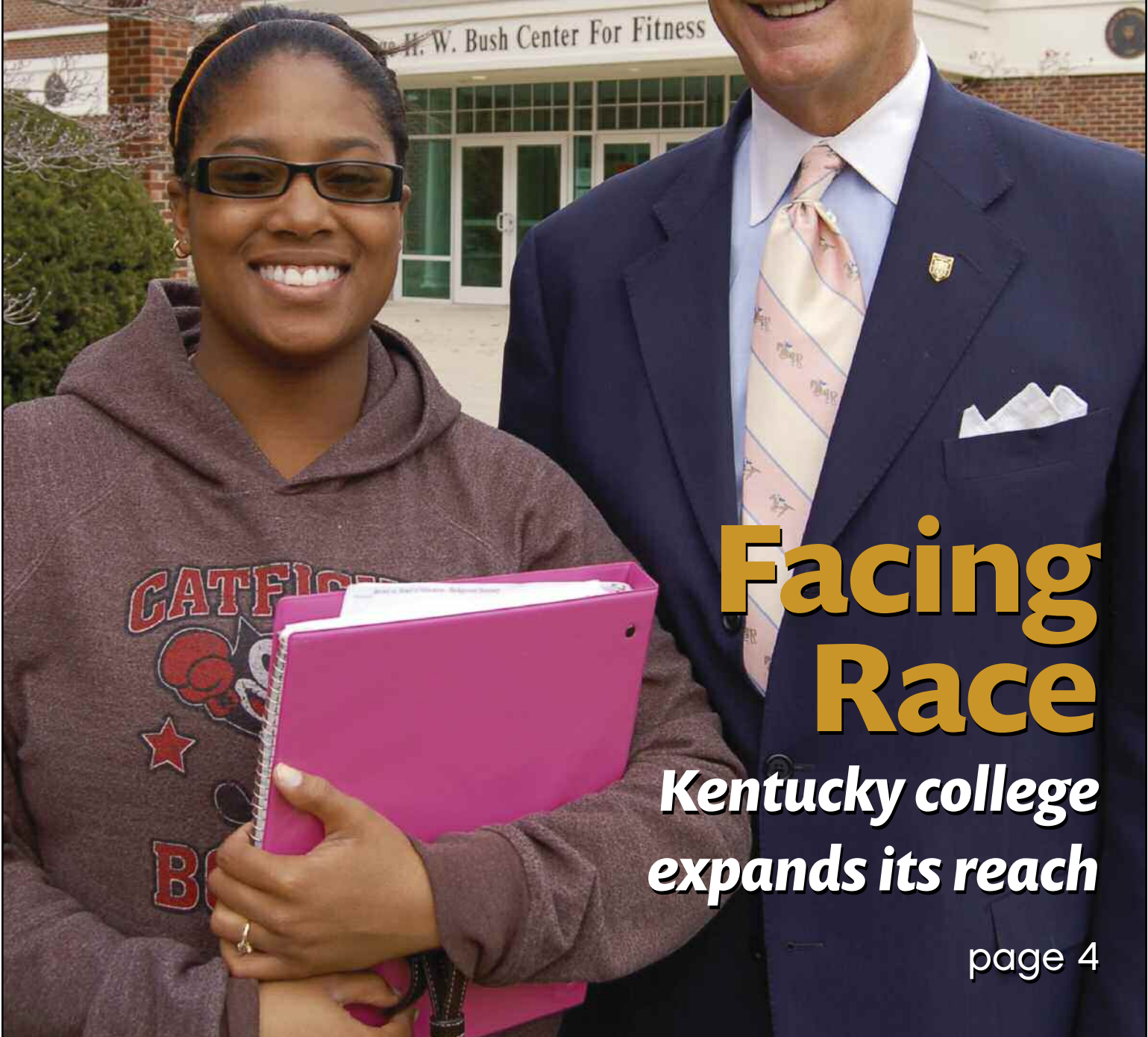


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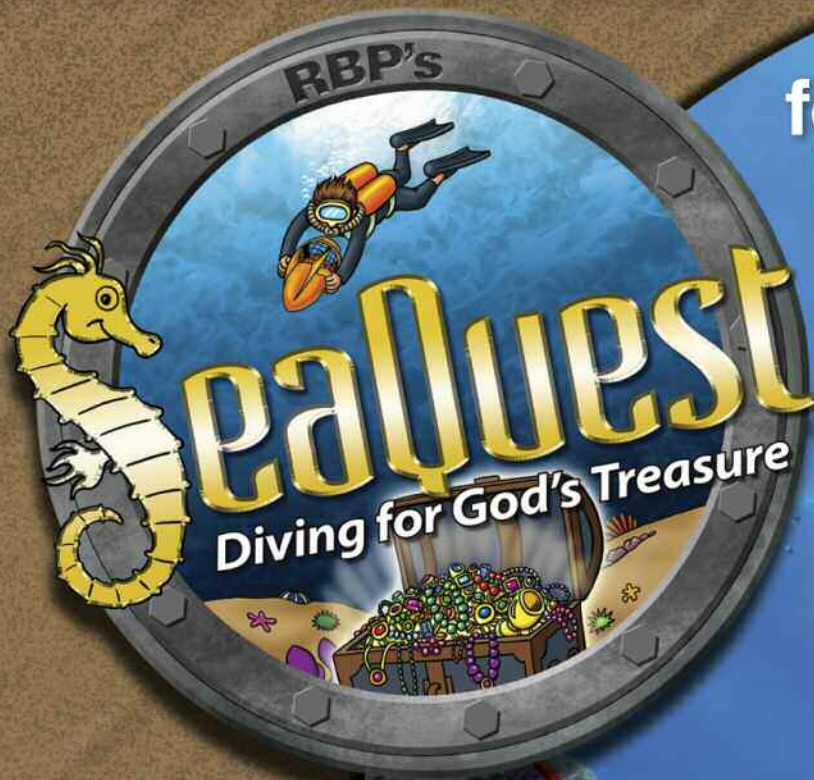


Facing Race

*Kentucky college
expands its reach*

page 4

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Cover photo by John Pierce.
Alexis Anderson, a sophomore from Arlington, Texas, and one of the current Bishop Scholars at Georgetown College, became interested in the Kentucky school when President Bill Crouch (right) spoke to her church.

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facing race

Kentucky college changes its look, expands its reach

G EORGETOWN, Ky. — Georgetown College President Bill Crouch traces his concern for racial reconciliation to his youthful days in Mississippi where his father, Baptist pastor Henry Crouch, was a rare voice calling for equality. But two other factors have helped him lead the Baptist school near Lexington, Ky., to change its public face — and to a good degree, its heart.

He keeps a Bible in his office opened to Proverbs 3:27 that reads, “Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act.” It was a verse he read during the early days of his presidency at the overwhelmingly white school in an overwhelmingly white state.

“This college was all white with the exception of a few blacks who played athletics,” said Crouch, now in his 18th year as president. “We’re in the whitest part of America.”

Crouch’s conscience was stirred by that proverb to make the educational offerings of Georgetown available to a more diverse population. A second and very motivating factor came when Crouch and the college trustees set an ambitious goal of achieving recognition by the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa national



Georgetown College President Bill Crouch visits with five of the current Bishop Scholars: (left to right) Brittney Hutchison, Kaylah Bozman, Crouch, MaKinsley Jemison, Ashlee Gordon and Shakir Mackey.

honor society. One of the requirements was to increase campus diversity significantly.

But early efforts — such as trying to recruit a full-time, tenure-track African American to the faculty and founding the Underground Railroad Research Institute on campus in hopes of drawing black students — failed.

Since most Georgetown students come from within a two-hour drive of the school — where few minorities live — efforts to diversify would take creativity and, more importantly, trusting relationships with influential black leaders beyond Kentucky.

Before changing the school, Crouch said he needed a little more education for himself. The racial sensitivities learned from his father and others — like Ed Christman, his Wake Forest University chaplain and professor who had a big picture of Martin Luther King Jr. over his desk and referred to him as “my hero” — were not enough. He needed mentoring to better understand African-American culture.

Provisionally, Joel Gregory, former pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, who now spends most Sundays in

pulpits of black churches, spoke during the college’s annual Pastors’ School in 2004.

Crouch sought his advice.

Gregory, who left the Southern Baptist spotlight in crisis, credited African-American pastor E.K. Bailey with rescuing his preaching ministry. After preaching to Bailey’s Dallas congregation, invitations from other black churches around the country flowed.

Gregory mentioned that Bishop College in Dallas — the alma mater of Bailey as well as the presidents of the four major black Baptist conventions — had closed in 1988 following a financial scandal. And he invited Crouch to attend a historic meeting of the four conventions in 2005, where he could get acquainted with these leaders.

Discussions with the four presidents, Crouch said, led them to wonder: What if we could bring back the spirit of Bishop College?

About six weeks later the four presidents came to the Georgetown campus where stones inscribed with the names of the four conventions and two colleges were ceremoniously pulled from the Rock River and stacked together as Gregory read from the Bible.

Then Crouch went to Dallas and met with 200 Bishop College alumni who eagerly approved a plan to bring the spirit of their alma mater back to life some 900 miles away.

A year later, in November 2005, Georgetown entered into formal partnerships with the four conventions that called for one full scholarship and one trustee seat for each convention.

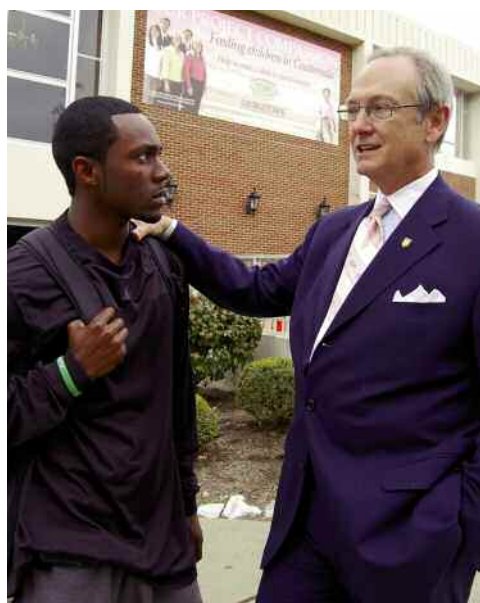
Today, bright young African-American students — from Texas, Oklahoma, California and other parts of the country — are at home on the Kentucky campus.

“Once you convince people you are open to diversity, diversity comes your way,” said Crouch, who has seen the college’s diversity grow from 1 percent to 11 percent. He hopes the percentage — including Hispanics and other minorities — will reach 20 by 2015.

Crouch said he found other helpful mentors in William Parker, African-American professor of sociology at the University of Kentucky and a diversity coach for Fortune 500 companies, and Phil Wilkins, an owner of five McDonald’s restaurants and a popular diversity speaker.

“Nobody knew I was doing that,” Crouch said of his own educational pursuit. “I had to have credibility within the African-American culture.”

Trustees were courageous, said Crouch, in their willingness to add Bishop College alumni from other parts of the country and with no previous relationship with Georgetown to their board. Among those



Golfer Christian Heavens (left) came to Georgetown as a First Tee Scholar. He uses birdies he makes in tournaments to raise money for charity from sponsors such as President Bill Crouch (right).

elected was Major Jemison, an Oklahoma City pastor and president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, whose son, MaKinsley, is a current Bishop Scholar at Georgetown.

Of the Bishop Scholars currently enrolled at Georgetown, one — Stella Brown — is studying through the college’s partnership with Oxford University in England.

Brittney Hutchison, a sophomore from Dallas, said the “homey feel” of the campus and the small classes attracted her to Georgetown.

“Dr. Crouch came to my church,” said freshman Kaylah Bozman, a member of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, Calif., of her introduction to the Kentucky school. She said the supportive teachers and staff at Georgetown made it easy for her to adjust.

However, she is learning more than academics by interaction with roommates and classmates. “I’ve never had a really close white friend before,” she said.

Also from Oakland, Shakir Mackey saw Georgetown as a good place to prepare for medical school as well as have an opportunity to study at Oxford. A visit to campus “solidified” his plans, he said.

“I got here fast,” said junior Ashlee Gordon, a double major in accounting and management information systems. She recalls being awakened by her mother who heard Crouch speaking about Georgetown during a church service on the radio and urged her to consider the advantages of a small college.

“It’s different, and I’m all for doing something different,” said Gordon, who turned down a university scholarship back in Texas to come to Georgetown.

Geographical diversity has also resulted from the college’s racial diversity efforts. “These kids are coming from all over the U.S.,” said Crouch.

Brittney Hutchison laughed aloud when remembering how one local student, hearing that she was from Dallas, asked if she rides horses. “I’ve never seen as many horses in Texas as I have in Kentucky,” she replied.

Mackey said experiences, not just race, define a person’s culture.

“Diversity is not just color, to me,” he said. “Everybody has a different background.”

Crouch called this first group of Bishop Scholars “pioneers” who are blazing a trail that many others will follow at Georgetown.

The college’s diversity efforts themselves are quite diverse. The school founded the First



Tee Scholars program — now present on 30 campuses across the U.S. — that grants scholarships to mostly minority students who participated in the PGA-related golf program for high school students. The first two student First Tee Scholars, both African American, graduated from Georgetown last year.

The legacy of Bishop College continues in multiple ways including an annual homecoming on the Georgetown campus, souvenirs in the bookstore and a depository for academic records. Construction of the Bishop College Center on campus is expected to begin this year.

Early fears, expressed by some, that an attempt at diversity might lower the college’s academic standing proved false, said Crouch.

“What this crowd (pointing to the Bishop Scholars) is doing is just the opposite,” he said. “Pastors are sending us their best and brightest.”

And with students “coming out of strong spiritual backgrounds,” the college’s Christian identity and mission are also enhanced, said Crouch.

The road to diversity is not easy, Crouch admits. There have been some challenges along the way.

After two years of conversations with student leaders of the Kappa Alpha fraternity, they voluntarily gave up an annual event that included Confederate uniforms and flags. Fraternity leaders told Brian Evans, the African-American director of the college’s Office of Diversity: “We get it.”

“Every year we get further down the road,” said Crouch. **BT**

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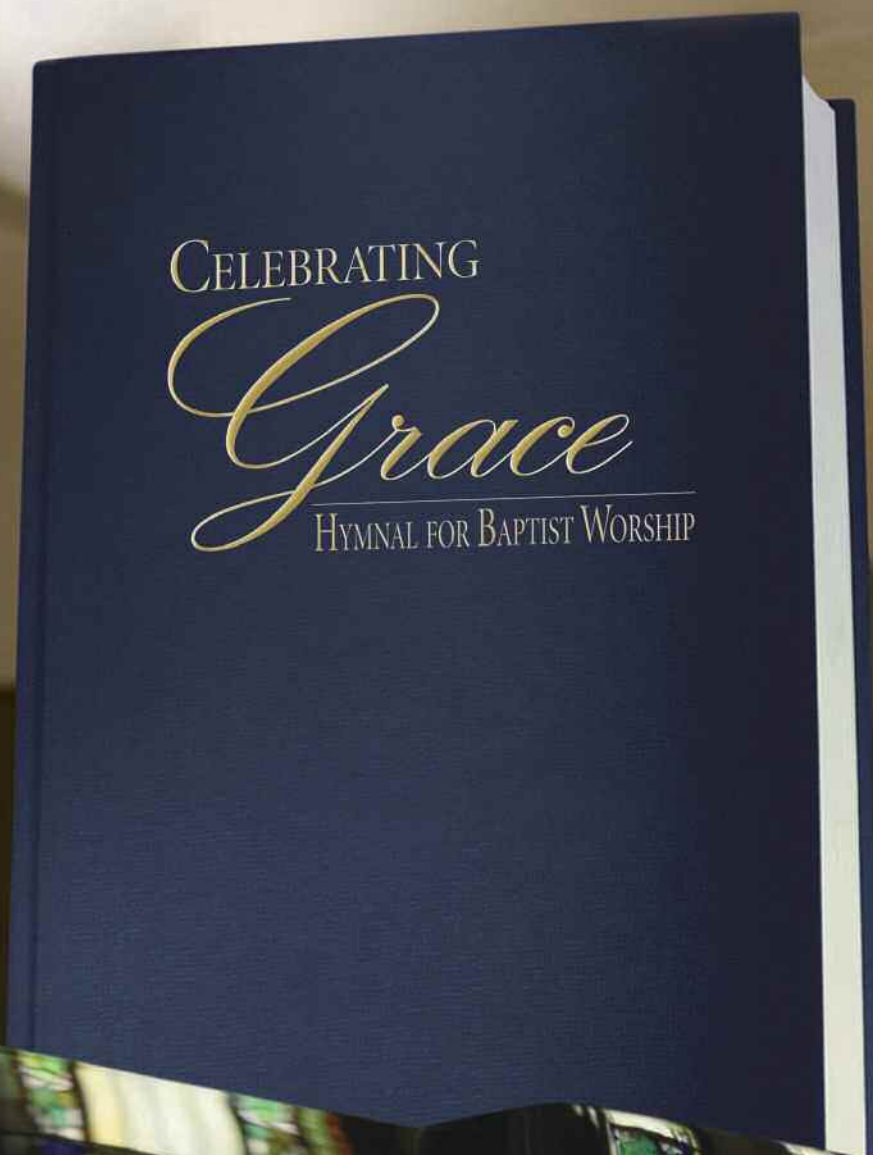
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editorial

The Bible tells us so — or does it?

