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WESTERN Recorder

News Agency *of the* Kentucky Baptist Convention

October 4, 2016 — *Shine Like Stars* ✳ Philippians 2:15 — Volume 190, Issue 20

SBC Executive Committee recommends expanding membership

Nashville—Four state conventions would gain representation on the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee under a recommendation adopted during the EC's Sept. 19-20 meeting in Nashville for presentation at the SBC annual meeting in June 2017.

See more stories from the Executive Committee meeting on pages 8-9

The recommendation would amend SBC Bylaw 18 to exempt the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin and Montana Baptist conventions from Bylaw 30's requirement that territories have 15,000 members in cooperating Baptist churches to qualify for EC representation.

In other actions, EC members updated the committee's media relations policy, declined to recommend an amendment to the SBC constitution to require that churches relate to a state convention and association to be considered a cooperating Southern Baptist congregation, and honored retiring state convention executives Fred Hewett, Cecil Seagle and Fermin Whittaker.

Regarding the amendment to extend EC membership to the additional conventions, EC President Frank Page told the committee he originated the proposed bylaw amendment in an attempt to be "fair and kind."

"I have deep passion for small churches and deep passion for our smaller (state convention) partners," Page said. Some territories "have been a part of the convention all these years" and yet "have no representation on the Executive Committee."

The EC's September meeting marked the third time the body had considered a proposal to grant representation to geographic areas with fewer than 15,000 church members. In February and again in June, the EC considered proposals but felt more study was needed.

At a Sept. 20 plenary session, 20 minutes of discussion ended with approximately 60 of 82 EC members favoring the recommendation on a show-of-hands vote, according to an estimate by Baptist Press that was corroborated by EC chairman Stephen Rummage.

Members speaking against the recommendation said they supported the granting representation to all geographic territories but worried the waiver of an objective numerical standard could set an unhelpful precedent.

Rummage, senior pastor of Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, Fla., told BP the EC's action "was carefully considered in the workgroup as well as the Administrative Committee" and "reflects the heart of Dr. Page and the committee as a whole to see the fullest number of Baptists represented on the Executive Committee so that all Baptists can know what is happening throughout our convention and so that all Baptist territories can have an opportunity to speak into the direction of our convention."

❑ *See EC expansion... Page 8*

Kentucky convention to hotels: Help fight human trafficking

Louisville—The Kentucky Baptist Convention will not do business with hotels that fail to train employees to recognize and report human trafficking, KBC Executive Director Paul Chitwood announced Sept. 21.



Andrew Dyer

Chitwood set forth the convention's position in a letter to potential vendors and listed several resources for free training.

Among the list is the Kentucky attorney general's office, which announced Sept. 20 a partnership that will seek to offer human trafficking training to Kentucky's commercial drivers and truck-stop employees.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention intends for its internal policy to encourage corporate partners to provide employees with human trafficking awareness education.

Andrew Dyer, president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, said the state's Baptists "are committed to standing with the ones the Bible calls the least of these."

"We want to consistently be a voice for the ones who have no voice, whether it be the unborn, or in this case, the victims of human trafficking," Dyer, pastor of Corinth Baptist Church in London, told the Kentucky Baptist newsjournal, Western Recorder.

In addition to bringing awareness to the situation, Dyer said, "We want to bring real hope to lives. Obviously that only comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we want to be about anything we can do to point people to Him."

Advocacy groups say human trafficking is a $32 billion industry that ensnares about 27 million people worldwide, with 46 percent of traffickers known by—or even relatives of—the victims.

Some children as young as 2 months old have been victims of sexual exploitation. Children are twice as likely as adults to be trafficked, with the average girl groomed for prostitution being between 12 and 14 years old.

"That isn't prostitution. It's human trafficking," Chitwood said.

"Going forward, our intention is that we will forego business with hotels that don't participate in this training," he said.

According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, more incidents of human trafficking reported in Kentucky occurred at a hotel or motel than at any other location.

Chitwood said the convention wants to "partner with hotels that have taken steps to prevent human trafficking, establishments that exemplify great corporate citizenship, and are ready to put a stop to the use of hotels for criminal activity."

❑ *See Hotels... Page 2*



Short videos are part of the Great Commission Advance initiative, conveying the message that Southern Baptists are "Not Alone" in seeking to reach the world for Christ through their Cooperative Program partnership.

Great Commission Advance: 'Not Alone' in CP impact

By Art Toalston

Nashville, Tenn.—"Great Commission Advance" shouldn't be mistaken for a formal program. It's more personal.

It's a call for "every Southern Baptist and every Southern Baptist church living up to the high calling of disciple-making, evangelism and missions, biblical stewardship and fervent and effective prayer," as Frank S. Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, defines the focus of a growing partnership between state conventions and SBC entities.

Simply put: "We follow Jesus, we love others like Jesus and we tell the world about Jesus," Page said.

In myriad ways among Southern Baptists, Great Commission Advance is nurturing discussions about Cooperative Program national and international missions and ministries, and other initiatives large and small, to tell the lost about Jesus.

And it relays a key message to missionaries, church planters and pastors in bivocational or traditional settings: "Through the Cooperative Program, we definitely are not alone," Page said. "That is the theme of this emphasis: We are 'Not Alone,'" in moving toward the 100th anniversary of the CP in 2025.

❑ *See Great Commission... Page 3*

KBC VISION TOURS

Discover new opportunities for missions in 'unreached' Salt Lake City

Salt Lake City—Salt Lake City is more likely to be associated with Mormons than Southern Baptists, but that could change with help from ministry partners in Kentucky.

Of the 2.4 million people living in metropolitan Salt Lake City, a vast majority are either religiously unaffiliated or aligned with the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Only 2.3 percent claim to be affiliated with an evangelical church.

"Though it is hard for many people to believe there is a place in the United States that is basically unreached, Salt Lake City fits that description," said Travis Kerns, a North American Mission Board Send City missionary.

Kerns said church planters are committed to seeing the gospel presence grow. At present, there is one Southern Baptist church for every 40,994 residents.

"We need Kentucky Baptists that can come alongside the work there and make a gospel impact," said Doug Williams, missions strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Williams will lead a vision tour Nov. 1-3 with the goal of connecting local churches and associations with ministries in the city.

Kentucky Baptist pastors, directors of missions and missions leaders are invited to join the tour as Salt Lake City church planters share God's vision for the region.

"God is moving hearts to love Salt Lake City like never before. Partner together with us and let's watch God work miracles together," Kerns said.

Learn more about the Salt Lake City Send City Vision Tour and other available tours at www.kybaptist.org/visiontours. (KBC)

Hall Street's legacy continues by gift to Life Community

By Myriah Snyder

Owensboro—In late spring of this year, Kenny Rager, pastor of Life Community Church in Owensboro, one of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's "high impact church plants," stood in the parking lot of the old daycare they rented as office and ministry center space and watched as it burned to the ground.

"We had to go through the fire before this could ever happen," Rager expressed, referring to Hall Street Baptist Church gifting their entire property—church building, additional property near the church, two buses and all of its assets—to Life Community.

"Kenny, this just means that God's going to do something big," a church member told Rager as he stood with him watching the fire consume the building and much of their supplies. Thankfully, because the church met for worship in the local community college, the items for church services were safely stored in a trailer outside and untouched.

"He was absolutely right," Rager said. "The fire turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to us."

When Hall Street heard of the fire, they offered to share their facilities with Life Community, at no cost. Out of thankfulness, Life Community chose to pay them rent each month anyway.

Behind the scenes at Hall City, the financial situation looked grim.

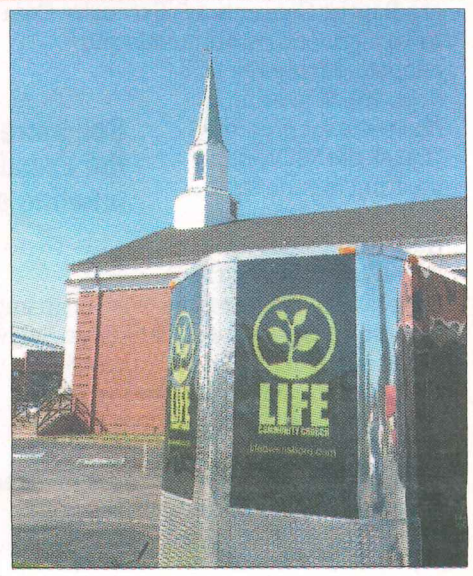
"We have a long rich heritage, but we've seen a decline in our membership and attendance," Jim Nelson, pastor of Hall City Baptist Church who will have their last service on Oct. 9, told the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer.

He continued, "When we were looking at our problems, even recently the air conditioning, we began to pray as a church and God took the blinders off our eyes. We knew we had more space than we needed, and we wanted to be good stewards of God's property."

"Most often, churches merge or one might sell to the other. We decided to become a legacy church. Legacy churches realize that what's best for the kingdom is to gift our church to a healthier one," Nelson said.

Nelson added of the decision, "Thinking of 1 John 3:16, true love is when you lay down your life for the brethren. The decision took a lot of courage but the majority of our members understand. And for some of our members who have been here the longest, they're excited to see the parking lot full of cars again."





Above: *Jim Nelson, pastor of Hall Street Baptist (left) and Kenny Rager, pastor of Life Community Church (right) talk about their plans to dissolve Hall Street Baptist Church and gift the properties to Life Community at no cost. (Photo by Alan Warren/Messenger-Inquirer)* ***Right:*** *Life Community Church will hold their first service at the new property on Oct. 16. (Photo by Kenny Rager/Life Community Church)*

Life Community is very humbled by this gift and plans to honor the church by continuing ministry in the community, Rager said.

"We hope to be able, more than anything else, to reach out to that neighborhood, that community, and let them know that there's a new church here and we will carry on the legacy of Hall Street Baptist Church," Rager shared.

He continued, "They did a lot of ministry in that community too. We want them to know that as the Hall Street ministry is coming to conclusion, we want to honor their ministry by continuing to reach out in that neighborhood and let that neighborhood know that we will be there to carry on the torch that Hall Street left."

At the business meeting (or family meeting, as Life Community calls it) to vote to accept the property, Rager told the church "that we were on the receiving end of generosity, so we had to receive this gift with humility."

For a few weeks the church had been collecting shoes for the needy. "I told our people that as a symbol that we will receive this building with humility, I am challenging the people in this room today to take the shoes off of their feet and lay them on the altar to give to the poor as a symbol that we will always be servants," Rager said.

And they did! "The day we voted to receive that building, we voted with bare feet. We left church that morning in our socks and bare feet. I've never been in a business meeting before where I'm wearing just socks, but I was that day," he said.

"Isn't this crazy? Look how this came about. The Holy Spirit was all over this," Rager added.

Rager concluded, "I hope that this is a reminder to associations here in Kentucky why we need to plant new churches in our communities. There's renewal and revitalization, but we still need new churches in Kentucky."

Life Community will hold services on the new property in the gymnasium "because it feels more like Life Community," Rager said. Their first service will be Oct. 16 at 11 a.m. (WR)

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Hotels

Continued from Page 1

KBC staffer Kristen Drake said, "As Christians, we must not stop at making others aware of these injustices. We must take action and fight for the freedom and restoration of victims."

Drake was key in creating an upcoming workshop for Kentucky Baptist churches to not only learn about human trafficking but also to discover ways they can be a changing force.

The one-day workshop, sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Convention, will be Oct. 22 at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Louisville.

"Kentucky WMU is grateful for this bold step as we deal with hotels for our events," Kentucky WMU executive director, Joy Bolton, said, considering WMU's focus from 2010-2014 on human trafficking awareness through Project Help: Human Exploitation.

She continued, "The recent decision of the KBC to stop doing business with hotels that refuse to train employees and to report trafficking to authorities is a concrete response to this terrible problem in our society. Knowledge brings responsibility and we have a responsibility to respond."

In November, messengers to the KBC annual meeting are slated to vote on a human trafficking resolution. (KBC/WR)

Evangelical leaders gather for 'solemn assembly' in Dallas

By Marc Ira Hooks

Dallas—Some of the nation's most recognizable evangelical leaders are rolling out a three-pronged plan designed to call Christians, across denominational and racial lines, to a new age of spiritual awakening.

Nearly a dozen pastors and teachers stood shoulder to shoulder in Dallas Sept. 21 for The Gathering 2016 at GateWay Church, a non-denominationl congregation, where several thousand assembled for "a national solemn assembly"—the initial step in their plan.

Organized by Tony Evans, senior pastor of the 10,000-member Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship Church in Dallas, the group has been meeting since the beginning of the year in an effort to bring a spirit of prayer and repentance to the U.S.

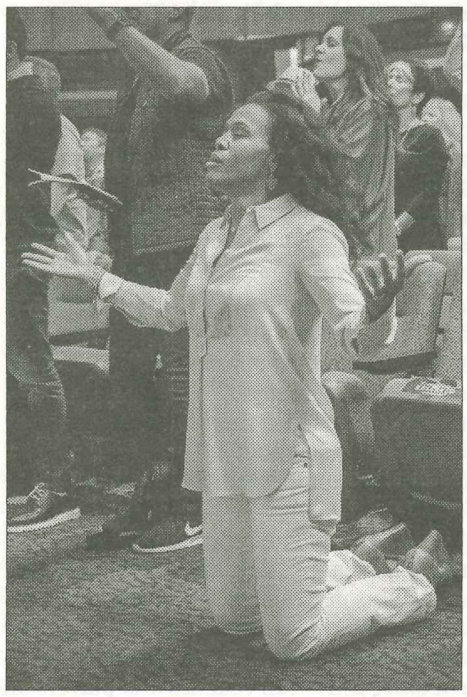
"It just seems to be that God is raising up a mighty commitment to pray," said Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, and immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"People are concerned about our country, and they are concerned about the condition of the church, and concerned about the brokenness in the lives of people," he said.

The concept of the solemn assembly is found in the Old Testament, according to event organizers, and is a special time of prayer and fasting. These meetings have been called by priests, prophets, and kings who led people to repent of their sins and passionately pursue the return of God's presence in their midst.

Organizers noted The Gathering is "the Body of Christ coming together one day to unite across racial, denominational and generational lines; lifting up the name of Jesus, and taking responsibility for the condition of our nation."

A similar meeting for pastors and key leaders from around the country, a "gathering of the elders," was held earlier this year in preparation for the larger meeting in Dallas, which included several thousand attending in person, and several dozen churches participating online.



Speaker and author Priscilla Shirer drops to her knees in prayer during The Gathering 2016 in Dallas. (Photo by Marc Ira Hooks)

During his message, Floyd said many Christians are often more desperate for their football teams during the weekend than they are for the touch of God on Sunday.

"Many of us as believers are more committed to some kind of political awakening," Floyd said. "That's not the answer to this nation. The answer to the nation is the next great awakening with the Holy Spirit of God and He wakes up the church and He shakes the church."

International Bible teacher and leader of Precept Ministries Kay Arthur led the assembly in a prayer of repentance saying the United States of America is not united in God.

"We trust in man rather than in God. There is no knowledge of God in our land. There is no fear, or respect, or trust," she prayed. "We've played church instead of sitting at Your feet, and knowing that every work is God-breathed, and You expect us to live by every word."

With incidents of racial violence fresh on the minds of those attending, John Jenkins, pastor of First Baptist Church of Glenarden in Maryland, spoke to the issue of racial reconciliation.

"These situations and circumstances are creating a mountain level of rage and discontent and worry," Jenkins said. "The 11 o'clock hour of Sunday morning still remains the most segregated hour of the week. We are further apart from each other (than ever), and the church has stood silently with little or no action or comment.

"While the world accepts racial disharmony, the church must not accept racial disharmony," he said. "We know how to interpret Greek and Hebrew, but we don't know how to communicate in English to someone who doesn't look just like us," he said. "What God ultimately wants us to achieve is that we give value to all cultures and embrace and learn from one another."

