

CAPITAL BAPTIST NEWSBRIEFS

■ A News Summary ■ Edited by Jeffrey Haggray

District of Columbia Baptist Convention

February 2008

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2007 NCAMO

(National Capital Area Missions Offering)

Goal: \$100,000

Y-T-D: \$ 50,804.88

All 2007 NCAMO monies are due by Mar 31, 2008

Companions in Christ

Forgiveness Seminar

Feb 16, 2008 at DCBC Building

9:30am-12noon

Vignettes of DCBC People, Churches, etc.

The Senior Focus Group at Johenning Baptist Community Center (sponsored by Forest Heights BC in partnership with the DCBC) — The Year 2007 in Review:

- grieved the passing of our beloved member, Isabell Washington.
- prayed for our sick and family members who were hospitalized and at home.
- made hospital visits.
- blessed and give thanks for — a keyboard (donated by Village BC), a musician, a certified exercise instructor, a professional arts and crafts leader, an assistant arts and crafts leader, a food caterer, a registered nurse, a preacher of the Gospel, a television (donated by David Freshour), and support from the Early Childhood Academy Charter School in assisting in passing out invitation flyers to the Open House in December.
- passed out Christmas bags with a small toy and Christmas candy to all the ECA children who were present on the last school day before Christmas.
- assisted a family whose home and belongings were lost in a fire. New clothes, toys and candy were provided to the family's children.
- donated a case of canned vegetables for the Thanksgiving and Christmas Baskets.
- participated in the DCBC Open House in December. Provided ham sandwiches, BBQ & red-hot chicken wings and Coca-Cola cake (all went fast). Robert Cochran and Tish Jones were present.

DCBC Vice President Ella Redfield, pastor of **New Creation BC**, is progressing well following surgery on January 8. Continue your prayers for her as she recuperates.

Hillandale BC is seeking a full time pastor. Please send resumes to: Search Committee, Hillandale Baptist Church, 2601 Powder Mill Road, Adelphi MD 20783-1199, fax 301434.5430 or email hbc1952@aol.com.

FBC Upper Marlboro recently had the privilege of hearing from David and Laurie Bledsoe, missionaries to Brazil. They shared how God is working in Brazil and how God's glory can and should be revealed through us as well.

Montgomery Hills BC has embraced *Close Encounters at the Cross* for their Lenten theme. Some *Close Encounters at the Cross* include *ourselves*, *The Tempter*, *Nicodemus*, *The Woman at the Well*, etc.

Twinbrook BC Lenten service theme this year is "Psalms for Aging." They will look at a different Psalm each week in light of the challenges and blessings of aging. Instead of meeting at night, they are trying a new time, Wednesdays (10:30am) starting on Feb 20 and location – in the homes, some in retirement areas.

Bookkeeper Position Available

DC Baptist Convention has a part-time bookkeeper position opening. Position requires a minimum of college-level bookkeeping and/or five-years experience in AP, AR, PR, and GL. Also requires experience in computerized bookkeeping [ACS (Automated Church System) a plus], Microsoft, and/or Corel. For additional information, please call Tish Jones at 202.265.1526. Email resumes to tish.jones@debaptist.org.

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

You May Not Be as Good a Tither as You Thought

Terry Austin, Exec Dir Tarrant Baptist Foundation, Texas

I hesitate to approach this subject because it makes me uncomfortable. It is prickly because it causes us to consider something differently than we normally do and that is always difficult. It is a subject that many folks think they have mastered for years and there is no need to think any more about it. The subject is tithing.

I trust that most of you are aware of the fact that the word “tithe” actually means ten percent. There is no such thing as tithing anything other than a tenth. If you give three or four percent of what you have you are not a tither. Some of you, probably many of you who take the time to read an article on stewardship, are faithful tithers.

Consequently, I don’t presume to be able to teach you anything about the subject. However, I learned something recently that caused me to reflect on the issue. The fact is that ninety percent of the giving in this country is accomplished by using cash. In other words, when we give, we do so with money in our pocket or in our bank account. The problem is that ninety percent of the wealth in this country is not in cash. It is tied up in non-liquid assets.

Before going any further, let me say that I examined my own financial situation and sure enough, less than ten percent of my net worth is actually in the form of cash. When I give, I typically only consider a very small part of what God has actually given to me. Do you understand the ramifications of this new information? Even the most faithful tithers are really only giving a tenth of a tenth of what they have.

The first comment I am going to receive is that we really cannot give a tithe of a non-liquid asset until it is turned into cash. When we sell the item or cash in the stock then we can give the tithe. Let me say that I agree with you. It would certainly be difficult to give a tenth of your house. I am sure your church has little use for a bunch of spare bedrooms.

The problem is that we seldom think about the tithe when we consider our non liquid assets. For example, if you sell your house, it is likely that you will get a price that exceeds what you paid. In most situations, a house is an appreciating asset.

Let’s say you paid \$100,000 for a house and sold it for \$125,000. You have an increase of \$25,000. A tithe would be \$2,500. However, most folks simply plow all the money from the sale into a new, more expensive house.

The common scenario for most Christians, including those who have been faithful tithers throughout life, is for a young family to purchase a house. Throughout life, the house appreciates, traded for a more expensive house, and the

process is repeated several times. At the end of life, the family probably owns a nice house that is worth considerably more than the original investment. Upon death, the house is given to the children who sell it and divide the money. A very small investment grows into a significant asset and God is never considered in the transaction.

This same principle can be applied to most of our investments and assets. As figures indicate, perhaps as much as 90% of our wealth is not even considered when we make giving decisions. Even at death we should think about giving at least a tithe of our estate, and it would certainly honor God if we gave much more.

I certainly don’t want to be seen as a legalist – there are more than enough of you already. However, it would serve us well to expand our thinking and honestly consider all the gifts God has given.

