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Magazine signals Word & Way's shift

You are holding the first glossy magazine to be produced by Word & Way since Sanford Brown launched the state Baptist newspaper way back in 1896. Word & Way has served readers in parts of three centuries since that beginning.

This is not only the first contemporary magazine format for the venerable publication — now in its 120th year — it represents a shift in frequency from roughly every other week to once a month. For many years, the newsprint edition was published and distributed weekly or every other week.

Readers of this first magazine issue will notice we have an updated Word & Way nameplate and that the print is larger and sharper than in our previous newsprint issue. Our staff plans to utilize more and better photography. We have been referring to Word & Way in recent years as a Midwest publication that seeks to provide news coverage of various Baptist groups in this part of the country, many of them already cooperating in various ventures of common interest.

We believe the potential for greater unity among Baptists is great. This has long been illustrated in the work of the Baptist World Alliance and a newer emphasis called the New Baptist Covenant. We want to continue to make progress in connecting Baptists across the Midwest.

Back in 1896, Editor Brown called the “paper” Word & Way, the familiar name the web site and magazine still use. Other Baptist publications preceded Word & Way, but Brown saw the need for one that “contended for the Word” and, in turn, pointed readers in the Way of Christ. The idea was to help Baptist readers understand the Bible and the eternal Word — Jesus — and then to live as faithful Christians, not only imitating the Lord but actually becoming like him in the power of his Holy Spirit. Brown sought to inspire Baptist readers to become salt and light among people in the Midwest, particularly in Missouri. Brown was reminded of these goals every time he looked at the publication’s nameplate.

This first issue as a magazine will undergo a good bit of tweaking in terms of presentation and content over the next few months, as will our website — www.wordandway.org — and our Between the Lines e-newsletter that supports both the magazine and website. Magazine publishing is new territory for our staff, but we are committed to make it better and more effective with each monthly issue. One goal is to increase readership, especially among some younger age groups that might be more readily attracted to the new format.

A change of format usually calls for some adjustments in how news, information, inspiration and other messages are delivered. This change is no exception.

Both the monthly frequency and the letter-size format require us to move the regular Bible study commentaries prepared by John Howell, dean emeritus of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., and Michael Olmsted, retired long-time pastor of University Heights

Baptist Church in Springfield, Mo., to www.wordandway.org.

Lessons will be posted online about a week before the Sundays they will apply. The website includes a means to print enhanced copies each week that can be used for study or taken to Bible study on Sunday mornings. One of the advantages of distributing these commentaries on the Internet is that they become available to an even larger audience of Bible students, not only to print subscribers.

We will take a similar approach with Missouri PrayerWays, the prayer calendar produced monthly by Missouri Woman’s Missionary Union. We will post it online instead of in the magazine. Because we serve various Baptist groups in various states, we will begin to publish additional prayer calendars online. Again, Internet distribution will enable a wider audience than our print circulation.

As we make these changes, Word & Way values your insight. In fact, we value your feedback and continued suggestions to help us as we improve both Word & Way the magazine and our website. Please email the editor at bwebb@wordandway.org with your thoughts.

— Bill Webb, Editor

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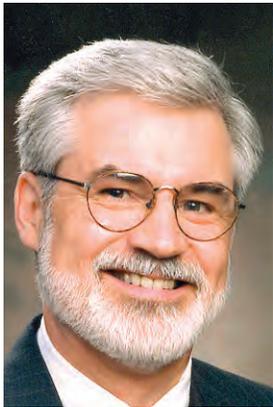
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WORD&WAY

Will we finally address the racial divide?

Bullets fired deliberately at close range killed nine African-American members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in historic Charleston, S.C., June 17.

The alleged attacker, Dylann Roof, 21, started firing the shots about an hour into a Wednesday night Bible study. Apparently he had sat quietly around a table until he drew his weapon and began executing nine of the other 10 attendees, including



BILL WEBB

Clementa Pinckney, pastor of the church and a highly regarded state senator in South Carolina. He targeted the victims because they were black, authorities said.

What was described as a “lone wolf” attack shocked a nation that has seen its share of African Americans killed in gun violence, many in controversial confrontations with police.

Material that authorities discovered on Roof’s personal computer within two days of his arrest 245 miles away in Shelby, N.C., confirmed the shootings were motivated by racial hatred.

The alleged shooter had acknowledged in writing that his parents did not raise him to be a racist. What became very evident was that the young man was influenced thoroughly by online white supremacist websites.

The gunman spared the lone survivor in the room, an elderly woman, saying he needed a witness to what happened because he intended to shoot himself.

One member of the church said that her friend’s son pleaded with the shooter to stop, but the gunman

replied: “No, you’ve raped our women, and you are taking over the country.... I have to do what I have to do.” Then he shot the young man.

A law enforcement official said witnesses told authorities the gunman stood up and said he was there “to shoot black people.”

Authorities discovered a 2,000-word “manifesto” authored by Roof on a crudely designed website called “The Last Rhodesian,” registered in his name. It makes a specific reference to a motive for the Charleston church attack: “I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston because it is the most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country.

“The event that truly awakened me was the Trayvon Martin case. It was obvious that Zimmerman was in the right. But more importantly this prompted me to type in the words ‘black on White crime’ into Google, and I have never been the same since that day.”

Photos on the site depict Roof posing with a handgun or a Confederate flag, or both.

The site concludes with “An Explanation” that reads in part: “We have no skinheads, no real KKK (Ku Klux Klan), no one doing anything but talking on the Internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me.”

Shootings inside a church have happened before but this one had unmistakable racial overtones and it left nine people dead.

The annual Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly in downtown Dallas was already underway when the shootings erupted. Comments about what had happened at the church Charleston locals call “Mother Emanuel” frequented the Thursday morning worship and busi-

ness session, and remaining sessions. A week later, the same was true of the American Baptist Churches USA Biennial Mission Summit in Overland Park, Kan.

The groups share a diversity in racial and cultural makeup, particularly the American Baptists, and concern for the Charleston killings and the victims was evident throughout both meetings. Attendees prayed for the wounded and grieving city.

It is striking that more than one speaker named the nine victims individually rather than merely refer to them collectively: Cynthia Hurd, 54; Susie Jackson, 87; Ethel Lance, 70; DePayne Middleton-Doctor, 49; Clementa Pinckney, 41; Tywanza Sanders, 26; Daniel Simmons Sr., 74; Sharonda Singleton, 45; Myra Thompson, 59.

Recognizing and remembering these victims as individuals and not merely as a group of victims suggests the depth to which this atrocity has been felt by the population at large but especially by the faith community.

Renewed efforts are underway in communities, states, churches and denominations across the United States to finally address the racial divide, particularly systemic matters like equal educational, employment and economic opportunities for blacks. These are real issues across the country and throughout the U.S.

Whites and others joined blacks in protest efforts during the Civil Rights era a couple of generations ago. Some people of faith were among them, but faith communities were divided over the race issue themselves then.

Passivity and hesitation on the part of people of all colors to address this issue today amounts to dramatically falling short in responding in Christ-like concern. It is past time to act.

Bill Webb is editor of Word & Way.

CONTENTS

features



**JEAN
CARNAHAN**

9



**CHURCHES
& SCHOOLS**

10

EDITORIAL PAGE 4

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

MAGAZINE DEBUT 3 Welcome to the new *Word & Way* magazine

NEWS 6 Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School President Marvin McMickle says progress still needed on race in America

MIDWEST NEWS 7

CBF Heartland recognizes partners, honors tenure at CBF General Assembly in Dallas

MIDWEST CHURCH CHANGES 8 Check out the most recent changes in Midwest Baptist church leadership

MEDIA AND THE INTERNET 16 Ken Satterfield helps individuals and churches focus with online learning options

SHEPHERD CALLS 17 Wade Paris explores the fine line between miracles and tragedies

THE NEED FOR 'NEW METRICS' 20 Pastor Sager suggests some new guidelines for evaluating success in congregations

RIGHT OR WRONG 22 Improving public behavior Jesus-style

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McMickle: Why many blacks cool to First Amendment

BY **BOB ALLEN**

Baptist News Global

Religious liberty doesn't mean much to people who are physically enslaved, an African-American preacher reminded a predominantly white audience at an annual Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty banquet that this year coincided with the holiday celebrated as Juneteenth.

Friends of the Baptist Joint Committee attending the June 15-19 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Dallas gathered Friday for the 25th annual Religious Liberty Council luncheon. It was 150 years ago to the day when

— two-and-a-half years after signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and two months after the effective end of the Civil War — that word reached the last enslaved Americans in Galveston, Texas, that they were free.