Evans described America as "desperate."

"But God will not fix the White House by skipping the church house," he said. "It will be this (the church) house that determines the well-being of that (the White) House. If He cannot get the attention of this house (the church), then that house (the government) will stay in trouble."

Evans noted that every year on Sept. 11, we remember the terrorist attack on our nation.

"Nineteen men from around the world, in the name of their faith, shut down the most powerful nation in the world. If 19 men from around the world, in the name of their faith, can shut down the most powerful nation in the world, what do you think we can do in the name of our faith to redeem the most powerful nation in the world?"

Evans told a group of Dallas pastors who earlier in the day gathered for pray that Phase Two of the plan would be a call to greater discipleship. While Phase Three would focus on coordinating a massive, cross-denominational, interracial, service project where Christians from around the nation work together in their communities to demonstrate the love of Christ. (BP)

Great Commission

Continued from Page 1

Contemporary technology and videos are part of the Great Commission Advance initiative alongside the Christian faith's cornerstones Page cited.

Southern Baptists encompass "many faces, many accents, many languages, but we're all reading from the same Word, working for the same goal—to share the Gospel with every person on the planet," Page said. The CP enables every church "no matter its size and every group no matter its ethnicity" to do its part in the Great Commission task, which he underscores as "the single mission of the Southern Baptist Convention for more than 170 years."

> ***Southern Baptists encompass "many faces, many accents, many languages, but we're all reading from the same Word, working for the same goal—to share the Gospel with every person on the planet."***
>
> Frank S. Page, SBC Executive Committee president

Among the disciple-making facets of Great Commission Advance is NetCP, a partnership of state conventions and SBC entities in state-of-the-art technology to assist churches in elevating their missions outreach through the CP.

State conventions, for example, can customize communication to churches that have stagnated or declined in their CP giving in recent years to help pastors lead their churches toward strengthened discipleship for the Great Commission.

Terry Dorsett, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England, said NetCP has "the potential to re-educate and empower a new generation of Southern Baptists toward significant Kingdom advance. NetCP is one piece of the larger foundation that the Great Commission Advance and its key initiatives are laying for revival to happen across America.

"We cannot reach our nation without a unified strategy and plan that helps us marshal our people, prayer and financial resources the best way possible," Dorsett said. "Great Commission Advance allows us to do that."

In missions and evangelism, the "1 percent CP Challenge"—which Page set forth prior to the Great Commission Advance—is continuing to stir churches upward in their CP support by 1 percent of their budgets each year. Since 2012, nearly 12,350 churches have responded to the 1 percent CP Challenge, some continuing for multiple years.

When Brad Adkins became pastor of Powdersville First Baptist Church in South Carolina in 2006, upheaval in the congregation had ended its missions giving.

"The first thing I told them was that we had to start investing in the Kingdom," said Atkins, who served as president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention from 2011-2013. Powdersville First Baptist, in a precursor to the 1 percent CP Challenge, initially budgeted 5 percent of its receipts through the CP; today 10 percent of the church's budget undergirds Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries while 3 percent is devoted to the cooperative ministry of the 50 churches in the Piedmont Baptist Association in the northwest part of the state.

"Although we may not be large enough to send missionaries to the ends of the earth," Atkins said, "we are able to help send SBC missionaries through our CP giving."

Also part of the Great Commission Advance:

- Advisory councils reflecting the insights and concerns of African American, Hispanic, Asian, multi-ethnic, smaller church/bivocational and women's leaders within the SBC, along with a Calvinism advisory group and a mental health panel.

The councils also have been a catalyst. Gideon Lee, an engineer and bivocational college pastor for a Chinese church in Cambridge, Mass., said, "We feel God is touching our heart to reach out to others. The future of the church in America is reaching out beyond our own ethnicity."

- TalkCP, an online forum for insights and reflections on the Cooperative Program's reach and impact.

Chris Martin, executive director of the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention, wrote in one of TalkCP's commentaries, "As a Southern Baptist, cooperation was taught to me from an early age. I recall the times when missionaries would speak to our RA's group, our association was hosting an outreach or when our church was assisted by other churches to meet a need. I never knew our church to be alone in the pursuit of the Great Commission."

- Intercessory prayer, a key component of which is PrayerLink, a network of state convention prayer coordinators and SBC representatives in the process of strengthening its ministry to promote a Great Commission prayer mindset along with prayer ministries and resources in all dimensions of Southern Baptist life.
- Nearly 20 short Cooperative Program and 1% CP Challenge videos ranging from upbeat animation to personal interviews produced by state conventions and the SBC Executive Committee, available free for church and small group viewing.
- Development of a line of biblical stewardship resources, including digital and print sermon outlines, Bible studies, workbooks and financial planning tools.

Page also envisions each follower of Christ having "a personal missions portfolio," a "personal and strategic plan to embrace the Great Commission ... to be on mission every single day of our lives ... beginning in the community where we live and expanding across North America and to the far reaches of the world."

"We need to be resolute," Page said, "in leaving behind a legacy of commitment to our Lord, a legacy of missions and evangelism, a legacy of church plants and missionary work, a legacy of touching the lives of countless men and women, boys and girls in discipleship." (BP)

What if the Cooperative Program disappeared?

If CP disappeared today, so would a significant portion of the ministries and mission work of Southern Baptists, and those that managed to continue to exist would be significantly crippled. Let me explain why.

While the recent financial struggles of the International Mission Board have been widely reported, the loss of CP would mean a reduction of approximately $100 million, more than a third of the IMB's annual budget. The loss of that much of the fuel that sends Southern Baptist missionaries to the ends of the earth would be eternally devastating.

Together
We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

The loss of CP would mean a reduction of approximately $50 million for the North American Mission Board. That would immobilize NAMB's capacity to fuel church planting or Southern Baptist Disaster Relief response to flood and fire victims.

Since the ministry of the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission is almost exclusively funded by CP, without it, Southern Baptists would lose their voice in Washington. And the resources that ERLC provides to help pastors address issues like religious liberty, human trafficking, racism, and abortion would no longer exist.

Without the CP, most of the ministries and mission work of Southern Baptists' state conventions would come to a halt. In the KBC, Disaster Relief would be no more. Our annual retreat to encourage and strengthen ministry couples wouldn't happen. Evangelism training and church revitalization consulting that has helped growth in baptisms and church membership in Kentucky, with no CP, would be no more.

If CP disappeared, the 14,000 students at our Crossings summer camps would be disappointed and God would no longer use the gospel preaching at camp to win hundreds of kids to Christ each year. Without CP, the 1,000-plus hurting kids Sunrise loves and cares for may still suffer the pain of ongoing abuse, hunger, and neglect. Our educational institutions in Kentucky, which allow us to disciple and equip over 8,000 students, would, in some cases, be shuttered and, in others, see tuition hikes that would put them out of reach of far too many students. And you wouldn't be reading this article because the Western Recorder printing presses would stop.

But, thankfully, the essential fuel of CP is still flowing! For two years, CP giving has grown in Kentucky. And, for the first time in a decade, our churches exceeded the CP budget. At the same time, Kentucky Baptists are setting new records in giving through both the Lottie Moon Offering for international missions and the Annie Armstrong Offering for North American missions.

I praise God that He is still using Kentucky Baptists to share the life-giving message of the gospel and build the eternal church of Jesus Christ! And I praise God for the generosity of Kentucky Baptists for cooperative mission work.

'In the Arena' mobilizes Christian athlete

Arriving home from an overseas trip this weekend just in time, I switched on the TV, like tens of thousands of football fans, to watch the Top 5 match-up between the Louisville Cardinals and Clemson Tigers. Other devotees across the Commonwealth cheered as the Tennessee Volunteers shocked the Georgia Bulldogs with a "Hail Mary" pass in the final seconds, or lamented as the Alabama Crimson Tide rolled their beloved Kentucky Wildcats.

Beyond just the multiplicity and magnitude of our stadiums and arenas, the painted faces of jersey-clad, frenzied fans, celebrating scores or ranting over unsuccessful plays, illuminate the obvious: We are a sports-crazed people!



After Thought

By Todd Deaton

"Nothing else in our culture produces so much passion and intrigue," asserts Southern Seminary professor and Lexington pastor David Prince. Such obsession, he says, should lead us to ponder, "How should the Christian think about sports? What does Christ have to do with athletic competition? Can sports be redeemed?"

In his new book, "In the Arena: The Promise of Sports for Christian Discipleship," the pastor of Ashland Avenue Baptist Church contends that the lessons learn in the sports arena can have profound implications when applied to the ultimate arena of life. His desire in writing the book is to provide "a valuable resource in helping Christian coaches and players on all levels, from youth leagues to professional, as well as in assisting parents of athletes and fans in thinking biblically and intentionally as Christians about their participation in and enjoyment of sports."

As a former baseball player and coach, his love for the diamond shines forth in his illustrations, but he also employs examples from the football field and basketball court. Whatever your favorite sport may be, Prince collects us with a fascinating premise, "(T)he cultural diversity illustrated by the variety of sports, like the cultural diversity of music and art, is a manifestation of the expanse of God's glory."

While acknowledging the ever-present propensity for sports to become an idol, Prince also sees the usefulness of sports for Christian discipleship. In revealing one's character, sports can provide lessons of honesty, fairness, faith, endurance, sacrifice for others, hope and belonging to community (or team), for example. "Sports, rightfully understood, are just one means to the greater end of delighting in God," he writes. "Sports must not become an idolatrous competitor with God instead of a means to glorify him."

Borrowing a phrase from C.S. Lewis, Prince hits full stride in concluding, "Every part of our lives, including our sports lives, must run on 'the right juice' or we will inevitably turn gifts into idols. To run on the right juice we must forsake a self-referential approach to life, embracing a radically Christ-centered life and walking humbly before God with fierce gospel focused intentionality before men in community."

"In the Arena" debunks the false dichotomy of attempting to compartmentalize the practice of one's faith and one's performance on the athletic field. It is both energizing and mobilizing to discover, however, that just as one's skills and abilities in any business field may be used to glorify God, so can one's performance "in the arena" be used to shine the light of Christ among teammates, opposing players and fans.

Prince's book should be required reading for Christian players and coaches alike.

State of wonder on a front porch stoop

Notes from the Back Row



Duane Bolin

When one reaches the age of 60, it does not take much to create a state of wonder—just a cup of good coffee at 6 o'clock on any morning, a postage stamp of freshly mowed front lawn, a tiny porch stoop with a comfortable white wicker chair, and the hope that the sun will rise just one more time. It is after all the seemingly insignificant things that can somehow emerge as the most meaningful, most profound and richest of life's pleasures. At least that has been my experience of late.

We teach our children and students the importance of making eye contact to communicate effectively. I have learned this in a new way on my front porch stoop. Just the other Sunday I sat there at daybreak in preparation for my Sunday School lesson when, of all things, an owl winged its way into the silver maple across the lawn. I do not write, "winged its way," flippantly. The owl's wings were magnificent, stretching out several feet.

When landed, the owl turned its head 180 degrees and made direct eye contact with me. We had a moment, communing with each other. My Sunday School lesson, which happened to be on God's creation, took on a new meaning for me at that moment.

Almost every morning, the same hummingbird comes along, attracted by the bright red blossoms of a potted geranium on the porch. The hummingbird goes through the same routine each morning. He's always disappointed, unable to draw any nectar from the blossoms. But he always turns his head, looks me square in the eye as if to say, "You've done it to me again," and then darts away.

Just this morning, a praying mantis perched on the front door frame. I drew near to snap a photograph with my cell phone, and even the praying mantis cocked its tiny head, looked me straight in the eye to say, "Excuse me; you are in my space." I took the picture anyway and then went back to my chair.

I think of all of God's creatures I have observed on the front porch stoop my favorite has been a very small ground wren who made a ruckus burrowing under a boxwood bush by the front sidewalk. The wren hopped along the walk and I tried not to move a muscle. When the wren went under the boxwood, that tiny bird unbelievably shook the entire bush violently. Finally, all went silent. It took another 10 minutes before the wren came out again. When it did, however, she finally took notice of me, looked me right in the eye, and then flew away. I never knew what the disturbance inside the boxwood was all about.

Each of these marvelous creatures communicated with me through the light of their eyes. They made not a sound, but we talked even so. And that is the way it is every morning when I sit with my cup of coffee in a state of wonder on my front porch stoop. I sit amazed at the wonder of it all, at the wonder of God's glorious creation.

In "The Marshes of Glynn," the southern poet Sidney Lanier, wrote "As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod, Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God." I have a new appreciation of that verse after observing our own wren at work in the boxwood from our front porch stoop. Maybe that's what she was trying to tell me when she looked me in the eye. "As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod, Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God." May it ever be so.

Duane Bolin teaches in the Department of History at Murray State University and is a member of Murray's First Baptist Church.

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Letters to the editor:

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

BAPTIST FORUM

Counting our wins and losses

First Person



Brian Hobbs

The football season is underway, and gridiron glory is now on the line across the nation.

It's amazing how slim the margin can be in a game being won or lost, between a winning and losing season. Just one play going right or wrong can tip the entire outcome of the game and season. Once a win or loss is posted in the standings, those results are on record permanently and remembered—for better or worse—for years to come.

Sometimes Christians who are involved in cultural issues are tempted to do the same thing, to count something as a win or loss permanently.

Take for example, when a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit against Kim Davis, the Kentucky county clerk who refused to grant same-sex marriage licenses. When that ruling happened, we chalked it up as a significant religious liberty win.

If, on the other hand, when the White House issued a decree that people self-identifying as transgendered can use whatever restrooms or locker rooms they want, social conservatives rightly chalk that up as a loss.

In both cases—indeed in almost every culture war example I can think of—the wins and losses are not necessarily permanent. While Davis' case has been won, another clerk might face another lawsuit.

If the transgender decree is not upheld by the court (in fact, one Texas district recently issued a preliminary injunction, thus blocking it for the time being), another judge might rule another way later.

As Christians who are trying to engage the culture with the gospel, we must avoid falling into the trap of viewing all wins and losses as permanent and final. If we view it that way, a defeat on key issues like life or marriage might lead us toward a mindset to give up. Or conversely, when we achieve victories on key issues, we might grow lax in our prayers and efforts while our opponents on the issue continue to advance.

If "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," as the saying goes, surely continual prayer and effort is the price of engaging the culture.

Now, all of this is not to say there are no permanent wins and losses.

In fact, what fuels our passion to fight for the unborn is the knowledge that abortion takes a human life and is final (though we know that there is forgiveness for those who have had abortions and that, on the resurrection day, death will be swallowed up by life).

This sense of permanency also is what fuels our evangelism efforts.

We realize that when it comes to people's lives and salvation, the results are permanent.

When a person dies, they were either won or lost to the Lord. There is no second chance after death to change that.

But isn't it a blessing to know that, while we share an active part in working toward soul-winning, God is in control of those wins and losses? And isn't it a blessing that because of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection, He grants to us eternal life in Christ, the ultimate victory?

That's the kind of win no one can take away. (BP)

Double tax savings giving

With financial market ups and downs over the past few years there probably have been times when your stocks, bonds and/or mutual fund shares have been worth considerably more than what you paid for them and times when that has not been the case. And, that same pattern will continue in the future.

For those considering an above-and-beyond gift to their church, or one of our KBC or SBC ministries, using appreciated securities to fund that gift may be a better choice than giving cash. That's because your gift of appreciated stocks, bonds or mutual fund shares can provide both income tax savings, if you itemized deductions on your income tax return, and capital gains tax savings.



Laurie Valentine

The income tax deduction value of your gift is the current price you would get if you sold the security, not what you paid for it. And, by giving the appreciated security you avoid the capital gain (difference between current market value and what you paid for the security) you would have to report if you had sold it.

Appreciated stocks, bonds or mutual fund shares can be used for outright gifts or to fund a gift that pays you an income for life with remainder to the charitable cause or causes you designate at your death.

