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April 2004  
Vol. 22, No. 4

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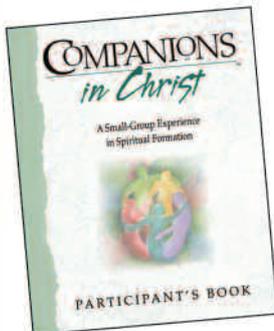
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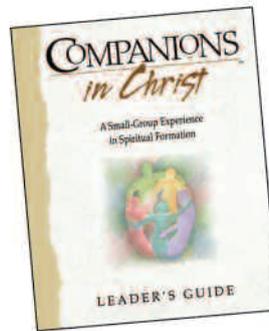
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# 'Bridging denominational barriers'

## *ABC, CBF in on formation of new ecumenical effort*

By John Pierce

ATLANTA —

Leaders of the American Baptist Churches in the USA and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship say they are excited about potential opportunities for formal dialogue with other U.S. Christians including Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals.

Both ABC and CBF governing bodies have approved taking steps toward becoming founding members of Christian Churches Together in the USA. A much broader fellowship than the current National Council of Churches, CCT is seeking to embrace the widest range of Christian communities.

"Our General Board has authorized us to become a part of it officially," said ABC General Secretary Roy Medley, adding that final documents and cost estimates are still forthcoming.

"It will give us a place to have the spectrum of our family represented," said Medley, noting American Baptists range from evangelical to liberal.

Unlike bodies that pass resolutions and take specific political positions, Medley said he is attracted to CCT's conciliar approach.

"(CCT) will be more about conversations and mutual knowledge of one another's faith and traditions," said Medley.

As a result, he added, a wide range of American Christians will likely participate.



Daniel Vestal



Roy Medley

"That means that Roman Catholics and Evangelical Pentecostals will be involved," said Medley.

Rothang Chhange, ABC director of ecumenical formation, is assisting in the development of the new venture, Medley said.

A CCT steering committee's release welcomes churches and national Christian organizations that "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures; worship and serve the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and seek ways to work together in order to present a more credible Christian witness in and to the world."

One unique characteristic of CCT is a consensus approach to decision making.

The CBF Coordinating Council voted Feb. 20 to pursue participation in CCT. John Finley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Savannah, Ga., and a member of the CBF ecumenical task force, spoke in favor

of a recommendation that the Fellowship "identify as a founding member."

CBF Coordinator Daniel Vestal urged support as well, saying he was impressed by the broad inclusiveness of CCT.

"I've, frankly, been waiting for the emergence of some ecumenical body that fits CBF," said Vestal, "— and in which we fit."

CCT's intention to include a wide spectrum of Christian communions is a unique and noble effort, said Vestal. He

Focusing on dialogue, said Medley, is the only way to bring together such a broad spectrum of Christians. 'There is a real effort in this to keep everybody at the table,' he added.

noted that the National Council of Churches lacks the involvement of Roman Catholics and many evangelicals while the National Association of Evangelicals includes no other Christian traditions.

This is the most ambitious ecumenical effort ever put forth," said Vestal.

CCT has loosely identified five "families" — Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Protestant, Historic Racial/Ethnic, Orthodox and Roman Catholic— to assure broad participation.

COOPERATIVE BAPTIST  
FELLOWSHIP

Focusing on dialogue, said Medley, is the only way to bring together such a broad spectrum of Christians.

"There is a real effort in this to keep everybody at the table," he added.

During a planning session in Texas in early January, participants were asked to gather by "families." The challenge for Baptists may be in knowing exactly where they fit.

"I went to the Historical Protestant faith family," Vestal told the council, "and Roy (Medley) went to the Evangelical one."

Medley explained later that Chhange represented ABC in the Protestant group as well. The designation of these five families will not play a major role in CCT, said Medley, but simply assures wide participation.

Regardless of how Baptists identify themselves among the broader Christian community in the U.S., Medley said the efforts of CCT connect well with the "long-time commitment of American Baptists to bridge denominational barriers and create an ability to work with others for the sake of the gospel." **BT**





“What a wonderful week of uninterrupted study! Out of my work as an A.H. Newman Scholar will come nine sermons on Baptist distinctives and the people who shaped the Baptist tradition. It was a great week! I encourage all Baptist ministers to seek this possibility for concentrated reading in Baptist studies in a quiet setting. I would like to do it again.”

*Dr. Charles P. Long  
Pastor, Barcelona Road Baptist Church  
Hot Springs Village, Arkansas*



“I was delighted to be chosen as the fourth A.H. Newman Scholar at the Center for Baptist Studies. As valuable as the readings prior to and during the sabbatical were, I found the greatest help in the conversations with Walter Shurden and his associate, Greg Thompson. I am deeply grateful to Mercer University for the experience I had as an A.H. Newman Scholar at the Center for Baptist Studies.”

*Dr. Jesse Croom  
Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church  
Ahoskie, North Carolina*



“It was a great privilege to be the fifth Newman Scholar and spend a week at Mercer University in Macon. I used the week to concentrate on Baptist history, theology and principles. The week challenged me to evaluate my own thinking about issues in Baptist life. Most of my time was spent in the library pouring over the material on my reading list, but I also had the opportunity to reflect and pray. I recommend it to anyone who wants to retool and rethink about what it means to be a Baptist.”

*Dr. Danny Chisholm  
Pastor, Central Baptist Church  
Meridian, Mississippi*



“After reading about a new ‘mini-sabbatical’ sponsored by Mercer University’s Center for Baptist Studies in Macon, Georgia, I submitted my proposal, asked to be invited and — much to my delight — I received an invitation to be the first A.H. Newman Scholar of the Center for Baptist Studies. Among the many authors I read during the week were Leon McBeth, Glenn Hinson, H. Wheeler Robinson, Charles Deweese and Cecil Sherman. It is hard for me to imagine a better way to grow in my understanding of Baptist history than to spend five days reading some of the best writers in Baptist life and then to have some discussions on my readings with Walter Shurden and Greg Thompson.”

*Dr. Robert Mulkey  
Pastor, First Baptist Church  
Deland, Florida*

# How About a *One-Week Sabbatical?*

**T**he Center for Baptist Studies at Mercer University sponsors mini-sabbaticals for ministers on staffs of Baptist churches. The sabbaticals are designed to provide an opportunity for ministers to come to the Mercer campus in Macon and to spend one week in concentrated supervised reading in Baptist studies.

The Center for Baptist Studies offers at least two such sabbaticals per year and pays all expenses for food and lodging while the sabbaticant is on campus. These sabbaticants will be known as “A.H. Newman Scholars of Mercer University.” For more information, go to [www.mercer.edu/baptiststudies](http://www.mercer.edu/baptiststudies) and click “mini-sabbatical.”



“It has been a year now since I enjoyed the A.H. Newman Scholarship. Although it was delightful at the time, the real test for a continuing education experience is in its long-term impact. My renewed appreciation for Baptist history, reaffirmed commitment to Baptist principles and hunger to know more is stronger than ever! If you are looking for an experience that will make a real difference, this is the one. I urge you to apply to the Center for Baptist Studies at Mercer University to become the next A.H. Newman Scholar.”

*Dr. Randall Rich  
Pastor, Prentiss Baptist Church  
Prentiss, Mississippi*



“I would highly recommend that anyone looking for a week to broaden their understanding of Baptist history apply for this mini-sabbatical at the Center for Baptist Studies at Mercer University. While trying to read everything that Shurden requests is a little like trying to drink water out of a fire hose, I left relaxed, refreshed and rejuvenated for the work ahead. The week was very fruitful for me.”

*Chris Riley  
Pastor, Central Baptist Church  
Borger, Texas*

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*Baptists Today* (ISSN 1072-7787)  
is published monthly by:  
*Baptists Today*  
P.O. Box 6318  
Macon, GA 31208-6318

To subscribe or place  
an advertisement,  
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Subscription rates:  
1 year, \$18; 2 years, \$32  
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Periodical postage paid  
at Macon, Ga. 31208

POSTMASTER:  
Send address corrections to:  
*Baptists Today*  
P.O. Box 6318  
Macon, GA 31208-6318

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### Cover photo by John Pierce from the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem (1996).

During a Lenten season filled with unprecedented attention on the Crucifixion, Christians now approach Holy Week and move toward the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, April 11.



# Quotation

“ remarks ”

“Someone once suggested that the two greatest inventions in American history are Alcoholics Anonymous and ice cream cones. As half-serious as that proposer must have been, I’d add Habitat for Humanity International.”

—Martin E. Marty (Sightings)

“Espousing in a Baylor publication a view that is so out of touch with traditional Christian teachings is not only unwelcome, it comes dangerously close to violating university policy, as published in the student handbook, prohibiting the advocacy of any understandings of sexuality that are contrary to biblical teaching.”

—Baylor University President Robert Sloan, reacting to an editorial in the student newspaper, the *Lariat*, supporting gay marriage (Baptist Standard)

“I’m not calling for destruction of the Southern Baptist Convention, but I’m calling for destruction of a bad idea, which is to separate from the Baptist World Alliance.”

—Retired physician Bob Casey, a member of Parkview Baptist Church in Gainesville, Fla., who fasted and walked around SBC offices in Nashville in a Joshua-like effort last month in hopes that Southern Baptists will not withdraw from the BWA (ABP)

“In evangelizing the world, we should not plant Southern Baptist churches in other nations because churches abroad ought to be indigenous to the local culture, and local believers need to feel ownership for those churches and the spread of the gospel.”

—Charlie Warren, editor of the Arkansas Baptist News

“This schism is a serious setback to the cause of ecumenism among Baptists and a heavy blow to the larger hope of Christian unity, especially in the face of resurgent world religions.”

—Richard V. Pierard, professor of history emeritus at Indiana State University and general editor of the forthcoming centennial history of the Baptist World Alliance, on the Southern Baptist Convention’s planned withdrawal from the worldwide fellowship (Sightings)

“There are two things Baptists don’t like: change and the same, old thing.”

—Ben McDade, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship coordinator for communications, to the CBF coordinating council

“The icons, art and passion plays in most white churches present Jesus as the subject of a radical makeover. The rugged, sun-baked Palestinian Jew of the Bible gets morphed into a manicured, middle-class, model citizen. Almost like one of the neighbors. The theology that underwrites this sanitized Jesus avoids the brutal manifestations of oppression and violence he experienced.”

—Robert M. Franklin, social ethics professor at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology, suggesting blacks resonate more deeply with Mel Gibson’s film, *The Passion of the Christ* (Sightings)

“(Y)our typical pastor is to some large degree the hired chaplain for a gathered colony of Christians and does not understand himself or herself primarily to be in the role of

an apostle ... And many church people like that arrangement where they gather into a Christian ghetto and love each other and look forward to going to heaven with their hired chaplain taking care of their spiritual needs.”

—Asbury Seminary professor George Hunter III (Religious Herald)

“The heart of the sermon was the idea that always craving more, thinking that more of anything will bring us something, is idolatry.”

—Gary Fenton, pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, on the rare occasion of preaching about gluttony (The Alabama Baptist)

“America’s congregational rabbis, priests and ministers deserve our sympathy because they are on the front line every day facing two huge issues that will be with us for years to come: sexuality and bioethics.”

—Rabbi James Rudin, inter-religious advisor for the American Jewish Committee (RNS)

“Can you imagine going to church with a stolen Bible?”

—Patsy Cole of Davis-Kidd Booksellers in Jackson, Tenn., on Bibles being more frequently stolen than any other book (Jackson Sun)

“I find the Jesus Beanie I keep on my own office desk helps me remember what’s important and reminds me of the values that I cherish.”

—Craig Keughas of CPR Marketing on his company’s release of *Jesus Beanies*, the “soft and loveable nine-inch tall cloth dolls designed to resemble the image of Jesus Christ” for \$9.99 postpaid

# editorial

## Apologies yet to come

By John D. Pierce

Dear (Grand)Daughter:

You have been on my mind so much that I just had to tell you how very proud I am. But I also must apologize for something I did — or, rather, didn't do — several years ago.

Some people have graciously called me a peacemaker. But, in reality, I've never been very good at taking a stand if personal risk was involved.

Frankly, I've been more concerned with looking out for myself than standing up for others — though I have rationalized it well.

Now I realize there is nothing noble about avoiding criticism. But, hopefully, there is some in admitting my failure, even if well after the fact.

Over the years, I've preached my share of sermons about standing up for what is right. You can't explore the biblical texts each Sunday and avoid that message.

Of course, I eagerly and vocally joined other ministers in warning against the evils of secular society. It was when the wrong was being done on the inside that I was silent.

There wasn't much room for dissent back then. I didn't want to be labeled as disloyal — and, frankly, not be considered for leadership opportunities that might be ahead.

Some of my minister friends shared my weakness. So we just grumbled privately and reinforced each other's lack of boldness.

Regretfully, I did not have you in mind when other Baptist leaders started publicly opposing women ministers. While I would never have initiated such efforts, I admit to going along with their ever-restrictive proclamations and policies without a word of public protest.

Honestly, I didn't think things would escalate as they did. I remember the first time I read that we were about to oppose women as "senior pastors."

It seemed right silly to me. But it was presented as some irrefutable biblical truth to be affirmed and even enforced — as if God wanted our help in keeping women in their proper place.

"Senior pastor" was hardly a biblical term. In fact, we Baptists had only been using it for a few years back then.

Pastors and churches — those with at least a part-time custodian — liked to put the title on their business cards and lighted signs to make them feel more important. Some of them just added it at the same time they were replacing "Baptist" with "Community" in the church's name.

I remember thinking the whole idea of a Baptist church calling a minister ought to be left up to that congregation. But since I hardly knew any female pastors back then, it didn't seem like that big of a deal.

But, of course, that first effort was not restrictive enough for some of the Baptist brethren newly intoxicated with political power. A couple of the good ol' boys in the association led a charge to toss out a church that called a ministry couple.

Then the Christian education consultant the state convention used to send down to help us was no longer available. Her contract was not renewed, we learned, because she was ordained.

It didn't matter that ordination was not even mentioned in the documents the convention approved. Just seemed like they wanted to make sure no woman was even moving near an open pulpit.

Those guys were quite ambitious, always looking to climb another step on the ecclesiastical ladder. So, I guess a doctrinal position that eliminates half the competition can be quite attractive.



Tragically, I didn't look far enough down the road to see you. You were too young — though I must admit the brightest kid in your Sunday school class and missions group.

How strange! We saturated you in the ways of faith and then looked with surprise when God called you to ministry.

Oh how I wish I could go back and do things differently. Could I have made a difference by speaking out back then?

Not in them — but it would have made a difference in me.

So today I look back and am disappointed — both in those who pushed this agenda in the name of biblical fidelity and in myself for not having the courage to disagree.

It was just one of those typical Baptist political/theological debates back then — and we had a lot of them.

But now the issue has a face on it. And it is one I dearly love.

I was wrong, and God has forgiven me. Today, I am asking for your forgiveness as well.

Love,  
(Grand)Daddy

P.S. Be assured of my daily prayers for you and all the other chaplains who serve our God and others so faithfully — and at great risk.

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# readers' responses

## Support for starting churches clarified

EDITOR: Thank you for your coverage (February 2004, page 14) of church planting within the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Because my involvement with church starts came after the initial start-up, I was not directly involved in setting up the endowment to fund the ministry.

In my enthusiasm to tell the CBF church-planting story, I did not accurately describe the process. A group of Atlanta church members from Dunwoody Baptist Church and Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church came together to form the Venture Ministries Fund for Church Starts.

This fund is what gave us the springboard for a church-planting ministry. We are grateful to those whose vision and foresight provided the seed for what is becoming a thriving and healthy ministry within the Fellowship.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify my earlier statements, and thanks to *Baptists Today* for continuing to be a free and faithful voice for Baptists.

*Phil Hester, St. Petersburg, Fla.*

(Hester is associate coordinator for church starts for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.)

## 'Baptist Fellowship' is enough

EDITOR: Ron Crawford's article on the need to clarify the sense of identity for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship invites answers and suggestions. May I be as bold as to comment?

First, I would like the name changed to "Baptist Fellowship" or "The Baptist Fellowship." To me, "cooperative" seems vague and unwieldy and reflecting past Baptist projects.

Second, "a network of churches seeking to work together for common Kingdom goals" seems modern and clear cut.

Third, following Crawford's list of values needed, I would change "We are missional" to: "We are dedicated to Christian missions. We seek to present the gospel to those most isolated by culture and geography."

Concerning structure, I like the idea of

the present Coordinating Council as the "presbytery." I am glad I do not have the important responsibility to determine a new and improved plan of reorganization.

One more thought: I'd like to see some effective plan for the use of the Fellowship's excellent literature, visual arts, etc. This can be done through the network of churches in the Fellowship.

I think many readers and contributors, of whom I am one, do not see and know these assets.

*Margaret A. Griffith, Winston-Salem, N.C.*

## Covenant read at church formation

EDITOR: Once again I have been so impressed by the refreshing sanity of one of your editorials that I feel constrained to comment. "Covenants, creeds, coercion and confusion" (February 2004, page 7) deals with a matter that has been of considerable interest to me.

