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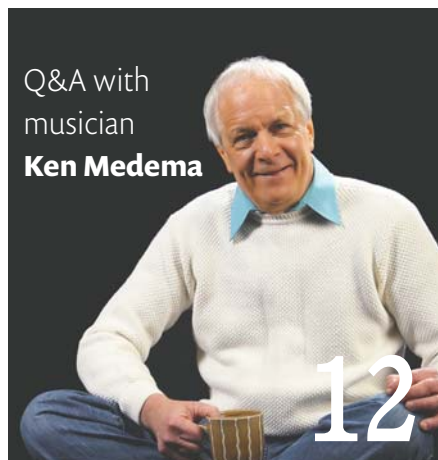
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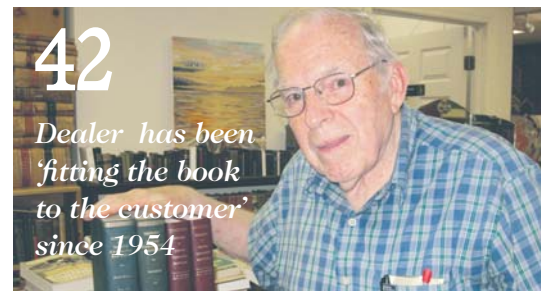
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Tina and Jonathan Bailey relate to a variety of artists in Bali and beyond.

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Faith and the Arts



Baileys share in Bali's diverse, creative culture

Bali, Indonesia is a haven for international artists. Local artists are joined by many Europeans — who enjoy greater freedom of expression than being placed in “the categories of European art,” said Tina Bailey.

Since 1996, Tina and her husband Jonathan Bailey have been living and serving within this diverse, vibrant and talented community of artists where they encourage Christians to be true to their culture, craft and calling.

“When we went to Bali in '96, our job description didn't have an arts color to it,” said Jonathan during a brief spring visit to the States. But the fit was natural.

Tina, a native of Springfield, Ga., is a dancer, visual artist and a graduate of the Savannah School of Art and Design. Jonathan, from Simpsonville, S.C., is into music and literature.

The rap on American missionaries through the years has been that many brought their Western culture along with the Gospel message to the places where they served. That's not the mission of Tina and Jonathan Bailey, who serve through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship global missions program.

“We're very open to say that as Christians we value Balinese culture,” said Jonathan.

Tina and Jonathan encourage Christian artists to use their gifts of music, dance and



This *gamelan*, a musical ensemble in Bali, rehearses and performs on a regular basis — bringing varied musicians together and giving them opportunities to share their gifts. At top: Tina Bailey dances.

visual arts to express faith in an honest way that is true to their own culture. In doing so, the Baileys believe, relationships are built across cultural barriers and authentic expressions of faith get heard.

“We don't see the arts as a tool ...” said Tina. “It's not a means to an end; it's an authentic way to be.”

“Christian artist” can be a tough tag to wear in Bali as well as in other cultures. If the artists' works are not solely focused on overtly Christian symbols and themes, fellow Christians will often criticize them for straying from or compromising their faith commitments.

On the other hand, the larger arts community can see Christian artists as being one-dimensional — with a lesser

commitment to artistic expression than to getting across a religious message.

So Tina and Jonathan offer encouragement and support to Christian artists and help create opportunities for engagement with the larger arts community. From art exhibits to music and dance classes to enhancing the use of arts in worship, the Baileys are finding many points where faith and art connect.

It's not a new idea, however, said Jonathan. “It is what the Church did for a millennium or more,” he said, noting the role of music, architecture and other forms of art.

The Baileys said that not everyone understands how art is an intrinsic part of life and faith for many people in many cultures.



Tina Bailey (right) with a Balinese Hindu friend Tini, who carries an offering on her head as a sign of respect. The rice grains on her forehead symbolize a blessing by the priest.

“Our work is about as traditional as it gets. It’s about relationships.”

“In America, or parts of America, we’ve bought into the idea that the arts are a luxury — not a way of life,” said Tina, noting that concept would not be understood where they live and serve.

But for those who don’t appreciate art or can’t grasp how this could be a means of Christian service, Tina and Jonathan speak of a more common basis for their work: relationship-building.

“Our work is about as traditional as it gets,” said Tina. “It’s about relationships.”

Jonathan added: “We live in a community where art is a way to relate” — in fact, a primary way.

Growing, trusting relationships provide opportunities for the Baileys to host an artist-in-residence program, teach summer art classes in Hungary, and communicate faith in ways that are understood and appreciated in a pluralistic and artistic culture.

“We find ourselves standing in a lot of [different] communities,” said Tina of the doors that have opened through relationships with artists — adding that the most meaningful ones “have been 10 years in the making.”

Art is a good way to make friends and an important part of their own identities, said Tina.

“We are doing art because that is who we are,” she said.

The Baileys admit that explaining their ministry to supporting congregations back in the U.S. is not as easy as for mission personnel who might dig wells or build houses in other parts of the world. But the needs in Bali are different, said Jonathan.

“The Balinese are capable of building things; they don’t need construction teams,” he said.

Because of the distance to Indonesia and the long-term relationship approach, the Baileys don’t host as many visitors from U.S. churches as some mission personnel who need volunteer labor or medical teams. However, they have artists and other guests come to participate in their classes and worship.

One visiting pastor told Tina and Jonathan that churches in the U.S. could learn some important things from their ways of engaging the art community.

The Baileys believe that breaking down barriers is the key to effective ministry and that art is one of the most effective ways of

doing so — even though it had to be written into their first job description.

“We walked through the doors that opened,” said Tina. “[The larger art community] knows that we are Christians and artists and involved in the international Christian church.”

In whatever creative form of art — music, painting, dance, etc. — the Baileys see a connection to the Creator.

“We see it as a gift from God,” said Jonathan. And he and Tina are helping artists grow in their own creativity and to see themselves as gifts from God as well. **BT**

—For more information on the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship global missions program, visit thefellowship.info/missions.



Slovakian composer and performer Daniel Matej (seated with stringed instrument) shares in a multicultural collaboration between European and Balinese artists. Slovakian pastor Daniel Pastircak is second from right.

quotation remarks

“I’m greatly concerned about the new idolatry in the church of elevating talk radio or Fox News before the word of God and the person of Jesus Christ when it comes to worldview.”

—Southern Baptist Convention President Bryant Wright at the SBC annual meeting June 14 in Phoenix (RNS)

“This congregation and building are both certainly rich in history, but we’re not stuck in the past. We don’t want to be curators of a museum. This is a living community.”

—Pastor Michael Crane on the 200th anniversary of First Baptist Church of Essex, Conn. (Middletown Press)
—New York Times

“In English, when you say ‘you guys,’ we don’t necessarily mean that we’re just talking to males. The changes that they’re trying to make are changes of that kind.”

—Darrell Bock, research professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, defending translators of the newly revised NIV Bible that Southern Baptists and others have criticized for its use of gender neutrality (Christian Post)

“One of the most nefarious aspects of this law is it appears to criminalize Alabamians in the act of being helpful and compassionate.”

—United Methodist Bishop William Willimon of the North Alabama Conference on the new state laws that make it illegal to knowingly give a ride to an undocumented immigrant (RNS)

“I feel like a born-again Hindu now.”

—Charu Krishna Thammavaram, 28, after moving from Lafayette, La., to the active, growing Hindu community in Houston, Texas (CNN)

“New York Republicans are responsible for passing gay marriage. The party will pay a grave price.”

—Maggie Gallagher, founder of the National Organization for Marriage, whose group set aside \$2 million to help defeat GOP state senators who voted to legalize same-sex marriages (BP)

“Since Liberty is the world’s largest Christian university, we think it is important to expose the students to as many candidates as possible.

How well they are received at Liberty will be a good indicator for how they will be received in Christian circles nationwide.”

—Chancellor Jerry Falwell Jr. to the Lynchburg News & Advance on inviting Texas Gov. Rick Perry to speak Sept. 14 at Liberty University (American-Statesman)

“Our culture seems to have the patience of a drooling 4-year-old. OK, so I have the patience of a drooling 4-year-old.”

—Lorilee Craker, who is thrifter after researching and writing Money Secrets of the Amish (RNS)

“Some of the best work you can do is in small churches. You can help them grow and get stronger.”

—Eugene Frost, a Wheaton College classmate of Billy Graham, who recently retired from Big Rock Baptist Church in Illinois after 66 years of small-church pastorates (Beacon-News)

“Prostate cancer is so dangerous, if you wait until there are symptoms, it’s usually too late, which is often the case for black men.”

—Pastor Clyde W. Oden of Bryant Temple AME Church in Los Angeles, urging men in his congregation to have their PSA levels checked, an early indicator of prostate cancer (RNS)

“Numerous cocksure Christians, militant Muslims and extremist Jews openly proclaim they know exactly what God wants, for them and for everyone else.”

—Charles Kimball, director of religious studies at the University of Oklahoma, in his new book, When Religion Becomes Lethal: The Explosive Mix of Politics and Religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (ethicsdaily.com)

“I don’t think fundamentalists are bad people, but I think fundamentalism is a religion rooted in fear and hostility and anger. We have to ... become a voice for overcoming religious bigotry and religious intolerance.”

—Mercer University Chancellor R. Kirby Godsey to Associated Baptist Press about his book, Is God a Christian?

“If you can laugh at yourself, you can forgive yourself. If you can forgive yourself, you can forgive others.”

—Susan Sparks, an attorney, stand-up comedian and pastor of NYC’s Madison Avenue Baptist Church, speaking to the Baptist Women in Ministry annual meeting in June (ABP)

On being Christian without being obnoxious

“Hell ... would be spending eternity with Evangelicals,” wrote Don Koons of Dallas in a letter published by Time magazine.

This assessment and similar ones raise a good question: Why can Evangelical Christians be so annoying?

Sadly, those who need to reflect upon this question most will rarely do so. They prefer to blame the critics, label them as infidels and reject the premise that any part of their own demeanor could be abrasive if not repulsive.

While some anti-religious bias is certainly present in modern culture, much of the dismissal of Evangelical Christianity results from Evangelicals’ own making. And to project upon themselves the role of victims who are persecuted for deeply held, well-defined, religious beliefs is neither accurate nor helpful in sharing the great redemptive story of the Christian faith in an increasingly diverse culture.

Many Evangelical leaders engage the larger society with only a cocksure attitude of possessing all truth and an eagerness to push their perspectives of rightness on all others — even through the coercion of law.

The tragedy, of course, is that this fearful, aggressive and inflexible approach creates a missed opportunity to display Christian love and furthers the isolation (and at some points irrelevance) of Evangelical Christians.

So is it possible to be Christian without being obnoxious? Here are some suggestions.

One: Stand up for the religious freedom of someone else — first. Evangelicals tend to make noise — or at least make the most noise — when they feel their own rights are not being granted.

Often such squawking is an effort to get preferential treatment — such as giving an overtly Christian prayer in a government-sponsored setting.

What if the same passion was seen in the public arena for the religious rights of a

minority faith group — one with beliefs very different from Christianity?

Early American Baptist leader Roger Williams founded Rhode Island as a haven of freedom for suspect and persecuted groups such as Baptists, Quakers, Jews and non-believers. He knew what many contemporary Evangelicals have forgotten or never learned: that there is only one kind of religious liberty — freedom for all.

Two: Show some humility. This is especially needed when addressing social issues of the day — an area in which Evangelicals seem to always have the right answer regardless of how complex the issue.

Try beginning all such proclamations with this confession: “Those of us who claim biblical authority have a long record of being wrong on issues of human rights and equality. Therefore, there is potential that we could be wrong on this or other issues in the future.”



(Don’t hold your breath.)

Evangelical Christians know enough truth to hold firm to their faith — but not enough to pompously claim that the glass through which they look is perfectly clear.

A little humility — based on past errant thinking (regarding slavery, racial and gender discrimination, etc.) and limited understanding of current, complex issues — can go a long way in getting a broader hearing.

And hearing is important too. Often, Evangelicals seen so eager to dispense their certainty that there is little room for listening to what others might have to share about an issue.

Three: Relate out of faith, not fear. Much of the angry rhetoric and hostility that comes from Evangelicals appears rooted in fear.

There is the fear of diminishing cultural dominance, the fear of diverse perspectives and the fear of losing personal power.

Belittling the beliefs of others or seeking discriminatory policies will always alienate neighbor from neighbor and sully the reputation of all who seek to follow the Way of Jesus.

Relating out of faith allows Christians to listen to other viewpoints and to be self-critical. Fear does not.

The biblical fruits of the Spirit are given as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Displaying those characteristics on the public stage can go a long way in avoiding or repairing a reputation for being cocky, pushy and obnoxious. **BT**

BWA accepts four new members from Africa

KUALA LUMPUR (BWA) — Four organizations in Africa were accepted into membership of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) at the July General Council meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Association of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Congo is an association of 3,021 members in 36 churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Established in 1994, its offices are in the city of Goma in the eastern part of the country.

A second Baptist body from the DRC, the Baptist Churches Union Community of Congo, has also been received into BWA membership. Formed in 1964, it comprises 46,321 members in 372 churches and has offices in Kikwit in the southwestern part of the DRC.

There are now 10 BWA member bodies in the DRC, one of the largest countries in Africa.

The Baptist Convention of Sudan (BCOS) started in refugee camps in Kakuma, Kenya, in 1996, and includes 18 churches and another 32 that are in the process of being established. The BCOS has more than 13,500 members. Offices are in Malakal in South Sudan. There are now two BWA member bodies in Sudan.

The Free Evangelical Baptist Church of the Central African Republic joins three other Baptist bodies that are members of the BWA in the French-speaking African nation. It has 57,000 members in 250 churches. Offices are in Berbérati, the third-largest city in the nation.

The BWA now has 222 member bodies in 120 countries. The General Council also accepted the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI) into associate membership in the BWA.

CBCNEI includes a number of church bodies in several Northeast Indian states, some of which hold full membership in the BWA. CBCNEI represents more than one million members in more than 6,000 churches.



Malaysians offer colorful welcome to global Baptists

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian Baptists provided a warm, colorful and tasty welcome July 5 to more than 300 participants attending the 2011 annual gathering of the Baptist World Alliance in Kuala Lumpur. About 180 Baptists from Malaysia and Singapore hosted the celebration in a gaily-decorated ballroom of the Berjaya Times Square Hotel.

The evening included a feast for both the eyes and the palate. Troops of children and youth danced as local hosts, identified by matching shirts, entertained at each table. The evening meal consisted of no less than seven courses ranging from shrimp roll appetizers to corn soup with crab, fried rice with chicken and pineapple, and sea bass with ginger sauce served whole at the table.

Baptist work in Malaysia began in the late 1930s as immigrants from Swatow, China, moved to the area and established churches. Their efforts were boosted significantly when Communists came to power in China during the 1940s and forced the many Southern Baptist missionaries there to relocate.

Malaysia, which has a significant Chinese population, was a natural fit for missionaries who already spoke Mandarin.

Today, Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country of 28 million people. A slim majority (53.3 percent) are Malays, while 26 percent are Chinese, 7.7 percent are Indians, and various indigenous groups make up an additional 11 percent.

Malaysia's constitution, adopted in 1957, declares that native Malays are by definition Muslim. Conversion to other religions is strongly discouraged and can lead to persecution for those who encourage Muslims to become Christians.

As a result, most of the churches in Malaysia are ethnically Chinese. Currently, 58 percent of the population is Muslim, 23 percent is Buddhist, 11 percent is Christian and 6.3 percent is Hindu.

The Malaysia Baptist Convention, founded by five charter churches from Malaysia and Singapore as the Malaya Baptist Convention in 1953, now includes 163 churches and more than 22,000 members. The convention joined the Baptist World Alliance in 1957 and changed its name to Malaysia Baptist Convention in 1964.

In late 1974, the Singapore Baptist Convention branched off and became a separate convention. It now includes 36 churches and about 10,000 members.

Both the Malaysia and Singapore Baptist Conventions are active members of the Baptist World Alliance and the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation.

Meetings of the general assembly continued through the week, offering seminars and affinity group sessions on topics ranging from Baptist-Muslim relations to theological education and human rights advocacy. Business sessions were held July 8-9.

For most persons attending the annual gathering, however, the main attraction is friendship and fellowship with Baptist brothers and sisters from every corner of the globe. **BT**

—Tony Cartledge represents Baptists Today at meetings of the North American Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist World Alliance. His participation in and coverage of global Baptists is supported by a gift from Roy J. and Charlotte Cook Smith of Winston-Salem, N.C.

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Legacy of *Progressive National Baptist Convention formed in larger context of civil rights movement*

Freedom

This month the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. celebrates its 50th anniversary at an annual conference in Washington, D.C.

A major African-American Baptist group, the PNBC focuses “on the precepts of fellowship, progress, service, and peace and seeks to affirm the ‘priesthood of all believers.’”

Commitment to the priesthood of all believers spurred the creation of the PNBC in 1961. The turmoil of the civil rights movement also played a prominent role in the group’s formation.

Prior to 1961, most African-American Baptists were represented by the National Baptist Convention that was formed in 1895 following earlier attempts by black Baptists to create organizational structures in the post-Civil War era.