Tap in to the potential for double tax savings by prayerfully considering a gift of appreciated securities.

Preventing divorce

Q: Please say a word about divorce prevention. I hear about all kinds of problems that can cause divorce and am interested in saving my marriage.

A: You are wise to focus on marriage before considering divorce. Jesus told the Pharisees that Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of their hearts. In most cases, you might find one or both persons have experienced a "hardening of the heart" before a divorce happens.

When Jesus was approached about the permissibility of divorce, he changed the subject to the purpose of marriage. In Jesus' day, women were essentially property, and the argument among the Pharisees was about whether or not a woman could be dismissed "for any and every reason." Jesus' answer is a strong rebuke to those today who would trade one spouse for another due to boredom or other trivial pursuits.



James Stillwell

The purpose of marriage, according to Jesus, (Mark 10:2-16) was three-fold:

To reflect the image of the creator. The first chapter in the Bible concludes with "in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them." The question we ask ourselves, therefore, is, "Does my marriage reflect the glory and image of God?"

Marriage is to provide an increasing sense of safety, a palpable sense of the joy of knowing and being known. The second chapter of Genesis includes that idea of intimacy and nakedness, in ways physical, psychological and spiritual.

A sense of permanency. When we look at our beloved, it ought to be with a view to the years and decades yet to come, of forming all the stages of life together. Marriage ought not to be about looking for greener grass over the fence. It's about watering the grass on your side of the street.

There are no magical formulas. Marriage is life in community, a community of two. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's jewel of a book, Life Together, is about how to live as a church in community. The greatest insight about marriage is to read everything the Bible says about how to live in community and apply those teachings to marriage.

Reaching students—in their own words

First Person



Shane Pruitt

One of the things I love most about young people is if you want to know what they're thinking, all you have to do is ask. Sometimes, you don't even have to ask.

I sat down and asked students some probing questions whenever I was speaking at student camps and conferences, young adult worship services, etc.

I typically asked, "What do adults need to know about your generation?" It was an incredible journey in becoming a student myself so that I could hear from this generation about reaching their generation.

With that in mind, here are some ideas for reaching students from their own words:

1. Students want to be seen as people, not projects. If the focus of a church in reaching students is to be seen as cool, trendy or relevant, then it is missing the point. Have a desire to reach students because they are made in the image of God, they have souls and they matter to the Kingdom of God. No one wants to be someone's project, including students.

2. Students want to be a part of "doing" something. They want more out of church than sitting on a pew, listening to sermons, going to potluck dinners while waiting on a rapture bus to swoop down to pick them up. They are not scared to die young; but, they are terrified to die at a ripe old age while not having done anything significant with their lives. They are not typically impressed by a church's size or budget. They're more interested in being noticed relationally and in what the church is doing outside the building's walls.

3. Students don't despise adults. People tend to think students don't want anything to do with the older generation. However, this generation is in desperate need for the older generation to invest in them. This is largely a fatherless generation. They often seek out or are more open to discipleship or mentorship than we tend to believe. But they won't know how to ask for it, so they ask you to "hang out."

4. Students value the "why" over the "what." They do not typically want to do something just because it's the way it's always been done or because it's what their family has always known. They are not driven by heritage. Students are not going to be Southern Baptists just because their parents were. If we can't answer their "why" questions or we get defensive over them, we'll lose them. Be ready to answer their questions with love, patience and kindness. Their experience will often dictate their views more than history will.

5. Students don't want to be seen as the future of the church. Remember, if they've been redeemed with the blood of Jesus, then they're the church right now. So, let them have some ownership of the ministry and be patient with them when they mess up—possibly a lot. A great way to keep students engaged in the ministry is by constantly communicating, illustrating and empowering participation in the vision and mission of the church.

6. Students are more globally minded. Most students are up to date on world news and affairs, especially entertainment and music. This generation may drive older generations a little crazy because they may seem to be less patriotic to the USA. But this is simply not the case; they just value other countries, cultures and citizens equally. They tend to view things from a global perspective instead of a national perspective. It's very possible that the Lord may accomplish the Great Commission through their interest in the nations. Educate, disciple and mobilize this generation toward the nations; they'll love you for it.

7. Students want authenticity and transparency. Nearly all students quickly grow weary of gimmicks and sleek presentations. The more transparent and vulnerable a communicator is, the more students connect. There was a time when speakers/teachers were told not to use themselves in personal illustrations; but this generation wants to hear those stories. As adults, if we act as those who have it all figured out and are not in desperate need of God's grace daily, we'll lose their attention because they won't believe that we're "being real" and that our faith is unattainable for them.

I'm personally encouraged by this generation of students. Even as an adult, I resonate deeply with their views. I believe God will use them to further the Great Commission, perhaps more than any previous generation. (BP)

NCAA, ACC: 'Breathtaking hypocrisy' cited in North Carolina

By David Roach

Raleigh, N.C.—Southern Baptist state legislator Paul Stam, Charlotte pastor Clint Pressley and evangelist Franklin Graham are among those calling the NCAA hypocritical for its decision to withdraw seven championship events from North Carolina over the state's anti-discrimination law.

Two days after the NCAA's Sept. 12 move, the Atlantic Coast Conference followed suit by stating it would move all neutral-site championships for the coming academic year out of North Carolina, including the football conference championship game in December.

The most high-profile events affected by the NCAA's decision are first- and second-round Division I Men's Basketball Championship games that were slated for March 17 and 19 in Greensboro.

At issue is a measure known as House Bill 2, adopted earlier this year, which does not include sexual orientation or gender identity among classes of people designated for antidiscrimination protection. The law also requires individuals in state buildings to use restrooms that correspond with the sex listed on their birth certificates.

The Obama administration claims the law violates federal antidiscrimination standards and issued a May 13 directive instructing public schools and universities to grant transgender students access to programs, activities and facilities—including restrooms and locker rooms—based on their gender identity and not their biological sex.

In response to the NCAA, Stam, speaker pro tem of the North Carolina House of Representatives, issued an eight-page news release Sept. 13 detailing what he termed the collegiate association's "breathtaking hypocrisy."

The NCAA, Stam wrote, "selectively boycotts North Carolina for policies it claims are unique to our state—but actually are common throughout the nation—and for daring to disagree with a sweeping federal mandate by the Obama Administration—a mandate that is currently being challenged in court by 24 other states."

Stam, a member of the SBC Executive Committee from 2005-09, added, "The NCAA is in violation itself of the civil rights provision of Title IX (of the 1972 Education Amendments) as interpreted by the Obama Administration."

Among Stam's contentions, which cite supporting documentation in more than 30 footnotes:

• "The NCAA claims the 'dynamic' in North Carolina is different from other states. But North Carolina state law on discrimination is the same or very similar to that of 28 other states and the statutory law of the federal government."

Stam advised the NCAA to "take a careful look at its activities and those of its thousands of members" in those states as well.

• "The NCAA and its member institutions are not in compliance with the civil rights provision of Title IX as defined by President Obama."

While the administration instructed colleges and universities to treat students consistently with their perceived gender identities, Stam wrote, NCAA rules prohibit so-called transgender females who are not undergoing hormone therapy from competing on women's teams. If the NCAA held itself to the same legal standard to which it holds North Carolina, Stam wrote, "a male could self-identity as a female and demand a position on (an athletic) team. Will women put up with having an anatomically correct male in their shower rooms and in their hotel rooms on travel days? Some may; most will not. None should be asked to do so."

• Although the NCAA claims "North Carolina law provides legal protections for government officials to refuse services to the LGBT community," in litigation concerning HB 2, "not a single LGBT person has cited ... being denied service."

Pressley, a former SBC first vice president, told BP the NCAA and the ACC apparently want "to be on the 'right side of history' and the right side of what seems to be the prevailing view in society." Yet demanding that North Carolina treat everyone according to their gender identity and not their biological sex "seems hypocritical to me because they still have men's and women's basketball," said Pressley, pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte.

Pressley said he has not heard "overwhelming wailing" at the loss of NCAA and ACC championship events. He urged Gov. Pat McCrory and state legislators not to succumb to pressure either to adjust or rescind HB 2.

Upholding a biblical view of gender and sexuality, Pressley said, should be "a first-tier issue" for followers of Jesus.

"It takes us all the way back to creation," he said. "... How men and women are identified has to do with their sex. Sexuality is certainly more than biological, but it's obviously not less than that."

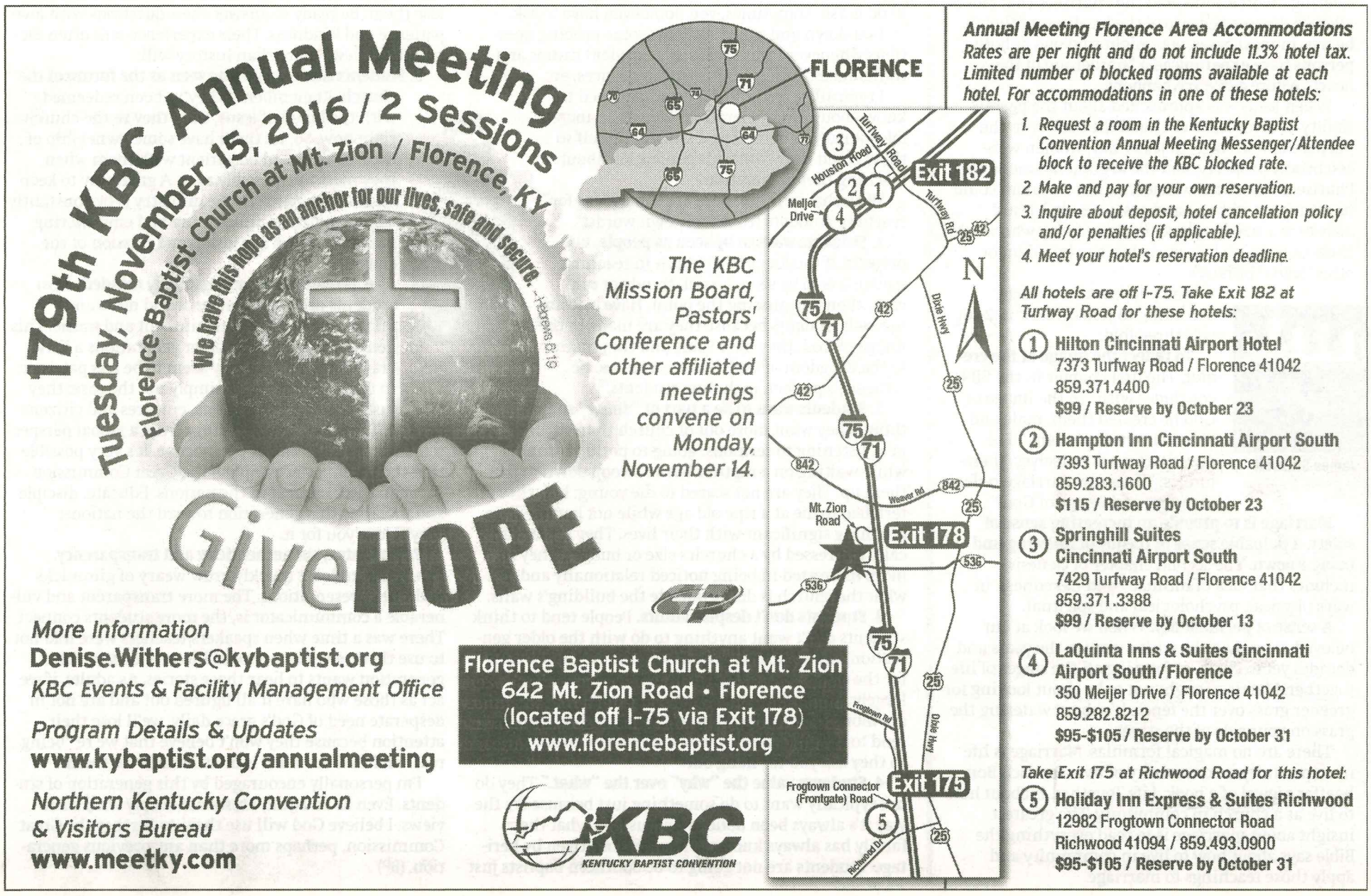
"Human flourishing" and "the overall wellbeing of people" are advanced most effectively "when we understand the sexes as male and female and not as interchangeable," Pressley said.

Graham, president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, wrote in a letter to ACC commissioner John Swofford of the "profound hypocrisy of the ACC, the NCAA and other companies and organizations who are making calculated business decisions disguised as moral outrage."

ACC sponsors like Dr. Pepper and Toyota conduct business in countries where homosexuality is illegal, Graham wrote, asking why the conference does not sever ties with those sponsors. NCAA policy, he added, requires a male-to-female transgender athlete who is not taking hormone therapy to compete "in accordance with their ... assigned birth gender."

"That is precisely what supporters of HB 2 have been requesting," Graham wrote, "that people use public restrooms in accordance with their assigned birth gender."

Graham continued, "... I would rather defend the biological definition of the two genders as created by the Creator of the universe than to attend ... a football or basketball game to determine the ACC champion." (BP)



Prayer in troubled Charlotte counters 'hurt, anger'

By Diana Chandler

Charlotte, N.C.—"Hurt" and "anger" have met with prayer in troubled Charlotte, N.C., where Southern Baptist pastors are praying and encouraging peace and reason amid violent protests and a declared state of emergency after the police killing of Keith Lamont Scott.

Christians of various denominations held prayer services on Sept. 21-22 after police shot and killed 43-year-old Scott, a black man, while looking for a suspect in an unrelated incident. Charlotte policeman Brentley Vinson, also black, has been identified as the officer who fired the fatal shot among officers at the scene.

"Hurt; Anger; Disappointment; Frustration; Heartbroken; Sadness; Tired is the mood of our city of Charlotte as another black life is taken at the hands of a police officer," pastor Phillip R.J. Davis of Nations Ford Community Church, a leading Southern Baptist African American church in Charlotte, wrote in a message posted on the church website.

Davis' words are almost identical to the description given by First Baptist Church of Charlotte pastor Mark Harris in a written message to his congregation this morning, which he shared with Baptist Press, saying the city was experiencing "pain, hurt, anger, disappointment, and frustration."

Both churches hosted prayer Sept. 22 at noon. While Nations Ford Community Church is about five miles southwest of where the riots occurred, First Baptist Church is in the same block. Marshall Park, the site where a peaceful protest at 7 p.m. Sept. 21, turned violent just yards away, is in First Baptist's backyard.

"The church facilities have been protected and suffered no damage or harm. We thank the Lord for His mercy!" Harris told his membership. "Our offices are open presently, but will close at 3:00 p.m. to assure our staff be able to get home safely.... I am writing this to you from our sanctuary, where I have been reflecting and praying this morning." Buildings were damaged and looted within the same block of the church at 301 S. Davidson St.



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Kerr Putney speaks at a Sept. 22 press conference after the police killing of a black man spurred violent riots and protests in Uptown Charlotte, N.C. (Screen capture from WSOC-TV)

Harris invited church members to a prayer meeting in the sanctuary, which was attended by about 300 people, including professionals who work in the Uptown community, church members and staff, and students from the church's school, Brookstone.

"There will be no agenda, no program, no music, no preaching, but just men and women of God, on the altar, crying out to The Father!" Harris said. "These are serious days, and they require serious people who take seeking the heart and will of God seriously!"

Davis wrote similar remarks.

"Now is the time for heartfelt and sincere prayers, not political and personal-agenda driven rhetoric," Davis said on Nations Ford Community Church's website. "Now is the time for loving encouragement not condemning judgment. In light of the climate in our city, I stand with other pastors and leaders both black and white and our church unites with other churches that (demonstrate) the gospel of Jesus Christ in love and that (seek) the peace of our city."

