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Nationwide Edition

Telling the Story of Tennessee Baptists

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2007 TBC church survey mostly shows decreases

by Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — The final report for the 2006-2007 church year is in from the Annual Church Profile (ACP) of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

All areas reported by churches declined except Sunday School enrollment and financial giving, reported Libby Eaton, information specialist of the TBC. The number of TBC churches reporting this year also declined — 3.4 percent — from last year. The TBC has about 3,000 member churches. Eaton said she had hoped the number of reporting churches would increase as church secretaries and association secretaries are trained to report online. The TBC has offered online reporting for two years via TeD (Tennessee Electronic Database).

Eaton said churches can update their leadership data year round, but statistical data had to be received prior to Dec. 31 to be considered for this report. Churches can report on any 12-month period of their choosing as long

as they are consistent.

Eaton also pointed *B&R* readers to the four reports (on page 4) which list the top 50 churches in baptisms — total and per capita (ratio of baptisms to resident members), and top 50 churches in Cooperative Program giving — total and per capita of resident members.

Southern Baptist Convention stats for 2006-07 are reported on page 9.

Eaton encouraged churches and associations to use TeD to update contact and leadership information about their church. For more information church leaders may check with their association or Eaton at leaton@tnbaptist.org, (615) 312-1997, or 1-800-558-2090 ext. 1997.

Gary Rickman, TBC ministry coordinator, said, "We are very thankful for the

3.7 percent Cooperative Program giving increase. However if we as Southern Baptists are going to resource the mission task before us, all of us need to be challenged to see the CP giving begin to increase by more than the inflation rate.

"This is why in our Ten x Ten in Tennessee stewardship CP emphasis we are

ACP Comparison Totals — 2007 vs. 2006

	2006-2007	2005-2006	Difference	% Difference
Total Members	1,105,532	1,124,683	-19,151	-1.7 %
Resident Members	819,450	830,235	-10,785	-1.3 %
Baptisms	23,443	25,641	-2,198	-8.6 %
SS Enrollment	552,383	547,770	4,613	0.8 %
SS Average Attendance	277,474	286,684	-9,210	-3.2 %
DT Enrollment	120,421	126,146	-5,725	-4.5 %
Music Enrollment	115,645	119,807	-4,162	-3.5 %
WMU Enrollment	59,450	61,293	-1,843	-3.0 %
Men's Ministry Enrollment	32,029	32,971	-942	-2.9 %
CP Gifts	\$37,188,295	\$35,876,908	\$1,311,387	3.7 %
Undesignated Gifts	\$694,288,881	\$559,552,494	\$134,736,387	24.1 %
Designated Gifts	\$191,390,448	\$160,963,683	\$30,426,765	18.9 %

	2007	2006	% Difference
# of Churches Reporting (on at least 1 item on ACP)	2,543	2,632	-3.4 %

encouraging our Tennessee Baptist churches that are giving below a 10 percent level of undesignated receipts going through the CP to prayerfully consider increasing their commitment to mission support through the CP. If all the church-

es in the TBC had been giving at the 10 percent level, our Cooperative Program gifts would have surpassed \$60 million. While we rejoice at the increase let us all recognize the challenge before us in resourcing the mission task." □

Evangelism must begin outside the sanctuary, research shows

By Mark Kelly
LifeWay Christian Resources news office

NASHVILLE — Unchurched adults interested in finding a congregation aren't nearly as likely to visit one in person as a church member who is shopping for a new congregation. That means effective evangelism must begin outside the sanctuary in relationships between Christians and unbelievers, according to research from several recent studies from LifeWay Research.

A survey of 1,684 adults who had not "attended a religious service in a church, synagogue, or mosque, other than for a religious holiday or for a special event such as a wedding or funeral at any time in the past six months" revealed that only 49 percent would visit in person if they were looking for a church. By contrast, 83 percent of church switchers in an earlier survey said they made an in-person visit when they "actively searched for a new church."

Significantly, more than half of unchurched people would follow a recommendation from family, friends, neighbors, or colleagues if they were looking for a church, but 24 percent said they didn't really see themselves using any of the usual ways of finding a church.

"The location of our evangelism needs to shift if we want to reach the unchurched and not just move sheep around," said Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research.

"At LifeWay Research we want to encourage churches to grow through conversion. To do that, they must not rely only of the unchurched visiting our churches. Church switchers are primarily the ones who visit churches. The unchurched stay home.

"So, if you build your outreach on recruiting and reaching church visitors you will often build a church on church switchers," he said.

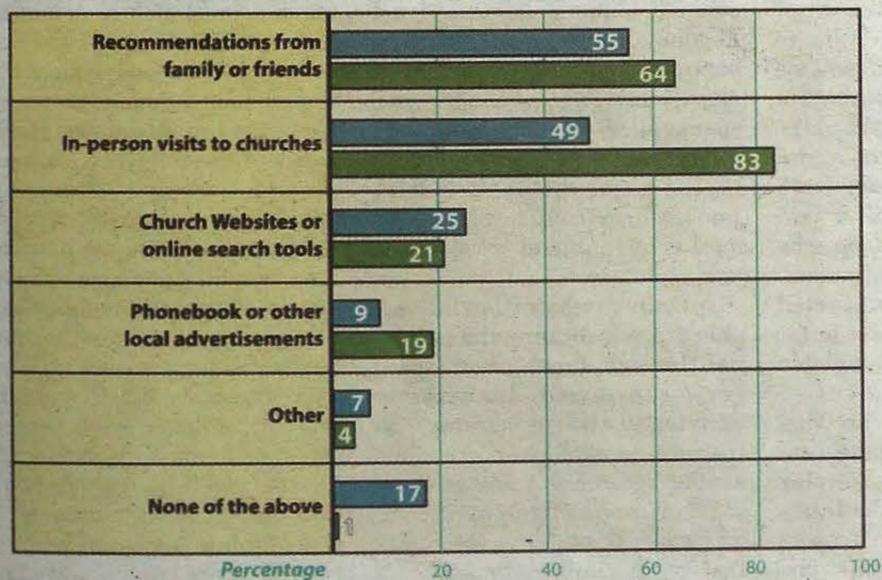
Rethinking strategies

Stetzer continued, "For several decades we have focused on come and see, invest and invite, bring your friends to church by attracting them with a great program. We call that attractional ministry. Now we are facing the reality that fewer unchurched people are willing to visit a Christian church.

"This will compel us to embrace a go and tell — or incarnational — approach," he said. "Should we invite our friends to church? Sure. But should we be, do, and tell the Gospel to people in culture? You bet. It is not only biblical, but it is even — See Evangelism, page 9

How people find a church

Resources "Unchurched" would likely use if looking for a church and "Church Switchers" did use to find a new church



■ Unchurched (Feb. 2008 study)

Unchurched are defined as people who have not attended a religious service in the past six months.

■ Church Switchers (Dec. 2006 study)

Church switchers are defined as Protestant Americans who have attended more than one church regularly as an adult.

LifeWay RESEARCH

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Winning the lost focus of '08 SBC annual meeting

By Mark Kelly
Baptist Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Fulfilling the mission Christ gave His followers — bringing lost souls into God's kingdom — will be the focus of the 151st session of the Southern Baptist Convention when it convenes June 10-11 at the Indiana Convention Center here.

The meeting will extend a theme of spiritual awakening that has characterized the tenure of Frank Page as SBC president, pressing on to the evangelistic outreach that flows naturally from renewal.

"The motivation and power for evangelism arises out of spiritual awakening," said Page, who is completing his second term as SBC president. "I keep going back to Acts 1:8, which says, 'When the Holy Spirit comes, you shall receive power.' And when we have been stirred by God's spirit, we reach out to the lost and God draws people to Himself."

That's why Page said he selected Acts 2:47b as the watchword for the gathering: "And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved" (HCSB).

"The recent report of a decline in baptisms and membership in the Southern Baptist Convention re-emphasizes that for too long we have been attempting to raise baptisms among non-revived people in non-revived churches," Page said. "The lack of connection with lost people and the lack of urgency for soul-winning and personal evangelism is a direct indication of our lack of spiritual passion and love for the lost."

"Even when there is a love and a concern for the lost, sometimes we have a total disconnect with the culture in which we live," Page added. "Many of our people simply do not know how to relate to people in 21st-century culture and have been frustrated at their inability to communicate the gospel. Many believers do not know people who are outside the kingdom and often do not even know their own neighbors."

Under the banner of "Fulfilling the Mission," Southern Baptist leaders will introduce a multifaceted long-term strategy for helping churches evangelize their neighborhoods, states, country, and world. The 10-year National Evangelism Initiative was a priority Page set for his time in office when he was elected in Greensboro, N.C., in 2006.

"The moment I was elected, I knew I wanted to encourage a continent-wide evangelism strategy," Page said. "A large

number of people have been saying to us, 'Don't just tell us what to do, but show us how to do it.' So I approached the North American Mission Board and they have worked with our state and associational partners to come forward with a strategy that will help us know both what to do and how to do it."

Unlike some programs that drop a big box of material on the desk and leave it to the pastor to figure out whether it can be implemented in his church and how to do it, the National Evangelism Initiative will offer a menu of strategies in four areas: praying, engaging, sowing, and harvesting, Page said. Churches will be able to pick and choose strategies that will work in their unique contexts.

Among the other highlights of the annual meeting:

- Block parties in 27 ethnically mixed neighborhoods will spearhead a drive to launch eight new churches during Crossover '08, the citywide evangelistic campaign set for June 6-7. "I want to encourage Southern Baptists to be part of Crossover," Page said. "I will be out sharing Christ on Saturday and hope hundreds, if not thousands, will join us in that great evangelistic opportunity."

- Messengers to the annual meeting will hear challenges from Leo A. Endel, executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention in Rochester, Minn.; Rob Blackaby, president of the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary in Cochrane, Alberta; and Forrest Pollock, senior pastor of Bell Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, Fla.

- An intensified focus on prayer will be another feature of the convention. In addition to the prayer room, signs will be posted around the convention center to help messengers make a "prayer journey" for the annual meeting. A virtual prayerwalk will be available at www.crossover08.com for people who can't attend the convention. In volunteering to intercede for the annual meeting is available on that site as well.

- The North American Mission Board report and presentation is scheduled for Tuesday evening, June 10, and the International Mission Board report and presentation will be Wednesday evening, June 11.

- Congregational praise and worship will be led by convention music director L. Lavon Gray, minister of music and worship at First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss.

- Al Gilbert, senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., will deliver the convention message Wednesday morning, June 11.

- The SBC Pastors Conference will begin early — on Sunday

Tennessee Baptists chosen to serve on SBC committees, boards

Baptist Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Nominees to serve on the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, the four denominational boards (International and North American Mission boards, LifeWay Christian Resources, GuideStone Financial Resources), the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the six seminaries and the Committee on Order of Business have been selected by the 2008 SBC Committee on Nominations.