Education and missions stood at the forefront of black Baptist interests from the late 19th century through the first half of the 20th century. During this time, racial inequality and periods of white terrorism against blacks remained overarching concerns for African-American Baptists.

The formation of the Progressive National Baptist Convention occurred in the larger context of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and early 1960s. As the civil rights movement intensified, white opposition to the movement became more violent while internal dissension grew within African-American Baptist life.

The civil rights movement, in short, challenged African-American Baptists over the issue of improving the lives of blacks in America.

Joseph H. Jackson, president

of the National Baptist Convention, steered the denomination away from activist involvement. Jackson insisted that economic empowerment, rather than legal and social equality, stood as the most critical component of black advancement.

Gardner Taylor and Martin Luther King Jr., among other National Baptist ministers, disagreed. Advocating for government-enforced legal and social equality, Taylor and King found themselves in a power struggle with Jackson for control of the denomination.

Yet disagreements over civil rights took place alongside what Cincinnati pastor

L. Venchael Booth and others viewed as Jackson’s iron control of the denomination in violation of the Baptist heritage of the priesthood of all believers. In reaction to Jackson’s leadership style, the PNBC was birthed in November 1961 by Booth and a group of concerned National Baptist ministers.

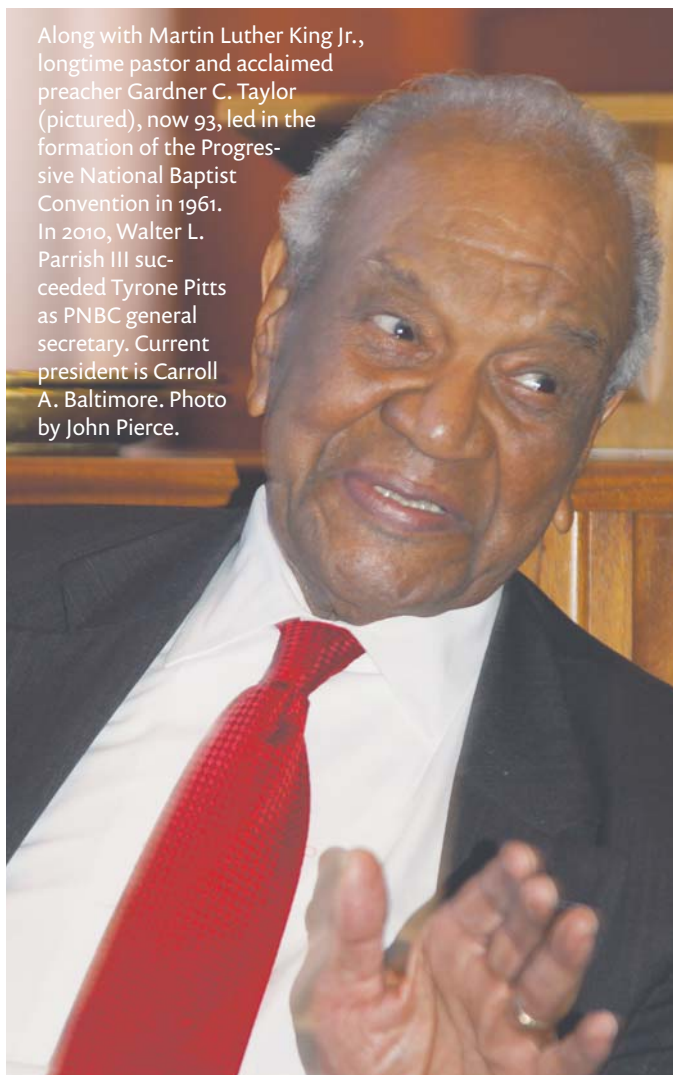
In the years following, PNBC ministers, led by King and Taylor, played a prominent role in securing equal rights for African Americans. Today’s Progressive Baptists celebrate the denomination’s legacy of freedom as forged in the civil rights movement, a hallmark contribution to the larger Baptist story. In addition,

Progressive Baptists continue to advocate for education, missions and community involvement.

At the same time, Progressive Baptists are challenged by many of the same contemporary patterns facing other Baptist denominations, such as differing views of Baptist identity expressed along generational lines; the influence of non-denominational currents in the larger Christian world; the roles of women in ministry; and the rapidly changing nature of modern technology.

The theme for the 50th anniversary Progressive National Baptist conference, Aug. 7–12, is “Securing Our Future: Humility — A People of Fellowship.” For more information, go to pnbc.org. **BT**

—Online editor Bruce Gourley is also executive director of the Baptist History & Heritage Society. The Spring 2011 edition of the Baptist History & Heritage Journal is devoted to the 50th Anniversary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention and can be ordered at baptisthistory.org.



Along with Martin Luther King Jr., longtime pastor and acclaimed preacher Gardner C. Taylor (pictured), now 93, led in the formation of the Progressive National Baptist Convention in 1961. In 2010, Walter L. Parrish III succeeded Tyrone Pitts as PNBC general secretary. Current president is Carroll A. Baltimore. Photo by John Pierce.

Looking *at* Luter

Southern Baptist eyes on black New Orleans pastor

NEW ORLEANS — Even before the Southern Baptist Convention elected Fred Luter to national office, there was already widespread speculation that he is poised to become the denomination's first African-American president.

Representatives of 16 million Southern Baptists overwhelmingly elected Luter first vice president on June 14 at their annual meeting in Phoenix.

By the time Baptists gather again next summer in Luter's backyard, many expect the pastor of this city's 5,000-member Franklin Avenue Baptist Church — one of the largest Southern Baptist churches in the state — to clinch the top post.

"Many of us are thinking this is the first step toward him being elected president next year," said Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., who nominated Luter for the vice presidency.

"I haven't talked to a person who hasn't affirmed that, including the present president, Bryant Wright, the past president, Frank Page" and others, Akin said. "There's tremendous interest and excitement about that."

Luter's election comes at a moment when the nation's largest Protestant denomination confronts evidence that it has plateaued in numbers — even declined slightly.

Moreover, some leaders of the predominantly white, socially conservative church say they are concerned that their ranks — and especially their leaders — do not look like the nation as a whole.

In recent decades, the convention has passed 11 resolutions seeking "greater ethnic participation," including a 1995 resolution apologizing for its past defense of slavery, but church leaders deemed that insufficient.

"There's a sense that we're behind the curve in the SBC, that we're not really representative of our constituency at the level of leadership. That we need to be moving forward with more diversity," said David Crosby of First Baptist Church in New Orleans.

Convention delegates, or "messengers," approved a plan in Phoenix to vigorously



reach out to minorities to incorporate them in meaningful leadership positions.

"We're becoming more aware of the fact we should strive to make church on earth look like church in heaven," Akin said in an interview.

Luter's allies portray him as the right man for the job next year, regardless of the denomination's explicit desire to incorporate more people of color into its leadership ranks.

"I think Fred can be elected on merit, regardless of race or color," Akin said. "But he gives us opportunity to make a proactive statement, to say something about who we want to be."

Luter, a gifted preacher, has traveled widely in Southern Baptist circles for almost 20 years and built a solid reputation all across the convention, Crosby said.

In 2001, the last time Southern Baptists convened in New Orleans, he was given a plum preaching slot and delivered a tour-de-force sermon that roused 10,000 messengers to their feet.

Luter took over the Franklin Avenue

pulpit in 1986. Formerly a white church whose congregation had left for the suburbs, it had only about 60 members and was near death.

At the time, Luter was a commodities clerk, not even formally ordained. His preaching experience was in borrowed churches and street corners, including his native Lower 9th Ward. Luter was ordained and installed as pastor on the same day, he said.

The congregation grew. And although it became predominantly black, like its changing neighborhood, it kept its Southern Baptist affiliation.

The Franklin Avenue congregation numbered about 7,000 members just before Hurricane Katrina destroyed its building in 2005.

In the following months, evangelical pastors around the state sent money and volunteers to help Franklin Avenue get back on its feet. It currently claims about 4,900 members, according to the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

"He's known not only as a great preacher, but an effective pastor. He's worked hard and people love him. He's a model for pastors all over the convention," Crosby said.

Meantime, Luter said he is overwhelmed by the sudden attention.

Although a movement to draft him for the presidency has quietly circulated for months, he said he was approached about the vice presidency just weeks before the meeting. With the elevation to that office, he said, people are congratulating him as if the presidency were a foregone conclusion.

My head's spinning," he said.

"I haven't decided what to do, but every step I take people are telling me, 'It's your time,'" particularly with next year's meeting scheduled for New Orleans, Luter said.

His congregation is in the midst of a major capital campaign to build a new church in eastern New Orleans. He said he would decide whether to seek the presidency after consulting with his church and other leaders. **BT**

—Bruce Nolan writes for *The Times-Picayune in New Orleans*. Adelle M. Banks contributed to this report.

BY NORMAN JAMESON

Associated Baptist Press

Ken Medema — singer, composer, pianist, artist and for four decades — has the gift to listen to a sermon, speech or spiel, and then unreel a song that reflects what he's heard, created as he sings it.

As a young person Medema, now 67, ran away from the Dutch Calvinist faith of his family in Michigan. While studying music at Michigan State University, he met the daughter of a man who directed the Baptist Student Union and was pastor of a tiny Baptist church in Lansing. Jane's family members were "very progressive thinkers" who dared to ask questions and were unthreatened by the doubts of others. When Medema presented his own questions about faith, they told him they had the same questions.

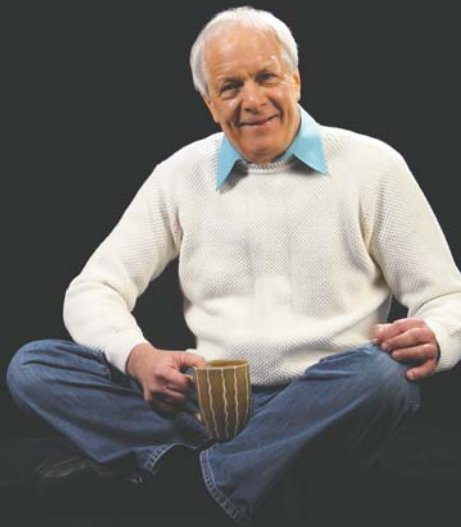
"The only difference is we ask them from the inside," they said.

They explained to Ken the foundational Baptist beliefs about church and state, soul competency of believers and church autonomy in which "no ecclesiastical body is going to tell us what to believe." Those positions rang the bell of a young radical in the 1960s who thought, "If this Baptist thing is what Christians are all about, I want to be a part of it."

He's been married 46 years to Jane, that Baptist girl. They've lived in San Francisco since 1980. Medema was wildly popular among Baptists, but in the past 10-15 years he said most of his work has been among other Christian groups. He said singing at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship assembly in Tampa this summer was "truly like coming home."

ABP: You've been doing this a long time. How do you stay fresh?

Medema: I have people around me who do not exult me, who insist on keeping me real, who do not believe all the publicity and hype they hear and they keep me away from most of it. The people who manage my work and my family treat me like an ordinary guy with lots of foibles and failures. My wife is always reading to me new things, new theological articles



Q&A

Musician Ken Medema articulates his art form

to keep my head fresh. Friends send me musical things.

I get enough down time so I am not burning the candle on both ends. That's been the secret. When I go home for five or six days, I totally change my focus. I'm home focused on the kids, grandkids, going out to eat, taking long walks in the city.

ABP: How has your blindness informed your music?

Medema: It has put me in tactile contact with people. When I walk with people, I have to take their arm. That immediately sets up a relationship most people don't get to have.

Because I am blind it makes me maybe even more interested in using visual imagery than other composers. I have this obsession

with visual imagery, talking about color and talking about azure skies and the depth of clouds.

It made me aware of other people who are left out. I was the kid other kids didn't play with. I stood at the edge of the playground wishing I could play basketball, knowing they'd never invite me to be on the team.

The other thing is, people will give me a listen sometimes when they won't give other folks a listen. In my concerts I ask people to tell me stories. They know I'm not looking at them and judging them by their appearance, so they'll walk up to the mike and tell me a story that I can then turn into a song.

ABP: Can you articulate how you do what you do?

Medema: The music is for me like grammar is for you. If I ask you a question, you don't think about the grammatical form of what you're going to say. You think about the content.

Without even thinking about it, you speak because you've spoken all your life. The process of speaking is an unconscious thing. Because I've done this all my life, music is my grammar.

I have listened to what the person has said. I have reactions. Then I simply engage in conversation with what I've heard.

ABP: Social justice is often a theme in your music and life. Has that changed?

Medema: The emphasis has not changed. My way of doing it has changed.

Through the 1970s and early '80s I was "the angry young man." I would get on the piano and pound out my songs saying: "Church, we're neglecting these very important things. We're a bunch of stupid fools."

I would rag and bang and pound. I called it passion, and it was really anger. It was kind of spiteful and full of vitriol and bitterness.

Somewhere in the later '80s and early '90s some people helped me by saying: "Ken, you don't have to be so angry. You can dance with people. Come alongside us and say, 'Let's think about this. Or tell us a story about people who are hungry. You don't have to hit us in the head.'"

“I want to write something from the perspective of a Baptist ... that kind of radical, revolutionary, independent kind of way we have of looking at the world.”

My way of telling is a lot gentler now. It's filled with a lot more humor and fun. The issues are no less urgent for me. But I realize it isn't going to help for me to be angry.

We've been called to dance in the cross-roads; to laugh while we feed the hungry; to shout delight while we care for the poor. Some of that I learned with poor people.

We went to Nicaragua in 1986, responding to a call to come show there are some people in the U.S. who don't agree with Reagan's Contra war and all that. I came all primed to be a prophetic witness. We visited a coffee plantation prepared to work alongside the coffee growers.

Instead, these people whose very life depended on working hard every day stopped work because we had come to visit. They brought out their guitars. We spent the whole day singing.

I kept saying you have work to do and we want to work beside you. They said, “You don't understand; if we don't stop to sing, we won't be in it for the long haul.”

It made me weep. I thought, golly, I'm not helping people stop to sing. I'm hitting them over the head. I want to help people stop to sing so they will be there for the long haul.

ABP: How have your music and theology matured over the years?

Medema: I think it's a lot more open, a lot less certain, a lot more open to mystery. You can't take a mystery and turn it into a manual.

Doctrine for me has become a way that we fragile, weak humans try to codify a story and I'd much rather hear it as a story. I'd much rather follow a story than a doctrine.

Jesus is my teacher and guide, my way of seeing the world and seeing divinity and holiness. But I'm not afraid to ask questions. I'm not afraid to be drawn by a story rather than a belief set.

As far as music, I continue to be open to new musical forms. I'm always wanting to experiment and find new things, new sounds, new textures.

ABP: Of what are you proudest?

Medema: Being known as a storyteller with

integrity. I'm not always proud of all the music I make. Some is good; some is weak.

I'm proudest when people say, “Ken, you tell our story with truth and sensitivity.”

ABP: What remains to do?

Medema: There's some choral work to write. I want to write a mass. I want to write a post-modern choral piece. I want to write a piece with influences that come from here, from there, from everywhere, that brings together all these traditions in a crazy mix.

I want to write something from the perspective of a Baptist. I want to take that kind of way we have of looking at the world and write a choral piece that embodies that. I want to do something with the Psalms, more than I've done before.

I want to travel some more. I want to see more of the world.

ABP: To your audiences, many of your spontaneous pieces are instant classics. Does it hurt to sing it once knowing the only ears that will ever hear it are those in the audience at that moment?

Medema: Once in a while I say I wish I had that to keep. We've had it happen where I'll do a piece and both Beverly, who is my manager and producer, and I realize this is going to be a keeper. We'll dash home after the concert and say, “Quick, write that down.”

For most of them it's like a sunset. It's wonderful that God gives us a new kind of sunset every day. But if on Thursday you had to have a repeat of Wednesday's sunset, what fun would that be? **BT**

—Norman Jameson reports and coordinates special projects for Associated Baptist Press on an interim basis.

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BAPTISTS AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

The South, having chosen to go to war with the North in order to preserve a slaveholders' society, now faces the dual tasks of defeating the Union and suppressing southern dissent.

Roughly five percent of southern whites own African slaves. This small minority, however, owns the vast majority of southern wealth and controls the region's political processes. Directing the affairs of the South, their money and power trump potential opposition from common whites and ensure the ongoing enslavement of African Americans.

Even as slaveholders during the war use their power to further increase their wealth, the

150 YEARS AGO

August 1861

Confederacy, or join other East Tennessee dissenters in fleeing to Kentucky to join Union ranks? Even as they talk, Confederate forces are approaching, intent on suppressing rebellion in the valley.

Nine days later following a treacherous journey, the men are in Kentucky. Along with hundreds of other Tennesseans, they enroll in the newly formed 2nd East Tennessee Infantry (Volunteer), U.S.A.

Like the white Baptists from Tennessee's

"Might it be said that the nineteenth century has prostituted the purity of the gospel to so base a purpose as arming brother against brother? Or if this must, in truth, be acknowledged, shall it be that the elements of the Campbell County Association must carry out the same intolerant spirit? God forbid! If Christian love and fellowship were as the spirit of the gospel would have them, this could never be; yet the fellowship of churches (not in this Association) has been entirely destroyed by the introduction of political issues ... how fearful the ground upon which any brother stands, if he feels in his heart a rising hatred towards a brother whose greatest fault may be honestly differing upon the politics of the day."

