.)

"The Stations of the Cross." Moreover, archeologists have confirmed that the famed "paving stones" at the site actually date to the Roman Emperor Hadrian's construction of a pavement during the second century. Hadrian paved over the Struthion Pool for a forum he built in this area.

During Pilate's administration of Judea, this site, although adjacent to the Fortress Antonia, would have been underwater, archaeologist Pierre Benoit noted in his book "Antonia Fortress." Although Josephus confirms that Roman troops were stationed in the Antonia (Jewish War, 5,238-247), no ancient sources have specifically stated that Roman governors maintained their headquarters at this particular site. Little reliable evidence exists to confirm the Fortress Antonia as the site for the trial of Jesus.

Trial site: Herod's Western Palace

The more probable site for the trial of Jesus before Pilate was in King Herod's magnificent Palace Complex on the western side of the city. While Roman governors of Judea usually were stationed in the coastal city of Caesarea, they stayed and conducted business in this palace when they visited Jerusalem (Josephus, Jewish War, 2,301-8; Philo, Embassy to Gaius, 306).

This palace was more spacious and more elaborately furnished than the palace within the Fortress Antonia—thereby a more fitting residence for a Roman governor. Additionally, the extensive courtyards of the palace complex and nearby fortified towers with its apartments provided space for soldiers to encamp (Jewish War, 2,329).

Recent archeological excavations have uncovered other information about the site. Archeologist Shimon Gibson uncovered some raised pavement stones



Michael Avi-Yonah's model of Herod's Western Palace Complex (foreground) by the heavily fortified Western Hill with its three towers named for Herod's friend (Hippicus), brother (Phasaël) and wife (Mariamme). Today the only part of the complex above ground is the base of one of the three towers in the misnamed "Tower of David." (Photo by Roger Oldham.)

in 2009 near the site of Herod's Western Palace that were thought to have been the "gabbatha" mentioned in the fourth Gospel. Gibson has endorsed the belief that Herod's Western Palace was the location for the trial of Jesus (WORLD News Service, Jan. 9, 2015).

In January, Israeli archeologist Amit Re'em announced the results of years of excavations in and around this palace. Under an old Ottoman (Turkish) era prison, foundational stones have been uncovered, along with an extensive sewer system and related waterworks that once were part of Herod's palace. Tours of the excavations have been opened to the public and Tower of David Museum director Eilat Lieber hopes that Christian pilgrims will add the site to their holy land visits.

Perhaps the only drawback to

completely endorsing this location as the site of the trial of Jesus before Pilate remains the silence of the four Gospels regarding the specific locale for the trial.

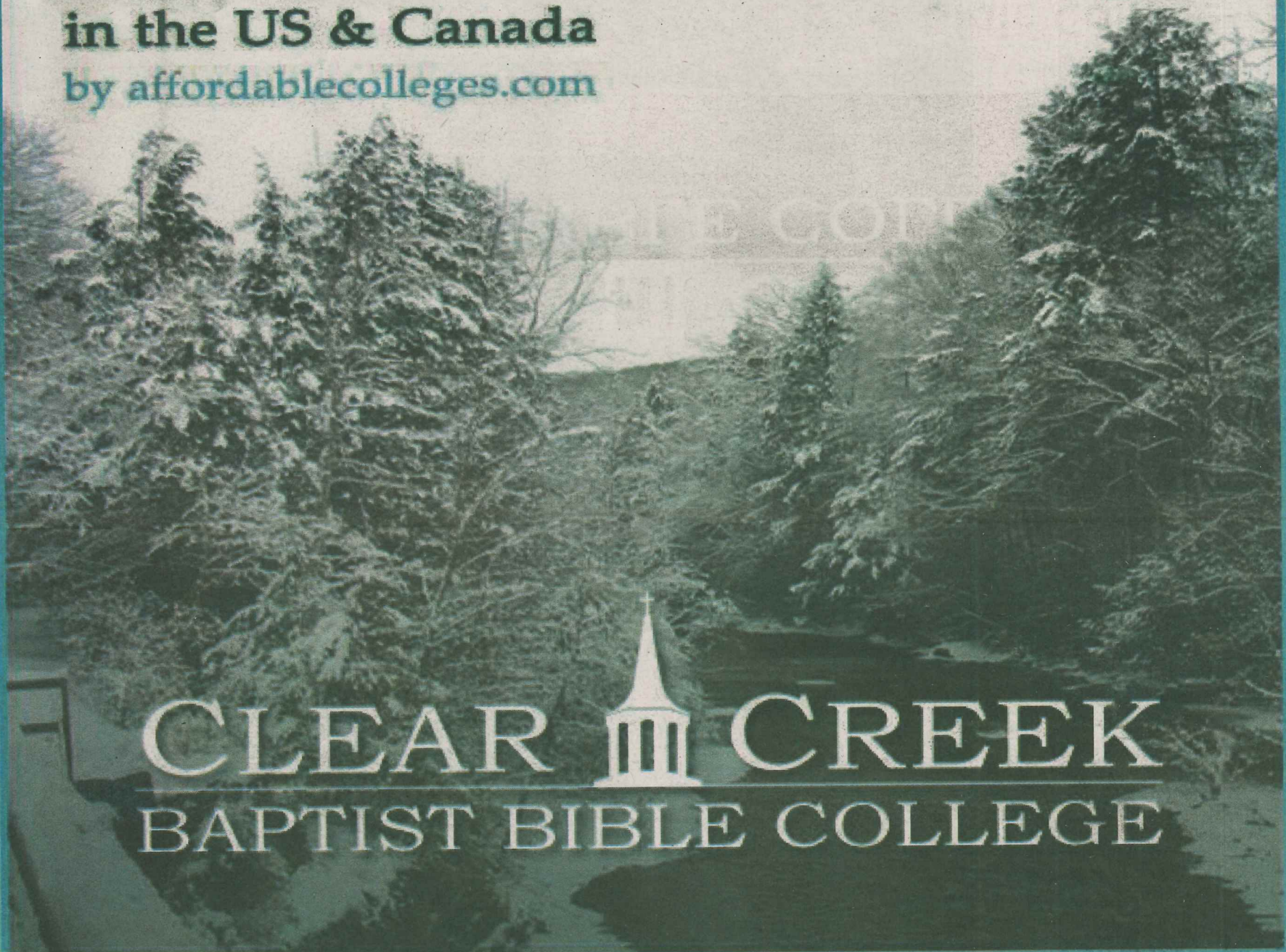
Less than 40 years after the trial, both of Herod's fortress palaces in Jerusalem were destroyed in the Jewish Revolt at a time when early copies of some of the Gospels were being circulated. Readers and hearers of these written works could no longer relate what they heard or read with the physical above-ground remains of the doomed city.

To a certain extent, then, some uncertainty about the venue of the trial of Jesus continues to this day. (BP)

Stephen Douglas Wilson is an adjunct professor at West Kentucky Community and Technical College in Paducah and a former member of the SBC Executive Committee.

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