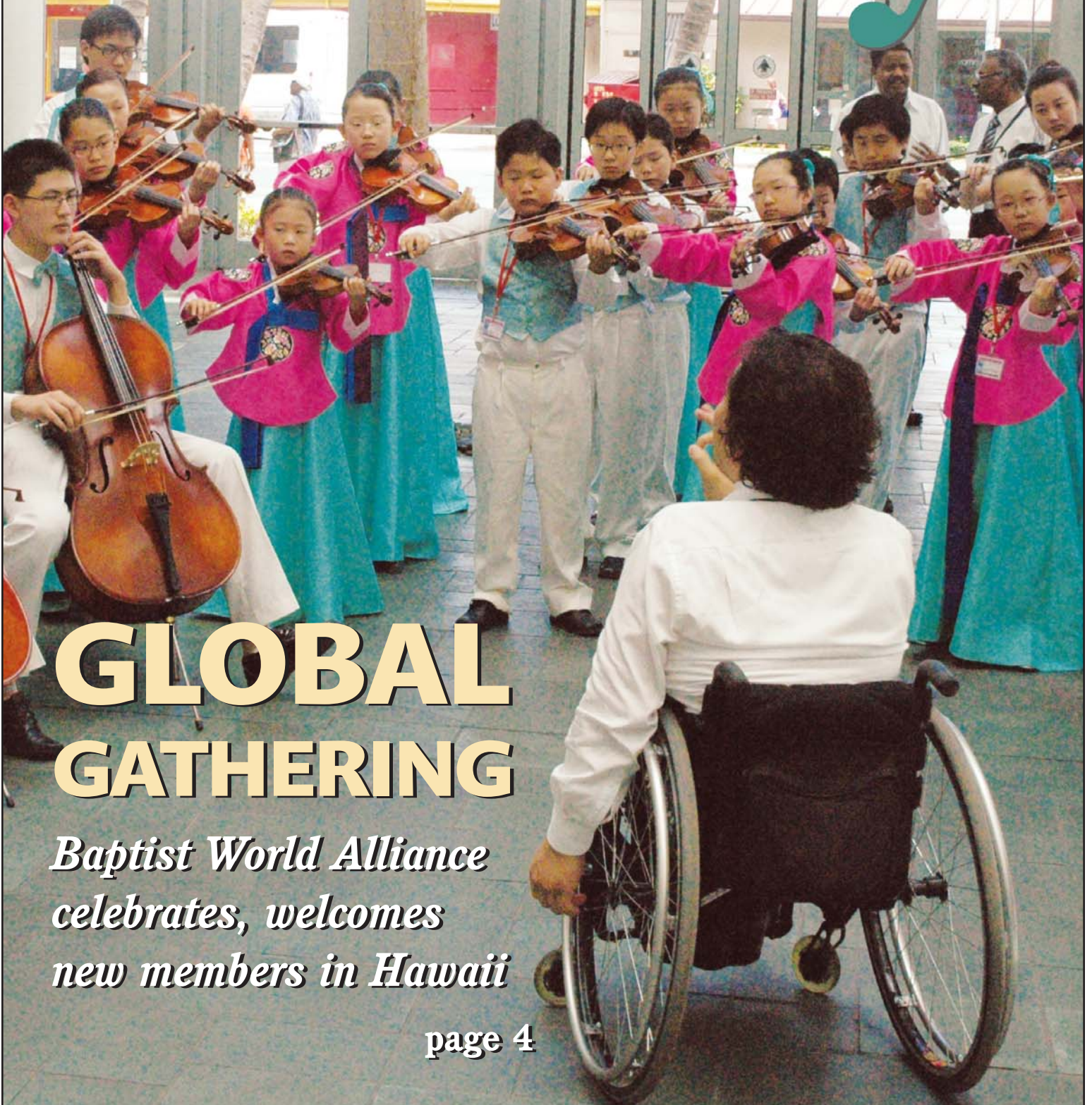


BAPTISTS Today



GLOBAL GATHERING

*Baptist World Alliance
celebrates, welcomes
new members in Hawaii*

page 4



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BAPTISTS Today

An autonomous national Baptist news journal



Cover photo by Tony W. Cartledge

Members of the 400-strong World Vision Korean Children's Choir play for delegates entering the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu for the opening session of the Baptist World Congress July 28.

Coverage begins on page 4

Fort Myers church celebrates special union



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‘Historic moment’

BWA adds three member bodies, including Vietnamese

HONOLULU (ABP) — Some of the globe’s most persecuted Christians found an international home when the Baptist World Alliance admitted the Baptist Churches in Vietnam into the global organization.

The BWA’s General Council voted full membership July 28 to the Vietnamese organization, as well as to Baptist groups from Zambia and the District of Columbia in the United States, as delegates gathered in Honolulu for the 20th Baptist World Congress.

“This is a historic moment and a fruitful moment,” BWA President David Coffey said as General Council members prepared to vote on the Vietnamese Baptists. He reflected on the persecution and struggles faced by Christians in Vietnam during the latter part of the 20th century.

He pointed to a 2006 human-rights visit — conducted by representatives of the BWA and Texas Baptists — as a pivotal event in securing government recognition for Vietnamese Baptists.

They trace their heritage to the work of Southern Baptist missionaries in their country, reported Alistair Brown, chairman of the BWA’s membership committee.

Religious freedom in Vietnam

“Their formal founding was in 1988,” said Brown, a British Baptist who now is president of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Ill., a Chicago suburb. “Those were very difficult years, when open witnessing was illegal in Vietnam.”

The Baptist Churches in Vietnam received government recognition in 2008. The organization includes 509 churches with about 30,000 members.

The United States Commission on



New Baptist World Alliance president John Upton of Virginia greets Vietnamese Baptist leader Khanh Giam V. Nguyen and others. BWA Photo by Peter Traynham.

International Religious Freedom has recommended the State Department add Vietnam to its list of “countries of particular concern,” an official designation for the world’s most egregious violators of religious liberty.

The State Department gave that designation to Vietnam in 2004, citing restrictions of religious liberty and harassment and repression of religious believers, but lifted the designation in 2006, citing the country’s passage of new religious-freedom legislation that outlawed forced renunciations of faith and permitted official recognitions of new denominations.

After visiting Vietnam in 2009, however, members of the independent U.S. government panel said religious-freedom conditions there have not improved as quickly as other areas of Vietnamese life and continue to lag behind international standards.

“This day represents a new chapter of Baptist work in Vietnam,” noted Bonny Resu, general secretary of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation, one of the BWA’s six regional fellowships.

Admission into the BWA marks a historic and emotional milestone for Vietnamese Baptists, stressed Giam Nguyen, general secretary of the Baptist Churches in Vietnam, in an interview.

Admission of Zambian and D.C. Baptist bodies

The General Council also affirmed admission of the Baptist Fellowship of Zambia and the District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

The Zambian fellowship was founded in 1995 and affiliates with about 1,500 congregations, making it the largest Baptist group in the African nation, Brown said. The Baptist Convention of Zambia, an older but smaller organization, endorsed the Fellowship’s BWA membership — an important component in the process of affiliating with the BWA, which aims to avoid rivalry among Baptist groups in each country.

The D.C. convention dates to 1877 and includes churches in the federal District — the U.S. capital — plus parts of neighboring Maryland and Virginia. It includes 112 churches and 34 mission congregations and numbers 66,000 members.

The D.C. convention affiliates with multiple other Baptist groups, including the Alliance of Baptists, American Baptist Churches USA, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Progressive National Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention. **BT**

—Marv Knox is editor of the *Texas Baptist Standard*.

BWA leaders installed

South Africa to host 2015 gathering

HONOLULU — John Upton, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV), was officially elected and installed July 31 as president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) for the next five years.

Outgoing president David Coffey, of Great Britain, presented Upton a wooden carving of a hand holding an egg as a reminder that “leadership must be handled with care.”

Upton said frequent praises to God in the BWA’s worship services were a fitting symbol for the BWA, but noted that “praise is subversive” because it cries out for freedom and justice. Upton pledged to lead “with dignity, respect, inclusiveness, and praise for these next five years as we are in step with the Spirit.”

Upton has a long history of BWA involvement, including service as a member of the BWA General Council and the Executive Committee. For the past five years, he was chair of the Congress Program Committee, which played a significant role in planning the Baptist World Congress in Honolulu.

Twelve vice-presidents, two from each of the BWA’s six global regions, were also elected and installed. Daniel Carro of Argentina will serve as first vice-president. Carro and Joel Sierra of Mexico represent the Union of Baptists in Latin America.

Other vice-presidents include Regina Claas of Germany and Nabil Costa of Lebanon, representing the European Baptist Federation; Harry Gardner of Canada and William Epps from the United States, representing the North American Baptist Fellowship; Olu Menjay of Liberia and Paul Msiza from South Africa, representing the All Africa Baptist Fellowship; Victor Samuel Gonzalez from Cuba and Burchell Taylor from Jamaica, representing the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship; and John Kok of Malaysia and Ross Clifford of Australia, who will represent the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation.

Earlier in the week, Raquel Contreras

of Chile was elected president of the BWA Women’s Department. Contreras is president of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Chile, was a BWA vice president from 2005 to 2010, and formerly served as president of the Union of Baptists in Latin America. She succeeds Dorothy Selebano of South Africa who served as president of the BWA Women’s Department from 2005-2010.

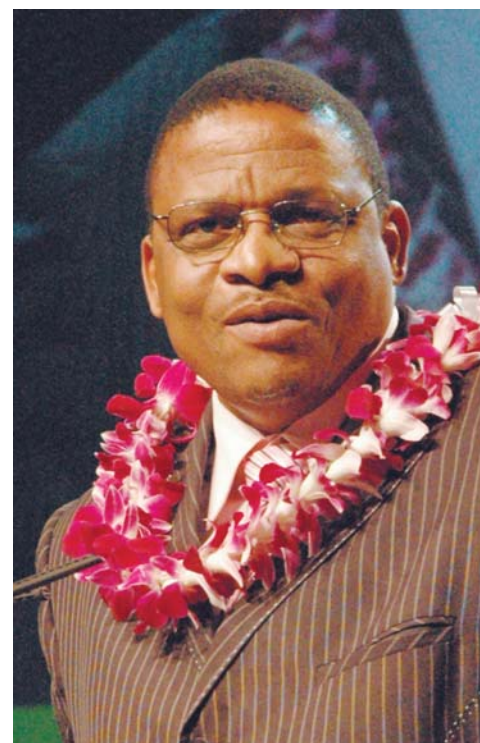
Owen Crooks, president of the Jamaica Baptist Union Brotherhood, was tapped as the new president of the BWA Men’s Department, succeeding Forestall Lawton of the U.S., who had served since 2005.

“It will be an honor to the Baptists of South Africa and to Africa to host the Baptist World Congress.”

Lawton, of Kansas City, is now the new director of the Men’s Department, taking over from Doyle Pennington of Colorado. Pennington is the new secretary.

Everton Jackson, who was elected as executive secretary-treasurer by the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship in March, was confirmed by the BWA General Council as BWA regional secretary for the Caribbean. Jackson is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and a former president of the Jamaica Baptist Union. He succeeds Peter Pinder of the Bahamas, who had served since 1995.

The 21st Baptist World Congress will be held in Durban, South Africa, in July 2015 — the first time the Congress has been held in Africa. Neville Callam, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), made the announcement during a meeting of the organization’s executive



Paul Msiza, president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship and general secretary of the South Africa Baptist Convention, promised “South African hospitality” when the global Baptist family gathers for the Baptist World Alliance Congress in 2015. Photo by Tony Cartledge.

committee July 27.

Paul Msiza, president of the All Africa Baptist Fellowship and general secretary of the South Africa Baptist Convention, expressed great delight that South Africa has been chosen to host the next meeting of the largest international gathering of Baptist Christians.

“It will be an honor to the Baptists of South Africa and to Africa to host the Baptist World Congress,” Msiza said: “You will enjoy South African hospitality.” He noted that travelling to South Africa will be affordable and much easier as, with the World Cup, more airlines have opened routes to the country.

The 105-year-old umbrella group’s first meeting was held in London, and it has mostly stuck to the Western and Northern Hemispheres in years since, with the majority of congresses meeting in English-speaking countries.

Only three other Baptist World Congress gatherings have taken place in the Southern Hemisphere: in Rio de Janeiro in 1960, Buenos Aires in 1995, and Melbourne in 2000. The gatherings have taken place in Asia twice: Tokyo in 1970 and Seoul in 1990. **BT**

U.S. visa denials impact BWA attendance

HONOLULU (ABP) — As many as 1,000 people who had registered for the Baptist World Congress this year were unable to attend because they were denied visas by the United States government, leaders of the Baptist World Alliance said July 28.

Security-conscious Americans are increasingly prohibiting entry to foreign nationals attending religious conferences, making it difficult for global Baptist meetings to be held in the United States, said the leaders at a press conference at the beginning of the 20th Baptist World Congress.

“People want to come to the United States. It’s a wonderful place,” said Neville Callam, general secretary of the Falls Church, Va.-based BWA. “But it’s difficult when general secretaries and presidents [of national Baptist conventions and unions] have saved to come to a conference and they are denied a visa. And there’s nothing anyone can do.

“Of course, states have to protect themselves,” Callam added. “We must take that into account. But it would be very unfortunate if the U.S. had to be eliminated from the list of places to hold meetings.”

Countries in Africa and Asia were the hardest hit by the visa denials, said Emmett



BWA conference planner Emmett Dunn discusses the U.S. denial of visas to about 1,000 persons who wanted to attend the gathering in Honolulu. BWA photo by Peter Traynham.

Dunn, the BWA’s meetings and conferences director. All 87 delegates from Angola were denied visas, Dunn said, as was 40 percent of Nigeria’s 246-member delegation.

Only two of Sierra Leone’s 27 registered delegates were granted visas and only 24 percent of the more than 100 registrants from Bangladesh received permission to enter the United States. Other hard-hit countries were Ghana, Liberia and India.

“We live in post 9-11 world,” said Dunn, acknowledging heightened

security concerns.

Registered attendees at this year’s Baptist World Congress topped 4,000, but was still a steep drop from the approximately 10,000 who attended the last Congress five years ago in Birmingham, England. While a fragile economy and Hawaii’s distance from centers of Baptist population both contributed to a smaller attendance, visa denials unquestionably played a role and left many potential travelers frustrated — as many expressed in e-mails sent to BWA headquarters.

“We paid our registration fees, we paid also our travel ticket, we have done our reservations ... really we lost more money, we’re very sorry,” wrote one of the Angolans whose visa was denied.

“After showing all the required documents ... several of us were rejected today for no specific reason,” wrote a delegate from Sierra Leone.

Callam said other global Christian bodies — including the worldwide organizations of Seventh-day Adventists and the Reformed churches — have also been affected by American visa denials. **BT**

—Robert Dilday is managing editor of the *Virginia Baptist Religious Herald*.

Denton Lotz receives the Baptist World Alliance’s Human Rights Award July 30, in Honolulu.

A former general secretary of BWA, he was a persistent campaigner for religious freedom and human rights during his tenure. In presenting the award, BWA Vice President Emmanuel McCall of Atlanta called Lotz a “visionary leader” who led the BWA to commit a decade to emphasizing human rights, who helped draft proclamations and declarations supporting human rights, and who often confronted government leaders to advocate for religious minorities. The award is presented every five years, during the Baptist World Congress. Another human rights award, named for Lotz and his wife Janice, is presented at the BWA’s annual gatherings in intervening years. Photo by Tony Cartledge.





The Baptist World Congress was characterized by praise from around the world. From the top, and going clockwise: "True Spirit" from St. Louis, Mo.; a choir composed of delegates' children; two women from a French-speaking country in Africa; a choir from Brazil; and Beth Lazor demonstrating how Hawaiians praise God through hula dancing in which each gesture has meaning. Photos by Tony W. Cartledge.



Quotation

“ remarks ”

“I was thinking of all my troubles, all my sins and letting them go with the water.”

—*Miranda Zerbe, 19, after her baptism in muddy Bermudian Creek, a practice carried on for more than 250 years by the Bermudian Church of the Brethren in Washington Township, Penn. (York Daily Record)*

“They are gone every weekend and most wouldn’t darken the door of a church, ordinarily. But they need to get saved.”

—*Independent Baptist Alan Farley of Appomattox, Va., 59, who dons period clothing to preach to Civil War re-enactors (RNS)*

“A lot of people either died or got mad at the preacher and left.”