No major battles are fought this month, as generals of both armies plot strategy and train soldiers. Among notable events, North Carolina's Cape Hatteras falls to Union forces, Maryland remains with the Union, western Virginia moves to form a separate state, and martial law is declared in Missouri, resulting in the freeing of slaves in the state.

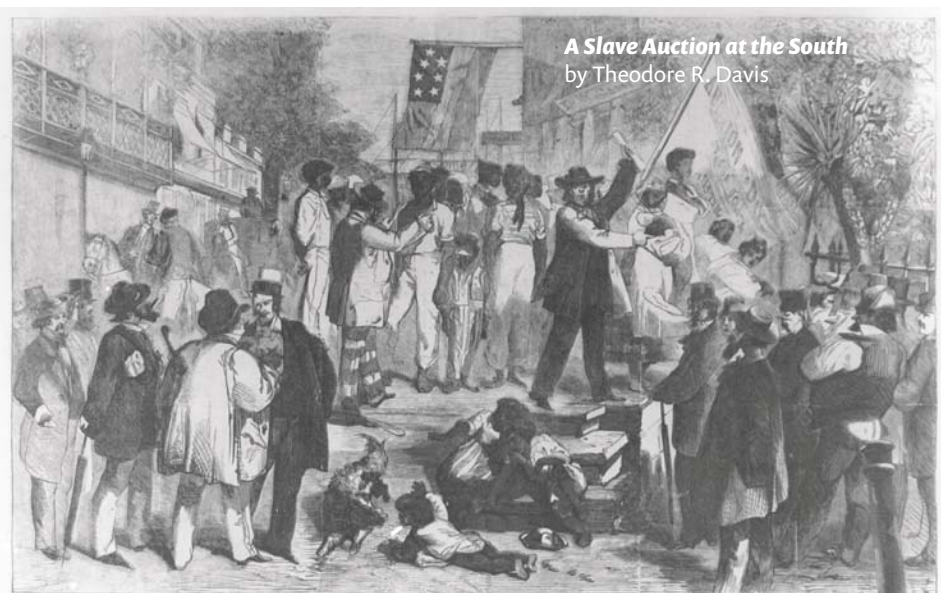
For some Baptists, life goes on without major disruptions. Revival season begins in the South. Women primarily attend, alongside men who are not fighting in the army. The war adds urgency to revivalists' invitations. As is customarily the case, church rolls increase during revival season.

Northward, Augustus Hopkins Strong is ordained pastor of First Baptist Church of Haverhill, Mass., his first pastorate. After the war, Strong becomes president of Rochester Theological Seminary and a leading Baptist theologian of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the broader picture, the antebellum era hardened regional Baptist theology, cementing biblical literalism in the South while in the North accelerating the embrace of critical biblical scholarship expressed in contextualized scriptural interpretation.

In addition, the early months of war heighten the trend of women's numerical dominance in church attendance. Yet in August 1861, the transformative force of the Civil War has just begun. **BT**

—For a daily journal along with references to source material, visit civilwarbaptists.org.



regional culture of white supremacy serves as a balm over the financial chasm between slaveholders and poor whites — for now.

Nonetheless, many rural white southerners living in regions largely devoid of plantations even now choose to support the Union over the Confederacy. Such is the case of East Tennessee, which by a two-to-one margin weeks ago voted against secession.

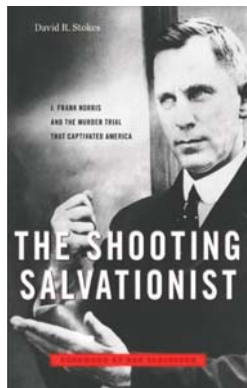
Sunday, August 11, is hot and hazy in Tennessee's Stockton Valley. Some 150 gather for worship at the Union Baptist Church. After morning services, the women gather in small groups on the church grounds.

Inside the church building, 34 Baptist men — common folk farmers and craftsmen — regroup to discuss a solemn question: Should they remain at home and quietly resist the

Union Baptist Church, an increasing number of African slaves are seizing opportunities to flee to Union lines. In response, this month the United States passes the Confiscation Act of 1861, allowing federals to seize property used in the southern insurrection.

In effect, the measure frees slaves (who are legal property) forced to participate in the Confederate war effort. The journey to emancipation has begun.

Meanwhile, in Kentucky, the Campbell County Association of Baptists issues a circular letter to be distributed to member congregations. The subject of the war is heavy on the hearts of the delegates as they lament the disunion of the nation. Kentucky's status as a border state with mixed loyalties is evident in the anguished feelings of delegates.



The Shooting Salvationist

By David R. Stokes
(2011, Steerforth)

J. Frank Norris story and trial hold lasting lessons, says author

FAIRFAX, Va. (ABP) —When the pastor of one of the nation’s largest churches shot and killed an unarmed man who entered his study threatening him, the whole nation took notice.

J. Frank Norris, the controversial pastor of First Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, who earlier had been indicted but acquitted on arson and perjury charges after his church burned, stood trial for first-degree capital murder — and beat the rap.

The courtroom drama drew page-one attention in newspapers across the country in the mid-1920s. But today, more people know Norris for his part in denominational schisms than for his role as defendant in a high-profile murder trial.

Nearly 40 years ago, David Stokes first heard about how Norris shot and killed D.E. Chipps, a wealthy Fort Worth lumberman and close friend of Mayor Henry Clay Meacham — whom Norris defamed both in the pulpit and in print. Stokes found the story captivating, and he began to collect material related to the event.

“It had all the elements of a powerful drama,” he said.

Four years ago, Stokes decided the story was too compelling to remain untold, and he started conducting serious research with the intention of writing about it.

Stokes’ book about the Norris murder trial, *The Shooting Salvationist*, first appeared as a privately published work under the title, *Apparent Danger*. Steerforth Press subsequently picked up and revised the book, and released it July 12 — the 85th anniversary of the day Norris shot Chipps.

“Any time there is a scandal involving a

clergyman, it’s an ugly thing. But who better to tell the story than someone with an inside view?” Stokes reasoned.

After all, his mother “was converted under the preaching of J. Frank Norris” at Temple Baptist Church in Detroit, Mich., although she later grew quite critical of him. Stokes grew up an independent fundamental Baptist and attended Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Mo., a school that grew from an offshoot of the movement Norris led.

Today, Stokes serves as pastor of Fair Oaks Church in Fairfax, Va., a nondenominational congregation in the suburban Washington, D.C., area.

Stokes sees the Norris/Chipps affair as an example of overreaction by Norris and overreaching by the prosecutors. He believes Norris probably did not act with premeditation to kill Chipps, but he responded in fear at the possibility of being physically assaulted by the burly lumberman, who had been drinking.

Attorney W.P. “Wild Bill” McLean and the other members of the high-powered legal team assembled to prosecute the case probably could have won if they had charged Norris with second-degree murder or manslaughter, but they became “blinded by hatred of Norris,” Stokes said.

“I think the jury fumbled the ball, but more than that, I think the prosecution fumbled it by insisting on a verdict of first-degree murder or nothing,” he said.

While *The Shooting Salvationist* contains all the elements of a true crime novel, Stokes sees it more as a character study of a “Lyndon Johnson-style larger-than-life” figure whose tremendous gifts and flagrant

flaws continue to shape a significant segment of conservative Christianity in the United States.

“The DNA of Norris still is seen in the whole independent Baptist and fundamentalist movement,” he said.

Norris exercised authoritarian leadership utilizing “coercion, control and manipulation ... and that continues to happen,” Stokes noted. “Norris was undoubtedly a person of great gifts and abilities, but he also operated out of dysfunction.”

To a large degree, the feuds Norris launched that affected the lives of many people — whether in local politics or denominations — grew out of “petty slights, hurt feelings and personality conflicts,” he added.

“But Norris was not as doctrinaire as people think he was. He was a pretty pragmatic, populist guy,” Stokes observed.

For instance, Norris built alliances with the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s primarily because they shared his fervent anti-Catholic views. But by the early 1950s, he embraced Catholics as comrades in the fight against “godless communism.”

“Norris always needed a bogeyman. He always needed an enemy,” Stokes said. And when it came to defeating an opponent, “Norris believed the end justifies the means.”

Perhaps the greatest lesson to learn from Norris’ life centers on his ability to build a church and a movement around his own powerful personality.

“There’s a lesson concerning the danger of any cult of personality — the worship of a person,” Stokes said. “And that transcends categories of politics, religion and entertainment.” **BT**

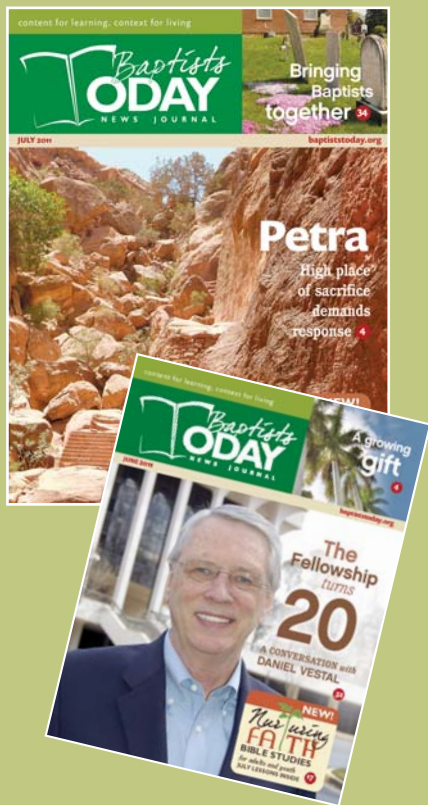
—Ken Camp is managing editor of the Baptist Standard, newspaper of Texas Baptists.



Ken Camp

“Norris always needed a bogeyman. He always needed an enemy.”

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Popular Bible teacher and writer **Tony W. Cartledge** writes each of the weekly Bible studies in *Baptists Today* (beginning on page 18). Themes are based on selected texts from the Revised Common Lectionary.

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Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Sept. 4, 2011

Lawful Love

With this text we begin a series of nine lessons taken from Paul's writings in Romans, Philippians and 1 Thessalonians. In one way or the other, these texts deal with the question of how Christ-followers should live in relationship to Christ and to each other, especially within the context of the church as a community of believers.

Boiling it down (vv. 8-10)

Are you a rule-follower? Many people find comfort in having an external list of guidelines, knowing what the rules are, and then following them. Others prefer to work from an internal system of values from which they develop their own behavioral decisions.

In Paul's day, Rabbinic Judaism, in an effort to "build a hedge about the law," had expanded Old Testament teachings to develop a system of 613 specific commandments. Some devout persons, such as the Pharisees, sought to live in accordance with every religious prescription, no matter how onerous. Other Jews were less inclined toward a legalistic faith, but still familiar with the complex expectations of the rabbis. ↓

As Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, he knew that some were former Jews who had come — as he had — from a background of prescribed behaviors that promoted religious and ethnic conformity. ↓ In contrast, believers from a Gentile background may have been unfamiliar with guidelines as basic as the Ten Commandments.

In the Book of Romans, Paul seeks to help both Jewish and Gentile Christians understand what kinds of behaviors and attitudes are most pleasing to God, without getting them caught up in a list of legalistic rules. In ch. 12, Paul encourages

readers to be transformed by the power of God's Spirit, becoming new people in Christ and loving one another with genuine love. Ch. 13 begins with a reminder that believers, like all people, have obligations that include the payment of taxes and other debts.

Beginning with 13:8, Paul tackles the issue of rule keeping by reducing the commandments to a single law, and speaks of it as one obligation that persists: the debt of love.

As he does so, Paul runs through a quick synopsis of four of the Ten Commandments (v. 9) — all negatively worded directives that have to do with attitudes or actions toward other people. Believers are to avoid adultery, theft, murder and covetousness — four examples of selfish actions that could bring harm to others. Paul tells his readers that all of those "thou shalt nots" could be summed up in the single positive command found in Lev. 19:18: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Paul was not the first or only New Testament thinker to summarize the law in terms of love. Paul rarely quotes Jesus, and the Gospel of John probably post-dates Paul's letter to the Romans, but he may have been familiar with the teaching attributed to Jesus in John 13:34, where he described the law of love as a new approach: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (citations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted).

In Paul's writings, he is particularly interested in maintaining the Old Testament connection, however. In an earlier letter to the Galatians, he had used the same argument found in Romans 13: "For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:14, citing Lev. 19:18).

And, the author of James spoke of the same command as the law of the kingdom: "You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Jas. 2:8).

In v. 10, Paul argues that a life of love fulfills the law because "love does no wrong to a neighbor." On the surface this suggests a rather anemic view of love, an approach that avoids harm but doesn't necessarily help, either.

It is unlikely, however, that Paul would think of love in such shallow terms. In these verses, he consistently uses the word *agape*, a rich term adopted by the early church to describe Christ-like, self-giving love.

Thus, we cannot mistake a life of non-involvement or indifference for love just because those attitudes do not cause direct harm to others.

Love may be many things, but it can never be indifferent. Jewish author, Holocaust survivor and Pulitzer Prize winner Elie Wiesel has often spoken of the dangers of indifference. In a speech at the White House in 1999, Wiesel said:

Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. ↓

Love is never indifferent. True love cares, acts and gives — even when it hurts. This theme is not unique to religious thought: admiration of sacrificial love is a common theme in literature. ↓

Living it out (vv. 11-14)

Paul follows his exhortation to love with a strong note of eschatological urgency. Like other early Christian leaders from Jesus (Mat. 10:23, Mark 9:1; 14:62) to James (Jas. 5:8) and Peter (1 Pet. 4:17), Paul believed the end of

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the age was near (see also 1 Thess. 4:17, 1 Cor. 15:51, Phil. 4:7). He and others seemed to take it for granted that Christ would soon return.

Paul offers no rationale for his expectation of imminent judgment, but writes as if the belief is common knowledge: “Besides this, you know what time it is ... For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers ... the night is far gone, the day is near.” With judgment day approaching, Paul insisted, believers should “wake from sleep” and rise up to “lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (excerpts from 12:11-12).

Waking from sleep suggests shaking off one’s spiritual lethargy and devoting one’s energy to a life of renewed commitment to Christ. Similar uses of the metaphor can be found in Mark 13:35-36, 1 Thes. 5:6 and Rev. 3:1-3.

The image of changing clothes is a favorite of Paul’s. He also speaks of both “putting on” and “taking off” in Eph. 4:22, 25 and Col. 3:8, 12. He employs the metaphor of “putting on” alone in 1 Thess. 5:8

and Eph. 6:11-17 (for similar references in classical literature, see Charles Talbert, *Romans* [Smyth & Helwys, 2002], 301).

The metaphor of changing clothes suggests that believers are first to put aside their sinful “works of darkness,” just as they would remove worn or dirty clothes. In v. 13, Paul spells out the sort of dark behaviors he has in mind: “reveling and drunkenness,” “debauchery and licentiousness,” “quarreling and jealousy” — all harmful actions that roughly parallel the earlier-mentioned commandments not to commit adultery, covet, steal or murder (v. 9).

Having removed their sinful/soiled garments, the newly awakened are then to adorn themselves with the “armor of light” (v. 12), an alternate way of saying “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14).

For Paul, putting on the “armor of light” enables one to “live honorably

during the day” — that is, to walk unashamed in the daylight, knowing that one’s behavior is worthy of respect rather than reproach.

Likewise, those who “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” are so focused on following Jesus that they “make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” This does not suggest that Christ-followers do not have human needs, that they do not get hungry or cold or sleepy.

Paul’s point is not that believers should forgo all human comfort or ignore physical needs, quit their jobs and camp out on a hill while awaiting the Second Coming. Rather, he wanted Christians to live with a conscious and constant awareness that Christ could return at any moment. Those who keep Christ’s return in mind are less likely to lose themselves in selfish or harmful behaviors, and more likely to give themselves in loving service to others. Motivated by eschatological awareness and clothed with Christ, believers have no need for a list of commandments, but fulfill the law by living in love.

Love Rules!

How do you feel about rules? Since we were small children, there have been rules to help us know how to act and what to do.

Most of these rules are for our protection (ex.: don’t touch a hot stove, look both ways before crossing the street). Some rules help us learn how to get along with others (ex.: tell the truth, be nice, say please and thank you).

Rules are nice because we do not have to think about them; we simply have to follow them. As we mature, we can see the wisdom in childhood rules, but we also grow in our ability to understand that we also need to learn to use good

judgment in our actions. We can think about the right thing to do.

In Romans 13:8-14, Paul offers a way of thinking about how we live and act. He encourages Christians to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If we live by this principle, Paul argues, we not only will keep the law, but also will go beyond it and live more like Jesus.

Love is one of the most powerful forces in life. Loving others causes us to want to put their needs first. We want their happiness and well-being. When we love someone, it is a big deal.

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In the same way, being loved is the best thing that can happen to us. To know that someone else cares, hopes and wants to give of themselves for us can change our lives.

Paul knows the power of love. He experienced the life-changing love of God in his own life, and knows that same love is available to all who seek it.