"The Baptist Church Covenant" is in the appendix of the history of my church, Forest Hills Baptist, which I am writing. I was intrigued at how the "church covenant" was read at the formative meeting of the church in 1945 when they were not yet a church.

I suspected, correctly, that it was *the* covenant with which most of us Baptists of a certain age were familiar and which most of us — at some time — had pasted in our hymnbooks.

*Jack Porter, Raleigh, N.C.*

## Bottle assembly's magic

EDITOR: Ron Crawford is very much on target in his view of and for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (January 2004, pages 30-31; February 2004, page 32).

We who have felt the reasons for its being — and seen its formation and progress — are astonished that there is no stampede of people to participate. To some extent, this represents the tunnel vision of many in their faith walk.

Also, (Crawford) correctly identifies the hesitancy of the CBF to market itself. Coca-

Cola advertises. If we could bottle the magic of the annual assemblies of the CBF, it would be a "top 10."

It is a given that attacking "brothers" is a negative; however, the Southern Baptist Convention continues to do major *faux pas* and the CBF, in contrast, is "stand up."

This contrast begs to be boldly and creatively marketed, and then surely many will awaken. Thank you, Ron Crawford.

*Charles R. Hurst M.D., Tyler, Texas*

(Hurst is a retired physician and a former member of the CBF Coordinating Council.)

## Broader scope needed

EDITOR: I have enjoyed the recent articles in *Baptists Today* and have found them enlightening, even though I do not agree with much that was included. I am indeed happy that some are at least thinking of those issues.

In the most recent article, Ron Crawford tells us, "CBF is the answer for moderate Baptists in the South." This seems to say we are limited in scope and not capable, or of value, to the world.

Is this really the case? If so, why bother?

I had hoped to see a major Baptist movement, but have about given up.

*Ed King, Ormond Beach, Fla.*

## Ad sparks good memories

EDITOR: I always enjoy each issue of *Baptists Today*. But the ad (for Mercer University's Center for Baptist Studies) on page 4 of the January issue had a group of photos that were nostalgic.

Among the photos were Claude Howe and Walter "Buddy" Shurden. I was once their pastor — along with 13 other New Orleans Seminary professors.

I had to be extra careful if I used anything from Baptist history, ethics, or both Old and New Testament. For there sat well-educated, well-known scholars in almost every area of study.

However, they were good listeners, very supportive and lenient when I made a mistake. Thanks for bringing back good memories.

*G. Avery Lee, New Orleans, La.*

This forum gives readers a chance to participate in respectful, though often passionate, dialogue on important issues. Your opinion is welcomed. Please include your name, address and phone number, and limit your letters to 200 words. Send by e-mail to [editor@baptiststoday.org](mailto:editor@baptiststoday.org), by fax to (478) 301-5021, or by mail to Editor, *Baptists Today*, P.O. Box 6318, Macon, GA 31208-6318.

# guest commentary

## How is CBF doing?

By Bob Setzer Jr.

*(Editor's note: Commentaries and letters have appeared in recent issues of Baptists Today concerning the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Now, CBF Moderator-elect Bob Setzer, pastor of First Baptist Church of Macon, Ga., responds to questions raised about the still developing Fellowship.)*

When asked how the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is doing, Bo Prosser, CBF Coordinator for Congregational Life, often answers, "About as well as any 13-year-old I know." Having raised a 13-year-old — and having been one myself! — I think that is an apt assessment.

Recently in these pages, Ron Crawford published his own answers to the question, "How CBF is doing." In three thoughtful essays, he registered his hopes and concerns for CBF as she "enters puberty."

Without attempting to respond point-by-point, let me offer some perspective on three oft-heard comments about CBF.

### CBF needs to define itself

As 13-year-olds are apt to say, "Been there, done that!" Go to the newly refurbished CBF web site ([www.thefellowship.info](http://www.thefellowship.info)), click on "Inside CBF," then "Who We Are." Published there are focused, articulate statements of CBF's identity, mission, vision, core values and strategic initiatives.

Frankly, anyone interested in crafting still more statements of principles must find word-smithing more rewarding than I do.

Why then the "disconnect" between CBF's identity statements and the perception that "CBF needs to define itself"? For some, the issue may be lack of sufficient experience to flesh out the words.

Identity and mission statements not etched in experience are notoriously ineffective, as evidenced by the mission statement hanging on the wall of a burger joint where the service is abysmal. Those who regularly embark on CBF-sponsored mission trips or attend state and national assemblies understand intuitively what CBF is about.

When they see women in visible leadership roles, a thoughtful love for the Bible in evidence and a holistic approach to missions, instinctively they "get it."

Alternately, some may have difficulty grasping CBF's identity because they wish to squeeze new wine into old wineskins, insisting on such familiar, well-worn words as "convention," "denomination," "association" and so on. Such words bring baggage that does not reflect the "new thing" God is doing in the movement.

CBF is "a partnership network" of individuals and churches that share a passion for the Great Commission and historic Baptist principles. If pressed, I would say CBF is more like a Baptist association than other models of corporate Baptist life, but different in two important respects.

First, individuals, as well as churches can belong to CBF. Second, CBF works with and through partner institutions and agencies, rather than owning and operating them.

### CBF should spend less time criticizing the SBC

CBF leaders spend little time criticizing the Southern Baptist Convention. We have more important kingdom business to be about. Other than responding to direct accusations and attacks, the SBC gets precious little attention.

However, in the minds of many, "CBF" is synonymous with the moderate Baptist movement. So when one of our partners or friends offers a prophetic critique of the SBC, "CBF" is considered the author.

Consider this news journal, *Baptists Today*. It offers cogent, insightful commentary on the trends and movements within the larger Baptist family. But *Baptists Today* is not a house organ of CBF.

Thank God, it is the voice of a free Baptist press, which CBF — along with

many others — helps support.

### CBF should empower the General Assembly while de-emphasizing state and regional groups

Crawford suggested that CBF should lessen restraints on decision-making at the General Assembly, in effect, "returning power to the masses." On the other hand, CBF should de-emphasize state and regional groups since most of today's churches are self-serve operations.

I find these points in direct contradiction. The real spiritual vitality in CBF will come from the grassroots, and state and regional groups are closer to the grassroots than national can ever be, the Internet notwithstanding.

Further, the vast majority of Baptist churches are small. They want and need the support of a local CBF family.

CBF's representation and decision making flows up from the state and regional groups. They elect persons to serve on the Coordinating Council that conducts CBF business between annual assemblies.

This model allows for far better representation and decision making than throwing everything open to whoever makes the most effective speech on the floor of the General Assembly. That said, the General Assembly allows for considerable input from those attending, including nominations from the floor.

CBF is a creature in process. Still, I am amazed by the vitality of this young movement. Our far-flung missionaries, combined with a partnership network of state and regional groups, ethnic networks, partnering schools and institutions, make for a powerful force for healing in a broken world. And all is done with a Christlike spirit of cooperation and a healthy dose of Baptist freedom!

How is CBF doing? As my friend Bo says, "About as well as any 13-year-old I know." And as pastor of a Baptist church, brimming with vitality, I know some pretty remarkable 13-year-olds. **BT**



# NEWS DIGEST

*Baptist News From Staff and Wire Reports*

## BWA membership committee shares blame for SBC pull-out, says one member

By John Pierce

NASHVILLE — Baptist historian Albert Wardin, a member of the Baptist World Alliance membership committee that recommended including the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in the worldwide fellowship, said blame for the reaction from Southern Baptist leaders can be placed on several shoulders.

“If there had been more Christian charity and sensitivity on all sides, the division would not have occurred,” said Wardin, emeritus professor of history at Belmont University in Nashville, in a letter to the editor of the independent newsjournal *Baptists Today*.

Wardin, author of the book, *Baptists Around the World*, said many share the blame for the planned departure of the Southern Baptist Convention from the BWA. He begins with the committee on which he served.

“The membership committee ... is to be seriously faulted,” said Wardin, the only committee member to vote against CBF acceptance. “It is a committee created by the administration of the BWA and was particularly influenced by individuals from Western Europe who had no sympathy for the SBC leadership, and its concerns were more ideologically in tune with the CBF.”

Additionally, Wardin charged that the membership committee broke its own rule of not recommending membership of any Baptist body if there was objection from a current BWA member.

“In all of this,” said Wardin, “the administration of the BWA was also as culpable since it did not stop the action on constitutional grounds and long-standing policy.”

Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, said there has never been “a written rule” about not including member bodies if any other member objects. In countries where

there is only one member, he said, special consideration has been given to the current member before bringing in a second body if there is conflict.

“But there are 14 member bodies in the U.S.,” said Lotz. Strong efforts were made to work with both SBC and CBF leaders, he added.

“There have been cases when other member bodies were accepted when there were particular objections,” said Ruby Burke, assistant to the BWA general secretary who met with the membership committee. Burke said she was the only BWA staff member involved in the committee process and that Wardin gave the lone opposing vote to including the CBF. Another member abstained during the final vote.

“It was a membership committee decision,” said Burke, “Dr. Lotz had nothing to do with this.”

“In fact, [BWA president] Dr. [Billy] Kim asked me not to participate in the committee’s decision,” said Lotz.

Wardin said the BWA General Council showed its negative feelings toward the SBC by approving the recommendation of the membership committee by majority vote.

“In spite of the protestation today of love for the SBC, a number of General Council representatives have been critical of the current theological stance of the SBC leadership and its unilateral action,” said Wardin. “As has been noted, numbers of the BWA look upon the SBC as many in Western Europe today look upon the U.S.A. as too big and powerful and too often acting only on its own.”

Wardin recalled a May 2003 interview with Duke McCall in *Baptists Today*, in which the former BWA president — while critical of changes in SBC life — had counseled CBF leaders to withdraw their application to avoid a “nasty divorce.” Because, they did not, Wardin said the CBF “got the recognition it sought from the

BWA,” but at a high cost.

In response, CBF Coordinator Daniel Vestal said recognition was not one of the reasons the Fellowship sought inclusion in the BWA. “CBF’s application for membership in the BWA was not to gain recognition,” said Vestal, “but to be a full participant in the world Baptist family.”

Blaming the Fellowship for the SBC’s proposed withdrawal is misplaced, Vestal added. “To blame CBF for the actions of the SBC is like blaming the abused wife for the behavior of the abusive husband,” he said.

Vestal added that CBF leaders do not wish for Southern Baptists to leave the worldwide body they helped form nearly a century ago.

As a longtime supporter and participant, Wardin said he has been “most disturbed about the proposed separation of the SBC from the BWA” and is aware of the need for inter-Baptist cooperation worldwide.

Wardin said he agrees with John Briggs of Oxford that the BWA today is more conservative and has a more limited theological range than it had when founded by Southern Baptists and others in 1905. It is unfortunate, he said, that SBC leaders have tried to brand the BWA as “an organization on the path of theological deviation.”

“But the application of the CBF and its acceptance by the membership committee of the BWA,” said Wardin, “brought again to the fore the underlying discontent with certain aspects of the BWA.”

In the membership committee report presented last July in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, chairman Ian Hawley of Australia gave a different perspective on the committee’s action. He wrote: “[T]he membership committee in bringing this recommendation has not done so lightly or easily ... [but] we believe that this recommendation is the only fair and right decision that could be made.” **BT**

# BWA denied exhibit space at SBC convention in June

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (ABP) — A Southern Baptist Convention official has denied exhibition space to the Baptist World Alliance at this June's SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis — even though the convention has not yet approved a recommendation to separate from the umbrella group for Baptists around the globe.

Convention messengers will vote on a recommendation — approved in February by the SBC Executive Committee — to break all ties with the 99-year-old BWA. The SBC is the group's largest member body and most generous contributor. If messengers approve the recommendation, the BWA will stand to lose \$300,000 in funding next year.

BWA officials in Falls Church, Va., received a letter informing them of the decision from John Wilkerson, the Executive Committee's vice president for business and finance. In the Feb. 25 letter, Wilkerson said, "Because of the controversy surrounding this issue currently and the pending recommendation of the Executive Committee to the Southern Baptist Convention, it would be inappropriate to exhibit under these circumstances."

Wilkerson also returned BWA's exhibitor's fee.

Alan Stanford, BWA director of promotion and development, said he and other BWA officials were "surprised and disappointed" at the decision. "Our assumption was that we would be allowed to exhibit until the SBC voted to discontinue funding the BWA," he said.

"To us, it seems to be premature for the staff of the Executive Committee to deny messengers to the SBC the opportunity to look at materials and ask questions of the BWA representatives when the messengers are being asked to vote on severing an almost 100-year relationship," Stanford added.

Wilkerson, reached by phone at Executive Committee offices in Nashville,

## Convention messengers will vote on a recommendation to break all ties with the 99-year-old BWA.

said his office made the decision to deny the exhibit space. "Funding and exhibiting is not connected," he said, noting that SBC-funded agencies "don't gain a right [to exhibit] because you're sent money — that's another privilege that's extended to them."

Wilkerson said he made the decision to deny the space, in part, because of the BWA's responses to SBC leaders' recommendation that the denominations cut ties. "Let me just say that the comments that have been voiced by the BWA in the press articles and in person — in fact, just the press releases that have been released by the BWA — certainly are not supportive of the Southern Baptist Convention position," Wilkerson told Associated Baptist Press.

Wilkerson said that BWA's press releases on the situation "are mean-spirited, they're unfactual, they're just harsh." He accused BWA leaders of attempting to publicize the story. "They want this public," he said. "This is the rhetoric and the dialogue we've tried to avoid the whole way."

He said an Executive Committee policy allows him to make such exhibitor decisions, and that "it doesn't require convention approval."

Wilkerson would not agree to provide a copy of the policy to an ABP reporter — despite his membership in an SBC-affiliated church — unless the reporter came to Nashville to view it himself. "I don't want to see this all over the front page of some newspaper," he said.

Stanford said BWA still plans to host a breakfast during the SBC annual meeting. It will be held June 15 at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Indianapolis. **BT**

## Baylor president 'outraged' by pro-gay marriage editorial

(RNS) — Baylor University President Robert B. Sloan said he is "justifiably outraged" that the Baptist school's newspaper published an editorial supporting gay marriage.

The *Baylor Lariat*, the newspaper at the largest Baptist university in the world, published the editorial in its Feb. 27 edition to support San Francisco's lawsuit against California for barring gay marriages.

"Just as it isn't fair to discriminate against someone for their skin color, heritage or religious beliefs, it isn't fair to discriminate against someone for their sexual orientation," read the editorial, approved by the paper's editorial board by a vote of 5-2.

"Shouldn't gay couples be allowed to enjoy the benefits and happiness of marriage, too?"

In a statement, Sloan said the editorial position does not reflect the views of the school's administration or faculty.

"I would like to assure Baylor constituents that, while we respect the right of students to hold and express divergent viewpoints, we do not support the use of publications such as the *Lariat*, which is published by the university, to advocate positions that undermine foundational Christian principles upon which this institution was founded and currently operates," he said.

The Student Publications Board, which oversees the newspaper at the school in Waco, Texas, issued a statement declaring the editorial in violation of university policy.

"The guidelines have been reviewed with the *Lariat* staff, so that they will be able to avoid this error in the future," the board's statement said. **BT**



Robert B. Sloan

## NEWS DIGEST

# BWA withdrawal recommendation approved for SBC vote in June

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — By a 62-10 vote Feb. 17, the SBC Executive Committee approved a report recommending that the Southern Baptist Convention withdraw from the Baptist World Alliance.

The report was a revision of one released in December by the Executive Committee's nine-member BWA study committee. This latest report was in keeping with the earlier one in that it also recommended withdrawal from the BWA. The report will be presented to messengers from SBC churches at the June 15-16 annual meeting in Indianapolis.

The report adopted by the Executive Committee included, however, a provision that "the chairman of the [Executive Committee's] BWA Study Committee invite select representatives of the Baptist World Alliance to meet in Nashville with the study committee prior to May 1, 2004."

The study committee chairman, Morris H. Chapman, who also serves as president of the Executive Committee, said the meeting would be held in response to a request from BWA leaders. But Chapman said neither he nor other members of the study committee anticipate that the SBC/BWA session will result in any change in the SBC course of action. The Executive Committee's vote followed an hour-long discussion on the second day of its Feb. 16-17 sessions in Nashville, Tenn.

The revised report, in addressing "issues raised more recently," focused on three areas:

First: The committee noted that various negative reactions to the initial report "that emanated particularly from fellow BWA member body representatives ... served to demonstrate to all interested evangelicals why we had been experiencing increasing discomfort in attempting to define the SBC to the world through the BWA." Some of the critics of the proposed SBC action "took the opportunity to vent what appears to be pent-up feelings of hostility about our Convention. Due to these revelations, we need not now justify or vilify, but can simply do what we



Photo courtesy of Baptist Press

Morris H. Chapman, president of the Executive Committee, presents the report of the SBC study committee which recommended withdrawal from the Baptist World Alliance.

preferred to do in the first place, which is to politely withdraw from an organization that, at least for us, no longer efficiently communicates to the unsaved a crystal clear gospel message that our Lord Jesus Christ is solely sufficient for salvation."

