

An abstract, expressive painting in shades of red, black, white, and yellow. The word "ACT UP!" is written in large, bold, white letters with black outlines, set against a background of red and black. The overall style is reminiscent of graffiti or street art.

BAPTISTS Today

Newseum keeps
freedom
on the **front page**

page 5

Look Who's Talking About CELEBRATING GRACE

Churches from across the country are embracing the recently released *Celebrating Grace Hymnal*. Already in its second printing since debuting in March 2010, the *Hymnal* contains traditional hymns, new hymns, congregational songs, scripture songs, worship readings, scripture, and extensive indices. Comprehensive and practical, the *Hymnal* offers churches fresh resources for creative congregational worship. Color options include burgundy, navy, forest green, and ivory.

"*Celebrating Grace Hymnal* presents a viable option for churches to consider when selecting a songbook. As a Baptist, I am especially grateful for lyrics, tunes, readings, and a multitude of support materials that originated in the hearts and minds of Baptist musicians and theologians. Many of my own heroes of faith and ministry have made serious contributions to this work that can assist churches as they worship."

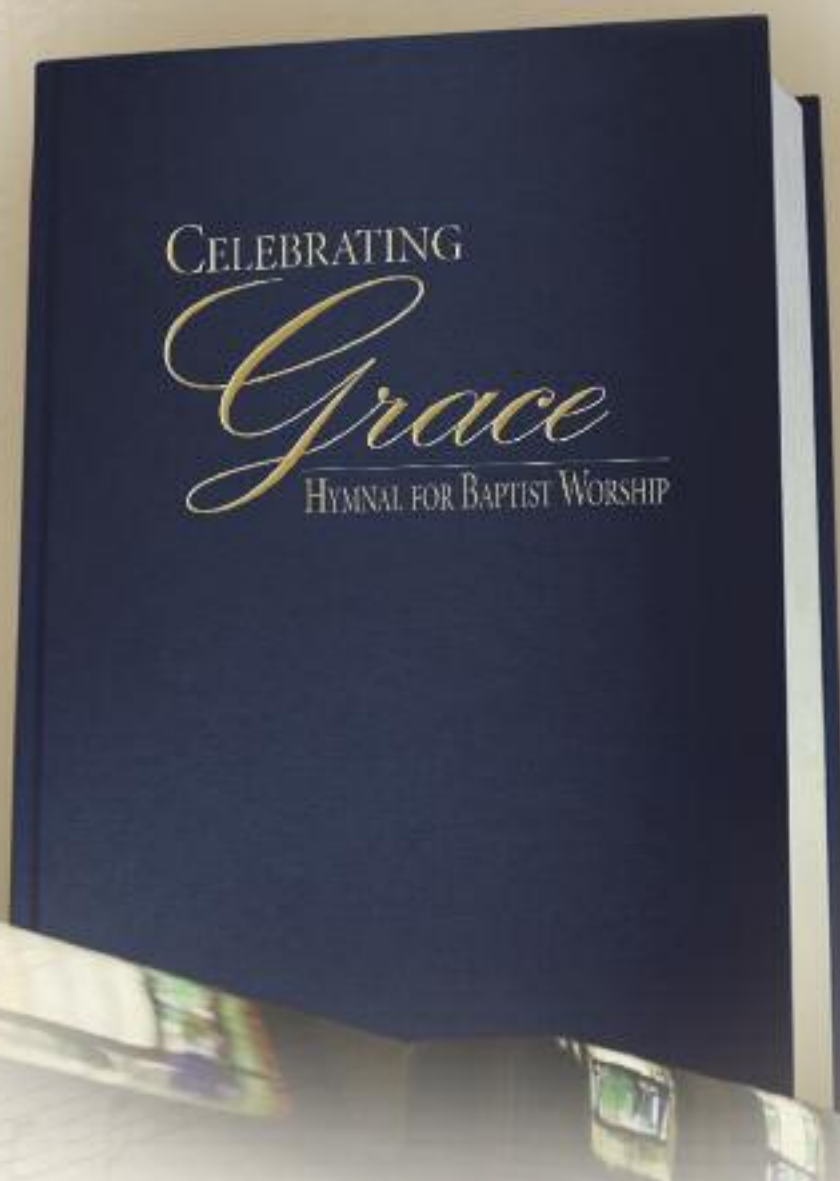
PAUL CLARK, D.W.S.

*Director of Worship & Music Ministries
Tennessee Baptist Convention
Brentwood, Tennessee*

"In just a few short weeks of usage by our people, the *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* has proven itself to be a worthy 'book of the people.' Its thoughtful blend of standard, beloved favorites and creative, new hymns and readings has allowed us to deepen our moments of corporate song and enriched our overall worship experiences. Having too many wonderful options to choose from in this hymnal is a dream come true for today's worship planner!"

DAVID SCHWOEBEL

*Minister of Music/Composer in Residence
Derbyshire Baptist Church
Richmond, Virginia*



To learn more about *Celebrating Grace*, visit www.celebrating-grace.com.

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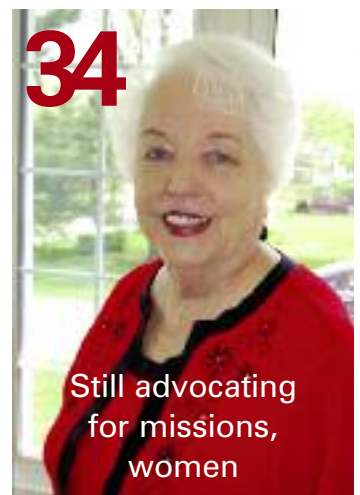
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Tying prophetic,
pastoral roles
By Stan Wilson



Cover photo by John Pierce.
A large section of the Berlin
Wall on display at the
Newseum in Washington,
D.C. **Page 5**



Still advocating
for missions,
women

Overby honored with Judson-Rice Award



WASHINGTON — Charles L. Overby, chairman and CEO of the Freedom Forum and a staunch defender of the First Amendment, accepted the annual Judson-Rice Award from *Baptists Today* on April 22. The award luncheon was held at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Overby has been involved in journalism throughout his life, beginning as a paper boy, leading his high school paper to receive a national award, and guiding *The Clarion-Ledger* in his hometown of Jackson, Miss., to a Pulitzer Prize for public service in 1983.

In his work with the Gannett Company, publishers of *USA Today*, he covered the White House, presidential campaigns,

Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1981, Overby was named president and CEO of the Gannett Foundation, which was renamed the Freedom Forum in 1991. In his role with the Freedom Forum, Overby heads the Diversity Institute, which provides training and promotes a diverse workforce in the news.

He also led in the development of the popular Newseum on Pennsylvania Avenue, a \$350 million project that celebrates First Amendment freedoms, including that of a free press.

“The First Amendment suffers from people not knowing what it means,” Overby said in remarks to participants at the ceremony.

Many people fail to understand the role of the First Amendment in guaranteeing basic freedoms, he said, making the role of the Newseum as a “fun, educational and inspiring” destination particularly important.

With regard to religious freedom, some

Americans think faith doesn’t really matter in everyday life, Overby said, while others would “give up freedom for a theocracy.”

What we need is an awareness that faith does matter, he said, but cannot be compelled.

“The genius of America is that we all are allowed to believe as we wish,” Overby said, pledging that the Freedom Forum will continue working to promote understanding and appreciation of First Amendment liberties.

Though he commutes to Washington, Overby and his wife, Andrea, live in Nashville, Tenn., and are active members of First Baptist Church there, where Overby taught Sunday school for many years.

The Judson-Rice Award was created in 2001 to celebrate the contributions of early Baptist leaders Adoniram Judson, Ann Hasseltine Judson and Luther Rice, and to recognize a current Baptist leader who has demonstrated significant leadership skills while maintaining the highest integrity. **BT**

Newseum keeps freedom *on the front page*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN PIERCE



WASHINGTON — As the new Newseum was being planned on prime real estate between the Capitol and the White House in Washington, D.C., Freedom Forum CEO Charles Overby wondered if his big idea of having the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution displayed prominently would ever happen.

He envisioned two possible obstacles.

“Sometimes architects think you work for them,” said Overby, a seasoned journalist and former director of *Baptists Today*, upon receiving the news journal’s annual Judson-Rice Award April 22.

Then he wondered if building-design watchdogs in D.C. would allow what might be seen as a big sign. In both cases, he received good news.

The architect’s rendering of a 74-foot-high marble engraving of the First Amendment that would face Pennsylvania Avenue pleased Overby very much. And how could anyone in the nation’s capital consider the guiding and protecting words of the First Amendment to be out of bounds?

The popular Newseum — which First Lady Michelle Obama told *Conde Nast Traveler* magazine is a favorite of her daughters — is designed to remind Americans about the cost and value of freedom.

Bringing together the words “news” and “museum” might sound like a boring combination, said Overby, but the Newseum experience is widely described as fascinating, interactive and ever changing.

Within the seven layers of exhibits are 14 theaters including a 4-D time travel adventure, a large section of the Berlin Wall, a memorial to journalists killed in the line of duty, an impressive gallery related to news coverage of 9-11, the largest collection of Pulitzer Prize photographs ever assembled, an interactive newsroom (where visitors can be filmed as reporters), the Unabomber’s cabin, Tim Russert’s office (including his baseball collection) and, yes, even Elvis is in the house (a current and extensive exhibit).



Remembering 9-11: A crumpled communications tower from atop the World Trade Center is displayed along with front-page reports of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. **Photo above:** Charles Overby welcomes *Baptists Today* directors and staff to the Newseum.

Located between the Capitol and the White House, the Newseum is hard to miss — with its prominent display of these 45 words that protect freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly and petition:

“Congress shall make no law respecting

an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” **BT**

Quotation

“ remarks ”

“Churches have to begin educating their members and those who visit their locations that the narcissistic attitude that is prevalent throughout our society needs to be overcome. For the sake of the future of the church, it has to be overcome.”

—David Key, director of Baptist Studies at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology (Baptist Heritage)

“Dr. [Paige] Patterson is one of the patriarchs of Christian higher education, and [Glenn] Beck is one of the few courageous voices in the national media standing up for the principles upon which this nation was founded.”

—Chancellor Jerry Falwell Jr. announcing that the Southern Baptist leader and the Fox News personality, a Mormon, were enlisted as graduation speakers at Liberty University this spring

“Ergun [Caner] has publicly apologized for certain exaggerations and for letting his enthusiasm carry him away. He realizes now that his attack mentality is inappropriate.”

—Liberty University co-founder Elmer Towns, defending the school’s seminary president amid growing charges of making false claims such as growing up in a strict Muslim family in Turkey rather than in a nominal one in Ohio (Christianity Today)

“We have a Christian way to be human, a Baptist way to be Christian and a CBF way to be Baptist.”

—Former seminary president Randall Lolley, as quoted by Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina executive coordinator Larry Hovis at an April retreat of CBF movement leaders

“We insomniacs can take heart that, more often than not, scripture urges wakefulness rather than sleep on the followers of a sleepless God.”

—Sightings columnist Rodney Clapp (RNS)

“There’s a lot more doubt than faith that goes on with me, but I just can’t dump the whole thing.”

—Nashville songwriter David Olney on his personal Christian faith that finds expression in his songs (Christian Century)

“Baptists believe that more is better and too much of anything is wonderful.”

—United Methodist Bishop Will Willimon (Christian Century)

“There is much to be said about the value of younger and older generations finding ways to communicate and finding common ground when it comes to concerns for social justice, faith development, spiritual renewal, worship experiences.”

—Carra Hughes Greer, minister to families with youth at Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Ga. (Baptist Heritage)

“Most individuals and churches are likely to treat the report like most long-winded and over-ambitious sermons: it will be endured, then ignored.”

—Baptists Today contributing editor Tony Cartledge on the Southern Baptist Convention’s “Great Commission Task Force” report that presents 90 “challenges” for individuals, churches, agencies and institutions

“A lot of these new buildings will pick up the piece that was missing (for Scientology), a place where people can come together.”

—Susan Setta, associate professor of religious studies at Northeastern University in Boston, on the Church of Scientology building boom taking place in several U.S. cities (RNS)

“Blogs have given occasion to a whole new set of conversations about religion in public life. They represent a tremendous opportunity for publication, discussion, cross-fertilization and critique of a kind never seen before.”

—From a study on the blogosphere by the Social Science Research Council (ABP)

“There is the small church’s glory: You can’t avoid the person you hate. You can’t wiggle out of the meeting with the person you’re not speaking to. And so you have a shot at being Christian.”

—Jason Byassee, Leadership Education at Duke Divinity School (Christian Century)

“No one can say this is holy water. No one can say this is an acceptable state for a river this famous worldwide.”

—Gidon Bromberg, Friends of the Earth director for Israel, on the current condition of the Jordan River (The Gazette)

“All voices are welcome to the community. We ask only that the voices treat one another with dignity and respect and that we have a conversation and not a shouting match.”

—Kenneth Starr, 14th president of Baptist-related Baylor University in Waco, Texas (The Baylor Line)

editorial

Just read the Gospels, and act accordingly

By John Pierce

Just read the Gospels very carefully and take notice of how Jesus showed no anger or hostility toward the adulterous women, the woman at the well or those seeking honest answers. His harshest words and actions were reserved for the religious elite and those seeking to benefit themselves at the expense of others.

However, the most visible (and audible) American Christian leaders today — and perhaps most preachers overall — are doing just the opposite.

We hear constant railings against those of other faith traditions, gay and lesbian persons, and people who don't share the preacher's political perspectives. Often the pulpit sounds little different from the strident talk radio voices heard all week.

Rarely is there a strong word about the spiritual arrogance and self-righteousness that fill the pews in front of them and seem to define much of evangelical Christianity today.

Perhaps this false "boldness" is the result of an unfounded fear of appearing "soft on sin" — as if grace, respect and compassion are somehow equated with condoning bad choices and failure.

The insightful and instructive author and researcher Diana Butler Bass has noted

that the new atheists, on the rise in the U.S. in recent years, are building their cases primarily on the failure of the church to reflect the characteristics of Christ.

Therefore, she concludes correctly: "They are rejecting us for the right reasons."

Then the best defense of the Christian faith, it seems, is not to be found in bolstering our intellectual arguments for the existence of God but in revealing more of the nature of God seen so clearly in the life and teachings of Jesus.

When reading the Gospel accounts, we tend to see ourselves as ones staying close to Jesus' side and receiving his constant approval. Yet, the religious elite that raised Jesus' ire often provide a clearer reflection of the public face of American evangelical Christianity today.

The irony of American evangelicalism, however, is hard to miss. Below this public face of intolerance and loud voice of condemnation is a heart of compassion found in the incredible generosity of Christians in support of disaster relief, medical missions,

community ministries and the care for children.

Yet that Christ-like picture often cannot come through all the condemnation, hostility and proclamations of exclusion that paint the public perception of American evangelical Christianity. If Jesus said his followers would be known by their love, why would we consider that approach to relating to others as somehow unfaithful to our convictions?

Perhaps it is tied to a misunderstanding of Jesus when he spoke of his way as being "narrow." Too many have confused Christianity with narrow thinking — that results in narrow parameters for doctrinal and political conformity.

However, with a careful and fresh reading of the Gospels, we might discover that the Way of Christ is narrowed by the challenge of being as loving, accepting and merciful as he.

The softness of sin being ignored by American Christianity today just might be found in the arrogance with which we stand in judgment over those who do not conform to our revised versions of faith and practice. It is amazing what new perspectives can be found by looking inward for a change of view. **BT**



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BAPTISTS
Today

Editor's note: This is the sixth 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.

Tying together the prophetic, pastoral roles

By Stan Wilson

The call to my current pastorate came during a highly charged political season. The shock and loss of September 11 had given way to anger and blame, and a much-protested war in Iraq was just beginning.

Since that time, new issues have emerged to reveal a deep polarization within a fragmented society still at war. In such an explosive context, all pastors face a huge challenge: How do we speak prophetically without hurting one another and the church? How do we speak prophetically while offering the comfort of Jesus Christ to a broken world?

Ministers are called to be prophetic as well as pastoral, and we are wise not to separate one from the other. In healthy ministry, both are tied together, and both point to the wholeness and healing of the reign of God in Christ.

I grew up in a church that rarely spoke of divisive public issues. The prophetic voice was muzzled by an understanding that the church must not be "political." As a result, I did not receive much training in how to speak prophetically, and most church members were not prepared to hear or respond to prophetic speech.

I wonder now if our silence set us up for the contemporary fragmentation of the body of Christ. We are divided from the worldwide

church by national allegiances; we are divided ethnically and economically within homogeneous congregations; and we are increasingly divided by partisan commitments.

We sought to avoid divisive issues, but we wound up with a deeply divided church.

Discovering prophecy

It was not until college that I discovered Jesus' prophetic social vision and began to see how much of Jesus' teachings I had ignored.

Later, studying the Civil Rights movement, I discovered that the silence of many churches had been a quiet approval of the status quo — a very political position after all. Still later, gay and lesbian Christians began to reveal that silence on some issues can be deadly.

I resolved that when I became a pastor, I would be "prophetic." I would not fail to speak on difficult issues.