Can we really love our neighbors? Can we go beyond rules and choose to treat others through love?

Think About It:

Who do you love? How does your love affect the way you treat them? What changes would you need to make to treat others through love?



Make a Choice:

Living according to rules is actually easier than living through love for others. Loving others requires us to think about our actions and motives more deeply. Which approach will guide your actions this week?



Pray:

Thank God for loving you and for giving you the ability to share love with others. Ask for the wisdom to be able to love others as you love yourself.



Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Sept. 11, 2011

You're Welcome — Really?

Does your church ever have disagreements? A major problem with churches is that they have so many people in them, and people have an alarming habit of being human. They have different opinions about life and culture and money and music and what you can do and what you can't do.

One reason the church has survived despite its diversity is that Paul's advice to the church at Rome has been a constant reminder that it's okay to be different, and that we are called to live together and love together despite our differences. 📖

Welcoming the weak (vv. 1-4)

Try to imagine what it must have been like to be among the first generation of Christ-followers. There was no New Testament, only stories about Jesus passed down by word of mouth, no doubt in different forms. Apostles such as Peter, James and John were considered to be "pillars" of the early church (Gal. 2:9), but they were far away from most congregations and hard to consult. Other leaders such as Paul and Barnabas traveled through much of the known world, establishing new churches in a variety of places and cultures, visiting rarely.

It's no wonder the churches were wracked by differing opinions on a variety of subjects. As Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, he knew that church members there were particularly divided over appropriate dietary habits. Today's text is very reminiscent of a similar issue Paul had addressed in 1 Corinthians 8-10, where some thought it was permissible to eat meat that had been ritually offered to idols before being sold in the markets, while others did not.

The controversy in Rome had

nothing to do with idols, but with whether one should eat meat at all. Apparently a number of believers in Rome were strict vegetarians, and they took issue with their brethren who brought a pot roast to the potluck: "Some believe in eating anything," Paul observed, "while the weak eat only vegetables" (v. 2).

Paul does not comment on the reason some believers had scruples about eating meat. The Jewish law did not proscribe the consumption of meat from cattle that had been properly drained of blood, but such carefully prepared fare was not always available. Thus, we recall the story about Daniel and his three friends choosing to eschew the king's "rich food" and to eat only vegetables (Dan. 1:5-16). Some believers in Rome may have given up meat for similar reasons.

Gentile Christians may have brought their own concerns, whether for philosophical reasons, 📖 or as holdovers from other religions they might have practiced. Whatever the background of their belief, Christian vegetarians were both numerous enough and vocal enough to cause painful dissension among the believers in Rome.

Church leaders in Rome seem to have regarded those who held such meal-time misgivings as "weak" in the faith, and Paul writes as if he accepted their judgment. Even so, Paul encourages the "strong" to accommodate those who still hold to unnecessary rules, without making a big issue out of their differences: "Welcome those who are weak in faith," he says, "but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions" (v. 1).

The word "welcome" translates a form of *proslambanō*, which literally means "take to." Elsewhere in the New Testament it means "accept" or "receive," and is often used for God's acceptance of sinners and Christians' acceptance of one another in fellowship. We welcome other Christians to the church family — not with the goal of converting them to our way of thinking — but because they are sisters and brothers in Christ. We cannot welcome others without accepting them.

Let's repeat that thought: we cannot truly welcome others without accepting them.

Today, we are more likely to admire those who have the self-discipline to follow a vegetarian diet, and would not consider them to be weak. Nevertheless, omnivores may label vegetarians or vegans as "health nuts," while those who abstain from meat may consider their carnivorous friends to be unenlightened. Paul's advice is clear: "Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them" (v. 3). It is not our place to judge those whom God has accepted (v. 4). 📖

Recognizing what matters (vv. 5-9)

Eating meat was not the only issue among the believers at Rome. Some church members held that certain days should be observed, probably by fasting. We don't know what days Paul has in mind, but Sabbath observance was probably one of them. Many Jewish converts to faith in Christ did not think of themselves as any less Jewish than before, so it is likely their ingrained observance of the Sabbath would have continued.

Observance of the special days in question must have involved abstaining from work or from food. Paul's concern is not the particular behavior, but the motive: "Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God" (v. 6).

Paul recognized such observances as a matter of personal choice, not a requirement of the law or of Christ. Some things are essential to the faith, but many matters of custom or preference — no matter how dear they may be to some individuals — are peripheral and not to be forced on the entire community.

How does one respond? Should the "strong" — those who recognize the

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inconsequential nature of certain scruples — insist on enjoying their freedom even though it pains more assiduous members of their faith family? Or, should the “weak” in faith be given power to impose their personal views on others?

Paul insists that all should refrain from judging and learn to accept each other despite their differences. He does suggest, however, that when meeting together (at least), the strong should be willing to forgo their freedom rather than offend those who have a weaker understanding of the faith.

We don't live or die to ourselves alone, Paul said (14:7-8). As we live for Christ, who died for us, we remember that Christ calls us to love others as he did, even if that means sacrificing our freedom for another's peace of mind.

As believers think about what they will and won't do, Paul suggests that all should follow their own conscience (“let all be fully convinced in their own minds,” v. 5b), so long as their desire is to honor the Lord (v. 6), and be considerate of others.

other. The more conservative should not stand in judgment over the more liberal, and the more open-minded should not look down upon those who prefer a more rigid faith system. Paul enjoins believers to live in peace and mutual respect. 

Though we may not see eye to eye, we can still stand shoulder to shoulder in upholding the faith, or go forth hand in hand to carry Christ's love into the world. It is not our place to pass judgment on those who disagree with us; it is our place to live out the call of God to us according to the dictates of our own conscience, knowing that God is our judge (vv. 10-11). That is what Baptists call “soul freedom” or “the priesthood of the believer.” That kind of relationship is a great privilege, but it also brings a great responsibility.

Christians are called to live before God and for God. We do that best when we live out of a compassionate heart rather than a judgmental mind. That is not just what it means to live in peace. That is what it means to live as Christians, period.

Leaving Judgment to Jesus (vv. 10-12)

In summary, Paul seems to be dealing with two main groups in the Roman church. One is more legalistic, while the other is more broad-minded. In Paul's view, the more conservative, scrupulous group is weaker in the faith, still holding on to vestiges of salvation by works, unable to accept the full measure of the gospel. Paul regarded the more moderate group as stronger in the faith because they were no longer in bondage to legalism. Still, it is important to note that Paul regarded both groups as Christian: both were seeking to honor God, and God was honored by their worship.

For this reason Christians should not take a judgmental attitude toward each

Loving or Judging?

First impressions are really difficult to avoid. When we see someone, it is easy to look at her clothes and hair, how she acts, and who she's with and jump to immediate conclusions. Not surprisingly, making judgments based on first impressions can easily lead us to misunderstand someone.

Even with people we already know, we can run into problems when we judge their actions or they judge ours. When we judge others, we automatically place ourselves above them, and assume that our point of view is superior.

If you have ever felt a “judging stare” or overheard a “judging comment” about yourself, you understand how much it can hurt. The person

doing the judging does not know your world or your heart, and yet he feels he is in a position to judge you.

Just as we hurt when others judge us, we should avoid judging others.

In today's passage, Romans 14:1-12, Paul warns Christians about the problems in relationships that judging can bring. Rather than seeing ourselves as better than others, Paul reminds us that we all stand on equal ground before God. It is our job to love one another, and judging is God's role. When we take on God's role as judge over someone else, it can make doing our job of loving one another even harder.

Youth • September 11, 2011

Sometimes we may find ourselves thinking that our churches should be full of people who look alike, dress alike, talk alike, listen to the same kinds of music, and have the same ideas about how to live. Yet, Paul reminds us that the church is to be a place where all are welcome — in spite of our differences — because we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

How can we help our churches be places where all people are welcome?

How can we help ourselves avoid the impulse to judge others? Perhaps one way is to remember that it is our job to love others, and God's job to be the judge.

Think About It:

How often do you find yourself judging someone else? Does your judging make it easier or harder to love them? How do you feel when someone else judges you or your actions?



Make a Choice:

Will you choose to leave the judging of others to God? Will you choose to accept the role of loving others? How can you help your youth group be a place that is more about loving than judging?



Pray:

Pray for forgiveness for the times you have judged others. Ask God for the strength and wisdom to love others — especially those who are different.



Thumbtacks



Romans 13:8-14
The Secret Word is **wake**.

9-4-11

Have you ever broken a very important rule? Did you forget a rule at school or accidentally do something that's not allowed? Or maybe you got angry and broke a rule on purpose, and ended up in the principal's office after school. When Luler the dog does something she's not supposed to do and we scold her, she hangs her head low and looks at us with sad hound eyes.

All of us have broken rules, even the best students, your parents and your principle. Does that make you feel better? Think of some rules you keep. Rules are there so that things work best for everyone. They are important, but no one in the world can live without breaking a rule or making a mistake. It's impossible! And sometimes the harder you try to keep all the rules, the more mistakes you make. It can be confusing to have too many rules.

The missionary Paul is writing here in his letter to the new Jesus-followers in Rome that it is better to keep just one rule in mind: have the same love for every person that you have for yourself. Do to others what you want them to do to you. We call it the Golden Rule. The whole reason for most of our rules is to point us in the direction of treating other people with love. Paul wants us to wake up and understand that.

The next time you notice you are keeping a rule, wake up to the idea that it's a way to love another person as much as you love yourself. See if Paul was right and if the idea of love in the Golden Rule helps you keep all the other rules too.

Romans 14:1-12
The Secret Word is **bow**.

9-11-11

Maybe you have seen people from Asian cultures greet one another by bowing. To put your head below the head of another person is to humble yourself, showing respect to the person you are meeting. Some Christians bow when they enter a church or before they receive the Lord's Supper, showing respect for the presence of God. Showing respect for other people is important, whether they are people you know and love or people who are strangers. Everyone deserves respect just because they are human beings.

In the United States of America we could show much more respect to one another than we do. Have you been surprised at someone's rudeness? Even Luler the dog knows how to show respect: she puts her ears back, sits and waits calmly. She knows she's not the master.

This part of Paul's letter to his church friends in Rome is about having respect for people who are very different from them. He describes people who eat different foods (do you know someone who is a vegetarian?) and worship on different days (do you know someone who is Jewish and worships on Friday night or Saturday?), and he encourages Jesus-followers to make room for every person—to show respect.

Baptists believe in an important idea called "soul competency," which means we believe every person can talk to and learn about God for himself or herself. Paul is asking in this letter for Jesus-followers to teach and have respect for that same ability in others. It's a way of bowing to the presence of God in another person. It's a way of seeing that we *all* belong to God.

Today we mark the 10th anniversary of a terrible day when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Maybe you were too little to remember that day or were not even born yet, but you've listened to people describe it. People still hurt and are sad about the death and loss suffered that day. We hope for healing and for a chance to make the world a place where that kind of thing can never happen to anyone again.

If Paul could talk to us now, he would probably remind us that Christ is the Lord of those who died and of us who still live. He'd encourage us to practice the art of showing respect for the God-discernment in people who are different from us. He'd want us to make room for different ways people hear God's voice calling us to follow. What do you discern God calling you to do?



Philippians 1:21-30
The Secret Word is *worthy*.

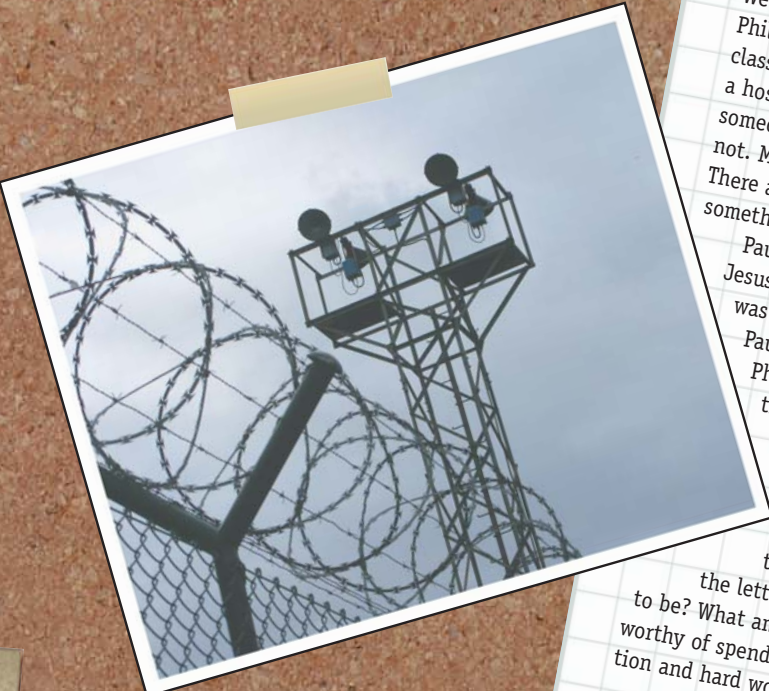
9-18-11

We believe Paul was in jail in Rome when he wrote his letter to the new church at Phillipi. Have you ever been somewhere you felt was like a jail? You've been in a classroom at school when you wanted to be playing. Maybe you've been stuck in a hospital bed with an illness or at home too sick to get up and have fun. Maybe someone in your family went on a wonderful trip and you wanted to go but could not. Maybe someone you loved died, and you felt sad and alone without that person. There are many ways people can feel imprisoned, as if they are being held down by something and can't get free, no matter how hard they try.

Paul is deciding if it's better to keep living in jail and writing letters to the Jesus-followers, or to give up and die to be with Christ in heaven. This tells us he was feeling very bad, very lonely and very helpless. But God must have given Paul strength and hope, because he decided to keep living so he could visit the Phillippians again one day. He wrote them this letter telling them that while they waited for him to get out of jail and return, he wanted them to behave in a way that would make him proud of them and would honor God.

It may be hard for us to imagine how helpless Paul was feeling since most of us have never been in jail! But we still know what it's like to be stuck and unable to do what we want. We know how important it is to be free to make our own choices. We can follow his advice in the letter, and carefully make these decisions: What kind of person am I going to be? What am I going to do to show people I am a Jesus-follower? What choice is worthy of spending my valuable time on? What am I proud to say is worth my attention and hard work on?

If we made a list of the number of minutes we spend on each task — video games, texting friends, reading, doing chores, being in class, taking care of pets, playing with friends — do we spend the most time on the things that show love to people? Do we spend precious time on things that would make Jesus proud of us? Do we use our freedom fully, or do we act like we're stuck when we are really not? Choose something today that Paul would call worthy of Jesus-followers.



Philippians 2:1-13
The Secret Word is *tongue*.

9-25-11

Did you know there are poems in the Bible? Some are easy to find, but others are hidden like this one. This is a great poem that Paul knew and decided to put into his letter to his friends in Phillipi. "Let this mind be in you which is in Jesus" means for us to "think like Jesus thinks." Maybe you have seen people wearing bracelets or driving in cars with bumper stickers that read, "What Would Jesus Do?" or WWJD for short. It's a pretty good question to ask, and it's what Paul is asking here.

Trying to think like Jesus or do what Jesus would do is a difficult thing. After all, we are not Jesus! But Paul reminds us that it was difficult for Jesus too. Jesus was as human as we are, and the mercy and love he showed to people were as hard for him as they are for us. For example, think of someone who hurt you, who asked you to forgive them. It can feel impossible to forgive a hurt sometimes, even if it's done by someone you love. This is when we must "think like Jesus thinks" and do our best to find a way to forgive. It is not easy. Sometimes we will fail.

It's this Holy Spirit that is in our own minds and hearts, giving us understanding and helping us think like Jesus thinks. Is it possible for you and me to have some of the same ideas Jesus had? Sure! Every time your idea is to humble yourself, love, forgive, ask forgiveness, do what is fair, include someone who's left out, or to comfort someone who hurts, you are "letting this mind be in you which was also in Jesus." You are acting out the great poem. You don't have to use only your tongue and your words to say these ideas. Your actions will show people who it is you follow if you think like Jesus thinks. What can you do differently today that is like what Jesus would do?



Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Sept. 18, 2011

Live Worthily

I could see that he was suffering, not only from the pain of the cancer that ate at his body, but also from the certain knowledge that his remaining days on earth would be few. He spoke wistfully as he confided to me a struggle within. On the one hand, he wanted to remain alive and spend more time with his family. On the other hand, he had begun to see death as a release from pain and struggle. And, since he was a firm believer in Christ, he could also see death as a doorway to the hope of a new life. Should he continue receiving painful treatments that offered little hope?

Have you known people who faced similar struggles? Have you ever imagined such thoughts yourself? In today's text, Paul speaks publicly, almost shockingly, of his own internal debate over competing desires to live or to die.

Paul's friends in Philippi

Paul seems to have had a special relationship with the Christians in Philippi. The story of their first encounter is told in Acts 16:11-40, the point at which Luke (the author of Acts) first injects himself into the story by using the pronoun "we." Readers have often wondered if Paul's Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9-10) may have led him to Luke.

From the beginning, Paul and the people in Philippi maintained a close relationship. He stayed in touch with them through Timothy (Acts 19:21-23; Phil. 2:19, 20) and apparently made at least two other visits (Acts 20:1-3). Later, the Philippians sent gifts to support him while he was imprisoned (Phil. 4:15-16).