Second: The committee commented on the BWA's acceptance of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a breakaway organization critical of the SBC's conservative convictions, by noting, "One soaked by a rain need not blame the last raindrop. We strongly affirm the right of the BWA to determine its own membership and affiliations. It is the very right we now recommend that our Convention exercise. The decision of the BWA to include the CBF merely served as a confirmation that we must, as a Convention, allow the world to see us without having to look through a BWA lens — a lens which, for us, has become too cloudy."

Third: The committee underscored that the proposed SBC withdrawal from the BWA "is not intended to cast aspersion upon the many godly and enthusiastically evangelical

Baptist fellowships that are members of the BWA. We fully intend to continue to partner with our oldest and best friends worldwide, and to develop new and vibrant friendships and joint endeavors to reach the world for Christ. Those who chose to cast this in any other way should not be allowed to dismay our Baptist brothers and sisters in Christ who long, as do we, to take a giant and unhesitant step forward in world outreach. For us, the decision is one of stewardship. If we can multiply the harvest by reapplying the funding, there is no true Christian who should take issue."

The SBC would fulfill its \$300,000 allocation to the BWA in the current SBC budget, which runs through September, under the recommendation to be presented to the annual meeting in June.

For a number of years, the SBC allocation to the BWA had been \$425,000 per year. The allocation was reduced by \$125,000 during last June's SBC annual meeting in Phoenix to be redirected to a new SBC "Kingdom Relationships" global initiative in conjunction with the SBC-wide Empowering Kingdom Growth movement. The committee anticipates that the other \$300,000 now will be similarly redirected.

The discussion included an appeal by Janet Hoffman, president of Woman's Missionary Union, an SBC auxiliary, who serves on the Executive Committee, that the SBC seek reconciliation with the BWA rather than separation.

Hoffman recounted an extended time of joyful and tearful sharing during WMU's annual board meeting in January during which numerous WMU leaders recounted their relationships and experiences with women in various countries through WMU's affiliation with the BWA women's department.

At the end of the WMU session, Hoffman said, the leaders stood unanimously

Continued on next page ➤

## State Baptist news editors decline BWA study offer

STOWE, Vt. (ABP) — State Baptist newspaper editors, during their annual meeting Feb. 13, declined an offer from a foundation to fund an independent inquiry into the Southern Baptist Convention's reasons for defunding the Baptist World Alliance.

Meeting in the ski resort town of Stowe, Vt., members of the Association of State Baptist Papers declined to accept an offer from retired Southern Baptist leader Duke McCall to fund a study into an SBC committee's decision to withdraw membership and funding from the worldwide umbrella group.

The SBC Executive Committee voted Feb. 17 to end the SBC's 99-year-old relationship with the BWA, which Southern Baptists helped found and continue to fund. The SBC, with 16 million members nationwide, is the largest member of the Baptist World Alliance.

If approved, the plan for withdrawal will come before the entire Southern Baptist Convention for a vote in June. If messengers favor it, then all SBC funding of BWA — until recently, \$450,000 a year — will end Oct. 1.

The committee accused the Baptist World Alliance of being too open to liberalism — allegations strongly denied by BWA leaders and many of the 211 affiliated Baptist unions worldwide.

In a Feb. 3 letter, McCall offered the editors up to \$100,000 to fund expenses related to conducting “a full investigation of the relations of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance which either support or rebut the withdrawal of the SBC from membership in the BWA.”

McCall is a former BWA president, Executive Committee head and president of two Southern Baptist seminaries. The funding would flow through McCall's family foundation.

The editors' group is made up of both moderate and fundamentalist editors of the newspapers historically affiliated with SBC-related state conventions. McCall said he felt the editors would have the most credibility in investigating the BWA matter.

“My personal goal is to get an uncommitted investigation by able Baptists who place the cause of Christ above institutional concerns,” McCall wrote. “The state paper editors appear to me to be such a group with experience in looking for the truth in an environment of disagreement. Their job requires them to have the ability and experience to sort facts from fiction.”

In discussion on the offer, the editors disagreed over whether embarking on such an endeavor would amount to an admission that their papers hadn't already covered the

SBC-BWA issue adequately. “I share a lot of the sentiments that Dr. McCall shares,” said *Alabama Baptist* editor Bob Terry, who serves as the group's executive director. “But I'm not sure that this association is the right vehicle for doing the study that he seeks.”

Current ASBP president Trennis Henderson, editor of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's *Western Recorder*, spoke in favor of the recommendation. The association doing an in-depth investigation of the issue, Henderson said, “is [not] the same as saying that individual Baptist newspapers have not adequately covered the story.”

But *Texas Baptist Standard* editor Marv Knox, who serves as the chairman of Associated Baptist Press' board of directors, suggested that approving such a study might exacerbate an already-existing rift within the ASBP — exhibited by the fact that several of the most conservative editors did not attend the Stowe meeting, opting instead to attend a simultaneously scheduled meeting of state convention executive directors.

“Us here voting to do this would be another polarizing issue within this group,” Knox said.

The editors ultimately voted to decline McCall's offer, but did discuss suggesting alternative organizations — such as secular news services or journalism schools — to McCall. **BT**

### ➤ Continued from previous page

in voting to affirm WMU's relationship with the BWA. “It was as if they stood as one,” without making a sound, “tears streaming down their faces. It was love that I saw there” for the Christian women of other lands, Hoffman said.

Nancy W. McGuigan, an Executive Committee member from Pennsylvania, read into the record a resolution adopted Feb. 16 by the administrative committee of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey's executive board calling for prayer “to bring reconciliation between the BWA and the SBC for a unified witness to a world in need of Christ.” The resolution also noted Jesus' prayer in John 17 for unity in the body of Christ.

Several Executive Committee members underscored their support for the study committee report. Calvin Wittman, a pastor from Colorado, noted that the Bible tells of “Christians who decided to walk a different path” over theological differences, which “brings a greater peace.” The SBC's withdrawal from the BWA, he said, “is a peaceful move.”

Mike Trammel, a pastor from Maryland, noted that the nine study committee members are “as fine and as representative” a group to be trusted to bring Southern Baptists a worthy recommendation on BWA membership.

The hour-long discussion was limited to Executive Committee members, but Denton Lotz, the BWA's general secretary, and several other BWA representatives were in attendance. **BT**



Photo courtesy of Baptist Press

Janet Hoffman, president of Woman's Missionary Union, voices the SBC auxiliary's affirmation of the women's department of the Baptist World Alliance.

## NEWS DIGEST

# CBF council approves doubling support for BWA; recommends flat 2004-05 budget

By John Pierce

ATLANTA — The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's contribution to the Baptist World Alliance will increase from \$20,000 to \$40,000 next year if participants at the June CBF General Assembly adopt the \$16 million budget as approved by the CBF Coordinating Council Feb. 20.

The additional funds would make a slight dent in an anticipated funding gap for the BWA. Southern Baptist Convention messengers will vote in June on a recommendation to pull all funds — that dropped from \$425,000 to \$300,000 this year — from the worldwide fellowship of Baptists effective Oct. 1.

The Fellowship's membership in the BWA is considered a primary reason for the SBC's planned withdrawal.

The council also recommended

that Atlanta pastor and former SBC Home Mission Board leader Emmanuel McCall join CBF Coordinator Daniel Vestal in formally representing the Fellowship in the BWA.

"Our acceptance into the BWA wasn't in our strategic plan," Vestal told the council. "But it seemed to be the right thing to do."

CBF moderator-elect Bob Setzer of Macon, Ga., is studying how the CBF can relate most effectively to the BWA, said Vestal.

He also announced that BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz will host a breakfast and a breakout session during the upcoming CBF General Assembly in Birmingham, Ala.

Offerings received at the June 24-26 gathering will be given to the BWA over and above budgeted contributions through the CBF. **BT**

## FLAT BUDGET APPROVED

The 2004-2005 proposed budget of \$16,008,123 is equal to the Fellowship's modified spending plan now in place. The staff and CBF council reduced the current budget when a shortfall in projected funds was realized last year.

Finance committee member Nelson Rodriguez of Fort Worth, Texas, said revenues for the current year are expected to come in at \$348,000 under the revised plan. He described the proposed 2004-2005 budget as "conservative."

Jim Strawn, CBF coordinator for finance, said an additional \$3.7 million dollars in designated funds will be spent during the next budget year as well, bringing total expenditures for 2004-2005 to nearly \$20 million.

In addition to doubling the funds to BWA, the 2004-2005 budget calls for increases of

See Flat Budget page 15 ➤

## REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Missouri layman Charles Cantrell, chair of the partner study committee, reported that the committee's earliest work has been significant, but "hard to quantify," as they have sought to determine and define the broad use of the word "partner" in CBF life.

The committee held its third meeting in conjunction with the Feb. 19-20 council meeting and interviewed representatives of four partnering organizations.

"To say how many people partner with CBF is unlimited," Cantrell reported. "But that's not bad."

Cantrell said the committee is categorizing the various types of CBF partnerships. He expressed hope that the committee's work would be near completion by the end of the year with formal reports to come

in 2005.

The council also heard and affirmed a proposal to collaborate with state and regional CBF groups to increase support for the Offering for Global Missions. The plan uses the 2002-2003 offering receipts as a numerical baseline.

States or regions showing an increase over that mark would be entitled to 10 percent of the increased amount to fund approved mission endeavors conducted by the state or regional CBF body.

Frank Broome, coordinator of CBF of Georgia, described the Missions Collaborative Initiative as a "great idea" that gives state organizations an incentive for promoting the Offering for Global Missions over creating additional state-focused offerings.

A recommendation to pursue participation in the upstart ecumenical effort Christian Churches Together was also

approved by the council. John Finley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Savannah, Ga., and a member of the CBF ecumenical task force, said initial dues of \$1,000 increasing to \$10,000 the following year would likely be expected of participating groups.

Vestal, who participated in a related meeting in Texas earlier this year, called CCT a "noble" and "most ambitious ecumenical effort."

Actions requiring the approval of General Assembly participants will be presented at the Birmingham meeting in June. Annual meetings for 2005 and 2006 have been set for Grapevine, Texas, and Atlanta, Ga., respectively.

The council affirmed efforts to continue discussions with leaders of the American Baptist Churches, USA for an overlapping meeting in 2007 in Washington, D.C. **BT**

➤ Flat Budget from page 14

\$150,000 for staff medical insurance, \$100,000 for Worker's Compensation and \$100,000 in across-the-board salary upgrades (2 percent for professional, 3 percent for support).

The budget also funds a newly-created associate coordinator in faith formations as well as a revised position to fill the vacancy created when Reba Cobb resigned as resource center coordinator last year. The council approved a new job title — coordinator of administration — and a job description that removes previous supervisory responsibilities of all staff.

The new job description calls for “overseeing the daily operations of the staff” and providing “direct supervision of administrative operations.” Coordinators that do not specifically relate to administrative services will report directly to Vestal.

Personnel committee chair Elizabeth Barnes of Raleigh, N.C., described the position as “first among equals,” in that the new staff person would represent CBF in the absence of Coordinator Daniel Vestal. Barnes chairs the search committee comprised of the personnel committee, moderator-elect Setzer and former moderator Donna Forrester of Greenville, S.C.

The proposed budget contains some additional changes from the current one including a reduction of funds allocated to partnering organizations — Associated Baptist Press, Baptist Center for Ethics, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and *Baptists Today* news journal — and to related institutions for theological education. **BT**

## CBF must avoid partisan politics, Vestal tells coordinating council

ATLANTA — “We are not going to be involved in secular politics,” Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Coordinator Daniel Vestal told the CBF Coordinating Council at their Feb. 19-20 meeting in Atlanta.

Fellowship participants are “all over the board when it comes to secular politics,” Vestal said, describing a broad spectrum ranging from “rock-ribbed Republicans to yellow-dog Democrats to the tree-hugging Green Party.”

The Fellowship’s mission, to be the presence of Christ in the world, is greater than any secular political agenda, said Vestal. “Please don’t divide the Fellowship over partisan politics,” Vestal urged the council. “We’re about something more important than that.”

Vestal added that no political party “has a corner on the moral conscience of America.”

In an interview following his report, Vestal said his comments were not in response to the recent

announcement by Southern Baptist Convention leader Richard Land about a new voter registration effort or any concern.

“I was being preventative,” said Vestal, noting that the upcoming presidential election will evoke lots of political debate.

Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, told the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 16 that Southern Baptists will work with other evangelical Christians to promote voter registration through the web site [ivotevalues.com](http://ivotevalues.com). Land said the coalition effort avoids endorsing particular candidates, but encourages people “to vote their values.”

Vestal said a broader statement on avoiding partisan politics will be posted on the CBF web site [www.thefellowship.org](http://www.thefellowship.org), but he wanted to go ahead and express his concern to the council.

“I wanted to be clear about this before anything comes up,” said Vestal. **BT**

# Southern Baptists gearing up to get out the vote

By Tony Cartledge

*Biblical Recorder*

NASHVILLE (ABP) — Southern Baptists should get involved in the political process, and the SBC will assist them by developing a campaign and promoting it through a new website called [ivotevalues.com](http://ivotevalues.com), Richard Land told the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 16.

Land, president of the SBC’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, said Southern Baptists will work in tandem with the group “Americans of Faith” to encourage evangelicals to register and vote, with a goal of adding 2 million registered voters before the fall elections.

A handout described Americans of Faith as “a coalition of civic-minded evangelical leaders and organizations.” The groups were not named.

The campaign, which hopes to involve “tens of thousands of Bible-believing churches across the U.S.,” will promote voter registration days in churches on two Sundays, July 4 and Sept. 26.

An estimated 4 to 5 million evangelical Christians sat out the last presidential campaign, Land said.

“It is essential to get people to vote their values,” Land said. “We should never tell people how to vote, but we should tell them they have a responsibility to be informed and

involved in the process.”

Voters should be taught to look for and support candidates who endorse their values, beliefs and convictions, he said.

Land said he believes the upcoming presidential election is the most critical election in his lifetime, and perhaps “in the history of the Republic.” It is “the most important election since 1860,” he said, referencing Abraham Lincoln’s defeat over Stephen Douglas.

“We must never try to tell people how to vote, but we should tell them the Lord wants to talk to them about how they’re going to vote, and the Lord is going to talk to them one day about how they voted,” Land said. **BT**

# Dockery: Common ground, freedom to disagree can keep Baptists from dividing over Calvinism

By Kathie Chute

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP) —Are Southern Baptists Calvinists? Yes and no, said David S. Dockery, president of Union University. Yes, because some Southern Baptists subscribe to Calvinist beliefs in some form; no, because all do not.

Dockery told church leaders at a PreachingPoints Conference at the Jackson, Tenn., university Feb. 10 that a renewed interest in Calvinism and Arminianism in the Southern Baptist Convention could lead to divisiveness if the issues are misunderstood.

“If we get hung up on these questions, rather than concentrate on a lost world,” he said, “we have missed the boat. We must find areas of commonality and then give freedom in some areas where we disagree.”

Dockery urged Baptists to consider the issues in their historical context. He traced

the history of Calvinist and Arminian thought from the 16th century to today and emphasized the rich Calvinist heritage in Southern Baptist history, including the contributions of James P. Boyce and B.H. Carroll and the modified Calvinism of E.Y. Mullins, W.T. Conner and W.A. Criswell.

“The final fault line between the two is eternal security,” Dockery said. “If you believe in eternal security, you are probably a Calvinist in some form as opposed to an Arminian. Are you a four- or five-point Calvinist? Maybe not.”

The two overarching issues, Dockery said, are God’s sovereignty and man’s freedom to choose, which could be considered contradictory. He said he did not believe the ideas were a contradiction but were, instead, an antimony, which is defined as a combination of two thoughts or principles, each of which is true but seem incompatible.

“There are issues we will not be able to fully grasp,” Dockery said. “A lot of it remains a mystery to us. These questions have not been discussed only in Baptist life but also in other denominations as well. However, if you believe there are people in the world who are sinners and need salvation, that God initiates salvation and that the means for salvation are necessary within the sovereignty of God, then we have common ground.”

The gospel is intended for all, Dockery said, but only effective for those who choose to accept it.

“I believe that God saves believers and that he does this through men and women who take his gospel and share it. We cannot lose sight of that.”

— *Kathie Chute is associate vice president for university relations at Union University.*

## Texas convention ending relationship with LifeWay

By Ken Camp  
*Baptist Standard*

DALLAS — The Baptist General Convention of Texas will end its longstanding formal relationship with LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention when the cooperative agreement expires Sept. 30, according to Lynn Eckeberger, coordinator of the BGCT church health and growth section.

The ministry investment plan is the current version of an agreement used by LifeWay, and the Baptist Sunday School Board before it, to gain a marketing presence through Baptist state conventions.

“This agreement achieves for LifeWay a prominence of position directly related to product sales and for the state convention a revenue source,” Eckeberger explained.

The most recent agreement requires state conventions to submit Annual Church Profile information to LifeWay; to grant LifeWay a visible presence at state convention-sponsored events; to participate in LifeWay conference centers and various meetings; to showcase only LifeWay

products at state training events that LifeWay helps sponsor; and to submit quarterly reports to LifeWay.