By John Pierce

The Bible gets blamed for a lot of our own foolishness. So much narrow-mindedness, prejudice and even hatred get justified by selected biblical rendering.

With good intentions, many church leaders gave those of us raised in Baptist congregations an appreciation for the Bible but a less-than-honest understanding of its inspiration and purpose. We were taught by example and silence to ignore or excuse inconsistencies within the larger and deeper biblical revelation.

We were presupposed to the belief that the Bible was one big cohesive book — fully harmonized in its message of God and redemption. Critical analysis, no matter how honest, was not to be applied to a holy text.

The result was an elevation of the Bible to an equal status with God — without recognition of idolatry. Instead of being embraced as the written Word of God — an important revelation that leads to an ongoing, redemptive relationship with the Living Word of God — the Bible was often presented as an end rather than a means to faith.

We were taught that “all Scripture is inspired by God,” but learned by example that the Bible was to be read and applied selectively. “The Bible says so ...” could preface most any nonsensical statement and be given the irrefutable status of divine authority.

Questioning an interpretation of Scripture — especially if long and deeply held by a person of authority — was quickly considered heretical. The fact that the Bible has been used for generations to wrongly support injustices from the mistreatment of Native Americans to African slavery to subjugation of women did (and still does) little to diminish the zeal and certainty of those claiming divine approval of their proof-texted social and doctrinal positions.

To challenge such strongly held biblical interpretations — even ones clearly at odds with the life and teachings of Jesus — were (and still are) met with the charge of “not believing the Bible.”

Ironically, those claiming the strongest allegiance to the Bible are often the last to arrive at truth. If you disagree, just name the fundamentalists at the forefront of the civil rights movement. There were none, despite the claims of racial sensitivity some make today.

However, when it comes to using the Bible to support one’s own preferred positions, lessons are rarely learned well. That’s why Christian fundamentalists will be among the last — not only in Christendom, but also

in the larger society — to see the errors in their current discriminatory attitudes toward women.

As a result of this arrogance-infused certainty, the Bible and the faith tied to it are seen by many as repressive and exclusive — making Christianity unattractive to those who want no spiritual dimension in their lives that requires intellectual and moral imprisonment to religious doctrine that violates even the most basic understandings of human rights and justice.

Why does this matter? Because the church of the future has little hope when its public perception becomes one of ignorance, inflexibility and condemnation. Why not be defined by honest searching for truth, humility based on the recognition of human limitations in finding truth, and an eagerness to embrace others in the loving and redeeming ways exhibited throughout the life of Christ?

Well-packaged, immovable, easy answers — propped by selected readings of the Bible — to life’s tough questions may satisfy a few. But an honest, ongoing struggle to follow Jesus sounds much more like the desired role for being his disciples.

“Believe like me — I’m right,” has never been the message given to Christians — no matter how or where you search the Bible in hopes of finding a slither of support. **BT**



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Editor's note: This is the first in a yearlong series of articles on "Healthy ministers for healthy churches," produced in partnership with the Center for Congregational Health and supported by a gift from Henry V. Langford.

Marks of a healthy faith community

BY CHRIS GAMBILL

What is a healthy faith community? That seems to be one of the great mysteries of the faith. There are many approaches to describing church health, and definitions vary widely.

As a consultant to hundreds of churches over the past 17 years, I have yet to find the one all-encompassing definition. I can say with assurance that, while no one definition of health fits all, there are some basic characteristics, or marks, of a healthy faith community.

In the Center for Congregational Health's extensive experience in working with faith communities, we have discovered that healthy congregations don't all look or act the same. We have observed healthy faith communities in a variety of sizes and ministry contexts, with vastly different resources, and with varying outlooks for significant growth and development.

Congregational health is often viewed in light of theological principles derived from scripture. These include transforming spirituality, prayer, discipleship, compassion, evangelism, stewardship and generosity.

It is important to point out that, while a sound theological foundation is vital to any faith community, it is simply not enough to keep it healthy. The Center for Congregational Health's approach to opening doors to hope and wholeness for faith communities, lay leaders and clergy enables faith communities to maintain their own theological perspectives.

Our goal is to help them develop and maintain the framework within which these ideals and aspirations can flourish.

To understand and identify the marks of a healthy community of faith, I suggest turn-

ing to scripture. Examples from the earliest Christian communities provide helpful glimpses into the lives of God's people striving to live together well.

Constructive conflict resolution

A healthy faith community is not one that never has conflict; it is one that resolves conflict constructively. When faced with internal conflict over the distribution of food in Acts 6, the apostles allowed the congregation to own the problem and participate in solving it.

They avoided polarization (Grecian Jews versus Hebraic Jews) and sought what was best for the congregation. They were able to remain in a constructive, problem-solving mode and find a collaborative solution.

Adaptation to change

A healthy faith community has the capacity to adapt. Beginning in Acts 10, the scriptures portray an early church facing a potentially crippling crisis over identity and diversity. Christ followers were no longer limited to Jews.

With this change, questions arose over who could rightfully be a member of the faith community and under what circumstances. Faced with this challenge to its most fundamental sense of identity, the early church adapted, emerging stronger, more inclusive and ready to take on the task of evangelizing the world.

Authentic community

A third mark of a healthy faith community is, well, community. One of the many casualties of life in the 21st century is the loss of what Robert Putnam calls our social capital.

He has documented numerous ways in which our relational connections have broken. This is in stark contrast to the church where "they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46, NRSV).

Many faith communities attempt to make difficult decisions, resolve conflict, overcome a financial crisis, grow and develop their ministry, and plan their future with minimal social capital within the congregation. The result is a decision-making that erupts into conflict and processes that produce not progress but frustration.

Ministry that reaches out as well as in

A healthy faith community ministers to those outside as well as inside the church. Acts 2 believers shared among themselves as needs arose. They sold their possessions and "had everything in common."

Their strong ministry to believers was balanced by Peter's and John's healing and preaching outside the community of believers, as when they healed the beggar at the temple gate in chapter 3. They were also bold in proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers.

It is easy for churches to be caught in the trap of spending the vast majority of their resources, time and energy on those within the faith community, while neglecting their mission and service to those outside the walls of the church.

Good communication

A healthy faith community encourages honest and civil discourse. Communication is between people, not about them.

In Acts 10-11, when facing a critical juncture in the development of Christianity, the earliest Christians had to wrestle with whether Gentiles could be full members of the Christian community. To their credit, they were able to have what was, no doubt, a challenging conversation. It ended with Peter describing his experiences and the assembled apostles and believers declaring, "then God has given to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18).

The scriptures are full of examples of God's people having honest, but difficult,



conversations about important issues. On their best days, the honest discourse led to a realization of God's will and purposes and a desire to fulfill them together.

A balance between clergy authority and lay leadership

A healthy faith community supports participatory leadership. Clergy and lay leaders see themselves as ministry partners and work together to build fundamental capacities within the congregation. Clergy support, encourage, mentor and coach developing leaders.

In Acts 6, seven church members were elected to share leadership responsibility. Their empowerment helped the church to grow. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul emphasizes the importance of every gift within the church.

Clarity of identity and mission

A healthy faith community is bound together

by a shared identity and mission. Faith communities are riddled with differences of opinion and belief about everything from politics to theology. They need something to bind them together that is bigger and more compelling than those things that could tear them apart.

Getting clear about identity — understanding the congregation's values, its shared history and culture, and its unique strengths and challenges — is one kind of binding agent. Another is identifying what inspires the congregation and pulls them forward into mission and ministry.

The early church in Acts again provides an example of a faith community with an overarching sense of identity and mission. In Acts 4:32, the writer says of this community, "the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul." Their sense of connectedness was so deep that "there was not a needy person among them" (4:34).

Though Acts clearly shows there were

significant differences among the early believers, they were able to overcome these and seek the greater good of the community and their calling in Christ.

Finally, it must be said of healthy communities of faith that there are no perfect ones. A case in point can again be found in the Book of Acts. For many Christians, the most compelling picture of a healthy church is the early church described in Acts 2. However, later portrayals of this same church in Acts 5 and 6 reveal major shortcomings.

Even within healthy communities of faith, it takes balanced effort and resourceful leadership to live together well in a fallen world. The striving for well-being is continuous, but absolutely worth the effort. **BT**

—Chris Gambill is manager of congregational health services for the Center for Congregational Health based in Winston-Salem, N.C.

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ONGOING CONCERN — When not responding to disasters, volunteers like these from Concord, N.C., engage in other projects through North Carolina Baptist Men, such as improving substandard housing near Red Springs in the state's poorest county. (Photo by Mark Abernathy)

Networking helps Baptists respond when disaster strikes near or far

RICHMOND, Va. — Baptist churches, associations, fellowships and conventions have organized volunteers into an impressive force of hope and help when disaster strikes near or far. Networking among and beyond Baptist circles makes for more effective service during such times, said Terry Raines, who directs disaster relief efforts for the Virginia Baptist Mission Board.

“There is nobody in the nonprofit world — even including the Red Cross — that does more than do Baptists through that mutual, state-to-state link,” said Raines. “We’re equals with them now.”

State conventions with ties to the Southern Baptist Convention provide a well-trained workforce when disaster strikes, said Raines,

with the SBC’s North American Mission Board (NAMB) serving as “dispatcher.”

His Virginia Baptist volunteers work “fully, but not exclusively” with Southern Baptist Disaster Relief. Raines serves as convener of a disaster relief network of Baptist organizations affiliated with the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF), a regional body of the Baptist World Alliance.

“We’re a network, not a structured group,” said Raines, noting that “face time” twice annually with those leading disaster relief for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, American Baptist Churches, the National Baptist Convention USA and other BWA-related groups is helpful when teaming up in response to a disaster.

Richard Brunson was an organizer and convener of the NABF network before Raines. He directs North Carolina Baptist Men (NCBM), a lay-led auxiliary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina that developed a strong disaster relief and recovery ministry through a series of tragic events beginning with Hurricane Mitch’s ravaging of Honduras in 1998.

NCBM also responded to the aftermath

of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, a major earthquake in Turkey, and the tsunami that devastated much of Southeast Asia in late 2004. Following Hurricane Katrina's devastation of the Gulf Coast in 2005, NCBM set up feeding stations until the immediate crisis had passed, then camped out in Gulfport, Miss., for three years, rebuilding approximately 700 homes devastated by the storm.

"What we do best ... is to help people get involved in missions," said Brunson of his organization."

Disaster relief is just one part of NCBM's mission, said Brunson. The organization is heavily involved in ongoing poverty relief as well.

A slowdown in natural disasters during the past two years has given NCBM an opportunity to build up an ongoing ministry presence in North Carolina with the development of mission camps in the eastern and western parts of the state.

The eastern camp, in Red Springs, N.C., is based in a former textile mill that NCBM purchased and remodeled with volunteer effort. Mobile sleeper units and indoor bunks in the 52,000 square foot facility provide lodging for as many as 200 volunteers at a time, while a full kitchen and large dining area is capable of feeding them and many more.

Red Springs is located in Robeson County, the poorest of North Carolina's 100 counties. Volunteers tackle a long list of projects designed to improve substandard housing and assist in a battered women's shelter, among other ministries.

A similar camp is currently under construction in Shelby, N.C., in the western part of the state. That facility is being built on a 45-acre tract NCBM purchased within the city limits. The building won't be as large as the one in Red Springs, but is still designed to accommodate up to 200 volunteers at a time.

"Our focus really needs to be on the local church and what it takes to get people involved in missions," said Brunson, who believes mission support follows mission involvement. "We believe the other things follow the hands."

Charles Ray of Little Rock, Ark., is U.S. disaster relief coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He sees the NABF network as a good way to develop procedure and to know what assets can be provided by other Baptist groups.

CBF, he said, seeks to help those with the greatest needs and least resources.

"CBF spends most of its resources — manpower and money — on long-term recovery," said Ray. "This is seen in our continued efforts in the Gulf area where we are still working."

Teams will continue into this year to address the lingering effects of Katrina, he said. CBF also is providing recovery work in flood-stricken areas of Atlanta and Louisville.

"In my involvement with CBF Responses, I have emphasized the need for partners," said Ray, expressing appreciation for his group's shared efforts with American Baptists.

"Having met them on the 'disaster field' after a killer storm in Florida, we have

said Raines. "They want to see what happened."

But rather than assume the role of bystander or obstacle, Baptist volunteers roll up their sleeves and do the dirty work of disaster relief without pay but with the great benefits of Christian service.

Training allows volunteers to "exercise their gifts" and find the best place of service during a disaster, said Raines, who typically sends a key leader to three locations: the state emergency operations center (where feeding is coordinated), the Red Cross operation center and their own Baptist operation center.

Raines said the position a volunteer fills during a disaster is not about "rank" but



CLEANING UP — David Harding, who coordinates international disaster relief for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, lends a hand in Gulfport, Miss., following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. (CBF photo)

responded together in several states and are in constant contact," said Ray.

CBF works with non-Baptist groups as well, he said, such as Save the Children Federation, Catholic Charities and Volunteers of American Southeast.

Raines of Virginia said formal agreements between Baptists and organizations such as the Salvation Army and Red Cross have been very effective. For example, he said, Baptists have provided cooking teams with Red Cross providing the food and trash service.

Baptist disaster relief is successful, said Raines, for these reasons: It is lay driven; the needs are so obvious; preparation precedes response and the adrenaline rush that comes from being in an emergency environment.

"[Volunteers] are holy rubbernecks,"

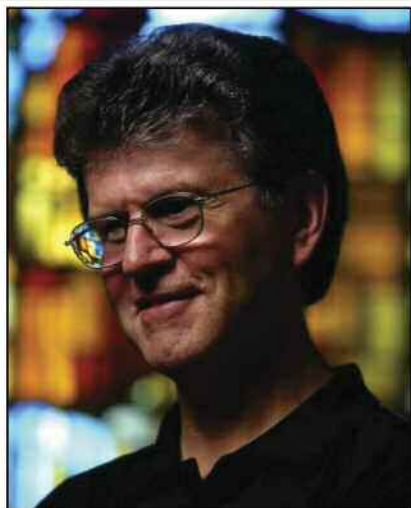
"about what your role is." And everybody, he said, can fill a role in disaster relief.

While denominational division and exclusion have grown among Baptists of North America in recent decades, these disaster relief leaders are working hard to keep such infighting from hindering their response to persons in need.

Brunson said his organization works with churches affiliated with the SBC, the CBF and even non-Baptist groups interested in increasing their mission involvement.

Raines said good, trusting relationships are needed when disaster strikes — and those on the receiving end are grateful for the relief that all Baptists provide.

"I've heard it a thousand times from volunteers: 'I have yet to have a disaster victim ask me which kind of Baptist I am.'" **BT**



Dr. Philip Jenkins

Professor of Humanities
Penn State University
February 16, 2010



Dr. Cleo LaRue

Associate Professor of Homiletics
Princeton Theological Seminary
March 22-23, 2010



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Differing faith groups agree on disaster relief ethics



WORKING TOGETHER — Damage from a rare February tornado in Oklahoma last year called for quick, coordinated responses. (CBF photo)

By Angela Abbamonte
Religion News Service

More than 20 faith-based organizations, from Scientologists to Buddhists to Catholics, have come together to produce a guide on addressing the spiritual and emotional needs of disaster victims.

The document was released by the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, an organization made up of 49 U.S. non-profit groups whose missions includes disaster response.

National VOAD brings the groups together to focus on the five stages of disaster: preparedness, relief, response, recovery and mitigation.

In 2008, these groups gave more than \$200 million in direct financial assistance and volunteered more than 7 million hours of labor. While National VOAD works to restore homes and businesses after disasters, it also recognizes that spiritual, emotional and psychological trials may persist after the physical ramifications of a disaster have been addressed.

The diverse group, including Catholics, Buddhists and Jews, teamed up to form a 10-point set of minimum standards when dealing with survivors of catastrophes.