The National Guard and the North Carolina Highway Patrol have been called in to help keep peace after overnight protests turned violent, leading to the critical injury of one civilian by another, minor injuries to eight other civilians and two police officers, and 44 arrests on charges including failure to disperse, assault and breaking and entering, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Kerr Putney said in a televised press conference at 11 a.m. today.

Harris, five other pastors and 25 members of the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team held a press conference, where Harris urged Charlotte residents to trust the process of the investigation of the tragedy, to practice peace and to pray.

"We pray for the Scott family. The death of a loved one is gut-wrenching under any circumstances. They need our prayers," Harris said at the press conference. "We pray for the officer involved in the tragedy. This public servant, this protector of all of us, is no doubt hurting as well. Not only the pain of what took place, but the intense scrutiny of each decision, which is life-and-death moments faced all too often, is cause for us to lift up this policeman and his family."

The rapid response team from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, headquartered in Charlotte, is operating from First Baptist's parking lot, offering prayer and counsel, Harris said.

"People can gather to protest and have their voices heard. But it must be done in a peaceful and a lawful manner," Harris said in summarizing his press conference remarks. "Much of what we are seeing play out is being perpetrated by people from outside Charlotte. The true leaders, black and white, in Charlotte, who work, worship and raise their families here are all calling for peace."

Bob Lowman Jr., executive director of the Metrolina Baptist Association in Charlotte, also is encouraging unity, prayer and cooperation across denominational lines. He is a member of the Pastors Prayer Summit Group that has been holding multiracial and multidenominational prayer gatherings for years and is planning a citywide prayer gathering with pastors within the coming weeks.

The city needs a spiritual awakening, he said.

"We need to see the church revived.... and we need to be praying for God to do work that only He can do to send awakening to the culture," Lowman told BP. "If you were watching the news last night here in Charlotte, that was not a picture of awakening. It was the opposite on the streets of our city."

Lowman, Harris and Davis voiced confidence in the power of prayer.

"While my feelings I share with the community are real," Davis wrote, "so is the God I serve.... God is real enough to bring comfort and healing in the midst of the pain. God is real enough to bring calm even through the violence. My God is real enough to bring peace in the midst of chaos. God is real enough to reconcile hearts that (have) been divided." (BP)



A television ad campaign from the Kraft Heinz Company uses innuendo and suggestive language to peddle a new line of frozen meals called Devour. (Screen capture from YouTube)

Stop raunchy Kraft Heinz ads, moms' group urges

By Diana Chandler

Nashville—Two television commercials using graphic and raunchy sexual innuendo to sell frozen food dinners are inappropriate for family viewing and should be discontinued, One Million Moms is urging the Kraft Heinz Company.

In protesting the Devour microwave meal ads that have become more visible this football season, One Million Moms Director Monica Cole said Kraft Heinz has gone too far and likely will lose loyal, conservative customers.

"The commercials (are) extremely perverted in nature (and are airing) during family viewing times," Cole said. "The vulgarity is extremely unnecessary and these sleazy type commercials are turning off parents from buying their products—not just Devour, but the entire line of ... the Kraft Heinz Company products."

The Devour campaign includes two commercials using innuendo and suggestive language to insinuate a wife having sexual relations with a scantily clad pool boy, and an employee engaged in apparent sadomasochistic relations in the office breakroom, all in efforts to sell microwaveable frozen entrees. The campaign continues on Facebook with a sexually suggestive hashtag supposedly describing the food.

"We don't want to give our hard-earned dollars to companies that cannot just advertise the food and the quality of the food," Cole said. "They have to pretty much hit the rock bottom and use these indecent ads to sell their food products."

The advocacy group has been successful in many campaigns, including one that helped lead to the cancellation of ABC's "The Muppets" 2015 series that used characters attractive to children to promote adult storylines, and a campaign that led McDonalds to install Wi-Fi filters in its corporate-owned restaurants and to the technology available to franchises, One Million Moms said.

Among other victories are campaigns against Abercrombie & Fitch, a company once known for using printed advertising that One Million Moms and others said bordered on pornography, and for using shirtless male sales clerks in its New York stores, among other tactics. (BP)

SBC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

President Gaines: SBC needs 'renewal from heaven'

By David Roach

Nashville—Spiritual awakening, soul winning and stewardship will be the three-pronged emphasis of Steve Gaines' Southern Baptist Convention presidency, he told the SBC Executive Committee Sept. 19.

Gaines said America's morally deteriorating culture evidences the need for revival and awakening. He asked Southern Baptists to pray for revival using Psalm 85:6 and Habakkuk 3:2.

Revival "is a renewal from heaven," said Gaines, pastor of the Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn. "It is when the fire of God falls" as depicted in Acts 4:31, which states, "When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God's message with boldness."

Evangelism is closely related to revival, Gaines said, noting pastors and leaders must renew their passion for winning souls to saving faith in Christ.

One important component of evangelism, Gaines said, is the evangelistic invitation pastors should extend at the close of every message. While an altar call, when people walk to the front of a worship area to indicate their response to the gospel, is not the only valid form of evangelistic invitation, he said, Bellevue utilizes an altar call weekly and sees people come to faith in Christ through it.

"We need not only to share the gospel, but give (people) the opportunity to repent of their sins, to believe savingly in Jesus," Gaines said. "... If we don't give that invitation, I don't care what else we preach; we have not preached the gospel."

Evangelism in the pulpit, however, is not sufficient, he said. It must be accompanied by personal soul winning by every believer—especially church and convention leaders. Gaines suggested praying for lost people by name daily and looking for opportunities to share the gospel one-on-one.

"Leaders have to lead," he said. "If you and I don't do (personal evangelism), how can we expect anybody else to do it?"

Gaines expressed concern that the harsh rhetoric of some Christian leaders regarding the 2016 U.S. presidential election could inhibit their witness.

"When we speak prophetically, I want to encourage us to speak with kindness," Gaines said. "The litmus test for me is this: Whatever I say, whatever I put on social media, whatever I say from the pulpit or in personal conversation" should not "prevent me from being able to share the gospel with that person to whom I'm speaking."

Regarding stewardship, Gaines advocated tithing, which involves believers' giving a tenth of their income to God through their churches. While some argue the New Testament does not specifically require continuation of the Old Testament's 10 percent standard, Gaines cited Matthew 23:23 to argue God's commandment to tithe remains in force.

"I don't believe that we in the New Testament (era) need to give less than people in the Old Testament," Gaines said. "If you can't trust God with 10 percent of your money, how can you trust God with your eternal soul?"

Tithing by every member of Southern Baptist churches would provide "all the money we need to support every ministry" at the church, associational, state convention and SBC levels, Gaines said.

"If we don't have a national revival ... let's at least have a revival among Southern Baptists," he said. (BP)



"Leaders have to lead" in personal evangelism, SBC President Steve Gaines told the SBC Executive Committee Sept. 19. (Screen capture)

EC expansion

Continued from Page 1

SBC Referrals

In response to motions referred from the 2016 SBC annual meeting in St. Louis, the Executive Committee:

• declined to recommend an amendment to The Baptist Faith and Message 2000, Section IV, as proposed in a motion by messenger Steve Taylor from Indiana. Faith, as described in Article IV as "a personal commitment of the entire personality," lacks the element of belief, Taylor stated in setting forth his concern in a two-page letter. The Executive Committee, in its response to be reported to messengers, said it "declines to recommend amending selective portions of The Baptist Faith and Message apart from a Convention-authorized comprehensive review of the Convention's confession of faith."

• declined to recommend a constitutional amendment that would have required churches to relate to a state convention and association as a prerequisite to cooperating with the SBC. The EC stated that the amendment, proposed by messenger Andy Perryman of Georgia, would be contradictory to Article III, Article IV, and the preamble of the SBC constitution regarding autonomy of the Southern Baptist Convention and its cooperating bodies.

• declined to recommend a bylaws amendment requiring that all nomination speeches for SBC officers include the percentage of Cooperative Program giving by each nominee's church. The SBC Bylaw 10C amendment recommended by messenger Steven Bailey of Arkansas was unwarranted, the EC said, as messengers are fully capable of using all publicly available information about any nominee to determine whether the content of any nominating speech is accurate, sufficient, and persuasive.

• declined to recommend an amendment to Bylaw 15J that Commmittee on Nominations changes made within 45 days of the annual meeting be published no later than seven days before that annual meeting. The amendment recommended by messenger Doug Hibbard of Arkansas was unnecessary, the EC said, because the current processes of the Committee on Nominations are "efficient and sufficient to provide messengers with information regarding nominees." Messengers may make inquiries during the nominations committee report as well as make a motion to amend the report as indicated in SBC Bylaw 15K, the EC noted.

Other action

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission honored GuideStone CEO O.S. Hawkins with the 2016 John Leland Award for Religious Liberty, commending Hawkins' legal battle against the Affordable Care Act's abortion/contraception mandate.

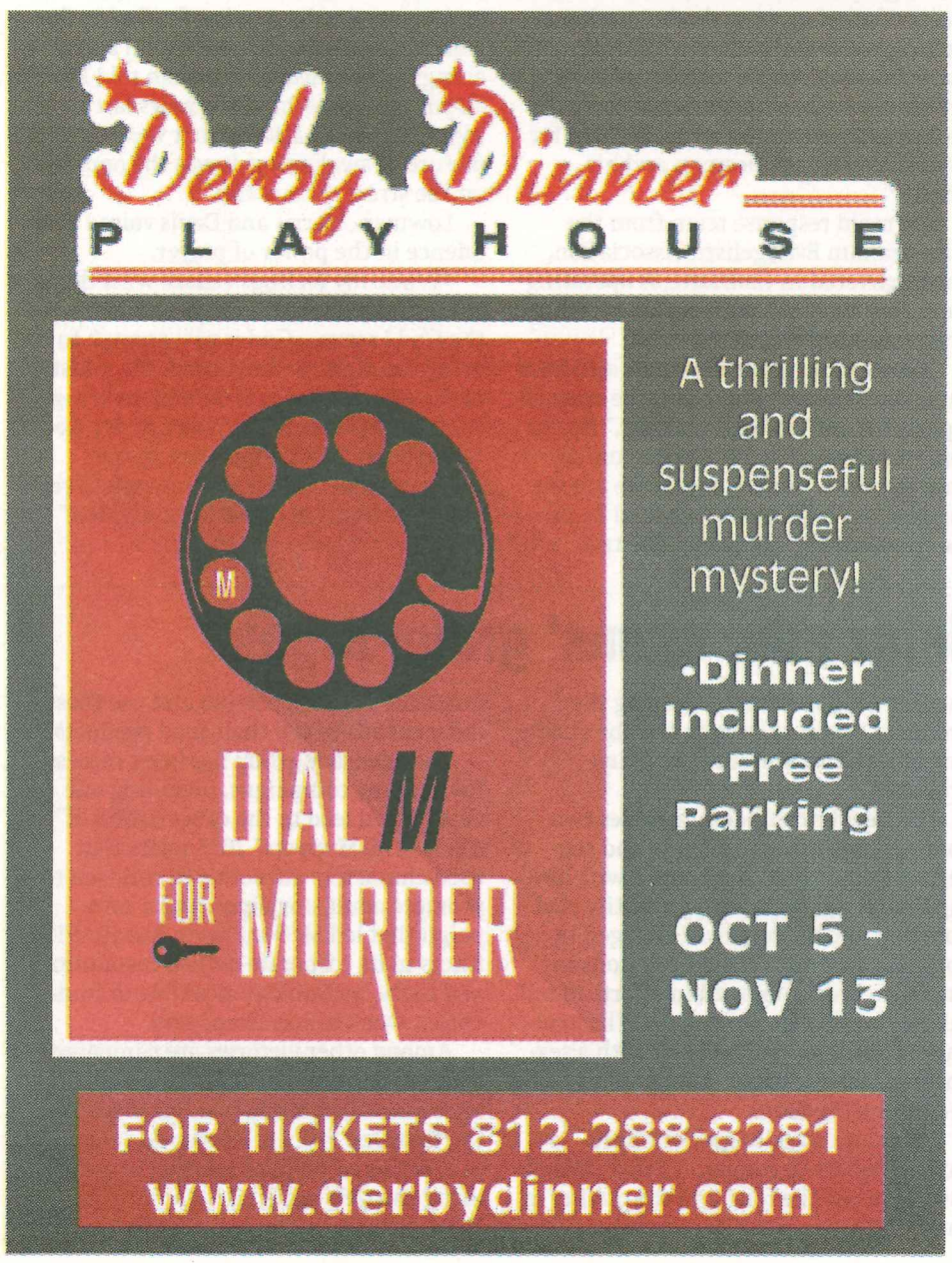
In May, the U.S. Supreme Court instructed lower courts to broker a resolution in the dispute which upholds the religious liberty of faith-based organizations that oppose abortion.

"O.S. Hawkins easily could have led GuideStone to just accept whatever mandate came down from the government and said we'll just navigate our way through it," ERLC President Russell Moore said. "He didn't. He led with courage and conviction and with skill and with integrity.

"The board of trustees of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission voted unanimously to award him with the John Leland Award for Religious Liberty and we wanted to recognize that in front of all of you here today."

Hawkins said GuideStone is "cautiously very optimistic" that it will achieve a satisfactory resolution in the case. GuideStone health plans "provide contraception," he said, "but there are four (abortifacient) pills we don't provide and never will."

Also during the meeting, Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources, presented checks totaling more than $713,000 for the SBC's two mission boards. The funds—$465,699 for the International Mission Board and $247,689 for the North American Mission Board—were mission offerings given this summer by participants in LifeWay's Fuge, CentriKids and World Changers ministries. (BP)



Platt: Seemingly dead man rose among UUPG

By David Roach

Nashville—What appeared to local believers to be a physical resurrection from the dead among an unengaged, unreached people group in Southeast Asia has opened a door for gospel witness and highlighted what International Mission Board President David Platt called "God's power to supernaturally save sinners."

Platt recounted the story—which, though atypical in Western experience, bore similarities to biblical accounts of raising the dead—during his report to the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, Sept. 19 in Nashville. The episode illustrates, he said, the spiritual fruit that has come as IMB missionaries have shared the gospel with "biblical clarity, precision and consistency."

Relaying the account of an IMB worker, Platt said a Southeast Asian believer trained by Southern Baptist missionaries took some friends with him and began sharing the gospel in a village "that was totally unreached with the gospel until they got there." The villagers responded by listening, attending Bible studies and expressing the sentiment, "Maybe this is true."

As villagers became interested in Christianity, they brought idols, necklaces and amulets associated with the occult to the center of the village to be burned, Platt said. In a reversal, however, one day all the villagers began taking back their occult-related items.

The believers learned upon inquiring that the village leader had died and his people believed his demise was the work of evil spirits who were displeased at the setting aside of sacred objects.

Discouraged, the Christians went to express their condolences at a house where the man's body lay.

Standing over his body, they began praying "that God would show His mercy to the people in the village, that God would show His glory and His love to that people who were so close," Platt said.

"This Asian believer tells our missionary," Platt said, "that as they were praying there over the man, all of the sudden the man coughed. Everybody in the house got really still. And the man coughed again. People came rushing over, and the village leader started breathing. People started helping him up. Everybody's looking at these Asian believers like, 'What happened?'



International Mission Board president David Platt addressed Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee members during the committee's plenary session Sept. 20. "Let's work together," he urged, "to see thousands upon thousands of Southern Baptists proclaiming that Good News to the ends of the earth." (Photo by Morris Abernathy)

"They decided this was as good a time as any to share the gospel," Platt said. "So they shared the gospel, and in the days to come, people started coming to faith in Christ and that village starting burning their idols."

Platt, acknowledging he doesn't know if the man was really dead, offered an evaluation.

"I do know (that) at villages like this, they know how to recognize death," he said. Yet "even if he wasn't dead, God sure chose an opportune moment for that guy to cough."

