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## Listening to Luther

***Veteran broadcaster  
creates community***

*page 4*



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An autonomous national Baptist news journal



Photo by John Pierce. Chattanooga radio personality Luther Masingill is friend to the community — including churches. **Page 4**

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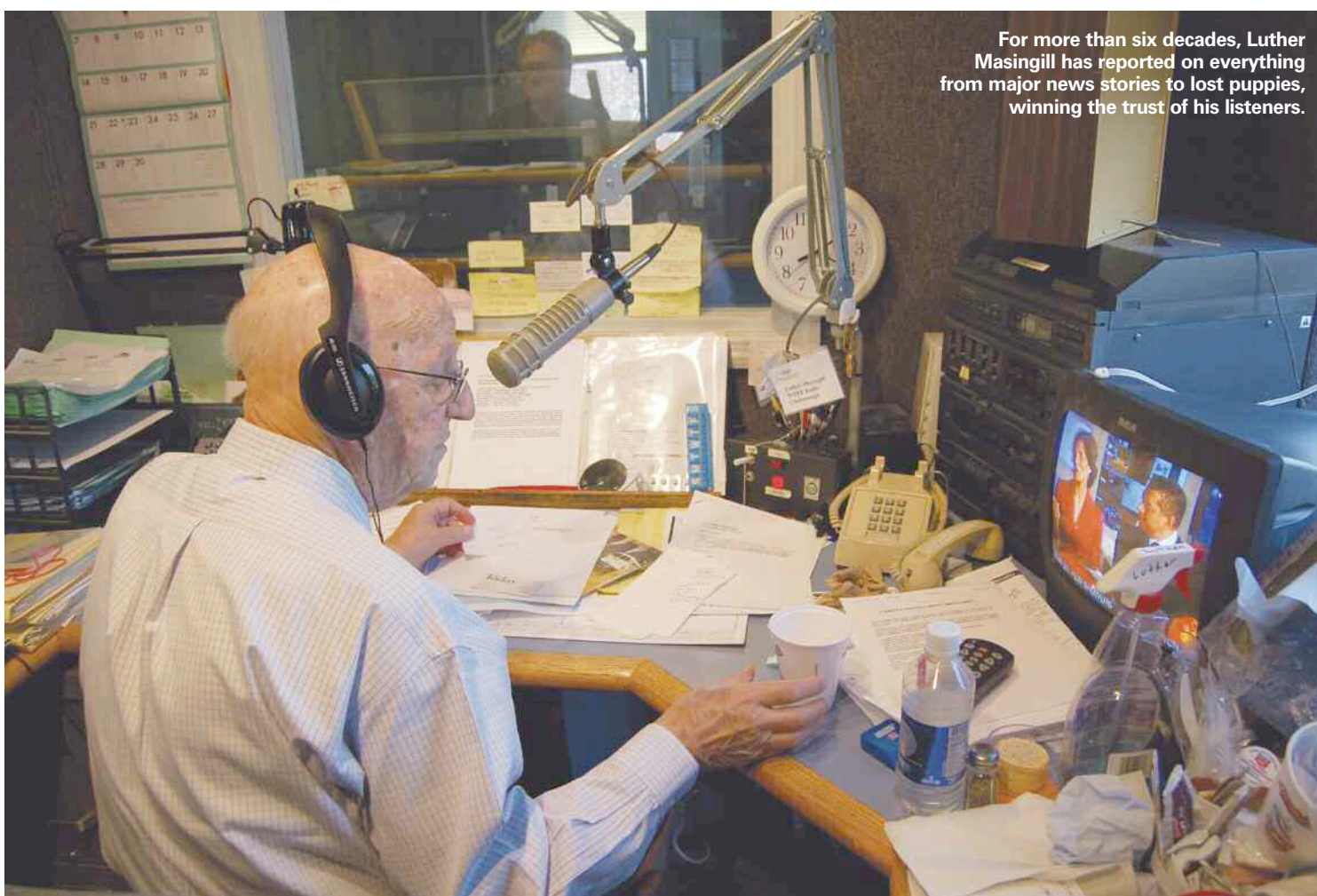
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# Listening to Luther

Veteran broadcaster creates community



CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — Only one person is credited with reporting the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the same radio station.

**H**is name is Luther Masingill — but in the hills and valleys around Chattanooga, the last name is unnecessary. The affable man with the familiar mellow voice is just “Luther.”

Every weekday morning, as he has done for more than six decades, Luther rises to a 4:15 alarm and makes his way to the studios of WDEF. There he keeps residents of the Tennessee Valley — including the northeast corner of Alabama and the northwest corner

of Georgia — keenly aware of everything from world news to a local church group’s upcoming car wash.

## STAYING PUT

Though a recipient of the prestigious Marconi Award who was offered broadcasting jobs in larger markets, Luther has stayed put — “all 87 years of my life” — in his hometown except for a three-year stint in the military during World War II.

While he has embraced the remarkable

technological changes in broadcasting over the decades, Luther does not care much for change on a personal level.

He met his wife, Mary, at Avondale Baptist Church — just two houses down from where he lived — and has not changed wives or churches since. And he and Mary continue to live in the only home they have ever owned despite changes in the community and the relocation of their congregation.

“I’m funny; I’m working for the same company I started out with 63 or 64 years ago — it’s changed hands once but is the same station with the same call letters,” he said, spinning his chair away from the microphone during a taped commercial. “I don’t do much changing.”

## QUIET SERVICE

“I’ve been a Baptist all my life,” said Luther of his longtime involvement with Avondale Baptist Church.”

Yet he does not use his local celebrity status for a bright religious spotlight. Rather he has always preferred quieter contributions to kingdom work — like mowing the church lawn and caring for widows.

When ice delivery stopped decades ago, Luther discovered one elderly neighbor who refused to buy a new-fangled refrigerator. So he would bring bags of ice for her cooler — and, in the winter, coal to keep her warm.

On the air Luther has long been a friend to churches and other religious groups seeking to spread the word about their work. Public service announcements (PSAs) flood into the station — now by email, voice mail, fax and in stamped envelopes.

“I’ve had (station) managers along the way who have said, ‘You talk about the church so much,’” Luther recalled. “Well, that’s the community.”

## CHURCH NEWS

Some of the announcements making his “Community Calendar” — which he also shares on television — are typed out on an old Royal typewriter.

On this day in early June, he tells of a gospel music benefit at Mount Vernon Baptist Church, a carwash the Silverdale Baptist youth are using to fund a mission trip to Peru, a community-wide baby dedication at a Church of God congregation, a flea market at First Centenary United Methodist Church and the 39th Annual Lutheran School Horseshow.

“From the things people have said to me over the 60-plus years, you know they appreciate what the station does for churches, religion, and for keeping a good clean broadcast station,” he said. “It makes you feel good.”

Concerts, revivals and other church-sponsored events — along with civic and personal interests — create a thick and ever-growing file on Luther’s desk.

“The ratings are good; the (ad) sales are good,” said Luther of the Sunny 92.3 morning show he co-hosts with news director James Howard. But he suspects the church news will be pared down a good bit “when I pass on.”

“I try to get every (church announcement) — in an abbreviated version — on the air at least once,” said Luther. “But I also

have to get in the lost dogs and cats and other announcements.”

## ‘DOG GONE’

Luther is a one-man lost-and-found department. He is so well known for his faithful efforts to reconnect homeowners with their pets, that he does a daily television segment on WDEF News 12 called “Dog Gone.”

When out and about, Luther hears gratitude for his compassion and concern.

“You never know who you are going to run into out there,” he said with a smile. “Somebody will come up and say, ‘You found a dog for me — 25 years ago.’”

On this day he reports on a lost black and brown Chihuahua north of town and a nursing female cat that jumped out of a car and fled down Rossville Boulevard.

He even tried to help someone who lost a camera case — “not the camera, just the case” — in Ringgold.

Longtime radio personality Luther Masingill (right) with co-host James Howard outside the Chattanooga studios from which their show is broadcast on Sunny 92.3 every weekday morning.



## CONNECTING PEOPLE

Luther connects people to other people as well. He gives daily funeral notices with an empathetic voice. He offers well-wishes to those in times of grief and celebration.

“When I think of Luther, I think of community instantly,” said his on-air partner and friend, James Howard. “He just loves people, and he loves helping people.”

And the love is often returned, said the veteran broadcaster whose mellow voice has been booming across the region for so long.

“That look they give you when they walk up, that’s the warmest feeling in the world,” said Luther. “Being a Baptist and being a Christian, I can see a look of love in their faces because of something done for them over the years.”

“That’s one of the rewards,” he said of the radio business. Then, with good comedic timing, he deadpans: “The pay isn’t that great, but ...”

## GETTING STARTED

As a teen, Luther worked at a gas station frequented by Joe Engel, the popular owner of the Chattanooga Lookouts baseball team and the upstart WDEF radio station that would sign on New Year’s Eve 1940.

Hearing Luther’s good voice, Engel invited him down to the station to apply for a job answering the telephone. But instead he was put on the air.

“(Joe Engel) liked to say, ‘I gave Luther his start,’ and he did,” said Luther. “He also hired me as the public address announcer (for the Lookouts). I introduced the players until each one batted once — and then the pinch-hitters.

Luther spent about two years on WDEF radio, while still in high school, before going into military service. As a teen, he reported the big event on Dec. 8, 1941, that started the worldwide conflict.

“I was on duty at that time and heard the bell ringing in the newsroom indicating a bulletin,” he recalled. “Ding, ding, ding, ding ...”

He picked up the news bulletin that read something like: “Japanese have attacked by air the ships on the island of Oahu.”

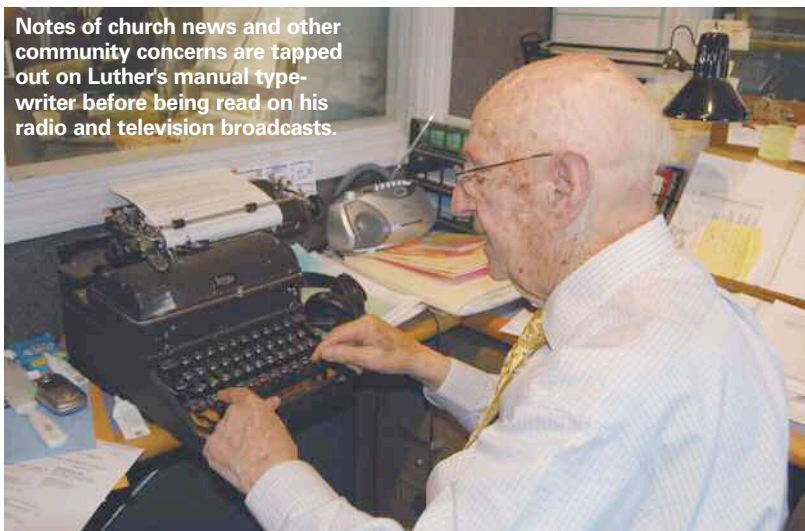
“It was Pearl Harbor, but to me, as a young high schooler, it didn’t mean too

much,” said Luther. “I didn’t realize how big it was until other bulletins started coming in: ‘Ships sunk.’ ‘More ships sunk.’ Then the total casualties, (and) then the president spoke.”

Luther said he was so young, that it was two or three days later before he realized the full significance of it.

“And I was on the air the time President Kennedy was killed (in 1963) and announced his death,” he recalled. “I never thought, in my lifetime, we would see one of our presidents assassinated.”

“I’ve been on the air when a lot of things have happened in our history,” he said reflectively. “If you pull any kind of shift, you’ll cover a lot of that.”



Notes of church news and other community concerns are tapped out on Luther’s manual typewriter before being read on his radio and television broadcasts.

Of course, Luther has not pulled just “any kind of shift” but has taken to the airwaves for more than six decades — with his only break being his time in the Army Signal Corp where his communication skills were put to good use.

“I kid about it and say: ‘Yes, I was in World War II. I fought and I fought and I fought — but I still had to go.’”

Luther also reported the terrorist attacks on American soil that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001. “I was on the radio and watching it on TV and announcing it live.”

## LONGEVITY’S REWARD

Affirmation from listeners he encounters in restaurants and grocery stores means a lot to Luther.

“That’s one of the rewards of being in this business,” he said. “Seeing that expression on their face. It’s that feeling of affecting someone’s life in a good way.”

So he just keeps getting up early and coming down to the station.

“It’s a great business and I’ll miss it if I have to get out of it,” he said. “I enjoy coming to work everyday.”

But then he added: “The mornings that are most difficult are ... when the alarm is going off at 4:15 and I can hear the rain coming down the downspout outside my bedroom window.”

Yet no one else in the greater Chattanooga area could possibly spread the word about lost pets, church fundraisers, funeral announcements and world events quite like Luther.

At 87, he still travels the tall stairs up to his second-story studio in impressive fashion.

People want to know his secret to a long, healthy life.

He tells them: “For many, many years I will get up, bathe, shave and all of that, and then before I come to work I touch the tips of my shoes 50 times without stopping.”

And he adds: “Then I take the shoes off the dresser and put them on my feet.”

Staying active by doing something you love is his more serious answer to the question of a long and pro-

ductive life. That’s why his familiar voice continues to be a comfortable part of starting the day for many in this scenic region.

“It has kept me busy all these years and probably has kept me alive — doing something rather than retiring and sitting on my butt.”

Luther said he does less public speaking now and spends most of his off-air time at home or at church. He does get out on occasion to visit family and friends — and to brush elbows with the many fans who treat him like family.

On a recent Sunday he met his brother and other relatives for lunch at a German bakery over in Tracy City, Tenn., near Monteagle Mountain, where the WDEF signal travels.

With his typical dry wit, Luther said: “I told my brother I’d have to leave church a little early to get there in time — right before they take up the collection.” **BT**

# editorial

## Dozing off in church . . . history

By John Pierce

**B**altimore, in the racially charged and challenging days of the early '60s, is the setting for the musical *Hairspray*. In the 2007 movie version, Nikki Blonsky plays the main character, Tracy Turnblad — a chubby young white girl with good dance moves and a strong social conscience.

She is expressing her idealism about racial equality and interaction when African-American actress Queen Latifah's character, Motormouth Maybelle, responds: "Have you been dozing off during history?"

It is a question that has frequent application. We often encounter words or actions that suggest a need to look backward before moving ahead.

As Baptists, we have reached a significant historical milestone as various groups within our denomination celebrate four centuries of a spiritual movement that began in obscurity and resistance before growing into prominence and influence.

Yet, too often, Baptists — including many in significant leadership roles — seem to have dozed off during history.

Various celebrations are being held this year in recognition of the 400th anniversary of the worldwide movement that most church historians trace back to a small band of believers who dissented against control by church authorities. The group, led by formative Baptist leaders John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, organized in Amsterdam in 1609

what many consider to be the first Baptist congregation.

All Baptists would do well to attend one of the many events throughout the nation and world that spotlight this occasion. Or, at the least, to read one of the many excellent books about those who shaped the Baptist movement.

While at high risk of offending many friends who have also written excellent and relevant books on Baptist history, let me suggest just a few: *Portraits of Courage*, by Julie Whidden Long, *The Story of Baptists in the United States* by Pamela and Keith Durso, and *Roger Williams* by Edwin Gaustad.

Many good biographies of early Baptists such as Smyth, Helwys, William Carey, Andrew Fuller, Luther Rice, Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson, and John Leland are enlightening. And the broader Baptist history picture is well painted by the good works of Baptist historians Walter Shurden, Bill Leonard, Leon McBeth, William Brackney, Charles Deweese, Robert Gardner, Jesse Fletcher and Doug Weaver — among many.

The Internet is full of resources as well with good starting places being: [baptisthistory.org](http://baptisthistory.org), [centerforbaptiststudies.org](http://centerforbaptiststudies.org), [baptistheritage.org](http://baptistheritage.org), [abhsarchives.org](http://abhsarchives.org) and



[whitsittbaptist.org](http://whitsittbaptist.org).

This anniversary year is a good time to pay closer attention to the people, places, causes and conditions in which our deep convictions and unique approach to faith and practice developed. Even a casual familiarity with our Baptist past will reinforce an understanding about those principles for which Baptists have long stood and even died.

Our history reveals to us a profound commitment to freely-chosen/non-coercive faith, non-hierarchical denominational structures with voluntary cooperation, equal and individual access to God and Scripture, unfettered congregational autonomy, and full religious liberty for all persons while seeking no special governmental favors.

It is the thread of freedom — for individual conscience and congregational direction — that is woven throughout the 400-year quilt of the Baptist movement. It is a unique tradition that values dissent.

Speaking to the First Baptist Church of Bennington, Vt., recently, American Baptist leader Roy Medley shared the story of Joanna P. Moore, a white Baptist in the 1800s who was denied appointment by the American Baptist Home Mission Society to work with newly freed slaves. But she would not be stopped, and formed the Women's Home Mission Society to carry out her calling.

"Like any good Baptist, she ignored the church authorities of her day, and she plowed ahead," Medley said to the congregation, according to the *Bennington Banner* newspaper.