—*Longtime member Bill Cox on the decline of First Baptist Church of Leeton, Mo. (DigitalBurg)*

“The religious right is over because they lost their children.”

—*Jim Wallis of Sojourners, quoted in CNN’s Belief Blog about younger evangelicals who don’t want to be defined by debates over abortion and homosexuality (RNS)*

“It’s not fair. I was born atheist and they were forcing me to become Catholic.”

—*Cambridge Boxterman, a 24-year-old non-believer who participated in a mass “de-baptism” using a hair dryer labeled “Reason and Truth” at the Annual Atheists Convention, on her infant baptism (ABC News)*

“This must be a Baptist convention.”

—*A beer vendor at Atlanta’s Turner Field when finding little business in an outfield section populated by families with young children*

“If Americans rebuff high-profile efforts by Muslims who condemn terrorism to reclaim their faith, we effectively give the 9/11 hijackers and their ilk a monopoly on the symbols and institutions of Islam.”

—*Wake Forest Divinity School professor Melissa Rogers, in an Aug. 4 analysis for the Brookings Institution, on opposition to an Islamic facility opening near Ground Zero (ABP)*

“I think Baptists today are more holistic, not only in our thinking but in our actions, and I see that the world over.”

—*Paul Montecute, who has directed BWAid — the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance — for 20 years (ABP)*

“I think part of the appeal for some in the house church movement is the desire to return to a simpler expression of church. For many, church has become too much (like a) business while they just want to live like the Bible.”

—*Ed Stetzer of Lifeway Research on the 9 percent of American Protestants who attend only home services according to a Pew Forum survey (AP)*

“I just wanted to remind him that he knew better.”

—*Pompano Beach cell phone store manager Nayara Goncalves, 20, who dissuaded an armed robber by telling him Jesus wouldn’t approve and offering to connect him with friends who could help him find work (Miami Herald)*

“The proposed burning of Qurans would be profoundly offensive to Muslims worldwide, just as Christians would be insulted by the burning of Bibles.”

—*From a National Association of Evangelicals statement condemning plans by a Florida church to burn copies of the Quran on the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (RNS)*

“His physical appearance, the white suit and white hair, coupled with the thunderous voice, made him appear what we imagined God himself to be like.”

—*Robert Jeffress, current pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, on the late W.A. Criswell who was his pastor there in the 1960s (Dallas Morning News)*

“We remember how Anabaptist Christians knew suffering and persecution, and we remember how some of our most honored Reformation leaders defended this persecution in the name of faithfulness.”

—*Bishop Mark Hanson, president of the Lutheran World Federation, at a July 22 service in Germany in which global Lutherans apologized to Mennonites and other Anabaptists for 16th century persecution (RNS)*

“Jesus lived in the open. He didn’t have iPhone apps or massive databases, but he lived transparently, allowed people to get close to him, spoke in public places, and tore down the curtains of secrecy by which religious and political elites historically keep control.”

—*Religion News Service columnist Tom Ehrlich*

editorial

Articulating an identity apart from Fundamentalism

By John Pierce

Moderate Baptists, and other intentional middle-of-the-road Christians who avoid the theological and political ditches on both sides, often seem hesitant to articulate their identity and vision. There are understandable reasons for such hesitation.

One, it takes more explanation than a good slogan can cover. There is just no clear, catchy way to explain how and why one chooses to reject Fundamentalism and embrace a more holistic, biblical faith.

Then it takes additional effort to explain that rejecting Fundamentalism is not an embrace of liberalism. There really is a lot of desirable space in the broad middle.

Two, continually seeking to express an identity apart from Fundamentalism — and to provide an alternative to those who know no other expression of Christianity — can bring widespread criticism and misrepresentation.

Some criticism comes from within. Friends will tell you to move on; get over it; leave them alone; stop fighting old battles.

However, there is an important difference between wasting time in waging old denominational battles that should be put to rest and continually offering a constructive and healthy alternative to the Fundamentalist vision of faith that reduces Christianity to a narrow and oppressive political and theological vision.

Other friendly fire comes from those who charge that you are being known by what you oppose. But is there really a problem with being defined in opposition to Fundamentalism?

For someone to say, with surprise in their voice, that “you are not like the Baptists I’ve known” should be considered a compliment.

Moderate Baptists need more resolve in articulating this biblical, holistic understanding and practice of Christian faith that is rooted in honest scholarship and an

aversion to tying God to partisan politics. Why wouldn’t we be pleased to be known by those distinctions?

Often our resistance to boldly proclaiming a moderate Baptist vision is tied to the fear of being painted as something we are not. And, yes, that risk is real.

However, we should do so without inhibition. It is worth the effort — and it is a position for which we should not apologize.

Of course, one cannot challenge Fundamentalism — despite its many obvious faults and failings — without pushback from those seeking to convince themselves and others that they alone embrace the true biblical faith.

It helps to know the familiar tactics of Fundamentalists in seeking to discredit those who challenge their positions and power. After observing such sleight of hand (and words) by religious Fundamentalists over many years, one can discover their trickery.

Here are some of the ways Fundamentalists defend themselves and dismiss those who challenge their claims. These common tricks may help in articulating an alternative to Fundamentalism — or perhaps serve as a how-to guide for some young man (yes, man) seeking to become an effective Fundamentalist leader:

- Emphatically affirm that the Bible is “inerrant” but ignore the parts of Scripture that do not fit within your narrow theology. (The key here is to never confess to what you are doing — but always criticize others who take the same approach yet reach a different conclusion.)
- Emphatically affirm that the Bible is “infallible” but act as if that infallibility



applies to your own interpretation of selected texts. (Remember: Anyone who disagrees with your interpretation is disagreeing with God. Keep repeating it.)

- Aggressively adopt a narrow doctrinal statement (like the revised 2000-2001 *Baptist Faith and Message*) and then act really, really grieved (even helpless) when using it as a creed to harass your own committed missionaries or to kick out churches that will not align with such narrow beliefs.
- Apply one standard of morality to politicians and religious leaders who share your position on key social issues and another to those who do not.
- View as many people as possible as your enemy.
- When you run out of outsiders to oppose, look with greater suspicion at those on the inside who might be slightly different from you in some regard.
- When in doubt, just label someone as a “liberal” or a “socialist.” (Note: “secular humanist” and “communist” labels, which worked well previously, are a bit outdated.)

We could go on. But the real question is when will churches and individuals who do not share Fundamentalist beliefs and attitudes that push so many people away from a genuine life-changing spiritual experience step up, stand up and speak up?

There is more at stake than our reputation. Our silence, timidity and fear result in many persons assuming that the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Fundamentalist expressions of Christianity are the same.

That is tragic. The middle ground that we claim is more solid and desirable than many yet know. **BT**

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

Toward wholeness: Linking emotional health and spiritual maturity

By Steve Scoggin

"What a long time it can take to become the person one has always been!" Thus says Parker Palmer in his book, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, which explores the quest we are all on to find our true calling.

For 25 years, my call as a pastoral counselor has been to be a faithful companion who walks alongside those who have found the courage to search for their "birthright gift of self." Educated as a theologian and clinician, my ministry has stood at the intersection of emotional pain and spiritual confusion.

The interdependent relationship between the emotions and spirit, where improvement in one area informs improvement in the other, is much like the dilemma of the chicken and the egg. Yet, the paradox is that many times, in the midst of our darkest emotional episodes, our spiritual sensitivities pave the way toward wholeness.

Life is an experiment with truth. We begin our lives unable to hide the truth of who we are as children but, over time, discover ways to cover this truth with protective masks, lies, power, ego and deception.

The voice of our childhood succumbs to the many voices we hear in adulthood, and the noise prompts us to lose touch with our uniqueness. Failure to awaken to this conundrum that the life we are living is not ours but someone else's can set us forth on a path of imbalance and ultimately pain and despair.

We are disabused of our original giftedness in the first half of our lives, and if we awaken to our loss, can spend the second half trying to recover and reclaim the gift we once possessed. The way back home is simple but profoundly difficult in a world that is loud and calls us toward activity rather than receptivity.

We seek out guidance everywhere from without, and the therapist's office becomes the modern-day confessional. The link that bridges the gulf between our false self and our true self resides in the practice and discipline of listening. We listen everywhere for guidance except from within.

In this quest for truth and wholeness is an often-ignored dimension we are invited to embrace, which is holding what we dislike and find shameful about ourselves, as well as that of which we are confident and proud. The link between mind and soul, emotional health and spiritual maturity, is found only under quiet conditions where the soul can speak its truth.

There is a Hasidic tale that reveals, with amazing brevity, both the universal tendency to want to be someone else and the ultimate importance of becoming one's self: Rabbi Zusya, when he was an old man, said: "In the coming world, they will not ask me, 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me, 'Why were you not Zusya?'"

So, as a pastoral counselor, one way I invite persons to begin to reconnect with their spiritual self is to seek clues in stories from their younger years, when they lived closer to their true self. It is through our

stories that we find those "thin narratives" that have shaped who we are and the faces we have tried to put on as our own.

We find our calling by claiming our story and becoming the author. By being who God has created us to be, we dwell in the world as Zusya rather than straining to be Moses.

This quest toward spiritual maturity is arrived at only after a long journey through alien lands. It is most akin to the ancient idea of pilgrimage — "a transformative journey to a sacred center" full of hardships, darkness and peril. It is a journey where we are invited not to distance ourselves from the shameful, fearful and embarrassing chapters of our story, but to find the grace to embrace, listen and learn that these truths are important for our moving forward in reclaiming that which has been lost.

It continues to be my experience that the way to God is not up but down. When the way we have been living becomes closed, I invite people to look down and within before looking up and out.

Let me illustrate this by the example of depression. The underground is a potentially life-giving place to which depression takes us; a place where we come to understand that the self is not set apart or special or superior, but is a common mix of good and evil and a place we share in common with others. To embrace this holistic view of life is to accept a more demanding life because once you embrace this you must live your whole life from the mountain to the valley.

Life becomes a mysterious soup of joy and sorrow, both of which are critical ingredients for a whole life. Theologically, it is to embrace a cross — a symbol of death and ultimate disconnection with an empty tomb,



We begin our lives unable to hide the truth of who we are as children but, over time, discover ways to cover this truth with protective masks, lies, power, ego and deception.

a symbol of new life and reconnection.

Depression is the ultimate experience in being disconnected. It deprives one of relatedness, which is the lifeline of existence.

Like Job's visitors, we often offer sympathy, explanations and solutions to the despondent out of our own discomfort and feelings of helplessness. Many times our sincere efforts to help the depressed only compound the weight of their darkness.

What we can offer the depressed is not so much our words as our authentic presence. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke says, "Love . . . consists in this, that two solitudes protect and border and salute each other."

This is the kind of love that does not invade the inward awfulness with false comfort or advice, but simply stands on its boundaries, modeling respect of the other and their journey and the courage to let it be.

Rilke describes a love that neither invades nor avoids the soul's suffering. It is a love in which we represent God's love to a suffering person — a God who does not fix us, but gives us strength by suffering with us.

By standing respectfully and faithfully at the borders of another's solitude, we may mediate the love of God to a person who needs something deeper than any human can give. As I learned from one of my clinical supervisors, Dr. Bill Oglesby, depression is not the enemy trying to crush you, but can be the hand of a friend, pressing you down to the ground on which it is safe to stand.

Parker Palmer reminds us of this by commenting on his own depression. He states that sometimes we can live so ungrounded and at such an altitude that it becomes unsafe.

The problem with living at such altitudes is that when we slip, as we always do, we have a long way to fall and the landings can literally kill us. The grace of being pressed down to the ground is also simple; when we slip and fall, it is usually not fatal, and we can get up.

So, in the case of depression, it can be the hand of a friend pressing us down to the ground on which it is safe to stand — the

ground of our truth and nature, with its complex mix of limits and gifts, liabilities and assets, darkness and light.

This delicate interplay between the life of our emotions and our spirit is a relationship where what is underground/unseen informs the shape of what is seen. This "hidden wholeness" that Parker Palmer describes transcends shoring up the emotions to grounding our mind in the vitality of the spirit.

This deeper reality was the call I responded to 33 years ago as a young seminarian. It was the call to walk alongside those who had lost their way with the hope of pointing them to the "truth that can set us free." **BT**

—Steve Scoggin is president of CareNet, Inc., a subsidiary of Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C.

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A conversation with Hardy Clemmons

Veteran pastor and consultant discusses pastoral ministry

Hardy Clemons, a mentor, counselor and minister-at-large, served as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Greenville, S.C. from 1988 until his retirement in 2000. Earlier pastorates included the First Baptist Church of Georgetown, Texas (1961-67), and the Second Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas (1967-88).

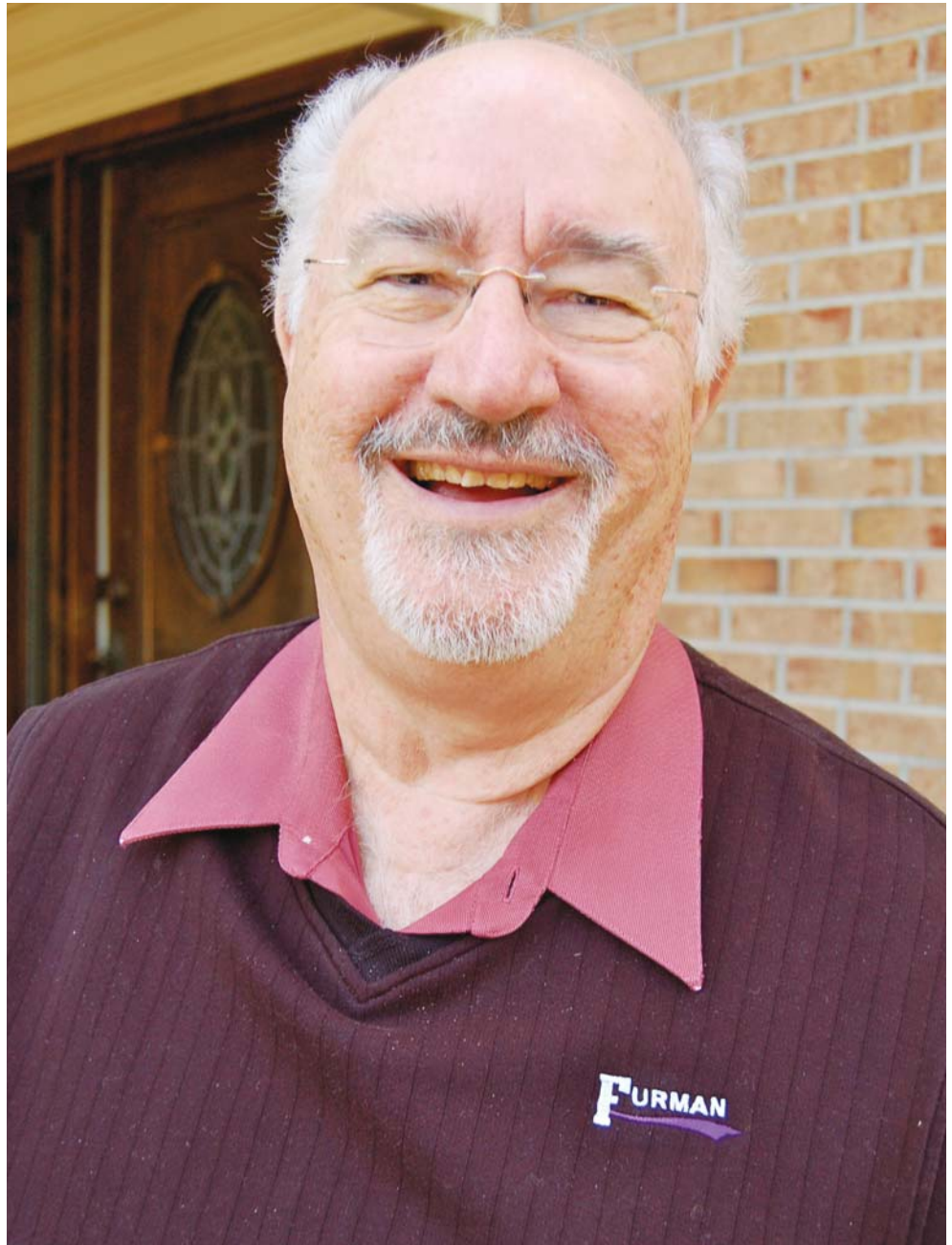
On Sept. 23, he will receive the annual Oates Award from the Wayne E. Oates Institute during a forum and dinner in Louisville, Ky. The award is given to a person who has demonstrated exceptional qualities in pastoral care and specifically the areas of ministry, leadership and personal service.

