

CAPITAL BAPTIST NEWS BRIEFS

■ A News Summary ■ Edited by Jeffrey Haggray

District of Columbia Baptist Convention

August 2008

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2008 National Capital Area Missions Offering (NCAMO)

Goal: \$100,000

Promotion Materials to Arrive in August.

Has your church set a goal for the 2008 NCAMO?

Have you set your own personal goal?

Vignettes of DCBC People, Churches, etc.

FBC Upper Marlboro is hosting an *All About Kids Production* (performing arts camp) August 3-8. This high-energy camp is a fast paced and full of music, drama, dance, Bible study, just the right amount of hard work, plenty of laughter and lots of fun. Summer interns from Lamplight Artists will teach the music, drama and dance. FBC volunteers will lead the Bible study and provide other staffing needs.

A newly published author is a member at **FBC Upper Marlboro**. Andrea Ballard, has put together a compilation of original poetry entitled: *Above and Beyond: An Air Force Wife's Conversations with God*.

Luther Rice Memorial BC is seeking a Minister to Youth and Children. Candidate must have a true passion for this area of ministry in order to grow and sustain the exciting youth fellowship that has developed in the past year. This position is particularly suitable as an internship for the right seminary student, requiring an average of 25 hours per week. This transitional church is intentionally diverse, theologically moderate and mission-hearted. Contact Pastor Connie Stinson at cnstins@aol.com or at 301.393.1130.

FBC of the City of Washington DC seeks an interim pastor to lead and inspire our congregation as we search for a full-time senior pastor. Excellent preaching is our top priority. We prefer full-time candidates who are locally available for Sunday and Wednesday services and related pastoral duties.

About FBC DC: We are an urban church, founded in 1802, with a multinational and multiracial congregation. While we are committed to historic Baptist principles of individual freedom, congregational autonomy, and religious liberty, our tradition of hospitality has brought us members from many Christian denominations and resulted in an increasingly ecumenical perspective. More information: www.firstbaptistdc.org.

FBC will accept applications through September 15, 2008. Please send (1) a cover letter that includes a statement of interest, information about availability, and salary requirements; (2) a resume; (3) three references, and (4) a sermon on cassette or CD. Respond by mail to Interim Pastor Search, 1328 16th Street NW, Washington DC 20036. Email questions to Jean Weber, Administrative Assistant, at jweber@firstbaptistdc.org.

University BC College Park has a mission partnership with Buck Lodge Middle School. They are supplementing student needs for school supplies and uniforms. Also the UBC CP food pantry supplied food to 17 families, feeding 54 people.

Twinbrook BC member news: H D Johns has published a book of poems for children (and for playful adults) — *A Child's Backyard Garden of Poems About Animals, Birds and Things*. Julie Phifer was recently recognized by Montgomery County Council on Literacy for giving more than 3000 hours in programs helping people to read.

Twinbrook BC sent a Habitat Team to Carlisle PA July 13-19.

Please Post, Duplicate & Distribute to All Interested — Note: Only One Copy Mailed Per Church

Montgomery Hills BC held *Feel the Power!* (A Power Lab where kids discovered Jesus' miraculous power!) July 20-24.

Children at **Montgomery Hills BC** have begun rehearsal on *Hans Bronson's Gold Medal Mission*. Rehearsals will be held every Sunday with performance on September 14 at 11:00am. This musical focuses on Hans and his Olympic friends. They soon realize that physical fitness is no substitute for the spiritual fitness a growing relationship with Jesus Christ can bring.

July 7-11 were the dates of **Village BC** Vacation Bible School. Participants learned about the road Jesus took to the cross by exploring the Jerusalem Marketplace!

First New Horizon BC presents Bishop John A. During, Ffmi Overseer for Liberia, West Africa in Revival on Wednesday August 6, 7:00pm, 9511 Piscataway Rd, Clinton MD 20735 — 301. 856.9177.

Cresthill BC The Freese Family (Gregg and Amy and their three children) were at Cresthill BC on July 27th to speak about their mission adventures. Gregg is the son of Mary Freese, former DCBC treasurer.

Iglesia de Washington Held a successful Vacation Bible School July 11–13. Fifty-two people participated, including children and adults. The theme was Outrigger Island. They had a limited budget, but are very grateful because God provided everything they needed, materials and snacks.

FBC Alexandria VA will host a HANDS-ON AudioSeminar and a MediaSeminar on Saturday, September 27. The seminar begins at 8:00am-6:00pm. Pre-registration is a must. Cost is \$159, if registered and paid by September 5. Group rate is available. More information on the seminar is available at 904.744.2010 or info@AudioSeminar.com www.AudioSeminar.com.

From Baptist News Services

Southern Baptists Included at Bush Faith-based Conference

by Karen L. Willoughby

WASHINGTON (BP)—Government bureaucracy can't "fix" America, but the nation's people can, President Bush told 1,000-plus leaders of faith-based and community groups gathered in Washington to network with each other and hear from various government leaders.

"Groups like yours have harnessed a power that no government bureaucracy can match," Bush said. "So when I came to Washington, my goal was to ensure that government made you a full partner in our efforts to serve those in need. The results have been uplifting, and that's what we're here to talk about today."

