

# Baptist Briefs

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**Southern Baptists fall short of baptism goal.** Southern Baptists failed to meet their goal of baptizing 1 million people in 2006, according to statistics reported by [Southern Baptist Convention](#)-affiliated churches. Baptisms for 2006 instead declined by 1.89 percent—364,826 in 2006 versus 371,850 in 2005. The SBC baptism thrust was launched by immediate past-President Bobby Welch at the outset of his two years in office in June 2004.

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**International Baptists discuss local-church autonomy.** Sixty seven Baptist theologians, leaders and pastors from around the world gathered at a [Baptist World Alliance](#) symposium at the German Baptist Seminary in Elstal, Berlin, to talk about the theology of the church—particularly issues of local-church autonomy. Participants examined the relationship of the local church to the larger Baptist community of associations, national conventions and unions, regional fellowships and the Baptist World Alliance. At the end of the symposium, participants issued a statement concluding, “For Baptists, the local church is wholly church but not the whole church.”

**CBF offers church-starter ‘boot camp’ at Truett.** The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s [New Church Starts Boot Camp](#) will be held July 29-Aug. 3 at Baylor University’s Truett Seminary in Waco. The annual event

offers individuals interested in starting churches opportunities for networking, learning about practical resources and assessing their ministerial gifts and calling. American Baptist Churches USA and the Baptist General Convention of Texas also are sponsoring the event. Featured speakers include Tom Johnson, American Baptist new-church planting coordinator; Andre Punch, BGCT congregational strategists director; and Charles Higgs, BGCT director of western-heritage ministries.

**Don't mess with Texas seminary, Patterson suggests.** Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson suggested an attack like the Virginia Tech shooting wouldn't happen at his school because students would overwhelm an attacker—even if they died trying. Patterson told students [in an April 18 chapel sermon](#) that if a shooter attacked classes at the Fort Worth school, he was “counting on” male students to respond. “See, all you had to do was have six or eight rush him right at that time, and 32 people wouldn't have died,” Patterson said. “Now folks, let's make up our minds. I know we live in America where nobody gets involved in anybody else's situation. That shall not be the rule here. Does everybody understand? You say, ‘Well, I may be shot.’ Well, yeah, you may. Are you saved? You're going to heaven. You know, it's better than earth.”

**Palestinian Bible Society building bombed.** A bomb severely damaged the Palestinian Bible Society building in Gaza City. The building, located in the city center, housed the Teacher's Bookshop, Gaza's only Christian bookstore, according to the Baptist World Alliance. The building also includes a library and a community development center. It is the base for one of the largest relief agencies in the Gaza Strip. Hanna Massad, pastor of Gaza Baptist Church, said the massive explosion occurred around 2 a.m.,

April 15, causing damage much worse than that caused by a previous explosion, which happened a year ago. His wife, Suhad, directs the Bible Society's Gaza ministry.

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