In return, LifeWay provides financial assistance to cooperating state conventions. Last year, the BGCT received about \$105,000 from LifeWay. Anticipated income this year is \$102,000.

While sales of the BGCT’s BaptistWay Press materials have increased significantly, Eckeberger said, they will not generate enough funds to offset the loss of LifeWay revenue. Even so, the BGCT considered it important to follow the lead of its churches in ending its exclusive relationship with LifeWay, he noted.

“No longer do most Texas Baptist churches use one line of curriculum,” said Eckeberger, who identified about a dozen publishers of Bible study and discipleship materials they use frequently.

Jimmy Draper, president of LifeWay, said he was “surprised and saddened by the decision,” but added, “I respect the BGCT’s right to make it.”

Increased sales of BaptistWay Press materials will help enable the BGCT to

provide some of the resources and services previously provided by LifeWay, such as Vacation Bible School, Youth Bible Drill and Baptist doctrine clinics, said Eckeberger.

BaptistWay, the BGCT publishing imprint, doubled its sales between 2002 and 2003 and increased its customer base by one-third. Currently, about 1,000 BGCT-related churches use the materials, he reported.

“By all indications of the first two months of 2004, we are on track to be self-supporting by year’s end, and this includes being able to provide at no cost to users a fully graded, two-year curriculum for preschool and children, downloaded from the Internet,” Eckeberger said.

Vacation Bible School materials produced by the BGCT will be available online at no cost by April 1, providing an alternative to existing products, such as the controversial LifeWay “Rickshaw Rally” curriculum, he added.

BGCT President Ken Hall said he anticipates LifeWay being one of many bookstore exhibitors at the state convention next fall.

“We’re not being exclusive. ... We’re being inclusive,” said Hall. **BT**

# Mainstream speakers urge Baptists to regain religious-liberty commitment

By John Pierce

NASHVILLE (ABP) — The strong commitment to religious liberty by the early Baptists who shaped American democracy is now at risk of disappearing, said several speakers during the third annual convocation of the Mainstream Baptist Network Feb. 27-28.

"I believe religious freedom in America is at great risk," U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards (D-Texas) told nearly 200 convocation participants via video.

Edwards, a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, said Baptists have a responsibility to protect the principles of religious freedom they helped ensure in the formation of the nation. The wall of separation between church and state that Baptists helped erect, he said, is being "torn down brick by brick."

The congressman cited the Bush administration's faith-based initiatives as an example of improperly blurring the roles of church and government. He said the programs allow for direct government funding of churches and permit religious discrimination in jobs funded with public money.

"People of faith must take a higher profile in the battle for religious liberty," said Edwards.

Countering the heavily funded efforts to use government power to advance religious causes will require a stronger effort by those committed to the separation of church and state, he said.

Among his suggestions, Edwards called for educating the media on church-state relations, bringing together various groups to develop a long-term plan for advocating religious liberty, creating a grass-roots lobbying effort, and helping Baptists reassert their historic role as proponents of religious liberty for all Americans.

Educating the public is crucial, said Edwards, since the concept of church-state separation is now perceived negatively by most Americans. "We must be good stewards in protecting God's gift of religious freedom," said Edwards. "Failure can simply not be an option."

Speakers frequently referenced the historic role of Baptists who insisted that the religious freedom of all citizens be respected. During the nation's formative years, "Baptists were one of the small, annoying minorities," said Carolyn Blevins of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn.

That same lack of power was indicative of the Christian church in its early history, said former Southern Baptist Convention president Jimmy Allen of Big Canoe, Ga. "There's nothing in the Bible about separation of church and state," said Allen, "because the disciples and the early church didn't have any power."

However, said Allen, the Baptist principle of soul freedom — "the opportunity for people to make decisions for themselves" — is a definite biblical concept. Soul freedom, he said, is the "mechanism" for religious liberty.

Allen warned of a "gravitational pull" away from traditional Baptist commitments to soul freedom and religious liberty. He said it is imperative for Baptists to pass these concepts along to the next generation. "If we slip away from our soul freedom," said Allen, "we will have another kind of Dark Ages."

Federal funding for churches is a sign of weakness rather than the strength of religious groups, warned Allen, noting that government funding can lead to an altered message. He called faith-based initiatives an oxymoron. "If it is faith-based," said Allen, "then it would be paid for by faith groups."

Randall Balmer, the only non-Baptist among the 15 speakers, titled his presentation, "Where have all the Baptists gone?" "Never in my life would I have thought I'd say this," said the Columbia University professor, who has written extensively on evangelicalism in America, "but America needs more Baptists."

Balmer specified the kind of Baptists he said are needed in America today, citing the contributions of such historic Baptist advocates of religious liberty as Roger Williams, Isaac Backus and George W. Truett.

"America needs more Baptists who understand the crucial difference between persuasion and coercion," he said.

Balmer said Americans are an extraordinarily religious nation by any standard and that "religion has thrived ... precisely because the state has stayed out of religion's business."

Balmer expressed dismay that modern Baptists could "so determinately turn their backs on religious liberty." He cited two developments — the rise of the Religious Right and the fundamentalist takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention — as major factors in the shift from the historic commitment to religious freedom.

Balmer quoted George Truett, who famously affirmed the value of separation of church and state before thousands of Baptists gathered at the U.S. Capitol in 1920, as saying: "Christ's religion needs no prop of any kind from any worldly source."

In contrast to this commitment of earlier Baptists, Balmer questioned why "every Baptist in Alabama didn't storm the judicial building and demand" the removal of Judge Roy Moore's monument placed in the state judicial building last year.

Balmer said the once "proud and defining tradition" of Southern Baptists in support of religious liberty for all has "withered beneath the onslaught of misguided individuals who seek to impose their own views on the rest of society."

Balmer, who recounts his own faith pilgrimage beyond fundamentalism in the book, *Growing Pains: Learning to Love My Father's Faith*, said the Baptist principles of separation of church and state have "all but disappeared" in Southern Baptist life.

Other speakers at the convocation included Brent Walker of Washington, D.C.; Charles Wade of Dallas; Charles Dewese of Nashville; Bruce Prescott of Norman, Okla.; Robert Parham of Nashville; and David Currie of San Angelo, Texas.

Leaders of the Mainstream Baptist Network re-elected Bob Stephenson of Norman, Okla., and Bill Wilson of Dalton, Ga., as co-chairs. Joe Lewis, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Petersburg, Va., was elected secretary-treasurer. The next convocation is set for Feb. 25-26, 2005, in Orlando, Fla. **BT**

# back-row birdie

## The weird world of shrinking and expanding Baptists

By Keith D. Herron

“Preacher, help me understand this ... we’re not *Southern* Baptists anymore because it’s too provincial. So we’re thinking about dropping the name and renaming ourselves. Pastor Jack’s motion has been on the floor before by others who wanted to change the name but now since he’s the one who’s run it up the flagpole, the mucky-mucks who control the SBC have to salute the idea. But now I’m hearing we’re no longer *World* Baptists because we’re ‘unequally yoked’ with a global bunch of liberal Baptists with whom we don’t share the same ideas. I don’t get it ... Are we reaching out or closing the ranks? Seems like you can do one or the other, but you can’t do both.”

Seldom have I caught Birdie so confused she couldn’t put her mind around all the ideas floating in a room. The narrow definition of what it means to be a Southern Baptist has been both shrinking and expanding at the same time recently, and it was more than Birdie could imagine. She looked lost.

“Birdie, if you’re going to be on top of these things, you’re going to have to quit trying to use your keen sense of logic to understand the world of Southern Baptists. Get with it! You’ve slipped through the looking glass and have fallen into a strange world. It’s not supposed to make sense. Nothing the SBC has done in the last 25 years has made any sense! The sooner you get that settled, the more sense it will begin to make.”

“Pastor, don’t those men know that not everyone lives on the same planet they live on?” It made me wonder whether Southern Baptists actually live in some parallel universe that only they inhabit. A private parallel world reserved only for Southern Baptist fundamentalists certainly has its appeal, but I shuddered about it the more I thought about it.

“Good point, Birdie. But it doesn’t appear they know that. Just dropping the regional name of *Southern* Baptist doesn’t

make them less southern. Small minds don’t get bigger just because they don’t think they’re small-minded. Whipping the whole Baptist world is not a goal many would take on, but our boys in Nashville have never lacked the nerve or the ambition. Just ask the good folks in Washington, D.C., who didn’t knuckle under and refused to play power politics when threatened by the SBC. Ask the WMU’ers who were slapped silly because they wouldn’t submit and be gracious about it. Don’t ever say “No” to an abuser! Ask all those missionaries who were fired a while back because they wouldn’t sign the *BF&M* 2000. The good ol’ boys of



Illustration by Scott Brooks

the SBC bemoan the lack of support for the Cooperative Program but tell me, do they look like folks who want to cooperate?”

“Gosh, Preacher, you nearly raised your voice with that ugly tirade! Why don’t you sit down before you blow a gasket?” Birdie dropped her own anger in order to take care of me.

But she didn’t drop her anger for long. After I sat down, she ranted on. “Rev, they boast about reaching the world as if their front door was open to everyone. But what

they don’t mention as you’re coming through is you have to pass muster to get in by signing on to their restrictive codes of belief. If you don’t agree with them or if you try to voice a dissident opinion about their little rules, they throw you out the back door!”

“Birdie, that’s the point! They think anyone with a thought different from theirs is a godless liberal who represents the devil. If they’re partnered together with someone, they will eventually want to control them and they’re not afraid to pull the partnership rug out from under them like it’s nobody’s business. Just last month they decided they weren’t endorsing any women for chaplain positions. What’s with that? The North American Mission Board said it was to be ‘consistent with the spirit of the *Baptist Faith and Message* 2000.’ That’s a mighty mean and ignorant spirit, if you ask me.”

“Pastor, if our church got like that, we’d slowly whittle the thing down to only you and me. Then you would have to go! Just imagine ... the Church of Birdie!” Watching her turn beatific was more than I bargained for.

“Birdie, why good folks want to support this nonsense and keep giving them their missions money is beyond my way of thinking. Seems no one wants to hear that the emperor is prancing down the street in his undies. The Southern Baptists talk about wanting to reach the whole world, but when they reach them, they make everybody have to conform to who they are. God help us if that passes for evangelism. Sounds to me more like brainwashing!”

“Pastor, maybe there’s some good news buried here among all the Baptist crud. Look at it this way. If the Southern Baptists change their name, we won’t have to keep telling folks we meet we’re not an SBC church! It’s the best news we’ve heard out of Nashville in a long, long time.”

“Amen, Sister Birdie. Amen.”

—Keith D. Herron is pastor of *Holmeswood Baptist Church* in Kansas City, Mo.

# 2004 Formations Commentary

Bible Study resources for the adult Formations lessons available from Smyth & Helwys Publishing ([www.helwys.com](http://www.helwys.com))

## LESSONS FOR: Sunday, May 2-30, 2004



Winnie Williams is an author, a retired professor and a member of First Baptist Church of Clemson, S.C.

May 2, 2004

## Christian joy

Philippians 1:1-26

For most of us, it is difficult to identify with Paul's confinement in a Roman prison when he wrote to the church at Philippi. I vividly recall the nearest I came to feeling imprisoned was the wintry month I spent teaching at a university in China.

I had no idea of the barriers I would face living under communism. The fenced-in building on campus where I lived was guarded around the clock. With the lack of Chinese language skills, I had little communication with the Chinese except for the three faculty members who served as interpreters for the three-hours-a-day class I taught. I was alone most of the time.

Unfamiliar food was delivered in a large thermos bottle and placed outside my door along with a thermos of hot water. I was always cold, could not leave the campus unless an official of the university accompanied me, and was unable to discuss religion or politics freely. It was the most confining period in my life, and I felt utterly alone. It was only through prayer that I managed to survive that difficult experience.

Thus, I am able to somewhat identify with Paul's predicament as he wrote this long affectionate letter to the people of Philippi from his prison cell. In it he affirms that Jesus Christ is the reason for his love for the Philippians and the one who gives purpose to his life. This bond with Jesus Christ is so strong that he describes his relationship as a slave for and to his master, Jesus Christ.

*Discuss: What did being "a slave of Jesus Christ" imply to the Philippians? Does this implication of being a slave have the same inference today?*

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The Philippian letter was most likely a response to inquiries by the church regarding Paul's welfare and was probably intended to be read aloud to groups gathered in homes. Paul was passionate in expressing his love repeatedly for those cherished people.

*Discuss: Do bonding relationships exist today between church leaders and church members? Evaluate the nature of Paul's prayer of thanksgiving and relate how we can apply it to our prayers of thanks for fellow Christians. (Review Psalm 100.)*

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Paul's response to the Philippians, who desired to learn about his plight in prison, gives evidence of the great soul of Paul. He only briefly detailed his personal hardships, for he was more concerned with how his being confined to prison affected his preaching of Christ, which was the sole purpose of his life (read 1 Cor. 9:15-18).

*Discuss: Does our culture of individualism and self-interest affect our understanding of and behavior in acting out our faith?*

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Even when Paul, possibly with his emotions on edge, faced trial and the possibility of death, he exhibited optimism. No matter how tough life became for Paul, he spoke and behaved in such a manner as to honor God and provide an exemplary model as a follower of Jesus Christ. He chose not to be the center of his own life, but to breathe and live Christ in every area of his existence. For Paul, to die was gain. But there was more for him to do on earth, and he would be diligent and aggressive in his service to Jesus Christ (read 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

*Discuss: When we experience great inner struggles, we sometimes withdraw from our responsibility for others and center on our own problems. How was Paul a model for looking beyond himself to a greater good? How can we anchor our lives in Jesus Christ so that adversity strengthens us rather than alienating our service to others?*

May 9, 2004

## Living like Christ

Philippians 1:27-2:13

During Paul's imprisonment in Rome, he diminished the extent of his sufferings as he wrote to the Philippians and urged them to remember that they were suffering not only for him, but also for Christ. He encouraged the church to live the Christian life, even though it was not easy to do so in a military colony like Philippi. He appealed to them to be of good courage and never give up the struggle of sharing the news of Jesus Christ.

Several years ago I was involved in a mission project in Albania, a Balkan country that had for the previous 50 years endured the harsh communist leadership of Enver Hoxha. Hoxha avowed that Albania was an atheist state as he eliminated religious leaders and demolished churches and mosques.

During that period of persecution, a local farmer found a Bible that had been slipped into the country by a Gideon, secretly read it and discovered the way to salvation. He became convinced that a tenth of his meager land belonged to God and whatever crops the land produced he would sell and use the money to glorify God. Through the years, he saved enough money to construct a building on God's land.

Years later, after Hoxha died and freedom was on the horizon during the early 1990s, missionaries were allowed to enter Albania. The farmer contacted one of the missionaries and said, "I knew you would come. I have a building ready for us to worship God." The farmer's life had been at risk, as was Paul's, for proclaiming the knowledge of the good news. Do we dare to take risks to share our faith?

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Paul advocated that the Philippians would be stronger in their boldness for Christ if they were unified, and he assured them that their faith would be stronger as a result of their struggles. He pleaded with them to stand together, to be of one mind and to let their manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



**Cooperative Baptist Fellowship** provides these Bible study resources to church leaders through this supplement to *Baptists Today*. For more information on how CBF is "serving Christians and churches as they discover their God-given mission," visit [www.cbfonline.org](http://www.cbfonline.org) or call 770-220-1600.



*Discuss: How do members standing together strengthen the church? Why have so many secular support groups evolved for people who have similar life concerns? Would this approach be appropriate for churches?*

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Conflict between church members may cause anguish and hurt feelings and be non-productive, with an end result of diminishing the functions of the church. It can bring the ministry of the church to a screeching halt or at least a slothful pace.

Paul implored the Philippian church members to work together in “one heart and mind and purpose” and to “humble yourselves through love for others.” Rivalry and discord seem to be an ancient disease, and yet we have not found the “penicillin” to eliminate it even among Christians. Is it possible that we are the carriers of the disease, but can detect it more clearly in others than ourselves?

*Discuss: Does “self” get in the way of solving church conflict? Should Christians be expected to agree on all theological diversity? How does being in full accord (Phil 3:15; 4:22) address diversity?*

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Some New Testament interpreters believe that verses 6-11 are a hymn sung by the early churches and Paul used these verses as a reminder of his earlier teaching. The hymn states that the people must demonstrate self-denial and divest themselves of stature and privileges. It is a reminder of Isaiah 45:23 that states every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Paul often verbalized that Jesus Christ is Lord (see Rom. 10:9 and 1 Cor. 12:13). God demonstrates who he is by becoming human, being obedient even unto the cross and bringing freedom to those who surrender to him.