Can you imagine any other faith tradition in which a denominational leader publicly celebrates dissent against church authority and identifies such action as the defining norm? No. Baptists, only Baptists, would do that.

Being marked by such freedom is risky. But the historic Baptist understanding of this prized principle does not suggest reckless freedom — but rather responsible freedom where the individual person is responsible for relating to God and the individual congregation is responsible for charting its course of ministry.

This is no time to be dozing off. **BT**

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## 'STREET QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISTS'

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

# 'Why are Baptists **against drinking and dancing** (wink, wink)?'

I did not attend my high school senior prom. It was a dance and we Baptists, at least our little Baptist church on Fort Worth's south side, opposed dancing, especially for the youth group.

**S**o Pene, Cheryl and I, all church members and seniors at Paschal High School, had our own little party with friends and stayed away from the prom lest we compromise our witness.

Consequently, I never learned to dance. By the time I realized (about a year or so ago) that one could choose to dance, and still remain a professing Christian (and not hit hell wide open), it was just too late to learn. Whatever rhythm I had was lost forever in revival meetings and other "rededication" services.

(One of my all-time favorite sermon titles, preached by an infamous Texas pastor, addressed the martyrdom of Jesus' prophetic cousin as "The Baptist preacher who lost his head at a dance!")

Across much of 19th and 20th century America, Baptists in general and in the South in particular were known as the non-dancing, non-drinking, non-smoking, non-movie-going denomination, the source of curiosity, humor and even ridicule from secularists and certain more "free" (or more "worldly") Christians.

Some suggest that such practices were simply the attempt of preachers and congregations to control the private lives of their members, stealing the joy out of them, and dictating certain conformity to the popular morés of the day.

Others suggest that by concentrating on individual sins of dancing and alcohol, Baptists distracted themselves from the harder and more divisive questions of such social sins as war, poverty and, of course, human slavery.

For example, records of the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church in Kentucky from April 1815 note that a "complaint" was made

against "Eli Clark, a black member . . . for parting with his Wife, getting drunk and dancing — he being then present acknowledged the charges . . . (and) he is by this Church excluded" (W. Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists*, 387).

In 1815 all "black members" of the Forks of Elkhorn Church were slaves, an issue never addressed by the disciplinary action of the congregation.

Nonetheless, Baptists' responses to these issues are important for what they reveal about piety, practice and the relationship between Christian living and cultural context.

Why were the sins of dancing and drinking signposts on the road to discipleship, holiness and covenant responsibility for Baptists? There were multiple reasons.

First, I think that in many ways they reflect an understanding of what it means to be born-again, a turning from one way of life to another. As seasonal revivals and camp meetings became a normative way of confronting sin and entering into faith, Baptist evangelists called persons to radical conversion that broke all connections with "the world," often requiring anti-dancing, anti-alcohol commitments as outward and visible signs of a genuine profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Dancing involved multiple dangers. It fostered physical contact with the opposite sex that could (and preachers said often did) lead to more explicit sexual encounters; it could occur in contexts that were themselves thought to be morally compromising — taverns, bars, night clubs and, worse yet, "honky-tonks"; and it could induce musical states of being that unleashed animal instincts.

The editor of the *Religious Herald* (Richmond, Va.) summed it up in an article published on March 16, 1876: "Dancing, we judge, is not sinful *per se* (but) it requires no prophet to perceive that the ardor and inconsiderateness of youth, the excitement of the music, and the frivolities engendered by association, would be likely to lead to unwarrantable familiarities between the sexes" (R. Spain, *At Ease in Zion*, 199).

Second, Baptist piety (and that of other Protestant denominations) often pressed believers for all or nothing in their Christian commitments. In other words, "moderation" on issues such as dancing and especially drinking was actually little more than compromise with the world, a sell-out to the principalities and powers of the present evil age.

Where alcohol was concerned, what began as a movement for "temperance" turned soon enough into a requirement of total abstinence.

It was not always so. The earliest Baptists were Puritans, most of whom rejected drunkenness, but consumed alcohol moderately. They also used wine in communion, a biblical witness.

During the colonial period, beer and wine were the cheapest alcohol available. On the frontier, however, "hard liquor" (whisky)



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was often the drink of choice, even among church folks. Indeed, bourbon whisky itself was “invented” by none other than the Reverend Elijah Craig, a Baptist dissenter exiled from Anglican Virginia, who preached the gospel and founded churches across Kentucky.

Because liquor was sometimes a “money crop,” certain frontier Baptists pledged barrels to the church as part of their annual offerings. Churches sold the whisky to cover expenses.

The rise of the “Gospel Temperance” movement brought together two coalitions of Christians in one grand crusade. Revivalistic pietists attacked “demon rum” as the agent of physical and spiritual defilement, corrupting the body, the very “temple of the Holy Ghost.” Social Gospel and Women’s Rights advocates united with evangelicals to fight the communal familial results of the excessive alcohol consumption — spouse abuse, poverty and familial hopelessness.

Many insisted that preachers must address not only the individual responsibility for alcohol abuse, but also the failures of employers evident in the lack of a livable wage, tenement housing and the exploitation of labor — all of which weakened human resolve and could lead to alcohol abuse.

In 1907, Baptist Social Gospel leader Walter Rauschenbusch wrote that: “Alcoholism is both a cause and an effect of poverty. The poor take to drink because they are tired, discouraged, and flabby of will... Tuberculosis and alcoholism are social diseases, degenerating the stock of the people, fostered by the commercial interests of landowners and liquor dealers, thriving on the weak and creating the weak” (*Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 242).

The rise of the Temperance/Abstinence Movement was the primary reason that many American Protestants, including Baptists, largely dropped the use of wine at communion in favor of unfermented grape juice.

Not all were willing to relinquish biblical literalism so easily, however. John G. Crowley cites a Primitive Baptist elder who observed that Southern Baptist “and Methodist use of grape juice in communion was quite appropriate, since their doctrines bore the same resemblance to truth as grape juice bore to wine” (*Primitive Baptists in the Wiregrass South*, 180).

Such Primitive Baptists asked how other Baptists could continue to demand immersion as the biblical norm for baptism

while eliminating another sacramental norm (wine) so readily.

These days Baptists demonstrate multiple responses to issues such as dancing and drinking. Some have not moderated their opposition to both practices, claiming infallible biblical authority. Others suggest that moderation may be possible as long as Christian witness is not compromised.

Young conservative Baptist bloggers are challenging their elders’ claims that alcohol abstinence is the only biblical norm. Still others note that Baptist global diversity illustrates varying options drawn from

biblical exegesis and ecclesial practice.

Some Baptists now dance in the Spirit while others move their bodies in response to something called “Christian heavy metal” music. And then there is the matter of health and antioxidants, of all things.

Ironically, Paul’s admonition to Timothy to “Take a *little* wine for your stomach’s sake” (1 Tim. 5:23) might be worth revisiting biblically and physiologically, by a new generation of Baptists. But not if it makes you dance (B. Leonard, *Criswell Journal of Theology*, Spring 2008, 17). **BT**



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# Quotation

“ r e m a r k s ”

“... We are called to witness, not public relations. We must aim to be gracious and winsome in our witness to Christ, but the bottom line is that the gospel will necessarily come into open conflict with its rivals.”

—R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (BP)

“... Whether you believe in human-induced global warming or whether you’re like me, really skeptical about that, there is one thing we can agree on, and that is the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.”

—Barrett Duke of the Southern Baptist Convention’s ethics agency during a May conference on creation care organized by young SBCers Jonathan Merritt (ABP)

“Teaching is an intellectual undertaking in which the teacher is just as much of a learner as the student.”

—Minori Nagahara, a former sixth grade teacher in New York City who now teaches in Tokyo, in an article titled “Teaching as a Christian Vocation” (Baylor University’s Christian Reflection)

“No one denies that religion has always played an important role in the lives of Americans. There is also no doubt that religious differences have been the cause of much controversy and conflict in our nation’s history. That is why the framers of our Constitution were careful to preserve the peace and tranquility of our free and diverse society by securing liberty of conscience for all citizens by separating government and religion.”

—Bruce Prescott, executive director of Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists (ABP)

“Listen closely to today’s self-proclaimed conservative Christian radio talk shows, and you too will hear the timeless tug of war between the powerful and powerless.”

—Bruce Gourley, interim director of Mercer University’s Center for Baptist Studies and online editor for Baptists Today (Baptist Studies Bulletin)

“Baptists, much to our peril, tend to espouse a terribly thin theology of vocation.”

—Ben Cole, who now works on public-policy issues in Washington and is often identified as “a former Southern Baptist pastor” (ABP)

“This is why healthy, growing, aggressive church leaders are seeing this as a huge option on the table that didn’t exist a few years ago.”

—Jim Tomberlin, of Third Quarter Consulting, on the availability of affordable commercial properties that were previously out of the reach of congregations (RNS)

“When you wear these shades, you’re saying you love Jesus.”

—Gerome Singletary who, along with his brother, introduced a line of evangelistic sunglasses called “Shades of Glory” (RNS)

“If they leave the church, they won’t be covered, and that is a shock for many churches.”

—Rex Frieze, an Orlando-based expert on church accounting, urging religious groups to tell employees during hiring that they won’t qualify for unemployment benefits (RNS)

“I am glad that he is dead. Now I am sad that he went to hell, because he had a choice just like everybody else did. He could have chosen Jesus Christ and when he died went to heaven. But he chose the devil.”

—Wiley Drake, pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park, Calif., and former second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, speaking to his June 1 radio audience about Dr. George Tiller, the controversial abortion provider gunned down in his Wichita, Kan., church (ABP)

“Murdering someone is a grotesque and bizarre way to emphasize one’s commitment to the sanctity of human life. People who truly believe in the sanctity of human life believe in the sanctity of the lives of abortion providers as well as the unborn babies who are aborted.”

—Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, on the May 31 shooting death of Dr. George Tiller

## In the news, 25 years ago . . .

“... [Paul] excludes women from pastoral leadership (1 Tim. 2:12) to preserve a submission God requires because the man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall (1 Tim. 2:13ff).”

—From a resolution passed at the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention meeting (SBC Today, July 1984)

# BJC seeking new space on Capitol Hill

**W**ASHINGTON — “Location, location, location” is the mantra of real estate professionals. That is also what leaders of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC) have in mind as they search for new space in Washington, D.C.

“Symbolically, it’s important for us to maintain our Capitol Hill presence,” said Brent Walker, executive director of the religious liberty advocacy organization supported by 15 diverse Baptist denominational groups.

Currently, the BJC rents office space in the Veterans of Foreign Wars building near the Supreme Court Building on the Hill. While a great location, it does not provide space to host visiting groups or offer any street-side visibility.

Yet the strategic location allows BJC staff easy access to the Supreme Court where briefs are filed and to the Congress where much advocacy for religious liberty occurs, said Walker.

The envisioned Center for Religious Liberty would also provide a better setting for the third prong of the BJC’s work — education. Groups visiting the nation’s capital could be hosted for events focused on religion freedom and the role the BJC plays in that effort.

“We’re in the process of looking at property,” said Walker, who described the ideal facility as a new, or more likely an older facility needing renovation, with 5,000-6,000 square feet of space and within three to four blocks of the Capitol.

And with a purchase price that does not exceed \$5 million, he added.

The vision to raise funds for a new Baptist Center for Religious Liberty was cast in 2003. The campaign to make this dream a reality has now brought in \$3.2 million in pledges — including \$2.2 million in the bank.

Walker said that support has led them to engage a real estate agent to begin the search — with hopes that at least another \$1.5 million can be raised before the purchase. He credits BJC supporters with rallying behind the effort — especially two longtime friends.

“We are as far along as we are in large measure due to two donors — Babs Baugh and the Baugh Foundation, and Pat Ayres,” said Walker of matching-fund offers over two consecutive years. “We hope people will



**Above: While in an ideal location, the Baptist Joint Committee's rented offices do not provide the street-front benefits that leaders such as Brent Walker (right) hope will come with the new Center for Religious Liberty on Capitol Hill.**



continue to give and to pledge and to be partners with us as we finish out the year.”

While trying not to set firm time targets, Walker said he and other BJC leaders would like to have the new Center for Religious Liberty operative well ahead of the current lease that expires in three years. He also expressed hope that the entire project can be funded without a mortgage so that the current budgeted funds for rent can go into programming.

Reginald McDonough, former executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and chair of the campaign, said the new facility would expand the BJC’s work and give it greater visibility.

“We feel we’ve got to create a spot to host visiting delegations from churches, colleges and seminaries,” he said. “And we really need a front door.”

Walker agreed: “Having a street-front entrance is integral ... with a sign that reads ‘Center for Religious Liberty.’”

The new facility, Walker said, would have other benefits as well — such as showcasing Baptist contributions to religious liberty, increasing meeting space for coalition work with other religious liberty groups, creating state-of-the-arts communications and providing space for a larger number of interns to serve.

The dream is moving toward reality, BJC leaders said. The only remaining tasks are to find the best available space and to complete the campaign.

“We feel that when we find a specific property then we’ll be able to wrap up (the campaign),” said McDonough. **BT**

*For more information, visit [www.bjconline.org](http://www.bjconline.org).*

# ‘Scholarly but accessible’ *Review & Expositor* still bridging gap between academy, church

ATLANTA — After more than a century of tackling theological issues and enduring varying and, at times, conflicting Baptist opinions, the academic journal, *Review & Expositor*, continues its longtime mission of bridging the gap between the academy and the church.

**B**egun as a publication of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary faculty, the *R&E* is now produced through the collaborative efforts of several Baptist institutions of theological education.

“It is scholarly, but accessible,” said current managing editor Nancy deClaissé-Walford, a professor at Mercer University’s McAfee School of Theology and the first woman to guide the 104-year-old journal. “It is applicable to the local church context.”

Gerald Keown, associate dean at Gardner-Webb University’s School of Divinity, wrote about the journal’s history and influence at its century mark in 2004. The journal began in April 1904 under the guidance of then Southern Seminary President E.Y. Mullins.

“(Mullins) stressed the importance of a forum in which diverse perspectives could be voiced in areas of theological significance, diversity which would even include non-Baptist voices.”

The practice of including the perspectives of non-Baptist scholars continues said deClaissé-Walford.

The journal’s early focus, said Keown, was on offering reviews — as the name suggests — of various theological resources available to ministers. In time, the scope of the publication broadened.

When controversy wracked the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s and 1990s, and the Louisville-based seminary was undergoing tremendous change, the publication’s editorial board took steps to ensure the journal would continue its

longtime mission of open academic inquiry.

“The journal became independently incorporated under Kentucky law, (but) the change did little to alter the nature of the journal,” said Keown. “Content decisions and issue planning had long been the province of the editorial board without interference from the seminary administration.”

With the emergence of several new Baptist seminaries and divinity schools following the SBC’s rightward shift, a new opportunity availed itself in 1996. Under the leadership of Dan Stiver, managing editor at that time, a consortium agreement put the editorial board and the financial well being of the quarterly journal into the hands of sponsoring institutions — that could invest at one of two levels, as either sponsors or patrons.

In 2001, however, Baylor University’s Truett Seminary — one of the original sponsors along with Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and McAfee School of Theology — pulled out after the publication of a controversial article on theology and sexuality written by a pastoral counselor.

According to deClaissé-Walford, steps were taken to avoid similar reactions while seeking to not over-react. As a result, she said, “All members of the editorial board can now preview each issue ahead of its printing and give feedback.”

Other schools involved with the journal’s sponsorship and editorial direction include Gardner-Webb, Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University, Campbell University Divinity School (now a sponsor) and Baptist Seminary of Kentucky as well as two institutions with ties to American Baptists — Central Baptist Theological Seminary and American Baptist Seminary of the West.

Many noted Baptist theologians and educators — such as Glenn Hinson and Frank Stagg — have guided the journal along its long course, said deClaissé-Walford. While hot-button theological issues impacting the church are constantly changing, the journal’s mission has remained consistent, she added.



Gerald Keown and Nancy deClaissé-Walford



Printed in the front of each quarterly issue is this stated purpose: “The *Review & Expositor* is a quarterly Baptist theological journal dedicated to free and open inquiry of issues related to the Church’s mission in the contemporary world.”

“We plan our issues a good two years in advance,” said deClaissé-Walford, noting that the spring issue always contains a Bible study. The remaining content, she added, is designed to be “broad-based but (with) sound theology.”

Topics for this year and the next include “Scripture on Scripture,” archaeology, worship, prophetic preaching, and teaching the Bible in a congregational context.

New technology has also impacted the journal. Electronic subscriptions are available as well as the print format. And collections of past issues are now available — 11 years worth of *R&E* on a CD or 50 years of Bible study editions on DVD. These resources and other information may be found at [www.rande.org](http://www.rande.org). **BT**

# American Baptists study clergy compensation

NEW YORK — The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) initiated a study in 2007 of churches providing MMBB benefits to learn more about their compensation levels and practices.