Clemons is a graduate of Texas Tech University and Southwestern Baptist Seminary where he earned a Ph.D. He has done additional studies at Austin Presbyterian Seminary, University of Texas in Austin, Texas Christian University, University of Louisville School of Psychiatry and The C.G. Jung Institute in Zürich. In addition, he has held numerous certifications during his pastoral ministry.

He is the author of *Saying Goodbye to Your Grief* (Smyth and Helwys, 1994) that was revised in 2004 as *Saying Hello to Your Life After Grief*.

He and his wife, Ardelle, live in San Antonio, Texas. They have one daughter and two grandchildren.

Baptists Today editor John Pierce interviewed Clemons in Greenville, S.C., where Clemons serves as a trustee for Furman University. The following is an edited version of that conversation.



BT: How is pastoral ministry different from other professions?

HC: I think it's harder for one thing. And people in other professions, I don't think, understand that. And I don't think I understood it as well as I do now after 10 years of not being a pastor.

The world we live in has gotten so

violent and so critical that it is difficult to cover all the bases. In most jobs you come to a weekend and then you have Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday off. There is not much way for a pastor's work to avoid being 24/7. You're always on call even if you're out of town.

I think it's hard for us to say this clearly because we don't want to sound like

whiners. But I honestly don't think I understood what a hard job it was while I was doing it.

I woke up one morning thinking: "What is this strange feeling I have? I don't remember ever feeling like this?" About halfway through the day it hit me: This is what it feels like to be rested.

That was probably three months after retirement. And I had done 11 sabbaticals and had religiously taken my day off. Wayne Oates had taught me to do that and to feel guilty when I didn't take a day off instead of when I did.

But I woke up that morning thinking: "Gosh, this is a good feeling." And I don't know how to communicate that.

About everybody that's really in a church with their heart understands the pastor can't do everything and can't be everywhere. But when I was [in Greenville], and was down at [Lake Kiowee trying to get some family time and some rest, and this guy's mother dies, he understands that I can't come back for every funeral but, "This is my mother and she thought so much of you and you were there for her when my dad died and we've just got to have you."

It took me a long time to say: "I can't do that." And it would still choke in my throat.

I wish somebody would discover a way to talk about this without sounding like you're a whiner. Because I think the average church member still kind of thinks the preacher works one day a week. The people on the inside know better. I always found the people toward the periphery of the church were more demanding than the people at the heart of the church.

BT: Yet, in reality, aren't there some lazy pastors out there?

HC: Yes, right. And everybody has had some experience with that. And, these days, there are preachers who are on their computers all day and aren't accessible to the congregation.

I felt like if people thought I was accessible, they weren't as demanding as if they got the idea that I was hiding.

BT: What did you learn later in ministry that you wish you'd learned sooner?

HC: How important it is for the minister to take care of himself or herself. It took me a long time to learn that, and I almost burned out and crashed.

I took a month off at Wayne Oates' suggestion — I called him desperate. He said: "Well, I can tell you what to do about that, but I don't think you'll do it."

I said, "You don't understand." (I'd known Wayne for a long time when we had this conversation.)

He said, "Go to whoever makes the decisions like this in your church and tell them that you're really thin in your rope, that you've talked to me and that I've invited you to come up here to Southern Seminary and be a pastor in residence for a month. We'll work out a contract about what we are going to try to accomplish.

I think the average church member still kind of thinks the preacher works one day a week. The people on the inside know better. I always found the people toward the periphery of the church were more demanding than the people at the heart of the church.

And you'll need to come with the understanding that you will not go back to Lubbock for any reason unless it involves your family."

I said, "Gosh, Wayne, I know the seminary shuts down on the weekends. I could go up on Sunday afternoon and be with you until Friday noon and then fly home and preach and make a few hospital visits. . ."

He said, "See, I told you that you wouldn't do what I said."

So I went to what we called our executive council and laid it out for them. I thought their response would be: "What is this? Preachers don't get tired." But they said: "We've been wondering when you were going to wake up on this. We think this is really a good idea. We were doing this church before you got here. We can probably last a month without you coming back."

BT: Was that before the concept of sabbaticals in Baptist churches was very popular?

HC: It was — and we didn't call that a sabbatical. But it really was and it led to my doing, in Lubbock and in Greenville, 10 other sabbaticals. Some were a month and others for a semester [to teach at seminaries].

That led to a lot of people calling for me to tell them about the agreement with the church. So I've kind of had an off-line consulting business — a lot without portfolio or without pay, but some with pay — where I've helped churches set up a sabbatical that will work for them.

The people on the staff at First Baptist Greenville, who were here with me, every one of them has done five sabbaticals by now. My deal [with the church] was: "I want you to give me a sabbatical and everybody who reports to me a sabbatical."

It is a much more popular idea now. And I counsel ministers to put that in their agreement when they go [into the pastorate].

This [Greenville] church really bought into it. And we did not have the kind of [staff] problems that largely come from fatigue — where people make stupid decisions because they are just tired.

The history of most churches is there has been a good bit of crashing and burning going on. We did not have anything that resembled that among staff on my watch at First Greenville.

BT: Anything else regarding lessons you wished you'd learned earlier?

HC: Two things come to my mind with reference to preaching. One, I had to learn to quit preparing sermons [to impress a few] and prepare sermons for the people who were sitting there on Sunday morning.

And, I had to learn that everything else I do sits on some private time with God and some real study. Not just "getting up a sermon" — but really getting into something and using my education to come to the heart of something instead of skating over the tips of the mountains.

A third thing I learned is that going to another church is like going to a mission field where you don't speak the language. Even if that church is three miles away in a big city, there is still a language in that church that they have to learn about you

and you have to learn about them.

My first churches were in Texas and I'd grown up in Texas, so I thought I could communicate with everybody. But that was a real breakthrough when I had that parallel of going to a mission field where it is going to take at least a year of pretty concentrated study to learn the language.

BT: A Baptist minister works for a congregation made up of many bosses with different and sometimes conflicting expectations. How does one determine to whom to listen and where to put the most energy?

HC: That is really a good question because that is really one of the hard things to figure out. The way I tried to do it was to say to myself, but not much to the congregation: "I really work for God, and the congregation pays my salary."

I'm accountable to both. But if push comes to shove, I'm really going to try to operate out of my priority system — without sounding pious or holy — that says, "If God is displeased with what I do, that's a bigger problem than if the power people at the church, or the loudest people who sometimes aren't the power people, are displeased."

I think a lot of ministers feel like they've got to please everybody. All ministers can answer on a true-false test if it's possible to please everybody in your congregation. But, in your gut, you still try.

I had a guy who was superintendent of schools in Georgetown, Texas, during my first pastorate. He had been through the Battle of the Bulge. I asked if I could take him to lunch and pick his brain about leadership.

When we first sat down, he said: "Hardy, having watched you, I think the main thing you need to hear is if you are going to be a leader, you can't always be the good guy." Boy, did he ever nail me.

He helped me learn that if your real push is to please [the most demanding people], you're going to be in trouble all the time. And I'd rather be in valid trouble than in invalid trouble.

BT: There is also an expectation from some lay leaders — such as CEOs — that the pastor should lead the congregation in the same way

they lead their companies. They don't realize that ministers must lead volunteers who don't respond to demands.

HC: Yes. A statement that I've used to those people is: "The church is not a business."

It is more like a family that needs to be run in a business-like way. We've got to realize that one disciple plants and one disciple waters, but God gives the increase. If you are not clear with that, I think you should not be in ministry.

One [Baptist] leader asked me years ago: "When you have to make up your mind between truth and expediency, what will you do?"

I think a lot of ministers feel like they've got to please everybody. All ministers can answer on a true-false test if it's possible to please everybody in your congregation. But, in your gut, you still try.

Carlyle Marney was pastor at First Baptist Austin when I was a campus minister at the University of Texas. He took me under his wing and would meet me at the Nighthawk for breakfast at 5:30 in the morning.

He really did influence me that if you're going to go into ministry you need to go into it to serve God and not to be popular with your people. You need to have the guts to do something you know is going to get you in trouble but it's right.

He helped me to decide that, if you're going to be fighting battles whatever you do, you might as well fight battles with as much integrity as any fallible human can muster. I have honestly tried to do that.

I tried not to talk down to members. And I cut my teeth as a pastor between 1961 and '67 in Georgetown, Texas, which wasn't that different from Mobile, Ala. And I fiercely believed in what Martin Luther King was doing.

I tried to have integrity about that but not to shove it up people's noses. One church had four pastors (due to the race

issue) during the six years I was in town. I think I survived because of the attitude of not talking down and not shaming people — but inviting them [to rethink].

I had an awful lot of respect for Medgar Evers. When he was killed [by a Klansman], Ardelle and I sent a check to the fund for \$5. If it could have been \$500 or \$5,000, we would have done it, but \$5 was a stretch for us.

In about three months the president of the First National Bank, a good friend and a Methodist, called to see if I could stop by. I came in and he reached in his drawer and pulled out that check. He said: "What is this?"

I said: "It's a check to the Myrlie Evers Fund. I wish it could have been more. That killing was a terrible thing. Why are you asking?"

He said: "Well I always look at every out-of-town check that comes through my bank because I feel like I need to be knowledgeable about what people are doing with their money and where it's going."

I had not been in Georgetown very long. So he said: "If you are going to make it in Georgetown, you're going to need to be real careful about that attitude because most people here are on the other side."

And, boy, they were: the chairman of the school board, the mayor.

I didn't get offensive with him. I said, "Billy Bob, I understand that you need to be knowledgeable, but I don't think that is an appropriate thing for you to do — to be checking on my contributions without my permission."

He and I stayed friends, and he loaned me money all the time and I paid him back all the time. But that is a little window into the kind of things I was up against in Georgetown.

My point is that not all, but most of the people respected that I stood for what I believed in and didn't talk down to them and shame them about their own attitudes.

My father was a school superintendent who went to Columbia University in the '30s to get a masters degree under Nicholas Murray Butler — the unreconstructed liberal of that time. So I watched my dad handle school boards in small West Texas towns, and I learned a lot from just breathing the same air.

Don't put people down when you disagree with them, but don't sell out your integrity when they are upset.

BT: In most jobs, discussing compensation and benefits is a natural part of the interview and employment process. Yet often churches act like this subject is unspiritual and will reach the very end of a drawn-out search process with a potential minister before it is addressed. How can this be done better while still retaining the understanding of a call to ministry?

HC: Wayne Oates really helped me with that issue. When you called him, he would listen and then say: “OK, I believe I have a pretty good understanding of what you want me to do for you. Now let’s talk about what you are going to do for me . . .” That was a model that I thought had integrity, and I do something like that.

I consult with a good many search committees and one of the first things I tell them is: “Talk to the person about your compensation ideas early in the process.” It’s the elephant in the room for both sides. If you name the elephant and get that settled, then it’s going to free up the rest of the conversation. The ones that do that, I think, are glad they did.

I do some coaching of ministers, largely over the telephone. I tell them it is not unspiritual to say: “I have needs and my family has needs. We’ve talked about everything but one thing.”

Now I’m not going to bring that up real early as the prospect. But if they don’t bring it up and I don’t bring it up, whatever happens is as much my fault as it is theirs.

In Lubbock, I said there are five things to consider in setting a compensation package. One, how much responsibility does this person have? Two, how much education do they have that prepares them to do that responsibility well?

Three, what kind of experience do they have that will help them do this? Four, what salary are they making now? And, five, . . . is this a self-starter?

I tried my best to hire people who tended to be workaholics because I found it was a whole lot easier [to slow them down]. I think anybody who ever reported to me will tell you that when I got in their face it was usually because they were not taking care of themselves.

I’ve got to model self care as a pastor.

That’s why I took the first sabbatical and then we passed them to other ministers.

In our concept of team ministry, I wanted a mutual accountability. If you caught me doing something [work-related] on my day off, I invited people to confront me.

BT: Some ministers struggle to build close relationships within their congregations while retaining a professional distance without being aloof. What can you say about these boundaries?

HC: I remember really struggling with this. I decided that the respect for the office will take care of itself. Being who I am, I don’t need to work very hard on maintaining a pastoral authority. People accord you that.

I’ve got a CEO friend who said you can demand respect but you’ve got to earn trust. And I followed that. I was not afraid to develop close friendships, but I was afraid of having a clique or the perception of a clique.

So if I thought the thing was getting a little thick, I’d say to the group: “We’ve got to remember here that we are working with the whole church and if they think we’ve got a little clique over here, trust is going to go in the tank.

I stayed in Georgetown for six years, Lubbock for 21 and Greenville for about 11. In that time you get closer to some than others, and I don’t think we should fear that. But we should not let it get out of hand. How to do that is a balancing act that takes a lot of grace and wisdom.

BT: How did you deal with relationships with neighboring Baptist churches and congregations of other traditions?

HC: We talked a lot in the churches I served about responsible denominationalism. I felt like I should preach and talk in committees about being an honest part of the Baptist witness in our part of the world.

For example, when they started *Baptists Today*, Buddy Shurden called and asked if he could count on our church for \$2,000 because Walker Knight was going to start a paper.

We understood the importance of that in Lubbock because we had been kicked

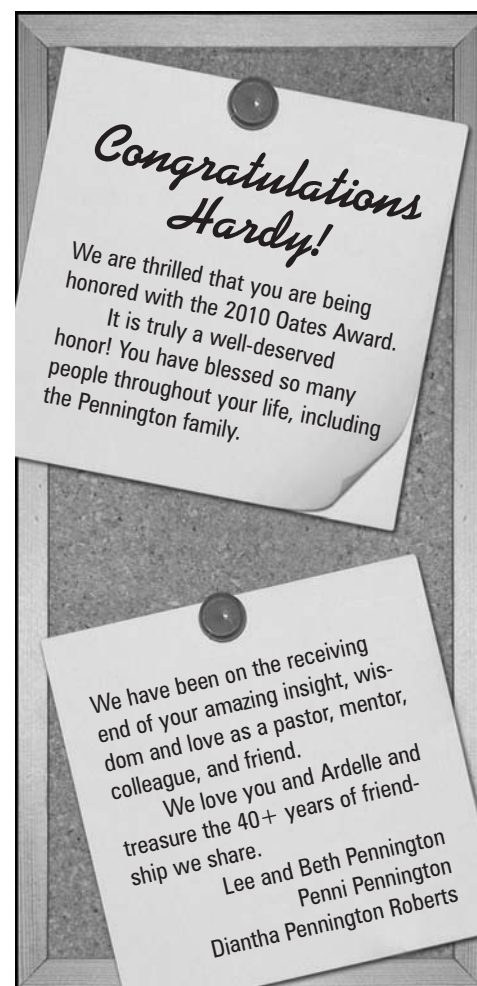
out of the association over alien immersion. But when I got there, I said let’s relate to them anyway we can — and if they won’t let us do it, then let’s don’t take it personally.

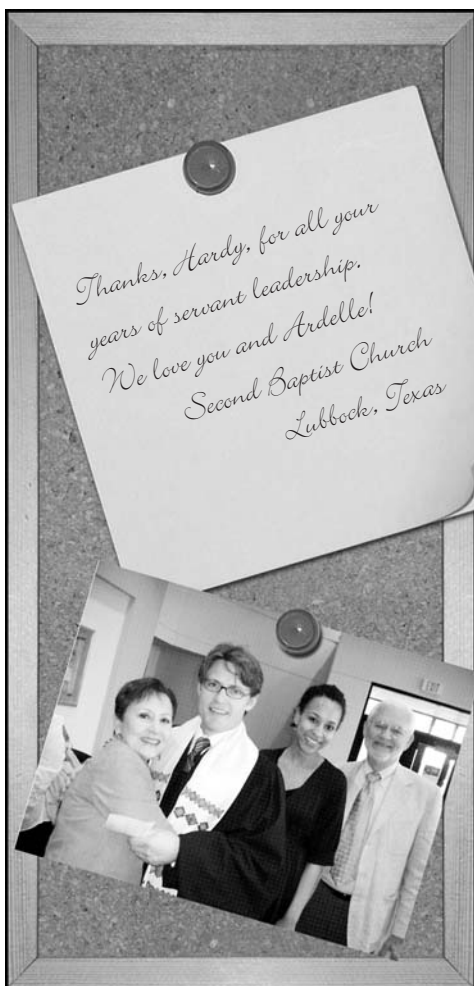
So I tried real hard to get acquainted with every Baptist preacher in the association and did not just talk about church. I really worked at that because I felt like we needed each other.