Now on the other side of the pulpit I am learning that genuine prophetic speech is an essential but complex gift of the Spirit that is only one part of a ministry of wholeness and healing.

Genuine prophetic speech is not destructive or self-righteous, but confessional. When the Old Testament prophets spoke, they lamented the failures of Israel, not Babylon.

Prophetic judgment begins with the people of God. Perhaps the most significant prophetic speech doesn't mention a single

issue. It merely seeks to praise God, whom we have known in the humble suffering of Jesus Christ. In so praising God, we reveal our political posturing for what it is.

Prophetic speech proclaims the Lordship of Christ over a reign of healing and wholeness, but that speech does not have to be a position statement. In fact, since prophetic speaking is still new to many of us, it may be awhile before we can issue statements.

Our church never agreed on the war in Iraq, but we did talk about it, and we tried to listen to scripture and to one another. Some of those teachings of Jesus are still new to us, so many of us were asking for the first time what Jesus has to say about war and peace, whether it is permissible for Christians to fight, and, if so, how to fight conscientiously.

We shied away from criticizing the President and turned our lights inward to examine how our own pursuits may have made war inevitable. In the end, we never issued a statement, but I hope we became a church more capable of witnessing to the peaceable reign of Christ.

The prophetic dimension of pastoral comfort

We fail to exercise the full range of ministerial gifts when we seek to be only pastoral, ignoring the prophetic.

In choosing to comfort but not challenge the status quo, we are resigning ourselves to a world governed by death. So, it is important to remember that there is a profound prophetic dimension to pastoral comfort.

When we help the grieving learn to



"Genuine prophetic speech is not destructive or self-righteous, but confessional."

forgive their lost family members, we are pointing to the Lordship of Christ over death and sin, and that is prophetic. When we invoke the names of loved ones among the communion of saints, and look to the day when “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes,” we are using prophetic language from the book of Revelation (7:17).

All pastoral comfort has a prophetic dimension. If we fail by being *sola* pastoral, we also fall short when we seek to be prophetic without being pastoral or priestly. Seeking to be relevant and timely, we can easily obscure the salty, distinctive presence of the church in the world.

Our churches struggled this year to respond prophetically to the health care debate. Of course, many of us spoke to the issue, but we often fell into one political camp or another, and neither of those camps is prepared to serve the fullness of the reign of God in Christ.

That is a reign in which people are healed, sins are forgiven, and broken relationships are mended by God’s gracious love. The question is not whether we speak to health care, but how we point to the healing and wholeness of the reign of God.

Tips for serving as both pastor and prophet

Living into the pastoral vocation, I have found prophetic speech to be a complex and demanding pastoral gift. So, here are a few practical ideas for serving as both pastor and prophet.

First, if you are a pastor, visit and listen well before you preach prophetically. It is not that you have to earn your right to be prophetic; that is an obligation.

Listening is the first step of prophetic speech and action. Listen to the membership, listen to God, listen to the hope of the poor, listen to the fears underneath all the angry rhetoric at large in this world, and listen to the quiet counsel of wise, seasoned church members.

Second, be aware of the effects of partisan politics on your membership during election season. Consider some congregational rules: “We will not forward cranky emails to one another.”

These are tough times, but you do not have to be silent. Remember that we are

living in a time of great upheaval and social change, so preach about trust, fear, community and courage.

Third, laugh. Don’t let the powers get you down, and don’t let the politicians draw you into every outrageous statement they make.

The Lord has risen, the powers of sin and death have been defeated, and what we are witnessing may be the last, desperate efforts of resistance to God’s ultimate victory in Christ.

Finally, remember that we are in a time of war, and the vast majority of us are being asked to go about our business as if all is right with the world. All is definitely not right with the world, and that is why it is so vitally important that the church discover our prophetic voice.

Let’s encourage one another. **BT**

—Stan Wilson is the pastor of Northside Baptist Church in Clinton, Miss.

Shaping Faithful Ministry

Today’s churches and ministries need leaders who are exceptionally perceptive, highly creative, and contextually oriented. Central students are challenged to use their giftedness for transformation in the local and global context.

Haiti

Joel Dorsinville, Central alum from Haiti, ministers to those affected by the earthquake. “...Central Seminary is active on the scene through my leadership. Central has invested a lot in my training so that I may serve better and more efficiently with competence and compassion.”



Kenya

Central alum David Nzioka, Pastor of Neema Community Church, a Swahili congregation in Kansas, recently took members of his denomination back to his home village of Thwake, Kenya, to build a dispensary and will return to build two wells. “Our vision is to change one village after the other.”

United States

Pastor Wallace Smith of the church plant now meeting weekly at Central Seminary and anxiously waiting for the completion of the new chapel, advised, “An exciting aspect of ministry with Journey Community is in creative partnerships with Central Seminary students. Interns can engage in ministry on the frontier of the emerging church.”

India

Central alum and native of India, Mang Sonna, Director of the Bethel Neighborhood Center in Kansas City, KS, has been helping Chin refugees connect with other Burmese groups and their worship communities and to get established in the US.

Myanmar (Burma)

Jennifer Harris, create scholar, reflected on the recent Myanmar immersion experience. “I’m looking forward to using the experiences I had with the country’s culture to help build better relationships with my Burmese neighbors.”

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Fellowship Baptist movement leaders reflect on history, look to the future

By Lance Wallace
CBF Communications

PINE MOUNTAIN, Ga., — Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Executive Coordinator Daniel Vestal and Baugh Foundation President Babs Baugh convened a retreat for a number of leaders of Baptist organizations that make up the Fellowship Baptist movement April 27-29 at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Ga.

Financed by a generous gift from the Baugh Foundation, the retreat included 84 attendees who addressed five questions:

- What would not have happened or would not exist if it weren't for the Fellowship Baptist movement?
- How are lives being transformed through the work of the movement?
- What are the significant challenges the movement faces in the future?
- What audacious dreams do you have for the future of the movement?
- How can we move from dreams to actions?

The meeting was convened as a first step toward celebrating the Fellowship's 20th anniversary in 2011. Baugh has agreed to serve as chair of the Fellowship's General Assembly Steering Committee, and worked closely with Vestal to plan the agenda for the three-day retreat.

"I knew this could be good, but I had no idea how truly wonderful it would be to share this time with these incredibly creative people," said Baugh of San Antonio, Texas. "I feel like God has given us new marching orders. We've done what we're supposed to do so far, but we have much, much more to do."

The gathering received ministry reports from Diana Garland, dean of the Baylor School of Social Work; David Burroughs,



Daniel Vestal and Babs Baugh wrap up a three-day discussion on evaluating and considering the future of the Fellowship Baptist movement. The retreat ended with a call to consider restructuring the nearly 20-year-old organization that emerged after Fundamentalist leaders solidified control of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1990. (CBF photo by Clark Hill)

president and co-founder of Passport, Inc.; and Molly Marshall, president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Shawnee, Kansas.

Presentations on lessons learned from the past 20 years were made by Bill Leonard, dean of the Wake Forest Divinity School; Suzii Paynter, director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas' Christian Life Commission; and Alan Culpepper, dean of Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology.

On the topic of significant challenges facing the Fellowship Baptist movement, presentations were given by Marv Knox, editor of the *Texas Baptist Standard*; Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics; Pam Durso, executive director of Baptist Women in Ministry; and Bill Underwood, president of Mercer University.

The final session of reports on the way forward were made by Larry Hovis, coordinator of CBF of North Carolina; Colleen Burroughs, president and co-founder of Passport, Inc.; and Connie McNeill, CBF's coordinator of administration.

Reports and presentations were followed by group discussion times and reporting out by a representative from each of the discussion groups.

"This gathering was an important step in a process of celebrating our history and dreaming for our future," Vestal said. "The two simply can't be separated. The invited participants represented some of the leadership within the Fellowship Baptist movement, and we talked candidly about our identity, mission and structure. It was a very hopeful and encouraging meeting, and the Coordinating Council will receive a report in June." **BT**

"I feel like God has given us new marching orders."

—BABS BAUGH, PRESIDENT OF THE BAUGH FOUNDATION IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

A proposal for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's transition from being a teenager to being a 20-something is a good occasion for reflecting on our identity and mission. I want to offer three ideas about our identity for your consideration. The question I hope you will ask about my proposal is: If we were going to describe our CBF identity with just three ideas, would these be the right ones?

We Are Christians

That we are Christians is self-evident but also not to be overlooked. This is the most important component of our identity.

The 2.3 billion church members in the world today do not all understand the center of gravity in Christianity the same way. For some the center of gravity lies in attempting to follow the teachings of the historical Jesus. For some others it means standing in the great theological tradition known by names such as "mere Christianity" and "orthodoxy." For others the center of gravity is meeting the risen Christ who is uniquely present in the Eucharist. For still others it means being passionately devoted to works of justice and peacemaking. And for still others it means having a personal conversion experience so that you will go to heaven when you die. Others could be named.

Despite the contested character of our Christian identity, all these things have a family resemblance. We may not be able to define with precision what it means to be Christians, but we know it when we see it. And we are trying to the best of our ability to live it out in our lives and in the movement and organization that is CBF.

Because we are Christians, we are ecumenical. The CBF has repeatedly reached out to other Baptist and non-Baptist groups. This is appropriate because we are all attempting to follow the same Lord Jesus Christ.

We Are Baptists

The CBF emerged from the largest Baptist denomination in the world, and we have kept the word "Baptist" in our name. Being Baptist is important to our identity.

Baptists have made two enormously important contributions. To the wider world they have contributed the insight that, in

order to grant maximal religious liberty to all citizens in a religiously diverse society, you must effect a separation of church and state. The Baptists were not the only people to see this four centuries ago, but they were among the first, they made great sacrifices to carry forward this idea, and their contribution to it has been fruitful and enduring.

To the wider church the Baptists have contributed the insight that, if you want the church to be an intentional faith community, and if baptism is the rite of initiation into the church, then you must reserve baptism for professing believers. Likewise, the Baptists were among the first to see and to carry forward this important idea.

These two contributions are so important that they need to be preserved for the sake of the world and for the sake of the wider church. Therefore it is important that there be Baptist denominations and churches and people who understand and propagate these ideas. The CBF is one of those.

Of course, what it means to be Baptists is just as contested as what it means to be Christians. And, in fact, we in the CBF are a particular kind of Baptists. We emerged from the Southern Baptist Convention, an important part of whose positive corporate identity was its passionate commitment to missions and evangelism. All Baptist groups do not have that passionate commitment. We do. We brought it with us when we emerged. That too is something worth keeping alive institutionally, and the CBF is doing it well.

We Are Moderates

To say that we are moderates is to say that we are not extremists, and, in particular, that we avoid the extremist form of Christianity known as Fundamentalism.

It is conventional among CBF folk to

comment that it is inadequate to say that the CBF is "not fundamentalist" and the like. This is true. There must be more to our identity than that we are not Fundamentalists. I have tried to list the "more" above: We are Christians, and we are Baptists.

However, once the "more" is clearly stated, it is in fact part of our identity that we are not Fundamentalists. We are wise to realize that our disagreements with Fundamentalism are not enough to bind us together, but we will be wise to remember also that our disagreements with Fundamentalism are a part of who we are. We should not allow that fact to slip away from our sense of identity.

It is not difficult to spell out the kinds of problems in Fundamentalism that we resist. For example, we resist Fundamentalism's accounts of what is fundamental in Christian faith. We resist Fundamentalism's tendency toward exclusivism, as though Fundamentalists are the only (true) Christians.

We resist Fundamentalism's militant and mean-spirited defense of the faith. We resist Fundamentalism's anti-intellectual tendencies. We resist Fundamentalism's excluding women from certain roles in church life. I am glad to report that there are forms of Fundamentalism that do not exhibit all of these problems, but these problems do exist in Fundamentalism, and it is a part of the CBF identity that we intend, with the Lord's help, to avoid these problems.

Conclusion

The CBF can no more offer a complete account of its corporate identity than any individual can offer a complete account of her or his personal identity. But the CBF, like an individual woman or man, can state some of the most important parts of its identity. This article is my attempt to do that.

I am offering a prayer that the Lord may help the CBF to flourish in the coming years. Because I believe that God's world will be a better place if the CBF flourishes than if it doesn't, I am filled with hope that the Lord will answer my prayer. **BT**

—In 2008, Fisher Humphreys retired from Samford University after having taught Christian theology for 38 years. His e-mail address is fisherhumphreys@gmail.com.

MERCER UNIVERSITY PREACHING CONSULTATION

September 26-28, 2010

King and Prince Beach and Golf Resort • St. Simons Island, Georgia

Co-Sponsored by

The James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology
The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia

Main Presenter — Allen Walworth

A gifted and proven consultant with more than 10 years of full-time experience in the church stewardship ministry, Allen brings the passion and calling of an ordained pastor, the training and discipline of a biblical scholar, and the wisdom of a tenured church "coach" to his work with churches of all denominations.

Over the past decade, Allen has partnered with 90 churches, helping them raise more than \$260 million toward their ministry visions. Five of those campaigns raised more than \$10 million each, and one congregation raised more than 15 times its annual budget in a single capital campaign.

Allen's passion for stewardship is fueled by a pastor's heart and a studied knowledge of Scripture. Before becoming a stewardship consultant, Allen was a senior pastor for 17 years, leading congregations ranging from a small town church of 1,000 members, to a large metropolitan congregation of more than 9,000 members. He is much in demand as a speaker at churches and other ministry venues across the country. Allen earned a Ph.D. in New Testament studies and has taught at the college and seminary levels.

Allen and his wife, Connie, live in Florida, where they enjoy golf, tennis and their five grown children.

Other speakers scheduled for the three-day program —

- William D. Underwood, President, Mercer University
- Benjamin U. Barnett, Pastor, Faith Fellowship Church, Fayetteville, Ga.
- Doug Dortch, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Tallahassee, Fla.
- Glen Money, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Monroe, Ga.
- Julie Pennington-Russell, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga.
- Michael Oliver, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Williams, Jacksonville, Ala.
- Jon Roebuck, Pastor, Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.
- Brett Younger, Associate Professor of Preaching, McAfee School of Theology

Registration is \$100 per person and is on a first-come, first-served basis.

A golf outing is planned for Monday afternoon.

Questions regarding registration or lodging?
Contact Diane Frazier at (678) 547-6470
or frazier_d@mercer.edu.



EVENT SCHEDULE

Sunday Evening, September 26

- 4:00-7:15 Check In and Registration
- 7:15-7:30 Music by Mark Edwards
Celebrating Grace
- 7:30-8:00 William D. Underwood, President, Mercer University
Welcome and a Word from Prayer
- 8:00-9:00 Allen Walworth
President and CEO of Genesis
- 9:00-10:00 President's Dinner

Monday Morning, September 27

- 7:00 Wake-Up Board of Visitors Breakfast
- 7:00 Doctor of Ministry Degree Information Breakfast
- 8:00-8:30 Music by Mark Edwards
- 8:30-9:00 David Sepp, Pastor, Second Prince de Leon Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.
- 9:00-9:30 Ben Barnett, Pastor, Faith Fellowship Church, Fayetteville, Ga.
"A Calling to Preach: A Reaction of Apathy"
- 9:30-10:00 Jon Roebuck, Pastor, Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.
"Telling the Gospel Story with Story — When Congregations Really Remember Post-Sunday"
- 10:00-10:30 Fellowship and Refreshments
Hosted by Mosbygrove Treatment Services, Inc.
- 10:30-10:45 Music by Mark Edwards
- 10:45-11:15 Mike Oliver, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Williams, Jacksonville, Ala.
"Finding Renewal in the Parables of Jesus"
- 11:15-11:45 Peter Iken Jones, Professor of New Testament and Preaching, McAfee School of Theology

Monday Afternoon, September 27

- 12:45 Golf Tournament
- 2:00 Tennis Tournament
- 2:00 Discussion of Tools for Advent
Alan Cripe and Brett Younger
- 6:00 Dinner for Walker Students and Alumni

Monday Evening, September 27

First Baptist Church of St. Simons

- 8:00 Allen Walworth
- 9:00 Fellowship and Refreshments
Hosted by First Baptist Church

Tuesday Morning, September 28

- 8:30-8:45 Wake-Up to Music, Mark Edwards
- 8:45-9:15 Julie Pennington-Russell, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Barbour, Ga.
"Move It, Believe!"
- 9:15-9:45 Elton Meany, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Wrens, Ga.
"The Preaching Relationship"
- 9:45-10:15 Doug Dortch, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Tallahassee, Fla.
"The Preacher as 'Second Father'"
- 10:15-10:30 Fellowship and Refreshments
Hosted by Mosbygrove Treatment Services, Inc.
- 10:30-11:30 Allen Walworth
- 11:20-11:30 Announcement about WPC 2011 and Adjournment

Campbell, Wake Forest announce new divinity deans

Gail O'Day and Andrew Wakefield have been tapped to serve as deans at the divinity schools at Wake Forest and Campbell universities, respectively. Both schools are in North Carolina and relate to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Wakefield, who has served on the Campbell University Divinity School faculty since 1997, will become dean on July 1, succeeding Michael Cogdill, who is returning to the classroom. Wakefield currently holds the Lewis Edward and Martha Barnes Tyner Chair of Bible at the Divinity School.

