

Baptist Briefs

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Craddock to speak at Truett luncheon. Fred Craddock—selected by Newsweek as one of the 12 most-effective preachers in the English-speaking world—will address Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary Luncheon. The luncheon will be at 11:45 a.m. June 22 in the Omni Hotel at CNN Center, Atlanta, Ga., during the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly. Cost is \$35, and reservations are requested. Craddock is the Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament Emeritus in the Candler School of Theology and director of the Craddock Center, a program serving Southern Appalachia. For more information, contact Kyle Reese at (904) 396-7745, kyle@habchurch.com or write to Truett Alumni Association, Attn.: Kyle Reese, c/o Hendrix Avenue Baptist Church, 4001 Hendrix Avenue, Jacksonville, FL 32207.

GuideStone cancels Wellness Walk. A Wellness Walk/Run scheduled in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C., has been cancelled due to the distance between most convention hotels from the Greensboro Coliseum Complex. GuideStone Financial Service has sponsored the activity at SBC meetings the past three years and plans to resume it at the 2007 SBC in San Antonio, President O.S. Hawkins said.

Mercer Press to publish children's Sunday school material. The publishing arm of Mercer University will begin offering children's Sunday school literature this fall—the first in a new line of Bible study and devotional materials for children and adults called CrossWalk that the publishing house hopes will find a home in Baptist churches. Mercer's move to provide children's curriculum comes a few months after another moderate Baptist publishing house, Smyth and Helwys, discontinued its children's Sunday school curriculum.

NC Baptists strengthen policy on churches with gay members. Leaders of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention have beefed up a policy designed to oust local churches that “knowingly act to affirm, approve, endorse, promote, support or bless homosexual behavior.” They also approved a set of guidelines for interpreting whether a church's actions fall under the policy, including ordination of practicing homosexuals, allowing a minister to officiate at a same-sex wedding ceremony, affiliating with or supporting an organization that affirms homosexuality, or accepting as members people who have refused to repent of homosexual behavior. The convention's executive committee and board of directors voted to approve the new policies. Because the policies require amendments to the convention's articles of incorporation, they have to be approved by a two-thirds majority of messengers at the convention's next annual meeting. If approved, the policies would likely exclude more than 20 North Carolina churches affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists, regardless of their individual policies on homosexuality. The Alliance is officially “welcoming and affirming” of gays in all levels of church involvement, but it does not dictate member congregations' local policies on homosexuality.

Pastors' Conference presidential nominee announced. Hayes Wicker, pastor of First Baptist Church in Naples, Fla., will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference. In announcing his intention to nominate Wicker, James Merritt, pastor of Cross Point Church in Duluth, Ga., characterized him as "one of Southern Baptists' most consistently long-term evangelistic pastors." Wicker, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Lubbock, also served churches in Arizona, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

SBC President announces retirement plans. Southern Baptist Convention President Bobby Welch has announced plans to retire Aug. 27 as pastor of First Baptist Church in Daytona Beach, Fla. Welch, whose second one-year term as SBC president ends this month, has been pastor of the church 32 years. David Cox was named co-pastor in 2003 and will assume the full pastorate upon Welch's retirement.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.