Nominees will serve if elected by the messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 10-11 in Indianapolis.

Tennesseans selected for positions include:

Executive Committee: Phil Harper, layman, Northside Baptist Church, Murfreesboro; Gene Mims, pastor, Judson

Baptist Church, Nashville; GuideStone Financial Resources: Craig Parker, church administrator, Germantown Baptist Church, Germantown;

North American Mission Board: Chuck Herring, pastor, First Baptist Church, Collierville; Jimmy Arms, pastor, Stevens Street Baptist Church, Cookeville; and

LifeWay Christian Resources: Jeanne J. Davis, layperson, First Baptist Church, Sevierville.

SBC President Frank Page also announced his appointments to the SBC Committee on Committees. Tennesseans selected for this committee include Billy Riner, Vernon Heights Baptist Church, Kingsport; and Tom McCoy, Thompson Station Baptist Church, Thompson Station. McCoy is president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. □

afternoon, June 8 — to preview "Fireproof" (fireproofthemovie.com), a new movie on unconditional love and covenant marriage produced by Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga.

- The annual Ministers Wives Luncheon will be held at noon Tuesday, June 10, in the Sagamore Ballrooms 1-5 of the Indiana Convention Center. Gary Chapman will speak on the topic "How to Love a Leader." Registration information is available at www.sbcannualmeeting.net.

- Woman's Missionary Union activities will begin Sunday evening, June 8, at the Hyatt Regency Indianapolis, with a banquet featuring SBC President Frank Page as the keynote speaker. A day-long missions celebration will be held June 9 in the same hotel. Registration information for the banquet is available at www.wmu.com.

- Online registration is available at www.sbcannualmeeting.net through June 7 so messengers can avoid lines upon arriving at the convention. The website gives a church a messenger reference number form to be printed out and presented by each messenger at the registration booth in exchange for a nametag and a set of ballots. The appropriate church-authorized representative must complete all online registrations. The traditional registration method also is available. Registration cards are available from state convention offices.

- Messengers wishing to propose resolutions must submit them at least 15 days prior to the annual meeting, giving the Resolutions Committee a two-week

period in which to consider them. Detailed guidelines on submitting resolutions are available at www.sbcannualmeeting.net (by clicking on "resolutions").

- Shuttles will be available to and from most official SBC downtown and airport hotels. The shuttle service will be complimentary on Sunday afternoon, June 8. Shuttle tickets will be available at the convention center information desk for \$10, with children 12 and under riding free when accompanied by parents who purchase tickets. Hotels near the convention center that will not have shuttle service are the Canterbury, Conrad, Crowne Plaza Union Station, Embassy Suites Downtown, Hampton Inn Downtown, Homewood Suites, Hyatt Regency Capitol, Marriott Downtown, Omni Severin, and Westin. The Country Inn & Suites near the airport will not have shuttle service. The remaining official SBC downtown and airport hotels will have service.

- Childcare (birth-3 years) and a children's conference (ages 4-12) have been planned for the meeting, with registration information available at www.sbcannualmeeting.net.

- Students grade 7 and above will be able to participate in Bible study, worship, and fellowship during the annual Centrifuge program. Registration information is available at www.lifeway.com/fuge/cfuge under "SBC Fuge."

- GuideStone Resources will sponsor a wellness walk at 6:15 a.m. Tuesday, June 10, at White River State Park. Online registration is available at www.GuideStone.org/walk or www.sbcannualmeeting.net. □

Says Bruce Edwards

'Tick-tock, tick-tock ... teenagers are crying out'

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

GATLINBURG — Despite the fact that today Christians are providing more youth programs and youth ministries, "for the first time in history only 4 percent of this generation of teenagers are Bible-believing Christians," said Bruce Edwards, youth ministry specialist of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. He was leading a conference at the Missions Get-Together and Connection here April 4-6. The conference was

entitled, "Tick-tock, Tick-tock ... Teenagers are Crying Out."

This is true though there are more teens today than ever in history, continued Edwards.

"The church is not doing its job."

Either teens are "not being taught God's Word," he declared, or what they are being taught is "being watered down."

He warned that churches must be careful about entertaining teens too much.

Of course, the job of the church is more difficult as it deals with students who are being impacted by culture, stated Edwards. Fifty percent of teens are not living with both biological parents.

He asked the crowd if they were helped while they were teenagers by someone at church. Many women spoke, telling how a Girls in Action leader, Acteens leader, or Sunday School teacher befriended

them and helped them.

Oftentimes, said Edwards who also has served as a church youth minister and on the staff of LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, an adult just needs to encourage a student and tell them they are unique because God made them.

He explained that the reports from Barna and other

anybody's church on a Sunday, cited Edwards. This is of more concern when considering the fact that 34 percent of the United States population are millennials, the term for the current generation which includes teens.

Previous generations contained many more Bible believers — 16 percent of GenXers, 35 percent of baby boomers, and 65 percent of builders (from WWII era), he reported.

Research shows that "more than two-thirds of all adults who have given their lives to Christ

made their decision before age 18," said Edwards, and if that decision isn't made by age 13, 80 percent of those people won't ever make it.

"Teens have their spiritual antennas up," but they're not necessarily tuned into the Bible, he observed.

He presented four points which are true for the first time in history concerning teenagers (see box).

Concerning media saturation, Edwards said teens go to their bedrooms and just stay there because of the media outlets which are available.

A very good reference for folks interested in these issues is www.familysafemedia.com, he advised.

Several participants asked questions about e-mails received which are inappropriate and how to block them. Edwards advised good filtering programs but said there always will be hackers who can disable filters.

On the statistic that 77-88 percent of teenagers fall away from Christ as soon as they get out of high school, Edwards quipped, "They think they also graduate from God."

Young adults ages 18-25 seem to enter a "spiritual black hole," he described. This age group becomes "fertile ground for other religions" and even a "target group."

Christians need to be teaching doctrine, advised Edwards, including what we believe and why we believe it.

At around age 26, statistics show that about 44 percent of young adults who left the church return to the church, usually because they are having children and want them to

For the first time in history only 4 percent of this generation of teenagers are Bible-believing Christians. — Bruce Edwards

researchers he was citing should motivate people in churches (see box below). Most churches need youth workers, but just seek them by recruiting through the church bulletin or newsletter. Sometimes someone will ask for volunteers from the pulpit, he added.

Church leaders should be careful when recruiting youth workers. Not every adult should work with youth and they must be properly screened and trained, Edwards said.

The most urgent need of teens is relationships. They also need commitment and consistency, he observed.

"Drive by parents" are common today and reveal another need of teens, noted Edwards, referring to parents who drive by the church to drop off their children but never attend themselves.

Only 12 percent of America's teenagers can be found in

Facts about teens

- Today there are more teens than ever in history.
- On any given Sunday, only 12% of America's teenagers can be found in anybody's church.
- 77-88% of teenagers fall away from Christ as soon as they leave high school.

For the first time in history

1. Only 4% of this generation of teenagers are Bible-believing Christians.
2. Media saturation.
 - Teens listen to nearly 40 hours of music a week.
 - More than 25% of teen-targeted music contains sexual content.
 - 42% of top-selling CDs contain sexual content that is "pretty explicit" or "very explicit."
3. Sexualized culture.
 - Every hour 6.7 scenes on TV include a sexual topic.
 - The most watched teen network is MTV, where more than 3,000 soft porn images are broadcast every week.
 - Teens who watch a lot of sexualized programming are twice as likely to engage in sexual intercourse.
 - Average age of first sexual experience — 15.8 years old.
 - Average length of first sexual relationship — 3.8 months.
4. Point & Click Pornography
 - Average age of first Internet exposure to pornography is 11.
 - There are 4.2 million pornographic websites.
 - There are 2.5 billion pornographic e-mails on a daily basis.
 - The largest group of Internet pornography consumers is the 12-17 age group.
 - 90% of 8-16-year-olds have viewed porn online (most while doing homework).

experience church as they did as children and youth.

He warned the crowd to prepare themselves for youth ministry. Teens today "are wired differently than when you and I were in youth group at church."

If adults are going to work

and when they leave not leave problems for the church volunteers who will take over, he advised.

Students are used to change and welcome it yet "we in the church don't change a lot."

Concerning the music of teens, he said, "Remember, it's for teens; it's not for us. If we're going to reach young people we've got to change some things."

Youth ministry leaders,

though, shouldn't compromise the faith, he added. He encouraged them to develop a "distinct, different youth ministry from what teenagers do in the world.

"Teenagers are drawn where there are relationships," repeated Edwards.

For more information on youth ministry contact Edwards at bedwards@tnbaptist.org, 1-800-558-2090 ext. 2094, or (615) 371-2094. □



BRUCE EDWARDS, youth ministry specialist of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, leads a conference at the Missions Get-Together and Connection April 4-6 in Gatlinburg.

Remember, it's for teens; it's not for us. If we're going to reach young people we've got to change some things. — Bruce Edwards

"in the youth area we've got to be where they are," continued Edwards. Adults might need to "cry with some teenagers and do some stupid stuff with them so they'll like us and know that we are real."

When churches don't have enough youth leaders, maybe they can develop partners who assist the youth ministry in some way, he suggested.