Bush was joined by cabinet members and other government leaders at the June 26-27 meeting of public- and private-sector leaders at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington. The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives hosted the national conference which included about 200 small group workshops as well as several bipartisan plenary sessions.

The event served as a "pep talk," said Karl Ragan, a specialist in disaster relief for the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board. "The entire administration is looking ahead toward the next administration," Ragan said. "They wanted the faith-based groups to show strength and solidarity behind the faith-based initiatives going into the next administration."

Ragan said even though the event included more than just faith-based groups, "I was impressed with the number of high-level government officials who were openly displaying

their faith. I really wasn't expecting that; it was kind of neat."

"Our president quoted Scripture correctly, not out of context," Ragan continued. "This was totally unscripted. It seemed like he was speaking from the heart."

.... There were others sitting around who commented on the president's passion for this [faith-based and community initiatives] and his faith."

Bush received several standing ovations during his 15-minute talk, especially after quoting Scripture, Ragan added.

Ragan also represented Southern Baptists at a networking session limited to the nation's 15 largest faith-based and community entities.

"Southern Baptists are a major player in disaster relief, and they particularly asked us to be there," Ragan said of the session at the Army Navy Club in Washington that provided another opportunity for people in disaster relief to get to know each other better so they could work together more easily during a disaster.

The national conference — its exact title was White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Conference on Innovations in Effective Compassion — was among a series of gatherings of leaders of faith-based and community initiatives entities that take place at least every other month, a White House spokesperson said.

In May, for example, a Mississippi disaster relief leader was called on by the White House to explain the Southern Baptist strategy for response efforts in the wake of disasters.

Don Gann, a 20-year veteran of disaster relief efforts — the last five as a consultant (associate director) with Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's men's ministries — was one of

eight people asked to speak May 19 at a three-hour roundtable called by the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives as part of a “Compassion in Action” series.

About 100 people from a variety of public and private sectors involved in disaster preparedness and response listened to the four-person “response and recovery strategies” panel and to a four-person “partnerships in emergency preparedness” panel. Also, Terry Henderson, national director of the SBC’s disaster relief thrust at the North American Mission Board, was among those invited to be in the audience.

“This was the first one they’ve ever done [on disaster relief],” Henderson said. “It was a kind of a beginning.... I thought this was a good meeting to bring the different government agencies to understand more what volunteer agencies bring to a disaster.”

Michael Chertoff, secretary of Homeland Security, made specific mention of the impact of Southern Baptist response in Mississippi and Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina, Henderson said.

Gann said he was chosen to speak because he was part of the initial response to Katrina in Mississippi. During the five minutes he was allotted, he explained that Southern Baptist response is rooted in the response of local churches.

“Our first thing to do was to try to keep those churches going, to support them and prop them up,” Gann recounted. “In our response [during disaster relief efforts], we wanted people to say, ‘This church helped me.’”

“I talked about the partnership between the North American Mission Board and the state conventions,” Gann said. “I really believe the only way you can partner is if you don’t lose your identity. For example, the Red Cross — they know what we’re doing, that we’re sharing the Gospel and ministering in the name of Christ as we serve. They know that and they don’t ask us to not do that, and that’s why we can partner with them.”

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives launched the Compassion in Action roundtable series in January 2007 to facilitate discussion among policymakers, government officials, philanthropists and faith-based and community service providers, said Rebecca Neale, a White House FBCI spokesperson.

“The roundtables underscore the critical and increasing role of faith-based and community organizations in disaster preparedness, response and recovery,” Neale said.

The Department of Homeland Security’s Center for FBCI was the lead agency for the May 19 roundtable.

John Kim Cook, director of the FBCI, noted, “From the Department of Homeland Security perspective, the whole idea was to bring together people who were interested in emergency preparedness, response and recovery, and display and highlight some of the best practices across the country,

and of course the SBC was one of the shining examples in disaster relief.

“Southern Baptist Disaster Relief has more than 80,000 trained volunteers, over 2,000 chaplains and 1,500 mobile units that are often deployed in times of disaster. It’s a massive effort,” Cook said.

“But it’s not about numbers,” he continued. “It’s about working effectively with federal, state and local emergency management officials as well as VOAD [Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster], a private-sector, nonprofit organization for effective response to people in need during and following a disaster, and that’s also something Southern Baptists do very well.”

Also invited to be part of the May roundtable were such disaster response and recovery organizations as Volunteer Florida, Volunteer Mobile and Operation HOPE and, for emergency preparedness, Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, Convoy of Hope, Christian Emergency Network and Secure Community Network.

Karen L. Willoughby is managing editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message and Dakota Baptist newspapers.

What to Do With Leftover Literature

David Francis

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—What do you do when the quarter is nearly over and you have extra Sunday School learner guides and magazines left over? The easy answer is just to throw it away. But maybe there are some more creative uses. Here are a few ideas:

1. **Take them to places people have to wait.** A doctor’s office is an obvious place. Or a bus or train station. Or maybe you could smuggle a few Sunday School quarterlies into an airline terminal. Hospital waiting rooms. Hair salons and barber shops. The breakroom at work. The auto repair shop. The crisis pregnancy center. The blood donor center. The fire station. Be creative!