Paul's genuine warmth and personal concern for the Philippians is particularly evident in this epistle. Like other churches to which Paul wrote, however, the Philippians also experienced internal

conflict. Paul speaks personally to two women who had a disagreement that had impeded their teamwork (Euodia and Syntyche, Phil. 4:2-3). Paul's various appeals for unity suggest there were other divisions also.

Women seem to have played an especially important role in the church at Philippi. Lydia, the first convert there, hosted the church and provided for Paul's traveling party. She seems to have set the tone for a church that rallied behind Paul, like a local Woman's Missionary Union circle, to support him in his work and during his imprisonment.

And, even though Paul chides Euodia and Syntyche for their grievances against each other, he speaks proudly of how they had worked faithfully with him in advancing the gospel (Phil. 4:3). Paul clearly saw them as co-workers who had labored side by side with him and his other companions in establishing the church.

Paul's conundrum (vv. 21-26)

Today's text begins as Paul concludes a section of "news from home" (1:12-26), and continues as he shifts to a list of instructions for the church (1:27-2:18).

After greeting his readers (vv. 1-2) and offering a prayer of thanksgiving (vv. 3-11) in typical fashion, Paul updates the Philippians on his personal situation: he was in prison, but his confinement had worked out for good, encouraging others to spread the gospel with boldness (vv. 12-14). Though Paul believed some preachers had mixed motives, he rejoiced that the Christ was being proclaimed (vv. 15-18). Paul had confidence that he himself would be delivered (whether from prison or in an ultimate sense is not clear), but declared his desire to honor Christ and be without shame whether he lived or died (vv. 19-20).

With this thought, Paul segues into today's text, in which he gives outward voice to an internal debate regarding the competing desires of live and work in Christ's behalf, or to die and rest in Christ's company (vv. 21-26). Paul sees

a positive outcome to whatever happens, expressed in the often-memorized verse: "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (v. 21, KJV).

Though Paul looks forward to death, he thinks it would be better for the Philippians (and others) if he remains alive and able to assist them. He is so convinced of this that he expresses optimism strong enough to use the verb "I know" in concluding "I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith" (v. 25), and that he would come to them again (v. 26).

Paul's calm contemplation of death may be instructive. At some point, unless we die suddenly and without forethought, all of us must face the inevitability of death. Some people achieve a sense of equanimity about life's close, while others fear death and resist it until their last breath. How might Paul's sharing of his own internal debate assist us in making peace with the prospect of our own demise?

Paul's encouragement (vv. 27-30)

Having concluded that his preferred option was to continue living, Paul speaks to the Philippians about their own lives, asking them to live "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (v. 27).

Paul spoke of three things that would demonstrate the Philippians' success in worthy living. They would be "standing firm in one spirit," "striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel," and "in no way intimidated by your opponents" (vv. 27-28).

Interpreters are divided as to whether Paul intends "standing firm in one spirit (*pneuma*)" as a reference to the Holy Spirit, or simply as a metaphor of their common commitment. The latter is more likely. In either case, Paul's desire is that together they "stand firm," a desire he later repeats (4:1).

A similar thought is found in the following phrase, though it is obscured by most translations. "Striving side by side" (NRSV) translates a phrase that is more literally "one soul (*psuche*), struggling

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together ...” Paul knows the Philippians will fare best if they both stand as one, and work as one.

The word translated as “striving together” (NRSV), “contending as one man” (NIV), or “contending side by side” (NET) is from a rare verb (*sunathleō*) that appears in the New Testament only here and in 4:3, where it refers to the joint efforts of Eudoia and Syntyche. Outside of the Bible, the word was used in reference to sports that require team effort: it is composed of the prefix *sun* (with) and the verb *athleō* (struggle), the root of the English word “athlete.”

Strengthened by a unified front, the believers in Philippi could stand firm and not be intimidated by their opponents. The word behind “intimidated” appears only here in the New Testament. In classical Greek, it could describe a timid horse that shied away from its handlers.

But who were these intimidating opponents? Paul does not say. He himself faced opposition from the city authorities in Philippi, who may have continued to make life hard for the young

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church. Some contemporary interpreters believe the primary opponents were non-Christians who ostracized the believers, causing them economic hardship and even physical suffering.

Other commentators think it more likely that Paul has in mind the same opponents described in ch. 3, aggressive Jewish evangelists who had sought to scuttle the young church.

Whoever the church’s antagonists might be, Paul saw the Philippians’ firm stance of faith in the gospel as a sign of sure salvation, even though they must suffer in the short term. With an intriguing turn of phrase, Paul went on to speak of the Philippians’ suffering as something that had been granted them by Christ (v. 29). The NRSV’s “privilege” is not in the text, which literally says “for he has given to you on Christ’s behalf ...”

Perhaps Paul is reflecting on the notion of citizenship that carries both rights and responsibilities: the gift of belief in Christ went hand in hand with the possibility of suffering for Christ’s sake.

Paul concludes his call to faithful living with a reminder that he and the Philippians shared in the same struggle, the suffering that can result when the gospel is proclaimed in an unfriendly environment. The word for “struggle” is *agon*. It was used to describe an athletic contest in the arena, and came to be used of other struggles, both inner and outer. The English word “agony” can be traced back to it.

Contemporary believers, at least in tolerant climes such as America, rarely face the kind of outward opposition of which Paul spoke. Most of us are so culturally assimilated that there is little about our faith that is distinctive. This leaves few real struggles that relate directly to our faith, and none that compare with the difficulties faced by Paul and the Philippian believers.

Perhaps we would do well to ask ourselves why.

Faith Wins

Do you ever read a passage from the Bible and puzzle over what it means? You are not alone. Like any ancient document, the differences in language, culture and worldview can make it tough to understand. Today’s passage, from Philippians 1:21-30, might fall into the “hard to get” texts.

Paul and the early church lived in a world quite different than ours. They lived in regions ruled by the Roman Empire, and had to practice their faith in that culture. The empire insisted that Caesar was a god, and insisted on its citizens saying things like “Caesar is Lord.” Many Christians got into trouble for refusing to treat or speak of

Caesar as a god. Even the belief that there was only one God was a radical idea to most people.

While leaders of the Roman Empire allowed many religions to be practiced, they could be brutal in their treatment of those who refused to add the Roman religious practices to their own. Many Christians refused and were either imprisoned or killed for their views. Their world was a difficult and dangerous place for the Christian faith to be practiced. The church at Philippi understood these pressures and threats.

Paul wrote to the Philippians to encourage them. He spent time in jail for practicing his faith, and thus could relate to the fears of the young church.

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By writing “For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain,” he is admitting that regardless of what happens to him, his faith will prevail. For as he lives, he can do good things for God and these new churches. If he dies — which is a real option with his tendency to get the attention of the Roman authorities — his faith will bring him into God’s presence.

Our culture does not threaten to imprison or kill us for practicing our faith. Yet, if we are faithful followers of Jesus and work to love others as ourselves, we may well find ourselves ridiculed. Paul’s words of encouragement, and his call to follow our faith regardless of how others treat us, still make sense for Christians today.

Think About It:

When you follow Jesus and love others as yourself, how do others treat you? Is there a cost to being a Christ-follower? When you love others as yourself, how do you feel? How does it change you?



Make a Choice:

Paul found he could make a difference through his faith in the lives of others. What difference does your faith lead you to make in the lives of those you meet? What do you feel your faith leading you to do for others?



Pray:

Thank God for the power of faith. Ask God to use your faith to make the lives of others better. Ask God to show you how to love others, even those who are quite different.



Bible Study

with Tony W. Cartledge

Sept. 25, 2011

Live Mindfully

I am a member of a minority group — the 10 percent or so of the population who are incurably left-handed. We southpaws take some comfort in the knowledge that, since the body's motor controls are generally controlled by the opposite side of the brain, left-handed folk can claim to be the only ones who are in their "right minds."

In his very personal letter to the Christians in Philippi, Paul had a lot to say about being right-minded, though in a very different context. What does it mean to have the right mind for following Christ?

Have one mind ... (vv. 1-4)

Today's text demonstrates Paul's rhetorical and persuasive skill. In poetic, perhaps even hymnic language, the apostle pleads with the Philippians to overcome apparent divisions among them by uniting with a common mind, namely, the mind of Christ. ↓

In vv. 1-4, Paul carefully constructs an appeal for harmony, putting together three sets of thoughts, each containing four units. The first of these, v. 1, consists of four clauses that appear to be conditional, but only to make Paul's appeal more forceful.

Paul piles up reminders that Christ has blessed the believers with the "encouragement of Christ," the "consolation of love," the "fellowship of the spirit" and its outworking in compassion and affection. He then speaks of four ways the Philippians should respond to these realities: he calls them to "be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."

The first and last responses both relate to the way we think, using the verb *phroneō*, one of Paul's favorite words. The opening "be of the same mind" could

literally be translated "think the same," and the closing "of one mind" means "the same thinking." Paul is not suggesting that church members become mental clones of each other and agree on every point, but that they orient their thinking toward harmonious service to Christ. It is not so much that they agree on all the same ideas, but that they share the same cooperative attitude. ↓

Believers can unite their thinking in common cause because they share the same love and are united in spirit: "being in full accord" translates *sumpsuchoi*, which combines "with" (*sum*) and "soul" (*psuche*) to mean something like "fellow-souled" or "united in spirit." A common love and a common spirit give rise to a common purpose, a common way of thinking.

Paul now pleads with them to demonstrate their loving attitude through mutual service and humility (vv. 3-4). Again, his appeal has four components: the first and third say what they should *not* do (act from selfish ambition or conceit, focus on their own interests), while the second and fourth explain what they *should* do (humbly regard others as better than themselves, look out for the interests of others).

Readers may be troubled by Paul's admonition to "regard others as better than yourselves" (v. 3b), but Paul's concern is not with a qualitative assessment of competency or maturity, but a measure of importance. The word translated "better than" is the participle of a verb formed by combining "above" or "higher" (*hyper*) and the verb of being (*echo*). To regard others as "being above" us is not to make a value judgment about their character or competency, but to consider their needs as more important than our own.

Even that nuance does not make the advice any easier to follow. We live in a culture largely defined by the mantra "Looking out for Number One." If we have learned what it is to live in community as followers of Christ, however, we have heard Jesus' insistence that those who would be great must learn to be servants, unselfishly loving others as he loved us.

What are some practical ways we might see this attitude being worked out (1) within the fellowship of a church and (2) as a church relates to its larger community?

How are we acting now to "not look after our own interests, but after the interests of others"? What are some ways we could do that more faithfully?

The mind of Christ ... (vv. 5-11)

Having called for harmonious love and self-giving humility, Paul grounds his appeal on the example of Christ as a model for emulation. Reverting again to a form of *phronein*, Paul calls the Philippians to think as Christ thought, to have the same selfless disposition toward others that Jesus modeled and instructed his disciples to follow. ↓

What follows in vv. 6-11 is so artfully arranged and worded that scholars typically refer to it as a hymn, though without agreement as to whether Paul quoted it or wrote it. Arranging the text into symmetrical verses requires deleting a few phrases as later additions, however, and even then scholars disagree on how the text should be arranged.

The text moves into two stages. In the opening section (vv. 6-8) Christ acts to empty himself, take on human form, and live as a servant so obedient that he was willing to die a humiliating death on a cross. In the second part (vv. 9-11) God acts to exalt Jesus and give him the highest name of all.

Interpreters and theologians have long debated the precise meaning of these verses, but we need not worry about every nuance. In some way, we are to understand that Christ was pre-existent and on equal standing with God, but he did not consider this position something to be grasped or held onto.

Rather, Christ was willing to "empty himself." Does this mean he stopped being divine? That he gave up divine attributes and powers? That he surrendered divine prerogatives? We cannot claim to understand every shade of meaning, but the end

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result is the incarnation, that Christ came to earth in the physical form of a human. He called himself the “son of man.” He became susceptible to temptation, hunger, thirst and every other desire known to humans. Yet, the church has held through the years that, while Christ became “fully human,” he was also “fully divine.”

Paul emphasizes that Christ did more than simply become human: he became a slave, a servant to others, obedient to the end. Paul’s picture of Christ’s earthly servitude that led to heavenly glory is not unlike Jesus’ own instruction to his disciples, who struggled with each other for positions of leadership: “But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all” (Mark 10:43-44).^U

None of Christ’s followers, however, could pretend to contend for Jesus’ position as the one who has a “name above every name” (v. 9). On the surface this might appear to be the name “Jesus,” for v. 10 says “at the name of Jesus every knee should bend ...” It is more likely, however,

that the “name above every name” is not “Jesus” — a common earthly name he already possessed — but “Lord.” Paul goes on to say that all tongues will confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord” (v. 11).

The word *kurios* was commonly used in the Septuagint (the earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament) to translate the divine name Yahweh, commonly translated as “LORD” (all uppercase) to distinguish it from “*adonai*,” which could also mean “Lord,” but in a less personal sense.

Paul’s declaration, whether quoting from a hymn or composing spontaneously, would have been encouraging, but also dangerous. “Jesus Christ is Lord” is often regarded as the earliest Christian confession — and is no doubt something the Philippian Christians already professed. That claim, however, ran squarely in opposition to Rome’s political dogma that

“Caesar is lord.” This may have contributed to the oppression Paul hinted at in speaking of their opponents (1:28).

Obedient minds ... (vv. 12-13)

While v. 11 would be an ideal place to conclude the study, the lectionary text continues through the next two verses, where Paul begins a series of exhortations for the Philippians to follow Christ’s example and live obedient lives.^U

“Therefore” connects vv. 6-11 to the following section: It is because of the Philippians’ devotion to Christ, the perfect model of humble obedience, that they should also demonstrate similar fidelity.

The NRSV and some other translations add the word “me” to v. 12, as if Paul refers to them obeying him, but the addition is unnecessary. The subject at hand is obedience to God, not to Paul.

Believers, inspired by Christ, are called to live in obedience to God and reverence before God, as they are empowered by God to live out their salvation in Christ.

Humble Faith

Shows like *American Idol* are fun to watch. Young people are given a chance to reveal their talent, become famous and launch a music career. Many of us may secretly wonder what it would be like to find that level of fame and success. Yet, how would achieving such success change us? How would we treat other people or handle our wealth and influence? Would it change our personality?

What happens when your schoolmates are successful? When someone gets the best grades, makes the game-winning score, or is elected team captain or the head of a club, does it change how that person treats or relates to others?

Jesus faced similar issues. He was the Son of God, and had great power and the ability to perform miracles and inspire crowds. Yet, Jesus was remarkably humble, and chose to live and die as a servant rather than to gain wealth, influence and power over others.

In this week’s passage, Philippians 2:1-13, Paul again calls on the Philippians to treat one another with love and to work together for good. He goes on to use a poem or hymn that holds up Jesus as the example of such humble love. Jesus, who deserved to be worshipped and honored, gave up such status to become a servant of others.

Youth • September 25, 2011

Sometimes Christians have trouble being humble. We are drawn into wanting our way, to looking down on others who do not live or believe as we do, and to seeking our own needs ahead of the needs of others. Christians can be demanding and judgmental, yet Jesus clearly had a different mindset.

Paul encouraged the Philippian Christians to “let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” What do you think the “mind of Christ” is like, from reading this passage?

Think About It:

Remember other stories from Jesus’ life. Where else do we see signs of his humility? What does it mean to be humble? What makes being humble so difficult?



Make a Choice:

This week, work hard to be humble — to put the needs of others ahead of your own. Pay attention to how it makes you feel and how others respond. Is a life of humility one you will choose?



Pray:

Thank God for a savior who cared enough about us to become one of us. Ask God for the wisdom to practice humility with others.





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Preying on the praying crowd

Selections from recent blogs at
baptiststoday.org

By John Pierce
Executive Editor

Few things disgust me like slick TV preachers preying on the aging and the ignorant for their own financial gain. I try to avoid them, but sometimes my channel surfing leads me there.

Most often I move ahead quickly — but other times I watch the shameful manipulation that takes place in the name of a faith that has no resemblance to the life and teachings of the One being claimed.

Unless it's a rerun of *The Waltons*, I typically don't pause the remote control on the Inspirational Channel because, well, it doesn't inspire me. But it can provide fodder for my writing.

During a recent pause, *Campmeeting* was putting full-court pressure on viewers with their false promises of a give-to-get heresy: "Sow your seed gift of \$1,000."

Slick. Sick.