Keynote speaker Marvin McMickle, president of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, N.Y., suggested the timing of his invitation was perhaps providential “to help you understand the composition of this room.”

McMickle, a pastor for 34 years and a seminary instructor for 25 before becoming president of the American Baptist Churches USA-related seminary in 2011, said he supports the BJC's work in securing and protecting religious liberty for all Americans, while recounting “perhaps the most ironic and hypocritical dimension of the long quest for religious liberty in Europe and the

United States.”

“During the entire time that Holland and Spain and England and British colonies in America were seeking religious liberty for themselves, during the entire time, all of the above nations were actively involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade that denied physical liberty to tens of millions of people,” he said.

McMickle, author of 14 books, said to those people “soul liberty” seemed to matter less than the prospect of economic prosperity.

“The position that most African-American clergy hold with regard to the issue of separation of church and state cannot be understood unless you first understand this,” he said. “What happened between the 15th and 19th centuries in both the church and the state worked together to build their economies on the backs of slavery.”



MARVIN McMICKLE

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CBF Heartland hears reports in Dallas from field partners

BY BILL WEBB

Word & Way Editor

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Heartland participants heard updates from partner field personnel and member churches and saw Associate Coordinator Jeff Langford recognized for 10 years of service during a regional meeting held in conjunction with the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly June 15-19 in Dallas.

Field Personnel Ralph and Tammy



Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Heartland Associate Coordinator Jeff Langford (center) is recognized for 10 years of service by Moderator Michael Olmsted (right). At left is Harold Phillips, CBF Heartland coordinator. (Photo by Bill Webb)

Stocks, who work with the Roma people in Romania, and Karen Sherin who, with husband Kenny, works as an advisor with CBF's Together For Hope rural poverty initiative in South Dakota, gave brief updates on their ministries.

Ralph Stocks referenced the involvement of CBF Heartland and volunteers in the Gypsy Smith School for local pastors, normally offered in January each year.

He described a variation of the ministry they call Gypsy Smith Mobile, which will involve teams of two leaders visiting Roma churches and conducting one-day seminars.

Tammy Stocks reported that her appeal a year ago to the Heartland

group for quilters to reach out to women in Romania is coming to fruition. A team is scheduled to arrive in Romania in August, she said.

Sherin and sons Matthew and Caleb displayed photos of their involvement in several South Dakota communities to support ministries in the impoverished reservation among the Lakota (Sioux), including Lakota Immersion Day Care.

A testament to the impact of ministries — some of which date back 25 years — is that a tribal council came to leaders and requested they come in and assist their community, she said.

Jordan Dollar, pastor of ESIC Baptist Church in Edwardsville, Ill., noted that his small church had discovered the value of utilizing interns from Truett Baptist Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas, each of the past two years.

This year, he said, the congregation recruited one of its own, University of Illinois student Daniel Gregory. "We couldn't be more pleased than to get Danny," Dollar said.

Gregory is gaining experience preaching, teaching, making hospital visits and engaging in weekly planning meetings with Dollar, he said.

"This program has helped us," he said. He also thanked Coordinator Harold Phillips and CBF for their support in undergirding the congregation, especially when its future was uncertain.

Gregory also expressed his appreciation for the intern experience.

Attendees also heard brief reports from Central Baptist Theological Seminary student Kristin Woolridge and from the national leadership of CBF's student.go program.

Moderator Michael Olmsted made a presentation to Langford, noting his valuable service in his 10 years as associate coordinator of CBF Heartland.

Calmer steps down as head of Foundation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Christopher Calmer has stepped down as president and treasurer of the Missouri Baptist Foundation, effective on June 25.

Calmer, president for four years, has accepted a position with UMB Bank, according to an MBF press release.

Foundation Executive Vice President Stephen Mathis has been named as interim president. He served

in that role when former president Jim Smith retired to assume a similar post with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Foundation in Atlanta, Ga., in September 2010. Mathis also filled in as interim before Smith was hired in 1983.

Before becoming president in 2011, Calmer served the Foundation in various capacities for 14 years.

"Chris has done an outstanding job during his tenure as president," MBF Trustee Chairman Larry Guess said in the press release. "We have witnessed significant improvements in every facet of the work of the Foundation under his leadership and we truly appreciate all that he has done."

In addition to his work with the Foundation, Calmer served as a bivocational music minister and volunteered with several ministries, including Sports Crusaders, the Jefferson City YMCA and the Missouri Baptist Credit Union.



Chris Calmer

Black, white pastors unite in ‘war on racism’

BY **BOB ALLEN**

Baptist News Global

A century and a half after the United States fought a civil war over slavery, two black and two white Baptist pastors in Kentucky say it is time for another war against “fear and racism.”

“This war will not employ guns and grenades but the nonviolent tactics of the 1960s civil rights movement, targeted at capturing hearts even as it liberates cities like Louisville from the residual effects of slavery,” the quartet said in a June 23 op-ed in the Louisville Courier-Journal.

Pastor Joe Phelps and Chris Caldwell of Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, both white, joined African-American pastors Kevin Cosby of St. Stephen Baptist Church and Bruce Williams of Bates Memorial Baptist

Church in a “fight to transform educational and economic opportunities for Louisville’s black community until there is a level playing field.”

“This war will liberate white Americans chained to subtle and not-so-subtle patterns of material and emotional dominance over black Americans,” they said. “These patterns justify racist business decisions that keep black communities poor. They retain ‘us’ and ‘them’ thinking that becomes the seedbed of competition, disdain and eventually demonization and extermination.”

The pastors said the effects of slavery are still evident 150 years after the last slaves were set free. Disparities perpetuated through the Jim Crow era, they said, are now seen in “today’s new Jim Crow laws” that disproportionately “imprison black communities who have

few options and...give in to despair.”

“Tour certain streets of West Louisville and you will find yourself in Zombieville: a community of living people in whom hope has died,” the pastors said. “These are not bad or lazy or evil people, but people robbed of their institutions, whose communities are stripped bare of the means of economic vitality, who are displaced from one neighborhood to another based on decisions in which they have no voice, and whose family systems are profoundly compromised by despair and destitution.

“We have been brought together ‘for such a time as this,’” they said. “As such, we will move from truth-telling to action and, when necessary, strategic confrontation, as we assess who is our ally and who is, for today, our enemy.”

MBU ranked top college workplace in St. Louis again

For the third time in as many years, Missouri Baptist University has been named as a Top Workplace by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

The Post-Dispatch gave MBU the “Work/Life Flexibility” award for the high number of employees who indicated MBU offers the flexibility to maintain a quality personal life. In fact, MBU rated the highest out of all organizations when those surveyed were asked to rate the statement “I have the flexibility I need to balance my work and personal life.”

MBU provides full-time employees comprehensive insurance and retirement benefits as well as free enrollment in undergraduate programs and a 50 percent discount for graduate courses after one year of employment, among other benefits.

Church Changes

Hooe Missionary Baptist Church in Oran, Mo., has called **KENNETH SHOEMAKER** as pastor.

Fellowship Baptist Church in Sikeston, Mo., has called **TERRY MEJEAN** as pastor.

GARY PALMER has resigned as pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Green Ridge, Mo. His wife’s name is Rebecca.

Emmet Avenue Baptist Church in Sedalia, Mo., has called **HARVEY PACE** as its new pastor.

RICHARD FISHER has resigned as pastor of Harmony Baptist Church in Sedalia, Mo., to serve with wife Albe in Nickerson, Kan.

Bass Chapel Baptist Church in Strafford, Mo., has called **STEPHEN COUNTERMAN** as worship leader.

GENE MARCUM is the new pastor at Homeland Baptist Church in Springfield, Mo.

PAT FINDLEY has been called as the new youth pastor at Ridgecrest Baptist Church in

Springfield, Mo.

KEVIN BAKER is the new pastor of First Baptist Church in Ash Grove, Mo. He and wife Terri have four children, Brandon, Brandi, Noah and Olivia.

First Baptist Church in Charleston, Mo., has called **GREG BOWERS** as its new pastor.

Boone Creek Baptist Church in Licking, Mo., has called **WAYNE CARRIGAN** as pastor. He and his wife, Carol, have two grown sons.

STEVE MASTERSON has resigned as pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Marshfield, Mo.

RANDY SWEARENGIN has resigned as pastor of CrossBridge Church in Marshfield, Mo.

RANDY JOHNSON has resigned as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Republic, Mo. to accept a pastorate in Iola, Kan.

RAY ROACH is the new pastor of Grant Avenue Baptist Church in Springfield, Mo.