He is a graduate of Wake Forest University, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Duke University where he earned a Ph.D. in New Testament.

Wakefield was born in Chattanooga, Tenn., but spent his childhood in Southeast Asia as the son of missionary parents. Most recently he has been serving as coordinator for Baptist Fellowship of Angier, a mission church focused on ministry with children and families from economically depressed areas.

O'Day, a New Testament scholar who currently serves as senior associate dean at Emory University's



Andrew Wakefield



Gail O'Day

Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Ga., will become dean of the Wake Forest University School of Divinity on Aug. 1. She will succeed founding dean Bill J. Leonard, who will return to teaching.

O'Day joined the Candler School faculty in 1987 and is now the A.H. Shatford Professor of New Testament and Preaching. She is a graduate of Brown University, Harvard Divinity School and Emory, where she earned a doctorate in New Testament.

She has been an assistant professor of New Testament at Eden Theological Seminary in Saint Louis, Mo., and taught in the religion department at Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y. She is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. **BT**

ABC National Ministries reclaims historic name

By Bob Allen

NEW YORK — (ABP) National Ministries of American Baptist Churches USA marked the 178th anniversary of its founding April 27 by announcing the agency will reclaim its historic name of American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

“Outside of American Baptist circles and often within it as well, we spend a lot of time explaining what National Ministries is,”



Wright-Riggins

Executive Director Aidsand Wright-Riggins said in a ceremony at Mariners' Temple Baptist Church in New York City. “American Baptist Home Mission Societies is much more straightforward and self-explanatory.”

Mariners' Temple, the oldest Baptist church in Manhattan, was site of the sixth triennial Convention of the General Missionary Convention of the United States of America for Foreign Mission. A number of Baptists attending the meeting recessed to the nearby Mulberry Street Baptist Church to found the American Baptist Home Mission Society on April 27, 1832.

The name National Ministries was

adopted after the organization joined in 1955 with the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, which was founded in 1887. Later it merged with the Baptist General Tract Society, founded in 1824, and the American Baptist Education Society, founded in 1888.

Clifford Johnson, president of the National Ministries board, said using the plural American Baptist Home Mission Societies honors the “various threads of our history.”

A redesigned home page at www.abhms.org will include a new weekly podcast feature, “Home Mission in Action,” which launches with an interview with Wright-Riggins about National Ministries reclaiming its historic names.

“Our birth names state clearly who we are and what we are called to do in this second decade of the 21st century,” Wright-Riggins said. “We are American Baptists, networked and focused on doing and enabling mission here in the United States of America and Puerto Rico.”

Graphic files of a new logo and a bulletin insert to announce the reclaimed name to congregations will be made available on the website.

The service at Mariners' Temple included a dramatization by Al Staggs who portrayed John Mason Peck, a founder of the

American Baptist Home Mission Society and pioneer missionary who traveled to the western frontier, primarily Missouri and Illinois, preaching, teaching and establishing churches until his death in 1858.

Another dramatization by Anthea Butler profiled Joanna P. Moore, an American Baptist missionary who spent most of her life ministering to newly freed slaves in the South following the Civil War. **BT**

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First Baptist Church
Abilene, Texas

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First Baptist Church
Bladenboro, N.C.

Remembering Cecil Sherman

Editor's note: Cecil Sherman died April 17 at age 82 in Richmond, Va. He was one of the founders and the first coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The following tributes honor his unique style of leadership and his impact on Baptist life.

He stood on a higher hill

BY WALTER B. SHURDEN

I speak as one who knew Cecil Sherman in the context of his extraordinary denominational leadership. I have two comments.

First, Dr. Sherman stood on a higher hill than the rest of us. So, he saw more. And he saw more, more clearly. And he saw more, more clearly, farther down the road.

And he saw more, more clearly, farther down the road *sooner* than all of the others.

One of his favorite phrases during the denominational conflict was about when people “smelled the coffee.” He smelled the coffee very early.

I say now publicly what I have said in writing in two or three places: “Cecil Sherman was right more times on more occasions on more issues than anyone in the Fundamentalist-Moderate Controversy.”

Second, and something that was obvious to anybody who ever heard Dr. Sherman speak: he was plain spoken.

If you heard Cecil Sherman and did not understand him, either you did not understand the English language or you were hard of hearing.

Because of his plain speech, especially in the blue flame of controversy, he was often accused, and even by his friends, of being shrill, harsh and brash. I honestly never thought of him as such. Rather, I think his plain speech often intimidated his vigorous adversaries and frightened his timid friends.

The flip side of Dr. Sherman's plain speech often went unnoticed. He was a masterful encourager of people, both of ministers and laity. He was of the bloodline of Barnabas.

Yesterday I was at Calvary Baptist Church

in Washington, D.C., for a *Baptists Today* luncheon. Dr. Amy Butler, pastor at Calvary, came up to me and said, “I understand you are going to Dr. Sherman's memorial service in Asheville.” I told her that I would attend.

She said, “A quick story. On last Easter Sunday morning, I walked into the sanctuary, took my seat behind the pulpit, looked out on the congregation, and I saw Dr. Cecil Sherman in the congregation. I was scared to death! I was terrified to have to preach to him! But then later in the week, I received one of the most encouraging and affirming notes any preacher could receive, and it was from Dr. Sherman.”

“Barnabas” Sherman.

A dear friend told me this story on the phone last week when he heard of Dr. Sherman's death.

“I went to Southeastern Seminary as a very raw first-year ministerial student, extremely conservative to the core. Nobody there believed the Bible the way I did, and nobody there understood the gospel the way I did. I became sadly disillusioned, and I decided to pack it up, leave seminary, and go back to Georgia after my first year.

“That summer I was in a class on ‘The Multiple Ministries of the Pastor’ taught by Dr. Sherman... I was in the seminary library one day, and happened to see Dr. Sherman. We struck up a conversation, and I told him that I was not returning to Southeastern the next term.

“He asked why, and I told him. He grunted, we said our pleasantries, and he walked off.

“At the final examination, I finished

writing the exam and took it to Dr. Sherman, who was sitting behind the desk at the front of the class. I laid my examination in front of him and turned to walk away from Southeastern Seminary.

“I heard him say, ‘Hey, you.’ I turned to face him and he had his index finger crooked, motioning for me. I walked up to his desk, and he urged me to come closer so that he could whisper and not disturb the class. I bent down.

“He said, ‘There are 94 of you in this class. There are about four of you who are going to amount to something. So you get your butt back here next term.’”

My friend returned to Southeastern, graduated and became my pastor at First Baptist Church in Macon, Ga. He then became the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., where *The Washington Post* called him “The Poet Preacher.”

Today he is the pastor of the Northminster Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., and he is one of the best pastors-preachers in our corner of the Baptist orbit. His name, of course, is Chuck Poole.

Chuck said to me as he finished his story, “One of the half dozen most important spiritual moments in my life was when Dr. Cecil Sherman told me that I might amount to something.” “Barnabas” Sherman!

Cecil Sherman stood on a higher hill than most. He saw more. And what he saw, he spoke plainly about. **BT**

(This tribute is adapted from Shurden's comments at an April 23 memorial service in Asheville, N.C.)

Sherman and the life of *Baptists Today*

BY JACK U. HARWELL, *Editor Emeritus*

Baptists from around the world will be telling Cecil Sherman stories for years to come. He impacted lives and causes and churches and institutions more than any Baptist leader I knew across more than 40 years of denominational service.

As a founding director and then as editor of *Baptists Today* from 1988-1998, I know a little bit about Cecil's singular contributions.

One: In November 1982, Baptist journalist Walker Knight got a telephone call from Larry McSwain, speaking for himself and Kenneth Chafin and Cecil Sherman about starting a newspaper for Baptists that was not "owned" by denominational bureaucrats. Walker agreed, if financing could be arranged.

Ten persons, at a meeting in Decatur, Ga., in January 1983, pledged to raise \$50,000 to launch the autonomous, national news journal. Six days later Cecil made a trip from Asheville to Atlanta with his pledge in hand, plus a little extra.

Two: In 1990, I got a conference call from Southern Baptist giants Duke McCall, Darold Morgan and Grady Cothen indicating that people across the nation were asking them to set up a fund to hold mission monies until progressive Southern Baptists could decide what to do. *Baptists Today* became the holding agency for what was first called the



Baptist Cooperative Mission Program

Hettie Johnson, retired director of business services for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, was hired and given an office near mine to handle the funds.

When Cecil became the first coordinator in 1992, more than \$2,600,000 had come in for the fledgling Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. I will always be thankful that *Baptists Today* had a small part in this significant effort.

Three: One day Cecil called and said something like this: "Jack, I think *Baptists Today* ought to be included in the budget of the CBF. CBF won't try to control you or own you, but ... you ought to be in our

budget." It's still there.

Four: In 1995, President Jimmy Carter called to say that he and Rosalynn were going to leave the Southern Baptist Convention and become supporters of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He asked me to gather Cecil Sherman and Keith Parks, and our wives, for lunch and to talk about how they might be involved.

President Carter and Cecil did most of the talking. We gave President Carter a list of six things we thought would be helpful. He agreed to do five of them.

He would not write some Sunday school lessons for *Baptists Today*, because he did not feel theologically trained or qualified. Just a few weeks later, at the CBF Assembly in Birmingham, President Carter announced that from the day forward, he and Rosalynn were "CBFers."

Five: Cecil wrote a brilliant and straightforward column for *Baptists Today* after he became national coordinator in 1992. He always met our Monday 5:00 p.m. deadline.

But one time he called and said, "Jack, I am in Kentucky promoting CBF. I will be back at my office late Monday afternoon. Please come by at 4:30 and pick up my column so we won't miss the deadline."

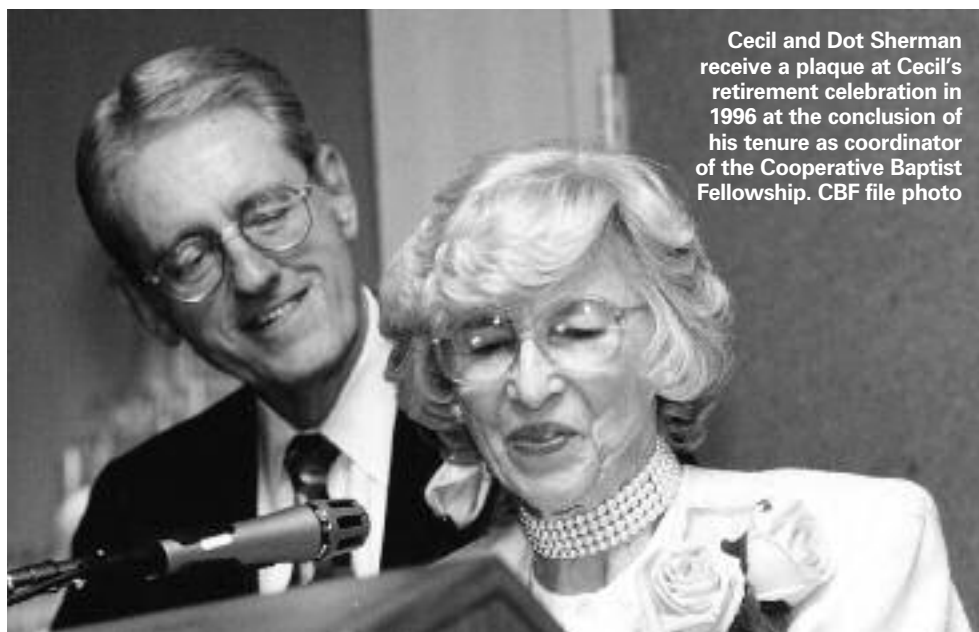
I got there at 4:15. At 4:30 Cecil rushed in and said, "Our plane was late landing. I will have you a column in 10 minutes."

Sure enough, in 10 minutes he had typed one of his typical masterful columns; I never saw a person type as fast and as accurately as Cecil did. But when he finished, he said, "I can't give you this column until I run it by my wife Dot; she's my best sounding board and my most careful critic."

So Cecil got Dot on the phone and read the column to her. She said without hesitation, "No, Cecil, you cannot print that column. It's too blunt and too caustic. People will misunderstand your spirit and your motivation."

So Cecil tore up that column and said to me, "Give me 15 minutes and I'll write another one."

In less than 30 minutes, he wrote two absolutely scintillating columns. Either one of them would have taken most writers hours to ponder and to produce. **BT**



Cecil and Dot Sherman receive a plaque at Cecil's retirement celebration in 1996 at the conclusion of his tenure as coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. CBF file photo

Cecil's fertile, fruitful friendships

BY JACK U. HARWELL

Some friendships are fragile. Some are fickle. And some are frail. But happily, some friendships are fertile and fruitful.

Such a friendship took root between two couples in Chamblee, Ga., in 1956, and grew for more than half-a-century.

When Cecil Sherman became pastor of First Baptist Church in Chamblee that year, the youngest member of the pastor search committee was a college student named Tommy Boland — who was launching a career in banking.

Cecil was married to Dot Hair, a marriage that lasted 54 years until Dot's death in 2008. In 1958 Tommy married Beth Ann Campbell, a lifelong Methodist who became a Baptist.

Beth Ann remembers: "When Cecil baptized me, he told the Chamblee congregation it was the first time he had ever baptized a deacon's wife."

Tommy's career flourished and he became chair of the finance committee at the Chamblee church, holding that post for many years. Cecil liked to say: "I tried to give Tommy spiritual guidance, and he tried to give me financial guidance. I don't know who succeeded the most."

Beth Ann said: "Cecil and Dot were great role models for us as a young married couple... As Tommy and I followed Dot and Cecil's career across the next 50 years, we saw that he was a powerful influence in the lives of young people in every church he served."

Beth Ann said they still hear "Cecil



Good friends Cecil Sherman and Tommy Boland together last February

"Cecil taught our children that peanut butter is good on Oreo cookies. He was a down-to-earth friend, while being the greatest preacher we ever knew. He truly blessed our lives and the lives of our children."

—BETH ANN BOLAND

stories" from people who went to summer camp with Dot and Cecil while he was their pastor from 1956-1960. "He was our spiritual hero, but he was also great fun!"

After the Shermans moved to Texas, the two couples stayed in touch by phone and letters while raising their children. Then Cecil became pastor of First Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C., in 1964. He stayed there 20 years and became one of the most respected (by progressives) and feared (by fundamentalists) voices in Baptist life.

Only 225 miles apart, the Shermans and Bolands visited each other on occasion.

"Cecil taught our children that peanut butter is good on Oreo cookies," Beth Ann said with a chuckle. "He was a down-to-earth friend, while being the greatest preacher we ever knew. He truly blessed our lives and the lives of our children."

Also, the Bolands remember a conversation in their home in the early 1970s, when Cecil predicted what would happen within the Southern Baptist Convention. Beth Ann said: "Everything he predicted happened, almost on the exact timeline Cecil had predicted."

Out of that tragic SBC struggle for power came the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Cecil

was its unquestioned spiritual and political stack-pole and became its first national coordinator in 1992, moving from the pastorate of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

Cecil lived with the Bolands until Dot could sell their home in Fort Worth and join him in Atlanta.

"During those months in our home, we spent many hours talking about theological and political issues which caused CBF to come into being," said Tommy, now retired chairman of the board of Wachovia. "Cecil convinced Beth Ann and me to become whole-hearted supporters of CBF."

Beth Ann added: "It was during this time that Cecil's heart for missions impressed me the most. He was deeply concerned for SBC missionaries who felt they could no longer represent Southern Baptists, and wished to come on board with the CBF. We saw him work long and hard, going all across the nation, to build up the CBF."

Tommy served on the CBF Coordinating Council and, when Cecil retired four years later to become a professor at Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Tommy became interim CBF coordinator, serving until Daniel Vestal was elected.

Summarizing their 54 years of friendship, Tommy listed some of Cecil's attributes that made their friendship so fertile and fruitful.

"He was able and willing to teach in almost any situation; he had an amazing memory for facts and dates and names and faces; he could remember wonderful stories from Baptist history and from his personal experiences; his writing blessed and edified thousands of people; he was especially persuasive and could get me and others to do almost anything he truly believed in; in caring for Dot through a long and mystifying illness, he gave a supreme example of marital integrity; he has had and will have a long-term impact on free and faithful Baptists because he always knew the right thing to say and to do; but most of all, Cecil was an unfailing representative of the truth, the right thing, the Christ-like thing, no matter what others might say or think. He was a fertile and fruitful friend whom Beth Ann and I will forever cherish." **BT**

Correction:

In the May issue ad (p.11) for Bill Hull's new book, *Seminary in Crisis*, the pricing is incorrect.

The ad should read as follows:

Hardcover \$19
Softcover \$13
(plus tax & shipping)

We apologize for our error and any inconvenience it may have caused.

Debbie Williams ran the race before us

For more than 30 years Debbie Williams was a faithful Christian servant who taught by example what it means to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself.

A member of First Baptist Church of Augusta, Ga., she died March 20 while accompanying a medical mission team to Chili that included her husband Dr. George Williams.

Although she grew up in another denomination, Debbie came to believe firmly in the Baptist way of doing things. When their daughter, Nan, was baptized, Debbie chose to be baptized by immersion as a public confession of the covenant commitment made to God years earlier.