“As significant as the adoption of these

points of consensus is the cooperation conversation that took place among these partners to form them,” Kevin Massey, a current National VOAD board member, said in a press release. “We did not start with consensus; rather, it was created through respectful conversation.”

The Spiritual Care Points of Consensus address basic types of disaster care, and ethical standards of care, among other points. The document tries to set minimum standards for addressing the spiritual needs of those in the midst of disaster, as well as for relief workers.

The guidelines also warn against inappropriate proselytizing or evangelizing in disaster zones, as well as discrimination based on “culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, spiritual/religious practices and disability.”

“Spiritual care providers refrain from manipulation, disrespect or exploitation of those impacted by disaster and trauma (and) respect the freedom from unwanted gifts of religious literature or symbols, evangelistic and sermonizing speech, and/or forced acceptance of specific moral values and traditions,” the guidelines say. **BT**

Editor’s note: National Baptist Convention USA, American Baptist Men and the SBC North American Mission Board are listed as national members of NVOAD.

Quotation

“ remarks ”

“I believe we’re beginning to see buyer’s remorse...”

—*Preaching professor Tom Long of Emory’s Candler School of Theology, speaking to the Baptist Heritage Council of Georgia Nov. 9, on congregational division resulting from offering “contemporary” and “traditional” worship services*

“I don’t think there’s anything wrong with getting breast implants as a Christian... I don’t see anywhere in the Bible where it says you shouldn’t get breast implants.”

—*California beauty contestant and author Carrie Prejean (Christianity Today)*

“Women were there at the founding of the organization and worked in the office and arranged many things but, at that point in history, women were not acknowledged as someone who could be a leader, not even a field leader. I think that it’s exciting.”

—*Teresa Fry Brown, director of the Black Church Studies program at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology, on the election of Bernice King as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), co-founded by her father Martin Luther King Jr. (RNS)*

“You and the church family are in my thoughts and prayers today as you move forward to continue your ministry in the name of the Lord.”

—*Georgia Baptist Convention executive director J. Robert White to Julie Pennington-Russell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga., in a letter informing her that the congregation has been “excluded from the convention and all rights and privileges thereof” because of her gender*

“He’s softened hearts and changed long-held, if subliminal, attitudes toward race among our extended family.”

—*Scott Barkley, production editor for The Christian Index, on the biracial son, Jackson, he and his wife adopted three years ago (BP)*

“He’s a study in extremes. ... He’s incredibly cheap and incredibly generous.”

—*Chick-fil-A president and COO Dan Cathy, on his father, 88-year-old company founder and CEO Truett Cathy (Atlanta Journal-Constitution)*

“Few things are more dangerous for the Christian life than the belief that good Christians, doing all the things good Christians are supposed to do, will never experience prolonged, disturbing doubt.”

—*Robert N. Wennberg, professor emeritus of philosophy at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, Calif., in Faith at the Edge: A Book for Doubtters (2009, Eerdmans)*

“These are the tired Christian Right leaders, who no longer have buddies in the White House and are now watching younger conservative evangelicals recover the Bible’s broad moral agenda.”

—*Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics, on proponents of the “Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience” that focuses on abortion, gay marriage and the fear of U.S. Christians being persecuted (EthicsDaily.com)*

“The rhetoric of this [Manhattan] Declaration is a bit extreme, and the Nazi analogies are unnecessary and definitely not helpful. However, the authors and signatories do indeed point to real problems that need real solutions: That is the emerging clash between gay rights and religious liberty... Liberals, conservatives and centrist constitutional lawyers alike have all acknowledged this emerging conflict, and they tend to have different solutions.”

—*Baylor doctoral student Aaron Weaver who blogs at www.thebigdaddyweave.com (BaptistLife.com)*

“I’m a freelancer who stockpiles work ... regardless of where it is. I’m fortunate in that I can do a lot of different things.”

—*Ed Alstrom, organist at Church of the Redeemer in Morristown, N.J., and at Yankee Stadium (RNS)*

“I’ve always said I’m not going to make football my god. A lot of coaches put so much into coaching football games that they have nothing left. I’ve never made football my priority. My priorities are my faith and my dependence on God.”

—*Bobby Bowden, 80, upon retiring as football coach at Florida State University after 34 years (espn.com)*

“Among Latinos the prosperity gospel has been spreading rapidly... For a generation of poor and striving Latino immigrants, the gospel seems to offer a road map to affluence and modern living.”

—*Hannah Rosin writing in The Atlantic*

Worthy investment

Early friendship grows into shared ministries

EAST POINT, Ga. — In 1959 a young white student from South Alabama and a young black student from Pennsylvania met in seminary. A friendship was launched that flourished for 50 years.

Charles Worthy, from Dothan, Ala., attended Baylor University and Howard College (now Samford University) before entering Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., to study for ministry. One of the first students he met was Emmanuel McCall, son of a Pennsylvania pig farmer and the only African-American student in the seminary.

“This was a difficult time for race relations in America, and I was naturally apprehensive,” McCall, a University of Louisville graduate, remembers vividly. “I had no idea how my color would be received among fellow students.”

Yet he also remembers the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

“Charles and Carolyn Worthy opened their arms and their hearts to me and my wife Emma Marie in every possible way,” said McCall. “Led by Charles and Carolyn, a group of about five couples shared meals, study sessions, church assignments and many other times and events. They even marched in civil rights demonstrations with me.”

Emmanuel added: “It was hard to imagine in 1960, but this white boy from South Alabama became the warmest supporter and friend of this black farm boy from Pennsylvania. We formed spiritual and family bonds which grew warmer and stronger across half of a century.”

During seminary and after graduation in 1962, Worthy was a pastor in Fordville, Ky., before going to Germany to serve Baptist churches in Ludwisburg and Wiesbaden. Then he and Carolyn were appointed as Southern Baptist representatives to Israel. Charles worked in mission churches there, managed a bookstore in Jerusalem, and took advanced training in counseling and pastoral psychology.

In 1976, the Worthys completed their work in Israel and settled in Atlanta. One of the first “welcome home” calls Charles



Emmanuel McCall (right) and the late Charles Worthy (shown in a portrait held by his wife Carolyn Worthy) enjoyed a half-century friendship that began as seminary students and ended in shared ministry. Today McCall and J.W. Wallis (left) are continuing those interracial efforts in East Point, Ga., near Atlanta’s busy airport. Photo by Teliea Harwell.

received was from his seminary friend, Emmanuel McCall.

At that time Emmanuel worked in the Black Church Division of the Atlanta-based Southern Baptist Home Mission Board that later merged into the SBC North American Mission Board. He had earned advanced degrees, served as a pastor and professor in Kentucky and as a youth leader for the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

Worthy accepted the pastorate of The Rock Baptist Church in Rex, Ga., south of Atlanta, in 1978. He often invited his friend Emmanuel to fill the pulpit.

Nine years later, Worthy moved to Washington, D.C., to work with Bread for the World. Then he served for 11 years as pastor of Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church, a predominately African-American congregation in Southeast Washington.

His church hosted many interracial programs and community service ministries. And Charles served in various leadership roles with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

After retiring from the pastorate in D.C., Charles and Carolyn returned to Atlanta where once again they lived near the McCalls.

Emmanuel left the Home Mission Board in 1991 to become the founding pastor of

Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in College Park, near the Atlanta airport. Charles became director of a Christian counseling center at the First Baptist Church of Morrow, Ga., about six miles from McCall’s church.

Early in 2006, Worthy became part-time pastor of First Baptist Church in East Point, Ga., also on Atlanta’s south side. The small flock — formed by remnants of several white congregations that had disbanded due to demographic changes in the area around the airport — struggled to maintain its ministries and the large, historic building.

That same year, McCall — who had retired from Christian Fellowship in 2004 — was approached about starting another congregation that became known as the Fellowship Group. For several months they met in schools, hotels and theaters.

Then Worthy suggested that First Baptist of East Point share facilities with the new congregation. Beginning in August 2006, the two congregations would hold separate services in the chapel and sanctuary.

The longtime friends since 1959 were now pastors of congregations sharing the same building and many ministries. For two years they put into daily action what they had dreamed and prayed about while at seminary.

But in December 2007, Charles was diagnosed with cancer and died a month later. J.W. Wallis, a former pastor of Second Baptist Church of College Park, Ga., which had once shared space with McCall’s earlier congregation, became interim pastor in East Point.

During the last month of his life, Worthy urged McCall and Wallis to prayerfully consider his dream that the congregations would become one. At this time, the details are being worked out for that celebration.

“The spirit of Charles Worthy, a courageous Christian from South Alabama, will live on in our multiracial congregation as long as God allows,” said McCall, who has served as national moderator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and is a vice president for the Baptist World Alliance. “Charles may be dead, but his dream, his faith and his friendship will bless my life without end.” **BT**

New domestic poverty stats a shock, Baptist ethicists say

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON — New government numbers revealing that, in 2008, nearly one in six Americans lived in households that struggled to afford food ought to be a wake-up call for Christians, according to two Baptist ethicists.

An annual USDA report released in November reported that 17 million households — 14.6 percent of all homes in the United States — were “food insecure” and had difficulty putting enough food on the table at times during the year.

That compares to 13 million households — 11.1 percent — who worried about their next meal in 2007 and represents the highest level recorded since the government started taking national food-security surveys in 1995.

“Christians need to ... seek justice for those at risk of hunger,” said Robert Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

The USDA found that one-third of food-insecure households had “very low” food security, meaning that some household members had reduced food intake and eating patterns interrupted at times during the year. That is 5.7 percent of all U.S. households, or about 6.7 million. The number is 2 million more households than the 4.1 percent of U.S. households with “very low” food security reported in 2007. That was also the highest on record.

“We’re calling on the faith community to respond to these hunger needs,” said Suzii Paynter, director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Paynter’s agency sponsored a summit at Baylor University in November to discuss ways to eradicate hunger in Texas by 2015. She said the idea is to coordinate efforts of the public and private sector to make existing programs more effective.

“We have all of these resources in place,” she said. “They are not coordinated. They are not working together.”

She said the summit was “the first time we’ve ever had all these people in a room.”

“This is a perfect example of federal, state, faith-based, nonprofit, advocacy and a major university working together successfully for the good



of the community and the less fortunate,” said Bill Ludwig, regional administrator for the USDA. “No matter what the final outcome and results produced by the summit, this adventure has already been a huge success by bringing so many individuals from different walks of life to the table together.”

Paynter said the No. 1 priority of the gathering was to address the problem of children who qualify for free breakfast and lunch programs during the school year but have nowhere to turn in the summertime. In Texas, about 40 percent of families whose children are eligible for free food at school do not take part in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Paynter said the Texas CLC is asking churches and missions in low-income areas to fill the gap by offering breakfast and lunch feeding programs in their communities during the summer.

“We’ve had a very good response,” she said. “Churches are willing to say, ‘We could do that for June, July and August.’”

The day after releasing the USDA report, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack asked the Senate Agriculture Committee to reauthorize nutrition-assistance programs that provide a safety net to those with critical needs.

“The reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Programs presents us with an important opportunity to combat child hunger, improve the health and nutrition of children across the nation, and enhance program performance,” Vilsack said. “The scale of these programs means that reforms can have a major impact on tens of millions of school children.” **BT**

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readers' responses

Editor's note: These letters are a sampling of responses to the recent series of articles on the controversial issue of homosexuality and the church.

Disagrees with Hipps

EDITOR: What I find interesting (in "One pastor's perspective on the Bible and homosexuality" by Richard S. Hipps, November 2009, page 14) is how the concluding remarks are so incompatible and incongruent with the overall tone and general thrust of the writer's argument, which is nothing more than a recitation of biblical condemnations.

Consider the condemnatory language that laces the article: He begins with "the Bible condemns homosexual activity . . . the Bible nowhere sanctions the activities of homosexuals who choose to act out those particular desires. Rather, it very pointedly condemns homosexual activity in general."

After referencing Sodom and Gomorrah, he quotes the horrendous laws in Leviticus that call for the death of any person caught in a homosexual act. And while he says that these laws, along with the entire holiness code, have been abolished under the New Covenant he qualifies his statement by quoting inerrantist Harold Lindsell, "The answer is plain. The New Testament also condemns homosexuality while it does not repeat or advocate some of the other prohibitions of the Old Testament."

He interprets Romans 1:26-27 as if the passage was mainly about homosexuality. Again, his language is peppered with condemnation: "Homosexuality involves shameless acts . . . homosexuality is sexual perversion . . ."

Paul, in the passage, is denouncing all selfish sexual indulgence that treats the other as an object for one's own sexual gratification.

The writer says that the Bible "is silent with regard to homosexual orientation"; well, of course it is. The ancient world knew nothing about the physiology, genetics and sociology of sexual orientation, just as they knew nothing about modern science, thinking the earth was flat, enclosed by a heavenly dome.

The writer references 1 Timothy 1:9-10 noting that homosexuals are condemned along with murderers, kidnappers and

perjurers. Such non-gracious, non-compassionate condemnatory language!

There is no wrestling, grappling and questioning of Scripture; no acknowledgment of the biases, presupposition and cultural assumptions of the biblical writers. There is no recognition of what Brian McLaren mentioned in his interview (page 4) of "how the Bible is filled with arguments against itself."

We are left with the naïve conclusion: "The biblical commandments about homosexual activity cannot be set aside." Why not?

By the same logic then we cannot set aside the biblical command that women are to be silent in the church, remain in submission to men, and if they have a question must wait till they get home and ask their husbands (1 Cor. 14:34-35). By the same logic then we would have to agree that women are morally inferior to men and should never teach men (1 Tim. 2:11-14). If one is going to assume an infallible text, one has to accept it all!

The writer asks: "In light of the biblical view of homosexuality, what should be the attitude of churches toward homosexuals?" Well, it's obvious isn't it? They deserve to die. They are no better than kidnappers and perjurers. They are sexual perverts. They are condemned by God.

But then the writer, out of nowhere, says, "the lack of compassion many Christians show for homosexuals is inexcusable." Where does that come from? The argument presented is saturated with the language of condemnation.

This is like claiming that God is love while preaching a message of a literal, burning hell that turns God into a torturing despot. Calling for compassion toward the homosexual while accepting hook, line and sinker the biblical language of condemnation is like holding back a vicious, growling pit-bull, ready to tear into a visitor, while saying to the visitor, "Oh, he really likes you."

*Chuck Queen, Frankfort, Ky.
(Queen is pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church
in Frankfort.)*

Account for cultural context

EDITOR: It saddens me to see that more times than not, we moderate Baptists assume the exact same positions as our much more conservative brothers and sisters in Christ. It feels to me as if we are unable to look objectively at scripture and at what it has to say — or not say — regarding homosexuality. We read into scripture our own cultural and learned understandings, biases and prejudices.

Richard Hipps quotes all of the typical proof texts including the creation account from Genesis 1, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah from Genesis 19, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Romans 1, etc., and I believe he interprets them from the limits and confines of his own cultural perspective. The inevitable result is a regurgitation of the same conclusion of "love the sinner, hate the sin" (although, at least he puts it in his own words).

One of the biggest shortcomings I see in his interpretation of scripture is the failure to account for the reality that scripture was shaped in a particular cultural context. If the setting in which these passages were written was one in which the prevalent understanding of homosexuality was highly negative and saw homosexuality as perverse, lustful and sinful (all of which can be just as present and damaging in heterosexual behavior and relationships), then some of that sentiment is very likely to become crystalized in the text.

I think it is time for us to take a fresh look at what the Bible is saying. With all awareness that I may be entirely wrong about this, I would like to propose the following observation.

The real teaching from these passages is not that homosexuality is morally wrong or that God's created norm is limited to heterosexuals, but that objectifying a person created in the very image of God and using that person to feed your own brokenness or for our own gain and gratification (sexual or otherwise) is morally wrong and outside of God's created norm. This is significantly different from two people, who love each other, and are committed to one another, sharing a life

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together whether they are homosexual or heterosexual.

So let's seek to be aware of all we bring into our reading of scripture, see our own stuff for what it is, appreciate what we bring when it merits it, and dismiss what we bring into our reading when it doesn't. If we can do this, we stand a much better chance of seeing all the fullness and truth that God gives us through scripture.

*Jeff Wright, Cartersville, Ga.
(Wright is minister to youth and children at Cartersville's Heritage Baptist Church.)*

Let homosexuals be who they are

EDITOR: Discrimination is a cruel thing, made worse when the Bible is brought in on the wrong side. The millions who use the Bible to condemn homosexuality should know the company they keep. They join those [who are] certain the Bible supported slavery, a position that over hundreds of years hurt millions of black people and helped bring on America's bloody Civil War. They keep company also with those who use the Bible to justify discrimination against blacks and women.

Honesty about the Bible is imperative. Selected Bible passages do, in fact, support those positions. This should punctuate that our approach to the Bible may need serious review.