The American Baptist-related group's stated objective was "to gain information independent of MMBB's plan administration, reinforce MMBB's longstanding position as a trusted source of knowledge on clergy compensation matters and improve MMBB's ability to advocate on these issues."

A 2008 survey requested demographic information on the churches; information on the lead pastor's tenure, experience and education; compensation and benefit levels for all employees; and optional contact information.

The survey was mailed in April 2008 to all 3,240 churches currently contributing to MMBB benefits on behalf of their employees. The 18.8 percent response rate was considered higher than the industry standard of 5 percent for surveys of this type.

The majority of responding congregations had no more than 100 weekly

worshippers and a history reaching back at least 100 years. Most of the churches had fewer than four employees, most of whom were part time.

The overall average total compensation for lead pastors was \$50,768, but the largest single group of pastors earned between \$40,000 and \$49,999. (Total compensation includes cash salary, housing allowance and Social Security offset.)

Of the churches responding, the current lead pastor had been with the church for an average of nine years and, on average, had 24 years of ministry experience; 85 percent of those lead pastors had completed a master of divinity degree or doctorate.

Those with comparable work in the nonprofit world receive compensation that is, on average, 1½ times higher than the average lead pastor in this study.

The average percentage of the churches' annual operating expenses that supports the lead pastor was 17.8 percent. In churches with congregations of less than 100, the average annual compensation for the lead pastor

was 28.5 percent of average operating expenses.

Nearly four out of five churches responding to the survey (79 percent) reported that they review and adjust the pastor's salary annually based on — in order of frequency — cost of living, a general evaluation of the pastor and comparisons with other professionals, such as school superintendents. Responding churches reported they increased pastoral compensation by an average of 4.99 percent in their previous fiscal year.

The Midwest and the Northeast had the highest number of responding churches; these churches also have the smallest worshipping congregations, total operating expenses and lowest lead pastor compensation levels. Churches reporting from the South and West regions had larger worshipping congregations, larger total operating expenses and higher lead pastor compensation levels. **BT**

*The full report is available at [www.mmbb.org/clergy\\_compensation\\_survey\\_2008.cfm](http://www.mmbb.org/clergy_compensation_survey_2008.cfm).*

## Poll says Americans moving rightward on social issues

By Bob Allen

PRINCETON, N.J. (ABP) — A week after releasing a poll for the first time showing a majority of Americans describe themselves as pro-life, the Gallup Organization reported new numbers showing public opinion moving to the right on a number of other social issues as well. In a May 20 poll, fewer Americans said it is morally acceptable to clone humans, have an abortion or conduct stem-cell research using human embryos than those polled a year earlier.

A majority still finds stem-cell research morally acceptable, but support for such research dropped five points to 57 percent. Just one in three Americans (36 percent) believes abortion is morally acceptable, down four points in the last year. Support for human cloning fell from 11 percent to 9 percent.

A slight majority said sex between an unmarried man and woman (57 percent) or having a child out of wedlock (51 percent) is morally acceptable, both four percentage

points lower than last year. While nearly two-thirds said divorce is morally acceptable (62 percent), the number is down from 70 percent in May 2008. Five percent fewer Americans now view gambling as morally acceptable (58 percent) compared to a year ago.

Most Americans (62 percent) view the death penalty as moral, same as last year, and just under half (49 percent) approve of gay or lesbian relationships, up one point. On the question of buying and wearing clothing made of animal fur, 61 percent said it is moral, an increase of seven points from 54 percent who said so last year.

The survey said most movement toward the right occurred for Republicans. Support for stem-cell research declined nine points among Republicans, to 41 percent, while the percentage of Democrats finding it moral remained steady at 74 percent. Democrats' attitude toward divorce also remained unchanged, with 74 percent finding it morally acceptable, while among Republicans that view dropped from 64

percent a year ago to 52 percent now.

Both Republicans and Democrats increasingly expressed doubts about the morality of gambling, but the drop was faster among Republicans. Among Democrats, acceptance of gambling dropped from 67 percent to 64 percent, while among Republicans it dropped six points to 55 percent. Half of Democrats (52 percent) accept the morality of abortion, compared to fewer than one in four Republicans (23 percent). Nearly twice as many Democrats (66 percent) as Republicans (35 percent) affirm same-sex relationships.

Few Americans view a married man and woman having an affair as moral (6 percent). About the same number (7 percent) said it is moral for a man to be married to more than one woman at the same time. Fifteen percent said suicide is morally acceptable, the same percentage as last year.

The survey was based on telephone interviews with 1,015 adults conducted May 7-10. The margin of error is 3 percent. **BT**

# Mainline clergy OK with gay rights

## Still cautious on issue of gay marriage

By Daniel Burke  
*Religion News Service*

Mainline Protestant clergy are generally more likely than most Americans to endorse gay rights, but only one in three supports same-sex marriage, according to a new study.

About one-third of mainline clergy support civil unions and one-third oppose any legal recognition for gay couples, found Public Religion Research, a Washington-based consulting firm, which released part two of its “Clergy Voices Survey” on May 20.

According to a *Washington Post*/ABC poll released in April, 49 percent of Americans say they support gay marriage, and 47 percent are opposed.

Five states have legalized gay marriage with a sixth, New Hampshire, set to join their ranks once legal protections for religious groups are put in place.

Such assurances that churches and congregations will not be required to perform gay marriages make mainline Protestant clergy much more willing to accept them, according to the report. Support for gay marriage jumped from 32 to 46 percent with the “religious liberty” assurance, according to the survey.

The “Clergy Voices” report details the response of senior mainline clergy from seven denominations to more than 60 questions about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues. The researchers called it

“the most in-depth study of mainline clergy attitudes on LGBT issues ever undertaken.”

More than two-thirds of mainline clergy support hate crimes legislation and protections from workplace discrimination for gays and lesbians; more than half (55 percent) say gay couples should be allowed to adopt children.

But the survey found “significant and sometimes stark differences” between mainline Protestant denominations, with clergy in the United Church of Christ and Episcopal Church most supportive of LGBT rights. Clergy in the United Methodist Church and American Baptist Churches USA are least supportive.

The other denominations surveyed were the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Overall, mainline Protestant clergy have become more supportive of equal rights for gays and lesbians over the last decade, and 45 percent now favor the ordination of gays and lesbians with no special requirements, the survey found.

Still, a slight majority (51 percent) of mainline ministers said that disagreements in their church over homosexuality have become a crisis. Among that majority, 40 percent say the crisis is about how the Bible should be read, 27 percent say it concerns what the church is supposed to be and 23 percent say it’s about core Christian doctrine, according to the survey. **BT**



### ABC clergy opinions

According to this study, 20 percent of surveyed ministers affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, USA, affirms that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. A slightly higher percentage (28) believes that gay couples should be allowed to enter into civil unions.

Additionally, 52 percent of American Baptist ministers believe that no legal recognition should be extended to same-sex couples. Here are a few more of the study’s findings on American Baptist clergy:

- 52 percent supports hate crimes legislation.
- 33 percent supports adoption rights for gays and lesbians.
- 28 percent supports the ordination of gays and lesbians.
- 31 percent stated that the church should not oppose making homosexuality acceptable.
- 33 percent supports gays and lesbians as lay leaders in their church.

*Poll results provided by Aaron Weaver who blogs at [www.thebigdaddyweave.com](http://www.thebigdaddyweave.com).*

## Federal government finds home-school numbers on the rise



WASHINGTON (RNS) — The number of home-schooled students has nearly doubled in the last eight years, with parents’ desire to provide religious and moral instruction the most oft-cited cause, according to a recent report by the Department of Education.

An estimated 1.5 million students — nearly 3 percent of the country’s school-age population — were home-schooled in the spring of 2007; that’s up from 850,000 home-schooled students reported in 1999 and the 1.1 million

home-schooled students reported in 2003, according to the report.

More than 8 in 10 parents said they home-school their children to provide religious or moral instruction, up from 72 percent in 2003. Thirty-six percent said that was the most important reason they home-school their children, followed by concern about the school environment (21 percent) and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools (17 percent). **BT**

# Krumping gives movement to the Spirit's call

CHESAPEAKE, Va. — On a peaceful afternoon in a suburban home garage, Demetrus Leslie, 17, jerked like he was dosed with strychnine. His arms lashed menacingly, then he dropped to the floor, only to rear up smoothly.

His chest popped in and out, convulsing as if an alien larva heaved within. He ranged around the garage, “traveling,” or following the direction of his foot stomps and arm swings.

“Go, go!” admiring friends yelled over the pounding music. In his spontaneity, speed and mesmerized concentration, they could see the tell-tale symptoms.

Demetrus had got krump. Praise the Lord!

Krump is a frenetic dance born on the West Coast, combining flashes of modern dance, break-dancing, tribal-like dance, hip hop, “pop lock” steps and free-form motion, often at blurring speed.

Leslie and his friends say Krump truly is all about God.

“When you’re going the fastest, that’s when you unleash, that’s when God takes over,” said Demetrus, who belongs to a local krump group, Kreative Mindz Crew: The Syfer Family, that aims to keep kids off the street and in the church.

The origins of the name krump are obscure, but fans including Demetrus’ older brother, Kreative Mindz manager Danyasius Leslie, give it this definition: Kingdom Radicals Uplifting Mighty Praise.

“How would I describe krump?” said Danyasius, 29. “I would say, because I have a Christian background, that it’s the power of God that moves.”

For Kreative Mindz dancers, to krump is to praise God through movements inspired by the Holy Spirit. “It’s God, man, all we do is give the glory to God,” said Jaren Goodridge, 15.

Krump’s spiritual dimension may not be immediately apparent to the uninitiated spectator, and Leslie conceded it can be hard for outsiders to see the thrashing and jumping as divinely inspired.

In the Leslies’ garage, lithe Goodridge danced like a caffeine fiend, slender arms swinging, bending and jabbing triple-time, one motion flowing into the next, his gaze fixed on the floor.



Kelvin Weldon shows some of his krumping moves to fellow members of the “Kreative Mindz Crew” in Chesapeake, Va. Photo by Stephen M. Katz/*The Virginian-Pilot*.

Alexis Hinton, in contrast, shot wolfish looks, baring her teeth while stamping and clawing the air with outstretching arms. Despite the feminine bows on her red flats, she radiated anger. Krumping, she said, is a powerful emotional release.

Nohnee Purvis, a high school sophomore, said he first krumped for fun but soon, “the whole spiritual thing of it just hit me in the chest,” he said. Now, he even acts differently.

“Sundays, I’d just sit in the house, sleep, talk on the phone,” Purvis said. “Now I get up and go to church. My whole mind has changed. We got Christ up.”

Leslie started the group two years ago with his brother and some friends, inspired by “Rize,” a lauded 2005 documentary on krump by renowned photographer David LaChapelle.

According to Leslie, a hip-hop dancer named Tommy the Clown started krump in California in the 1990s. The expressive, freestyle dance caught on as an alternative to street violence, with dancers competing, or “battling,” one another to display their moves and krumping prowess.

Leslie’s dance practices in his garage fascinated neighborhood kids and he began recruiting, setting conditions for membership.

One rule is to keep up with school work. “I don’t look for C’s and D’s; I look for A’s and B’s,” said Leslie, who often checks in with parents about teens’ grades.

Leslie also feeds dancers a steady diet of Bible verses and expects them to make Jesus Christ their model. The twice-weekly dance practices start with prayer. Dancers are expected to go to church.

The group has performed about 25 times during Sunday worship at New Light Full Gospel Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, which Leslie attends. Bishop Rudolph B. Lewis said some older congregants initially recoiled when he allowed krumping at services.

Lewis himself said he understands krump dancing no better than his parents’ generation understood Elvis Presley’s risqué swivel-hips in the ’50s. But he’s told parishioners that teens are more likely to attend church — and to say no to gang-banging — if they know their unorthodox worship styles are welcomed.

“God wants to hear what you want to say, and he don’t care how you say it, and if you say it like this” — Lewis contorted himself, krump-like — “he hears you.” **BT**

—Steven G. Vekh is a writer for *The Virginian-Pilot* in Norfolk, Va.

# Sanctuary for challenged children, parents

DALLAS (ABP) — Parents of squirming children who cannot stay focused and who often end up labeled as “troublemakers” sometimes feel isolated — and maybe even unwelcome in church. Author Maren Angelotti believes they are in good company. The parents of John the Baptist and the Apostle Peter might have felt the same way.

It’s obvious from God’s word that he has no problem working with people who are different. ... In fact, he seems to prefer it,” Angelotti writes in her book, *Of Different Minds: Seeing Your AD/HD Child Through the Eyes of God*.

Angelotti — who earned a master’s degree from Dallas Baptist University in teaching for the learning-different student — understands learning disabilities such as attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, dyslexia and perceptual dysfunctions.

As a reading therapist who specializes in remediation programs for dyslexic students, she recognizes the neurological differences between the brain activity of the general population and children with learning disabilities.

But she also understands learning differences experientially. Three of her four children have learning disabilities — two diagnosed with ADD, dyslexia and related disorders, and one with ADD and auditory processing disorder. And she realizes the children inherited those traits — she is dyslexic, and her husband, Bob, has ADD.

One big challenge parents of children with learning differences face is floundering in what Angelotti calls “the sea of denial” and failing to come to terms with the special needs their children have.

“Pride is really the bottom line. They have a tendency to say, ‘Nobody needs to help me,’” she said in an interview.

But if churches seriously want to minister to all families — including parents of the more than 2 million children in the United States with learning differences — they must approach parents in ways that break down those walls

of prideful self-sufficiency, Angelotti insisted. And the churches themselves must move out of denial that a need exists, she added.

“The faith community has to realize there is a problem. It’s not so much that the church has dropped the ball, but it hasn’t really picked up the ball, either,” she said.

Matthew Stanford, professor of psychology and neuroscience at Baylor University, has noted AD/HD, in particular, is a controversial topic among some evangelicals.

“Within Christian circles, some have gone as far as to suggest that AD/HD is nothing more than rebellion, resulting from bad parenting, or society’s attempt to turn sin into sickness,” Stanford writes in *Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness*.

While he acknowledges AD/HD has been misdiagnosed, and probably over-diagnosed, that does not negate its reality or churches’ responsibility to respond. AD/HD is “a real disorder that affects the lives of real children and their families,” he writes.

“These children wrestle daily with debilitating physical, psychological and spiritual issues.

Although mistakes may have been made in relation to diagnoses in the past, this does not change the fact that children who do struggle with this disorder can be effectively treated. And the church has a significant role to play in their healing.”

An important first step churches can take is to educate members — particularly Sunday school teachers and children’s workers — about learning differences and learning styles.

“One of the greatest services churches can provide is to give families a place where they feel safe,” Angelotti said. “Churches are at their best when they help children to become what God intended them to be.” Churches become more welcoming places for families of children with learning disabilities when adults who work with the children understand them, several children’s ministers noted.

First Baptist Church in Port Neches, Texas, seeks to be the kind of place where parents feel their children are affirmed and loved — not rejected, said Jeanette Harvey, minister to children and preteens. “We try to build trust with these parents who probably already have their defenses up. Some of them have been told by teachers and other authorities, ‘Your child is a problem,’” she said.

“We want to love on them and let them know we want them here.” A key way teachers and workers can help children with learning differences is by making accommodations to their special needs in ways that don’t single them out.

“They get enough of that at school and everywhere else they go,” noted Amy Owens, children’s minister at First Baptist Church in Garland, Texas.

In the Sunday school classroom, the accommodation may be as simple as encouraging teachers to vary their teaching styles to appeal to a variety of learning styles. By incorporating different styles that reach visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic learners — children who learn best by seeing, hearing, touching or moving — the needs of children who process information differently are met, she noted.

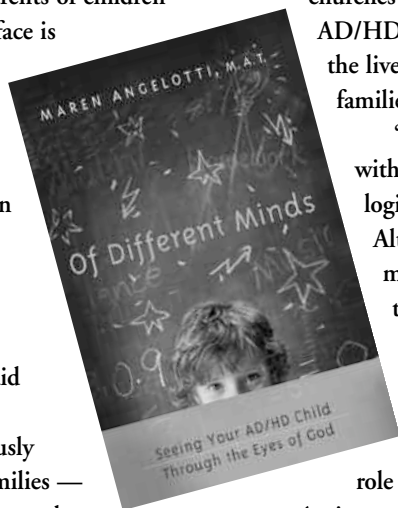
“When a teacher uses more than one approach frequently, that helps every child in the class, because the more senses they use, the more they absorb and learn,” Owens said.

Bible Drill competition — a contest based on children’s ability to find selected Scripture passages quickly, as well as memorizing key verses and the books of the Bible — presented a special challenge, but First Baptist Church in Garland worked to level the playing field for children with dyslexia.