Faith prepares Jean Carnahan TO BECOME ENCOURAGER, MENDER

BY VICKI BROWN

Word & Way Associate Editor

Missourians know Jean Carnahan for her contributions in the past — as First Lady of Missouri when the late Mel Carnahan served as governor and as the first woman to represent the state in the U.S. Senate.

Today, St. Louis foodies know her for her blog, goodfoodstl.com.

But to a host of young people and friends, Jean is an encourager and a mender of brokenness (everything from relationships to world problems) — two constant outgrowths of strong religious faith.

“I have become a professional encourager,” she explained recently. Now at nearly 82, Carnahan believes her life’s purpose lies in the ministry of encouragement.

Her faith was born and grew out of a love for words. “The beauty of the words” first attracted her to the Bible as a youngster. “It had a profound effect on my life,” she said, adding that it still keeps her focused on God.

While her two guiding principles — encouragement and mending the world — grew over time, anyone can live by them at any life stage, Jean emphasized.

She has always looked for ways to impact those around her, regardless of her circumstances or platform, and is grateful that God put her in situations and places that afforded

broader opportunities.

During the decades she and her husband lived in the Rolla, Mo., area, she taught adult Sunday School classes at First Baptist Church and participated in other activities. She also organized children’s church and started a bus ministry.

Concerned about students at the University of Missouri-Rolla (now Missouri University of Science and Technology), she created International Homemakers, a monthly meeting for women international students, to help them adapt to life in the U.S.

As First Lady of Missouri, she emphasized children’s issues. She started an annual egg hunt at Easter for disabled children. Jean called her outreach “a natural thing to do” because of her own four children.

Her faith was tested and her testimony became more public when Gov. Carnahan, son Roger “Randy” Carnahan and political aide Chris Sifford were killed in a plane crash on Oct. 16, 2000, while the governor campaigned for a U.S. Senate seat.

In a brief statement following the governor’s funeral, Jean said, “While I still ponder the mysteries of God, I do not for a moment doubt His purpose or His love for us.”

The former governor won the Senate election posthumously, and Jean was appointed to fill the post from Jan. 3, 2001, until a special election was held in November 2002. She lost her bid to retain the seat to Jim Talent.

Losing a national platform did not deter her from following her principles. In her book “The Tide Always Comes Back,” she notes the ancient Jewish teaching, *tikkun olam*, that Isaiah said called God’s people to

make a difference.

“It means repairing the world — that is, taking responsibility for correcting the damage done by people to each other, as well as to the planet,” she wrote. “I like to think that if we can mend a moment in time, perhaps we can mend a millennium. At least, we must try.”

Jean continues “repairing the world” through face-to-face encounters and through writing. The author of seven books has tried her hand at a couple of genres, starting with a history of Missouri’s first families and her most recent, “Secrets of Dawson Mills,” a romantic comedy set in small-town Missouri in the 1970s.

Often asked what she would do if she could live her life over, she usually responds, “I would have gone to seminary or divinity school to be able to teach theology...because of the beauty and language of the Scripture. As a youngster, I always found such joy in reading.... And I always feel the presence of the Lord.”

As people grow older, they have to look for new ways to contribute to society, Jean explained. She has relied on God to show her opportunities.

She has started every morning for years with the question: “What do you have for us today, Lord?” She remains open to whatever comes — like recently meeting someone new over lunch to encourage the individual in a project and sharing on her blog about her grandson’s work to dig water wells in an emerging nation.

Jean makes a point to encourage others to become encouragers themselves, regardless of age. “Don’t stop. Keep going as long as you can. Be an encourager...and look for purpose every morning,” she said.

“There are all kinds of opportunities out there — just look for them.”



Churches, schools can work together to benefit students

BY VICKI BROWN

Word & Way Associate Editor

The pastor of the Baptist church in the small rural community sauntered down the hall toward the school cafeteria, greeting students by name as he went. Once through the lunch line, he nabbed a table. Soon students, many who were church members, joined him and the banter and laughter began.

Does a pastoral lunch at school breach church-state boundaries? That depends: Does the school allow pastors from one denomination or faith tradition but not from others? Do the administrators require all students to participate? Do school officials promote the event?

Congregations and faith groups assist local public schools as a means to become more involved in their communities — and often at the invitation of school boards and superintendents.

Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas, and founder of The Urban Alternative, started his National Church Adopt-A-School Initiative in 2006 because of a request from a high school principal for help with disruptive behavior. Evans developed a model of social outreach and school-based ministry that now is used in several schools across the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

The ministry's website claims there is an average of 14 churches for every public school in the nation. Evans believes the church and the public school are “the two institutions that bring people together more than anything else” and that both are essential to rebuilding communities, especially in urban areas.

But as churches work with schools, members must make sure they follow federal law and school board policies. State lawmakers generally leave volunteer decisions in local district hands, noted spokespersons for education commissioners in Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois and Iowa.

K. Hollyn Hollman, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, said district administrators and church leaders can ask themselves a simple question to help them stay within legal guidelines — what is the school's involvement with an offered church program or activity, whether at school or in the church building?

Simply put — schools cannot support religion nor can volunteers share their faith or promote their churches while serving students on campus. Congregations also must exercise caution with school-assistance ministries, such as tutoring, offered in their own buildings, she said.

Again, church leaders should make certain the school is not involved in any way, including with promotion.

As long as school personnel and church leaders adhere to legal requirements, partnerships can benefit students, leaders in three districts believe.

Since becoming superintendent of public schools in Wichita, Kan., in July 2009, John Allison has encouraged active participation by and input from all community stakeholders

— students, parents, staff, partners and business leaders, including faith groups.

“We believe faith-based partners, as well as partners from businesses and other community

organizations, make a huge difference in our schools and for our students,” Allison said by email.

Currently, 112 faith-based partners assist schools in the Wichita district, primarily as mentors and volunteers. Faith groups donate necessities such as school supplies, coats, shoes and food. The district also uses church buildings as emergency evacuation sites.

Lee’s Summit, Mo., R-7 school district works with volunteers through its Partners in Education program and includes several churches. In addition, the community is invited to participate through school parent-teacher associations, booster clubs, the Lee’s Summit Educational Foundation and state programs.

“Within the partnership program, churches are treated in the same manner as other businesses or civic organizations, with the same expectations,” Communications Executive Director Janice Phelan said by email.

The Lee’s Summit district makes certain organizations that provide volunteers do background checks and understand and comply with campus security procedures. It also trains its staff about state

and federal statutes and school board policies.

Both Lee’s Summit and Wichita districts require training for volunteers. The Wichita district provides the training, while Lee’s Summit hosts dialogues and an annual roundtable meeting and sends email updates to church leaders.

High Point R-3 school district near Jefferson City, Mo., relies on nearly everyone in the rural community to help provide extracurricular activities it otherwise

wouldn’t be able to provide.

The Missouri State High School Association governs high school sports. Because the High Point school only includes grades K-8, it does not qualify as a member and cannot participate. Since Superintendent Stan Elliott

is an individual member, High Point’s middle school teams are allowed to compete with other teams in the area.

But the school must rely on the community, including churches, to assist with coaching, supply referees, and provide and man concession stands. A local individual paid for new uniforms, Elliott said.

The three district leaders said few constituents have questioned faith groups’ involvement with schools. “While we have had a few questions about the separation of church and state, most of the questions can be resolved quickly by providing them information,” Allison explained.

All three also agreed that congregational

involvement benefits their schools. “We have

been pleased with the positive impact

our churches and other business

partners have had on our

schools and students

and appreciate their

involvement,” Phelan

at Lee’s Summit said.

