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

Subscription rates:
1 year, \$20 2 years, \$35
1 year groups of 25 or more, \$18
1 year groups of less than 25, \$20
1 year Canada, \$35
1 year foreign, \$50

Periodical postage paid at Macon, Ga.
31208 and additional mailing offices

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

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BAPTISTS Today

An autonomous national Baptist news journal



Photo by John Pierce.
Co-founder Linda Fuller and president David Snell lead the expanding work of the Fuller Center for Housing.
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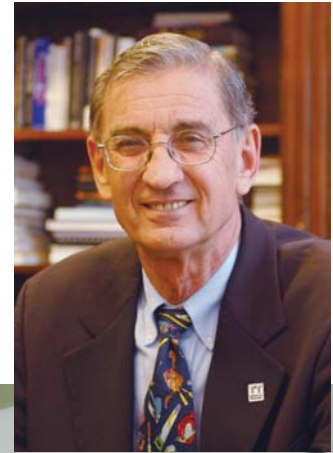


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The beat goes on

Millard Fuller's legacy of inspired Christian service



AMERICUS, Ga. — Immediately after Millard Fuller was buried at Koinonia Farms on the unusually cold morning of Feb. 4, 2009, family and friends gathered at the Fuller home outside Americus, Ga. to grieve and believe.

The noted absence of the vibrant and visionary attorney-entrepreneur-humanitarian left more than an empty chair at the table. And on the table was the big question: What do we do now?

“I could have said, ‘Fold the tent,’” David Snell said reflectively. But the man who succeeded Millard as president of the Fuller Center for Housing quickly added: “But we had obligations around the world.”

After conflict with its board and dismissal from the wildly successful housing ministry, Habitat for Humanity International, founders Millard and Linda Fuller had started the Fuller Center for Housing in 2005. At the time of Millard's death, the Fuller Center was active in 14 countries and in 40 U.S. cities said Snell.

Millard's death and burial had been sudden. Only about half of the Fuller Center's board members made it to Southwest Georgia for the service on the farmland where Millard had encountered the Baptist prophet Clarence Jordan and, in a radical faith commitment, decided to give away his wealth in exchange for a life of Christian service.

“We wanted to honor Millard's memory,” Snell said of the family and friends who gathered in their departed leader's home study. “The best way was to keep building houses.”

After phone calls to other board members, the decision to forge ahead was unanimously affirmed. “There was no question [about proceeding],” said Snell, who was asked to take the lead.



“It was obvious that David now needed to be president,” said Linda Fuller, who had earlier conversations with her husband about future leadership of the organization, but no plan of succession. “Millard always said the word ‘retirement’ is not in the Bible.”

A NEW START

Coming out of the painful, public conflict with current Habitat leaders, the Fullers formed the nonprofit organization they first called “Building Habitat.”

“We didn't start out to build houses,” said Snell, also a former Habitat leader. “We were set up for Millard to speak and raise money for Habitat affiliates.”

But the international housing ministry objected to their use of the Habitat name. “So we changed our name to the Fuller Center for Housing and changed our focus,” said Snell.

Linda said she and Millard were not interested in having the organization named for them but were convinced that their name recognition would help accomplish their mission.

Opportunities for building homes for people in need arose as requests for the Fullers' help with Habitat affiliates decreased, she said. News that an entire village in Nepal had burned brought an urgent opportunity.

“We could build a house in Nepal for \$750,” said Linda. “That appealed to us.”

Then a friend in Shreveport, La., called asking for help after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina drove families there from the coastal areas. The first U.S. project for the now five-year-old Fuller Center was begun there for new residents wanting to stay on “higher ground.”

The Fullers worked out of their home until Atlanta homebuilder John Wieland provided and renovated an older house in Americus to become the Fuller Center office. The organization expanded as well.

Snell said the Fuller Center now has affiliate organizations — called “covenant partners” — in 62 U.S. cities and 17 nations with more on the way. New work has been started in Haiti along with a unique opportunity to build homes in North Korea.

U.S. covenant partners, he said, “raise their own money and are very autonomous.” He describes the mission and values of the Fuller Center as “old order Habitat.”

“We build with families in need — willing to help build, pay on terms they can afford and with no interest/no profit,” he explained.

Government plays a limited role, Snell said, in helping with land acquisition and infrastructure. “But we don’t use government money to build houses.”

The Fuller Center keeps a strong Christian focus, he said. “We consider ourselves a servant of the church.”

In fact, Snell said, churches are their favored partners for building homes with families in need.

“We take corporate money,” Snell said, “but we would rather have a relationship with a congregation.”



David Snell

CHURCH CONNECTIONS

“This has been a chance to go back to the old principles,” said Linda, of the Fuller Center’s approach to faith-based, partnership home building.

Some Fuller Center programs are directly related to churches. For example, the Greater Blessing program, based on Jesus’ teaching that it is more blessed to give than to receive, focuses on efforts to rehabilitate housing for elderly persons or those with special needs.

Typically, these are renovation projects that allow homeowners to repay the cost of materials over time — by placing payments in a Greater Blessing box, said Snell. The payments are then used for work on other homes.

“We’re challenging churches to do this Greater Blessing because it’s under \$5,000 and they can do the work themselves,” said Linda.

The Fuller Center is constantly connecting U.S. congregations with families in Haiti and elsewhere where relationships can be established and homebuilding ministry can occur. Churches are also encouraged to provide work teams for Fuller Center projects such as the current one in Armenia and other parts of the world.

Details on how churches can work in partnership with the Fuller Center are available at www.fullercenter.org.

“We believe we are called to acts of righteousness,” said Snell. “Faith manifests itself through action.”

That action of building partnership housing, said Snell, turns homeowners from beneficiaries into donors whose monthly no-interest, no-profit payments fund the building of additional homes.

“We feel called to help the poor and to restore dignity,” said Snell. “That’s why we charge (for the cost of the home).”

While the Fuller Center’s Christian motivation is made clear, the invitation to partnership is wide open, said Snell.

“We believe Jesus called us to do this sort of thing,” he explained. “But we don’t discriminate when selecting homeowners and accept anyone as a volunteer.”

A BOOK AND A MOVIE

Linda Fuller said she was busy going to college and being a mother when her husband penned an unpublished autobiography in the late 1960s — just prior to a life-changing experience that led to mission service in Africa. The manuscript gave an account of how he had built his fortune — that would be given away in the near future — in a brief span of about eight years.

But it also contained details of Millard’s early youth work with a

Congregational church and a tri-state church conference where his organizational skills were honed and exhibited.

“He created a newsletter,” said Linda, “and figured out how to grow an organization.”

With the same touch that took Habitat for Humanity from a dream to a household name, young Millard grew the youthful Pilgrim Fellowship from about five to 200 participants in one year.

“That same year he was very active in Junior Achievement,” said Linda. “He had a lot of irons in the fire even as a teen.”

The manuscript, which Linda had never read until a couple of years ago, was found in a return envelope from Word Publishing, along with a rejection letter.



Linda Fuller

“All of these wonderful stories are in this book,” said Linda, including how he sold his cows to attend Auburn University.

“This is actually Millard’s first book and the only autobiography he’s ever written,” said Linda, “and the last to be published.”

Millard Fuller: Beyond the American Dream, which covers the first 30 years of the visionary Christian leader’s life, was released in September by Smyth & Helwys Publishing (www.helwys.com).

Linda said the book “will go hand in glove with the documentary” with the same title that premiered during the Millard Fuller Legacy Build in Indianapolis last month.

Directed and edited by Steve Zukerman, the film — to be released later on DVD — is the fulfillment of many dreams, said Faith Fuller, who directs communications for the housing organization her parents began in 2005.

Talk of doing a documentary goes back at least 15 years, said Faith. But Zukerman was “passionate about it.”

She described the film as “part movie, part documentary.” But however the film is described, she said, “No doubt, my parents have a compelling story.”

For more information on the film or to watch the trailer, visit www.millardfullermovie.com.

HIGHWAYS, BYWAYS AND GRAVY

Another tribute came in August when a 22-mile section of U.S. Highway 29 between Valley, Ala., and LaGrange, Ga., was named the “Millard Fuller Memorial Highway.” Included in the route is Millard’s hometown of Lanett, Ala.

The big dreamer from that small town has gone on to a resounding “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Yet his boundless dream of a world without shacks continues to expand globally through the many volunteers who lend time and talent through the efforts of Habitat for Humanity International and the Fuller Center for Housing.

Across the U.S. and around the world, the beat of hammers continues as an ongoing memorial to a big-hearted man who modeled Christian sacrifice and service. Despite challenges and obstacles, Millard also looked with faith toward a hopeful future.

Or as Linda put it: “He could take spilled milk and make gravy out of it.” **BT**

Quotation

“ r e m a r k s ”

“The pastoral vocation is to help people grow spiritually, resist their lowest impulses and adopt higher, more compassionate ways. But churchgoers increasingly want pastors to soothe and entertain them.”

—United Church of Christ minister and author G. Jeffrey MacDonald (New York Times)

“Men, women and children are exploited in many ways, such as being held against their will to quarry stone, build roads, make rugs, work as maids, fight wars, harvest crops, work in factories, hotels, restaurants, brothels, and even to provide body parts.”

—Executive Director Reid Trulson of American Baptist International Ministries on modern-day slavery known as human trafficking (IM On Location)

“An active member of a Southern Baptist church not dually aligned with the [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship]. A subscriber to the *Baptist Faith & Message*, latest edition.”

—Two “character traits” sought by Georgia Baptist Convention-controlled Shorter University in “finding God’s man for its next president” according to Board Chairman Nelson Price (Christian Index)

“Not only am I often not listened to, I am also made to feel stranded theologically: being too much of a free thinker to be accepted by the evangelical establishment and too much of a conservative to be accepted by the liberal mainline.”

—Theologian and former Baptist professor Clark Pinnock who died Aug. 15 at age 73 (Christianity Today)

“If the evangelical Christian leadership thinks that ‘cool Christianity’ is a sustainable path forward, they are severely mistaken. As a twenty-something, I can say with confidence that when it comes to church, we don’t want cool as much as we want real.”

—Brett McCracken, 27-year-old author of *Hipster Christianity: Where Church and Cool Collide* from Baker Books (Wall Street Journal)

“I am particularly disturbed by the many conservative Christians who seek to denigrate the President by labeling him a Muslim even though they claim to uphold the Ten Commandments, one of which, of course, is ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness.’”

—Leroy Seat of Missouri, a former Baptist missionary to Japan who blogs at theviewfromthisseat.blogspot.com

“Their professors, who might be tempted to think that they are hip enough and therefore ready and relevant to teach the new generation, might remember that Kurt Cobain is now on the classic oldies station.”

—From the Beloit College Mindset List on the college class of 2014

“Science is about explanation. Religion is about interpretation ... The Bible simply isn’t interested in how the Universe came into being.”

—Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, writing in *The Times* in response to physicist Stephen Hawking’s claim that God had no role in the creation of the universe (CNN)

“I was fascinated as I sat at luncheons with Paige (Patterson), Al Mohler, Chuck Kelley, Adrian Rogers and others who were giving leadership to the effort; it was like being a part of the Council of Nicea.”

—Barry McCarty, Southern Baptist Convention parliamentarian since 1986 and current pastor of Atlanta’s Peachtree Christian Church, on SBC leaders with whom he has worked (The Christian Index)

“Some of [the Religious Right] leaders faded, but that group didn’t disappear. They are waiting for new leaders, and my sense is that [Glenn] Beck would like to be one of those leaders.”

—Religion and politics scholar John C. Green on the Fox News commentator, a Mormon, who is now rallying religious conservatives (CNN)

“In order to be this gullible, American Christians have had to endure years of vacuous talk about undefined ‘revival’ and ‘turning America back to God’ that was less about anything uniquely Christian than about, at best, a generically theistic civil religion and, at worst, some partisan political movement.”

—Southern Seminary dean Russell Moore, in a blog about Glenn Beck’s August rally in Washington, D.C.

“How can you not see the goodness and spirit of God in this woman who sacrificed her life for others?”

—Artist Thomas Blackshear, an evangelical Christian, who painted the image of Mother Teresa for a U.S. postage stamp released this year, which would have been her 100th birthday (RNS)

editorial

Does Jesus hold a Christian worldview?

By John Pierce

Much of today's use of "Christian worldview" or "biblical worldview" can be traced to the late evangelical theologian Francis Schaeffer who provided the terminology — and some of the criteria — that empowers contemporary conservative evangelicals to separate the sheep from the goats ("secular humanists").

Often, more conservative Christian schools or home-schooling networks will attract likeminded parents with their promises to continue exposure to the same biblical worldview that has been offered at home and church.

One resource provider offers "a one-of-a-kind Christian worldview testing and training program to families, schools and churches." The testing of students (and teachers, as they recommend) results in test-takers being placed in the preferred category of "Biblical Theism," or in the less-desirable "Moderate Christian Worldview," "Secular Humanist" or "Socialist" groupings.

Sample test questions were not provided online, but it is not hard to assume the subject matter. Such educational endeavors tend to dismiss evolutionary science, use the Bible as the primary educational text and downplay the highly successful U.S. experiment in full religious liberty in favor of revisionist tales of an intended "Christian nation."

For some Christians, their worldviews are primarily political perspectives ranging from the far left to the far right. For others, the perspective is tied to living apart from the trappings of this physical world through which we are simply passing.

Acquiring a Christian worldview for some means an almost-exclusive engagement in an evangelical subculture complete

with "Christian" media, "Christian" yellow pages, "Christian" everything.

For others, it is an ongoing attempt to apply Christian compassion to every place of suffering and justice to every point of inequality and injustice.

Some proponents of a Christian or biblical worldview recognize the inability of any one person or group to see clearly. Others boldly speak of *the* Christian worldview.

Yet there is no single Christian worldview — only individual attempts at living in faithfulness to biblical teachings as we each understand them.

Christianity and the Bible that guides its practice are widely interpreted and practiced. Therefore, the lenses through which Christians see the world come in as wide of a variety as the multiple expressions of the church that populate the planet.

Yet there does seem to be a proper starting place for the many and varied who would dare seek to see the world through the eyes of Jesus.

It would seem that the first perspective of an honest, biblically-based viewpoint on life would be a confessional acknowledgement — like the Apostle Paul — that our vision is marred. Even our best attempts at seeing the world as Jesus sees it gets clouded by self-interest, fear and cultural blinders — often beyond our awareness.

Too often we confuse the noble question of "What would Jesus do?" with our quick tendency toward "I'm against that, so God must be too."

Yet how we view the world is so important. While we may reject the narrow



politics and doctrines of some who claim a "biblical worldview," and willingly admit that we can never fully grasp *the* Christian worldview of seeing all things from the perspective of Jesus, our ongoing attempts at such faithfulness are commendable and good.

Following Jesus, despite our limitations, should change the way we see the world. Our existence here is by intent, not chance. Life is therefore a gift. Others become more valued. Enemies — real or perceived — evoke less anger. Redemption is present and real. Hope reigns where others see only despair.

Even if we see through darkened glass, we need more glimpses into the way God sees us and the world in which we live. **BT**

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Life is therefore a gift.

Editor's note: This is the 10th in a yearlong series of articles on "Healthy ministers for healthy churches," produced in partnership with the Center for Congregational Health and supported by a gift from Henry V. Langford.

Numbers don't lie: Seeking the truth about clergy health

By Melissa Clodfelter

To most clergy, it comes as no surprise to learn that ministry can be hazardous to your health. Even so, the clergy health statistics from the Duke Divinity School Clergy Health Initiative are a startling wake-up call.

Their findings of lifestyle-related physical ailments among clergy point to a need for deep changes across the culture of ministry. Pastor rates of obesity and chronic disease are significantly higher than those of their non-pastor peers.

The Clergy Health Initiative 2008 survey of more than 17,000 active North Carolina United Methodist clergy showed their rates of obesity to be about 10 percent higher than other North Carolinians. The same survey revealed clergy rates of high blood pressure and asthma at about four percent higher and diabetes rates at about three percent higher than those of their non-clergy peers.

The Clergy Health Initiative is a \$12 million, seven-year program intended to improve the health of United Methodist pastors in North Carolina.

Their survey also asked about mental health. Depression rates in pastors, which approach about 10 percent, are roughly double that of all people in the United States.

Other less formal surveys in other denominations have shown similar results. One such study indicates that the number of young clergy who are leaving the profession during the first five years of ministry has quadrupled since the 1970s.

Why do clergy suffer from obesity,

chronic disease and depression at rates higher than those whom they serve?

As a personal coach, what I see is that people who enter the ministry tend to be helpers who desire to sacrifice for the greater good. Furthermore, most congregations expect their clergy to sacrifice, yet are unaware of many of the ways they do.

As today's churches face economic challenges and for many, aging congregations and loss of members, pastors in smaller congregations carry an especially heavy load.

Cell phones and congregational expectations that pastors be available 24/7, along with a shrinking volunteer pool, exacerbate the problem of too many needs and too little time — too little time for exercise, slow food, time with family and friends, and much-needed vacations.

Can clergy regain health? They can and they must.

The changes that will promote clergy health — physical, mental and spiritual — will not come quickly. Many factors contribute to clergy health.