Regardless of the physiological particulars underlying the astonishing event, Platt said, God was at work drawing people to a saving relationship with Christ. The IMB president said he hopes believers from all walks of life will consider service on the international mission field, where they too can experience the Lord's power to save sinners.

As an example of how believers from various walks of life can travel the "limitless" paths to missionary service, Platt said a fully-funded IMB couple might be joined on the field by another couple in which the wife is employed locally as a teacher and another in which the husband is employed as an oil and gas executive. Together the three couples could strategically evangelize their city.

Students, retirees, professionals and others, Platt said, have opportunities to expand Southern Baptists' missionary force exponentially by using traditionally non-religious funding sources to get in position to share Jesus with the nations.

Regarding the apparent Southeast Asian resurrection, Platt concluded, "There are some things I don't know, but here's what I do know: We have the Good News of a God who has conquered death, who has power to say to the dead, 'Come to life.' So brothers and sisters, let's work together to see thousands upon thousands of Southern Baptists proclaiming that Good News to the ends of the earth." (BP)

Cool with contraception, Americans divide over transgender bathrooms, same-sex weddings

By Lauren Markoe

Washington, D.C. — When it comes to contraception, a clear majority of Americans say employers should be required to cover it in their health care plans—even if they have religious objections.

But a survey released Sept. 28 by the Pew Research Center reveals a sharp division on whether photographers, cake bakers and other wedding service providers should have to serve same-sex couples. And Americans also disagree on whether transgender people should have to use the public restroom of their gender at birth.

"What doesn't surprise me—but is I think the biggest news in terms of the value of the research—is the deep divide in this country is more basically theological than anything else," Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, said of the study.

For Mohler, Pew's findings on religious liberty "have almost everything to do" with whether a person attends church services regularly.

The survey shows those who attend religious services weekly are more likely to hold traditional moral views on matters raised in the study.

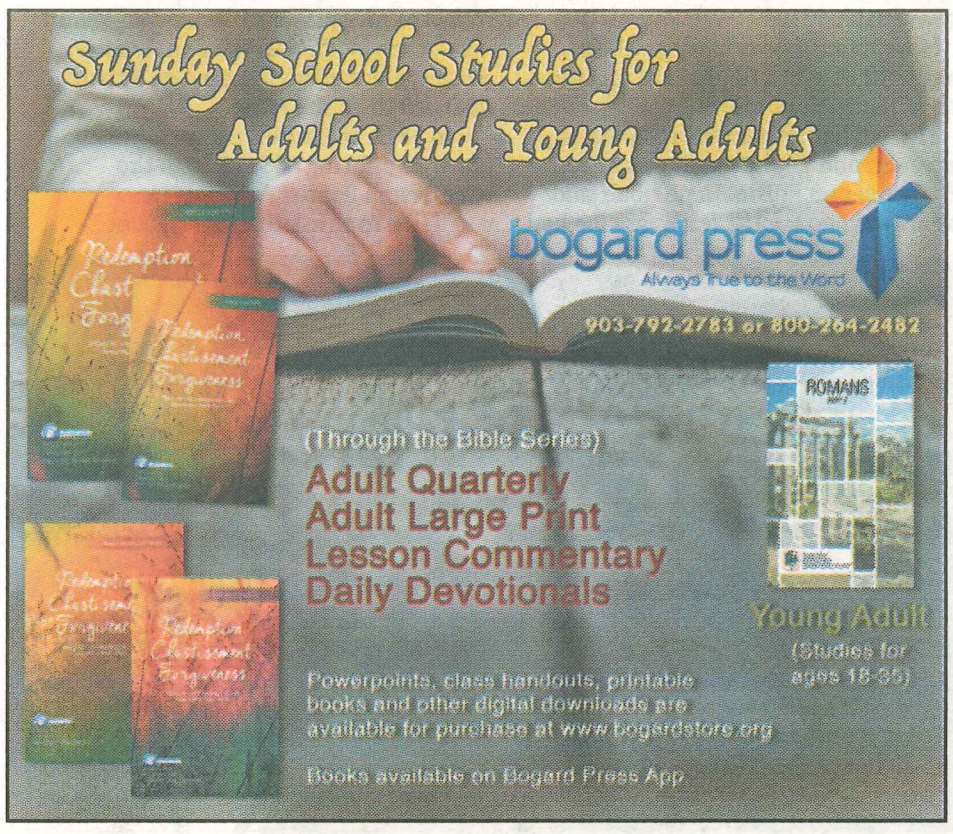
By contrast, Kelly Brown Douglas of Washington National Cathedral says the survey reveals Americans' attitudes toward discrimination.

She said it is discriminatory to force transgender people to use a bathroom that does not correspond to the gender they identify as, just as it is discriminatory for a business to refuse service for a gay couple's wedding.

The country should not wait until a consensus emerges to protect gay and transgender people from discrimination, Douglas added. "If we waited for the polls, we would still have Jim Crow." (RNS)



O.S. Hawkins (left), president of GuideStone Financial Resources, receives the John Leland Award for Religious Liberty of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission from ERLC President Russell Moore. (Photo by Morris Abernathy)

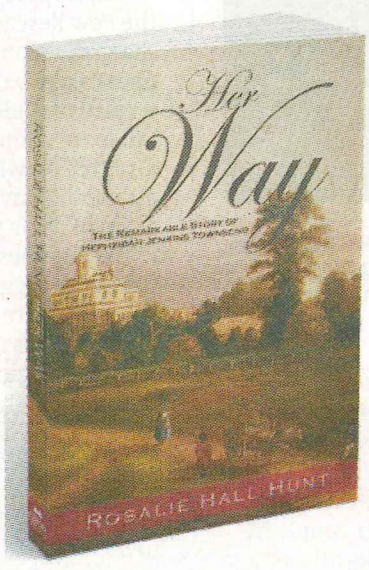


Unknown entrepreneur was missions pioneer

By Erin Roach

Edisto Island, S.C.—The modern missions movement owes much to an unknown entrepreneur, Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend, who overcame social constrictions in the antebellum south to rally women toward missions giving.

Her journey unfolds in the form of a novel, "Her Way: The Remarkable Story of Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend" by Rosalie Hall Hunt of Guntersville, Ala., who also has written a biography of pioneer missionaries Adoniram and Ann Judson and a history of Woman's Missionary Union.



For Hephzibah, surviving a dangerous birth in Charleston two days before the city was captured by the British in the Revolutionary War was confirmation to her that God had a purpose for her life. Her mother had died following childbirth, and a couple of slaves risked their lives to take her back to her family's plantation on Edisto Island, south of Charleston.

Hunt, a former national WMU officer, told Baptist Press she spent three years researching Hephzibah and then tried to reconstruct her personality and her philosophy of life in the novel.

Fashioning her research into a novel "gave me an opportunity to make her story immediate by using conversation to unfold the material," Hunt said. "I did find it a challenge because I prefer to write with annotations, listing sources. I personally like a book with a lot of endnotes, but many people do not."

As told by Hunt, Hephzibah's father "taught her the old adage, 'To him who wills, ways are not wanting.'" At 15, in marrying Daniel Townsend, a distant cousin, she brought to the marriage 4,000 acres of sea island cotton on Edisto. But in those days husbands controlled the dowry, and Hephzibah's fortune was not available to her.

Most young brides may have been okay with this, but Hephzibah was not one of them, Hunt said.

Though her father was an Episcopalian elder and her husband was a Presbyterian elder on Edisto, Hephzibah said she always had Baptist leanings. She had relatives in Charleston who were Baptists, and any chance she got she went to First Baptist Church with them. The pastor was Richard Furman, a prominent theologian of the era who was "very influential on her life and who baptized her when she was in her 20s," Hunt said.

"She used to go by rowboat every Sunday that she could, six hours there and six hours back," Hunt said. "She showed loyalty."

Hephzibah gave birth to 15 children, but only six of them lived to adulthood. She experienced tragedy upon tragedy, including the untimely death of her closest brother.

Along the way, Hephzibah learned from Furman about William Carey and missions in India. She also learned of Polly Webb, a paraplegic in Boston who had started a mite society to give to missions. From Edisto, Hephzibah decided to join the missions cause.

"So she went to Daniel and said, 'I need some funds for missions,' and he said, 'I'm sure Dr. Carey is a very worthy man but I'm not going to release the money,'" Hunt said. "... So she said, 'Alright, I'll find a way.'"

Since women were not necessarily allowed to have vocations back then and had to be creative in raising funds, Hephzibah sent a beloved servant named Bella to Charleston to learn from the leading pastry chef there how to make specialty cakes and gingerbread, Hunt recounted. "Meanwhile, she took servants over to the property that her brother had willed to her and built outdoor tabby ovens just yards from the Atlantic Ocean. Tabby is oyster shells and lime and water, like a cement. She built these ovens, and Bella came back and began baking the bread."

They would bake all week and then row their goods over to the market in Charleston on Saturdays. "And that's how the missions business began," Hunt said. Each woman in the female mite society Hephzibah founded on Edisto learned to do the same.

In 1812, the mite society on Edisto gave an offering of $122.50 to the Charleston Baptist Association.

"I like to think that was a lot of gingerbread," Hunt said. "That started it, and other societies began to spring up in South Carolina, in North Carolina, in Alabama and Georgia and Tennessee and other states. Then of course in 1888 it became the Woman's Missionary Union."

Hephzibah badly wanted a Baptist church on Edisto, particularly concerned for the slaves because few of them were in church services or had religious instruction. She and Bella started a catering business for weddings and special occasions, and by 1818 she had enough money to build a church, about $2,000, Hunt said.

Hunt's novel includes a copy of a letter Hephzibah wrote to a lawyer ensuring that the property she gave to the church would remain in its possession—because 95 percent of the members were slaves.

Edisto Island Baptist Church was the only place on the island where a slave had any dignity or voice, Hunt said. "They could sit anywhere and they were deacons. This was like a gift from Hephzibah."

Hephzibah described the slaves as her people, "and she didn't just say it; she meant it," Hunt said. The church is still an active congregation to this day, and Hephzibah is the only white person buried there.

"One of the most interesting things I found was in the minutes book that the pastor had written in the 1830s and '40s," Hunt said. "He had recorded the revival service of 1844. And he said, 'Sister Townsend invited us to meet in her parlor.' So they sat in the parlor of her home Dec. 21-26 and they met at night because that's when the slaves were able to have free time, and the pastor said they started at 7 each evening and never finished before midnight.

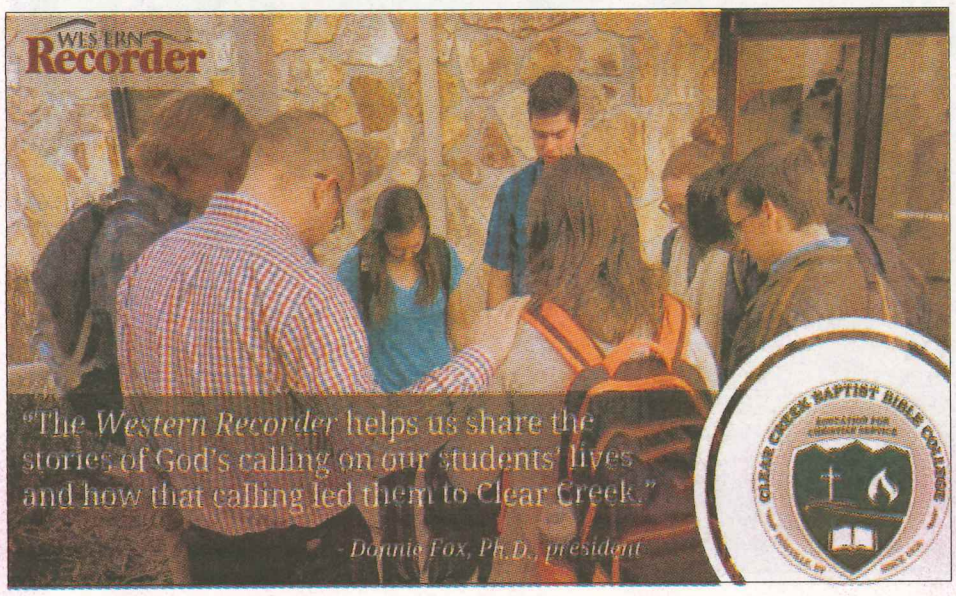
"The last night of the services, Dec. 26, he said, 'Sister Townsend assisted me in baptizing the 60 converts,' and he listed them name by name—everyone who had come to faith. Isn't that incredible? In 1844, a woman ministering like that. It was an amazing thing to read. And the dignity that she afforded these that she called her people," Hunt said.

Hunt wrote the biography, she said, because WMU is the largest missions organization for women in the world, "and we need to know where we came from so we can pass it on."

Laurie Register, executive director of South Carolina WMU, told Baptist Press though the name Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend is unknown—and was unknown to many in her day—"her commitment to her Lord and His mission; her determination that other women pray and support those called to the missions field; her love and concern for the spiritual needs of 'her people' provided the impetus for early women's missions societies across our country.

"As a member and leader in Woman's Missionary Union, I see a direct connection between Hephzibah's female mite society ... and this organization which now provides missions discipleship for every member of the church, and has a worldwide impact," Register said.

Her Way is published by Courier Publishing, an extension of the Baptist Courier newsjournal in South Carolina. The novel is available through Barnes & Noble, Amazon and other booksellers. All proceeds go to missions causes. (BP)



Contempt of Congress sought for fetal tissue firm

By Tom Strode

Washington—A possible contempt of Congress holding against a fetal tissue procurement business that has worked with Planned Parenthood is the latest development in an ongoing investigation into the apparent trade in aborted baby parts in this country.

The Select Investigative Panel on Infant Lives of the U.S. House of Representatives voted 8-0 Sept. 21 for a resolution recommending that the chamber find StemExpress and its chief executive officer, Catherine Spears Dyer, in contempt of Congress for refusing to provide documents it had subpoenaed.

The resolution also called for Speaker of the House Paul Ryan to certify the panel's report to a federal attorney.

All the panel's Republican members voted for the resolution, but the six Democratic members refused to vote and walked out in protest.

The contempt report came in an investigation that has uncovered evidence some abortion clinics and at least one tissue procurement company have benefited financially from the trade, according to the House panel.

The panel is seeking to determine if payments for baby parts made to clinics and companies violate a 1993 law that bans fees beyond reasonable costs for such activities as processing, storage and transportation of human fetal tissue.

The investigation has focused on Planned Parenthood since the panel was established last year after undercover videos provided evidence that the abortion provider trades in baby body parts. The secretly recorded videos showed various Planned Parenthood executives discussing the sale of fetal parts.

The Center for Medical Progress (CMP), which produced the undercover recordings involving Planned Parenthood, also released videos regarding StemExpress, a California-based firm that acts as a middleman between abortion clinics and biomedical researchers.

CMP posted clandestinely recorded videos online of StemExpress officials discussing their work, as well as a video of a former StemExpress employee discussing her experience procuring baby organs at a Planned Parenthood clinic.

In its report at the Sept. 21 meeting, the panel said StemExpress provided limited information voluntarily, prompting subpoenas of the business in February and March. The panel also subpoenaed Dyer and the company's outside accountant.

