

Evangelical chaplains spark controversy

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By Deborah Potter

Religion & Ethics Newsweekly

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The U.S. Armed Forces always have had chaplains, but as the number of chaplains from evangelical groups with a strong commitment to bringing nonbelievers to their faith has grown, so has a controversy about how the chaplaincy should carry out its ministry.

Historically, chaplains have served side-by-side with the troops in both peace and war, offering public prayers and private counseling—to all comers, of all faiths, believers and nonbelievers alike.

Bush challenges students to

lives of service

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Bush challenges students to lives of service

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

BELTON—Former President George Bush stressed the importance of service, integrity and ties to family and friends during a lecture at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.

Former
President
George Bush
delivers the
McLane
Lecture at the
University of
Mary Hardin-
Baylor. Photo
courtesy of
the University
of Mary
Hardin Baylor

“There is no definition of a successful life that doesn’t include service to

others,” Bush told a capacity crowd at the university’s Mayborn Campus Center, Feb. 10.

John Lilley seeks balance as he leads Baylor University

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John Lilley seeks balance as he leads Baylor University

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

WACO—Baylor University bills itself as “a Christian university in the historic Baptist tradition.” And when President John Lilley uses the phrase, he emphasizes every key word.



“It’s not in just any tradition and not even just any Baptist tradition. It’s the historic Baptist tradition,” he said, stressing the university’s leaders hold a distinctively Baptist understanding of religious liberty and noncreedal, biblical faith.

Intelligent design discussion moves to university campuses

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Intelligent design discussion moves to university campuses

By Sarah Price Brown

Religion News Service

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (RNS)—When Hannah Maxson started an intelligent design club at Cornell University last fall, a handful of science majors showed up for the first meeting. Today, the high-profile club boasts more than 80 members.

Casey
Luskin,
founder of
the
Intelligent
Design and
Evolution
Awareness
(IDEA)
Center, a
small
nonprofit
organization
based in San
Diego,
speaks at an
intelligent
design club
meeting at
the
University of
California at
San Diego.
Photo by Brit
Colanter/RNS

Until recently, the nationwide debate over whether intelligent design should be taught alongside evolution was centered primarily in public elementary and high school science classes.

Now the discussion is spilling over onto university campuses. At nearly 30 public and private universities across the country, students have started clubs aimed at promoting intelligent design. The clubs, sponsored by the

Intel-ligent Design and Evolution Awareness Center—IDEA—a small, nonprofit organization based in San Diego, have been gaining members and visibility.

Proponents of intelligent design insist the theory, which says the universe is so complex that it must have been created by a higher being, is scientific. Opponents—including most of the nation’s scientific establishment—put their weight behind Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, and dismiss intelligent design as a religious idea based on the biblical creation story in Genesis.

When Cornell’s interim president, Hunter R. Rawlings III, denounced intelligent design as “a religious belief masquerading as a secular idea” in a speech last October, Maxson, a 21-year-old junior and president of the Ithaca, N.Y., school’s IDEA club, responded with a press release. Rawlings’ comments were a “gross misstatement,” she said, and “an insult to people of faith throughout America.”

Suddenly, Maxson, a self-described “bookish” chemistry and math major, found herself and her club in the spotlight.

“Before, we were just basically a science club,” she said. “Now, we have to defend our ideas everywhere.”

During one recent week, she was scheduled to speak about intelligent design at a campus discussion, make a presentation to a biology class and give an interview on local radio.

Intelligent design clubs at other universities also have been gaining momentum and attention. The first IDEA club meeting at George Mason University, a public school in Fairfax, Va., drew 20 people.

At a recent meeting, where a scientist guest speaker offered his criticisms of intelligent de-sign, 90 people attended.

Josh Norton, a 22-year-old math major who is president of the University of California at San Diego’s club, said his group was meeting every week in order to plan an all-day conference on intelligent design for the spring.

Casey Luskin, 27, founded the first IDEA club in 1999, at the University of California at San Diego. Luskin, then a college junior, had become

interested in intelligent design after taking a biology seminar that taught about the theory. When Luskin graduated with a master's degree in earth sciences in 2001, he founded the IDEA Center to help other students start their own clubs.