“We have a

strong faith-based

community in

Wichita and we

are extremely

thankful that

so many in the

community are

willing to donate

their time and

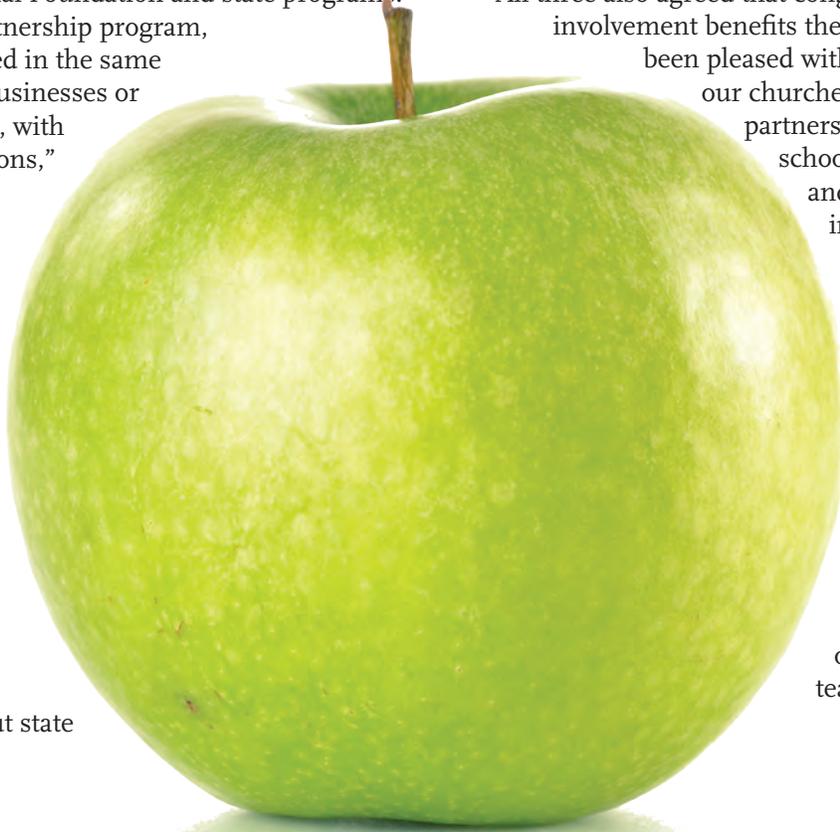
resources to help

our students and our

teachers,” she said.

**“We believe...partners...
make a huge difference...”**

— John Allison, superintendent
of Wichita, Kan., school district



CHURCHES & SCHOOLS

He added that often partnerships become “a two-way street” when student groups assist churches by collecting food or other items to benefit the needy in their communities.

High Point’s Elliott said pastors are allowed to visit the campus to be available to students who want to talk with them. Students still do programs at Christmas and Easter,

and religious songs are included when the kids request them.

Elliott believes sometimes school administrators fear allowing congregations to get involved. They hesitate even when constituents support church participation. “You have to know your community,” he said.





Two congregations connect TO COMMUNITY THROUGH SCHOOLS

BY VICKI BROWN

Word & Way Associate Editor

Serving Clark Elementary School helps the roughly 40 members of Woodlawn Avenue Baptist Church in Wichita, Kan., realize they have a purpose, a contribution to make to their community.

For members at First Baptist Church in Lee's Summit, Mo., connecting one-to-one as mentors at Westview Elementary School has been a way to improve lives.

Ministering to Clark Elementary "seemed to be what God wanted," Woodlawn Avenue Pastor Steve Brecheisen said.

About seven or eight years ago, the congregation was praying for a ministry to the neighborhood. God "gave a vision" to a member, explained Beth Easterday, the church's volunteer Christian education director.

Members started by doing a school supply drive. "The doors opened after that.... We just followed God's leading," she said.

Now in addition to school supply drive, every year the congregation provides goodie bags for all students at Christmas. At Easter, members take home-baked cookies. They provide grocery gift cards to six families the principal selects at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Several times throughout the school year, church members reach out to teachers by providing doughnuts, brownies and other snacks — always with a note of thanks and appreciation.

The congregation responds with help whenever the principal calls about families with extra needs. "We always make it known to the principal

that we are available if a family needs help," Easterday said.

But she believes Woodlawn Avenue's longest lasting contribution will be through the lives volunteers touch in their weekly after-school Bible club, Campus Kids. Part of Wichita-based Campus Kids Ministries, the club is hosted at the school. About 65 students register each school year, with about 30 to 40 attending each week.

A typical session includes songs, a Bible story, an activity, an object lesson, a craft or game and a snack. Students are not required to attend, and those who do must have a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian.

CHURCHES & SCHOOLS

Several First, Lee's Summit, members mentor students who struggle with math, reading, writing and other subjects. The congregation also provides breakfast foods for Westview Elementary's Character Study Breakfast, a monthly event that recognizes students from each grade and class for a specific character trait. Occasionally, the school has invited First Baptist members as guest speakers.

Leaders from both churches said they have not experienced any problems over separation of church and state issues. The Wichita School District "pretty much has opened their arms to church help," the Woodlawn Avenue pastor said.

David Maddron, children's minister at First Baptist, Lee's Summit, agreed. "We try to be very sensitive to the opportunity we have to serve our community in this

manner and, thus, all those who have partnered with us over the years have really helped make our involvement with this school a huge success," he said.

The two ministers also noted that partnership with a local school has benefitted their churches. It provides an opportunity for members to become involved, Maddron said.

"We desire to meet the needs of our community and this is just one of those unique opportunities for us to be able to do that," he added.

"I'm amazed at how the church comes together...every time we do something for a kid or the school," Brecheisen said. "It's pretty amazing" for a congregation of its size.

Member Jo Templin felt led to start Kids' Camp, a children's worship experience held each Sunday during adult service, as an offshoot of the school effort.

Congregations interested in connecting with a local school should first pray for God's direction, the church leaders emphasized. "Pray for guidance, for what God would want you to do," Easterday said.

When members believe the ministry is God-directed, they should approach the principal. "Build relationships with the administration. Their blessings on church involvement is crucial," Maddron said.

"We can show people Jesus with our actions. That can go a long way in building those relationships and, ultimately, helping shape the lives of children."

Church members must be willing to help in any way possible, he added, including stapling pictures to a bulletin board. "Make the most of the smallest of opportunities," he said.



"We can show people Jesus with our actions."

– David Maddron, children's minister, FBC, Lee's Summit

Churches Should ‘Like’ the

by Brian Kaylor, Churchnet Generational Engagement Team Leader

Technological shifts often spark new industries, trends and lifestyles. But they can also put other people out of business. The Industrial Revolution transformed modern society with cheap, mass-produced goods, but drove many “old-fashioned” weavers and artisans to close their shops. The digital revolution and the explosion of social media similarly changes expectations for businesses, organizations and even churches.

Nathan Evans, a member of the Churchnet Board of Directors since 2011, believes churches need a social media presence today as much as they needed to be in the phone book in years past. Evans serves as managing director of Blue Duck Marketing, a consulting firm he founded with his wife, Amanda. They have helped several Baptist groups with marketing, management, and communication tasks.

Evans notes that a church website often serves as someone’s “first ‘visit’ to your congregation,” thus, churches need to “take the time to concisely communicate the spirit (and services) of your church.”

He also sees the potential of social media to attract people, especially since churches need to communicate where people are. “Every community is different, but Facebook (and others) can be an excellent tool for the church family,” he explained. “It’s also another potential source for ‘visits.’ Even the simplest Facebook page can be helpful.”

Zach Dawes Jr., managing editor for EthicsDaily.com, agrees that churches need to find ways to engage on social media. His job at EthicsDaily.com that Churchnet partners with and supports, includes leading the organization’s social media efforts on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and elsewhere.

“Church websites are now seen as essential to a congregation’s outreach,” Dawes said. “An active social media presence should be viewed in the same manner. An ever-increasing number of people engage organizations via social media platforms, learning of upcoming events, viewing event photos, and interacting with people connected to the organization in virtual space. Churches must embrace this shift to remain visible and effective in their mission and ministry initiatives.”

Dawes offers tips for how to effectively use specific social media platforms, since



Nathan Evans



Zach Dawes, Jr.

“Churches must embrace this shift [to social media] to remain visible and effective in their mission and ministry initiatives.”

- Zach Dawes, Jr.

each platform comes with unique aspects, expectations and audiences.

“Each social media platform offers advantages and disadvantages,” he explained. “Facebook has the largest number of users, but not everyone who ‘likes’ your Facebook page will see the content you post. Twitter allows everyone who follows you to see your posts, but most people follow so many people that content is often ‘lost in the shuffle.’ Pinterest has lower total users, but it offers a visual approach, enabling aesthetically pleasing presentations primarily of pictures and videos.

“Each platform allows you to connect with different folks in different ways, so an ‘either/or’ mindset should be avoided when seeking to engage constituents on social media,” he added. “Churches, organizations should use every social media platform that meets a need for their constituents and helps them communicate what their organization is about and what it is doing.”

Like EthicsDaily.com, Churchnet utilizes multiple social media platforms. Churchnet has a page on Facebook (facebook.com/theChurchnet), an account on Twitter (twitter.com/ChurchnetBGCM) and a page on Vimeo (vimeo.com/Churchnet).