*Discuss: Review a hymn that expresses your own or your church’s philosophy. Since God set us free, can we be instruments to alleviate the oppression of other races and genders, of the poor and neglected people of the world and help set them free? Are denominational disagreements justifiable when they cause Christians to interact negatively? How can we have peaceful disagreements?*

May 16, 2004

## What is important?

Philippians 3:7-16

In what do we place our trust? Is it in something we have learned from others? Is it in something we advocate? Is it in something we have heard or read? Are these “things” we trust of the world or

of God? Paul reviewed his earlier life and realized he no longer would dwell on past things but because Christ had revolutionized his life, he would move forward with God at the helm.

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Though we are earthly people by birth, we are heavenly people by choice. Paradoxically, as heavenly citizens we become involved with the ways of the world. Instead of bringing heaven to earth, we allow earth to steal from us the blessings of Christ. Whether it is authority, worshipping false Gods or being obsessed with materialism, all these earthly things are enemies of the cross.

Have you noticed the abundance of storage buildings that have popped up everywhere in the last few years? People have so much “stuff,” they need extra space for storing it. When I was a child, my parents’ house had only two closets — and they were not even filled. Our lives today become more and more filled with materialism. Paul cautioned the Philippians regarding the priorities in their lives.

*Discuss: Does society contaminate churches to a greater extent than churches positively influence society? In what way does materialism render false security? Are you willing to pay the cost of being a Christian?*

Paul found security in Jesus Christ and was willing to relinquish everything in order to experience Christ’s almighty power.

*Discuss: Did Paul’s heritage enhance or hinder his understanding and acceptance of Jesus Christ? (Read of his conversion in Acts 9:3-10.) What attributes does a Christian in today’s world need for obtaining the passion for Christ that Paul demonstrated? Have all Christians experienced an awe-inspiring conversion as did Paul on the road to Damascus, or can the acceptance of Jesus Christ be a growing and gradual experience?*

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While I was in Athens, Greece, a few years ago I visited the Temple of Zeus and some sites that were significant in Paul’s life. I was especially interested in the sites where Olympian races had been run during early periods of history. As I surveyed the areas, I visualized the runners with lean muscular bodies who had trained for years and readied themselves to receive a reward at the end of the race. Often the reward was a garland placed on the head of the winner at the finish line. I visualized how the runners stretched and strained every muscle to be the first to reach the finish line and claim this prize.

Paul used the metaphor of running because racing was familiar to the people of Philippi. He said Christians would suffer and endure hard-

ships in their life’s race, but that these trials are not nearly so difficult to bear if one is aware that the greatest prize is spiritual blessings.

*Discuss: What are the “prizes” for Christians in today’s society? Paul never reached the perfection (or maturity in Christ) he desired, but he continually strove to follow the will of God. Does “perfect” insinuate absolute perfection or the relative state of striving to be like Christ? Do you think Paul was “boasting” when he set himself up as an example? What attributes do you possess that are positive examples for others? Are people of wealth and stature more likely to be rewarded with leadership positions in churches than those of less stature?*

May 23, 2004

## Getting along in church

Philippians 2:14-30, 3:17-4:4, 4:14-23

Unfortunately, most Christians have experienced conflict within their churches at one time or another. Over the years I have attended many churches, and at one time or the other there was some element of strife and conflict in each of them. Paul was aware of the conflict in the Philippian church and encouraged the people to address the issue, giving directions on not only how church members could glorify Christ, but also how to seek peace and harmony. Following are some of Paul’s suggestions.

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Paul suggested the church should be aware of members who are stubborn, dishonest, selfish and vain. They are troublemakers and fail to be shining models for Jesus Christ. He strongly recommended that the church approach these troublemakers and try to resolve the existing conflict within the church. He may have been attempting to head off future problems as well.

*Discuss: What are crucial factors that lead to disunity in churches? What solutions would you offer for resolving disagreements? To what degree do stubbornness, dishonesty, selfishness and vanity hinder the witness of Christians?*

\*\*\*

Paul requested that the people of Philippi welcome his dear friends Epaphroditus and Timothy into their church fellowship. Since he could not go to Philippi at that time, he wanted the church to honor his friends just as they had loved and honored him. They were in essence an extension of Paul.

*Discuss: What are the elements of a warm, caring, receiving church? In what manner could your group demonstrate love and appreciation to individuals in your church or community?*



Paul warned the church of false teachers such as those who oppose the cross and follow their own appetites. Beware of those who are filled with greed, he said, those who seek recognition and have ambitions of only earthly goals rather than citizenship in heaven. Paul wanted the church members to be firm in their relationship with Jesus Christ just as he had demonstrated for them.

*Discuss: How does materialism interface with contentment and our obligation to Jesus Christ? Who are the false prophets we encounter daily? Can one be a heavenly citizen and a citizen of the earth simultaneously?*

\*\*\*

Conflict had arisen between two women of the Philippian church who in the past had been most helpful to Paul as teammates for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the church to assist these women in settling their conflict.

Several years ago I went to a foreign country to spend a month as an educational consultant to some missionary teachers. I expected to find those 30 dedicated servants of Christ working in perfect harmony, but I immediately discovered conflicts and power struggles among them. They actually had some of the same characteristics Paul found in the church at Philippi. Those missionaries needed to read Paul's admonitions to the Philippians.

*Discuss: Are we weaker Christians because we have conflicts? Do outside conflicts, such as in the home, business or political arena, affect unity within the church?*

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The church at Philippi must have been delighted to hear these encouraging words from Paul: Be happy, be joyful, be filled with delight and ecstasy for we Christians are safe in the arms of Jesus. God had brought contentment, peace and joy to Paul, so he was anxious to share this assurance that Christ would come soon and all was well. The title to the song "Don't Worry, Be Happy" could have been Paul's theme song.

*Discuss: Are living in peace and joy innate or learned behaviors? Can there be peace and joy in difficult circumstances?*

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Do you remember the elation you have felt when an unexpected gift arrives? Paul was most appreciative for the gifts the Philippians sent him. He said their "sweet sacrifice" was pleasing to God and that God would supply their spiritual needs because of their acceptance of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

*Discuss: Is there a discrepancy between what we say we believe and what we actually do in supporting the church and others financially?*

May 30, 2004

## Parting advice, example

Philippians 4:4-13

Most of us meet head-on with a host of problems each day, though some of these problems have more twists and turns than do others. Nevertheless, we often covet advice from someone who loves and understands us, who is concerned about our welfare, and who embraces Christian principles.

Paul met these criteria as he offered advice to the Christians at Philippi in resolving problems within their church. He suggested they were not to "worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart" (v. 6). In addition, they were to rely upon Jesus Christ, seek peace and make commitments to him.

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I have heard that about 90 percent of what we worry about never comes to pass. Whether or not this is true, I try to recall the statement when I become anxious — such as when my husband is late returning from a trip and I am just sure he has had an accident or when a grandchild has a stiff leg and I begin to visualize her with some type of paralysis.

We tend to be anxious about a pain in the stomach, thinking it might be cancerous, or we wonder if we will ever have enough money to buy a home or take a vacation as most of our friends do. These concerns likely will not materialize but, even if they do, we need to hear Paul's advice when he says we are not to worry or be anxious for the Lord is near. He admonishes us to pray about everything and tell God our needs, for God will give us peace and quiet our hearts (see Psalm 119:165; John 14:27). Likewise, Stanley Saunders (*Interpretation of Philippians and Galatians*) reminds us that "peace is found not in circumstances but in God."

*Discuss: Does being "anxious" demonstrate a lack of dependency upon God? What measures can you take to assist your family members in overcoming anxieties through a greater reliance upon God?*

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Late last year I was in Guatemala serving as a volunteer with several career missionaries. One of the missionaries stated that she would be returning to the United States soon due to lack

of funds. Numerous individuals and churches had promised her support, but the promises had not been fulfilled. Her heart was broken because she would be unable to continue in her ministry without their promised financial support.

In his book, *Bound for Joy*, Stuart Briscoe states that the people in Philippi had agreed to be responsible in part for Paul's financial support (Phil. 4:10), as well as provide moral support during his ministry. However, letters from the Philippians eventually dried up, and support did not arrive for 10 years. Paul must have experienced pain and disappointment from this group of friends just as did my missionary friend.

*Discuss: How serious do we take our commitments to support ministry programs?*

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Foreign missionaries always give this advice to volunteers upon arrival to a mission field: "Be flexible" and "adapt" to whatever situation occurs. It is not always easy to follow this advice, however.

While I was in South Africa for a five-week mission trip, I was invited to participate in teaching a course at a seminary in Swaziland. I "adapted" more that week than I had on numerous mission trips before. I adapted to living without electricity, writing letters by candle light, eating strange and wonderful food prepared over an open fire by indigenous women under less than sanitary conditions, revising my seminary teaching to a junior high school level from the graduate level for which I had prepared, fording streams in a car when there were no bridges, and being confronted by large poisonous snakes in and around the yard where I lived.

I never totally adapted while in Swaziland, but I often remembered Paul's words to the Philippians to be content with whatever the situation. Paul came to grips with his circumstances and developed the necessary adaptability to walk with God in all situations.

*Discuss: What types of adaptability are necessary for you to become "content" in your home, workplace or church? When should we adapt, and when should we try to change circumstances?*

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Paul provides noble bits of advice for Christians in Philippians 4. They include leaning on Christ, being open to God, resting one's soul in God and praising God. He also encourages self-guidance, consideration for others, refraining from worry, and being gentle, happy, thankful and content in every situation.

*Discuss: As we engage proactively with our culture, how can we encompass Paul's counsel?*

2004

# The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

Brought to you this month  
by Connie Campbell



## Children's Sermons: *A Message for Everyone*

It is right and appropriate that everyone who "brings the Word" in any context explores the differences between preaching "to" children and "for" children. Maybe a better way of stating this is to say it's the difference between preaching in front of children and including them in the sermon.

A typical children's sermon time has little to do with the children; it is for the adults. The adults get to see and feel good about all the children who are in worship. The adults also get a bite-size piece of the sermon they can chew on and remember.

Usually children's sermons are short — five minutes or less — and touch on a

scripture idea. Many will have some object or picture or even a prize for the children to look at or receive.

The children are usually seated on the steps in front of the pulpit, looking out at the congregation while the minister or leader stands in front of them and talks. This means all eyes are on the children when the questions are asked — so answering "Jesus" is always a safe bet! Even if it's the wrong answer, everyone thinks it is cute and sweet.

The opposite of having a children's sermon is offering an adults-only sermon and expecting the children to sit perfectly still and attentive while the preacher proposes "that

one can predicate premillennial vs. post-millennial prophecy only by purveying the scriptures that pronounce the predominance of the Paraclete."

With this approach you not only have lost all the children in the room, but you've also lost most of the adults. Vocabulary and alliteration alone do not connect anyone to the scripture message and real life. Thinking about the children in your congregation can help you make those connections for everyone.

In fact, many preachers use the same processes in preparing both children's and adult sermons.

### Making children's sermons appropriate

*Ask how you will be heard.* Instead of standing in front of the children, sit down among them. Let them turn and look at you as if you were going to tell them a story.

*Reflect on how the text moves.* Allow your story to build; add drama with your voice and expressions. Ask questions that allow for more than one answer, or allow children to answer from their own experience. For example, ask: "How many of you have ever been scared?" "Do you know how it feels to try something new for the first time?"



### Relating children's sermons to adults

- Stress the point of or give a preview of the adult sermon.
- Present an action strategy: How do we share with others? How do we get ready for worship? What do we do to show someone we love him or her?
- Illustrate the adult sermon point in a way that connects it to listeners of all ages.

*Engage the audience.* Involve the children in the story through physical motions or by repeating phrases. For instance, you might say: "I'm going to tell you a story today about Jesus and big storm. Every time I say 'storm,' I want you to make a sound like a big wind blowing."

*Examine other sources.* Children's books are a treasure trove for sermon illustrations and sometimes make great children's sermons all by themselves. When using children's books, you could: Choose a particular story to read to the children and allow the adults to "overhear" the message. Scan the pictures into a PowerPoint presentation and project them onto a screen while reading the story aloud. Provide background music to the story, furthering the drama and feelings.

### Relating adult sermons to children

- Picture the faces of all potential listeners — including children — and then tailor your sermons to connect with everyone.
- Think about feelings and experiences common to children and adults. We all laugh and cry; feel happy, scared, hurt and proud; experience birth, death, disappointment and achievement. Ask how these occurrences are alike and different.
- Read and listen to the sermon text as a child, as if you have never heard it before, so that old assumptions will fall away and new light will shine through.
- Write as if you will be speaking to children. Utilize clear thoughts and simple language to make the truth accessible for everyone. Draw on insights from a child's world.
- Employ the power of storytelling and encourage listeners to share their stories.

**THE RESOURCE PAGE** is provided by the Congregational Life office of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in partnership with *Baptists Today* and for those dedicated lay leaders working in the educational ministries of local churches. This month's page was written by Connie Campbell, minister to families with children at First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tenn.

First Baptist Church, Commerce, Ga., is seeking a full-time **pastor** with a master's of divinity degree or additional training to lead in growing and nurturing the people of the church and community. This person will lead and coordinate the work of the staff: associate pastor for youth and children's ministries, part-time music minister, two administrative assistants and part-time custodian. We partner with CBF, SBC, state and local Baptist entities, and various other Christian organizations and social ministries. Please send a cover letter and résumé to: Ancil Baird, Chairperson, Pastor Search Team, 180 Parkview Dr., Commerce, GA 30529. Information must be submitted by June 1.

First Baptist in Blowing Rock, N.C., is seeking an **interim pastor** with a B.D. or M. Div. for a 300+ diverse congregation in a small mountain resort town. Candidate must be duly aligned with CBF and SBC. Please submit résumé and references to: First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 3, Blowing Rock, NC 28605.

First Baptist in Blowing Rock, N.C., is seeking a **pastor** with a B.D. or M. Div. for a 300+ diverse congregation in a small mountain resort town. Candidate must be duly aligned with CBF and SBC. Please submit résumé and references to: First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 3, Blowing Rock, NC 28605.

Signal Mountain Baptist, a 57-year-old church in a suburban community, 10 minutes from downtown Chattanooga, with a congregation of approximately 500 resident members, seeks a forward-looking and creative **senior pastor**. The church has strong ties to SBC, CBF and other Baptist entities. Send

résumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 939 Ridgeway Ave., Signal Mountain, TN 37377 or [LindaRWyatt@aol.com](mailto:LindaRWyatt@aol.com).

The Oaks Baptist Church in Lyons, Ga., 1 1/2 years old, with a current membership of 125, is seeking a **pastor**. Mail résumé to: Pete Frost, 721 Sharpe Dr., Vidalia, GA 30474.

Vienna Baptist Church (VBC), a culturally diverse American Baptist congregation, affiliated with Virginia Baptists, Alliance of Baptists and the Baptist World Alliance, and located in suburban Northern Virginia, seeks a full-time **associate pastor** beginning summer 2004. The new pastor, under the pastor of spiritual formation's direction and supported by lay teams, will work directly with children, youth and their families. VBC's active youth and children's ministries include: regular Bible study, retreats, music, dramas, worship, discipleship programs and local, national and international mission projects. Candidate must have a seminary degree and experience working with youth and children. For more about VBC, visit [www.vbc-va.org](http://www.vbc-va.org). Send letter of interest and résumé to: Associate Pastor Search Team, Vienna Baptist Church, 541 Marshall Rd., SW, Vienna, VA 22180.

**Minister of Adult Missions and Spiritual Maturity:** King's Cross Church, affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, is an exciting, 7-year-old congregation located in Tullahoma, Tenn. The worship style is purposely contemporary to create a non-threatening environment for the unchurched.

Membership has grown from 80 to 400, and we have recently moved to our new facility. We are seeking an individual with a theological education and experience in ministry who can lead adults in local and global missions and toward spiritual maturity. Send résumé to: Chairperson of the Search Team, King's Cross Church, 222 Turkey Creek Rd., Tullahoma, TN 37388. For more information about the church, visit [www.kingscrosschurch.org](http://www.kingscrosschurch.org).

Large, downtown, moderate church seeks a **minister of adult education and outreach** who will give focus and shape to our ministries of formation/transformation of adults into Christlikeness and who will provide overall direction and coordination of strategies for outreach and for external and internal communication (advertising, publications and electronic media). Send résumé to: Mrs. Dorothy Murphree, c/o First Baptist Church, 5 Oak St., Asheville, NC 28801. Applications accepted until position is filled. For further information, including position description, visit [www.fbca.net](http://www.fbca.net).

**Choirmaster/Organist:** Historically inclusive Baptist church desires musician for music education, worship leadership (traditional service/classical music) and various ministerial duties with team ministry approach. Send videotape (playing and conducting) and résumé to: Pastor Sarah Shelton, 2117 University Blvd., Birmingham, AL 35233. For additional information about Baptist Church of the Covenant, visit [www.bcoc.net](http://www.bcoc.net).

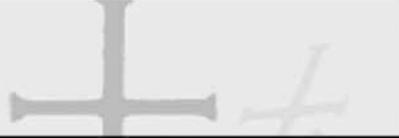
Second Baptist Church of Lubbock, Texas, is seeking a full-time **minister of music and worship** who will coordinate the music ministry of the church. An advanced degree in music education, church music or choral music is preferred. Experience in leading a music program in a church, preferably Baptist, is desired. Second Baptist is a progressive church affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist World Alliance. The church's worship is central to its life and liturgical in style. Please send résumé to: Philip Wise, Senior Pastor, 6109 Chicago Ave., Lubbock, TX 79424.