“We advocated at the associational and state levels for an easy accommodation for them,” said Owens, who has a daughter with dyslexia. They changed the procedure of the competition slightly. When a monitor would



Maren Angelotti





call out verbally a Scripture passage or book in the Bible, he or she would hold up a visual cue at the same time. The accommodation not only helped the dyslexic children, but also was beneficial to competitors who were more visual learners rather than auditory. Children with learning differences may require special attention, such as having a worker assigned specifically to that child to make sure he or she gets what is needed in order to learn, she noted.

While it generally can be done discreetly, sometimes other children will notice the extra attention one child receives. When dealing with older children — particularly preteens who already may have made a commitment to follow Christ — teachers may want to gently explain the special needs of one of their classmates.

“Children are all about being fair. If we explain to the older kids that someone is getting extra attention because they need a little special help in order to be even with everybody else, in their minds, that’s fair treatment,” she said.

“Our kids are more compassionate than we give them credit for. Particularly if they already have become Christians, they have the Holy Spirit working in them. They are looking for opportunities to express that relationship they have with Christ.”

Churches also can minister to families of children with learning differences by offering programs that directly benefit the parents. Since most learning disabilities are inherited, oftentimes at least one parent has learning difficulty — including many that went undiagnosed as children, Angelotti noted.

“Adults typically don’t seek help for themselves, but churches can provide assistance by offering literacy and reading training,” she noted.

Churches also can provide marriage enrichment ministries or even subsidized counseling that help couples directly address issues that put strains on their marriage. Among families affected by learning disabilities, most often one spouse has AD/HD, dyslexia or some other dysfunction, and the other learns to compensate, Angelotti observed. “That can lead to a martyr syndrome, where one spouse feels he or she has to take care of everything,” she said. “Finances particularly can be a point of tension that destroys a marriage. There is a high divorce rate among this group.

“When marriages are healthy, children are healthy — mentally, spiritually and physically.” **BT**

## Religious leaders say time running out for Palestinian Christians

By Bob Allen

WASHINGTON (ABP) — Religious leaders warned President Obama that continuing strife between Palestinians and Israelis threatens to wipe out a Christian presence in the Holy Land.

Fifty-six representatives of various Protestant and Catholic faiths — including several Baptists — wrote a letter June 4 applauding the president for making peace in the Holy Land a top priority but warning that time is running out for a viable and peaceful two-state solution to conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

While concerned about Jews and Muslims, the leaders said they are particularly worried about the plight of the Palestinian Christian community.

“In the birthplace of our faith, one of the world’s oldest Christian communities is dwindling rapidly, and with them the possibility of a day when three thriving faith communities live in shared peace in Jerusalem,” the letter said.

Unless there is an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, the leaders warned “Christians in the Holy Land may cease to exist as a viable community.”

The leaders said a “window of opportunity” for a two-state solution establishing peace and security “is rapidly closing” in the Middle East.

“Continued settlement growth and expansion are rapidly diminishing any possibility for the creation of a viable Palestinian state,” the letter said. “The targeting of Israeli civilians through ongoing rocket fire and the insistent rejection by some of Israel’s right to exist reinforces the destructive status quo. These actions, along with the route of the separation barrier, movement restrictions and continued home demolitions, serve to undermine Palestinians and Israelis alike who seek peace. As hope dims, the threat of violence

grows and hardliners are strengthened.”

The leaders said the current stalemate demonstrates that Israelis and Palestinians cannot reach a negotiated agreement without America’s strong helping hand. They urged the Obama administration “to present proposals that go beyond the mere principle of two states and lay out a just and equitable solution that provides dignity, security and sovereignty for both peoples.”

One leader signing the letter was Jimmy Allen, coordinator of the New Baptist Covenant, a movement aimed at uniting Baptists in North America divided by race and denomination on common concerns such as poverty and justice.

Other Baptist signers included Joy Fenner, former president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas; David Goatley, executive secretary-treasurer of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention; Wayne Johnson, general secretary of the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America; Willie Maynard, treasurer of the National Baptist Convention, Inc.; Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA; Tyrone Pitts, general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.; and William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Some of those individuals signed an earlier letter to the president drafted by Christian leaders invited to a two-day summit on growing despair in the Holy Land at The Carter Center in May.

In that letter religious leaders pledged to Obama “to continue to build constituencies that will advocate for a just political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” and committed to “an ongoing conversation with you about achieving the solution we can no longer postpone.” **BT**

The current stalemate demonstrates that Israelis and Palestinians cannot reach a negotiated agreement without America’s strong helping hand.

2007

Brought to you this month  
by Mike Harton



# The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

## Baby boomers, volunteerism and the future of church leadership

**N**ews flash: “Churches losing market share as boomers exit the ranks of leadership.” This could be the headline if churches continue business as usual when it comes to their *laissez-faire* practices of caring for volunteers. This is particularly true when it comes to baby boomers — that “pig in the python” generation, 72 million strong, born between 1946 and 1964.

It is no stretch to realize that churches are probably the longest standing users of volunteer services of all community organizations. From teaching Sunday school classes to staffing committees to operating the various mission efforts, churches are almost completely dependent upon unpaid volunteers. That is why the future of program and ministry leadership in churches is in jeopardy.

Jeopardy? Are people going to stop volunteering? No. Are churches in danger of losing volunteers? Yes. For years churches have found it increasingly challenging to staff programs and ministries, and that challenge will increase. The primary reason has nothing to do with lack of dedication or poverty of time, but rather the increasing opportunities for volunteering in the community.

It appears that community agencies are more in tune with demographics and trends, which leads them to be more adept at attracting and holding volunteers. This is particularly true of baby boomers, the first wave of whom are approaching retirement or have retired early with no desire to spend all their time knitting, playing golf or fishing. Indications are that this will be the most active retired cohort in history so far. High numbers of boomers are actively searching for meaningful ways to give their time in service to their communities. They want engagement,

and they want to make a difference.

Couple this with a perhaps surprising effect of the economic downturn, the conscious decision to focus on significance over success, and you get a virtual tsunami of potential volunteers. Already the value of volunteer hours runs into millions of dollars, and this statistic is growing.

The opportunities for volunteering in the community continue to grow: School-aged and adult literacy (in some areas called mentoring), English as a Second Language, helping older adults, addressing hunger and homelessness issues, teaching hobbies and life skills, and the list goes on and on.

But you may protest, these are all things that many churches do — which is true. When baby boomers evaluate the options for investing their time, however, they are affected by such things as the quality of orientation to the job, clarity of expectations, the training provided, the promise of supportive yet honest supervision, feedback and recognition, clearly stated goals, and often the possibility of short-term commitment.

How do churches stack up in these areas? Let's be honest, usually when we enlist volunteers for a task ...

- Goals and expectations are not clearly stated.
- Little or no orientation and/or training is provided.
- Real supervision is missing.
- Feedback is lacking on how well or poorly the task is done.
- There is little or no recognition for service.

Add to the list above the likelihood that volunteers fear becoming lifers (“If I accept that job, I’ll never get out of it!”), and it is easy to

see why people choose to volunteer outside the church.

So what can churches do to attract and keep baby boomers (and others) as volunteers?

- Recognize and bless their service in the community.
- Make available the same benefits they find in the community.
- Present the challenge and expectations of each ministry opportunity.
- Provide orientation and training.
- Enlist their help in setting goals.
- Identify channels of accountability.
- Give feedback on the quality of service done.
- Find multiple ways to recognize their service. (Examples: Ask volunteers to give testimonies in worship and in the newsletter about why they serve. Write notes and e-mails of appreciation to them for specific acts of leadership. Treat them with a gift card. Share e-mail links related to leadership or their area of responsibility.)
- Offer short-term opportunities for service; talk in terms of weeks and months rather than in terms of years.

If programs and ministries are to survive, churches must awaken from their malaise and show potential volunteers that the opportunities provided are worthy of their investment of time and energy. No amount of guilt or appeals to spiritual motivation will substitute for meeting volunteers' expectations.

Need some motivation to get started? Visualize being able to staff only one huge adult class, having no children's activities for lack of help or else ill-equipped huge classes consisting of all ages, and few mission activities. Continue the status quo, and that's what we'll reap. **BT**

**THE RESOURCE PAGE** is provided by the Congregational Life office of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in partnership with *Baptists Today* and for those dedicated lay leaders working in the educational ministries of local churches. This month's page was written by Mike Harton, an adjunct professor at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and Bluefield (Va.) College and an educational coach living in Midlothian, Va. Resource Page Archives are available at [www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page](http://www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page).

# 2009 Formations Commentary

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

## LESSONS FOR: Sunday, Aug 2-30, 2009

Written by Chris O'Rear, executive director for clinical services at the Pastoral Counseling Centers of Tennessee, Inc. in Nashville.



Aug. 2, 2009

## Sin wisely

1 John 1:5-2:2

It has been said of the church I attend that “if there is one of them in Baptist life, then there is one of them in our church.” This is often said to describe the diversity of thoughts that co-exist within our fellowship. It is a constant and intentional act to maintain this diversity, and we do this better at some times than others. At the same time there must also be some common beliefs that bind us together as a body. In matters of difference, we often seek to understand and respect one another rather than label and marginalize one another. The ability to be a body of believers is predicated on each member of the church trying to live out our church motto of “Loving God, Loving People.”

The first epistle of John is instructive for my church and others because John's goal was to identify a set of core beliefs the early fellowship of believers should embrace. John wanted to clarify how the fellowship could appreciate — rather than just tolerate — the diversity of its membership.

John begins his description of right living and right fellowship by building on the life and message of Jesus and describing him as both “light” and “truth.” Walking in the light means believing in the person of Jesus as God's Son and following his example and teachings. If we believe, we are forgiven our sins. And if we follow Jesus, then we have right fellowship with others — which flows

from having our relationship with God in perspective first.

Walking in the light has to do with letting the holiness of God be the illumination of our character. We cannot be in God's light and say that we have no sin. When in the presence of the Holy, we should be aware of our imperfection and then feel a sense of humility. This is a key component in having meaningful fellowship with others because it keeps us from thinking too highly of ourselves. John writes here that if we say we have no sin, then we deceive ourselves. We are imperfect and should not think too highly of ourselves.

We are not hopeless in our imperfection, however. If we acknowledge our sin to God, he is faithful to his promise to forgive us and to cleanse us from our unrighteousness. The other side of acknowledging our imperfection is realizing that God loves us. Therefore, in our imperfection, we should not be too critical of ourselves. When we stand before God and realize our sinfulness, God makes us clean and new. We are made righteous by his work and his gift through Jesus. We must balance not thinking too highly of ourselves with the reality that we are valued, loved and gifted by God.

So, if we know we are sinful and we know that we can be forgiven by God when we do sin, we may be tempted to think that it is okay to continue in our wrongdoing or not worry about it. John is clear, however, that we should live in such a way as to try to avoid sinfulness, but know that when we do sin, we have the gift of Jesus to save us. If we fully recognize the magnitude of God's love for and gift to us, then our attempts to avoid those things that separate us from God, ourselves and others are simply a gift of gratitude we give to God. This is made clearer by the use of “expiation” to describe Jesus' saving work on our behalf.

The word *hilasmos*, translated as expiation or propitiation, is derived from the Hebrew word *kipurim* for covering. Edward McDowell writes, “The scriptural use of the [word] is not to convey the idea of appeasing one who is angry toward another but of alter-

ing or removing the cause of alienation” (p. 199). The expiation of our sin is an act of God that reconciles us to God. This is not only a gift for us, but also for the whole world.

Fellowship with one another begins with our relationship with God through Jesus. It involves keeping perspective on our own behavior in order to better have relationships with others. We are to monitor our sinfulness and seek to walk in the light of God's holiness and love.

These verses are not for us to use as a measuring rod to determine if others are in the light or in the darkness. These verses encourage us to seek within ourselves and judge our own hearts, to be honest with ourselves and with God. We have confidence that when we find things in our life that keep us alienated from God, others or ourselves, God has already acted to make our reconciliation possible. So, with the humility of self-evaluation, we are able to have fellowship with others.

McDowell, Edward A. Vol.12. *The Broadman Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.

Aug. 9, 2009

## Practice discernment

1 John 2:18-27

The world of the Christian church is diverse. Christians have been divided and subdivided over a number of secondary issues related to the practice of our faith.

Some believe that baptism is required for salvation; others see it as a symbol. Some believe that infants must be baptized; others believe that only those who have made a decision to follow Jesus should be baptized. Some Christian churches put more emphasis on Jesus taking the form of humans and being born, while others emphasize Jesus' death on the cross or Jesus' resurrection from the dead as being the most significant. Christians are



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divided on the style of worship, meaning of worship and order of worship. There are Christians who are “pro-life” and Christians who are “pro-choice.” We are liberal and conservative, Republican and Democrat.

While the body of Christ should be able to make room at the table for a variety of views and personalities, some tenets of our faith ought to be non-negotiable. As stated in the previous lesson, part of the reason for writing 1 John is to warn against those who claim to have a truth but do not have *the* truth.

In the language used in today’s text, we see why there is a historic connection between 1 John and the Gospel of John. In this section of the epistle and in John 15:4-10, there is a language of abiding in Christ. Also in this part of 1 John there is a description of the role of the Holy Spirit to guide and instruct like that in John 14:26, 15:26, and 16:7-11, 13-14. Similarly, we find in 1 John and in John 14:10-11 and 6:24 a warning against false teachings regarding the relationship between Jesus and God the Father. There is also a shared sense of urgency of time (John 16:32).

As John is writing, he refers not to one “Antichrist” but many, evidently believing his contemporaries are already living in the “Last Hour” (v. 18). Edward McDowell points out, though, that the Greek for “Last Hour” does not have a definitive article; “The” is missing. The absence of the article leaves the time ambiguous. “Last hour” therefore indicates that the days are critical, but not necessarily *the* last days. What makes the time critical seems to be the presence of those who bring alternate teachings about Jesus.

Most writers on 1 John agree that those to whom John refers as the antichrists are probably former members of the early church. It is believed that these former members of the body were followers of an early form of Gnosticism. As such, they may have had a special anointing that they believed gave them special knowledge about God. They would have held beliefs that denied either the divine nature or the human nature of Jesus, stating he was either all one or all the other.

John is reminding those in the early church that they also have an anointing — one by the Holy Spirit. He reminds them of what they have learned and what they have known. John’s use of the word “abide” here is reminiscent of the use in the vine and branches references in John 15 and implies a more complete relationship that fills a person

rather than just an intellectual knowledge. The abiding in Christ should produce fruit; it should bring about growth and transformation. Those who fell away from the church could not have been connected to Christ in this way or they would not have left the fellowship (2:19).

The connection to Christ seems to be predicated on “abiding” in what was heard from the beginning. Therefore, we should continually focus our attention on the life and teachings of Jesus. We should connect ourselves with his commandment to love one another (John 12). We should remind ourselves through study of scriptures and prayer of the saving acts of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. We need to share our experiences and reflections with other believers to test our understanding and to encourage one another.

When we are grounded in these things, we cannot be led astray by those who bring other teachings. We are not tempted to deny the experience of salvation we have through Jesus, and we are not lured into hatred of one another. We cannot be deceived about our own sinfulness or tempted to think too highly of ourselves. When we are grounded in what we “heard from the beginning,” we have the potential for true community and the Spirit’s teaching to protect us from being misled.

McDowell, Edward A. Vol.12. *The Broadman Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.

Aug. 16, 2009

## Care for one another

1 John 3:11-22

In John 13:34, Jesus tells his disciples he is giving them a new commandment to love one another. This is the message the followers of Jesus have heard from the beginning. As John points out in 1 John, love is also the mark of a true follower of Jesus and having love is a way of discerning whether we are truly a child of God.

As a child of God, we are to have love for our brothers and sisters. We are to be a family of God. Perhaps this is why John offers Cain as an example of the antithesis of this love; because Cain killed his own brother, Abel. Loving those in our Christian family is sometimes difficult, but is possible when the love of Christ is in us. The love we are to have for

one another as believers is not to be in exclusion of the love for our enemies or the love for others in the world.

The story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) has been problematic for me in the past because at first look, the acceptance of Abel’s offering and not Cain’s seems arbitrary. Upon a closer reading, however, it seems there is something about Cain’s attitude and life that made his offering unacceptable. God offered Cain the opportunity to make it right and to master whatever sin he had kept in his heart, but Cain did not change his life. What made Cain evil was not the offering he brought God, but how he handled his relationship with God and how he treated his brother. Instead of correcting his relationship with God, Cain grew angry with his brother and killed him.

John points out that when we have a right relationship with God, those who do not may hate us. John’s primary focus in 1 John, however, is on believers loving one another.

Sadly, loving others within the church community can often be difficult. At church we deal with matters of ultimate concern for us, things about which we feel strongest. Often times, church is a place where we are more concerned about appearances than honest and open communication. When we find places where we differ, we are tempted to discount or ignore the differences or else we focus on the differences and nurture divisions and hatred. However, can hatred and murder really be the same, as John suggests?

One of my favorite preachers, Tom Richter from Queens, New York, humorously said in a recent sermon, “If you wake up tomorrow and you have the choice to hate me or kill me, please, just hate me.” There does seem to be a big difference between the feeling and the act, but Glenn Barker writes, “To hate is to despise, to cut off from relationship and murder is simply the fulfillment of that attitude” (p. 335).

