

BAPTISTS Today



Medicine & Missions

*The long, lovely life
of Dr. Virginia Connally*

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Street Question

'Are Baptists poor folk or rich folk?'


By Wayne Flynt



Photo by John Pierce. A well-worn copy of Oswald Chamber's *My Utmost for His Highest* — filled with her personal notes — has traveled the world with Dr. Virginia Connally. **Page 4**

Media Shelf

The immeasurable influence of George W. Truett. A review by Aaron Weaver



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**NEVER WITHOUT A BOOK**

Dr. Virginia Connally continually reads and shares books with others, fulfilling her aunt's charge: "Don't ever let me catch you without something to read."

ABILENE, Texas — "Never tell people how old you are," Dr. Virginia Boyd Connally warned. "I did, and they start treating you that way."

Just a bit of sage advice offered by an active 96-year-old physician who has broken more West Texas ground than a dozen plowshares.

In 1940 Dr. Connally began her pioneering medical practice in Abilene, Texas, where she had completed undergraduate studies at Hardin-Simmons University (in 1933) while living with her aunt and uncle. She was the first female physician in the region and continued her eye, ear, nose and throat practice until retirement in 1982.

Her uncle, an Abilene surgeon, encouraged young Virginia to move from her hometown of Temple, Texas, where she was born on Dec. 4, 1912, to study at Hardin-Simmons and to pursue a career in medicine.

"He just decided I should be a doctor," recalled Dr. Connally, who was one of only three women in a class of approximately 80 students at Louisiana State University Medical School from which she graduated in 1933 and then completed a three-year internship and residency in New Orleans. There she was impressed by the Catholics' concern for the poor and suffering.

However, it was her mother who provided a very early and deeply impressionable perspective on missions.

"I remember my mother taking me to a window in our house and saying in kind of a sad voice, 'If we don't take the gospel to the whole world we're going to regret it,'" Dr. Connally said of her earliest childhood memory nearly a century ago. "I was little and didn't know what she meant, but it was the tone of her voice and the expression on her face that made me remember that."

Medicine & Missions

Groundbreaking physician's full life marked by service to others

Both medicine and missions have been defining marks in her remarkable life.

“I never thought about it,” said Dr. Connally of becoming Abilene’s first female physician in 1940. “The war was just starting, so it was a good time to be here — especially for a woman.”

Because many male physicians were leaving for the war, Dr. Connally said she “had a practice almost from the beginning.” Most people, she said, were just glad to have a doctor to treat them.

“Some have asked if there were people who wouldn’t come to me because I was a woman,” she noted. “I don’t know because I didn’t see them.”

Being just 28 and “pretty naïve” when she began her practice, Dr. Connally said she had no fear of breaking new ground. As she used to tell her daughter, Genna: “Innocence protects.”

But so many are appreciative of her decades of loving service. She recalls checking into a small-town hotel while on a missions education venture a few years ago and hearing the clerk say: “You took my tonsils out.”

“I hear that a lot,” said Dr. Connally whose medical practice spanned more than four decades.

Whether traveling the world or at home in Abilene, missions has always been an important part of Dr. Connally’s life.

“Keith and Helen Jean Parks have really meant a lot to me,” she said of the mission leaders who served with both the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and with whom she has maintained a lasting friendship.

Also she was “life-long friends” with the legendary Bertha Smith.

“She was a precious thing; so devout,” said Dr. Connally of the beloved missionary to China who lived to be nearly 100. They would pray together in the third-story cupola of “Miss Bertha’s” home in Cowpens, S.C.

Dr. Connally’s husband, Ed, an oil company president who died in 1975, joined her in both traveling abroad and in bringing missionaries — including Bertha Smith — to Abilene’s First Baptist Church and Hardin-Simmons. They purchased and donated a neighboring home to the university that was designated as a missionary residence.

“Just think of how many people I’ve met because of this house next door — missionaries who would come there and stay for a while,” Dr. Connally said. “I can’t even name



Dr. Connally and friend Janet Erwin visit Coventry Cathedral during a 2005 tour of England that included participation in the Baptist World Alliance centennial celebration.

all of them.”

Owning an interest in an airline company gave the Connallys the freedom to travel at will. “We could fly first class on any plane, so we did,” she said of their travels including a trip to Japan in 1963 where they met with a variety of Japanese leaders related to their multiple interests of pharmaceuticals, the airline industry and politics (due to the new occupant of the White House at that time).

Ed Connally was deeply involved in Texas politics — serving as chairman of the state Democratic party — leading to a close personal relationship with President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson with whom they visited in the White House.

Later, LBJ paid a visit to the hospital when Ed had heart surgery in 1971 and summoned the Connallys to visit him just before his death in 1973.

The Connallys’ travels abroad, however, always had an intentional focus on connecting with and supporting Baptist missionaries.

“We had the best of all worlds,” said Dr. Connally. “With missionaries you can see what you need to see, under the best conditions, in the least amount of time.”

Three mission trips to Venezuela, two to China and the centennial celebration of the Baptist World Alliance in England in 2005 are but a few on Dr. Connally’s extensive list

of worldwide adventures.

She has toured cathedrals with the reflective Quaker Elton Trueblood and had tea with British Christian writer Malcolm Muggeridge. Bravely, she bought three Russian language Bibles from the American Bible Society in New York City and smuggled them into Russia during forbidden times.

Always active, Dr. Connally assumed the presidency of Connally Oil after her husband’s death while continuing to serve as chief of staff at the former St. Ann’s Hospital and Hendrick Medical Center.

Dr. Connally was particularly moved by a copy of Oswald Chamber’s devotional book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, given to her by a patient in February 1975 following Ed’s death.

“I’ve carried it all over the world,” said Dr. Connally, noting that a devotional thought in the book led her away from self-pity and back to a life of service.

Among her lasting contributions is the establishment of the Connally Missions Center at Hardin-Simmons.

Earlier this year the Abilene Woman’s Club presented Dr. Connally with its inaugural Legacy Award. There were no other nominations.

The mayor pronounced the date of the celebration as “Dr. Virginia Boyd Connally Day in Abilene.” But whether in Abilene or anywhere else in the world, Dr. Connally is known for making each and every day better for those she encounters.

In a written tribute, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson noted Dr. Connally’s “humility, keen intellect, love of learning and unwavering faith and service” that have been evident throughout her full life.

Dr. Connally has long outlived her siblings and many others with whom she has been close. She has built friendships with the powerful as well as with those who are down-and-out. She has crisscrossed the globe more times than she can recall.

Hers is a remarkable life that started in Temple, Texas, back when “it used to snow” and is still going strong today.

“I have had the most fun,” she said with a smile.

And someday when her earthly life is finally over, her influence will continue. “I’ve bought a lot of books to be given out at my funeral,” she whispered.

Because no one should be caught without something to read. **BT**

Quotation

“ remarks ”

“No one questions that a burly fellow who stands up front with a beard and a Hawaiian shirt can speak prophetically about the Gospel message. That’s not something that would have happened in the 1950s or 1960s.”

—Mark Oppenheimer, author of *Knocking on Heaven’s Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture, using Rick Warren as an example of Woodstock’s influence on the church 40 years after the hippie music festival* (RNS)

“We just don’t know who is coming into our church. We’d like to think everyone is a good Christian, but we can’t know that.”

—Barbara Strong, church secretary at Jubilee Worship Center in Westmoreland, Tenn., in a press release from *LifeWay Christian Resources* revealing that one in eight background checks conducted for churches found criminal activity (ABP)

“The larger Baptist witness in America is pulling out of collaborative efforts and building more doctrinal walls than ever before. It is one of the most frustrating problems in Baptist life today. It is absolutely essential that we ride the wave of collaborative communities.”

—Ellis Orozco, pastor of First Baptist Church of Richardson, Texas, speaking to the New Baptist Covenant regional gathering in Norman, Okla., in August (ABP)

“It was a step backwards.”

—Larry Lewis, who retired as president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in 1996, on the merger of the HMB and two other agencies into the North American Mission Board that has experienced two failed presidencies (Biblical Recorder)

“Liberty students like being around fellow believers, but not at the expense of everything else. When it comes down to it, no matter how pious or like-minded he might be, a Christian jerk is still a jerk.”

—Brown University student Kevin Roose who spent a semester at Liberty University and wrote *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner’s Semester at America’s Holiest University*

“The greatest obstacle to faith in our time may be that most of us are too invested in securing our own futures to trust Jesus for the good life he wants to give us.”

—Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, author of *God’s Economy: Redefining the Health and Wealth Gospel* (Christian Century)

“If I have a Church of Christ or more conservative soldier, he certainly does not need to know about dharma or things like that. But if he is in pain, or his child back home is sick, I need to be compassionate and help him through that moment.”

—Thomas Dyer, an ex-Marine and former Southern Baptist appointed as the U.S. Army’s first Buddhist chaplain (The Tennessean)

“Many Christians like to call ourselves followers of Christ. I can’t be a follower of Christ if I’m shouting at you or interrupting your meeting, and I certainly don’t look like one when I do that.”

—Baptist publicist Mark DeMoss who helped launch *The Civility Project* to encourage people who disagree to be less disagreeable (RNS)

“This is the SBC at its worst: secrecy, closed doors, constituency stifled, saying one thing in May, the opposite in August ... We can have the worst of disasters and gloss it over with some spiritual talk.”

—Southern Baptist pastor William Thornton of Georgia, posting about the trustees’ forced resignation of Geoff Hammond as president of the SBC North American Mission Board in August (BaptistLife.com)

“Movements do better when they have something to oppose ... It’s easier to mobilize volunteers because you have an us-versus-them mentality, and that plays very well right now for the Christian right.”

—D. Michael Lindsay, a sociology professor at Rice University who studies evangelicals, in a Washington Post article on how opposition to health-care reform is re-energizing conservative Christians

“Before we can help people deal with meaning and values, we need to dial down our own noise and uncompromising zealotry.”

—Religion News Service columnist Tom Ehrlich

In the news, 25 years ago . . .

“The problem with the Religious Right extremists ... is not that they are wrongly active but that they are actively wrong,” said James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs

—SBC Today, October 1984

editorial

Getting beyond the ‘glory years’

By John Pierce

In most congregations old enough to have a written history, current church leaders have heard too much and too often about “the glory years.” Longtime members keep them reminded of that era in the ’50s, ’60s or perhaps even ’70s when the pews and offering plates were filled every week.

You know, back when Dr. Everybody Loved could pull in souls and money from behind the well-polished pulpit — before walking across the lake back to his stately church-owned home.

Never mind that the church sold the home long ago and it is now in decay. And ignore the fact that the neighborhood church now sits in a very different kind of neighborhood than it did back then.

When honestly examined, the overwhelming sociological changes surrounding many churches would have even the most revered pastor of the past spinning in search of answers.

(It really is about more than just the current pastor going to his or her kid’s soccer game rather than visiting prospects every evening.)

The homogenized community of my upbringing was comprised of but three primary religious groups: Baptists, Methodists and those who did not attend either church but felt guilty about it. Across America now, however, the religious landscape is vastly

different — even in rural communities of the South.

The “glory years” may bring good (though often idealized) memories, but they are an unfair measuring stick for congregational ministry today — and especially unfair when used to judge the gifts and commitments of current pastoral leaders who must deal with dynamics earlier church leaders never imagined.

Such as?

In addition to growing religious diversity, there are many factors impacting churches today. Work patterns are very different. Weekends and weekdays are less distinct. Recreation and travel compete for ever-tightening space on family calendars.

And harping about it or defending the religiously enforced “blue laws” of old doesn’t really help. It is a reality that, for most individuals and families, time is at a higher premium — with church as but one of many competing factors.

And only the most naïve would fail to see the greater number and variety of churches that have emerged in recent years to compete — yes, compete — for members.

However, churches facing these and other

challenges must find an approach to ministry that neither surrenders in defeat to these cultural shifts nor expects a magical return to the “glory years.”

My own congregation is seriously asking Jesus’ question: “Who is my neighbor?” It is not the community church that emerged more than a half-century ago.

Most members drive a good distance to be involved because of its distinctive worship and ministries. Even the overwhelming majority of those who grew up in the church no longer live in the neighborhood.

The church where I am wrapping up an interim pastorate does not fill its beautiful and historic sanctuary to the degree it did decades ago. Yet the church — which includes a large number of older members — has excitedly called a bright young pastor to lead them into the future.

Successful ministry (or better yet, faithful ministry) for most congregations needs a clearer, biblically missional definition. Constantly bringing up the time when many more better dressed, tithing, like-minded, like-looking people showed up for Sunday school, worship, Church Training, prayer meetings and revivals really doesn’t help the church to chart its future with enthusiasm.

Only when the realities of the current context for ministry are honestly examined can a congregation begin to move forward with energy and excitement rather than bearing the burden of an unrealistic, sure-to-fail attempt to recapture the past. Creative, hands-on ministries — with widely diverse people groups never engaged by the church of the past — can emerge through fresh eyes, unhindered by the “way it used to be.”

Comparisons with times when the doors could be thrown open and crowds poured in are not helpful. It is a different time with a different set of challenges — ones not even the beloved pastor whose portrait hangs in the hallway could envision.

God’s love and grace are about the only things that haven’t changed. Could they be enough? **BT**



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'STREET QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISTS'

Editor's note: This is the 10th article in a series titled "Street Questions about Baptists," in celebration of 400 years of the Baptist movement.

'Are Baptists **poor folk** or **rich folk**?'

On the face of it, this is a simple question. In 2009, Baptists worldwide represent all races, classes and economic conditions.

But the substance of the question raises more difficult and illusive issues. The deeper we retreat into the past searching for answers, the more complicated the question becomes.

In 1928, the new pastor of Salem Baptist Church in Brundidge, Ala., encountered the question in a way that surprised him. The previous pastor had shared wine with the wealthy clique of members who dominated the church. The new pastor and his wife found the congregation too aristocratic for their tastes.

When he invited a tenant farmer to attend services, some of the "hoity-toity type people didn't want them in the church." His wife received similar rebuke when she brought a tenant's wife to WMU.

Members "let us know they didn't care to have her in the church, so we just had to let things pass..." They kept their peace and prayed for a God-inspired pulpit committee.

A contemporary Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) report revealed that the situation in Brundidge was not unique. Multiple Baptist churches in small communities attracted different socio-economic classes. And even when tenants and landowners shared the same building, landowners monopolized places of influence.

L.L. Gwaltney, editor of the *Alabama Baptist* from 1919-1950, also commented on the phenomenon. Baptists often lumped together so-called "holy rollers" (Church of God, Nazarenes, other Holiness and Pentecostal groups). Such groups appealed largely to the underprivileged, Gwaltney wrote, many of whom lived in "direst poverty" in backwoods or urban slums.

Had Baptists been faithful in preaching to the poor, he claimed, there would have been

no Pentecostals because that "cult is the response of a neglected people." Pentecostals lacked economic and educational opportunities, the editor wrote, and expressed their deficiencies through scriptural literalism and emotional excess.

Gwaltney followed this observation with a prophetic editorial about class relations and Christian visions of justice in one of America's poorest states:

"We want to see a state where there will be no slums ... ; a state where no one will have to live in the miserable shacks and hovels that some of our people now call their homes; a state that sees and has compassion for its humblest citizen; a state that has an understanding heart, even when such understanding brings serious unrest.

"We want to see a state in which unemployment is no longer the ghost at our banquet table; a state in which underemployment and semi-employment are no longer major problems. The unemployed do not want charity any more than the rest of us. They want work that they can provide for their loved ones, just as the rest of us do. There is tragedy when men have no employment and do not know which way to turn for a job.

"Such a state as we dream about will come only when one takes seriously the business of building the kingdom of God on earth, because then only will come a real brotherhood of man, whose foundation will be laid in the Fatherhood of God."

Such opinions are not as rare as many Baptists think. From the beginning of the Baptist witness, it was the church of marginalized outsiders. Negatively stereotyped and ridiculed, shut out of power, wealth and university education, Baptists had nothing to lose by their emotional worship, fervent singing, or folkish theology and preaching.

In America, democratic politics and economic opportunity slowly ushered most white Baptists into the middle-class. Their theological independence and church autonomy fit the conditions of the American frontier. Their work ethic and sense of moral responsibility prepared them well for a market-driven economy.

So they flourished as a people's church, as the preferred religious station for aspiring yeomen and sturdy laborers. Prosperous burghers and substantial planters might dominate individual congregations or even exert disproportionate influence on denominational affairs, but they did not leave a huge imprint on Baptists. Theirs remained an ordinary people's church.

Among black Americans, the story was quite different. Denied the possibility of upward mobility first by slavery and later by apartheid, their preference for the Baptist faith owed much to its affirmation of the lowly and oppressed, its prophetic proclamation of liberation, its vision of justice, and its promise of eventual vindication, if not in this world, then in the next.



Wayne Flynt is distinguished university professor of history emeritus at Auburn University.

Such Baptist visions were not unknown among poor whites either. In September 1935, during the run-up to the 1936 presidential election, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent a letter to the nation's clergy. Some 30,000 responded. The letter asked ministers to assess conditions in their communities and express their opinion of the new Social Security Act.