What the Bible says to the church about homosexuality cannot be divined from minuet-like interpretations of verses and passages. Selected passages or "proof texts" do not make homosexuality an evil any more than "proof texts" make an evil of freeing slaves or of granting equality to blacks and women.

Using selected passages in isolation denies a prime rule of Bible interpretation: No part of the Bible can be interpreted in disagreement with the whole. Put more accurately, this rule is that no part of the Bible can be interpreted in disagreement with the

great, broad truths of the Bible as a whole.

These great, broad truths do not support slavery, do not deny the rights of blacks or other minorities, and do not deny equality for women. Nor do they deny the acceptance of homosexuals.

Two other approaches lead to erroneous interpretations of the Bible on these and other issues. One is the erroneous belief that the Bible is inerrant. The other is literalism as a blanket approach to Bible interpretation. These twins have done immense harm and continue to do so. They are the basis of Protestant fundamentalism.

Readers interested in the evidence against Bible inerrancy are referred to Clayton Sullivan's book, *Toward A Mature Faith: Does Biblical Inerrancy Make Sense?* Critics of Sullivan write that his book devastates belief in inerrancy, and that the evidence presented is overwhelming and unanswerable.

Determining what the Bible says about homosexuality is highly complicated. The best option here is to suggest three books: *The Bible And Homosexuality*, by Jeffery Minor; a more technical and difficult book by Daniel A. Helminiak, *What The Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*; and *The Children Are Free*, by Michael England.

Whether homosexuality is a choice is a defining issue. My own conclusion after many years as a therapist agrees with that of the American Psychological and Psychiatric Associations. Homosexuality is neither a choice nor a mental disorder. That their orientation is a choice is utterly foreign to homosexuals.

The sad realities of being homosexual make that a moot point. Homosexuals do not react to the idea of choice as though it were the equivalent of choosing to have incurable cancer; they react with indifference; they know this idea is invalid and irrelevant.

Some religious programs claim miraculous cures. Yet true homosexuals cannot be

"cured." Nor can a homosexual orientation be separated from homosexual acts any more than a heterosexual orientation can be separated from heterosexual acts.

Claims of homosexual cures may have other explanations. Some non-homosexuals engage in a wide variety of sexual activities that may include homosexual acts. Other non-gays engage in such acts because of treatable psychological problems. By no means does this mean homosexuals can be "cured" by getting help with their psychological problems. It does mean that some may not have been true homosexuals.

In programs in which I worked, of the homosexuals who dared reveal their orientation in groups, or who conferred with me privately, all said they had accepted their homosexuality. This may or may not have been true. Their problem, each said, was fear of hatred and rejection, including occupational ruin, should they reveal their orientation.

Particularly do those of us who honor God need to remember that the government, labor unions, businesses, the military, and other entities, fought and won the battles for the rights of blacks, other minorities and women. Too many of our churches jumped on those bandwagons only after others had won the battles.

Now, that pattern is being repeated with homosexuals. We learn so slowly and are too prone to repeat history. Our churches should be on the cutting edge of truth, at times suffering persecution for being there.

But again, our national culture must teach to many of our churches that discrimination — this time against homosexuals — is wrong. Whether the church likes it or not, the American culture is on its way to full acceptance of homosexuals. **BT**

*Dick McCoy, Independence, Mo.
(McCoy is a former pastor and retired mental health clinic administrator.)*

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guest commentary

A time for exchanging ecclesial gifts

By Steven R. Harmon

This is the season for exchanging gifts. I'm referring not to the Christmas season just past but rather to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Jan. 18-25), when we join with sisters and brothers in Christ from other denominations in praying Jesus' prayer that we "may all be one" (John 17:21).

Our prayers in this season move us to ponder what we might do to embody more fully the unity of the body of Christ. One hugely significant thing we can do for Christian unity is to participate in the exchange of the gifts that each Christian tradition has to offer the universal church.

Baptists have sometimes been resistant to the ecumenical movement because they fear that more visible forms of unity might require them to relinquish their most distinctive doctrines and practices. Some older approaches to ecumenism did unfortunately give the strong impression that the cost of unity would be the surrender of some of the things held most dear by each church.

When I served as a Baptist representative to the meeting of the World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order last October, I was delighted to discover that a newer paradigm called "receptive ecumenism" is gaining traction.

Receptive ecumenism is an approach to ecumenical dialogue according to which the communions in conversation with one another seek to identify the distinctive gifts each tradition has to offer the other and that each could receive from the other with integrity.

Yet as an international conference on receptive ecumenism held at Durham University (UK) in 2006 defined the enterprise, "the primary emphasis is on learning rather than teaching ... each tradition takes responsibility for its own potential learning from others and is, in turn, willing to facilitate the learning of others as requested but without dictating terms and without making others' learning a precondition to attending to ones' own."

Baptists have actually been practicing this sort of ecumenism for a long time. The earliest Baptists received gifts from English Separatism and Continental Anabaptism, which along with the canon of Scripture and the core doctrines of orthodox Christianity they received from the pre-Reformation church combined to form a quintessentially Baptist pattern of faith and practice that endures to this day.

Our early confessions of faith underscored Baptist indebtedness to these gifts with language drawn directly from the ancient creeds, Anabaptist confessions, the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles and the Reformed Westminster Confession.

Along the way, Baptists received from other Christians more ordered patterns of worship and the singing of hymns — speaking of which, Baptist hymnals have long fostered practices of receptive ecumenism. They have helped Baptists to sing and absorb the theologies of the ancient church father John of Damascus, the medieval mystic St. Francis of Assisi,

Martin Luther, the post-Reformation Roman Catholic author of the text of "Fairest Lord Jesus," the Methodist Charles Wesley, and more recently the Pentecostal pastor Jack Hayford — to name a few hymn writers whose ecclesial gifts Baptists have gladly received.

Baptist theological educators have long taught Baptist seminarians and divinity school students that the resources they need for the work of the ministry are not exclusively Baptist in origin. Our ministers thus routinely glean the riches of non-Baptist biblical scholarship in their sermon preparation.

They are enriched by the contemplation of systematic theologies written by theologians of other churches. They incorporate practices of pastoral care forged in other traditions into their own approach to the cure of souls. They plan worship and craft programs of Christian education that weave the gifts of other Christians into the fabric of Baptist congregational life.

One of the distinctive gifts of the Baptist tradition may be its unique capacity for receptive ecumenism. Lacking a foundational theologian like Martin Luther or John Calvin, a mandated liturgy or a binding confession, free and faithful Baptists and their churches may incorporate the gifts of others into their own faith and practice without ceasing to be Baptist.

This month, as we pray for and seek the unity for which our Lord prayed, let us continue the Baptist practice of receiving the best gifts offered to us by other Christians — and of offering our own best gifts when others ask for them. **BT**

—Steven R. Harmon is associate professor of divinity at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala., and the author of *Ecumenism Means You, Too: Ordinary Christians and the Quest for Christian Unity* (Cascade Books). He blogs at www.ecclesialtheology.blogspot.com.



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2010 Formations Commentary

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LESSONS FOR: Sunday, Jan. 24- Feb. 14, 2010

Written by Tambi Brown
Swiney, associate pastor
of Immanuel Baptist
Church in Nashville, Tenn.



Jan. 24, 2010

Get serious!

Malachi 1:6-2:9

In this oracle, the Lord's messenger delivered a scathing commentary on the state of the priesthood in fifth century B.C.E. The priests, who themselves were called to be messengers of the Lord of hosts, had clearly failed in their vocation. As Elizabeth Achtemeier has noted in *Interpretation: Nahum-Malachi*, this passage in Malachi offers the highest estimation of the priesthood in the Old Testament. With this high calling in mind, the prophet put the priests on trial, accusing them of dereliction of duty. Those who were called to be reverent had become irreverent. Those who were called to speak God's truth no longer offered words of godly wisdom. Those who were called to walk in integrity and uprightness had stumbled badly off course, leading the people astray in the process.

Was the priests' spiritual apathy born of impatience with God? At this point in Israel's history, Jerusalem's walls had been rebuilt and the temple had been restored. Jewish life had regained a sense of normalcy, and the sacrificial system was back in full swing. The Lord had brought his people back from exile, just as he had promised, but other promises remained unfulfilled. The glorious messianic kingdom foretold by Haggai and Zechariah had not yet arrived. What was the Lord waiting for? By now, should not Judah have become much more than an insignificant province in the vast Persian empire?

As they waited on God to act, the people grew weary. Achtemeier observed: "Nothing faced Israel but 'the dailiness of life,' obeying God's commandments in the daily relations with

neighbors and friends; spending money to pay tithes for the support of the priests; giving up prized lambs and calves to be burnt on the altar; learning religious traditions that seemed as distant as the God they portrayed; praying prayers that disappeared, unanswered, into the blue. God apparently was doing nothing at all in Judah's life, and all his promises for the future seemed hollow mockeries of her service to him" (*Interpretation*, 175).

This should have been a time when the priests rallied the people to trust and obey, encouraging them to remain faithful to the Lord even as they waited on him to act. Instead, the priests lapsed into their own spiritual doldrums. They took shortcuts with the sacrifices and shortchanged God's honor. Under Mosaic law, the people were forbidden to bring a lame or sick animal to the priests as sacrifices (Lev. 22:17-25). It was ultimately the priests' responsibility to determine whether or not a sacrifice was defective, so when the priests readily accepted the unacceptable, they condoned the people's half-hearted worship and profaned God's holy name. Not only were the priests corrupt, but they were also sowing seeds of corruption among the people of God.

Was the priests' apathy born of familiarity? Had they lost sight of God even as they regularly approached the Lord on behalf of the people? Familiarity can indeed breed contempt, and the priests' loss of the awe of the holy was contemptible in the sight of the Lord. As Robert Alden has noted, spiritual leaders in both ancient and modern times "often run the risk of treating sacred things as ordinary. Intimate familiarity with holy matters conduces to treating them with indifference" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, 711).

So how does one who is called to serve in the name of the Lord avoid falling into the trap of simply going through the ministerial motions? "The vocation must be taken with utmost care and gravity," warns William Brown. "It is a serious business that does not dull one's spirit, but rather enlivens it as it is, in turn, enlivened by the Spirit. When the joy of ministry is lost, when the gravity of the office does not probe the depths of

one's being, when the practice of ministry does not elicit a sense of awe-struck excitement and passionate care, then the trap is sprung. The result, as Malachi is quick to point out, is disaffection and despicement of one's calling" (*Obadiah through Malachi*, 196).

The problem was not that the priests had forgotten what to do. This was not a mental lapse; this was a spiritual disease. The hearts of the priests were corrupt. They had broken covenant with the Lord. They were no longer fit to be messengers of the Lord of hosts.

"A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work!" Jeremiah declared (Jer. 48:10), and the curse described in Malachi is graphic. In pronouncing his verdict on the guilty priests, the prophet offered an ironic twist on the Aaronic blessing, which the priests spoke as a benediction over the people (Num. 6:24-26). The Lord's face would not shine upon the priests; instead, the Lord would smear the excrement from the slaughtered bulls and goats upon the faces of the priests. So defiled, the priests would no longer be fit to serve at the altar. The privilege of speaking on behalf of the Lord and blessing others in his name had been divinely reneged.

Have you fallen into a state of spiritual apathy? Are you simply going through the motions? Proceed at your own peril. Make no mistake about it, the Lord's messenger insists: Leading God's people is serious business.

Jan. 31, 2010

Do justice!

Micah 6:1-8

In presenting the Nobel Peace Prize to Elie Wiesel on a December day in 1986 in Oslo, the chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Egil Aarvik, observed that Wiesel was a "witness for truth and justice." The following day, in his memorable Nobel lecture titled "Hope, Despair and Memory," Wiesel declared, "There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest."



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In Micah's day, not only had Israel's leaders failed to protest the injustices of their time, but they were also perpetrators of injustice. Like other prophets, Micah was compelled by the Lord to build a case against the people of Israel, shining a harsh light on their failure to do justice.

"The prophets' preoccupation with justice and righteousness has its roots in a powerful awareness of injustice," Abraham Heschel wrote. "That justice is a good thing, a fine goal, even a supreme ideal, is commonly accepted. What is lacking is a sense of the monstrosity of injustice. Moralists of all ages have been eloquent in singing the praises of virtue. The distinction of the prophets was in their remorseless unveiling of injustice and oppression, in their comprehension of social, political and religious evils. They were not concerned with the definition, but with the predicament, of justice, with the fact that those called upon to apply it defied it" (*The Prophets*, 204).

In last week's passage from Malachi, God's messenger admonished the priests for their failure to lead; Micah likewise noted a failure of moral leadership. The heads of the house of Jacob and the rulers of the house of Israel were accused of despising justice, of distorting all that was right (3:9). *Should you, of all people, not know justice?* the Lord demanded.

A native of Moresheth, a village situated southeast of Jerusalem, Micah was keenly aware of the injustice that the most vulnerable members of his community experienced at the hands of the powerful. Wealthy urban landowners seized property from the rural poor through fraudulent transactions (2:1-2). Jerusalem had benefited from bloodshed and wickedness (3:10). Judges, priests and prophets were all parties to oppression (3:11). Thus this eighth century prophet became the first to predict the fall of the holy city and the destruction of Israel's holiest site: "Therefore because of you, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets" (3:12). But the prophet took no pleasure in bringing these charges against his own people: Micah wept, wailed, howled and moaned over Israel's fate (1:8).

Yet, Israel's leaders were blissfully unaware of their spiritual shortcomings. After all, they continued to faithfully bring their sacrifices to the altar. *What kind of sacrifices do you want from us? the worshipers asked. Burnt offerings? Thousands of rams? Rivers of oil? Our firstborn children?* Clearly they had forgotten what the prophet Samuel told Saul on the day that he learned the Lord had declared him unfit for royal service: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offer-

ings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Micah insisted that the people knew all along what the Lord required: Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. This verse, Walter Bruggemann noted in *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, is a summary of prophetic ethics. The prophets recognized that oppression of one's neighbor was incompatible with loving God. In response to everything the Lord had done for them — in view of God's mercy — these covenant people were called to offer their lives as living sacrifices as an act of worship (Rom. 12:1).

"Justice is not an ancient custom, a human convention, a value, but a transcendent demand, freighted with divine concern," Heschel observed (*The Prophets*, 198). The Lord is a god of justice (Isa. 30:18), and righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne (Ps. 97:2). It follows that the people of God should be a people committed to doing justice. Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God, Micah instructed. Other prophetic voices joined in the chorus: "Seek justice, undo oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:17); "But let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream" (Amos 5:24); "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another" (Zech. 7:9). Time and time again, the prophets issued the clarion call: Do justice!

Do you lack a sense of "the monstrosity of injustice"? How is God calling you to do justice on behalf of the oppressed in your community, your state, our nation, our world? Don't allow the enormity of the task to overwhelm you. Respond to the Spirit's prompting and act obediently. May we be witnesses for truth and justice in our day.

Feb. 7, 2010

Have faith!

Habakkuk 3:1-19

While confined to a prison cell awaiting trial during the dark days of the Nazi regime, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "By good powers wonderfully hidden, we await cheerfully, come what may." A man whose abiding faith allowed him to transcend dire circumstances, Bonhoeffer would have found a kindred spirit in Habakkuk. This seventh century prophet, who like Bonhoeffer, was deeply distressed at the state of his beloved nation, nevertheless expressed faith in the midst of a

period of waiting.

While other prophets spoke to the people on behalf of God, Habakkuk was unique, speaking instead to God about the people. The prophet recognized that God's people had been covenant-breakers rather than covenant-keepers, and thus he did not defend their conduct or seek to dissuade the Lord from disciplining them. Habakkuk was deeply distressed at the injustice he had witnessed in Judah, and the prophet bluntly confronted the Lord about his failure to act sooner to address the rampant violence in the land.

However, even though Habakkuk believed that Judah deserved divine discipline, he could not understand why the Lord would choose to use a people who were even more wicked — the Babylonians — as his instrument of divine judgment. Wouldn't this simply compound the pervasive problem of injustice? How could this plan possibly end well? Like Jeremiah and Job, Habakkuk raised a question of theodicy: Why do the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer? While Job wrestled with this issue on a personal level, Habakkuk wrestled with it on an international scale.

After two rounds of dialogue with God, the prophet was moved to pray, and in this passage we find an inspiring confession of faith. Elizabeth Achtemeier observed: "Habakkuk is a book for all faithful people, of whatever era, who find themselves living 'in the meantime' — in the time between the revelation of the promises of God and the fulfillment of those promises — in the time between their redemption, when God made his purpose clear, and the final time when that divine purpose will be realized in all the earth. As such, Habakkuk is a book from faith for faith. It speaks of that faith and to that faith which lives in the world as it is and yet which knows that the world is not all there was or is or is to come" (*Nabum-Malachi*, 32).