2. **Leave them in places where people read while they’re doing something else.** “Accidentally” leave a copy at the coffee shop. Leave copies on the magazine rack at the fitness center. In the seatback pocket on an airplane. Did I hear someone say the bathroom? Which reminds me of a story. One day, a group of Baptist women told me their husbands wouldn’t read stuff from the church. I shared with them a wise truth: He’ll read anything you leave in the bathroom.

3. **Hand out at church events.** Give a copy of *ParentLife* to parents who come with their kids to Vacation Bible School family night or attend an Upward Basketball game or entrust their kids to your daycare, preschool or Mother’s

Day Out program. Provide copies at the Harvest Festival. Give a copy of *Living with Teenagers* to parents dropping their students off for a week at youth camp. Provide copies

of *Christian Single* through your divorce recovery ministry.

4. Bundle with your ministry efforts. Put a copy of a magazine or Bible study resource in the grocery bag of clients at your food pantry. Take copies to people you visit through homebound, nursing home, Meals on Wheels and prison ministries.

5. Share with a campus Baptist Student Ministry. Is there a BSM on a nearby college campus? Ask if they might have use for some Bible study materials or magazines.

6. Help out a struggling congregation or mission. Do you know of a church or mission that might rejoice to receive and/or reuse your leftovers? Why not ask?

7. Send to military personnel and other “Adults Away.” Some churches set up a special ministry for “Adults Away.” It really has no “attendance.” Just group leaders. One way to stay in touch -- and exercise biblical encouragement — is to send Bible study material and magazines. An exciting LifeWay ministry to military personnel deployed abroad is “LifeBox.” In addition to treats and essentials, the boxes include LifeWay magazines. To learn more about this ministry, go to www.lifeway.com/lifebox.

Some of these ideas, especially the last one, might cause you to observe, “Why should we just use leftover literature? We could use current magazines for these type of ministries, too!” Of course you could. Stamp or sticker the name of your church, class or association on the back cover of the magazine. Keep it simple: “A Gift from First Baptist Church” and include your church’s website address. And maybe, “Yes, you may take this home!” Have you used leftover literature in a creative way? Or do you have a testimony about such a ministry? Share it with us at sundayschool@lifeway.com.

David Francis serves as director of Sunday School for LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Point of Grace Now a Trio

by Erin Roach

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Heather Payne, one of the founding members of the Christian singing group Point of Grace, has announced her departure from the group in order to focus on her family and local church involvement.

In a statement posted on the group’s website, pointofgrace.net, Payne said the growing demands of raising four small children and touring finally became too much to handle.

I have given it my all and in the process I have realized that I can’t do it all,” she wrote. “As much as I have tried to be super-wife, super-mommy and super-singer, my efforts came up empty. I now know that I haven’t been excellent at any of it. The girls [of Point of Grace] have sacrificed and I have sacrificed, but mostly my family has sacrificed, and to continue like this is not God’s will.”

Payne, along with Denise Jones, Shelley Breen and Terry Jones, founded Point of Grace 17 years ago at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas. Terry Jones left the group in 2003 to raise her three children, and Leigh Cappillino joined in 2004.

After the birth of her first child, Ella, who is almost 6, Payne said she memorized Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and realized the mandate believers have to train their children in the Lord. As she prayed about what to do in regard to raising four children and continuing her singing career, Payne said the passage kept coming to mind.

“Every time I got to the part about teaching our children ‘diligently’ and at all times, I started feeling uncomfortable,” she wrote in her mid-June website post. “I haven’t been diligently teaching my children, I have been getting by. I am incredibly blessed with a husband that has supported my ministry. He had three of our kids many weekends by himself when I traveled and he embraced that time. Now, my role is to support him in his ministry. I will also be able to be actively involved in our home church. As believers we are members of the body of Christ.”

Payne’s husband, Brian, is an assistant professor of expository preaching and pastoral leadership at Boyce College in Louisville, Ky., the undergraduate college of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Paynes are members of Ninth & O Baptist Church. He graduated from the seminary in May with a Ph.D. in systematic theology.

Leaving Point of Grace, Payne said, was a “very difficult decision,” but she’ll continue on the sidelines, cheering the trio on in future endeavors.

“I support them 110 percent in all that they do and wish them only blessings,” she wrote.

Jones, Breen and Cappillino, meanwhile, wrote in a post on the website that over the years they’ve developed a unique bond with Payne.

“Something special has happened in our relationships with one another, something that cannot be fabricated, something that can only happen over many years of walking the same road together,” the women wrote. “We have a chemistry with one another, onstage and off, that we not only acknowledge, but treasure.

“After much prayer and consideration, this has led us to the decision to not ‘replace’ Heather. Some would say that no one is irreplaceable, but we would have to respectfully disagree,” they wrote. “Our precious sister Heather, in our opinion, is indeed irreplaceable. We are excited to continue with our ministry for as long as God allows, and it will be as a trio.”