Churches should try to call youth ministers who will come

Top 50 TBC Churches in Total Cooperative Program Giving, 2006-2007

CHURCH	Resident Members	Cooperative Program
Hendersonville First Baptist Church, Hendersonville	9065	\$ 652,976.00
Clarksville First Baptist Church, Clarksville	4159	\$ 464,721.00
West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson	2847	\$ 341,776.00
Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova	18021	\$ 338,952.00
Hermitage Hills Baptist Church, Hermitage	2760	\$ 331,118.00
Silverdale Baptist Church, Chattanooga	3303	\$ 316,268.00
Cleveland First Baptist Church, Cleveland	3752	\$ 314,309.00
Millington First Baptist Church, Millington	2827	\$ 312,785.00
Belle Aire Baptist Church, Murfreesboro	2356	\$ 309,608.00
Wallace Memorial Baptist Church, Knoxville	2657	\$ 290,427.00
Sevierville First Baptist Church, Sevierville	3818	\$ 290,000.00
Red Bank Baptist Church, Chattanooga	2891	\$ 287,692.00
Grace Baptist Church, Knoxville	3974	\$ 269,999.00
Forest Hills Baptist Church, Nashville	1503	\$ 258,080.00
Long Hollow Baptist Church, Hendersonville	4580	\$ 252,397.00
Morristown First Baptist Church, Morristown	1462	\$ 222,837.00
Hilldale Baptist Church, Clarksville	1785	\$ 216,718.00
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church, Nashville	754	\$ 211,747.00
Thompson Station Baptist Church, Thompson Station	2295	\$ 210,914.00
Cookeville First Baptist Church, Cookeville	1757	\$ 209,970.00
Dickson First Baptist Church, Dickson	2218	\$ 208,954.00
Lenoir City First Baptist Church, Lenoir City	2355	\$ 200,874.00
Faith Baptist Church, Bartlett	2633	\$ 200,000.00
Stevens Street Baptist Church, Cookeville	2011	\$ 198,173.00
Westwood Baptist Church, Cleveland	2040	\$ 195,843.00
Lexington First Baptist Church, Lexington	1620	\$ 195,319.00
Mount Juliet First Baptist Church, Mount Juliet	1883	\$ 193,985.00
Immanuel Baptist Church, Lebanon	2841	\$ 187,168.00
Germantown Baptist Church, Germantown	5970	\$ 186,316.00
Tulip Grove Baptist Church, Old Hickory	1653	\$ 164,997.00
Englewood Baptist Church, Jackson	3246	\$ 164,346.00
Brainerd Baptist Church, Chattanooga	2020	\$ 163,706.00
Jackson First Baptist Church, Jackson	1228	\$ 159,114.00
Paris First Baptist Church, Paris	963	\$ 158,351.00
Collierville First Baptist Church, Collierville	2538	\$ 153,615.00
Colonial Heights Baptist Church, Kingsport	1079	\$ 152,542.00
Judson Baptist Church, Nashville	1154	\$ 151,761.00
ClearView Baptist Church, Franklin	1920	\$ 151,306.00
Joelton First Baptist Church, Joelton	1600	\$ 150,636.00
Eastanalee Baptist Church, Riceville	433	\$ 149,112.00
Ridgeway Baptist Church, Memphis	985	\$ 145,872.00
Bartlett Baptist Church, Bartlett	1707	\$ 145,765.00
Bethel Baptist Church, Greenfield	367	\$ 144,764.00
Northside Baptist Church, Murfreesboro	1024	\$ 144,475.00
Central Baptist Church, Johnsons City	1485	\$ 143,002.00
Nashville First Baptist Church, Nashville	1703	\$ 142,793.00
Murfreesboro Third Baptist Church, Murfreesboro	0	\$ 142,421.00
Greenville First Baptist Church, Greenville	1188	\$ 142,386.00
Bayside Baptist Church, Harrison	2530	\$ 141,355.00
Beaver Dam Baptist Church, Knoxville	2172	\$ 140,580.00

Top 50 TBC Churches in Per Capita Giving to Cooperative Program, 2006-2007

CHURCH	Resident Members	Amount Given Per Member
Lakewood Baptist Church, Beechgrove	9	\$ 565.67
Bethel Baptist Church, Greenfield	367	\$ 394.45
Connection Church, Cleveland	12	\$ 348.25
Eastanalee Baptist Church, Riceville	433	\$ 344.37
Bruton Branch Baptist Church, Savannah	10	\$ 310.80
Riverview Missionary Baptist Church, Loudon	13	\$ 282.31
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church, Nashville	754	\$ 280.83
Rocky Valley Baptist Church, Lebanon	25	\$ 248.36
Shelbyville First Baptist Church, Shelbyville	364	\$ 243.94
West Franklin Baptist Church, Franklin	199	\$ 236.63
Fairview Baptist Church, Oak Ridge	35	\$ 223.11
Southwestern Baptist Church, Johnson City	379	\$ 222.63
Calvary Baptist Church, Rutherford	30	\$ 214.90
Cornerstone Community Church, Atoka	24	\$ 210.04
Smyrna Baptist Church, Burlison	213	\$ 191.99
Big Springs Baptist Church, Elizabethton	70	\$ 191.84
Hillcrest Baptist Church, Dyersburg	383	\$ 191.27
Tellico First Baptist Church, Loudon	150	\$ 188.00
Hickory Valley Baptist Church, Hickory Valley	59	\$ 185.34
Carthage Road Baptist Church, Carthage	10	\$ 184.80
Wartburg First Baptist Church, Wartburg	200	\$ 179.94
Emmanuel Baptist Church, Collierville	96	\$ 179.02
Buffalo Trail Baptist Church, Morristown	430	\$ 178.71
The Planting, Clarksville	30	\$ 177.93
Camden First Baptist Church, Camden	442	\$ 172.69
Forest Hills Baptist Church, Nashville	1503	\$ 171.71
Grace Park Baptist Church, Spring Hill	51	\$ 169.57
Covington First Baptist Church, Covington	756	\$ 165.17
Ararat Baptist Church, Jackson	284	\$ 164.72
Paris First Baptist Church, Paris	963	\$ 164.44
Grace Baptist Church, Dover	8	\$ 162.25
Grace Community Church, Memphis	33	\$ 158.24
Bread Of Life Baptist Church, Lyles	37	\$ 157.03
Poplar Heights Baptist Church, Jackson	362	\$ 155.95
Counce First Baptist Church, Counce	407	\$ 154.84
Northside Baptist Church, Savannah	53	\$ 154.06
Woodland Baptist Church, Brownsville	135	\$ 153.22
Morristown First Baptist Church, Morristown	1462	\$ 152.42
Grand Junction First Baptist Church, Grand Junction	193	\$ 151.52
Belmont Heights Baptist Church, Nashville	219	\$ 151.50
Ridgeway Baptist Church, Memphis	985	\$ 148.09
Charlotte Road Baptist Church, Nashville	248	\$ 147.06
Northside Baptist Church, Chattanooga	22	\$ 145.91
Wartrace First Baptist Church, Wartrace	111	\$ 141.89
Colonial Heights Baptist Church, Kingsport	1079	\$ 141.37
Northside Baptist Church, Murfreesboro	1024	\$ 141.09
Trace Creek Baptist Church, New Johnsonville	359	\$ 140.28
Rock Springs Church, Smyrna	90	\$ 139.30
Oakland Baptist Church, Rutledge	225	\$ 138.88
Dotson Memorial Baptist Church, Maryville	618	\$ 137.93

Top 50 TBC Churches in Total Baptisms, 2006-2007

CHURCH	Resident Members	Total Baptisms
Long Hollow Baptist Church, Hendersonville	4580	515
Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova	18021	476
Concord First Baptist Church, Knoxville	6135	284
Sevier Heights Baptist Church, Knoxville	3914	210
Faith Promise Church, Knoxville	1515	210
Grace Baptist Church, Knoxville	3974	179
Hendersonville First Baptist Church, Hendersonville	9065	169
The People's Church, Franklin	2689	160
Millington First Baptist Church, Millington	2827	148
Smyrna First Baptist Church, Smyrna	3659	137
Red Bank Baptist Church, Chattanooga	2891	136
Thompson Station Baptist Church, Thompson Station	2295	126
Watson Chapel Baptist Church, Madisonville	1239	124
Central Baptist Church, Hixson	4500	122
Silverdale Baptist Church, Chattanooga	3303	121
Brentwood Baptist Church, Brentwood	5569	118
Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Cottontown	148	113
Clarksville First Baptist Church, Clarksville	4159	106
Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville	6893	106
Faith Baptist Church, Bartlett	2633	105
Higher Ground Baptist Church, Kingsport	3417	102
Tri-Cities Baptist Church, Gray	1052	98
Hillcrest Baptist Church, Lebanon	1986	95
College Heights Baptist Church, Gallatin	742	95
Stones River Baptist Church, Smyrna	1187	91
Englewood Baptist Church, Jackson	3246	89
Greater Missionary Baptist Church, Clarksville	2092	88
New Vision Baptist Church, Murfreesboro	1606	86
Sevierville First Baptist Church, Sevierville	3818	81
Cleveland First Baptist Church, Cleveland	3752	80
Hermitage Hills Baptist Church, Hermitage	2760	76
Kirby Woods Baptist Church, Memphis	2368	76
Collierville First Baptist Church, Collierville	2538	75
West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson	2847	74
Dallas Bay Baptist Church, Hixson	1850	74
Dickson First Baptist Church, Dickson	2218	72
Bayside Baptist Church, Harrison	2530	71
Clinton Second Baptist Church, Clinton	1450	67
Stevens Street Baptist Church, Cookeville	2011	65
Chilhowee Hills Baptist Church, Knoxville	951	62
Saint Bethlehem First Baptist Church, Clarksville	1037	61
Hilldale Baptist Church, Clarksville	1785	60
Solid Rock Baptist Church, Prospect	148	60
Union City Second Baptist Church, Union City	1416	59
One Faith Fellowship, Memphis	542	58
Grace Baptist Church, Tullahoma	1257	58
Stuart Heights Baptist Church, Chattanooga	1349	58
Gladeville Baptist Church, Gladeville	1720	57
Forest Hills Baptist Church, Nashville	1503	56
Crosspointe Baptist Church, Millington	2860	55

Top 50 TBC Churches in Members/Baptisms Ratio, 2006-2007

CHURCH	Resident Members	Total Baptisms	Members / Baptisms
Hilham Baptist Mission, Hilham	21	32	0.7
Grace Baptist Church, Dover	8	11	0.7
Grace Fellowship, Memphis	22	22	1.0
Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Cottontown	148	113	1.3
Greater Hope Ministries, Clarksville	62	46	1.3
Germantown Korean Baptist Church, Collierville	35	22	1.6
Iglesia Hispana de Bells Nuevo Desafio, Bells	40	23	1.7
Crossroads Baptist Church, Benton	30	15	2.0
Walnut Grove Baptist Church, Vonore	50	25	2.0
Epiphany Baptist Church, Springfield	62	29	2.1
Iglesia Bautista Renacer, Lebanon	105	47	2.2
The Connection Fellowship, Morristown	35	15	2.3
Solid Rock Baptist Church, Prospect	148	60	2.5
Rocky Valley Baptist Church, Lebanon	25	10	2.5
Iglesia Bautista La Gran Comision, Morristown	146	55	2.7
Iglesia Bautista Agua de Vida, Gray	16	6	2.7
Spring Creek Baptist Church, Springville	44	15	2.9
Iglesia Hispana Vida Abundante, Jackson	12	4	3.0
New Chapel Baptist Church, Decaturville	15	5	3.0
Rolling Hills Baptist Church, Bon Aqua	49	16	3.1
Concord Baptist Church, McKenzie	13	4	3.3
Vine Ridge Baptist Church, Crawford	13	4	3.3
Good Samaritan Baptist Church, New Tazewell	10	3	3.3
Tercera Iglesia Bautista, Murfreesboro	90	24	3.8
Crosspointe Community Church, Bristol	24	6	4.0
New Faith Baptist Church, Palmyra	24	6	4.0
Miracle Mountain Baptist Church, Cookeville	80	20	4.0
Falling Springs Baptist Church, Alpine	20	5	4.0
Hispanic Mission, Antioch	20	5	4.0
Friendship Baptist Church, Shelbyville	45	11	4.1
Alva Baptist Church, Southside	17	4	4.3
Pleasant View Baptist Church, Dukedom	60	14	4.3
Bridges Of Hope Fellowship, McMinnville	40	9	4.4
McCloud Baptist Church, Rogersville	40	9	4.4
Cypress Creek Baptist Church, Martin	81	18	4.5
The Bridge, Spring Hill	100	22	4.5
Legacy Baptist Church, Indian Mound	32	7	4.6
Macedonia Southern Missionary Baptist, Ardmore	80	17	4.7
Ridgeway Baptist Church, Knoxville	66	14	4.7
New Haven Baptist Church, Dover	77	16	4.8
Reelfoot Baptist Church, Troy	60	12	5.0
Carthage Road Baptist Church, Carthage	10	2	5.0
Lamontville Baptist Church, Calhoun	30	6	5.0
Sugar Loaf Baptist Church, Seymour	15	3	5.0
Memorial Baptist Church, Waynesboro	10	2	5.0
New Home Baptist Church, Martin	69	13	5.3
Haleys Grove Baptist Church, Crab Orchard	85	16	5.3
Slate Springs Baptist Church, Crossville	32	6	5.3
Faith Baptist Church, Vanleer	80	15	5.3
Pisgah Baptist Church, Decatur	97	18	5.4