There is a lot more to the issue than just educating ministers to make healthy food choices. Health requires not only a shift in eating, but also a shift in lifestyle and self-perception. It also requires a shift in congregational thinking.

The issue of clergy health is an adaptive challenge, not a technical one. Leadership guru and author Ronald Heifertz describes a technical challenge as one that is easily solved by experts, such as when a mechanic fixes a

car. He describes an adaptive challenge as one that requires people in the community to change their attitudes, values and behaviors.

The problem of clergy obesity, chronic disease and depression poses an adaptive challenge to congregations. The responsibility for change cannot be left to ministers alone.

The gargantuan scope of the problem requires congregations to develop their own core strengths for helping clergy to become and remain healthy. There is not one right way to approach the problem; there are many.

Many pastors suffer under an either/or philosophy: I must serve this congregation or take time away for myself. I must sacrifice to be effective or be seen as selfish. That kind of thinking begs the question of how we measure sacrifice and generosity, and whether we are living by someone else's measurements or our own.

The change from either/or thinking to both/and thinking is essential. Thoughts such as, if I am taking care of myself, I am not caring for others, must change to: I can take care of myself and then better serve others.

Self-love — the kind of love Jesus commanded with "love your neighbor as yourself" — embraces both/and thinking. It commands self-care.

Pastors who move most effectively toward both/and thinking are those with congregations that encourage them to take time off, spend time with friends or family, exercise, or just rest and de-stress.

And those who move most effectively toward both/and thinking are those pastors who grab those resources when they are offered. Pastors must ask for support in their efforts to stay healthy. They must admit that they cannot meet every need in the



congregation and embrace realistic boundaries.

One of my fellow coaches, Mitch Coggin, has gained firsthand expertise in the area of clergy self-care. Mitch is not only a certified coach, but also pastor of two small Presbyterian churches in North Vernon, Ind.

Earlier, Mitch served as a chaplain for two Baptist hospitals and as pastor and minister to families of two Southern Baptist churches. He knows clergy wellness obstacles firsthand, and he is working with churches and ministers to change the culture. He knows this is an adaptive challenge — requiring change in attitudes and actions at several levels.

Through a grant from the Lily Endowment, Mitch's presbytery has established a coaching component to help congregations that are between pastors to consider what they can do to assist the incoming pastor in the area of personal wellness. Mitch initially works with a congregation to increase its understanding of the large stake its church has in maintaining the health of a new minister.

As part of the program, a congregation names a task force to work with a coach during five to seven sessions to discover how its members can play a key role. With the coach's guidance, the task force leads the congregation in discovering its own unique abilities to support pastor health.

Recommendations differ for each community of faith, Mitch says, but the entire congregation has to take responsibility for maintaining pastoral excellence. If recommendations from the task force are institutionalized, a Care and Concern Committee might be formed and trained in stress management as one solution in providing safe space for the pastor.

To be most effective, the Care and Concern Committee's work with the pastor must be separate from that of the personnel committee. This committee might find ways for the pastor to take study and leave time. It might supply a gym membership, encourage wholesome church dinners or find creative ways to fill the pulpit on Sunday. The committee uses the church's unique strengths to

help the pastor stay healthy.

Mitch says that a two-and-a-half-day long seminar on clergy wellness is enough to point out health problems and causes, but it takes an ongoing relationship with a personal coach, mentor or a supportive small group for most clergy to see positive life changes.

The majority make significant, lasting changes only after six to 12 months of ongoing, intentional work.

The culture of unending clergy self-sacrifice is slowly finding ways to promote clergy self-care as denominations become aware of the flagging health of their obese, sick and stressed-out pastors.

Change must come if the church is to remain vital. Healthy pastors are an essential component of a healthy church. **BT**

—Melissa Clodfelter is director of vocational formation and the Pathways Program at Wake Forest University School of Divinity and coordinator of coaching for the Center for Congregational Health (healthychurch.org) in Winston-Salem, N.C.

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Where are the Baptists?

a n a l y s i s

The American religious landscape of the 21st century is characterized by a widespread abandonment of denominational labels. Many Baptists, from liberal to fundamentalist, intentionally and systematically avoid the name “Baptist.”

In some cases, entire Baptist groups mask their denominational identity behind innocuous-sounding word plays.

At the cusp of this century, for example, the Southern Baptist Convention’s Baptist Sunday School Board morphed into “LifeWay.” Members of the Baptist General Conference, until 1945 the Swedish Baptist General Conference, recently renamed themselves Converge Worldwide. Neither organization even mentions the word “Baptist” on its Internet homepage.

So, if you are looking for Baptists in the United States, don’t expect much help from the Baptists: many are too busy trying to convince themselves and the world that they are something-other-than-Baptists.

The post-denominational memo, however, has not yet circulated worldwide. Even in the face of true suffering and persecution at the hands of hostile governments, global Baptists are more openly affirming of their denominational identity.

In addition, if one could take the pulse of

Baptists in America and throughout the world, one might be surprised to learn that while the Baptist presence in America is growing fainter — both in terms of public identity and denominational vitality — Baptists apart from the Western world are thriving as never before.

Gone are the days when Baptists of the American “Bible Belt” multiplied like kudzu and were the undisputed heavyweights of cultural, social and religious norms. Instead, a new variety of “Southern” Baptists are the public global face of Baptists in the 21st century.

Few of today’s pace-setting Baptists, however, speak the English language or watch NASCAR.

In terms of numbers, they constitute a large portion of Baptists worldwide and are rapidly expanding at a rate that would have been the envy of America’s Southern Baptists in their glory days of the 1950s.

Many live out their faith without the guarantee of religious liberty or separation of church and state, and embrace spirituality in a manner largely foreign to Western Baptists.

And while diversity characterizes these new “Southern” Baptists in dialect, theology and worship, in their differences they display a unity often absent within given Baptist groups in America.

Who are these new Baptists, and where

are they?

They speak dozens if not hundreds of different languages, are typically poor and unencumbered by Western materialism, and live on continents that straddle the globe’s Southern Hemisphere.

Driven largely by indigenous faith rather than missionary efforts, the advance of Baptists in proximity to or south of the equator shares little resemblance to the characteristics of popular evangelicalism publicly evidenced among many contemporary Baptists in America.

Theologically diverse, spiritually-focused (often to the point of mysticism), and frequently embracing a socially-conscious Gospel that complements their evangelical fervor, Southern Hemisphere Baptists collectively evidence a form of Christianity with which the West has never been fully comfortable.

In all likelihood, many Baptists in America are unaware that their time of influence has passed, and that a new era has begun in which the Southern Hemisphere leads the way.

As late as the early 20th century, few Baptists existed outside of the Western world. Yet today, Africa contains more than 31,000 Baptist congregations with roughly 7.5 million members; Asia, more than 29,000 churches and 5.3 million congregants; and Central and South America, more than 15,000 churches and two million members. Southern hemispheric nations claiming more than one million Baptists each include Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Nigeria.

Europe, by comparison, is home to 12,500 congregations with 765,000 members. Collectively, according to some estimates, the numbers of non-Western Baptists are now on par with, and perhaps even exceed, those of their Western counterparts.

The central point of Baptist growth in the opening decade of the 21st century is the continent of Africa. Increasing in numbers by roughly 350 percent from 1990 to 2010, African Baptists, formerly on the receiving end of Western missionary efforts, are now sending missionaries around the globe.

The Baptist faith in Africa today is largely indigenously driven. Rapid growth is taking



This Korean children’s choir is a favorite when global Baptists meet every five years. 2005 photo by John Pierce.



Historian Bruce Gourley, online editor for *Baptists Today* and executive director of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, joined in the 100-year celebration of the Baptist World Alliance in 2005 in England. Photo by John Pierce.

place despite a severe lack of financial resources compared to Western nations, and in spite of the struggle to train enough ministers to meet the needs of the churches.

Rapid growth also characterizes the Baptist presence in Central and South America.

Although the numbers of churches and adherents do not yet match those of Africa, Phillip Jenkins (*The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford University Press, 2002) near the turn of this century estimated that by 2025 the number of Christians within each of the continents of Africa and South America will exceed 600 million — far more than believers in either Europe or North America. Baptists today are among the fastest growing denominations in South and Central America.

While the Southern Hemisphere offers dramatic evidence of the vitality of Baptists, Asia, lying largely within the Northern Hemisphere, is also home to millions of Baptists.

India leads the way with roughly 2.5 million Baptists. Within India, the state of Nagaland is the most Baptist place on earth. Fourteen major tribes characterize Nagaland, and while residents yet practice many native customs, an estimated 90 percent of Nagaland's citizens are Christians, with 75 percent claiming the name Baptist.

While late-19th century Baptist mission-

ary efforts introduced Christianity into the region, 20th century conversions were largely the result of indigenous efforts.

Although not as numerous as in other portions of the globe, Russian Baptists, coupled with Baptists living in nations that formerly comprised the Soviet Union, number in the neighborhood of one million. Of even less numerical presence is that of Baptists in Middle Eastern nations and other countries in which Islam is the predominant faith and Islamic theocracies are the norm.

Yet even apart from Islamic theocracies, many Baptists of the 21st century live in nations devoid of religious liberty. Muslim nations may be most visibly theocratic, but the Pew Forum identifies 70 percent of the world's population living in nations that place a high degree of restrictions on religion.

India, Nigeria, Myanmar, China and the Congo are included among nations with many Baptists that are experiencing significant religious persecution in the 21st century. Many Muslim-dominant nations with relatively few Baptists also rank high on the religious persecution scale, including Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Iran and Turkey.

The predominant lack of religious freedom outside of Western nations connects today's global Baptists with their earliest faith forebears. Many Baptists in America — now incorporated into an evangelical majority and chafing at religious pluralism — have forsaken the Baptist heritage of religious liberty for all and separation of church and state.

Many global Baptists, on the other hand, live as a minority faith in nations adhering to state-supported religions. Far from influential within national society and culture, global Baptists practice their faith despite restrictions and persecutions.

Experiencing dramatic growth and in search of religious liberty, global Baptists are also characterized by expressions of spirituality largely absent from the Western world. Experiential faith, highly emotional worship styles, and Holy Spirit language are characteristic of many Baptists in the non-Western world.

Whereas Baptists in America typically congregate in identifiable church buildings on Sunday mornings, global Baptists are just as likely to be found gathered in open air meetings, open-sided buildings, outdoor arenas, or on a riverbank.

Revivalist fervor is common. More at home surrounded by nature, many Southern hemispheric Baptists in particular often practice a faith that accommodates earthly

spirituality and incorporates ancient, indigenous religious beliefs.

Encapsulated at the recent Baptist World Alliance Congress held in Honolulu, Hawaii, was the 21st century public face of Baptists.

The BWA, a global alliance of Baptists, represents more than two hundred of the roughly 250 distinct Baptist groups worldwide. Working with Baptists worldwide to advance religious liberty, minister to human needs, train leaders, and preach the Gospel, the Baptist World Alliance is inclusive and holistic.

The BWA Congress, a gathering held every five years, is a melding of hundreds of languages and dialects, and, in recent decades, is more typically held in the Southern Hemisphere than hosted by Western nations.

In Hawaii this summer, Baptists of the world gathered to celebrate both unity and diversity. Other than fundamentalist Baptists, most Baptist groups in America are a part of the BWA, yet collectively are a minority voice within the BWA. And while a Baptist from the United States (John Upton of Virginia) was elected as the new president of the BWA, the non-Western predominance of the global Baptist family was evident in the ranks of the 11 vice-presidents elected.

With each passing year, the Baptist World Alliance is increasingly recognized as a reflection of 21st century Baptists and a harbor of Baptist identity.

Baptists in America will continue to back away from the name Baptist, and many will choose to remain unaware of, or little informed about, global Baptist life. Meanwhile, the Baptist name, identity and spirit are carried forth on currents far away from the Western world from which Baptists were birthed and nurtured, in ways that are beyond Western control. **BT**

Notes: Those wishing to learn more about the Baptist presence worldwide can find helpful information and statistics on the Baptist World Alliance website (www.bwanet.org) and in printed publications of the BWA. In addition, Albert Wardin's, *Baptists Around the World* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995) is a valuable, if now dated, volume. A recent and helpful general historical survey of Baptists from a global perspective is David Bebbington's, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

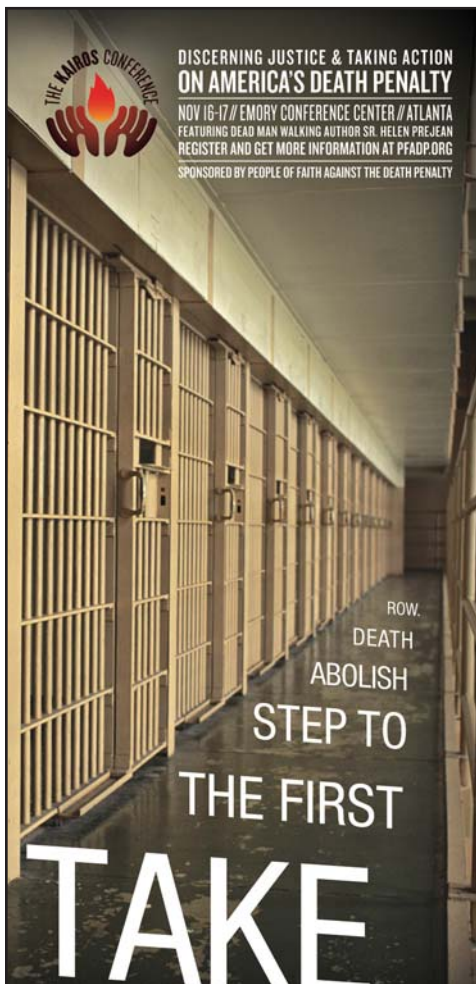
Who are **the Baptists?**

The Baptist Union of Great Britain

When the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) held its initial World Congress in 1905, the chosen location was London, England, home of one of the world's oldest Baptist unions. English Baptists also hosted the 50th anniversary BWA World Congress in London in 1955, and the 100th anniversary gathering in Birmingham in 2005.

Baptists have a long history in England. When Englishmen John Smyth and Thomas Helwys founded the first known Baptist church in 1609, it was in the city of Amsterdam, but only because they had fled there due to persecution from the Anglican establishment in England.

The Amsterdam congregation was short-lived, however. After Smyth changed course and persuaded some of the group to seek membership among the Mennonites, Helwys led the remainder back to England, where they founded the first Baptist church on English soil, in 1612, at a place called Spitalfields.



Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles introducing readers to member groups of the global Baptist family.

The Baptist movement grew quickly in England, despite significant persecution from the government and the Anglican Church. As British Baptists multiplied, they developed along two theological tracks: "Particular Baptists" who held to a firm doctrine of predestination, believing Christ died only for the "elect"; and "General Baptists" who believed salvation is available to all, so that Christ died for everyone in general.

The first Baptist Union in Great Britain was formed in 1813 as an organization of Particular Baptists. It was restructured in 1832 to allow for the inclusion of General Baptists, but a large-scale union of Particular and General Baptists did not occur until 1891, when the present "Baptist Union of Great Britain" (BUGB) was formed.

Today, the Baptist Union of Great Britain is comprised of about 137,000 members and a third of a million participants in 2,076 churches, which are organized into 13 regional associations.

In its 2009 annual report, the Union emphasized its commitment to historic Baptist principles:

"Our Baptist principles mean that within the covenant relationship of the Union we value the freedom of the local church to discern for itself its practices and policies within the broad scope of Baptist belief. We stress the importance of individual response in faith, and we understand that each Christian is to play their part in advancing Christian faith and witness. Because of our emphasis on personal faith and the freedom of the local church we are committed to religious freedom for people of all Christian traditions and other faiths."

The Union's primary function, according



Jonathan Edwards has served as general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain since 2006.

to the report, "is to provide encouragement, advice and support to member churches so that they too may maximize their ability to achieve their own charitable objective of making Jesus Christ known to particular individuals and to society in general."

The Union's offices are located at Baptist House in Didcot, Oxfordshire, from which resource personnel provide advice or help for member churches and publish a variety of materials, including a newspaper, *The Baptist Times*.

The Union relates to a variety of other Baptist and ecumenical organizations, and remains active in BWA. Former general secretary David Coffey served as president of the BWA from 2005-2010. Jonathan Edwards, the current general secretary, was elected in 2006. **BT**

The Apocalypse is supposed to be a good thing, right?

As *Left Behind* co-author Tim LaHaye sees it, the United States is inching ever closer to the Apocalypse, and he's not shy about who's to blame.

“Our president doesn't seem to get it,” LaHaye recently told talk show host (and former presidential candidate) Mike Huckabee. “He doesn't understand that some of the things he's introducing ... (are) going to work against our country and (bring) us closer to the Apocalypse.”

Asked if he thought America is living in the end times, LaHaye responded, “very definitely” and said the Rapture — the beginning of the tortuous end of the world and judgment of humanity — was imminent.

But if the Rapture also means Jesus' Second Coming and the perfection of the world, isn't that something he and other Christians should look forward to, and do whatever they can to make it happen?

Yes and no, says LaHaye.

In a follow-up interview, LaHaye said Rapture theology sees the end of the world as divided into three parts:

The Rapture, in which Bible-believing Christians will be taken up into heaven and others will be left behind; a seven-year tribulation period known as the Apocalypse; and finally, the ultimate return of Jesus.