National Center for Children & Families — Family Dinner Night at BD’s Mongolian BBQ

Gather your family and friends and join NCCF for a fun night raising money. BD’s will donate a portion of their evenings proceeds to NCCFs Youth Summer Activity Fund.

Wed.	Feb 20	Wed.	Aug 20
Wed.	Jun 11	Wed	Nov 19
Time:	4:30pm-9:00pm		
Location:	7201 Wisconsin Avenue. Bethesda MD		
Cost:	\$16.99 adults and \$8.99 children		
	Parties of 6 or more may call ahead for reservations at 301.657.1080.		

More American Baptist Volunteers Needed to Build Houses On Gulf Coast

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 01/29/08) — Once again National Ministries, on behalf of American Baptist Churches USA, will partner with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge in spring 2008 to build five homes for families that have permanently relocated to Baton Rouge, following displacement by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

More than 300 volunteers will be required to complete the homes in this “Blitz Build.”

“Taking part in a ‘Blitz Build’ is an amazing opportunity to let others see the love of Jesus Christ in you,” says Victoria Goff, National Ministries’ national coordinator of Volunteer Ministries. “It is awesome to help raise wall after wall and then-before you know it-you have a house standing before you. But doing this side-by-side with others filled with Christ’s compassion, and the homeowners, too, makes it even more special. Don’t miss this chance of a lifetime to give back, and return home enriched in ways you could

never have imagined.” Contact: 1.800.ABC.3.USA

Creation Museum Surpassing Expectations

by Michael Foust

PETERSBURG, Ky. (BP) — Eight months after it opened, the Creation Museum near Cincinnati still has its secular detractors, but its success in attendance is erasing any doubts it can succeed.

Officials with the museum say they surpassed the one-year attendance goal in only seven months, drawing 290,000 visitors through the end of 2007. When the museum opened on Memorial Day with protesters outside, Creation Museum officials said their 12-month goal in attendance was 250,000. They passed the 300,000 mark Jan. 9.

Located in Petersburg, Ky., the high-tech, \$27 million, 60,000-square-foot museum and planetarium present a scientific view of the biblical creation account — in essence, a creationist answer to popular natural history museums. In fact, one of the goals of the museum — which is a product of the ministry Answers in Genesis — was to rival the artistic elements of natural history museums. The Creation Museum says the earth is thousands, not millions, of years old.

“It’s something that has been desired for a long time,” said Kurt Wise, who was a consultant for the museum and currently serves as professor of science and theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. “A lot of Christians who are creationists want an alternative to the fabulous museums that we have — the Field Museum [in Chicago] and the Smithsonian and so on. They like taking their kids to those places, but they want to see the creation model presented, and that’s especially true for homeschool groups.

“It’s filled a void that probably never had been filled.”

Media attention — even though it hasn’t been all positive — has helped get the word out about the museum. Mark Looy, a vice president for Answers in Genesis, said 200 media outlets — including four Swiss ones — have either visited the museum or conducted telephone interviews.

The museum has grown since opened and continues to do so:

- Some 600 parking spaces will be added in the coming months to accommodate the large crowds the museum has during the summer, particularly on weekends. Additionally, traffic flow will be improved.
- A 4,500-square-foot, two-story “Dinosaur Den” opened in the museum last summer, several weeks after the grand opening. It features sculpted dinosaurs and dinosaur bones and shows where creationists believe dinosaurs fit in the Genesis account.
- A fourth planetarium program will be added this year,

bringing the total number of such programs to four. One of those programs is shown only around Christmas.

Additionally, the museum now is holding lectures by Answers in Genesis President Ken Ham and other staff. The lectures are held in part to draw more visitors on specific days of the week the museum has lower attendance.

The museum’s success has focused more attention on the ministry’s Website — AnswersInGenesis.org which offers answers to frequently asked questions and is one of the most visited religious websites in the U.S., Looy said. The ministry recently launched an online peer-reviewed research journal (at AnswersInGenesis.org/arj).

The museum’s success comes at the same time an unaffiliated Texas-based creationist research ministry, Institute for Creation Research, seeks to get approval for an online master’s degree in science education. A Texas state advisory group gave the group preliminary approval, and now the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board must give it the final OK. Some scientists are urging the board not to approve the degree.

“The latest round of so-called creation science truly scares me and all of my colleagues here at UT Southwestern Medical Center,” Alfred Gilman, dean of UT Southwestern’s medical school and a Nobel Prize winner in medicine, wrote to the board, according to The Dallas Morning News. “Approval of this sort of nonsense as science in Texas will have a significant negative impact on our ability to attract the best minds to the state. How can Texas simultaneously launch a war on cancer and approve educational platforms that submit that the universe is 10,000 years old?”

Wise said the museum has contributed a great deal to the young earth creationist movement.

“The museum is really a phenomenal step forward in young age creationism,” Wise said. “... It moved creation science forward. It brings [creation science] up to date and even on the edge in some places.”

The museum, Wise said, takes what he considers a new tactic in that it is less of an anti-evolution museum and more of a pro-creationism one.

“It changed an emphasis in creationism,” he said. “Most young age creationism has been [seen as] attacking evolution and attacking the concept of millions of years, but this [museum] was explicitly a creation museum, so it’s a presentation of the creation model and as much as possible a positive presentation.”

The museum (online at CreationMuseum.org) does tackle some of the tougher objections to creationism, such as how the speed of light and the size of the universe fit in a young earth model. The museum — which during construction had the services of a former designer of Universal Studios theme parks rides — has roaring animatronic dinosaurs, more than

50 educational videos and a special effects theater complete with three screens, vibrating seats, simulated wind and mist.

Michael Foust is assistant editor of *Baptist Press*.