By Lonnie Wilkey, editor

Stats are great; but it's all about souls

I have a confession to make. At times I have wanted to stop using the charts on churches that are in the top 50 in Cooperative Program giving and baptisms.

Why?

I was afraid it would become just a "look at what we did" page. We must never forget that none of us, churches as a whole or Baptists individually, can do anything without the Holy Spirit guiding each and every step.

After adopting that viewpoint, I now look at these charts as a "look at what He did" page.

When it comes to baptisms, each number represents a soul that is now going to heaven.

As for Cooperative Program gifts, every dollar should represent the funds needed to reach more souls for Jesus Christ in our state, our nation, and our world.

We can never do "too much" for the God who gave us His best and His all.

And, churches that are doing good things to bring honor and glory to Christ deserve to be recognized as long as it is kept in perspective.

Also, keep in mind that just because a church is not on these charts does not mean God is not at work in those congregations.

If a church is doing all it can do to reach its community for Christ, then those members can hold their heads high.

Those churches may have seen only one soul saved last year, but that is one more soul going to heaven. And, in some cases, churches do all they can and may not see any results. It can get discouraging, but keep in mind that God just tells us to "sow the seeds."

God will bring the increase and the harvest.

And, may He, and He alone, get all the honor and praise for "great things He hath done." □

Respond to blessings with old-fashioned savvy

By James Porch

Dear Aaron and Anna:

Many good folks moving through hard times during my childhood in the post-Depression era kept a watch out for surprise blessings from the Father.

One of my most descriptive memories of such a faith experience came by way of the peach peddler.

Kids, back in my kid's day, quite often men and women would travel house to house selling tonics, books, cleaning supplies, brushes, and fruit — especially peaches.

Some sales folks met you with a lot of talk, anxious to bear witness to why your mere daily existence could not continue unless you purchased their amazing product. Medications especially could cure — well, you name it. Most medicines fit into one of two categories: (1) the rub on stuff, (2) the swallow-down stuff. While infrequently their products combined water, grease, spices, alcohol, and food coloring, I do not recall any one dying from the cure-all elixirs. One brand name salesman stood out above all others for integrity — the Watkins man. I bear witness, his tonics, especially Spring Purges, worked. Even more reliable, folk depended upon his array of flavorings and salve. A southern post-depression household cupboard, if at all financially possible, involved a Watkins shelf featuring vanilla, lemon, sassafras, and peppermint extracts. The Watkins salve worked on sore throats, burns, cuts, boils, carbuncles, the itch, wasp stings, scrapes, arthritis, rheumatism, gout, and bedsores. Watkins salve could

usually be found also in the barn to treat horsefly bites, saddle rash, girth scrapes, back grubs, tail fly bites, various forms of udder ailments, and cracked hooves.

By the early 50s the peach peddler was one of the few remaining distributors making home deliveries. Usually, he was a fellow trying to make a few dollars by going over to Georgia in July, buying a pickup load of peaches by the bushel and hurrying back to quickly sell the perishable fruit.

Stopping by a house, he simply asked in a cautious manner, "Ya'll need any peaches?" Never, "Ya'll want any peaches?" Hard up for money folk appreciated his word "need." You see, everybody wanted peaches, but asking on the basis of need allowed a family unable to purchase the delicious fruit to defer without betraying their dignity due to inability to buy a \$2.50 bushel of Georgia peaches. Courtesy, honor and respect, while today lost, overshadowed most honorable peddlers. He knew everybody composed the "make it through hard times" time.

The peach man, a peddler, gave our family one of the best tasting blessings I still remember. He drove an old green dented, dusty Chevrolet pickup and pulled up followed by a cloud of dust in front of our house one hot, muggy July afternoon. Seeing him come to a stop, Dad and I leisurely walked out to his truck. The possible forthcoming business transaction demanded the potential buyer not betray

any urge to purchase from the seller. I heard the question, "Mister, you need some fine Georgia peaches? Only \$3 a bushel."

Dad, rubbing his chin in a contemplative way, observed, "Gone up 50 cents a bushel since last year." No comment by the seller. Near the cab of the truck rested an enormous pile of fruit under the careful watch of buzzing fruit flies in circular motion. Dad walked over, picked up one, and the man remarked, "Them's over ripe and I can't sell them." Dad responded leisurely, "I got some hogs." The conversation continued. "Well, brother, help yourself to all you want." Peering down at me as his mental wheels caught motion, Big Milton directed,

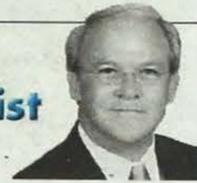
"Son, go around to the back of the house and get both of those big galvanized wash tubs." We filled both tubs with over ripe peaches, and the two of us began carrying one — I thought — to the hog pen. Near to the back porch, Dad directed again, "Turn to the right, set the tub on the porch and call yo' Mamma." In a matter of minutes we unloaded six washtubs of very ripe peaches onto the screened in porch and shooed out the flies. You see, my Dad saw the amazing opportunity for an abundance of peach preserves as yet unknown to the Porches. For two days, we skinned the delicate fruit. Being over-ripe, the peeling came off like skin with no knife peeling required. As Papa and I skinned, Mamma cooked. I made three quick bicycle trips to Goodman's Grocery for Mason jar lids and

sugar. In the 24-hour period, all available glass jars, both screw top and seal lid top, sat upside down covering the kitchen counter and table. As I remember, we ate peach preserves regularly for three years. The hogs did get the peelings.

Now, I suppose a question could be raised about integrity. Remember though, Dad only said, "I have hogs," and no commitment had been made to feed the peaches to the hogs. On the other hand, maybe there was a "gross misunderstanding." Nevertheless, what actually happened was that we benefited greatly from merchandise that could not be sold, thereby lessening the weight on the old truck and also alleviating the peddler from improper disposition of the fruit, or even allowing the over-ripe peaches to transition into fermented compounds that if ingested could advance inebriation. Actually, I even as a boy sized up that peach peddler as a qualified "no dummy." According to my daughter, in her sweet mom's (my mother) version of this memory, Dad gave the peddler a \$5 bill.

You may also debate whether or not this was a blessing from God. Any reluctance to understand such providence would grow certainly out of a lack of understanding of the times in which we lived. There was a strong connection between what God was about and what you were receiving on a daily basis in a post-Depression Christian home in Mississippi. Sometimes response to blessing requires quick thinking and just plain old fashioned savvy. □ — Copyright by James Porch, executive director-treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

guest columnist



By Frank Page

Are we serious about praying for the lost?

I have been encouraging the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board to present to our convention a multi-faceted, flexible evangelism strategy which will help pull our churches together over the next years to focus on that which my predecessor, Bobby Welch, emphasized during his tenure.

I also have been calling for prayer and spiritual awakening, so that our churches will be on fire once again to reach our nation for Christ. Having heard the call from Welch, we now need to help our churches move in this direction.

Recently, members of a nearby church stated their great desire to reach their area for Christ, but also stated that they simply did not know how to do some of the ministries that can reach people for Christ. They called for us to help them in that regard. Our church is now joining into a new partnership to assist them in learning better how to reach their neighborhood for Christ.

I am intensely excited about the opportunity before Southern Baptists. We can move together to reach this continent for Christ.

The initiative that will be presented in Indianapolis is multi-faceted. In this article and several to come, I will be emphasizing some of its key points.

One of the great aspects of this initiative is that there will be a powerful emphasis upon PRAYING. The call will be that every church will be praying for every lost person. The Bible says in James 5:16, "The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful." I Timothy 2:1, 3-4 says, "First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone. ... This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Are we serious about praying? Are we serious about praying for the lost? God's people need to be mobilized into a mighty, praying army. I am convinced that the key to spiritual awakening is prayer. I am convinced that Satan is wishing to distract and to disrupt our prayer lives.

Would you join me in a recommitment to prayer? If our nation is going to be won to Christ, we must be in deep connection with our Lord who is the only source of power, help, and hope. □ — Page is president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

When sharing about Christ, keep it simple, practical, and real

guest columnist



By Larry Gilmore

Recent articles from LifeWay are validating what our evangelism team has been emphasizing with our Tennessee Baptist churches. Ed Stetzer points out that the unchurched are not knocking down our doors to get into "church services." They know where we are, but the majority are not coming to see! The imperative for pastors and staff is to equip their lay people to know how to become intentional in developing relationships with the unchurched.

Many have discovered that once they have become Christians and been involved in a local church for a year or more, their circle of friendships with the unchurched has signifi-

cantly diminished. While some quote Hebrews 7:26 and II Corinthians 6:17 to emphasize "separation" from sinners, how can we reach the pre-Christian with the Good News of the gospel without demonstrating that we care for them and value them. While Jesus was "separate from sinners," it also is clear that He immersed Himself among them to show them the power of grace.

Our church members are immersed among the unchurched. Go to the soccer fields, baseball fields, gymnastics, or Upward basketball games, and all around you will be parents, grandparents, and relatives who are present to watch their loved one perform. Many of these are unchurched, unsaved souls that you already have a connection with through sports. Buy them a coke, share your popcorn, strike up a conversation, ask about the one on the field they are interested in.