She freely offered her many gifts in service to Christ as an insightful Bible teacher, deacon, youth leader, puppeteer, interpretive dance choreographer, and an instructor in drama, song and dance. Also, she was an artist, baker, missionary, women's event coordinator, audio-visual controller, floor sweeper, kitchen helper, hostess and mentor to young women.

She could organize any church event. When it came time to plan Debbie's funeral, everyone said, "We need Debbie to plan this!"

Debbie loved a challenge and was very resourceful. She always found a way to get a job done and at times funded projects herself. She swapped her services for goods at craft stores, raised funds from within the community, and saved every scrap of cloth that might be used for some future project.

On occasion, she was even known to have jumped in a dumpster that held some item she thought might be used for a church project.

Debbie firmly believed the arts were a medium for communicating Christian faith. For many years the sanctuary was decorated to explore the Vacation Bible School themes, and the children's building was completely transformed so the children could experience God's teachings through



Debbie Williams

her creativity and visionary artwork.

Largely due to Debbie's vision and creativity, the children's building now depicts biblical Jerusalem. She also choreographed and directed a production called "Night on Broadway" where church members, lay leaders and ministers came together to sing, dance, perform and laugh.

Everyone in the arts community sought Debbie's help, but knew that her first priority was serving through the church. Her involvement in the arts became a means of outreach into the community.

During the annual C.S. Lewis Festival, she encouraged members of First Baptist Augusta to transform space into the "Land of Narnia" so thousands of local children could engage *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The C.S. Lewis Foundation invited her to Oxford, England, to lecture on organizing C.S. Lewis Festivals.

Debbie understood that working together in service was important for building a strong church family. She encouraged people to venture out in new commitments.

Former pastor Chuck Bugg claimed that Debbie could get a senior adult, child, teenager, church moderator, maintenance staff, deacon and the pastor to do just about anything. People trusted her.

Current pastor Greg DeLoach counted Debbie as a good friend who wanted to initiate change in people as they chose to be more like Christ.

Of course, Debbie was not perfect.

She had her moments of frustration, disappointment and difficulty. Yet, she always seemed to find a way to look beyond what was seen and to imagine what was unseen.

It was the love of God known fully in relationship with Jesus Christ that inspired Debbie — and she wanted everyone to experience God's love. To that end, she organized and coordinated many mission trips at home and abroad for youth and adults.

Just two weeks before her death, Debbie and George hosted a young Roma student who had been in the Gandhi School where Cooperative Baptist Fellowship mission personnel Glenn and Clista Adkins serve in Hungary.

Debbie spoke a great deal about passing on the baton to the next generation. It pleased her that this had already happened in her own family. George and Debbie's son, Will Williams, was ordained by First Baptist Augusta and is now pursuing doctoral studies in theology at Baylor. Their daughter, Nan Williams, shares her faith as a special education teacher in South Carolina.

When our church began a building project, Debbie designed a "wall of faith" as a reminder that the past and the future are linked. She was already hard at work finding items from the former church building such as old stained glass, wood and even organ pipes to be incorporated into the "wall of faith."

By "seeing that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses," she wanted our church to appreciate the courageous people who came before us. It was her deepest desire that we would grow stronger in Christ and always be actively involved with missions.

We have been challenged to continue running the race before us and to pick up where Debbie left off. Thanks be to God for her life of love and her witness to the Baptist way. **BT**

—Kathy Smith Martin is a deacon at First Baptist Church in Augusta, Ga., and a member of the Board of Visitors at the Wake Forest University School of Divinity.

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Good ideas for effective ministry

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month
by Chad Fetzer



Take your students to the 'School of Prayer'

There was a time when I felt confident that students in my church knew how to pray. After all, I thought, many of them had been raised going to church, had seen people pray and surely prayed themselves many times. However, I stumbled upon the sobering discovery that more than a few of my teens had difficulty praying. Many confided to me their lack of confidence in their praying. They felt their prayers were "weak" and lacked meaning for their faith. Some confessed they didn't really know what to say when they prayed.

This realization became the stimulus for a Doctor of Ministry project seeking to discover how our church could help students become more comfortable and confident in the spiritual discipline of prayer. During the months of study and research I naïvely dreamed of designing some dazzling new concept or program that might revolutionize how the church teaches prayer. Ironically, my journey led me not to something new, but to something old — the Book of Psalms.

For some reason, the Psalms have lost importance as a tool to teach people to pray. This is surprising since the book is at its core a catalog of prayers. Its pages contain the complete span of the Hebrew's holy conversation with God. All the emotions of life find a voice somewhere in the Psalter — happiness, joy, love, frustration, fear, disappointment, anger and even hatred. The prayers of the Psalms demonstrate an authentic intimacy with God. In the Jewish mind, nothing was to be off limits or sugar coated in prayer. God was big enough and close enough to listen to everything one had to say.

The Psalms possess a remarkable beauty and rawness that formed the prayers of a people for centuries. The Psalms became the "School of Prayer" (a term utilized in many different settings by Christopher Barth,

Eugene Peterson, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others) for Hebrews of later generations who learned to pray by praying the Psalms. The early church prayed the Psalms. As I studied, I became convinced that the Psalms held the same potential to mold and shape the prayers of today's young believers.

As the project continued, we became intentional in finding places in the life of our church where students could interact meaningfully with the Psalms. Opportunities were plentiful.

- At the start of our Wednesday youth meeting we might introduce a subject such as impatience. After asking students to spend a little time thinking or writing about things in their lives where they felt frustrated or impatient, we would read a psalm that identified with those feelings and remind students to pray the psalm as if it were their own words. We then took time to discuss their reactions to the prayer.
- We asked students to rewrite a psalm in their own words. Those who were willing would share a bit about their psalm and lead our prayer time with their rewritten psalm. These student prayers might eventually be collected and produced as a prayer guide for the wider church body.
- We enlisted students to identify all the metaphors related to God utilized in a particular psalm (e.g. Psalm 18) and then share which, if any, of those metaphors connected with their experience with God and to compose a prayer utilizing that metaphor. Other students composed prayers with their own unique metaphors, and many students wanted to read their prayers to the group.
- After a discussion of Psalm 109, we offered students the opportunity to pray to God about situations or people where anger and perhaps hatred were involved. We went out-

side and gave each student a tennis ball and a felt-tip marker. Students could write about their situations on their tennis ball and bounce it on the parking lot as they prayed. For this exercise we laid out specific boundaries for determining healthy and unhealthy expressions of anger. Several adult sponsors were on hand to talk with students who appeared to be struggling. Students were encouraged to stop if they felt their emotions were getting too intense and also not to manufacture anger for the sake of the exercise. After the prayer time we asked students to leave their tennis ball in a specified box as a way to symbolize the desire to leave the issues of those prayers to God's care.

- Soon we hope to launch a Psalms student study group. In this group students will meet together weekly for seven weeks to read, reflect, journal and pray through the selected psalm for the week.

As I completed my project, I found myself in agreement with the words of Christian writer Eugene Peterson, who concluded that "There is nothing (I hope) innovative in what I write. This is not the latest thing on prayer, but the oldest; the Psalms, obvious and accessible as tools for prayer in the work of faith" (*Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer*, 7).

Our students need to explore the Psalms as the prayers of an earlier generation of believers that can instruct a new generation of believers; to pray the words of the Psalms as their own, allowing the Psalter to give voice to the groans and the longings they struggle to express to the Holy One; to be shown the concepts the Hebrews utilized in the prayers of the Psalms and be taught how to utilize those same concepts to expand and broaden their understanding and experience of God. **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 Chad Fetzer, minister for students and families at the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, Okla. To submit an article for consideration or to receive writer's guidelines for the *ChurchWorks!* page in *Baptists Today*, contact Managing Editor Jackie Riley (jackie@baptiststoday.org). 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

July 11, 2010

Do justice

Matthew 12:1-14

A frightened woman on the Titanic found her place in a lifeboat about to be dropped in the raging North Atlantic. She thought of something she needed and was granted only a moment to retrieve it. She ran across the deck, which was already slanted at a dangerous angle, and across the gambling room floor with all the money shoved ankle deep in one corner. She went to her stateroom, pushed aside her jewelry and reached above her bed to retrieve three small oranges. She then hurriedly found her way back to the lifeboat and got in (*Tales of the Tardy Oxcart*, 469).

Most of us are familiar with the tragedy of the Titanic. It is a reminder that in a moment of crisis, the things we thought were most important become extremely unimportant. And the seemingly unimportant things, consequently, can become very important. We don't have to have an experience on the scale of the Titanic tragedy to remind us; individual crises come our way causing us to gauge our priorities. Having gone through them, we come out with a different mindset about the things that matter. We learn that ...

Some things are important (vv. 1-2). The Pharisees thought the Sabbath was important, and the idea of transgressing this particular day was unthinkable. Religious leaders knew what the Mosaic law said: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exod. 20:8). The Law specified there were six days to work, but the seventh day would be set apart as a day of rest. So, when the Pharisees saw the disciples "working" on the Sabbath, they questioned Jesus about it. The disciples were "picking heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them" (Luke 6:1). That may not sound like work, but the Pharisees were precise about implementing the law and weren't going to let Jesus get by with it.

The Pharisees "saw" what the disciples were doing, which indicates they were watching them closely to see if they were going to do something unlawful. The Pharisees did not care that the disciples were hungry, only that an important law had been broken. This same behavior appears among believers today in that there is a tendency to look at ourselves as the standard of behavior and look for ways to point out faults in others. This approach will make us as legalistic as the Pharisees, who no doubt thought they were interpreting their Scripture correctly.

Some things are more important than others (vv. 3-8). On Jan. 12, 2010, a 7-magnitude earthquake rocked the island nation of Haiti. The devastation and loss of life were catastrophic, but the response of the American people and in our Baptist relief agencies in particular has been inspiring. Our church identifies with American Baptists and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and has contributed financial aid through these ministry partners. Others helped in a significant way as well, with little regard to agreement on every theological issue. It may be interesting to debate why this tragedy happened, but it is more important to focus on being the presence of Christ to those in need. Our differences of opinion pale in comparison to the need we can meet if we work together.

Jesus did not rebuke his disciples, but responded to the Pharisees' accusations by quoting two examples from the Mosaic law and by reciting a scripture reference from Hosea 6:6. The first example related to King David, a hero to the Pharisees, as he did something "unlawful" because he and his companions were hungry. The second example related to priests working in the temple, which technically could be construed as work, but not regarded that way by the Pharisees.

By using these two examples, Jesus pointed out the inconsistency of their interpretation by asking "Haven't you read your Bible?" Then, he pointed out that "something

LESSONS FOR:
Sunday, July 11-25,
2010

Written by Danny Chisholm,
pastor of University Heights
Baptist Church in
Springfield, Mo.



greater than the temple is here." Some translations may read "someone greater ..." but the primary emphasis is that the work and message of Jesus and his disciples was more important than the temple. Extending mercy to others is more important than sacrifice without service. We should interpret our actions based upon this premise, as Jesus said, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Some people place great importance on imposing their religious rules and limitations (vv. 9-10). The Pharisees had been selective in their understanding and application of the Law, much in the same way persons are selective in their use of the Bible today. It is easier to promote parts of the Bible we don't have difficulty with and ignore other aspects of Scripture that call us into greater accountability in how we treat others.

After engaging in debate, Jesus entered the synagogue where he found a man with a shriveled hand. The Pharisees were also there, and were quick to capitalize on another opportunity to accuse Jesus. They asked "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" They did not see an opportunity to help a man in need, but instead focused on a legalistic interpretation of their law. The Pharisees did not consider justice for this man as significant as maintaining their interpretation of the Law. Unfortunately, this mindset is prevalent in our society today.

The National Association of Evangelicals released a survey recently about the top moral concerns in America. A number of concerns surfaced in the list, and no doubt would generate debate about which one should be at the top. However, I found Sammy Mah's reaction to this survey to be most on target. Mah, president of World Relief, said: "The greatest moral issue in America today is our blindness and silence to injustices here and around the world. Social ills like poverty, malnutrition, human trafficking, and so many more are rooted in injustices that must be fought" ("Evangelicals: Abortion, Moral Relativism Top Moral Issues List," *Christian Post*).



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“Is it lawful?” was the question of the Pharisees. They would have been considered “good” persons from a moral standpoint but woefully lacking in extending mercy to others. Jesus was concerned about justice for the man with the shriveled hand. He gave the Pharisees an easily identifiable example about a sheep falling into a ditch on the Sabbath and asked, “Will you not take hold of it and lift it out?” The unspoken answer was “yes”; their silence once again revealed their hypocrisy.

We must place importance on the things that are important to Jesus (vv. 11-14). By healing the man, Jesus emphasized the truth, “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” The Pharisees missed the point regarding the purpose of not only the Sabbath day, but also in how to treat others each day of the week. No astonishment or praising God occurred in response to this miraculous healing. The Pharisees missed out on the greater good in order to hold on to their stiff, burdensome views of the Law. They didn’t think it was appropriate to pick grain or heal on the Sabbath, but had no difficulty leaving that place and “plotting on how they might kill Jesus.”

Today, there are differences of opinion regarding what is appropriate for the people of God to do on Sundays, for example, going to restaurants or playing sports or engaging in other activities. There are extremes to avoid when considering the Sabbath. We must not allow Sunday to become “just another day,” nor should we watch others in order to catch them “walking in the wheat fields on the Sabbath.” Let us make sure that worship, rest and praise are an important part of Sunday, and find ways to do good not only on the Lord’s Day but also on every day.

The words of Jesus immediately preceding this passage provide an important context and appropriate summary of his teaching: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

There wasn’t much “rest” involved in the Pharisees’ thinking or lifestyle. Their concern was to point out the sins of others. In contrast, we need to be sensitive to those around us who may have “withered” lives, hopes and dreams. The tendency may be to condemn these individuals for their past sins rather than offer comfort to them. These persons need an

encouraging word and the love of Christ, rather than burdensome rules and regulations to follow. It is possible to be good church members but not good members of the human race. Let us focus on the latter and in doing so transform our churches into those that administer justice rather than judgment. Indeed, Jesus is Lord — not only of the Sabbath, but also of every day.

July 18, 2010

Love kindness

Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the best-known stories in the Bible. Hospitals have been named after it. Persons who do a good deed are called “good Samaritans.” There is even a “Good Samaritan Law” in place to protect citizens from legal liability for helping someone with a medical emergency. While some of us may feel there is nothing new to learn from the story about the Good Samaritan, our attitude about it is extremely important.

The passage begins (vv. 25-29) with an “expert in the law” standing to question Jesus: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The lawyer was an expert in Mosaic law and offered this question to test Jesus’ knowledge and catch him in a mistaken interpretation. The emphasis is seen in this literal rendering, “By *doing* what shall I inherit eternal life?” (emphasis mine). Jesus reflected the question back to the lawyer, who eagerly offered an answer. The lawyer cited Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19 in his response, indicating he “knew his Bible.”

Jesus commended him for a correct response, and in so doing revealed the duplicity of the lawyer for asking a question for which he already had the correct answer. The lawyer realized he could in no way live up to his own answer and asked, “Who is my neighbor?” His definition of neighbor related to persons he knew and those in his social and racial class. He was searching for a loophole to make himself feel better. This question serves as the introduction to one of the greatest stories ever told, a story with many characters.

We don’t know anything about the victimized man (v. 30) except that he was going “down from Jerusalem to Jericho” and was ambushed by thieves who beat him and left him naked on the side of the road. This particular path did have a descent of about 17

miles, so the man went down not only geographically, but also emotionally and physically. The incident left him extremely vulnerable.

This kind of situation, unfortunately, is common in modern society. News stories of persons being mugged in shopping mall parking lots or being carjacked at traffic lights are common. The temptation in hearing about all these incidents is that we can become desensitized to the violence. It can become more interesting to offer explanations about why the violence happened rather than help the person in need.

A priest and a Levite (vv. 31-32) are also introduced into this story, perhaps to the relief of the lawyer and those in attendance. Surely one of these two pious individuals would stop and offer help to this man in obvious need. Each one “happened to be going down the same road,” which would be a wonderful coincidence for the victimized man. The priest was the most likely hero for this story, as he was well respected, had strong morals, and most of all had a keen awareness of the Scripture and its implications for living. The Levite also worked in the temple and was understood to be someone of high moral standing.

The audience must have cringed to hear that both the priest and Levite saw this man and not only passed by, but also “passed by on the other side.” It’s important to note that both of these men were considered good people, yet the dilemma of the stranger registered no emotional response on their behalf. They avoided the situation entirely, thinking that involvement might contaminate them and keep them from participation in the temple ceremonies. Their inaction created more disappointment and tension for Jesus’ hearers, as the two persons most likely and expected to help out failed to do so.

It’s hard to overstate the surprise and disgust generated by the insertion of a Samaritan (vv. 33-35) into the story. Jews despised Samaritans. They were considered enemies, and viewed as morally inferior and a racially mixed people that were to be shunned. Nothing good could be associated with Samaritans, and this stereotype contributed to the surprise ending and application of the parable.