The scenario is grim for some, and relieving for others. And while the “glorious appearing” of Jesus is a good thing, LaHaye said the goal is to not stick around during the Apocalypse.

“I'm trying to get people not to get afraid of the tribulation but to accept (Jesus) Christ as their Lord and Savior so that they can be a part of the Rapture,” he said.

The good thing/bad thing dichotomy about the end of the world can be comforting for Christians and confusing for outsiders. As Jim Bradford, general secretary of the Assemblies of God, put it, “it depends on your spiritual condition.”

The website of the Assemblies of God, for instance, says “the end times will be full of frightening events.” However, “to the Christian who truly loves Jesus, the sudden appearance of Christ in the air will hold no fear, dread, or disappointment.”

Other scholars, however, say the idea of the Rapture is a historically novel and theologically tenuous belief. David Barr, professor of religion at Wright State University, said the word “Rapture” does not show up in Christian writing until the late 19th century, and the biblical imagery popular among Rapture enthusiasts is incorrectly interpreted.

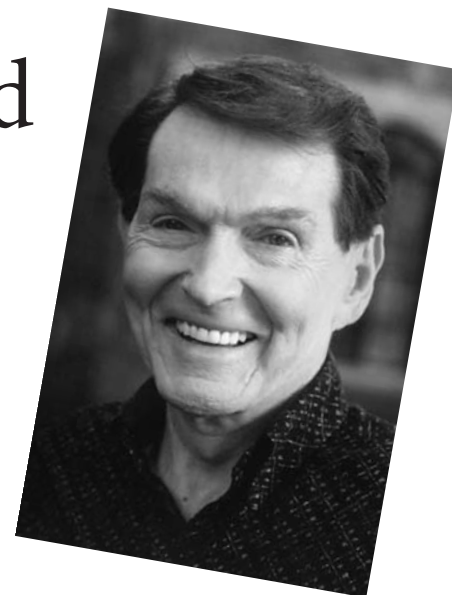
“I would emphasize the amount of imagination that goes into the creation of these scenarios from a biblical interpreter,” he said. Tales of the Rapture “are not part of the biblical text itself.”

Barbara Rossing, professor of New Testament at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and author of *The Rapture Exposed*, agreed.

“The Second Coming of Christ is in the Bible, but not the Rapture,” she said. “That seven-year tribulation is new ... and it's incorrect.”

LaHaye and others who subscribe to Rapture theology practice a kind of biblical prophecy that analyzes current events in light of the biblical text, especially the Book of Revelation with its flaming angels and horned beasts and Armageddon imagery.

Everything from Obama politics to the creation of the state of Israel can all be found in the Bible, he said. “You'll have to excuse Christians for pointing out that the Bible predicted (today's news) 2,500 years ago,”



“You'll have to excuse Christians for pointing out that the Bible predicted (today's news) 2,500 years ago.”

LaHaye said.

And by that standard, LaHaye and others say current events show that the Rapture is imminent.

“There's no prophecy that I know of — and I'm familiar with most of the end-time prophecies — that needs to be fulfilled before Jesus comes,” LaHaye said. “We have more signs that Christ could come in our lifetime than any other generation in the past 2,000 years.”

Rossing, however, was skeptical of LaHaye's prophecy, saying there is a difference between biblical prophecy and LaHaye's “predictions.”

“This idea of prophecy as a script of history written in advance — that is not the biblical definition of prophecy,” said Rossing.

Either way, LaHaye has built his life — and the 63 million *Left Behind* books he and Jerry Jenkins have sold — on the conviction that all signs point in one direction: the Rapture is coming, and it's getting closer.

People who see that as a good thing just need to be patient, LaHaye and others say. And those who don't? Well, there's something in it for them, too, if they can survive the Apocalypse.

“The Second Coming of Christ marks the end of suffering, death, martyrdom,” said Bradford. “It's also a hope because ... evil is defeated, and the other side of that coin is that Christ rules.” **BT**

Mormons, Jews reach agreement on baptism dispute

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

Jewish and Mormon church leaders announced Sept. 1 that church policies preventing the posthumous baptizing of Holocaust victims have reduced tensions between them.

Leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said they now require church members to have a family relationship with the people they baptize by proxy.

Mormons must also agree not to include Holocaust victims unless they are directly related to them, preventing the mass submissions of such names that had occurred.

The announcement by the church and the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants said the policies, which have been in the works for more than two years, will enhance future cooperation between Jews and Mormons.

The church teaches that Mormons can be baptized on behalf of their dead ancestors, who then choose whether to accept the baptism in the afterlife.

“Respect for the Jewish identity of Holocaust victims is naturally a highly sensitive matter, and we are glad to see new movement in resolving the problems of the past,” said B’nai B’rith International President Dennis W. Glick.

But some Jewish leaders, including Jewish genealogist Gary Mokotoff, continue to question whether the church will be able to prevent Holocaust victims from being included in proxy baptisms. “It’s on the books, but no one enforces it,” he told *The Salt Lake Tribune*.

Church spokesman Michael Otterson said there could still be glitches, but the church and Jewish groups are ready to move on.

“We’ve resolved the issues to our mutual satisfaction,” he said. “We all know that no system is ever going to be foolproof.” **BT**

Baptist Army chaplain the first slain in combat since Vietnam

By Robert Marus
Associated Baptist Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — An independent Baptist who died Aug. 30 in Afghanistan is the first United States Army chaplain to be killed in the line of duty since the Vietnam conflict, according to Army officials.

Capt. Dale Goetz, 43, was killed by a roadside bomb that exploded under his convoy. Goetz had reportedly been in Afghanistan less than a month. Four other soldiers perished alongside him.

An Oregon native, Goetz graduated from Maranatha Baptist Bible College in Watertown, Wis., and Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis in Plymouth, Minn. The independent Baptist school is not related to the similarly named Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Shawnee, Kan., which relates to American Baptist Churches USA and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

His chaplaincy endorsement was through the American Council of Christian Churches, a coalition of small independent and fundamentalist denominations formed as an



Dale Goetz

alternative to the mainline National Council of Churches.

Goetz was stationed at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colo. He and his wife, Christy, had three sons, according to a tribute posted on Maranatha Baptist Bible College’s website.

Jason Parker, Goetz’s pastor at High Country Baptist Church in Colorado Springs, said the late chaplain “was passionate about seeing his soldiers turn from their sin and trust in Christ as their Savior. He wanted men to know the eternal joy of knowing Christ.”

He reportedly joined the Army in 2000, going there from the pastorate of a church in White, S.D. He also served a tour in Iraq.

According to High Country Baptist Church, a trust fund has been established at a Colorado Springs bank in Goetz’s name. Contributions will help “to provide quality, biblically sound books and other printed materials for chaplains to use in their ministry to the soldiers,” a statement about the fund on the church’s website says. “Dale always wished he had more good materials to distribute, so Christy would like to help meet that need for other chaplains through this fund.”

Goetz’s funeral was held on Sept. 9 at Fort Carson’s Prussman Chapel. **BT**

Priest at London cathedral blasts ‘glitzy’ weddings

By Al Webb
Religion News Service

LONDON — A top priest at London’s St. Paul’s Cathedral, where Prince Charles and Princess Diana were married in 1981, says fancy, multi-million-dollar weddings are now posing “a threat to marriage itself.”

Giles Fraser told BBC Radio’s *Thought for the Day* that “the problem with the modern wedding is that it’s too often a glitzy stage-set, overly concerned with the shoes, the flowers, the napkin rings and performing to the cameras.”

Fraser is canon chancellor at venerable St. Paul’s, where he oversees the cathedral’s

teaching office. Charles and Diana’s 1981 wedding at St. Paul’s attracted a global television audience of an estimated 750 million viewers.

It’s no wonder, the cleric said in his Aug. 3 broadcast, “that at their worst, some weddings can feel like an overblown vanity project, all justified by foot-stomping references to ‘my special day.’”

Such ceremonies, Fraser claimed, “have just lost their way” and have “become a threat to marriage itself.”

Some fellow clerics have become so disenchanted with weddings, he said, that they would prefer to conduct a funeral because funerals “still have a beauty, a quiet dignity and a moral seriousness that is quite absent from many of the weddings we get to take.” **BT**



First Muslim college in the U.S. opens

Zaytuna classes meet on Baptist seminary campus in California

By Joanna Corman
Religion News Service

BERKELEY, Calif. — Faatimah Knight's college decision came down to eight schools where she would have majored in English, or Zaytuna College, where she could study Islamic classical teachings in an environment that embraces all aspects of her Muslim faith.

The Brooklyn native is part of the inaugural class of what Zaytuna's founders hope will be the country's first accredited, four-year Muslim liberal arts college — a flagship of higher learning with an Islamic identity yet open to all faiths.

Knight, 18, chose Zaytuna, she said, because she wants to grow in her faith, learn more about the religion that inspired her parents to convert from Christianity and be able to defend Islam during a time of stepped-up suspicion.

Four years of college, Knight said, “has to bring me more than book smarts.”

“I want to feel like I'm improving as a person. I want to feel like I'm improving in terms of my character,” she said. “I'm almost

The college could help bridge the gap between different segments of the community, such as immigrants and native-born Muslims,

positive that I can only get that here.”

Knight, an aspiring writer, is one of 15 Zaytuna students who started classes on Aug. 24. Zaytuna College grew out of a pilot seminary program at the Zaytuna Institute, which graduated a handful of students in 2008.

Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, an American-born convert from the San Francisco Bay Area who studied Islam abroad, started the institute in 1996, offering continuing education classes in Arabic and Islamic studies.

Yusuf began planning Zaytuna's transition to a full-fledged college two years ago with two colleagues: Imam Zaid Shakir, a Berkeley convert who studied Islam abroad; and Hatem Bazian, a professor at the University of California Berkeley and a Palestinian native who's lived in the Bay Area for nearly 27 years.

The three are among the best-known and most-respected Muslim scholars in America, said Zahra Billoo, the programs and outreach director at the Council on American-Islamic Relations' San Francisco Bay Area chapter.

The college will seek accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and founders hope to graduate students who can work in any profession, including serving the Muslim American community as imams, nonprofit managers and Islamic school teachers.

Co-founder Bazian said the college is needed because of a lack of native-born Muslim professionals with a strong understanding of their faith and the needs of U.S. Muslims.

“We feel the college is very important in that it provides a grounding for the community in its own tradition — not in a sense to create a difference with the larger society, but to actually normalize its presence within the larger society, that there is no contradiction

between being an American and being Muslim,” Bazian said.

While Muslims have been in the U.S. for centuries, most immigrated here within the last 40 years, with 80 percent of U.S. Muslims arriving after 1980, said Farid Senzai, a member of Zaytuna's management committee and the research director at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, a Michigan-based think tank focused on U.S. Muslims.

Over several generations, Muslim Americans have built an infrastructure of mosques, schools and advocacy organizations. Now, with a population estimated to range from 2 million to as many as 8 million, and growing financial stability, they're beginning to build academic institutions, Senzai said, just as Catholics and Jews did generations ago.

The college could help bridge the gap between different segments of the community, such as immigrants and native-born Muslims, said CAIR's Billoo. It could also provide ranks of homegrown imams to lead the country's estimated 2,000 mosques instead of foreign-born leaders who sometimes face cultural, language and generational gaps.

Zaytuna is offering two majors to start: Arabic language, and Islamic law and theology. There are plans to add advanced degrees, adult education classes and professional certificate programs in areas such as Islamic medical ethics, Islamic finance, and religious training for imams and undergraduates.

Zaytuna, which means “olive tree” in Arabic, also hopes to be a vehicle for interfaith dialogue. The college was intentionally planted in progressive Berkeley, an intellectual hub with a sizable Muslim community. The college is renting space at the American Baptist Seminary of the West for five years until founders can establish its own campus.

The college can help promote cross-cultural understanding, when visitors “see it in action,” said Senzai, who also teaches political science at Santa Clara University.

“In fact, these kinds of institutions in the long term are absolutely necessary for bridging the divide that currently exists and the misunderstanding that many have about Islam and Muslims,” he said **BT**



UC Berkeley professor Hatem Bazian co-founded Zaytuna College in Berkeley, which welcomed its inaugural class Aug. 24. The college strives to be the country's first accredited four-year Muslim liberal arts college. RNS photo courtesy Zaytuna College.

Unity in faith

Christian leaders praise Taizé community on 70th anniversary

GENEVA (RNS/ENInews) — World Christian leaders are paying tribute to the ecumenical Taizé community in eastern France, which is marking the 70th anniversary of its founding in 1940 by Brother Roger Schutz, who died in 2005.

In a message in advance of an Aug. 14 commemoration, Pope Benedict XVI described Schutz as a “pioneer in the difficult paths toward unity among the disciples of Christ.”

“Seventy years ago, he began a community that continues to see thousands of young adults, searching for meaning in their lives, come to it from around the world, welcoming them in prayer and allowing them to experience a personal relationship with God,” Benedict said.

Schutz died at age 90 after being attacked with a knife by a mentally disturbed woman during evening prayers on Aug. 16, 2005 at the ecumenical community’s headquarters in Burgundy.

Schutz, a Swiss Protestant, arrived in the village of Taizé on Aug. 20, 1940 with the idea of founding an ecumenical monastic community.

Many Christian congregations, including Baptists, hold Taizé worship services based on the practices of the ecumenical, international Taizé Community in Saône-et-Loire, Burgundy, France.

The contemplative worship incorporates silence, simple songs in different languages, Scripture reading, candles and meditative prayers.

The Taizé community in France has a web page, available in English, at www.taize.fr/en.

“With him and the brothers who shared his vision ..., Taizé has become a true center, a focal point and a place of gathering; a place of deepening in prayer, of listening and humility,” said Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodoxy.

From the 1960s onward, thousands of young people made pilgrimages to Taizé to experience its ecumenical spirituality and unique worship styles.

The general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Olav Fykse Tveit,

described the community “as a model for attending to the spiritual and physical needs of the whole people of God and in particular the needs of young people.”

After Schutz’s death, Brother Alois, a German Catholic, became prior of the community.

“Today at Taizé, a hundred brothers, Catholics and Protestants, live together. And the community is often visited by young believers from the Orthodox churches,” said Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the head of the worldwide Anglican Communion, described Schutz as “one of the few figures who truly change the climate of a religious culture, not by the exercise either of force or of cheap popularity, but by a lifelong practice of Christ-like authority.”

Though Schutz remained a Protestant until his death, he attended the funeral of Pope John Paul II in 2005 and received the Catholic Eucharist from the hands of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who weeks later would become Pope Benedict XVI. **BT**

Christian women prefer Sunday services to shopping, study says

By Nicole Neroulis
Religion News Service

Protestant and Catholic women in the United States have grown unhappier since stores have stayed open on Sundays, according to a study by economists from Israel’s Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Chicago’s DePaul University.

The study found that the repeal of “blue law” restrictions on Sunday shopping has corresponded with lower church attendance for white women. Meanwhile, the probability of women becoming unhappy increased by 17 percent.

The study concludes that “an important part of the decline in women’s happiness during the last three decades can

be explained by decline in religious participation,” said Danny Cohen-Zada, an economics scholar at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

The researchers analyzed churchgoing habits of women from the National Opinion Research Center’s General Social Survey, which has collected information about American characteristics and attitudes from 1972 to 2008.

They looked at data from states that have repealed “blue laws” restricting Sunday commerce — Indiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Vermont — compared to others with no change.

The study followed up on a 2008 study published in the *Quarterly Journal of*

Economics, which found that states that had eliminated blue laws saw church attendance decline while drinking and drug use increased.

Even when women noticed they had been happier when malls were closed Sundays, they didn’t resume their previous church habits, which the researchers speculated was due to a problem of self-control and the addictive nature of shopping.

“People choose shopping, like watching TV, because it provides immediate satisfaction,” Cohen-Zada said. “That satisfaction lasts for the moment it’s being consumed and not much longer than that. Religious participation, on the other hand, is not immediate. Instead, it requires persistence over a period of time.” **BT**

Closer to heaven

Workers repair both steeples and lives

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — When William Thornton goes to work in the morning, all he can see is a cross lifted against the sky as he swings around the steeple of First Methodist Church 100 feet above the petty concerns of the city.

His work reminds him of the balancing act of his own life.

“The spiritual aspect keeps me straight,” Thornton said. “It helps me. It surely helps me.”

Thornton might be a recovering drug addict or an ex-convict. He may be just a skilled construction worker. Or a seminary student working a summer job. Tony Stratton has all of those kinds of people working for him, but the past doesn't matter.

“The Christian life is not about being labeled, identified, restricted,” said Stratton, a third-generation steeplejack and a fourth-generation preacher who runs Inspired Heights, a steeple reconstruction company in Rockford, Ill.

“It's about living today to serve God. It's about hanging on to your lifeline.”

“Life — either on the ground or suspended mid-air, is about keeping your lines straight and your ropes anchored,” says Stratton, a lay jail chaplain. “It's about depending on something real and solid. About looking up and having a back-up system, a partner.”

“It's all about mentoring,” said Stratton, who is training his son, seminary student A.J., 20, in the skills of his trade. “It's about accountability. It's about strengthening one another. We are mutually accountable and mutually supportive.”