I read 8,000 of the letters, deposited at the Roosevelt presidential library in Hyde Park, N.Y. Although Baptist ministers from well-to-do and modest congregations authored many of them, I was struck by how many came from bi-vocational preachers, who served rural, mill village or factory churches.

They were one with their people, poor and lacking formal theological education. They worked in the same textile mills or factories, mined the same coal or iron ore veins, tenant-farmed similar patches of corn or cotton.

What their letters lacked in correct grammar, they made up for in passionate prose and poignant anecdotes. One 80-year-old missionary Baptist preacher from the "backwoods," nearly blind and suffering from pellagra, relied

entirely on income from part-time, rural churches as poor as he was.

Forced to continue as a pastor despite his age and infirmity, he wrote that he was too proud to beg and too feeble to work. "Who will care for us," he wondered, when blindness forced him to retire?

A 77-year-old rural pastor with little education praised old-age pensions. Although he knew "the Lord would provide for him," he was experiencing "hard luck now."

Reading those letters reminded me of a conversation I had with a leader of the Dalits (once called "Untouchables") in Madras, India, during January 1994. I was on a lecture tour of India sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency, discussing poverty in America.

By comparison with India, there was no poverty in America. In his country, 250 million people received less than 80 percent of the calories that the World Health Organization considered necessary to sustain life.

My new friend and I talked of many things, mostly religion. He told me that though Christianity enrolled an inconsequen-

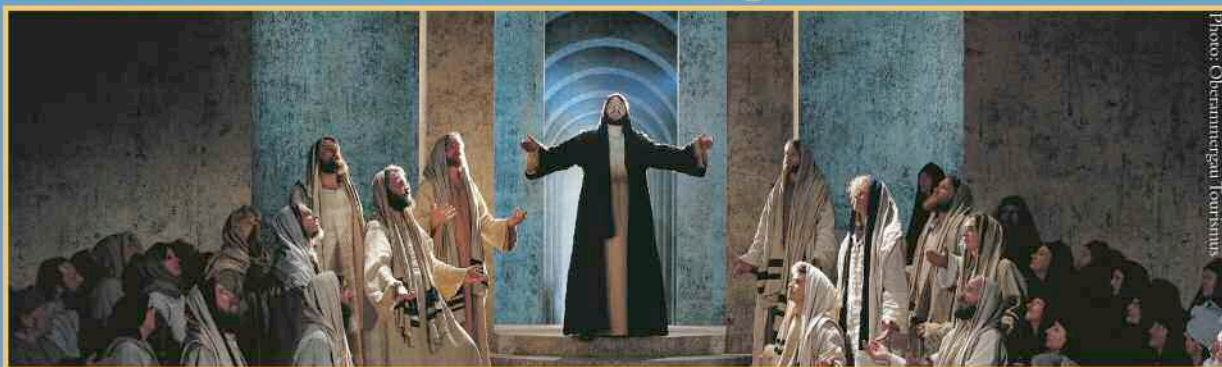
tial number of his countrymen, it claimed 10 percent of all Dalits.

The same is true in Myanmar (formerly Burma), where Adoniram and Ann Judson, early Baptist missionaries, labored not in vain. Poor Chinese flock to Christ as well. In Africa and Latin America, evangelicalism and Pentecostalism appeal disproportionately to the dispossessed and the upwardly mobile.

Established, state-supported, officially endorsed, opulent religion has always appealed to the powerful, the affluent and the well educated. And in America, white Baptists have generally made their peace with modernity and prosperity. Even black Baptists have become ever more educated, prosperous and influential compared to their peers among Pentecostals.

But if Baptists ever forsake their proud heritage among poor English cobblers, sweaty southern tenant farmers, coal-dust-smeared Kentucky coal miners, or black Chicago packing-house workers, they will have severed themselves from their social and economic roots. **BT**

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Parrish III, son of ABC leader, to head PNBC

Walter Parrish III, 50, was elected general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), the third largest African-American Baptist convention that was founded in 1961 in strong support of the civil rights movement.

He is the son of Walter Parrish II who has served as the executive minister of the American Baptist Churches of the South (ABCOTS) formed in 1979.

Parrish III will begin his new ministry this month after the retirement of current PNBC General Secretary Tyrone Pitts. He comes to this position from the pastorate of Union Baptist Church in Montclair, N.J., a church dually aligned with the PNBC and the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA).

Earlier the younger Parrish served on the staff of the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) of ABCUSA for 12 years.

The elder Parrish worked with both the



Walter L. Parrish III (left), who assumes the leadership of the Progressive National Baptist Convention this month, comes from a family of church leaders. In this contributed photo he is pictured (left to right) with Willette Parrish, ABCOTS executive minister Walter L. Parrish II, Carole J. Parrish and William K. Parrish Sr.

PNBC and ABCUSA in a 1970s capital fund campaign called Fund of Renewal.

“Someone asked me how I felt about the competition,” Parrish II said of his son’s election. “My response was ‘There is no competition. We’ll continue to work in a collaborative partnership in strengthening kingdom ministries.’”

PNBC is a national organization, he

noted, whereas ABCOTS is a regional entity of a national body.

A. Roy Medley, general secretary of ABCUSA, offered his congratulations as well. “Walter is well-respected within ABC life where he has served for years,” said Medley, “and we know he will bring excellent leadership to PNBC.”

Also, Medley noted an increased relationship between ABC and PNBC in recent years and credited the outgoing PNBC leader for his cooperative spirit.

“We look forward to continuing to explore how our mutual efforts in mission and ministry might increase,” he continued. “Dr. Tyrone Pitts has been known internationally for his prophetic ministry, and we wish him God’s blessings in his upcoming retirement.” **BT**

—Based on reporting from the *American Baptist News Service*

Tuller led American Baptists through social change

VALLEY FORGE, Penn. — Edwin Tuller, an influential American Baptist leader known as a strong advocate for human and civil rights, died Aug. 25 in Pittsburgh, Penn., at age 95. He served as general secretary for the American Baptist Churches USA from 1959 to 1970.

Tuller sat behind Martin Luther King Jr., at his famous “I Have A Dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 — positioning American Baptists as early advocates for civil rights.

Fellow American Baptist leader and civil rights participant Albert Paul Brinson of Atlanta worked with Tuller in both denominational and social change efforts.

“Ed Tuller was one of my American Baptist idols and mentors,” said Brinson, a friend and associate of Martin L. King Jr. “He was a true model for ministry, committed to all the things the American Baptist family stands for — freedom, equality and justice.”

Born in Hartford, Ct., in 1913, Tuller graduated from Brown University in

Providence, R.I., where he was the editor of the yearbook, member of the governing board, and won athletic letters in soccer and lacrosse. He completed graduate work at Colgate Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, N.Y., and La Faculte Libre de Theologie Protestante in Paris, France.

Tuller served as assistant pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. (1939 to 1944), director of Christian education and assistant executive secretary of the Connecticut Baptist Convention (1944 to 1950), executive secretary of the Connecticut State Council of Churches (1950-1955), executive secretary of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention (1955-1957) and associate general secretary of ABCUSA (1957-1959) before assuming the top denominational post.

Tuller was credited with steering the

denominational ship through a period of great social change. Also, he presided over the completion of the American Baptist headquarters in Valley Forge, Penn., which opened in 1962.

Current general secretary A. Roy Medley called Tuller a “rare mixture of both the prophetic and pastoral leader” who will long be remembered for his leadership that paved the way for American Baptists to be the most racially diverse denomination today.

After leaving the position of general secretary, Tuller and his wife, Rose, were appointed as special service workers of the Board of International Ministries, with Ed serving as pastor of the American Church in Paris, France — the oldest non-governmental American institution established on foreign soil — until his retirement from active ministry.

For the past several years, Tuller lived in the Pittsburgh area, where he was a member of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh. His funeral was held there on Aug. 29. **BT**

—Based on reporting by the *American Baptist News Service*.



Edwin Tuller

Black, white Kentucky churches unite in move toward congregational reconciliation

By David Winfrey

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) — Long talks, compromises and at least one blunt sermon preceded a recent celebration service uniting a black church and a white church in Louisville, Ky.

Several questions remain for the new congregation, but both pastors insist they have both the Holy Spirit and a spirit of cooperation to make the unusual merger a success.

More than 560 people sang, prayed and rejoiced Aug. 23 as St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church (a mostly black congregation) and Shively Heights Baptist Church (a mostly white congregation) merged to become St. Paul Baptist Church at Shively Heights.

“Today is a great example of the gospel at work changing lives, congregations and communities, with impact extending far beyond today and far beyond Louisville,” said Larry Martin, a consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention who has long worked with St. Paul’s pastor, Lincoln Bingham, on racial-reconciliation efforts.

The location of the combined churches is especially noteworthy. Years ago, Shively was a white-flight suburb for many families leaving the city of Louisville. Just down the road from the church campus is the spot where, 55 years ago, a bomb destroyed the house of the first black family to locate in Shively.

Pastors at both churches say they realized their congregations were at a crossroads when they proposed combining forces.

At St. Paul, Bingham said facilities were limiting the church from conducting the ministries members wanted to host. The youth had no gym. Seniors had no elevators. The sanctuary, which seated 220 people, lacked room for growth. “Our challenge was we had ministries and membership larger than what our facilities could properly accommodate,” Bingham said.

Seven miles southwest, Shively Heights Baptist Church was facing challenges both economic and cultural, said Mark Payton, who has led the church for eight years.

“We had 100 people trying to raise \$112,000 per year” just to keep the doors open and the staff paid, he noted. “We were

just getting so crunched and we just knew that we needed help to reach this community.”

Statistics compiled with the help of the Kentucky Baptist Convention reinforced the challenges and opportunities surrounding the church campus, he added.

Projections showed that by next year, 30 percent of the neighborhood would be African American, Payton said. Reports also noted that 300,000 people live in a five-mile radius of the church.

The two pastors, who have been friends for 25 years, were talking this past winter when they realized a merger might solve their problems. The Shively Heights campus has a gym, four times as much education space as at St. Paul, elevators and a sanctuary that can seat 500 comfortably.

Together, Payton and Bingham emphasized the opportunities for reaching the community with a public witness to reconciliation — as well as a racial sensitivity that wasn’t possible before.

Still, both congregations had some objections. Said Payton: “Me and Lincoln decided when we started this process we would lose some but we would gain far more.”

Bingham said two-thirds of St. Paul members voted for the move. He said he maintained focus by casting the vision for what God wanted to accomplish.

“God wants us to do bigger things,” he said. “We’ve had a great ministry here. But God has much more for us to do. And the facility and the racial mix [in Shively] will provide even greater opportunity.”

Payton said approximately 70 percent of Shively Heights voted for the move, but less than one percent expressed their opposition publicly. Nearly 20 members have left since the vote to merge, he added.

“Even in this day and age, we would be naïve to think some of it wasn’t because of race,” he said.

Payton addressed the racial issue squarely in a sermon before the merger.

“I just told them, ‘You all used to live downtown. Why did you move to Shively? We all know why you moved,’” he recalled.

“When are you going to quit running from

them and start reaching them?”

Nationally, approximately 8 percent of churches are racially integrated, according to George Yancey, a sociology professor at the University of North Texas who has studied race and churches.

While many aspects of life, such as work or school, often are integrated, totally voluntary organizations such as churches remain less so, he noted. “In America we still choose to be among our own, racially,” said Yancey, author of *One Body, One Spirit*.

Successful integration requires sensitivity and compromise from all parties, he explained.

“Things are not going to be the way they used to be and both groups are going to have to accept that,” he said.

Yancey said some research suggests integrated churches are better able to grow numerically, but more research needs to be done into such outcomes as spiritual growth or true cooperation among different ethnic groups in such churches.

For the newly christened St. Paul Baptist Church at Shively Heights, many details remain to be worked out. Bingham and Payton are taking turns preaching on Sunday mornings. Leadership teams and committees are being merged. Bingham said leaders are working to maintain a diversity of cultures in all aspects.

“It will take some time to do this, but we’ll do everything we can possibly do to make sure that equity is demonstrated in music, preaching and every other part of our worship.”

Payton said he’s asked members to be patient as leaders “nail down the wrinkles.”

“We’re all going to be stretched,” he said. “I’ve reminded them of Joshua as he led the children of Israel. He said ‘We’ve never been this way before,’ and neither of our churches have been this way before.”

Bingham said he hopes other congregations will learn from the merger that “we all should follow the biblical mandate that we all be one, and that it does not necessarily suggest disaster when we obey that command.” **BT**

—David Winfrey is a correspondent for the Kentucky Baptist Western Recorder.



Dr. Joel Gregory
November 5, 2009

Professor of Preaching,
George W. Truett
Seminary, Baylor
University

Topic: Proverbs



Dr. Philip Jenkins
February 16, 2010



Sparks Professor of
Humanities, Penn State
University

Topic: The Lost History
of Christianity

Dr. Cleo LaRue
March 22-23, 2010

Francis Landey Patton
Associate Professor of
Homiletics, Princeton
Theological Seminary

Topic: Power in the
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Lyons loses race to Scruggs to lead National Baptists

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — An Alabama pastor was elected president of the National Baptist Convention, USA on Sept. 10, overwhelmingly defeating Henry J. Lyons, the denomination's former leader who was sent to prison for fraud.

Julius R. Scruggs, pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., won the presidency during the denomination's annual meeting in Memphis, Tenn.

Lyons, who now leads a church in Florida, received just 924 of the more than 5,000 votes cast.

Scruggs has led the Huntsville church for more than 32 years, and has served as the vice president-at-large of the predominantly black denomination. He succeeds William J. Shaw, who served two five-year terms.

Lyons resigned from the presidency of the denomination in 1999 after being convicted of swindling millions from corporations wanting to market products to church members. He was released from prison in 2003.

Riggins Earl, an ethics professor at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, said the overwhelming vote demonstrated that members wanted to put the Lyons' controversy behind them.

"It means that the leadership of the churches of this convention as well as the members, lay members of the convention, are ... unequivocally clear that they want leadership of integrity," said Earl, who

attended the meeting in Memphis and voted for Scruggs. "They have spoken loudly that they want that."

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, professor of African-American studies at Colby College in Maine and an assistant pastor of a Massachusetts church with ties to the NBCUSA, said the vote indicates a desire for leaders who don't prompt questions.

"It looks like people are ready for new leadership and an opportunity to move forward and to really, I hope, build on what Dr. Shaw has done," said Gilkes, who did



Julius R. Scruggs

not attend the meeting. "At this time, I think it's really important that our leadership in our religious life be forward-looking and be ready to basically be in a position that's unassailable."

Joseph Wright, a Florida pastor who supported Lyons, said he considered the outcome to be a "divine right" and was not disappointed with the outcome.

"I'm hoping that now that this is over, that we'll start mending some bridges and start establishing a new direction for the convention and begin a healing process," said Wright, pastor of Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church in Tallahassee, Fla.

In the days before the election, Lyons sought a temporary restraining order to halt the process because he thought it was unfair, but a federal court denied that request and the election was held as scheduled.

Lyons, the pastor of New Salem Missionary Baptist Church in Tampa, Fla., made an unsuccessful run for president of the Florida General Baptist Convention in 2007.

Scruggs said during his campaign that he hoped to expand the mission work of the denomination beyond Africa to countries like Haiti, where individual NBCUSA churches have had a presence. He also said he wanted to see the denomination develop a public policy commission to better address issues such as public education and health care. **BT**

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Prof: 'Hymnal serves as statement of faith'

By Terry Lee Goodrich

WACO, Texas (ABP) — Terry York is willing to bet that if he goes into a Baptist church, sits down and listens, he can tell — long before the preacher speaks — whether the congregation is theologically conservative or moderate.

The tip-off is in the tunes, said York, associate professor of Christian ministry and church music at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

"It's a little insider family secret — a signal, although it's not foolproof," York said. "The hymnal serves as a statement of faith. It matters, even if they don't use it."

Throughout their history, Baptists have resisted having a written creed or book of common prayer, said York, who has written hymns for Baptist hymnals and was project coordinator of the 1991 *Baptist Hymnal* published by the Southern Baptist Convention.

"When Baptists get crosswise, they either have to admit they're singing from the same statement of faith or go to different books," York said. "You know they all want to sing 'Amazing Grace,' but it gets hairy after that."

So, it's significant that an alternative songbook to the *Baptist Hymnal* — the first in several years — will be published in 2010, York said. The songbook — *Celebrating Grace* — will be heavier on hymns than on praise choruses that have become popular in churches in the past several years.

Centrist and right-leaning Baptists in the 15-million-member denomination likely will use the *Baptist Hymnal*, put out by LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville; center and left will probably use *Celebrating Grace*, produced by Mercer University, York predicted. That's because churches that are more conservative theologically generally are more liberal musically, with services heavy on praise choruses. Meanwhile, traditional hymns typically are staples in moderate congregations, York said.

"It doesn't compute, but the conservatives tend to be more populist, painting with a broader brush, wanting you to feel a certain thing," said David Music, professor

of church music and graduate program director of Baylor's School of Music. "More moderate churches want you to leave thinking a certain way.

"Of course, you also can have very conservative congregations that, come heck or high water, are only going to use the good old hymns, the old gospels."