A View from the Mountain Top

by Kay Cumbie

Civil Rights Hero, Martin Luther King, speaking in Memphis TN 40 years ago, said *I Have Been to the Mountaintop!*

More than 15,000 Baptists from across the North American continent gathered in Atlanta 30 years later, seeking to climb another mountain for the purpose of celebrating *A New Baptist Covenant*. We came from 30 racially, geographically and theologically diverse participating organizations, committed to UNITY.

We represented every age group – babes in arms or strollers; Seminary students; robust adults; Senior citizens. We came in every imaginable mode of dress. All were welcome in that place.

Like all serious mountain climbers, we were bound together by ropes:

- the rope of creating an authentic and prophetic Baptist voice
- the rope of emphasizing traditional Baptist values
- the rope of ministering in every possible way to a needy world

As mountain climbers we needed toe holes as we made our way in uncharted territory. A list of superb speakers provided our toe holds, based on Jesus' first sermon as recorded in Luke 4. They reminded us ...

- The great tragedy in life is not failing to meet goals. The great tragedy in life is not to HAVE goals.
- We must help break the cycles of poverty. Society is only 9 meals away from revolution.
- Each of us is a stranger sometime. Every day 1 million people move across borders.
- We must understand other faith groups so we can relate to them and be good neighbors.
- Churches need to be involved in public policy as we try to help the sick, the poor, the oppressed.
- Just as Jesus healed lepers, we must address needs of today's world suffering from frightening diseases.
- We must be vigilant in supporting freedom for all people in our land to live out their faith.
- Churches must work to keep watch over our criminal justice system and help insure that our laws are administered fairly, as well as promoting victims rights.
- We all must continue to move forward in addressing racial prejudice.

- It is not enough to respect others, we must also love them.
- Evangelism is, as always, central to who we are as Baptist Christians.

When mountain climbers reach a new height, never attained before, they plant a flag. Buoyed by superb music, enriching fellowship, Christ-centered preaching, eye-opening opportunities and a totally positive attitude, attendees at the New Baptist Covenant gathering in Atlanta Georgia in January 2008 have planted a flag of commitment.

We do not know the specific details of our next mountain, but we are ready to take it on. JOIN US!

Kay Cumbie, member Westwood BC in Springfield VA, presents her summation of the A NEW BAPTIST COVENANT meeting. Her daughter, Beth Fogg, served with the program committee for the meeting.

Covenant Organizers Close Gathering with Determination but Few Specifics

by Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) — “We don’t want this to be a wasted moment,” Jimmy Carter said, describing the excitement and concern he said he found among participants in the first-of-its-kind New Baptist Covenant, which wrapped up its three-day gathering in Atlanta Feb. 1.

As the unprecedented event came to a close, participants and organizers alike pondered the challenging task of turning energy and enthusiasm into tangible action.

Former President Carter, a Baptist layman and the catalyst for the New Baptist Covenant, said many of the estimated 15,000 participants stopped him in the hallways of the Georgia World Congress Center to urge organizers to capture and build on the positive spirit of the gathering — the first collaborative meeting of more than 30 Baptist denominations and groups in North America.

No plans have been laid yet for another convocation, organizers said, and there is no need for a new interdenominational structure. But organizers committed to meet again in March to set a course for follow-up ministries.

Carter invited participants to submit ideas for future collaboration, but the organizers acknowledged getting 30 groups with different cultures and histories to work together would not be easy.

“The diversity of this group represents both its potential and its problem,” said William Shaw, one of the event organizers and president of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., the oldest of the predominantly African-American Baptist denominations.

The diverse participants have “a sense of expectation” that the meeting will lead to a new era of collaboration and unity among Baptists who have been divided along racial and theological lines since before the Civil War.

“We’re not on a picnic here. We’re on a journey,” said program co-chair Jimmy Allen. “And we’re going to be working hard to overcome these cultural barriers.”

Carter said participants had already demonstrated a consensus to work on environmental stewardship, civil rights, equality for men and women, and ministry to immigrants.

Even the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest denominational group not involved in the New Baptist Covenant, might cooperate with the new coalition, he said, despite its initial opposition to the movement.

Bill Underwood, president of Mercer University and event co-chair with Carter, said the gathering will have a positive impact on the public witness of Baptists.

“People are seeing Baptists talking about working together and doing positive things together, rather than bickering,” he said. “I think that is a very positive thing for Baptists.”

“The next steps have already begun,” added David Goatley, president of the North American Baptist Fellowship, an umbrella group encompassing all the organizations in the New Baptist Covenant coalition. The relationships formed among the sponsoring groups and their leaders have paved the way for future collaboration, he said.

Shaw said the movement could have international impact as well. “There have been Christians around the world taking notice that we have been doing something unprecedented,” he said.

Shaw said the New Baptist Covenant movement represents “the moving of the Spirit of God within the religious community.” That Spirit “has moved us to respond to what we all agree is a central claim of the Kingdom of God,” summarized in Jesus’ sermon in Luke 4, which provided the framework for the New Baptist Covenant meeting and future collaboration.

Allen, the last moderate Baptist president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979, agreed the Covenant is “reflecting a movement of God that is bigger than any participating group.”

Allen said the Covenant leaders are not interested in organization, structure or control. While follow-up plans will come, he said, the leaders are welcoming suggestions from attendants and counting on grassroots involvement. “Everything is going to be considered that is suggested,” he said.

“We’re not trying to find ways to say no. We’re trying to find ways to say ‘go.’”

Daniel Vestal, executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, said the relationships formed among his fellow organizers will pave the way for whatever follows. And one role for the leaders is to foster relationships among grassroots participants.

“There’s nobody in a room over here planning this out,” Vestal said. “There is a desire among all of us not to control it.”

“I think the New Baptist Covenant is a gift from God,” he concluded. “Now we are responsible for how we steward and manage that gift with great care.”