Every safety system is doubled for the eight-man crew that is spending two months riveting copper into place on First Methodist's 1874 steeple. The crew uses rappelling techniques developed on sailing ships — a system that's actually safer than constructing a web of scaffolding around the steeple, Stratton says.



Stratton runs his crews like a monastery for construction workers.

“While we're on the job, we live together, we eat together, we study together, we work together,” Stratton said.

The crew is up at dawn and on the road at 6:15 a.m. Once on site, they meet for Bible study at 7:15 and are on the job by 8:30 a.m. or so for 10 hours, with a half-hour break at lunch.

“Or an hour, if we really complain about the heat,” says A.J., grinning as his father ambles over to put a playful headlock on his son.

The workday ends with breakdown and an hour of Bible study. The crew eats dinner on the way back to the hotel, where they shower and sleep. It's all repeated six days a week, unless there is a Saturday wedding at the church.

And the seventh day? They rest, of course.

Most Sundays, they'll attend the church they are repairing. “We don't want to be the typical contractor that comes in just for the paycheck,” Stratton said. “We're here as part of the Body of Christ to serve the church. We want to come and worship with them.”

In everything, Stratton says, a Christian seeks to glorify God, and it's no different with the work of repairing the buildings erected for the glory of God.

“A church steeple is designed to lift one's head upward, to remind you that there's just one way,” Stratton said. “Back in the day, the steeple would have been the highest point in town. It's a testimony to the people of the town that God is still in control, and even if you've strayed away from church, when they get ready, he'll be there.”

Stratton says he can identify with the hard-luck tales of his crew; he's had his own struggles, but it's not something there's any reason to talk about now.

“In Christ, the old is gone. He's dead,” Stratton said. “The past is not as relevant as: What do I do with my life today?”

The work undergirds the Bible lessons that Stratton leads at the beginning and end of each day: a change of focus, looking up, renewing the old and repairing the broken, digging out the rot and replacing it with strong new parts.

At the end of the day, after they've broken down the 60-foot, 200-pound extension ladder, the crew moves inside to a Sunday School room where they've set up a circle of chairs.

William Thornton writes a note to his fiancée. Stratton boots up his computer to scroll to the day's lesson. Mike Miller makes jokes about how he thinks he's getting to be afraid of heights. Melvin Kennedy walks a little unsteadily, slowed by pain medication for an unfortunate run-in between his index finger and flecks of steel from a drill bit.

Andy Guthrie and A.J. share a notebook. Orlando Bea, the youngest member of the crew, tips his chair back onto its hind legs and chats with Torue Solomon beside him, a strong ex-con and recovering addict who's become one of the regular and returning mentors on Stratton's team.

Then Stratton leads the group in prayer.

“This is not just something being restored on the outside,” Stratton says afterwards. “This is God restoring lives.” **BT**

—Kay Campbell writes for *The Huntsville Times in Huntsville, Ala.*

2010 ChurchWorks!

Good ideas for effective ministry

Brought to you
this month
by Sarah Stafford



Producing a children's musical in one week

Many years ago, when I first started coordinating children's choirs, I decided I didn't want to spend the entire spring semester teaching a musical for the end-of-year choir program. I heard about a church having a summer music camp where the children learned a musical during that one week. I called the minister of music to find out how he made this impossible feat possible. Thus, the most physically demanding but also rewarding week of my life began, and now the summer doesn't feel complete without MusiCamp. I have followed the same schedule for more than 20 years. Listed below are a few tips that are important to carry out this adventure.

Planning

- Meet with the church staff, especially the children's minister, to decide on the date and time of day. Choose a week on the calendar that does not conflict with another event or is not back-to-back with Vacation Bible School or preteen camp. A 9-12 schedule works well, although some churches follow a 9-5 schedule with activities held in the afternoon.
- Set a budget. Determine the amount the church and each of the children will fund.
- Decide on the ages of children to include, being aware of the challenges of including younger children.
- Select and order the musical. Make sure it is biblically sound and feasible with your group of children. Musicals with 5-6 songs are preferable, especially if some of the songs are repeated. Harder musicals are doable if a select ensemble performs a few of the songs.
- Arrange for practice and performance space based on the size of the church and the number of children in the camp. Try to choose rehearsal space with adjacent rooms for drama, costumes, solos and dance.
- Publicize the event to families.

Suggested Musicals

Are We There Yet? and *Malice in the Palace*
(Allen Pote and Tom Long, Hope Publishing Co.)

Christmas in Egypt, Hans Bronson's Gold Medal Mission, Nic at Night
(Kathie Hill, KathieHillMusic)

Daniel, Darius & DeLion and *My Way or Yahweh!*
(Sue Farrar, Word Entertainment)

A Technicolor Promise and *Oh, Jonah!*
(Allen Pote and Carole McCann, Choristers Guild)

Moses and the Freedom Fanatics
(Hal H. Hopson, Choristers Guild)

Fat, Fat Jehoshaphat
(Kathie Hill and Ron Griffin, PraiseGathering Music)

Good "Kings" Come in Small Packages
(David and Bonnie Huntsinger and Linda Rebeck, Maranatha! Music)

Sticky Notes and Bible Quotes
(Dennis and Nan Allen, Dovetail Music)

Elijah! God's Faithful Prophet
(Mark Patterson, Lorenz Corp.)

- Recruit leaders such as the overall director, choral director, drama director, rehearsal pianist, solo director, choreographer, designers for costumes and sets and props, Bible study leader, recreation director, refreshments coordinator, registrar, audio and visual technicians, and photographer.
- Begin registration.
- Distribute music and CDs to the children.
- Set up auditions for main characters and soloists, preferably in 15-minute time slots during the week before camp. Enlist the help of the choral director, drama director, soloist coach and pianist to listen and choose the main characters.
- Notify children of their individual speaking and singing parts to be memorized by the first day of MusiCamp.

- Work with the drama director; designers for costumes, sets and props; and choreographer.
- Design a t-shirt, nametags and other artwork related to the musical.
- Plan an after-performance family party or picnic. Ask parents to provide food.

Daily schedule

9:00 — Large group rehearsal in choral room, drama director working with main characters by scenes, solo director working with soloists, costume designer doing fittings
 10:00 — Recreation
 10:20 — Restroom
 10:30 — Refreshments
 10:45 — Bible study
 11:00 — Repeat of 9:00 activities
 12:00 — Prize drawing or other incentive

- *Monday and Tuesday:* Learn the songs. Work on choreography for selected songs.
- *Wednesday:* In the first hour, learn the songs and choreography. In the second hour, perform the songs from memory. The drama director works with the main characters in the sanctuary, complete with scene blocks and sets and props.
- *Thursday:* All children practice in the sanctuary, using microphones.
- *Friday:* Practice briefly in the sanctuary. Change into costumes for a dress rehearsal.
- *Sunday:* During morning worship, present a short excerpt from the musical. In the afternoon, leaders arrive early to prepare for a brief rehearsal with the children. Then the children eat a snack, slip into costumes and have prayer time before the performance.
- *Monday:* Clean up and store items as needed. Meet with leaders for an appreciation luncheon and evaluation time. Write notes to the children and leaders. Check on finances and pay bills. Rest and reflect. **BT**

ChurchWorks! 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 Sarah Stafford, associate minister of music at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. More ministry resources are available at www.thefellowship.info/News/subscribe and www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page.

2010 Bible Studies

These lessons follow the adult Formations studies from Smyth & Helwys Publishing www.helwys.com

Oct. 31, 2010

Defending the homeland

1 Samuel 30:1-4, 11-30

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), more than 1,800 allied soldiers were killed between 2001 and June 20, 2010, in Afghanistan alone. This figure included more than 1,100 American soldiers and more than 300 soldiers from the United Kingdom. While it is impossible to accurately count the number of civilian Afghans killed, the BBC did suggest that as many as 10,000 civilians have been killed over the past 10 years.

In light of the realities of war and terror in our world today, how are we as practicing Christians to best respond to our world? In our biblical text for today we find David, who has not yet become king, returning to his camp at Ziklag only to find that all the women, children and their supporting livestock have been taken by a raiding party.

David and his men respond in three ways. First, they collectively mourn (“wept aloud”) for their loss (v. 4). Second, David’s men want to kill David for leaving their camp unprotected and placing them in this spot (v. 6). Third, David finds strength in the Lord his God (v. 6).

As the leader, David immediately receives the blame for the present disaster. The people seem to forget that David himself has two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, who have also been taken (v. 5). After all, it apparently was David who had led this band into the land of the Philistines. It was David who had been given the city of Ziklag as a place to live by the Philistines. And it was David who had led the soldiers in his band to travel to Aphek when the Philistines were gathering together to battle with Israel at Jezreel.

Leadership can be a lonely place. David must certainly feel the heat at this moment. He seeks divine counsel, however, in which he is instructed to pursue the raiding party and affirmed that he will be successful in his rescue

mission. Since no bodies are found, the raiders were apparently motivated by the prospects of selling their captives for profit. David and his men decide to follow the raiders and recapture what rightfully belongs to them.

Verse 11 relates that the pursuing band finds fortune in the form of an Egyptian servant who has been left behind by the raiding party to die. David agrees to let the Egyptian live in return for his help in directing David’s band to the raiding party’s camp. David learns that the raiding party has a head start of at least three days and that the party is primarily a group of Amalekites.

We often read of divine assurance given to a biblical character in regard to the person’s task at hand. I have often wondered if this describes the assurance of the person in the middle of the crisis or perhaps is more reflective of the confidence that comes when reflecting upon the event itself from a safe distance afterwards. In other words, how can I be assured that God is truly with me? When we make decisions today, I believe that God does want to give clear direction, but sometimes we must also step out on faith. It is often when we have crossed the threshold of a crossroad that we are either affirmed positively or negatively about our decisions. We often have to take that leap of faith.

David and his band catch the Amalekites as they are celebrating in their successful plunder. According to the text, David recovers “everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives” and “nothing was missing” (vv. 18-19). David and his men are successful.

The remainder of 1 Samuel 30 describes how David distributes the recovered wealth among his entire camp, including a group of 200 soldiers who had not traveled the entire way with the party (v. 10). David also sends a portion of the plunder to the elders in Judah. He establishes a tradition that is seen in several places throughout the Bible that all the people share equally in the blessings and spoils of war.

In this story David is portrayed as a leader

**LESSONS FOR:
Sunday, Oct. 31–Nov. 21, 2010**

Written by Wayne Ballard,
associate professor of religion
and Hebrew language at
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Church in Blaine, Tenn.



of a band of misfits who have lived on the outskirts of Israel’s society out of the grasp of King Saul who desperately wanted to kill David. David forcefully defends that which is his. He defends his family, his possession, and ultimately his faith in the God of his fathers.

Remember that David is not yet king. This story reminds us that we do not need a title or position before we begin serving in the manner God has called us. We are empowered to act on the authority God has given us whether others recognize this authority or not.

Nov. 7, 2010

Submitting to authority

Romans 13:1-7

“Love and Tater Pie.” This was the synopsis of a meeting a friend had with a minister more than 26 years ago. His future father-in-law asked him to meet with the father-in-law’s pastor to see if he was a suitable match to marry his daughter. At that time the older man viewed his pastor as his “spiritual authority” and if the pastor approved, then everything would be fine. This idea was popularized at the time by Bill Gothard’s Institute in Basic Life Principles. Gothard popularized a theology that can best be described as “Umbrella Theology.” If you are under the “umbrella” of your God-given authority, then you are where you need to be and your spiritual life is in check.

My friend thought this request a bit odd, but agreed to go and meet this pastor. During the meeting the pastor lectured him on everything from being a “godly man” to “love and tater pie.” About the only thing my friend remembered from his hour-long lecture was that two people can’t live on “love and tater pie.” In the entire session the young man spoke less than five sentences.

After this encounter, my friend received word from his future father-in-law that the pastor had deemed him unworthy because he was



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not as spiritually mature as the potential bride. In truth, he is still not as spiritually mature as his bride, and may never be! In fairness to his future father-in-law he didn't say a definite "no," but he said the dreaded "let me keep praying about it."

This past summer my friend and his wife celebrated their 25th year of marriage. And just because God has such a sense of humor, let me add the real kicker to this story. The pastor who lectured the young man on "love and tater pie" was discovered having multiple affairs with women in his church during the time period of that lecture. (Partly because of this true story, I am not a big fan of "umbrella theology"!)

What then are we to make of Romans 13:1-7? How do we rectify Paul's directive to be submissive to our God-given authority? Let us read the passage allowing Paul to speak not only to the Romans of his day, but also to the alleys and markets of our 21st century world.

Writing about Romans 13:1-7, John O'Neill says: "These seven verses have caused more unhappiness and misery in the Christian East and West than any other seven verses in the New Testament by the license they have given to tyrants, and the support for tyrants the Church has felt called on to offer as a result of the presence of Romans 13 in the canon" (*Paul's Letter to the Romans*, p. 209). O'Neill's response to Romans 13 was to delete this chapter from the Christian scripture along with other Pauline passages that didn't seem to fit consistently with Paul's other writings.

As a licensed, practicing Baptist minister, professor and pastor, I can't bring myself to dismiss this text. Even if it has been used to cause some pain and difficulty in peoples' lives, I do believe in the centrality of the Bible in the life of a believer. So what can we make of this text? Let me suggest two ways theologians have sought to come to terms with this text.

First, John R. Stott, following the earlier work of Oscar Cullman, suggests that we read Romans 13 in the light of Revelation 13. With at least 30 years having passed since Paul's writing of the letter to the Romans, Revelation 13 describes the State not as the hand of God, but rather as the tool of the devil. Stott writes: "To sum up, we are to submit to the State's God-given authority, but it has been given for particular and not totalitarian purposes. The gospel is equally hostile to tyranny and anarchy" (*The Message of Romans*, p. 343). In other words, we are to be discerning in our submission as Christian citizens.

A second approach to Christian submis-

sion is described by Richard Foster in his work *The Celebration of Discipline*. Put simply, Foster says we are to live in submission to human authority until it becomes destructive. Like O'Neill, Foster warns of the possible dangers of blind submission. "Nothing can put people into bondage like religion, and nothing in religion has done more to manipulate and destroy people than a deficient teaching on submission" (p. 110). Much like a battered wife, God is not honored when we allow ourselves to be physically, mentally or spiritually abused.

In our previous study we examined David and his merry men reclaiming what had been taken from them by the Amalekite raiding party. As we have considered Romans 13:1-7 and the modern concern of "umbrella theology," let us ask a significant question: Would we even know of David the great king of Israel if he had submitted to his earthly authority in the person of King Saul?

The Bible is filled with people who choose to follow the direction of God rather than submitting to the authority of humanity. Moses' mother in Exodus 1:22-2:10 places Moses in the Nile River as commanded by Pharaoh, but only on her own terms. She places Moses in a *tevat* (literally an "ark"), a word used only in this instance and earlier in Genesis 6-9 describing the vessel built by Noah. The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel 3 describes civil protest rather than bowing down to an idol as prescribed by the king. Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us of our duties to the State, but these duties should always be honored in light of our allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Nov. 14, 2010

Longing for peace

Isaiah 2:1-4

"Too long have I lived among those who hate peace. I am a man of peace; but when I speak, they are for war." (Ps. 120:6-7)

Psalm 120 is the first Song of Ascents found in Psalms 120-134. These "pilgrimage psalms" represent the possible words of sojourners as they traveled to the Temple in Jerusalem. Some scholars suggest these psalms were recited in succession as the priest rose up the steps entering into the Jerusalem Temple. The ending of Psalm 120 speaks of the pilgrim's longing for peace, even while all those around him or her clamor for war.

The last 10 years have been difficult ones for the United States. Since the attacks of

Sept. 11, 2001, we have known only the constant fighting of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In many evangelical churches there has also emerged a convergence between the church and the United States military machine. The old British slogan "God and Country" has been replaced frequently with "Country first and then God." Over the last 10 years I have personally witnessed several worship experiences where Psalm 120:6-7 came to mind.

Is it really unpatriotic to long and work for peace? Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah speaking to an eighth-century world fraught with war and violence.

"In the last days ..." This apparent introduction to Isaiah's prophetic vision appears at first glance to be a temporal marker expressing a disclaimer for those who would long for peace. One may read this as saying that the prospects of peace are only available at the end of time as we know it, therefore relieving us of any current responsibility of working for and living in peace. In his commentary, *Isaiah 1-12*, Otto Kaiser interprets this verse as the "consummation of history." The Hebrew text, however, literally says, "And it will be in the following days ..." or "And it will be in the days that come after ..."

The words "last days" carry a vast amount of theological baggage in our world today. We often jump to a conclusion that peace is not possible, and therefore we alleviate any responsibility we may have to work for peace. Seeing peace as possible in the days to come gives us a sense of hope that peace may indeed be probable in our world and in our time.

Hans Walter Wolff describes Isaiah 2:1-4 as "the most significant promise for Jerusalem on the theme of world peace that is known in the Old Testament" (*The Meaning of Peace*, p. 117). Indeed it is such a powerful affirmation of the promise of peace that it appears also in Micah 4:1-4.

Micah, like Isaiah, was a prophet living in the 8th century B.C. in the land of Judah who witnessed the cruelty of the Assyrians as they pressed their war machine into service prevailing over the smaller nations of Syria and Israel, Judah's northern neighbors in 722 B.C. It is significant that in two prophetic texts from this period of Judah's history, two separate prophets viewed this hope for peace as significant.