Like the priest and Levite, the Samaritan saw the man lying on the side of the road but that is where the similarity ends. What the Samaritan saw moved him to compassion. He went to the man, administered first aid, put



him on his own donkey and took him to an inn for an overnight stay. Prior to leaving the hotel, the Samaritan said he would pay for any additional charges related to the man's care.

There are any number of situations that could relate to this story. We are capable of great kindness and compassion in the face of global calamities. The earthquake in Haiti, Hurricane Katrina and the 9/11 attack are examples of tragedies that have brought out the best in humans as we have sought to help those around us — even complete strangers. Yet there are times when Christians have been silent and “crossed to the other side of the road” despite seeing the need for someone to help. We can't be too hard on the priest and Levite when our own actions fail to measure up to our beliefs. We can be inconsistent in our responses, at times acting like the priest while at other times like the Samaritan. The sad truth is that we don't always “practice what we preach.”

This story is also about us (vv. 36-37). Jesus reframes the question of the lawyer and asked him to respond. “Which of these three do you think was the neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The lawyer could not bring himself to say “the Samaritan” but only offered “the one who had mercy on him.” Jesus answered, “Go and *do likewise*” (emphasis mine). The lawyer had been interested in what he could “do” to inherit eternal life, and had been instructed on what his behavior should be. The lawyer's answers reveal his own prejudice and that he was not much of a neighbor himself. Another way of looking at this question is this: “Will you, a Jew, an expert in the Mosaic law, follow the example of a Samaritan?”

It's easy to condemn the lawyer, but I can appreciate his attitude and sympathize with him. So many times we know the right thing to do, but do not follow through in our actions. Right answers are not nearly as important as right actions, and this passage reminds us there is no way we can do enough to justify ourselves before God. It's easier to identify the neighbors like us socially, economically and racially than those who are unlike us. Prejudice creeps into our lives in a variety of ways, and in so doing we miss out on opportunities to be a witness for Christ.

I came across a story about a teaching hospital whose administrators learned that one of their young resident students was having a great impact upon the patients who were children. They were eager to respond to him, as

he was more effective with them than anyone else on the staff. The administrators assigned a nurse to follow the young resident around to find out what his secret was in dealing with the children. It wasn't until the nurse was on night duty that she found out his secret: every night on his last round he would kiss and hug and tuck in every one of the children. It was through this simple act of compassion that he made contact with them, and that simple touch made a world of difference (Bruce W Thielemann, “Telltale Tears,” *Preaching Today*, tape 40).

Like the priest and Levite, many of us have taken the journey to the “other side of the road.” The enduring question that emerges from this story is not “Who is my neighbor?” but rather “What kind of neighbor am I going to be?” May God help us to see those in need and respond with kindness and compassion.

July 25, 2010

Walk humbly with God

Matthew 23:1-12

In the courtyard of a little church in a French town stood a beautiful statue of Jesus with his arms outstretched. One day during World War II a bomb exploded close to the statue, and it was dismembered. After the battle the citizens decided to find the pieces of the statue and reconstruct it. They patiently gathered the broken pieces and re-assembled it, but there was one problem. They were unable to find the hands of the statue. “A Christ without hands is no Christ at all,” someone moaned. “Hands with scars, yes. But what's a Lord without hands? We need a new statue.” Then someone else came along with another idea that prevailed. A brass plaque was attached to the base of the statue that read: “I have no hands, but your hands” (Paul Powell, *The Church Today*, 49).

God put each of us here for a reason, and those in positions of leadership in the church should be especially mindful of our responsibility to minister to hurting people. Our words and actions can bless or burden others, as we shall see below.

Some use their position to burden others (vv. 1-4). The teachers of the law and Pharisees sat “in Moses' seat.” This was a chair of importance in the synagogue, and those who sat in it had great authority. Mosaic succession meant that the man who sat in this

chair had a direct connection with Moses and therefore had the gift of teaching and interpretation of the Law. Jesus acknowledged the importance of their teaching, as long as it was consistent with the true meaning of the Law. Persons were to follow the teaching of the religious leadership, but not to imitate their actions because they “do not practice what they preach.”

Jesus condemned the religious leaders for placing great expectations on the people while not being willing to help them live out those expectations. In fact, the teaching of these leaders was stricter than the Scripture itself. They condemned people for not measuring up to the Law, while feeling no conviction about not living up to it themselves. Jesus accused the leaders of placing “loads” on the people's shoulders, much like a yoke is placed on an animal. The Pharisees enjoyed controlling the people with the Law, but did not trust them to understand the Law.

Some think their position entitles them to greatness (vv. 5-7). The Pharisees thought they were morally superior and wanted others to know it. Jesus offered a scathing rebuke of their shallow spirituality: “Everything they do is done for people to see.”

The Pharisees wore phylacteries, or leather boxes with strips of parchment in them with Scriptures on them. These boxes were bound on the forehead and on the arm to demonstrate how serious the wearers were about keeping the Law. The size of the phylacteries could vary depending on the piety of the individual. Tassels served a similar purpose.

Jesus also condemned the Pharisees for wanting places of prestige at banquets and sitting in prominent places at the synagogue. The motivation for their external displays came from a superficial spirituality. They wanted to look good because they thought they were good, even though in reality they were far from it.

I wish this mentality had been limited to the Pharisees, but the truth is that we in the church struggle mightily with self-righteousness. There is nothing wrong with learning Scripture and wanting to participate in worship, but the problem comes when we think we are superior to those around us. We can become very particular about what biblical passages are important while ignoring those that might convict our behavior. It is easier to criticize others for their lack of moral clarity while holding ourselves up as the standard.

Theologian John Stott commented on

this danger: "Hypocrisy is hideous. What cancer is to the body, hypocrisy is to the church. It is a killing agent. Unfortunately, hypocrisy is also addictive. And even though Jesus reserved his most severe words of condemnation for the hypocrites, we still seem to prefer that lifestyle to truth and authenticity" (*Tales of the Tardy Oxcart*, 285).

Greatness is not achieved in title or position (vv. 8-10). Jesus warned against the temptation of titles as a license to think of ourselves as better than someone else. He cautioned against calling anyone "rabbi" or "master" or "father." The reason for this prohibition probation was two-fold. First, there is only "father" and "teacher" and Jesus referred to the Heavenly Father and himself as filling those categories. Second, everyone else has equal footing as "brothers and sisters" before God. No one has a superior place.

Jesus' disciples struggled with this concept, even as Jesus sat with them at the Last Supper: "A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest" (Luke 22:24). This desire for position is very real, and there is nothing wrong in aspiring to be our best with our education and ministerial efforts. However, title and position should not "go to our heads" and we forget that we are in fact sinners in need of forgiveness. I am reminded of what one preacher said: "We must not confuse a title with a testimony."

The real problem with titles is that they

take the focus off God and his gracious provision. There is nothing wrong with showing respect for someone who has worked hard and serves in a place of leadership in a church. Those in leadership positions, however, should be careful not to allow the attention and influence to inflate their egos and cause them to forget why they are in that position.

I heard a humorous story once that is applicable here. A preacher, after delivering the sermon, was greeting people after the service was over. Each person who came by said, "Thank you for the sermon today; it was wonderful!" In a false sense of humility the pastor responded each time: "Don't thank me; thank God." Finally an elderly woman came through and offered the same appreciation. Once again the pastor responded: "Don't thank me; thank God" to which the woman responded, "It wasn't *that* good." Pride is an unattractive quality sometimes found in church leaders; a good dose of humility can keep us grounded.

Greatness is achieved through humility and service to others (vv. 11-12). The danger of exalting ourselves is that we might not be as good as we think we are. Jesus offered a scathing rebuke of the teachers of the Law and Pharisees in a sermon sometimes called "the seven woes." The content of this message is found in this same chapter and follows a familiar verse to church-going folks: "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Jesus didn't say that no one who follows after him will be exalted. There is a difference between exalting ourselves and exalting Christ. Humility precedes greatness. It is better to allow the Lord to put us in a position of leadership than to do things "to be seen by others" so that we will achieve greatness on our own. The path to greatness is through humility. I've heard several definitions of humility through the years, but the one that means the most to me is this: "Humility is not thinking less of yourself or more of yourself; it is not thinking of yourself at all."

There's nothing wrong with ambition and desiring to be the very best we can be for God. But we must guard against allowing our own desires and ambition to overshadow our true mission, which is to serve others and make a difference for Christ. In a world when we hear about being "upwardly mobile," it is important for God's people to know that the path to greatness comes through being "downwardly mobile." Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Humility is liberating. It keeps us grounded before God and helps us handle the praise or criticisms that come in a life of ministry and service. We don't have to do anything to prove our worth or acceptance, and this reality frees us to be the presence of Christ in our world. Whatever God wants us to do, we can be secure in ourselves and our identity because of what Christ has done for us. **BT**

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Tommy Brisco is provost and chief academic officer at Hardin-Simmons University. Brisco has served more than three decades as a faculty member, and most recently as dean of the Logsdon School of Theology and Logsdon Seminary. He replaces former provost **Bill Ellis** who left HSU to become president of Howard Payne University last fall.

Northern Seminary announces the installation

of two new deans. **Karen Walker Freeburg** is dean of academic programs, and **Blake Walter** is dean of academic administration.

Tracy Hartman, associate professor of homiletics and practical theology at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, has been named director of the seminary's doctor of ministry program.

Dorothy Herrin died April 28. She served four terms as budget review officer for American Baptist Churches USA.

American Baptist International Ministries announces the appointments of missionary candidates **Catherine and Taku Longkumer** for service in India, and **John David (J.D.) and Rhonda Reed** for service in Bolivia.

Travis Russell is minister of youth and children at First Baptist Church of Whiteville, N.C.

Steve Sumerel is associate pastor for adult learning at First Baptist Church of Greensboro, N.C.

PLACES

The Center for Theology and Public Life will be launched by Mercer University this fall. Christian ethics professor **David Gushee** will direct the center that will hold public events on the Macon and Atlanta campuses each year to discuss current controversies from a theological and ethical perspective.

EVENTS

"**Light to Live In**," a conference for peacemakers by the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, will be held **July 12-17** in New York. Among the speakers are **Tony and Peggy Campolo**. For more information, visit www.bpfna.org/conference.

Popular author Ron Rash says Baptist upbringing impacts his heralded writings

From the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* to his hometown newspaper, the *Shelby Star* in North Carolina, Ron Rash is making his mark in American Letters.

In 2002, the *L.A. Times* said of his first novel: “Equal parts vintage crime novel and Southern Gothic, full of aching ambivalence and hard compromises, and rounded off by bad faith and bad choices, *One Foot in Eden* is a veritable garden of earthly disquiet.”

Janet Maslin, in the *New York Times* earlier this year, praised Rash’s latest collection of short stories, *Burning Bright*, by reminding readers of the “piercing language, bleak and beautiful details” of his 2009 novel, *Serena*.

Longtime fan Pat Conroy said *Serena* “catapults Rash into the front ranks of American novelists.”

In March and April, Rash was invited to give readings in France — where his *One Foot in Eden* is in its third printing in the native language — and in the Netherlands.

All of this has caused the local *Shelby Star* to announce Rash recently as the Cleveland County Man of the Year. This fall his alma mater, the Baptist-affiliated Gardner-Webb University, will hold a literary festival in his honor.

Rash was born in 1953 in Chester, S.C., where his father worked in the Eureka Textile Mill by day and attended college at night. When Ron was eight, his father moved the family to Boiling Springs, N.C., and became an arts educator at Gardner-Webb. Ron’s mother was an elementary school teacher.

Ron Rash is now the James Parris Chair of Appalachian Studies at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C. His novels and works of poetry are chock full of religious imagery and biblical names allegorizing many of the Old Testament stories.

Rash is drawn to themes of suffering saints whose simple resurrection faith helps them persevere in the face of overwhelming

obstacles and opportunities for despair.

The conversation that follows is edited from a longer interview.

Fox: The title story for your first collection of short stories is *The Night the New Jesus Fell to Earth*. A used car salesman is Jesus for the Christmas pageant and even advertises his business on the church marquee announcing his starring role. What kind of fun were you having there?

Rash: It’s true I was going for some humor, but it’s a look at human foibles not necessarily mean-spirited in its satire. We all fall short of our ideals.

Growing up in a religious household and most often going to the local Baptist church three times a week, at a certain age you begin to recognize the difference between what people espouse and what they do. For a while it can turn you off from religion, but then comes a period when you get beyond that and come around.

Jesus “fell” to earth in my story; it’s that Baptist imprint that we are fallen.

Fox: In 1970 I became friends with Roger Milliken Jr., son of the most powerful textile magnate in the country. So I was captivated by your stark and unflinching poem in *Eureka Mill*.

Rash: The poem comes from my imagination from stories of my mother and father and maternal grandparents at the Eureka Mill in Chester, but I hope I captured the sensibility.

It does not come from resentment or any revenge motive at all. In fact, I know from my grandmother, who worked in Eureka, her gratitude in the ’30s to the mill owner who kept the mill running at his own costs so his workers could eat.

I think it was Francis Bacon who talked about deepening the mystery; we always want

things to be black and white. But it is the role of the artist to deepen the mystery, to explore the lack of certainties in a character no matter the station, high or low. I hope I did that in my collection of poems, *Eureka Mill*.

Fox: You have written how the Shelton Laurel Massacre is not only the key component of *The World Made Straight*, but also how it compelled you to write the novel.

You’ve said: “One of the most troubling aspects of history is how some of the worst atrocities have occurred among people who have co-existed for generations, as in Nazi Germany and more recently Rwanda and Bosnia.” Such was the case in the county known as “Bloody Madison” during the Civil War.

It occurred Jan. 18, 1863, at the height of the Civil War, and you’ve found your ancestry in those parts on both sides of the tragedy. You also invoked the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Rash: That’s true. The title comes from Handel’s *Messiah*.

Lot of folks say, when they think about the Holocaust: “How could anybody stand by and let that happen?”

The truth is you don’t know. You don’t know what you would do until you are in that situation. People in my own family just a few generations ago took different sides in the Massacre.

It is in these moments of hopelessness that a Bonhoeffer comes to mind. He had to make a decision of courage for decency. In the midst of a great darkness he stands as a powerful light.

Fox: Instead of an idea provoking a novel as in *World Made Straight*, most often you say it is an image that starts the process for you.

Rash: With an image you enter the mystery from the beginning. From that you have



Ron Rash

something like two wires crossing and a sparking.

Joyce used the term epiphany — sudden illumination, a moment of grace. Suddenly this thing happens you don't understand.

Frost called it a momentary state of mystery; in a way it's an illusion because a work of art is nothing but a moment of clarity, insight.

Fox: Your preacher character, McIntyre, in *Serena* is not the only preacher in your novels, but maybe the most memorable — an end-timer who “looks up at the gray-slate sky as if it were some Gnostic text only he was capable of deciphering.” What's he about?

Rash: McIntyre represents a type of character or preacher we don't often like — kind of self-righteous.

But look what happens to him in the novel. The comic characters kind of don't like him, but after he's struck mute, he develops this humility that gives him substance; he becomes true.

He has this moment where he has the spiritual insight he's just been prattling about. Last thing he says, he looks at the devastated land — where the timber has been clear cut — and says, “I think I'm looking at the end of the world.”

It's McIntyre's moment of truth as a backwoods prophet; and in that moment of humility that hasn't been recognized before, the most cynical of his detractors, Ross, is amazed and gives him respect.

Fox: The Pulitzer Prize winner Marilyn Robinson has written of the horror that often comes with the darker reach for a Utopian vision — a vision that carries the baggage of total control. *Serena* in some ways seems an exploration of that notion.

Rash: My title character, Serena, has no accountability; she is outside the pale of humanity.

A lot of people who read the novel miss the point that after she exploits Western North Carolina and leaves it barren, she ends up in Sao Paulo, Brazil, as a business partner of the Nazi Joseph Mengele and his West German Tractor Company.

A good story is like an iceberg; it is the tip of the story that reveals all that's underneath.

It gets to the core of character.

My clear implication is, Serena has found her own kind in a community of like-minded vision. So, yes, I think Robinson is right.

The exploitation of a region has its after-effects. I was in Eastern Kentucky a few years ago and struck by the number of military recruitment posters at every corner; this is where the foot soldiers for our adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan are coming from. I'm working on a short story about that now.

Fox: There is a lot of violence in your novels. You led a workshop last summer at Appalachian State on violence and beauty ...

Rash: It's not about violence to titillate. It's comparable to Flannery O'Connor's work — *A Good Man is Hard to Find* in particular — where an extreme situation, often the moment of violence reveals the essence of character.

A good story is like an iceberg; it is the tip of the story that reveals all that's underneath. It gets to the core of character.

I was telling my students last week that the key moment of a good short story is when we learn about the world in a way not imagined before. It's haunting because everything else is stripped away.

In *One Foot in Eden*, when Billy Holcombe shoots Holland Winchester, it sets up repercussions that direct the rest of the novel.

In *Serena*, it's not the knife fight that starts on the first page but the first murder. Rachel, for me, is more interesting than Serena in the way her character develops after that.

Rachel goes on the trip with the child when she's sick, a several-mile walk to the doctor. A woman with a great capacity for love, she's not sure she loves the child before then.