New Baptist Covenant: Unity. Harmony. Now, What Comes Next?

by Marv Knox

ATLANTA (ABP) — Fifteen thousand participants in the New Baptist Covenant convocation arrived in Atlanta Jan. 30 seeking unity in Christ and departed Feb. 1 wondering where their quest will lead.

In the meantime, they demonstrated racial, theological and geographic harmony as they prayed, sang, listened to sermons and attended workshops focusing on ministry to the people Jesus called “the least of these” in society.

The unprecedented event brought together African-American, Anglo, Asian-American and Hispanic Baptists. They represented 30 Baptist conventions and organizations, all affiliated with the North American Baptist Fellowship, the regional affiliate of the Baptist World Alliance. They also heard from two former U.S. presidents, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, and a former vice president, Al Gore – all Baptists.

Participants scaled a 163-year-old wall that has divided the denomination since U.S. Baptists parted company over slavery more than a decade before the Civil War.

As women and men of numerous races sat side-by-side through sermons and hugged and laughed in hallways, they embodied a dream-come-true for Baptists who dreamed of racial reconciliation in their denomination.

“This is the most momentous event of my religious life,” declared an emotional Carter, a son of the South and a lifelong Baptist.

“For the first time in more than 160 years, we are convening a major gathering of Baptists throughout an entire continent, without any threat to our unity caused by differences of our race or politics or geography or the legalistic interpretation of Scripture,” said Carter, who co-chaired the gathering with Mercer University President Bill Underwood.

Carter’s euphoria echoed the aspiration of another Baptist from Georgia, and the convocation fulfilled the prophecy of Martin Luther King Jr., Underwood told the crowd.

“Forty-five years ago, a native son of Atlanta, a Baptist pastor, shared with all of us his dream: One day, on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners would be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood,” Underwood said to sustained

applause.

“Today, here on those red hills of Georgia, Baptists have come together to take a step in the long and difficult journey toward achieving Dr. King’s great dream. After generations of putting up walls between us—separation, division by geography, by theology, but most of all division by race—a new day is dawning. Today, we all sit down together at the table of Christian brotherhood and sisterhood.”

Leaders of most of the participating groups first affirmed the New Baptist Covenant in April 2006, when Carter and Underwood invited them to Atlanta to talk about bridging Baptists’ racial, theological and geographic divisions by working together “to promote peace with justice, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the sick and marginalized, welcome the strangers among us, and promote religious liberty and respect for religious diversity.”

That effort piggybacked on a historic gathering of the four predominantly African-American Baptist conventions five years ago, plus ongoing discussions of unity within the North American Baptist Fellowship, NABF President David Goatley said.

“The New Baptist Covenant is a public witness to our common commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed,” explained Goatley, executive secretary of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention.

“Never before have Baptists on this scale sought to cross the boundaries we choose to leave behind – ethnicity, ideology, theology. Never before have Baptists on this scale sought to explore ministries of this impact. Never before have Baptists on this scale come together for cooperation and collaboration for missional ministry impact.

“We are at the threshold of great possibilities,” Goatley said.

Prior to the convocation, critics suggested one of those possibilities was politics.

They claimed organizers stacked the program in favor of Democrats, citing the presence not only of Carter, but also Clinton and Gore. Carter refuted that charge in a news conference, noting the all-Baptist program also featured Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa. Organizers invited Republican presidential candidate and former Baptist pastor Mike Huckabee, who accepted and then declined months ago, as well as Sen. Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., who bowed out at the last minute to campaign for another presidential candidate who attends a Baptist church, John McCain.

In the convocation’s opening session, Carter made a promise that also sounded like a warning to all the other speakers. Imploring the diverse Baptists to make unity the distinctive element of their gathering, he pledged, “There will be no criticism of others—let me say again—no criticism of others or exclusion of any Christians who would seek to join this cause.”

Near the end of the meeting, he told reporters the convocation lived up to his nonpolitical billing. “We have deliberately avoided any identification by politics,” he declared. “It’s been a wonderful mixture of cohesive, different groups. All of us, so far as I know, have been completely unified.”

Unity in Christ provided the convocation’s theme. Plenary sessions focused on creating Baptist unity by following Jesus’ mandate set out in his first sermon: *to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.*

Clinton, the closing speaker, **called for unity toward a group with which many of the other participants disagree – the Southern Baptist Convention.**

The SBC pulled out of the Baptist World Alliance – the organizational common denominator for all the groups affiliated with the New Baptist Covenant – several years ago, citing alleged “liberalism.”

Clinton described the rift with the SBC as competing interpretations of the New Testament Epistle of James, “that people would know our faith by our works.”

Baptists who gained control of the SBC focused on “works” related to issues such as opposition to abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment and gay rights, he noted, while “more progressive Baptists” focused on fighting poverty, protecting the environment and providing housing for poor people, he said.

“I say this in good conscience: We all believe we are doing what we can. But so do they. They read the obligations of Scripture in a different way,” he noted.

Calling for humility and respect, Clinton urged, “We should not let our response to the people who disagree with us be dictated by what they say about us or even how they treat people we care for. If there is any chance that this covenant can become an embracing one, that there can be a whole community, then there has to be a chance that we can find love.”

Other speakers amplified the unity theme from a range of perspectives:

- **Christian oneness centers on fulfilling Jesus’ “radical mission,”** stressed William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, one of the four African-American conventions, and pastor of White Rock Baptist Church in Philadelphia.

Jesus wasn’t satisfied merely to bring relief to the persecuted and victimized, he explained, noting Jesus “concretized” his mission by seeking to reverse the structures and situations that caused oppression.

The heart of that quest is establishing justice and uprooting injustice, Shaw noted. “When God made mankind, he made

us male and female – in his image. To do injustice to anybody is to do injustice to the reality of God, because we are in his image, and his image is not to be demeaned.”