Many commentators over the years have pointed to Joel 3:9-12 as a reversal of the call for peace in Micah and Isaiah. Joel 3:10 records, "Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears." This is an



apparent reversal of Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3. Citing the repeated calls for peace throughout the Old and New Testaments, Wolff refutes the notion that somehow Christians are exempt from the mandate of Jesus to live peaceably in our world. Wolff writes, “the expectation of a Messiah belongs inseparably with the hope for an end to war, the destruction of weapons, and the establishment of peace between nations, including social justice” (pp. 116-117).

The words of Ephesians 2:14 aptly describe Jesus as the center of hope for peace in our world, “For he himself is our peace.” Are we content with the waving of the flag and the submitting of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ to the flag of any nation? How long will we sit idly by while people in our churches use our pulpits for political agendas and personal aspirations? Is our world any less violent than the world of Isaiah and Micah, yet both prophets describe God’s desire for peace? When will we really believe that all things are possible with God — including peace in our lifetime?

I very much appreciate the men and women now serving in the United States military. Their service is commendable, and they are no less than heroic for their sacrifice, courage and selfless service. I deeply respect each of these persons and their families. But I pray for the day to come, as spoken by Isaiah, when “... they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” and “nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” I long for the day when our men and women will no longer be called upon to leave their families to journey to the far-off deserts of Iraq or the rugged mountains of Afghanistan or the varied topography of Korea.

Nov. 21, 2010

Turning the other cheek

Luke 6:27-36

“Do unto others as you would have them do to you.”

Luke 6:31 records the Golden Rule that most of us know by heart. It is central to the Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel of Luke. It is central to the mission and purpose of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus has taken a prohibition known in Judaism — “what you hate, do not do to anyone (Tobit 4:15)” — and turned it upside down in a positive way. But truth be told, it is hard to live and practice.

I really don’t want to do good to those who have wronged me. It is against my

ingrained nature. I demand justice, and I want the right to say what that justice might be.

Life is filled with those who wrong us: companies that overcharge for sub-par services, friends who betray us, co-workers who put us down in attempt to make themselves look better. These are just some of the possible scenarios where we are called to remember the words of Luke 6:31.

Many in our world live by a golden rule today, but it is a different golden rule than the one offered by Jesus. Like the days of Amos and Hosea, many live today by this golden rule: “He who has all the gold makes all the rules.” Our American legal system has favored the elite, the wealthy and the highly educated for decades. We can simply look to Congress or other places of government and see that those with all the gold are still making all the rules. Are there any plumbers or electricians or bank tellers serving in the halls of Congress?

In laying the groundwork for the Golden Rule, Jesus has issued a four-pronged command for his followers: “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (v. 27). In essence, Jesus gives us a formula that will enable us to live by the Golden Rule even on those days when it is the last thing we want to do.

First, we are to love our enemies. In verses 20-23 the needy and the persecuted are described as those who are to be blessed. This prescription given by Jesus shows us how we are to react to those who are persecuting us — with love. Love is much more than an emotion or simply a mushy feeling; it can include a purposeful way of relating to others. We make a decision to love or not to love. When facing an enemy or an instance of oppression, it is the equivalent of “standing down.” We may have the ability, and perhaps even the force to resist the oppressing force directed at us, but instead of meeting force with active resistance, we consciously choose to not resist. We simply are to love. This can be difficult, but it is something we must do if we desire to be authentic followers of Jesus Christ.

From my formative years I remember those things passed down from my father. One such belief was his question when I was involved in any kind of scrape at school (and I seem to remember way too many of them!). His only question for me was not “Who started it?” but rather “Who finished it?” Jesus commands us to respond with love to those seeking to hurt us.

Second, Jesus exhorts his disciples to do good to those who hate us. This is also counterintuitive to our conventional wisdom. It is one thing to “love” our enemies, but it is quite another to aid them with good deeds. By doing good to our enemies, Jesus asks us to do exactly opposite of what they are doing to us. This is a powerful element of the ethic of Jesus. At its core is the belief that violence only begets violence. The world has witnessed in the 20th century the futility of an arms race. It is yet to be seen if humanity will actually learn from this chapter in human history. In our current efforts in Afghanistan it is clear that more is often accomplished by the building of schools, hospitals and housing than by dropping bombs or staging raids with drones.

Third, we are to bless those who curse us. The biblical concepts of blessing and cursing are often misunderstood or lost altogether in our culture today. In the biblical world, blessing and cursing had a profound impact on both the one issuing the edict and on the one receiving the pronouncement. People believed there was power in the edict itself and that whatever was pronounced would, in fact, occur. Jesus called upon his followers to offer blessings rather than curses.

Fourth, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are called upon to pray for those who would do us harm. Prayer is such a neglected tool, but it has the ability to change our world. As most believers understand when we pray for our enemies, it also places us in a posture of trust and vulnerability before God. God has the opportunity to work not only with our enemies, but also on us. Prayer changes things, but prayer can ultimately change us.

Recently I saw a bumper sticker that really made me smile. It said read something like, “I am already against the next war!” Perhaps if we really take seriously the words of Jesus Christ in Luke 6, we too are already against the coming of future military conflicts.

Suggested Resources

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Colored beads & controversy

Jesus Seminar to mark 25 years of questions

Since 1985, scholars affiliated with the Jesus Seminar have been casting doubt on the authenticity of sayings attributed to Jesus and questioning whether he saw himself as an end-times prophet.

As the seminar marks its 25th anniversary Oct. 13-16 in Santa Rosa, Calif., it's generating far less attention and controversy than in years past, when the media spotlight gave members a platform to reach millions.

Now observers are debating a new question: What difference has the Jesus Seminar made? Once again, the jury is divided.

Among the seminar's 100 fellows is a strong sense that the group has effectively made the general public more aware of questions surrounding the so-called "historical Jesus."

For example: By using color-coded beads to vote on whether Jesus likely said this or that, the group captured widespread attention, said John Dominic Crossan, chair of the 25th anniversary event.

"When some of our critics said, 'These guys are seeking publicity,' we said 'Duh! That's the whole purpose!'" Crossan said.

"We wanted people to know what we were doing. That was the whole purpose of the voting with colored beads and all the rest of that paraphernalia. It was designed for cameras."

Critics of the Jesus Seminar concede that the group deftly drew the spotlight and got a cross-section of people talking about Jesus. But they also fault the scholars for allegedly misrepresenting their views as mainstream and for shaking the faith of Christian communities.

"They created this impression that they were representing a genuine consensus of

opinion that Jesus only said 18 percent of what's attributed to him in the Gospels and so on," said Duke Divinity School Dean and New Testament scholar Richard Hays.

"In point of fact, that was never so. They didn't represent the sort of consensus that they claimed to represent. It was a self-selected group of scholars who held a particular view."

The Jesus Seminar held its first meeting in Berkeley, Calif., as 35 individuals, mostly scholars, responded to an invitation from the late Robert Funk, who died in 2005.

Having rejected the fundamentalism of his youth, Funk was eager to assemble fellow scholars to dispel what he considered to be mistaken church teachings about Jesus, according to Lane McGaughey, a member of the seminar since its beginning.

What emerged from the group's semi-annual meetings was a sense of Jesus as human, not divine, rising to prominence because of his social justice teachings, not because of his messianic status.

"The danger is that any of us will see in Jesus what it is that we're looking for," McGaughey said. "That is a problem not just for Jesus Seminar scholars but for conservative scholars as well."

Critics say the Jesus Seminar has long been an agenda-driven project marked by flawed methodology.

Fellows of the seminar defend its methods and its impact.

Crossan says that through the seminar, scholars fulfilled a moral duty to make their insights accessible to rank-and-file Christians and other curious people, not just academic journals.

McGaughey goes even further, saying the seminar, in presenting a historical and human Jesus, helped make Christianity meaningful for people who stopped believing doctrine and left the church.

"It's opened up some very interesting changes in a lot of these so-called dying

churches," McGaughey said. "Because of the Jesus Seminar, a lot of people feel that they have permission to ask questions that they never before thought they could ask in church."

Without a doubt, the Jesus Seminar elicited strong reactions from scholars and clerics who defend tenets of orthodox Christianity.

The seminar provided a "wake-up call" for conservative scholars to popularize their own writings, said Ben Witherington, professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary.

"One of the positive effects is that it's changed the way the networks deal with that kind of subject," Witherington said. "They started bending over backward to get more of a spectrum of opinion about the historical Jesus because they realized there was such pushback to just interviewing the Jesus Seminar people."

After more than two decades of examining the Gospels, the Jesus Seminar is moving on. Fellows continue to meet, but they now focus on the biblical book of Acts and the letters of Paul.

The Westar Institute, an umbrella group for the Jesus Seminar, will in October publish *The Authentic Letters of Paul*.

As the seminar moves beyond Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, critics say the initiative has ceased to compel public interest. Witherington sees the lack of public attention as a sign that the seminar is now largely irrelevant to public conversation about religion and culture.

Fellows of the seminar acknowledge that public attention has waned, but they aren't entirely disappointed. To some, being disregarded has become a badge of success.

"There is in a way less criticism of the Jesus Seminar now and less publicity in fact because our work has been accepted. It's no longer regarded as on the fringes,"

McGaughey said. **BT**

After more than two decades of examining the Gospels, the Jesus Seminar is moving on.

Fellows continue to meet, but they now focus on the biblical book of Acts and the letters of Paul.

in the know

Keeping up with people, places, and events

Glen Adkins is minister of music at Emerywood Baptist Church in High Point, N.C.

Greg Barr is pastor of St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky. He previously was pastor of St. Andrews Church in Columbia, S.C.

Wade Bibb is pastor of Central Baptist Church of Bearden in Knoxville, Tenn. He comes from Carson-Newman College where he had served as associate professor of religion for 12 years and as interim pastor of several congregations.

Joshua Breazeale is minister of education at Oakmont Baptist Church in Greenville, N.C.

Ronnie Brewer will become coordinator of the Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship on Oct. 15, coming from the pastorate of Trinity Baptist Church in Madison, Ala.

Elizabeth Davis has been named provost and executive vice president of Baylor University. Davis is the first woman appointed to the chief academic officer's post in the school's 165-year history.

David Hinson is senior benefits consultant with the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit

Board (MMBB). He will serve church workers in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia, working out of Frankfort, Ky., where he has been pastor of First Baptist Church.

Jenny Lee is minister to students at First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C.

Timothy Maddox, head of the philosophy department at Hardin-Simmons University, died Sept. 6 while at work. Maddox, 56, had taught at his alma mater since 2004. His funeral was held at First Baptist Church of Abilene, Texas.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin is executive director-treasurer of the Woman's Missionary Union of Texas, following service as Illinois WMU director since 2001.

Craig McCoy is minister of music at University Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, N.C. McCoy previously served as minister of music and youth at the First Baptist Church of Martinsville, Va.

Ruth Morales, former associate minister and active member at First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, died Aug. 25.

Jack Partain, professor emeritus of religion at Gardner-Webb University, died Aug. 3 in Shelby, N.C., at the age of 77. Partain also served as a pastor in North Carolina and Virginia and as a missionary with his wife, Ruth, in Africa for 15 years.

Thomas Quisenberry is pastor of First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tenn., coming from First Baptist Church of Morrow, Ga.

Jim Ross left the pastorate of Madison Baptist Church in Madison, Ga., to direct advancement and church relations for Morningstar Treatment Services.

James Smith is the new president of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Foundation Board. Smith has served as president of the Missouri Baptist Foundation since 1993.

Douglas Watterson retired Aug. 1 after 18 years as pastor of North Stuart Baptist Church in Florida. His 60 years in ministry included Cliff Temple Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, and the First Baptist Churches of Knoxville, Tenn., and Marianna, Vero Beach and Tallahassee, Fla. He is former president of the Florida Baptist Convention and first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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guest commentary

Time to scrutinize the ‘restoration’ experts

By Tom Ehrich

RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

Everyone seems to have a solution for “restoring” America. Take power away from liberal intellectuals, say some, and put “ordinary” people in charge.

Or make this a white-run, Christian nation.

Or insist on leaders who are intelligent and informed.

Or stop wasting American lives in pointless wars.

Or honor truth-telling and stop allowing ideologues to finance phony “research” to serve their interests.

Or restore traditional marriage and family life.

Or allow new forms of marriage and family.

On and on they go, prescriptions of astonishing contradiction, grounded in smoke, expressed in absolutes, claiming the moral high ground while denigrating opposing views as morally repugnant.

What these solutions have in common is a belief that America needs “restoring,” that something is fundamentally wrong in America, that America has lost its way and is in danger, and — here comes the money pitch — that they alone know how to fix it.

It’s an old form of argument, of course. In debate it’s called the “straw man.” I deflect the point you made by insinuating that you said something else, something profoundly stupid.

Or as Sarah Palin said at the “Restoring Honor” rally in Washington: “Say what you

want about me, but I raised a combat vet, and you can’t take that away from me” — as if someone had been denying her son’s military service.

In marketing it’s called “selling the problem.” Before you can sell diet products, first convince people they are fat. To sell hatred, first convince people they are being hated.

In religious history it’s called “scapegoating.” Denominations stir solidarity by declaring themselves under attack. To stir rage among working-class Americans, tell them that the college educated look down on them.

In everyday life it’s called lying. To rescue a dying candidacy, fabricate stories about illegal immigrants and blame them for falling property values and distressed retirement portfolios. To stir anti-Islamic rage, misstate the facts about a cultural center planned for lower Manhattan.

We buy it, because we sense that something does need restoring. Something is wrong. We aren’t sure what. Money seems unusually tight. Jobs seem scarce. Our children don’t have bright futures. Yet another government seems helpless. Bewildering enemies point weapons and vitriol our way.

As we feel “nameless dread,” politicians,

charlatans and demagogues are eager to give us the “name.”

Rather than think clearly, we give in to passions. Rather than seek facts, we welcome invective that expresses our fears. Rather than honor the complexity and ambiguity of the world we live in, we grasp at simplistic notions.

None of this is new. Every demagogue invents enemies for him to squash. What seems new, in an age of information overload and vanishing credibility, is that every rumor and lie, every piece of phony research, every campaign fabrication gets taken seriously — not so much because we are gullible, but because we are desperate for answers and here is someone whose answer feels right.

We want to name our dread, and here is an enemy-namer who seems sincere and claims to be one of us — wearing shirt sleeves! Never mind that actually waging war on that enemy would accomplish nothing and might make matters worse.

A maybe-truth that happens to agree with one’s predispositions and fears is more satisfying than an actual-truth that requires one to think again.

It’s time to scrutinize the restoration experts. **BT**

—Tom Ehrich is an Episcopal priest based in New York and the author of *Just Wondering, Jesus*.



Baptist News, Baptist Views

BAPTISTS TODAY *online*

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guest commentary

Theological education gains a new global perspective

By Molly T. Marshall

Nearly 200 years after the Judsons arrived on the golden shores of Burma (“golden” because of the rice and the pagodas), a tidal wave of Baptist sisters and brothers from Myanmar (Burma) is arriving on U.S. shores.

Approximately 17,000-18,000 refugees have come each year over the past decade. When they arrive, about half have made their way to Baptist churches because of the enduring spiritual kinship.

For the past three years, Central Baptist Theological Seminary has been strengthening varied collaborative initiatives with Myanmar Institute of Theology. Our schools have an historic partnership.

After World War II, Central served as the accrediting seminary, granting degrees to the graduates there in Yangon (Rangoon). I have been touched as faithful pastoral leaders who earned their degrees in the 1950s have expressed their gratefulness for Central’s assistance in that time.

In 1966 the government expelled missionaries from Myanmar (Burma), and the Myanmar Baptist Convention grew strong in its post-colonial status. No longer do these Baptists consider themselves a “mission field,” but global mission partners with many other Baptist bodies around the world.

Central has the privilege of being a partner in theological education — sharing faculty, students and intercultural learning opportunities.

On Aug. 25-28, Central hosted 26 refugee pastors for two continuing education courses, Baptist Polity and Ministry Ethics. Central was able to provide instruction in Burmese, the language understood by the majority of the 135 ethnic groups in Myanmar, for the ethics course.

Those who attended were primarily of Karen and Chin ethnicity, two major tribal groups, and translators in their languages were provided for the polity course. These pastors



“I received a lot of new information on how to adjust my ministry life working in a new context here in the USA,” said Pastor Tha Hgay of the Karen congregation at Monte Vista Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., about the training Central Seminary in Kansas provided for ministers coming to the U.S. out of Burma (Myanmar). Central Seminary photo by Matt Nichols.

have suffered as internally displaced persons within Myanmar, moving from camp to camp along the border with Thailand.

Their villages were burned, their homes and personal belongings destroyed (including records of their academic work); and they were forced into servitude as porters for the military, walking long distances burdened by the gear of soldiers. Post-traumatic stress syndrome is common as they seek to recover from inhumane treatment. The next series of courses will address this reality more specifically.

Hospitality is a key spiritual practice, and “welcoming the stranger” is ever more crucial in missional theological education. Working with American Baptist Home Mission Societies and with support from the Henry Luce Foundation, Central is seeking to be of assistance to these leaders as they minister in new contexts with new challenges.