More classifieds  
page 24 ➤

For rent: Beautiful 2 BR/2 BA guest house at Lake Junaluska, N.C. Completely furnished including 42-foot porch with swing and rocking chairs and a view of the Blue Ridge Mountains. \$450/week. 3-day min. \$295. Contact: [fulbrightrg@cs.com](mailto:fulbrightrg@cs.com) or (828) 456-4887.

For rent: Water Lily #45, Coast Cottages, St. Simons Island, Ga. 5-year-old Victorian vacation home. 3 BR/3 BA. Sleeps 8-10. Complete furnishings. Delightful decor. 3 porches overlooking marsh. Community pool/pavilion. 1/2 block to private beach entrance. \$1600/week/spring. \$2100/week/summer. 3-night min. Contact: Jackie Riley (478) 471-9274 or Ga. Coast Realty (800) 638-1144.

Read about it in *Baptists Today*. Discuss it at [www.BaptistLife.com](http://www.BaptistLife.com)



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➤ Classifieds from page 23

First Baptist Church of Griffin, Ga., constituted in 1841, a church with a current affiliation with the CBF and historic ties to the SBC, is seeking God's will in searching for an energetic, creative and committed **minister of music**. Candidate should have at least a master of music degree, proven leadership qualities, an appreciation for a wide range of music styles, appropriate experience and an interest in leading traditional and celebration worship. Submit résumé and references by May 1 to: Chair, Minister of Music Search Committee, First Baptist Church of Griffin, GA, Inc., P.O. Box 908, Griffin, GA 30224.

North River Baptist Church, a moderate congregation north of Atlanta, seeks a **minister of music and youth**. Candidate will have experience in recruiting, equipping and leading teams of volunteers to help accomplish the church's vision of reaching its community for Christ. He or she will have the ability to relate to and motivate students, and be able to lead worship in a variety of styles. If this sounds like you, and you would be interested in becoming part of our team, please address your résumé to: NRBC, 12090 Hardscrabble Rd., Roswell, GA 30075.

**Minister of Education and Youth:**  
Full-time position with primary

responsibility to youth ministry including planning, implementing programs, mission activities, visitation and counseling youth; also responsible for education ministry for entire church. Family activity center recently completed. M.Div. preferred. Send résumé to: Personnel Committee, Edenton Baptist Church, 200 S. Granville St., Edenton, NC 27932 or [edentombaptist@yahoo.com](mailto:edentombaptist@yahoo.com).

Progressive Baptist church in beautiful coastal community seeks dynamic **minister of youth and recreation**. Please send résumé to: Search Committee, 1501 Beasley Rd., Wilmington, NC 28409, or call (910) 395-0343 for job application.

children and their families. We are a growing church reaching many young families and desire to build a ministry that is creatively reflective of our historic Baptist witness. We are a congregation of 1,600 members affiliated with both the CBF and SBC. Send résumé to: Minister with Children Search Committee, Shades Crest Baptist Church, 452 Park Ave., Birmingham, AL 35226 or attach bio to an e-mail directed to our pastor's attention: Dr. Dennis Foust, [dfoust@shadescrest.org](mailto:dfoust@shadescrest.org). To learn more about us, please visit [www.shadescrest.org](http://www.shadescrest.org) or call (205) 822-1360.

**Associate Coordinator, CBF Florida:** This is a full-time position and requires that the person live in Lakeland, travel throughout the state to visit churches, network and build relationships. Submit résumé and recommendations to: Carolyn Anderson, CBF Florida, P.O. Box 2556, Lakeland, FL 33806-2556 or [canderson@floridachf.org](mailto:canderson@floridachf.org) in a word document.

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## CBF has the following opening in the Atlanta Resource Center



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Position reports directly to the CBF Coordinator. Responsibilities include overseeing the daily operations of the CBF staff including direct supervision of the offices of Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Facilities/Office Management and the CBF Resource Link. The Coordinator of Administration will assist the CBF Coordinator by functioning as chief of staff and will act in the absence of, and on behalf of, the CBF Coordinator as required. The position relates to the CBF Coordinators and staff personnel, Coordinating Council members, State and Regional Coordinators, churches, constituents, and partnering organizations.

**Requirements include:** Bachelor's degree required; graduate level work preferred. A minimum of 10 years experience in organizational management, supervision and administration, preferably with non-profits. Qualified candidate will possess demonstrated skill in organizational leadership, written and verbal communications, and human relations. Proven comprehensive knowledge of the theories, principles, and practices of administrative management and working knowledge of the fields of Human Resource Management, budgeting, accounting, and information systems required.

To be considered, qualified applicants should e-mail résumés to: [searchcommittee@thefellowship.info](mailto:searchcommittee@thefellowship.info) or mail to: CBF, Attn: Search Committee, P.O. Box 1876, Raleigh, NC 27602.

Deadline to submit résumé is April 30, 2004, but the process will remain open until the appropriate candidate is found.

*CBF is a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice. The Fellowship's mission is to serve Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission.*

# Mainstream Baptist leader claims SBC 'holy war' threatens world peace

By John Pierce and Greg Warner

NASHVILLE (ABP) — Southern Baptist Convention leaders are to blame for sparking “riots in countries around the world with finger-pointing pronouncements and inflammatory rhetoric about Islam and its founder,” said a moderate Baptist leader.

Bruce Prescott, executive director of Mainstream Baptists of Oklahoma, also accused SBC leaders of leading a “neo-conservative political crusade to assert American supremacy” and firing scores of SBC missionaries who refused to sign “an idolatrous and unconscionable creed.”

Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee, denied and denounced Prescott’s accusations.

Prescott strongly charged current SBC leaders with first “waging a holy war against moderates within the Baptist family” and then “waging a holy war against Muslims and Hindus and humanists and homosexuals.”

“Already, the weapons of war are shifting from ballots and pink slips to bullets,” Prescott told participants in the convocation

of the Mainstream Baptist Network Feb. 27-28 in Nashville. “Now people are literally dying.”

Prescott said SBC leaders pose a threat to liberty of conscience, religious liberty and even world peace.

“All of these things have happened in full public view...,” said Prescott. “Why is there no outcry in our churches? Why do Baptists dutifully fill the coffers of the [SBC] Sunday morning after Sunday morning and thereby underwrite, endorse and perpetuate such evils?”

Prescott said he believes many Southern Baptists continue supporting the convention, despite these actions, because current SBC leaders assume the responsibilities that previously belonged to each individual. “We are grateful to the SBC for relieving us of the liberty and responsibility for making conscientious choices,” said Prescott.

Too many Southern Baptists willingly turn over their responsibilities for decision making to autocratic denominational leaders, said Prescott.

By doing so, they violate the historic Baptist principle known as liberty of

conscience, he said. “Freedom is a burden. Liberty of conscience means you must accept the responsibility to make conscientious choices.”

“Mr. Prescott’s remarks are outlandish, patently false, and misleading,” Morris Chapman told Associated Baptist Press. “How disingenuous of him to accuse Southern Baptist leaders of using ‘inflammatory rhetoric’ in the very same speech where he avers ‘Southern Baptists are increasingly playing a major role in a cycle of escalating violence that could literally lead to the nuclear incineration of the very people to whom we once felt called to share the good news.’ What motivates a person to say something so outrageous?”

“Mr. Prescott has slandered millions of faithful, godly Southern Baptists,” Chapman continued in his statement. “He may call himself ‘Mainstream Baptist’ but is anything but. I am confident the free and faithful people who populate our Baptist congregations will continue to turn a deaf ear to the shrill, ridiculous, rantings of Mr. Prescott and any of his persuasion and bitterness.” **BT**

## SBC president Jack Graham calls for Southern Baptist name change

By Tony Cartledge

*Biblical Recorder*

NASHVILLE (ABP) — As “a network of churches that circle the planet,” the Southern Baptist Convention must consider changing its name to “reflect who we are and what we are doing nationally and internationally,” SBC president Jack Graham told the convention’s Executive Committee Feb. 16.

Southern Baptists are viewed in the nation and the world as leaders among conservative Christians, said Graham, pastor of the Dallas-area Prestonwood Baptist Church. “I have loved the Southern

Baptist Convention and its name,” Graham said. “But this name that I love and you love speaks of our region and doesn’t move us beyond to the great cities of the Northeast, to the West and the Midwest. It’s time to consider a new name that reflects our future.”

Graham’s call came a day before the Executive Committee voted to remove the SBC from the Baptist World Alliance. Southern Baptist leaders say the BWA pullout will make way for a new international network of like-minded conservative Christians.

Graham said he will appoint a name-change study committee that is

“geographically and generationally” representative, reflecting “the heart and compassion and theology of the SBC around the world.”

“It is my prayer that the committee can bring a recommendation to the SBC in 2005,” he said. “Timing is everything,” said Graham, noting that “seven or eight” previous studies of a possible name change resulted in no change, including one initiated by W.A. Criswell in 1974. The last effort was in 1999.

“This is a significant, important decision,” Graham said, but “Southern Baptists are always willing to embrace significant change.” **BT**

## NEWS DIGEST

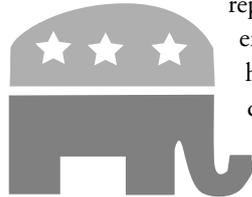
*Religion News From Staff and Wire Reports*

## Gallup: Republicans more 'religious' than Democrats

WASHINGTON (RNS) — Republicans, who already appear more willing to cast their vote according to their religious convictions, are more "religious" than either Democrats or independents, according to a new Gallup Poll.

Gallup's annual survey of leading religious indicators, which measures religiosity on a 1,000-point scale, gave Republicans a score of 722, while Democrats got 653 and independents scored 581.

In a series of seven categories used to score the index — from church attendance to confidence in organized religion and whether or not religion is "important in life" — Republicans consistently rank higher than Democrats.



Linda Lyons, education and youth editor of Gallup's Tuesday Briefing report, said many of the differences are "fairly modest," but have grown deeper in the past decade.

For example, 75 percent of Republicans are members of a church, compared to 67 percent of Democrats.

Two-thirds of Republicans say religion is very important, compared to 63 percent of Democrats. The differences are most pronounced on confidence in organized religion, with Republicans outpacing Democrats by 11 points, 63 to 52 percent.

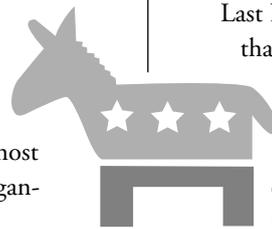
In addition, since 1993, Republicans

have risen in the index, from 711 to 722, while Democrats shrank from 671 to 653, and independents fell from 607 to 581.

On every indicator, independents trail both major parties. Lyons said the independents' reluctance to join a party or specific religious ideas may "spring from an unwillingness to commit oneself to a set of prescribed beliefs."

Last November, a Gallup Poll showed that 48 percent of GOP voters said religion was important to their vote — up from 37 percent in 2000 compared to only 28 percent of Democrats, down from 31 percent in 2000.

The 2003 religious indicators survey was drawn from Gallup Polls conducted throughout the year. **BT**



## Polls say gay marriage not a top issue for voters

(RNS) — Gay marriage is not a decisive issue for American voters in the 2004 presidential election, despite national debate over gay rights, according to recent polls.

A CBS News poll found that more than half (52 percent) of all voters would support a candidate who doesn't share their views on gay marriage. Only 4 percent of voters said gay marriage is the main issue they want to hear about in the election.

Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., does not support legalization of gay marriage, but opposes the constitutional amendment proposed by President Bush banning gay marriage completely.

Voters in a poll sponsored by the Alliance to End Hunger said candidates' positions on issues such as poverty and hunger are more important than positions on gay marriage. In the survey, a majority of voters — 78 percent — said a candidate's plan for fighting poverty would affect their voting decision, while only 15 percent said a candidate's position on gay marriage would matter.

"In a campaign year increasingly

According to CBS, nearly 60 percent of Americans said they favored an amendment limiting marriage to a man and a woman

dominated by talk of moral values, it is very significant to find that a large majority of voters believes a candidate's position on fighting poverty is more important than their position on gay marriage," Jim Wallis of Call to Renewal, a faith-based anti-poverty group, said in a statement.

A Pew Research Center study found that a national ban on gay marriage, despite recent debate, is not an issue of importance for voters. Gay marriage did, however, rank as a more important issue than abortion or gun control.

The Pew poll, which surveyed 1,500 U.S. adults, found that American voters oppose gay marriage by more than two-to-one. Gay marriage remains a "make-or-break" voting issue for two-thirds of gay

marriage opponents but only 6 percent of gay marriage supporters.

Some voters are more strongly opposed than others, according to the Pew report.

"Even among gay marriage opponents, the issue has a disproportionate impact on some groups — notably conservative Republicans, evangelical Christians and voters age 65 and older," the report said.

Six in ten Republican voters strongly oppose gay marriage, as do two-thirds of evangelical Protestant voters. Of voters 65 and older, 60 percent oppose gay marriage. Catholics and mainline Protestants are less likely to count gay marriage as an important factor in their voting decision.

According to CBS, opposition to gay marriage is growing. Nearly 60 percent of Americans said they favor an amendment limiting marriage to a man and a woman, up from 55 percent last December.

The number of voters who favored allowing homosexual couples to legally marry in a July CBS poll was 40 percent; it has dropped steadily since then to a current low of 30 percent. **BT**

## AP survey estimates 1,341 Catholic priests accused of abuse

(RNS) — A national survey by the Associated Press estimates that at least 1,341 Catholic priests have been accused of abuse since 1950.

The AP study, which counts only the 80 dioceses (out of 195) that have released such figures, came two weeks before a national abuse accounting released Feb. 27 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Sixty additional dioceses released their local figures by the end of the month, while others have not set a date or do not plan to release those statistics.

Some of the nation's largest dioceses that have been hardest-hit by the scandal, including Boston and Los Angeles, have not released their local figures.

The AP survey also showed the church has paid \$186.1 million to settle abuse claims or pay for victims' therapy. The survey said the 80 dioceses contacted by the AP received 2,870 abuse allegations from victims or their families.

"It's never been about how many priests, how many victims, how much money," said David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. "It's always been about how bishops respond." **BT**

## 'Souper Bowl' collects \$4 million

(RNS) — Churches nationwide raised more than \$4 million for thousands of charities as part of the "Souper Bowl for Caring" on Super Bowl Sunday this year.

The Souper Bowl for Caring is a faith-based group that coordinates charity donation drives at churches across the country every year on Super Bowl Sunday. At participating churches, young people collect \$1 donations in large soup pots at the end of worship services. Churches then funnel the donations to a local charity of their choice. Many donate to local soup kitchens, though some also give to international missions. No money is sent to Souper Bowl for Caring.

This year, more than 12,000 churches participated in the drive. Since its beginning with one South Carolina church in 1990, the Souper Bowl for Caring has raised more than \$24 million for charities throughout the United States.

"Americans everywhere can be heartened that thousands of young people in every state joined together in caring for others on Super Bowl weekend," Brad Smith, founder and

executive director of the Souper Bowl for Caring, said in a statement.

"In light of this year's halftime debacle, wouldn't it be exciting to see all Americans follow the lead of these youth to transform Super Bowl Sunday into a day of unprecedented giving?"

The donation total is expected to climb, since not all participants have yet reported their numbers. This year's giving already tops the \$3.5 million raised in 2003.

The Souper Bowl for Caring also coordinates a "Service Blitz" each year, when hundreds of youth groups work at local soup kitchens or food banks the Saturday before the Super Bowl. Roughly 10,000 youth participated in the Service Blitz in 2003, according to the Souper Bowl Web site.

"Although the Souper Bowl of Caring is a small step in the fight against hunger, it is a way for young people to put God's love into action by developing a heart for helping others," Smith said. "The goal is for these young people to see they can make a difference and for them to continue contributing through volunteerism when they reach adulthood." **BT**

## Robertson honored by tourism official for support of Israel

(RNS) — Religious broadcaster Pat Robertson was honored Feb. 15 by Israel's chief tourism official during the National Religious Broadcasters annual convention.

Robertson was praised for his support of Israel during a breakfast held in conjunction with the convention meeting in Charlotte, N.C., the Associated Press reported.

When accepting the honor, the founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network restated the support evangelical Christians have for Israel. He praised the country's survival in the face of a "fanatical religion" of its Muslim neighbors. He also said Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was raised to complete the work of Hitler, the AP reported.

Jibril Hough, president of the Charlotte chapter of the Islamic Political Party of America, denounced the recognition and the presence of Israeli Tourism Minister Benny Elon and Robertson at the event.

"Both men have spewed anti-Islam rhetoric and have done what they could to incite antagonism toward Islam, Muslims in America and abroad and the plight of the Palestinian people," Hough said in an e-mail to *The Charlotte Observer*.

After the tribute to Robertson, Elon said: "Not all of the Muslims are enemies. But there are many that have really forgotten morality."