Traditionally, hymns consist of stanzas in which the words vary but the music stays the same. They are sometimes punctuated by repetitive choruses in which words and music remain consistent.

Praise choruses, often projected on a screen rather than in a hymnal's musical score, tend to be simpler and more repetitive. Then there are modern worship songs, often including a solo. Because of the greater musical range and intricacy, they can be tough for worshipers, York said.

Despite the two hymnals' varying emphases on musical styles, "they'll have more in common than different," he said. "Blessed Assurance' and 'Just As I Am' show they are indeed still Baptists. The differences are over interpretation of doctrine, although some of the split is purely musical preference."

Some hot-button theological debates — such as whether Scripture is inerrant and whether women should be ordained — will not be obviously present in the hymnals.

"I don't think you'll find any that are pro or con inerrancy," Music said. "And I can't think of a single hymn that speaks of the ordination of women. You want to avoid partisanship, even if you're aiming at a niche."

What's telling is how a song holds up over time. William May, dean of Baylor's School of Music, said that throughout history, "when you engaged with God, it was an offering of your very best — best clothes, best attitude and even, in the Old Testament, the best animal you sacrificed.

"Today, the philosophical notion is that that made it elitist," he said. "Now we want everyone to be comfortable, visit with friends, get a cup of coffee.... But if I don't

know the tunes and I have to sit through five repetitions to learn, that's just as elitist as people who said Bach in church was elitist.

"If the music in the church is only the slide on the wall that says, 'God is awesome' and 'Jesus is cool,' then some may be prepared to worship, but others, like me, may not be so moved." York said that hymns "keep on trucking. There have been challengers, like the praise choruses of the 1970s and 1980s, often played by younger generations who want to make current worship songs. "Challengers usually fail," York said. "But the best of those stick and get the name 'hymn.'"

Examples include "Since Jesus Came into My Heart," initially scorned for being too much like "dance music," and "I Love You, Lord," criticized for having too few words, too few chords and too much repetition.

Whatever Baptists believe church music should be, compiling a hymnal is a huge task.

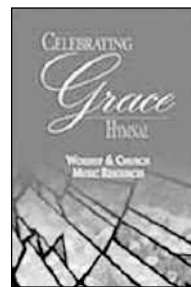
Revisions of the *Baptist Hymnal*, with more than 600 songs, are done about every 15 years after massive surveys of church leaders and members about hymns they sing, hymns they do not and hymns they want to add.

Equally difficult was the task for *Celebrating Grace*. Those who selected hymns included pastors, theologians, music ministers, laity and professors of church music, said Music, one of five editors.

"We want it to be a practical book that people will actually use, but also challenging so people can grow into it, not out of it," he said. "I think hymns are more effective than almost any means of teaching Scripture. We're more likely to remember words and concepts when they're set to music. There's a blend of emotion and passion, rhyme and meter with repetition.

"If a preacher preaches the same sermon repeatedly, the preacher is going to be looking for a new job. But people don't mind singing a hymn again and again." **BT**

—Terry Lee Goodrich is assistant director of media communications at Baylor University.



BWA presentation on church and gays reveals differing regional approaches

By Robert Marus
Associated Baptist Press

EDE, Netherlands — A friendly debate about the Bible, human sexuality and the church's response to the advance of gay rights during the Baptist World Alliance's recent annual gathering revealed differences between some in the developing world and some in the Western world — but also expressions of hope that global Baptists would not divide themselves over the question.

"We do come out at different points on the issue, but I hope you'll notice there are considerable areas of agreement in our

what exactly comprised such an ethical response.

Gbode contended that both testaments of Scripture unequivocally condemn all same-gender sexual relationships, that the church must oppose what he described as the "radical homosexual agenda" and that the church must "always be willing to assist [gays] to overcome attraction to the same sex."

But Stearman said scientific evidence makes it increasingly difficult to affirm the idea that sexual orientation is a changeable trait. He drew a parallel between how science and changing social standards altered Christians' interpretations of the Bible's

Scripture is always before us as our guide and our authority, but that means that Scripture itself must always — in every generation — challenge the easy, repeated interpretations that were useful by one majority sometimes as weapons against another minority."

He noted that the meeting was held in the Netherlands to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Baptist movement — which began in Amsterdam with a group of English non-conformists who had been exiled from their homeland because of their theological views.

"Do we as Baptists in this 400th year of our existence have the courage of our convictions as people of the Book to let the Book speak to us in new ways — in fresh ways — in the midst of crises and controversy and tensions?" he said. "I hope we do."

Gbode, asked in a question-and-answer session if this issue would eventually tear Baptists apart along Western-versus-developing-world lines the way it has the worldwide Anglican Communion, said it didn't have to.

At his church, he said, "We've been focusing on the issue that matters — the issue of salvation. Some of those things really have nothing to do with our salvation — and in that way it keeps us together."

Nonetheless, Gbode added, "I stand by the traditional interpretation of the Scripture. To me the truth of the Scripture doesn't change. It will never change — and it will never change even if our cultural standards change."

Several speakers affirmed that Christians can remain in fellowship while having reasonable disagreements about what the church's response should be — both on a theological level and on a civil level — to homosexuality.

Commission officials noted that BWA had taken an official stance in 1994 affirming the view that homosexual practice was incompatible with Scripture. But at least one attendee at the meeting criticized that statement as limiting the discussion.

"I find the resolution of the Baptist World Alliance not helpful, not useful — because it goes toward closing the debate," said Italian Baptist Massimo Aprile. **BT**

AT ISSUE: Homosexuality and the Church, Part One

Editor's note: No issue is more divisive in many church settings today than homosexuality.

One Baptist denominational leader has referred to it as the "H-bomb" due to its destructive potential. While some on both ends of the theological spectrum hold clear positions on the proper Christian response to homosexuality, many others see complexities, even conflicts, in coming to terms with this pertinent issue. This is the first in a two-part series on the controversial subject.

papers," said Scott Stearman, pastor of Kirkwood Baptist Church in suburban St. Louis, describing essays that he and an African pastor summarized to the BWA Commission on Christian Ethics in the Dutch city of Ede this summer.

Stearman said participants — who had toured nearby Amsterdam the day before — might have noticed banners all over the city advertising Amsterdam's gay-pride festival, one of the world's largest.

"We Baptists cannot act like this is going to go away," he said. "We've got to discuss it."

Ayo Gbode, pastor of Christ Baptist Church in Gbagada, Nigeria, agreed that Baptists had to deal with the issue squarely.

"The church can no longer stand aloof and believe that some angelic host from heaven will come and cleanse the earth of this gangrene of a behavior called homosexuality," he said. "The church must respond, but her response must be ethical."

The two pastors disagreed, however, on

passages on slavery and how emerging scientific and social evidence may cause Christians to take another look at what they have, in the past, viewed as unambiguous scriptural injunctions on homosexuality.

"Our understanding of sexual relationships, of monogamy, polygamy and the status of women has changed radically since the Bible was first compiled in the fourth century," he said.

"This change is not in spite of the Bible, but in fact because of the Bible," Stearman continued. "For while there are many texts rooted in systems of injustice that we find abhorrent [such as slavery and gender inequality], the teachings of Jesus prompt us inexorably to another level of freedom."

In a response to the presentations, Mercer University professor Richard Wilson noted that "these two papers gave us two very different reactions to seven or eight passages that are found in holy Scripture."

He continued: "I am saying that

Changing sexual orientation is risky, psychologists say

(RNS) — The American Psychological Association has announced that therapies aimed at changing a person's sexual orientation could be hazardous, but health professionals should respect the beliefs of patients who object to homosexuality on religious grounds.

Although the APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation concluded that “efforts to change sexual orientation are unlikely to be successful and involve some risk of harm,” the association also acknowledged that some people's faith is strong enough to affect their sexual identity and behavior.

In the study released Aug. 5, the APA includes participants of conservative religious traditions whose beliefs conflict with same-sex attractions. Some participants who pursued practices to change their sexual orientation reported increased ability to control same-sex urges and reduced stress levels, according to the APA.

The report differentiates between sexual orientation and sexual orientation identity. While sexual orientation is unlikely to change, some participants who engaged in “reparative therapy” modified their sexual orientation identity — the group or label with which they identify — and their sexual behavior.

The APA report advises therapists to provide accurate information on sexual orientation and sexuality “without imposing a specific sexual orientation identity outcome” and calls health professionals to recognize that homosexuality is not a mental illness or developmental disorder.

Exodus International, a Christian organization that promotes reparative therapy, released a statement that expressed gratitude to the APA for promoting respect for religion but said, “Exodus does not fully agree with the APA's criticisms of clinical techniques such as reparative therapy and its view of sexual orientation change.” **BT**

Q&A

with Ray Pollard

Ray Pollard, a retired pastor now living in Burlington, N.C., was enlisted to teach an online course titled “Homosexuality and the Church” for the School of Christian Ministry at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

The course's description: “Homosexuality is a highly controversial issue in many denominations. In this course we will examine multiple perspectives as we seek to discern God's word to the church on questions of acceptance, inclusion, membership, leadership, and ordination of persons who are gay or lesbian. The purpose of the course is to provide a safe space for a difficult and often uncomfortable conversation — not to provide THE answer.”

Here are Pollard's responses to *Baptists Today* editor John Pierce's questions:

BT: How did the course on homosexuality and the church come about?

RP: The course was chosen because of a request from a pastor who wanted help with this issue. Others have echoed the request and affirmed the need.

BT: What do you hope to accomplish

in teaching this course to current or future ministers?

RP: I hope to provide an opportunity for a small group to safely and openly discuss an issue that has too often merely been taboo or the source of conflict. My hope would be that the participants in this online course would find that environment in our weekly discussions, and discover ways to translate that to local church experience.

I also hope to expose participants to a variety of perspectives toward homosexuality and the church through studies, sermons and readings that will move beyond a simple dismissal of homosexual persons as subjects of the church's concern.

BT: The most common approach to this topic is avoidance since it can be so divisive. Why not ignore this controversial subject?

RP: The issue of homosexuality has been ignored too long. Churches need to assume a role as examples of the search for a better way to treat all people who are in our congregations or who look to the church for moral and spiritual guidance as they wrestle with critical issues of our time.

A prophetic approach is typically uncomfortable for both prophet and hearers, but it is essential if the church is to be true to its mission in the world. At the same time I hope to help participants understand what some of the consequences might be if they chose to attempt a congregational dialogue on the matter of homosexuality and the church that departs from the typical condemnation or

exclusion. We will examine the experience of several churches that have engaged in serious dialogue.

BT: What approach do you take in this class? How will you address this topic?

RP: The approach of the course is to move through readings that I will assign to participants in the discussion board in which the learners interact with each other as they seek approaches to this subject which they can individually accept.

As the course description (above) explains, “The purpose of the course is to provide a safe space for a difficult and often uncomfortable conversation — not to provide THE answer.” Participants will have to reach their personal conclusions as to how they will approach the issues involved.

BT: What from your pastoral experience impacts the way you teach this class?

RP: Working with families who have gay and lesbian children, and working with gays and lesbians who wish for some sensitivity and compassion from churches in which they have been raised leads me to want to find ways to encourage that kind of ministry within local congregations.

Further, having seen the kind of congregational conflict aimed at ministers and other leaders of local church life when efforts were made to move toward compassionate and loving ministry to all people makes me want to provide resources for meaningful congregational dialogue. **BT**

guest commentary

My trip to *The Shack*

By Kent Cranford

A beloved senior adult woman in our church stopped by my office one day to hand me a book. She knew that I was considering where to go with our Wednesday night study after finishing a marathon (year and a half) exposition of the Gospel of Mark.

She reasoned that we could use something light and relatively short next. But not being a fan of religious novels, I thanked her and put *The Shack* on my stack of “to-read-when-I-get-the-time” books.

Before leaving, she told me that her daughter’s church had just finished discussing the book and she thought I might find it interesting. I noticed a twinkle in her eye as she told me this.

A few weeks passed when *The Shack* caught my attention again. Lying on the top of the pile, its blue and white cover seemed to beckon me. Picking it up, I noticed the cover and wondered what a ladybug had to do with religious faith.

An Internet search for reviews of *The Shack* revealed both positive and negative comments. So I decided to read the book for myself, but because it was fiction and not essential to my work, I placed it on the “audio book” schedule.

Since my dog died, my mp3 player keeps me company on the sidewalks and streets of my neighborhood as I take my daily health march. I use these walks and time alone in the car to listen to books I’d normally never read.

Not expecting much drama from a religious narrative, I was surprised to find myself drawn into the opening account of a father’s worst nightmare. Being a dad myself, I understood the pain and helplessness that Mack (the main character) exhibited.

The drama was there, I had to admit to myself. But I wasn’t prepared for the trip

that was to follow. I had read the warnings. Some “theological experts” had deemed the book nothing short of heresy.

So when Mack met the first member of the Trinity, I wasn’t surprised. I imagine that when Jesus spoke of the unspeakable YHWH (Yahweh) and called God *abba* (daddy), he received the same response by the religious leaders of his day.

I suppose for those of us who grew up envisioning God as a Santa-type figure — with white skin, white hair and blue eyes — the thought of the Father in the form of an African-American woman is beyond comprehension. But for me this wasn’t the case.

My father died when I was just five years old and my mother was pregnant with my younger brother. She never remarried, but did her best to raise us in the ways of the Lord and went with us to church where she served in the nursery.

When she needed surgery and a prolonged recovery, I felt compelled by her faithful example to walk miles to attend church. I witnessed mom’s devotional life and faith during great hardship and grief. Later in my life, when I was the cause of some of her pain and disappointment, I experienced the grace of

God through her forgiveness, acceptance and love.

So, it was not hard for me to recognize the presence of the Father in the character of Papa. For me, it was not so much heresy as it was the genius of an author who could

portray the nature of the Almighty in a way that communicates God’s unending love for us all. As Jesus states in the book, “I will travel any road to find you.”

What I did not realize was that my experience at *The Shack* would mirror Mack’s. As I read the dialogue between Mack and the personalities of the Trinity, I recognized discussions I had had with God during the course of my life.

No, I didn’t lose a daughter to a serial killer, but the pain I have experienced in growing up without a dad, in witnessing the devastating effects of drug and alcohol abuse on my older siblings, and in seeing my younger brother deal with the disabling effects of mental illness left me with many questions of God.

Moreover, broken relationships in my past still haunted me and I needed to forgive and find forgiveness.

In my strolls around the neighborhood, I finished my journey to *The Shack*. But I now walk with a new appreciation for the beauty of God’s mysterious plan to reconcile all of creation.

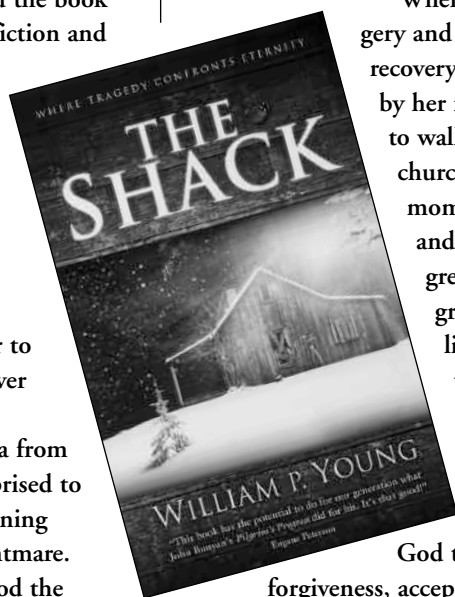
My own long-held grudges were enveloped in Jesus’ love for me and the rest of his family. I can now move forward being reminded of God’s unfailing love.

I wanted to share this experience with my flock, so I began searching for a study guide or book to use on Wednesday evenings. Much to my dismay, I couldn’t find one yet published.

I did find a blog (www.theshackbook.com) in which a pastor offered topical questions on several themes that arise from a careful reading of the book. With each question, biblical references were offered for clarification and discussion.

Using this material along with my own explanatory thoughts on the value of the study, our church office produced an in-house study guide and promoted the beginning of our study of *The Shack*.

Pleasantly, I was surprised to have some new faces in attendance when we



Southwestern professor chooses church over seminary job

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) — A music professor has taken early retirement at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary rather than resigning a part-time position and moving his membership from a church that the Southern Baptist Convention declared out of fellowship in June.

Michael Cox, professor of music theory and composition at Southwestern's School of Church Music since 1990, is a member of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and director of the church's Chancel Choir.

The Southern Baptist Convention voted June 23 to sever its 125-year-old ties with Broadway, after the congregation failed to convince denominational leaders it was in compliance with SBC membership requirements banning churches that affirm homosexuality. Since Southwestern requires its professors to belong to a Southern Baptist



Michael Cox

church, that meant Cox, composer of more than 160 published works recognized 11 times by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), had to make a choice.

"I'm sorry Southwestern and the Southern Baptist Convention put Michael in this difficult position," said Brent Beasley, senior pastor of Broadway Baptist Church. "But from Broadway's perspective, we're thrilled that he made the courageous decision he did to take early retirement from Southwestern and stay at Broadway."

The church responded by naming Cox as composer-in-residence, a one-year appointment in addition to his part-time job as director of the Chancel Choir. Beasley said the composer-in-residence position will carry a stipend, and Cox would compose several pieces during the year for use in worship services at the church.