As a Churchnet board member, Evans serves on the new Generational Engagement Team. The team met for the first time in June as part of the new *Vision 2020* strategic plan that will guide Churchnet’s ministries in 2015-2020. One team goal will be to assist congregations with strategies for effective digital communications. To reach new generations and cultures, churches need to develop a strong, engaged online presence through social media. This even means learning a new digital language, such as hitting “like” on Facebook, “retweeting” and using “hashtags” (which look like #) on Twitter, “pinning” on Pinterest and more.

If you would like to learn more about digital communications for your church, contact Brian Kaylor, Churchnet’s Generational Engagement Leader, at bkaylor@churchnet.org or 888-420-2426, ext. 704.

Our mission: Churchnet serves churches by fostering collaboration and hope for engaging new generations and cultures.

facebook.com/theChurchnet

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Texas Editor Knox honored by BNG

Baptist News Global honored veteran Baptist journalist Marv Knox for “courage, moral integrity and truth-telling” across a career spanning more than three decades at a CBF General Assembly auxiliary event June 18 in Dallas.



MARV KNOX

Board chair Kyle Reese presented Knox the Greg Warner Lifetime Achievement Award in Religious Journalism, named after the first full-time employee and long-time executive editor of Associated Baptist Press.

The award recognizes courage and integrity in reporting important issues related to matters of faith and writing and reporting that consistently reflect the highest standards of journalism. (BNG)

Colorado Supreme Court strikes down school voucher program

The Colorado Supreme Court struck down a school voucher program June 29, saying it violates the state constitution’s ban on using public money to fund religious schools.

Overturning a lower-court decision, the Supreme Court said the Douglas County School District — the state’s third-largest school district located south of Denver — cannot administer its “Choice Scholarship Pilot Program.”

On hold since its launch four years ago, the program provided up to 500 scholarships that qualifying elementary, middle and high school students can use to help pay their tuition at partnering private schools.

At the time a lawsuit challenging the program went to trial, 16 of the 23 schools participating in the program were religious in nature, and about 93 percent of the scholarship recipients

had enrolled in religious schools.

The Supreme Court said the program violates “broad, unequivocal language forbidding the state from using public money to fund religious schools.”

Defenders of the voucher program argued that the constitution’s ban on taxpayer funding of “sectarian” schools is a code word for “Catholic,” describing the section as a “Blaine Amendment” — state laws that allegedly rose out of anti-Catholic bigotry after a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution proposed by Republican Congressman James G. Blaine in 1875 failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds majority to pass the Senate.

Colorado’s justices said whatever the history, they are bound to enforce constitutional provisions as written whenever their language is plain and their meaning is clear. (BNG)

Learn more about...learning more

Whether good or bad, school experiences impact most everyone’s life. Many choose to return to college and pursue a degree. What about less-intensive options?

Free online courses. From their introduction at the beginning of this decade, by the end of 2014 there were 2,400 courses offered through more than 400 universities in 13 languages, according to Class Central (tinyurl.com/MOOC-classes).

These Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are often free, and many are self-paced. Very often the class size is in the thousands. Class Central (class-central.com) has an aggregated list. The biggest three providers are Coursera.org, edX.org and Udacity.com.

Evaluate MOOCs by asking: Is a class free? Is it a college-level course? What university is offering it? Who is teaching it? Are there graded assignments?

Media and the Internet

Also evaluate class choices. If you are looking to change jobs, determine if the class will help you. What is the schedule? Is it possible to reach the professor?



KEN SATTERFIELD

Smart videos. Many sites offer useful and thought-provoking videos.

TED Talks are designed to share ideas. More than 2,000 courses can be found at ted.com/talks. Many of these can be viewed on Netflix.

YouTube is more than grumpy cat

videos. It offers channels of videos: FORA.tv (youtube.com/user/ForaTv) for sharing ideas, Make Magazine (youtube.com/user/makemagazine) for DIY projects and Vsauce (youtube.com/user/Vsauce) for questions like “what if everyone jumped at once?”

Learn a skill. Rather than string theory, maybe you want to learn to whistle or make something. Bible helps are at BibleStudyTools.com, Bible.com and BibleGateway.com. DuLingo (duolingo.com) can help you learn a language, free. Guides and do-it-yourself content can be found at eHow.com and wikiHow.com and other sites listed at technobuzz.net/31-how-to-sites.

Don’t let the Internet cause you to overlook what’s available at your public and church libraries, through a mentor or with a magazine subscription.

Ken Satterfield is marketing coordinator for Word & Way. Find more links online.

American Baptists suspend executive search

The search for the next general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA is on hold, due to “breaches of confidentiality” in the search process, the denomination’s president announced June 28 at its biennial mission summit in Kansas City, Kan.

Don Ng, pastor of First Chinese Baptist Church in San Francisco, acknowledged in a Sunday business session that many delegates were anticipating an announcement of a successor to General Secretary Roy Medley, who steps down Dec. 31 after 14 years.

Instead Ng read a statement announcing the ABCUSA Board of General Ministries voted during executive session Wednesday morning “to suspend the search process at this time.”

The search process “brought forth strong and qualified candidates, each of whom is uniquely gifted in ways

worthy to be celebrated and honored,” the statement said, “Unfortunately, breaches of confidentiality have compromised the integrity of the search.”

As a result, the board plans to name an interim general secretary at its November 2015 meeting and “will discern when to resume the search process.”

“As you know, searches are personnel matters,” the statement said. “For this reason, further details will not be given nor questions taken.”

The decision comes nearly a year after the naming of a 12-member search committee after the Board of General Ministries elected Medley in June 2013 to a two-year term ending in 2015. That was after Medley served three of the typical four-year terms, taking office in 2002.

Effectively announcing his retire-

ment, Medley said at the time he desired to serve another two years beyond the end of his current term to implement a “Transformed by the Spirit” initiative aimed at revitalizing congregations, regions and national bodies.

Key changes included reducing the size of the denomination’s General Board and shifting focus of the biennial meeting away from public statements to a small-group discussion format in which delegates pick from a wide variety of interests.

This year “Mission Summit Conversations” ranged from leadership issues such as combatting pastoral attrition to public witness issues, including ministry to people with disabilities, to future-oriented topics like “congregations without buildings.”

(BNG)

Miracle or tragedy?

It had been a long, hard day. Nellie Frances was preparing dinner. She said it would be a few minutes. I lay down on the bed to rest and fell sound asleep for just a minute. The phone rang; I answered. The party calling had some information I had requested. I was trying to write it down, but I couldn’t see.

“Something’s wrong here,” I thought as I squinted, looking at the blurred print on a page. “What’s happening? I must be going blind.”

Then, suddenly, I remembered. I took my glasses off when I lay down and put them on the nightstand. I chuckled and asked the person on the telephone to excuse me while I got my glasses, and everything returned to normal.

Later, I was telling the story to some friends and another friend related a similar story. She went to sleep. When she awoke, she could see very clearly. “My goodness,” she thought, “I’ve been healed. I can see again.”

The Shepherd Calls

“Hallelujah!” (My word, not hers.) Then, she remembered she had forgotten to take out her contacts when she went to sleep. That’s the



WADE PARIS

reason she could see.

There is a fine line between a miracle and a tragedy. If you had owned the house where the four men let the paralytic down through the roof to Jesus’

feet, you may have thought it was a tragedy. However, if you were the paralyzed man Jesus healed, you would have regarded the incident as a miracle.

Often, the difference in a miracle

and a tragedy is the touch of God. By all human standards, the cross is the most tragic event ever. In the name of God, religious people crucified the Son of God — Jesus. Thinking they were doing the right thing, they did the worst deed in all of history.

By human standards, the cross is the world’s worst tragedy. Nevertheless, God touched that event and made it a miracle. A few hours later, Jesus was raised from the dead, and the cross became our redemption. God took man’s worst act of history, touched it, and made it God’s greatest miracle of all times—the redemption of all mankind.

Whatever sad or tragic event may be going on in your life right now can be changed into a miracle by God’s touch.

Would you pause now and ask him to do it?

Wade Paris writes a weekly syndicated column, “The Shepherd Calls.”

Among Baptists

CBF partner school earns accreditation

Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, one of 15 theological-education partners with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, has been accredited by the Association of Theological Schools, seminary President Greg Earwood announced June 19.

"We celebrate with great joy the achievement of accreditation as a member of the Association of Theological Schools," Earwood said. "We are grateful to God and to all our friends who

support us in our calling..."

Seminary of Kentucky reported a fall 2014 enrollment of 32 students.