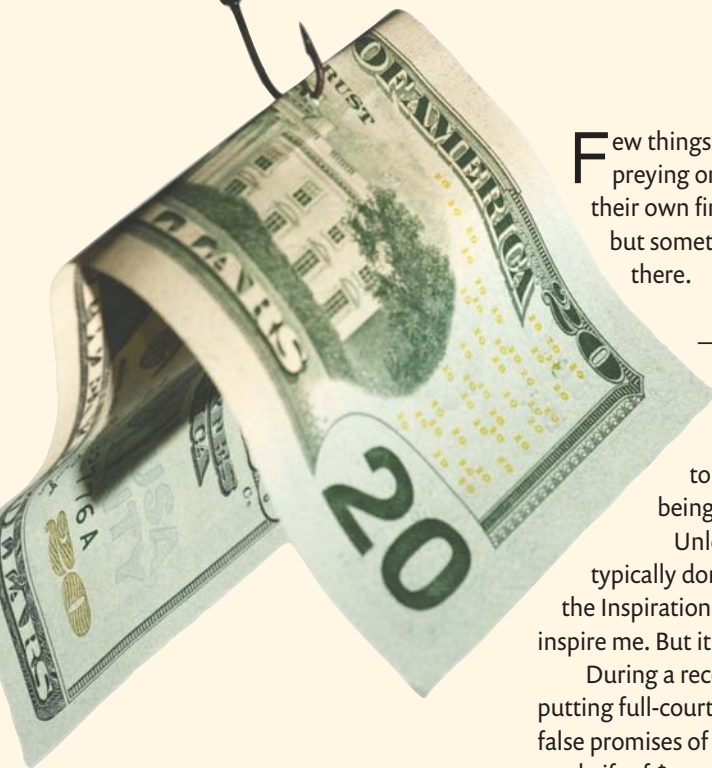
Time and time again surveys have shown that the elderly and less educated — often those with limited resources — are most susceptible to such hucksterism.

In churches and other settings all around the world, there are so many wonderful, gifted and committed clergy of the highest integrity. They are honest, caring and self-giving.

Yet their reputations get sullied every time some nattily-attired huckster on TV tries to sell this re-packaged, mislabeled gospel like a ShamWow, PedEgg or Slap-Chop.

We need to keep reminding all who have ears to hear that the so-called "prosperity gospel" is designed to make the seller rich, not bring divine blessings to the buyer. And while sending cash to slick TV preachers is certainly "good news" to them, it has absolutely nothing to do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The clear difference can be seen by turning off the TV showmanship and reading a first-hand account by either Mark, Luke, Matthew or John. **BT**



A free reminder

By Tony W. Cartledge
Contributing Editor

The annual gathering of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, began with preliminary meetings on July 3.

A well-attended communications conference — jointly sponsored by the BWA and the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (one of six global regions within BWA) — revealed some interesting realities.

On July 4, in a session at Kuala Lumpur Baptist Church, BWA communications director Eron Henry asked participants to talk about needs and obstacles they confront in getting their message out through various forms of media.

Along with expected issues like finding good writers and technology matters such as gaining better Internet access, an obstacle unfamiliar to Americans popped up time and again: freedom.

Many Baptists live in countries that frown upon or outlaw any perceived attempts to evangelize citizens or persuade them to convert from another religion to Christianity.



Thus, Baptist communicators who want to share the good news about Christ and about their church or organization face restrictions on what can be posted or published.

In some cases, the government may restrict access to social media websites like Facebook; in others, Baptist communicators know that government watchdogs may be

reading their publications, with potentially negative consequences.

Hearing this discussion on America's Independence Day, I couldn't help but be thankful for precious gifts so taken for granted that we often overlook them completely: the privileges of free speech and a free press are blessings that should not remain uncoun- **BT**

Classifieds

Senior Pastor: First Baptist Church of Laurens, S.C., seeks a visionary leader to supervise a full-time ministerial staff of three in leading our church in the worship of God and in achieving the purposes to which God is leading us. FBC Laurens recently completed an extensive renovation of facilities and an in-depth self-study to prepare ourselves for a future of service to God under the leadership of an experienced minister with an accredited seminary education. FBC Laurens embraces the roles of women in ministry through a dual affiliation with CBF and SBC. Submit résumés by Aug. 31 to Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 300 W. Main St., Laurens, SC 29360.

Senior Pastor: First Baptist Church of Shepherdsville, Ky., a moderate church with CBF affiliation, seeks a full-time senior pastor responsible for contemporary/blended worship, preaching and pastoral care. The church has one additional full-time minister and three part-time ministers. The pastor should have some successful pastoral experience and should be seminary trained. Additional information about the church and the position are available at fbc-shepherdsville.org. Email résumés to hwise@insightbb.com or mail to Harley Wise, Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 186, Shepherdsville, KY 40165.

Pastor: Augusta Heights Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., seeks an innovative, passionate pastor with proven experience in church growth and outreach and the ability to design inspiring, creative worship experiences. Requirements include accredited seminary education, ministry experience and strong preaching skills. AHBC is a diverse congregation that affirms roles of women in ministry through a dual affiliation with CBF and SBC. Submit résumés to resumes@augustaheights.org.

Associate Pastor: McLean (Va.) Baptist Church (mcleanbaptist.org), a Christ-centered, mission-minded, inclusive, moderate church in the greater Washington, D.C., metro area, seeks an experienced associate pastor for discipleship and faith formations for all ages, children to senior adults. Reply to resume@mcleanbaptist.org.

Music Minister: First Baptist Church of Valdese, N.C., a growing church in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, seeks a versatile full-time leader for our chancel choir and other music ministries. We affirm women in ministry and worship in a blended service. The best candidates will be comfortable with both traditional and contemporary music and competent in a secondary area of ministry, such as administration or technology. For a detailed job description, consult valdesefirstbaptist.org. Send résumés and inquiries to stуди87013@aol.com.

Minister to Children and Young Families: Roswell First Baptist Church, a vibrant, growing church, located in the beautiful suburban Atlanta community of Roswell, Ga., is looking for an individual to develop a comprehensive ministry to children and adults with preschool and elementary children, as well as the newly married with emphasis upon meeting the needs of young families. The ideal person will bring a creative zest that mirrors and expands the RFBC vision and mission statement, "Sharing Jesus Christ with those who do not know Him; Nurturing and Growing those who do." The candidate should possess the gifts and talents to plan, implement, and conduct programs and events that grow Christian families and attract new families to the Lord and to First Baptist Church. If you feel led to pursue this opportunity, please review the detailed job description on our website, rfbc.org, and submit your résumé and cover letter to search@rfbc.org.

Minister to Children and Families

First Baptist Church Dalton, Ga., affiliated with CBF, is seeking a minister to children and families. Our candidate must possess strong faith in Jesus Christ and Christ's call to work with children in a loving and nurturing environment.

The position manages all aspects of ministry: educating children birth-grade 5, training volunteers, coordinating activities, selecting curriculum, outreach, administration and ministerial support, while maintaining high standards of religious education for children.

The MCF will also supervise the director of our children's learning center. Seminary training is preferred. Experience working with children (2+ years) is required.

Applicants should submit résumés to Bill Ireland at bireland@firstbaptistdalton.com or Spencer Gazaway at mcf.search@gmail.com.

Part-Time Minister to Children

Qualifications:

- bachelor's degree in religion, early childhood education, human services or related field
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PEOPLE

Wati Aier, principal of the Oriental Theological Seminary in Dimapur, India, received the 2011 Baptist World Alliance Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award July 9. He convened a forum that brought together leaders of three armed nationalist groups in Nagaland who pledged to end longtime hostilities.

Babs Baugh was recognized at a June 23 meeting of the Baptist Center for Ethics as EthicsDaily.com's 2010 "Baptist of the Year." She is president of the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation based in San Antonio, Texas.

Chris Cadenhead is pastor of Bayshore Baptist Church in Tampa, Fla., after having served at Augusta Road Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C.

James M. Dunn received the J.M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award at the June 24 Religious Liberty Council luncheon in Tampa sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. Dunn, former director of the BJC, now teaches at Wake Forest University's divinity school.

Baptist Women in Ministry presented its 2011 Addie Davis awards to **Griselda Escobar** and **Kyndall Renfro**. Escobar, who received the award for outstanding leadership in pastoral ministry, is a recent graduate of Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon Seminary and is serving as a chaplain at Trinity Mother Frances Hospitals and Clinics in Tyler, Texas. Renfro, who received the award for excellence in preaching, is a recent graduate of Truett Seminary.

Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, received the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board's (MMBB) first Century of Service Leadership Award June 23.

Tommy Teague died of an apparent heart attack June 23 while leading church members on a tour of Israel. He was longtime pastor at North Richland Hills Baptist Church in Texas, and also served churches in Virginia and Florida.

PLACES

Central Baptist Theological Seminary Tennessee is now fully accredited to award the master of divinity and diploma in theology degrees. In 2005 the historic Kansas seminary began offering classes at First Baptist Church of Murfreesboro, Tenn. Ircel Harrison is director. **BT**

By Brett Younger

Bluff the reader

Each Saturday, *Wait Wait Don't Tell Me! The National Public Radio News Quiz* includes a segment called "Bluff the Listener." Callers are challenged to tell truth from fiction. Three stories are presented. Only one is factual. The stories usually feature politics, entertainment or sports. So far they have, for unfathomable reasons, skipped the fertile ground of Baptist history. What if they finally corrected this oversight? Here are three stories of first Baptist churches. Which is the one true tale?

Story one: The first Baptist church in Maryland was a house that love built. Six-principle, foot-washing General Baptists began meeting in Lutherville in 1742. Their third pastor, Henry Loveall, baptized 48 new converts shortly after coming. Then the church began to hear rumors that Rev. Loveall was really Desolate Baker, a runaway indentured servant who was not only a criminal on the run, but also fleeing justice in the intimate company of another man's wife. Loveall fled to a church in Virginia, but the rumors followed him, so he returned to Maryland. Loveall watched his old church in Lutherville go from 181 members to 21. He lived as proof that ministerial gifts and ministerial ethics don't always go together — not even for Baptists named Rev. Loveall. Was there really a pastor named Henry Loveall who wasn't really named Henry Loveall?

Story two: The first Baptist church in Pennsylvania began in 1764 with a captive audience. Richard Curtis Sr. owned much of Asheville, N.C. The senior Richard provided financial backing when his son, Richard Curtis Jr., became pastor of a small Particular Baptist congregation, Mount Gilead. Then, Richard Jr. heard the Quaker John Woolman preach against slavery. Richard Jr. was so taken with Woolman that he followed him back to Pennsylvania and became part of the Friends community, working to convince slaveholders to free their slaves. Then, Richard Sr. died and left his son 14 slaves. Richard Jr., under what

he called "the clear urging of the Holy Spirit," founded a second Mount Gilead Baptist Church, this one in Philadelphia, the first Baptist church in Pennsylvania. Was Mount Gilead Baptist Church in Philadelphia a church where the servants really were servants?

Story three: The first Baptist church in Utah was the result of young love. Dwight Spencer was the single pastor of Mount Olivet, a Free Will Baptist church in Denver, Colo. At a political event he met the beguiling Margaret Taylor, daughter of Randolph Taylor, the pastor of First Methodist Church. Dwight was smitten and asked Margaret to marry him. Randolph Taylor forbade his daughter to marry one of the "big-and Baptists," so Dwight and Margaret eloped to Ogden, Utah. Dwight began a Baptist church in a blacksmith shop in 1874 and was surprised when the congregation filled with Ute Indians. Margaret didn't care for Indian culture, but it was still a shock when Margaret left the Baptists for the Mormons, and Dwight for Gordon Fletcher, a Mormon elder. A heartbroken Dwight resigned. The First Baptist Church in Utah lasted only a few months. The congregation never had a joint worship service with the Mormons. Is this a true story of big love in Utah?

Was the actual story Rev. Loveall's church in Maryland discovering its pastor was loving all in an inappropriate way, Rev. Curtis' inherited congregation in Pennsylvania or Rev. Spencer and his ex-Methodist, ex-Baptist ex-wife Mormon in Utah? For the answer we turn to Loyd Allen's page-turner of Baptist history, *You Are a Great People*: "In the end, the Baptist story in Maryland does not rest heavily on the reputation of its earliest ordained ministers, but Baptist work was weakened by the scandal. Eight years passed before another Baptist congregation was established in Maryland."

Congratulations to the many descendants of Henry Loveall, the residents of Lutherville and the church historians who answered correctly. **BT**



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

No pain, no change: Can a congregation transition without carnage?

By Chris Gambill

There is no change without pain. Change processes in congregations often have unintended as well as intended consequences.

Unintended consequences can include conflict, anger, grief, loss of energy and momentum, or even the loss of staff or members. Regardless of how well intentioned a change process may be, it has the potential to bring more harm than good.

For some congregations, these potential liabilities are enough to check any movement toward change. However, as most faith communities surely know, not changing also has serious liabilities and consequences.

Refusing change puts a congregation at risk of irrelevance or even extinction. Church history, both ancient and modern, is brimming with evidence that this can and still does happen.

The real challenge is to create transition processes that produce the kind of results congregations hope for and avoid as much as possible those things they least desire. With careful and prayerful planning, a congregation can transition without carnage.

When considering change, congregations should seek to be faithful to their own particular sense of calling. Scripture and tradition offer various points of view about change that can inform a congregation as it seeks to be faithful and relevant.

For example, in regard to change in general, scripture seems to revere and value both stability and change:

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8, NIV)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV)

'Refusing change puts a congregation at risk of irrelevance or even extinction.'

In our experience at the Center for Congregational Health, most congregational change processes fall along a continuum where one end represents a *revolutionary* approach and the other end an *evolutionary* approach.

A revolutionary approach is one typically carried out in a short timeframe and seeks to establish significantly different ways of thinking and behaving. An evolutionary approach typically utilizes a longer timeframe and may or may not seek to establish the degree of change sought through a revolutionary approach.

The biggest difference between the two approaches is the impact on the congregational members. Revolutionary change is hard to miss. Evolutionary change can happen so slowly that the transition is almost indiscernible. Both have a significant emotional, psychological and spiritual impact on members of a faith community.

For congregations ready for a revolutionary approach, the sudden and often dramatic change is welcomed by most people. However, if a congregation is not carefully prepared and does not have enough of a sense of urgency to support quick and dramatic change, then the transition may be resisted or rejected.

Quick change processes have less time to build cohesion and consensus. This means there is a higher risk of members not "owning" the changes or of feeling left out of the decision-making processes.

Evolutionary change, because it is slower and more gradual, may be more readily accepted or produce less resistance. Because

more time is available for the progression, it has a higher likelihood of producing broader ownership for the change and decision-making processes.

On the other hand, the slow pace of evolutionary transition may be frustrating to those with a greater sense of urgency about what they perceive to be needed change.

Which is better, revolutionary or evolutionary change? Neither.

Just as it is not an option for a congregation to simply choose change or no change, the choice is also not simply between a revolutionary or evolutionary approach. Picturing change processes on a continuum with the two extremes being revolutionary and evolutionary allows change leaders to move back and forth along the continuum to find the appropriate methodology, speed and forcefulness for any particular situation.

Those seeking to lead change processes in congregational life need to ask good questions. For example:

- Which theological principles should take precedence in the change process?
- How urgent is the need for change?
- How much time does the congregation have to devote to a change process?
- How much emotional energy surrounds the potential change?
- How much risk can the congregation afford regarding potential unintended consequences?

Listening carefully and answering these questions accurately can help congregational leaders determine the right speed and energy needed for a change process. While congregational transitions are never easy, they can be managed in ways that bring largely positive results. **BT**

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



Old church, new idea: Energy co-op increases congregation's buying power

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The idea that things can get better with age is proving true for Calvary Baptist Church in downtown Washington, D.C. Entering its 150th year of ministry, Calvary is pioneering a way for congregations to practice savvy, ecumenical buying power.

After several months of cooperation and negotiations, Calvary recently joined 11 other faith groups in a bulk energy procurement that saved each organization thousands of dollars in electricity bills, with a collective savings of \$97,000.

During my first week as a social work pastoral intern, I joined a conference call related to Calvary's potential participation in bulk energy procurement. Key players in the effort were the DC Project, the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN), and faith groups across the city affiliated with WIN.

As the church's point person on this project, I had to quickly figure out what bulk energy procurement was and why Calvary would benefit from it. The energy project began when lead organizer for WIN, Martin Trimble, realized that energy costs were one of the largest expenses for faith institutions.

Trimble connected with Felipe Witchger from the DC Project and Jill Barker from Betts & Holt, LLP. Witchger and Barker had years of expertise in energy purchasing and other resources that they brought to the endeavor pro-bono.

As they considered the buying power faith institutions could possess collectively, they knew a bulk energy purchase was the direction to go. Trimble worked with the institutions to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) to be sent to competing electricity companies, asking to receive a lower rate per kilowatt-hour.

In early January I joined representatives from approximately 20 faith institutions to begin the process of committing our institutions to the project. Electricity is deregulated in the District of Columbia, which means the generation and transmission of electricity can be procured competitively. For someone with

no background in thinking of electricity as a commodity, I was getting a crash course in bulk buying — like buying electricity at Costco.

The faith institutions provided electricity bills, current energy contracts and tax-exempt verification, along with consent forms allowing Witchger and Barker to release our kilowatt-hour use to the competing electricity companies.

Witchger and Barker then organized, analyzed and presented the information in a formal RFP that included preliminary pricing, individual prices and group prices, staggered (grouped) start dates to accommodate the institutions currently under contract, a 24-hour window to lock in the group price, and a donation/payment for WIN.



After conference calls in which Trimble, Witchger and Barker confirmed contract agreements, renewable energy options and results in savings, 12 of the 20 faith institutions agreed to enter the first round of bulk energy procurement. The eight other institutions were under contract with their electricity provider until 2012 or 2013 but expressed interest in joining future rounds of procurement once their contracts expire.