In this passage we find the most detailed theophany in the Old Testament, verses that evoke imagery of the Exodus. Habakkuk envisioned the Lord coming as Warrior-King, advancing from the mountain with horses and chariots, bows and arrows and spears. Just as the Lord held back the waters of the Red Sea to deliver the Israelites from the clutches of the Egyptian army, the Lord of Hosts would once again intervene in human history and vanquish his foes. Echoing the Song of Moses, Habakkuk declared that the Lord was his strength (Exod. 15:2).

Although Habakkuk's distress over Judah's current circumstances was compounded by his foreknowledge of the judgment that was yet to come, he expressed a willingness to wait



patiently for God's plan to unfold. The prophet had faith that even though God's ways were inscrutable, the Lord of Hosts had a battle plan that would ultimately result in victory. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9). As Walter Brueggemann noted, the prophet recognized that "the future is secure in YHWH's governance even if the present is unbearably out of control" (*An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 241).

Habakkuk concluded his prayer with words that have a defiant ring — a passage marked by three "thoughts" and a "yet." Centuries later, Habakkuk's faith-full words inspired 18th century poet William Cowper to pen the hymn "Sometimes a Light Surprises":

Though vine nor fig tree neither
Their wonted fruit should bear,
Though all the field should wither,
Nor flocks nor herds be there;
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice,
For while in Him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.

Difficult days lay ahead for Judah — of this Habakkuk was certain. Crops would fail. Walls would fall. People would perish. Nevertheless, Habakkuk chose to live by faith (2:4). His praise was not dependent on his circumstances. God had acted in the past on behalf of his people, and the prophet believed the sovereign Lord would act again. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb. 11:1).

As we live "in the meantime," we recall the Lord's mighty acts of deliverance in the past. As we live "in the meantime," we remember that no matter how chaotic the course of human events has become in the present, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. As we live "in the meantime," we look forward to the day of our ultimate deliverance — the day when the dwelling of God will be with his people, when he will wipe every tear from our eyes, when the old order of things will once and for all time pass away. In the "meantime," have faith.

Feb. 14, 2010

Rejoice!

Zephaniah 3:8-20

What prompts corporate expressions of joy? What circumstances cause a crowd to spontaneously burst into song? A victory often provokes such a display — whether of the

athletic, political or military variety. Fans of the University of Tennessee's football team punctuate a win by singing a rousing chorus of "Rocky Top" in Neyland Stadium. When Barack Obama was elected president, Kenyans took to the streets of Nairobi, singing and dancing to celebrate the victory of one whom they consider to be a native son. A famous photograph taken at the Brandenburg Gate on Nov. 10, 1989, shows Berliners singing and dancing on top of the Berlin Wall the day after the wall fell, opening the way for people to move freely between East and West Germany.

The book of Zephaniah concludes with a corporate call to rejoice, but if one were to proceed only as far as 3:8, the reader would wonder, "What's there to sing about?" The seventh century prophet, who served during the reign of King Josiah, announced the coming of the day of the Lord. Like other prophets — Amos, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Malachi — Zephaniah warned of a horrific day when the Lord would come as Warrior-King to judge not only Israel's enemies, but also Israel itself — "a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers" (1:15-16).

In the opening verses of this book, Zephaniah described what was essentially a reversal of Creation: Rather than filling the earth, God is sweeping everything away. In his first oracle, Zephaniah takes aim at Judah. God's chosen people, having survived the Assyrian onslaught, had once again failed in their vocation to be a peculiar people, wholly devoted to Yahweh. Their rebelliousness was painfully evident after the rediscovery of the Book of the Law during the temple reconstruction project. Even as King Josiah prompted God's covenant people to realign their lives with his commands, the people continued to practice an amalgamation of religions. The Israelites had been warned from the days of Moses that obedience to God's commandments would bring blessings, but disobedience would result in curses. Judgment was coming.

After pronouncing God's judgment on Israel's enemies — the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Cushites and Assyrians — Zephaniah once again turned his attention to Judah, specifically the once holy but now wicked city of Jerusalem. Had the city learned nothing from the destruction of its neighbors? Why did the people and its leaders fail to accept God's correction, thus averting disaster? The prophet condemned Judah's leaders — the royal princes, judges, prophets and priests — accusing them of

greed, arrogance and oppression. In their recklessness they had profaned the sanctuary and done violence to the law. With such a gross failure of spiritual leadership, it's no wonder the people had pulled away from the Lord.

Wait for it, the Lord declared, *I am about to act*. The consuming fire of the Lord would descend to purify the peoples of the earth. In contrast to what happened at the tower of Babel, when the people sought to make a name for themselves and God subsequently confused their language and scattered them (Gen. 11:1-9), on the day of the Lord the people will be gathered and pure speech restored. God will unify the people so that they can praise and serve his holy name.

After intense passages about God's judgment, the tone has abruptly shifted. All is not lost. God had a plan to preserve a remnant of Israel. Zephaniah's final words are reminiscent of Habakkuk's concluding hymn of triumph. The Lord has chosen to commute the sentence of the faithful remnant. In this reversal of fortunes, the scattered will be gathered, the humble will supplant the holy, and the remnant will at last rest in peace. In the messianic era the oppressed, lame and outcasts will be included in the community, as their shame is turned to praise. The enemies of the Lord will be defeated, once and for all.

What is the proper response to such an astounding message of hope? The Hebrew verbs are stacked for emphasis: sing, shout aloud, be glad, rejoice! Zephaniah paints a picture of an exuberant celebration complete with singing and dancing, music and laughter. Just as they had done many times before on their pilgrimages to Jerusalem to observe the great feasts, the people will assemble in the Holy City to rejoice over God their Savior. The Lord will bring them out to a spacious place; he will rescue them because he delights in them (Ps. 18:19).

Charles Wesley's words would be appropriate for the worshippers in Zion: "Rejoice the Lord is King: Your Lord and King adore! Rejoice, give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore: Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!" And so Habakkuk calls the people to rejoice. But they aren't the only ones singing; the Lord is rejoicing in song as well. Like the father in Jesus' parable who throws a party to celebrate the homecoming of his wayward son, the Lord, the King of Israel, rejoices in the return of his beloved children.

What prompts you to sing? What moves you to shout for joy? Hope is on the horizon, Zephaniah reminds us, a homecoming awaits. Rejoice! The Lord your God is with you. He is mighty to save. **BT**

2010

The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

Brought to you this month
by Neil Westbrook



Eight trends church leaders should consider in 2010

As a church leader, you will want to consider what trends will likely impact your church in the new year. Following are some trends that will likely have the greatest impact on congregations in 2010.

1. New economic realities and perceptions.

To cut costs, closely examine your budget for line items that may not be prudent or that are no longer effective. One approach is to use a zero-based budget. Cuts may need to be made only temporarily. Seek to ease the attitude of fear among members who may hold on to their money; encourage them to be faithful and to continue to tithe.

2. Shift from nuclear family to diverse meanings of family.

The word “family” used to mean a husband and wife and their kids. Today’s family may be two people living together who are unrelated, a household filled with extended family members, or a group living together to share costs. These are often less stable than traditional, nuclear families and may require more help from churches. In addition, churches will have to wrestle with the challenges of accepting new family models into the church and finding ways to minister to these families.

3. Increasing number of single adults (of all ages).

Studies show that the total percentage of married people in America is at its lowest point in more than 30 years. Many younger people who are choosing to stay single find it difficult to fit in to traditional churches predominantly attended by married couples with children. Often times when couples divorce, the husband and/or wife also chooses to divorce him/herself from the local church. As the divorced population grows, so will the percentage of unchurched Americans. In addition, the senior adult population is one

Resources:

- Beckhard, et al. *The Community of the Future*.
- Callahan, Kennon L. *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*
- Garfield, Bob. *The Chaos Scenario*.
- Hammett, Edward H. *The Gathered and Scattered Church: Equipping Believers for the 21st Century*.
- www.transformingsolutions.org
- www.factfinder.census.gov

of the fastest growing single populations in America. According to SeniorJournal.com, “Beginning in 2011, the population 65 and older will grow faster than the total population in every single state.”

4. Importance of social media networking.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs and other social media networking websites continue to grow not only in popularity of use, but also in importance. The Internet has actually outpaced television in terms of where people get their news and connect with friends. Churches should consider developing an online presence in order to “get in the loop” and keep their information in front of members. Additionally, when people move into a new community they often use the Internet to find their next church home. Blogging represents another option for pastors and church leaders, providing an opportunity to connect on a deeper or more personal level.

5. Rampant church planting.

Many denominations have all but given up on the churches that have supported them for decades, and now are turning their attention and resources toward starting new churches as their strategy to sustain denominational structures and to reach tomorrow’s generation. Unfortunately, established churches will actually have

to compete with these newer, niche church plants for members. While new church plants do reach unchurched and dechurched people, they also gain membership from other churches.

6. Anti-denominational attitudes.

Many people are tired of old denominational rules and politics that seem to be divisive rather than unifying. Most new churches do not put their denominational affiliation in their names. The general population is less impressed with a church’s denomination and more concerned about a church’s witness, community involvement and the programs offered.


7. Aging population.

By 2030, people 65-plus are expected to make up about 20 percent of the American population. Many of these senior adults have been the foundation of support for local churches for more than 50 years. Younger generations have been slower to make the same level of commitment. Financially, this means that when local churches lose their older members it may take two or three families to make up the difference. However, the aging population is still very active. Churches may consider starting new ministries to capitalize on the passions and energy of their aging members.

8. Desire for authentic, meaningful religious experiences with real people.

Although the Internet has provided a means for connecting people with old friends and making new friends across geographical borders, people are looking to connect with others in deeper and more meaningful ways. Affinity groups, men’s and women’s groups, ministry teams, and other small groups will serve to help people connect with one another. Authenticity and intimacy are slowly replacing the big or mega-church experience. **BT**

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 Neil Westbrook, pastor of Neel Road Baptist Church in Salisbury, N.C. Resource Page Archives are available at <http://www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page>.

PIEDMONT COLLEGE RELIGION & THE LIBERAL ARTS CONFERENCE	Keynote Speakers	
	 Barbara Brown Taylor <i>Piedmont College</i>	 Bill J. Leonard <i>Wake Forest University School of Divinity</i>
February 19 & 20, 2010 Athens, Georgia	 VANISHING APPALACHIA KEEPING FAITH ON UNEVEN GROUND	
Details and online registration at www.piedmont.edu		

in the know

Keeping up with people, places, and events

PEOPLE

Bob Ballance is pastor of First Baptist Church of Boulder, Colo., coming from Heritage Baptist Church in Cartersville, Ga., where he has served since 1999. He is a former editor of *Baptists Today*.

Rich Giersch is minister of youth at First Baptist Church of North Wilkesboro, N.C.

Gerald Hewitt, a retired administrator of North Carolina Baptist Hospital and former pastor, died Oct. 24.

Austin Moses died Dec. 2 in Austin, Texas. He was a building contractor and Baptist layman. During his many years in Rome, Ga., he served as a trustee and twice as interim president for Shorter College.

Rebekah Naylor, an emeritus Southern Baptist missionary physician who served for 35 years at Bangalore Baptist Hospital in India, has joined the staff of Baptist Global Response, a Nashville-based international relief and development organization, as a U.S.-based health care consultant.

Josh Powers is minister of youth and education at First Baptist Church of Rutherfordton, N.C.

Andy Smith is minister of youth and their families at Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

Ellen Teague, director of finance and administration for the Baptist World Alliance, retired Dec. 31, 2009. Teague joined the staff of the BWA in 1994. Prior to that, she served as director of the North American Baptist Women's Union.

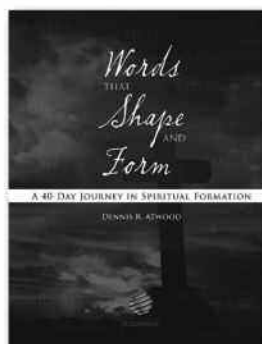
Matt Wilson is minister of youth, children and families at Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, N.C.

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Words that Shape and Form: A 40-Day Journey in Spiritual Formation

Words That Shape and Form is a 40-day resource for use by individuals, small groups and congregations. Ideal for the Lenten season and other 40-day periods of the Christian year, this resource helps participants explore the meaning and transforming potential of words like advent, missional, and xenos.



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Dean, School of Divinity

Wake Forest University seeks nominations and applications for the Dean of the School of Divinity. Ranked among the top 30 national universities, Wake Forest integrates the intimacy of an undergraduate liberal arts college with the academic vitality of a research university. Wake Forest is a vibrant intellectual community located in Winston-Salem, N.C., which is part of the Piedmont Triad metropolitan region with a population of more than 1.5 million individuals.

The University enrolls 4,300 undergraduates and 2,400 graduate and professional students. Wake Forest comprises Wake Forest College (undergraduate), the Schools of Business (undergraduate and graduate), the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Divinity, the School of Law, and the School of Medicine.

Founded in 1999, the School of Divinity identifies itself as Christian by tradition, ecumenical in outlook and Baptist in heritage. With nine full-time faculty and more than 100 students at present, the school offers a Master of Divinity degree designed to prepare women and men for competent and faithful ministry. It also offers two dual degrees as well as related graduate degree programs and other special studies. In a truly integrated approach, the school's curriculum blends theological education with courses taught by faculty of the University's undergraduate, graduate and professional schools, as well as adjunct faculty from outside the University community.

The School of Divinity seeks an energetic and committed leader to build upon the strong foundation established in its first 10 years and to expand on future opportunities for the school and develop and implement its vision for the next decade and beyond. The candidate should have attained a Ph.D. degree or its equivalent. The successful candidate should also bring leadership experience in higher education and have attained distinction in the theological scholarship. Reporting directly to the Provost, the Dean will provide leadership for the academic enterprise of the school and will play a lead role in resource development and external relations.

Review of candidate materials will begin immediately and continue until a new dean is selected. For more information on Wake Forest and the School of Divinity, please visit the Wake Forest website at www.wfu.edu. Inquiries, applications and nominations should be directed to:

Wake Forest University Divinity Dean Search
Heidrick & Struggles, Inc.
Attn: Ellen Brown/Dale Jones
303 Peachtree St., NE, Ste. 4300
Atlanta, GA 30308
Phone: (404) 682-7400 / Fax: (404) 577-4048
E-mail: wfu@heidrick.com

Wake Forest is an Equal Opportunity Employer and strongly encourages applications from minority and female candidates.

Willow Meadows Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, seeks a **senior pastor**. Please send résumés to: rtsimmons@aol.com.

First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tenn. (www.fbcchattanooga.org), is seeking a **senior pastor**. Our church is located in a prominent site in downtown Chattanooga, and is made up of members from in and around the city. Our total membership is approximately 1,000. We are a moderate church with ordained women on our ministerial staff, and we ordain both males and females to serve as deacons. Our church was organized in 1838, so we have a long history and a long tradition of ministry in the downtown. We have always maintained active participation in regional, state, national and international missions together with our heavy involvement in various downtown ministries. We seek a pastor who is committed to Baptist principles, and has excellent preaching skills, genuine pastoral attributes and strong leadership abilities. Direct all inquiries and résumés to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 401 Gateway Ave., Chattanooga, TN 37402, or judy@1stbaptistcha.org.

Associate Pastor: McLean Baptist Church in McLean, Va., is seeking a special minister to serve God and the world with our special church. Focus will be on youth and spiritual formation programs for all ages, with particular attention to children, along with some visitation and administrative duties. A full job description is available at www.mcleanbaptist.org. Salary is commensurate with education and experience; benefits are included. Send résumé and references to: résumé@mcleanbaptist.org.

Morningside Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C., is seeking an **associate pastor to children**. Morningside is a congregation of 1,550+ members and has a ministerial team of six other ministers, and affirms women in ministry and worships in a traditional form. Appropriate college and seminary degrees are required. Candidates must have the ability to coordinate a comprehensive children's program. Send résumés to: Mike Hensley, Associate Pastor to Children Search Committee, Morningside Baptist Church, 897 S. Pine St., Spartanburg, S.C. 29302, or mikehensley@bellsouth.net.

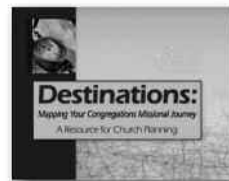
Millbrook Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C., is seeking a **part-time minister to children**. The desired candidate will have a master's degree from an accredited seminary or divinity school, a childhood education degree, and practical experience working with children in Christian education and/or weekday early education. This individual will be responsible for the development and implementation of comprehensive programs for children, and will provide pastoral care to children and their families. Salary is based on experience and education. Send résumé to: Personnel Committee, Millbrook Baptist Church, 1519 E. Millbrook Rd., Raleigh, NC 27609, or office@millbrookbaptistchurch.org.