In a separate plenary speech at the

broadcasters' convention, evangelist Franklin Graham — who also has drawn criticism for comments about Islam — chose to focus on domestic issues.

He encouraged evangelicals to re-elect Bush to reduce the "garbage" that was viewed during the recent Super Bowl halftime show.

"If this president is not re-elected, the floodgates of this garbage is going to be open because there won't be anyone to stand against it," he said.

Graham, the son of and successor to evangelist Billy Graham, also said Islamic fundamentalists want to destroy this country and commended the president for waging war against Iraq and Saddam Hussein. **BT**

## NEWS DIGEST

## Parents file suits linking schools, holiday expressions

(RNS) — Parents filed two separate lawsuits in early February on behalf of elementary school students involved in church-state battles centered on the proper recognition of holidays in the classroom.

The parents of a first-grader sued a Dayton, Ohio-area school district Feb. 6 on religious discrimination grounds because their daughter could not pass out candy with the “jellybean prayer” to classmates.

Allen and Sheila Wuebben said in a U.S. District Court lawsuit that a teacher stopped the candy distribution last Easter, then phoned them to say the Kettering City School District had a policy against students giving religious literature to classmates.

“We’re saying that kindergartners are too impressionable,” said Kettering schools Superintendent Bob Mengerink, adding that young children may think the religious

message is from the school. “We worried that the kids might not be able to make the distinction.”

The Kettering couple described themselves as adherents of the Christian faith who “sincerely believe that their religion requires them to tell others about Jesus Christ.”

In both suits, the holiday greetings the children intended to distribute had a range of colors included in their messages about God.

The “jellybean prayer” is a Christian rhyme that has spread around the world on the Internet in recent years. One line goes, “Green is for the grass he made.”

The second case, filed Feb. 9, involves a parent suing on behalf of a 6-year-old son who was prohibited from distributing a Jesus-themed Christmas card at an Oregon school party in December.

That card included a message about

“The Meaning of the Candy Cane.”

The message said the “J” shape of the candy cane represents Jesus; the color white represents his pureness and the red represents “the blood Jesus sheds for us.”

The Gresham-Barlow School District reviewed its policies the day of the North Gresham Elementary School party and allowed the student to distribute the candy canes without the religious message attached.

“We think censoring this young man’s speech because it refers to Jesus is not what the United States Constitution stands for,” said Stuart Roth, an attorney with the American Center for Law and Justice, which is representing Julie Cortez and her son.

John Miner, Gresham-Barlow assistant superintendent, said he had not seen the lawsuit, but said the district has specific policies regarding separation of church and state and takes care to exclude religious labels from December parties. **BT**



## Glossy ‘Biblemag’ hopes to lure teen boys into the Good Book

(RNS) — Sex advice, music reviews and tips on looking good ... no, it’s not the latest issue of *GQ* or *Maxim*. It’s the Bible — for the mind of a teen-age guy.

*Refuel* is the New Testament that looks like an entertainment magazine, and it hits secular and religious bookstores this month. Featuring quizzes and dating hints alongside the Word of God, *Refuel* caters to young Christian men who aren’t otherwise reading Scripture.

“It really was birthed from research we did that said teens don’t read the Bible because it’s too big and too intimidating,” said Laurie Whaley, a spokesperson for Thomas Nelson Inc., the publisher of *Refuel*. “We removed the intimidation factor, so it’s fun — and it’s a Bible.”

*Refuel* features the New Century Version of the Bible, a modern and easy-to-read translation, and is priced for a teen’s budget at \$16.99. It includes recommendations for Christian pop CDs and columns such as “Inside Her Head: Real Girls Give Their Opinions.”

*Refuel* comes on the heels of the *Revolve* Bible, a Bible-magazine published for adolescent girls last year by Thomas Nelson. *Revolve’s* magazine format, complete with glossy pages and pictures of smiling young teens on the cover, was the first “Biblemag” created. After only six months in stores, it boasted higher sales than any other Bible sold in 2003. Now, *Refuel* is poised to dominate the hard-to-please teen male market.

“We’ve had so many requests for it, which really surprised me,” said Kate Etue, managing editor of *Revolve* and *Refuel*. “We literally had hundreds of e-mails from guys telling us they were reading *Revolve*, and asking for a *Revolve* for boys.”

Girls, sex and dating were the top things guys said they most wanted biblical advice about when surveyed by *Refuel’s* editors. Experts and interviews with teen girls offer some answers, all with a scriptural base.

“We don’t shy away from things the church won’t talk about — drugs, oral sex,

suicide, tattoos,” Whaley said. “Teens from across the world are asking about these things.”

*Revolve* is also planning an abbreviated version of the Old Testament, with Psalms and Proverbs. A Biblemag for post-teen women, called *Becoming*, will be published in July.

Some experts see these Bibles as simple evangelism tools Christian teens can bring to their peers.

“My instinct is that kids who are interested in their faith will maybe look at it and show it to their friends,” said Christian Smith, director of the National Study on Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, whose research on teens and religion prompted Thomas Nelson to create *Revolve* and *Refuel*.

With *Revolve* still selling more than five times the rate publishers anticipated and online pre-orders already mounting for *Refuel*, Thomas Nelson expects strong sales for its newest Biblemag. **BT**

## Evangelical churches tackle pornography in their own ranks

(RNS) — “I’m a guy, and I’m supposed to look at porn, right?” That question, says author Henry Rogers, sums up America’s attitude toward pornography.

Pornography is a multibillion-dollar industry and widely available via the Internet — no longer just a dirty little secret. More surprising, however, is that evangelical churches, who over the past decades have led the public policy crusade against indecency, are slowly starting to admit there is widespread use of pornography among men in their own pews.

Between 40 percent and 70 percent of Evangelical Christian men admit they struggle with pornography, says Rogers, a corporate chaplain who records his own experience in *The Silent War* (New Leaf Press).

Rogers and other like-minded experts say pornography addiction has become a problem of epidemic proportions, one that divides men from family and faith.

It is a tricky problem to address.

“The devil loves a secret,” says Al Meredith, pastor of Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. “You don’t have to go down to an adult store now and risk being seen in the parking lot” when it’s readily available on the Internet at the office or at home.

Unlike eating disorders or substance addiction, pornography and sexual addiction still bear a stigma that years of Oprah-ization have drained from other behaviors. Many pastors decline to preach on lust, much less pornography and masturbation.

Now, because of the spread of Internet pornography and studies indicating the number of men who look at it, churches like Wedgwood and McLean (Va.) Bible near Washington, D.C., along with Promise Keepers and the college-targeted Passion ministry, are wading into battle, speaking out against pornography and launching counseling and support groups to help those who struggle with it.

Some experts question whether pornog-

## Religious freedom panel raises concerns about 11 nations considered oppressive

WASHINGTON (RNS) — The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, renewing a plea to closely monitor deteriorating religious rights in Middle and Far Eastern countries, cited 11 nations it believes tolerate religious oppression.

“We believe that the designation of these countries is one of the most important steps toward the advancement of human rights that the United States takes every year,” Michael Young, the commission’s chairman, said at a Feb. 18 State Department briefing intended for foreign reporters.

Young said the commission did not mean for its recommendations to be punitive. Rather, it wants the State Department to encourage countries on the list to improve their record on religious rights.

The commission, an independent, nine-member bipartisan body created by the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998, advises the State Department on its annual designation of “countries of particular concern,” or CPCs, where religious rights are abused.

Five of the countries the commission listed were designated by the State Department last year as countries of

particular concern: Burma, China, Iran, North Korea and Sudan. Iraq was taken off the list following the U.S. invasion.

“It’s our opinion — with the exception of Iraq — that nothing has changed for the better in these countries in a manner that would warrant their removal,” Young said.

In its report to the State Department, the panel also named as “countries of particular concern” Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia,

Turkmenistan and Vietnam. Commissioners were divided over whether India met the CPC criteria.

Nina Shea, executive director of the Freedom House’s Center on Religious Freedom, said India should have made the list of countries of particular concern because of its “forcible Hinduization” of its citizens.

“I was in favor of the CPC designation because the central government not only has not done enough to stop the violence and persecution of non-Hindus,” she said. “The BJP ruling party is allied with some of these violence groups, and its leaders have appeared at their conferences and at the local level have contributed to the violence.” **BT**



raphy is a problem at all.

British attorney and ethicist Francis Bennion writes in *The Sex Code: Morals For Moderns* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson) that “stimulative pornography” is helpful and should generally be treated as “not immoral.”

Not so for Christians, says Eddie Traugher. A Garland, Texas, counselor at Austin Street Church of Christ, Traugher says Scripture clearly condemns pornography. “According to what Jesus says, if you look lustfully at a woman, you’ve committed adultery in your heart.”

Viewing pornography can have the same addictive effect on brain chemistry that alcohol or drugs do, Rogers says. “It

satisfies for a season, but you want more. It’s the same with alcohol.”

Rogers has observed the effect of pornography on the marriages of men he’s counseled. “Your wife won’t compete with pornography. The woman on-line will do whatever I want, and my wife won’t do that,” he says. “Nothing cuts at the heart of a woman more than finding out her husband isn’t satisfied with her.”

And men aren’t the only ones falling into the trap.

“ALL of us struggle with sin,” says Meredith. “The only one who gains from (keeping it secret) is the devil. All of us have the idea that ‘if anyone knew what I struggle with, they’d throw me out of here.’” **BT**

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## guest commentary

# A good chance for Baptist worship

By James Richard Joiner

The Baptist schism has left moderates with well-defined directions in regard to theological approach, seminary training, Baptist polity and missions structures, but with no real pronouncements or directions in regard to corporate worship styles.

Given our strong loyalties to local church autonomy, this may be appropriate. However, Baptists have hardly been autonomous in much of their worship practice.

For many years, one could walk into dozens of Southern Baptist churches on Sunday morning and be a part of the same “liturgical” exercises: welcome times with greeting free-for-alls, rather loose announcement periods, and the formulaic worship order: offering-special music-sermon-invitation-benediction-postlude.

Now, many more conservative congregations have begun to match their zeal for church growth with some of the more spontaneous traits of “seeker” services while the worship practices of moderates do not appear to be much different from pre-schism exercises.

Now that the moderate movement has set its course, perhaps God has presented a new opportunity to resist contemporary trends and build traditions of worship out of our own distinctive Baptist heritage. This could be achieved by preserving and developing the best of Baptist worship traditions and incorporating the most appropriate aspects of the new styles.

There are three areas upon which Baptist worship music styles may be fashioned.

First, the best of the Baptist worship tradition seems to center around lay involvement. Southern Baptist church music emphases of the late 1940s and 1950s laid the foundation for the most comprehensive program of church music education for laypersons ever structured by an American denomination.

In the heyday of the old Church Music Department of the Sunday School Board, a complete Baptist program of church music potentially touched every aspect of church life. Services included a solid breadth of musical styles from gospel song arrangements to the

more formal or classical anthems. Small church orchestras and well-trained organists were valued.

A return to comprehensive church music programs and worship practices would seem to be consistent with our passion for the priesthood of the believer.

Second, seeker worship brings immediate access to worship.

For the curious, not knowing when to sit, stand or kneel is a fearful experience.

The best aspect of the seeker service may be its appeal to the unchurched. The worst parts may be the emotion-filled, yet pointless repetitions of sung refrains and the extraordinary control exerted over the worshiper from the pulpit area.

Third, there are factors in the praise and worship style that meet the needs of some traditional Baptists as well. Southern Baptists are products of two traditions, the rather formal, structured Charleston format, and the revivalist and spontaneous Sandy Creek heritage.

The Charleston tradition inspired carefully-planned worship music and well-trained choirs, while the Sandy Creek tradition was closely related to the camp meetings that melded 18<sup>th</sup> century hymn writers with Anglo-American folk tunes. When searching for accessible congregational expressions, Baptists should not ignore the American folk hymn.

Finally, several factors included in the worship of historically liturgical denominations would seem appropriate to Baptist worship from both historical and biblical perspectives:

(1) With our emphasis on seasonal music, Baptists have always had strong calendar associations. Lately it has not been a stretch for traditional Baptists to include Advent and Lent with Christmas and Easter in seasonal worship. The development of rich worship practices for these four major seasons would probably be welcomed by moderate Baptists.

(2) Baptists have widely proclaimed

themselves as a “people of the Book.” Yet, in conservative worship, the only scripture is the theme text prior to the sermon. Old and New Testament readings would be appropriate for any congregation.

(3) Baptists have never minded preaching against sin. We have not been so inclusive, however, in regard to personal sins and the processes of dealing with them. It would seem appropriate to include a structured period of silence in which personal failings can be faced in intimate moments with God.

Just as it will be difficult to enhance our worship by stubbornly pursuing past practices alone, it is unwise to link our services completely to contemporary media.

Popular styles, built out of commercial Christian music, usually disappear as quickly as they arrive, leaving the congregation with no real worship heritage. As a result, the church moves from trend to trend, never grounding itself in practices that worshipers recognize as a cherished part of their past experience with God.

The Charleston and Sandy Creek traditions embody much of what is still important in the worship practices of Baptists. They remain partners in a tradition rich in worship potential and accessible to many.

A cursory study of the curricula of the new Baptist seminaries and theological schools reveals that only one has installed multiple courses in worship.

It is time for the new seminaries to provide the orientation, historicity and creativity that will give ministers a passion for worship leadership.

New Baptist organizational directions provide a golden opportunity to establish healthy worship practices out of contemporary trends, liturgical structures and our Baptist heritage.

Perhaps God has opened the door for us to learn how to worship in spirit and in truth. Where shall we begin?

—James Richard Joiner is chair of the music department at Union University in Jackson, Tenn.



## guest commentary

# The whole world in his hands

By R. Quinn Pugh Sr.

*(Editor's note: Quinn Pugh, retired executive director of the Baptist Convention of New York, submitted this commentary five days before his death on Feb. 13 at age 74.)*

During the opening session of the Eighth Baptist World Congress, July 22, 1950, hundreds of costumed delegates from nearly 40 countries processed around the circumference of the baseball stadium in Cleveland, Ohio.

As a recent college graduate, I sat in wide-eyed wonder. The whole world, it seemed, was present in that spectacular moment.

Then the spotlight picked up the world-famous African-American concert artist, Roland Hayes, walking from second base toward home plate singing, "He's got the whole wide world in his hands."

I could sense the magnitude of planet Earth and the strength of God's upholding hands. With persons of every race and language, the Baptist World Alliance was a demonstration of the reality of the singer's words.

My view of the Christian gospel was forever enlarged and energized as I sat high in the stands.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Baptist World Congress was convened in January 2000, in Melbourne, Australia, under the banner, "Jesus Christ Forever: Yes!" Watching again the parade of nations, my heart and head were seized with a robust re-affirmation of every conviction I had known 50 years earlier.

In 2005, the BWA will celebrate its Centennial Congress in Birmingham, England. Sadly, it appears, the celebration will be without the support of present Southern Baptist Convention leadership.

The charges as detailed in the report of the SBC Study Committee seem gravely overdrawn to this modest participant of more than 55 years. The general secretaries since 1950 (and before, I am certain) have been leaders of unquestioned commitment to the gospel. They have each worked tirelessly as

evangelists, agents of reconciliation, visionary leaders of a diverse Baptist family, and clear thinking model Baptist representatives in a complex world community.

Current General Secretary Denton Lotz has been used of God in bringing together numerous separated Baptist groups within their national settings. He has stated in the most positive terms his commitment to the unity of Baptists in the bonds of the Gospel.

The study committee charges that "an increasing influence of positions contrary to the New Testament and to Baptist doctrines ... is being advocated in the various commissions and committees of the BWA." While throughout our history Baptists have held and openly expressed varying positions as we have sought to interpret the scripture and state our beliefs, it is grossly unfair to say that there has been an "increasing influence" of contrary positions.

Southern Baptist theologians, historians, ethicists and educators have freely participated in and contributed to both the discussions and the publications. That some Baptists may hold beliefs at variance with other Baptists does not mean they are attempting to subvert the historic doctrinal commitment of all Baptists.

There is a better way of dealing with differences than walking away from the discussion while declaring a self-proclaimed purity.

Has "a decided anti-American tone" emerged in recent years, as charged by the study committee? Could that be a response to an air of superiority, albeit unconscious, on the part of some of us Southern Baptists?

Some of us Southern Baptists have been embarrassed to see our own leaders huddled in small circles while the mass of people are sharing an open fellowship; making housing reservations in hotels, often more elite, than the official BWA hotel; and selectively avoid-

ing membership responsibilities on commissions and committees.

However, they are always present for block voting on issues raised in the General Council of which they are elected members. Their recent practice has been to name their spouses, other relatives and colleagues as proxies for absent SBC General Council members in order to sustain their block voting.

This is done without consideration of a large number of experienced Southern Baptists who are present to serve at their own expense on various commissions and committees.

Speaking of "a less Byzantine form of governing the fellowship" is an unworthy criticism in face of the ever-tightening, frequently-defensive bureaucratic structure of the SBC. When Southern Baptist church members holding differing views to those of the current leadership seek to express a counter position; they are too frequently closed out of discussion and refused a voice on boards and agencies.