That calls Baptists to seek change in society, he added. “You can’t embrace the mission of Jesus and not encounter the reality of injustice. He came not with actions of charity. He came to change.... Justice says we need to change the structures of victimization.”

• Unfortunately, the Baptist name is associated with exclusion, observed novelist John Grisham, a member of University Baptist Church in Charlottesville, Va. “The reason is because, for so long, so many Baptists have worked so hard to exclude so many,” he said.

Grisham offered Baptists three suggestions for seeking unity: Restore their good name by respecting diversity, stay out of politics and “spend as much time out on the streets in ministry as in the church.”

“Jesus preached more and taught more about helping the poor and the sick and the hungry than he did about heaven and hell. Shouldn’t that tell us something?” he asked.

• **Love is the key to unity**, claimed Julie Pennington-Russell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga. She accepted an assignment to speak on respecting diversity, but she said respect isn’t sufficient to build unity.

Respect alone “has no power to change something that is broken between you and me,” she said. “Only love can do that. Let love take you by the hand and lead you like a child to a new way of seeing that brother or sister, and look for Jesus in the face of that person,” she said.

• Marian Wright Edelman **called for Baptists to unify around protecting children**. She cited a litany of statistics that reveal the depth of poverty, neglect and risk that describe the United States’ 13 million children in poverty, noting they add up to a national catastrophe.

“They are not acts of God,” said Edelman, founder of the Children’s Defense Fund. “They are our choices as citizens and as a nation. We created them; we can and must change them.”

Churches “ought to be the locomotive, and not the caboose, in speaking up for children,” she said.

• **Baptists could express their unity by giving themselves—and their means—to rescue the poor**, Tony Campolo said.

Jesus pronounced his priorities in Luke 4, beginning with preaching good news to the poor, noted Campolo, author and professor emeritus at Eastern University near Philadelphia.

“Do you think Jesus meant what he said, or do you think he was kidding?” he asked.

“There is nothing wrong with making a million dollars. I wish you all would make a million dollars. There is nothing wrong with making it, but there is something wrong with keeping it,” he said. “My Bible tells me in 1 John 3:17, *If anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need but shuts off his compassion from him—how can God’s love reside in him?*”

After calling on both individuals and churches to pour themselves into ministering to the poor, he shouted, “Rise up, you suckers, and go out and do the work of Jesus!”

• **Gore called for Baptists to protect the environment, pleading for participants in the convocation to make creation care one of their major initiatives.**

The former vice president and Nobel laureate discussed the research behind his Oscar-winning documentary, “An Inconvenient Truth” during a luncheon attended by 2,500 participants.

“The evidence is there,” Gore said. “The signal is on the mountain. The trumpet has blown. The scientists are screaming from the rooftops. The ice is melting. The land is parched. The seas are rising. The storms are getting stronger. Why do we not judge what is right?”

“There is a distinct possibility that one of the messages coming out of this gathering and this new covenant is creation care—that we who are Baptists of like mind and attempting in our lives to the best of our abilities to glorify God, are not going to countenance the continued heaping of contempt on God’s creation.”

• **Ironically, the world—for the first time in history—began producing enough food to eliminate hunger altogether in the 1960s**, Grassley said, noting one in seven people worldwide goes to bed hungry each night.

“Unfortunately, this condition, this increased food productivity, has not solved hunger throughout the entire world,” he said. “Poverty, war, natural disasters contribute to the cycle of hunger. But we also confront 21st-century complexities that affect a wholesome, stable and deliverable food supply.”

Grassley said increasing free trade will help alleviate hunger worldwide, but Christians in the United States should begin focusing on practical ways of alleviating hunger themselves. “If ever there was a time for unity, now is the moment—building consensus between agriculturalists and conservationists and building the food supply can create sustainable farming methods that protect the environment.”

• **The presence of “strangers” in the world provides a point for Baptist unity**, stressed Joel Gregory, a professor of preaching at Baylor University’s Truett Theological Seminary.

“Behind us, in front of us, ahead of us we meet the face of the stranger in the word of God,” he said. “It is not a

marginal issue. It's a central concern."

Unfortunately, Christians often try to care for strangers, foreigners and outsiders in the abstract, Gregory said, but God calls them to care for the stranger "in his concreteness, in his particularity, in his idiosyncrasies. Behind every generalization is God's particularity—that person in front of me right now."

• **Another group that needs the force of Baptist unity is composed of the 47 million Americans who do not have medical insurance**, said former Surgeon General David Satcher, of the Morehouse School of Medicine.

Inequities persist in the United States' health-care system, he noted. "An African-American baby is 2 ½ times as likely to die in the first year of life as a majority baby," and globally, child-mortality disparities between the wealthiest and poorest countries are far worse.

"For me, that is not a political issue; it's a moral issue," he said.

• **Setting the captive free also is a moral issue**, echoed Charles G. Adams, pastor of Hartford Baptist Church in Detroit.

If Baptists do not share freedom with others, "then our souls will be destroyed and our freedom with it," Adams said. "We are free only if we face the challenge of freedom, do the work of freedom, fight the fight of freedom and die the death for freedom.

"We are filled with the Spirit only to empty ourselves in the liberation of others. We are loved only to love others. We are free only to accept the responsibility of setting others free."

Convocation participants fleshed out the repeated calls for unity through ministry in 32 special-interest sessions. They featured practical applications of the unity/service theme.

Those sessions are likely to provide the backbone of structure for fleshing out what the convocation means and how participants will continue what began in Atlanta, predicted Jimmy Allen, program chairman for the event.

Ministerial students who attended each session took notes on the outcomes and proposals for cooperation in ministry, he said. They also gathered e-mail addresses of participants who want to continue collaboration on a range of poverty, racial, equality, peacemaking and other policy issues.