"Michael is a gifted composer and conductor, and he means a lot to our Chancel Choir and entire congregation," Beasley said. "And continuing their relationship with

Broadway is obviously important to Michael and Rhonda, as well."

According to Cox's online biography, which has been removed from Southwestern Seminary's website, he has composed and published numerous sacred choral and keyboard works for use in the church.

His seventh keyboard collection, titled *All Glory, Laud and Honor*, was published by Shawnee Press. More recently, his compositional efforts have focused upon larger works for festival-size choir and orchestra. His *Deo Gratias* was recorded by the Southwestern Seminary Oratorio Chorus and the Fort Worth Chamber Orchestra. His latest effort in this genre is an eight-movement work for tenor soloist, choir, and orchestra titled *Symphonic Psalms*. It was commissioned and premiered by the Oklahoma Baptist University Oratorio Chorus and Orchestra.

Cox has degrees in piano performance, orchestral conducting and composition. Prior to joining the Southwestern faculty in 1990, he taught for 18 years at Oklahoma Baptist University. **BT**

began the study. One person did not attend church regularly and another (non-Baptist) couple traveled from a nearby community for the discussion.

I had found some video clips of interviews with author William Paul Young on YouTube and began the study with his own description of how he had come to write the book.

According to Young, he had never intended to publish the book. He had written it as a gift to his family — in hopes of saving them some time as they searched for God's meaning and purpose for their lives.

Our church's weekly gatherings were thoughtful, and the discussions centered primarily on the scriptural references found in the study material. In our dialogues, we did begin finding hidden treasures in the book.

In one Internet posting, I read where Young said the book was full of symbols that many would miss with a casual reading. One person's question led me into an investigative search of meaning centering in the contents of a tin can found early in the story.

Floodgates of insight were opened to

"Barnes & Noble called and asked us to send them our marketing and promotion plan. We said we didn't have one and asked them to send one so we knew what one looked like."

— WILLIAM PAUL YOUNG, author of the *The Shack*, which has sold 7 million copies and spent 61 weeks on *The New York Times* best-seller list. He was quoted by *The Birmingham News*. (RNS)

the symbolic meaning of each item. When compared to the contents of the tin can at the end of the narrative, new insights emerged and Young's creative mind was fully appreciated.

However, a few Wednesday night regulars dropped by the wayside and through the grapevine I heard that *The Shack* was to blame. Not wanting a book of fiction to be the cause of someone not attending church, I decided to finish our exploration at another time during the week.

I will reserve Wednesday nights for pure Bible discussion. Some folks just don't like their Bible and bugs mixed together.

And I guess that some people are not ready for *The Shack*. But once you move

past the questions of the Trinity, what you are really confronted with is grace, the providence of God and forgiveness.

Often we like to talk about forgiveness — and even think about it. But doing it is hard work.

I hear that William Paul Young is coming to nearby Gardner-Webb University later this month. I have a few questions for him. Perhaps, you will too. **BT**

—Kent Cranford is pastor of Loray Baptist Church in Gastonia, N.C. William Paul Young, author of *The Shack*, will be speaking at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, N.C., on Oct. 31. For information and tickets, visit www.supportgwu.com.

New NIV translation due out in 2011

By Bob Allen

PALOS HEIGHTS, Ill (ABP) — The *New International Version* of the Bible is getting its first update since controversy over gender-inclusive texts derailed future revisions more than 20 years ago.

Biblica, the new name for a company created when the International Bible Society and Send the Light publishers merged in 2007, announced the first complete update of the NIV since 1984 in a live webcast Sept. 1. The translation, to be done by an independent 15-member Committee on Bible Translation and published by Zondervan, is due for release in 2011.

In 1997 the IBS announced plans to forgo all plans to publish an updated NIV, following criticism of an edition released in the United Kingdom that substituted gender-neutral language for masculine pronouns in many texts. The NIV is the most popular modern translation among evangelicals, and has sold approximately 300 million copies.

In 2002 Zondervan marketed the gender-neutral translation under a different name, *Today's New International Version Bible*. Traditionalists panned the TNIV as catering to a feminist agenda and promoting the "egalitarian" view that men and women are equipped for identical roles in the church and home.

Last fall Crossway Books released the ESV Study Bible, reviewed by the conservative Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood as "unapologetically complementarian." Complementarians believe men and women are created equal, but for different — or complementary — roles in both church and home. Generally, complementarians believe in wifely submission and oppose women serving as pastors or in other important positions of church leadership and governance.

The ESV Bible went on to become the first Bible ever named the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association "Christian Book of the Year."

Keith Danby, global president and CEO of Biblica, said some of the criticism of the last NIV revision was justified, "and we need to be brutally honest about the mistakes that were made."

"We fell short of the trust that was placed in us," Danby said. "We failed to make a case for the revisions, and we made some important errors in the way we brought the translation to publication. We also underestimated the scale of public affection for the NIV and failed to communicate the rationale for change in a manner that reflected that affection."

But Danby said "freezing the NIV" was also a mistake. By not publishing revisions, he said the IBS "fundamentally undermined the obligations of the original NIV charter" and "shackled the NIV to a language and scholarship of a quarter a century ago."

Wheaton College Professor Douglas Moo, chairman of the Committee on Bible Translation, said translators would conduct a year-long review of every gender reference changed since publication of the 1984 edition of the NIV.

Moo said translators would consider input not only from scholars, but also from ordinary readers. "We have to be as careful as we can, while recognizing those influences, to do our work in a sincere and open way so that we honestly reflect what we think God's unchanging Word is saying to the English-speaking world in our day," Moo said.

In response to a question, Moo declined to label any of the committee members as "complementarians," because he said some members would be uncomfortable with any label.

"I think it is fair to say that at this point the committee represents a very fair balance on this matter of gender and women's issues that is representative of the evangelical community as a whole," he said. "All of those voices are heard and heard strongly — not just from outside scholars, but on the committee itself."

Another questioner suggested that since most Bible translators are men, translations tend to be biased against women. Moo said only one member of the current committee is female — there was another woman who recently resigned — but he disputed the

notion that because a person is male he cannot fairly represent female interests.

"I think that the male members of the committee, as well as the female member of the committee, are all very conscious of avoiding bias in any direction," Moo said.

Moo also declined to offer an example of a gender-specific reference that might be changed, saying that would create the false impression that some of those passages would be reviewed more carefully than all the others.

"You should expect those changes that we think were appropriately made in the TNIV to be made," Moo said.

"We felt certainly at the time, or we would not have done what we did, that it was the right thing to do, that the language was indeed moving in that direction and that because we wanted to produce a translation that would speak naturally to the English people were actually using, we needed to do that," Moo said.

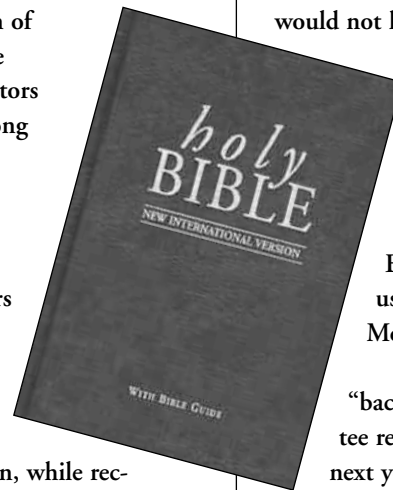
Moo said all those changes are "back on the table" as the committee re-evaluates the text during the next year.

"This has been a time, over the last 15 to 20 years, in the way the issue of how to handle gender in English has been very much in flux and process and development," he said. "Things are changing quickly, and so we are going to look at all of that again as we produce the 2011 NIV."

Zondervan President Moe Girkins said after launch of the new NIV in 2011 there would be no future TNIV products.

"Whatever its strengths were, the TNIV divided the evangelical Christian community," she said.

"Our goal with this edition is for the NIV Bible to be back to being a unifying translation," Girkins said. "Although we don't know what the translation is at this moment, we believe that we are correcting some of the mistakes we made in the past." The 2011 release date coincides with the 400th anniversary of the *King James Version*, also called the Authorized Version, first translated in 1611 by the Church of England. **BT**



2009 Formations Commentary

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

LESSONS FOR: Sunday, Nov. 1-22, 2009

Written by Terry Eddinger,
vice president for academics and professor of
Old Testament at Carolina Evangelical
Divinity School in Greensboro, N.C.



Nov. 1, 2009

Bathsheba: The Adulteress?

2 Samuel 11:2-5, 26-27a

On the surface, today's lesson seems to be one about morally weak people who make bad choices, and how the effects of those choices last a lifetime. But if we think the story is only about morally weak people, then we miss one of the theological truths in it. This story is about temptation. Whether subtle or blatant, it is real and always present. Perhaps neither David nor Bathsheba planned or staged the event described in today's story. Perhaps it just simply happened out of spur-of-the-moment decisions influenced by pheromones and hormonal drives. But once done, the consequences were cemented into history. This story is not just about David, Bathsheba and their temptation. It is our story too.

The scene in 2 Samuel 11 reads like a page from a romance novel or something from the *Desperate Housewives* television show. A married man arises from his rooftop bed and walks around on the roof of his house enjoying the view. While taking in the scenery of his beloved Jerusalem, he sees a beautiful married woman bathing in a neighboring courtyard. The man takes notice. The man sends for the woman. One thing leads to another and the next thing you know, the woman is pregnant. How can this be? Isn't this David, the "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14)?

The biblical writer lets us know that the story is not an innocent one that happens by

chance, as it may initially appear. The writer gives us a warning, "a red flag," in verse 1 when he says this story took place in times when kings went out to battle; but David sent Joab to fight the Ammonites and he chose to stay at home (2 Sam 10:1). This seems unusual for David, a warrior-king who usually led his army into battle. Why did he not accompany his army? Was David sick? Were there more important matters to which he must attend in Jerusalem? The text does not answer any of these questions.

After spotting the bathing woman, David inquired of his servants as to her identity and they answered him. We are told her name is Bathsheba, meaning "daughter of Sheba" or "daughter of seven." She is an Israelite woman, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite. According to 2 Samuel 23:34, Eliam was the son of Ahithophel, one of David's 30 elite men. Uriah also is listed among the 30 (23:39). This means that both Bathsheba's grandfather and husband belonged to David's inner circle of warriors and friends. Since these men had been with David for a long time, and since she was a neighbor (geographically close by), David probably knew who Bathsheba was before this encounter.

Unfortunately, the biblical writer does not give us many details about Bathsheba, her prior relationship with David, if any, or her perspective on the affair. David summoned her and sent messengers to get her, but she said no words of consent or protest to the messengers. The same is true of Bathsheba once she was in David's residence.

Did David force her to have sex with him? Were they simply living in the moment without regard for future consequences? Did she see him as an opportunity to exploit? After all, David was the king and had power — nearly absolute power — and potentially she had much to gain from him.

The passage does not give us an answer. For such a dramatic event, the biblical text treats it in a rather nonchalant, matter-of-fact way. Bathsheba accompanied the messengers to the king's house. She and David had sex,

and then she cleaned up and went home. Later, she sent a simple, three-word message: "I am pregnant" (2 Sam 11:5; actually only two words in Hebrew).

Now, let us return to the title question of the lesson. Was Bathsheba a willing participant, an adulteress or a victim? Unfortunately, the text is not clear. What is clear is that Bathsheba bathed in plain sight of David. She should have known the king's routine and that he or anyone else could see her from the palace. Did she want to draw David's attention and therefore use her beauty to lure David into acting upon his passions? Probably so.

We know that Bathsheba became David's favorite wife and she seemed to enjoy her position within his harem. So perhaps she was both victim and adulteress. According to the text, she did not ask for a relationship with David, but she took it when it came. This is where we must be careful, to avoid temptation and not give in to it when it happens. Giving in to it is our choice.

The story goes on to tell us that David tried to cover up the event and ended up having one of his most loyal subjects, Uriah the Hittite, killed. However, David's attempt at a cover-up did not work. Such attempts rarely if ever do. Brueggemann states David's precarious position perfectly in saying, "It is easier to win a war than it is to cover an affront" (*David's Truth in Israel's Imagination and Memory*, p. 52). Today's lesson ends with a frantic David looking for a solution to cover a sin that cannot be covered and never should have happened. Bathsheba, for her part, found herself unexpectedly pregnant and mourning for a dead husband (1 Sam 11:26).

Nov. 8, 2009

Bathsheba: The Mourner

2 Samuel 12:15b-25

Facing the death of a loved one is always difficult. However, one's grief is compounded



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when the death is unexpected and untimely, and even more so when the death is unnecessary and preventable. This week's lesson is about Bathsheba's mourning such a death. Her mourning is really a double mourning — the unexpected and untimely death of a husband followed quickly by the death of an infant son. Since the text does not mention any other children belonging to her, we can assume that she had lost her entire immediate family.

Last week our lesson was about David and Bathsheba's adulterous affair. The lesson ended with Bathsheba mourning for her dead husband Uriah, who was killed by the Ammonites, a death that resulted from David's plot to cover up his sin (Nathan the prophet blamed David for Uriah's death, 1 Sam 12:9). According to the Law, both David and Bathsheba should be killed for their adulterous affair (Deut 22:22). However, instead of death for the two of them, the text tells us that after the completion of the appropriate period of mourning, David took Bathsheba for his wife (1 Sam 11:27). This period of mourning probably lasted seven days as that seems to be the normal time for mourning a death (see Gen 50:10). The text does not tell us how Bathsheba mourned for her husband. However, the irony here is thick. How does one mourn the loss of a husband and then marry the one who had the husband killed? The text leaves us wanting information.

Today's lesson is about mourning — of both Bathsheba and David. The story shows us two different ways people mourn. David mourned before the death of the child. This is called anticipatory grief. David anticipated the child's death and, therefore, took on the position of a grieving person. First, he fasted and refused to eat (2 Sam 12:16). Second, he lay on the ground and refused to get up. Even his elders could not get him up. Job displayed a similar pattern of mourning when he found out about the death of his 10 children and the loss of much of his property in one day (Job 1:20). In his mourning, David worshiped God in hopes that God would change his mind and save the child. But David hoped against all hope because Nathan the prophet had already spoken God's word to David and told him the child would die (1 Sam 12:14). As soon as David heard the child had died, he ceased to mourn and resumed his normal life.

People often feel anticipatory grief when they are about to experience an upcoming loss or major life transition. Because I am a military officer, my family has experienced

anticipatory grief as I have deployed for six-month tours on three occasions, twice to the Middle East. My family anticipated being separated for a long time and began grieving about the separation even before my departure. We found that once the separation occurred, we could re-establish our routines and continue with our lives. In a sense, the separation was a relief from the grief. David acted the same way in today's lesson.

The text gives us little information about Bathsheba and her grief, but it seems to suggest she grieved for the child after he died. After her son's death, the text says, "David comforted his wife Bathsheba ..." (1 Sam 12:24). His way of comforting her was to get her pregnant again; this time with a child to be named Solomon. In our society, that action would seem heartless but in the ancient world giving birth to a son was the most honorable thing a woman could do. Perhaps it showed that David was sensitive to Bathsheba and was concerned about her grief for the lost son. David showed that he continued to care for her after the affair was over and the child was dead. And she certainly needed someone to care for her after the loss of a husband and a child. Again, the irony in the scene is thick. The one who caused their deaths comforted her.

We learn several things from today's lesson. First, we learn that people grieve in different ways. David grieved before the child died, but Bathsheba grieved afterward. Likewise, each of us deals with grief in our own way. Therefore, we should allow others to grieve in their own ways and not expect them to grieve like ourselves.

Second, we learn from the lesson that the ultimate consequence of sin is pain and suffering. Sin and suffering always go together. David and Bathsheba suffered the consequences for their adulterous affair, one of which was the death of the child. Because of this sin, David's life was forever changed; he continued to suffer the consequences the rest of his days. In addition to the death of a son, God told David that the sword would never depart from him, and that "his companion," meaning Absalom, would lie with David's wives in public (2 Sam 12:10-12). David repented and God forgave him (2 Sam 12:13). However, God's forgiveness did not remove the consequences of his sin. We should learn from David and Bathsheba. Sin can be appealing, but it brings pain and suffering; the consequences are well beyond any benefits of the initial pleasure.

Nov. 15, 2009

Bathsheba: The Advocate

1 Kings 1:11-31

At one time or another, each of us has needed an advocate, someone who will stand up for us when we need help or someone to intervene on our behalf for our benefit. We see advocates in times of elections, someone endorsing their favorite candidate. We also see advocates who plead on behalf of charitable causes, such as human or animal rights.

Today's text is about Bathsheba advocating for Solomon's ascension to the throne as David's replacement. It begins with an ironic twist. David was confined to his bed because of bad health and old age. The text tells us his health had become so poor that he could not keep himself warm. David's servants decided the best way to help David was to find a woman who could join him in bed and use her body heat to keep him warm. So, they conducted a search to find a very beautiful virgin to lay with him in bed and keep him warm. They found Abishag the Shunammite. The irony is that she remained a virgin the entire time (1 Kgs 1:1-4). This is in stark contrast to David's dealings with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 and 12 where he sought a beautiful woman out for his own pleasure. David's servants gave Abishag to him, and he had no pleasure with her. It is a sign of David's extreme ineptness at this point in his life. David was ripe for manipulation, and Bathsheba and David's closest friends took advantage of the situation.