Listen! This is the beginning of a relationship. Introduce

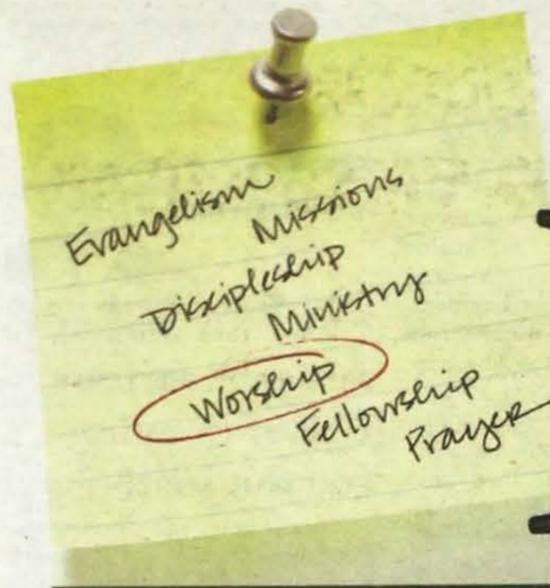
yourself, ask them their name. Along the journey, you may ask many other questions. Is there a need that you discover? Do they have a loved one in the hospital? Are they facing a crisis? You can offer to pray for them. Is this an opportunity to prepare a meal for the family? You don't have to be pushy, but you can express genuine concern! Maybe there isn't a discovered need. Just be gracious. Call the person by name. Let them know you'll look forward to seeing them at the next game. And when the next game is scheduled, be sure you look for them and call them by name.

It's springtime and the outside events offer a unique opportunity for us to meet and develop new friendships. This concern cannot be simply for the purpose of accosting them for an evangelism statistic. The concern must be genuine! And when it is, your ministry opportunities which arise may earn you the right of passage into the more important areas of

their lives ... that which is spiritual.

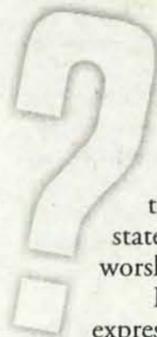
Remember, the culture has changed. Many around us are not familiar with church. And others are too familiar with some of our less than Christian attitudes and church conflicts. They need to see and know someone who is genuine in their love for the Lord Jesus, someone who practices what they believe, and someone who is not pushy, but compassionate in their understanding.

You may not reach the masses, but you can reach one and see that one discovering a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. And then ... what do you do? Continue your friendship and discipleship, but continue to expand your circle and ask God to show you how to love another to Him. It really is simple. It's a practical approach. And you are real! "As you go ... make disciples!" □ — Gilmore is the evangelism director for the Tennessee Baptist Convention.



Church Health Matters

"Building healthy churches empowered by the presence of God."



Worship Matters

A few years ago I was speaking at a conference on the subject of music in worship and made the statement that music could not truly renew our worship, but only the Lord Himself had that power.

In making points about using music to help us express worship and suggesting ways to enhance the music that is used, I did not want the participants to misunderstand and fall into a common trap, whereby we arrange music to emphasize its emotional power and mistake our emotional response for genuine renewal in worship.

In other words, our goose bump factor does not equal a spiritual revival. In fact, the music and even worship itself could become idolatrous if Christians begin to worship the worship.

Worship in our churches will be renewed when lives of the worshipers are renewed. The sound of the "new song," indicated in the Scriptures, is much less about a new set of notes on a printed page than it is about a fresh encounter with the Creator, who "makes all things new."

Church leaders, we would do well to humble ourselves before the Lord to ask how we might be less, that Christ would be more in our worship. We would do well to walk around our sanctuaries, when no one is there, and to pray for genuine encounters with the living God in the lives of those precious people, that have been entrusted to our guidance.

I believe faithful and diligent leaders who have been refreshed in the ever-renewing love of the Lord will lead God's people to worship in an orderly (I Corinthians 14) and vital manner, that calls all attention to the peerless Christ, our true worship leader.

With these thoughts in mind, below are some ideas and resources that I hope you might find useful in worship planning for your church.

As always, we stand ready to help you in any way we can through the Tennessee Baptist Convention Worship and Music Ministry office. -Paul Clark

Contact us at:

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Carla Nichols
Preschool/Children's Music consultantcnichols@wjbc.org

Martha Robinson
Keyboard Music consultant.....Martha4robinson@gmail.com

Eddie Hodges
Technology in Worship consultant.....ehodges@wmbc.net

Baptism Is a Powerful Witness in Worship

By Paul Clark

I have heard many pastors indicate that the best witnesses are people who have just given their life to Christ.

Whether the new believer is a child demonstrating the faithfulness of parents, grandparents, teachers, and church family, or an adult who has been saved from a life of debauchery, there is a strong witness to be shared in close proximity to the time that a person places their faith in Christ.

Church Worship leaders, make much of baptism in your worship! For convenience or expediency, baptism is often placed at the beginning or end of a worship service. To make more of this ordinance of the church, leaders may want to make necessary adjustments to allow a baptism to be more central in the worship event.

Of course, the new believer may not be prepared to offer much spoken testimony, but this is where the pastor and other leaders need to offer appropriate guidance for this worship element. This also allows the symbolic act to speak its intended message of bold witness to the gospel.

Think of this: the church is forever changed as a new Christian enters the fold! What could be a stronger reason to celebrate in worship than the rich testimony enacted before the congregation, when a new believer is lowered into a watery grave, raised to walk in a new way as a follower of Jesus Christ, and becomes part of the family!

Are we not seeing the Good News right before our eyes? Also, quite often there are family members and relatives who have come to witness the baptism. Many times someone in



that group is not a practicing Christian. This is an important opportunity to demonstrate salvation's power through this symbolic act and to make the symbol's message clear and plain through visual and spoken message.

Consider these options as means of enhancing this important time of worship and witness:

- Sing hymns and worship songs surrounding the baptism of each candidate that lift up the gospel message and/or that tie in to baptism.
- Select, or have someone to write a short chorus to be used every time a candidate steps into the baptismal waters.
- Read a passage of Scripture immediately prior to the baptism that was instrumental in the person giving their life to Christ.
- Have family stand and be recognized as the candidate is introduced.
- Have all believers rise as the candidate is lifted from the water, identifying this new believer's position as a risen follower of Christ and part of this body of risen followers of Christ.
- Provide baptism announcements for candidates and encourage families to use these to bring neighbors, work colleagues, and others to witness the baptism.
- Have Sunday School classes provide a fellowship lunch for the new member of the church and the family of the same.

What Are Some New Resources for Worship?

- A new Baptist Hymnal will be released by LifeWay Worship Music Group on Aug. 8, 2008 (8-8-08.) Eight is a biblical symbol of new beginnings.
- The Tennessee Baptist Mens Chorale will sing for the PraiseSing celebration at the Nashville Symphony Hall, the Schermerhorn, on Aug. 8, 2008, as part of the release day celebration.
- There are three training events, planned for Tennessee Baptist Worship and Music leaders in conjunction with the release of the new hymnal and its companion products. For dates, locations, and information, see www.tnworshipandmusic.org.

How to Teach Children to Worship

By Paul Clark



Worship renewal can be encouraged by the involvement of children in the worship life of the church. I do not mean for children to entertain us in order to add some spice.

Instead, I mean making sure that we are helping our children become worshipers by teaching them. In the process, their involvement can help us all see the eternal praise being passed on to the next generation.

Laying a good foundation for children to help them know the language and meaning of worship of the true and living God through Jesus Christ is an awesome and marvelous responsibility for church leaders and parents.

There are many philosophies about educating children in this area. Some separate the children from "big church" to have their own Sunday worship. Others take moments in the church's worship service to focus on children. Some churches have special bulletins and other helps.

Whatever your church's approach, something we must hold dear in regard to worship development in our children is: the church and home are the places our children need to learn to worship.

Child appropriate retreats, summer camps, and concerts can be wonderful opportunities for children to share special experiences in their development of understanding worship. These experiences, however, need to be helpful to the larger and most important context, and that is the church at worship. Help your children set a lifelong pattern of weekly Sunday (Resurrection Day) worship.

Here are some ideas being used to help children learn about worship and connect with leaders:

- Have the pastor and worship music leader visit children's choir, Sunday School, or other gathering of children to help children know them better and to teach

- them about their responsibilities.
- Teach children hymns and worship songs that are commonly used in worship.
- Start a program of memorization of hymns and other appropriate worship songs.
- Recognize older children for memorizing verses to hymns and other worship songs.
- Have older children read Scripture, introduce songs, or take up the offering on occasion.
- Utilize children's choirs in worship leadership: not only to sing selected pieces, but to teach songs, sing descant parts, or sing selected verses of hymns or worship songs.
- Have two or three children "shadow" someone in a worship leadership role: musician, pastor, usher, and greeter.
- If you have a separate children's church worship program, have times of building bridges to the intergenerational service by having leaders come and speak, do interviews, and record videos to help pave the way for a transition to the other worship environment.

Children's choirs are wonderful organizations to organize these kinds of activities for children. But if your church does not have a children's choir program, they can certainly be done through other groups.

For help with children's worship education, contact Vicky Hulsey, Tennessee Baptist Convention Childhood Ministries specialist, at vhulsey@tnbaptist.org. For children's choir help, contact Carla Nichols, TBC Preschool/Children's Music consultant, at cnichols@wjbc.org.

What Is a Kingdom Perspective?

Worship renewal can be served by broadening the perspective of our people to know that others are worshipping our Lord: some in different languages, some in different ways, and others much like us.

Get together with other churches in your area to share special worship times.

How about a worship service with a church that is comprised mainly of another ethnicity?

Swap worship leadership (pastor, musicians, choir) with another church on a Sunday.

Join with churches from your association in a shared evening of worship where you purposefully include different styles of music, drama, and preaching to help build appreciation for the many voices of worship in the kingdom.

Invite missionaries and other speakers to help your people know about worship in environments and cultures different than your worship.

For consultations regarding worship in your church, contact Paul Clark, TBC Worship and Music Ministry specialist, at pclark@tnbaptist.org. For helps with language groups, contact Tim Hill, TBC Ethnic Church Planting specialist, at thill@tnbaptist.org; or Chuy Avila, TBC Hispanic Church Planting specialist, at cavila@tnbaptist.org.



Coming Up! Coming Up! Coming Up!

- May 1Tennessee Mens Chorale Concert, First Baptist Church, Huntingdon
- May 1-3Tennessee Baptist Religious Educators Association (TBREA) Retreat
Fall Creek Falls State Park, Pikeville
- May 2Tennessee Mens Chorale Concert, First Baptist Church, Millington
- May 2-3State Xtreme Bible Challenge, Baptist Center, Brentwood
- May 2-3WMU Associational Leader Development, First Baptist Church, Donelson
- May 3State Youth Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament Competition, Baptist Center, Brentwood
- May 5-6New Church Staff Orientation, Carson Springs Baptist Conference Center, Newport

For more information, please visit www.tnbaptist.org.