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Conservative Christians vow continuing resistance on abortion, gay marriage

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON — Facing what they consider “threats” from American culture, prominent Catholic, evangelical and Orthodox Christian leaders are vowing unspecified civil disobedience against abortion, same-sex marriage and limits on religious liberty.

“We are Christians who have joined together across historic lines of ecclesial differences to affirm our right — and more importantly, to embrace our obligation — to speak and act in defense of these truths,” reads the seven-page “Manhattan Declaration.”

“We pledge to each other, and to our fellow believers, that no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence.”

More than a dozen Christian leaders — including Catholic bishops, an Orthodox priest, and officials of evangelical organizations — endorsed the document at the National Press Club. Organizers on Nov. 20 claimed about 150 initial signatories.

Archbishop Justin Rigali of Philadelphia cited increasing numbers of troubling incidents that he said sparked the new concerted approach, including doctors expected to refer or perform abortions despite their own objections, acceptance of embryonic stem cell research and assisted suicide, and the risk of marriage being “redefined in its very essence.”

“If someone asks, ‘Why now? What is the urgency of a declaration of conscience by Eastern Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic leaders?’, we say we must speak now because justice, which is love in action, demands that we not remain silent in the face of these threats,” Rigali said.

Supporters said possible civil disobedience would be up to individuals, but could include closing facilities or paying fines.

Princeton University professor Robert George, a drafter of the document, said people need to be “prepared to make sacrifices,” just as the late Martin Luther King Jr. did when he faced jail during the civil rights movement.

The declaration specifically states initiatives to recognize same-sex marriage are not the “cause” of damage to the institution of marriage, which has been eroded by divorce and infidelity.

“What we don’t want to do is lock in any understanding of marriage that will become itself an impediment to us rebuilding the marriage culture,” said George, a Catholic layman and prominent ethicist.

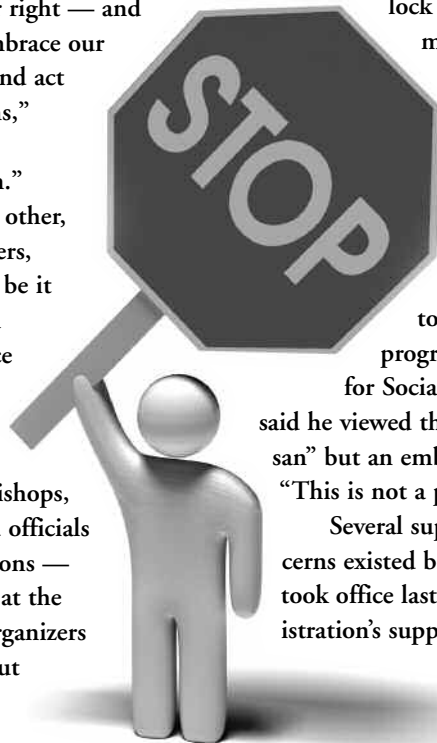
Ronald Sider, director of the traditionally progressive group Evangelicals for Social Action and a signatory, said he viewed the document as “not partisan” but an embracing of Christian values. “This is not a political ploy,” Sider said.

Several supporters said their concerns existed before President Obama took office last January, but the administration’s support for expanding embryonic stem cell research only enhances their need to speak up.

Critics, including the group Americans United for Separation of Church and State, questioned whether the motives of the declaration’s supporters were ultimately political.

“I am optimistic that the people in the pews will not heed their leaders’ misguided call to action,” said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United. “Polls show that most churchgoers do not want to see their faith politicized. But I am well aware that religious leaders have vast lobbying power that cannot be ignored.”

Baptist signatories included Richard Land, Jimmy Draper, Al Mohler, Jack Graham, Chuck Colson, David Platt, Herb Lusk, Bob Reccord, Danny Akin, Robert Sloan and Timothy George. **BT**



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guest commentary

Hitler's dead. Let's keep it that way.

By A. James Rudin, RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

Holocaust. Hitler. Auschwitz. Opponents of health care reform have used each of these terms as hateful political weapons in the public arena, and as a result, America is infected with a dangerous social cancer that corrupts civil discourse and splinters our society.

Since the end of World War II, such terms have been “off limits” in any political discussion inside the United States. But not anymore.

Citizens, of course, have every right to express their disagreement with the proposed health care overhaul. But in using these three terms in an attempt to sway public opinion, cynical politicians and pundits have poisoned America with a kind of political pathology.

Their actions, and their words, must be swiftly opposed and vigorously challenged.

We've seen it over the past year: raucous town hall meetings, tea-bag rallies and anti-reform marches on Washington. The demonstrations, however, cross the line of civil discourse when participants carry pictures of President Obama with a Hitleresque moustache, or when they describe the impact of the reform measure as a health care Holocaust, or when they inflame passions by predicting millions of helpless patients confined to an American Auschwitz that will “kill grandma” through nefarious “death panels.”

Those who spew this linguistic graffiti for short-term political gain are, in a word, disgusting. Yes, they deserve a vote — but not into positions of public trust, but into a national Hall of Shame.

Because the survivors of Hitler's Holocaust are dying natural deaths every day, along with our veterans who actually defeated Nazism, it is our task to condemn the cheap use of the three horrific words.

The late Lutheran Bishop Krister Stendahl, the former dean of Harvard Divinity School, taught that the word “Holocaust” must always and forever be spelled with a capital “H.” He also said it must never have the letter “s” attached to its end.

Stendahl declared the word Holocaust — the mass murder of 6 million Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators — must stand alone and never be employed for any other event. If every flood, earthquake, fire, mudslide and disease (horrible though they are) is called a “holocaust,” then the very word and the Nazi victims are trivialized and demeaned.

Stendahl would be appalled to see the word twisted for cheap political gain.

With the passage of time, the name “Hitler” has been mischievously attached to various contemporary political leaders. The mists of time and deliberate contempt for Hitler's victims have made the Nazi leader into a convenient one-dimensional villain who, if he were still alive, might be making the rounds as an outspoken guest on America's cable talk shows.

I wince each time I see a poster linking

Hitler to a piece of American legislation that will allegedly “kill grandma.” The fact is, Hitler really did murder millions of real “grandmas.” His orders, whether written or oral, constitute history's grimmest and most lethal “death panels.”

“Auschwitz,” meanwhile, was the epicenter of mass murder and must never be a convenient term used to inflame American public opinion. My last visit to the real Auschwitz in Poland was with my wife on a bitterly cold January day a few years ago. The original barracks of both Auschwitz and the neighboring death factory, Birkenau, are still intact.

To project Auschwitz — the most evil place in the world — into today's political debate is an ugly action no words can adequately condemn.

The Bible says “the dead cannot praise God,” and neither can the Holocaust victims speak for themselves. It is up to us, then, for as long as we are alive, to speak for those who were murdered in the Holocaust, because of Hitler, in a place called Auschwitz.

Hitler is dead. Let's keep him that way.

The Holocaust has ended. Let there never be another.

Auschwitz is haunted by the ghosts of the lost. Let us leave them at peace — and out of our politics. **BT**

—*Rabbi Rudin, the American Jewish Committee's senior interreligious adviser, is the author of The Baptizing of America: The Religious Right's Plans for the Rest of Us.*



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guest commentary

Calculating the 'saved' doesn't add up

By James L. Evans

In the calculus of evangelical theology, there are only two states of being. People are either saved or lost. Saved means they have accepted Jesus as their savior. Lost means they have not.

There is no middle ground for evangelicals — no semi-saved or mostly saved. You either are or you are not.

And apparently at least one Baptist in Kentucky can tell you precisely how many are and how many are not.

Peter Smith, religion writer for *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Ky., posted a column about Ross Bauscher on his blog recently. Bauscher serves as the Evangelism Growth Team Leader for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Apparently, Bauscher has developed a method for determining who is saved and who is lost. During the Kentucky Baptist Convention's annual meeting in November, Bauscher announced that there are 2,587,995 Kentuckians who "are lost without Christ."

He didn't say "nearly" or "as many as." He didn't use a rounded-up number, such as "2.6 million." He gave a precise number.

How can he do that?

One troubling aspect of his calculation is the existence of census data that seems to contradict it. According to Smith's column, there are 4,269,245 people living in Kentucky. Of

this group about 2.6 million claim some form of religious affiliation. There are about 1.6 million who claim no affiliation.

Bauscher's number takes in all 1.6 million of the self-avowed, non-church attendees, and about a million from those who do claim affiliation.

When asked about this, according to Smith's blog, Bauscher replied, "You have to distinguish between religion at that point and the relationship with Christ, because there's a lot of people who go to church but don't have a relationship with Christ."

So how do you distinguish between real saved people and semi-saved people who nevertheless claim church affiliation? How do you walk into a congregation where, according to Bauscher's estimate, one-third of the membership is potentially lost?

Is there some sort of salvation radar he uses that sends out a special pulse that identifies the saved from the lost?

The whole thing has raised additional questions for me. For instance, do the people Bauscher claims are members of churches but are not saved know they are not saved?

Also, if it's possible to be affiliated with a

church and still be lost, is it possible to not be affiliated with a church and yet be saved? I realize that would totally skew Bauscher's math, but I think we have to at least consider the possibility.

There is a theological arrogance at work in Bauscher's reckoning that I am all too familiar with. Because evangelicals hold beliefs that define for them in general terms what they understand are the conditions for being right with God, they think they can make particular applications of those beliefs. That's fine if a person is thinking of his or her own relationship with God.

But to say with certainty that someone else is not right with God is clearly claiming knowledge available only to the divine mind. This is especially true when nearly one million people claim for themselves a relationship with God.

I wonder if this is what Jesus had in mind when he said, "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get."

Talk about tough math. **BT**

—James L. Evans is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Auburn, Ala. This column is reprinted with permission from *EthicsDaily.com*.



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BAPTISTS
Today

the lighter side

The young and the waistless; the old and the beautiful

By Brett Younger

On most Saturday mornings I go to Mountain Park Park (*Note to the editor: That's not a typo. It really is the name of the park. Mountain Park is the name of the city.*) (*Second note to the editor: Maybe you should leave the previous note in the column. It might be funny.*) (*Third note: Do you think you should leave in the second note too?*)

My park is set up for old people and small children. The track winds around tennis courts where everyone plays doubles, a playground with tiny slides and swings, and a pond with old ducks. The mile-long path has wooden markers each 10th of a mile, offering encouragement to runners every couple of minutes.

“Run” may not be exactly the right word to describe what usually goes on at my park. “Jog” would be closer. “Trot,” “lope” and “saunter” fit. We go slow. We time our miles by the position of the sun.

My crowd wears knee braces, warm-up pants and “Carter/Mondale” T-shirts. We include lots of moms with strollers. (I have only seen one mother smoking while out getting her baby some fresh air.)

Our children have given us iPods so we don't talk much, but we recognize one another and (even as we listen to our downloaded

Tony Bennett) nod in a friendly manner. We admire one another, because we know it takes more than a New Year's resolution to keep people like us showing up.

I've named one of the regulars “Rocky.” He wears an orange University of Tennessee visor. He must be in his 80s. The way he runs makes me think at least one hip and one knee are recent additions. He moves slowly, but he is often at it when I arrive and still at it when I leave.

“Mabel” waited too long to start substituting the side salad for the fries. I'm guessing she is there on doctor's orders. It is easy to imagine her a few years after her kids left home suddenly surprised that she is wearing XXL. She brings a white poodle — “Killer” — who keeps her moving, though not always in the right direction.

When I got to the park one recent Saturday, I immediately knew something was terribly wrong. Young people in \$200 Nikes were dashing around at a startling pace. The high school cross-country team had invaded our family-friendly track. A thundering herd of 16-year-olds with 2 percent body fat (even though they still eat double cheeseburgers) were running five-minute miles like they

owned the place. They were frightening our ducks.

What had always been a leisurely stroll now felt like running with the bulls of Pamplona. Parents cheered their sons wildly. Coaches lined the way with stop watches and megaphones. If the enthusiastic crowd even noticed slow-moving people like Mabel and me, it must have been with condescension.

At first I felt bitter about being run off the road, but after the whippersnappers left I calmed down and began to wonder whether the wrong people are getting the applause.

Who are the real runners? It takes more for my gang to be there than the 100-pounders with teenage knees. Mabel sweats, labors and struggles, but she keeps coming. Most people Rocky's age have given up, but he still shows up. Maybe the 10th graders darting around the track will still be at it 40 years from now, but isn't the applause premature?

The runners we should admire the most may not be the young fast ones, but the grandparents who drag themselves out of bed when they are feeling sore all over.

The real heroes and heroines may not get the loudest ovations. The quickest, smartest and best looking should not get all of the praise. The best Sunday school teacher may not be the one with the biggest class, but the gracious friend who has been caring for the same good people for decades.

The best pastor may not be the one with the biggest church, but the minister who faithfully serves a congregation that struggles to survive. God's finest are the ones — young and old, large and small — who are not running for applause. **BT**

—Brett Younger is associate professor of preaching at Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology.



Illustration by Scott Brooks

Right on time

By John Pierce
Posted Nov. 19, 2009
www.bteditor.blogspot.com

The late D. Eugene Briscoe, my supervisor of long ago, taught me the values of time management and punctuality. Some would say it was an obsession with him.

However, those good lessons learned have served me well throughout my career. So I am very grateful.

Using time wisely, efficiently and effectively is a stewardship issue, Gene insisted. He taught me how to do so through calendaring and other ways of organizing. With his good help, I learned to “multi-task” before that became a common term.

Punctuality was one of his strongest emphases. An appointment with someone should be considered as a “contract,” he often said. So being late is an unacceptable violation of a contract. To waste the time of someone else was stealing something of great value.

So only on rare occasions have I ever been late to anything. I just show up on time if not early.

However, there are some good exceptions to the rule. For example, I hurried to an out-of-town event recently and arrived just before the

announced starting time. I should have slowed down. Managing the amount of time one’s rear can endure sitting is another matter for consideration.

A couple of years ago I took our older daughter to see the Plain White T’s in concert at Mercer University. We made the mistake of showing up at the time printed on the tickets.

It would be nearly three hours before the first note of “Hey There Delilah” was struck. Only a handful of other fools were in the vast arena when we arrived.

Not being a frequent concert-goer, I was unaware that even the announced warm-up acts were nowhere around when the show was scheduled to start. But the worst piece of missing information was the quality of entertainment that would precede the announced acts.

Suffice it to say that there is a word combination I now know to avoid at all cost: “local rapper.” Otherwise, I’ll be there — right on time. **BT**



Is God in your genes?

By Tony W. Cartledge
Posted Nov. 16, 2009
www.tonycartledge.com

An article in the *New York Times* recently explored arguments for the existence of a “God gene” and its potential evolution among humans.

Say what?

It’s not a particularly new idea: archaeologists, anthropologists and other varieties of social scientists have observed for some time that religion of some sort has developed in just about every known civilization, and at various stages of cultural development. Evolutionary theory would assume the near-universal existence of religion implies that natural selection favors it.

It’s not hard to imagine why: religion has the potential of promoting social cohesion, a moral order, self-restraint and altruistic behavior. Those who are (genetically?) inclined to adopt their culture’s religious tenets might be more likely to fit

in and be successful in passing on their genes.

Many religious folk are likely to take offense at the notion that natural selection could have anything to do with the develop-

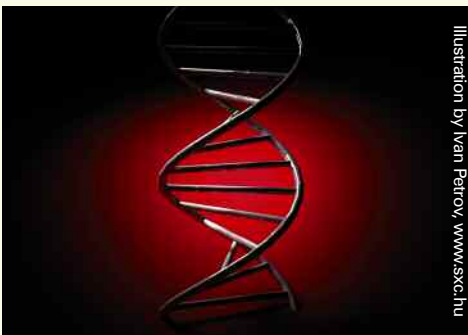


Illustration by Ivan Petrov, www.sxc.hu

ment of religion. But, I have heard Christian apologists argue for the existence of God by saying that humans have an innate longing for God, ergo, God must exist (and have put the longing in our hearts).

I’ve always thought that logic was a bit lame, but one could apply the “God gene theory” in the same way: if humans

have a gene that predisposes them to a belief in God, does that imply God put it there?

I can’t answer that question, though it’s an intriguing thought. A primary objection to the idea is to ask why some people would have the “seek the divine” gene and some people wouldn’t, though a firm Calvinist might contend that’s evidence of predestination.

These days, perhaps the most troublesome aspect of the God gene theory is the underlying assumption that religion functions to promote moral order and “patch up the social fabric.”