Hatred of a brother or sister reduces that person to simple ideas or labels. It is easier to hate an idea than a person. When we substitute a person for his or her ideas, we reduce the individual to an object — a sum of our labels. When we objectify the other, we effectively kill the personhood of the other. We have more difficulty hating, and I imagine, would have difficulty killing, a person we really take the time to know and understand (and perhaps even love.)

The drastic contrast to the division and



objectification that can lead to hatred and murder is the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. Jesus' act of laying down his life for us is to be our example of how to show love to others. We are to consider the needs of others and to give of what we have in the service of others. This directive should not be limited to only those who are in the church. In fact, we often do well providing for the needs of those in our church or in our Sunday school classes, but the example of Jesus is an extravagant gift given to all.

As we observe the need of the world, it may be overwhelming to consider how our resources could possibly be sufficient, but we need to find some way to share what we have been given with others because of the magnitude of what has been given to us. It is the ability to have our heart broken by the pain and need of the world that demonstrates we have Christ in us.

To live in such a way as to have the heart of Christ in us is only possible because God puts that heart in us. John says that if we follow his commandments and do what pleases God, then we will have what we ask. Rather than suggesting a formula by which we will receive all that we pray for, this seems to be suggesting a way in which we can align what we ask for with God's desires. John also clarifies the commandments we are to follow, which are very similar to the words of Jesus that John records in his Gospel: we are to believe in Jesus as the son of God and love one another. To truly grasp the depth of these truths and to live them out daily is to demonstrate the love of God in us and connect us with those around us.

Barker, Glenn W. Vol. 12. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.

Aug. 23, 2009

## Embrace love

1 John 4:7-21

It is easy to talk about "love." We love the burger we are eating. We "just love that new dress" someone is wearing. We believe we should love others, but what exactly does that mean? Does it mean we should have warm feelings for humanity as a whole? That seems fine until some member of humanity as a whole decides to ride your bumper down the

interstate or insults the character of your mother in a disagreement.

Talking and theorizing about love is much easier than expressing genuine love — because genuine love is not our primary nature. "Love" has been tainted and distorted by the imperfections of this world and sometimes by misguided teachings in our own faith. Without a complete focus on God, whose nature is love, it is difficult, if not impossible, to love one another well.

In my work as a counselor dealing with couples and families, I am often reminded of the difficulty in loving even those closest to us because of our fears and hurts. Because we have been hurt or because we know our own vulnerability to being hurt, we respond to others in ways to defend ourselves against hurt. When faced with loss of or rejection by someone, we may respond to the other by trying to control his or her behavior rather than managing our own fears.

Connection with others always comes with a loss; whether it is the person we met for only five minutes in the grocery store or the spouse who has died after 50 years of marriage. Every connection has a loss. Fear of loss, fear of hurt and fear of rejection keep us from being completely open and cause us to respond to others from a defended position rather than the vulnerability and openness that lead to true connection. The imperfections of this world that feed our insecurities and add to our hurts lead us to a place of fear rather than love.

Unfortunately, fear is sometimes a part of the message of Christianity as presented in some churches.

Erik Reece, author of *An American Gospel: On Family, History, and the Kingdom of God*, was interviewed on May 13, 2009, on National Public Radio's program "Fresh Air" about his experience growing up with a fundamentalist pastor for a grandfather and how he left the church in search of a less punitive form of Christianity. He described not only the sermons he heard, but also the way he was dealt with at home and the effect of these things on him and his father. Sin, guilt and salvation from hell were all Erik ever heard from a church that, as he described it, sounded hateful and judgmental. Though Reece has come to a new understanding of God and Christianity that embraces the living of Christian faith through love, he admitted in the end of the interview that he no longer

attends a church.

That church has not been a place of love and grace for many is a sad testimony to our need to hear John's words.

The love espoused in 1 John is presumed to be a response to the false teachings of the "antichrists" about love. The love of the false teachers was similar to that of Greek understanding was focused more on the love of people for the gods. It also dealt with the idea of love as a more metaphysical principle. It is profound, then, for John to state that not only does God love us, but also that the very nature of God is love.

The word that John uses for love here is *agape*, which is the word for the type of love that flows from God. This love is also described as "love by choice, love motivated by the will and implemented by action and conduct" (McDowell, p. 215).

While romantic love (*eros*) and brotherly love (*phileo*) are not the same, it seems reasonable to think that all forms of love should contain some elements of *agapē*. This love is an extension of God's nature to us and is demonstrated in very tangible ways. It is a love that seeks the best for us and calls on the highest part of our beings.

Because we have received such extravagant love, we also ought to love one another with the same love. To do this, we need to confess our fears and let God heal our hurts. We need to seek to be open with others and to respond with gratitude and humility. If we cannot love one another — or love one another well — we must examine our experience and relationship with God because love is from God because God is love.

Barker, Glenn W. Vol. 12. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.

McDowell, Edward A. Vol. 12. *The Broadman Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.

Aug. 30, 2009

## Live victoriously

1 John 5:1-5, 13-21

As John begins to close his message, he summarizes several points he has been making and weaves his thoughts together. The result is an affirmation of the person of Jesus as the son of

God and the faith of those believers in the early church. As John expands the ideas of the power of the faithful believer over the powers of the world, he uses some perplexing references. What is a “mortal sin” (vv. 16, 17) and what does it mean that “those born of God do not sin” (v. 18)? These things seem more complicated than a simple admonishment to “love one another.”

In John’s summary he is reiterating the uniqueness of Jesus as God’s son. He also affirms that to believe that Jesus is the Christ is to be born of God. He outlines that when we are born of God, we have certain qualities — we love the children of God, we obey God’s commandments — and our faith gives us victory over the world. Faith, in this sense, is not an intellectual exercise, but a setting of our path and priorities in light of Jesus’ identity and teaching.

The “world” we overcome, then, is that which is contrary to the identity and teaching of Jesus. This is perhaps summarized in John’s affirmation that those who have this faith can know that they have eternal life. Eternal life would be characterized both as endless (as to time) and “God Breathed” (as to quality), and would stand in contrast to a worldly life that is finite and characterized by destruction and hopelessness.

As if to accentuate the unique quality of life in Christ, John gives some specific examples of the power of faith in prayer and over sin. The “We know” phrase occurs numerous times in verses 13-21 and seems to affirm the faith of the early church. “We know that [God] hears us” (v. 15) when we pray is one such phrase and is qualified with the familiar words “if we ask anything according to his will.”

Similar to “In Jesus’ name,” this is not to be formulaic as much as it is to be an attitude

when we pray. Though John affirms the confidence we can have in obtaining the things for which we pray, perhaps it is the confidence that God is at work in our lives when we pray to accomplish his purposes and not a specific outcome in which we have confidence. The specific example of prayer that John gives is one of the perplexing statements he makes in this writing.

John affirms that if we see a brother or sister in sin, we can pray that God will bring them life. That God can work in a person’s life to bring life is part of the good news of Jesus. However, there is a sin identified as “mortal” that seems immune to this.

“Mortal sin” or literally “sin unto death” is not identified specifically by John, which would indicate that the exact identity of the sin is not important or the identity is reasonably clear from culture or context. Indeed some Christian traditions have gone to great lengths to compose lists of sins that are considered mortal and non-mortal (*venial*). There was also a Jewish tradition of dividing sins into two major categories: (1) deliberate, which were punishable by death, and (2) inadvertent, which could be atoned for. However, examination of the content and purpose of the text may be sufficient to identify the mortal sin.

First John seems to be written in response to the teachings of a group of people who probably left the fellowship of the early church, a group that John calls “antichrists.” The context of John’s statements would indicate that their “sin unto death” could be their failure to accept Jesus as the Son of God, their failure to put their faith in him and their inability to love one another. (This would not be three separate sins, but one sin resulting from failure to put their faith in Jesus.)

In this discussion on sin, John makes a statement that all “wrongdoing is sin” (v. 17), but then states that “those born of God do not sin” (v. 18). As a person who seeks to follow the life and teachings of Jesus, I know that I am not perfect. Therefore, I do not understand what it means that those born of God do not sin. We may be able to discern some meaning, however, if we look at the context that states the “evil one” has control over the world.

If we also assume that sin is that which alienates us from God, then, what John may be saying is that while those born of God may do wrong from time to time, because of the act of Jesus, we cannot be separated from God and would not return to the evil one in the world. It is an affirmation of the sustaining act of God’s love. It is also an indictment of those who had been a part of the early church and had left it for another way.

As John nears the end of his writing, he affirms again what “we know.” He affirms the truth of Jesus as God’s son and the truth of our ability to know him (not just intellectually). He also affirms the truth that by believing in Jesus as God’s son we can know God-breathed eternal life. An idol is something we worship instead of the “true” God. This seems to be why John completes this writing by admonishing the believers to avoid idols. It is an encouragement to stay grounded in the truth of Christ, the power of God and the love for one another.

Barker, Glenn W. Vol. 12. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.

McDowell, Edward A. Vol.12. *The Broadman Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970. BT

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## Ethicists mark 75 years of 'Confessing Church'

ATLANTA (ABP) — A document written three-quarters of a century ago to protest rising nationalism in Nazi Germany's Protestant churches provides instruction for American Christians navigating through today's culture wars, say a Baptist ethicist and Methodist filmmaker.

Sunday, May 31, marked the 75th anniversary of publication of a statement that came to be known as the Barmen Declaration. Drafted by Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth, the six-point declaration challenged the popular "German Christian" movement, which at the time was lending theological support to Hitler's National Socialist (Nazi) party.

Many modern Christians assume that theologians who opposed Hitler, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemoller, were the norm in Germany's Protestant church. But in reality a majority of Germany's Christian leaders viewed Hitler as a gift from God and the best hope for restoring national pride dashed in the aftermath of World War I.

"The story that has been prevalent since World War II is the common idea that the church was persecuted, that everybody could see clearly what was going on, but they had to no real power to do anything," said Steven Martin, a Methodist minister turned documentary filmmaker. "There could be nothing further from the truth."

Meeting May 29-31, 1934, in Barmen-Wuppertal in northern Germany, 139 clergymen from Lutheran, Reformed and United churches publicly disagreed with the leadership of the German church and its willingness to follow the orders of the Third Reich. It marked the beginning of what became known as the "Confessing Church," which declared the Bible, not the state, would be the church's authority.

The Barmen Declaration laid the theological groundwork for Christian activism on later issues like apartheid, economics and the environment.

"The Barmen Declaration stands the test of time as a ringing affirmation of Christian integrity in a time and place in which that integrity was under unprecedented challenge," said David Gushee, professor of Christian ethics at Mercer University. **BT**

### Minister of Students

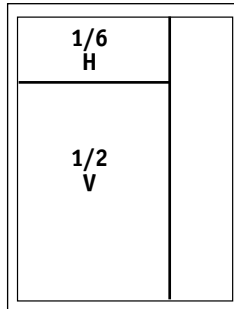
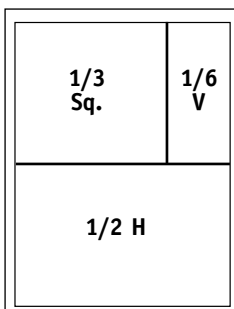
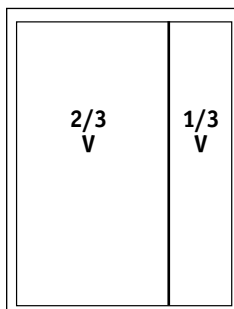
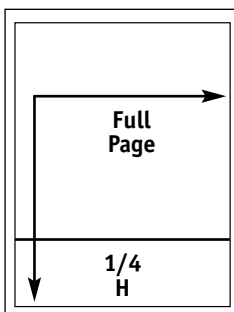
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# readers' responses

## The issue is control

EDITOR: I am a subscriber who appreciates the broad spectrum of coverage in the journal. It is one of the few journals that I read in its entirety.

I want to respond to a paragraph in Aaron Douglas Weaver's article on James Dunn (April 2009, page 13). James Dunn is the most respected and knowledgeable church-state scholar among Baptists.

Mr. Weaver's article does him justice except for one statement that is misleading and confusing to an already confused public regarding church-state relations. He writes:

"Dunn does not equate 'the separation of church and state' with separation of religion from politics ... in a pluralistic democracy, he fully understands that religion and politics will mix, must mix and should mix. He often declared that 'mixing politics and religion is inevitable but merging church and state is inexcusable.'"

To the average reader, not versed in the nuances of church-state rhetoric, that may sound like double-talk. There is a subtle difference, but most strict separationists believe "religion and politics" should never mix.

The issue is one of control. Government has its sphere of authority regarding health and safety, and the churches have authority in the area of faith and doctrine.

When Thomas Jefferson was President of the United States, he invited John Leland, a Baptist preacher, to conduct worship services in Congress. There are countless ways that church and government mix today, i.e., church property tax exemption, government-paid chaplains in the military and in Congress, etc. But in this mixing, there is respect for the boundaries of their respective authority.

*C. Truett Baker, Branson, Mo.*

*(Truett Baker is president emeritus of Arizona Baptist Children's Services)*

## God's model is different

EDITOR: Count me among the brand of readership that supports guest commentary that dares to assault our most dear and sacred assumptions. Jonathan Lindsey's article "On marriage, time to separate civil

from ecclesiastical" (*Baptists Today*, May 2009, page 25) warrants respectful consideration.

Most of his argument, however, seems to hinge on the recognition of clergy by the clerk of court and the necessity of the public record. With respect to recognition, I am thankful for an unbiased process for clergy of whatever stripe, a right for which Baptists were in the center of the fight.

With respect to the necessity of record keeping, let's remember Lindsey's own point about the original established church in the colonies. It was this church and its antecedents in England and on the Continent, who, for the longest time, retained the birth, marriage and death records, often incompletely, without standardization and certainly with prejudice toward those not of its own persuasion. We keep our own records at our own church, but that the state requires these records for the sake of inclusion, law enforcement, public health, statistics and so on, is not a problem but a public service.

Excepting Lindsey's rather late and passing reference to blessing as a responsible role of the church, I am suspicious that Lindsey has not considered the difference between a civil and a religious ceremony. A civil ceremony is nothing but a contract between two persons. A religious ceremony is a worship service.

We celebrate at a wedding an awareness of the work of God in a woman and a man: having created them, endowing them with personality and ability, and bringing them together. God loves them and is present in time and space, acting in love.

God's model for marriage is different from a contract. It is the same as that with God's people: covenant love, "for better, for worse," for instance, a requirement far beyond contract law. The agreement is not just between the couple, but also with God.

That means God is not only the witness, but also the source of strength, wisdom and joy that every couple needs. I would not lose weddings as worship before the one who has loved us most actively and ardently.

Of course, Lindsay remembers that in colonial days, clergy of the established

church functioned as civil officials. This assertion cannot be sustained today.

Thankfully, the nation and its states are governed by laws for the sake of *all* the people.

Alternatively, this task does not eclipse the role or responsibility of the church commissioned by God which "must obey God rather than men," as Peter reminded the powers of his generation. Therefore, as I perform ceremonies, I may indeed have a role within and in support of publicly held laws, but the intent of the law is the free exercise of religion without prejudice, certainly not "the final vestiges of theocracy in the United States."

On the other hand, I think that Lindsey has actually, if accidentally, compelled us (in paragraph seven) to look at the role of the church with respect to divorce. Not wishing to admit either the fallibility of the church in confirming marriage and being unwilling to enter into the complexity of sorting out the lesser sides of ourselves, the church deftly stepped aside of divorce and the state stepped into the void.

Can the church do better than hand over to the state the initial healing touch through divorce? It is this question that appears the more relevant in our time: What might be the Christian church's potential *official* role in divorce?

*James B. Johnson II, Williamsburg, Va.*

*(Jim Johnson is pastor of Williamsburg Baptist Church.)*

## Eyes opened by personal experience

EDITOR: It was 20 years ago when our dear long-time friend, Jack Smith, called and said he wanted to talk with us on Friday night. After dinner, he told us he had something very important to discuss with us.

We were to be the fourth and fifth of his large circle of friends to hear his news. He asked us to keep this information confidential for now.

Jack had donated blood at Red Cross, as was his practice every 58 days. He received a letter informing him that they could not use his blood this time because he had tested positive for the HIV virus.



# in the know

## *Keeping up with people, places, and events*

Twenty years ago that was a sentence of death. My wife, Carole, and I instinctively reached out our hands to Jack as we grasped each other's hands for comfort. There was a long silence as we sat in our circle of grief crying.

Jack told us he was gay. He had known since he was very young. For many years he had to keep secret who he was born to be.

Jack was a well-known scientist with many published articles and was often sought after as a speaker. He was our close friend. We were in a dinner club for many years, eating a meal together once a month.

We went to church together. Jack and Carole sang in the choir. Jack was on the committee that helped cook and serve Wednesday night supper for years. He often led our Sunday school discussions.