At Calvary, we were able to enter one of our two meters into the first procurement and agreed to add the second meter in the second round in 2012.

The RFP and request for preliminary bids were completed by mid-February. Then preliminary bids were evaluated two days after they were requested so the RFP could be adjusted and resent with a request for final pricing the following week. Once the request for final pricing was received, the 12 institutions had 24 hours to sign the final contract with the winning electricity company.

Six suppliers offered competitive bids, and the winning company offered all of the

faith institutions meaningful savings on their electricity bills along with a \$10,000 donation to WIN to support future organizing, thus ending the first round of bulk energy procurement. From beginning to end, the effort took five months.

This endeavor taught me a great deal about the benefits of broad-based organizing, the need for churches and other faith groups to be creative with their spending, the significance of trying something new, the value of ecumenical work, and the potential for faith institutions to apply their buying power in other areas.

These lessons led Calvary to spearhead development of an interfaith purchasing co-op for other goods and services as well. Currently we have a steering committee representing eight faith institutions with support and guidance from WIN, the National Cooperative Business Association, Betts & Holt, LLP, and the DC Project.

Thus far, Calvary has received two electricity bills from our new contract and has saved about \$200 each month. Adding our other meter in the second round will mean even more savings next year. In the second round of procurement, we will also benefit from the added buying power of 10-12 new institutions.

Bulk energy purchases are possible in states (including New York and Ohio) where deregulation of electricity and gas exists — and where multiple companies supply electricity or gas. States where deregulation of these energy sources does not exist include Washington, North Carolina, Colorado and Alabama.

There is also the possibility of having one source of energy deregulated and the other not, as in California and Georgia. Information can be found at interceptwest.com, smithenergygroup.com, or quantumgas.com.

Calvary's participation in this project, as well as the development of the interfaith purchasing co-op, demonstrates how a community of faith can creatively address budget needs and apply the savings to mission and ministry. **BT**

By Bill J. Leonard

Pluralism and the continuing American dilemma

Winthrop Hudson, the American Baptist historian, writes: “The most obvious inference to be drawn from our present low spiritual estate would seem to be that the churches are no longer fully measuring up to the specific responsibility imposed upon them by their voluntary status in society.”

Given that reality, he insists that “there has been on the part of many a persistent refusal to acknowledge that the churches have been either derelict in their duty or ineffective in their ministry, and ... an equally persistent effort to pin the responsibility for our present spiritual plight upon the state. The absence of formal religious instruction in the public schools is the chief scapegoat. [Some believe that] what the churches have failed to do, the public schools must now do. They must teach the great fundamental truths of religion and thus restore the moral and spiritual foundations of society.”

He concluded: “A moment’s reflection should be sufficient to indicate how ill-equipped the state is to provide such spiritual leadership.”

Hudson wrote those sober words in his classic work, *The Great Tradition of the American Churches*, published in 1953, a time some see as American religion’s Golden Age, the last great era of public (Protestant) faith.

These debates endure almost 60 years after Hudson published those observations. They are worth revisiting in light of news stories about the Texas high school senior who chose to affirm her Christian faith in a valedictory address at commencement ceremonies in the Medina Valley Independent School District near San Antonio this spring.

She concluded her remarks by leading the audience in prayer. Before the event, parents of another graduating senior joined with Americans United for Separation of Church and State in legal action, contending that the prayer constituted compulsory religious activity at a public, state-related event.

A federal judge initially ruled in favor of the plaintiffs but the verdict was reversed by the Circuit Court, a decision that drew praise from the state’s governor and other officials.

The valedictory address went on as scheduled, complete with the student’s statements of faith and concluding prayer.

Public prayers and other faith-based affirmations offered in state-based, multi-faith settings have created controversies throughout American history. For example, Illinois Methodist preacher Peter Cartwright charged in 1846 that Abraham Lincoln, Cartwright’s Republican opponent for the U.S. Congress, was an “infidel” since he would not publicly acknowledge his Christian faith.

Cartwright apparently wanted Lincoln to show his “new-birth” certificate! (Lincoln won the election, and the rest is history.)

In the current Texas case, Professor Hudson’s remarks regarding the church’s dereliction of duty seem a bit overstated. The valedictorian’s faith commitment was clearly nurtured in familial or religious communities. No dereliction there.

In fact, the initial court ruling in no way limited her references to her personal faith. Rather, it agreed with the plaintiffs that her proposed prayer represented a type of religious compulsion at a public school-sponsored gathering for those who could not in good conscience join in the call to prayer.

Therein resides the continuing American dilemma: how to give voice to faith or non-faith, while avoiding even implicit religious compulsion at state-sanctioned gatherings. Hudson’s commentary reaffirms such responsibilities for religious communities.

For Baptists like Hudson, the “fundamental truths of religion” include these affirmations:

- The faith of the valedictorian should be celebrated and taken seriously.
- At state-based public forums even implicit compulsory prayer is problematic, since that is not what governments are about.

- At its best, prayer like faith itself is freely chosen — not implicitly or explicitly compelled of anyone, especially under government auspices.

What if future valedictorians are Muslim, or even Wiccan in their faith commitment? Would others at the graduation join their prayers then? If next year’s valedictorian affirms a non-Judeo-Christian faith, and invites prayer from such a tradition, what might be the response?

Given the expanse of American religious pluralism, that day is not simply to be imagined; it is already here. Today’s religious majority can readily become tomorrow’s minority, especially if it is “ineffective in its ministry” whether in 1953 or 2011.

As a native Texan, I fear that other developments complicate the debate. The “Window on [Texas] State Government” recently posted these statistics:

- Texas is No. 49 in verbal SAT scores in the nation (493) and No. 46 in average math SAT scores (502).
- Texas is No. 36 in the nation in high school graduation rates (68 percent).
- Texas is No. 33 in the nation in teacher salaries. Teacher salaries in Texas are not keeping pace with the national average. The gains realized from the last state-funded across-the-board pay raise authorized in 1999, which moved the ranking from 33 to as high as 26th in the nation, have disappeared over the last five years.
- Texas was the only state in the nation to cut average per pupil expenditures in fiscal year 2005, resulting in a ranking of No. 40 nationally; down from No. 25 in fiscal year 1999.

If these trends continue, it might not matter how the courts rule on religious issues; public school students in Texas may not have a prayer anyway. **BT**

—Bill J. Leonard is a professor of church history at the Wake Forest University School of Divinity. This column is distributed by Associated Baptist Press.



James Madison and the influence of persecuted Baptists

Baptists in Virginia were fiercely persecuted by other Christians for about 20 years beginning around 1760. The Anglican Church, the official state church, and the Anglican establishment did not look kindly on other faith groups. Baptists were singled out for sometimes brutal assaults because they were a fast-growing group that often challenged the uniting of church and state.

They were the victims of mob violence, their marriages were not recognized by the state, they were fined, and they were jailed.

The plight of persecuted Baptists profoundly influenced James Madison. You may be familiar with a legendary account connected with Baptist leader John Leland and Madison in the struggle for the Bill of Rights. I will set that important story aside in order to underscore the way the oppression of Baptists impacted more generally the founder known as the father of the Constitution.

As a young man, Madison was appalled by the persecution of Virginia Baptists. From 1772-1775, after graduating from Princeton University (then called the College of New Jersey), Madison stayed at the family estate north of Charlottesville, Va.

Perhaps he heard about the ill treatment of Baptists from his father who, as a vestryman in the Anglican Church, was charged with enforcing laws against religious dissenters. In a Jan. 24, 1774, letter to a friend, the young Madison expressed his outrage over the “diabolical Hell conceived principle of persecution” that was exemplified in the imprisonment of six Baptist preachers in nearby Culpeper County.

Concerning the abuse of Baptists, Madison notes in the same letter that he had “squabbled and scolded abused and ridiculed so long about it, to so little purpose that [he

was] without common patience.”

The degree to which the future President of the United States intervened on behalf of persecuted Baptists is unclear. There is evidence that Madison visited jailed Baptists and defended them in court.

When he was older than 80, Madison wrote that he “spared no exertion to save [Baptists] from imprisonment [and] to promote their release from it.” Whatever his exact efforts on behalf of Baptists, his writings leave no doubt that he was infuriated by their imprisonment and that he courageously made his views known in Anglican-dominated Virginia.

Numerous historians see the mistreatment of Virginia Baptists as the factor that drove James Madison into politics. It appears that the oppression of Baptists was important to Madison’s future advocacy of republican government.

In the Federalist Paper No. 10, Madison explains that pure democracy can be its own form of tyranny in which strict majority rule can infringe on the fundamental rights of a minority.

As an illustration, Madison wrote that “zeal for different opinions concerning religion ... have ... divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other ... “ He proposed a representative republic as the solution to the oppressive tendencies of pure democracy.

It appears likely that personal experience with persecuted Baptists may have been on the mind of the father of the Constitution as he pressed for this form of government. Some attribute Madison’s desire for a representative

republic to his Calvinist education at Princeton with its emphasis on human depravity.

Madison’s education was, no doubt, a major influence on his political philosophy. However, the obvious passion excited in Madison with the imprisonment of Virginia Baptists made an indelible mark on him.

Madison was still writing about “the persecution instituted in his County ... against the preachers belonging to the sect of Baptists” as an octogenarian. Some of the language of the Federalist Paper No. 10 seems to betray personal experience with a tyrannical majority that could easily be connected to Madison’s rage against the oppression of Baptists.

It is fair to conclude that the real-life example of human depravity seen in the mistreatment of Baptists inspired Madison’s dedication to a form of government that avoided the despotic dangers of pure democracy.

Irving Brant, widely considered the leading Madison biographer, considers Madison’s experience with persecuted Baptists a significant factor in his “lifelong zeal for religious freedom.” For Madison biographer Robert Rutland, Madison’s Princeton experience coupled with his discussions with his father about the oppression of Baptists shaped “a lifelong aversion to religious bigotry.”

Oppression at the hands of a religious establishment inspired not only Baptist dedication to religious liberty, but also that of one of the foremost founders of the United States. It appears that young James Madison was serious when he requested of a friend in 1774, “[P]ity me and pray for Liberty of conscience ...”

Baptists had much to do with that passion. **BT**

—David Stratton is pastor of Woodhaven Baptist Church in Apex, N.C.





STORY BY JOHN PIERCE • PHOTOS BY DWAYNE BASS

‘Turning waste into something’

Artist, Alabama children create beauty from storm debris

JACKSONVILLE, Ala. — It’s like a circle. But Georgia artist Dwayne Bass calls it a “tree cookie.”

He’s cut more than 200 of them from trees downed by the April 27 tornadoes in Alabama — so children could lather them with colorful designs.

It’s like a circle. Rather than being hauled to landfills or burned in the summer heat, some of the debris is made into art — and then sold to help rebuild homes destroyed in the storms.

“I’d never seen any destruction like that,” said Bass, when visiting the Williams and Webster Chapel communities near Jacksonville, Ala., as part of a team of volunteers from First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, Ga.

Bass, a sculptor whose many works “using everything you find in a construction dumpster” can be found all around the cities of Chicago, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere, saw the potential for art where others saw refuse. He suggested to leaders of First Baptist Church of Williams, who were coordinating disaster relief efforts in the area, that he help

children attending Vacation Bible School to create art from the debris.

“The green in me,” said Bass, caused him to suggest: “Let’s do something with what we have right here.”

Church leaders warmly embraced the idea that also saved \$500 in craft supplies. And Bass extended his initial stay well beyond the Memorial Day weekend mission project.

For one VBS project, Bass led the children in painting expressions of the theme, “This is our Father’s world,” on the reclaimed wood.

Glidden Professional Paints donated eco-friendly paints, and Georgia School Supply provided a deal on brushes. The kids brought great imaginations and an eagerness to create.

Families at First Baptist Williams have been housing and feeding Bass this summer while he works with adults on home construction and with kids in art projects. And he’s finding creative uses for more usually discarded stuff.

“When you rebuild homes there is still going to be waste,” said Bass who is skilled at mixing construction leftovers — rebar, plastic, marble, lumber and other materials — with storm debris and forming them into his sculptures.



Artist Dwayne Bass assisted children in the Williams Community near Jacksonville, Ala., in turning storm and construction waste into art rather than sending it to the landfill.



some of the small, individual art pieces and created larger sculptures. He wants the kids to see how they are part of a broader effort — in the same way adults work together to rebuild homes and communities.

After completing an art degree at the University of Georgia, Bass became a professional photographer shooting in places as far away as Milan and Paris. Then his love of art — and a belief that God has called humanity to care for the earth — led to his being the first sculptor whose works were LEED certified as green. And now?

“I never, ever thought I’d be a missionary,” he said about his new efforts to “turn waste into something” and help a community find new life after a deadly storm. His work is being supported by church friends in Macon.

“I don’t like to waste much,” said Bass, who is using his time and talent to help bring beauty out of debris, joy out of sorrow, hope out of despair — like a circle. **BT**

—Sculptures and photography by Dwayne Bass can be seen at twovital.com. Visit reinspirationstore.com to see the unique creations from recycled materials carried by the Re-Inspiration Store in Atlanta.

For a community Independence Day celebration, Bass led about 30 children in creating a large American flag sculpture. Smaller artworks by the children were displayed during a show and auction. That encouraged Bass to give the children’s creations greater exposure.

He carried some of their art to Atlanta for Brooke Schultz, co-owner of the Re-Inspiration Store, to see. She was impressed and offered to host a late-July art show and sale to help support the rebuilding efforts in Alabama.

“It’s so colorful,” said Schultz. “They take ugly old debris and make it into something.”

Schultz said she and Julie Golden relocated to Atlanta after suffering significant personal losses from Hurricane Katrina. They opened the store — that sells new creations from recycled materials — in 2009. So the Alabama project was right for their store in both its eco-friendly art and the effort to rebuild homes destroyed in a natural disaster.

Bass said he wanted the children to understand that the materials were more than craft supplies — but a way of saving space in landfills. They got the message, he said.

“By the third or fourth day they were saying, ‘We know; we’re recycling.’”

Creating something new and colorful from the storm debris was good for the children who have been surrounded by so much destruction, said Bass.

“It’s art therapy because the kids get to release some of their feelings,” he explained.

For an additional lesson, Bass has taken

Debris from the April 27 tornadoes was used for a community Independence Day celebration and for Vacation Bible School crafts at Williams First Baptist Church.



Broken glass better earth

Fallen steeple makes a new impact

RINGGOLD, Ga. — Tara McRae Kestner makes custom jewelry out of recycled glass. But she wasn't sure what to do with the stained glass pieces that her mother Faye Tucker and neighbor Sue Lane Helton brought home from church.

The April 27 tornadoes that hit the county-seat town of Ringgold, Ga., had blown the steeple off of the First Baptist Church. So, to Tara, it didn't seem right to throw the steeple glass in with the bottles and other materials she collects for her artistic ways.



"I thought, 'I can't use this,'" said Tara of her initial response. Then upon further reflection she concluded, "I'll give back."

Tara said it took her a few days to decide to use the glass in earrings and pendants. But she knew she wanted to share some of the proceeds with the church.

She took photos of the first pieces of jewelry she made and put them on Facebook. Orders starting coming in from California, Nevada, Virginia, Ohio, Arkansas and elsewhere — almost always with some connection to the church or town.

She even made a couple of pieces for Dolly Parton, who was married at the church in 1966, with hopes of finding a way to get them to the entertainer.

Requests for gifts for boys led Tara to shape some of the glass into arrowheads that can be worn or simply carried. A former pastor asked for a cross from the stained glass — a shape that is challenging from this material.

Tara first named her company "Baby Steps to a Better Earth" in honor of her daughter, Meadow, and as a sign of her commitment to environmental stewardship. With Meadow at age two and always eager to "help," the business is now called "The Glass Meadow."

Art is in her blood, said Tara, who attended craft shows regularly as a child. Her mother, Faye, is a gifted watercolor artist.

Tara's home-based business took off when her mother found a used kiln at a yard sale and Tara began hitting up area businesses for their used glass.

Then a recycling partnership was struck with the Doubletree Hotel in nearby Chattanooga — which gives Tara its used wine bottles



Artist Tara McRae Kestner is turning broken stained glass from a toppled steeple into jewelry, with some proceeds going back to the church.

into colorful serving trays with hors d'oeuvre knives that are then sold in the hotel's gift shop.

"This is my small contribution" to protecting the earth, said Tara, who confessed to being a scavenger of bottles, broken china and other glass materials that look better as jewelry or other artworks than buried in a landfill.

And the stained glass that once stood above a town hit by deadly tornadoes is now being worn, carried or kept by those who have been shaped by that congregation or as signs of support for a community in its time of need. **BT**

To inquire about the steeple jewelry or other artworks from recycled glass, email tara@theglassmeadow.com. Tara's works may also be found at the Switch House in Huntsville, Ala.



‘Spared for a reason’

Tornado survivors gain new perspectives on life



RINGGOLD, GA — Kay and Donnie Wise’s home on scenic Cherokee Valley Road in Northwest Georgia was their larger family’s “gathering spot” for birthday parties, Easter egg hunts, summer swimming, Sunday lunch and for no reason other than to be together. Their two daughters, sons-in-law and five grandchildren came over often, as did other family and friends who lived “in the valley.”