The story begins by telling us that David's son Adonijah had set himself up to be David's successor, the next king of Israel. By tradition, the legitimate heir was the oldest living son. Why should he not be king? After all, Adonijah was David's oldest living son while Solomon was way down the list of sons. Also, David favored him. The text tells us that Adonijah was handsome and David had never rebuked him. The reason given is that he was the son born of Haggith, after Absalom, David's beloved son, thus, his replacement (1 Kgs 1:6).

Adonijah amassed for himself chariots and 50 men to run before him, as Absalom had (2 Sam 15:1). He gave a big party to celebrate his new position and many persons of David's administration — including Joab, Abithar the priest, and David's other sons — attended. The



text tells us that Nathan the prophet told Bathsheba what Adonijah had done, and together the two of them plotted to manipulate David so that he would appoint Solomon as the king instead. They claimed that David had promised to make Solomon king. Whether David had made such a promise is not clear. The Bible does not mention this promise prior to this scene. At the end of the scene, most of David's closest confidants — Bathsheba, Nathan, Zadok the priest, Benaiah, and others — had become involved in the quest for Solomon's appointment. Solomon, however, was strangely absent. In the text, Solomon makes no request or speaks a single word. He is not even present in the scene.

The events of the scene seem a little confused in the text. Bathsheba entered and made her request (1:15). Nathan entered while Bathsheba was still present (1:22) and made a brief plea. Then David called for Bathsheba, who seemed to be out of the room (1:28), although she should be present. Then David called for Nathan again, who still should be present but is absent (1:32). Regardless of the movement, they convinced David to declare Solomon the new king of Israel (1:34-35).

Why did Bathsheba advocate for Solomon's coronation? Perhaps she saw an injustice; that is, David had promised Solomon the throne but Adonijah and his party were usurping it. Perhaps she was looking out for herself. Bathsheba notes that Adonijah would view her and Solomon as enemies and kill them (1:21, compare with Nathan's words 1:12). In the ancient Near Eastern world, kings new to the throne often killed anyone they thought threatened their position in order to consolidate their kingdom. This is what Solomon did in killing Adonijah (2:25), Joab (2:34), Shimei (2:46), and perhaps even his brothers (Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, p. 398). The text tells us that after the last one of these died, "the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon" (1 Kgs 2:46b). Whatever her motive, Bathsheba, with the aid of David's closest administrators and friends, successfully advocated for Solomon's ascension.

We should not forget the true advocate, the one we have in Jesus Christ. Unlike Bathsheba, Christ selflessly gave himself for us and became our advocate before the Father in heaven. That's what true advocacy is about — selfless giving for a person or cause deemed worthy of our efforts. As followers of Christ, we have a debt of gratitude for Christ's advocacy that we can never repay. But all he asks of us is

to put our trust and faith in him and to be advocates on his behalf toward others.

Nov. 22, 2009

Bathsheba: The Intercessor?

1 Kings 2:13-25

How do we deal with adversity within our family? How do we deal with a family member who intends to do us harm? These are questions we probably prefer not to ask but, for many families, they are real ones. These questions can also be true of relationships within our church family.

In today's lesson, David had recently died and Solomon had just begun his reign. Before he died and to the surprise of Israel (1 Kgs 2:15), David declared Solomon as the next king, instead of Adonijah, who was the oldest living son and rightful heir. Afterward, Adonijah and his supporters remained alive and living in Jerusalem. Therefore, the threat of them usurping Solomon from the throne remained real. After all, the greatest threat to the throne in the ancient Near Eastern world came from ambitious family members, particularly brothers (or half brother in this case, as they had different mothers). According to 1 Kings 2, David and Solomon co-reigned for a time. Then, before David died, he gave Solomon advice on how to consolidate his reign. This advice included ridding his kingdom of potential enemies (2:5-9). Although Adonijah is not mentioned in the list, he was Solomon's greatest threat.

According to the story, Adonijah made a seemingly simple request to Bathsheba. He requested Abishag the Shunammite for a wife and asked that Bathsheba ask on his behalf to King Solomon. Bathsheba enjoyed a special position in Solomon's court. The text tells us that Solomon had a special throne set up for her to the right side of his own throne (1 Kgs 2:9), which was a place of honor and delegated authority. (Compare with Christ sitting at the right hand of God, Matt 26:64; Mark 16:19.) Bathsheba was the queen mother; Solomon even bowed to her (1 Kgs 2:19). Also, she had authority over all the women in the king's court (Devries, *1 Kings*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 12, p. 37). In short, Bathsheba enjoyed a power few other women

in the ancient Near East had. If Adonijah wanted to be persistent on getting Abishag for a wife, then Bathsheba was his best hope.

Bathsheba made Adonijah's request to Solomon. However, rather than giving the woman for Adonijah's wife, Solomon rejected Adonijah's request as an act of treason and condemned him to death. Why did Solomon have such a brutal reaction to Adonijah's request? The request is not as innocent as it sounds. Abishag became a part of David's harem and literally was the property of the king. When the king died, the harem became the property of the successor king. By taking one of David's women for his wife, Adonijah would have been claiming through his actions his rightful place as king of Israel and a rival to Solomon (McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, p. 181). That is the real issue in this story; it is not about getting a wife.

Furthermore, since she was young and beautiful (1 Kgs 1:4), Solomon probably intended to take her to be his own wife (DeVries, p. 37).

What is Bathsheba's position on this issue? Does she really want Adonijah to have Abishag as a wife or does she also see this as a threat to the throne and an opportunity to rid the threat? The text does not answer these questions in this story but rather presents Bathsheba making the request nonchalantly (see 1 Kgs 2:20-21). However, before David's death, she definitely recognized Adonijah as a rival and a mortal threat to her and her son and a threat to her position of power and well-being (1 Kgs 1:12, 21).

Teaching this passage can be difficult, but there are several lessons we can learn from it. First, Bathsheba had a choice of what to do with Adonijah's request. She could tell Solomon or ignore it altogether. But she kept her word to Adonijah and made his request to King Solomon. Keeping our word and honoring what we say we will do is just as important.

Second, she presented Adonijah's request without a negative bias. She made the request fairly. Perhaps that is the most important characteristic of an intercessor — being fair.

Third, although Bathsheba was Adonijah's intercessor, she was not his advocate. She did not wish for a favorable outcome for his request. Christ is both our intercessor and advocate to our heavenly Father. Not only does Christ take our petitions to God on our behalf, but he also pleads our case as one who cares for us and loves us. Thanks be to God that we have such an advocate and intercessor. **BT**

2009

Brought to you this month
by Steve Sheely



The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

Experiments in experiential discipleship

I have always been astounded by the impact of Christ's teaching. He used common everyday objects — seeds, coins, fish and fig trees — to offer remarkable truths about God's amazing kingdom. Concrete examples and real-life events were his lesson plans.

But I also embrace techno-gadgets. A classroom or sanctuary does not need to rely on the same passive media we rely on for everyday entertainment and information-gathering. Meanwhile, many young people are coming to church looking for an alternative to virtual lives filled with video games, on-line relationships and texting.

In the church setting, our goal reaches beyond transferring knowledge. Our goal is to shape, encourage, transform and compel. Would Christ have used DVD players and LCD projectors if they were available? I don't know. But I do know he used hands-on methods and experiential lessons to teach his disciples. And maybe because gadgets can be expensive, frustrating and time-consuming, I prefer a low-tech approach to teaching and preaching.

Following are some activities we have tried at my church. Maybe they will help you as you strive to make disciples in your own corner of the kingdom.

- On **Reformation Sunday** we brought in old doors and stood them up at the front of the room. Everyone was invited to write down those things they would change about their spiritual past and their church experience. Participants could come forward and nail those reforms to the door.
- On **Palm Sunday** we placed palm branches on the floor, and pointed out: "You will walk on the palm branches as you leave today. For just as the donkey walked on palm branches

as he carried Christ into Jerusalem, you will also carry Christ into the world."

- During **Holy Week** we passed around a bowl of scented oil to enhance the story of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet. On **Good Friday**, we filled communion cups with a piece of sea sponge soaked in apple vinegar and also distributed thorny branches. Over the years, visitors to our **sunrise services** have included a costumed gravedigger, an angel, a centurion and the Grim Reaper.
- On **Pentecost** we used gas cans, fire extinguishers and a fake fire in the baptistery (a room fan and orange crepe paper) as object lessons. We heard the call to worship read in seven languages, and scripture read by a woman in a firefighter's coat and helmet. A large shop fan rolled into the room became the "rushing wind."
- For **worship services** we have used band-aids, packets of seeds, reflective decals and salt packets stapled to the front of the bulletin as "hands-on" tools. Once we pasted a piece of paper on the front of the bulletin with the words "Do not look under here," with 1 Corinthians 10:13 waiting for those who looked.
- When we preached on the story where Christ told his disciples what *not* to take on their journey, we piled luggage around the room. We discussed the baggage we carry when we try and do **kingdom work**.
- During a lesson on **Peter's confession of Christ** we returned the offering plates to the congregation — not so they could make another offering, but so they could take a key. Each person left with a key to the gates of hell, reminding them they could help others escape from their prisons of despair.
- On **All Saint's Sunday** we invited anyone to come forward and share the name of a

departed loved one and light a candle in that person's memory.

- On **Thanksgiving** we invited volunteers to share what they were thankful for or to bring a written list of thanks and place it on the table.
- On **New Years Day** congregants came forward and brought a list of their hopes and prayers for the year and offered them to the Lord.
- As our congregation has faced opportunities for change and **vision casting**, we have questioned whether we would draw lots to determine God's will or await his Spirit to lead us (Acts 1-2)? Would we use old, traditional methods or rely on God? The sound of rocks rattling in an old wooden ice cream bucket was like thunder, and the phrase "bucket of rocks" is now part of our church lexicon. Similarly, each church member was given a compass when asked to pray for God's plans for our church.
- The cheapest trinkets can be shared with groups both large and small. To symbolize **celebration** of what God was doing in our church, each person received a party favor. Seeing members of all ages blowing toy trumpets, whistles and kazoos brings me joy to this day.

Our churches should never reinforce the notion that being a Christian is a spectator sport. If we can do something in Bible study or worship as a part of learning, maybe we will do something in our everyday lives as a part of our Christian faith. If we are going to call one another to action, then action should be part of the call itself . . . So use your imagination. Try something new. And let our Lord be your example. **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 Steve Sheely, pastor of Rolling Hills Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Ark. Resource Page Archives are available at <http://www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page>.

in the know

Keeping up with people, places, and events

PEOPLE

Larry Baker has been appointed director of the new Doctor of Ministry program at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon Seminary. Baker most recently served as pastor at First Baptist Church, Sun City West in Phoenix, Ariz.

Holly Vincent Bean, director of member education and corporate secretary for the American Baptists' Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, will retire at yearend after 23 years of service.

Ana D'Amico, retired CBF field worker and wife of David D'Amico, died Aug. 25. Commissioned in 1995, the D'Amicos lived in New York from 1996-2004, serving as CBF representatives to the United Nations and as administrators of relief funds sent by

CBF churches following the Sept. 11, 2001, bombing of the World Trade Center. The D'Amicos' last assignment with CBF Global Missions was working as advocates for Hispanics in North Carolina.

Thomas W. Downing Jr. died June 25 at age 76. He retired in 1989 from the pastorate of University Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, N.C.

Omer Hancock, professor of church ministry at Hardin-Simmons' Logsdon School of Theology, was honored by the In-Service Guidance Association. The Lewis W. Newman award is given annually to an in-service guidance professional in recognition of outstanding contributions in the field of supervised ministry.

Brint Hilliard is associate pastor of discipleship at First Baptist Church of Jefferson City, Mo.

Douglas Lee, recently retired president of Stetson University, died Aug. 25. Lee served in several administrative positions at Stetson before becoming president in 1987. In the 1990s, he led the school to separate from the Florida Baptist Convention.

The Patty Hanks Shelton School of Nursing in Abilene, Texas, has appointed **Nina Ouimette** as dean. The nursing consortium is the only one of its kind in the United States, serving and abiding by the Christian mission statements of the three universities it serves — Hardin-Simmons University, McMurry University and Abilene Christian University.

Bill Yates retired Sept. 1 after 14 years as vice president of the Division of Pastoral Care at North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem. **BT**

Position Wanted: Retired minister who recently served as interim pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga., is available to do supply preaching and/or interim pastoral work within driving distance of Atlanta, Ga. Contact: Leon Clymore at (404) 627-8264 or leonluella@bellsouth.net.

CBF/SBC church that strongly affirms God's call to men and women in God's kingdom work is seeking a **part-time director of youth ministries** (15-20 hours per week) to provide leadership in youth Bible studies and other areas of Christian education, and to plan and facilitate social activities. Send résumés to: Chairman of Youth Search Committee, Louisburg Baptist Church, P.O. Box 730, Louisburg, NC 27549.

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guest commentary

Recovering health care as ministry

By Bert Montgomery

A column I wrote for *The Commercial Dispatch* titled “Holy Health Care!” was picked up by a few other newspapers — and brought a variety of responses.

A Baptist friend, who is a physician, reminded me that government-run health care (i.e., Medicare/Medicaid) is already a bureaucratic nightmare, and expanding it would just make it worse for everybody. Another Baptist friend, also a physician, reminded me that it is the government’s responsibility to protect and provide for its citizens.

Then there was a response from a Methodist friend who is ready to jump in and get moving on what she termed, “Gospel Care.” She may well be onto something.

After all, were the Methodist hospitals

As Christians, our actions must never suggest that some people are not loved by God, and therefore do not need to be loved by us.

and Baptist hospitals and Catholic hospitals in our cities originally established as money-making machines? Of course not.

They were established to provide needed medical care for communities, especially during epidemics and other major health crises. And why was that? Because we proclaimed that, by God, every life is sacred and worthy of care — and so, by God, we Christians would care for each other and our communities.



Tragically, however, our mission activities became businesses. Our Methodist and Baptist and Catholic hospitals now operate to serve boards of directors, to care for the “bottom line,” and to obey the commandments of insurance companies. What were once missions for the love of God and others have become institutions competing for dollars.

In our churches we organize medical mission trips and travel all over the world to serve people who do not have access to health care — because God calls us to do so. Yet at home, we surrender our calling to businesses and government while millions around us are denied access to medical care.

Recently I listened to a story about two women who went into North Africa a half-century ago proclaiming that nobody stands beyond God’s love. But they were corrected: God did *not* love at least one group of people — illegitimate children.

Therefore, illegitimate children ought not be loved by others, they were told.

Boys were being tossed out into the desert to die; girls were being sold as slaves.

But these two women stood firm: “God *does* love them. Give them to us. We will care for them.” They took in babies, infants, young children. They fed them, clothed them, educated them and raised them as people of worth simply because they were God’s children, too.

As Christians, our actions must never suggest that some people are not loved by God, and therefore do not need to be loved by us. We should care for those “not good enough” for the gods of commerce, simply because all are God’s children.

St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, which has an outstanding reputation for research and treatment, will care for any child who comes through its doors, regardless of ability to pay.

So, to those running Christian-named hospitals and clinics that were established as missions, let’s be consistent in our beliefs and actions. And let’s simply treat anyone and everyone who comes through our doors with the best research-based treatment available, regardless of income or insurance.

We don’t have to wait for the government to bureaucratize everything, and we don’t have to wait for CEOs of insurance companies to stop trying to get out of paying for treatments so that they can pocket more cash. We just need to agree that this is who we are as people of faith, and we will care for each other and our communities because God loves everyone.

St. Jude does it for sick children. We *used* to do it for anyone.

We’ve done “Gospel Care” before; we can do it again — with our tithes, offerings and hearts filled with God’s love for all God’s children. **BT**

—Bert Montgomery is pastor of University Baptist Church in Starkville, Miss., and a columnist for *The Commercial Dispatch*, where this column first appeared.

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readers' responses

Herrin was 'at home' in South

EDITOR: Thank you for publishing the fine tribute to the life and work of J.C. Herrin (August 2009, page 16), who worked on behalf of the American Baptist Convention (now American Baptist Churches USA) in the 1960s. He was a good friend in challenging times to those, both black and white, who worked for civil rights in the South.

But I wouldn't have called him a "civil rights missionary." In fact, I believe one reason he was so effective is that he did not regard the South as a mission field. It seemed more like he was ministering at home, among his own people. And I guess he was.

*Everett Gill
Weaverville, N.C.*

Illustration lacking

EDITOR: Brett Younger's article on the Baptist family (October 2009, page 28) was informative and inclusive. It deserved a more fitting illustration! Five men were quite well characterized but of all of the women mentioned in the article the illustrator chose only one woman, Jessica Simpson, in a very revealing outfit.

Even Jessica has worn more appropriate attire than that. The illustration reminds us of the work we have yet to accomplish in the way women are seen in the Baptist world.