As we shared meals (we finally cooked enough rice!), we discovered that these good brothers are “no longer strangers and aliens,

but ... members of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19) as are we. They taught us about deep faith and perseverance in the harshest of circumstances.

Their joy in Christ is palpable, and they believe in a hopeful future in their new land.

Why would Central undertake a project of this magnitude? We believe that we cannot be faithful in our vocation in theological education without participating in global Christianity. It is my dream that every student at Central will have a profound cross-cultural experience as a part of their seminary curriculum.

Missional work does not flow in one direction as our colonial forebears assumed. Rather, there is the prospect of mutual spiritual transformation as we learn the ways of Christ together. We are grateful to share the pathway with these friends, both in Myanmar and here at home. **BT**

—Molly T. Marshall is president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Shawnee, Kan.

guest commentary

Answer to bad religion is not no religion, but good religion

By Martin Thielen

In 1859, Charles Darwin startled the world by publishing his famous (many would say infamous) book *On the Origin of Species*, which laid out his theory of evolution.

You may know that at the end of his life, Charles Darwin was an atheist. However, that was not always the case. Darwin was raised in the Anglican Church and even considered becoming a clergyman.

So, what caused him to renounce Christianity? Many people believe Darwin lost his faith because of his belief in evolution. But that's incorrect.

To the end of his life, Darwin insisted that evolution was completely compatible with the Christian faith. Neither science nor evolution caused Darwin to reject Christianity.

Instead, bad religion caused Darwin to become an atheist. For example, when his beloved daughter died at the age of 10, Darwin blamed God.

Eventually he quit believing in God altogether. He simply could not believe in a God who killed off 10-year-old children. I don't blame him. I don't believe in that kind of God either.

Unfortunately, there's still a lot of bad religion out there, and it still causes people to lose their faith.

Think of all those young Muslim men and women who blow themselves up, along with dozens of innocent people — all in the name of God. But bad religion is not limited to Islam.

Think about those Roman Catholic priests who molested children and the bishops who covered it up. There's plenty of bad religion in Protestant churches as well — such as those who pray, in the name of Jesus, for God to kill President Obama.

Sadly, I could go on and on. Bad religion abounds, including closed-minded

Today, more than ever before, people are receptive to vibrant, centrist, open-minded, grace-filled, gender-equal, life-giving, moderate/mainline faith.

religion, arrogant religion, intolerant religion and judgmental religion. You can add to that list religion that tells women they are inferior to men and religion that says science is the enemy of faith.

When I think of all the bad religion out there, especially in the Christian faith, I can relate to the singer's Bono's statement, "Christians are hard to tolerate; I don't know how Jesus does it."

Some argue that the answer to bad religion is no religion. A growing number of "new atheists" argue that since religion can be toxic, we need to get rid of faith altogether.

But that is a weak argument. For one thing, we are not going to get rid of religion. People are hardwired to have faith. And without it, the world would be terribly impoverished.

Think of all the good that religion gives us. Religion provides meaning, purpose and hope for billions of believers. It builds significant relationships and faith communities. It gives people a sense of transcendence.

It motivates people to care for others. It promotes responsible ethics and high ideals. It inspires music, art and beauty.

Almost every major charitable organization in the world is faith based. A world

without religion would be a bankrupt, impoverished world. So the answer to bad religion is not no religion. Instead, the answer to bad religion is good religion.

Jesus understood that. In the face of the arrogant, judgmental and legalistic religion of his day, Jesus offered a healthy alternative of humility, grace, mercy, compassion and justice.

We can offer healthy faith to the world. We can promote a religion of grace, not judgment; a religion of love, not hatred; a religion of open-mindedness, not intolerance; a religion of compassion, not legalism; a religion of humility, not arrogance.

Several years ago a young family visited my congregation for several months. When we met to discuss baptism and membership, I asked: "What attracted you to our congregation?"

They said, "The sign out front that says, 'Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors.' We thought all churches were narrow-minded and judgmental. So when we saw your sign, we decided to visit. When we discovered that the church inside lived up to the sign outside, we wanted to become members."

Even in our Bible-belt community, people are hungry for a viable alternative to religious-right fundamentalism. Today, more than ever before, they are receptive to vibrant, centrist, open-minded, grace-filled, gender-equal, life-giving, moderate/mainline faith.

Offering that kind of Jesus-spirited faith is our God-given mission. Let us do so boldly. **BT**

—Martin Thielen is the former editor of Proclaim who currently serves as pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Lebanon, Tenn. His ministry website is www.GettingReadyForSunday.com.



guest commentary

When God has the last word

By Laura Rector

What happens when a Southern Baptist girl takes God's love story for her to heart? What happens when she grows up with heroines like Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong? What happens when she prays for missionaries every week?

For this former G.A., it meant growing up and feeling God calling her to ministry as an adult woman — even though the very denomination that taught her to hear and heed that call didn't officially approve.

As a little girl in a Southern Baptist church, I was a member of Mission Friends, then Girls in Action, and then Acteens. I loved missions even before I made a profession of faith in Christ, so it wasn't much of a surprise to anyone but me when God called me to missions while I was praying and reading my Bible outside the dorm at Union University.

It was something God had started preparing me for from the earliest days of my childhood.

After he grabbed my attention and affirmed that he was truly calling me — through Scripture, prayer and words from Christian brothers and sisters — to missions, I rushed through the end of my time in college. I even added an extra class or two to my course load in order to finish my B.A. in Christian studies in three years instead of four.

I went on to do M.Div. work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. At age 21, I was the school's youngest new masters student in the year 1999 — but I was ready to serve Jesus with all my heart.

Southern Seminary gave me opportunities to do that, both locally and overseas.

I did internships in South Korea and Mongolia while I was there, and I served as the youth minister of First Korean Baptist Church of Radcliff, Ky., for three years.

I learned my method for hermeneutics through the professors at conservative Southern Baptist Convention-related schools at both the undergraduate and seminary levels. Apparently, I was good at exegesis and New Testament-related courses, receiving good grades and honors for my work.

Surely that means I had mastered the skills taught by those schools, right?

But none of that mattered when I felt called to ministry — and when, using the education I received from Southern Baptists and their hermeneutical methodology, I understood Scripture to support women at all levels in church leadership. Unfortunately, in the midst of my seminary studies, the SBC's *Baptist Faith & Message* statement was revised to say women should not be pastors.

My academics, my spirituality, my felt calling didn't matter anymore. The only thing that mattered to the SBC was my gender.

Before my graduation in 2002, it became necessary to sign the *BF&M 2000* to serve as a missionary of the SBC's International Mission Board. I met with the IMB candidate consultant in an office on Southern's campus and asked if I could be accepted as an exception if I explained my theological reasons for believing women can be ordained to ministry and

serve as pastors.

The candidate consultant explained that mine was too big an exception — that other women who had served as children's ministers and pastoral counselors had been forced to choose between missionary service and turning in their ordination certificates to their churches.

"But if the reason women aren't allowed to be pastors is that it involves teaching men, why is it okay for them to lead all-male Bible studies in prisons?" I asked.

"They aren't performing baptisms or funerals or weddings" was the answer I was given. (Funny how the verses used to "prove" women can't be pastors don't mention anything about those things.)

The candidate consultant prayed for me, but made it clear that I would never be a Southern Baptist missionary.

With my naïve and broken heart, full of questions and frustrations, I walked home to Mullins Hall — the women's dorm at the seminary. I played back my answering-machine messages.

During the time that I was in the meeting with the candidate consultant, a local soup kitchen left a message on my answering machine. They wanted me to come preach and pray with the people who came for lunch on Fridays — men included.

Apparently, the Holy Spirit decided to have the last word that day — and God's word is still more important to heed than the SBC's. **BT**

—Laura Rector is a Ph.D. candidate in Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. This column is provided by Associated Baptist Press.



My academics, my spirituality, my felt calling didn't matter anymore.

The only thing that mattered to the SBC was my gender.

the lighter side

The most interesting minister in the world

By Brett Younger

Most Baptists claim they do not care for the product, but when we are alone we smile at the commercials featuring “the most interesting man in the world.” The advertisements depict a bearded, debonair gentleman in his 50s. While vaguely Spanish music plays in the background, the narrator describes “the most interesting man in the world.”

- If he punched you in the face, you would have to fight off the strong urge to thank him.
- He once taught a German shepherd to bark in Spanish.
- His personality is so magnetic, he is unable to carry credit cards.
- He has been known to cure narcolepsy just by walking into a room.
- His organ donor card also lists his beard.
- He is “the most interesting man in the world.”

Each commercial ends with a signature sign-off: “Stay thirsty, my friends.”

I am guessing that you and I have exactly the same reaction — someone needs to make commercials about “the most interesting minister in the world.”

- When the most interesting minister leads a silent prayer, birds stop singing.
- When the most interesting minister prays before the offering is collected, the plates fill with credit cards, earrings and gold watches.
- Other ministers have to lead the prayer of confession, because the most interesting minister has nothing to say.
- During hymns, the congregation wishes the most interesting minister’s lapel mic was on.
- When the most interesting minister reads scripture, most assume she wrote it.
- When the most interesting minister has a baby dedication, the baby always cries — when he hands the baby back to the mother.
- When the most interesting minister leads the children’s sermon, everyone comes to the front.

The most interesting minister never preaches long enough.

- When the most interesting minister steps into the baptistery, the water parts.
- When the most interesting minister serves communion, it does not taste like grape juice.
- When the most interesting minister preaches, cell phones refuse to ring.
- The most interesting minister speaks fluent Hebrew and Greek, but never does so in the pulpit.
- Nine months after the most interesting minister’s sermon on Song of Solomon, the nursery ran out of space.
- When the most interesting minister preached on the book of Revelation, it made sense.
- The most interesting minister preached on the war in Afghanistan, abortion and gay marriage. Everyone agreed with everything she said.
- The most interesting minister quotes “The Lighter Side.”
- The most interesting minister never preaches long enough.
- Ministers from other churches join the most interesting minister’s church just to shake his hand.



- After Sunday services, the most interesting minister autographs orders of worship — which have been known to show up on e-Bay.
- When the organ is broken, the most interesting minister fixes it — without tools.
- When the most interesting minister speaks at deacons’ meetings, deacons repent.
- The most interesting minister does not go to committee meetings; they come to him.
- The youth have a Sunday for the most interesting minister.
- When the most interesting minister served at the Wednesday night supper, the kitchen got a five-star rating in the next day’s newspaper.
- When the most interesting minister led a Bible study on Genesis 3, apple sales plummeted.
- When the most interesting minister performs a wedding ceremony, no one looks at the bride.
- When the most interesting minister preaches at a funeral, people cry because the deceased did not get to hear it.
- The most interesting minister performs the Christmas pageant as a one-person play.
- When the most interesting minister built a house for Habitat for Humanity, it was immediately renamed Habitat for Divinity.
- Billy Graham comes to the most interesting minister’s crusades.
- Joel Osteen copied the most interesting minister’s smile.
- The most interesting minister knows your name, your birthday and the year of your birth — which she never mentions.
- The most interesting minister has been to Israel many times, and each time, peace breaks out.

I don’t always go to church, but when I do I prefer my minister. Stay interesting, ministers. **BT**

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

The Parable of the Potato Chips

(or “Why non-Fundamentalists continue to fund Fundamentalism”)

By John Pierce
Posted Aug. 14, 2010
www.johnpierce.com

To take advantage of age-related discounts, a retired couple does their weekly grocery shopping every Wednesday morning. The schedule is not all that doesn't change.

The list no longer needs to be written out. They know what they like and rarely alter their buggy contents except when peaches are in season.

One large bag of Joe's Super-Cheap Potato Chips is the preferred accompaniment to lunchtime sandwiches and magically gets reduced to crumbs in the bottom of the bag late each Tuesday. Other staples such as a gallon of fat-free milk, two packages of Archway oatmeal cookies and a large jar of dry-roasted peanuts also seem to last exactly seven days.

After the groceries are brought home and the bags emptied, the couple

enjoys a turkey-on-whole-wheat sandwich with lettuce and tomato — along with the potato chips.

But there is a big surprise. The potato chip bag is filled with Happy Pup dog biscuits instead of the familiar chips.

“How did that happen?” they exclaim in a unison forged by decades of togetherness.

After calling the grocery store and then the customer service number on the back of the bag, they discover that the manufacturer has switched the product names. From now on, the dog treats will be packaged and labeled as Joe's Super-Cheap Potato Chips and vice versa.

The next Wednesday morning the husband retrieves a large bag of Joe's Super-Cheap Potato Chips and tosses it in the buggy. His wife looks at him with surprise.

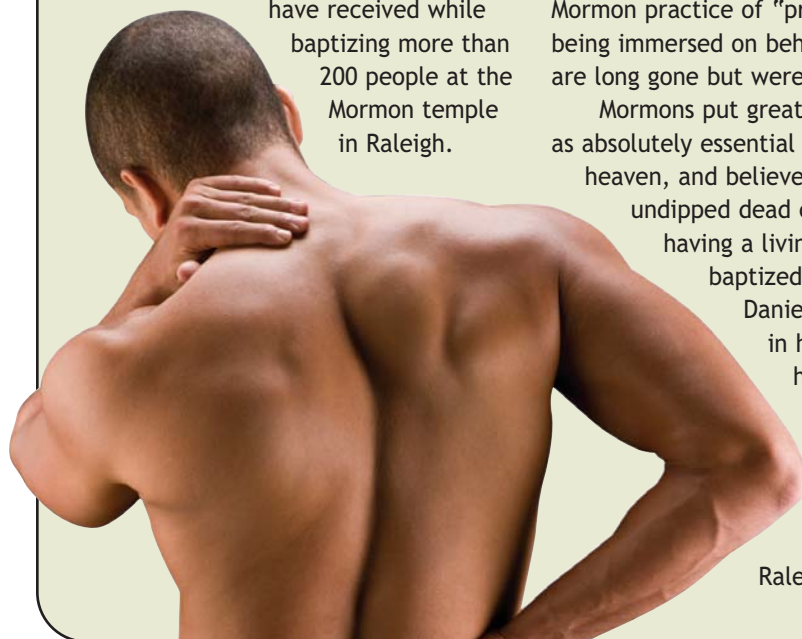


“Don't you remember?” she asks. “Those aren't the chips we like; there are dog treats in there now.”

“I know,” he replied. “But we have always bought them.” **BT**

Ever suffered from ‘baptizer's back’?

The Associated Press is reporting that a Las Vegas man is suing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) over injuries he claims to have received while baptizing more than 200 people at the Mormon temple in Raleigh.



None of the young men and women he baptized had recently professed faith in Christ or sought baptism for themselves. Rather, they were following the Mormon practice of “proxy baptism,” being immersed on behalf of people who are long gone but were never baptized.

Mormons put great stock in baptism as absolutely essential for admission to heaven, and believe that the undipped dead can benefit from having a living, willing soul baptized on their behalf.

Daniel Dastrup claims in his lawsuit that he suffered severe back injuries while performing about 200 baptisms at the LDS temple in Raleigh back in

August 2007.

Church officials failed to tell him that the repetitive motions of baptizing 200 people could result in physical injury, he said.

Dastrup claims further that when he complained about being hurt, a temple official ordered him to continue baptizing the line of proxies, some weighing up to 250 pounds, and refused to let another person relieve him.

Dastrup says his injuries led to two back surgeries that have left him in severe pain and unable to work or continue his studies in law school. The injuries have also damaged his relationship with his wife, the lawsuit said.

I've never been convinced that proxy baptisms could possibly be of any benefit for the dead. Dastrup's case suggests that they may not be good for the living, either. **BT**

Gentleman theologian

William Tuck brings theological heritage into pulpit

A review of *The Compelling Faces of Jesus* (Mercer University Press, 2008), *The Left Behind Fantasy: The Theology behind the Left Behind Tales* (RESOURCE Publications, 2010) and *Love as a Way of Living* (Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2008), all by William Powell Tuck.

William Tuck is a Baptist pastor, a seminary professor, a prolific author, and, that rarest of creatures, a theologian who is a very effective preacher. He has retired from some of these roles but, as the publication of these books demonstrates, not all.

In the beginning the social location of Christian theologians was not a seminary, divinity school, college or university, as it is usually today. The social location of theologians was the church.

For more than a thousand years, almost all Christian theology was written by bishops and monks and occasionally by priests. With the establishment of the universities in the West in about the 12th century, and then with the progressive loosening of the ties between the universities and the church, theologians possessed a place other than the church in which to do their work.

Still, many theologians remained within the church. As late as the 19th century in America many pastors in the South were gentleman theologians, as well-educated as anyone in their towns and cities and as theologically informed as many of those who taught theology in divinity schools and seminaries.

There are a few such persons today. William Tuck is one of them. None of these three books could have been written by someone who was not a serious theologian, and, though these are not books of

sermons, none could have been written by someone who was not a strong preacher.

In order to write his book about the *Left Behind* series, Tuck read all 16 books in that famous series together with a vast amount of secondary literature.

Tuck manages, while offering an alternative to other authors' understanding of eschatology, to draw out important implications for the lives of all Christians: Accept the need for continuous growth, attest to the mystery of life, affirm the great doctrines of the church, acknowledge the need for faithfulness, and approach the future with confidence.