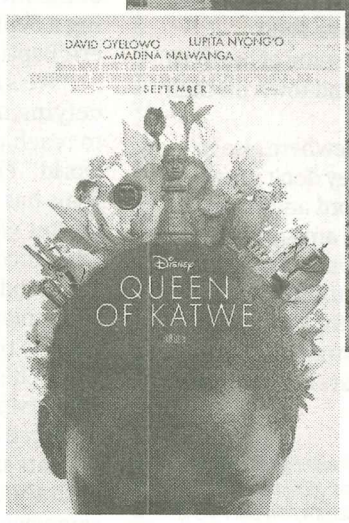
StemExpress and Dyer refused to provide the accounting records needed to complete its work, thereby violating the subpoenas, the panel reported. (BP)

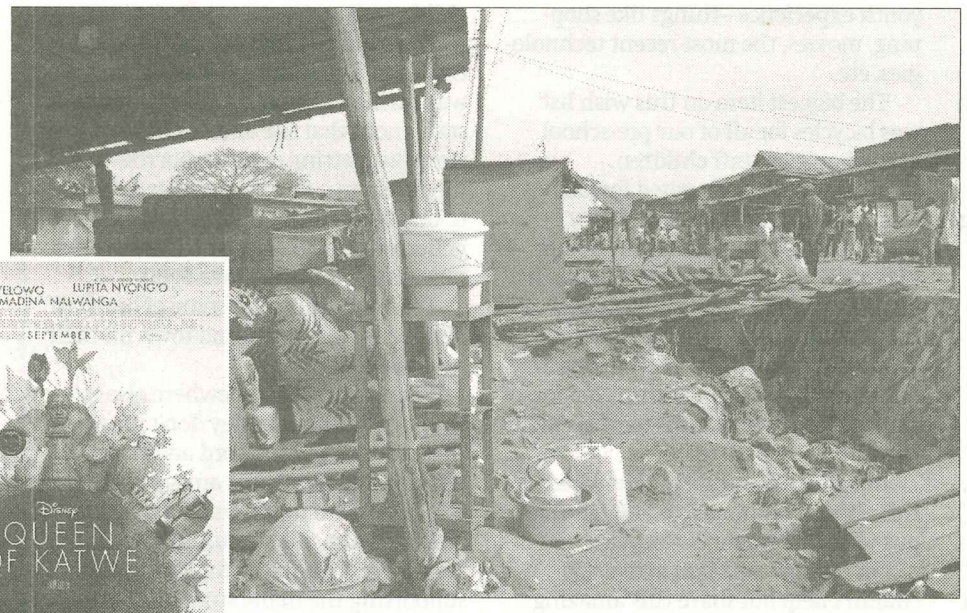
Disney film true tale of Christian faith, triumph

By Diana Chandler

Nashville, Tenn.—A girl living in poverty in the Katwe slums of Kampala, Uganda, becomes a national chess champion and enriches her life with Christ in Disney's "Queen of Katwe," based on a true story of struggle and triumph.

Disney maintains faith elements in telling the story of a young Phiona Mutesi who learned chess through the evangelistic Sports Outreach Ministry (SOM) and became a national champion and subject of the "Queen of Katwe" book that precedes the film.





Phiona Mutesi, the chess champion whose faith, struggles and triumphs are featured in Disney's film "Queen of Katwe," grew up in the Katwe slums of Kampala, Uganda, shown in this February 2015 photo. (Photo by Leigh Ann Loeblein)

Sal Ferlise, CEO of SOM based in Lynchburg, Va., with programs internationally, told Baptist Press he is pleased with Disney's treatment of the true story of faith, although the filmmaker does take creative license with Mutesi's journey.

"We're actually ecstatic because we believe (the movie) is going to be a tremendous bridge between the faith-based approach to restoring hope and transforming lives, and ... the humanitarian approach that normally a Disney company would accentuate more so," Ferlise said. "So we see those two (approaches) kind of coming together in maybe not as overt a fashion on the Christian side, but it's definitely there. You can't walk away from (viewing the movie) if you're intelligent and not realize that there's a faith element that's transcending through the process."

Mutesi encountered SOM through the Agape Church based in a makeshift building in Kampala, where her mentor and SOM coach Robert Katende was building a chess team with children living in the slums, most of whom could not afford to attend school. The ministry taught them chess, discipled them and helped place them in Christian schools in the community.

The movie includes frequent scenes of prayer, features the SOM logo with a cross prominently on the ministry van, and includes scenes set in the actual Agape Church, all elements Ferlise said might not have been included were it not for God.

"We are absolutely delighted with the outcome, because the truth is Disney is the 800-pound gorilla in the room and what they say basically goes," Ferlise said. "But by the grace of God and prayer on the part of a lot of people" the film has a faith "baseline. But again, we see that as miraculous because they (Disney) are not normally friendly to that type of environment."

Golden Globe nominee David Oyelowo, himself a professing Christian, portrays Katende and appreciates the use of the church building in the film's production.

"It's a rickety old church, but there's so much love in there," Oyelowo said in comments released by promoter Grace Hill Media. The church is described as a single-story building made of weathered wooden planks haphazardly mounted with sunlight streaming through the holes, and has a rusted corrugated roof. Ferlise describes Agape as a nondenominational Christian church.

Lupito Nyongo, who holds an Academy Award for her supporting acting role in "Twelve Years a Slave," plays Mutesi's mother Harriet Mutesi; newcomer Madina Nalwanga, who grew up in a Kampala slum, portrays the lead character.

Now 20, Mutesi is still being discipled by Katende and lives a humble life in Kampala, although she is Uganda's female chess champion and a Woman Candidate Master, the first step towards the Grand Master chess championship she desires. She authored the book "Queen of Katwe."

"She has given her life to the Lord," Ferlise said of Mutesi, who had lived a transient life since her father's death when she was three. The ministry raised enough money to move Mutesi's mother and siblings out of the slums to a modest home on the Kampala countryside. Mutesi lives with Katende's family when she is not in school, Ferlise said, allowing her to attend church and continue her Christian discipleship. While her mother is a Christian, Ferlise said, she has not had the privilege of attaining an education.

"All of our programs are led by committed Christian leaders. We use the term coach in the field, because we believe they are coaching them both practically in terms of the sports involvement, in terms of life skills, in terms of mentoring and coaching them in their walk and helping them develop a stronger faith."

SOM is an evangelical nondenominational ministry supported by partners and churches, Ferlise said, many of them Southern Baptist, including Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., pastored by Jonathan Falwell. Among other Southern Baptist supporters, Ferlise said, are Ana Jarai Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.; Carmel Baptist Church, Matthews, N.C., and First Baptist Church, Lubbock, Texas.

Queen of Katwe opened in wide release Sept. 30, after debuting in select theaters Sept. 23. (BP)

Pastor appreciation: Heartfelt letters have impact

By Tobin Perry

Sioux City, Iowa—While pastors appreciate the marriage getaways and financial gifts that sometimes come their way during Pastor Appreciation Month, Dave Miller suggests there may be something even more important to consider.



Dave Miller

"I think the best thing you can do if you really want to honor your pastor is to write him a letter," said Miller, who is president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference and pastor of Southern Hills Baptist Church in Sioux City, Iowa.

"Tell him how his ministry impacted your life. Don't just give him platitudes," Miller said.

"The letters that I've appreciated the most in my ministry haven't just been the ones that said, 'You're a great pastor. We love your sermons,' but have instead described how I helped them grow during my time as their pastor."

Many Southern Baptist churches, in honoring their pastors in October for Pastor Appreciation Month, do so in a variety of ways—from giving them gift cards to sending them on vacations to writing letters. For most pastors, it's a much-needed boost of encouragement.

A 2015 survey by LifeWay Research showed that while only 1 percent of pastors leave the ministry every year, many still have a challenging work environment. For example:

- 84 percent say they're on call 24 hours a day.
- 48 percent say the demands of ministry are more than they can handle.
- 53 percent are often concerned about their family's financial future.

Miller compared Pastor Appreciation Month to what an anniversary is for a marriage, while encouraging churches to express appreciation to pastors throughout the year.

"You should say what your wife means to you on a regular basis, but you often don't," Miller said. "So an anniversary is a reminder that you need to do that. It's not going to fix anything if the relationship is broken but, like an anniversary, it can help remind you to say the things you should be saying on a regular basis."

Charleston Farber, as a small church pastor, said it's special when his work is remembered during October's Pastor Appreciation Month. He acknowledged it's sometimes tough to know whether anyone notices what he does as a pastor. A note of appreciation or a simple gift card has often meant a great deal to him.

"It's nice to know the congregation appreciates what I do," said Farber, pastor of Center of Hope in Evansville, Ind. "I think pastors, particularly in smaller churches, tend to feel underappreciated and they are often carrying most of the load of the church. When the church does something for you during Pastor Appreciation Month, it's more than a thank you. You realize that they recognize all the work you put in."

Michael Thompson, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Clinton, Tenn., noted that in recent years the congregation has recognized the entire pastoral staff and their families during the month. He said the church typically has provided some kind of financial gift for the pastors and has a special meal in their honor.

"It's really a sweet and wonderful gesture from the church family," Thompson said. "I think, for me, the greatest part about it is the inclusion of my wife and the other pastors and their wives in that special recognition. What's great about this, especially for the wives, is when you're in ministry, Satan will try to tell you that you are not appreciated. Then something like this comes along and you really observe people with love in their hearts for you."

Thompson noted that at times, particularly when the family had kids in college, the gifts they received for Pastor Appreciation Month helped them buy Christmas gifts. LifeWay Christian Resources facilitates opportunities throughout the year for churches to encourage local pastors by hosting Pastor Date Nights. The free date nights are open to all evangelical pastors, regardless of denomination. LifeWay provides food, $300 in resources per couple, promotional materials and registration. Host churches agree to accommodate at least 50 ministry couples and administer much of the logistics, such as child care for the evening.

The North American Mission Board participates in a free Pastor Care Line where pastors can talk to professional counselors every day. To access the line, call 1-844-PASTOR1. (BP)

A blessing of bikes

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

I continue to be amazed at how God calls and uses so many folks from so many places to bless and support Oneida.

Periodically, an individual or church will ask if there is something specific that they can do for us. Around Christmas time last year, a church asked if there was something they could do for our staff, and I provided them with a list of five items that I thought would bless our faculty and staff.

When I was a staff kid at Oneida, there seemed to be 15-20 of us, but as the size of our staff grew over the years, so did the number of kids.

Speaking from first-hand experience, Oneida is a great place to grow up, but our staff children often feel they have had to give up certain amenities while their parents serve the Lord here.

They may feel that living in the middle of nowhere and the modest salaries their parents live on causes them to miss out on many activities that most youth experience—things like shopping, movies, the most recent technologies, etc.

The biggest item on this wish list was bicycles for all of our pre-school and school-age staff children.

When the church opted for this large undertaking, I asked if they would prefer I give them only to our kids ages 10 and down since it is such a large group. They said they wanted to try to secure bikes for all of our kids. This would take quite a bit of time and effort and promotion within their association, but after months of work, all 50 bicycles were secured.

Imagine my astonishment when this church group arrived here on campus with all brand-new bicycles.

On the day the bikes arrived, I couldn't help but share this amazing blessing with a visiting volunteer group.

Those volunteers were excited as well, and jumped right in and assembled the bikes that required assembly so that our parents wouldn't have to do so after receiving the bike for their child.

I also quickly told our staff about this soon forthcoming blessing, and was thrilled to hear from a particular staff mom that she and her husband were just getting ready to borrow money from a family member in order to buy bikes for their family of six. The generosity of our Baptist friends would now save this family over $500.

I cannot wait to see some of our staff children cruising around town on their new bikes.

Someone from somewhere else in this state, although they don't know these kids, loved the Lord and them enough to provide this amazing gift. God is faithful to the Oneida ministry, and He is also faithful to His saints who serve here. Thank you for loving and supporting the many students, both staff and boarding, that God has given us to reach and teach.

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute. Website: oneidaschool.org. Phone: (606) 847-4111. Follow OBI on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OBI.KY and Twitter, @Oneida_Baptist and @lgritton.

A place you won't want to leave

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

New student Kaymon Noble, from Fort Wayne, Ind., is glad to be settled into a place that he knows he will be able to stay for a while.

"Growing up with my family I never really lived in a house longer than a year," Noble said. "I knew that there had to be something far better than a new house every few months. I began going to church at a young age with my grandma. I switched schools my 8th grade year and went to a country school where I met my friends Aaron and Kaylynn. They invited me to go to church with them and on Jan. 29, 2012, I gave my life to Christ."

"As soon as I gave my life to Christ, I began praying about what His will was for me," Noble said. "Through conversations with my pastor over our time together the Lord began to deal with me about a calling to preach. My friends Aaron and Kari were leaving to attend Clear Creek at the same time. After they got to campus I continued to stay in touch with them inquiring about Clear Creek. They told me that it was a small college and the teaching was amazing. I instantly knew this was the place for me. I visited the campus my senior year of high school and God confirmed this was where I needed to be."

"I am in love with the school and everything here," Noble said. "I was attracted by the looks and the sounds of the school, but the personality of what is inside of it has kept me here. I see the love that the faculty and staff have for the Lord and for the students. This isn't a school for one specific age group. It's a school for the Christian who wants to better their ministry and get closer to our God.

"I am 18 years old and I have seen people over 50 years old attending classes here," Noble added. "You will not be a number or a dollar sign in anyone's eyes here. You will feel loved, you will be challenged and most importantly you will grow closer to God. This is a place that you will not want to leave."

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.

Directing social capital

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Richard Carnes

United States tax laws provide an incentive in the form of tax savings for making gifts to support non-profit organizations that provide vital services to our communities. The underlying philosophy behind this tax incentive is that private financial giving does many jobs that government entities otherwise might be called upon to do with tax money. "Social capital" is that portion of your wealth that will either pass involuntarily to the government as taxes or which can be directed voluntarily by you to charitable causes consistent with your spiritual values. If your social capital passes as taxes, you permit the government to choose what institutions and programs will be funded.

Alternatively, charitable giving allows you to direct these funds to ministry causes and Christian organizations that will perpetuate your highest spiritual values.

Directing your social capital demonstrates good stewardship. First and foremost, the ministries and charitable causes that echo your values will be enhanced and sustained. Moreover, your Baptist church, the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and its agencies and institutions are making a gospel difference for the Kingdom of God in our state, nation and around the world. These ministry organizations are worthy recipients of a donor's social capital to help sustain their ministries.

Individuals commonly express concern that giving social capital to church and ministry causes could affect the financial security their family. However, there are a variety of creative giving options that allow you to support and sustain kingdom work while also assuring the future financial security of your family. Through prudent planning, the potential tax savings resulting from your charitable gifts may actually provide more financial resources for you and your family, and those savings may permit you to financially give more than you ever dreamed possible.

If you have questions about these gift planning strategies, please contact the Foundation's trust counsel, Laurie Valentine, or me at our toll-free number (866) 489-3533 for a private estate stewardship consultation.

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

'Take risks' to spread the gospel, says Platt

By Annie Corser

Louisville—The reality of death for all people should compel more Christians to take risks in spreading the good news of Christ's resurrection among unreached people groups, said David Platt, president of the International Mission Board, during a Sept. 29 chapel message at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"We know that risk-taking, death-defying missions in difficult, dangerous to reach places is to be envied in this world," Platt said. "When you know that Jesus has risen from the dead, then no matter where he leads you and no matter what it costs you to, the proclamation of this good news in difficult, dangerous to reach places who haven't heard this good news is the most enviable life in the world. It's not in vain. Life is not in vain whenever you're doing whatever the resurrected Christ has told you to do."

Platt said since taking his position with the IMB he realizes there are missionaries in some of the most dangerous parts of the world who need support and people to join them. Preaching from 1 Corinthians 15, Platt showed how the Apostle Paul wrote to explain the "why" behind risking his life. It is for the proclamation of the gospel and to encourage others to do the same, he said. Platt offered three reasons from the passage for Christians to risk their life: Because death is coming for all, the resurrection is real, and all history is headed toward the fulfillment of God's kingdom.

"There are 2.8 billion people in the world, who, if nothing changes, will go to hell," Platt said. "There is real eternal wrath awaiting sinners before a holy God. God is going to consume them forever and ever. And these people have never even heard the good news of how they can go to heaven. ... So it makes sense to take risks to get the gospel to them."

While Platt is passionate about missions, he understands not all believers are called to a career overseas, but he closed his sermon asking all Christians to consider where God would use them.