And I tried to get acquainted with the key Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, Pentecostal leaders. I worked to develop a relationship where we could really talk.

In Lubbock, I had a wonderful relationship with Rabbi Klein. Recently, for I think the 50th time, we had our weekend where on Friday night we go to the synagogue and worship with them and on Sunday morning they come to Second Baptist to have a service. That was a sacred thing.

I was usually a part of a confidentially based clergy group that would meet once or twice a month. What I would do now is develop a relationship with the imam. I never did take flack from my congregations for being ecumenical.





If anyone ever deserved an award with Wayne Oates' name on it, you do. You magnificently practiced in the trenches of church life what Wayne superbly taught in the halls of academia! And we love you for it!
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I'm going to have several jobs, but I'm not going to have but one wife and one family. And I'm not going to neglect that family in an attempt to be a servant of God.

BT: Pastoral authority is a difficult issue for moderate Baptists who don't want to adopt authoritarian models but don't want to be seen as weak leaders. What is your perspective on this?

HC: I see that as a two-sided coin. One side is I really wanted a team ministry that is genuinely a team and not a hierarchy that uses team language.

The other side, I wanted the church leaders to understand that you can't lead a church with a committee. There has got to be clarity about where the buck stops.

If I'm in heart surgery, I don't want a committee. I want the best heart surgeon who is not shy about saying hand me that or don't do that.

On one hand, I really want the church staff to be a team that is accountable to one another — and that accountability needs to include me. The other is that I want 51 percent of the stock. There are times when we don't have time for this to be a discussion. We need to act, and it's like the quarterback in the huddle more than like the coach during the week.

The quarterback calls the play and says we've got 25 seconds to put this in motion or we're going to get penalized. Somebody needs to have the authority and the guts to exercise that 51 percent of the stock.

But if the team begins to feel that the guy who sits at the desk where the buck stops is misusing that 51 percent, it is their responsibility to confront that. Because we don't want a dictator in a moderate church — but neither do we want a swamp where the river has no banks or boundaries.

BT: More than in most Baptist pastors in the South, you have a long history of working with female ministers and women in other church leadership roles? How and why?

HC: I was a child in World War II and my dad was superintendent of schools in Lockney, Texas. All the men but him and

Mr. Allen, who was about 70, went to war.

So the whole faculty and the principals were women. I grew up watching my dad deal with strong women leaders.

I realized after I got into campus ministry, where there were a lot of female leaders, that I'd learned from my dad that women have as valid a viewpoint as men and sometimes a heck of a lot more sensitivity. If we don't have women in leadership, it's like cutting half of your line or backfield from your football team.

When I went to Lubbock, the chairs of several of the committees who served on the executive council were women. They had a fierce commitment to not having that church run by a bunch of old white men.

But we didn't have women deacons — that was 1967. In '70 we hired two female pastoral staff members. It was probably '75 before deciding to have women deacons.

When I left, we had six ministerial positions and four were held by women. We went out saying let's find the best person we can possibly find and if it's a woman, we'll be pleased. We were not into tokenism.

Greenville has been adding women to the pastoral staff since 1970. By the time I left, we had three women and three men on staff.

I just found that it enriched the pastoral team or the diaconate or the finance committee or whatever to ask the question of who is the most effective leader we can find, and if it is a woman or a young person, let's go for that. But let's don't get into tokenism of any kind.

BT: Both male and female ministers need models. Do you have any suggestions for finding good ones?

HC: All of my mentors are dead: W.F. Howard, Bruce McIver, Carlyle Marney, Blake Smith, Wayne Oates, Boyd Hunt.

One of Wayne Oates' recommendations to me as a minister was: "Hardy, you don't have enough wise old men in your life. You need more people."

He said to go home and cultivate more people and they don't necessarily need to be pastors. And include people who are younger than you and some women.

Looking back nearly 40 years, that was one of the best suggestions I ever got from a mentor — to look for younger people to whom I go for counseling or collegial conversation. So I went to people like Roger Paynter and later George Mason and some peer people like Jess Fletcher and Milton Ferguson.

Then some women leaders like Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler and I became good friends. I had trained a young female counselor who ended up with a Ph.D. in counseling and came back to Lubbock while I was still there. I made a deal to see her as a therapist.

One of my commitments to myself was that as long as I'm a pastor, I'm going to have a stated therapeutic relationship with somebody. I followed that everywhere I went. . .

Every pastor needs somebody he's not going to lie to and doesn't have to choose his words carefully to unpack his garbage.

I'm going to have several jobs, but I'm not going to have but one wife and one family. And I'm not going to neglect that family in an attempt to be a servant of God.

I can't always put the family first, but those were two commitments I tried not ever to violate as I matured. One of the great mistakes I made in ministry was, we only had one child, a daughter, and I neglected her when we moved to Lubbock. Fortunately, it didn't end up in any kind of train wreck. But that's something I'd do over if I could — and I got better at that.

One of the recommendations Oates made to me was to set a time every week when that daughter had my full attention. Then if you miss it because of a funeral [he said], you need to compensate.

So we made an agreement that every Saturday at lunch was her time with me. We'd go to lunch and then do something fun.

BT: Any other advice concerning pastoral ministry?

HC: Don't take yourself too seriously. It's a vocation; it's not a career. It's a calling.

If it's not going to be a vocation, do something else. As the guy says to the preacher in [the movie] *Oh God!* — “Why don't you just go sell Earth Shoes?” **BT**

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Coaching: A tool for clergy growth and transition

Coaching is a relatively new phenomenon that developed in the business world in the latter decades of the 20th century. In *Christian Coaching*, Gary Collins explains: “The coaching principles that athletes and performers had used for years emerged in the business community. Personal coaching moved beyond health clubs to corporate offices and the workplace.” Today, coaching is also finding a place with clergy and the church.

Coaching is a unique field apart from counseling, mentoring or consulting. In most professional circles, the common term used is “life coaching” and there are a number of specialties within the field, but the basic principles of coaching apply to all areas of coaching.

Charity Roberson, campus minister at North Carolina State University and a Christian coach, says: “Coaching is a unique relationship between coach and client that enables the client to discover and live the life they were created for.”

Bill Copper, director of the Hollifield Leadership Center, defines coaching as “a relationship — or a series of conversations — designed to help others expand on their current successes.” Copper stresses that coaching is “for successful people who want to expand their successes and reach new goals.”

This point is also emphasized by Christopher McCluskey, president and CEO of the Professional Christian Coaching Institute. McCluskey says: “Coaching is for people who are already at a fairly stable, healthy, functioning place in life. It’s an action-oriented service for those who are ready to do serious personal growth work — not healing work. I have often said coaching is for those who are ready and able to move from ‘acceptable’ to ‘exceptional.’”

Any number of personal concerns may be addressed in a coaching relationship, but these

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are always determined by the client in conversation with the coach. The client is always the responsible party in the coaching relationship. Mark Tidsworth, a life coach and president of Pinnacle Leadership Associates, observes that primary concerns include transformation and growth, life purpose, life balance, health, leadership, and personal or professional learning and development. He emphasizes that “coaching is about change that leads to maximizing one’s potential.”

Roberson, who works primarily with women clients, relates: “I see so many [women] living their lives like they need to apologize for being a woman. They seek coaching around issues of identity. They spend so much time giving and taking care of everyone else that they rarely have time and space for themselves.” Coaching provides the necessary space for reflection, discernment and goal setting.

What should a person look for in a Christian coach? Mark Tidsworth offers these suggestions: Ask about the coach’s faith journey, current involvement in a Christian church, training and philosophy or approach to coaching. Also request references of previous clients.

Gary Wood, director of the Christian Coaches Network, emphasizes that “if you are looking for a person who will bring a Christ-centered perspective to the table week by week, you need to search for a person of depth. By this I mean someone who brings the spiritual experience, maturity, facility with Scriptures and

spiritual things, and the depth of character that is commensurate with what you need.” Copper suggests: “Christian coaches recognize that when they are coaching others, they are engaging in a three-way conversation between the coach, the other person and the Holy Spirit.”

Roberson observes that the “coach should be willing to offer one free coaching session so that you can see if you are a fit as coach and client.” Client and coach enter into a contract outlining frequency of sessions (usually conducted by phone), confidentiality and fee structure. A responsible coach will also be willing to make a referral if the client has a special need such as career, health or marriage coaching that the coach is not equipped to address.

Wood anticipates a growth in Christian coaching in the next few years. “As boomers retire, they are being succeeded in leadership by a group of men and women who come out of university, college and seminary with a clear understanding of the value of coaching and what it can achieve in a person’s life. They are assuming roles in churches, parachurch organizations and corporations where they will introduce coaching if it does not already exist. They will increasingly use it as an integral tool of ministry to help take people from where they are to where God knows they can be.”

During these times of challenge and rapid change in the life of the church, Christian leaders should take advantage of all the resources available to deal with both personal and corporate concerns. These resources include their own personal abilities, desires and gifts. A coach can come alongside and help the leader discover how to maximize these personal resources and live into a productive and desirable future. The coaching conversation is a key to effectiveness, growth and personal transformation. **BT**

ChurchWorks! is provided by the Congregational Life office of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in partnership with *Baptists Today* and for those dedicated lay leaders working in the educational ministries of local churches. This month’s page was written by Ircel Harrison, director of the Central Baptist Theological Seminary center in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and an associate and coach with Pinnacle Leadership Associates, based in Lexington, S.C. More ministry resources are available at www.thefellowship.info/News/subscribe and www.thefellowship.info/Resources/Church-Resources/Baptists-Today-resource-page.

2010 Bible Studies

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

“Time is an equal opportunity employer. Each human being has exactly the same number of hours and minutes every day. Rich people can’t buy more hours. Scientists can’t invent new minutes. And you can’t save time and spend it on another day.”

—Denis Waitley

There are many inequities in life (ex: finances, living conditions, jobs, health, social status), but all of us choose each day how to spend/invest our allotted 24 hours. We may talk about time being a gift, but it can become a curse and us its slaves.

The wise use of time has become a point of challenge and growth for me through the years. I was a tither before I was a church member. My mother taught me from age 6 or 7 to always put 10 percent of whatever money I received into the little white offering envelope in Sunday school. My understanding of tithing grew in my young adult years, however, to a desire to give financially for a purpose rather than from expectation and also to give at least 10 percent of my non-sleeping and non-employed hours to serving God and others.

Stewardship of time is more than time management. We usually focus on *chronos* time or that of a short-term, quantitative nature. Christians, however, should focus on *kairos* time related to an undetermined period in which something of special quality happens over the long term.

October is stewardship emphasis month in many churches. Because stewardship centers on our best efforts at responsible living — and because time is becoming a more precious commodity in today’s troubled economy when money is limited for many people — the following lessons on the stewardship of time are apropos. They appropriately relate to the search for meaning and how life is best lived as found in Ecclesiastes, one of only a few Bible books to mention the use of time.

Oct. 3, 2010

Punching the time clock

Ecclesiastes 2:18-26

“Our self-centered and subjective-minded generation tends to think that work is justified only if it assists in the development of personal-ity or some such thing. It is a good thing if work is creative and artistic in that sense, but that is not its first justification. Its first justification is the service of God, which it achieves if it contributes to the common good in practical and material ways.”

—Alexander Miller

I used to say that I wanted to retire at age 55. Well, now that I’m there, it’s the farthest thing from my mind! I enjoy my job, toil, labor, calling, vocation — whatever term may be used to describe work. I function well with a schedule and purpose and plan. Work is an anchor related to other aspects of my life; the “flow” and “rhythm” are significant to my sense of self-worth and mental well-being.

Even though I have been a salaried professional for 30 years, much of that time I have felt the need to keep a timesheet of my hours worked to justify my employment. “Punching the time clock” is a carryover from my high school and college days of working at low-paying hourly jobs!

Our society worships work. Its accomplishments bring fulfillment, security and satisfaction. We have a compulsion to produce and perform. Yet, there’s never enough time to do it all.

As I read Ecclesiastes, the only book in the Bible that deals seriously with the subject of daily work, there’s no need to fret about the time element anyway. For Qoheleth the “Teacher,” toil is meaningless — as wisdom and pleasures are described in 2:17 as “a chasing after the wind” (NIV), “spitting into the

**LESSONS FOR:
Sunday, Oct. 3–24, 2010**

Written by Jackie Riley,
managing editor of
Baptists Today



wind” / “smoke” (The Message), “vanity and a chasing after wind” (NRSV), “vanity and striving after wind” (NASB).

As a sage, Qoheleth is among Israel’s elite. He is doubtful of the merits of wealth, influence, the intellect and the future. He is an honest thinker, a realist who is looking back at his life’s work and asking, “Does it really amount to anything significant?” His industrious spirit, hard work “under the sun” (see 2:18, 19, 20, 22 and elsewhere) and accomplishments matter little. He understands the reason for work, but realizes he will eventually die just as the foolish (his son?) will — and he cannot take the products of his labor with him. Distrusting the abilities of “those who come after me,” Qoheleth voices his frustration as “vanity and a great evil.”

Qoheleth’s distrust of his heir to handle his estate properly reminds me of two young women I have known who each inherited a large sum of money from her widowed mother. In each case the mother had worked long, hard hours to eke out a living for herself and her daughter. As a teenager, “Jennifer” spent her \$50,000 trust fund in 5 years and also pawned her mother’s silver and china — and was left homeless in her early 20s. Similarly, “Jillian” lost her family’s home and belongings within just a few years. Both young women ended up on the welfare rolls.

Although Qoheleth touts the inequities of work and just rewards for both wise and foolish in verses 18-23, in verses 24-26 his view of work and wisdom takes a positive shift. He acknowledges that wisdom is still of greater value than folly and that toil is to be preferred over idleness. Life is limited, he says, so enjoy the simple things such as food, drink and work. We might add: keep a cheerful demeanor, delight in companionship, and reverence God. Reward comes in the form of wisdom and joy “to one who pleases God.”

Qoheleth would probably tell us that “punching the time clock” isn’t such a bad thing



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after all. His lessons may be summed up thusly:

- Daily work can be the chief agent of our joy and satisfaction in life.
- Labor is a blessing from God, so proceed with moderation and enjoyment.
- The way we invest our time is a personal choice; there is no certainty of the outcome, however.
- God determines who can find joy in everyday activities such as work; our enjoyment is not based on status or situation.
- If we worry about what will happen to our wealth in the future, we will be unable to enjoy it in the present.
- We can become cynical and pessimistic from not knowing God's plan or the future; enjoyment in the present comes from being content with life's limitations.
- Appraise life realistically; acknowledge both vanities and values.
- Accept unchangeable things and seize opportunities for rejoicing when possible.

Discuss: What do eating, drinking and toiling represent in the life of humans? What is the difference between seeking pleasure and finding enjoyment? When/under what circumstances have you experienced the kind of satisfying enjoyment described here? Do you feel more like God's dutiful employee or his valued friend? Why? If you were to view your work as a gift from God to be enjoyed, how could that change your attitude about it? In addition to our preoccupation with time and the drudgery of the time clock, what other factors tend to make time an oppressive force in our lives?

Oct. 10, 2010

Time marches on

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

"It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth — and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up — that we will begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had."

—Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Why do the innocent suffer and the unrighteous prosper? If we dwell on this age-old question, we can become pessimistic like Qoheleth and decide that life is meaningless and time has no purpose. Ecclesiastes 3 invites us to consider a third question: Who is in control?

If we believe God is in control, we can

view life as a series of events, life stages and experiences presenting opportunities, responsibilities and challenges. We accept God's timing as being filled with both destructive and constructive forces. We acknowledge God's limitations in controlling day-to-day decisions and affairs. We can find, as John Barton (*Reading the Old Testament*, p. 62) says, "contentment in the midst of ultimate pessimism" by accepting that "all things happen in an appropriate way and at an appropriate time."

In the Old Testament, this "appropriate time" or "season" is not some abstract concept. Rather, it is related to specific events with a purpose and/or opportunities for action (see 1 Sam. 9:16; Ezra 10:13; 2 Chron. 24:11; Mic. 4:7; Lev. 23:2, 4). Such is the theme of the beloved poem that is our Scripture passage for today, made famous by the 1960s hit song "Turn, Turn, Turn" written by Pete Seeger and sung by The Byrds:

*To everything (Turn, Turn, Turn)
There is a season (Turn, Turn, Turn)
And a time to every purpose, under heaven
A time to . . .*

Each line of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 expresses two opposite actions or periods of time known to everyone, events ordained by God and recurring endlessly at appropriate times. The 14 contrasts cover nearly every event of life — pleasant and unpleasant — beginning on a personal level and ending in the public domain. Each line of the poem is introduced by "a time" and has a noticeable rhythm. The first and third verbs are related, as are the second and fourth verbs — for example, weep/laugh and mourn/dance.