*Melissa M. Roysdon
Cookeville, Tenn.*

Regaining love of the Bible

EDITOR: I am writing to those who through the last 30 years of Bible thumping and convention dumping might have given up reading the Bible. I have come full circle from deep Bible convictions, through serious skepticism, to regain a deep and abiding love for the Word of God, and a deep trust of the message God has for me in its pages.

I believe all of the Bible is inspired by God. The Bible has touched and changed my life more than all the other books I've read put together.

But everything you read about the Bible is somebody's opinion. When you say, "I believe the Bible," all you are saying is that you believe your opinion of the Bible.

The Bible itself is a committee's opinion about which books should be included and which ones should be deemed unworthy of the canon. Roman Catholics accept the Apocrypha while most Protestants do not. Again, it's somebody's opinion.

Translators try to stay as close to the "original" text and give to us an accurate translation. But the "original" doesn't exist and the translators, no matter how capable, are flesh and blood.

By the time I had graduated from Samford University in 1976 and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1979, my understanding of scripture had completely changed from my fundamentalist upbringing. In a way the fundamentalists are right about theological education.

I showed up at Samford with a very narrow understanding of God and what the Bible was trying to say to me. Granted, much of that understanding was rocked to its core, but it needed to be. What I believed about the Bible was mostly wrong.

During my first year in seminary all the students found in our mailboxes an orthodox test. It was mailed by some of the convention's finest. It was the standard fare.

"Do you believe God created the world in six 24-hour days?" "Do you believe Jonah stayed in the belly of a fish for three days?" "Do you believe Mary was a virgin?"

We were encouraged not to return it, but even by not returning the survey we all failed the test. So the fundamentalists said of my seminary "Let's raid it; let's bring it back to the Bible." They raided it for sure, but they didn't bring it back to the Bible. Still haven't. Now they've closed my music school, too.

In my last year at Southern, because the Baptist right was using the Bible as a battering ram to split the convention, it got progressively more difficult for me to read

the Bible at all. But just before throwing the Bible out with the proverbial bathwater, I was exposed to several things that helped me to regain my belief that the Bible is God's Word, that it is all inspired and that I can trust it with my life.

Seminary president Duke McCall in May 1979 eloquently made the point that I can only call "my Bible" the parts that I know by heart, the parts that have touched me personally. He said that over the course of our lives more and more of "the Bible" becomes our Bible.

Then I was exposed to narrative theology, which is extremely complex and far-reaching but can be boiled down to one central concept. The "truth" of the Bible is carried in the stories. While not all literally true, Bible stories contain truth that transcends human experience and have the power to change lives.

It's not important whether or not the Genesis account of Noah's ark is literally true. What is important is that the story is true. Something important happened, and God was there.

Narrative theology postulates that the stories carry the message of the Bible and you can trust the stories to contain the truths that can touch and change your life. So the message of Noah's ark may be that God gets upset when we fall short of his purpose and that sin is punished. And finally God always redeems his creation.

*David Helms
Ringgold, Ga.*

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commentary

Considering the Palestinian ‘problem’

By Tony W. Cartledge

We often hear about the “Palestinian problem” in Israel and the West Bank, and tend to assume therefore that the problem is with the Palestinians. Sometimes we assume too quickly.

The Palestinians are involved, certainly, but for the past 60 years they have been far more the victims than the aggressors. The injustices done to the Arab population of Palestine — Christian and Muslim alike — is one of the great crimes of our time, but one we’d rather pretend didn’t happen.

For many Americans — especially those who don’t know or understand how the modern State of Israel came to be — there is a simple formula: “Israelis good; Palestinians bad. End of story.”

That view, however, shows how much of the story we don’t know. The plight of the Palestinians — millions of whom continue to live in refugee camps 60 years after being displaced from their homes by order of the West — should weigh heavily on our collective consciences.

It’s not hard to find the information we’d rather ignore. One of the best resources is a recent book by Alex Awad, a professor and dean of students at Bethlehem Bible College, in the city of Jesus’ birth.

In *Palestinian Memories: The Story of a Palestinian Mother and Her People*, Awad recounts a brief history of his family’s experience as his mother Huda braved dire conditions to care for seven children after her husband was shot and killed as Palestinians were being evicted from their homes in 1948.

Awad’s book is helpful on several fronts. First, it puts human faces on the Palestinian issue, when Americans tend to see only the angry rock-throwers that Israel’s communications ministry wants us to see.

Second, it provides a helpful history of how the current conflict has developed in Israel-Palestine, putting steps such as the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate, the United Nations partition plan, and various peace initiatives into context.

Perhaps most helpful for American

Christians is the attention Awad pays to explaining the rise of Jewish Zionism in the late 19th century, how the emergence of Christian dispensationalism aided the Zionist cause, and why this still impacts America’s one-sided support for the State of Israel.

I am convinced that many Americans would feel differently about how the Palestinians have been treated if only they knew more about the matter, but it’s an unpleasant subject and we’d rather just comfort ourselves with Bible stories about God giving the land to Abraham, assuming that everyone else is an automatic interloper.

Awad includes a lengthy critique of Christian Zionism that would give us considerable pause if only we would stop to think about it. The political forces that created and continue to support the modern State of Israel are in part an outgrowth of a dispensationalist belief that a new temple must be built in Jerusalem in order for prophecy to be fulfilled.

Any attempt to destroy the Islamic Dome of the Rock and the El Aqsa Mosque that have stood on Temple Mount for more than a thousand years would lead immediately to a global war, but some dispensationalists apparently see it as their duty to bring on Armageddon. I suspect most of us are in no hurry.

When Campbell University Divinity School sponsored a trip to Israel and the West Bank this summer, one of my goals was to have participants visit Bethlehem Bible College so that they could learn something about the Palestinian side of the story.

Some were surprised to learn that there are Arabs who are also Christians, and that responsible interpretation of scripture can lead to other places than Zionism. Others were amazed when they saw how Palestinians who remain in the land are kept behind walls and fences, with their movements controlled by



the Israelis, and how Israeli settlements continue to confiscate land from Palestinians who have owned it for generations.

I am not suggesting that there are any easy solutions for Israel and Palestine: it may be the thorniest political issue of our time. And, I am very aware that no group of people has suffered more persecution over a longer period of time than the Jews.

But, we must remember that the persecution and murder of millions of Jews did not come at the hands of Arabs: it was mainly the work of Europeans, especially European Christians.

Following World War II, the West sought to assuage its collective guilt toward the Jews by giving them a homeland. In doing so, however, it compounded the problem by evicting nearly a million Palestinians from *their* homeland.

Can you imagine the response if the United Nations (with U.S. support) decided that the residents of Virginia or Tennessee should be evicted and their land confiscated so that the territory could be returned to the Native Americans who dwelt there first? There would be more than rock-throwing going on, I am sure of that.

While I have a lot of sympathy for Israel and the Israelis, I also have a great deal of concern for the Palestinians who continue to be displaced and oppressed in ways that are wrong in the sight of God and humanity. The West has perpetrated unspeakable atrocities against the Jews through the years — but trying to balance the scales on the backs of the Palestinians just adds one great crime to another. **BT**

[For further reading: Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* (Simon & Schuster, 2006); Sandy Tolani, *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East* (Bloomsbury, 2006); “The Christian Exodus from the Holy Land,” *National Geographic Magazine*, June 2009 (available at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/06/arab-christians/belt-text/1>)]

Getting Baptist news from a reliable source

Staying current on what is happening in Baptist life is important to Larry Hovis, executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina. He appreciates being able to link instantly to Baptist news and information through cell phones, netbooks, computers and smart devices.

Living in such a fast-moving, information-filled world, he believes, requires Baptists to be more watchful.

"Many sources [of Baptist information] don't necessarily support our Baptist principles; sometimes they even undermine them," said Hovis. "We need information that focuses on Baptist principles, and a publication like *Baptists Today* that helps us do that is needed now more than ever."

One of the strengths of *Baptists Today* that Hovis appreciates is the publication's commitment to conveying Baptist principles, especially to younger members.

"Whenever you talk directly with younger people about the historic Baptist principles, they do resonate with them," said the former pastor. "Unfortunately, many did not learn these things growing up in the church, so we need to educate young Baptists about what it means to be Baptist and the principles on which we were founded.

"Learning this is not automatic. We have to be extremely intentional about sharing these principles."

Teaching the Baptist principle of freedom is certainly the key, added Hovis, but he cautioned that freedom by itself is not enough.

"Baptist principles are about more than freedom," he explained. "While I greatly appreciate Walter Shurden's seminal work on the *Four Fragile Freedoms* and have taught those concepts for years, nowadays I don't necessarily always articulate Baptist principles around just freedoms because we are not just free to be free. Freedom must be put in the context of one's relationship with Christ. We are free in Christ to be the people that Christ has created and saved us to be."

He continued: "Freedom is not an end in unto itself. Freedom is a means to an end, which is being all that we can be in Christ and following him and his will and his way. That part of the message has to be communicated as well, and I think younger people

understand and can relate to that idea."

Describing *Baptists Today* as "a free and faithful voice for the Baptist world," Hovis says CBF of North Carolina considers the monthly publication to be a vital source for providing tools to educate the membership and communicate these historic principles.

"It resonates with our CBF family," he said. "[*Baptists Today*] is consistent with who we are and what we believe and what we are about in CBF life."

After a pause, he clarified: "In a sense, we have the best of both worlds. We have a publication that is very helpful to our constituents, but at the same time is autonomous and, therefore, can't be accused of just being for one group."

CBF in North Carolina has been a long-time partner with *Baptists Today* and encourages churches and individuals to subscribe.

"In more recent years, especially with the advent of *Baptists Today's* North Carolina edition, we have been even more assertive, more collaborative in working with the staff to introduce the publication to as many North Carolina Baptists as possible," he said. "*Baptists Today* publishes news and articles related to North Carolina that would not be published anywhere else."



Larry Hovis

And while he especially appreciates the North Carolina coverage, Hovis enjoys *Baptists Today's* window to Baptist life globally. "*Baptists Today* is a link to a much larger Baptist world," he said. "I find a lot of kinship in that larger world."

When his copy of *Baptists Today* arrives, Hovis looks for two things. First is the news.

"I want to keep up with what is going on," he said. "Also, having an actual piece of paper to hold in my hand is important, because if it is on the web, it can disappear."

The second is the opinions and insights provided. "I get a lot out of John Pierce's editorials," said Hovis. "They are always spot-on, and his insights into the Baptist world and the Baptist mind are extremely helpful to me and my ministry. Opinion pieces by other folks — some I know ... a major one being Tony Cartledge ... and others are new voices — are very helpful."

How would Hovis describe *Baptists Today* in just 10 seconds? "It provides us with a regularly published, trustworthy source for news, information and perspective on the Baptist world in which we live, based on historical Baptist principles, yet relevant to the 21st century." **BT**

If you would like information on making a gift to Baptists Today, contact Keithen M. Tucker, Development and Marketing Director at ktucker@baptiststoday.org or 478-330-5613.

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the lighter side

Celibate celebration

By Brett Younger

Alarm bells should have gone off when the woman handed us two keys.

Carol and I recently celebrated 25 years of consistently joyful wedlock. As would be true for many interesting couples, we had different ideas on how to celebrate our anniversary. My plan was big and loud — a downtown hotel, a show, lobster dinner. Carol's plan was small and quiet — a retreat to the country, simple accommodations, simple meals. Carol frequently has the best ideas, hers was cheaper, and she made the reservations, so we spent our 25th anniversary at a monastery. Carol made it sound like fun — a romantic getaway, quiet conversation, walking hand-in-hand along the shore of the lake, tenderly reflecting on 25 years and lovingly dreaming of the next 25.

Then the nun handed us two keys — as in two rooms, two rooms with single beds. Apparently the honeymoon cell had been booked. The quiet conversations were even quieter than we had imagined. Cistercian monks have taken a vow of silence. Talking is forbidden in the dining rooms, hallways and — this is the one that made us live in fear — guests' rooms. I should have learned more sign language.

We walked by the lake, but it was 95 degrees in August in Georgia and shorts are forbidden — a rule that even my Landmark Baptist grandmother would have thought harsher than a hair shirt. (The monk-suits didn't look much more comfortable.)

The meals were simple, but not a good simple, not ham sandwich and potato chips simple. We had lots of I-would-ask-if-these-are-sweet-potatoes-but-I'm-not-allowed-to-talk kind of simple.

At one point, I snuck out to the GPS in the car and found a movie theater that was only six miles away, but I couldn't get Carol to give up

her vows — and the front gate was locked each night at 8:00.

Eight was when the "Grand Silence" began each night. Since we weren't allowed radios, cell phones, TV, musical instruments or speaking voices, I assumed this was the time at which we were no longer to bother others with the infuriating racket of turning pages.

Eight may seem early, but it's not when vigils are at 4:00 a.m. What amazed me is that in the middle of the 4:00 a.m. worship service, there is a half hour of silence with the lights off, and no one fell asleep — at least I didn't see anyone sleeping, but my eyes weren't always open and the lights were off.

Baptists should have a 4:00 a.m. service

every now and then just to shame the people who complain that they can't get to Sunday school on time. We could have five worship services one day just to keep people from saying, "We're there every time the doors are open."

At midday prayers — one of the few times when speaking was allowed — the sister pointed us out and announced, "We have a couple here celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary." Everyone looked at us in befuddled silence. They wanted to mime, "What were you thinking?" I imagine that if monks decided to celebrate Easter in a Las Vegas casino, they might get similar looks.

But Carol was right. It ended up being a great place for a celebration. We chanted our gratitude and listened carefully for God's "You're welcome." We prayed, read, thought and wrote — only in part because there wasn't much else to do.

I have come to the conclusion that I admire monks the way I admire doctors. They do a much needed work to which I am sure I am not called. Someone said that the prayers of the monastery hold the world together. Giving your life to prayer is an amazing counter-cultural commitment.

Monastic life isn't for all of us, but the disciplines of faith they follow are vital. The silence reminds us of the sacred importance of our words. The lack of conversation makes us long to share our lives. Bland food leads us to appreciate the occasional lobster dinner. Worship in the summer without air conditioning teaches us to focus. Singing our thanksgiving helps us become people who know how to celebrate. **BT**

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



Illustration by Scott Brooks

Fred Craddock's latest

By Tony W. Cartledge
posted Sept. 1, 2009
www.tonymcartledge.com

Reading Fred Craddock's *Reflections on My Call to Preach: Connecting the Dots* (Chalice Press, 2009) is like listening to one of his sermons: the reader/listener is thoroughly engaged by Craddock's low-key presentation, entertained and challenged by the linked chain of his trademark stories, and left wanting more when the narrative comes to an end.

In a slim volume of just 117 pages, Craddock contemplates his earliest days, sharing stories about family members and friends, pastors and others who helped to shape his understanding of God and of what it means to discern and to follow God's call in ministry.

As Craddock draws the reader in with a string of anecdotes from his formative years, he adds layers of personal reflection and wonder, noting influence and inclination without pointing to any single event as "the" moment of calling. Rather, he

consciously tries to "connect the dots" that contributed to his call while confessing that he doesn't know where all the dots are, or exactly where God's call and human will overlap.

"To this day," he writes, "'God called' and 'I decided' are experienced as two sides of the same coin" (p. 4).

Except for a closing chapter called "Reflecting on These Reflections," Craddock begins and ends the book with the same paragraph, an account of orientation at Johnson Bible College, where a disinterested administrator could not spell "Brenning," the name he normally went by, so he substituted "Fred." "Thus," he says, "began the life of Fred Craddock."

Craddock grew up poor in the rural reaches of western Tennessee. With four siblings, a hard-working mother and an alcoholic father living in a tiny two-bedroom house, privacy was scarce. Putting food on the table and shoes on feet were



major undertakings: at one time, Craddock writes, everyone in the home except for his father and younger brother contributed to the family's meager income.

Older readers from similar backgrounds will smile knowingly at his recollections of living through the Great Depression, while younger readers may find some understanding of their grandparents' frugality through Craddock's skillful storytelling.

Craddock is remarkably transparent in sharing his struggles along with his strengths, his shifts between wavering and certainty about God's call. After his first botched attempt at sermonizing led the teen-aged Craddock to question his call to preach, it was a question from a foul-mouthed co-worker at a box-building plant that helped to cement his commitment.

When asked point-blank "Are you called to preach?" Craddock's answer — more certain than he expected — was "Yes."

Countless beneficiaries of America's "dean of preaching" are happy that Craddock replied in the affirmative, and preachers who ponder their own call will be glad he said "yes" to writing this insightful reflection. **BT**

How we see Jesus

By John Pierce
posted Aug. 18, 2009
www.bteditor.blogspot.com

Much of the wide diversity in church life comes from the ways we see Jesus. There are different lenses through which we view the central figure of our faith.

In his new novel, *South of Broad*, Pat Conroy has his fictionalized characters driving into the mountains of western North Carolina. The great phrase-turner tells of passing little white churches where "they worship a fiercer Christ than I do."

Through years of study, ministry and simple observation, I've seen the portrait of Christ painted in many shades and textures.

Some look to the philosopher Jesus. He is compelling, rational, insightful and convincing. He may be strong in debate or a meek storyteller with a lamb in hand.