The study committee, composed principally of current SBC leadership, has little justification for its claim that an SBC pastor "was not only refused clarification, but also rudely treated." As an observer, I sensed this young man, in his aggressive manner, was less interested in *clarification* than in *confrontation*. He was answered appropriately by the general secretary and the president relative to the basic assumption of the paper in question, "Call to Missions," that "Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation."

If others spoke "rudely" to him in later conversations, it was likely in response to his seemingly demanding demeanor and attitude. Is it too much in mutual humility to admit our frail humanity in the pursuit of understanding and reconciliation?

There's the rub! Reconciliation can never happen when "pride of purity" bolsters a superior attitude, or when "my/our interpretation of what is right" creates a defensive spirit. **BT**



# the lighter side

## Heavenly report: Baptists table their differences

By Bruce Gourley

Heaven (Golden Street Wire Service) —  
 “They’ve had 2,000 years to overcome legalism and embrace grace, but they keep breaking into more and more groups,” said Peter with a deep sigh. “When they are not battling with all other factions, they are battling among themselves.”

Viewed from above, Christian conflicts on earth seem rather childish, this reporter has observed.

“They’ve obscured Jesus so much that he is hard to recognize,” the renowned heavenly gatekeeper added. “And they keep getting salvation all mixed up with their politics and culture.”

When pressed for details, Peter pointed to Baptists as a prime example.

“I had high hopes for Baptists at one time,” he said. “They started off so well.”

Peter explained how early Baptists understood the Written Word as witness to the Living Word and the foundation for faith and life, and how they recognized that believers were priests before God through Christ and that faith cannot be coerced by earthly powers, whether secular or religious in nature.

“But now ...” said Peter, whose voice trailed off for a few seconds — which here

seems like an eternity. “But now ... so many have turned away from their first love and are having an affair with worldly power.”

Local resident J. Frank Norris overheard the discussion and butted in. With a hearty laugh — yes, a laugh — he readily admitted to being one who lost his focus.

“When I first got here, I thought I was in the wrong place,” said Norris. “The first person I saw was Edgar Y. Mullins, whom I had despised as a liberal Baptist on earth.”

“I wasn’t about to sit at the table with him,” said Norris, “even if you can now eat all the fried chicken you want and stay light as a feather!”

Norris said that if he had remained in his earthly form, he might have even tried to burn down this place.

“But there are no matches up here,” he said with a chuckle. “So I would have needed old Elijah to ‘Baal’ me out.”

Though heaven is a happy place, Norris said he still gets a little sad when recalling how hard it is for Christian folk on earth to get along.

“Yeah, it’s something Mullie and I talk about while we are playing cards,” said Norris. “Don’t tell him, but I always let him win.”

Baptists, of course, are not the only

ones learning lessons up here that they missed below, said Peter — finally regaining control of the conversation.

Fellowship in the celestial city caters to a variety of tastes: Methodist casseroles, Presbyterian beef, Lutheran cheese with complementary drinks, Quaker oatmeal, Catholic breads and something real spicy for the Pentecostals.

However, it is not uncommon to see a good Baptist swapping a piece of fried chicken for some Methodist casserole, although it took several decades for the Landmark Baptists to get used to the idea.

And most 20<sup>th</sup>-century Baptists still lend a judging eye to their 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century counterparts who wash down their fried chicken with something stronger than sweet tea.

Assimilation does not come easy. Strict Calvinist Baptists — like John Gill and Charles Spurgeon — found Baptist integration a little more difficult than most. They more readily buddied up to the Orthodox Presbyterians who served mint juleps and often quipped, “I knew that!”

Heavenly worship and preaching seem to be acquired tastes as well for many residents. When all the denominations get together, most observers agreed, the music always sounds wonderful. Even the Church of Christ folk have finally embraced the air harp.

“But the preaching,” said Paul, pulling himself closer to the press conference table, “is where things really get interesting.”

“The first time a fundamentalist Baptist preacher hears a woman preaching, he will inevitably run to me for help,” said Paul.

They always want to know how the great Apostle could let such a thing happen.

“I just tell them we go with the best we have — and most of you guys weren’t nearly as good of preachers on earth as you thought you were.”

—Bruce Gourley is online editor for Baptists Today.



Illustration by Scott Brooks

# in the know

*Keeping up with people, places, and events*

## PEOPLE

**Tom Allen** is the pastor of First Baptist Church of Corbin, Ky., coming from First Baptist Church of Mt. Vernon, Ga.

**Bethann Ayers** is minister of children at Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Ga.

**David Gnirk** is major gifts representative for Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Kan. He currently serves as president of the American Baptist Churches Dakotas Region.

**Patricia F. Heys** was ordained to the gospel ministry Feb. 22 by Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta. She holds an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Georgia and will graduate in May with a master of divinity from Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology.

**James Hines** has resigned as academic dean at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Kan., to return to the classroom fulltime as tenured professor of Christian education. **Molly Marshall**, professor of theology and spiritual formation, will serve as interim dean effective May 17.

**Janie Katheryne House** died Feb. 21 in Nairobi, Kenya, at age 56. She served as a Southern Baptist missionary for 23 years in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cote d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Thailand and Kenya. A Tennessee native, she was a graduate of Carson-Newman College and Southern Seminary. Memorial services were held in Mt. Juliet, Tenn., Liberty, Mo., and Nairobi, Kenya.

**Lamar Jackson** died Feb. 22 at age 86. He was pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., from 1957 until his retirement in 1980.

**Billy Ray Parmer** died Feb. 28 in a car crash near Abernathy, Texas, that also injured his wife, Joan. Parmer, 78, was president of Gloria al Padre, an organization linking volunteers with needs in Mexico and

other places. He was a leader with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Texas Baptists Committed.

**Bill Perry** retired Feb. 29 as pastor of First Baptist Church of Statesboro, Ga., where he had served since 1981. Previous pastorates include the First Baptist churches of Pelham and Hawkinsville, Ga.

**Jim Ramsey** is pastor of First Baptist Church of Thomson, Ga., coming from First Baptist Church of Albany, Ga.

**Dale Tadlock** is minister of youth for Trinity Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., coming from First Baptist Church in Belton, S.C.

**Allen Thomason** is pastor of First Baptist Church of Spindale, N.C., coming from Chesterfield (S.C.) Baptist Church.

**Jimmy Waters**, a pioneer in religious broadcasting, died Feb. 12 in Macon, Ga., at age 83. He served 31 years at Mabel White Memorial Baptist Church and 10 years at Tatnall Square Baptist Church, both in Macon. He was president of the Georgia

Baptist Convention and chairman of the SBC Radio and Television Commission in the 1970s.

## PLACES

A scholarship is being established at **Samford University** in memory of Ray Frank Robbins, who died Oct. 26. Robbins began his teaching career at Samford, then Howard College, in 1946 before joining the faculty of New Orleans Baptist Seminary in 1952. After retiring in 1981, he continued teaching at Mississippi College.

## EVENTS

The **Baptist History and Heritage Society** will hold its annual meeting **May 27-29** at the Northwest Baptist Convention in Vancouver, WA. See [www.baptisthistory.org](http://www.baptisthistory.org) for program speakers, topics and registration forms. The **Fellowship of Baptist Historians** will meet on **May 27** prior to the BH&HS gathering. To register, visit [www.baptisthistory.org](http://www.baptisthistory.org).

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# faith experience

## Not all saints look alike

By Mike Smith

On the first day of service in a new pastorate, an elderly man knocked on my office door. Most of his white hair hid beneath a well-worn cap. His bushy eyebrows flared above thick glasses. "Got a minute for me?" he asked.

He plopped down in the chair across from me before I could answer. I put on my best ministerial smile and asked what I could do for him. "Not a thing," he replied. "I've come to tell you what I do. We'll probably be seeing a lot of each other. I thought you ought to hear about me from me. By the way, most people call me Mr. Joe."

Mr. Joe was right. We interacted often over the next few years, though not for the reasons I had half feared on the morning he invaded my office. By the time I left to serve another church, I had come to love him, not least because he taught me a great deal about the Christian life.

After serving in the military during the Second World War, Mr. Joe returned home in search of a job. He was hired by a utility company, where he worked as a low-level employee until retirement. His assignment took him into every corner of the neighborhood, and he grew to know even its poorest inhabitants well. More importantly, and certainly counter-culturally, he grew to love them.

When he retired, Mr. Joe began a

personal ministry to the working poor. By the time we met, he kept two large garages stuffed with used furnishings and clothing. He had created a network of grocery stores, filling stations and repair shops upon which he could call for help. Employers turned to him for recommendations when they had positions to fill. Mr. Joe was a one-man Christian service agency.

He drove a decrepit truck of indeterminate color. People living in the poorest sections of the neighborhood knew his truck by sight. Seldom could he make his rounds without stopping numerous times to talk with individuals who flagged him down.

Mr. Joe was soft-hearted and tough-minded. Those in need had no better friend. Because of his considerable knowledge of individuals and their histories, he seldom fell for the story of a con artist. Even so, he confronted their lies with gentle words and left the door open for further conversation.

Over the course of two decades, hundreds of children had clothes to wear because of Mr. Joe. Households remained heated when there was no money to pay the electric bill. Food found its way into pantries and onto tables. Essential medical and dental care was arranged quietly. Whatever the need, Mr. Joe operated as an effective friend of the poor.

He prayed with each person he helped. His words were simple and non-manipula-

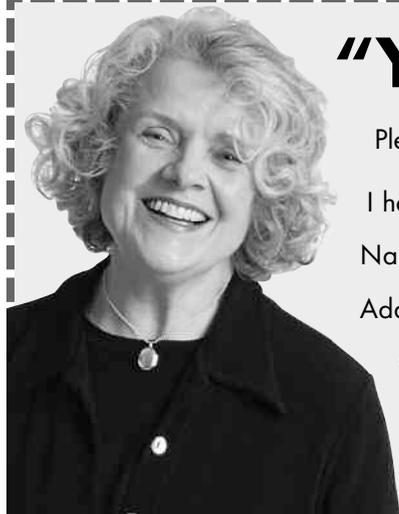
tive. A typical prayer went something like: "Lord, we ask you to guide and care for Molly. You know her life is hard. Grant Molly a sense of your presence and love. Help me to know how to be of help to her. We pray this while placing ourselves in your hands. Amen."

I came to consider Mr. Joe a saint. That is, he was the kind of Christian who became the face, hands and feet of Jesus in the world. Through him, people experienced a little of the boundless mercy of God.

My friendship with Mr. Joe reminded me that any of us might become such a saint. His education ended in the sixth grade. Outside of a small retirement and Social Security, he had no money. No one would have marked him out as a person who might do a mighty work in God's name. Yet he did.

Since those days I've realized there are more people like Mr. Joe than I had imagined. I've learned to look for them and to see them, even as a paleontologist develops an eye for spotting fossils. On those days when I find myself a bit depressed by the state of the world, I think of such saints and find comfort. They are out there, driving back the darkness and blazing trails each of us might yet follow.

—Mike Smith is pastor of First Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, Tenn.



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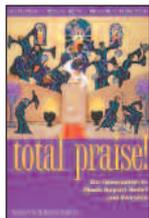
Reviews by Jackie Riley

## Total Praise

An Orientation to Black Baptist Belief and Worship

Lora-Ellen McKinney

In an easy-to-understand but challenging approach, McKinney helps both seekers and seasoned church members understand what they believe and why. Using the opening line of various hymns as her chapter titles, she develops an understanding of black worship as authentic commitment rather than just entertainment.



Organized in a question-and-answer format, she establishes her thesis by instructing her readers on Baptist beliefs, rites and rituals, and essential freedoms. She also gives attention to principles of church organization and management and guidelines for church participation. Then, she explains the elements of African-American religious traditions with special attention to their unique form of praise.

An ideal orientation resource for new attendees of the African-American Baptist church or interested observers of American religion, *Total Praise* is suitable for both individual and group study.

Each chapter is well organized with an overview, Thinking Through My Choice, FYI, That's What I'm Talking About, Prayerful Considerations, and references. Key words throughout the text are noted in bold and well defined. Also helpful is the appendix listing of 25 Baptist conventions, complete with contact information and a brief description.

\$14.00 / pb / 176 pp / Judson Press / ISBN 0-8170-1438-1 / www.judsonpress.com

## The Story of Christian Music

From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel

Andrew Wilson-Dickson

Lavishly illustrated and wonderfully written, this ecumenical and historical volume will meet the approval of anyone who appreciates Christian music.

In short, informative chapters, the author surveys the changing patterns of Christian musical experimentation from its roots in Jewish and Hellenistic music through the

medieval chant to flowery Reformation expression to the varied musical language of current global Christianity.

Particularly interesting is the author's link of biographical and historical sketches to musical movements. He also notes the influence of Eastern, Western and African culture in the formation of hymn types and musical traditions. He optimistically concludes that Christian music today consists of "coats of many colors" and Christians are moving away from "schism" over the worship wars and toward "reconciled diversity."



\$25.00 / pb / 256 pp / Fortress Press / ISBN 0-8006-3474-8 / www.fortresspress.com

## Church and State in America

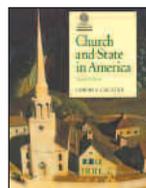
Edwin S. Gaustad

Should prayers be allowed in public schools? Should the Bible be taught as literature? Can choral groups sing Christmas carols? These and other questions have inundated the U.S. Supreme Court in recent years. In fact, there were more cases interpreting the First Amendment in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than in all earlier periods of American history combined (introduction).

Gaustad astutely notes: "In place of religious wars, Americans have substituted discussion and debate, a good deal of it gathered under the heading of 'church and state.'"

In his contribution to the Religion in American Life series, Gaustad tells the story of the conflicted and often difficult relationship between religion and government throughout American history, beginning with the colonists' concerns and the new nation after the Revolution and continuing through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the current debate about religion in schools.

Gaustad's new edition contains an updated chronology, additional photographs and suggested readings, and sections on the Pledge of Allegiance, Bible study groups in public schools, school vouchers and public funding of parochial schools. Clear and



concise, this volume is an excellent primer for those on both sides of the First Amendment.

\$28.00 / hb / 176 pp / Oxford University Press / ISBN 0-19-516738-4 / www.oup-usa.org

## American Religious Traditions

The Shaping of Religion in the United States

Richard E. Wentz

This fully revised and enhanced edition of *Religion in the New World* expands the account of the shaping of America's diverse religious traditions. Incorporating religious studies categories such as myth, legend, symbol and ritual, Wentz sketches the development of all the traditions — Native American, Reformed, Puritan, Roman Catholic, Restorationist — that proved decisive for American religion. Comprehensive and inclusive, he calls attention to the contributions of indigenous American figures and movements, including women, Native Americans and Mormons, as well as Asian, African and Islamic traditions.

Included in the revised edition are: more material on Transcendentalism and Unitarian Universalism, public religion, and contemporary American Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims; an extensive index and reading list; eight pages of photos and graphics; and a CD-ROM containing the full text of the book, chapter summaries, discussion questions and Web resources and features such as topic searching, bookmarking, notetaking and highlighting.

Thorough and well written, *American Religious Traditions* is an excellent text or reference book for use by students or inquiring church study groups. The chapter on the current fundamentalist and neo-evangelical traditions is must reading for concerned Baptists. Wentz's statement that fundamentalism "cannot be understood outside of history" is indicative of his objective presentation throughout the book.

\$30.00 (includes CD) / pb / 456 pp / Fortress Press / ISBN 0-8006-3616-3 / www.fortresspress.com **BT**

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**Officials sign papers to begin the Baptist Studies Program at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary**  
(From left to right) Marion Aldridge and Laurie Berry of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina, and President H. Frederick Reisz, Board Chair Paul Summer, and Academic Affairs VP Michael Root of LTSS.

## Baptist studies program forming at Lutheran seminary in S. Carolina

By John Pierce

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary is launching a study program specifically designed for Baptist students in South Carolina. Classes in the new program, directed by Virginia Barfield, will begin in the fall.

Officials from the Columbia-based seminary and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina, along with other Baptist leaders, signed a formal agreement Feb. 12.

Barfield, who holds a master's degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctorate from Duke University, left the ministerial staff of Kathwood Baptist Church in Columbia last November to develop the Baptist Studies Program.

"There are several ways this partnership will be good for South Carolina Baptists," said Barfield. "First of all, it will allow seminary students to be in South Carolina and to stay connected to South Carolina churches, attend South Carolina meetings and network with South Carolina Baptist people."

Other advantages, said Barfield, are the new opportunities for continuing education for clergy and laity, as well as relationship building for various types of Baptists.

"I hope this can provide a forum for Baptists of all types to study in an ecumenical setting," said Barfield, "and, thereby, realize that it is not what separates us but what unites us that is important."

Barfield, who has been teaching as an adjunct professor, said the program arose out of conversations about how the Lutheran seminary might attract more local Baptist students.

In addition to directing the program — including administration, recruiting and fundraising — Barfield will teach Greek, Baptist studies and an occasional New Testament class. **BT**

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Briarcliff Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.  
Broadmoor Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La.  
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