

Baptist Briefs

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Ethics conference scheduled. [Christian Ethics Today](#) will sponsor an ethics conference June 27 in Washington, D.C., to address “The minister and politics: How to be prophetic without being partisan.” The free conference is scheduled prior to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s general assembly, June 28-29. Featured presenters are prominent evangelical author Tony Campolo, [Sojourners](#) founder Jim Wallis, Minneapolis pastor Greg Boyd and Melissa Rogers, former general counsel for the [Baptist Joint Committee on Religious Liberty](#).

Organizers deny politics behind Atlanta convocation. An ambitious plan to unite Baptists in North America around the compassionate message of the gospel is not secretly a plan to get Baptists to elect Hillary Clinton as president, one of the plan’s leaders said. [Bill Underwood](#), a co-organizer of the effort with former President Jimmy Carter, said former President Bill Clinton’s offer to lend his star power to the upcoming [Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant](#) is not a covert political move. On Jan. 9, leaders of 40 Baptist denominations and organizations in the United States and Canada—led by Carter and “cheered,” as he put it, by President Clinton—announced a commitment to put aside social and theological differences to unite most Baptists behind an agenda of compassionate ministry. The effort will begin with the celebration, which is set for January 2008. But [Richard Land](#), head of the [SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty](#)

[Commission](#), and [Rick Scarborough](#), a Lufkin-based Baptist minister who heads the [Vision America](#) organization, questioned the timing. Scarborough noted the January 2008 celebration is “not coincidentally nine months away from the next presidential election.”

South African pastor killed during Bible study. Phillip Mokson, founding pastor of Masiphumelele Baptist Church near Fish Hoek, South Africa, was shot and killed Jan. 22 as he taught a Bible study inside the church building. Family members including his wife, children and grandchildren witnessed the event. The gunman also shot and seriously wounded a young woman, who was known to have spurned his romantic advances, despite the efforts of another pastor to protect her. After others had left the church, the man reportedly reloaded, turned the gun on himself, and took his own life. The gunman had been baptized as a member in late 2006, and Mokson had sought to counsel him during a period of deep depression. The man, known as Vusi, had attempted suicide at least twice. On one occasion, Mokson had discovered him hanging inside the shack where he lived and cut him down.

Mission opportunities open in China for students. Short-term mission opportunities for college or university students are available between May and August through [Volunteers for China](#). Students may work with fulltime Christian teachers at a medical college in Suzhou, May 14-31, to sponsor American culture events for Chinese college students. Students can participate in a cultural exchange with 150 Chinese college students in Changzhi, July 17 to Aug. 5. Participating exchange students who choose to remain in China Aug. 6-19 have the opportunity to lead an English-language camp for Chinese high school students in Changzhi. Also in July and August, students may teach conversational English or medical English

for two-, three-, four- or six-week terms in Changzhi. Tentative cost per participant for each project is \$1,000 to \$1,200, plus roundtrip airfare. Longer term oral English positions also are available that provide a stipend, room and airfare. A valid United States passport is required for all projects. For more information, contact Ann or David Wilson at (865) 983-9852 or e-mail cen29529@centurytel.net.

Mercer student engagement ranks high. [Mercer University](#) has scored significantly higher than its peers on a major survey of student engagement and learning. The National Survey of Student results showed Mercer ranks above its peers in all five benchmark areas of the study—level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment. Mercer also earned high marks for spiritual development, academic rigor and overall learning. The national survey assesses student involvement in the educational opportunities provided by colleges and universities nationwide. This year, approximately 260,000 first-year students and seniors on 523 college campuses nationwide participated in the survey.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.