The women said they’re already in the studio recording songs for an expanded version of their most recent project, the album “How You Live,” which was released in its original version last fall. Payne sang lead vocals on the title track, which she said was a reminder to enjoy the blessings God has given.

“We live in such a fast-paced world that we put things off,” Payne said at the time. “We will not use the ‘guest dishes’ because we want to save them for a time when it’s appropriate. When you wish time away, you don’t get that back. ‘How You Live’ is about making every moment count. It encourages us to take advantage of every single moment.”

Point of Grace asked for prayer in making the transition from four members to three, and they thanked fans for their unwavering support.

“As for Heather, we will miss her more than words can say,” they wrote. “We continue to talk and communicate with her every day, and our friendship will continue to grow just as it always has. She is a beautiful person inside and out, and we love her with all our hearts.”

Erin Roach is a staff writer for Baptist Press.

Kutter to Serve as Ministers Council Acting Executive Director

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 07/8/08) — The Ministers Council has elected the Rev. Dr. Joseph Ray Kutter as Acting Executive Director. Kutter will assume the responsibility on September 1. He was chosen by unanimous vote of the Ministers Council Executive Committee. The Executive Committee was authorized by Senate 2007 to finalize the selection on behalf of the constituency. Since last summer the Personnel Committee has received and reviewed names of potential candidates, and recommended Joe Kutter.

During his 39 years in American Baptist pastoral ministry Kutter has served five congregations. Since 1997 he has served as Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas. With his leadership, that congregation constructed a new community life center, costing about \$2.3 million. The center has allowed them to create new ministries to impact the community, including the Topeka Shepherd Center for senior adults, an after school program for middle school students, and Upward Basketball for more than 200 elementary school children from the community.

Prior pastorates include: the First Baptist Church of Royal Oak, Michigan, from 1987 to 1997; Cherry Hill Baptist Church, Dearborn Heights, Michigan, from 1980 to 1987; First Baptist Church of Arlington, Kearny, New Jersey, 1972-1980; and Assistant Pastor, First Baptist Church, Haddonfield, New Jersey, from 1970 to 1972.

Kutter has also served as President of the Ministers Council, as trustee of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, as chaplain to the General Board and General Board Executive Committee, and in a variety of regional and community leadership roles.

He received his education at Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, Doctor of Ministry, 1978; Crozer Theological

Seminary, Rochester, New York, Master of Divinity, 1971; and Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, Bachelor of Arts, 1967.

The Ministers Council was founded in 1935. As the professional association of pastoral leaders in the American Baptist Churches, the Ministers Council defines itself as the “the only group solely committed to the well-being of the clergy person” and seeks to fulfill its mission through a three-part Ministers Council strategy: face-to-face collegial covenant groups that meet monthly; strong constituent Councils with exciting programs; and a pattern of national clergy conferences

In 2002 the Ministers Council launched the Together in Ministry project. Funded by the Lilly Endowment Sustaining Pastoral Effectiveness initiative, Together in Ministry was designed with the goal of inspiring and resourcing pastoral leaders to form collegial covenant groups to strengthen them for their ministries. The Together in Ministry web address is www.ministerscouncil.com/togetherinministry/default.aspx.

Current Ministers Council Executive Director Kate Harvey states, “Joe Kutter’s numerous leadership capacities over the years with the Ministers Council, as well as his work on the Together in Ministry Steering Committee, equip him superbly for the role. The next stage of the Ministers Council strategy is a Lilly-funded project for organizational capacity building through resourcing and strengthening constituent Council leadership. His gifts make him the ideal leader for that phase of the work and I am thrilled to have him succeed me in the position.”

Kutter will serve the Ministers Council for two or three years as the American Baptist Churches USA pursues a process of restructuring.

An article written by Kutter appeared in the 2008 issue of Minister Magazine that is shaped around the theme of transition. It presents his perspective on this major transition in his pursuit of God’s calling on his life: www.ministerscouncil.com/Periodicals/documents/summe r08minmag.pdf.

Third-World Faith: Hub of World Christianity Shifts to ‘Global South’

by Kaitlin Chapman

(ABP) — Sounds of laughter, tambourines and native instruments reverberate through a tiny apartment as a small group of Christians gathers for fervent worship. Despite oppression under Islam and the Soviet system, these Central Asian Christians dance and sing with joy with the freedom they have found in Christ.

Their relationship with Christ is more important to them than their own lives. The gospel is not just a story to study, but is their daily connection to hope and the message to share with their community.

This is contemporary Christianity.

During the last few years, Christian scholars, such as Philip Jenkins, author and professor of religion at Pennsylvania State University, have noted the center of global Christianity has shifted to the Southern Hemisphere and other developing nations that missiologists often refer to as the “Global South.” The center has left the United States and Europe and headed to Latin America, Africa and Asia, where churches have seen unprecedented growth despite persecution and opposition.

The number of Christians in North America is smaller than the number of believers in Africa, Latin America and Asia. By 2050, China, Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Ethiopia and Uganda will dominate the list of the 10 nations with the largest Christian populations, according to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity.

World events outside the United States and Western Europe have served as catalysts for the shift, said a mission worker in Central Asia, whose name cannot be published for security reasons. After years of oppression and poverty, people are finding freedom and hope through a relationship with Christ.