Early in his book on love, Tuck alludes to the seminal work of Anders Nygren on this subject. Only a theologian (or a philosopher) would think to do that, and yet I found Tuck's book to be as spiritually enriching as the famous book about love by Henry Drummond.

Tuck's book about Jesus is a deeply affecting account of the Lord, written with a sure grasp both of the modern history of the quest for the historical

Jesus and of the longer history of the universal church's attempts to understand the person of Jesus in Christological terms.

This book is inspiring not despite of, but because, it is so intensely theological. For example, the chapter about Jesus as a teacher contains a wonderful summary of Jesus' message together with insights into how he communicated that message, and it also makes the enormously important Christological point that

Jesus placed himself at the center of his teachings.

I believe that all adults who are committed church members will benefit from reading these books. You will enjoy them because they will connect Jesus, love and eschatology with your life in fresh and helpful ways.

And I believe that all preachers will benefit from reading these books. You will find in them a vast amount of information and wisdom for your own preaching, and also a pattern for incorporating theology into sermons in such a way as to heighten their effectiveness as sermons.

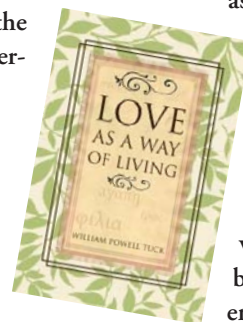
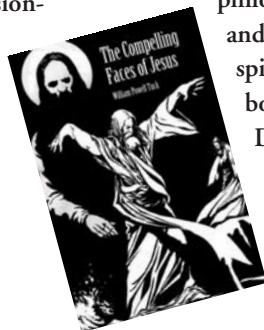
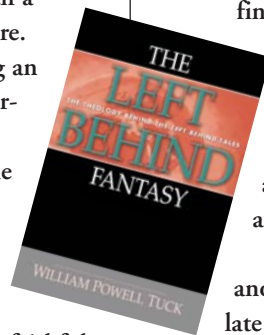
Many years ago I interviewed another gentleman theologian, the late Herschel Hobbs. Over lunch he told me about something he did for many years in his church, the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City.

For the first three months of each year, he said, he preached a theological sermon every Sunday morning. He found that these sermons were beloved by his congregation.

Then he added with a little smile, "Of course, I never told them the sermons were theological because, if I had, some of them would have complained and said, 'Oh, we don't like theology.'"

William Tuck is in some ways different from Hobbs both as a theologian and as a preacher, but the two men are alike in being able to preach the church's great theological heritage in ways that enrich people's lives and the life of the church. I recommend Tuck's books for our generation just as I would have recommended Hobbs's books for his, confidently and enthusiastically. **BT**

—Fisher Humphreys is Professor of Divinity, Emeritus at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.



Putting God first

A 90-year way of life for creative schoolteacher

DUBLIN, Ga. — As the day heats up under the blazing Georgia sun, Sarah Frost has been busy straightening her home and finishing her grocery shopping on a mid-August afternoon. Her 90th birthday is approaching, and she knows her family is going to throw a celebration.

“I don’t know what they are planning, but I know they are going to do something,” she says. “I just want to be prepared for when they all get here. My daughter always tells me not to do anything, but I want to have some of the foods on hand that I know my son and daughter enjoy.”

Over the nine decades marked by this birthday, the retired math educator has more than once traveled the road less taken. She says her life is full of wonderful memories of people and times.

“God has been good to me,” declares Sarah.

Growing up in the Great Depression on her family’s farm in Monroe, N.C., she learned early the value of meaningful work, a good education and her personal faith rooted in the Baptist tradition.

The oldest child, with a sister and two brothers, she set a high standard for herself in schoolwork. After finishing high school in 1936, she studied mathematics at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, which was the state’s women’s college.

“College cost \$341 a year, which included everything but the books,” she recalls. “I worked in the dining hall all four years, and we had the best time. Everyone wanted to work in the dining hall.”

Graduating in 1940, at age 19, Sarah got a teaching job with the Stokes County School Board at Pine Hall, near the North Carolina-Virginia state line. In addition to her math classes, she was the coach for girl’s basketball, a skill she learned with the assistance of her principal.

She had been teaching for 16 months



and was returning to Pine Hall after a visit home when she learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor the first Sunday in December 1941. With the nation at war, Sarah resigned her position and returned to her parents’ home in Monroe.

After a brief teaching position at a nearby high school, she enlisted in the newly formed Marine Corps Women’s Reserve in July 1943. After boot camp, where marching was the mode of transportation, Sarah was sent to Radio Operators School in Ohio, then to Radio Materiel School in Omaha, after which she worked in the radio shop at the Marine Corps Air Station in Santa Barbara, Calif.

Sarah was honorably discharged as sergeant in December 1945. When she returned home, her father suggested she pursue a master’s degree on the GI bill.

She attended Teachers College of Columbia University in New York City. When not in class, she explored the nation’s largest city, learning the subways and taking in plays and museums.

A teaching position at R.J. Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem was waiting for her when Sarah returned home with her master’s degree. She enjoyed working with students, teaching them algebra, geometry and advanced mathematics.

In 1953, the school principal urged Sarah to compete for a Ford Foundation fellowship. Her presentation of “The Use of Mathematics in Government, Business and Education” won the young teacher the opportunity to visit corporations, government agencies, and high schools and colleges for the next year. What

Sarah learned she shared with her students over the next 31 years.

While teaching in North Carolina, Sarah met and married Bill Frost. They had a daughter, Betsy, and a son, Billy. “I know marrying Bill was the Lord’s work because I have two of the nicest children,” she says smiling.

When Bill’s work took him to Georgia in 1964, Sarah easily settled into teaching at Dublin High School. For more than two decades, her passion for teaching and for math translated into interesting class assignments, such as constructing 3-D stellated polyhedron stars, which are still remembered by her former students.

“I loved teaching,” exclaims Sarah. “I looked forward to every Monday and dreaded Friday. I always had the greatest classes and the best students.”

A member of Jefferson Street Baptist Church in Dublin for the past 46 years, she has taught Sunday school for more than four decades. After retiring from the high school in 1985, she became more active in the church and served 17 years as director of the ministry to the homebound.

One way she stays connected with her Baptist roots is through *Baptists Today*. Her support for the monthly journal has grown over the years as she sees the value of its mission to provide information on Baptist life from an autonomous source.

“I look forward to my copy of *Baptists Today* every month,” she states. “I support it because I think it is important to have this information available to Baptists.”

Sarah’s faith has been strong throughout her 90 years. When people ask to what she attributes her longevity, she says, “I tell them to put the Lord first in everything.” **BT**

SUPPORT IS THE KEY

Like Sarah, you can support the effective communication ministry of *Baptists Today* by making a three-year pledge in any amount to the Keystone Fund. For information, call (478) 301-5655.



President David Olive looks over the scenic Bluefield College mountain campus. The Virginia Baptist-related school is nestled near the West Virginia state line. Below: Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem has historic ties to Baptists in North Carolina. Photos by John Pierce.



Linking faith^{to} knowledge

Baptist higher education has long history, modern challenges

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Baptist higher education stands on the shoulders of a long tradition in Christianity linking knowledge to faith. The Apostle Paul, many of the early church fathers and important theologians like Augustine were respected for their knowledge, both in religious and secular realms.

Most early colleges founded in America began as denominational schools intended to meet the need for an educated clergy and at the same time provide an educated lay leadership for church and denomination.

EARLY INVOLVEMENT

Baptists were significant players in the movement. The first Baptist institution of higher learning in America, Rhode Island College, was founded in 1764. It was renamed Brown University in 1804.

From its origin in the Northeast, the Baptist movement spread into the mid-Atlantic and Southern regions. A group of Baptists including Luther Rice, a prime mover for Baptist home and foreign missions in the early 19th century, decided in 1819 to

establish a school in the nation's capital called Columbian College.

The venture proved to be financially unsustainable. The federal government bailed it out, and by an act of Congress in 1904, it became George Washington University, severing all ties with Baptists.

Inspired in part by a desire for an educated clergy, Furman University in Greenville, S.C., was founded in 1826. The school was named after Richard Furman, a clergyman and pioneer denominational statesman in Southern Baptist life.

As pioneers moved westward, religious schools popped up along the way. Many were small academies to teach children the basics of reading, writing, arithmetic — and the Bible. They flourished in the hundreds until the beginning of the public-school movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

MOVING WESTWARD

Baptists in the West tended to be more suspicious of higher learning, based on their opinion of clergy of other faiths they viewed as intellectually elite but spiritually dead. In the end, however, the desire for qualified church leaders and to improve the social status of Baptists in general prevailed.

Georgetown College in Kentucky lays claim to being the oldest Baptist college west of the Appalachians, dating its founding to an academy started in 1787 by a Baptist pastor named Elijah Craig. But it wasn't chartered by the Commonwealth of Kentucky until 1829.

Other early Baptist colleges included Union University in Tennessee, founded in 1823; the University of Richmond, established in 1832 by the Virginia Baptist Education Society; Mercer University, founded by Georgia Baptists in 1833; and Wake Forest University, chartered by North Carolina Baptists in 1833.

Judson College, an all-female school in Marion, Ala., began in 1838. Samford University began in Marion as an all-male school in 1841 but relocated to Birmingham in 1877.

The Republic of Texas chartered Baylor University in 1845. Baptists started Missouri's William Jewell College in 1849, Mississippi College in 1850 and other schools in places including Tennessee, Florida, Arkansas and North Carolina.

EDUCATION AND THE SBC

By the time the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845, there were 11 existing institutions of higher learning associated with Baptists in the South. Significantly, the SBC chose not to venture into establishing colleges and universities, concentrating the denomination's efforts on preparing ministers in seminaries at the graduate level and entrusting undergraduate education to Baptist state conventions.

That collegiality lasted for nearly 150 years, until the moderate/conservative controversy of the last two decades of the 20th century prompted seminaries to add baccalau-

reate programs while several colleges and universities opened seminaries or divinity schools.

The number of Baptist institutions of higher learning continued to grow in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Baptist state conventions included developing a college as part of their ministry plan and destitute schools turned to Baptists to rescue them from dire financial straits.

In 1915, the Southern Baptist Convention established an Education Commission to give centralized planning and coordination of several colleges and universities sponsored by state Baptist conventions. The commission was abolished in denominational reorganization in 1995, but an Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools that had worked with the agency determined to carry on its essential functions as an independent voluntary association owned and governed by members.

With adoption of the Cooperative Program unified giving plan, Southern Baptists provided a higher level of financial support for their colleges and universities than most denominations. That helped them retain a loyal religious constituency, while most Northern schools started as religious institutions gradually lost or diminished their denominational identity.

While denominational support remained comparatively generous, the budgets of colleges and universities grew much larger than those of sponsoring bodies, forcing presidents to concentrate on fundraising and decreasing the percentage of their funds coming from Baptist organizations. As schools became less dependent on state conventions for funding, those groups exercised less influence on teaching and governance.

DENOMINATIONAL CONTROVERSY

Beginning in the 1980s, the SBC controversy prompted several proudly Baptist institutions to sever ties with state conventions, viewing theological politics as a threat to their academic freedom.

In the mid-1970s, 71 Baptist universities, seminaries and schools identified with the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools. By 2008, the number dropped to 51.

In 2006, members of the association voted to rename the organization the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities. Leaders said the intent was not to distance the schools from their heritage as Southern Baptist state-convention-

supported institutions, but rather to expand the group's focus to a global scale.

"Baptist higher education has served Baptists well over the years, and it is our role at IABCU to continue promoting and celebrating our member institutions," said Michael Arrington, the group's executive director.

FACING NEW CHALLENGES

Baptist higher education is in a state of flux. Challenges that include finances, changing demographics and fragmentation of Baptist denominations are prompting insiders to reassess what it means to be a distinctively "Baptist" institution of higher learning.

While many Baptist schools have students and/or professors who are non-Baptist, Baylor University — which has endeavored publicly for years with how to maintain its Texas Baptist identity while moving toward a higher tier of academic prestige — surprised everyone in February when the school's board of regents tapped former Whitewater prosecutor Kenneth Starr as president.

Starr, whose religious background is Church of Christ and whose previous membership was in a nondenominational church, agreed to join a local Baptist church. When he assumed the presidency, he joined Columbus Avenue Baptist Church in Waco, Texas.

Baylor isn't alone in grappling with trends like waning loyalty to denominations, more religiously diverse student bodies and controversies that give the Baptist label a negative image or at least create confusion about what it means to be Baptist at all.

FADING LOYALTIES

Recently, Baptist schools — which have relied for decades on a cohesive Baptist subculture to bring up prospective students eager to study in a faith-based environment — find built-in loyalties fading away.

Due in large part to the megachurch phenomenon, many large congregations are finding it convenient to remove the descriptor "Baptist" from their name, and many Baptists today find themselves just as comfortable worshipping at a community church where they like the music and preacher.

Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn., witnessed rapid growth in enrollment in the 1990s, but fewer and fewer students came from Baptist backgrounds. By 2006, the student body was 75 percent non-Baptist, and the board of trustees changed the school's charter to allow non-Baptists to serve as trustees.

The Tennessee Baptist Convention sued

to regain control of the university, and Belmont agreed to an \$11 million settlement, ending a 56-year-old relationship between the two.

After the settlement, Belmont's trustee chair pledged the university would "continue to be a student-focused Christian community of learning and service with a rich Baptist heritage that we intend to foster and nurture through our ongoing relationships with local Baptist churches."

After negotiating an amicable parting with the Kentucky Baptist Convention in 2005, Georgetown College remained intentionally Baptist but broadened the definition beyond Kentucky Southern Baptists by adding partnerships with 15 Baptist organizations and institutions — black and white — in the United States and abroad. The partnership also extends to local churches both within and beyond Kentucky.

"We are trying to maintain a Baptist identity but broadening what that means," said H.L. Kingkade, Georgetown's director of religious life. "We treasure our Baptist heritage very much."

"There are many who wear the Baptist name," Kingkade continued. "We seek to be an institution of higher education for all Baptists and other denominations as well."

FEARS AND FAITHFULNESS

In a 2007 lecture to the International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities, David Gushee, an ethics professor at Mercer University, noted that many schools formerly affiliated with mainline denominations drifted toward secularization or only a nominal Christian presence after breaking those ties. In order to avoid the trend, Gushee said, historically Baptist schools must adopt one of two models.



Georgetown College, near Lexington, Ky., has broadened its Baptist identity since separating from the Kentucky Baptist Convention in 2005. The school was started by Baptist pastor Elijah Craig and lays claim to being the oldest Baptist college west of the Appalachians. Photo by John Pierce.

Borrowing terms from Roanoke College professor Robert Benne, Gushee said some intentionally Christian schools will function as "orthodox" universities, recruiting a large percentage of faculty and students from within the Christian faith — especially the faith of the sponsoring denomination. In those schools, he said, all instruction will be influenced by a shared Christian perspective.

"Critical-mass" schools, on the other hand, do not seek 100 percent sponsoring-tradition domination in every aspect of university life. They are Baptist schools willing to hire committed Catholic, Lutheran or Eastern Orthodox professors — maybe even in the religion department. Gushee said such schools would need a "critical mass" of both Baptist students and trustees to retain their

religious nature.

Over the last 30 years, Gushee said, much of the debate over Baptist schools has been between those who fear that Baptist colleges will devolve into completely secular institutions and others who fear they will become fundamentalist schools like Bob Jones University.

Instead of thinking about what they fear, Gushee said, Baptist schools should ponder what they desire — to produce graduates who demonstrate elements of what it means to be a Baptist Christian.

"Some will emphasize Baptist distinctives, while others will sound more broadly evangelical or Christian," he said. **BT**

—Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.

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- 6:00 pm Registration
- 6:45 pm Music
- 7:00 pm Business Meeting/Worship
- 8:30 pm Dessert Reception

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 8

- 7:30 am Baptist Heritage Council Breakfast
- 8:00 am Registration
- 9:00 am Breakout Sessions; Pastors Network
- 10:15 am Break
- 10:45 am Breakout Sessions; Staff Networks; Pastors Network
- 12:15 pm Advocates Luncheon*
- 1:30 pm Ministry Networks

*Keynote Speaker: Julie Pennington-Russell
 Pastor, First Baptist Church Decatur
 "Saying Grace" (2 Cor. 9:10-15)*

*Advocates work to strengthen ties between their churches and CBFGA. For more information, or for lunch tickets, contact Aimee Day (aday@cbfga.org / 478-742-1191, ext. 26).

Planting for the future

Texas youth camp goes to Haiti

LAITY LODGE YOUTH CAMP, Texas — Summer traditionally is the time young people head off to camp and vacations, but this year a group of young people from Laity Lodge Youth Camp, a Texas Christian camping ministry, traded roles and reached beyond the U.S. borders to share a camping experience with Haitian children, most of whom had never experienced camp before.

Through LLYC's Outbound Haiti, a program of Foundations for Laity Renewal founded by the H.E. Butt Foundation, a team of 36 traveled to the remote and beautiful mountain region of northern Haiti to Jacob's Well Youth Camp near Limbe. The young Texas missionaries hosted a camp for 200 children who heard the message of Jesus in their own French Creole language at the first campground of its kind in Haiti.

Kevin Mayne, executive director of LLYC, believes the impact of the mission exists on multiple levels.