Following is a brief analysis of the contrasting actions/periods in the poem. The first four pairs deal with the body. The next four focus on the soul — thinking, feeling, choosing. The last six relate to the spirit — decisions, commitments.

born/die (v. 2) — Everything takes place between birth and death, which we do not control naturally and involves a choice.

plant/pluck (v. 2) — There is a time to "punch the clock" and invest much energy and effort, but then we should enjoy the fruits of our labor.

kill/heal (v. 3) — Sometimes closure is the answer, whereas building up is the better way in other instances.

break down/build up (v. 3) — Depending on the circumstance, the most constructive approach may be either a concise end or a fresh start.

weep/laugh (v. 4) — C.S. Lewis said that God whispers to us when we laugh, but shouts to us when we weep. There is a proper time to express all types of emotions.

mourn/dance (v. 4) — Those who weep are the ones who mourn. And those who laugh are the ones who dance.

throw away stones/gather stones together (v. 5) — Stoning represents the ultimate rejection of a person not only from society, but also from life. The gathering of stones could symbolize the building up of someone, however.

embrace/refrain from embracing (v. 5). — Physical absence or anger prevent the usual greeting of embracing. There is a time to mend relational fences and also a time to move on.

seek/time to lose (v. 6) — We should seek to better our situation and also restore relationships, but sometimes we must accept that some things do not change.

keep/throw away (v. 6) — Caring for ourselves and others and the environment is important. Sometimes we must rid ourselves of unusable goods and unhealthy relationships, however, and encourage more responsibility from others.

tear/sew (v. 7) — Tearing one's garments is an outward symbol of grief or crisis. Grieving is healthy, but the time comes to pull ourselves together emotionally.

keep silence/speak (v. 7) — The wise know when to express themselves and when to hold their tongue.

love/hate (v. 8) — We are to love and respect the people and things God loves, but speak out against injustice, hypocrisy, mistreatment, etc.

war/peace (v. 8) — We must work for peace first, while constructively countering aggression and mistreatment.

Qoheleth may well have been the inspiration for the modern-day saying, "Time waits for no one." He has other words of wisdom for us as well:



- God's timing is perfect. Seek God's guidance in dealing with changing times and seasons.
- Enjoy the simple activities of each "season" as God's gifts.
- There are many things we cannot control, but we can choose our own conduct and form our own character.
- Life is filled with choices. Sometimes the healthiest choice is to move on/start over, as with an unhealthy relationship or job situation or living condition.

Discuss: Does the verse "a time to be born, and a time to die" apply to a soldier who escapes death in a battle while his comrade does not?

Explain. If "there is a time to mourn, and a time to dance," does that mean there are periods of grieving during which celebrating is appropriate or inappropriate? Explain. In what circumstances would the verse "there is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" be applicable? If there is "a time for war, and a time for peace," does that mean war is an inevitable part of human history? Explain.

Oct. 17, 2010

Time and eternity

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

*I have only just a minute,
Only sixty seconds in it,
Forced upon me, can't refuse it,
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it.
But, it is up to me to use it.
I must suffer if I lose it.
Give account if I abuse it,
Just a tiny little minute.
But eternity is in it.*

—Benjamin E. Mays

We tend to view time like money: as an exhaustible resource we spend rather than use. We're busy all the time — doing good, being productive, filling every minute with activity. Rather, we should think of time as an inexhaustible resource God has given us both to enjoy in the present and to invest for an ultimate goal that provides dividends in the future.

The Bible has much to teach us about investing time wisely. Psalm 90 instructs us to spend our limited days in view of eternally worthy causes. Jesus modeled this principle in the Gospels by accomplishing much in three short years. Busyness and activity did not consume him, however. He balanced a strong work ethic with time for rest and reflection.

His slower pace of life allowed him time to help in unexpected situations. Also, he prioritized his time; he did not heal every person or solve every problem. Rather, he focused on his long-term calling.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, we are told to do good to others in the present (Gal. 6:9-10) and to make the most of our time, taking advantage of ministry opportunities (Eph. 5:15-17; Col. 4:5-6; Rom. 13:11-14). Likewise, Ecclesiastes 3:9-15 encourages us to live wisely in view of God's overall purpose and eternity, giving attention to both privilege and responsibility, purpose and limitations.

Today's passage addresses questions raised in verses 1-8, interpreting the events in terms of Qoheleth's own experience — which included a lot of busyness! If we view time from the perspective of eternity and "seasons," the opposite events/actions will make sense even if we do not understand these polarities in the present.

In verses 9 and 10, Qoheleth digresses from his poetic strain to ask a summarizing question (that expects a negative answer): Of what profit are all of these activities? . . . What good is it to be born if you eventually die? What good is it to plant if that which you plant is eventually uprooted? What good is it to throw stones if they must eventually be regathered? What good is it to go to war if you will eventually make peace? It's almost as if he is asking: Why wash dishes and do laundry when you'll just mess up more? Or, why cut the lawn and pull weeds because they'll just grow back quickly?

Qoheleth then softens his stance in verse 11 to acknowledge the role of God who has appointed our activities, so therefore, we should perform them in service to God. He affirms that God has made everything appropriate or "suitable" (also rendered "proper" / "fitting" / "useful" / "beautiful") for its occasion.

Activities in God's plan have a certain design if we view them as part of the whole story. We may not understand this design in the present, but we look to eternity because we desire to fulfill our role in God's overall plan.

Qoheleth continues on a positive note in verses 12-13 as he repeats advice given in 2:24 ". . . [T]here is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil." Note the emphasis on God's gift.

Time is a gift from God, who controls the past, present and future. God's work brings eternal results. It is our gift to God when we . . .

- Honor God's rhythms of prayer, work, service and rest so that we can have free space for the unexpected and unplanned opportunities in life.
- Make the best use of opportunities God gives us even if they are routine and seemingly purposeless.
- Focus on quality over quantity of time invested, always giving attention to how, where and why we spend our time.
- Determine how our immediate objectives lead to intermediate goals and to our long-range mission/calling, and then we structure our rest, recreation, relaxation and fun as well as work, service and ministry to mesh with our mission/calling.
- Don't just view time from a utilitarian standpoint of productivity, performance and accomplishment.
- Invest time in building vital relationships rather than superficial associations.

Discuss: What negative and positive things does Qoheleth say about time? Do you agree or disagree with him? Why? How do you understand his conclusion: "[God] has made everything suitable for its time"? How is this idea to be distinguished from fatalism? If Qoheleth not a fatalist, what might we call him?

Oct. 24, 2010

Taking time for God

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8, 13-14

"Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you."

—Carl Sandburg

Confronting old age and death forces us to evaluate how we invest our resources — our time, energy, finances and relationships — and to examine the importance of wealth, status and pleasure. Are we truly living for the eternal goals of Christ or for insignificant security?

Today's Scripture reeks of pessimism over approaching old age and experiencing disability and finally darkness. The writer is apparently getting older — and more skeptical. He has been influenced by the negative thinking of the Stoics, Epicurians, Apocalyptic and Sectarians. Also, the time is around the third or second century B.C., when Israel is still under foreign domination and the purposes of God seem to be hidden.



Surprisingly, the text regarding the special challenges of youth and old age begins in an optimistic tone (see 11:7-10). Life's short, Qoheleth says, so rejoice during your youth and enjoy it while you can. (We would say, "Carpe diem," or "seize the day.") In 11:8, however, he calls us to "remember" the dark side of aging. More importantly, in 12:1, he encourages us to "remember" (or take time for) our creator while we are young.

Verse 2 reverts to the perils of aging, beginning what some commentators call the "Allegory of Old Age." Verses 2-6 are full of metaphors related to aging, such as those listed and explained below.

- *guards of the house* (arms and hands tremble)
- *bent* (legs weaken)
- *grind* (lose teeth)
- *those who look through the windows* (vision fails)
- *doors shut* (hearing diminishes)
- *sound of the grinding* (voice deepens)
- *sound of a bird* (awaken early)
- *daughters of song* (hear faint sounds)
- *heights* (fear high places)
- *almond tree* (hair turns white)
- *grasshopper* (probably a sexual metaphor)
- *desire fails* (appetite for all things decreases)
- *broken bowl/pitcher/fountain/cistern* (death is coming)

Verse 7 ends the allegory in its reference to death, followed in verse 8 by a reassertion of the thesis of Ecclesiastes that all is vanity. Even if we experience some measure of happiness from our endeavors, old age and death eventually rob us of everything. Sadly, youth does not last forever. We might spend a lifetime seeking something we will never find and in doing so come to death's door realizing we could have had much more if we had only depended upon God.

Thankfully, Ecclesiastes ends on a positive note centered around the theme of today's study on taking time for God. Qoheleth praises the teachings of the wise men, but exhorts us to be mindful of what God has done and to be loyal to God. Wisdom is good, he says; it is God's gift for helping us accomplish difficult tasks.

Although life choices and seasons (such as aging) had seemed meaningless to Qoheleth, in the end he sees the guiding purposes, values and priorities more clearly. He directs his readers to "fear God" and "keep his commandments" because judgment is coming (see vv. 13-14). He affirms that God is unknowable, but that apart from God, we waste our lives on things that have no eternal value.

Most of us are like Qoheleth at times: doubtful, pessimistic, too realistic. The Teacher would have us choose a more wholesome outlook that involves taking time for God:

- Life is full of choices, and the greatest time for making wise choices is during youth. So, serve God while you still have plenty of time and energy.
- There are no glib answers to life's perplexities, doubt, disillusionments, but focusing on God brings perspective and optimism.
- We can find satisfaction in life because each of us chooses how we serve God. If we embrace our purpose and duty, we will find contentment.

Discuss: Has the author given a fair picture of the ages and stages of life? Explain. What are the advantages of youth? Of older adulthood? Do you feel that you wasted part of your youth? What is one thing you need to add to and/or subtract from your daily or weekly schedule to better serve God and others? What are specific ways you work tithing of your time into your daily schedule? How many hours or days in a month should we set aside for evangelism and discipleship and the ministries of our church? What about caring for the poor, the orphans and widows?

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in the know

Keeping up with people, places and events

Jarrett Banks is the new assistant vice president for development and director of church relations at Chowan University in Murfreesboro, N.C. He comes from the pastorate of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, La. He has held ministry positions in North Carolina, Georgia and Kentucky as well.

Edna Frances "Efee" Dawkins died May 8 at age 93 in Richmond, Va. She served her alma mater, Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C., as associate dean of women before going to the Richmond-based Southern Baptist Foreign (now International) Mission Board in 1947. She served as assistant director in missionary personnel for 35 years, helping select and nurture more than 2,000 missionaries in 55 countries. In

retirement she served on the coordinating council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the development council of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. She was one of the first female deacons at Ginter Road Baptist Church before joining First Baptist Church of Richmond.

Rosa Iris Morales, an American Baptist International Ministries missionary to Bolivia, died July 28.

Esther Parker is minister to children at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C., coming from Raleigh's First Baptist Church.

Julian T. Pipkin died May 27, 2010 at the age of 93. He served the Georgia Baptist

Convention 13 years as state Sunday school director, 15 years as church growth division director, and 5 years as director of state missions planning and coordination.

Avery Willis died July 30 from a rare form of leukemia. He was 76, and a former Southern Baptist missionary and administrator who developed the *MasterLife* discipleship materials. He retired in 2004 as senior vice president of the SBC International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and then worked as executive director of the International Orality Network that provides a Christian witness to the world's population that is functionally illiterate.

Leadership Development Coordinator

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina (www.cbfn.org) seeks a coordinator for leadership development. Reporting to the Executive Coordinator, the Leadership Development Coordinator will provide strategic direction and support to all ministry areas with a particular focus on ministries designed to nurture current and future ministerial leaders.

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Remembering Florrie King, devoted Baptist

A quiet, unassuming woman who meant much to many Baptists and to *Baptists Today* died July 13 in her hometown of Lithonia, Ga. She was 88 years of age.

I rise to pay tribute to the memory of Florrie Coffey King.

She was a graduate of Georgia State College for Women and Southwestern Baptist Seminary. She then served as minister of education at First Baptist Church in Tifton, Ga., as well as Baptist campus minister at Abraham Baldwin Agriculture College and Georgia Southern College (now University).

Florrie also served as assistant Baptist campus minister at the University of Georgia and as assistant director of the Georgia Baptist Convention Department of Student Work.

At retirement age, she married Hugh King, who had worked more than 20 years for the Georgia Baptist Church Training Department and 10 years as promotion director for *The Christian Index*, the Georgia Baptist state paper.

When Hugh retired from the *Index*, he

Florrie's services were invaluable — and her faithful gifts to Baptists Today continued throughout her life.

became director of missions for the Catoosa Baptist Association in Northwest Georgia. Florrie served as librarian at First Baptist Church in Ringgold.

In 1986, Florrie and Hugh moved back to her childhood home in Lithonia to care for her elderly mother. Florrie immediately volunteered to be part-time librarian at First Baptist Church in Lithonia.

Hugh died in 1988, the year I became editor of *Baptists Today*. Florrie called and asked if she could serve as a one-day-a-week volunteer.

"I'll do whatever you need — sweep floors, build up your files, proofread copy, type manuscripts — anything you think I can do to help," she said. "I believe in *Baptists Today*, and I believe in you."

For the nearly 10 years I was editor, Florrie came to our office in Decatur, Ga., almost every week despite heavy family

responsibilities including significant care for a sister and others. She reorganized our photo files, set up biographical files, and made chronological files of every article published about the Southern Baptist Convention controversy unfolding at that time.

Florrie's services were invaluable — and her faithful financial gifts to *Baptists Today* continued throughout her life.

At her graveside funeral service in Lithonia, pastor David Shelton, said: "Florrie King was a seeker, she was a servant, she was sensitive, she was sincere, and in summary, she was a saint."

For the first 10 years of its life *Baptists Today* was domiciled in Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., where founding editor-publisher Walker L. Knight was a member. Many members of Oakhurst church were faithful volunteers; without them, the publication would never have survived.

But none was more faithful than Florrie. I praise God for her friendship and for her unflinching support of the progressive movement among free and faithful Baptists. **BT**

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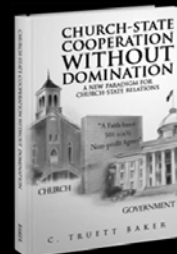
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readers' responses

'Holey' Land

EDITOR: Brett Younger, in the September 2010 issue (page 29), expresses some interesting comments regarding trips to the Holy Land.

A person really needs to visit there to appreciate the name. There are holes all over the country.

I know the Bible speaks of many caves. We know of the multiple caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Both Elijah and David had experiences in caves.

With all of this background, I never expected to see so many holes in the mountains as I observed in what is known as the Holy Land.

Bill Osborne, Houston, Texas

Is CBF moderate or liberal?

EDITOR: These are observations of "A proposal for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship" by Fisher Humphreys (*Baptists Today*, June 2010, page 11) to establish its identity and mission.

I agree with the first two of his three ideas. Certainly CBFers are Christian and Baptist. However, his third, labeling CBF as "moderate," needs to be examined.

Religious liberals — the left-wing fundamentalist form of Christianity — advocates: the woman's right to choose an abortion, homosexual rights, theistic evolution, the feminist agenda and Jesus is not the only way to God.

Does not CBF, to varying degrees, embrace the above? If so, the word "moderate" is not appropriate.

If CBF wants to call Southern Baptist conservatives "fundamentalists," then you need to call CBF moderates "liberals."

Bill J. Leonard, in his book, *God's Last and Only Hope*, stated: "The moderates were in a sense the Democratic Party of the Southern Baptist Convention." Though written 20 years ago, I believe this is still true. A better description for CBF would be Christian, Baptist and politically liberal.

Greene Hollowell, Richmond, Va.

[*Editor's note:* In 2000, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a narrowly defined revision of the *Baptist Faith and Message Statement* that is used to enforce doctrinal uniformity. Also, the SBC adopts non-binding resolutions about social and doctrinal issues during its annual meetings.

Such actions have led some to assume that the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship takes formal doctrinal positions and uses them as criteria for participation. However, that is not the case.

Affirming congregational autonomy, CBF leadership insists that such doctrinal concerns should rest within each church. Therefore, CBF has not adopted a required doctrinal statement and does not vote on resolutions.