Some see Jesus the Judge, prima-

rily. An emphasis on Jesus as judge often leads those who embrace such an image to enjoy the role themselves. He is taking names; kicking behinds. This is the sheriff who patrols our lives looking for each and every infraction.

The street Jesus moves among is the neediest. He cleans up the messes of life. Compassion is his defining mark.

Pieces of these images and others are found throughout the Gospels.

My earliest mental images of Jesus were shaped by the physical renderings on my grandmother's walls as well as the ones that moved across flannel-graph boards in the children's department at church.

Over the years the portraits have changed for me — depending on what scripture I was reading or what experiences were happening in my own life. None of us has him pegged just right.

But we do know that Jesus was offensive enough to be targeted for elimination — and loving enough to endure it. **BT**





Where horses *do the whispering*

RIDING HIGH: Kasey was the first female resident admitted to Oak Ranch, where the staff helped her overcome personal challenges and restore her relationship with her family. BCH photo.

BROADWAY, N.C. — Put a child and a horse together, and sometimes the horse, without so much as a word, can loosen knotty emotions that have left human counselors stymied. That happens on a regular basis at Oak Ranch, a bucolic home for boys and girls — and horses.

Located on the Lee-Harnett County line not far from the small town of Broadway, N.C., Oak Ranch is one of many campuses and services provided by North Carolina Baptist Children's Homes (BCH).

Encompassing 755 acres of wooded hills, open pastures, and a mile of riverfront property on the Cape Fear, the ranch offers everything from trail rides to fishing to camping in caves once used by Native Americans. With so many acres to roam, a person could spend three to four hours riding the trails and never see the same scenery twice, according to director Phill Richmond.

However, it is not the scenery that brings children to Oak Ranch, but trouble: sometimes abuse or neglect, sometimes abandonment or a family crisis. Some of the



A HOME ENVIRONMENT: Girls at Oak Ranch live in "Ben's House," left, while boys live in Ewing House, foreground. "Ben's House" is named for Ben Woodruff, who died in a fraternity house fire at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1996. His parents led fund-raising efforts for the cottage in his memory. Photo by Tony W. Cartledge.

children have become rebellious and have fallen behind in school.

Few have intact families. When families, custodians or social service agencies seek assis-

tance from BCH, intake counselors thoroughly review the particular needs of each child and recommend the best course of care for them.

Sometimes, counselors determine that the child might gain special benefit from the equine therapy service offered at Oak Ranch, where two spacious cottages and experienced house parents (often with children of their own) have the capacity to care for seven boys and seven girls.

At-risk residents can vary in age from eight to 17, and on most days their care differs little from those in other BCH facilities: they get up early for devotions and breakfast, clean their rooms, then ride the bus to a public school. In the afternoons they do homework, help out with chores and enjoy some free time.

Children help care for the 10 horses that live on the ranch, and at least once per week, they get to spend special time with them. The time doesn't begin with a simple walk to the barn, however. Residents must first go to the pasture and work together to catch the horses, and then walk them to the barn before grooming them and learning to work with their equine companions.

On the best days, they saddle up and ride. Counselors and therapists find teaching moments in time spent with the horses. “Troubled kids often do well with animals because they are not judgmental,” Richmond said. Horses offer a natural shoulder to cry on, he added, and their manes are often wet with tears when a child is working through a problem and finds comfort in his or her favorite horse.

Intentional strategies maximize the value of a child’s exposure to the horses. When a horse leaves a pile of droppings on the barn floor, for example, a counselor might point out that the resulting mess is natural, but can make life uncomfortable for everyone if it’s not cleaned up. If left too long, the droppings could also attract flies and breed disease.

A counselor or therapist might then ask the child to think about messy situations at home, and note the importance of dealing openly with troublesome issues rather than leaving them to fester. Learning that “poop happens” and gaining skills for dealing with it promotes present comfort and future health.

Children who come to BCH are inevitably wounded in some ways and bear scars from their past. A horse named Clyde becomes a lesson for life: he has large warts on his left rear foot.

The warts are unsightly and bleed when bumped, but they don’t slow Clyde down. A veterinarian removes the warts every few months, but they grow back. Counselors remind children that they can be wounded, but still keep going.

Terri Dussault, who teaches residents how to work with the horses, pointed to confidence building and team building as two main benefits of the focused sessions. Equine therapy also teaches social skills and a good work ethic,

she said.

The barn becomes a place where children take on responsibilities and learn that all creatures need nurture, no matter what the weather. As they provide food and water, clean the stalls and brush the horses, they learn that one must care for the horse before enjoying the benefit of riding.

Sometimes Dussault will work in tandem with psychotherapist Jamie Bierwagen to create scenarios that lead to therapeutic conversation. For example, a child might be asked to enter the paddock with three horses, choose one, and lead it back. The therapist observes how the child interacts with the horses and then asks questions that help bridge the gap from horse to human.

“What did you think when the white horse backed away and pulled his ears back?” “How did it feel when the brown mare walked up to you and nuzzled your belly with her nose?”

Talking about how they relate to the horses becomes a gateway to helping children open up and talk about their relationships with people. As children gain confidence in handling horses, they get a better handle on relating to the humans in their lives.

While some children remain at Oak Ranch or other BCH campuses for years, the average stay is 9-12 months. The staff’s first goal, said Richmond, is to bring healing to the child and help to mend his or her broken family system. The second goal is to reunite the child with the family, if possible, offering continued counseling and support.

In a recent collection of writings by children in BCH care, a 16-year-old named Britni said she was homesick when she first came to Oak Ranch, but later recognized her placement as a gift from God, “a once-in-a-lifetime shot.”

“I have a brighter future because I’m at Oak Ranch,” she wrote.

Oak Ranch was founded and initially developed by Lyston Peebles, a Raleigh businessman who envisioned a facility that offered social, spiritual, intellectual and physical services to needy boys. He and other contributors purchased the land in 1998 and began the process of hiring staff and constructing the needed buildings. Working with child welfare agencies and getting boys into the program proved more daunting, however, and the cottages were sometimes empty.

In 2006 Oak Ranch began seeking a partner to help them grow the program, which led to a conversation between Peebles and BCH president Michael C. Blackwell. After months of study and negotiation, Oak Ranch and BCH entered a transitional 15-month partnership that began in June 2007 and culminated with BCH taking ownership of the property in the fall of 2008. The campus now serves both boys and girls, and the cottages are routinely full.

The care offered by BCH depends largely on contributions from supportive individuals and churches, both directly and through missions giving plans facilitated by the Baptist State Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina. Each November, BCH promotes an annual Thanksgiving offering to support the homes. The theme for this year’s offering is “Growing Hope.” **BT**

Editor’s note: On October 24, Oak Ranch will host a benefit trail ride for visitors who are welcome to bring their own horses. More information about the trail ride, the Thanksgiving offering, and the services provided by BCH is available at www.bchfamily.org.



MEN ON HORSES: Oak Ranch director Phill Richmond (left) shows Baptist Children’s Home president Michael Blackwell where a bathhouse for visiting recreational vehicles will be built.



LEARNING: Equine expert Terri Dussault holds a training session with new counselors Samantha and Shawn Snipes, along with their children, Kevin and Alexis. Photos by Tony W. Cartledge.

A bicentennial tribute

The Baptist who first published 'Amazing Grace' with its familiar tune

William Walker's music had been around for more than a century when I was born in Spartanburg, S.C., where he made most of his contributions.

As a teen I discovered an old oblong music book, *Christian Harmony*, in my family's possession. At the close of the tunebook's preface were the words: "William Walker, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1866."

Years later I would write my master's thesis on Walker and expand research on the shape-note singing school tradition.

By the time Walker was five, his mother had taught him three hymns with tunes reflecting the Anglo-American folk idiom. In all probability Walker received musical instruction in singing schools, for by the age of 18 he had composed his first piece of music. In 1835 the 26-year-old

Walker married Amy Shands Golightly (1811-1897), who over the course of their long marriage bore 10 children.

In 1839 the Walkers became members of the newly organized First Baptist Church of Spartanburg, where during his 36 years in that church he served as a deacon, a frequent messenger to the association, and a leader of congregational singing.

In Walker's era, singing schools were the primary means of education in vocal music in numerous small towns and rural areas of the United States. Vocal music was taught using syllables, a practice first attributed to an Italian monk of the Middle Ages, Guido of Arezzo.

In early America the major scale was taught using four syllables: *fa, sol, la* and *mi*. The first three of these were repeated, creating the major scale: *fa, sol, la, fa, sol, la, mi, fa*.

About 1800 a short cut to reading music called "shape notes" was invented.

Each of these four syllables had a different shaped note head: an oval, square, triangle and diamond. Singers learned to associate each shape with its syllable and its corresponding sound.

Ingenuously, once a singer learned the shapes there was little need to learn the complications of the lines and spaces of the musical staff and the numerous keys. Shape notes became so popular that in many areas it was practically impossible to get a singing school music book published unless it was printed in shape notes.

"Singin' Billy"

Walker, as he became known, compiled four books in shape notes, two of which are still in use. Walker's most popular book during his lifetime was his first, *Southern Harmony*, published in 1835 with revised editions as late as 1854.



William Walker

It reportedly sold more than 600,000 copies, a phenomenal figure for the South in that day. Walker took great pride in his popular music book, signing his name, "William Walker, A.S.H. —

Author of *Southern Harmony*."

Music books such as *Southern Harmony* served several purposes. They began with musical rudiments designed for teaching the basics of music. Walker was widely known as a singing school teacher and taught other music teachers as well, traveling thousands of miles in the southern and midwestern states.

Although *Southern Harmony* was not a church hymnal as such, its texts were practically all religious. Singing school books provided music harmonized in several voice parts for the hymns used in the churches of the time.

Hymnals in Walker's day were typically small pocket-sized books containing only the words of hymns. Walker provided

music for words already published in these little hymnals. In those days the pastors wrote the hymn texts and compiled little words-only hymnals, and lay musicians compiled music books for use in singing schools to teach people how to read music and sing their faith.

Walker was also a collector of music from oral tradition, what we call "folk music" today. He and others so thoroughly absorbed the idiom of Anglo-American folksong that their own compositions were hardly distinguishable from songs that had existed in oral tradition.

Walker appropriated melodies from oral tradition, harmonized them, and published them as his own. He and other singing school teachers wrote down melodies from oral tradition, harmonized them in several voice parts, and published them in singing school tunebooks.

This older tradition of shape note music is strictly vocal without musical instruments. It is also music performed by the singers for themselves in community, and not intended to be performed for an audience. Books such as *Southern Harmony* constitute a wonderful treasury of early Americana that is widely known and appreciated by churches of many denominations today.

Walker published his second major music book in the seven-shape *do-re-mi* notation. Titled *Christian Harmony*, it was published in 1867 with a revised edition in 1873. Walker's seven-shape book is used in singings in the Southeast in two current editions in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and the mountains of North Carolina.

Singing sessions using Walker's books in South Carolina died out in the first half of the 20th century. In the early 1990s a South Carolina Singing in memory of William Walker was started on the campus of Spartanburg's Wofford College where singers use both the four-shape *Sacred Harp* and the seven-shape *Christian Harmony*.

A unique feature of the singing at Wofford is its closing ceremony. At the



conclusion the singers go to Walker's grave at nearby Magnolia Cemetery to sing the final song and offer a prayer of thanks for his life and work.

The musical tradition that Walker and his fellow singing school teacher-composers have bequeathed to us is often called the "Fasola" tradition, named after the three repeated syllables in the shape-note scale. This early American tradition, primarily arising in the Southeast in the early decades of the 19th century, has had a significant influence on hymnals of major denominations and on the repertoire of many choirs.

Three representative folk hymns first published by Walker illustrate this tradition: "What Wondrous Love Is This, O My Soul" (WONDROUS LOVE), "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand" (PROMISED LAND), and "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" (NEW BRITAIN).

"Amazing Grace" (NEW BRITAIN tune) is by far the most popular of our early American folk hymns. Its stanzas were written by John Newton, an English slave trader whose life was completely turned around by the grace of God.

Following his conversion experience, Newton left the sea and responded to a calling to the ministry, serving several Anglican parishes. His life story is summarized in the epitaph he wrote for himself:

*John Newton, Clerk
Once an infidel and libertine,
A servant of slaves in Africa,
Was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and
Savior Jesus Christ,
Preserved, restored, pardoned,
And appointed to preach the Faith
He had laboured to destroy*



Newton originally wrote six stanzas of "Amazing Grace," four of which are usually included in hymnals of today. It is really an autobiographical hymn, giving us John Newton's life story in verse form. The final stanza, beginning with "When we've been there ten thousand years," was not written by Newton, but was added by an unknown American.

The melody of "Amazing Grace," named NEW BRITAIN, had been published as early as 1829 with other hymn texts, but Walker published it with the text of "Amazing Grace" for the first time in the initial edition of *Southern Harmony* in 1835. NEW BRITAIN is pentatonic and is harmonized with typical dyads, parallel fifths and parallel octaves.

Popular around the world, "Amazing Grace" has transcended cultural boundaries. It has been aptly named America's most beloved song.

In 1990 journalist Bill Moyers produced an inspiring full-length documentary on this beloved hymn, now found in practically all major hymnals in the English-speaking world. Perhaps the best-known choral arrangement of "Amazing Grace" is that of

Robert Shaw and Alice Parker.

Two hundred years after his birth, Walker's rich legacy clearly encompasses several areas. As a singing school teacher and a teacher of music teachers in normal schools, Walker spread musical literacy especially in the South, teaching many thousands of teachers how to read choral music using shape notes.

Walker also contributed to community singing through his own music books and even more through his compositions published in the popular Georgia tunebook, *The Sacred Harp*.

A third area of Walker's legacy is his contribution to music for choirs. Walker was close to the oral tradition of folksong, preserving in his music books melodies passed along by word of mouth and publishing them in the distinctive harmonies of the fasola style. These choral works have been widely used by choirs in schools and churches.

Perhaps Walker's greatest contribution is his impact on congregational singing. Practically all major hymnals draw on the early American folk hymn tradition; several of these hymns have gained broad ecumenical acceptance.

Hymn singing is a significant part of the worship of most churches, and the voices of congregations across many denominations singing these hymns of the early South testify to the continued vitality of Walker's legacy as we celebrate the bicentennial of his birth this year. **BT**

—Harry Eskew is professor emeritus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he was professor of music history and hymnology and music librarian, serving on the faculty for 36 years.

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- 4:00 pm Coordinating Council Meeting
- 6:00 pm Registration
- 6:45 pm Pre-service Music
- 7:00 pm Worship (Tom Long, Speaker)
- 8:30 pm Dessert Reception

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

- 7:30 am Baptist Heritage Council Breakfast
- 9:00 am MEL (missions, education, leadership) Talks
- 10:30 am Break
- 11:00 am Conversation with MEL Talkers and Breakouts
- 12:00 pm Lunch (Tom Long, Speaker)
- 1:00 pm Business Meeting
- 1:30 pm Network Gatherings (clergy/laity)

MAIN SPEAKER Tom Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching
Candler School of Theology, Emory University
Sermon # 1: Luke 16:19-31 - "A Great Chasm"
Sermon # 2: Psalm 19:1-9 - "What's Going On in Here?"



the media shelf

A review by Aaron Weaver

The immeasurable influence of George W. Truett

Throughout this year, Baptists across the globe have been celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Baptist movement. Keith E. Durso has given his fellow Baptists further cause for reflection and celebration with the timely publication of *Thy Will Be Done: A Biography of George W. Truett*, courtesy of Mercer University Press and the Baptist History & Heritage Society.

Those who celebrate the early contributions of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys to the Baptist movement will want to take notice of Keith Durso's biographical examination of one of the most influential and inspirational Baptist preachers of the 20th century, George Washington Truett.

Durso begins *Thy Will Be Done* with an extensive account of the first 23 years of Truett's life. Born in a log cabin near Hayesville, N.C., on May 6, 1867, he was the seventh of eight children.

Truett's maternal grandfather, James Kimsey, and maternal great-uncle, Elijah Kimsey, were both Southern Baptist ministers. According to Durso, stories about Truett's grandfather who died in 1896 and the ministry of his great-uncle "undoubtedly influenced Truett's understanding of God, preaching, and ministry" (p. 4).

However, Durso explains, his parents were the most influential people in Truett's life. Charles and Mary Truett valued education and filled the Truett home with books such as the Bible, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, J.M. Pendleton's *Christian Doctrines*, and various Baptist periodicals. Charles, who had little formal education himself, insisted that his children read.

As a child, George W. Truett spent many hours listening to country preachers and Masons who were frequent house-guests. While the Truett family regularly attended Hayesville Baptist Church, young Truett was a frequent participant in the ministries of the nearby Methodist and Presbyterian congregations. He was almost

20 years old before he was baptized and joined the Baptist church at Hayesville.

In 1889, Truett caught "Texas Fever" and followed his family to Whitewright, Texas, where he joined Whitewright Baptist Church, and taught Sunday school and occasionally preached in his pastor's absence. Durso explains that these sermons Truett preached "eventually sank his dream of becoming a lawyer, for many people in his church determined that he should be a preacher" (p. 30).