The biblical names are intentional: Rachel as a character in exile, as her name-sake in the Old Testament, and her son, Jacob — you know, Jacob and Esau in the Bible. *Serena* is very much a story about who has the birthright.

Rachel's story in *Serena* brings up a good point about being raised Southern Baptist. Again, it was the Catholic Flannery O'Connor who realized all those Southern Baptists around her in Central Georgia knew the Bible, knew these stories; and also the beauty beneath that, the beauty of the King James Bible.

In grad school we had some students from outside the South reading O'Connor, Milton and Faulkner, and they would say to me: “How do you know all of this?”

I'd say: “Mrs. Parker, my third-grade Sunday school teacher in Boiling Springs, N.C., made me memorize these verses.”

Growing up every Sunday, hearing those stories, the richness of the language, was such a great thing for a writer. I would not be the writer I am today had I not been raised Southern Baptist.

I'm immersed in it. One friend has said every time one of my characters gets near the water, he's a goner.

In *Saints at the River* you have an actual resurrection of a body from a stream, an answer to prayer. Water is a potent symbol of death and resurrection. In the Celtic tradition, water is a conduit between the living and the dead.

Fox: Your poem “Sunday Morning 1959” is one of my favorites. I'm convinced any regular churchgoer who at one time worshipped in a country church can identify with it. Was Randy Ford a real person, and how about the cows?

Rash: There is a real Randy Ford, and sitting in my maternal grandmother's Friendship United Methodist Church in Watauga County, N.C., you could hear the cowbells in the pasture just outside the church.

I was six years old that Sunday morning, daydreaming. It was the first moment in my recognition of timelessness, transcendence. **BT**

—Stephen Fox is a freelance writer living in Collinsville, Ala.

12 in a row

Obama, Graham meet at evangelist's home

By Adelle M. Banks
Religion News Service

President Obama and ailing evangelist Billy Graham exchanged prayers during their first meeting April 25 at Graham's home in western North Carolina.

Obama had traveled to nearby Asheville, N.C., and requested the visit — the first time a sitting president has visited Graham at his residence, said Graham's longtime spokesman, A. Larry Ross.

Graham, 91, issued a statement saying he was pleased with the visit and encouraged "Christians everywhere to pray for our president."

The White House described the meeting as one of conversation and "private prayer" and said Obama "is extraordinarily gratified that he took the time to meet with him."

During the 35-minute meeting, the men — joined by Graham's son and fellow evangelist Franklin Graham — discussed their wives, golf and Chicago.

Graham gave the president two Bibles, one for himself and another for first lady Michelle Obama.

Graham has met with 12 presidents over six decades, starting with Harry Truman in 1950. **BT**



The first class to graduate with master's degrees from the Campbellsville University School of Social Work. Photo by Bayarmagnai "Max" Nergui.

Campbellsville social-work program awards first master's degrees

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. — Campbellsville University's Carver School of Social Work and Counseling awarded its first master's degrees this spring — 12 years after acquiring the Carver name for its baccalaureate program from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention-affiliated school awarded 15 master of social work degrees May 7, according to John Chowning, vice president for church and external relations.

The 2,600-student private school founded in 1906 established its first program of social work in 1974. The program was phased out in 1989 and reborn in 1994. In 1998 Campbellsville purchased the Carver name from Southern Seminary — located in nearby Louisville, Ky. — which the year before closed its long-standing Carver School of Church Social Work.

The legacy of the original Carver school began in 1907 when the Woman's Missionary Union established a training school on the Southern Seminary campus to prepare young women to serve in missions and social work. In the 1960s the training school merged with the seminary, making Southern the only seminary of any denomination to offer an accredited master's degree in social work.

Seminary president Albert Mohler fired Diana Garland as dean of the Carver school in 1995 after she complained to students about his decision to declare a prospective faculty member unfit because he believed God could call a woman to preach. Mohler told students that modern social work was no longer "congruent" with theological education.

Accreditation problems followed, and in 1997 Southern trustees voted to abolish the Carver school. Garland moved to Texas to become founding dean of the School of Social Work at Baylor University. **BT**



Save the date!

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia

FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Sunday–Monday, November 7–8

Highland Hills Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.

Keynote speaker: Julie Pennington-Russell, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga.

ALSO SPEAKING: MALIEJAZ SONGULASHVILI, ARCHBISHOP, EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCH, REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA



For shy worshippers, church is overwhelming

By Lilly Fowler
Religion News Service

LOS ANGELES — If Jesus were to take a Myers-Briggs personality test, would he rank as an introvert or an extrovert? He was, after all, popular with crowds, but often retreated to pray in solitude.

As an undergrad, Daniel Perett wrestled with similar questions as a member of the evangelical InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Middlebury College. He soon discovered that his introverted personality clashed with the group's prayer-and-share ethos.

"The expectation is if you really are having a spiritual experience, the first thing that you're going to do is share it very publicly," said Perett, 31, now a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame.

In other words, "if the Holy Spirit were working in your life," you'd be talking about it — "you would be an extrovert," he said. But what Perett really needed most was time to process what was happening to him spiritually.

Perett says evangelical Christianity — with a bigger-is-often-better strain deeply embedded in its DNA — is stacked against introverts like himself. And so, like other introverts, he began to develop coping methods rather than a deeper theology.

Perett started to speak in code. He sprinkled phrases like "God was testing," rather than "God was absent," in his testimonials so that his peers would not realize that he was actually trying to determine how — if at all — God was present in his life.

"It forces you to put on a spiritual show for everyone else," he said.

Perett is far from the only Christian whose introverted personality has caused religious obstacles. Writer and pastor Adam McHugh has taken note and recently released a book called *Introverts in the Church*.

"In my mind at the time, ideal pastors were gregarious, able to move through crowds effortlessly, able to quickly turn strangers into friends," he writes in the introduction of the



Pastor Adam McHugh is the author of the new book, *Introverts in the Church*. RNS photo courtesy William Vasta/Claremont McKenna College.

book published by InterVarsity Press.

But as an introvert himself, McHugh found the social demands of his job overwhelming, which led him to take a closer look at his specific personality type.

McHugh discovered that although introverts had previously been thought to be in the minority, more recent studies reveal that introverts actually make up roughly half of the population. That doesn't mean, however, that they're always understood.

By definition, an introvert is someone who is energized by solitude rather than social interaction. An introvert might also love long intimate conversations; they aren't necessarily shy, but they may very well dislike small talk.

In short, introverts like to go deep, and they often like to do it alone.

As writer Jonathan Rauch described introversion for the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine in 2003, "introverts are people who find other people tiring."

McHugh, for example, felt absolutely exhausted by all the retreats he was required to attend as an InterVarsity college minister in California. Canadian Jamie Arpin-Ricci says he has endured similar frustrations as a pastor.

Arpin-Ricci, a Mennonite pastor in Winnipeg, Manitoba, said most Christians expect a pastor to be available at all times,

which gives introverts like him and McHugh little of the much-needed downtime.

Arpin-Ricci said it's important not to fall into certain stereotypes — that introverts are anti-social, for example, or extroverts have plentiful but only shallow relationships. His church, the Little Flowers Community, is intentionally community-led, giving him the freedom to hand off certain responsibilities — especially when he feels a more extroverted personality may be better suited to the task.

Donna Katagi, director of spiritual formation at Cerritos (Calif.) Baptist Church, estimates that her congregation is made up mostly of introverts who don't fit neatly into the category of demonstrative Christians that many believe define a truly spiritual person.

Although Katagi says her church engages in typical activities like refreshments after worship, she also says she's catered her spiritual formation program to meet the needs of her introverted congregation. Outside of worship, Katagi says she'll break up members into smaller rather than larger groups to better facilitate discussion.

For his part, McHugh says he has learned to incorporate solitude during the day, and says he remains confident that introverts can make good Christian leaders.

"I had to just figure out my own rhythm," he said. **BT**

the lighter side

A speech you won't hear at the Georgia Baptist Convention

By Brett Younger

The Georgia Baptist Convention is at it again. In November they plan to disfellowship (is that even a word?) Druid Hills Baptist Church in Atlanta for the crime of calling a female co-pastor. It does not matter that Rev. Mimi Walker is a committed minister who preaches the Gospel with passion and integrity. After excommunicating the church, the GBC will no longer accept funds from the 96-year-old congregation, but, interestingly, it will not return the money the church has given to the GBC since Mimi and her husband Graham began serving in 2008. I have been thinking about the expulsion of my good friends and their good church and have been trying to imagine how the argument could become any more foolish. Here's a speech that will not be given at the Georgia Baptist Convention, but you are welcome to borrow it if you want to try.

Mr. President, distinguished messengers and other Bible-believing Georgians, I rejoice that Georgia Baptists are spreading the gospel from Rome to Valdosta, Columbus to Savannah, Atlanta to Augusta, Athens to Americus, in Ellijay, Enigma, Fargo, Cairo, Egypt, Damascus, Sparta, Glory, Hephzibah, Hiawassee and Daisy. The gospel is being shared with old and young, rich and poor, conservative and more conservative, native Georgian and foreign interloper.

"I stand to commend this august body for taking seriously the admonition in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, and I read, as all Christians should, from the King James Version, 'Let the woman learn in silence with

all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.' We follow this infallible commandment joyfully, but this chapter has 15 verses and each one of them is equally inspired and inerrant. This leads to my distress that we're not taking the whole Bible seriously enough.

"Immediately following, in verses 13 and 14, we read, 'For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.' (This is, of course, obvious. Verse 15 is the one heretics overlook.) 'Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.'

"You may be saying, 'What about Lottie Moon? Lottie didn't have children.' (Mother Teresa didn't have children either, but she was a Catholic, enough said.) I know there are liberals who would like for God to make an exception for Lottie (also Dolly Parton), but the Bible says it. I believe it. That settles it.

"My greater concern is the passage a few sentences earlier — 1 Timothy 2:9, 'women should adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.'

"We're all for 'modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety' and I am no fan of 'braided hair,' but the 'gold or pearls' part may be problematic at some otherwise acceptable Georgia Baptist churches.

"It may be hard for you to imagine upstanding Christian women not wearing wedding rings, but that's what it says. First Timothy also clearly prohibits True Love Waits purity rings. We need to warn and punish those who sinfully wear gold cross earrings.

"One group that has been given far too long to repent is Girls in Action. When a G.A. reaches the level of Queen Regent with a Scepter, why can't she be honored without the wicked use of gold? What are we teaching tomorrow's WMU?

"I've heard about a church where the pastor gives those who are baptized a gold necklace with the Christian fish symbol. Those corrupt churches will be more comfortable in the Episcopal Church.

"You may have some anxiety for the people who work in James Avery's 'Christian jewelry' division, but they are an abomination. Perhaps they could switch to printing 1 Timothy 2:9 on plastic bracelets.

"I know that some will think it harsh when we kick out all of the churches where women wear gold, but if we're going to be honest and consistent, we have no choice." **BT**

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



Illustration by Scott Brooks

Keeping company with the tragic past

By John Pierce

Posted April 23, 2010

www.johndpierce.com

Gerald Harris' editorial titled "Breaking family ties painful, but sometimes necessary" in *The Christian Index*, official publication of the Georgia Baptist Convention, is condescending toward Mimi Walker, co-pastor of Druid Hills Baptist Church, specifically, and toward women in general.

It is also an insult to that fine congregation that has remained faithful despite great sociological change in its Atlanta community. And it should be offensive to any honest and reflective Christian whom Harris does not permit to have a different interpretation on this subject than his without being dismissed as unfaithful to the Bible.

However, his writing puts him in the company of Baptist and other church leaders who made the same arguments in defense of racial inferiority and the slavery of persons of African descent.

For example, Harris claims that "the Bible is clear on this issue ..." while selecting an isolated biblical passage that supports his position and ignoring both those parts of scripture that affirm women in leadership roles as well as those even more restrictive than he wishes to argue.

He points to 1 Timothy 2:11-14 to bolster his claim that women are not to teach or have authority over men. And, of course, he ignores the supposedly inerrant preceding instruction (in verse 9) that calls for women to dress modestly without "braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes."

It is just flat dishonest!

And no amount of patronizing about how women are of equal value but restricted to different roles can gloss

over the sexism here. As Susan Shaw of Oregon State University, who has done major research on Southern Baptist perspectives on women's roles, once noted: In such cases, the roles with all power always go to men.

Defenders of slavery took the same approach, however, by isolating verses such as Ephesians 6:5-6 ("Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart") while ignoring the broad and deep biblical message of human worth and equality.

Also like those who argued for slavery, Harris asserts that he and his ilk are true to the Bible while those in disagreement "adjust (their) sails to catch the wind of popular opinion." He reiterates: "Neither should our interpretation of Scripture become so accommodating to our secular society that every assumption and concept fits snugly into our humanly-devised system of theology."

But what if it is Harris' system of theology that is humanly devised? Did not secular society reach the gospel truth on racial equality and the unspeakably inhumane treatment of African slaves well ahead of many church leaders? Absolutely!

Also, in both cases, proponents claim to defend God's intended order of authority rather than merely a humanly-devised social structure that they find comfortable and beneficial.

If fundamentalist Baptists continue to be the last holdouts on basic issues of human worth and equality, and keep building their flimsy cases on highly selective scriptural evidence at the expense of the broader biblical

truth, who is going to listen to what else they might say?

Hopefully, there will not be many who do so — and even fewer who will judge the merits of the wonderful Christian gospel on such remaining blind spots.

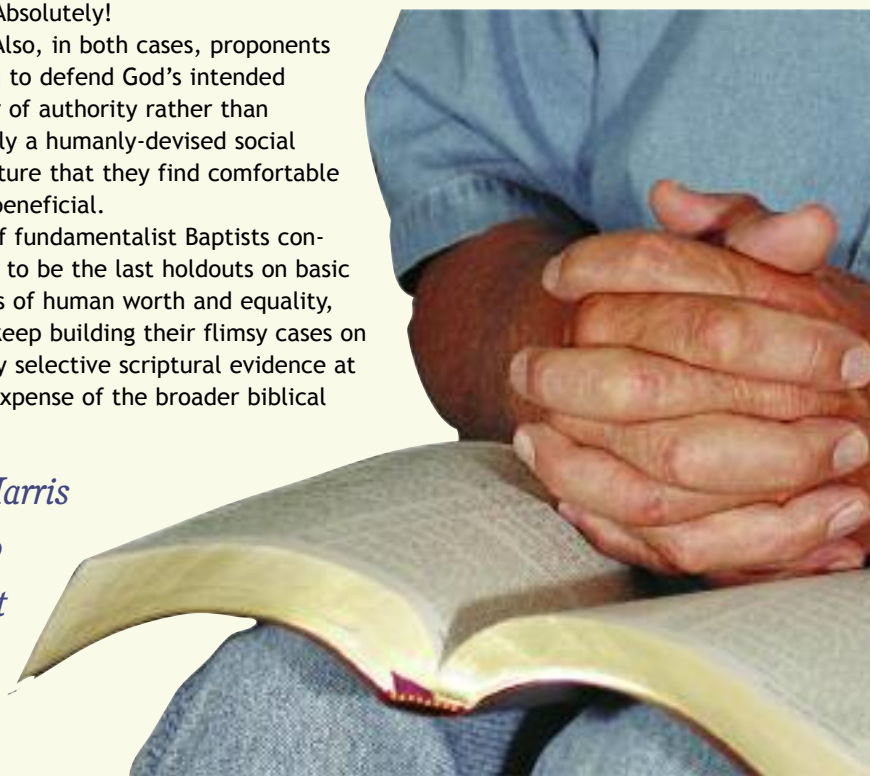
Those who argued so passionately that the only true biblical interpretation was one that supported racial inequality and human bondage were dead wrong. So are Harris and those who make this equally poor case — and aggressively impose it on others.

As the old folk song asks: "When will we ever learn?"

And, for God's sake, at least admit that the potential for error — so clearly evident in the past — still exists today. It is amazing how those who affirm biblical infallibility are so willing to assume the same authority for their human interpretations of a handpicked verse or two while ignoring parts of the very same chapter. **BT**

Harris' editorial on the Georgia Baptist Convention's effort to break ties with Druid Hills Baptist Church for having a female co-pastor can be found at www.christianindex.org/6357.article.

Like those who argued for slavery, Harris asserts that he and his ilk are true to the Bible while those in disagreement "adjust (their) sails to catch the wind of popular opinion."



When church hurts

By Tony W. Cartledge
 Posted April 14, 2010
www.tonycartledge.com

When I saw Barna's recent report that 61 percent of unchurched adults think of themselves as Christians, and that 37 percent of non-churchgoing adults say they have been hurt by an experience or person within the church, my first response was surprise that the number wasn't higher.

In 26 years as a pastor, I learned that a significant number of prospective members I visited had stories to tell about having been hurt or disappointed by a former church.

The combination of survey results and personal experience leads me to a few observations.