“When you look over the past 100 years, one of the most deadly ideologies that killed more people during the 20th century was communism,” the worker said. “Yet, today in places where communism existed, we have seen some of the greatest advance of the gospel over the past 15 years.

“Today, radical Islam is having a similar effect in certain locations in the Muslim world. People have grown weary of living under the oppression of Islamic fundamentalism and are starting to turn to Jesus in places that we can’t even report right now.”

Billy Kim, former pastor of the 20,000-member Suwon Central Baptist Church in Suwon, South Korea, said people feel like they have to rely on God in areas with widespread poverty and persecution. “As you go to affluent Europe, the United States and Australia, churches seem to decline,” Kim, who served as president of the Baptist World Alliance, said. “But when there are problems of war, tragedy and poverty, like in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the church is growing and people are looking for hope.”

Now that Christianity has penetrated these societies, Christians are taking the gospel into the community, meeting people where they live instead of expecting them to come to a church building to experience a programmatic approach to religion.

Stan Parks, strategic catalyzer for Southeast Asia with the Global Connection Partnership Network, said that South Korea is now the second-largest missionary-sending country in the world. India, Brazil, Nigeria, the Philippines and China launch the next-largest missionary efforts, even sending missionaries to the United States.

Christians who “come out of these areas have an enthusiasm, vitality, confidence and joy because they know why they are

here, where they are headed and they know the message they have to share,” said David Coffey, the current BWA president.

With the influx of missionaries to the United States and Europe, church leaders are re-evaluating where the Western church stands. As stories of dramatic church growth in developing nations appear more frequently, the decline of Western Christianity becomes more evident.

Scholars cite many reasons why the West has shifted from the Christian center, and all agree new approaches must be taken for the West to turn around.

Rob Sellers, the Connally professor of missions at Hardin-Simmons University, a Texas Baptist school, attributed much of Christianity’s decline in the West to growing secularism. However, he added, it is “more complicated than simply a matter of a ‘secular-versus-sacred’ bent in society.” He pointed to postmodernism — with its rejection of absolute answers and its receptivity to spirituality — as an overarching cultural phenomenon.

“Postmodernity as a cultural phenomenon in the West has influenced the way that people perceive and accept systems of thought — be they religious, political or otherwise — that claim to have the ‘definitive answer’ to the problem,” Sellers said.

“A lot of people in the West are much more likely to validate different religious, political or social ideas than our parents — and certainly our grandparents — were apt to do. [They] are disenchanted with the established church. They perceive the church to be rigid, legalistic, formal, out of touch, superficial and old-fashioned.”

Sellers called for Christians to engage in holistic ministries that seek to enhance and sustain life. “If Christian people and churches were to set up their commitment to addressing human needs around the world, I believe more ‘secular’ people in the West would take notice and be more likely to participate,” he said.

Amidst the evident decline in church attendance in the West, pastors and church planters are hopeful, believing change can come through the Holy Spirit’s leading and through prayer.

If change happens, it will have to come through non-Western ways, some insist.

“We’ll keep doing what we are doing until we run out of money, but it will slow down,” said Bob Roberts, church planter and pastor of Northwood Church in Keller, Texas. “We will then get desperate enough to try something different and learn from those outside of the U.S.”

In the West, the church does not teach people to be self-feeding in their spiritual life, said Curtis Sergeant, a church-planting strategist with e3 Partners, a church-multiplication organization that equips, evangelizes and establishes connections with churches across the world.

Christians need to be praying, reading Scripture and

involving themselves in church life so that they can practice all of the Bible's "one-another" commands and use their spiritual gifts, he said.

The Western church has created disciples who are dependent, not capable of reproducing disciples themselves, Sergeant added.

"Church in essence is a movement of the Spirit," said Bob Garrett, professor of missions at Dallas Baptist University.

"It's a conversion of a mindset, a complete change. [Church growth] has little to do with institutions and buildings and programs. It's happening by people going out and helping their neighbors with life problems and sharing Christ. It is a contagious element that people catch."

For growth to happen, Coffey said, Western churches must be more urgent and intentional in their approach to evangelism and be led by missionary-hearted leaders in order to recover their zeal.

"While there are stirring examples around the world of those who are engaging creatively in mission and evangelism, I am discovering that many Baptists are unsure about how to preach the good news to the poor of our day," Coffey said.

"The changing cultures alarm them, and many have lost their confidence to communicate the gospel. My conviction is that whenever there are changes in cultures, this constitutes a fresh call from the missionary God. We need to realize that a Christian mission has never evangelized a culture by avoiding it. Perhaps the starting point is a greater dependence on the strategic guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is able to lead us into places we may fear to go."

The West has a giant task ahead, but Coffey added, "Don't write the West off just yet."

"Christianity does not seem to plant churches that last forever," he said, explaining that churches experience a cycle of death and birth.

"While the gates of hell will not prevail against the church, the local and cultural expression of the community of Christ has no divine right to survival."

Inmates Relay Gratitude for Self-Study Plan

by Kelly Shrout

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Quite a few letters from inmates arrive at Pam Stubblefield's desk.