However, the Fellowship does affirm historic Baptist principles of freedom and a

commitment to model racial, gender and generational inclusion. CBF also has a policy that forbids the hiring of an openly homosexual employee.

So it is inaccurate to say that CBF as an organization "embraces" the positions you list if you are suggesting some kind of broad consensus on these issues. Rather, varied and changing perspectives on issues such as abortion and homosexuality can be found among those who identify with the Fellowship — which does not require agreement on social issues or fine points of doctrine as a means of participation.

Tagging various Baptists groups as conservative, moderate or liberal is always a challenge. For example, many CBF participants would be more moderate or liberal than many Independent or Southern Baptists, yet more conservative than some participants in other groups such as the Alliance of Baptists.

So the answer to your question of CBF embracing the so-called liberal positions you name is "no" — but the Fellowship embraces congregations and individuals who are free to hold to those positions or to hold positions that are considered much more conservative.

Concerning secular politics, it is likely that various viewpoints and party affiliations exist among Fellowship participants. To my knowledge, no attempt has been made to influence or track those secular political perspectives.] **BT**

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

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guest commentary

Modern technology may aid or hurt church

By Kyle L. Tubbs

I tried to call the church office of a fellow youth minister and the secretary said, “We’re not sure where he is this afternoon, but try to contact him through Facebook; he always checks that.”

The accessibility of ministers is an important part of church administration. Social networking can enhance the ministry of churches if used properly, but it can also hinder the effectiveness of ministers if someone becomes consumed by it.

A senior gentleman in my church likes to use the phrase “the way things used to be” to describe life before the technology takeover. The only time we see some ministers now is via their profile pictures on Facebook.

The senior adults in my church tell of a day when they could find a pastor just by calling the church office. I even hear whispers of a time when one could go up to the church and even meet with the pastor face-to-face.

I am only 24 years old, but I’m starting to wonder if things really were better “the way things used to be.” A congregation needs accessible ministers, and vice versa.

When cell phones became widespread, they were supposed to aid in communicating with one another. Now smart phones are devices that connect so much information, answering the phone to talk on it can be a hindrance — since doing so could possibly disconnect

A senior gentleman in my church likes to use the phrase “the way things used to be” to describe life before the technology takeover.

The only time we see some ministers now is via their profile pictures on Facebook.

the person from Twitter, Facebook or MySpace.

I have actually become a fan of a ministerial friend on Twitter just so I can figure out where he is during the week.

Please do not misunderstand me. I believe technology can enhance life, but if ministers do not balance their social networking with human interaction, then it can become a stumbling block to ministry.

How can the blitz of social networking and iPhone technology become a positive tool in ministry? Here are three positive principles for using modern technology to aid the church:

First, information can be dispersed and updated at a fast rate. When I leave from a hospital visitation, I take out my cell phone and call the church secretary.

Through email, she can update our church prayer chain. I can also use Facebook to put up a status about a prayer request of praise, and those who watch the Facebook “mini-feed” or follow my “statuses” can choose to engage in prayer.

Second, ministers can be accessible, even when they are out of the office. If I am out of the office and an emergency strikes, I can be alerted through a text message or a call to my cell phone.

Third, dispersal of information can be inexpensive and direct. I send out text messages each week to members of my youth group to let them know the “who, what, when, where and how” of our ministries.

Technology can have its negatives too. Here are three principles to remember when using social networking or technology to aid the ministry of the church:

First, with regard to email, do not overload your parishioners’ inboxes. Have a reason and objective for all messages. Also, remember what you put into cyberspace represents your body of believers, and the entire body of Christ.

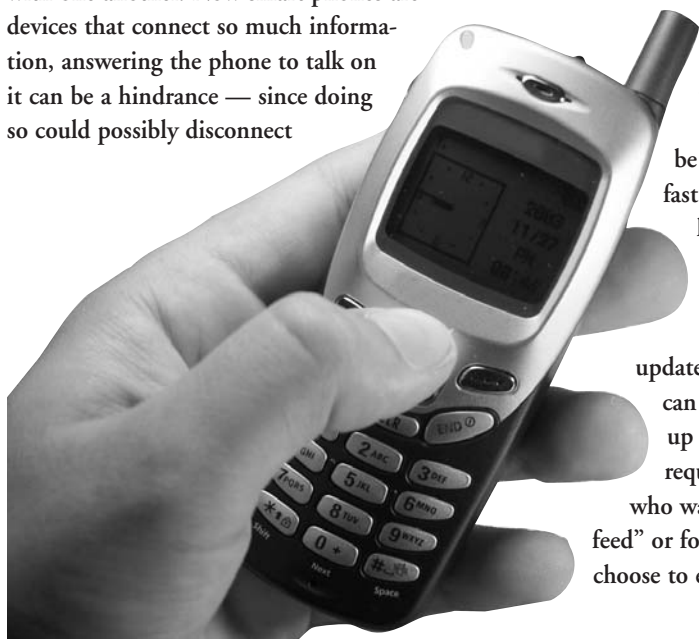
Second, when dispersing information, beware of gossip and remain confidential. Ask permission before you throw someone’s name into an email or social networking site that acts as a public prayer forum.

Parishioners never want to think their deepest, darkest secrets are going to end up as a minister’s latest Facebook status.

Third, have self-control in time management. Social networking can become addictive, so put limits on how much time you will spend online. Also, have clearly defined office hours, and communicate to the congregation the best way to be found in person.

As a young minister, I want to be accessible to my church members. I want them to see and hear from me — outside of my profile picture or status on Facebook. **BT**

—Kyle Tubbs is youth minister at Trinity Baptist Church in Sweetwater, Texas, and a Master of Divinity student in Logsdon Seminary at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. He received a B.A. from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas, with a double major in religion and performance studies. This opinion piece was originally written as a class assignment.



guest commentary

And the truth shall set you free

By Dick Staub

RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

Judging from a recent Gallup Poll, politicians, corporations, the entertainment media and religious institutions are in a close competition to prove which is least trustworthy. A jaded public has come to expect the worst, and regularly receives it.

Headlines about politicians' lies hardly warrant attention anymore. We've gone from George Washington, who could not tell a lie, to an elected elite who appear incapable of telling the truth.

In corporate America, big tobacco stonewalled and suppressed the facts when they knew nicotine was an addictive carcinogen. BP doctored photos of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and for weeks understated the amount of oil spilling into the Gulf.

MTV's reality show "The Hills" was supposed to be filmed in and around Los Angeles, but in the series finale, the camera pulls back to reveal cast member Brody Jenner standing in a studio back lot. Maybe reality wasn't as real as it seemed.

"As you saw in the end: what's real and what's fake?" Jenner said later. "You don't know!"

Indeed.

Given the public proclivity for lying on a regular basis, the rank-and-file appear genuinely betrayed, and even occasionally outraged, by these public prevaricators in this post-truth era. Yet perhaps we're the ones to blame.

In *The Day America Told the Truth*,

researchers James Patterson and Peter Kim found that the vast majority of Americans lie on a regular basis, in matters both large and small.

The Leo Burnett ad agency conducted a study and found that 91 percent of us confess to lying regularly, and one in five say they lie every day. Lying is such an accepted and expected way of life that it should be no surprise that 50 percent of those surveyed said they believe that lying is NOT wrong!

Ancient civilizations universally viewed lying as an unequivocal threat to a stable, orderly and just society.

There is a reason that "Thou shalt not lie" made Hammurabi's code, Moses' 10 Commandments and the moral code of virtually every religion on earth.

Truth lies at the heart of healthy relationships, both personal and societal. "I'm not upset that you lied to me," Friedrich Nietzsche said. "I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you."

Jesus, too, reserved special scorn for hypocrites who live lies and tell them. "Woe to you, hypocrites! For you are like white-washed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth."

Repeated lies dull our ability to discern the truth. This is not a new problem, although it is a serious one. What 17th-

century mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal observed in his age remains true of ours: "Truth is so obscure in these times, and lying so established, that unless we love the truth, we cannot know it."

The flip side of the not-lying coin is the positive commitment to know and tell the truth. Can this even be done anymore in this day of deceit?

Restoring truth in culture begins with one individual at a time making a personal commitment to stop lying and to begin consistently telling the truth.

Jesus said that loving God and neighbor is the basis for fulfilling all the commandments. This means truth-telling is an act of love. St. Paul added that we should not only tell the truth, but should "speak the truth in love."

The promise that we could become an honest society of individuals who require truth from our elected officials and business leaders may seem a pipedream, but it is a battle worth fighting.

Revolutionaries whose ideas seemed impossible at the time nonetheless founded our nation; George Orwell called the restoration of truth our most challenging but valiant and supremely important of crusades.

"In a time of universal deceit," he said, "telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

Let the revolution begin. **BT**

—Dick Staub is author of *About You: Fully Human and Fully Alive* and the host of *The Kindlings Muse* (www.thekindlings.com).





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the lighter side

Your guide to the Holy Land

By Brett Younger

After two weeks in Israel, I feel qualified to offer the kind of advice you might expect only from tour guides with years of experience.

Try to get to the Holy Land as a young person. If you are as old as 49, you may find the mountains exhausting and the heat draining. Fill your pockets with \$1 bills and spend them freely on bottles of water.

Be prepared to feel like some holy sites would be holier with fewer people. (Most of us know the feeling of the church getting in the way of our worship.)

Recognize that some historical sites are a bit sketchy. A multitude of signs point sightseers to “David’s Tomb.” The first thing the guide says is, “We are certain that this is not David’s tomb.” I assume they found that “Not David’s Tomb” did not draw many tourists.

Leave your skepticism at home. The Church of the Nativity is probably not on the exact spot of Jesus’ birth. That does not change the sacred truth that pilgrims have been coming to that spot for almost 1,700 years to give thanks for Jesus’ coming.

... Just get in line.

Be grateful for sites that are more likely authentic. The well in Nazareth has been the only well in town since long before the time of Jesus. If Mary and Joseph went to a well, it was the one I saw (though, admittedly, it did not have a big church on top of it).

Most places where there is any chance a particular biblical story took place are marked with churches. I did not see “The Church of the Head of John the Baptist on a Platter,” but I would not have been surprised.

Write down the names of churches you see, in case you are ever starting a church and want something out of the ordinary. Have you seen any of these in your town — The Church of the Adolescent Jesus, The Church of the Flagellation or The Church of Our Lady of the Spasm?

Float in the Dead Sea if you must, but do not expect to enjoy it. It is basically a bath in poisoned baby oil.

You will quickly recognize that when the Bible says Jesus went to the wilderness,

it was easy — because 99% of the country is wilderness. Do not, however, ask your guide born in Israel if the person who first called this “the land flowing with milk and honey” was being sarcastic. He will not be amused.

Don’t expect camel rides or belly dancers, but take a camera anyway.

Enjoy the exotic foods. I started my trip looking forward to falafel, shawarma, and the fish’s head being left on. By the end I was looking for McDonald’s.

Make your way through the crowd, kneel and push a list of prayer concerns into a crack in the Wailing Wall. It couldn’t hurt.

Sit on the beach where the resurrected Jesus served the disciples the Lord’s breakfast. Wish you could have been there, and then realize that you are.

Get baptized in the Jordan River — even though you have to walk through Disneyland to get there. You still might feel a little of what Jesus felt.

Pray through the Beatitudes while sitting on the Mount of the Beatitudes. Read about Jesus’ birth while you are at the Shepherds’ Field in Bethlehem, the stilling of the storm while on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, Zacchaeus while standing beneath the oldest sycamore tree in Jericho, and Peter’s denial while in the courtyard where it happened. Walk the Via Dolorosa, the way of suffering, and marvel at Jesus’ courage.

The best stories are often about people traveling far from home to discover that what they most need was at home all the time. A Catholic priest welcomed our group by saying that he hoped we were not there as religious tourists, but had come to “meet the Risen Christ.” We could have responded that we believe we can meet Christ every day — no matter where we are. Sometimes the treasure we go looking for has been with us all along. **BT**

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





Sing it, children

By Tony W. Cartledge
Posted July 30, 2010
www.tonycartledge.com

Worship time at the Baptist World Congress is generally well-prepared and impressively offered, often incorporating different languages, which is entirely appropriate for a global organization comprised of nearly 220 member bodies. This year's meeting in Honolulu was no exception.

The preaching was often good and other elements well done, but my favorite part was the music, especially when it involved a children's choir. I was pleased when the Thursday night celebration began with 20 minutes' worth of the World Vision Korean Children's Choir, which is celebrating its 50th year (obviously not with the same children Billy Kim first recruited in 1960). I've seen traveling choirs from the group several times

through the years, and have enjoyed every carefully choreographed performance.

There were more than 300 children on the stage in Honolulu, singing in both Korean and in English, mixing upbeat versions of songs ranging from "Amazing Grace" to "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," with a few old American folk tunes thrown in.

The children's training must be rigorous: their angelic smiles and impeccable behavior (on stage, at least) are a match for their delightful harmonies, colorful costumes and energetic dance routines.

Part of me would like to peek in and see if they behave with such sweet innocence at home. The other part of me, however, simply savors the image the children portray: the world needs more of their sweetness and I, for one, could use a good dose of their energy. **BT**

You were most likely raised *too* Baptist, IF . . .

By John Pierce
Posted July 22, 2010
www.johndpierce.com

1. You thought "peacethatpasses understanding" was one word.
2. You missed more episodes of "Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color" than you saw because of Sunday night services.
3. You thought the tablets Moses brought down from the mountain were written in the King's English and primarily opposed dancing, drinking, shooting pool and playing games with "face cards."
4. You never asked your parents, "Are we going to church this Sunday?" You just knew.
5. Every technological advancement got tagged as the "Mark of the Beast."
6. Saturday nights involved shoe polish and Sunday school lessons.
7. Gluttony seemed to vanish from the list of sins while most other vices were amplified.
8. You got in trouble as a youth for adding the phrase ". . . between the sheets" to hymn titles and giggling about it during a boring sermon.
9. You've sung all the verses to "Just As I Am" more than once during a single, protracted invitation time.
10. You feel both punished by and thankful for growing up in such a way — and enjoy thinking and laughing about it. **BT**

Quiet refuge

More and more hospitals converting chapels into meditation rooms

SACRAMENTO Calif. — When Connie Johnstone saw relatives of Muslim patients praying in a hospital parking lot, or laying out a plastic bag to create a clean spot on the lobby floor, her visions of a meditation room suddenly got a lot broader.

“I took note of that and said, ‘Hey, we need to have a place for them to pray,’” said Johnstone, the former manager of spiritual care at Kaiser Permanente facilities in Sacramento and suburban Roseville, who now holds a similar position in San Jose.

Johnstone wanted to create a space “that calls up beauty, something that is quiet to still the spirit” for patients, visitors and staff. She also wanted to accommodate the region’s diverse religious and cultural rituals.

Johnstone created three meditation rooms, the first of which opened in July in Sacramento. The other two, in Roseville 30 miles to the northeast, are expected to open later this year.

The rooms will look similar: Each will have stained glass windows depicting nature scenes, movable chairs, kneelers for Catholic worshippers, space for Muslim prayer rugs and literature from a variety of faiths.

While Johnstone chose a nature theme, a colleague at a separate Kaiser facility across town chose symbols from nearly a dozen major religious traditions in the Interfaith Meditation Chapel of Hope that’s under construction.

The shift to meditation rooms mirrors a growing trend among hospitals nationwide as health care centers try to make room for people from a wide variety of faiths, as well as those who are “spiritual but not religious.”



In a stressful environment, hospital chapels, meditation rooms or prayer rooms offer employees, patients and visitors quiet refuge for individual prayer, meditation or communal worship.

Throughout the 19th century, many U.S. hospitals were built by religious groups, particularly Catholic nuns. As a result, their chapels typically resembled Protestant or Catholic churches or Jewish synagogues.

Today, hospital chapels vary widely. Some still reflect their founders’ religious roots. Others have been renovated to accommodate multiple religions, or their religious symbols have been removed so the rooms resemble waiting rooms or art galleries.

“There was a diversity for a long time that was Christian diversity,” said George Handzo, vice president of pastoral care leadership and practice at HealthCare Chaplaincy, based in New York City.

Staff and patient populations at many U.S. hospitals are much more diverse than they once were, and hospitals know it makes good business sense to accommodate them, Handzo said. “They don’t want to lose those people to the place down the street.”

Some hospitals have Jewish family rooms or Shabbos rooms, which can be stocked with couches, prayer books, kosher food and kitchen appliances. Located in hospitals or nearby apartments, they are typically paid for by the local Jewish community.