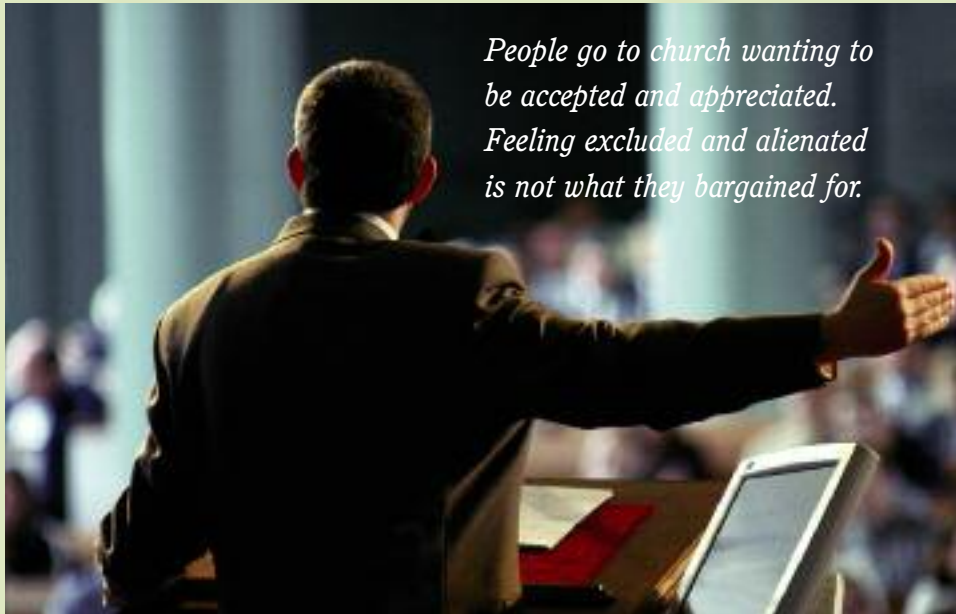
One, it is amazing how easily some folks can get their feelings hurt.

Church is an interactive social milieu in which many people have a stake in how things turn out, so it's not unexpected that people will often have run at cross purposes with each other, and some turn out to be a lot more cross than you'd expect given the issue.

Some folks, in addition, like to wear their hurt feelings on their sleeve, sort of like Bill Deal and the Rondells (from the 1960s) singing "I've Been Hurt."

Two, it is equally amazing how insensitive some folks can be, even within the church context. Some people get their feelings hurt for good reasons.

In some cases it is a pastor who rails against those who don't share his personal views on politics, creationism, homosexuality, single mothers or other matters. In other cases it could be a heated exchange during the discussion period in a Sunday



People go to church wanting to be accepted and appreciated. Feeling excluded and alienated is not what they bargained for.

school class, or a snippy remark about someone's appearance or children not intended to be overheard.

People go to church wanting to be accepted and appreciated. Feeling excluded and alienated is not what they bargained for.

Third, church leaders have a responsibility to set a personal example of kindness and grace toward others, and seek to cultivate a culture of compassion within the church.

Leaders can help other members grow in maturity and learn when they need to offer or ask forgiveness, when they need to intentionally work out differences in respectful ways, and how they can develop relationship skills needed for the task.

One of my favorite biblical texts is 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, in which Paul writes to congratulate the members of that church for their "work of faith," their

"labor of love," and their steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul went on to commend them for having followed the example that he, Timothy, and Luke had set for them — and for becoming models in turn, "so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia" (vv. 3, 6-7).

Sending hurt people out the church's back door is more like bad advertising than setting a good example.

Is your church a safe harbor that welcomes all people with their various issues, or is it more like a yacht club that caters to a select group?

Have you done what you can do to help those at loggerheads to be at peace with one another?

Jesus didn't say, "Blessed are the peaceful," but "blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9).

The Lord knows we need them. **BT**

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Trusting relationships

Veteran minister helps next generation find success in ministry

While serving as associate pastor at First Baptist Church of Greensboro, N.C., in the 1960s, Jack Causey asked the pastor how to be successful in ministry. Forty-four years later, he has never forgotten Claud Bowen's reply: "Surround yourself with good people."

That's the key," Causey said emphatically. "Surround yourself with good people and develop those relationships. They will enrich your life and empower you to become what God has called you to be."

The native Mississippian put the advice to work for the next 34 years while serving pastorates at First Baptist Church of Gaffney, S.C., Pendleton Street Baptist Church of Greenville S.C., and, until his retirement in 2000, First Baptist of Church of Statesville, N.C.

Today, Causey shares that sage advice with new ministers in both his roles as Services to Ministers Coordinator for the Young Leaders' Program at the Center for Congregational Health, a part of North Carolina Baptist Hospital's Pastoral Care Department, and as Ministerial Resource Coordinator for Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina (CBFNC).

"That's what I try to do with my life," he said. "I surround myself with good people, and, hopefully, I contribute something to their lives because they certainly contribute to mine. I tell young ministers that you will learn from them and grow with them, contributing to each other's ministry and life."

David Odom, the founding president of the Center for Congregational Health, recruited Causey in the mid-'90s to assist with the center's leadership program for young ministers. When Causey retired from the pastorate, the center invited him to join the staff.

The Young Leaders' Program equips new ministers with leadership skills to enable them to better serve their churches and to best utilize their talents and strengths in ministry.

His role with CBFNC grew out of his

work with pastors at the center.

Causey stayed in touch with the new ministers after they completed the leadership program, and the ministers began to seek his help in finding a church or relocating to another. As he assisted them, word spread and more and more called him.

CBFNC leaders noticed his work. So, in 2007, Executive Coordinator Larry Hovis invited Causey to provide reference and referral assistance to ministers and churches as the state's Ministerial Resource Coordinator.

"I help search committees figure out the kind of minister they need for their church,"



Jack Causey

he said. "Then, I meet with ministers to see what kind of church they want to serve or are gifted toward. I then try to blend those two together."

As churches grow and change, Causey explained that the style of leadership needed might change as well.

"Every congregation requires different styles of leadership at different times in their history," he said. "It is not as if one style fits all. There are times when a church calls for a certain kind of leadership and, at another time, needs a different kind of leadership."

While churches have always had to deal with change, Causey feels churches today face the strong, growing influence of culture on congregations.

"I would like to be able to say that churches influence culture, but the reality is that culture influences congregations very much," he said. "This results in congregations needing to change, but they are so comfortable, it is difficult for them. In today's culture, churches have to change to be able to meet people where they are [in order] to bring them into relationship with God."

Helping a church embrace change, Causey says, starts with ministers developing trusting relationships, and that often comes with longevity. Some of the healthiest congregations he knows are those that have a pastor

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and staff with long tenures.

"They have built up those trust relationships; therefore, the congregation follows their leadership in making changes and adjusting to those changes," he pointed out.

"The trust factor is the biggest factor of all," he reiterated. "Engaging the congregation to help them to discern and figure out for themselves what changes need to be made — how they are going to approach what needs to be done."

Collaborative leadership, rather than authoritarian, works best for congregations, advised Causey. "It is not the minister who says, 'This is what needs to be done and follow me,' but instead the one who engages the congregation so that together they determine what needs to be done."

When working with new ministers, Causey often suggests resources to consider, including *Baptists Today*. A longtime subscriber to the monthly news journal, Causey feels it has much to offer young ministers.

"*Baptists Today* keeps me informed about the Baptist life that I am a part of and that is important to me," he said. "Young ministers need to stay informed and connected."

From time to time he provides gift subscriptions to new ministers who are not familiar with the autonomous Baptist publication whose Board of Directors he will join in September.

Reflecting back on his 50 years in ministry, Causey recalls the many people who have served as his mentors and who have given him opportunities to serve others.

"It is interesting how people intersect our lives and open doors when we least expect it," he mused. "Even in retirement, this work with young ministers is one of the most meaningful times in my life." **BT**

Overreaching for evidence

Scholars view latest Noah's Ark discovery claims with skepticism

LEXINGTON, Ky. — As the newest reported discovery of Noah's Ark raised doubts even among fellow Ark-hunters, two Baptist seminary professors said Christians should not rest their faith on whether remains of an ancient vessel are ever found high in the mountains of Turkey.

Agence France-Presse first reported that a team of Chinese and Turkish evangelical explorers said April 26 that they recovered wooden specimens from a structure on Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey. The fragments were carbon-dated as 4,800 years old, around the time biblical literalists believe the events described in the Genesis story about a worldwide flood would have occurred.

"It's not 100 percent that it is Noah's Ark, but we think it is 99.9 percent that this is it," said Yeung Wing-Cheung, a Hong Kong documentary filmmaker and member of the 15-member team from Noah's Ark Ministries International.

Within hours an e-mail written by Randall Price, a Liberty University professor who was the archaeologist with the Chinese expedition in the summer of 2008, declared the photos of the supposed discovery a fake. After it went public on websites, Price clarified that while he did not retract his statements, they were not meant for public dissemination.

"The only public statement he wishes to make at this time is that he believes that the greater the claim the greater the evidence needs to be to support it and urges the Chinese-Turkish team to make their collected samples from the structure available to scientists and scholars for comparative analysis," said a statement on the website of World of Bible Ministries, of which Price is president.

Bob Cornuke of the Bible Archaeology Search and Exploration Institute, who produced a 2008 DVD about his own search for Noah's Ark in 2005 and 2006 in Iran, called the Chinese team's discovery a "fraud ... of the highest caliber" in a story on the *WorldNetDaily.com*.

Even Answers in Genesis, which offers several resources presenting what the min-



The Lutheran cathedral 'Ulm Münster' of Ulm/Germany, 'Noah's Ark' by Hans Acker. Photo by Joachim Köhler

istry believes is geological evidence supporting a literal reading of the Bible's account of the Genesis flood, reacted with caution.

"Every few years we hear of claims that Noah's Ark (or what may remain of it) has been found on the mountains of Ararat in Turkey," read a statement on the ministry website. "Over the decades, we have learned to be cautious about such Ark claims."

"We have no doubt, however, that there once was a massive Ark that served as a vessel of salvation during a global Flood and landed on the mountains of Ararat, as recorded in the book of Genesis," the statement went on to say.

Dalen Jackson, academic dean and professor of biblical studies at the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, said such literal readings of Scripture fail to acknowledge how biblical language often expresses rich meaning in ways other than simply conveying information.

"We may assume that the truth of a

story can be measured only by the correspondence of its events with actual historical events," Jackson said. "In fact, the biblical writers, like their contemporaries throughout the ancient world, told stories without reference to modern historical and scientific understandings, stories that conveyed traditions about where they came from and why the world was the way it was. Even so, they recognized the presence of God in the world and that God was good and had created people in order to have a special relationship with them."

Gerald Keown, associate dean and professor of Old Testament interpretation at the M. Christopher White School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina, said his skepticism over claimed blockbuster archaeological finds is not related to the veracity of the Bible stories, but the lack of veracity on the part of con artists eager to exploit public naïveté.

"I question the survival of any wooden artifact from ancient times which has been exposed to air," Keown said. "Even materials from the relatively recent past — the 1600s to 1700s — which have been under water and sand are notoriously fragile and disintegrate upon exposure to the air. The desire to make a buck off of people who are willing to be conned has no expiration date."

Keown said most historical questions that intrigue most Christians will never be "answered" by archaeology, but the most important message in the Bible is not historicity but faithfulness.

"I wish more Christians were as interested in how seriously they/we respond to the life challenge of the gospel as they/we are in whether this or that 'really' happened," he said. "The latter tends to get us into heated debates that have no bearing on the true life of faith, but represent our straining gnats and swallowing camels."

Jackson said those who search for Noah's Ark are so intent on proving that the evidence exists that they always overreach in their conclusions about the pieces of wood they find high in the mountains of Turkey. **BT**

Martin Marty: Church-state separation doesn't mean opposing religion

By Mary Wimberley

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) — In a series of lectures sponsored by a Baptist religious-liberty organization April 27-28, church-state specialist Martin Marty said supporting strong separation of church and state doesn't mean you also have to oppose religion.

Marty's talks were presented as this year's Shurden Lectures on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State, a series sponsored by the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. They were hosted this year by Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

Marty, a respected interpreter of religion and culture and author of 50 books, has written and taught extensively on religious freedom.

"There are strong impulses in society to say that you serve religion by protecting and privileging it," said Marty. But, he added, there is a difference in protection and privilege.

"There are all kinds of ways to protect religion without privileging it," he said.

The Framers and faith

Marty told how 18th-century French philosopher Charles Montesquieu — who wrote that religion is more harmed than helped by favoritism — influenced the writers of the United States Constitution on matters of separation of church and state.

"Montesquieu never visited America, but they were reading him," he said of the 55 Framers who gathered in Philadelphia, Pa., for the Constitutional Convention.

In his writings, George Washington used 28 different names for God, such as "First Architect," but not one was biblical, said Marty. "They were looking for language that would enlarge the context."

During the three-part series, Marty also told how the writings and beliefs of Benjamin Franklin and James Madison played roles in matters of religious liberty.

To some extent, the quality of indifference, such as that exhibited by Franklin, contributed to the lack of religious references



"There are all kinds of ways to protect religion without privileging it."

in the constitution, he said. Franklin was religious, but didn't like the dogma associated with it. Nor did he like defining religions, and opposed zealotry and fanatics, said Marty, noting that zealotry and rivalries both play large roles in religion.

"Religion in the end almost always calls for profound, sustained passionate commitment," said Marty, an ordained Lutheran minister who taught for 35 years at the University of Chicago, primarily in its divinity school.

A degree of indifference helped move along the framing of the Constitution, which involved people who had strong convictions — but who also had to compromise with others, make choices and eventually go home.

No prayers in Philadelphia

Franklin once asked, during the Constitutional Convention, why he and his colleagues did not have morning prayers to help them in their

task. The idea was scuttled, in part because there were no funds for a chaplain.

Too, said Marty, the Framers knew that starting with prayers could bring a divisive element into already-delicate negotiations. "They were passionate people, but they knew that introducing religion into the setting would get them in trouble." The situation, he said, "was a close-up of how it would be in the republic."

James Madison, said Marty, predicted that it would be difficult to trace a line of separation between the rights of religion and civil authority without collisions and doubts.

Although little is known about his personal religious views as an adult, Madison initially saw no need for a religious-protection clause in the Constitution. However, he later became a key figure in writing the First Amendment, which includes clauses both protecting the free exercise of religion and prohibiting government endorsement of religion.

It's not easy to draw the line between the two, said Marty, citing current court cases such as those involving military endorsement of chaplains and lobbying by Catholic bishops on health-care reform.

"Madison anticipated that it would be impossible to trace a line of distinction in all cases," said Marty. "A wall may be slender and have holes, but it's a wall. Madison said that a line wasn't something you could storm. And, you could see people on the other side."

"Separation is important, and whenever we talk of convergence we must recognize potential problems," said Marty, who said Madison advised defending rights of religion, but not privileging religion.

The annual lectureship was established in 2004, when Baptist historian Walter Shurden and his wife, Kay, of Macon, Ga., made a gift to enhance the programs of the Baptist Joint Committee. The lectures are held at Mercer University every three years and at another seminary, college or university in other years. The Shurdens both taught at Mercer for many years. **BT**

—Mary Wimberley is a writer for Samford University.

Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler

Still advocating for missions, women

CINCINNATI — Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, who led Woman's Missionary Union, SBC from 1974-1989 and helped form Baptist Women in Ministry in 1983, got the mission bug early.

"I was a Sunbeam," she said recently in the sunroom of her Cincinnati home. "I remember the first missionary that I met was a missionary to the Seminole Indians."

That experience in missions education grasped young Carolyn who grew up in Frostproof, Fla., near Seminoles lands.

She stayed the missions course through Girl's Auxiliary and Young Woman's Auxiliary — and took early leadership roles. After a bus trip with other teens to Ridgecrest, the Baptist conference center in Western North Carolina, Carolyn sensed her own calling.

"There I thought, 'God wants me to be a missionary.' It happened when I was 16 — and was the result of the missions education program at my church."

After high school graduation, Carolyn connected with another group of Seminoles at Florida State University where she joined the Baptist Student Union and attended Tallahassee's First Baptist Church.

One Sunday, a professor who also attended the church expressed concern that Carolyn changed majors on a regular basis. He encouraged her to enter a new degree program.

"So at the beginning of my junior year I majored in library science and became a high school librarian in Tampa," Carolyn recalled. Her deep involvement in Seminole Heights Baptist Church seemed to satisfy her earlier calling to ministry until a revival service led by Charles Howard.

With a fresh commitment and the advice of her hometown pastor about the importance of preparation, she headed to New Orleans Seminary.

"I had heard Gladys Keith, a missionary in New Orleans, speak," said Carolyn. "I wanted to work in the [ministry] center down there."

As Carolyn sought to clarify her ministry call, one Florida pastor offered this advice: "Find a preacher boy to marry and come on

back to Florida."

Upon completing seminary, however, she applied to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, but was not appointed due to hypertension.

"So I went to Alabama as state YWA director in the fall of 1958," she said. "I stayed 31 years in WMU work — and my hypertension never did go away."

After serving as WMU executive in Florida, Carolyn became the national WMU leader based in Birmingham. In that role she took an early stand in support of women in ministry.

The WMU hosted the group that formalized into Baptist Women in Ministry in 1983. Such support was not always appreciated.

Carolyn recalled two wives of prominent Southern Baptist pastors scolding her for her advocacy.

One told Carolyn that she didn't mind one bit being submissive to her husband, to which Carolyn responded: "But why would you want me to be submissive to him?"