If a high school or university student contacts the IDEA Center about starting an intelligent design club, the center will provide a curriculum with suggested discussion topics, books, videos and a bibliography of sources.

Recently the center helped start clubs at the University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif. A few high schools, including one as far away as Kenya, also have started IDEA chapters.

The organization is "very grassroots," Luskin said. Its seven staff members volunteer part-time. They operate on a budget of a few thousand dollars, which comes from individual donations, he said.

The group's advisory board includes Michael Behe and William Dembski, fellows at the Discovery Institute in Seattle, a think tank that is the driving force behind the intelligent design movement.

Dembski became the Carl F.H. Henry Professor of Theology and Science at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary last June.

Luskin recently started working at the Discovery Institute as a program officer concerned with public policy and legal affairs. Still, he stressed that the IDEA Center remains independent and receives no funding from the institute.

But Victor Hutchison, professor emeritus of zoology at the University of Oklahoma, who attended some IDEA club meetings on his campus, said he could not separate the clubs from the broader intelligent design movement, spearheaded by the Discovery Institute.

"I find that they are espousing exactly the talking points of the creationist Discovery Institute," said Hutchison, who described himself both as "an evolutionist" and "a person of faith."

The way Hutchison sees it, the clubs fit into what he calls Discovery's larger plan to attack evolution and replace it with the religious viewpoint of

biblical creationism and eventually “establish a theocracy.”

The IDEA Center says intelligent design is a scientific concept, not a religious one. But students came to the meetings with their Bibles, Hutchison said. The IDEA Center also requires its club presidents to be Christian.

Luskin explained that as a Christian group, “we wanted to be totally open about who we thought the designer was.” But, he added, “this belief about the identity of the designer is our religious belief; it’s not a part of ID theory.”

Hutchison nevertheless sees the requirement as a contradiction. “It just proves they are lying when they say it’s not religious-based,” he said.

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.

Evangelicals sitting on sidelines in immigration debate

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Evangelicals sitting on sidelines in immigration debate

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Advocates at World Relief, the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, usually can expect a warm greeting from large evangelical groups wielding clout in the halls of Congress.

But this year, they're getting a downright chilly reception to one of their priority agenda items—immigration reform.

View of God often shaped by life experiences, pastor insists

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View of God often shaped by life experiences, pastor insists

By Ken Walker

Special to the Baptist Standard

TUCSON, Ariz.—Native Texan Roger Barrier started praying about ministry in an unchurched area after Roy Fish, his evangelism professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, told students, “You’d better be sure you’ve got a call from God to stay in Texas, because Texas doesn’t need any more preachers.”

For 30 years, Barrier has served Casas Church in suburban Tucson, a Baptist congregation that has grown from 70 to 4,500 members during his tenure.

TOGETHER: An inspiring, courageous servant leader

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TOGETHER: An inspiring, courageous servant leader

Phil Strickland was one of the greatest leaders Texas Baptists have ever known. He could have been an incredibly successful attorney. He could have been a great Texas governor.

But he chose to be a good and great advocate for justice and righteousness in Texas.

He came to the task of director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas as a very young man. He was not a pastor/preacher, but he was a wonderful speaker of truth. He attended seminary after law school because he wanted to be sure that what he did in the field of law was informed as much as possible by his deep biblical faith.

What he learned as a boy growing up in First Baptist Church of Abilene

kept growing in his heart and mind. He loved the gospel of Jesus Christ, which sets us free and keeps us free. He loved the Bible and treasured its truth and authority as he made decisions about life and ethics. He was grateful to God in all things and knew the power and blessing of prayer in the most intimate and spiritually meaningful way.

TEXAS TIDBITS

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Texas Tidbits

Baylor's endowment ranks high. Baylor University, with a \$750 million endowment, ranks 77th among U.S. colleges and universities with the largest endowments, according to a survey released by the National Association of College and University Business Officers. Baylor's endowment increased more than 11 percent in 2005, up from \$672 million in 2004. Baylor's investment return rate of 14.2 percent on its endowment for fiscal year 2005 ranked the university in the top 6 percent of all U.S. colleges and universities—44th out of nearly 750 institutions.