Despite his pleas, the church voted unanimously to ordain Truett in 1890.

Consequently, Truett promised to "follow God's leadership, wherever it led" (p. 31).

Durso's next two chapters cover the first 25 years of Truett's ministry. Working alongside his mentor and influential Texas Baptist pastor B.H. Carroll, Truett waged a "great battle" to save Baylor University from financial disaster.

As Baylor's financial agent, Truett traveled the state encouraging Texas Baptists to financially support Baptist higher education. His successful fundraising campaign earned him great respect among Texas Baptists and especially on the campus of Baylor University where he enrolled in 1893.

In 1898, Truett became a member of Baylor's trustee board and in 1899 was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by the institution. After serving the growing East Waco Baptist Church for four years, Truett became pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas.

Dallas had become the center of Baptist life, and Truett's new position was quite prestigious.

Throughout *Thy Will Be Done*, Durso vividly depicts fascinating events from Truett's life story. Less than a year into his

tenure at the Dallas church, Truett accidentally shot Captain Jim Arnold, the chief of the Dallas police department, while quail hunting on the farm of a church member. Arnold died the next day.

Durso explains that this tragedy "almost caused [Truett] to leave the city and quit the ministry" (p. 55). However, Truett remained at First Baptist Church of Dallas and his growing popularity resulted in offers from at least seven other churches, all of which he rejected. Truett even turned down the opportunity to serve as President of Baylor University.

According to Durso, "The fame Truett received resulting from his speaking engagements across Texas and in other states and the influence he had on thousands of people who heard him are immeasurable" (p. 68).

Truett was an evangelist. Still, he believed that, according to Durso, saved souls "were obligated to serve their neighbors" (p. 127).

Durso emphasizes Truett's role in championing the "priceless value of human life" (p. 65). His concern for the sanctity of human life led him to actively support the "healing ministry" of the Texas Baptist Memorial Sanitarium (later Baylor Hospital) throughout his career.

Truett's social ministry also included efforts to rid Dallas of gambling and Texas of liquor. A board member of the Anti-Saloon League, Truett took a three-week sabbatical in 1911 to lobby on behalf of a statewide prohibition referendum.

When the referendum lost, Truett declared, "Our noble church stood four square for the triumph of the great temperance cause" (p. 118). Durso points out that Truett, a Baptist separationist, was careful to make public policy appeals in the political arena using secular rather than religious arguments.

Durso's fourth chapter chronicles the seven months Truett spent preaching to the Allied forces in Europe during World War I.



George W. Truett

Durso explicated that in his support for American involvement in the war, Truett held a “Crusade ethic,” which holds that a nation fights for some utopian ideal such as waging a ‘war to end wars’ and that a clear distinction can be made between the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil” (p. 143).

Thus, Truett described the Allied forces as “God’s instruments” (p. 143). Durso also notes that while Truett primarily preached to white soldiers in Europe, he requested to preach to African-American soldiers.

The “Roaring Twenties” are covered in the fifth chapter. Durso highlights Truett’s most famous address from the steps of the United States Capitol before an estimated 15,000 people that included Supreme Court justices, military officials, cabinet members, members of Congress and foreign ambassadors.

Describing Baptists as “unwavering champions of liberty, both religious and civil,” Truett stressed that religious liberty “was pre-eminently a Baptist contribution to the history of the world” (p. 177). Truett argued that the foundation of religious liberty is “the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ.”

“The right to private judgment,” Truett announced, “is the crown jewel of humanity, and for any person or institution to dare to come between the soul and God is a blasphemous impertinence and a defamation of the crown rights of the Son of God” (p. 179).

Some scholars in recent years have emphasized Truett’s harsh theological criticisms of the Roman Catholic Church. Although Durso does not cite or allude to these scholars and their opinions, he does correctly note that “the anti-Catholic statements Truett made during his address must be read not only in the context of his understanding of the Lordship of Christ, but also in the context of the religious milieu of his day” (p. 185).

Durso points out that Catholics adhered to the “Syllabus of Errors,” an 1864 papal decree demanding that Catholics reject such concepts as religious liberty and the separation of church and state, the belief that salvation could be found outside of the Catholic Church and free speech. “In Truett’s mind, and in the minds of most Baptists, any organization

that condemned such concepts deserved to be condemned” (p. 185).

Truett explained that, at least for him, “the age-long conflict between Baptist and Romanist lines of religious thought ... is not personal. It is wholly a conflict of ideas and of doctrines” (p. 185).

Durso’s final two chapters are devoted to the last decade of Truett’s life in which he served a five-year term as president of the Baptist World Alliance.

Truett was severely harassed by J. Frank Norris, the controversial fundamentalist pastor of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas. Eventually Truett’s wife, Josephine, decided that enough was enough and began intercepting Norris’ harassing letters and telegrams before they reached Truett.

Throughout these final years, Truett continued to champion the “great business” of Baptists known as religious liberty (p. 240). Durso notes that since accepting Dallas church’s call in 1897, Truett “had expanded his ministry from one city church to encompass Baptists around the world, and he had gone from being a Texas

Baptist hero to being compared with the greatest Baptist preacher in the 19th century, C.H. Spurgeon” (p. 247).

According to Durso, although Truett averaged nearly one sermon per day during his 54 years in the ministry, he was “absent from Dallas approximately 40 percent of the time” (p. 248)

Despite the assertion from a historian who told Durso that “nobody cares about Truett anymore,” many people do care — and hopefully more will give thanks in part to the efforts of Durso. Without question, *Thy Will Be Done: A Biography of George W. Truett* is a long overdue book and a fine contribution to the study of Baptists.

Scholars will be indebted to Durso for compiling important primary sources about Truett. With these sources they will, I expect, continue to reflect upon Truett’s context and place in Baptist life and the wider story of American religion. **BT**

—Aaron Weaver is a doctoral student studying religion, politics and society at Baylor University and a popular blogger at www.thebigdaddyweave.com.

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The golden Dome of the Rock, Islam's third-holiest shrine, sits atop the same platform that once held the Jewish temple. The blue-domed Church of the Holy Sepulchre is to the upper left of the mosque.

Pilgrim Pathways

Holy Land visitors vary in routes, purpose

JERUSALEM — Pilgrims to the Holy Land come with differing agendas and follow divergent pathways when they set foot on the sacred soil of memory and imagination. Their various approaches to pilgrimage point to important differences in their expressions of faith, and in their impact on a region at the fulcrum of world events.

Jewish pilgrims come to Israel to celebrate their ancestral homeland and to pray at the Western Wall, especially during Passover and other Holy Days. The State of Israel encourages Jews to visit and build emotional bonds with the “Promised Land.” Every year the country invests thousands of dollars bringing groups of Jewish teens from America for tours designed to foster support for Israel’s claim to the land.

Muslims, who controlled Israel for most

of the past 2,000 years, come to Jerusalem so that they can worship beside a rocky outcrop from which they believe Muhammad — along with Jesus and several Old Testament figures — met and ascended to heaven. The golden-domed mosque that surrounds it has become the signature image of Jerusalem in popular art.

Most pilgrims who come to Israel and the West Bank, however, are Christians — and the Christians bring considerable diversity to their experience of the land. Greek Orthodox pilgrims come to Israel, often late in life, in spiritual preparation for death and the life to come. Monks of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre meet Orthodox pilgrims as they enter the country and ceremonially wash their feet. Giving little attention to historical or biblical orientations to various sites, pilgrims focus on Orthodox churches that have been built to

A Campbell University Divinity School student stands thoughtfully on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum.





Participants in a study tour sponsored by Campbell University worship beneath a shady tree by the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum.

commemorate specific events, seeking to touch or kiss the many icons — pictorial images of Jesus or various saints — that embellish such churches.

Baptism in the Jordan River is a central element of Orthodox pilgrimage. Wearing funeral shrouds they have purchased in Jerusalem, and sometimes carrying similar garments obtained for others, pilgrims seek out Jordan's waters, then put away the shrouds to be worn again when they are buried.

The Orthodox prefer to visit the land during special festal weeks, often concluding with the "Ceremony of the Holy Fire" in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where thousands pack the dark structure and light candles as a symbol of resurrection.

While Orthodox pilgrims seek separation from the world and preparation for death, Roman Catholics are more inclined to see pilgrimage as inspirational for life. While pilgrims from the Latin church also focus mainly on church buildings constructed over biblical sites, they often incorporate Bible readings and contemplate artwork as devotional aids to imagining events that may be either biblical or based on church tradition.

Catholics also find special meaning in liturgical ceremonies, especially the celebration of mass. Increasingly, Latin pilgrims conduct mass in outdoor settings of less-developed sites as well as in established churches.

Protestant pilgrims — especially when traveling in groups — also plan times of worship, but rarely in churches. Knowing this, local caretakers set aside outdoor chapel areas in popular places such as the Garden Tomb, the traditional Mount of Beatitudes, and the



An Orthodox woman caresses the star denoting Jesus' birthplace in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity.

village of Capernaum, where pilgrims can sit by the Sea of Galilee

It is the land that Protestants come to see. From childhood, many have imagined the gentle valleys and craggy mountains and desert wastes of the biblical landscape. They want to experience the land with all of their senses and go home singing "I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked."

Protestants are more likely to resent the ornate churches that cover sacred sites than to admire them. They find it difficult to worship in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, for instance, a dark and rambling complex where six different faith groups jealously guard designated spaces beneath the same roof, or at the Church of the Nativity, where the presumed location of Jesus' birth is covered over with marble, drapes and a floor-mounted silver star.

While Catholics believe the Roman emperor Constantine's mother had visions that accurately identified specific places where biblical events occurred, Protestants generally give little credence to either Helena or the monuments she inspired. Instead, they love the landscapes of the Holy Land. The Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River inspire thoughtful reflections. The Garden Tomb and Gordon's Calvary correspond to their biblical imaginations far more than the gilded jumble of icons and oil lamps in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

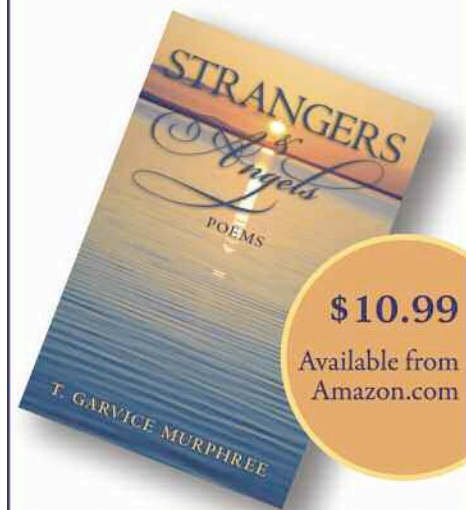
While Protestant groups may have their iconoclasm in common, however, they are also inclined toward differing paths.

As a rule, mainline Protestants and moderate-minded evangelicals approach the Holy Land as a place in which to connect with their spiritual roots. They want to breathe the dust and taste the water and stand on the same hills that David knew. They come to the Holy Land looking backward to biblical days, eagerly examining archaeological digs and the shape of biblical sites. "Roots pilgrims" seek a renewal

STRANGERS & ANGELS

A NEW BOOK OF POEMS

A reflection on life's beginnings and endings by retired Baptist minister **Garvice Murphree** — Mississippi native, Navy pilot, and minister of education for over 40 years to churches in South Carolina, Alabama and Tennessee.



Thy Will Be Done
A Biography of George W. Truett

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An Orthodox woman leans forward to kiss an icon of Jesus beneath an altar placed above the traditional site of Jesus' crucifixion in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

or reinvigoration of faith through an encounter between spiritual imagination and tangible experience on sacred ground, hoping to carry the experience home with them.

Protestants who come with a fundamentalist and dispensationalist mindset, on the other hand, give more focus to the prophetic future for which they believe Israel is destined. Thus, while moderate or mainline Protestants who come to the ancient crossroads city of Megiddo explore the archaeological riches resulting from more than 20 layers of civilization on the same tell, fundamentalist-dispensationalists come to relive prophecy and gaze upon the fields where they believe the world-ending battle of Armageddon will occur.

Dispensationalists celebrate the re-establishment of the State of Israel as a sign that other prophecies in the complex scenario of end times that they hold dear will also come true. They are Israel's strongest supporters, not for Israel's sake alone, but because they believe they are doing their part to bring prophecy to pass.

Seeing an opportunity in the resultant growth of Christian Zionism, Israel's Ministry of Tourism has for decades

promoted tour bus diplomacy, offering free or discounted "familiarization tours" to evangelical pastors, whose trained Israeli guides offered them a carefully nuanced interpretation of Israel's right to the land. Such "propaganda pilgrimage" has helped the State of Israel to win the firm and unquestioning support of America's Religious Right.

More than half a million American pilgrims visited Israel in 2008, and the country's Ministry of Tourism is working hard to increase that number. As they come, they will follow differing pathways. Some will embrace icons, while others will ponder landscapes. Some will pray for the peace of Jerusalem, as others long for the New Jerusalem.

For all who set foot on sacred soil, blessings await. **BT**

Editor's note: This article is a popularized extract from a paper presented at a seminar on "Archaeology, Politics, and the Media" held at Duke University April 23-24. A much longer and more academic version with extensive source citations will be published in Duke's Judaica series, published by Eisenbraun's.

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LaCount Anderson uses mission training to help homeless ‘get back on their feet’

SCOTLAND NECK, N.C. (ABP) — James walked in Union Mission’s building with purpose. He stood tall, proud but worried.

His shift had been eliminated and now he didn’t have a job or a place to live. He spent the previous night sleeping in an abandoned building in Roanoke Rapids, N.C.

The next day he decided to come to nearby Union Mission — a place he said he’d never thought he’d need — for help and hope.

His restless legs shook with anxiety as he sat across the table from LaCount Anderson, the director of the men’s recovery program at Union Mission, the area’s largest homeless shelter.

Anderson listened to James’ story and said, “The Lord has sent you here. Why don’t you sleep here tonight? We have a bed for you.”

That invitation spelled not only immediate relief but also a chance for a new beginning for James and the dozens of other men that Anderson has led through the recovery program. Anderson, who was appointed as one of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s field personnel at CBF’s General Assembly in July, has been working at Union Mission for two years — the best two years of his life, he said.

“All of the training and other ministry I’ve done in my life has led me to be here,” said Anderson, who has served previously as a pastor and in education ministry. “I see miracles every day. I see God impact lives.”

One of those lives belongs to Jimmy, who used cocaine for 20 years before accepting Christ in Anderson’s office and stopping his drug use.

Another is Phil, who spent 13 years in prison before going through the recovery program. Now, he’s the manager of a local thrift store.

And there are dozens of other success stories — of men who came in homeless and left with a better vision and purpose for their life.

The recovery program has three stages, including an initial three months of basics — Bible study, discipleship, life skills and the development of a life plan. During the second stage the men pursue any necessary education



LaCount Anderson is a mentor to homeless and struggling men, counseling and teaching life skills along with Bible studies at the Union Mission in Roanoke Rapids, N.C.

or training, and in the third stage they prepare to find a job.

“We’re small. We can’t help everybody, but we want to make a difference in some people,” said Anderson of the program and its 55 percent success rate, which is high compared to similar ministries.

Most of all, the recovery program gives men hope.

“The hope we give them is Jesus,” said Ron Weeks, the mission’s director. “Jesus is the hope and light.”

In recent months Anderson has widened his focus to include additional local ministries, such as two community gardens that will help provide food to needy people in Halifax County. He’s also partnering with Faith House, a ministry in the small community of Enfield, N.C.

Faith House is led by Gloria Caudle, who started the homeless shelter for women and children in 2007. Her shelter houses up to eight women as they recover from drugs, abusive relationships, depression and other life-altering situations.

At Faith House they get their lives back on track, just like Caudle did many years ago. When she escaped a bad marriage — one where the poverty was so great that she was down to just a tray of ice in the refrigerator — she promised God she would give back to others.

“God can transform,” she said. “This is my assignment. I have been commissioned to do this.”

What Faith House needs is a little extra help — repairing the house, providing toiletries and other essential items. And that’s where Anderson began to think he could help.

As a CBF affiliate, he aims to connect Fellowship partner churches with ministries among the homeless in eastern North Carolina, which has some of the state’s poorest areas.

“I want to help churches discover a way to reach out in their neighborhood,” said Anderson, a native of Savannah, Ga.

Reaching out to neighbors is something Anderson knows about. Two years ago he unexpectedly lost his job and, while looking for another position, he decided to visit Union Mission, which had mailed him a letter.

He went in one day to volunteer and came home to tell his wife, Anna, that he thought God was calling him to work there. A few days later he was hired and hasn’t stopped enjoying what he calls his new dream job.

“I share God more now than I ever did before in my 30 years of ministry. I get no greater thrill than watching someone give their life to Christ,” he said. **BT**

—Carla Wynn Davis writes for Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Communications.

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.
Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.
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.
Cullowhee Baptist Church, Cullowhee, 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.
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.
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First Baptist Church, Clemson, S.C.
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First Baptist Church, Hawkinsville, Ga.
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First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala.
First Baptist Church, Lavonia, Ga.
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First Baptist Church, Lumberton, N.C.
First Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.

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Grandin Court Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va.
Greystone Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.
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