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In various ways, our church has been involved with the children's home for over 20 years. Not only have we been directly involved on the campus, and with TBCH children and youth in our church, we've actually been able to stay connected with some of them into adulthood. We've been able to see firsthand the results of the care and compassion that is given so freely to so many. That's why we continue to support this ministry with both our time and our money.

Ken Parker, Pastor
Oak Valley Baptist Church



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www.TBCH4Kids.org

Brentwood, Chattanooga Johnson City,
Kingsport, Memphis, Millington, Oakdale

Baptisms in SBC fall to lowest level since 1987: ACP

By Rob Phillips
LifeWay Christian Resources
news office

NASHVILLE — The number of people baptized in Southern Baptist churches fell for the third straight year in 2007 to the convention's lowest level since 1987.

Although the SBC added 473 new churches and gave more than \$1.3 billion to support mission activities around the world, Thom S. Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources, said there's no escaping the fact that Southern Baptists are not reaching as many people for Christ as they once did. LifeWay gathers the year-to-year information on the convention's behalf.

According to LifeWay's Annual Church Profile (ACP), baptisms in 2007 dropped nearly 5.5 percent to 345,941, compared to 364,826 in 2006. (Baptism is a public act administered by the local church in which new followers of Christ are immersed in water. Baptism symbolizes believers' identification with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection; signifies their new life in Christ; and anticipates the day on which Christ will raise them from the dead, demonstrating His victory over sin and death. Therefore, the number of baptisms is a key measurement of the SBC's effectiveness in evangelism.)

"This report is truly disheartening," Rainer said. "Total membership showed a slight decline. Baptisms have now declined for three consecutive years and for

seven of the last eight years, and are at their lowest level since 1987. Indeed, the total baptisms are among the lowest reported since 1970. We are a denomination that, for the most part, has lost its evangelistic passion."

Membership in SBC churches, 16,266,920, fell from 2006's total of 16,306,246, or .24 percent. It is the second drop in membership experienced by the SBC in the last decade. In 1998, membership fell 1.02 percent but increased the next year and recovered to a positive trend in 2000. Prior to that, the last drop in membership was 1926. From 2000 through 2006, membership growth essentially was flat, registering .68, .58, .53, .42, .39, .02 and .22 percent respectively.

Not all the news coming out of the ACP was negative. The number of SBC churches grew by 1.1 percent to 44,696; primary worship attendance increased slightly to 6.15 million; and total mission expenditures topped \$1.3 billion.

Missions giving is significant and far reaching. Through the SBC's Cooperative Program, local churches voluntarily pool funds to support mission efforts in their states, throughout the nation and around the world. For example, Cooperative Program funds support more than 10,250 missionaries who engage nearly 1,200 people groups throughout North America and around the world. In addition, CP funds support six seminaries, the International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, the Ethics & Religious Liberty

2007 Southern Baptist Convention Statistical Summary

Item/Statistic	Final 2007	Final 2006	2007-2006 Numeric Change	2007-2006 Percent Change
State Conventions	41	41	0	0.00%
Associations	1,186	1,185	1	0.08%
Churches	44,696	44,223	473	1.06%
Total Membership	16,266,920	16,306,246	-39,326	-0.24%
Baptisms	345,941	364,826	-18,885	-5.46%
Ratio of Baptisms: Total Membership	1:47	1:45	(N/A)	(N/A)
Primary Worship Attendance	6,148,868	6,138,776	10,092	0.16%
Sunday School Enrollment ⁽¹⁾	7,876,611	7,931,753	Not comparable ⁽¹⁾	Not comparable ⁽¹⁾
Total Mission Expenditures ⁽¹⁾	\$1,327,856,082	\$1,285,616,031	Not comparable ⁽¹⁾	Not comparable ⁽¹⁾
Church-type Missions Operating ⁽²⁾	5,254	5,241	Not comparable ⁽²⁾	Not comparable ⁽²⁾

Notes: (1) Comparison between 2007 and 2006 data is not possible due to the fact that some state conventions did not ask the item in 2006. See the 2008 SBC Statistical Summary for details. (2) Some state conventions no longer use the designation of Church-type Mission to categorize congregations which are not self-determining, self-sustaining, and self-propagating.

Other 2007 Items

Not asked by all State Conventions ⁽¹⁾

Item/Statistic	Final 2007	Final 2006
Other Additions ⁽³⁾	361,583	394,321
Discipleship Training Enrollment ^{(2) (4)}	1,664,348	1,503,826
Music Ministry Enrollment/Participation ⁽⁴⁾	1,444,837	1,466,124
WMU Enrollment ^{(3) (4)}	778,555	811,139
Men/Boys Mission Education Enrollment ^{(3) (4)}	381,355	376,379
Total Tithes, Offerings, & Special Gifts ^{(3) (4)}	\$10,845,108,310	\$10,425,420,529
Undesignated Receipts ⁽³⁾	\$8,699,869,367	\$8,293,404,321
Total Receipts ⁽³⁾	\$11,832,871,416	\$11,372,608,393
Value of Congregational Property ^{(3) (4) (5)}	\$37,737,114,929	Not asked in 2006

Notes: (1) Totals for items in this table have incomplete data for 2007 due to the fact that not all state conventions asked the item or did so in a way not comparable with the standard definition. Similar actions occurred in 2006. Thus, comparisons between the two years may not be appropriate. See the Notes in the 2006 SBC Statistical Summary for specific details to determine if a comparison should be made. (2) Prior to 2005, Discipleship Training Enrollment counted persons more than once (counted for each group in which they participated). In 2005 (and afterwards), the item was changed to count persons only once regardless of how many studies in which they participated. (3) California Southern Baptist Convention either did not ask this item or their item definition was not comparable to the definition used by other state conventions. (4) The Baptist General Convention of Texas did not ask this item or the information necessary to obtain the total. (5) The Illinois Baptist State Association and the Kentucky Baptist Convention did not ask this item.

Prepared by:
Technology
Division, Life-
Way Christian
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37234-0123,
April 21, 2008

Commission, and other SBC self-funding.) At the same time, children's homes, volunteer mis- entities. (LifeWay and Guide- CP funds support statewide sions, colleges and universities, Stone Financial Resources are efforts in evangelism, as well as camps, and much more. □

Evangelism must begin outside the sanctuary, research ...

— Continued from page 1

more essential today as our culture grows increasingly resistant to the church."

Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research, said many churches use visitation effectively, "but all churches must learn to equip individuals to reach those who have never had contact with the church."

Thoughts on eternity

The situation is compounded by the fact that more than half the 1,402

respondents in a 2007 study of unchurched adults said they never wonder whether they would go to heaven if they died, McConnell said.

"Our evangelistic efforts must acknowledge that we no longer live in a culture in which people are simply putting off coming to the church to find truth," McConnell explained. "Many people today either don't believe truth exists or that the church is the place to find it."

According to Stetzer, "That 'how' of evangelism is in many ways determined by the who, when, and where of context. And, we have to learn that culture has changed and is changing. Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ must happen in relationships, not just at church. Each individual believer, not just church staff, must own the responsibility."

Developing relationships with people who don't believe in Jesus Christ is what earns a church member the right to invite them to church, McConnell said.

Unchurched people indicate that recommendations from friends and family would be the most common means of finding

a church if they were looking, but only half of them anticipate they would utilize such an invitation.

"For the other half, relationship is still important, because your only hope may be for you to initiate a conversation about faith rather than waiting for them to hear it in a church service," McConnell noted. "And the kind of conversation we have with them must change too. A typical question about heaven won't even relate to the half of the unchurched who never think about heaven."

While unchurched people are open to relationships, few church members are intentionally investing time developing relationships with non-Christians. A soon-to-be published 2007 survey of more than 2,500 adult church members found only 25 percent agreed they "spend time building friendships with non-Christians for the purpose of sharing Christ with them." A full 38 percent actually disagreed with the statement and 36 percent were noncommittal about it.

"Too often the way our churches measure success revolves around what happens at church when we ought to be focusing on what happens in building intentional relationships with those far from Christ," McConnell said.

"Some of the activities on our church calendars may actually be preventing effective evangelism by keeping believers away from the people they need to reach."

In addition to developing relationships with unchurched people, churches

also ought to put significant effort into creating an effective Internet site, McConnell said.

"The 2008 study revealed that 25 percent of unchurched adults would use a church website or an Internet search tool to find a congregation to visit," he said. "For one out of four unchurched people, the first visit to your church may be on the Internet. Churches need a website that favorably represents who they are and, more importantly, who Jesus Christ is."

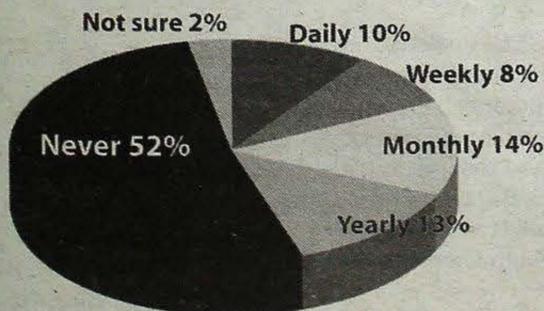
The upshot of all this is that evangelism efforts and strategies need to shift toward more incarnational and relational approaches than simply an attractational approach, McConnell explained.

"In laymen's terms, the 'We'll open the doors and they will come' approach to evangelism will not be effective with many unchurched people," McConnell said. "As believers and as churches, we must invest in building relationships with unbelievers and find tangible ways to show the love of Jesus Christ to them in everyday life."

"Believers must resolve to step into their world to share the Good News with them," Stetzer explained. "If we are waiting for them to someday walk into our churches, that someday may never come."

"We have tried that approach for decades — many church buildings/services are looking great. They have new looks, new music, and new strategies," he added. □

How often do you wonder, "If I were to die today, would I go to heaven?"



A national survey of 1,402 adults ages 18 and older who have not attended a religious service in the past six months.

Note: Numbers do not total 100 because of rounding.

'Expelled' enjoys Top 10 opening

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed" finished in the Top 10 among all movies in weekend box office estimates and could be on its way to finishing in the Top 10 all-time for documentaries.

The Ben Stein film about the debate between supporters of Darwinian evolution and Intelligent Design grossed \$3.1 million, placing it ninth for the weekend. But its per-theater average of \$2,997 — it opened in just over 1,000 theaters, which is a third of what some movies opened in — put it at fifth.

The *Los Angeles Times*' Josh Friedman wrote that the opening was "robust for a documentary," while *Entertainment Weekly*'s Joshua Rich said its gross was "very respectable" for its genre.