"Would you at least open up your life, your family, and your ministry to the possibility that God might lead you to go and preach (the gospel)?" Platt said. "If you do that and he clearly asks you to stay, then would you lead and shepherd the church here to give sacrificially, to pray zealously, to go willingly into risk for the spread of the gospel."

Modern hymnwriter Keith Getty led worship alongside the Southern Chorale. Following Platt's message, Getty led the service in singing his new version of "Facing a Task Unfinished," a hymn dedicated to global missions. (SBTS)





Students at Knoch High School in Saxonburg, Pa., posted this photo on Facebook of their Sept. 28 See You At the Pole prayer event. (Facebook photo/Ignition)

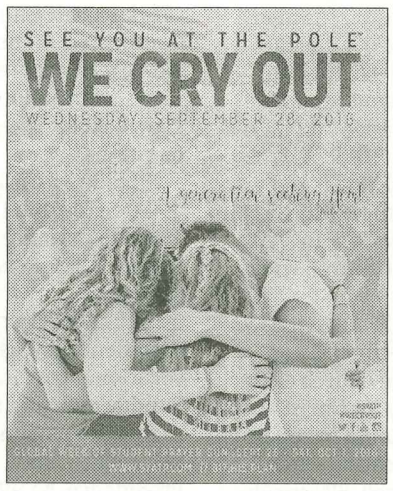
See You At the Pole launches 'I Am Hope' outreach

By Diana Chandler

Nashville, Tenn.—An estimated million or more students in the U.S. and 63 foreign countries publicly gathered around school flagpoles Sept. 28 and prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The annual See You At the Pole (SYATP) interdenominational Christian outreach is augmented this year with the launch of the I Am Hope outreach leading up to the Oct. 21 release of the film "I'm Not Ashamed."

Private and public school students of all grade levels were encouraged to gather at their respective school flagpoles at 7 a.m. local time for prayer, and many have documented their participation on Facebook and Twitter. Students have the option of holding such events any day during the week of Sept. 25, designated the Global Week of Student Prayer, allowing for school calendars and holidays that may fall on Sept. 28 in other countries.



Travis Deans, co-executive director of Teens for Christ student ministry, hosted one of many advance events Sept. 25 to encourage student participation in SYATP.

Deans estimated 600 students representing about 50 school districts attended his advance event, Ignition, at The Bible Chapel, a nondenominational megachurch south of Pittsburg.

"We want to encourage students to live out their faith at school," Deans said. "Anybody can be a Christian at church, but if a student can live out their faith in school, it's probably a very genuine faith. And if they can share their faith at school, if they can share Christ with others in that environment, they're probably going to be able to do that anywhere they go the rest of their lives."

He has held the Ignition event the past 11 years, he said, annually drawing between 400 and 1,000 students.

"We feel like we're helping prepare students for whatever God has for them by living out their faith in that environment right now," Deans said. Many students who attended Ignition have already posted photos of their SYATP events on the Ignition Facebook page.

SYATP organizers this year partnered with the Pure Flix Faith and Family Alliance ministry and ad hoc partners to kick off the national six-week "I Am Hope" evangelistic and discipleship movement targeting students. I Am Hope is inspired by the Pure Flix film "I'm Not Ashamed," which portrays the life of Rachel Joy Scott, a 17-year-old student shot to death by classmates at Columbine High School after she publicly reaffirmed her faith in Christ.

Thousands of ministries, youth and young adults are participating in I Am Hope, Pure Flix Alliance said in a press release today. Franklin Santagate, vice president of global strategic alliances for Pure Flix Entertainment, said SYATP is an excellent platform to launch I Am Hope.

"We feel that we are carrying out Rachel's mission to reach out to those who need hope and healing in their lives and know that this is just the beginning of the ripple effect that this (I Am Hope) movement will have for youth across the country," Santagate said in the press release. "We are thrilled to kick off the I Am Hope movement at one of the most important times during the school year when students publicly gather to express their faith."

SYATP national field director Doug Clark said the film, opening Oct. 21, honestly communicates Scott's faith struggle and can be a model for students living out their faith in schools around the country.

"I would love to see a Rachel on every campus," Clark told BP. "When there's a student like that on a campus it is catalytic."

The annual SYATP event grew out of a 1990 DiscipleNow weekend, when a small group of students prayed at flagpoles at different schools on a Saturday night. Inspired by the small event, youth leaders across Texas organized SYATP in 1990 and drew 45,000 students to prayer meetings in four states. By the next year, an estimated 1 million students gathered in prayer at flagpoles across the nation, according to the SYATP website.

While international reports are spotty, among foreign countries and territories that already have sent Clark photos documenting their participation this year, he said, are South Korea, Guatemala, the Philippines, Guam and the Dominican Republic.

The event does not violate U.S. laws against prayer in schools, as all prayer is student-led, before school hours and outside of any school building, according to the SYATP website. But the site encourages students to pray off campus if school administrators object to the event. (BP)

Visit to Texas Roadhouse leads to opportunity for Sunrise VentureON client

Texas Roadhouse didn't become one of the nation's most successful and innovative restaurant chains by sheer luck. The Louisville-based company's remarkable ability to find talented people of good character sets it apart in a very competitive industry.

So it comes as no surprise that company officials quickly recognized Diane, a Sunrise client, as a young lady with potential, someone who could succeed in their company. On July 20, Diane joined other Sunrise VentureON clients in a visit to Texas Roadhouse headquarters and a nearby restaurant. Her self-confident, outgoing personality stood out and the questions she asked reflected her natural curiosity and intelligence.

Today, all's well with Diane. She loves her new job and attends Owensboro Community Technical College. But she's traveled a long, troubled road for someone so young. A native of Lyons, France, Diane comes from a family that owns restaurants across Europe and the U.S. She lived in Los Angeles before moving to Kentucky when her father opened a restaurant in the Lexington area. Along the way, Diane started abusing drugs and alcohol and got caught up in a self-destructive lifestyle. Desperately in need of help, she went through a couple of treatment programs before coming to Sunrise.

Sunrise counselors and therapists helped Diane identify and avoid the negative behaviors that had led her down a troubled path. As part of VentureON, Diane is surrounded by mentors who help her transition into adulthood.

"Diane has lots of life experience, but she doesn't have a lot of life skills, things like managing money, washing clothes and so forth," said Becky Treon, Sunrise foster care specialist. "That's why I think Texas Roadhouse is such a great job for her because she has to stick to a schedule and be on time."

SUNRISE Children's Services

Diane agrees with that assessment. Her new employer is willing to work around her class schedule and her coworkers provide moral support.

"I absolutely love working there," she said. "I like having a huge family, knowing I can rely on them if I need help."

TalkCP new online forum for SBC gospel work

By Diana Chandler

Nashville, Tenn.—A new online forum to discuss the work and support of Southern Baptist missions and ministries fueled by the Cooperative Program has been launched at TalkCP.com.

Designed to meet the needs of the next generation of Southern Baptists, the site features blogposts from notable SBC entity heads, pastors and other leaders as well as archived interviews conducted on the CP platform and stage at the 2016 SBC annual meeting in St. Louis.

Ashley Clayton, vice president for Cooperative Program and stewardship for the SBC Executive Committee, describes the site as a meeting place for the SBC family that allows an open and public conversation about Southern Baptists advancing the gospel.

"In the past, it seems we were constantly trying to defend the Cooperative Program, or sell something that people were not certain about. TalkCP allows the CP to speak for itself," Clayton said. "It's similar in concept to what Charles Spurgeon said, '...defend the Bible? I would as soon defend a lion! Unchain, and it will defend itself!' TalkCP does just that."

The CP is a unified plan of giving that allows Southern Baptist churches to give a percentage of their undesignated receipts to support Southern Baptist missions and ministries.

TalkCP will feature regular and guest bloggers, and is designed to attract especially members of the Southern Baptist Young Leaders Network of young pastors, seminary students, church planters, missionaries and others committed to the SBC's core values. Downloadable, educational videos are among TalkCP.com's free resources.

"In the last four or five years under Dr. Frank Page's leadership, we have tried to expand the conversation about the Cooperative Program," Clayton said. "We have highlighted the conversation at the SBC annual meetings each year with panel discussions and interviews in the Exhibit Hall at the Cooperative Program stage and platform. We have sponsored pastor listening sessions across the convention where the intent is to listen to what pastors and church leaders are saying. TalkCP is a digital and online expression of this same type forum, an open and unedited dialogue."

In addition to Page, commentators featured on the site are entity leaders Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board; and David Platt, president of the International Mission Board.

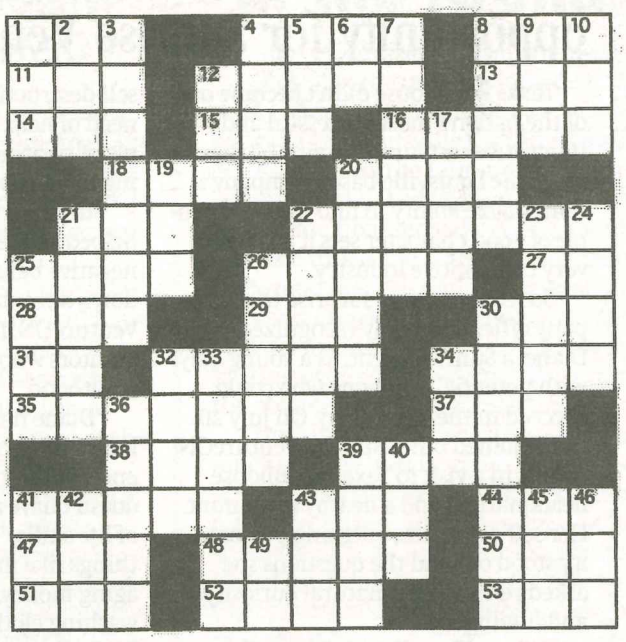
Others who have blogged at TalkCP.com are Jon Akin, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Lebanon, Tenn., and co-founder of Baptist21; Whitney Clayton, an SBC church planter and pastor of Living Stone Community Church, Phoenix; Andy Hale, pastor of First Baptist Church in Mt. Juliet, Tenn.; Vance Pitman, pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas; Paul Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention; Randy Davis, executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention; Kevin Smith, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware; and Chris Martin, executive director of the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention.

TalkCP.com was launched June 13 during the SBC annual meeting. (BP)

Bible Crosswords

Across

1. "There is a way which seemeth right unto ____" (Proverbs 14:12)
4. "whereby we cry ____, Father" (Romans 8:15)
8. Harness part
11. "Why make ye this ____ and weep?" (Mark 5:39)
12. "____down all thy strong holds" (Micah 5:11)
13. Alphonso's queen
14. Still
15. Trav. org.
16. Mother of Ishmael
18. The month of April (Exodus 13)
20. Telegram
21. Grad. degree
22. "____ cumi" (Mark 5:41)
25. "Thou shalt lay up ____ as dust" (Job 22:24)
26. "a great gulf ____ between us" (Luke 16:26)
27. Printer's measure
28. One (Scot)
29. Before (poet.)
30. "will do all that thou shall ____ us" (2 Kings 10:5)
31. Pronoun
32. Planted
34. Complete
35. "For by him were all things created,...whether they be____" (Colossians 1:16)
37. Office holders
38. Camel's ____
39. "in ____ will I call them my people" (Romans 9:25)
41. Fire (Sp.)
43. Egg (comb. form)



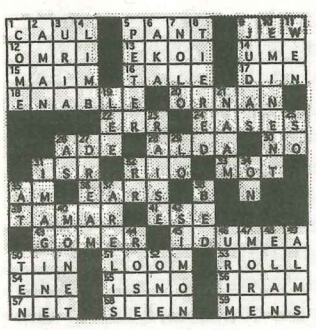
#05

44. "thou shalt put ____ away iniquity" (Job 22:23)
47. Reply (syn.)
48. Not in your wildest dreams
50. A son of Caleb (1 Chronicles 4)
51. Earl Grey, for example
52. Wither
53. Number of Joseph's brothers who went to buy corn in Egypt (Genesis 45)

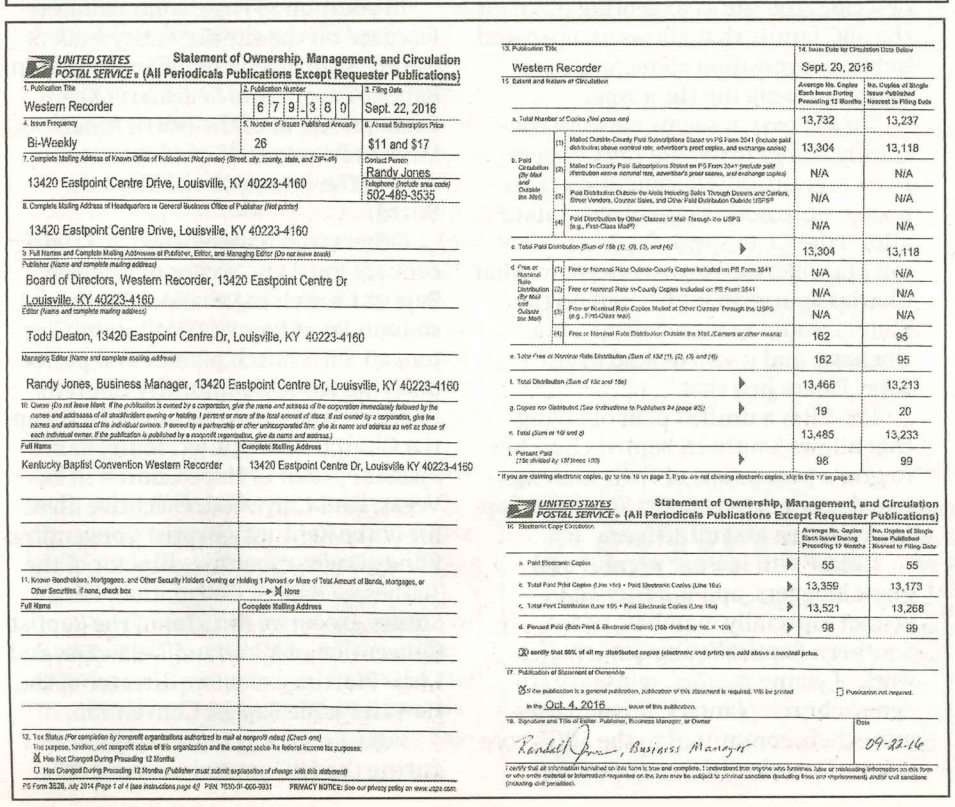
Down

1. Cape ____, NJ
2. Fruit drink
3. "a ____ prisoner named Barabbas" (Matthew 27:16)
4. An evil king of Israel
5. S.A. country
6. "First" name of nursery rhyme character
7. Short time
8. "Take ye wives, ____ sons and daughters" (Jeremiah 29:6)
9. Actress Claire
10. ____ paper
12. A group of Asian languages (var.)
17. Parched
19. Good (colloq.)
20. "For this people's heart is ____ gross" (Matthew 13:15)
21. Sivan, the third ____ (Esther 8)
22. Bores
23. "And if children, then ____ of God" (Romans 8:17)
24. Aunt Bea's nephew
25. Manner of walking
26. "to the ____, ye shall give the less inheritance" (Numbers 33:54)
30. "that ye might have a second ____" (2 Corinthians 1:15)
32. Rise above
33. "melons, leeks, and the ____ " (Numbers 11:5)
34. Compete
36. Son of Zorobabel (Luke 3:27)
39. Preposition
40. Term of address
41. Physical trait of Mrs. Sprat
42. Chemical suffix
43. Female cell (pl.)
45. Linking verb
46. "rejoiceth as a strong man to ____ a race" (Psalm 19:5)
49. Shoe width

#04



WESTERN Recorder + Your church newsletter
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h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		13,485	13,233
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		98	99

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KBC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October

7-9 myMISSION Retreat, Oasis Christian Center, Franklin

7-18 Zimbabwe Mission, Zimbabwe

22 Stuck in Traffick: Trafficking Awareness Workshop, Bethlehem Church, Louisville

November

1 Power Lunch, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville

1-3 Salt Lake City Send City Vision Tour, Salt Lake City

4 Ministry Assistants' Workshop, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Staff

BOAZ—Wice Memorial will celebrate its homecoming on Oct. 9, followed by revival services Monday through Wednesday. Revival services will be at 7 p.m. nightly with special music. Dale Harrell will preach Oct. 10; Bryan Overstreet will preach Oct. 11 and Wendell Gray will preach Oct. 12. **Frankie Goode** is pastor.