Some prayer rooms are outfitted for Muslim worship. Five years ago, Boston’s

renowned Massachusetts General Hospital installed a mihrab, or ornately tiled archway, in a prayer room to help Muslims orient themselves toward Mecca during prayer.

Washington, D.C.’s Georgetown University Hospital added Muslim prayer rugs at the back wall of its Catholic chapel, and later removed the Stations of the Cross facing Mecca, said Brian Conley, the Jesuit hospital’s director of mission and pastoral care.

Wendy Cadge, associate professor of sociology at Brandeis University near Boston, includes a chapter on hospital chapels in her forthcoming book, *Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine*.

She’s visited about 30 chapels nationwide, and she said it’s increasingly common to find renovated chapels that include images of nature instead of religious symbols to make them welcoming to a broad range of people.

“The question to ask — which I don’t think anybody really knows the answer to — is whether these renovations make the space more welcoming and therefore used by a range of people, or whether they make the space sort of unfamiliar to a lot of people so nobody knows quite what they’re for and as a result they don’t get used,” Cadge said.

An openness to spirituality reflects two larger changes in health care, experts said. Hospitals are embracing religion because of an increased awareness of a mind-body-spirit connection, and also increased spiritual diversity.

Beyond chapel design, hospitals offer kosher meals for Jews and halal meals for Muslims; vegetarian options for Hindus or Buddhists; and food for Muslim employees to break the Ramadan fast.

Baltimore’s Johns Hopkins Hospital, which has a Christian-style chapel and an interfaith meditation room, is planning to open a nondenominational chapel with a nature motif. A vertical rod in the floor will allow clergy to attach various religious emblems.

While Johns Hopkins is most focused on patients’ physical care, administrators also want to respect their religious, spiritual and cultural needs, said Uwe Scharf, who directs the hospital’s pastoral care department.

“People will only come to the hospitals where they feel that their whole person is acknowledged and welcome, and that their heritage is actually celebrated,” he said. **BT**

An analysis by Daniel Burke

RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

Gay debate mirrors dispute, split on slavery

One group of Christians confidently proclaims that a plain reading of the Bible is a slam dunk in their favor. The other side appeals to Scripture's grand narrative toward freedom and inclusive love.

The argument boils over and ripples through the wider culture. The search for middle ground proves futile. Denominations break apart.

Sound familiar? It could be 2010 — or the mid-19th century.

As U.S. churches and denominations slog through divisive and long-running arguments over homosexuality, many Protestant progressives have sought to claim the historical and moral high ground by aligning their cause with abolitionism.

"I think almost everybody who makes the liberal argument about homosexuality makes the connection with abolition and slavery," said Jeffrey Krehbiel, a Washington, D.C., pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA) who supports gay rights.

Abolitionists, he said, "were the first to make the argument that the plain reading of the text maybe isn't the most fruitful way to read the Bible."

But while there are striking parallels between the slavery and homosexuality debates, historians caution that important differences emerge upon close examination.

In both eras, cultural trends forced Christians to question practices that had long been taken for granted, said Mark Noll, a professor of American religious history at the University of Notre Dame and author of *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*.

Likewise, the Bible, and how to interpret it, has played a central role both then and now, Noll said.

In the 19th century, even some Northern abolitionists admitted that the Bible clearly condones slavery. Many, therefore, sought other sources of morality and methods of biblical interpretation; conservatives countered that such appeals undermine the power of the sacred text.

As conflict heated up, Noll writes in his book, slavery's defenders increasingly saw

"doubts about biblical defense of slavery as doubts about the authority of the Bible itself."

At the PCUSA's General Assembly this summer, James Joseph, a youth advisory delegate from Allentown, Pa., argued against allowing sexually active gay clergy. "We cannot defend the lowering of our ordination standards in contradiction to so many explicit passages in the Bible ... (which is) the bedrock of our faith," he said.

The resolution to allow gay clergy passed by a slim margin, but the contentious debate will continue as 173 regional presbyteries decide whether to ratify it.

As with slavery, few Christians are neutral on homosexuality.

"Like the situation in the 1830s and '40s, once a certain kind of heat is generated it becomes really hard to talk through these various kinds of debating strategies and implications," Noll said.

Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists (and to some extent, Episcopalians) all split over slavery, mainly along the Mason-Dixon Line. Some re-united centuries later. Baptists remain apart to this day.

Likewise, in the last few years, a number of mainline Protestant congregations have parted with their denominations over homosexuality, though in far fewer numbers than during mid-19th century splits.

But the exodus may not be over, as conservative Presbyterians and United Methodists have threatened to leave en masse if their denomination decides to allow gay clergy and same-sex marriages.

"The parallels to the contemporary debate are fairly striking," said Mark Valeri, a professor of church history at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Va.

"You have a long-simmering moral dispute that heats up an ecclesiastical and political question, which results in a division. And the question is, when the division creates branches, how courts adjudicate

those disputes."

Valeri was an expert witness in one such court case, concerning nine congregations in northern Virginia that voted to split from the Episcopal Church.

The churches, which argued that the 2003 consecration of an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire undercut biblical injunctions against homosexuality, appealed to an 1867 law in asking to keep parish property. That law was put in place to protect parishes that divided during and after the Civil War, said Valeri. This spring, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled against the congregations.

But there are key differences between the disputes over slavery and homosexuality, historians say. For instance, many conservatives say that it is not simply the gay issue that is driving them out the door, but a long liberal trend in mainline denominations that stretches back 30 years or more.

Secondly, Scripture shows only a grudging tolerance of slavery, a far cry from its ringing endorsement of heterosexual unions, argues Robert Gagnon, an associate professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

"What kind of legitimate analogy can be made between the two? In my opinion, absolutely none. It's just night and day," he said.

Moreover, what seem like similar clashes over biblical interpretation can mask the role of self-interest in the debates.

Southern plantation owners — and the pastors they built churches for — had a huge financial stake in the slavery debate, said Charles Irons, an assistant professor of church history at North Carolina's Elon University.

Today, it is not easy to see where the financial — or political — advantage lies in supporting or opposing gay rights, he said.

There's one final difference: Noll notes that the theological crisis over slavery was ultimately decided politically by generals and armies. Almost everyone agrees that the homosexuality debate will more likely be settled by judges and lawmakers. **BT**



Mormon missionaries make transition from Internet ban to online proselytizing

SALT LAKE CITY (RNS) — Not so long ago, Mormon missionaries were prohibited from using the Internet, even to contact their families. The system then loosened a bit to allow weekly e-mails home and some occasional viewing of church materials.

Now the nearly 14 million-member Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is attempting to revolutionize the way Mormons find converts — and it's all online.

The move involves experimenting with blogging missionaries, self-produced member profiles and stereotype-busting videos. The American-born church, which has been harnessing technology to promote the faith since the 1920 radio days, sees great potential in fast-paced storytelling.

The Internet is the new “town square,” said Ron Wilson, manager of Internet and marketing for the church. “And Mormons are taking to it like never before.”

The electronic universe, however, also is uncontrollable, an aspect that has traditionally been tough for the hierarchical church but one that organizers readily acknowledge.

“We relinquish a lot of control to members on this site ... and every one (of the authorities) is on board with it,” said Scott Swofford, director of media for the church's Missionary Department. “(The Internet) is where we've got to be.”

The online missionary effort began in 2001, with the launch of www.mormon.org, a site aimed at telling outsiders what Mormons believe. The church created it just before the world descended on Salt Lake City for the 2002 Winter Olympics, when people everywhere were asking about the church.

Two years ago, the church expanded the site to add a chat function and called its first online-only missionaries, who would discuss church doctrines with inquiring seekers from computer screens in cubicles at the Provo Missionary Training Center.

Then in May, LDS leaders asked a



dozen full-time missionaries in Rochester, N.Y., to spend their mornings or downtime blogging, commenting on various sites that mention Mormonism and describing their experiences on Facebook.

The president of the Rochester mission is one of the “Facebook friends,” Wilson said, so he will know what missionaries write. Also, missionaries work in pairs and the church expects them to “police” each other — no inappropriate information shared and no accessing naughty sites, for example.

“It's a test,” Wilson said. “We'll learn if it's appropriate to give missionaries hand-held devices.”

To top it off, the church has rolled out additions to www.mormon.org, which currently showcases 15 video portraits and 2,000 written profiles of Mormons across the globe; there are another 75 videos and 13,000 more profiles ready to be posted.

The subjects, drawn from diverse occupations, ethnicities, ages and genders, were allowed wide license to share their lives and faith.

The site features testimonials from Joy Monahan, of Honolulu, who won the 2008 Longboard Surfing World Championship; professionals Aaron and Emily Sherinian in Arlington, Va., who describe their family's frenetic pace; Jeff Tucker, with a goatee, who talks about his love for sculpting motorcycles; and Valetin Marcero, who spent time in jail on drug charges before joining the church.

Each segment ends with the subject repeating his or her name, a detail about their lives and the words, “And I am a Mormon.”

The personal approach is the result of two findings from focus groups and public opinion surveys: Most Americans have either false or hostile impressions of the Utah-based church but typically change or soften those views after meeting a real-life member.

The idea, officials said, was to help everyone “know a Mormon.”

“Our leaders were struggling for years to find a more effective, less annoying way to get our message across than knocking on doors,” Swofford said. “Our mission is to deliver teaching opportunities.”

The online missionaries already have proven the program's success. They routinely participate in about 10,000 chats a week, with 3,500 people asking for in-person visits and 1,200 going on to hear the missionary lessons.

“It's a lot more effective than (door-to-door) tracting in many places,” Wilson said.

But what if the church authorities or its doctrinal office don't agree with how a missionary or member describes a particular doctrine? That's the only aspect that the site's monitors edit, and only in certain cases.

If a Mormon writes, “the church teaches that. . .,” the doctrinal statements have to be correct, Swofford said. Monitors will ask them to revise any wording that misrepresents the faith.

If the person writes, however, “I believe that. . .,” monitors leave it, he said. A person's belief is his or her own.

“There is no way you can read 10 profiles and think we are controlling what they are saying,” he said. “We want to show people how Mormons live their faith. We want them to be authentic and transparent. That is the way misperceptions disappear.” **BT**

—Peggy Fletcher Stack writes for
The Salt Lake Tribune.

the media shelf

A surprising spree of saucy books from Anabaptist women

Rhoda Janzen's life is the stuff of a riveting, albeit unfortunate, tale. She survived an ugly car accident, realized her husband was gay, and sought refuge in her parents' Mennonite home for a string of hilarious, healing weeks.

Her memoir, *Mennonite in a Little Black Dress* was published last year, part of a string of "going home" memoirs by women who left the Anabaptist faith of their childhood for love, opportunities or because of tensions in the community.

Anabaptists — the religious umbrella that includes the Amish, Mennonites and Hutterites — have captured media attention for shunning the outside world, technology, and modern clothing.

But the recent books are not tales of horse and buggy, of bonnets and broad brims, or even a removed society. The women's memoirs indulge in sex, rebellion, and analysis of personal faith.

"In the seven years I was writing this, my knees were trembling the whole time," said Mary-Ann Kirkby, author of *I Am Hutterite*.

Born to a Hutterite family in Manitoba, the Canadian broadcast journalist had been out of the community for 40 years when she returned to her childhood home in 2002 after a co-worker made an uneducated — and derogatory — comment about the community.

I Am Hutterite features a nostalgic collection of family history, wholesome memories and tempting treats.

Yet Kirkby knew she knew would ignite controversy: Her parents had left the colony in 1969 to escape growing tensions, and she knew the Hutterites would not

enjoy having their story in the public eye.

"I had to weigh the importance of this story against the fact that I would hurt people," said Kirkby, now 50, from her home in Saskatchewan.

Ruth Irene Garrett also knew she would face similar criticism when she wrote her book, *Crossing Over: One Woman's Escape from Amish Life*.

Garrett was approached by PBS several years ago to create a documentary and a book about her transition from the Amish to life among the "English," the Amish term for the outside world.

Her account is wrought with emotion from the verbal "abuse" she encountered in her church and family when she fell in love with Ottie Garrett, an outsider and 15 years her senior.

While Garrett continues to maintain relationships with her Amish family in Iowa and Indiana from her home in Glasgow, Ky., the pain of being shunned from a community is hard to overcome.

"My mother cries most of the time, and my father preaches more of the time," said Garrett, 36. "They're convinced there's no salvation" outside the Amish church.

If revealing, risky writing defines one facet of Anabaptist memoirs, self-discovery characterizes another.

Despite embarrassing Mennonite moments of her youth — from hand-me-down patched jeans to stinky potato salad — Janzen found her adult unbelief challenged by her return home.

Her parents, she said, are the hardworking, service-driven devotees that define the best part of the Mennonite tradition.

"I did feel like an outsider" back home, Janzen said. "But I really like that my parents know who I am and I don't need to be duplicitous with them."

Janzen found a new life after leaving

the Mennonites and penning her memoir. She re-married, joined a Pentecostal church and battled cancer. "Spiritual fitness" became a consistent part of her life, she said, as well as the impetus behind her forthcoming book, *Backsliders*.

For Kirkby, revisiting the stories and homes of her Hutterite past was also a lesson in opening up about her own life, just as she had opened others' in her work as a journalist.

"I was willing to tell everybody else's story," she said. "My own would remain a secret."

When publishers were non-committal about her book, Kirkby opened up a small publishing house and produced *I Am Hutterite* through her self-owned Polka Dot Press.

Seventy-five thousand copies later, she had a contract from Thomas Nelson publishers, and was speaking at events around the U.S. and Canada. Fans told her that her reconnection with her roots helped them understand their own cultures.

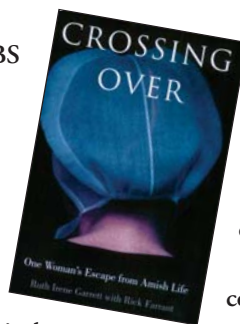
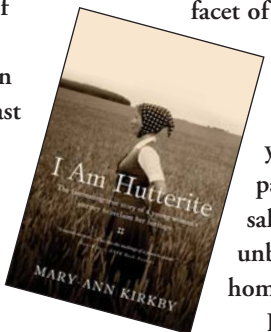
For Kirkby, it was just a matter of living an honest life. She said she spoke, ate and thought Hutterite, and there was no reason to pretend otherwise.

"I had such a privileged upbringing, I had such a wonderful childhood," she said. "I was wounded by people's misconceptions."

Garrett, too, found a sense of freedom in her life outside the Amish. "When you go home, it seems like the Amish world was even more repressive," she said, especially for women.

Janzen, now 47 and living in Holland, Mich., compared her return to life among the Mennonites to the traditional Amish "rumspringa," when young Amish men and women are let loose into the world to decide for themselves where they belong. She called her return "deliberate exposure."

"The issues that came up for me when I visited my community of origin were faith issues," she said, "And I really liked what I saw." **BT**



Julie Steele joins staff of *Baptists Today*

MACON, Ga. — Julie Steele is the new chief operations officer for *Baptists Today*, the autonomous, national news journal based in Macon, Ga. She holds a degree in technical communications from Mercer University's School of Engineering and has broad experience in both corporate and nonprofit management.

"Julie brings all the right skills and commitments we need to this job," said Executive Editor and CEO John Pierce. "We are delighted to have her as a valuable part of our small but gifted staff."

Steele will direct all aspects of the organization's business operations including supervision of staff related to finances, circulation, development and marketing.

"I'm thrilled to be working with such a great group of people and for such a well-respected publication," said Steele. "It is exciting to be given the opportunity to be part of an organization that honors the

Baptist tradition of access to information for both church ministers and laity alike."

Steele comes to *Baptists Today* from the executive search firm Myers McRae where she was a vice president. Previously she served for four years as executive director of the Crisis Line and Safe House of Central Georgia, a crisis intervention agency in Macon.

For five years, she worked for Equitable Life in New York City as a training consultant, sales promotion and project manager, and recruitment coordinator.

Her work at *Baptists Today* includes managing the day-to-day office operations, maintaining the subscription and donor databases, overseeing budget and finance matters, and coordinating meetings and special events. She will also develop and direct new



marketing and development initiatives.

"We take seriously the stewardship of resources entrusted to us by our supporters," said Pierce. "Having a gifted person giving full attention to the business operations assures us of fulfilling that commitment while freeing other staff to concentrate on the important mission of providing Baptists with a reliable source of unrestricted news, thoughtful analysis and inspiring features."

Baptists Today was founded in 1983 apart from any denominational control and is owned and directed by an independent, self-perpetuating Board of Directors that values and sustains a free press. Along with advertising and subscription revenue, the news journal relies on charitable gifts.