The 90-minute movie (PG, thematic elements, very brief language) explores the ongoing academic, legal, and cultural battle between supporters of Darwinian evolution and Intelligent Design, which is the belief that certain aspects of the world are so complex that they are best explained as having been created by an intelligent being, instead of by a random process. Stein interviews supporters of Intelligent Design who say they have been "expelled" — fired, shunned, or ridiculed (or all three) — from institutions for their beliefs.

It has the backing of Focus of the Family's James Dobson and the Ethics & Religious Commission's Richard Land, who said the film should be "required viewing" for anyone who wants to know "what is at stake in this society." □

Abstinence education is effective: study

Baptist Press

WASHINGTON — Abstinence education is effective at delaying sexual initiation and reducing the levels of early sexual activity, according to two studies presented April 22 at the National Press Club in Washington.

A study led by Stan Weed of the Institute of Research and Evaluation examined the impact of abstinence education in reducing the initiation of sexual activity by seventh grade students in suburban Virginia. The second study, which reviewed 21 abstinence education programs and found that 16 of them reported positive results, was published by The Heritage Foundation.

Both studies were presented

in conjunction with hearings April 23 by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which were to feature seven witnesses speaking in support of comprehensive sex education and two testifying in favor of abstinence education, with a goal of assessing the need for continued abstinence education funding.

Weed's study, published in the January/February edition of the *American Journal of Health Behavior*, evaluated the Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative by tracking the behavior of seventh graders in five different Virginia schools.

Students receiving abstinence education, the study concluded, were about one-half as likely to initiate sexual activity as students who did not receive abstinence education.

"The fundamental question here is, 'Can you change or influence adolescent behavior?' and the answer to that, as this and other studies in abstinence education demonstrate, is yes," said Weed, who was scheduled to present his findings at the House hearing. □

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Court in Israel sides with Messianic Jews

Baptist Press

JERUSALEM — The Supreme Court of Israel has ruled that Messianic Jews have the same rights regarding automatic citizenship as Jews who do not believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

The case was brought by 12 applicants who had been denied citizenship primarily because they were Jewish believers in Jesus. Most of them had received letters saying they would not receive citizenship because they "commit missionary activity," according to an e-mail circulated by Calev Myers, founder and chief counsel of The Jerusalem Institute of Justice. A clerk at the Ministry of Interior reportedly had told one of the applicants that because she was committing missionary activity, she was acting against the interests of the

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state of Israel and the Jewish people.

Israel's Supreme Court ended the two-and-a-half-year legal battle April 16 by ruling that Messianics should receive equal treatment under the Israeli law of return, which says that anyone who is born Jewish can immigrate from anywhere in the world to Israel and be granted citizenship automatically.

Jim Sibley, a professor at Criswell College in Dallas and a former missionary to Israel, told Baptist Press that Jewish believers had been excluded from the law of return by previ-

CLASSIFIED
MINISTRY — DOM
Fayette and Haywood Baptist associations are searching for a director of missions to serve both associations. These rural associations have 32 churches between them. We are looking for someone who feels called to associational work. Send resumes to Fayette Baptist Association, 12975 Highway 64, Somerville, TN 38068.

MINISTRY — MUSIC
The McLemoresville Baptist Church is currently seeking a God-called minister of music, for both Sunday morning and Sunday evening worship services. We are seeking someone bivocational or a student. If interested, please send resume to Search Committee or Pastor c/o McLemoresville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 208, McLemoresville, TN 38235.

MINISTRY — STUDENT
First Baptist Church of Jamestown is prayerfully seeking God's leadership for a minister of students to minister to the students and coordinate activities in the new family life center. Resume to be sent to First Baptist Church, Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 417, Jamestown, TN 38556, phone (931) 879-8412.

Part-time youth pastor for Lakewood Baptist Church, 400 Donelson Pike, Nashville, TN 37214. Fax or e-mail resume to (615) 883-3295 or Lakewoodbc@aol.com.

West Tenn. SBC seeking bivocational youth minister. Rural area with great growth potential. Currently at 188 membership. www.mfrc.org. Please send resume to Middlefork Road Baptist Church, 3955 Middlefork Road, Luray, TN 38352 Attn: Youth Committee.

MINISTRY — OTHER
Full-time position open — office administrator. Send resume or call Paul Webb or Mike Shelton, Bellevue Baptist Church, 7400 Hwy. 70 South, Nashville, TN 37221, call (615) 646-2711 or fax (615) 646-2720.

ous court rulings, including in the 1980s declaring that a Jew believed in Jesus as Messiah, he was not to be considered Jewish.

Traditional rabbinic Judaism teaches that Jewishness is determined by the mother's bloodline, Sibley explained. Biblically, though, it is traced through the father.

With the ruling, Sibley said Messianic Jews may seek citizenship in Israel without religious discrimination. □

CLASSIFIED
MINISTRY — PASTOR
Parrans Chapel Baptist Church is presently accepting applications for a full-time pastor. The church has an immediate growth potential. Please send resume to Parrans Chapel Baptist Church, c/o Pulpit Search Committee, 9390 Old Hwy. 6, Bolivar, TN 38008.

Smyrna Baptist Church in Burson, Tenn., needs full-time pastor (experience preferred). Send resume to Tracey Holliday, 295 Candy Lane, Burlison, TN 38015. For more information, call (901) 837-2396 or (901) 471-0093.

Brandon Baptist Church, Brandon, Miss., a traditional Southern Baptist Church is currently accepting resumes from qualified applicants for the full-time position of senior pastor. Please send resume to Pastor Selective Committee, P.O. Box 166, Brandon, MS 39043-1662.

Bethlehem Baptist Church, Greenfield, Tenn., is accepting resumes for a full-time pastor to lead a congregation of approximately 175. Please send resume to Bethlehem Baptist Church, P.O. Box 65, Greenfield, TN 38230 or e-mail to MDCoثرan@charter.net.

Union Baptist Church in Warburg, Tenn., is now accepting resumes for full-time past through the month of May. Average Sunday School attendance is 100-125 and church service 125-150. Parsonage is available. Submit resume to Search Committee, Box 145 Jones Rd., Hariman, TN 37748.

Gap Creek Baptist Church, conservative member of the Cumberland Gap Baptist Association in Claiborne County, Tenn., is accepting applications for a full-time pastor. Experience is preferred. Gap Creek has an active membership of over 300 and is growing. If possible, send a CD or DVD of your sermon along with a resume. Send resume to Gap Creek Baptist Church, Attn: Troy Poore, P.O. Box 177, Arthur, TN 37707. You may send your resume by e-mail to trpoore@hotmail.com or fax (423) 869-8777.

guest column

The numbers have value

By Roger S. "Sing" Oldham

The statistical profile generated from the Annual Church Profile reports (see stories throughout this issue) submitted by cooperating Baptist churches each year is a numerical snapshot of what is happening at the local church level. Though these numbers do not tell the whole story of ministry, they have value for the Southern Baptist Convention in a number of ways.

First, these numbers help us measure our overall effectiveness in terms of church planting and evangelism. These have always been areas of particular interest to Southern Baptists and have been the object of much of our strategic focus over the past few years. While we are disappointed that our number of baptisms has declined, we rejoice that the total number of our churches has increased. We would anticipate that an increasing number of churches will yield an increase in evangelism over the next several years.

Second, these numbers help us see the continuing faithfulness of our churches in discipleship and nurture. In recent years, there has been an increasing call to give greater attention to discipleship. This renewed focus seems to be reflected in our increase in discipleship enrollment. For this we are thankful.

Third, these numbers help us gauge various levels of participation in specific ministries of the church. The flagship of these ministries for many years has been Sunday School, the basic Bible study unit we have traditionally measured. Enrollment in this area of church life has declined. Seeing this will lead us to re-examine how many of our newer churches are conducting and recording participation in small group Bible study in their respective church ministries and monitor over time whether there are new trends we need to examine with our local churches.

Fourth, these numbers enable us to monitor church giving, stewardship, and support for our primary ministries of missions at home and abroad.

Fifth, these numbers help us measure the total number of individuals who actively relate to churches as members. A member is one who has confessed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and been baptized by immersion as a believer in one of our affiliated churches. With the mobility of our society, it is often difficult to keep track of each member who moves to a new location. There has been a renewed emphasis on tracking members who have left their home areas. With a decline of less than one-fourth of 1 percent in total membership, it is too soon to tell if this decline in membership is a result of churches "cleaning up" their church rolls or if it is the beginning of a trend that should give us cause for greater concern.

Clearly, some of these numbers are disappointing. They will provide an additional catalyst for evaluating how we can better assist churches in fulfilling their ministries on the local level. Other numbers continue to be encouraging. □ — Oldham is vice president for convention relations for the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, based in Nashville.

a way with words

To my parents

By Hugh X. Lewis

As I look back on my younger days,
I must have pained you two.
I've grown up in a lot of ways,
And your love saw me through.

When silly me thought it was I
Back then who knew it all,
Both of you kept standing by
To catch me should I fall.

Your gentle nudge and not a shove
Did my whole life effect,
So you not only have my love,
But also my respect. □

Copyright by Hugh X. Lewis. Lewis, poet laureate of Christian Country Music in Tennessee, is available to speak to church and senior adult groups. For more information, call (615) 883-0086.

Unlocking your best relationships — appreciate

By Bill Oakley

Focal Passage: Philippians 2:19-22, 25-30; 4:15-18

Relationships! What a powerful but perplexing word. If I had to choose two words that most accurately describe the deepest need of an individual, it would be proper relationships — relationship to Jesus Christ and then relationships to others. Good relationships are necessary for good health, both emotionally and spiritually.

Among the things that make for good relationships is appreciation. Everyone needs to be appreciated and needs to be told he/she is appreciated. The focal passage today is an expression of genuine appreciation from the pen of the Apostle Paul to those who had served with and assisted him in the ministry. The following outline will help us give focus to these passages.

(1) An expressed appreciation for Timothy's character (2:19-20). After spending some time in the previous verses in describing the exaltation of Jesus Christ, Paul now brings Timothy to the attention of the Philippian Church. In so doing, Paul not only introduces Timothy to them, but he also expresses his deep appreciation for Timothy's character.

Timothy is appreciated for his single-mindedness in caring for God's people. Paul says he has no one like-minded to Timothy in caring and ministering to God's people (v. 20). The word "like-minded" is the translation of a Greek word made up of the words equal and

soul. Paul says he does not have a single person in Rome equal to the soul of Timothy. What a powerful word of appreciation. As someone has said, Timothy was "all wool and a yard wide." He was the genuine article. He could be depended upon. For that, Paul expresses his deep and loving appreciation.

(2) An expressed appreciation for the commitment of Epaphroditus (vv. 25-30). Epaphroditus is the next person for whom Paul expresses loving appreciation. Epaphroditus' name means charming, and what a charming person he was. Paul uses four phrases to describe him, "brother, companion, fellow soldier, and messenger." These four words alone give us a glimpse to the commitment that Epaphroditus had to both Paul and to the service of the Lord as he represented the Philippian Church.