"Where we go from here will be very important," Carter told reporters. "People stop me and say, 'We don't want this to be just a moment, but a movement.'"

This spring, the convocation leadership group will reconvene in Atlanta to consider hundreds of suggestions and discuss how to follow up, he said.

The answer will not be creating yet another Baptist convention, Allen added. "This movement will not be

centralized. It can't be.... We're not an organized structure. We're stimulating and reflecting a movement of God that is bigger than us."

Answers likely will include opportunities for individuals, congregations and larger Baptist groups "to add our voice to common commitment" to implement the ideas for ministry that surfaced in Atlanta, Carter said.

Implementation of those commitments could answer one criticism of the New Baptist Covenant—absence of Southern Baptist Convention leadership, he added.

Carter noted he had developed a positive relationship with SBC President Frank Page, who initially criticized the endeavor. Carter also said he would provide Page with a full report on the convocation and its possible outcomes.

"The results of this meeting will determine how the Southern Baptist leaders respond to us," he predicted. "We will reach out" to them to participate in follow-up projects, he added.

Carter also debunked the notion that no Southern Baptists participated in the convocation. For example, his congregation, Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Ga., allocates 5 percent of its budget to the SBC and 5 percent to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Many other Baptists churches follow that pattern, he asserted.

Historian Walter Shurden, recently retired director of the Center for Baptist Studies at Mercer University and one of the early organizers of the convocation, said the event could become "a major step in racial reconciliation and gender recognition of Baptists in North America."

"It's the most significant Baptist meeting in my life, after playing in the Baptist yard 55 years or so," he said. **"I've never been to a Baptist meeting where there was the equality as well as the presence" of multi-racial, multi-gender participation. "It bears the marks of the ministry of Jesus."**

Separation of Church & State Can Be Complex, but It's Worth the Effort, Speakers Insist

by Robert Marus

ATLANTA (ABP) — Although often difficult to negotiate, drawing the proper line between church and state is worth it for both institutions, according to experts in the topic.

A panel of religious-liberty advocates addressed a small-group session of the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant Feb. 1. They said that religious-liberty is Baptists' birthright but that the church-state separation that protects religious freedom is imperiled and need Baptists' advocacy.

"Whether we have a wall or a zone or a rickety fence or whatever, we must continue to have at least a strand or two of barb-wire to keep the institutions of religion from cozying

up to the institutions of government,” said James Dunn, a professor at Wake Forest University Divinity School.”

While some evangelicals promote the idea that the separation of church and state is a “myth,” Dunn said, there are four reasons why it is not.

The church and the state should be separate because both have separate constituencies, separate purposes, separate sources of funding and separate methodologies, he said.

“The Constitution is indeed godless, thank goodness!” said Dunn, who is also the retired executive director of the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

But drawing proper lines between church and state can be difficult for Baptists, according to Jeffrey Haggray, executive director-minister of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention. Baptists, in particular, sometimes have difficulty defending their birthright because of other strong characteristics of their own tradition.

“Our prophetic tendencies give rise to activism within the public square,” he said. Due to that tendency, he noted, Baptists can sometimes succumb to the temptation to involve themselves in electioneering from the pulpit.

Second, Haggray said, **“Baptists are missional people,”** and as a result start ministries and social programs that politicians point to as models for the delivery of social services. In recent years, political leaders at the state and federal levels have attempted to change laws to allow churches and other houses of worship to receive government funding for such services.

Finally, he added, **Baptists have a strong evangelical strain** and “we love to share the good news about Jesus Christ – and that evangelical strand gives rise to strong preferences in the public arena for the Christian faith.”

But all three temptations ultimately hurt the church if indulged, Haggray said.

While prophetic preaching is important in calling the state to account—Haggray noted that a Baptist preacher from Atlanta and his ministerial colleagues fomented the Civil Rights Movement along—Haggray said giving in to partisan politics actually causes Christians to forfeit their prophetic role.

“When we align ourselves and our credibility and influence” with one political party or candidate, he said, the entanglement that ensues can cause the church of Jesus Christ to end up appearing like just another special-interest group. “Ultimately our credibility and influence are more important than any one endorsement.”

CULTURE DIGEST:

Abstinence Ridiculed on ‘American Idol’; Atheists Oppose ‘Giants’ Film

by Erin Roach

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A teenage contestant in a preliminary round of this season’s “American Idol” was mocked for his abstinence stance, sending a message to thousands of viewers about how the culture treats the issue.

Bruce Dickson, a 19-year-old from Bastrop, Texas, was asked to tell something about himself during the Dallas auditions for the reality show, and he said he had never kissed a girl.

“What?” Randy Jackson, one of the show’s judges, asked. “On purpose?”

“On purpose,” Dickson said. “On my wedding day, that will be my first kiss.”

The home-schooled, Christian teenager went on to explain that he has made a commitment to abstain from sexual activity until marriage, and his father holds him accountable in his decision.

“Maybe next year he’ll come back less a boy and more a man,” host Ryan Seacrest quipped as Dickson’s segment ended.

Dickson later told Cybercast News Service he disagreed with Seacrest’s assertion.

“A real man would rather wait than just do whatever with whoever,” Dickson said.

And on Fox News, the editor of a pornographic magazine said American Idol is a “national popularity contest based on talent and sex appeal. There’s nothing sexy about a 19-year-old guy who’s never kissed a girl and wears a heart necklace his father is holding the key to.”

Dickson told CNS he is firm in his decision despite the puzzling ridicule.

“I respect women and don’t think of them as a sexual object, and I’m the freak?” he said, adding that divorce and other problems his parents observed in their extended family led them to challenge their children to abstain from sex outside marriage.

“It wasn’t anything they forced on us,” Dickson told CNS. “It was something they talked to us about, something they taught us the importance of.”