Jeff Haggray to lead ABC home missions

The former District of Columbia Baptist Convention executive minister is the new executive director of American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

According to American Baptist News Service, Jeffrey Haggray, interim senior pastor of Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Roswell, Ga., was the

unanimous choice to succeed Aidsand Wright-Riggins, who retires Oct. 31 after more than 24 years at the helm.

An ordained American Baptist minister, Haggray, 51, was elected in 2001 as D.C. executive director.

Organized in 1832 and formerly known as National Ministries, the American Baptist Home Mission Societies oversees evangelism and church planting, along with caring, education, intercultural and justice ministries. Judson Press, the publishing ministry of American Baptist Churches USA, is one of its programs. (BNG)

BIBLE CROSSWORD

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Across

1. "___ the lilies (Matthew 6:28)
8. Woody Guthrie's son
11. Ann, Russ.
12. Moses' brother
13. Indianapolis' state (abbr.)
14. Roman Catholic (abbr.)
15. "They ___ unto them" (Exodus 12:36)
17. Bean curd
19. Apiece
21. Sews quickly
23. Turns away from sin
25. House of Lords (abbr.)
26. The writings that contain the new covenant (abbr.)
28. "Hole of the ___" (Isaiah 11:8)
29. Nickel (chemical symbol)
30. High male voices
34. "Every ___ of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14)
36. "He took...the ___ out of the house" (2 Chronicles 33:15)
37. Three (prefix)
38. More (suffix)
39. "Pure ___ of water of life" (Revelation 22:1)
41. Overeaters Anonymous (abbr.)
42. New England state, Concord is the capital (abbr.)
44. Evergreen
45. Perform

46. Caleb's brother (Joshua 15:17)
50. "He riseth...and took a ___" (John 13:4)
52. Grievance
54. Metal thread
55. "Get thee hence, ___" (Matthew 4:10)
56. The meal's last course

Down

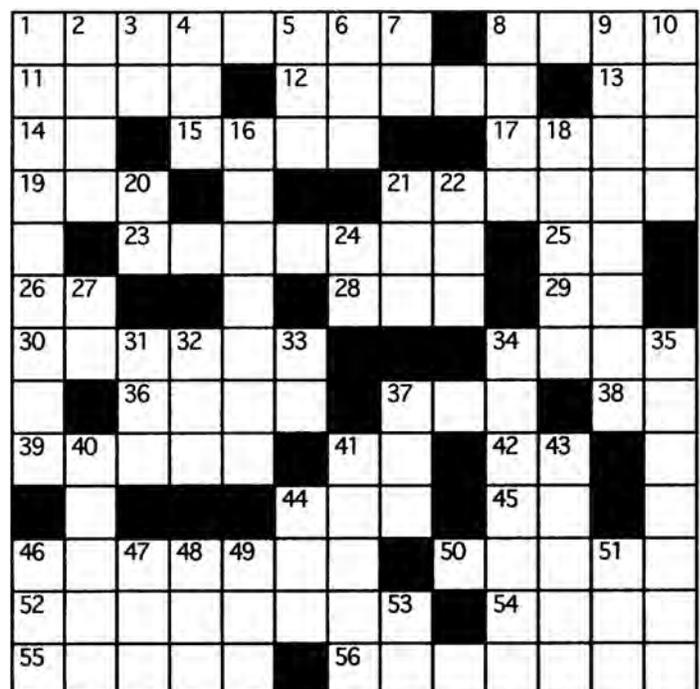
1. Joseph's profession (Mark 6:3)
2. One time
3. The Empire State (abbr.)
4. Girl's name, for short
5. Bilhah's son (Genesis 35:25)
6. "They work, and ___" (2 Thessalonians 3:12)
7. Railed transportation (abbr.)
8. Small insects
9. Throw out the ___
10. Burden
16. Chinese ruler
18. Son of Shemaiah (1 Chronicles 26:7)
20. Rural route (abbr.)
21. Noblemen, below a baron and above a knight (abbr.)
22. Snake
24. Not applicable (abbr.)
27. Tellurium (chemical symbol)
31. Modern Bible translation (abbr.)
32. Poem

33. Sea level (abbr.)

34. "___ of heaven" (Malachi 3:10)
35. Small drip
37. Black sticky substance
40. Within (prefix)
41. "Cake of ___ bread" (Exodus 29:23)
43. Howard, for short

44. Womanly (abbr.)

46. Officers of the Guard (abbr.)
47. Head covering
48. National Vision Associates (abbr.)
49. Man's name
51. To make a mistake
53. Born (French)



See answers on page 19

Baptist groups react to gay marriage ruling

BY BOB ALLEN

Baptist News Global

Amid both praise and condemnation for the recent Supreme Court decision legalizing gay marriage, leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship staked out a position of neutrality on a topic deemed best left up to the local church.

“In a changing culture, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship seeks to model unity,” CBF leaders said in a June 26 blog describing unity as “our cornerstone commitment.”

“For nearly 25 years, Cooperative Baptists have found it unifying to celebrate our autonomy in Christ while inviting collaboration. We cling tightly to and defend historic Baptist principles of soul freedom, Bible freedom, church freedom and religious freedom — our core values,” the blog statement said.

“CBF is a place where tension is recognized and spoken in honest dialogue, remaining in fellowship despite differences and disagreements. Put simply, our core purpose is to partner with one another in renewing God’s world.”

A Southern Baptist Convention leader, meanwhile, said he doubts denominational bodies can avoid polarization over the issue for long.

“There is no place to hide on this issue,” Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Albert Mohler said in a podcast June 30. “Eventually, every single church, every single denomination, every single pastor is going to have to answer the question. If anything, the decision handed down by the Supreme Court on Friday just makes that situation more acute. It is now virtually impossible to duck the issue or to hide.”

Mohler observed that in media coverage of reaction to the Supreme Court ruling, in some cases “the actual story becomes the intent to hide or the attempt to evade the question.”

“In terms of the political context I think we can all understand why there might be a reluctance on the part of some to speak to an issue that will be divisive,” Mohler said. “But when it comes to the responsibility of the Christian pastor to preach the word in season and out of season, there is no room for equivocation on something to which the Bible speaks clearly. And if the Bible speaks clearly to anything, it speaks clearly to the reality of marriage.”

In light of the Supreme Court ruling, the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood reaffirmed the Danvers Statement, a 1987 document outlining what later came to be known as “complementarianism.”

“The distinct but complementary realities of manhood and womanhood are ordained by God and foundational to the created order,” CBMW leaders said in the statement. They further stated that “biblical marriage pictures the gospel of Jesus Christ” and that “homosexuality is declared by God a sin.”

At the same time, more than 100 self-described evangelicals celebrated the Supreme Court decision as a “major step towards justice and equality for LGBTQ people in the United States.”

“As evangelical pastors and leaders, we believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of good news for all people,” the faith leaders said in a statement June 26. “Following in the way of Jesus, we are compelled to be a voice for the voiceless and to fight for the dignity and equality of all people, regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality or gender identity.”

The evangelical leaders said legalizing gay marriage “is only one step towards true equality for LGBTQ individuals and highlights our need, as people of faith, to continue to work for justice.”

Classified Advertising

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FBC ELDON, MO., is seeking full-time youth minister/praise team leader with Bachelor of Science degree or 2-3 years ministry-related experience. Send resume to First Baptist Church Search Committee, 209 S. Aurora, Eldon, MO 65026. Email: firstbaptisteldon@sbcglobal.net.

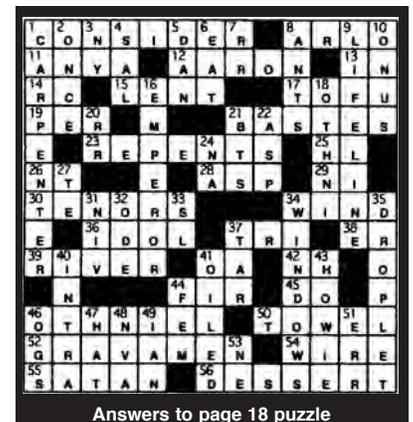
Looking to Purchase

SMALL CHURCH NEEDS 100 used Baptist Hymnals (Convention Press) 1975 edition. Contact New Hope Baptist Church, PO Box 393, Doniphan, MO 63935.

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Answers to page 18 puzzle

How about some new metrics?

An old Sunday School register hangs on the wall in my church office. Throughout my childhood, this is where my home church, Maple Grove Baptist, faithfully recorded important church metrics each Sunday: number on the roll; attendance last Sunday; attendance today; record attendance;

offering last Sunday; offering today; record offering; etc.

When Maple Grove voted to disband back in the 1990s, I told the people gathered at a farewell/church closure worship service that I would like to have

the register as a memento of the congregation which had nurtured me in the faith and launched me into vocational ministry.

As much nostalgia as that register generates, many of us are beginning to ask if we need some new metrics to measure congregational life and health in the 21st century. Granted, we still need the dashboard statistics of “nickels and noses” (offerings and attendance), because without a critical mass, effective ministry would be impossible. But a careful study of the New Testament and of our culture leaves us crying for some new ways to evaluate kingdom work.

I can think of at least three reasons why we need to find some new yardsticks to measure church life.

1. We need some new metrics because of Jesus’ teachings and priorities.

Here’s a Jesus quote not found in any of our four gospels: “Hey, disci-

ples, listen up. Synagogue attendance has been down lately; we need a new campaign to get people here. Maybe we could give away a free donkey to the one who brings the most friends next Saturday.”

If we read Scripture carefully, we are more likely to encounter the opposite from Jesus. In Luke 14, our Savior notices a large crowd following him and begins to talk about the extreme cost of discipleship (Jesus’ version of an “en-small-ment” campaign vs. an enlargement campaign).

He seemed more focused on quality, not quantity, on faithfulness, not success, and on disciples, not decisions.

2. We need some new metrics because culture and attendance patterns are changing dramatically.

Life in the United States is far different today than it was in the 1950s and ’60s when Maple Grove posted those weekly counts. To paraphrase a famous line, “We aren’t in Mayberry anymore!” Nowadays, a person who attends church once a month is considered a regular attendee.

Have you noticed? We don’t pass out many perfect attendance Sunday School pins anymore! Why? Greater mobility, more people working Sunday jobs, more sporting events, etc. But the point is, churches may need to pay more attention to monthly and yearly attendance than weekly attendance — how many people are we ministering to over time?

3. We need some new metrics because we get what we measure (and that may not be a good thing).

If we measure only those who come to the building, we reinforce a culture which values sitting and watching a performance by a few super-hired-holy men and women.

An obsession with numbers also creates a subconscious focus on bottom-line results. Years ago, I worked with a person who served on our stewardship committee, assisting us

in putting together a proposed church budget for the coming year. He said, “This is simple. Just show me results, something quantifiable, and we will know which ministries to reward with funds for next year.”

I pleaded with this man to slow down. If we were not careful, we would get what we rewarded.

Did we want a huge youth group? Simple. Plan fun events instead of offering quality Bible study and discipleship.

Did we want more baptisms? Simple. Get people down the aisle. But what if the pressure to produce results caused us to seek decisions which short-circuited authentic evangelism? How easy it would be for our faith-sharing to bypass intangible (but eternal) things such as genuine repentance and the Holy Spirit’s timing.

I think he got the point.

Yes, we still need hard data. But we need more than the old metrics. The truth is that most of the figures on the Maple Grove Sunday School register measured internal functioning (keeping the lights on, equipping believers with Bible knowledge and inspiring them through worship).

To use the language of Jesus in John 15 (the vine and the branches), the old metrics measure the condition of the soil; they do not measure the fruit.

I have three suggestions:

1. Buy and read Gil Rendle’s book, “Doing the Math of Mission: Fruits, Faithfulness and Metrics.”

2. Start thinking in terms of kingdom metrics vs. program metrics (i.e., think like Jesus).

3. Help me continue this conversation. In next month’s column, I’ll offer some models of new, health-based metrics.

Stay tuned.

Doyle Sager is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Jefferson City, Mo.



DOYLE SAGER

Church, state separation intact

Early in the U.S. Supreme Court decision finding a constitutional right to marriage that includes same-sex partners, Justice Kennedy describes the “transcendent importance of marriage.”

He makes a point that is crucial to discussions about religious liberty and marriage, stating: “Marriage is sacred to those who live by their religions and offers unique fulfillment to those who find meaning in the secular realm.”

With that simple and undeniably true statement, we are reminded of an important distinction between two meanings of “marriage.” Marriage is a religious act that occurs in the context of a religious community consistent with religious texts, traditions and understandings. Marriage is also a civil institution that affords certain legal privileges and protections.

It is important, however, to make clear that the Court’s decision does not remove the separation of church and state. Churches will continue to make their own decisions about what kind of marriage ceremonies they conduct. Ministers will not be forced to perform same-sex weddings.

The statement acknowledges an important distinction that has often been lost in the heated debates about marriage equality and the intersection of religious liberty.

Obergefell v. Hodges is a landmark civil rights case. It is not a First Amendment religious liberty case. Though the decision will have ramifications for religious liberty, some of which the majority notes briefly and the dissents stress more forcefully, the case is about civil marriage.

The decision states that the history of marriage “is one of both continuity and change. That institution — even as confined to opposite-sex relations — has evolved over time.”

The Court found that the history and evolution of marriage, as well as the changing understanding of the rights of gays and lesbians, were significant to finding that the Fourteenth Amendment protections include same-sex marriage.

The Court’s decision is based on marriage being a fundamental right demonstrated through principles about individual autonomy, the singular importance of the marriage union, protection of children and families and the preservation of social order. The Court found that exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage could not be supported in light of these principles.

To put it directly: “The limitation of marriage to opposite-sex couples may long have seemed natural and just, but its inconsistency with the central meaning of the fundamental right to marry is now manifest.”

In anticipation of the Court’s decision, conversations about religious liberty conflicts have abounded. Some centered on legitimate concerns; others exaggerated unfounded fears. The conversations will continue and the real legal conflicts will not be worked

out overnight.

It is important, however, to make clear that the Court’s decision does not remove the separation of church and state. Churches will continue to make their own decisions about what kind of marriage ceremonies they conduct. Ministers will not be forced to perform same-sex weddings.

Harder questions, particularly about religiously affiliated institutions and individual religious objectors, will depend on new fact scenarios and the interplay of a variety of laws.

While religious liberty rights were not the central subject of the case, the *Obergefell* majority respectfully acknowledged that some deeply held and long-standing religious beliefs oppose same-sex marriage.

The Court stated: “Many who deem same-sex marriage to be wrong reach that conclusion based on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises and neither they nor their beliefs are disparaged here.”

This kind of respectful treatment of dissenting views is important in continuing to protect religious liberty without harming the rights the Court has now affirmed. **(BNG)**

K. Hollyn Hollman is general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.



K. HOLLYN HOLLMAN

Mormons indexing records of 4 million slaves

BY LEE DAVIDSON

Salt Lake Tribune

On the 150th anniversary of “June-teenth,” the freeing of slaves after the Civil War, the LDS Church announced on June 19 a project to emancipate from obscurity key records of about 4 million former slaves’ families.

The Mormons digitized and now will lead efforts to index — for easy online researching by name — records of the Freedmen’s Bureau, an agency Congress created at the end of the war to help the first generation of African-Americans experience freedom.

LDS apostle D. Todd Christofferson called on the nation’s African-Americans to help with that project — and said many of their groups already have signed on. He said they will

“potentially reunite the black family that was once torn apart by slavery.”

He hopes to finish the indexing of 1.4 million digitized records before completion next year of the new Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture on the mall in Washington, D.C.

Indexing allows easy searches by name, date or place, enabling descendants to proceed directly to a document that mentions an ancestor rather than searching every record.

Information about the project is available online at discoverfreedmen.org.

“These are personal, sometimes difficult accounts to read at a turning point in our nation’s history when our forebears were struggling with their own humanity. But what one also sees

in these records is triumph, hope and resilience. What a great testimony to the sheer will and determination of this generation,” Christofferson said.

Thom Reed, marketing director at the LDS-sponsored FamilySearch International, said many African Americans, including himself, have up to now “run into a brick wall” because it is difficult to find any genealogy before the 1870 Census, the first to list former slaves.

Hollis Gentry, of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, said, “These are the earliest of recordings of people who were formerly enslaved. We get a sense of their voice. We get a sense of their desires, their goals, their dreams, their hopes.” (RNS)

Practice subway etiquette Jesus-style

Ads in New York City subways promote etiquette, such as telling riders not to take up excess space. Is this ad campaign “social engineering” or a good idea for improving social values?

Your question reminds me of something my mother used to say when we encountered a terribly inconsiderate or rude person: “There’s a nice person who has been pushed too far one too many times.” My mother reminded us to consider the other person’s feelings and motivations — even when the other person was downright rude. Perhaps my mother, one of the most thoughtful people in the world, can’t imagine anyone would choose to be inconsiderate without provocation.