Allow me to suggest that Epaphroditus' sickness just may have been homesickness. Paul said, "He longed after you all." The original text reveals that this was not a spasmodic yearning, but a continuous one. The Greek words for full of heaviness is found only two other times in the New Testament (Matthew 26:37 and Mark 14:13), both of which refer to our Lord's heaviness of soul at Gethsemane. Epaphroditus' heart was not at rest. The reason for his restlessness was that he was concerned that the Philippians had heard he was sick and were themselves concerned for their messenger to Paul.

Regardless of what had caused

Sunday School Lesson Bible Studies for Life May 4

his serious illness, that illness was incurred because of his ministry to the Apostle, who was confined to his quarters. Because of his commitment, he did not regard his own life, but continued to supply the service to Paul that the Philippians could not supply. It was because of that commitment that Paul expressed his sincere appreciation for a job well completed. May I suggest that it's commitment like that which God honors.

(3) An expressed appreciation for the Philippians care (4:15-28). Now Paul turns to the generous liberality of the Philippian Church that had met his needs on more than one occasion. In a sense, Paul writes the Philippians a receipt for the gift they had sent him. In verse 18 he states, "Having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you." He expressed his appreciation by stating that their gift was "a sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God."

The word appreciate, according to Webster, means, "To think well of, value, enjoy, esteem." It is obvious to me that in experiencing our best relationships in this selfish world of ours, it would be well to express this kind of appreciation that will enhance those relationships. — Oakley is pastor of First Baptist Church, Trimble.

Acknowledge broken relationships

By Gene Fant Sr.

Focal Passage: Genesis 42:1-38

The meeting of Joseph with his brothers, who had wronged him decades earlier, has been called one of the most emotional stories in all literature.

Jacob, and his family in Canaan, needed grain so the 10 brothers went down to buy grain but Benjamin, Joseph's full brother, was kept safely at home with their father.

With so many coming to Egypt, what was the chance Joseph would see his brothers and recognize them for it had been 20 years since he had been sold into slavery? This appointment was divinely timed.

Joseph recognized them but they did not recognize him since he was now in his late 30s, was wearing Egyptian clothing, speaking Egyptian, was clean-shaven unlike them, and they thought he was dead. They did know they stood before the mightiest figure in the land of Egypt.

He tested them by treating them harshly, but not with vengeance, although he recalled his childhood dreams of supremacy and bitter memories. He was witnessing the fulfillment of those long ago dreams as they bowed before him.

Certainly there were security issues during this time and Joseph accused them of being spies and placed them in jail for three days.

Some speculate this was the amount of time he spent in the pit before being sold as a slave. Joseph then demanded Simeon, perhaps the cruelest of all the brothers, remain in prison. The others were to go home and bring Benjamin, their youngest brother to Egypt.

In doing this Joseph is being redemptive as they were made to deal with their sordid past. Although they did not recognize him, their conscience reminded them of Joseph's distress when he pleaded with them at Dothan in the pit. Reuben had admonished them at that time.

We recall the Scripture, which warns, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

They were unaware Joseph could understand their language and he turned away from them and wept. Simeon would be held as a hostage until Benjamin could be brought to Egypt.

Joseph ordered their bags filled with grain and each brother's money placed back in their sacks unbeknown to them. While on their trip home the discovery was made and they trembled, wondering what the Lord was doing.

Upon returning to their father they reported the experience but he refused to let Benjamin return with them to Egypt lest Benjamin be lost as were Joseph and Simeon.

Jacob said he would die of a broken heart if he lost another son. I am sure he thought Joseph to be

Sunday School Lesson Explore the Bible May 4

dead. After all that is what he had been told by his own sons. All the information he had resulted in a life of sorrow but he did not have all the facts and neither do we in our sorrow. I doubt Jacob ever considered God was at work with an unbelievable plan to bless the whole world through Joseph. We too would be rejoicing rather than grieving if we had all the facts about the troubles we experience. I wonder at what point Jacob learned the truth about Joseph's disappearance?

Deacon Stephen, just prior to his murder, noted the significance of Joseph and the eleventh chapter of Hebrews lists Joseph in the Hall of Fame. Joseph was a mere shadow of Christ. Just as Joseph fed many, Christ is the Bread of Life, which is from heaven, and has satisfied the spiritual hunger of millions. The only shortage associated with this bread is that of distribution.

You and I have been charged with sharing Christ, the True Bread, to a world, which is starving spiritually. There is plenty of Bread, but too few are willing to pray, strategize, and share with the masses. — Fant is retired and lives in Nashville and is available for interim pastorates.

Leaders

◆ **Charles Richards**, director of missions for William Carey Baptist Association, Fayetteville, for the past six years, will retire on April 30. A retirement reception for Richards and his wife Ruth was held April 27 at Prospect Baptist Church, Fayetteville. He was a pastor and interim pastor of churches in Alabama and Tennessee including New Grove Baptist Church, Ardmore. He also taught college-level religion courses. Richards is a graduate of the University of Mobile, Ala.; Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.; and Luther Rice University, Jacksonville, Fla.



RICHARDS

◆ **Sevier County Baptist Association**, Sevierville, has called **Robert Nichols** as director of missions effective April 28. Nichols and his wife Deborah have served as International Mission Board missionaries to Uruguay for the past 12 years. He also served churches as a pastor in West Virginia, minister of education and youth in churches in Kentucky and North Carolina, and as Brotherhood



NICHOLS

intern for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Louisville. In Uruguay Nichols worked as a church planter since 1995. A native of Alabama, he is a graduate of Athens State College (University), Athens, Ala., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Instituto de Idioma Espanola, San Jose, Costa Rica.

◆ **Immanuel Baptist Church**, Nashville, has called **Steven H. Meriwether** as pastor effective May 1. He comes to Immanuel Baptist from St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, La., where he was senior pastor for 15 years. He also has served churches in North Carolina, Kentucky, and South Carolina. A native of Nashville, he is a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. A pastor installation service for Meriwether will be held June 8 at Immanuel Baptist. For information, contact the church office at (615) 297-5356 or www.ibcnashville.org.



MERIWETHER

◆ **Central Baptist Church**, Alcoa, held a reception April 13 to celebrate the ninth anniversary of its pastor **Greg Kelly**.



MEMBERS OF FIRST BAPTIST Church, Woodbury, present the Living Lord's Supper. A performance was held at the church on March 20, Maundy Thursday, and at First Baptist Church, Taft, on April 12. The presentation included a depiction of the supper based on the painting by Leonardo da Vinci, the Last Supper. In the performance each apostle speaks of his calling from Jesus to follow Him, his work, and his concern about the statement of

◆ **Spring Creek Baptist Church**, Tullahoma, recently ordained **Erik Anderson** to the ministry.

◆ **Powell's Chapel Baptist Church**, Murfreesboro, recently called **Mike Smith** as bivocational minister. He is a Sunday School specialist for LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville. Smith has been pastor of several churches in North Carolina and Tennessee. He is a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, La.

◆ **Broadway Baptist Church**, Martin, called **Kenneth Springer** of Martin as pastor effective April 20.

◆ **Cedar Grove Baptist Church**, Maryville, called **Bob Lynch** as pastor effective April 1.

◆ **East Walland Baptist Church**, Walland, has called **Danny Gregory** as pastor. He previously served the church as pastor.

◆ **Pilgrim Baptist Church**, Maryville, called **Max Murphy** as pastor recently.

◆ **Trinity Baptist Church**, Clarksville, has called **Keith Wilson** as pastor.

◆ **Dallas Gibson** has resigned as pastor of Providence Missionary Baptist Church, Seymour.

◆ **Mt. Hermon Baptist Church**, Clarksville, has called **Mike Madewell** as pastor.

◆ **Excelsior Baptist Church**, Clarksville, will host a mother-daughter banquet May 10 at the Clarksville Department of Electricity Building. **Kellye Cash**, Miss America 1987, and her mother, **Billie Cash**, author, will speak. For information and tickets, call the church at (931) 358-9695.

◆ **Bethel Baptist Church**, Palmyra, will hold revival services May 4-7. **Braxton Hunter**, staff evangelist at Trinity College and Seminary, Newburg, Ind., will speak. For information, call the church at (931) 387-4990.

◆ **First Baptist Church**, Union City, will hold revival services May 18-21. **Jake Roudkovski**, professor of evangelism at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, La., and senior pastor at First Baptist Church, Ponchatoula, La., will speak. For information, call the church at (731) 885-9481.

◆ **Sunswept Baptist Church**, Union City, will hold revival services May 25-28. **Phil Glisson**, evangelist of Memphis, will speak. For information, call the church at (731) 885-8525.

◆ **Southside Baptist Church**, Winchester, will celebrate 50 years of service to the Lord on May 4. **Gary Swafford** will speak. He led the

church's first revival in 1958. First Baptist Church, Winchester, was the sponsoring church for Southside Baptist. For information, call the church at (931) 967-9181.

◆ **Brush Creek Baptist Church**, Brush Creek, will hold a homecoming May 4 during its morning worship service to celebrate 206 years of serving the Lord. **Connie Rodriguez** and **Robbie Lea** will present special music. Lunch will be served. For information, call the church at (615) 683-8249.

◆ **Providence Baptist Church**, Ooltewah, has begun building its new 300-seat sanctuary. When completed, the new facility will adjoin the existing educational wing and family life center. The new building will also house a nursery, offices, room for children's church, and downstairs classrooms.

Events

◆ **The Tennessee Drug Awareness Council**, Nashville, a recipient of the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions, will also benefit from the proceeds of a southern gospel music concert May 9 at the Smith County Agricultural Building in Carthage. Musical artists scheduled to perform are **Terri Lynn Weaver**, the **Arnold Family**, **Josh Garner**, and **The Nelons**. Tickets may be purchased in advance or at the gate. For information, contact **Kenneth House** at (615) 683-8187.



SAM STEPHENS, left, and Casey Williams were recently elected state Baptist Collegiate Ministries president and vice president respectively at the annual BCM Spring Leadership Conference. Stephens is a student at the University of Tennessee - Martin and a member of Three Oaks Chapel Baptist Church, Dyersburg. Williams is a student at Jackson State Community College and a member of First Baptist Church, Clarksville. They will help lead BCM ministries across the state. Stephens and Williams also will both serve as BCM summer missionaries this summer for the third year. Stephens will serve in northern Maine on a traveling team working with churches and Williams will serve with SouthCoast Community Church in the Portland area.

Churches

◆ **Trinity Baptist Church**, Knoxville, will hold revival services May 11-14. The speak-