KEVIL—Spring Bayou Church has called **Wes Morehead** to be their pastor.

LEXINGTON—Grace Church, 811 Bryan Ave., will hold its Senior Care Extravaganza on Saturday, Oct. 8, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. for families and caregivers who are facing the challenges and issues dealing with the care of senior adults. Speakers and exhibitors: Laurie Valentine (Estate Planning), Cheri Fouts (Alzheimer's Association), funeral homes, assisted living, nursing homes, senior day care, and many more.

MARION—Marion Second Church will be holding revival services Oct. 9 at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. and Oct. 10- 12, 7p.m. nightly. **Mitch Coomer** is the evangelist. **Wesley Curtis** is the worship leader. **Chris Lowery** is pastor.

SPRINGFIELD—Thompsonville Church will hold its revival Oct. 16-21 at 7 p.m. **J.W. Hatfield Jr.** will be the evangelist. **Jerry Goss** is pastor.

Classified Ads

SEEKING: The Summersville (Ky.) Church is accepting resumés for a pastor. Summerville is looking for a God-called individual who will lead the church forward and further develop congregation. Send resumés to Summerville Baptist Church, c/o Pulpit Committee, P.O. Box 68, Summerville, KY 42782.

SEEKING: Seeking called praise and worship leader, willing vessel, to fulfill the call of Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:16 to lead His flock at Pleasant Grove Church, www.pgbc.net.

SEEKING: First Church of Paintsville Ky., is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. First Baptist is an established church desiring to reach the community for Christ and grow in Him. Candidates should have a minimum of a Bible college education while seminary training is preferred. Please submit resumés to fbcpaintsville@att.net.

SEEKING: Lead/senior pastor for Cedar Creek Church in Louisville, Ky. See church website for job description or email cedarcreekpsc2016@gmail.com to submit resumé and obtain job details. Accepting resumés through Oct. 19.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth and children/associate pastor for Fern Creek Baptist Church. According to applicant's gifts and skills, position could also include a different combination with youth ministry. Applicant must exemplify a growing relationship with God, spiritual maturity, responsible authority, fervent evangelism, sound theology, and effective communication skills with all age groups. Applicants should have experience and education in ministry. Send resumés to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, Attn.: Personnel Committee, 5920 Bardstown Rd., Louisville, KY 40291, or email to linda@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resumés will be received through Oct. 7. Questions? Call 239-0316 ext. 103.

SEEKING: Southside Baptist Church in Princeton, Ky., is now accepting resumes for a full-time youth and children's minister. Bachelor's degree, seminary training and experience preferred, but not required. Please email resumés to: youthsearchteam @southsidebaptist.com or mail to: Southside Baptist Church, Attn.: Youth Search Team, P.O. Box 684, Princeton, KY 42445.

SEEKING: Gap Creek Church, a conservative Southern Baptist church located near the Cumberland Gap in northeast Tennessee, is looking for the man whom God has called to be its next pastor. Gap Creek is an outreach-minded, growing congregation with over a 200-year history. Send resumé, CD or preferably DVD of a sermon to: Gap Creek Baptist Church, Attn: Pastoral Search Committee, PO Box 177, Arthur, TN 37707. Please visit gapcreekbaptistchurch.org for more information about church, or email to gapcreekbaptist@gmail.com with any questions.

SEEKING: Children's ministry position at Grace Church Louisville 10-15 hours per week. Experience preferred but not required. K-5. Send resumé to don@gracelou.com

SEEKING: First Baptist Church in Providence, Ky., is seeking a part-time bivocational pastor. Responsibilities include Sunday morning services and Wednesday nights. No parsonage is available. Send resumés to Linda Hutton, 12695 Nebo Rd., Providence, KY 42450.

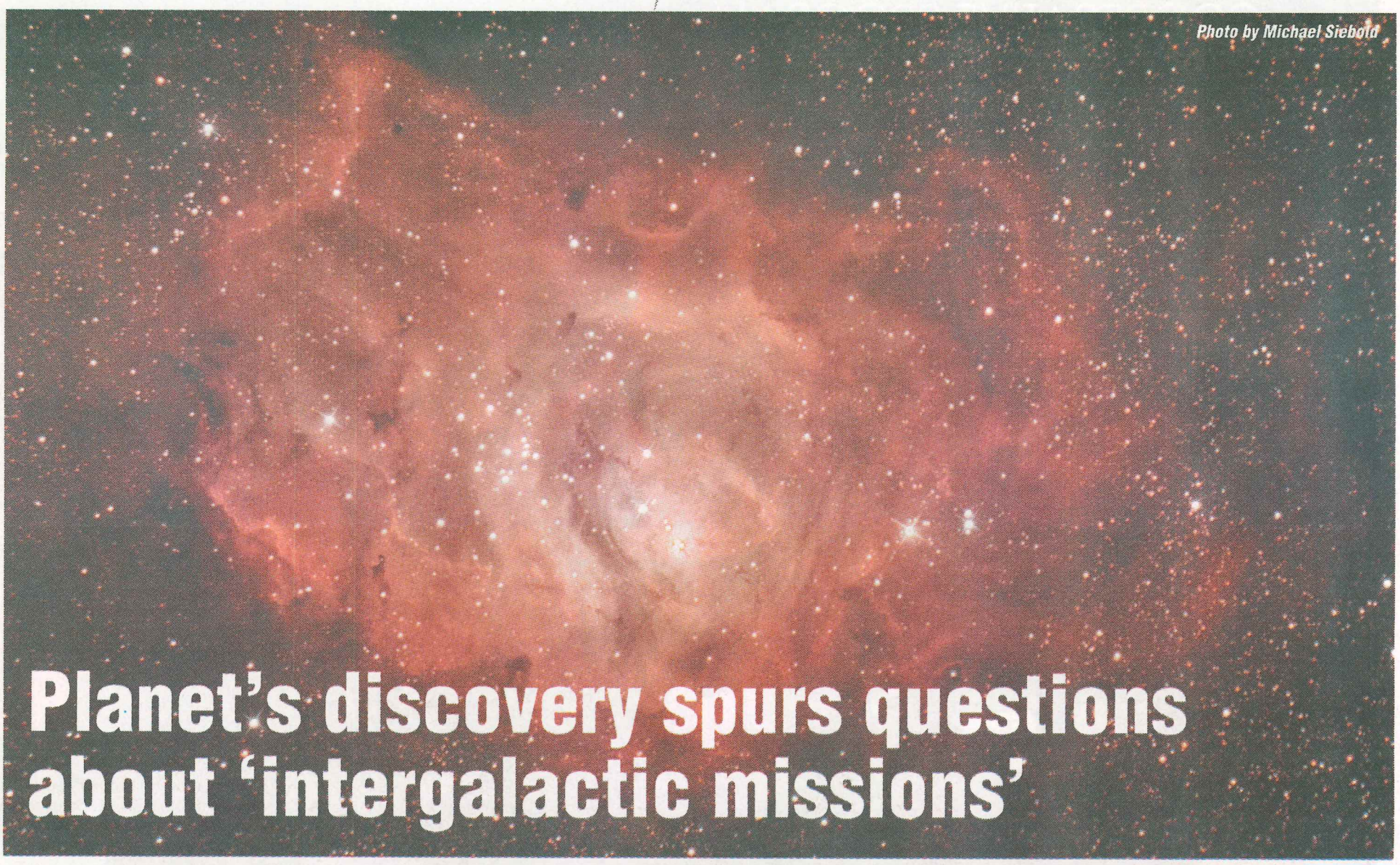
SEEKING: Boones Creek Association is seeking a full-time DOM. Please send resumés to P.O. Box 537, Winchester, KY 40392. Deadline for resumés is Nov. 1.

SEEKING: Spring Bayou Church in Kevil, Ky. is in search of a new bi-vocational worship leader. All interested candidates may submit their resumé and video of a worship service to Spring Bayou Baptist Church, 1205 Woodville Rd, Kevil, KY 42053. Email is sbbc@brtc.net.

SEEKING: Full-time or bi-vocational pastor to lead and shepherd a congregation of about 52 families. His main focus is on worship in reference to the greatest commandment—to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. His next focus is to equip the saints in sound teaching from scripture so that we may carry out the second commandment to love our neighbors as ourself. We desire him to lead us in one accord, protect us from unsound worldly doctrine, lead the deacons in the scriptural roles to minister to our members and encourage us to be the witness we should be wherever we are or go. He must meet biblical qualifications set forth in Titus and 1 Timothy. Send resumé to South Elkhorn Baptist Church, 4867 Versailles Rd., Lexington, KY 40510 or email to southelkhornbc@gmail.com.

AVAILABLE: Ordained, conservative, Southern Baptist minister available for interim pastoring or pulpit supply in central Ky. area. Can be reached at 859-8692 text or voicemail or bryantgeorge62@gmail.com.

AVAILABLE: Business for Sale: Looking for a mission? Christian publisher net $57K part-time. Clients established. EZ to learn. Do from your location. $24,900. Retiring. Call 828-633-6382.


Photo by Michael Siebold

Planet's discovery spurs questions about 'intergalactic missions'

By David Roach

Nashville—Discovery of another planet that might support life has given rise to speculation about intelligent life elsewhere in the universe—and whether such lifeforms would need the gospel.

"Briefly stated, saying that scientists 'think there may be life' on (the newly discovered planet) is greatly overstating what the scientific community is thinking," said Bill Nettles, physics department chair at Union University.

But "if there is intelligent life on other planets, we definitely need to tell them Earth's gospel story and learn what their history is," Nettles told Baptist Press.

> ***"There's nothing in the Bible that excludes biology on other planets, just as there's nothing to exclude other planets. The larger theology comes into view when you consider the work of Christ in redeeming mankind, and the extensiveness of that work."***
>
> **Bill Nettles, physics department chair, Union University**

Nettles' comments came following the discovery of Proxima b, a potentially earth-like planet 4.24 light-years away whose discovery was announced Aug. 24 in the scientific journal Nature.

"Finding a planet around another star which fits in a temperature range where liquid water is possible is a big deal when it comes to supporting Earth-like biological life," he said. "Having a size and a gravitational field similar to Earth would support the possibility of life bigger than insects. Again, notice that 'possibility' is not granting a high probability."

Detected by a telescope in Chile, Proxima b is 1.3 times Earth's mass and orbits Proxima Centauri, the closest star to the sun, according to National Geographic.

Scientists are divided on the likelihood of life on Proxima b, Nettles said, noting that life is not the same as intelligent life. While some believe "favorable conditions are no guarantee" of life, others "have the perspective that given the correct conditions, life will, indeed, exist and flourish."

Theologically, Nettles believes "there's nothing in the Bible that excludes biology on other planets, just as there's nothing to exclude other planets. The larger theology comes into view when you consider the work of Christ in redeeming mankind, and the extensiveness of that work."

"Most conservative Bible scholars" seem to believe "there is only one created universe, one fall, one redemption for all time and space and a glorification of one set of created beings along with their Savior," Nettles said, referencing the theory that humans are sole focus of Christ's atonement. Others, however, speculate there could be parallel sequences of history in other universes that include atonement for other intelligent creatures.

'Geo-centricity'

John Laing, a Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary theology professor who says he has "long been fascinated by the possibility of life on other planets," told BP that Scripture doesn't rule out the prospect.

If God created other intelligent life forms, He likely did so on the fifth or sixth day of creation, "when sea creatures and land creatures were created, respectively," said Laing, associate professor of systematic theology at Southwestern's Dalton Havard School of Theological Studies in Houston.

Any intelligent extraterrestrials are not likely to be created in God's image, Laing said, noting that having intelligence is not the same as being created in the divine image. Humans uniquely are made in God's image and therefore "the apex of creation."

"Consider angels: they are more powerful than we and they are intelligent and apparently have free will," he said in written comments. "Nevertheless, they are not made in the image of God, and we are. I suspect non-human intelligent physical creatures could exist without being made in the image of God."

In considering the possibility of redemption for lifeforms on other planets, Laing said it's important to remember the entire creation was affected by the fall and that "salvation is only available through Jesus Christ."

Yet "just because (potential lifeforms on other planets) are subject to the law of sin and death, it is not immediately apparent that they can or need to receive redemption in the same way we do," he said.

Perhaps intelligent life forms on other planets "will not sin," Laing speculated, "or if they do, they are not recoverable. Perhaps they ... have no soul."

What's certain is that believers "need to reject any notion that the Son may need to incarnate as a different being in order to save" lifeforms on other planets, Laing said. "The union of God and humanity in Christ is indissoluble, even though the two natures are distinct and without mixture."

Renewal of the entire fallen universe, including any other intelligent lifeforms, will occur much like the renewal of non-human creatures on Earth: in conjunction with and "through the salvation of humanity" at Christ's second coming, Laing said, citing Romans 8:18-23.

"Is this too geo-centric?" he asked. "Perhaps, but the Bible seems to suggest that this kind of geo-centricity is the way God has established the creation."

'Down to Earth'

Sammy Tippit, vice president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists, said talk of intelligent life on other planets is "very speculative" theologically and scientifically. Even if such life exists, Tippit wonders about its capacity to fellowship with God and its need for evangelism.

"To say that there is animal life or even intelligent life on another planet ... does not necessarily mean there would be beings with the capacity to know God as we know God," Tippit told BP.

Tippit, who has been a vocational evangelist more than 40 years, has focused his use of technology on sharing the gospel with earthlings. He is preparing to launch an interactive, multilingual discipleship app that will help believers lead friends to deeper walks with Christ—even if those friends live on the other side of the globe.

"We know" about lostness on earth, Tippit said, "and that has got to be our passion."

Laing, despite his enthusiasm for space exploration, agreed. "Intergalactic missions is an interesting prospect," Laing said.

"However, I would encourage us believers to begin with more modest goals: share the Gospel with your neighbor, co-worker and friend, and support the missions organizations doing great work here on Earth." (BP)

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM:

RESPONDING TO THE GREAT COMMISSION



THOUSANDS OF MISSIONARIES SENT OUT

The Cooperative Program is how Kentucky Baptists respond to the Great Commission, joining together with more than 46,000 congregations nationwide to support some 10,000 missionaries who are sharing the gospel of Christ every day.

The Cooperative Program is also how 750,000 Kentucky Baptists in 2,400 congregations support the work of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and its many agencies and institutions that do so much for the cause of Christ. It's through the Cooperative Program that orphaned children are given safe haven, future church leaders are educated, aging congregations are revitalized, pastors are taught effective evangelism strategies, church members are encouraged to be on mission, and so much more.

THOUSANDS OF SOULS BEING SAVED

Kentucky Baptists, working cooperatively in communities from the mountains of Appalachia in the east to the banks of the Mississippi River in the west, have had great success in reaching out with the gospel over the past year. The latest figures from the KBC show 14,223 baptisms across Kentucky in 2014, an increase from 13,975 the year before. That's enough people to populate a mid-sized Kentucky city. But the news gets even better. Thanks to your support of the Cooperative Program, missionaries from the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board reported another 190,957 baptisms last year.

The Cooperative Program isn't just a line on your church budget. It is the primary means through which Southern Baptists support the work of missionaries in the state, across the country and around the world. The Cooperative Program allows your congregation to make an impact literally around the world.

KBC
KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM