

# CAPITAL BAPTIST NEWSBRIEFS

■ A News Summary ■ Edited by Jeffrey Haggray

District of Columbia Baptist Convention

March 2008

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## Vision 2010:



**Congregations Cooperating  
in Missions:**

**Serving God by Serving ALL People**

## Vignettes of DCBC People, Churches, etc.

DCBC Finance Chair David McElveen sends this information. The DC Metro Chapter of The National Association of Church Business Administration (NACBA) is sponsoring a Seminar on The NACBA Compensation Survey and Effective Church Compensation Planning. The Seminar will be held at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 1125 Savile Lane, McLean, Va 22101 on March 13, 2008. This seminar will probably interest leaders in some of the DCBC churches. Please send this attachment to member churches that may be interested.

**DCBC churches are urged to participate in the SBC Compensation Study.** This is valuable our churches. It provides information on what churches in our area are paying various staff members — pastors, associates, administrative, maintenance, etc. However, we cannot glean any information unless churches participate. To date no DCBC churches have entered information. Look for the promo piece that is in this mailing to find out how to do this or call Tish at 202.265.1526.

**DCBC Ministers Fellowship** will meet on Tuesday, Mar 25, 2008 at 12noon, Baptist Building. The topic is the Nehemiah Leadership Network. The speaker will be Jean Kim, ABC USA. Lunch is \$7. Please RSVP for lunch to 202.265.1526 or [info@dcbaptist.org](mailto:info@dcbaptist.org).

**The National Gathering of American Baptist Youth** will be held Jul 5-11, 2008 at Estes Park, Colorado. For additional information go to [www.morethanaweek.org](http://www.morethanaweek.org). The event is sponsored by National Ministries ABCUSA

Home Mission Offering promotion time is upon us. The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering theme is **Live with Urgency –Seize Your Divine Moment**. The America for Christ Offering theme is *Home Mission on Our Doorstep*. Has your church set its goals?

**FBC Upper Marlboro Student Ministry Summer Trip “M-Fuge 2008.”** They are going to Glorieta Conference Center in New Mexico from Jun 22-Jul 1, 2008. M-Fuge is a mission camp designed to train students in missions and to give them hands on experience in helping those in need. It is also designed to train and equip youth in worship, fellowship, ministry, discipleship and evangelism.

**Montgomery Hills BC Habitat Team** is gearing up for May 12-17. They are joining in partnership with American Baptist Churches USA and Habitat for Humanity of Greater Baton Rouge this spring to build five homes for families that have been permanently relocated to Baton Rouge following displacement by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

**Anna K Webb**, 86, who taught elementary school in the District for more than 30 years and later was director of the **Vienna Baptist Children's Center**, died of cancer on Jan 16 at her home in Vienna.

She served as director of Vienna Baptist's preschool from 1980 to 1985. She developed, planned and was awarded a grant to create and construct a children's play park which the church named in her honor.

**Village Baptist Church** continues to participate in the Warm Nights Ministry, an inter-denominational outreach program in Bowie that provides emergency shelter and meals for homeless individuals and families during the winter months.

Through the participation of local houses of worship the program services an average of 7,000 beg nights and 10,000 meals each year. Other services provided through the program are transportation, employment assistance, general medical and mental health services, and intensive case management to help people assess their needs effectively. With the help of more than 8,000 volunteers each, Warm Nights shelters a total of 50 persons (25 at two host churches per week) from November to April. Participants arrive in the evening to receive a hot, nourishing meal and case management assistance prior to bedtime. The following morning they receive breakfast and then are provided a sack lunch as they board the transportation vans for the day.

**Living Proof Youth Group of Greenbelt BC** are attending Snow Camp, Mar 7-9. Teen Quest runs the camp and their mission is to spread the Word of God to as many teens as they can reach. It is a wonderful camp, set in the mountain of Pennsylvania and has many things to offer—snow tubing, horseback riding, climbing wall, trampoline, paintball, indoor archery, ice skating, hockey, challenge course and so much more, not to mention the testimonies, Bible studies and Christian entertainment.

**Clifton Park Baptist Church of Silver Spring MD** has called Essentino A. Lewis as its new pastor. Lewis will assume the pulpit responsibilities at CPBC on March 16, 2008; however, his full-time pastoral duties with CPBC will not begin until Sunday, April 6, 2008, as he wraps up his current responsibilities as associate minister at Parker Memorial Baptist Church in Burtonsville, MD, and as Assistant General Counsel at Morgan State University in Baltimore, MD.

## **It's That Time Again!**

The National Center for Children and Families Board of Church Representatives is sponsoring its annual fund raiser gala at Toby's Dinner Theatre in Columbia, MD on Monday evening Apr 7, 2008. Proceeds will benefit youth in the Greentree Adolescent Program (GAP).

Playing this year at Toby's is a special engagement of Andrew Lloyd Webber's delightful and popular musical, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, based on the Old Testament story of Joseph and his eleven brothers. The lively, upbeat musical score using a variety of styles, including country, calypso, ballad and rock, tells the tale of a favorite son and a father's gift of many colors. It is a must see for the entire family! The doors open at 6:00pm with the buffet running from 6:15-7:30pm followed by the show beginning at 8:25pm.

Tickets including gratuity are \$44.00 per person (\$7.70 is tax deductible). For ticket information contact Marcia Taylor at 301.589.1913. Donations toward sponsorships are also greatly appreciated.

## **BWA Blitz Build**

Baptist World Alliance (BWA) is once again partnering with Habitat for Humanity International to respond to the destruction that is still in place after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit in 2005. This year we are sponsoring our own "build" with the Lafayette, Louisiana, Habitat affiliate to put up six houses in southwest Louisiana from April 20-May 17, 2008. Please find attached the volunteer and sign up packets for you to pass onto your local church or other parties that you think might be interested in participating. Let me know if you have any questions and please direct any phone inquiries about the build to me in the coming weeks.

We believe that this will be a positive and life-changing experience for all those involved!

Please contact Julie Justus at the BWA Center 1.703.790.8980 or [Julie@bwanet.org](mailto:Julie@bwanet.org) if you have any questions to BWA.

## **Vacation Bible School Training**

**SAVE THE DATE! April 19, 2008, 9am to noon.** *Why?* VBS training this year has been expanded. We've added two

new instructors to our team—Anthony and Vanessa Hudson, members of West Hyattsville Baptist Church.

Our team traveled to Ridgecrest NC to the VBS Institute and they are excited about sharing what they learned with DCBC churches. LifeWay has included in their package this year not only the plan for salvation, but also discipleship. Their motto this year is “Know the truth. Speak the truth. Live the Truth.”

VBS Training this year will be held at FBC Camp Springs, Maryland, 6936 Allentown Road, Camp Springs, MD. The Team will demonstrate Crafts, Music, Missions, Recreation and Snack rotations and worship Rally. There will be classes for leaders of each age group: Preschool and Children (Debbie Cochran), Preteen (Vanessa Hudson), Youth (Robert Cochran), and Adults (Marion Criddle). Margarita Pinto will lead a session for Spanish speaking churches. Gloria Jenkins and Anthony Hudson will lead classes for Directors and Ministers respectively.

Remember, you do NOT have to use LifeWay materials to attend. We will have information about VBS curriculum from various publishers.

You may register now by calling the DCBC Baptist Building at 202.265.1526.

## **Wingspread 2008**

### ***Renewing Vision and Vigor for Older Adult Ministry***

A practical, intensive seminar for faith communities and individuals working with older adults, presented by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging and the American Society on Aging's Forum on Religion, Spirituality and Aging.

This FREE event will be held on Wednesday, March 26, 2008, 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, 4201 Albemarle Street NW, Washington, DC.

In the attempt to grow membership many faith-communities focus on persons of youth, because “the future of a faith community is found with the young.” While addressing the needs of the young is important, many a community misses the opportunities and the power found with older adults. Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the US population.

Older adults are living longer, healthier, and have more discretionary time and resources. The presence of older adults within faith communities raises essential spiritual questions that are seldom addressed. This seminar will focus on the possibilities and the opportunities found within an intentional outreach to older adults.

To register, email Don Koepke at [dkoepke@frontporch.net](mailto:dkoepke@frontporch.net). Include your name, address with zipcode, phone numbers, the name of your faith community and the average worship attendance.

## **A Partnership with American Cancer Society**

*by Adrien N. Ngudiankama & Mae Johnson*

A concern that traditional health care has become too narrow cold and impersonal, challenges our churches to help our society to become a more holistic mode. We need to have a holistic pastoral approach whereby we respond to the needs of the whole being.

Let us be reminded that at the heart of Christ's ministry was healing. Christ healed the sick, fed the hungry, restored the lost dignity, and forgave the sinner.

Current studies by the American Cancer Society (ACS) entail the urgency of multidimensional health promotion programs within the Washington Metropolitan area. For instance “Blacks are more likely to develop cancer than persons of any other racial or ethnic group and are about 33 % more likely to die of cancer than whites.”

The ACS' faith-based program is reaching out to churches to be more effective in their health ministries. Cancer is increasingly devastating our community. The church has no choice but to engage in a holistic pastoral activity that addresses such issues as cancer.

We pray that you would take advantage of this free program so that we can together by the grace and mercy of our Lord effectively minister to those whose lives are threatened by cancer.

Please contact Adrien N. Ngudiankama, at 202.483. 2600 or Mae Johnson, RN, 301.894.0452.

Adrien Ngudiankama is the pastor of Salem Gospel Ministries which meets at Montgomery Hills BC and works for the American Cancer Society. Mae Johnson is Chair of the DCBC Baptist Nursing Fellowship Advisory Team.

## Operation Noah Rebuild

Volunteer teams are needed in New Orleans to rebuild 1,000 homes and 20 churches. For further information, visit [www.OperationNoah.net](http://www.OperationNoah.net). Call 504.362.4604 or toll-free 1.877.934.0808 or e-mail [noah@namb.net](mailto:noah@namb.net). You must have completed ninth grade to participate.

## Wandering Away from the Faith

by Terry Austin

Executive Director of Tarrant Baptist Foundation

A few months ago when Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley initiated a probe into the finances of several prominent Christian ministers, many people were offended, but I don't think anyone was actually surprised. Offended and unsurprised seems to be the exact opposite reactions that we should have had. A Christian ministry should be operated with such integrity that an investigation into finances is simply seen as an opportunity to demonstrate that integrity. But, it is equally tragic that none of us were surprised that Christian ministries are being investigated because they have too often proven to be guilty.

Such dishonesty has become such a problem that some prominent universities where ministers are trained are beginning to offer courses on church financial management. Duquesne University in Pittsburgh and Boston College started programs in September, and Villanova University outside Philadelphia is offering an online master's degree in church management beginning this summer. These are all done in response to problems that have arisen in Catholic churches across the country.

The concept is becoming popular despite some objections, especially among those who bristle at the notion of the church as a business, said Kerry Robinson, executive director of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, a Roman Catholic group.

"It is true that the church is not a company, and we respect and acknowledge that," Robinson said. "But it is comprised of people, finances and facilities. Catholic theology demands that those are managed well – and not just well, but to the highest, exemplary degrees of stewardship."

By the way, it is not just a Catholic problem. There are international ministries led by executives who live in luxury justified by a harebrained interpretation of Scripture that God wants them to be wealthy. There are pastors who have been discovered misusing church bank accounts and credit cards. Even laypersons have been known to find ways to juggle the church finances to their advantage. A treasurer in a small church in Indiana was recently charged with theft when it was discovered he had lost \$58,000 of the church's money at a casino.

One of the most familiar money verses in the Bible is 1 Timothy 6:10. Most folks can quote the first part of the verse, but the second half is equally revealing. *For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.*

Some of these folks who have mishandled God's money have wandered away from the faith. However, many of their followers have failed to recognize that they have charted a new course away from God and continue to follow them blindly, probably hoping to receive some of the crumbs themselves.

Here is what I think often happens. A minister begins to enjoy success at a church and budgets grow. With the rapid growth comes carelessness in handling things. It is easier and quicker to allow the minister to make those decisions since he is the spiritual leader. All of a sudden, a young man who cannot even handle his own finances or balance his own checkbook, has control over hundreds of thousands of dollars and no one is really paying attention. Who wants to question the inner workings of a church that is growing? Since no one is paying attention, the temptation to grab a little extra becomes too great.

Although this kind of fall from grace happens occasionally (even back in the days of Paul and Timothy), fortunately it is not epidemic. Most churches and ministers are honest in their finances. However, it only takes a few to make all of us look bad.

## Don't Let Bad Food Spoil a Good Time

*Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company*

Church dinners offer great opportunities for fellowship. By handling food safely, you can prevent bad food from spoiling a good time at your church or ministry.

As you reach for a heaping plate of food at the church potluck, you probably don't ask yourself: How long has this been sitting at room temperature? Is it safe to eat?

Did you know that 477 cases of food poisoning were linked to churches from 1990-1995?

Here are some guidelines for safe food handling and serving from the Food Safety Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

- **Cleanliness** —
  - Always wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling food.
  - Keep your kitchen countertops, cutting boards, dishes, and utensils clean and sanitized.
- **Separation** —
  - Where possible, separate raw vegetable and meat preparations areas.
  - Always serve food on clean plates and with clean utensils—do not serve with anything that touched raw meat or poultry. Otherwise, bacteria that may have been present in the raw meat juices can cross contaminate the food to be served.
- **Cook Thoroughly**
  - Cook foods thoroughly to achieve safe minimum internal temperatures.
  - Beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts and chops should be cooked to 145°F.
  - All cuts of pork to 160°F.
  - Ground beef, veal and lamb to 160°F.
  - All poultry should reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F.
- **Containers**
  - Divide cooked foods into shallow containers to store in the refrigerator or freezer until serving. This encourages rapid, even cooling. Reheat hot foods to 165°F.
  - Arrange and serve food on several small platters rather than on one large platter. Keep the rest of the food hot in the oven (set at 200-250°F) or cold in the refrigerator until serving time. Doing this ensures that foods are held at safe temperatures for longer periods of time.
  - Replace empty platters rather than adding fresh food to a dish that already had food in it. Many hands took food from the dish, which was also

sitting out at room temperature.

- **The Two-Hour Rule**

- Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Keep track of how long foods sit on serving tables and discard anything that is there for two hours or more.

- **Keep Hot food HOT and Cold Foods COLD**

- Hot food should be held at 140°F or warmer.
- On a serving table, keep hot foods hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers, and warming trays.
- Cold foods should be held at 40°F or colder.

For more information on proper food temperatures or safe food practices visit [www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Safe\\_Food\\_Handling\\_Fact\\_Sheets/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Safe_Food_Handling_Fact_Sheets/index.asp) or check with your county extension office or local board of health.

## **Kidnapped Worker, Afghan Driver Apparently Dead in Afghanistan**

*by Hannah Elliott*

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (ABP) — A kidnapped aid worker from a Baptist background and her Afghan driver are believed dead, according to the agency that supported them.

Cydney Mizell, 50, and Muhammad Hadi, whose age is unknown, were taken at gunpoint Jan. 26 while working in Kandahar, Afghanistan. While their employer, the Asian Rural Life Development Foundation (ARLDF), has not been able to confirm their deaths, a spokeswoman said the organization has received “credible reports” of the news.

Mizell and Hadi were abducted together in a residential neighborhood while on their way to work. No suspects have been named in the case, and a Taliban spokesman told the Associated Press he could neither confirm nor deny his group’s involvement in the kidnapping.

A statement from George and Peggy Mizell, Cyd Mizell’s parents, said they were “heartbroken” to receive news of the apparent death of their daughter and Hadi.

“While these reports remain unconfirmed, we are beginning to accept that the hoped-for outcome may no longer be possible,” the Feb. 28 statement said.

Mizell was an English teacher at Kandahar University and taught embroidery lessons at a school for girls. She also helped women start projects to generate income for their families, according to the foundation’s website.

The initial capture sparked a rare protest by more than 500 Afghan women, who asked local officials to find the pair. The 90-minute demonstration included prayers and speeches calling on government leaders—or the captors—to act, according to reports.

Rumors that a Southern Baptist missionary had been kidnapped in Afghanistan spread around the Internet in the days following Mizell's disappearance. The overwhelmingly Muslim country does not allow Christian missionaries, and several Christian aid workers have been murdered there in recent months.

"Cyd knew before she went to Afghanistan that it could be a dangerous place, but she went because she loved the Afghan people and dedicated her life to serving them," George Mizell said in the statement. "We are trying to understand why someone would kill a gentle, caring person who came to their country to help the poor. Many of the people of Kandahar came to love her almost as much as we loved her, and all of us share her loss."

## God's 'Miracle Missionary' in NW Nev.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third of eight stories highlighting North American Mission Board missionaries as part of the 2008 Week of Prayer, March 2-9, and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, with a goal of \$61 million to help support 5,000-plus North American missionaries. 2008 Week of Prayer missionaries are Daniel and Marta Caceres, Dewey and Kathie Aiken, Melanie Lawler, Jon and Mindy Jamison, David and Shirley Proffitt, Jon and Linda Hodge, Brad Lartigue, and Chris and Monica Woodall.

RENO, Nev. (BP)—North American Mission Board missionary Melanie Lawler is a real, talking, walking-around miracle.

To follow Melanie around northwest Nevada, where she serves the Sierra Baptist Association as a ministry evangelism specialist in Reno, you'd never guess she had to battle through life-and-death health issues to get there.

Melanie first began suffering seizures as a fourth grader in Leland, Miss., and was diagnosed with epilepsy. Then, when she was an 11th-grader in Carthage, Miss., doctors discovered a brain tumor. The tumor was removed, but then 17-year-old Melanie suffered a stroke.

Following the stroke, "they [doctors] said I would be a vegetable," Melanie recalls. But the doctors forgot to consult God, who had other plans.

Melanie remembers that as a teenager, her pastor at First Baptist Church in Carthage, Russ Barksdale, challenged her to memorize Jeremiah 29:11: *For I know the plans I have for you... plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.* (HCSB)

"And I memorized that verse, and shortly after God began speaking to my heart, saying, 'Melanie, I have plans for you.' And I would say, 'Oh yes, God, I know. I'm going to be a pediatric neurologist. I'm going to be a good doctor for you, Lord.'

"And God would say, 'No Melanie. I have plans for you.'

"God brought me through the brain tumor and the stroke, and today I'm OK. I realized that if God could protect me in the midst of great problems, then I could trust Him to dictate the direction of my life."

Lawler is one of more than 5,000 missionaries in the United States, Canada and their territories supported by the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. She is among the NAMB missionaries featured as part of the annual Week of Prayer, March 2-9, 2008. This year's theme is "Live with Urgency: Seize Your Divine Moment." The 2008 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering's goal is \$61 million.

Lawler earned her bachelor's degree at William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Miss. Her current assignment in Reno is actually her second stint in Nevada. She served as a US/C2 missionary in Las Vegas back in the late 1990s, after graduating from college and before receiving her master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"After my time in Las Vegas ended in 1998, I told God I would never live in Nevada again," laughs Lawler. "It was too hot, too dry, too brown and too ugly."

"Following seminary, I was seeking where God would use me in ministry next. I got a call to come back to Nevada, and my immediate response was 'No! It's too hot, too dry, too brown and too ugly.'" But God had His plan and Melanie returned to Nevada in fall 2001.

"Reno continues to grow on me and I'm even beginning to find beauty in the desert," she says. "But I still go to Lake Tahoe at least once a month to get my tree fix. Now I can't imagine living anywhere else."

Think of Reno, Nev., and one usually conjures up bright lights, casinos, gambling and other assorted sins and vices. Melanie, now 34, is ready to take them on.

“My goal is to see our churches reach all our communities for Christ,” she said. “So that includes the people working at the casinos and the tourists visiting the casinos. We don’t have casino ministries in Reno at this point, but it’s a dream I hope to carry out in the future.”

Assigned as a ministry evangelism specialist for the last six years, she serves cities in northwestern Nevada – Reno, Sparks and Carson City, the state’s capital – and smaller towns most have never heard of – Gerlach, Empire, Silver Springs, Minden and Gardnerville.

“Our association is a mixture of rural and metro communities,” Lawler explains. The Sierra Baptist Association extends from the California state line east 100 miles into the desert, and from the Nevada/Oregon border south to California. Lake Tahoe and Virginia City also are part of the Sierra association.

Lawler said the people in her mission field come from all walks of life – from the middle class and inner-city neighborhoods of Reno to the “second home” owners at Lake Tahoe and the ranchers in the desert country.

“I help our churches develop and do ministries that reach beyond the walls of the church and into their communities to share Christ. They can be ministries like a food pantry, an ESL [English as Second Language] class or a ministry presence at special events in our cities.”

One initiative Lawler is especially excited about is a food ministry that officials in Lyon County recently handed off to Southern Baptists.

“The county came to First Baptist Church in Fernley and asked if we would be willing to host a food bank,” she said. “So now, once a month the church receives all the food for the food bank and the church members box it up. On Fridays, members of the community come into the church and get their allotment for the month.

“It gives the church the opportunity to have people come in and see that the earth doesn’t break in two if they actually enter a church. It also allows the local people to see that the church’s members are normal people, too. I hope to begin to see these people coming to church as a result.”

Another ministry Lawler helps run is ESL classes. She says many people in northwestern Nevada don’t know how to read or speak English, and in some communities as many as 52 percent of the population speaks a language other than English.

“Our churches are beginning to say, ‘maybe we could do something to help with that.’ So we’re starting ESL ministries in different areas,” said Lawler, citing one for Koreans who speak some English but not well enough to communicate and get along in society.

Lawler’s favorite ministry is the Kid’s Club, an initiative geared to kids in Nevada’s apartment community. Lawler herself became a Christian when she was only 6 years old.

“It’s given an opportunity for many of those children – who have never been inside of a church, never heard of God, never heard of Jesus and never heard of the Bible – to be able to come and learn that God cares about them, loves them and desires to have a relationship with them.

“So at the Kid’s Clubs we do games, songs and stories. Sometimes we do a craft. Of course the children’s favorite thing is the snack at the end,” Lawler said.

Another ministry involves the “Nevada Day Carnival” each Oct. 31, which commemorates the anniversary of Nevada becoming a state. All the students get out of school for the day and, although it coincides with Halloween, Lawler said the day has nothing to do with goblins or witches.

“Before the actual carnival begins, we have a local church, First Baptist in Carson City, which cooks dinner for the carnival workers and shares Christ with them.”

Similar ministries are carried out for area Fourth of July celebrations and even for “Burning Man,” a well-known counter-culture festival held in the middle of northwest Nevada’s Black Rock Desert each August. For Burning Man, Melanie and her team distribute gallon-jugs of water, each with a Gospel of John and a tract attached.

What gives Melanie her greatest joy?

“Two things. First, seeing people come to know the Lord and being able to share Christ with them. Second, resourcing a church and watching the church realize, ‘Hey, we can do that. We can reach past our walls. We can share Christ in our community. We may be a little church that meets in a school or in somebody’s home. But we can do something to share Christ with the community.’”

She asks Southern Baptists to pray that churches in northern Nevada will realize the opportunities around them and cultivate

their harvest fields.

“Ninety-five percent of the people here in northern Nevada don’t know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. On any given Sunday, only one person out of 10 here in Washoe County, where Reno and Sparks are, will go any kind of church anywhere. That includes the Mormon and Catholic churches.

Southern Baptist support through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the Cooperative Program are vital to this ministry, Lawler said.

“We would not be able to be here at all if it weren’t for the Annie Armstrong offering,” she said. “It allows me to be able to do my work without having to worry about how my bills are going to be paid. I know the money is there for me through our Southern Baptist churches.”

## God Responds to Much Prayer

*John L. Yeats*

JENA, La. (BP) — On a recent Wednesday evening, as my colleague placed his 15th baptismal candidate under the water, I received an e-mail from a national convention executive asking how the experience of the Jena revival could be replicated in his part of the country. I replied with my Blackberry, “Much prayer.” My personal thoughts were centered on Jesus’ response to the disciples’ inquiry as to why they couldn’t cast the demon out of the young man in Mark 9. *This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer* (Mark 9:29).

Humble, fervent prayer lies at the base of every great move of God. If we are to experience the hand of God moving in our Southern Baptist churches, we must be compelled to go to our knees in prayer.

This doesn’t mean we hold a prayer meeting on Wednesday night or schedule the latest prayer guru to lead an organized study on prayer. Nor does it mean we meet and articulate our wish list as if God was some sort omnipotent pizza delivery guy (You call in what you want and He will deliver). How presumptuous our American thinking can be.

The kind of praying that released the power of God in a broken community like Jena, La., is the kind that begins in the heart of a desperate individual. With no place to turn but to the Lord Himself, one falls to his/her knees and bows in surrender to the Lord, our

King. Desperate, not manipulative prayer, moves the heart of God.

Pride resists such a display of humility. But obviously, at the point of individual and community brokenness, God desires to orchestrate something extraordinary. In Jena, I observed how at invitation time the men broke from their seats, briskly walked down the aisles and fell on their faces before God. These were the leaders of the church and the leaders of the families. Men from different races. Young men, median adult men, seniors. They humbled themselves and sovereignly, God moved toward His humbled people.

Two rows in front of me, a woman turned to a friend. You could read her lips, “Watch my baby, I’m going to the altar.” And she went to the altar and knelt. You could see her shoulders heaving with repentance.

The church’s interim pastor continues to say that the key to this movement is humbling ourselves before our Holy God, obedience to God’s Word and faith to trust God. Simple, yet profound. When these concepts are translated out of the worship center and into the community the next day, there seems to be a holy boldness that abounds. The homes, the community, the workplaces, the educational institutions and even the Wal-mart buzzes with the news about God working in response to humility, submission and faith.

A trucker stood before the congregation and testified that his wife who attended the meetings came home and looked him in the eyes and asked, “If you died tonight ...?” He had heard the question before but this time it kept him up all night long and on Wednesday evening, he surrendered his life to Christ and became a candidate for baptism.

While lining up the candidates for baptism, a mom grabbed the sleeve of the interim pastor and said, “I’m lost and I want Jesus.” As the congregation waited a little longer for the Wednesday night baptismal service, she surrendered her life to Christ.

No pastor, no committee, no convention initiative can orchestrate this kind of response. There is no slick program or personality who can make this happen. No one can package a movement of God and put it in a box to be sold at LifeWay stores. Genuine revival is God’s people responding to the Spirit of God, the Spirit at work in the lives of people.

When He is moving, people humbly and fervently pray. This kind of praying is not what is experienced in most churches today. It’s not the kind of praying that some people in our churches have ever experienced. Some fear that honest, humble

prayer will lead them to do something weird or to cause the body to utter something unintelligible. That is just the spirit of fear talking in someone's head. When God moves, He moves in concert with His Word. Besides, how weird is confession of sin, restored relationships, or reconciled marriages and families? How weird is justice and racial equity? How weird is it for someone to surrender to the call of God?

When the heart is humbled the only opinion that matters is God's. The expression of God moving in response to a broken and contrite heart delivers people from their cultural demons and restores His supremacy in the life of his child and his church.

The greatest challenge of the church today is our desperate need for a move of God. To discover what a move looks like, we must humbly pray and desperately seek Him.

John L. Yeats is the recording secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention, director of communications for the Louisiana Baptist Convention and editor of LBCLive, the state convention's missions magazine.

## **Follow the Money: Church Budgets Reveal Priorities, But Which Ones?**

*by Ken Camp*

DALLAS (ABP) — Most observers of congregational life agree: A person can tell a lot about a church by looking at its budget. But exactly which conclusions can be drawn about a church's priorities remains an open question.

"It's a question I've raised with students in my classes for years," said Bill Tillman, who teaches Christian ethics at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon Seminary. "The whole matter of economic and financial stewardship is such a vital part of the practice of the Christian life, whether for an individual, a family or a congregation."

A church's budget reflects its priorities. How much a church spends on ministries inside its walls and how much it devotes to ministries beyond itself offers one measure of those priorities, but Tillman warns against rushing to judgment.

"What happens always has to be held in tension and viewed in context," he said. "For instance, we can't say a church never should build a new facility. A new

building may be what is needed in a particular community."

At the same time, a church should ask whether its financial decisions are shaped more by biblical teachings or by cultural values, he stressed.

"The larger culture says we should spend money to make things comfortable for us," Tillman said.

Churches should ask what lessons are being taught to families as they look at the congregation's budget, he said. And church leaders should not shy away from talking about money.

"That conversation is difficult," Tillman acknowledged. "One of my basic assumptions is that the world of money is one of the last points where conversion and redemption happen."

Each church not only needs to keep in mind the legitimate needs of its own members but also extend its vision to include God's work in the world at large, he said.

"It all should be qualified by the question of whether what we are doing is kingdom work," Tillman said.

Members of Cross Lanes Baptist Church, near Charleston, W. Va., decided five years ago the best way they could do "kingdom work" is by devoting a larger percentage of undesignated offerings to mission work.

When Seth Polk arrived as pastor, the church gave 7 percent of undesignated receipts to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified budget and 3 percent to its local association. Polk challenged the church to increase its mission-giving incrementally each year.

Now, Cross Lanes gives one-fourth of its undesignated receipts to missions — 11 percent to the Cooperative Program, 4 percent to associational missions and 10 percent to other mission causes.

Those causes range from local benevolent ministries and church-starting initiatives to global initiatives like Children's Emergency Relief International's work in Transnistria and Moldova. Children's Emergency Relief International is the global arm of Baptist Child and Family Services.

"We believe that as a church becomes more outwardly focused, God will bless that church at home," Polk said.

While the church increased the percentage of offerings it devotes to missions and increased giving to seasonal missions offerings and world-hunger relief, it also entered a \$3.5 million building campaign.

Cross Lanes, which leads the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists in total missions giving, has doubled in

worship attendance and undesignated giving over the last five years.

“We want to focus on what really matters to God,” Polk said.

A clear focus and sense of purpose help a church make wise decisions when it develops its budget — and make adjustments when receipts don’t match the budget, said Roger Hall, a retired chief financial officer and treasurer for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

“A church needs to know its purpose, its goals and what it wants to accomplish. The budget is a plan of action to get there,” said Hall, who serves part-time as business administrator at First Baptist Church in Waxahachie, Texas.

No one-size-fits-all rules apply for all churches in terms of establishing percentages for different areas of the budget. Just adding a few of the often-cited maximum percentages for various categories — 50 percent for personnel, 35 percent for debt service and 25 percent for administration — makes the numbers already exceed 100 percent, he said.

“Take that approach, and ministry is often what gets crowded out,” he noted. And if ministry and missions are the professed focus of the church, the problem becomes apparent.

Trouble develops when a church fails to define its purpose, deviates from its purpose or neglects to follow proper procedures in making financial decisions, he said.

A church’s budget or finance committee should begin the budgeting process by reviewing historical records for past receipts and expenditures, he suggested. Then, the committee should look at other factors such as anticipated growth or decline as it considers what may be realistic giving goals for the upcoming year.

Next, Hall recommended, the committee that is working on the budget should announce its schedule of budget preparation to the church, solicit budget requests from staff and committee chairs, and set a budget hearing meeting to allow people who are making requests to present their rationale and prioritize their requests.

“The budget should not be a product of just one committee. It should not be the product of just the staff or pastor’s recommendations. It needs ownership by the entire congregation,” Hall said.

That sense of ownership grows out of communication each step of the way, not just from an annual vote in a church business meeting. And the congregation’s “buy-in” of the budget has both ethical and practical implications, he noted.

“When the budget is understood and owned by the congregation, members have a sense of rightness about it,” he said. “And if they feel like this is a good plan and they are confident in the processes, they are more apt to support it with their tithes and offerings.”

\* This is the first in a three-part series about church finances.

## **Follow the Money: Cash Receipts Present Challenges for Churches**

*by Ken Camp*

DALLAS (ABP) — When it comes to church finances, donations in cash form present one of the greatest challenges for churches, experts say.

Roger Hall, a part-time business administrator for First Baptist Church in Waxahachie, Texas, said the biggest risk involves cash before it hits the books.

When handling cash receipts, churches should remember that there is safety in numbers, Hall said. Two or more people should monitor offerings when they are taken from the church’s sanctuary to the church office, two or more should count the cash, and two or more should take locked moneybags to the bank for deposit, he said.

“Have the counting committee members bonded as money handlers,” said Hall, the former chief financial officer and treasurer for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Hall also recommended a division of labor in legal and financial matters. Legal officers of the church like trustees should sign legal documents on behalf of the congregation. The treasurer should provide financial reports at church business meetings, work with the financial secretary on financial matters, and oversee independent audits.

The financial secretary’s handling of money should be limited, Hall said. Ideally, the job has only a few specific responsibilities: maintain accounting records; prepare checks for signatures from authorized individuals; prepare financial statements; maintain individual contribution records; handle payroll and reports; and oversee petty cash.

When it comes to cash disbursements, Hall offered several other recommendations:

- Use only church-approved bank accounts.
- Have all checks signed by two approved parties, and designate back-up signers for when the principal signers are unavailable.
- Use only pre-numbered checks.
- Do not sign blank checks or make checks payable to “cash.”
- Have approved invoices or documents available to review at the time checks are signed.
- Reconcile bank accounts monthly. That task should be performed by a person other than the individual who prepares the checks.
- Make sure checks are made out to approved accounts from which authorized funds are available.

Ultimately, Hall said, churches should keep in mind a clear sense of purpose: “to see that resources are handled properly, ensure accountability, and keep the church family informed.”

\* This story is the second of a three-part series on church finances.

## **Cornmeal Outreach Aids Flooded Zambians**

*by Staff*

LUSAKA, Zambia (BP) — About 100 families in an isolated area on Zambia’s Lunsemfwa River will be receiving food assistance after heavy rains and flooding wiped out their crops and some homes.

In early March, Kevin Rodgers, a Baptist Global Response field partner, will be trucking 55-pound bags of cornmeal to a river landing, where the bags will be loaded onto a rubber boat and taken 30 minutes up the river.

“The boat can only hold about 500 pounds of cargo, so it will take 15 to 20 trips over two days to move the entire shipment,” said Mark Hatfield, who leads Baptist Global Response work in sub-Saharan Africa. “The Lunsemfwa River has lots of hippo and crocodile, so there’s plenty of adventure in this small project.”

The only other access to the area requires several days of walking, Hatfield said.

In mid-January, Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa declared a national disaster in the country’s flooded

districts.

“All our maize stocks have since been washed away,” Chief Sianjalika, a traditional leader in one of the flooded areas, told a reporter. “We have remained with completely nothing. My people are starving, even their goats and chickens have all disappeared.”

Families in the area will be able to replant maize along the river once the waters recede and should be able to see a harvest in a few months, Rodgers said. A hunger crisis is emerging, however, because fields that were supposed to be maturing right now are gone. The bags of cornmeal should be enough to tide them over until residents can bring in a new harvest.

In addition to providing destitute people with needed food relief, this effort also will help improve future working relationships in a remote area where outsiders, especially Westerners, are not trusted, Rodgers added.

“This will be an opportunity to show love and support for their human needs in a crisis situation, without developing dependency,” Rodgers said. “It gives us an opportunity to minister to a large group of people at one time and also the credibility to be allowed to start new projects in the future.”

The project is being financed with \$3,200 from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund, one of the ways Southern Baptists who care reach out to people in need, Hatfield said.

Compiled by Baptist Press assistant editor Mark Kelly. Baptist Global Response is on the Web at [www.gobgr.org](http://www.gobgr.org).

## **Everett Elected as BGCT Executive**

*by Staff*

DALLAS (BP) — Randel Everett, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Newport News, Va., was elected executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Feb. 26.

“I am excited about the future of Texas Baptists and how God is going to use Randel Everett to focus our resources and relationships on Kingdom work in Texas,” said Ken Huggins, chairman of the search committee that recommended Everett, according to a BGCT news release.

When Everett was nominated in late January, Huggins said he “met the criteria of an executive director who could lead the convention in this crucial time in which Texas Baptists appear segmented and financial issues recently caused the convention to lay off 29 people.”

Everett succeeds Charles Wade, who retired from the position Jan. 31.

Besides serving the Newport News congregation, which is affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Convention, Everett is the former president of the John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Arlington, Va. He served as chairman of the Baptist World Alliance's education and evangelism commission from 2000-05.

He also was pastor of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va.; First Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla.; First Baptist Church in Benton, Ark., during which time he served as president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's executive board; and three Texas

churches: University Baptist in Fort Worth, Inglewood Baptist in Grand Prairie and First Baptist in Gonzales. Everett served as a member of the BGCT executive board from 1978-79.

A native of Fort Worth, Everett holds a doctorate and a master's degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and a bachelor's degree from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas.

He and his wife, Sheila, have two grown children.

Compiled by Baptist Press assistant editor Mark Kelly.