What did we learn from our experience with Jack? We learned that he was the same person we had known and loved for years.

We just knew something more about him, something very personal and very intimate. Jack was still Jack.

Jack opened my eyes and my heart to gay men and lesbians. Jack was the first openly homosexual person that I knew well. His sexual orientation and practices did not hinder our friendship. We loved Jack as we had for years.

What is your experience? When was the last time you visited with or shared a meal with a lesbian or a gay man who is in a loving, committed relationship? Do you know homosexual persons as friends?

It does not seem right or fair to exclude an entire group of Christians on the basis of what you have only heard. How do you think Jesus wants us to respond to people who in various ways are different from us?

He will help us as we reach out in love to those whom we do not know. We can handle new experiences and new relationships with his help.

*William C. Jackson, Homer, Ga.*

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

**Roberto Dieppa-Báez** is the new executive minister of the American Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico.

Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, has called **Brent Beasley** as pastor. Beasley is currently pastor of Second Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.

**Brian A. Burnette** is minister of childhood education at Grandin Court Baptist Church in Roanoke, Va.

Baptist Women in Ministry announces the following 2009 Addie Davis Award recipients: **Marquette Bugg**, a recent graduate of Truett Seminary, received the award for excellence in preaching. Bugg is moving to Ghana, West Africa, to help begin a basketball and soccer ministry. **Tammy Jackson Gill**, a student at Central Seminary and pastor to children and families at Holmeswood Baptist Church in Kansas City, Mo., received the award for outstanding leadership in pastoral ministry.

**Pamela R. Durso** is the new full-time executive director of Baptist Women in Ministry as of July 1. She comes from the Baptist History and Heritage Society where she was associate executive director. Both organizations are based in Atlanta.

**Scott Ford**, associate coordinator of missions for Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia for the past two years, will become business coordinator for Passport, Inc., in August.

**Ron Hinson** is pastor at Whiteville (N.C.) Baptist Church. Previously he was pastor of College Avenue Baptist Church in Lenoir, N.C.

**Charles Horton** is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Cocoa, Fla. Horton's previous pastorates include First Baptist Church of DeLand, Fla., and College Park Baptist Church in Orlando.

**Archie King** died May 12 in Murfreesboro, Tenn., at age 86. He was the first disaster relief director for the Tennessee Baptist Convention and a key leader in starting the highly successful disaster relief work of Southern Baptists.

**Nell Magee** of Nashville, Tenn., died May 29. Her life was devoted to ministry with college students, especially internationals. After ministry in Mississippi, Texas and Illinois, she was a consultant with the former National Student Ministries of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay). In retirement she directed Southern Baptist student ministry in New England as a volunteer.

**Kathy Traficanti** is minister of adult education at Second Baptist Church of Richmond, Va.

**Candy Wilson** is associate pastor-minister of music at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C. Previously she served Jeffersontown (Ky.) Baptist Church as minister of music.

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# guest commentary

## A time for generosity

*By Ruben Swint*

**G**enerosity is emerging in our society as a practice whose time has come. Bono of the rock band U2 is the spokesperson for “ONE, The Campaign to Make Poverty History.”

Consider his words: “God, my friends, is with the poor. And God is with us, if we are with them.”

The United Nations Millennium Campaign seeks to end the world’s extreme poverty by 2015 through the attainment of eight development goals. Religious bodies worldwide — including Baptists — are adopting the goals as expressions of their Christian witness and service.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation focuses on being generous in global development, global health and U.S. education. The foundation’s value was doubled by a \$31 billion gift from Warren Buffet.

Periodic financial publications are including philanthropy as a regular topic: *Forbes*, *Business Week*, *Financial Times* and *Kiplinger’s*. Websites are coming on line that address giving: [www.generousgiving.com](http://www.generousgiving.com), [www.newtithing.com](http://www.newtithing.com) and [www.globalrich-list.com](http://www.globalrich-list.com).

Counter to a United States culture that stresses materialism, accumulation and consumption, all major religions promote the

concept that we live not only for ourselves, but also for others. Generous behavior is an essential component of one’s faith.

Why generosity?

Today, North American churches exist in a society of abundance. However, the fear of scarcity dominates most stewardship talk and action.

What would it mean for your congregation if generosity became a guiding value? Isn’t it time for a Generosity Department in your church?

Why not stewardship? Steward and stewardship have been important words and concepts for congregations in the 20th century.

These biblical words, which prior to the 20th century were used to talk about responsible Christian living, became the reason for supporting unified church budgets and expansive worldwide mission endeavors.

After a century of good use, stewardship has become more connected to pledging a church’s budget. During the annual hunt for a green October, congregations study stewardship texts, hear stewardship sermons and

testimonies, and usually produce the same budget support results.

Martin Marty once said: “Generosity, unlike stewardship, has no limits. It’s not that you’ve got to be generous, but you get to be. It’s not haranguing or threatening. It’s liberation!”

Mature congregational members have lived in faithful stewardship and consider tithing to be the norm of Christian giving. Younger congregational members do not warm to the practice of stewardship and tithing as they do to living a generous life.


The words steward and stewardship describe a role, a position and a responsibility for Christians. Generosity describes a trait, a behavior, a characteristic.

Younger and newer church members respond more readily to generosity as a giving principle and while they do, older members remain faithful to stewardship and tithing.

Generosity can lead younger members forward into faithful stewardship and tithing. Generosity is rising. Generosity’s time has come. **BT**

*—Ruben Swint is an Atlanta-based senior strategist with Generis Partners, LLC and a former president of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Foundation.*





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# Hockey as religion? Many Canadians think so

TORONTO (RNS) — May the puck be with you. And also with you.

Hockey as religion? Many Canadians wouldn't argue that their hard-core fandom borders on religious fervor. Even when they don't bring home the holy grail of the Stanley Cup, storied teams like the Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens still attract the faithful.

Likening Canada's national winter sport to a kind of religious faith isn't as obscure as it might sound, even in academia. Thirty years ago, Tom Faulkner, a professor of church and society at the University of Winnipeg, argued in a widely published essay that Canadians are drawn to hockey because it offers many of the aspects that make religion attractive: a sense of community, belonging and common purpose.

Last January, the University of Montreal inaugurated a 16-week course specifically devoted to examining the link between hockey and religion. Like religion, hockey binds people together and can "affirm that we are Canadian and we can be proud to be Canadian," said Olivier Bauer, a theology professor who taught the course.



The latest entry in the field finds that a specific ceremony in hockey and other sports — retiring a player's number and raising it to a stadium's rafters — resembles a religious ritual.

For Rose Tekel, the similarities were just too stark to ignore. The religious studies professor at Nova Scotia's St. Francis Xavier University says hockey rituals, such as the retirement of a player's jersey, are rooted in religious traditions and practices.

Tekel, with her husband, Matthew Robillard, recently presented a paper on the subject at the annual Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences held in

Ottawa.

The duo examined one specific ritual in Canadian hockey: The retirement of the number (29) and the raising of the jersey of Ken Dryden, a legendary goalkeeper for the Montreal Canadiens from 1971 to 1978 and winner of six Stanley Cups.

Watching the retirement of Dryden's jersey in 2007, Tekel remarked, "We thought this looks like a religious experience, (and) the Bell Centre (in Montreal) has become a kind of cathedral."

The argument the academics wanted to make is that hockey "has its roots in webs of meanings grounded in various religious traditions and practices. Therefore, hockey can be seen as a popular Canadian religion, embodying the post-modern shift to globalization and the ensuing dialogue among religions."

The game can be seen "as part of the wide terrain of religious experiences," Tekel told the *Toronto Star*. "Many people are moving away from institutionalized religion and into 'marginalized religion.' What they're saying is that they want in some way to be connected with something beyond themselves, but they don't want ... organized religion." **BT**

## Wikipedia bans Scientology from editing entries

(RNS) —Wikipedia, the user-edited Internet encyclopedia, has banned the Church of Scientology from editing entries about the controversial religion.

Internet addresses known to be "owned or operated by the Church of Scientology and its associates, broadly interpreted, are to be blocked," according to the decision.

While the ban applies to all Wikipedia entries, exceptions could be made for non-Scientology related topics, according to Wikipedia.

Made by Wikipedia's arbitration committee, the decision comes amid an ongoing battle between admirers and critics of Scientology over more than 400 articles on the topic. It was the fourth time in four years the Wikipedia committee was asked to arbitrate a Scientology-related dispute.

While Wikipedia aims to be a site for

"neutral" information, Scientology entries have been slanted to fit particular views and partisans on both sides have "resorted to battlefield editing tactics," according to the arbitrators.

"Many Scientology articles fail to reflect a neutral point of view and instead are either disparaging or complimentary," the committee said. A handful of Scientology critics were also banned from editing Wikipedia.

Wikipedia traced some of the edits to "editors openly editing from Church of Scientology equipment and apparently coordinating their activities," the arbitrators said. The Web-based encyclopedia has policed similar efforts by corporations, government offices and colleges.

Karin Pouw, a spokeswoman for the Church of Scientology International,

downplayed the decision, calling it "a routine internal action by Wikipedia to clean up its editing process."

"More importantly is the fact that Wikipedia finally banned those who were engaged in unobjective and biased editing for the purposes of antagonism as opposed to providing accurate information," she said.

Jay Walsh, a spokesman for the Wikimedia Foundation, said it is the first time a church has been banned from editing the site. The 10 voting members of the all-volunteer arbitration committee reached their decision after a six-month "intensive process," he said.

"The work the arbitration committee does is not easy or simple," Walsh said. "This has been an issue that's been simmering for many years and we wanted to deal with it in a meaningful way." **BT**

# the lighter side

## Shaved by grace

By Brett Younger

Christians cannot avoid difficult ethical issues such as materialism, militarism and mustaches. That last one has been on my mind and face lately.

I stopped shaving and a week later when Carol noticed she surprised me, “It looks good.”

Another visually impaired friend commented, “It gives you an edge.”

I can use an edge, so I put my razor away.

I wanted my beard to be reminiscent of some famous historical figure — Abraham Lincoln, Sigmund Freud or Albus Dumbledore. Unfortunately, my beard makes me look like Al Gore, Shaggy of Scooby-Doo fame or, when my fuzz is at its absolute best, Yosemite Sam.

I know it took time for Ernest Hemingway, Vincent Van Gogh and Walker Texas Ranger to grow the kind of respectable beard to which I aspire. Yet I also know that Fidel Castro, Jerry Garcia and Colonel Sanders had beards for years and I don't want to look like them.

What I quickly discovered was that for something barely visible, my whiskers itch a lot. It feels like a tiny medieval hair shirt on my face, even though it only looks like I woke up late.

I had almost decided to shave when I began to think about the religious implications. Jesus is always pictured with a beard. “What would Jesus do?” is not a question I wanted to ask.

The biblical witness is predominantly anti-shaving. The most famous trim in scripture, Samson's, was not pro-Barbasol (Judges 16).

The Israelites were told not to shave before a funeral: “You must not lacerate yourselves or shave your forelocks for the dead” (Deut. 14:1).

When Ezra got upset he wrote, “When I heard this, I tore my garment and my mantle, and pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat appalled” (Ezra 9:3). I have never been distressed enough to pull out my own beard, but I imagine it would feel appalling.

The Ammonite King Hanun sent Israelite envoys home after he “shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle at their hips.”

King David was embarrassed for the men and told them, “Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown” (2 Sam. 10:4-5). Presumably they also found garments that covered their hips.

One prophet wrote that God's heart moans, “For every head is shaved and every beard cut off” (Jer. 38:7). Would God moan if I shaved?

Shaving is positive on a few occasions. For instance, “The Nazirites shall shave the consecrated head at the entrance of the tent

of meeting, and shall take the hair from the consecrated head and put it on the fire under the sacrifice” (Num. 6:18). Churches that have run out of ways to welcome visitors may want to consider a shave and a haircut followed by a barbecue.

Surely some denomination has split over this — beard-wearers versus clean-shavers. Old German Baptist Brethren do not wear mustaches because they believe it would make them vain, but many grow chest-length beards (which are understandably not a source of pride).

I thought about partial options. I could go with a mustache without a beard (Hitler, Einstein, Ned Flanders from *The Simpsons*), a goatee (Shakespeare, Wolfman Jack, Satan) or a soulpatch (Howie Mandel), but Ned is the only one I look much like. And it was still scratchy.

I know my mother would not like my new fur, but I kept thinking about great beards — Robert E. Lee, Che Guevara, Tim McGraw, Jack Sparrow, Santa, Uncle Sam, Poseidon and Count von Count (from *Sesame Street*).

Some might think I had enough justification for shearing my facial hair, but I kept looking until I found a doctrinal trump card. I was delighted to read the story in which Jacob says to his mother Rebekah, “Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a man of smooth skin” (Gen. 27:11). This text clearly teaches that God cares for both the hairy and the smooth. It was time to admit I am no Esau.

I spent two weeks growing my two-day beard. Then I shaved with a clear conscience. **BT**

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



Illustration by Scott Brooks

## 'Help my unbelief'

By Tony W. Cartledge  
posted May 18, 2009  
[www.tonycartledge.com](http://www.tonycartledge.com)

If you're just not into church, what do you do on Sunday morning?

Sleeping in is very popular, and so are early morning shopping trips. If you want to see a really big crowd at 11:00 on a Sunday morning, go to a Target or Wal-Mart store.

A small but apparently growing number of folks are choosing a different option: they're gathering for mutual support with others of like non-faith.

An intriguing article by Yonat Shimron documents one of the newest groups, which meets in North Carolina's Triangle (Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill) area. The group is called "Parenting Beyond Belief," a moniker based on a book of the same name, by Atlanta-based Dale MacGowan — who says he knows of at least 32 similar chapters around the nation.

The point of the gatherings, it

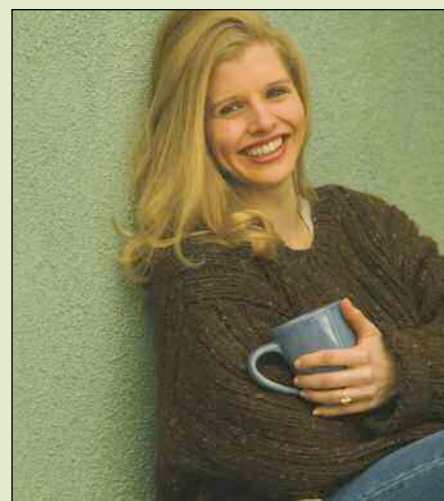
appears, is to provide a forum for parents who are self-professed atheists, free-thinkers, humanists or spiritual-but-not-religious folk.

They share ideas about how best to answer their children's questions about God or other religious beliefs in a way that respects other beliefs without necessarily reinforcing them. They want the children to think for themselves.

The meetings go beyond batting around childhood questions, though. It's not easy being an atheist when you live in the Bible belt.

Members (there were 71 on the e-mail list at last count) like being part of a group where they feel accepted, where they can talk freely about what they do or don't believe, and where religion is not a prerequisite for respect.

In reading the article, it seems evident that members of Parenting Beyond Belief gather for many of the same reasons that bring other people to church: fellowship, friendship and social accept-



ance are powerful motivators.

For many regular church-goers, I'm convinced, the worship of God is really secondary to the social side of church life.

I can't help but recall the man who pleaded with Jesus, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). I've often prayed the same prayer in confessing a desire for stronger belief.

But this new Sunday-morning movement gives "Help my unbelief" a whole new meaning. **BT**

## Gotta have a friend in Jesus

By John Pierce  
posted June 2, 2009  
[www.bteditor.blogspot.com](http://www.bteditor.blogspot.com)

It took only two or three notes of Norman Greenbaum's 1969 hit "Spirit in the Sky" to appear on the car radio before my teenage daughter had reached the volume dial and turned it up high.

A special satisfaction comes to me when she enjoys the same music I embraced when it originally hit the charts. My "current" music is her golden oldies.

"Spirit in the Sky" has such a great sound that *Rolling Stone* magazine named it one of the 500 greatest songs of all time. It is one of those tunes that keeps showing up everywhere from baseball games to the movie screen.

For example, in Anaheim, Calif., the Angels' play it while introducing their lineup. And my daughters associate the song with the wonderful Denzel Washington movie, *Remember the Titans* — filmed on the beautiful Berry College

campus, I might add.

As a young teen when the song first hit the radio, I was pleased that the popular rock song affirmed my faith: "Gotta Have a Friend in Jesus." (We ignored the doctrinal weakness of another line claiming: "Never been a sinner; I never sinned.")

A Wikipedia article says that Greenbaum, a Jew, wrote the hit song in about 15 minutes after hearing country crooner Porter Wagoner do a gospel number on TV — and wondering if he could come up with one. So it's not like he read a few volumes of Barth, Tillich or Bultmann first.

However, I have learned not to expect every aspect of the culture to affirm my narrow perspectives on life and God.

There are times for theological debate. And there are times to just rock out a little while driving down the road — especially if the joy of a 40-year-old song is being shared with someone you love. **BT**

Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God..."