Jason Burt, national director of Silver Ring Thing, a Christian organization that promotes abstinence, commended Dickson for his stance and said a growing number of youth are choosing to abstain based on their morals and faith. Burt also lamented the treatment Dickson received on the show.

“Bruce has said he’s going to walk the hard walk, and instead of lifting him up and praising him, we’re mocking him,” Burt said. “I think that’s because when someone is up on a chair, it’s easier for people to pull him down than to

pull everyone else up off the floor. Maybe they feel bad they couldn't do it themselves.”

In related news, a Boston University School of Medicine study said teens with positive attitudes about delaying sexual activity are more likely to practice abstinence. Influences like parental opinions on sex, personal beliefs and their friends' sexual behavior help determine whether a teen will have sex, the study said, while fears of pregnancy and STDs did not make teens more likely to abstain.

“This study proves that when teens are given the skill sets needed to make the best health choice about sex, it is clear they are capable of choosing to abstain,” Valerie Huber, executive director of the National Abstinence Education Association, said Jan. 16. “The core teachings of abstinence education include character building, goal-setting and exploring the emotional risks of casual sex. Abstinence education is the only curriculum that offers such a clear, risk-avoidance approach to sexual health.”

‘Facing the Giants’ Faces Hostility —Americans United for Separation of Church and State sent a letter to Paul W. Bryant High School in Tuscaloosa, Ala., demanding that all teachers be told not to show the film “Facing the Giants” in their classrooms because it establishes a religion.

“Here we go again with another bogus threatening letter from an antireligious organization which has a truncated view of the world,” said Mathew Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel and dean of the Liberty University law school.

“In the worldview of Americans United, there is no room for religion. The problem with that view is that it is contrary to our heritage, history and the First Amendment,” Staver added. “The First Amendment does not require that public schools become religion-free zones.”

Facing the Giants is an inspirational movie about a high school football team that overcomes obstacles, and it was produced under the auspices of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga. The film was shown in theaters nationwide and enjoyed significant box office success.

“There is no constitutional violation when public school teachers include, within the mix of curriculum or assemblies, various symbols, music, art, drama or literature that has overtly religious themes,” Liberty Counsel said in a news release Jan. 21. “If the school is providing exposure to a variety of viewpoints on a given subject matter or an array of cultural narratives, there is no violation of the First Amendment.”

Gambling Addictions Common on Campuses

- Gambling among college students has been in the news again after three members of the Ohio University baseball team were suspended for accepting or placing bets on professional sports.

According to *The Columbus Dispatch* Jan. 19, an NCAA

survey in 2003 found that 63 percent of Division 1 male student-athletes admitted gambling on things like the lottery and card games, and more than 17 percent admitted violating NCAA regulations by betting on collegiate sports.

“Gambling is the second-fastest-growing addiction on college campuses, behind alcohol,” said Frank Turner, a sports management professor at Ohio State University. “Athletes are competitive individuals, and that competitiveness can lead to gambling. It’s more about the thrill of the chase. Not many make money.”

The Dispatch said a 2006 survey of undergraduates at Ohio State found that 55 percent had gambled in the past year, 22 percent reported gambling in residence halls and 21 percent said they had gambled online.

“These venues appeal to young men, and men between the ages of 18 and 22 are at the highest risk-prone period of their life,” Louise Douce, assistant vice president of student affairs at OSU, told *The Dispatch*. “They are susceptible to gambling.”

Douce also said students accumulate credit card debt to support their gambling habits and some neglect studies and relationships. Many will face lifelong and life-threatening gambling addictions, the newspaper noted.

In December, *The New York Times* featured a Harvard professor who promotes poker among college students as a way of developing critical thinking skills.

“I tell my students all the time that if you want to do something with your spare time, you can do a whole lot worse than play poker,” Charles Nesson of Harvard Law School said.

Erin Roach is a staff writer for Baptist Press.

Bacone College Hosting Education Fair

Muskogee, OK—Bacone College is hosting an Education Fair on February 25, 2008, 1-6 pm in Wacoche Hall on the Bacone College Campus. Refreshments will be served!

Prospective students interested in pursuing a career in the field of Education are invited to attend this informational event. Meet the faculty; learn about scholarship opportunities, and much more.

“Bacone College is proud to have full accreditation for its teacher education program. Come visit, and let us discuss how we can help you obtain an Oklahoma Teaching Certificate.”

For more details please call Jess Bair, Dean of the School of Education, at 918.781.7268.

Executive Director Nominee Everett to Unify BGCT Around ‘Mission Passion’

by Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) — Mission work, Christian education and advocacy are the three tasks that can unite Baptists in the Lone Star state, according to the nominee for executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Randel Everett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Newport News, Va., said he hopes to unify the group around “not just a mission statement, but a mission passion.”

Everett, 58, will be nominated as executive director at the group's Feb. 25-26 Executive Board meeting in Dallas. Charles Wade, who served eight years as executive director, will retire Jan. 31. Jan Daehnert is serving as interim executive director.

If elected executive director, Everett will lead an organization still feeling the lingering effects of recent staff layoffs and a financial scandal that involved church-starting funds in the Rio Grande Valley.

In a phone interview, Everett acknowledged he would be returning to Texas at “a challenging time,” but he also characterized it as “a time of great opportunity” for Texas Baptists. The increasing ethnic diversity of Texas and the need to engage leaders aged 35 and younger in denominational life rank among the key challenges he noted.

“I would like to help the BGCT discern, ‘Where is our unique kingdom assignment?’” he said. To that end, he outlined the primary focus of his prospective tenure:

- **Missions.** “Texas Baptists should make sure every person in Texas has the opportunity to respond to the good news of Christ within his or her own language and context,” he said.
- **Christian education.** From religious education in local congregations to high education in universities and seminaries, Texas Baptists should “make sure we are providing the resources to ensure that people grow in Christ’s likeness,” he said.
- **Advocacy.** Texas Baptists should become advocates for the separation of church and state to ensure religious liberty for all people, and they should be advocates for the poor, he said. “There is no reason any child in Texas should go to bed hungry.”