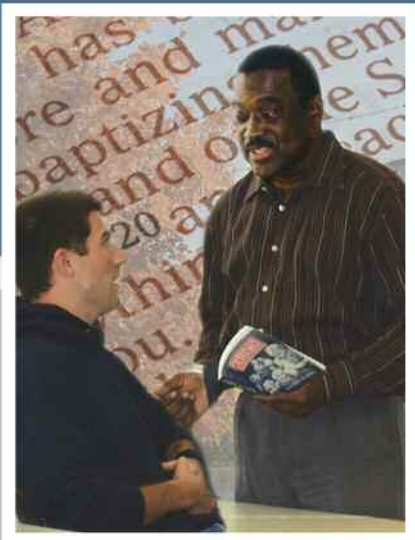
In the past three decades or so, we’ve been more likely to see religion used in divisive ways. Whether it’s a division within a denominational family, within a country (e.g., the religious right and left in America), or between global cultures, each thinking their religion should reign supreme, humans are quite capable of using religion to rip the social fabric apart.

Does that mean we also have an “evil gene”?

That one’s easier to defend: we call it “original sin.” **BT**

the media shelf

Reviews by Jackie Riley



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Rebecca Barnes-Davies

How can we be content with having “enough”? What does it really mean to “do justice”?

In *50 Ways to Help Save the Earth*, Presbyterian environmentalist activist Barnes-Davies answers these and other questions in convincing but not “preachy” suggestions that demonstrate the connection between creation care and personal faith and restoring relationships. In an approach that goes past conservation and recycling, she asks that we not only “do” something, but also that we simply take non-action by letting go of control, doing no harm, resting, celebrating and trusting God’s work.

With a flair for clear communication, the author presents 7 chapters of 7 “How To’s” (specific steps), each introduced by helpful background information. Interestingly, every 7th step emphasizes rest or celebration, and number 50 focuses on Jubilee. Following each “How To,” readers will find an appropriate scripture in “Faith Matters” and examples of what real congregations/groups are doing in “Walking the Talk.”

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Baptism Ahead

A Road Map for Young Disciples

Wallace R. Smith

In this six-week course designed by a Baptist pastor, children ages 8-12 will receive baptismal preparation and a basic orientation to Christian discipleship and membership in the local church. Written in a conversational

approach, *Baptism Ahead* signals key aspects of the Christian life with familiar road signs and compares the discipleship journey with a road under construction.

Smith taps into various learning styles and attention spans with an assortment of activities such as contemporary narrative, biblical lessons, student-friendly talking points, a companion website and varied homework assignments. Each chapter begins with a young person’s quote, a key question and a key term related to the topic at hand. The narratives are divided into short scenes with questions following each scene.

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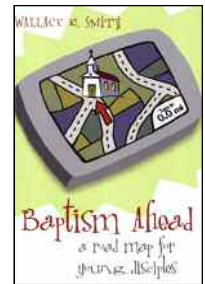
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Being Baptist

Lessons for New Members

J. Manny Santiago

With a rapidly growing Hispanic population in the United States, the bilingual flip-style book, *Being Baptist*, is a timely discipleship resource that introduces new church members to the Baptist family. Written by a fourth-generation Baptist from Puerto Rico who has varied professional credentials, its approach is straightforward and the language simple.



It is not Santiago's purpose to answer every question surrounding our identity as Baptists — hence the brevity of the volume — but to emphasize “the continuation of a long journey that has tried to define who we are as a people of faith.”

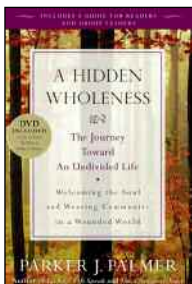
Each of the 10 units for teens and adults begins with a key scripture and memory verse, followed by a concise context, discussion of the key scriptures, and group and individual exercises. Particularly commendable is the personal responsibility element included in each unit. For example, “The Call to Stewardship” emphasizes the 5 T's: time, tasks, treasure, talents and testimony.

\$15.00 / pb / 144 pp / Judson Press
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A Hidden Wholeness

The Journey Toward an Undivided Life
Parker J. Palmer

Palmer refuses to believe the poet's claim that “the blizzard of the world” has overturned “the order of the soul.” Rather, he believes we can be lost or confused or in denial while on our journey to achieve wholeness. But, as he tells us, “The wilderness reminds me that wholeness is not about perfection... it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life.”



In language that paints beautiful visuals in the mind, Palmer takes readers/seekers on a journey that explores the sources of dividedness and then calls us to live “divided no more.”

“This book is about tying a rope from the back door out to the barn so that we can find our way home again. When we catch sight of the soul, we can survive the blizzard without losing our hope or our way. When we catch sight of the soul, we can become healers in a wounded world — in the family, in the neighborhood, in the workplace, and in political life — as we are called back to our ‘hidden wholeness’ amid the violence of the storm.”

In an intellectual, but compassionate approach, this seasoned author accomplishes his purpose well. He weaves together four themes he has pursued for 40 years: the shape of an integral life, the meaning of community, teaching and learning for transformation, and nonviolent social change.

Parker J. Palmer's work is not a quick read, for there is much to digest. In fact, some understanding and/or background in the spirituality movement and psychology would be beneficial to readers. However, there are practical elements in *A Hidden Wholeness*.

The second half of the book lends guidance for creating settings where

friends, co-workers, spouses, parents and children, etc. can support each other on the journey toward an undivided life.

In addition to thorough notes and indexing, two useful resources are included that will be welcomed in small group studies. The “Circles of Trust” DVD contains interviews with Parker J. Palmer and footage from retreats he facilitated for the Center for Courage & Renewal (www.CourageRenewal.org). “Bringing the Book to Life” is a reader's and leader's guide to exploring the themes in *A Hidden Wholeness*.

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At 100, pastor slows down but keeps on preaching

THOMAS, Ala. — J.W. Archie stepped into the pulpit and did his usual duties as associate pastor for Mt. Hebron Missionary Baptist Church.

He introduced the walk-in song. He led the Scripture reading and the responsive reading, prayed, took up the benevolence offering and presided at the altar call.

Sunlight streamed through a tinted window and cast flickers of honey-colored light on Archie's black suit jacket. He studied a piece of paper under the glow of a reading lamp over the lectern as he led the responsive reading.

It's not bad for someone who just turned 100 years old.

When he led his prayer, he spoke from the heart, in the studied rhythms of decades of practice.

"Thank the Lord for last night's sleep, and thank the Lord for this morning's rise," he said. "Bring home wandering minds and scattering thoughts. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our savior. Amen. Thank God."

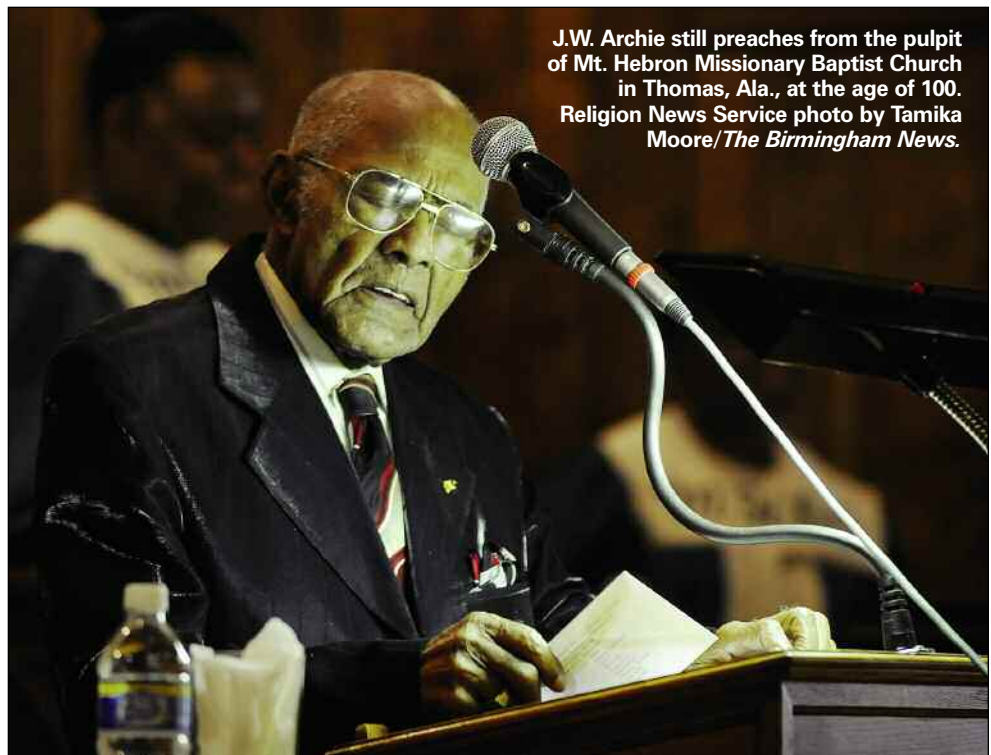
The dark wood-paneled walls of Mt. Hebron blend into the stained-wood pews and the brown curtain hiding the baptism. Two singers and an organist belted out a gospel song, "You Brought Me From a Mighty Long Way." Then Archie yielded the pulpit to the pastor, Thomas Smith.

A stone's throw from the church parking lot, a Burlington Northern Santa Fe train sat on the tracks. Sometimes the trains have been known to roar by during services.

"It doesn't bother me," Archie said.

Nearby are the steel mills where Archie worked, for Republic Steel, for "32 years, 10 months and six days," to the best of his recollection.

"Anything you ask him, he'll know off



J.W. Archie still preaches from the pulpit of Mt. Hebron Missionary Baptist Church in Thomas, Ala., at the age of 100. Religion News Service photo by Tamika Moore/*The Birmingham News*.

the top of his head," said one of his sons, Tim Archie.

During all his years in the steel mill, the elder Archie reported to work for the 3 to 11 p.m. shift to shovel coal into the ovens that fired up to melt the iron ore to make steel.

"I was late one time," Archie said, but only because he had to testify as a witness in a trial about a stolen dog, he said.

Archie was born Nov. 10, 1909, and moved to Birmingham in 1941, the same year he joined the Mt. Hebron church. He was ordained and began preaching there in 1977.

"It was my calling," he said.

He's lived in the same house in the steel mill village since September 1941. "I walked to work," he said. "It took five minutes."

His wife died of pneumonia in 1987.

Archie goes to bed at 6:30 p.m. and wakes up by 7 a.m. "I get tired of sitting around and I go to bed," he said. "I just keep on going till they call me home."

In the summer he keeps a garden,

growing black-eyed peas and okra. "I cut it, wash it and put it in the deep freeze," he said. He's got enough quarts of peas and okra frozen to last him through the winter.

His health has held up well, Archie said.

"It's fair," he said. "I take a cholesterol pill. I've been taking them for two months. That's all I take."

He wears glasses in the pulpit to read from the Bible and the responsive readings. He preaches when the pastor goes on vacation. He plans to keep up his church duties as long as he can, he said.

"Ain't nobody in my family lived as long as I have," Archie said. "I just thank God."

Unlike many centenarians, he has no longevity tips to offer. "Ain't got no secrets," he said. But he does have words of wisdom to live by. "Treat everybody straight and trust God for his word," he said. **BT**

—Greg Garrison writes for *The Birmingham News in Birmingham, Ala.*

Christian colleges get in the swing

Classes are done for the day. Meetings and work are winding down, and Facebook can provide a study break for only so long. So what's a restless Christian college student to do?

For undergrads at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., a walk down to the campus theater provides one solution: dancing to the tunes of Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway.

Inside, young men offer their hand to available girls and take them to the middle of the hopping dance floor. Beginners practice basic steps while more advanced dancers take on the more complicated moves, flipping their partners over their heads and through their legs.

At Union, like a growing number of Christian campuses, "it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

Dance fever hit the Southern Baptist campus when two freshmen, Grant Kelly and Brandon Walker, started recruiting students to dance for fun last fall. The group has grown from just a few friends meeting in a small classroom to about 50 dancers who now take over the theater.

Fans say the swing thing has now taken root in at least 10 Christian colleges in the U.S., and the fever is spreading.

But like a scene out of the 1984 classic *Footloose*, some campuses have had to overcome religious or moral qualms about dancing. Union's student handbook, for example, says the university "prohibits dancing at any Union University-sponsored event held on campus." Students simply

host the dance-offs as unofficial events either on or off campus.

"It's fun and innocent," said Dean of Students Kimberly Thornbury, who said she was given a heads-up by the students. "The university is not going to hunt people down. That's not the spirit of the policy."

While swing is downright innocent compared to the bump-and-grind moves found on many secular campuses, at Christian schools it often falls under the category of "social dancing" that some believe could lead to temptation, and therefore comes with

guidelines attached.

To be sure, many conservative schools such as Bob Jones University continue to prohibit all forms of dancing, yet some Christian schools have lifted the dancing ban in recent years.

In Waco, Texas, Baylor University students were able to boogie in 1996. Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., whirled in its new

culture — but it was no longer a counter-culture," Balmer said. "With that decreased attention to 'worldliness,' some of the taboos have fallen."

Balmer, who teaches American religious history at New York's Barnard College and is the author of *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*, says the suspicion of the "outside world" beyond evangelicalism has faded.

"There has been a general loosening of the (fundamentalist) structure of the 1920s and 1930s," he said. "The dancing is just another evidence of that loosening."

Still, some schools have reservations. In Kirkland, Wash., Northwest University's dancing policy states the school "recognizes the temptations inherent in the sensuous and erotic nature of some social dancing," and then sets guidelines to keep dancing off campus.

Those rules haven't dissuaded Michael Weber, a Northwest student, from dancing for four years. He and his friends go off campus to community centers and dance halls in order to stay within the guidelines and still swing.

Weber organizes dance events a couple of times a month to encourage students to learn basic moves. He likes swing because, in his opinion, it's easier to master than ballroom dancing.

"Swing dancing is easy to learn," he said. "It's not as proper."

Kristen Henley of Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, said

her mostly Catholic campus is "a little obsessed with swing." Every Sunday night, as many as 75 Steubenville students turn out for swing dancing and dance competitions.

Henley connected with the group her freshman year when they hosted a welcome-to-campus dance. She had so much fun she vowed never to miss a Sunday night dance session. Now, as a junior, she can say she has kept the vow almost religiously and rarely misses a week.

"As long as you can follow," she said, "you can (swing dance) instantly." **BT**



Students at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., swing dance at an unofficial student-led dance party because the Tennessee Baptist school officially prohibits dancing. Religion News Service photo by Angela Abbamonte.

dancing policy in 2003. In 2006, John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Ark., expanded its dancing policy to allow students to jive at more campus-sponsored dances with gentler genres such as ballroom and swing.

Randall Balmer, an expert on American evangelicals, said he was a little shocked to learn students on Christian campuses were picking up swing dancing, but sees it as an indicator of shifts within the evangelical subculture.

"What clearly has happened ... is that after 1980, evangelicalism was still a sub-

takers & givers



Riddles run need-based clearinghouse

DALTON, Ga. — So many people brought so much stuff to Odell and Johnnie Riddle's home that their garage kept overflowing. Now they gather, sort and share clothes, furniture and other items out of a warehouse in downtown Dalton, Ga.

Their primary destination is Appalachia — and the warm reception they receive upon arrival at the Bland Ministry Center in Bland, Va., keeps them gathering more and returning again and again.

"We've taken about eight loads this year," Johnnie in early December. "For three years, we would do a load every month."

The Riddles started a used car business in Dalton in 1953 and retired nearly 40 years later. But they didn't slow down.

With bright smiles and hearts of love, they find great joy in meeting the needs of both those who have something to share and those on the receiving end.

"I'm like the graveyard," said Odell, 84. "I'll take anything."

As a result, in addition to clothing, furniture and appliances, they received some 50-pound packages of muffin mix as a donation recently. Friends such as Ann and Bob Kelly, who make frequent and helpful appearances at the warehouse, are helping to divide the mix into smaller bags along with other tasks such as sorting and packing clothes.

"I've never seen anything like this," said Ann of the Riddles' generosity. "It's a daily thing for them."

In a sense, the Riddles have become a clearinghouse for getting goods into the hands of those in need. About 60-70 boxes of sorted clothes will fit into the First Baptist Church of Dalton trailer for the

After outgrowing their garage, Odell and Johnnie Riddle use warehouse space to gather and share clothing and other goods. Next page: Friends like Ann Kelly (right) and her husband Bob are regular volunteers who help sort, pack and deliver goods to those in need.

familiar trip to Virginia. When space allows, furniture and other items go along.

But the Riddles are also meeting local needs. When a family's home in nearby Cohutta, Ga., burned, the Riddles had bedding, furniture and clothes to share. When a school gave them 19 computers, they were shared with two area Boys Clubs.