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## guest commentary

# When water flows freely

*By Bill Ross*

**G**rowing up in the mountains of North Carolina, there were two water fountains in downtown Waynesville that continuously flowed. My younger brother thought that was the greatest thing in the world: pure, clean, free water — available at all times.

For 884 million people in the world, their water is unfit to drink. Lack of clean water is the greatest cause of disease, as well as the major cause of death in the world today.

The answer for most of us is bottled water. When we travel to a developing country our mantra is simply, “Don’t drink the water.”

We buy bottled water and wonder why everyone does not do the same. The idea of not having pure, clean water available at all times is a foreign concept.

“Going to the Hard Places” with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) has opened my eyes to the dilemma of impure water, and how CBF field personnel embody the solution.

Three years ago, John and Casey were students at Mercer University enjoying the luxury of drinking pure water. Today they are working in Southeast Asia with village leaders to provide clean water for people living beside a river where water is available but far from pure.

They work alongside people who marvel at the clean filtered water, how the filters work, the notion that someone cares enough to make a difference, as well as the fact that Americans are willing to provide physical labor to build the filtration systems.

John and Casey, along with Ron and Melin, who have been on the field for many years, are working to make the villages healthier today and in the years ahead. Their willingness to provide clean water affords them the opportunity to share the good news of a God who loves the world.

“Going to the Hard Places” allowed me to meet CBF field personnel such as Fran and Lonnie and Sam and Melody, who are work-



ing to build wells in Zambia, Kenya and other parts of Africa. Each of these partners with people in villages who have accepted the reality that “if” water is available, it is more than likely not fit to drink.

But through partnerships and working alongside of village leaders, these field personnel now offer hope in a God who brings living water.

This past Christmas, First Baptist Church of Marietta, Ga., gave visitors and members alike the opportunity to make financial contributions with the initial goal of building six wells in Africa. The response was overwhelming, and we were able to fund 10 wells.

It is interesting to note that, overall, our congregation had the largest Christmas missions offering in recent history. People will respond to needs and embodied solutions.

I am consistently haunted by the phrase the field personnel use when they report of new wells being built: “Water is Life!”

Some sources say that the water problems around the world could be alleviated with a gift of 10 billion dollars. For most of us, that is an astronomical figure. When we break it down, however, the solution is within our reach. Americans spend about 430 billion dollars a year at Christmas.

As difficult as that is to swallow, the reality is each of us can actually do something about the water issues in the world. Our giving to CBF causes and field personnel enables our collective dollars to become stronger in presenting the gospel to the world.

While our personnel are on the field establishing relationships, working with the indigenous people and leaders, we are able to be a witness quenching the thirst for God around the world. Our hope as a church is to continue to partner with CBF personnel as they seek to provide clean water to people in Southeast Asia and Africa.

One day my younger brother and I may travel to Zambia, Kenya, India or Southeast Asia. When that day comes, I pray that we have the opportunity to visit a village where water continuously flows pure, clean and fresh. And I am positive he could once again exclaim, “That is the greatest thing in the world!”

Every person needs and deserves pure water. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship enables this need to become a reality. **BT**

—Bill Ross is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Marietta, Ga. Photo provided by Lonnie and Fran Turner, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel serving in Zambia.

# A bigger connection to Baptist life

For the past three years, Kelly Belcher has been a member of the Board of Directors of *Baptists Today* and is currently serving as vice chair. She has appreciated the opportunities her experience on the board has given her to deepen and expand her knowledge of Baptist life.

"I've become exposed to and aware of American Baptists, General Baptists, National Baptists — even Baptist Yankees," said Belcher who lives in Spartanburg, S.C. "Without *Baptists Today*, how would I have known they were there?"

Having the opportunity to learn more about all Baptists around the world is one of the reasons she has always valued *Baptists Today*, having been a reader for more than two decades.

"In denominational life it's mostly the clergy and church leaders who go to the meetings, serve on boards, and have an idea of the big picture of what's going on," said Belcher. "Many laypeople aren't as connected personally to things outside their own churches and are dependent on those leaders to keep them aware of their vital connection to the larger picture."

"*Baptists Today* is an excellent way to get church laypeople connected to the big picture. You don't have to wait for your pastor to tell you everything."

Being Baptist has always been an integral part of her life. She grew up in

Winston-Salem, N.C., attending Knollwood Baptist Church with Dr. Jack Noffsinger as her pastor.

While completing her studies at Meredith College, she felt the "call toward ministry" and earned her M.Div. degree at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest. She served in churches in Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C., and then, more recently, at Fernwood Baptist Church in Spartanburg, S.C.



Kelly Belcher

She has provided leadership at many levels, including the Coordinating Council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. While living in North Carolina, she was a member of the state CBF council and moderator of N.C. Baptist Women in Ministry.

In 2006, she served as moderator of the South Carolina Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Her extensive involvement in Baptist life has helped this wife, mother and minister to recognize the lasting influence of *Baptists Today*.

"Newspapers everywhere are struggling," she said. "The same economic concerns that are causing newspapers to struggle also cause *Baptists Today* to need more solid funding. In

our economy right now, I can't think of a better way for a Baptist dollar to maintain and grow its value than to be invested in the ongoing work of this publication.

"*Baptists Today* printed this month what Baptists are doing for the sake of God's kingdom on earth. Next month, next year, next decade, what *Baptists Today* prints will become our history. It is being written now for generations of future Baptists. That is a great legacy to leave."

Belcher says the ability of *Baptists Today* to be "an autonomous eye in the sky over Baptists" is what separates it from state Baptist newspapers, which "must also serve as public relations outlets."

"It's like the nightly PBS hour-long in-depth coverage and analysis, as opposed to local TV news," she explained. "We can trust its accuracy; nobody tells *Baptists Today* what to print."

"This press freedom ought to be considered as valuable to and characteristic of Baptists as soul competency or separation of church and state. Press freedom informs and enables both."

Belcher appreciates the opportunity her role on the *Baptists Today* Board of Directors has given her to help ensure the long-term vitality of the publication. She and her fellow board members approved the three-year capital campaign titled "The Voice to Sustain Baptists Tomorrow" to further solidify its base of support.

"What would tickle me would be for the folks who have brought us through the last few decades of Baptist life to leave their legacy in print for future Baptists by ensuring that *Baptists Today* is endowed," said Belcher. "We have no alumni to leave legacy gifts except alumni who are self-chosen veteran readers and veteran Baptists."

"I want my great-grandchildren to be able to read *Baptists Today* for their current news and for the historical perspective it will give them, long into the future. Isn't that an exciting idea?" **BT**

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

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# Wayne Oates' legacy of caring continues

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The late pastoral care giant Wayne Oates was known for identifying and tackling those rather sticky issues of health and human behavior that many church leaders chose to ignore. He had a passion for helping ministers, health care professionals and others to broaden their perspectives and to address the holistic needs of those they encountered.

**“H**e knew the cutting edge issues ...,” said Vickie Hollon, executive director of the Wayne E. Oates Institute, “and he would write about them.”

Yes, there are 57 books worth of insights that pulled together biblical theology and modern methods of psychology — including his autobiography, *The Struggle to be Free: My Story and Your Story*, revised and republished by the Institute last year.

Oates, who died in 1999 at the age of 82, taught at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the University of Louisville School of Medicine where he carved out an influential career in the field of psychology of religion.

A legion of pastoral counselors, chaplains, church ministers and others have expressed their indebtedness to Oates for providing them with the tools for effective ministry to the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of those under their care.

So in 1993, the Oates Institute was created to honor the beloved professor and to continue his unique and valued work of caring for the whole person.

“My heart is in helping the church in ministry and caring for each other,” said Hollon, who recently moved from Louisville to San Antonio, Texas, where her husband Leslie is pastor of Trinity Baptist Church. The Oates Institute, she said, uses a variety of educational methods to meet that goal.

The Institute is described as “a learning community” that provides practical resources to professional and lay caregivers. Those resources include online courses, published books and articles, forums and traditional in-person conferences.



The Wayne E. Oates Institute is a 501(c)3 organization founded in 1993 under the direction of James Hyde. Offices have been housed at Deer Park Baptist Church and then Highland Baptist Church — both in Louisville, Ky. A major event, the Annual Forum and Oates Award Dinner, is set for October 8 in Louisville. For information on the Institute's offerings — including a new Congregational Care Specialist certificate program for deacons, Sunday school teachers and other church leaders — visit [www.oates.org](http://www.oates.org).

**Executive director Vickie Hollon leads the Wayne E. Oates Institute in providing resources to professionals and laity who are carrying out ministries that meet the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of others.**

“We Baptists value continuing education about as little as anybody,” said Hollon, noting that most professions have strict requirements for sharpening and updating skills.

The Institute's web site ([www.oates.org](http://www.oates.org)) provides information on individual and group memberships and is the gateway to the many resources for caregivers including journal articles, seminars and workshops, global networking and the Online Learning Center.

While equipping professionals in the care-giving field, Hollon said the Institute also provides resources for those who provide care out of personal relationships: “It may be the lay caregiver for a mother with Alzheimer's.”

In 2005 Southern Seminary, now under fundamentalist control, cut out the Oates-shaped approach to teaching pastoral care — that integrated Christian theology and behavioral science — and replaced it with a

“biblical counseling” model.

Many of those who had been trained by Oates expressed deep disappointment but not great surprise.

“It felt incredulous ... that they would disown that heritage,” said Hollon, who described the seminary's rationale as a false dichotomy implying that the collaboration of biblical theology and psychological methodologies was somehow “unbiblical.”

Hollon said rather than dwell on disappointment over the seminary's direction, the Oates Institute is moving ahead with “the flexibility to keep addressing cutting edge issues” in the same way her mentor did for decades.

“We're going to do what we can to fill that vacuum,” said Hollon, who has guided the Institute since 1996 with the help of colleagues and a board of directors. **BT**



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# The Gospel according to Twitter

ORLANDO, Fla. — Do you tweet during church? Isn't it rude?

David Loveless doesn't think so. Loveless is lead pastor of Discovery Church, a nondenominational congregation that draws some 4,000 on Sundays to three locations in Orlando.

The congregation has always thrived on the cutting edge, becoming among the first to embrace contemporary music and remove its steeple from its building.

Now the congregation is tweeting — using 21st-century technology to discuss the gospel in 140-character cell-phone text updates sent via Twitter. The technology emerged naturally here, as something parishioners brought with them to Sundays from the rest of their week.

Loveless recognized it as a new way to communicate, and he began posing questions during his sermons and asking parishioners to “tweet” back by texting their responses. Those responses were then woven into his sermons, creating an instantaneous dialogue between pulpit and pew.

“In John 1, when Jesus was referred to as ‘the Word that became flesh,’ God knew exactly what was the most relevant form of communication for the first century,” Loveless said. “It made people feel like, ‘My gosh, he talks my language.’ That would be people’s responses these days, in going, ‘My gosh, my pastor tweets.’”

It is the newest technology arriving in contemporary church services. In fact, it's so new, and growing so fast, that there's no data to say just how many churches have embraced it.

No longer is the cell phone such a pariah — only ringing cell phones are. Instead, church leaders are inviting worshippers to tweet and text their way through services as a way to share their prayers and reflections with neighbors in the pews, or their family, friends and “followers” on Twitter.

“It's a hot-bed issue right now, and people are on two sides of the fence about it,” said Matt Carlisle, a Nashville, Tenn.-based technology and new media consultant for faith-based groups and nonprofits.

“As Christians, we are to witness, we are to make disciples for Jesus Christ. And if we can embrace new technology to do that, I don't see any reason why we shouldn't embrace Twitter, why we shouldn't embrace Facebook.”

Many church leaders embraced new media such as Twitter and Facebook long ago

as a way to create an online gathering place and promote upcoming events. Now some are taking it further, encouraging tweeting and texting during services as a way to create dialogue and strengthen a sense of community.

Michael Campbell, the 30-year-old pastor of the 230-member Montrose Seventh-day Adventist Church in Montrose, Colo., poses questions during his sermons and asks worshippers to text their responses, which are displayed on a screen. Like Loveless, Campbell then discusses the responses.

In other congregations, Twitter has emerged quietly and organically, with parishioners tweeting their reflections during services in the same way they tweet their thoughts or activities throughout the week. The dialogue also allows real-time discussion and gives those who couldn't make it a chance to monitor services from afar.

“I'm a younger pastor,” Campbell said. “You're just building that sense of community, and people are interested in that because now they are part of the sermon.”

But isn't it distracting? Doesn't it detract from the contemplative and meditative nature of spirituality? Carlisle points out that parishioners long have been taking notes during services, and that never has been distracting to others.

“I don't think the etiquette has been established yet,” he said. “Literally, within a year's time, this thing has been happening at a handful of congregations.”

At Mars Hill Church in Seattle, leaders never decided to add Twitter to services. It just happened, said Ian Sanderson, a church spokesman.

The nondenominational congregation draws some 8,000 worshippers at nine locations, including a new one in Albuquerque, N.M. Seattle is a tech-savvy place, and the average member at Mars Hill is in his or her 20s.

Tweeting and texting encourages dialogue across the congregation's multiple locations, and it helps church staff keep up with what parishioners are thinking and feeling, Sanderson said.

“I would say probably 80 or 90 percent of the church staff is on Twitter,” he said. “If the old rules aren't helping anyone in their walk and their relationship with Jesus, if you can pull out your iPhone and Twitter something about the sermon and that helps your whole group of friends, we're not going to frown on that at all.” **BT**

# the media shelf

Review by Tony W. Cartledge

## Working Bible magic with Accordance

**S**erious Bible study requires serious work. Yet consulting multiple translations and essential reference tools can be time-consuming and downright tedious.

The informed use of quality Bible software, however, can leave students gasping as if their keyboards had been granted magical powers.

Among the several powerful programs available, none is more impressive than Accordance Bible Software (accordance bible.com). Accordance was designed for Macintosh computers, and the new Version 8 is completely native to the Mac's OS X operating system.

But PC users can also use it (minus a few bells and whistles) by installing a Mac emulator available at no cost.

What's so special about Accordance? First, the program's designers understand that everything should revolve around helping users to read, search, translate and understand the Bible — preferably through an elegant and intuitive layout. Accordance rates an "A" on every count.

The program opens to a clean workspace in which the user can easily open parallel panes containing as many Bible translations as the screen can hold (vertically or horizontally), and display study notes keyed to specific translations. A single search box atop the interface can call up the entire Bible, find individual verses or portions of text, or search for individual words (or combinations of words) in all available languages.

The magic starts when one floats the cursor over the text. Place it over any term in a Hebrew or Greek text and "Presto!" — an information box appears that displays the root, a transliteration, a complete parsing of the form used and the most common translations.

Instead of spending hours with a lexicon trying to puzzle out the inflected form of a weak or hollow verb, users can find it faster than Houdini could snap on his handcuffs. Once the term is identified, a quick click on the appropriate icon of a handy resource palette can open any one of several lexicons or



dictionaries — conveniently turned to the proper page.

Other available resources include 2-D or 3-D maps (complete with full GPS information), a PhotoGuide that includes descriptions and photos of biblical sites, and a timeline that offers both "conservative" and "critical" chronologies.

Even students with no background in biblical languages can dig deeply. English texts such as the King James Version and the New American Standard 1995 edition are tagged with the familiar Strong's numbering system. This allows the user to glide the cursor over any word, and the corresponding Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek term will appear in a box below. Triple clicking on the word will call up a concordance-type list of differing ways the word is translated.

Accordance's complex but quick search functions have a short learning curve, and the capabilities far exceed the needs of all but the most demanding student. One can do a simple search for the word "forgive," for example — but also find every verse in which "forgive" appears within five words of "sin." One can search for a Greek or Hebrew root, but also for any inflected form, gender or number of the root.

With its newest version, Accordance adds functions that are as useful as they are impressive. A "fuzzy" command allows one to search for a phrase, even if it's not exact.

For example, I may remember a phrase about the righteous being like a tree planted near water, but not recall the specific wording.

I can type "trees planted by water" in the search window, add the "fuzzy" command to my search, and before lifting my fingers, a window displays two texts with the highlighted words: Psalm 1:3 has "trees planted by streams of water," while Jeremiah 17:8 speaks of "a tree planted by water" (NRSV).

That may lead me to wonder if there are other similarities between Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17. By composing a second search and using a new "infer" command, I can find other common phrases. A "search back" command then helps me to compare them.

For students or teachers preparing written documents, Accordance offers full copy and paste functions, including Unicode texts and the ability to render Hebrew and Greek characters, or to automatically transliterate them according to scholarly standards.

The program also offers a tool to diagram sentences, and even a "speech" button that calls up an audio pronunciation of any word, or a reading of the text.

Accordance designers have sought to make the program intuitive and user-friendly, so most functions can be accessed in a variety of ways, from clicking on an icon in a resource palette or library, to using drop-down menus, to right-clicking for a variety of options, to using hot-key combinations.