Baylor's Success Center receives \$3 million gift. Paul Foster, president and chief executive officer of Western Refining in El Paso, has given \$3 million to Baylor University for its Success Center. The center will house six departments—academic advisement, academic support services, career counseling, career services, student-athlete services and the office of access and learning accommodation—to allow students convenient access

to services. Foster received his bachelor's degree in business administration from Baylor in 1979.

Hispanic Evangelism Conference scheduled. "Proclaiming ... Reaching ... Teaching ... the Good News" is the theme of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Hispanic Evangelism Conference, Feb. 24-25 at First Baptist Church in Arlington. The event features Mario Gonzales, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in El Paso; Javier Elizondo, Baptist University of the Americas vice president of academic affairs; and Victor Rodriguez, pastor of South San Filadelfia Baptist Church in San Antonio. The conference starts Feb. 24 at 1 p.m. and ends Feb. 25 at 1. p.m. The conference also includes a concert by Hombres de Valor from Orlando, Fla., Feb. 24. A track for students begins Feb. 24 at 6:30 p.m. with a pizza party in the youth building of First Baptist Church. The student track continues Feb. 25. For more information, contact Frank Palos at (214) 828-5266 or Frank.Palos@bgct.org.

Hardin-Simmons names university chaplain. Hardin-Simmons University has named Kelly Pigott as its first university chaplain—a newly created position intended to manage the school's chapel program and provide pastoral care for its students, faculty and staff. Pigott graduated from Samford University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His wife, Susan, is professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Hardin-Simmons' Logsdon School of Theology. They have two children—Nathaniel David and Eliana Marie.

Social justice center at HPU nears completion. Howard Payne University is completing restoration of its historic Coggin Academy Building, new home of the Bettie and Robert Girling Center for Social Justice. The center will house an undergraduate multidisciplinary program involving the departments of social work, sociology, criminal justice and legal studies. It will include a simulated courtroom featuring 19th century fixtures from the Brown County Courthouse.

Historical society meeting set. At the spring meeting of the Texas Baptist Historical Society, Andrew Hogue of Baylor University will present a paper exploring the political and religious impact since 1988 of Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. Michael Parrish of Baylor University will respond to the presentation. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the Texas State Historical Association at 2:30 p.m., March 2, in the Trinity A Room of the Renaissance Hotel, 9721 Arboretum Blvd. in Austin. For more information, contact Alan Lefever at (972)331-2235 or alan.lefever@bgct.org.

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Texas Baptist Men move to Dixon building

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By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

DALLAS—Texas Baptist Men has relocated most of its offices from the Baptist General Convention of Texas offices in Dallas to the Dixon Missions

Equipping Center in east Dallas, where much of its disaster relief equipment is housed.

The Dixon building has the office space and infrastructure to host Texas Baptist Men, said Leo Smith, TBM executive director.

Strickland provided voice for poor, powerless

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Strickland provided voice for poor, powerless

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

Phil Strickland believed his mission was to provide a voice for the powerless in the halls of government and speak prophetically to Texas Baptists on moral and ethical issues.

After a long battle with cancer, resultant pneumonia silenced that prophetic voice Feb. 11 at age 64.

Proposal could allow casino-style slot machines

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Proposal could allow casino-style slot machines

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

AUSTIN—A proposal meant to give the Texas Lottery Commission more flexibility in developing new games and taking advantage of new technology could put casino-style slot machines across the state, said Suzii Paynter, director of citizenship and public policy for the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The changes would allow the Lottery Commission to make some of their games electronic, enabling instantaneous financial gains and losses via a computer network.

Segregated churches hinder evangelism

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Segregated churches hinder evangelism

By Marv Knox

Editor

WACO—Christians undermine their ability to reach society with the gospel because they segregate their churches by race, sociologist/author George Yancey told participants in a workshop aimed at racial reconciliation.

George Yancey

Yancey, assistant professor of sociology at the University of North Texas and author of several books, including *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility*, presented two keynote speeches at “Becoming a Racially Reconciled Church & Community.” Mission Waco, an inner-city ministry in Waco, sponsored the event.