"It was really a victory in itself just to travel internationally with a team of 36 successfully," he said. But his team was changed by the experience as well, and Mayne said it's clear to him that there will be some personal changes back home.

He quoted one of his heroes of youth ministry, Mike Yaconelli, to explain: "If you do missions, it will wreck your life!"

Mayne added, "He certainly meant that in a good way, and I believe it's true. If you want to remain a mainstream, normal, status quo, don't-make-waves kind of person, then stay away from missions. Because missions will realign your compass, cause you to color outside the lines, and take you to a new way of thinking about life beyond your own life."

Of course, the main impact of the mission was meant for the Haitian children, who received three full days of camp activities and storytelling. The gospel was revealed through daily dramas and testimonies, and crafts and games rounded out the program.

"These kids were so hungry to engage with our team. It was the simple things that made the greatest impact, like playing soccer, exchanging bracelets, playing games, braiding hair, holding hands, being called by name, eat-



Last January's earthquake hastened the desires of a Texas camping ministry to sponsor a camp in Haiti. Photo courtesy Laity Lodge Youth Camp.

ing, drinking and laughing," said Mayne.

"I'm not an expert on Haitian culture, but I am a witness to what our team did there, and it is my opinion that the kids at Jacob's Well felt valued, loved and accepted," Mayne added. "They also felt safe, a component we strive for at LLYC."

Mayne recalled a moment when he and associate director Angela Aadahl were talking under a shade tree, and a teenage boy came by who was clearly in some kind of pain. Tears streamed down his face.

"He tucked himself right under the wing of Angela," said Mayne. "He felt safe with her and desired her comfort. That experience tells me we accomplished something significant — we built trust and community."

Brick and mortar projects at Jacob's Well were the final priority of the mission. The first water well in the area was drilled at the entrance of the camp. A large diesel generator was purchased to provide electricity for new appliances in the kitchen and to power the water pump to draw water from the well.

The team constructed three cabins to be used for future lodging. The mission also funded the first four months of a contract with a local horticulturalist who will be planting, nurturing and growing 5,000 mango trees to ultimately produce a revenue stream that can fund the camp.

"Literally, we were planting for the future," said Mayne.

The Outbound Haiti trip has been in the developmental stages for two years, but January's earthquake only served to hasten LLYC's desire to minister there. For the past 10 years, LLYC has hosted a steady stream of Haitian campers on the H.E. Butt Foundation camp property near Leakey, Texas.

Over those years, the organization developed strong relationships with families from Port-au-Prince. Two years ago, Gersan Valcin, a Port-au-Prince pastor, shared his vision for the development of the camp named Jacob's Well with Mayne.

Clearly, the country of Haiti has overwhelming needs and work there will be a very long-term endeavor.

Of a couple of things Mayne said he is certain: "First, these people are worthy of our time and effort. Second, there is a little 40-acre camp, the only one of its kind in Haiti, that just might be a new epicenter. Not of an earthquake or the eye of a hurricane, but of a launching pad to a new way of life rooted in the love, acceptance and compassion of Jesus."

Mayne sees a future for this village and the nation of Haiti, and will long hold to the memory created by the team's final drive out of Jacob's Well.

"I could hear the children of Limbe chanting the names of our mission team," he recalled. "They were calling out to the ones they loved because of the way they had received love." **BT**

Worth Emory celebrates 50 years in Western Carolina pastorate

WEAVERVILLE, N.C. — Pastor Worth Emory believes that Jesus never really stopped being a carpenter.

“The Bible doesn’t say, but I just have an idea that if Jesus went to Mary and Martha’s house and they needed something fixed, that he fixed it,” Emory said. “I just believe that was the kind of thing that Jesus did.”

As a carpenter himself, Emory has thought a lot about the ways Jesus may have used his carpentry skills, as he “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38).

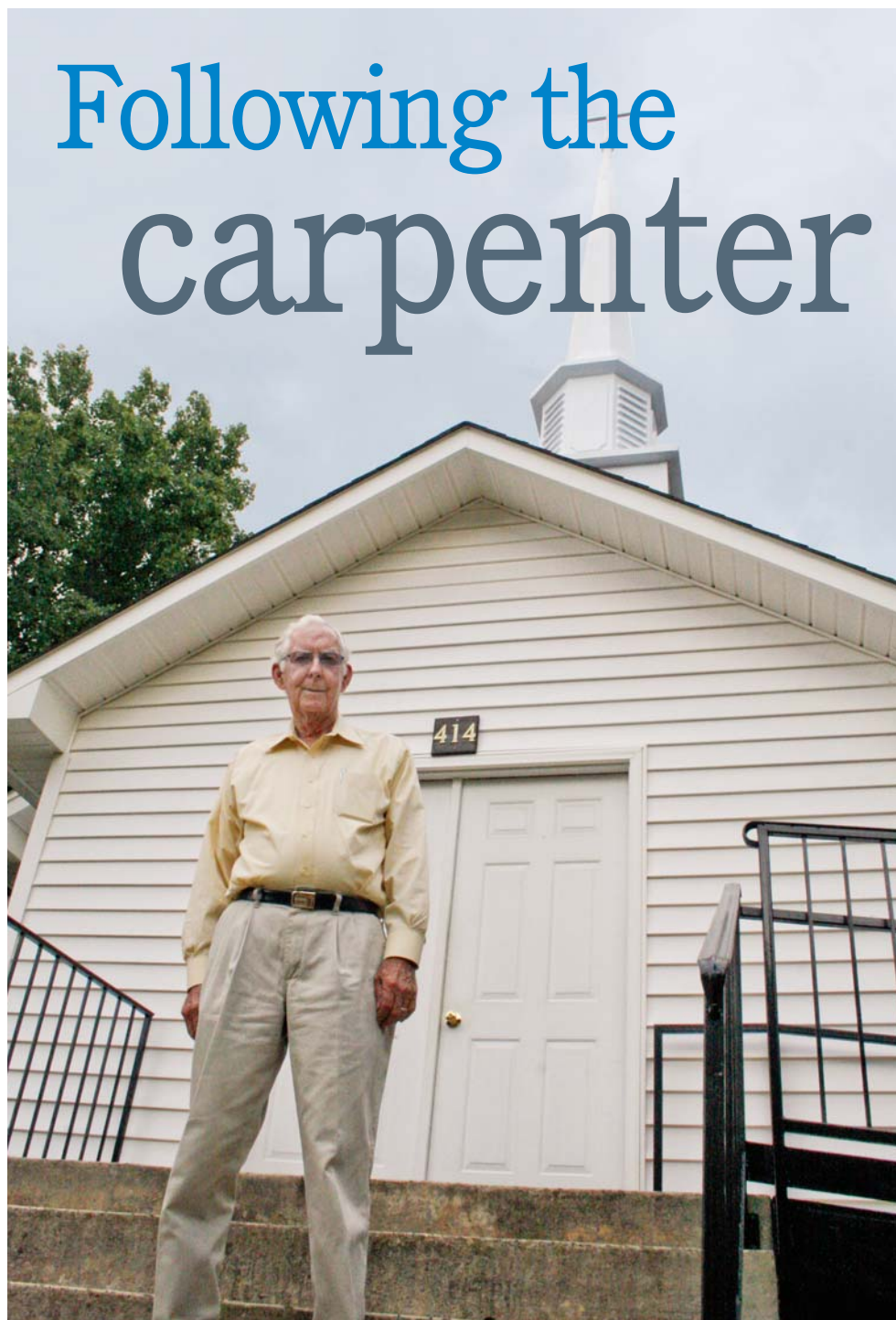
Recently, Emory celebrated his 50th anniversary as pastor of Ivy Hill Church in Northern Buncombe County, near Weaverville, N.C. It is exceedingly rare for a pastor to continue an active ministry for 50 years at one church.

Also remarkable is the fact that Emory has led this small country church, with an attendance of approximately 80 people on Sunday morning, to reach out in ministry across the world.

Over the half-century of his pastorate, Ivy Hill Church has sponsored and sent teams of builders to erect dozens of churches and homes in several states, as well as Venezuela and Honduras. And usually at the helm of the team is Emory, hammer in hand, working alongside Christians from around the country and around the world who want a building in which to live or worship.

“Jesus wasn’t just concerned about the spiritual, he was concerned about the whole of mankind,” Emory said. “He cares about everything about us. And when he told his followers to go to Jerusalem, and Judea, and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth, he wasn’t just talking to them; he was talking to me too.”

That belief feeds an insatiable desire to help people, and for Emory, helping people is not just a matter for words, but of actions.



BUILDING A GOOD LIFE

Bi-vocational pastor Worth Emory has served the same congregation in the hills of North Carolina for 50 years. The carpentry skills he has used in his other vocation have become tools for ministry as well. Mars Hill College photo.

“I’m a firm believer that sometimes before you can really tell people about Jesus you’ve got to do something for them to let them know you care about them. If somebody’s hungry and you go and say, ‘now Jesus loves you,’ and don’t feed them, what good is that?” he said. “But if you feed them first, they’ll know you care, and then you can tell them about a Savior that loves them much more than you do. And then you can tell them about the Bread of Life.”

Emory is widely respected by the Ivy Hill congregation according to Edith Whitt, his sister-in-law and a church member.

“I think he has stayed at our church so long because it is a relationship that works,” Whitt said. “We have a mutual love for each other and a shared vision of ministry.”

Emory ties his long tenure to the congregation’s willingness to promote ministry to others above ministry to itself.

“They’ve been willing to let me go on

all these mission trips, and a lot of them have gone themselves,” he said. “Some people want their preacher to stay around close, but Ivy Hill isn’t like that.”

He also credits his wife, Marie, with supporting his love of missions.

“I tell people quite often she has carried more of the load than I have,” he said. “She took care of the family more, since I was gone so much on mission trips and preaching revivals.”

Emory’s deep, slow drawl marks him as a Buncombe County native. The church he serves is about a mile from the house in which he was born. He grew up in a Christian home — the ninth of 10 children.

Emory married Marie Whitt in 1956, and preached his first sermon at North Black Mountain Baptist Church in Barnardville, N.C., in November of that year.

The next year the couple had a son, Alan, and Emory was drafted into the military. After basic training the young family spent two years at Fort Benning in Georgia, in the years of peacetime between the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

The family returned to the Ivy Hill community in 1959, ready to enter ministry but unsure where the Lord would lead them. Emory had begun doing carpentry work as a youth, and in fact, he helped build the current Ivy Hill Church.

So he began doing carpentry to support his family, and he preached at several churches in the area. Then in 1960, the pastor of Ivy Hill Church resigned.

“They elected me in 1960 for one year; that’s the way Ivy Hill elected preachers. Then after I’d been there a year, they asked if I would accept it indefinitely,” Emory said.

Emory felt that he would not be at Ivy Hill very long because the church “was full of my own people, and Marie’s people.”

“It was my own home territory and I thought God would send me somewhere else,” he said. “But God’s plan was different, and God has blessed us *sooo* much.”

As he took the pastorate, Emory felt impressed to buy small world banks for every family in the church. The next Sunday, he preached a sermon on giving to missions, and he passed out the banks, asking each family to put money in the bank every time they thought of missions. When they brought the banks back together, they had raised quite a bit of money.

“That sold that church on missions,” he said, “and we’ve been giving ever since.”

The Emorys had a second child, Connie, in 1960, and Worth continued his work as both pastor and carpenter. As time allowed, he also preached revivals in the western North Carolina area.

Unable to go to seminary, he read voraciously to educate himself, often taking recommendations about reading material from religion professors at nearby Mars Hill College. He also took seminary extension courses through the French Broad Baptist Association, earning a diploma in pastoral ministry and numerous certificates of completion.

Then in 1971, Emory volunteered to go with a group of Baptist men to build a church in Twin Falls, Idaho. Little did he know it was to be the start of a chain of events that would make his carpentry skills an integral part of his ministry.

Two years later, he went with a similar group to build the first church of any denomination in Jackpot, Nev. Though Marie had accompanied him on the first trip, she stayed home this time, pregnant with twin girls, Jennifer and Natalie, who were born soon after the trip.

After the Nevada trip, Emory went with building teams, or led them, every couple of years.

“I’ve been on trips to several states, West Virginia, Ohio, North Dakota, one into Canada,” he said. “Just to be honest, I couldn’t tell you where all I’ve been.”

In 1980, Emory was invited to go with a team to build a church in a small village in Honduras called Santa Cruz.

“When I went into Santa Cruz on that first trip, the water was so polluted, we couldn’t even wash in it,” he recalled. “There wasn’t a building in the village that had anything but a dirt floor, and some of the children had swelled bellies where they didn’t get enough to eat.”

Ivy Hill started sponsoring church members to participate in building teams to Honduras yearly. Each time the team stayed in the city of Choleteca and ventured into the nearby villages for building projects.

For the first 20 years, the teams built churches in the surrounding villages. Nine years ago, Ivy Hill began organizing and leading trips to build houses for especially needy families.

With each trip, the Ivy Hill team members started jamming their luggage full of extra clothing they could leave with the people in the village where they worked. In

addition to raising money for the buildings, the church began sending additional funds that were used to buy corn, beans and rice in bulk to be distributed to people in need. Ivy Hill members also held Bible schools for the children during the building projects.

Emory cannot speak of his Honduran trips, or the people he has met there, without great emotion.

“The people I met in Santa Cruz on my first visit, when I go back now, it’s just like seeing family,” he said. “That place got hold of me, and I never could get away from it.”

Over the years, Emory believes, and hopes, his congregation has made a difference in the way the people live in the small area of Honduras in and around Choleteca.

“I’ve watched a village be transformed,” he said. “They have a nice school house now, a good deep well with good water, a lot of the houses have floors now, and you very seldom see the children looking undernourished.”

Emory was unable to make the Honduran trip this year. At 76, he is remarkably fit, but a recent quadruple bypass made his doctor wary of the heat and hard work involved in a Honduran trip. Nevertheless, church members made the annual trek to Honduras, building an additional house, passing out food and clothing, and holding its annual Bible school.

About 200 people came to Ivy Hill Church for the August 1 celebration of the long-serving pastor’s 50th anniversary. As they headed to the fellowship hall after the service, Emory noticed that someone had parked a car on the grass. At first he believed that the presence of numerous visitors had necessitated parking on the grass — until he saw the big gold bow on top.

“I tell you what, I never had a new automobile in my life until that one, and I never planned on it,” Emory said with appreciation. “But some of the people said a lot of the other members had had new cars, and I’d never had a new one, and they wanted me to have a new automobile.”

In serving as a bi-vocational pastor, Emory had made a habit of buying used cars. But in celebration of his 50 years of servant leadership, the church gave a brand new Nissan Altima to the pastor who has taught them so much about giving to others. **BT**

—Teresa Buckner is media relations coordinator at Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, N.C.

Pastor's arrest puts face on immigration challenges

The plight of a Hispanic Baptist pastor who found himself sitting in jail rather than standing in his pulpit has put a familiar face on issues of immigration reform for many Baptists in North Carolina.

Hector Villanueva had been doing everything right. Having lived in the U.S. since he was three years old, Villanueva gained legal status as an immigrant, had a green card, worked hard, and sought to make his community a better place. With two children of their own, he and his wife Martha had been working toward the adoption of two foster children.

Mentored by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina (CBFNC) Hispanic network leader Javier Benitez, Villanueva had helped start a Hispanic church in Raleigh, and recently shifted his focus to starting another in Siler City, N.C., with the help of CBFNC.

When Villanueva recently sought to become a U.S. citizen, however, the application process turned up that he been convicted of trying to cash someone else's check some 15 years ago, when he was homeless and living in California.

While serving time for the crime, Hector

became an active Christian, turned his life around, and put himself on the road to ministry. The prior record, however, was enough to cause United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to show up at his home at 6:30 a.m. on Aug. 19 to arrest Villanueva in front of his wife and children.

The agents took him to jail and began deportation proceedings. Current U.S. law states that non-citizens convicted of an "aggravated felony" can be deported, whether they have served their sentence or not.

As Villanueva was held in a detention center in Gainesville, Ga., hundreds of people responded with prayers. Many wrote letters attesting to Villanueva's character or appealed to his congressperson to intervene. A judge granted bond at a hearing in Atlanta Sept. 2, and Villanueva was released the following evening. CBFNC assisted with the bond payment; family and friends have helped to pay attorney's fees.

The date for a trial on the merits of his

immigration case has not been set. Villanueva told *Baptists Today* he has been told it could be between two months and a year away.

Meanwhile, he's back serving his church and filled with thanksgiving.

"I'm so grateful, I don't have the words in me," Villanueva said. "So many people have stepped up and helped us with prayers, finances, food donations — I am so blessed to have connections like I have."

Villanueva's experience has put a face on immigration issues for CBFNC leaders such as Larry Hovis, the organization's executive coordinator.

"This situation has convicted me that we can't separate our spiritual ministry from the legal and political environment that impacts our friends' lives everyday," he told *Baptists Today*. "Suddenly, a hot-button political issue, immigration reform, that has seemed far removed from our ministry, has names and faces."

Calling for CBFNC members to engage the issue more deeply, Hovis concluded: "As we pray for Hector, Martha and their children, we are reminded to pray for others in similar situations and for political leaders who struggle to find a just solution to this challenging issue." **BT**



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