Tutorials and video demos are available, but few are really needed.

Accordance is available in either a "Library" or "Scholars" collection, depending on whether one wants to include biblical languages. Each collection is offered in a variety of packages, with costs based on the number of resources.

Basic packages begin at \$99 and \$149, with the "Premier" versions ranging upward to \$299 and \$349. Commentaries and other resources are available at additional cost.

With its nimble navigation functions, speedy search capabilities and impressive collection of tightly integrated resources, Accordance is more than a Bible study resource — it's like a genie on a hard drive, with no limit on wishes. **BT**

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# Priest's conversion strains ecumenical ties

In the nearly 500 years since the Church of England split with the Roman Catholic Church, a fair number of converts have crossed from one church to the other.

**S**till, the path is fraught with stumbling blocks, as Alberto Cutie — the most recent, and high-profile convert — discovered on May 29 when he left Catholicism to join the Episcopal Church.

Known as “Father Oprah” for his popularity and media savvy, a photographer caught Cutie embracing his girlfriend on a Florida beach earlier this month. The 40-year-old celebrity cleric later admitted to struggling with the Catholic priesthood's mandatory celibacy and was suspended from ministry.

Just weeks later, Cutie announced that he hopes “to continue priestly ministry and service in my new spiritual home” the Episcopal Church, which allows priests to marry. He had been considering conversion for two years, according to the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida.

With a star of Cutie's magnitude — millions tuned in to his television and radio shows for relationship advice — media attention of his conversion was, perhaps, inevitable. Reporters from English and Spanish-language media crowded into Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Miami to witness the half-hour ceremony and subsequent press conference.

Miami's Catholic Archbishop, John Favalora, Cutie's former boss, was not pleased.

He blasted the new convert and his Episcopal counterpart, Bishop Leo Frade of Southeast Florida, for breaking the unwritten rules of conversion: Advise the other bishop about your plans and don't show up the other faith by making a public display.

“Bishop Frade has never spoken to me about his position on this delicate matter or what actions he was contemplating,” Favalora said in a statement. “This is a truly serious setback for ecumenical relations and cooperation between us.”

Moreover, Favalora said his archdiocese “has never made a public display when, for doctrinal reasons, Episcopal priests have joined the Catholic Church and sought ordination ... I regret that Bishop Frade has not

afforded me or the Catholic community the same courtesy and respect.”

Even Episcopalians say Favalora has a point. Bishop Christopher Epting, the Episcopal Church's point man for interfaith affairs, said: “There's no written rule, but it's certainly been the informal understanding between all our ecumenical partners that it's not something one seeks headlines about. It doesn't help us ecumenically.”

There's a delicate diplomacy to conversions, with long-established protocols to ensure that interfaith bridges that take decades to build are not burned in a single afternoon. Epting said the Episcopal Church's ecumenical office, which is usually consulted on all conversions, was not informed about the ceremony ahead of time.

“I wish we had been consulted,” Epting said. “We will be pursuing this.”

Frade said, “The only thing we can say is that we pray for ecumenical relations ... I am sorry they are sorry, and we love them,” according to the *Miami Herald*.

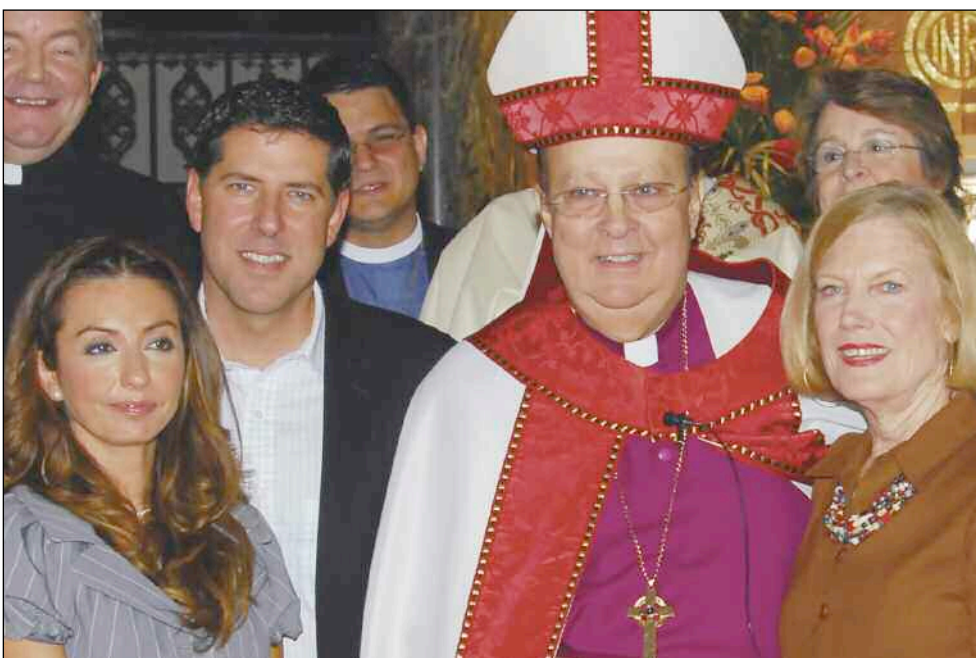
Cutie is hardly the first Catholic to leave the fold for love. In fact, the Church of England, which later spawned the Episcopal Church in the U.S., was essentially created by a spousal issue. King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife, Pope Clement VII wouldn't let him, so Henry started the Church of England and appointed himself its head.

But there's been plenty of traffic toward Rome too, said Monsignor William Stetson of the Office of Pastoral Provision, which was created by the late Pope John Paul II in 1980 to prepare former Episcopal priests for ministry in the Catholic Church. Four or five former Episcopal priests — including, recently, several bishops — convert to the Catholic Church each year, he said.

However, his office “has always advised not giving publicity to these events,” Stetson said. For example, when the former Episcopal Bishop of Southwest Florida, John Lipscomb, announced his conversion to Catholicism two years ago, “there was no display,” Stetson said. “This case in Florida (with Cutie) where you have it within a couple of weeks, and in a public ceremony ... that's not cool.”

But none of those converts were celebrities. In a sense, Frade's hands were tied by his new convert's fame, said Jim Naughton, director of communications for the Episcopal Diocese of Washington.

“When (someone) joins the Episcopal Church, it would be silly to chase them away,” he said. “And in such unusual circumstances it's very difficult to be critical of Bishop Frade because he has both a very vibrant and gifted priest, but also an atmosphere of controversy. Unless you're from that community, I think it's very hard to pass any judgment.” **BT**



Episcopal Bishop Leo Frade and his wife, Diana, right, welcome former Catholic priest Alberto Cutie, second from left, and his fiancée, Ruhama Buni Canellis, into the Episcopal Church. Cutie left the Catholic Church when he could no longer abide by the vow of celibacy.

# Lebanon 10

serve as emissaries for peace



At left: Rohel (man at left) is sheik of the Abou Jabbal tribe of the Bedouin numbering about 2,000. He is one of the few Bedouin Christians. Photo by Ruth Bass. Above: The first building at the White Wings Retreat center is under way. Photo by Tana Hartsell.

**W**hen 10 women affiliated with Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina (WMU-NC) volunteered for an April 10-21 mission trip to Lebanon, they expected to be praying often, preparing food baskets for the poor, assisting with an evangelistic event, and making visits to an orphanage and Bedouin tribe.

They arrived to find their host had more in mind: the team also became a *de facto* delegation for peace, meeting with a string of influential government and religious leaders.

That took some of the women out of their comfort zone. They were right at home working beside Lebanese women to purchase materials and stock 150 gift bags with rice, lentils, garbanzo beans, sugar, soybean oil, spaghetti, cheese, milk, laundry detergent and canned meat.

They were on familiar territory when worshipping in an Arabic-speaking church on Easter Sunday and when praying with Muslim women who have accepted Christ and wanted prayer for their husbands.

They were confident when visiting a women's hospital, delivering care packages to Bedouin women in the Bekaa Valley, and

taking school supplies and medicines to the "Home of Hope" orphanage — and being so touched that they pooled their own funds for a spontaneous offering of more than \$1,400 to buy shoes and a summer outfit for each child.

The women didn't raise an eyebrow over the task of packing 1,000 lunchboxes for young adult Palestinians who were bused in from a refugee camp to attend an evangelistic "celebration" — even though they had to begin by slicing the bread by hand to make 2,000 sandwiches, half bologna and half cheese.

They happily toured and prayed over the 12-acre White Wings Conference and Retreat Center, now under construction. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionary Chaouki Boulos (pronounced "sha-we") envisions the center as a mountaintop haven for thousands of Lebanese Christians who can't otherwise afford a place for spiritual refreshment and practical training.

The team's added function as an entourage for peaceful cooperation, however, caught some of the women by surprise.

Lebanon is a strategic country in the Middle East, a rare place where Christians,

Muslims, Druze, and other groups live with religious freedom and have traditionally sought peaceful co-existence and cooperation. With elections on the horizon and the danger of extremism ever-present, Boulos wanted the women to bring a message of encouragement and peace to a variety of dignitaries.

The visits were possible because Boulos and his wife Maha have a broad network of friends, including a well-connected official who supports their ministry, wants the best for his country, and lives out his faith through promoting peaceful cooperation among Lebanon's various religious and ethnic groups.

On Easter Monday, after spending the morning assembling food bags, the women were ushered through a gauntlet of armed guards to visit with Abbas Zaki, the Palestinian ambassador to Lebanon. Zaki told them of how he had recently escaped an assassination attempt, and described himself as a man of peace.

According to a journal kept by WMU-NC president Dee Thomas, Boulos explained the purpose of the visit by saying "We want the Palestinians to know that Christians love them and want peace."

He described the team as praying women who represented thousands of churches in their country who were praying for peace.

WMU-NC executive director Ruby Fulbright spoke for the women, describing the WMU as “a Christian organization of women who want all people to know Christ and love him” and citing Isaiah’s reference to the messiah as a prince of peace.

Acknowledging the difficult choices facing the ambassador and his people, she said: “We want you to know that we will pray for you.”

Zaki later arranged transportation for college-aged youth in a Palestinian refugee camp to attend a Christian celebration service.

The following evening found the women again surrounded by guards as they were ushered to the office of Marwan Hamade, a longtime member of the Lebanese parliament and the country’s minister of telecommunications. Hamade had survived an assassination attempt two years ago when a bomb exploded beneath his car, killing his bodyguard and severely injuring him. They talked about the importance of freedom, held hands in a circle and prayed together.

Two days later the team had a morning audience with Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, leader of the Maronite Church in Lebanon. The Maronites follow a liturgy more common to Eastern Catholics, but relate directly to the Roman Catholic Church.

At 900,000 strong, they are the largest Christian group in Lebanon, which has a population of about four million. Although the majority of Lebanon’s population is Muslim, the constitution calls for the president to be a Maronite Christian.

The team was met by TV cameras and formal greetings: Fulbright and team leader Tana Hartsell were invited to sit near the cardinal, more speeches were made, and Fulbright again had an opportunity to speak of peace and offer promises of prayer. Later that day, the visit was reported on Lebanese television.

Such visits continued throughout the trip, as the women met and prayed with the chief of police who heads security for downtown Beirut, a chief judge who has presided over major assassination cases, and former president Amin Gemayel, who remains a busy and powerful figure in Lebanese life.

At each stop, security was tight and guards were ever-present. In every case, the team’s assurance of prayer and desire for peace

was well received. Such occasions inevitably called for hot tea or thick Turkish coffee and chocolates as a prelude to the formal conversations.

As a result, even those members who didn’t care for the daily breakfast of boiled eggs, vinegary pintos, cheese and raw vegetables had no reason to go hungry. Given the season, traditional Lebanese Easter cookies were also frequent fare.

For the self-styled “Lebanon 10,” the experience will be lasting.

“One of the things that kept running through my mind,” Fulbright said, was “How can my heart be so full and so broken at the same time?”

Fulbright cited working among “the least of these” in the orphanage and Bedouin camp as especially moving, along with the unexpected opportunity to speak words of witness in places of power.

Hartsell said many activities were a stretch for team members, but they remained grounded in prayer. “We did such a variety of things and had such a variety of experiences, but the Lord revealed to us, seemingly one at a time, that the common thread running through it all was prayer.”

Because of their experiences half a world away, she said, “We know how to pray more specifically and effectively — and now our prayers have faces.” **BT**



Children at the orphanage enjoy their new shoes.



CBF missionary Chaouki Boulos, a native Lebanese, talks about his vision for the White Wings Conference and Retreat Center, which CBF, N.C. Baptist Men and others are helping to build. Photo by Tana Hartsell.

# What do these churches have in common?

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

Ardmore Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.  
Boiling Springs Baptist Church, Boiling Springs, N.C.  
Boulevard Baptist Church, Anderson, S.C.  
Broadmoor Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La.  
Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.  
Brunswick Islands Baptist Church, Supply, N.C.  
Chadbourm Baptist Church, Chadbourm, N.C.  
College Avenue Baptist Church, Lenoir, N.C.  
College Park Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla.  
Covenant Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C.  
Culowhee Baptist Church, Culowhee, N.C.  
Druid Hills Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.  
Dunwoody Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.  
Edenton Baptist Church, Edenton, N.C.  
Emerywood Baptist Church, High Point, N.C.  
Faith Baptist Church, Georgetown, Ky.  
Fernwood Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C.  
First Baptist Church, Ahsokie, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Aiken, S.C.  
First Baptist Church, Anderson, S.C.  
First Baptist Church, Asheville, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Cape Girardeau, Mo.  
First Baptist Church, Carolina Beach, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Clemson, S.C.  
First Baptist Church, Columbus, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Commerce, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Conway, S.C.  
First Baptist Church, Dalton, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Forest City, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Fort Myers, Fla.  
First Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky.  
First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Fla.  
First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C.  
First Baptist Church, Greenwood, S.C.  
First Baptist Church, Hawkinsville, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, High Point, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala.  
First Baptist Church, Kannapolis, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Lavonia, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Lexington, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Lincolnton, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, London, Ky.  
First Baptist Church, Lumberton, N.C.

First Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Madison, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Madison, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Marion, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Mocksville, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Morganton, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Morrow, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Mount Airy, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Mount Olive, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, Tenn.  
First Baptist Church, New Bern, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Orangeburg, S.C.  
First Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla.  
First Baptist Church, Rome, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Rutherfordton, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Savannah, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Sanford, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Spruce Pine, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Tifton, Ga.  
First Baptist Church, Wilmington, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Wilson, N.C.  
First Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.  
Forest Hills Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.  
Franklin Baptist Church, Franklin, Va.  
Grace Fellowship Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss.  
Grandin Court Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va.  
Greystone Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.  
Haddock Baptist Church, Haddock, Ga.  
Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.  
Highland Hills Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.  
Highland Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas  
Holmeswood Baptist Church, Kansas City, Mo.  
HomeStar Fellowship, Raleigh, N.C.  
Johns Creek Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Ga.  
Kathwood Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C.  
Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N.C.  
Lakeside Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, N.C.  
Lakeview Baptist Church, Camden, S.C.  
Lamberth Memorial Baptist Church, Roxboro, N.C.  
Lexington Avenue Baptist Church, Danville, Ky.  
Loray Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C.  
Lystra Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C.  
Madison Baptist Church, Madison, Ga.  
Mars Hill Baptist Church, Mars Hill, N.C.  
Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C.  
Mount Zion Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.

National Heights Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ga.  
New Heights Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.  
Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.  
North Stuart Baptist Church, Stuart, Fla.  
Northwest Baptist Church, Ardmore, Okla.  
Oakmont Baptist Church, Greenville, N.C.  
Peachtree Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.  
Piney River Baptist Church, Lowesville, Va.  
Pintlala Baptist Church, Hope Hull, Ala.  
Providence Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.  
Providence Baptist Church, Cookeville, Tenn.  
Providence Baptist Church, Hendersonville, N.C.  
Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.  
Reynoldson Baptist Church, Gates, N.C.  
Rolling Hills Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark.  
Rolesville Baptist Church, Rolesville, N.C.  
Second Baptist Church, Liberty, Mo.  
Second Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.  
Second Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.  
Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.  
Shades Crest Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala.  
Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Stone Mountain, Ga.  
Snyder Memorial Baptist Church, Fayetteville, N.C.  
South Main Baptist Church, Houston, Texas  
St. Andrews Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C.  
St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.  
Tabernacle Baptist Church, Carrollton, Ga.  
Tabernacle Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.  
The Lakeland Fellowship, Lakeland, Fla.  
The Memorial Baptist Church, Greenville, N.C.  
The Oaks Baptist Church, Lyons, Ga.  
Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn.  
University Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La.  
Vineville Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.  
Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, N.C.  
Wieuca Road Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.  
Wingate Baptist Church, Wingate, N.C.  
Winter Park Baptist Church, Wilmington, N.C.  
Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.  
Yates Baptist Church, Durham, N.C.  
Youngsville Baptist Church, Youngsville, N.C.  
Zebulon Baptist Church, Zebulon, N.C.

## Your church can be better informed, too

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