In addition to supportive churches and other organizations, more than 1,200 individuals support the work of *Baptists Today* through direct gifts and/or by insuring the publication's future through estate planning. **BT**

Science-versus-religion battle unnecessary, Baptists say

By Marv Knox
Baptists Standard

HONOLULU (ABP) — Science and religion do not need to quarrel, a molecular engineer and an ethicist told participants at the 20th Baptist World Congress.

Clayton Teague, director of the United States National Nanotechnology Coordination Office, and Bill Tillman, professor of Christian ethics at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon Seminary in Texas, explored how Christians can engage the technological advances that enable scientists to re-engineer life.

"Science is seeking truth about nature and the world around us, for the most part for the good of mankind," said Teague, a member of First Baptist Church in Gaithersburg, Md.

Through modern history, science has sped ahead of the church in that search for truth in nature, contended Tillman, a member of First Baptist Church in Abilene, Texas.

For example, the Roman Catholic Church declared Galileo a heretic for claiming Earth was not the center of the solar system.

"Here was a case when science, in observ-

ing creation, was far ahead of the church," he said. "And much of that dynamic is still with us. The development of science and technology is out-pacing our theological reflection."

Teague pointed to 1990 as a landmark date for science. "That was the first time we were able to reach, touch and move atoms," the start of nanotechnology, he said. "It changed the world of physics almost more than anything."

Now, nanotechnology experiments are seeking repairs for severely damaged spinal cords and optic nerves. "It's on the horizon — 'making the lame to walk and causing the blind to see,'" he reported, quoting Jesus' accounts of his own miracles.

Teague presented a catalog of scientific advances, from economically sequencing the human genetic code, to creating a living creature, developing an inexpensive cure for malaria, providing renewable energy through light-driven water oxidation and growing new human tissue in a laboratory.

Contrary to popular perception, scientific learning does not contradict theological understanding and a relationship with God, Teague insisted.

"You cannot study nanotechnology and not see the hand of God," he said. "The more I study science, the more I see the beauty of God's work."

To illustrate, he told about the human DNA strand, which is composed of 3 billion atomic "letters" — "the alphabet through which God wrote life" — and stretches six feet long. DNA could tangle easily if it were not spun around tiny spools, and it is repaired by microscopic chemical monitors.

"Nature is inordinately complex and beautiful," he affirmed. "The more you look into it, the more you see the beauty and majesty and order of nature."

Unfortunately, both Christians and scientists often defer to a false dichotomy that sets them against each other, Tillman observed.

Such a "dichotomy/dilemma" approach to faith and science over-simplifies the issues and "makes the gospel irrelevant" to people whose worldview begins with science, he lamented.

Baptists and other Christians need to take a more holistic, informed, integrated approach to science and religion, he added. "We must ask, 'How much am I living an either/or life, when life is much more complex?'" **BT**

Lee Royal: Deeply rooted in Baptist life

A. Lee Royal doesn't remember exactly how he was first introduced to *Baptists Today*. He thinks his longtime friend, Dr. Henry Crouch, who also was his pastor at Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., during the 1980s, first told him about it.

“It provided the news of what was happening during those troubling days with the Southern Baptist Convention,” he said. And, he continues to read *Baptists Today* because “it is full of good stuff that Baptists need to know and think about.”

Staying informed about Baptist issues and concerns is important to Lee. Over the years, he has seen firsthand the results of the friction within the Baptist denomination.

A former trustee of two Baptist institutions of higher learning in North Carolina, he had a front-row seat to witness the impact of actions taken by the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina over the years.

Lee recalls how some state convention leaders wanted more control at Campbell University, where he served as trustee for more than 16 years, and Mars Hill College, where he was named a lifetime honorary trustee in 2009. And he hasn't forgotten when the convention refused to approve the re-appointment of a trustee at Mars Hill.

“The trustee had made significant contributions to the college, and the convention would not permit him to be elected because of the church he attended,” he explained.

Both schools have altered their ties to the Baptist State Convention so that type of incident won't happen again, said Lee whose Baptist roots are deeply planted in North Carolina.

He grew up in the small farming community of Salemburg, 25 miles east of Fayetteville, where his father owned and operated the town's general merchandise store, selling everything from flannel underwear to farm tools. He and his sister and four brothers attended the town's only Baptist



church every Sunday.

“Going to church taught me a lot about the expectation of me from the church and from the adults in the community who went to church,” says Lee, who has held numerous leadership roles in the churches he has attended over his 86 years. “I like the structure of a Baptist church. And when the church gets too structured and organized, like it did with the Southern Baptist Convention, you can change it.”

After serving in the United States Navy during World War II and earning his bachelor of business administration degree from Wake Forest College (now Wake Forest University) in 1950, he returned home and told his father he was interested in commercial farming. His father, who was aware of the struggles of farming since he carried many families on the store's books until their crops were harvested and sold, encouraged him to consider a different career path.

Taking his father's advice, he moved to the nearby town of Clinton, where he worked for his uncle and cousin in their retail furniture business and funeral home for five years. While taking his meals at a local boarding house, he met his future wife, Gertrude Pierce, who was an English and drama teacher at the high school.

Deciding to start their own business, Lee and his wife bought a Manpower franchise, a national temporary employment service, and moved to Charlotte, N.C. Over the next 30 years, Lee used the strong work ethic he learned while working in his father's store to grow his company to eight locations in North and South Carolina and into one of the largest Manpower franchises in the nation based on sales.

“Every week we wrote checks to the

people we had placed the previous week,” he says. “While I don't know the total number of people we placed in jobs over those 30 years, we would mail out between 1,200 to 1,800 checks a week.”

Manpower's parent company asked to buy Lee's successful franchise in 1986. Though he has been retired for 24 years, he still sees the value of temporary employment agencies.

“Most companies have seasonal business and find they need 10 to 20 percent more people during certain times of the year,” he explains. “A temp service can provide those additional qualified people.”

During the economic times of today, Lee believes temp agencies offer value to people who are not able to find permanent work.

“The industry has expanded significantly, and now there are temporary services that cater to specialized fields, such as the medical, engineering and accounting professions.”

Lee's business background and lifelong commitment to Baptist life will be helpful when he joins the Board of Directors of *Baptists Today* this fall. As a member of the board, he will help guide the future of the national autonomous publication he has supported and read for more than 25 years.

“*Baptists Today* provides valuable information you will not find anywhere else,” says Lee, who has sponsored *Baptists Today* group subscriptions to two churches. “Baptists need to stay informed. *Baptists Today* provides not only the information, but also the insight to what it means.”

In early 2008, Lee and Gertrude moved to Greensboro, N.C., to live closer to their daughters, Meredith and Martha, and their families.

“My journey of faith has evolved slowly over time with the Holy Spirit working within me,” he says. “I appreciate the many opportunities I have had to serve my church and Baptist efforts. I look forward to this opportunity with *Baptists Today*.” **BT**

FOR INFORMATION on supporting the variety of ways you can support *Baptists Today*, please contact Keithen Tucker at (478) 301-5655 or ktucker@baptiststoday.org.

Fort Myers church celebrates special union

FORT MYERS, Fla. —

Churches do a lot of different things when Independence Day falls on a Sunday as it did this year. But a wedding?

Pastor John Daugherty conducted a marriage ceremony on July 4 at First Baptist Church of Fort Myers between two persons whose connection did not result from matchmaking friends, online services or longtime friendships that blossom into love.

Lois and Sam's marriage was so unique that the wedding ceremony was incorporated into the morning worship service with a celebratory covered-dish dinner/wedding reception that followed.

Minister of Music Joseph Caulkins described the union to the congregation as a "uniquely visible reminder of how people can grow and change when given a little help in an atmosphere where they are loved."

The love story goes back to January when Southwest Florida was experiencing unusually cool nights. Services provided to homeless persons by the downtown church with an activity center equipped with showers and washers and dryers were well received.

In addition to a weekly opportunity to clean themselves and their clothes, homeless neighbors were offered food, access to rehabilitation programs and other social services as well as spiritual nourishment.

With temperatures dipping into the 30s, a dozen or so persons began coming to the church to spend the night in or around the facilities. Sam was one of those "regulars."

He had lost his job and housing after suffering severe lead poisoning while working on a large commercial painting job. His illness prevented him from working for several months, and he lost everything he owned except for his tools. Those were stored away safely by Fred Schillfarth, who coordinates the Friends of Lee Co. Homeless.

To show his appreciation for the services provided to him, Sam volunteered to assist Lois, the church's building manager, with some maintenance projects.

Soon Sam found various jobs doing handy work in the community and rented an



UNIQUE UNION — Pastor John Daugherty of the First Baptist Church of Fort Myers, Fla., asked Lois and Sam to exchange vows as part of the Sunday morning service on July 4. Photo by Toni L. Bleiweiss.

apartment Lois had on her property in North Fort Myers. Then he bought an old panel van, and his workload picked up even more.

However, the tenant-landlord relationship grew into a close friendship. Lois would cook dinner for Sam, and he would do work around her house and property. Lois' two sons began helping Sam with both the work around their home and on some of his handyman jobs.

By the late spring the friendship turned into romance, and Lois and Sam went to see the pastor. They arranged for counseling and decided to have their wedding ceremony during the July 4 worship service.

"From homeless on the doorsteps of the church to having a family and working full-time, Sam is evidence of the grace and mercy of God when his people listen to God's calling to make a difference in people's lives," said Daugherty. "Sam got more than a place to stay on cold nights and a way to get cleaned up and have his clothes washed —

Sam became family in our church."

The wedding was not the first time Sam participated in a worship service at Fort Myers' First Baptist Church. He was baptized by Pastor Daugherty on May 30.

The pastor said Sam is just one example of redemption that comes from reaching out to persons in need.

"We have provided assistance with transportation, clothing, résumé service, encouragement and acceptance," said Daugherty. "A good many of these neighbors are regular in worship, and always available to help out around the facilities and for special events."

After the congregation celebrated the marriage of Lois and Sam, and sent them off on their honeymoon, Daugherty reflected: "Jesus told us this is what his kingdom is all about — doing to, with, and for those we consider having less than ourselves. After all, the church is to be in the life-transforming business." **BT**



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The King James Bible at 400

“We believe that the Scripture of the Old and New Testament, as translated in 1611 into the Kings [sic] James version of the Holy Bible, is the written word of God and the only rule of faith and practice.”

So reads the Articles of Faith of the Mountain District Primitive Baptist Association of churches in North Carolina and Virginia as amended in 1978. Adherence to the KJV is still the norm among Primitive Baptists in Southern Appalachia.

Not that long ago the King James was *the* Bible for *all* American Protestants. Sunday school lessons, Scripture reading in worship, and memory verses, unless otherwise specified, were assumed to be in the KJV. And anyone offering public prayer was expected to scatter the petitions with enough Thee’s and Thou’s to be recognized as sufficiently godly.

In many ways the King James Bible maintained a crucial link to the Old Time Religion, which suddenly seemed to be called into question by the proliferation of modern translations. New versions boasted improved readability for the general public and greater accuracy by taking into account more ancient manuscripts.

But not everyone was so convinced. For a whole lot of old-fashioned, church-going folks nothing could replace the good old King James. What many of them may not have realized was that their beloved old text was a relatively recent revision completed in 1885.

When the American Bible Society announced plans in 1851 to revise the KJV and correct its many textual inaccuracies, the group met with such opposition that the project had to be shelved for almost 30 years. Today, King James only-ism still persists, though with far less cultural force than in previous generations.

This summer I purchased an exact replica of the original KJV to commemorate the 400-year anniversary. It is a beautiful folio size volume, but the black-letter (aka Gothic) print makes it hard to read — at least for modern eyes more accustomed to Roman type.

It seems that the printer of the 1611 KJV made two simultaneous but separate print runs, resulting in *two* original versions, popularly designated as the “Great He” and “Great She” Bibles because of the variants of Ruth 3:15 — one having “He went into the city;” the other “She went into the city.” (In case you are wondering, mine is of the male orientation.)

Over the years there have been all sorts of



typos in the printed texts, none more notorious than the so-called Wicked Bible, a 1631 edition of the King James, which omitted the word “not” from Exodus 20:14 so that it read, “Thou *shalt* commit adultery.” Somehow I doubt that printing was ever affirmed to be inerrant by KJV-only advocates.

Explaining the popularity of the King James Bible defies any simple explanation. Precisionist Protestants were scandalized by the penchant of “the most high and mightie” James, who commissioned the translation, for extravagance and immorality. Nor was Lancelot Andrewes, the chief Translator and Ur-High Churchman, regarded as a friend of strict Protestants.

Because a copy of the King James Version was placed in every parish church throughout England for the public reading of Scripture, it was long viewed by Dissenters as the Anglican Bible. They steadfastly avoided it, preferring instead The Geneva Bible with its Protestant annotations.

So when, in 1620, Jacobean exile John Robinson bid farewell to the Pilgrim Church bound for the new world, famously exclaiming that God has “more truth and light yet to breake forth out of his holy Word,” it was a copy of the Geneva Bible he held. Yet, ironically, it was the King James Version that became *the* Bible for the spiritual descendents of the Pilgrims.

What accounts for its amazing appeal? Unlike some translations, the KJV was not driven by democratic or populist notions about making the Bible accessible to the people. The

translators, to be sure, strove for clarity and fidelity, but perhaps above all else, they attempted to render the biblical text with a sense of majesty that elevated human language with a sense of holiness.

As T.S. Eliot observed, the King James Bible appeals to “the auditory imagination” that transcends conscious levels of thought and feeling. Or as Adam Nicolson put it in his wonderful account, *God’s Secretaries*, the making of the King James Bible was as much about making the English language godly as it was about putting the Bible into words capable of being understood in English.

Miles Smith, one of the King James translators, stated it elegantly in the preface to the reader: “Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtaine, that we may looke into the most Holy place; that remooveth the cover of the well, that wee may come by the water, even as *Jacob* rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which meanes the flockes of *Laban* were watered.”

In that respect, no translation surpasses the King James, for nothing is quite like opening it up and reading it aloud. Maybe it is not “the only rule of faith and practice,” but hearing its words calls us upward to a high and holy place. And to that higher ground we are surely in need of being lifted up, again and again. **BT**

—Curtis W. Freeman is director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke Divinity School.

Samford, Baylor among most religious campuses

By Alfredo Garcia
Religion News Service

Brigham Young University was named the nation's most religious campus, and Sarah Lawrence College the least religious, in new rankings released last month.

The Princeton Review released the 2011 edition of their yearly assessment of "The Best 373 Colleges," which included rankings of the most and least religious students.

Mormon-owned BYU rose from second place in last year's rankings; it also ranked first in the list of "Stone-Cold Sober Schools," an honor the school has held for 13 consecutive years.

All of the schools with the most religious student bodies hold some kind of church affiliation, other than the U.S. Air Force Academy (Colo.), which came in 14th.

On the other side of the spectrum, Sarah Lawrence College in New York took the lead as having the least religious students, up from the No. 9 spot last year. Also

in the top 10, in the No. 8 spot, is Presbyterian-affiliated Macalester College in Minnesota.

"It is true that not very many of our students practice organized religion," said Allen Green, dean of studies and student life at Sarah Lawrence College, "though we do have active, even growing, Christian, Jewish and Muslim groups and popular spiritual space."

The rankings, he said, do not indicate that students face a difficult time making the right decisions. "Our students value moral and ethical principles including tolerance, diversity, respect and honesty," he said.

All the rankings included in *The Princeton Review's* tome are compiled from approximately 122,000 survey results from students at the 373 schools surveyed. An average of 325 students commented from each school.

The question regarding religiosity on campus has been asked every year since the survey began in 1992.

Most Religious Students:

1. Brigham Young University (Utah)
2. Thomas Aquinas College (Calif.)
3. Wheaton College (Ill.)
4. Hillsdale College (Mich.)
5. University of Dallas (Texas)
6. Samford University (Ala.)
7. College of the Ozarks (Mo.)
8. University of Notre Dame (Ind.)
9. Grove City College (Pa.)
10. Baylor University (Texas)

Least Religious Students:

1. Sarah Lawrence College (N.Y.)
2. Bennington College (Vt.)
3. Vassar College (N.Y.)
4. Eugene Lang College — The New School (N.Y.)
5. Reed College (Ore.)
6. Bard College (N.Y.)
7. Bard College at Simon's Rock (Mass.)
8. Macalester College (Minn.)
9. Emerson College (Mass.)
10. Hampshire College (Mass.)

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