"I get letters almost daily telling me how a certain workbook in the Christian Growth Study Plan has made a difference in the lives of inmates," said Stubblefield, a staffer at LifeWay Christian Resources. "I also get letters from prison chaplains and volunteers telling me how our resources, MasterLife in particular, have impacted the lives of incarcerated individuals."

Stubblefield, who works in LifeWay's leadership ministry training and events department, also has received phone

calls from parents of inmates sharing how their sons and daughters have grown closer to God through their CGSP studies.

The Christian Growth Study Plan (see www.lifeway.com/cgsp) is a free service that LifeWay, an entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, has provided for more than 100 years. It is a systematic self-study, guided Christian growth curriculum that churches and individuals can use for leadership and ministry development. CGSP has a certificate plan through which participants can receive credit for work they have completed.

Donna Gandy, manager of training and events services at LifeWay, noted that LifeWay, through CGSP, has had a longstanding relationship with prison chaplains and ministries.

"Chaplains in prison ministries find that CGSP is a great way for inmates to study in a structured way Christian growth principles," Gandy said.

The five most popular CGSP courses among inmates are "Experiencing God," "Survival Kit," "Living Your Christian Values," "God's Transforming Word" and "Making Peace with Your Past." Since the program's inception, more than 14,000 requests have been received from inmates for CGSP credit.

In searching out ways to become more involved in prison ministry, Duncan and Stubblefield learned about the Tennessee Faith in Corrections Conference, an annual conference for chaplains and volunteers who work in prison ministry.

The two women have had a booth featuring LifeWay resources for the past two years at the two-day conference.

"This is a wonderful way to showcase the many resources we have to help prison ministries," Duncan said.

Conference attendee Deborah Newman, a volunteer who mentors women inmates at the West Tennessee Detention Facility, said she has used Making Peace with Your Past on many occasions. "This is an incredible resource that teaches women to settle their issues from the past and give God control of their lives. I have seen many women let go of many hurtful issues of their past and move on to freedom in Christ."

Newman also has seen a growth in the popularity of the Spanish Bible published by Holman Bible Outreach International, a LifeWay ministry.

"I minister to many immigrants who speak Spanish and the HBOI has been a blessing to them," said Newman, of Mason, Tenn.

"With all the women I work with, I want to instill in them that God is our healer. I teach them that God is the only key to set them free. If God is not involved in the rehabilitation process, I can't promise what the outcome will be."

Various courses available to churches and individuals

through the Christian Growth Study Plan provide training for adult Sunday School leaders, childhood education, deacon ministry, lay ministry and Baptist doctrine.

Kelly ShROUT is the employee communications editor at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. To learn more about Christian Growth Study Plan, visit www.lifeway.com/cgsp.

Which Economy Is It Going to Be?

Thom S. Rainer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The headlines are all heralding a disaster on the horizon:

“Market set to fall on oil price, financials”

“Bankruptcies on the Rise”

“Rate uncertainty hangs over U.S. stocks”

It is impossible to be within earshot of a television or radio, or scan the headlines of a newspaper, or open an Internet news site and not hear or see reports about the economy. These were random headlines found after a quick glance of online news on an average Tuesday.

Discussions about the economy are more prominent these days than war, healthcare, politics, global warming, mortgage companies, oil prices and tuition increases, mostly because each of these are micro parts that contribute to the overall health of our macro economy. Some days it seems as if the whole thing might collapse. The stress saps a significant amount of emotional and mental energy as we wonder how we are going to make ends meet. This reality is new ground for many, especially those 40 and younger who for the most part have known nothing but economic prosperity their entire lives. The anxiety affects all areas of our lives, and a recent Baptist Press story on a LifeWay Research study, “Amid economy’s woes, churchgoers give,” indicates the church can suffer as well.

Can there ever be certainty in the economy? Well, that depends upon which economy is in your focus.

Jesus launched His ministry with the greatest sermon every preached (Matthew 5-7). He lays out the Beatitudes, covers a wide range of relational issues, defines how to give, how to pray, how to fast and tells us our material possessions — our economy — can rule our lives. Fortunately, He then tells us how to live.

“This is why I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or your body, what you will wear” (Matthew 6:25).

This statement is extraordinary! Food and clothing — along with shelter — are among the most basic, mundane needs and He tells us not to worry! According to his definitive 1943 paper titled, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” Abraham Maslow, the father of humanistic psychology, writes that these very basic things are needed if one is to make the most of one’s abilities, fulfill his or her potential and move toward becoming all he or she is capable of becoming.

Jesus points His listeners to God. In fact His next statement in that same verse couldn’t be a greater contradiction to Maslow’s egocentric teaching: “Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing?” Jesus says that it is the idolater who seeks his security in things similar to those that build Maslow’s pyramid, but it is the person who first clings to the pursuit of righteousness who finds that a deep, abiding, sufficient, joyful, fulfilling, meaningful relationship with God goes beyond self preservation — way beyond. It is life itself. Knowing God this way through Christ is the very reason for our existence.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is the nature upon which our economy is built. The pursuit of God and righteousness is the foundation upon which life is built. Jesus said one can’t serve God and money. It is easy to give lip service to truths like this in days like these while holding back a portion of our devotion, “just in case.” But Jesus tells us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). Press that into your heart! He wants us to really want God.