Although he has lived outside of Texas the last 15 years, Everett said the experience has given him “a broader perspective of what is going on in Baptist life.”

Ken Huggins, chairman of the executive director search committee, supported that notion.

“As the committee listened to Texas Baptists and talked with excellent leaders and candidates across our state, a description of the kind of leader Texas needs emerged. Randel Everett matches that description and more,” said Huggins, pastor of Elkins Lake Baptist Church in Huntsville, Texas.

Everett served nine years as president of the John Leland

Center for Theological Studies in Arlington, Va. His last three years at the Leland Center overlapped the beginning of his four-year pastorate in Newport News.

Everett also served five years at Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va., a 3,000-member congregation in suburban Washington, DC. He served from 1992 to 1996 at First Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla., after a pastorate at University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Everett was chairman of the Baptist World Alliance’s education and evangelism commission from 2000 to 2005. He served on the BGCT Executive Board from 1978 to 1979.

Other denominational leadership posts include president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board, moderator of Peninsula Baptist Association, trustee of Florida Baptist College, and member of several committees at the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Everett has been a guest chaplain for the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, and he has taught at the Pentagon Bible study.

He earned doctorate and master's degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a bachelor's degree from Ouachita Baptist University. He also holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Richmond.

Everett and his wife, the former Shiela King, have been married 35 years. They have two children: Jeremy, 32, who works as a community ministries director with Baptist Child and Family Services in San Antonio; and Rachel Froom, 28, of Ramrod Key, Fla. They have two grandsons.

Everett was born in Arkansas, but his family moved to Fort Worth when he was in third grade so his father could attend seminary. His father, Kenneth, went on to serve as a Baptist pastor and director of missions.

Two of his three brothers — Tim of Central Baptist Church in Spring Hill, La., and Neil of First Baptist Church of Calhoun, La. — also became pastors. His other brother, Tommy, is a pharmacist in Hope, Ark., and his sister, Janie Schroeder, lives in McKinney, Texas.

John Hall contributed to this story.

Save the Date for Upcoming College of Prayer DC

The College of Prayer DC, in partnership with the DC Baptist Convention, is gearing up for 2008 with a powerful lineup of presenters. It kicks off **Apr 24–26 with E. Glenn Hinson**, a noted professor of church history and spirituality, a lecturer and author. He will teach on “Contemplation in a World of Action.” Place to come.

Other dates to put on your calendar:

Jul 31–Aug 2 with prayer leader Cheryl Sacks, author of *The*

Prayer Saturated Church.

Oct 30–Nov 1 with Ron Walborn of Nyack College/Alliance Theological Seminary on Divine Healing.

Anyone interested in learning more about prayer and its power to revive our churches, our communities and our world is welcomed. Churches are encouraged to send prayer ministry leaders and other ministry leaders to these modules.

Also, the College of Prayer DC is looking for a worship and praise team who can served three-times a year for each three-day module. If you are interested, please contact Yvonne Lamb at 202.306.3453 or email shinlamb@aol.com.

Annette James is the president of the College of Prayer DC.

College of Prayer Books Available for Purchase

COP DC has purchased several copies of the books that will be used with the College of Prayer in 2008. COP participants are urged to read these books prior to the sessions. Books are available at the DCBC Building, 1628 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington DC 20009, or from the Servant Leadership Team of COP DC.

<i>Andrew Murray on Prayer</i> (at a discount)	\$15.00
<i>Prayer on Fire</i> by Fred Hartley	\$10.00
<i>College of Prayer Notebook</i> – Volume One	\$ 8.00

Available Yamaha Grand Piano

A 1972 Yamaha grand piano (mahogany color). Has been properly maintained. Appraised by Jordan Kitts for \$7,000. Asking \$5,000 or best offer. Call Mount Lebanon Baptist Church office 9am to 4pm to view 202.347.5562.

YOU Can Volunteer to Serve

DCBC is looking for volunteers to serve on the various Centers of the Convention: Center for Church & Community Ministries, Center for Congregational Health, Evangelism & Discipleship, Center for Ministerial

Leadership. You may volunteer to serve for a one-year term or longer. If you are interested in being an active part of one of these Centers, please call 202.265.1526 or email info@dcbaptist.org.

Also, volunteers are invited to serve at the receptionist desk, as packing specialists for the mission offerings three times annually, for database entry at the DCBC resource center or filing. For more information, call 202.265.1526 or email info@dcbaptist.org

Church Employees Invited to Participate in Compensation Survey

DALLAS — The 2008 **Compensation** Survey for Southern Baptist churches, provided through the joint efforts of Baptist state conventions, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources, is now available **online at www.LifeWay.com/compensationsurvey**. All ministers and employees of Southern Baptist churches are encouraged to participate.

Answers to the online survey are kept confidential and are not reported individually. **The survey takes, on average, less than 10 minutes to complete. In addition to salary and benefit information, participants in the survey will need to have available their church's average weekly worship or Bible study attendance, resident membership and annual budget.**

LifeWay and GuideStone are pooling resources to provide the online survey, compile the data and make available an online reporting tool for users to access results. The survey is available through mid-April and results will be released in time for the Southern Baptist Convention in June.

Southern Baptist church ministers and employees may complete the survey through April 15. For staff at churches without Internet access, a paper copy of the survey may be obtained by contacting GuideStone Financial Resources at **1-888-98-GUIDE** (1.888.984.8433) or by calling the state convention office at 202.265.1526 —speak with Tish Jones. **DCBC churches urged to participate.**