However, Carolyn stayed focused on advocating mission and ministry involvement by all who hear the call: "Missions is what we are commissioned to do."

Even in retirement, her passion for missions remains high. "We haven't gone into all the world," she said. "We've only gone into the easy places."

While never appointed a missionary herself, she became a champion for the cause — visiting mission posts across the U.S. and in 98 nations.

"[Cooperative Baptist Fellowship global missions coordinator] Rob Nash keeps insisting that I go to two more countries."

Carolyn has never been to Australia and New Zealand, she said, nor to Iran and Iraq. The former two, she said, have the greater possibilities.

Hear Carolyn!

The William H. Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society will present its annual Courage Award to Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler at 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 25, during the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly in Charlotte, N.C. The event, at which Carolyn will speak, is open to the public.

In 1983, she met Joe Crumpler, a widowed pastor in Cincinnati, and they married in 1989.

The newlyweds created a new home for themselves and found a new Baptist home in the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Carolyn was the Fellowship's fourth national moderator.

Despite years of holding high profile leadership roles in Baptist life, Carolyn is now seeing — and enjoying — another role. In retirement, Joe accepted the pastorate of a small congregation in Cincinnati.

"I'm a pastor's wife," she said with a broad smile that acknowledged the irony of rejected advice from her past. "I became church clerk, Sunday school director and teacher of the adults."

This role is a helpful perspective, she said. "I found out who had planned all of those events I had enjoyed so much."

But Carolyn has not completely settled into home life. She travels the country as an AIC Champion who teaches other diabetics how to keep their sugar levels under control —

and currently serves on the boards of *Christian Ethics Today* and Baptist Seminary of Kentucky. Previously, she served 30 years on the American Bible Society Board as well as many Baptist agencies and institutions including *Baptists Today*. **BT**



An emphasis on the 'C'

YMCA returning to its Christian roots

POTOSI, Mo. (RNS) — About 50 teenagers and their parents gathered at the YMCA Trout Lodge near here recently, in the middle of the Mark Twain National Forest, to praise Jesus Christ.

"We pray that this weekend our hearts are touched, Lord," one of the group leaders, Mark Patterson said, "and that we grow closer to you."

But this was not one of the many church retreats that meet here, and Patterson is not a pastor.

He's the program director of the South City Y in St. Louis, and the group he prayed with was there for FaithFest, the most public evidence yet that the Young Men's Christian Association in St. Louis is returning to its Christian roots.

FaithFest — a weekend full of Christian rock performances, prayer circles and a worship service — was the latest piece of the nonprofit group's effort to "light up the 'C' in YMCA," as staffers have begun to put it.

"It's a physical, tangible example of us showing our commitment to faith," said Julie Catron, vice president of marketing and membership for the YMCA of Greater St. Louis.

FaithFest is just the beginning of the Y's move toward a more visible Christianity. For 157 years, the St. Louis YMCA's mission has been "to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all." But for almost

as long, the Y has moved steadily away from overt displays of Christian principles.

That's about to change.

"We are nondenominational, but we think young people should have exposure to a faith experience," said Gary Schlansker, president and chief executive officer of the YMCA of Greater St. Louis. "So we're adding (faith) to our values, and FaithFest was one way to bring that forward."

The St. Louis Y isn't the first, or the only, YMCA trying to reclaim its Christian heritage. The Y in Portland, Ore., for example, recently hired a chaplain and collects prayer requests from patrons. The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati has also moved to re-emphasize its Christian character.

Despite its evangelical roots, the YMCA has always been nonsectarian, and in recent decades, members would be hard-pressed to find any evidence of the organization's Christian roots among the treadmills, basketball courts and spinning classes that have come to define the modern-day Y.

Local Y leaders acknowledge that changing the Y's image back from secular to Christian may be a sensitive issue that could take some time.

"We're going to infuse things slowly," said Catron. "We're going to be inclusive and caring and respectful of everyone's unique interests."

Much of the effort will be subtle, apparently only to YMCA members who are looking

for it. It might be a slightly different logo featuring "faith" as a new "core value," along with caring, honesty, respect and responsibility, said David Drexler, the St. Louis Y's vice president for information technology, who heads the group's Christian Emphasis Committee.

Patterson said the Y's effort would be subtle but clear.

"You're not going to come into the Y and get bashed over the head with religion," he said. "But we are going to tell people, 'Jesus Christ is the answer in our lives.'"

Each of the country's 2,687 Ys is independent, so local operational decisions are made by an association's volunteer board of directors and professional staff. The YMCA of the USA calls itself "one of the largest not-for-profit community service organizations in the United States" with revenue of \$6 billion and about 21 million members, 45 percent of whom are 17 and younger.

Drexler — who came to St. Louis from the YMCA in Cincinnati — said there was a difference between how the St. Louis Y would be embracing Christianity and the role of the church itself.

"We are not the church, and we don't claim to be the church," he said. "We are an extension — an arm and a leg to the church, to assist the church." **BT**

—*Tim Townsend writes for The St. Louis Post-Dispatch in St. Louis, Mo.*

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the media shelf

A review by Tony W. Cartledge

A Capsule History of Baptists

Bruce T. Gourley

Atlanta: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2010. 128 pages.

In *A Capsule History of Baptists*, Bruce Gourley has taken on a most ambitious task, at which he is largely successful.

The volume, designed as a companion to William Brackney's *A Capsule History of Baptist Principles*, was published by the Baptist History and Heritage Society (BHHS) in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of the first Baptist church in Amsterdam in 1609.

Gourley, recently named as executive director of BHHS, is a fine historian who also serves as editor of the *Baptist Studies*

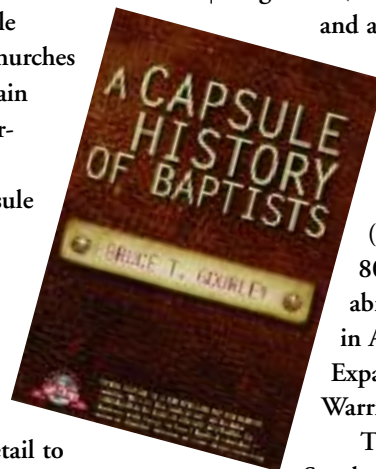


Bruce Gourley

Bulletin, as online editor of *Baptists Today*, and as the owner/manager of *baptistlife.com*, a popular portal for the discussion of all things Baptist.

In a very readable volume, Gourley provides a valuable resource for individuals, churches and students who could gain much from a clearer understanding of their heritage.

By definition, a “capsule history” can only cover so much ground, and some might quibble about which patches of earth get the most attention, but where Gourley is unable to devote much detail to a subject — such as the growth of Baptists in South America or in Asia — he provides helpful endnotes as a guided tour to additional resources.



Gourley partitions Baptist history into five eras marked by the primary task of Baptist leaders during those periods. He sees the earliest Baptists as “Freedom Fighters” (1609-1791) who sought peace and a place in the larger religious and political world.

A growing interest in outreach marked leaders of the next period as “Missionaries and Evangelists” (1792-1844), while the next 80 years of expanding influence abroad and conflicting agendas in America brought both “Global Expansion and American Culture Warriors” (1845-1924).

The growing strength of the Southern Baptist Convention as a dominant force in Baptist life led to the challenge of “Navigating a New World” (1925-1963) in a period demarked by the first and second versions of the confessional “Baptist Faith and Message” statement.

Giving appropriate attention to radical transformations in Baptist life during the past 50 years, Gourley describes the most recent period (1964-2010) with the term “Freedom Defenders,” as conflict rose between fundamentalists who would redefine Baptist principles of autonomy and soul competency, and those who defend individual and congregational freedom of conscience.

Although the largest part of the book is given to Anglo Baptists, whose largest growth and influence have been in America, Gourley also gives attention to Black Baptists, Hispanic Baptists, Asian Baptists and other shoots on the Baptist family tree. The Baptist World Alliance, a global organization of Baptists formed in 1905, also receives due attention.

For interested Baptists who want to know more about their story and for church leaders who want to teach important aspects of the Baptist heritage, Gourley's book is an ideal guide to Baptists' first 400 years. **BT**

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A photograph of a man with short brown hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, holding a young child with blonde hair and blue eyes. The man is looking down at the child with a gentle expression. The child is looking towards the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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Is high court's cross ruling good for Christians?

WASHINGTON — Evangelicals cheered when a Supreme Court ruling on April 28 allowed a cross to remain as a war memorial in California's Mojave Desert.

Some Christians, however, caution that a celebration may not be in order. The high court's decision was largely based on Justice Anthony Kennedy's determination that "one Latin cross in the desert evokes far more than religion." Rather, he said, it "evokes thousands of small crosses in foreign fields marking the graves of Americans who fell in battles."

In other words, the cross is more than a Christian symbol.

That line of thinking is, at best, "a mixed blessing," said Carl Esbeck, a professor at University of Missouri's law school.

"I'm concerned about the government co-opting the symbol for its own purpose, which among other things, has a detrimental effect on evangelistic religion, such as Christianity," said Esbeck.

"You get people who look at the cross who say, 'Well, it's just part of American culture.' Well, no, a Christian wants to look at the cross and say, 'No, that's a symbol of where Christ died for our sins.'"

Esbeck has an unlikely ally in retiring Justice John Paul Stevens, a stalwart church-state separationist. In a dissenting opinion, Stevens said, "Making a plain, unadorned Latin cross a war memorial does not make the cross secular."

The debate over the cross's symbolism had already made an appearance during the Supreme Court's oral arguments last October. When Peter Eliasberg, an attorney for the ACLU Foundation of Southern California, argued that "a cross is the predominant symbol of Christianity," Justice Antonin Scalia called his contention that the cross only memorializes dead Christian veterans "outrageous."

In this latest decision, the Supreme Court remanded the case to a California district court, which must now decide whether the cross belongs on federal land. In the meantime, Christian leaders — particularly

evangelicals — continue to debate Kennedy's interpretation of the cross's symbolism.

Secularizing the cross worries leaders of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. K. Hollyn Hollman, general counsel of the committee, said there is a "danger" that people in favor of piety on public property will downplay the spiritual significance of the symbol.

But another prominent Baptist said evangelicals can be comfortable with

sorts of layers of meaning for different people in different contexts," he said — from biker tattoos to pop artists' jewelry.

"I think Justice Kennedy is right that in the context of a war memorial, it evokes notions of sacrifice, which is part of the Christian message."

When a Supreme Court justice says the cross is not just about Christianity, it diminishes Jesus' charge to his followers to "take up their cross and follow me," said Read



The U.S. Supreme Court ruled April 28 that Congress had authority to transfer a World War I memorial cross in California's Mojave National Preserve to private hands. RNS file photo courtesy Liberty Legal Institute.

Kennedy's perspective on the cross.

"I think that most American evangelicals would acknowledge that it probably is, in our culture, more than a Christian symbol," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

That's fine, he said, "as long as it's not less than a Christian symbol."

Land said he'd rather have the cross stay up under Kennedy's line of argument than have authorities eradicate crosses from cemeteries.

David Neff, the editor in chief of *Christianity Today* magazine, said evangelicals can accept broader meanings of the cross.

"We need to be comfortable with the fact that this is, on the one hand, a strong Christian symbol; but it also has taken on all

Schuchardt, an expert on symbolism and iconography at Wheaton College in Illinois.

But the cross's meaning has already changed from the early centuries when it was known as a Roman tool of power and execution.

"Like all symbols, they go through an evolutionary process that almost always drains them of their original meaning by adding secondary and tertiary meanings," he said.

Christian ethicist David Gushee said the Supreme Court's affirmation of the multiple meanings of the cross shows that it is not a clear legal win for Christians who want to see crosses erected in the public square.

"The conservative Christians ... would see this as a victory for their kind of long-standing fight in the culture wars," he said. "It's not as unambiguous as that." **BT**

Big questions

Researchers probe whether, why 'free will' exists

ORLANDO, Fla. — Are people really responsible for all the things they do? Do they have what theologians call God-given "free will" to choose between right and wrong?

Those questions are at the heart of a four-year research project underway at Florida State University that aims to determine whether, and how, free will exists.

Funded by a \$4.4 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation, the project will gather together scientists, philosophers and theologians around the question of what factors — free will, genetics, environment, God or something else — lead us to do all the things we do.

"Gathering evidence for it one way or another, it's quite possible," said Alfred Mele, a professor of philosophy at Florida State who will lead the project. "Scientists have been looking for evidence for and against free will since the early '80s."

The debate, however, is much older. For instance: Do humans, through their own freely chosen actions and decisions, determine whether they will go to heaven or hell? Does an omniscient God already know how things will turn out in the end? Does God give humans the free choice to turn away?

In the early 1980s, neuroscientist Benjamin Libet conducted an experiment that found subjects' brains registered the decision to flex their wrists roughly 300 milliseconds before the subjects themselves became aware of their decision to do it. Libet concluded "conscious free will never is involved in producing a decision, and you can see how there's a quick road from there



A detail of Eve in a stained glass window depicted at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. Eve holds the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden — a moment of human "free will" that orthodox Christian theology says transmitted original sin to future generations. Religion News Service photo by David Jolkovski.

to 'there actually is no free will,'" Mele said.

The research led some to believe that brain processes traceable to genetic and environmental factors, and not free will, determine our decisions. Others think that while people might not be immediately aware of the decisions our brains make, they still possess the free will to veto these decisions.

But Mele, the author of two books and more than 170 articles on the concept of free will, doesn't discount the more common definition of free will — one used by the courts in determining guilt and premeditation.

"There really is nothing more to it than sanely, rationally assessing reasons and then deciding on the basis of those reasons, as long as nobody is pushing you around or forcing you," he said. "In that view of free will, it's pretty obvious there is free will."

The "Big Questions in Free Will" research project will devote \$3.4 million for projects around the world to explore the concept of free will from scientific,

philosophical and theological perspectives.

Scientists will look for evidence proving or disproving whether free will exists.

Philosophers and theologians, meanwhile, will seek a better definition of the concept, helping scientists to know precisely what evidence they are looking for, Mele said.

While it is perhaps difficult to reconcile concepts such as fate and destiny with free will, it is possible for an omniscient God to co-exist with the idea of free will, said Kevin Timpe, an associate professor of philosophy at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho.

"There is a difference between knowing what someone is going to do and causing them to do it," said Timpe, author of *Free Will: Sourcehood and Its Alternatives*. "I know what my wife is going to order when I take her to certain restaurants just because I know her very well. But I also think my wife is freely choosing to order."

What if researchers discover free will does not exist?

Two studies portend a troubled future, Mele said. One found its subjects cheated more when they believed they were not responsible for their own decisions; another found subjects' behavior growing more aggressive when their belief in free will was suspended.

Norman Geisler, the author of 70 books including several on free will, said the idea that free will does not exist is incompatible with the Bible and the doctrine of original sin, which refers to the sin inherited from Adam and Eve's transgressions in the Garden of Eden.

If Adam's decision was not made freely, then that presumably makes God responsible for evil in the world.

"The Bible constantly affirms that man is free, that he can choose his destiny, that he's morally responsible," said Geisler, whose books include *Chosen But Free*. "To say that we are pre-determined is to blame God for our choices. Secondly if all our actions are pre-determined, then why doesn't God save everyone? Because if he can save everyone apart from their free will and if he really loves everyone, then he would." **BT**

Saluting a New Generation of Baptist Leadership



Dr. David Turner
Senior Pastor
Central Baptist Church
Richmond, Va.

Seven Baptist schools of theology and three houses of Baptist studies were founded in the 1980s and 1990s with the distinct mission to sustain our historic Baptist principles by preparing the next generation of pastors and denominational leaders.

In April, Dr. David Turner became the first graduate of the new seminaries to be appointed to the *Baptists Today* Board of Directors. A member of the inaugural class of McAfee School of Theology of Mercer University, he serves as senior pastor of Central Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia.

Preparing men and women to become leaders within Baptist life was Jim and Carolyn McAfee's goal when they stepped forth to help Mercer establish McAfee School of Theology. "Jim was committed to preserving the historic Baptist principles by educating the next generation of pastors and leaders and by supporting a free Baptist press," said Mrs. McAfee of her late husband, who served as chairman of the *Baptists Today* Board of Directors. "David Turner's appointment is another realization of that goal."

It was 1999 when W. Ches Smith, III, then pastor of First Baptist Church of Tifton, Ga., and other Baptist leaders asked Mercer's Board of Trustees to consider establishing a School of Theology. Today, he sees David Turner's appointment as a symbol of the successful accomplishment of the School's purpose. "His appointment provides continuity in our Baptist leadership and shows that the School was established on good, solid ground," said Dr. Smith.

McAfee School of Theology Dean R. Alan Culpepper agrees:

"In 1999, the members of the School's first graduating class recognized David Turner's leadership by electing him class president. In the years that have followed, he has become the able pastor and leader his peers and professors knew he would become. We celebrate with him this opportunity to continue to ensure the future of the best of our Baptist heritage."

As a member of the *Baptists Today* Board of Directors, David Turner represents young Baptist leaders who are embracing and supporting the unique mission of the monthly journal and its role in shaping the Baptist future.



Jim and Carolyn McAfee at the
McAfee School of Theology in 2004