The Riddles' compassion is contagious. Friends eagerly come over to help them clean, sort, box and deliver.

"This is a far cry from when we were working out of their garage," said Bob Kelly of the Riddles' expanded efforts due to the large warehouse space now available.

Children at the church once gathered 500 grocery bags of food to send along to the coal-mining region. A team that often builds wheelchair ramps installed shelving in the warehouse, and the youth have gone to Appalachia to assist as well.

The Riddles got into this gather-and-share lifestyle by taking used Sunday school literature to Berea, Ky., where students would sort and distribute it to small churches in the region. Bill Barker, director of Appalachian Regional Ministries, asked if the Riddles might gather some clothes as well.

He asked the right persons — and their church friends responded well.

More than 60 persons dropped clothes by their house immediately, Johnnie said. And after the first load was taken to Bland, Va., and the Riddles saw the needs and gratitude there, they were hooked.

"It's a good place for us to help out," she said.

The Riddles quickly deflect attention from themselves, noting how much joy

they get from serving others and how much help they get from friends. The local hospital and wellness center provide gently-used boxes, and other businesses give them packing tape.

The word has spread into neighboring North Georgia counties, so the Riddles never know who will show up with what.

"It's well known that they do this," said Mary Etta Sanders, who teaches the Sunday school class that the Riddles attend at Dalton's First Baptist Church. "If you've got an hour or two (to volunteer), you

come by."

The warehouse doesn't hold donated items for long, however. Goods are quickly matched with needs locally — or delivered to the impoverished communities northward.

"Everything is given to us, and everything we take up there is given away," Odell added. "They don't charge anything."

It is not unusual for people to be classified into givers and takers. Yet the Riddles are both — and they do it in the right order. **BT**



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To register, go online to www.thefellowship.info/churchworks.



February 22-25, 2010, in Nashville, Tenn.
The conference will be held at the Scarritt Bennett Center.

Advancing the Baptist story

MACON, GA — Jody and Julie Long, ministers at First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, Ga., were asked to share their thoughts with the Board of Directors of *Baptists Today* last fall. The young ministerial couple spoke of their appreciation for the national news journal, which they credited for helping them grow as Baptists and as ministers.

“Whenever *Baptists Today* arrives in the mail or when I go to the website, I give thanks to God that you believe and proclaim God’s message as you continue to write the story of a peculiar people: Baptists,” Jody told the gathering.

Jody began reading *Baptists Today* as an undergraduate student at Mercer University, he said. “I have always had an historical bent in my studies and my readings, so I started reading ... *The Christian Index* [Georgia Baptist Convention newspaper] and *Baptists Today*.”

Jody discovered a difference in perspectives — and gained a preference.

“*Baptists Today* seemed to be more inclusive of Baptists across the board. It also had a sense of trying to connect Baptists to their roots and their heritage, and also to their future.”

For Jody and Julie, their journeys into the ministry were thoughtful and nurtured ones. Jody grew up in the community of Lizella near Macon. Wanting to work with young people, he planned for a career in education.

Coming from the South Georgia town of Fitzgerald, Julie was entering engineering. But, during their undergraduate studies at Mercer, they realized their true calling was in church-based ministry.

The two were friends in college, taking many of the same Christianity classes, and both chose to attend Mercer’s McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta. During their seminary studies, their friendship deepened into a different relationship.

When Jody graduated in 2004, he joined First Baptist as minister of youth and outreach. The couple married after Julie finished her degree the next year and became the minister of children and families at the Macon church.

While at McAfee the couple read *Baptists*



Today on a regular basis, thanks to donor-funded student subscriptions. The publication’s articles and commentaries on Baptist life helped them expand their knowledge and understanding of Baptist history, distinctions and ideas they were learning in class. They began to feel more connected to Baptist organizations and Baptist life nationally.

“I found it particularly valuable as a student since I was just starting out and was learning the names of Baptist historians and leaders in Baptist life,” said Julie. “It helped me put names with faces.”

Now as ministers, they say the national and global coverage of *Baptists Today* has enriched their ministry. Articles and news stories have inspired mission trips, new programs and different approaches in their church work.

“There are plenty of state and convention kinds of publications, but they are pretty localized or regionalized,” said Jody. “With *Baptists Today*, you find out what is going on in Texas as well as Massachusetts or Georgia or Washington State — or with Baptists around the world. It informs on a broader level and continues to give a context for us of

what it means to be Baptist. It is the national voice of Baptists.”

A feature story on a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship inner city ministry called “Touching Miami with Love” inspired Jody several years ago to take the church youth there on a mission trip. The article and the trip initiated a relationship between the church and the ministry that continues today.

“Most of the students, who first went there, have gone off to college, but they still say the trip to Miami was one of the best trips they have ever been on, where they learned the most and experienced firsthand working with children of a different culture and set of circumstances in life,” he said. “They made some serious connections there that will change the lives of some of our students and will have them focusing on what to do with their lives. That all started with a *Baptists Today* article.”

Staying informed about Baptist life is an important part of being Baptist, the couple says. “How can you claim to be Baptist and not know what is going on in the Baptist story — in Baptist life?” Jody questioned.

Julie agrees. “Without *Baptists Today*, even for someone who would intentionally try to keep up, the ability to learn about Baptist life would be limited,” she said. “*Baptists Today* is like a one-stop shop for Baptist voices, and it really offers that more than any other Baptist publication I know — even blogs and websites.”

Soon to be parents, the couple wants to ensure that the stories of people who sacrificed for their faith and beliefs and were models of courage are remembered within the Baptist story.

Jody added, “I want to be able to tell my children the stories of people who took what gifts God had given them and made a difference in the lives of their communities. That is why having *Baptists Today* continuing to write the Baptist story is so important.” **BT**

If you would like information on making a gift to *Baptists Today*, contact Keithen M. Tucker, development and marketing director of *Baptists Today*, at ktucker@baptiststoday.org or (478) 330-5613.

N.Y. churches apologize to Native Americans

By Daniel Burke
Religion News Service

NEW YORK CITY — Four hundred years after their spiritual ancestors took part in the decimation and dislocation of Native Americans in New York, one of the nation's first Protestant churches held a "healing ceremony" to apologize.

"We consumed your resources, dehumanized your people, and disregarded your culture, along with your dreams, hopes and great love of this land," representatives from Collegiate Church said in a statement. "With pain, we the Collegiate Church remember our part in these events."

The ceremony took place on Native American Heritage Day (Nov. 27, 2009) in lower Manhattan, where in 1628 Dutch colonizers built the first Collegiate Church, then known as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, at Fort Amsterdam.

The Dutch West Indies Company treated Native Americans "as a resource," Collegiate said in a statement, and "we were the conscience of this company."

Collegiate now includes four churches in New York, including Marble Collegiate Church, where the late Norman Vincent Peale preached from 1932 to 1984.

Ron Holloway, who attended the ceremony as a representative of the Lenape people, said "the native populations were suppressed by a political and religious will of which they could never begin to conceive."

But, he said, he and other Lenape people

"whole-heartedly accept this apology."

At the ceremony, Holloway embraced leaders from Collegiate, according to the Associated Press, and exchanged wampum — strings of beads symbolizing money or ornaments.

"After 400 years, when someone says 'I'm sorry,' you say, 'Really?'" Holloway told the AP before the ritual. "There was some kind of uneasiness. But then you've got to accept someone's sincere apology." **BT**

Mark your calendars!

Baptists Today will present the 2010 Judson-Rice Award to

Dr. Marian Wright Edelman

during a noon luncheon event on Thursday, April 22, at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Reservations and meeting details are forthcoming at www.baptiststoday.org.



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Bill Leonard
Thursday evening speaker



Lauren Winner
Friday evening speaker

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Poll: Americans pin poverty passage on Obama, not Bible

By Angela Abbamonte
Religion News Service

More Americans believe a statement about giving “justice to the poor and homeless” came from President Obama instead of its true source, the Bible.

A survey conducted by Harris Interactive for the American Bible Society found that 54 percent of U.S. adults polled believe the statement — “You must defend those who are helpless and have no hope. Be fair and give justice to the poor and homeless” — came from a celebrity or politician, when the statement actually comes from Proverbs 31:8.

Of the 1,001 adults surveyed, 16 percent believed the statement came from Obama; 13 percent said it came from the Bible. Other popular answers included the Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King Jr. and Oprah Winfrey.

Other questions in the survey also addressed poverty and the Bible. In a question about the teachings of the Bible, 40 percent said the Bible offers the most teaching on heaven, pride or adultery, even though poverty is actually mentioned more than any of these subjects.

The survey was developed to coincide with the release of the society’s new *Poverty and Justice Bible*, which highlights verses about poverty and justice and provides tips on helping people in need. **BT**



Serenity Prayer

BY REINHOLD NIEBUHR (1892-1971)

*God, give us grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.*

*Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.*

Amen.

Scholar changes view, says Niebuhr probably wrote ‘Serenity Prayer’

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

After receiving new evidence, the editor of a prominent compilation of famous quotations now believes theologian Reinhold Niebuhr most likely is the author of the popular “Serenity Prayer.”

“I think it’s not certain,” Fred R. Shapiro, editor of *The Yale Book of Quotations*, said in an interview. “If I had to put a number on it, I’d say it’s 80 percent. But it’s not 100 percent.”

In a *Yale Alumni Magazine* article published in the summer of 2008, Shapiro, the associate librarian at Yale’s law library, questioned whether Niebuhr was actually the author of the prayer that’s been popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous. At the time, Shapiro said it was “possible” Niebuhr wrote it, but also feasible he “was unconsciously inspired by an idea from elsewhere.”

Niebuhr’s daughter has said the prayer, which usually begins, “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change ...,” was written in 1943, but Shapiro found references dating to the 1930s that did not credit the theologian.

On Nov. 19, 2008, he received a note via a listserv of the American Dialect Society that a Duke University librarian had found a 1937 reference crediting Niebuhr. The words of the prayer in that reference, reports library staffer Stephen Goranson, are in a different order from later references: “Father, give us courage to change what must be altered, serenity to accept what cannot be helped, and the insight to know the one from the other.”

Said Shapiro: “By Stephen Goranson finding it in 1937 with an attribution to Niebuhr at that time, that makes it much more reasonable to conclude that he did originate it.”

Unless other new evidence refutes the finding, Shapiro said his next book of quotations, scheduled to be published in about five years, will credit Niebuhr.

Elisabeth Sifton, Niebuhr’s daughter and the author of *The Serenity Prayer: Faith and Politics in Times of Peace and War*, told *The New York Times* that the finding provides further evidence of what she has long believed.

“I think it’s an interesting small item,” she said, “which confirms what I’ve thought for some time.” **BT**



Cheers rise at the New Hope Baptist Church in East Orange, N.J., during the church's fourth annual 'NFL Sunday Football Service,' which is designed to attract more men. Religion News Service photo by Jennifer Brown/*The Star-Ledger*.

Church scores with men on football Sunday

EAST ORANGE, N.J. — Pastor Dwight Gill figures if there is one thing that will bring more men to church, it's football. At New Hope Baptist Church, NFL didn't stand for National Football League, but rather for New Found Life — as in the church's annual NFL service and celebration. The service in late November 2009 drew nearly 2,000 people, including a bevy of newcomers who were in for a worship service that was anything but ordinary.

"There's more to it than just a church service," said Michael Carrington, 48, of Newark, N.J.

Carrington said he is not a regular churchgoer but was so impressed with what he saw and the spirit of the congregation that he wants to become a member. He stood in awe, looking at scores of men wearing their favorite football jerseys over their slacks and suits.

In the church lobby and sanctuary, football banners and posters were plastered on the walls and hung from the rafters. Between worshipful songs of praise, the congregants broke out in a stadium wave,

briefly standing and throwing their arms in the air.

A tailgate party, including sandwiches, hot dogs and chips, followed the music-filled service.

"A lot of people can get bored during a service, but this brings a sense of excitement, and at the same time, a sense of hope," said Carrington, who wore a No. 88 Lynn Swann Pittsburgh Steelers jersey.

Gill's football service could be called the Hail Mary pass of religion: Get men into the church, then give them God's message.

He started the event four years ago and used the sports analogy because, quite simply, "men like football." He said women outnumber men at the church by a 3-to-1 ratio, and women's involvement in church tends to override men's participation nationwide.

The pastor believes he has found a fun remedy to what he calls a "longtime challenge with no easy solution." He wants to dispel any perception among men that church is just for women.

To help accomplish that, Gill also

invited former New York Giants player Lee Rouson — an associate pastor of a church in Harlem — to preach about "God's promise for salvation" during the two-hour service.

"It's a familiarity. Men gravitate to sports. It's physical, emotional and mental, and those analogies are all part of the spirit life as well," Rouson said. "Men compete; they understand competition. But the competition here is to be a real man."

Church member Samantha Roberts, 32, said many people have a misperception of church life, as women tend to be more involved.

"Women are the ones who hold the family together," Roberts said. "They know with God in their lives they make a positive place for men and women."

Gill has been keeping score and said he has been able to draw about 10 new men to the church each year following the event.

"If we can attract one man to come to church," he said, "heaven will be happy." **BT**

—Tanya Drobness writes for *The Star-Ledger* in Newark, N.J.

What do these churches have in common?

Through group subscriptions to *Baptists Today*, they keep up with the latest issues facing Baptists.

Ardmore Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.

Boulevard Baptist Church, Anderson, S.C.

Broadmoor Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La.

Brunswick Islands Baptist Church, Supply, N.C.

Chadborn Baptist Church, Chadborn, N.C.

College Avenue Baptist Church, Lenoir, N.C.

College Park Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla.

Covenant Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C.

Druid Hills Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.

Edenton Baptist Church, Edenton, N.C.

Emerywood Baptist Church, High Point, N.C.

Faith Baptist Church, Georgetown, Ky.

Fellowship Baptist Church, Fitzgerald, Ga.

Fernwood Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C.

First Baptist Church, Ahsoskie, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Aiken, S.C.

First Baptist Church, Anderson, S.C.

First Baptist Church, Asheville, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Cape Girardeau, Mo.

First Baptist Church, Carolina Beach, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Carrollton, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tenn.

First Baptist Church, Clemson, S.C.

First Baptist Church, Columbus, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Commerce, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Conway, S.C.

First Baptist Church, Dalton, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Forest City, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Fort Myers, Fla.

First Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky.

First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Fla.

First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C.

First Baptist Church, Greenwood, S.C.

First Baptist Church, Hawkinsville, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala.

First Baptist Church, Jasper, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Lexington, N.C.

First Baptist Church, London, Ky.

First Baptist Church, Lumberton, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Madison, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Madison, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Marion, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Mocksville, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Morganton, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Morrow, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Mount Olive, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

First Baptist Church, New Bern, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Orangeburg, S.C.

First Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla.

First Baptist Church, Rome, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Rutherfordton, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Sanford, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Savannah, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Spruce Pine, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Tifton, Ga.

First Baptist Church, Wilmington, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Wilson, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.

Forest Hills Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

Franklin Baptist Church, Franklin, Va.

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss.

Greystone Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

Haddock Baptist Church, Haddock, Ga.

Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.

Highland Hills Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.

Highland Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas

Holmeswood Baptist Church, Kansas City, Mo.

HomeStar Fellowship, Raleigh, N.C.

Johns Creek Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Ga.

Kathwood Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C.

Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.

Lakeside Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, N.C.

Lakeview Baptist Church, Camden, S.C.

Lexington Avenue Baptist Church, Danville, Ky.

Lystra Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Madison Baptist Church, Madison, Ga.

Millbrook Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Mount Zion Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.

National Heights Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ga.

New Heights Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.

Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.

North Stuart Baptist Church, Stuart, Fla.

Oakmont Baptist Church, Greenville, N.C.

Peachtree Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.

Providence Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.

Providence Baptist Church, Cookeville, Tenn.

Providence Baptist Church, Hendersonville, N.C.

Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

Reynoldson Baptist Church, Gates, N.C.

Rock Falls Baptist Church, Orrick, Mo.

Rolling Hills Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark.

Rolesville Baptist Church, Rolesville, N.C.

Second Baptist Church, Liberty, Mo.

Second Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.

Second Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.

Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.

Shades Crest Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala.

Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Stone Mountain, Ga.

South Main Baptist Church, Houston, Texas

St. Andrews Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C.

St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.

Tabernacle Baptist Church, Carrollton, Ga.

Tabernacle Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

The Lakeland Fellowship, Lakeland, Fla.

The Memorial Baptist Church, Greenville, N.C.

Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn.

Trinity Baptist Church, Moultrie, Ga.

University Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La.

Vineville Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.

Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, N.C.

Wieuca Road Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.

Wingate Baptist Church, Wingate, N.C.

Winter Park Baptist Church, Wilmington, N.C.

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