Now all that remains of the home is the pool. Around the corner on Friendship Road, Kay’s childhood home — where her 85-year-old mother Johnnie Fisher has long lived — is gone as well.

Though deeply saddened by their losses and challenged by many forced decisions, they are counting their remarkable blessings. Six family members — representing three generations — miraculously survived the deadly spring tornadoes that first hit small-town Ringgold, Ga., and then wiped out the Wises’ rural home where the six had gathered.

“For some reason God chose to spare us,” said Kay, still trying to find fuller meaning in the harrowing experience. She and her family — despite the physical and mental trauma, many

inconveniences and multiple choices — are seeking to grow, learn and move ahead out of this unimaginable chapter in their lives.

‘SOMETHING’S NOT RIGHT’

The morning of April 27 brought word that high winds had blown three trees down on the house where Donnie’s elderly parents live just over the state line near Chattanooga, Tenn. He left work quickly, and son-in-law Jett Loach — married to the Wises’ younger daughter Mindy — was summoned to help remove the trees and get tarps over the damaged roof.

Mindy is a surgical nurse at Memorial Hospital in Chattanooga who worked on into the evening as victims from the storms to the southwest of the city were brought into the

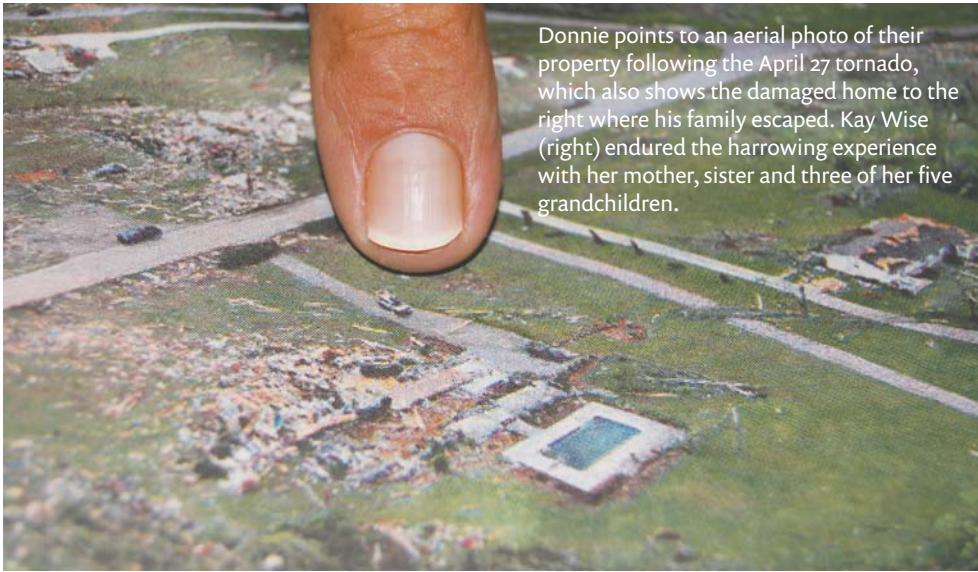
emergency room. Schools in Chickamauga, Ga., where the Loachs live, closed early, so Jett brought his and Mindy’s three children to be with Kay while he helped Donnie.

The Wises’ older daughter, Brandy, is an assistant to the pastor at Peavine Baptist Church in Rock Spring, Ga. But resting at her home that day after oral surgery, she was paying close attention to the developing storms that were moving with deadly force across northern Alabama and heading into the corner of Georgia. When Kay lost the cable TV signal at her house, she relied on weather updates from her daughter.

“Brandy kept calling and saying, ‘Mom, something’s not right; the storms are really sporadic and they are all around the area,’” Kay recalled, causing her to take the approaching weather more seriously. She brought her mom over and began making plans for a possible emergency. Her sister Joan joined them too.

The last call came before 9 p.m. when Brandy heard reports that tornadoes had slammed the nearby small town and said: “Something has happened in Ringgold; this is serious.”

The Wise home had no basement, so Donnie had suggested that an interior hallway with



Donnie points to an aerial photo of their property following the April 27 tornado, which also shows the damaged home to the right where his family escaped. Kay Wise (right) endured the harrowing experience with her mother, sister and three of her five grandchildren.



no windows would be the best place to go in the event of a storm. So the six — Kay, sister Joan, mother Johnnie, and grandchildren Kourtney, 13, Trent, now 11, and 4-year-old Emerson — each took a sofa cushion into the hallway along with some flashlights. But the weather was calm, so the adults tried to conceal any fears.

“Then the power went out and it was kind of like a ‘twilight zone,’” recalled Kay. “My mother said, ‘Let’s pray,’ and we all held hands and she said a prayer for protection around us.”

DIRECT HIT

Because of the valley, the approaching tornadoes could not be seen or heard as they came over the ridge. Calm followed by hail — then “really bad, bad pressure” in the ears — preceded the blast.

The pressure also forced their eyes closed. As the tornado hit, Kay’s last recollection was seeing her mother against the hallway wall that was now “literally moving.”

Kay and her grandson struggled to hold onto each other. He repeatedly prayed, “Jesus help us.”

With winds estimated at 200 miles per hour, the tornado blew away the Wises’ home except for the single interior hallway wall against which they were pinned by extreme force.

When the 30-second onslaught ended, the remaining structure — just the foundation and the single wall — had been moved about 30 feet. Kay’s car had landed where there once was a kitchen.

“When we came to a conscious state, all we were doing was counting bodies,” said Kay. The youngest was so buried in cushions and debris that it took awhile to find her — but all six persons had survived in good condition.

The only injury was that Kay’s right hand had been crushed — resulting in four broken bones. But the intense pain was not her first concern. Her family was accounted for; they had

made it through the tornado — even though the carpet beneath them had been stripped away and they were resting on sub-flooring.

“Out loud, we were screaming, ‘Thank you, God, for saving our lives,’” said Kay. “Then when we did a 360, we realized there was no way our neighbors were alive.”

Kay said their minds could not process what they had just been through and all the destruction they saw at that moment. Then she heard screaming from her Aunt Melba who lived in the house next to theirs — some 500 feet away. With mud, glass and other debris matted in their hair and covering their bodies, the six walked barefooted without injury to her aunt’s half-standing house.

“It was as if God had swept us a path,” said Kay.

BEYOND EXPRESSION

There they found shelter from the heavy rains and lightning, and began praying for their neighbors and for their own family members who would surely think they were dead. There was no means of communication, and the downed trees and power lines prohibited any emergency vehicles from getting to them for more than an hour.

“It was really dark,” recalled Kay.

Working feverishly to get his parents’ roof covered before dark, Donnie was unaware of what had happened to his family and home. Jett left ahead of Donnie and heard on the radio about the damage in Cherokee Valley. He rushed to check on his children.

As he — and then Donnie coming behind him — made their way through the many obstacles, they were stunned by the carnage they witnessed.

“The closer I got, I started seeing houses across the road,” said Donnie. “I got as far as I could and parked, and then took off running.

When I got there, I saw (the house) was gone.”

Joan had walked back over to look for her dog as Jett arrived. She told him his children were safe, and he fell to the ground in relief and uttered prayers of thanksgiving. He and Donnie had seen such destruction, yet were overwhelmingly grateful to find their families alive.

“It’s so surreal to me,” said Kay reflectively, “that it feels like it happened to someone else. It comes in waves of time.”

Not all the stories of what they saw and experienced can be told due to sensitivity to those who did not fare so well. Six neighbors — including an entire family of four — across the road were killed. Many others experienced serious injuries and emotional trauma.

And while continually praising God for their family’s survival, Kay and Donnie said they are careful not to imply that somehow they were better or more deserving than those who lost much more. They are simply grateful beyond expression for their family’s survival — and deeply saddened for those whose suffering continues.

STORM DAMAGE

Eventually, Kay was taken to the hospital where her hand was surgically repaired. “At the emergency room, all we could say is, ‘Thank God we were spared and we know he spared our lives for a reason,’” she recalled.

But the questions linger about why others lost so much more while they were saved from even injury beyond her crushed hand.

“I don’t understand why,” Kay confessed. “That’s where I have a problem.”

When they left the hospital, she said it was strange to realize that their home and its many possessions were gone in a flash. En route to spend the night with one of their daughters, she said to Donnie: "I guess we need to stop and get a toothbrush."

While the tornado blew through in half-a-minute, its impact was more lasting. Four-year-old Emerson was so traumatized by the experience that she could not eat or drink and had to be hospitalized.

It was three days before Kay returned to the home site where little remained. Some of her jewelry, family photos and two study Bibles she had written in for 30 years were recovered.

Most things were damaged beyond repair, blown away or sadly stolen by looters who even removed copper wiring from her aunt's damaged home. While disappointed at how some people will victimize those who are already victims, Donnie and Kay are more amazed by the generosity and kindness that have been shown to them in their time of need.

MORE THAN THINGS

"Our daughters fought over us," said Kay with a smile. She and Donnie lived with them, alternating about three days at each home for the first weeks after the storm. Then they decided everyone needed more space to process their experiences.

"We've sought counseling; I want everyone to know that we all need help at times," said Kay, noting that they are still extremely afraid each time stormy weather returns.

However, the children talk openly about their experience and are doing very well, said Kay. And she and Donnie are giving attention to the many practical decisions to be faced — including dealing with mortgage and insurance companies and acquiring a new place to live.

Some of their bank checks were found in Athens, Tenn., having traveled more than 50 miles through the air. Kay can only imagine where tax returns and other personal records have landed.

Despite their unending gratitude for survival, there are still some "hard days," said Kay. She and Donnie had lived in their house for 19 years — and her mother was in hers for six decades.

In one sense, she noted, these are more than "things" — they are connections to meaningful relationships.

Kay said she had saved cards that Donnie had sent to her over the years and some reminders of her brother Randy who died from a brain tumor in 1995. He was a big baseball fan, and she would sometimes wear his favorite

Atlanta Braves T-shirt while watching a game in his memory. Those treasures, along with most everything else, are gone.

"We had a home, not just a house," said Kay. "It is a death of something."

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Pastor Stephen Anthony learned of someone in Venice Beach, Fla., who offered the Wises the free use of an RV. Others in that community filled the vehicle with supplies — ranging from chainsaws to toilet paper to meet needs in the larger Ringgold community— before it was driven to North Georgia.

Kay and Donnie were offered a parking spot on a private farm that hosts special events. Fellow church members, friends and strangers have been generous too.

"I've had people I didn't even know come by our daughter's house and bring clothes, food, money and supplies," said Kay — even when she told them that their insurance company was being very responsive.

She was most grateful for a "homemade quilt that had been worn to death" and comfortable pajamas. "New is not all it's cracked up to be," said Kay.

However, moving into a new stage of life in a new place is where Kay and Donnie are focused now. But they and their family will be

shaped forever by the intensely moving experiences of April 27.

"I took my life as I knew it for granted," Kay confessed. "But everything has a different perspective now."

After watching the remains of her childhood home being excavated and hauled away in mid-July, Kay said to her 85-year-old mother: "This doesn't look like home now, so we can move on."

Indeed, her mother has found a new house to make into home — as have the Wises who will move soon. They will live "in the valley" no more — literally and figuratively.

"For two months we have mourned, cried and gone out to the valley, and we're ready now to turn around and make a life again," said Kay.

Kay and Donnie said they have learned much from the unforgettable experience of April 27. The miraculous survival of their family will always trump any daily challenge that threatens to get them down.

"It's going to take a lot less to make us happy," said Donnie.

During one challenging day of getting life back toward normal, Kay described herself as "inconvenienced but blessed." That sense of blessing is the most lasting aspect of the storm, she said.

"God does care what happens to us." **BT**

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Dick Stevens has been 'fitting the book to the customer' since 1954

Book Dealer

RALEIGH, N.C. — Dick Stevens has been in the book business for 57 years. He started while he was a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Stevens estimates that at one point he had more than a million books. Yet, when someone came in his shop and asked for a particular one, he could walk right to it and pull it off the shelf.

Stevens' stock is much smaller now — about 20,000 — but his love for finding the right book for people is as strong as ever.

Stevens sold his store, Stevens Book Shop, in 2008 to Olivet University. Now, he and his daughter, Pam Stevens, sell used books from her store, Stevens Gallery and Framing in Raleigh.

In the early days, several other seminary students who had started buying and selling used books gave Stevens the business when he agreed to take on their unpaid bills. He said he was a "country boy" with no experience in

business or books.

"I was going to sell books to keep myself in school when I took over the store," he said.

After Stevens graduated in 1957, he decided to stay in business. A year later, he started working in acquisitions for the library at Southeastern.

"I learned a great deal there," he said.

Stevens' store was located first across from the seminary campus, but eventually moved to downtown Wake Forest because it needed more space.

"I wanted to learn more to be able to help others better," he said. "I learned from other ministers and teachers, often finding the practical books, as well as academic."

The store served students and ministers for many years.

"As students graduated and took jobs all over the world, we would get calls for books," he said.

Stevens fondly recalls the times when faculty members at Southeastern would bring visiting speakers to the store.

"They were proud that we had something

in town to help the students," he said.

The controversy that engulfed the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s took its toll on the store as enrollment at Southeastern dwindled to fewer than 500. As more conservative students started attending, they weren't interested in many of the books Stevens sold.

Stevens started acquiring books to fit the new students. "I don't have any trouble working with most of the conservative boys," he said.

But some of the new potential customers still didn't like the store. One even left when he didn't like the cover of a fiction book in the store, Stevens said.

In 1989 Stevens moved the store to Raleigh to get more business. He still regrets that the store isn't in Wake Forest or closer to Southeastern so faculty and students can enjoy it.

"That was very heart-breaking to have to leave," he said. "I had started and dedicated the store to serving the students."

Over the years, Stevens also has helped schools stock their libraries. He's happy to know that the books will reach numerous people.

Selling to libraries helped keep the store in

business. Stevens once mailed a list of religious books to a community college in Virginia that needed volumes for its library.

A college representative called and said school leaders wanted to buy the books. He asked which books they needed. "They said, 'We want the whole list.'"

Stevens provided 20,000 books to the library at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis. He has sold books also to smaller theological schools.

Stevens has helped retiring professors and pastors who wanted to sell or donate their book collections.

"One of the frustrating things through the years is not having the money to buy collections when they became available," he said.

After he sold his Raleigh store, Stevens stayed on for a while to help train workers the college sent. The school used many of the books in its libraries, but still operates the store, which is less than a mile and a half from the gallery. The store's website says it has a half million books in stock.

The sale included the name of the store. Stevens and his daughter make it clear that there is a distinction between the two businesses.

Pam Stevens, who is an artist, said the gallery focuses on rare and collectible books. It also has more than 100 sets of Bible



Stevens Book Shop in Wake Forest, N.C., was once popular with Southeastern Seminary students, faculty and alumni. It moved to Raleigh in 1989.

commentaries, she said.

"We try to supplement what they have and not duplicate or compete with them," Dick Stevens said.

His daughter has helped him since she was young.

"I've juggled the books, the framing and the art since 1988 to make a living," she said.

Pam Stevens said the gallery pays a lot of rent to preserve the books.

"In this economy we should be thinking about marketing them," she said. "I think of saving them."

Her father has a similar attitude. He said he sees himself as a book dealer, not a bookseller.

"The seller wants to get rid of the books as soon as he can, and the dealer wants to find

the person who needs the books if he has to wait a long time," he said. "I don't like to see a book go to someone who only puts it on a shelf for looks."

Stevens said the most enjoyable part of his career has been "being able to help students and ministers find the tools they need."

"It's fitting the book to the customer," he said. "Trying to meet the needs of the students, teachers and libraries has been very satisfying."

Stevens said he feels that the Internet has lowered the value of books.

"The people selling are only trying to get rid of books, and I fear many good, hard-to-find books will only be lost on a collector's shelf and not in a seminary library where many people can use them for years," he said. "Just as the American farmer is becoming extinct, so are many used book stores — and that will be sad."

Stevens has a hard time getting around now because of arthritis in his knees, but he can still find a book when he needs it. Recently, he noticed that a volume of G.W. Paschal's *History of North Carolina Baptists* was missing from a shelf. Within a few minutes, he located both volumes of the original and revised versions.

"We've tried to do some good through the years," he said. **BT**

—Steve DeVane is the North Carolina-based contributing writer for *Baptists Today*.

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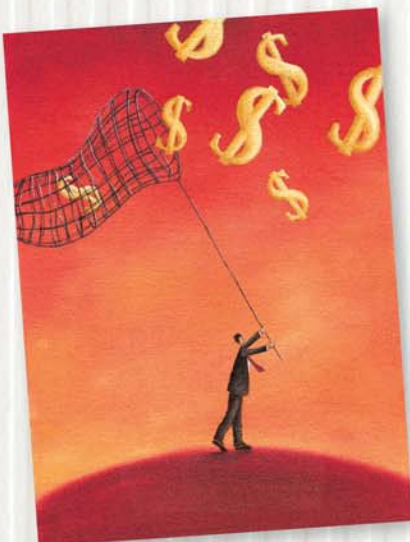


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