We only have so many resources, even during booming economic times, yet the question remains: “In whose economy are you investing; Maslow’s or God’s?”

Thom S. Rainer is president of LifeWay Christian Resources.

Daniel Vestal Counters BP Column that Said CBF not ‘Truly Christian’

by Jim White

ATLANTA (ABP) — Why would some Baptist writers go out of their way to create the impression that the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is not even Christian? CBF Executive Coordinator Daniel Vestal said he is trying to answer that question after the Southern Baptist Convention’s news agency published a column claiming the Fellowship was neither Baptist nor Christian at all. “It pained me that people have been offended and hurt by this confusion about what CBF believes. I want to make clear that CBF is Christ-centered and trinitarian in its theology,” asserted Vestal.

“CBF is clear in its affirmation of the core commitment to the triune God. Our commitment to Christ as the savior for the whole world stems from our trinitarian faith.” Vestal responded to the column by James Smith, editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness*, which Baptist Press published nationwide June 25. “Here’s the bottom line,” Smith wrote. “It’s long past time to declare the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is no longer truly Christian, let alone Baptist.” Smith conceded that some — perhaps even most — individuals in the CBF are Christians. But he contended they are ill informed about what he called CBF’s promotion of “heresy.”

Smith’s words were apparently inspired by comments made at CBF’s recent annual meeting by John Killinger. The Presbyterian pastor and author led three of about 60

breakout sessions at the meeting. According to multiple reports, in one session Killinger said: “Now we are re-evaluating and we’re approaching everything with a humbler perspective and seeing God’s hand working in Christ, but not necessarily as the incarnate God in our midst. Now, that may be hard for you to hear depending on where you are coming from, but we can talk more about it.”

Some of Killinger’s comments were first reported by BP, which sent reporters to cover the CBF general assembly in Memphis, Tenn. Killinger is currently executive minister and theologian-in-residence at Marble Collegiate Church in New York — the pulpit from which the late Norman Vincent Peale rose to fame.

Vestal denounced the theology Killinger expressed. “The only confession of the [early] Christian church was ‘Jesus is Lord,’” he said. “To make that confession cost many people their lives because of its radical claim. To say and believe that Jesus is Lord was to say and believe that Jesus of Nazareth is God. It was a clear affirmation of the deity of Jesus. And the Incarnation of God in the man Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. “And so for somebody in one of our workshops to question the Incarnation is simply very painful for me.”

Vestal continued. “I have known John Killinger to be a popular Presbyterian preacher. He was a professor at Samford University. . But we had no idea that his views on Christ were what he declared in this breakout session. His perspective is deeply troubling to me.”

Vestal’s own views on the lordship of Christ are made clear in his book, *Being the Presence of Christ*, just published by the Upper Room. The book’s premise, according to Vestal, is “that all the gospels were written from the perspective of the Resurrection, and the living Christ is none other than the incarnate Christ that was proclaimed in the pages of Scripture.”

Vestal said he regretted allowing Killinger to challenge such christological views at a CBF event. “I feel like that we gave him a platform at the general assembly,” he said. “We do allow freedom of exchange and ideas that people disagree on. But if we had known then what we know now about his christology, he would not have been invited.”

Vestal conceded, however, that CBF planners should have paid more attention to Killinger’s theological shifts. “I accept the responsibility for that. Obviously the staff and I had heard him speak. We knew him to be a popular preacher, but we did not know of his christological views. Should we have known that? Yes, we probably should have, and we will do more due diligence in the future.”

He continued, “We try to invite people who have different perspectives on a lot of issues, but the issue of the Incarnation is foundational. That’s central. That’s core gospel.” But Vestal strongly objected to Smith’s characterization of the CBF as non-Christian. “This is very personal for me and also very personal for Cooperative

Baptist Fellowship,” he said..” For some editors to write and insinuate that we are not Christians is very painful for me.”

Vestal questioned BP’s motives in regularly investing thousands of dollars in denominational resources to send reporters to cover the annual meeting of CBF, a group that is dwarfed in size by the SBC. He said he believes they attend “to find things in our assembly, either in a breakout session or in a line that someone makes, that they can use then to somehow paint everybody in the CBF in a certain way.”

Will Hall, executive editor of Baptist Press and the SBC’s chief public-relations officer, said his only reaction to Vestal was, “I really don’t have any comment. We’re a news service.” The SBC agency sends reporters to the event annually.

In the past, they have frequently produced stories highlighting general assembly speakers, workshop leaders or exhibitor organizations who may hold beliefs that some conservative Southern Baptists would find questionable. In 2000, many general assembly attendees accused BP writer Russell Moore of inaccuracies and blatant fabrications in several stories — most notably a report where he claimed that a former missionary attending the meeting physically assaulted him. Moore is now a dean at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Vestal said BP missed a great opportunity at this year’s assembly to celebrate a fellow Baptist group’s successes in kingdom work. “This was one of the best gatherings we have had. It was just a wonderful, wonderful meeting. Wednesday night we had a special commissioning service. We appointed 18 new missionaries that are going to some of the most difficult, dangerous places in the world.” According to Vestal, the meeting was “a high and holy moment” that included inspiring worship, corporate prayer and discernment about the organization’s future, and affirmation of CBF’s commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and the Micah Challenge.