Unfortunately, it seems more and more often, we run into people who are inconsiderate. I don’t think they always mean to be. Perhaps it is a byproduct of a greater heart issue. When we become consumed with ourselves, it is difficult to be considerate of others. And in our busy society, it is

Right or Wrong?

easy to become focused on ourselves.

Scripture offers an antidote to self-focused thinking: “Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ...do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:1-4).

We normally assume these words apply to serious matters or issues of grave concern. We consider others when it might cause a deep rift in a relationship or a church split. Or honestly, maybe we consider others when it doesn’t inconvenience us too much. But perhaps these words should apply to small and insignificant matters and to the ones that require personal sacrifice. After all, Philippians says “do nothing” because we consider ourselves better than others. If someone else’s comfort, ease or convenience is

at least as important as my own, I have no choice but to be a bit more considerate when I think about taking up an extra seat or cutting in line.

The motivation for the New York City ad campaign comes from passenger complaints about riders — particularly men — who sit in such ways they take up two seats. It’s called “man-spread.” The posture obviously projects an inconsideration of others’ need for a seat.

In Scripture, the admonition to consider others before yourself is modeled after Christ’s life. It seems rather petty that we would be unwilling to eat our taco before we get on the subway or to avoid loud phone conversations in small spaces when the one we serve was willing to give up life itself.

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If you have a comment or wish to ask a question for a future column, contact **Bill Tillman**, consulting ethicist for “Right or Wrong?” at btillman150@gmail.com.

Domestic violence rises on social justice agenda

BY DALE HANSON BOURKE

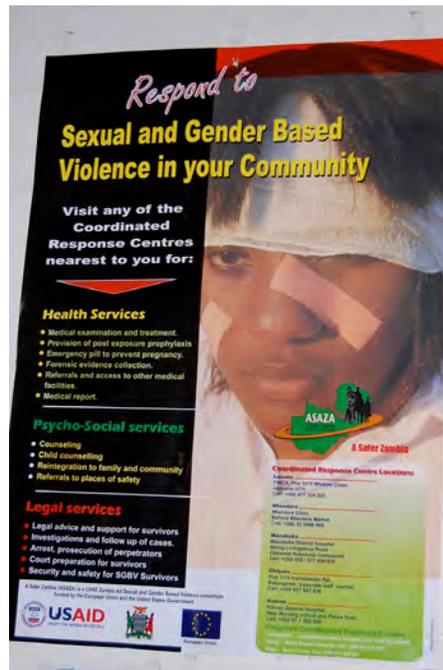
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON — For the last decade, progressive evangelicals have rallied around social justice issues like poverty, racism and human trafficking. Recently, a gathering of Christian leaders brought another cause to the top of the agenda: domestic violence.

Instead of viewing it as a personal or family concern, the Sojourners Summit, which concluded on June 20, zeroed in on domestic violence as a human rights issue, hoping to shine the spotlight on a problem little talked about in many Christian circles.

A study commissioned last year by Sojourners and IMA World Health, an international, nonprofit health care service, found that most Protestant pastors greatly underestimate sexual and other violence against women. Worse, pastors who teach “male headship” and submission of wives to their husbands may do more harm than good when counseling couples or individuals.

“Experts identify a link between masculine ideals of power and con-



A public poster brings attention to gender-based violence in Zambia. (Religion News Service photo by Dale Hanson Burke)

trol and violence against women and girls,” said Carolyn Custis James, an evangelical theologian and author of “Malestrom: Manhood Swept into the Currents of a Changing World.”

James, who spoke at the summit, added: “A theology based upon patriarchal notions that empowers men over women — who are expected to submit — establishes a relational system that can easily lead to violence and others forms of abuse.”

Taking the issue of domestic violence out of the personal realm and making it a justice issue is necessary, the study concludes, because it requires the full force of the legal system as well as social institutions, including faith communities. Without this attention to the issue, victims will continue to feel isolated and lack support systems.

Eight in 10 pastors recognize they need to know more about protecting victims of sexual and domestic violence and wish they had more training and resources.

A majority of pastors surveyed say they have responded to sexual or domestic violence by providing marriage counseling, a potentially dangerous or even lethal response for the victim, who is then not separated from the perpetrator.

Pope: World powers haven't pushed for Syrian peace

POPE FRANCIS CHIDES WORLD POWERS FOR FAILING TO PUSH FOR PEACE IN SYRIA.

Pope Francis on June 19 criticized world powers for their failure to find a solution to the Syrian conflict, saying the country's Christians had been united by “the blood of the martyrs” lost in war. Addressing Mor Ignatius Aphram II, the patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Francis recalled the impact of a conflict that is now in its fifth year. Francis has repeatedly called for international efforts to resolve the conflicts raging across the Middle East, and for protections for ancient Christian communities that are facing extinction. More than 320,000 people have been killed since the start of the conflict, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and nearly four million people are registered refugees outside the country's borders.

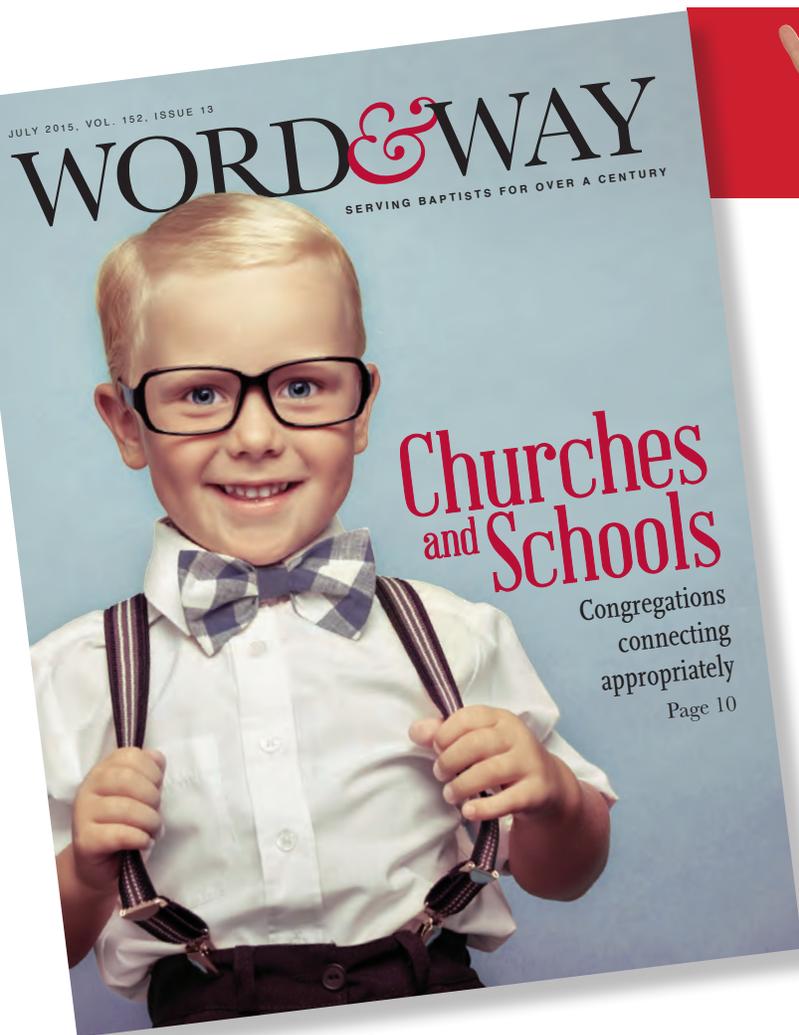


CIVIL RIGHTS VETERAN URGES BLACK CLERGY TO “FIX” VOTING RIGHTS ACT.

Civil rights veteran and Congressman John Lewis urged black clergy to work for changes in the Voting Rights Act on the second anniversary of the Supreme Court decision that removed key provisions of the law. “It's time again for religious leaders, the ministers of the gospel, to get in trouble,” said Lewis, speaking June 25 at the Rayburn House Office Building to Progressive National Baptist

Convention pastors attending a briefing. They gathered two years after the 2013 Supreme Court ruling, *Shelby County v. Holder*, that invalidated a Justice Department review of new voting regulations in states with a history of voting discrimination. Lewis is one of the co-sponsors of the Voting Rights Advancement Act that was introduced June 24 and seeks to restore the portions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act removed by the nation's highest court. “We need to fix it before next year's election. We've got to do it, brothers and sisters,” said Lewis, D-Ga., who marched with Martin Luther King Jr. The gathering of about 70 PNBC pastors and other religious leaders headed to lawmakers' offices to press for changes in the law. But they also stressed the need for voter registration efforts even as dozens of state laws have grown more restrictive.

(Compiled from Religion News Service)



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