Jim White is editor of the *Religious Herald*. Robert Marus contributed to this story.

A Simple Plant Battles Malaria & Gives Hope in Rural Africa

by Mark Kelly

HORN OF AFRICA (BP)—Every 30 seconds, a child in Africa dies of malaria.

But it doesn’t have to happen. Malaria often can be prevented. When that’s not possible, malaria can be treated. And it can be done simply and inexpensively.

In one rural area of the Horn of Africa, Southern Baptists are helping with a project that aims to greatly reduce the number of people who suffer from malaria by using a simple remedy that can be readily available, even in the most

remote areas.

Drawing on a little more than \$10,000 from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund, local believers and Southern Baptist field partners are distributing starts of Artemisia annua, a plant that has proven effective in treating malaria when its dried leaves are brewed as a tea. Use of Artemisia to treat fever dates back more than 17 centuries to ancient China.

“This area has a population of more than 4 million people and one of the highest incidence rates of malaria in the whole country,” said William Arnold*, a development worker who is a field partner of Baptist Global Response, a Southern Baptist international relief and development organization. “Because the area is so rural, 60 percent of the population is a least a half-day’s walk from the nearest health post or clinic.”

If malaria isn’t treated fairly quickly, the illness becomes much more severe, especially when its victim already is weakened by hunger — as many people in the Horn of Africa are. Because early symptoms of malaria are similar to other illnesses, a person who lives in a remote area may simply not get to a doctor in time.

“By providing a local source for Artemisia plants, individual farmers can have access to their own source for the treatment of malaria,” Arnold said. “By distributing the plants, Southern Baptists are able to provide an effective treatment option for people in remote rural areas.”

In just the past year, more than 2,500 Artemisia plants have been distributed to 800 farmers and their families, giving approximately 10,000 people access to their own treatment for malaria, Arnold said. As news of the project spread by word of mouth, from family to family and neighbor to neighbor, demand for more plants has increased.

So far, at least 10 areas have set up Artemisia gardens and a local government development leader who was transferred to another district has said he wants to establish an Artemisia distribution initiative in that area as well.

Interest in the plant isn’t limited to malaria treatments either.

“Where there is almost no health care, people who have grown Artemisia have used it to treat many other things,” Arnold said. “Because of the plant’s properties, it is effective in treating worms, amoebas, wounds, headaches and asthma. That has increased the interest in the plant.”

Several farmers have expressed interest in growing the plants themselves, Arnold said. That would allow the program to expand with almost no additional cost.

Projects like this establish relationships that allow development workers to show people other ways to improve the quality of their lives, said Jim Brown, U.S. director for Baptist Global Response.

“It’s really exciting to see how many people’s lives can be touched with a small investment,” Brown said. “By connecting people in need with people who care, we have

opportunities to see people begin experiencing full and meaningful lives.

“We want to help people find hope and peace and be inspired with the confidence they need to raise their families and build their communities with dignity,” Brown said. “And then you can watch it multiply as they share that new life with others.”

* Name changed for security reasons. Mark Kelly is an assistant editor with Baptist Press. Baptist Global Response is located on the Internet at gobgr.org.

Subject: More Information About the Chinese Multi Faith Delegation

The Baptist Joint Committee needs congregations or individuals that can provide transportation and meals for the American-Chinese Delegation from September 5-14, 2008.

More information has been received with an update itinerary from the planner about the need for transportation and meals. The planner has provided what an equivalent donation might be if a church or individual could not provide either a van or transportation. Following are the equivalent amounts: Lunch – \$375; Dinner – \$750; Van Transportation for 1 Hour – \$95.33.

If you are able to help or for more information, contact Kathy Lansing of the Baptist Joint Committee at 202.544.4226 or klansing@BJCOnline.org.

News from ABNS:

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 07/21/08) – Close to 1400 youth and adults attended “MTW: More Than a Week,” the National Gathering of American Baptist Youth sponsored by National Ministries, in Estes Park, Colo., July 5 - 11.

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 07/22/08) – National Ministries announces the launch of a new Internet-based resource focused on missional church transformation aimed at congregational leaders.

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 07/17/08) – Since 2002, Faith United Against Tobacco, a broad and diverse coalition of more than 20 national faith denominations and organizations, including American Baptists, Southern Baptists, United Methodists, Jews, Muslims and Sikhs, has been working to convince the United States Congress to pass life-saving legislation that would authorize regulation of tobacco products by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Website: www.abc-usa.org/news/

Searching for a Pastor: An eastern Idaho Southern Baptist church whose dedicated members believe that the Bible is God's inerrant word is prayerfully seeking a nurturing and visionary pastor to lead a church body which averages 130 in worship. Send resume to Calvary Baptist Church, 785 First Street, Idaho Falls, ID 83401.