

2nd Opinion: Longevity: Key to student ministry

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By Jeff Dooley

I was talking with Matt, a youth minister in Tennessee, asking him how he was doing in his first years of ministry. He said he was doing great and loving ministry. Matt and I began to reminisce. It seemed like just yesterday when he was one of my seventh-grade students in our youth group. We had a good time laughing about some of the teenage-boy pranks he and his buddies had pulled on some of our summer camp trips—some I am just finding out about many years later. I'm glad I did not know then what I know now.

I was standing on Waikiki Beach in Hawaii, conducting a beautiful wedding at sunset for Amanda, another former student who now is a recreation minister in Virginia. I was thinking to myself, "Where does the time go?"

How many student pastors get the opportunity to be part of the life of a student from middle school to marriage? I have come to realize these situations are rare in student ministry. I read the average tenure of a student pastor is 18 to 24 months. The frequently asked question to every student pastor is, "When are you going to pastor your own church?" I think

people have finally stopped asking that question of me.

DOWN HOME: What's interesting to all those men?

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DOWN HOME: What's interesting to all those men?

Stuck in an airport the other day, with time to kill and legs to stretch, I walked the concourse. On about the third or fourth lap, a sign caught my eye from high on a wall above magazines in a bookstore.

"Men's Interests," the sign said. A tall rack of books blocked the magazines below the sign.

"Well, what are 'men' 'interested' in these days?" I asked myself. Curiosity piqued, I took a detour from my concourse-walking and stepped inside the bookstore to find out.

I could've guessed, and so could you.

EDITORIAL: A time and place for healing wounds

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EDITORIAL: A time and place for healing wounds

If you could watch a wound heal, would you do it?

If so, plan to travel to Atlanta in just about a year. Baptists of all races and ethnicities from across Canada, Mexico and the United States will convene to [celebrate a new covenant](#) of committed, compassionate cooperation. Participants will spiritually and emotionally mend a wound that has disfigured the body of Christ for generations.

About 200 years ago, missions fervor compelled Baptists in America to cooperate so they could spread the gospel across the continent and around the globe. By 1845, however, their differences over slavery tore them apart—a denominational precursor to the Civil War.



So, for at least 162 years, Baptists have divided over race. To some extent, our churches and even conventions have integrated. But the wound inflicted by slavery has not healed enough so the four dominant African-American Baptist conventions and Anglo Baptists far and wide could come together for common passion and purpose.

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

Carter book prompts resignations. Fourteen members of an advisory group to the Atlanta-based Carter Center [resigned in protest](#) over former President Jimmy Carter's recent book and statements on the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate. At the same time, the [Central Conference of American Rabbis](#), a group that represents nearly 2,000 Reform rabbis, canceled a visit to the [Carter Center](#) during the group's scheduled March convention in Atlanta. The resignations and cancellation were prompted by

anger over a recently published book, [*Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*](#), which is critical of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians, and remarks Carter has made defending the book. Last month, former Carter Center Director Kenneth Stein resigned as a center fellow, saying the book is biased and marred with factual mistakes. Carter has defended the book as fair and thorough.

Christ's return in 2007 "somewhat likely," poll says. Twenty-five percent of Americans believe it is at least somewhat likely Jesus Christ will return in 2007, a poll from the Associated Press and AOL News shows. The poll, conducted by the international polling firm Ipsos, found 11 percent of those surveyed said it is "very likely" Jesus will return this year. An additional 14 percent said it was "somewhat likely." Twenty-five percent of those polled said it was "not too likely," compared to 42 percent who said it was "not at all likely." Eight percent said they did not know or were not sure. While a quarter of Americans polled said it is at least somewhat likely Jesus will return this year, views varied depending on religious persuasion. For example, 46 percent of white evangelical Christians believe it's at least somewhat likely Jesus will return this year, while 17 percent of Catholics and 10 percent of those with no religion feel the same way.

New IRS rules require receipts

for church donations

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New IRS rules require receipts for church donations

By **Jeff Diamant**

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The next time you toss dollar bills into the church collection plate, consider asking the usher for a receipt.

New federal rules for the 2007 tax year—which took effect Jan. 1—forbid tax deductions for charitable donations unless the taxpayer can prove the donation through receipts or other official financial records.

Church giving lacks external focus, study reveals

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Church giving lacks external focus, study reveals

By **Matt Vande Bunte**

Religion News Service

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (RNS)—An annual study of church giving shows most offerings go to activities and needs within local congregations, and activities focused beyond the congregations increasingly go unfunded as donations decline.

The authors, Sylvia and John Ronsvalle of Champaign, Ill.-based [empty tomb inc.](#), contend Christianity in the United States is becoming a “maintenance organization” that soon will have zero financial capacity for external ministry if the trends continue.

Semester missionaries merge vocational, ministerial callings

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Matt Miller
(left), a
semester
Go Now
Missions
missionary,
serves at
Greater
Good
Global
Support
Services.

Semester missionaries merge vocational, ministerial callings

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

ARLINGTON—Each week, Bryan Simpson leads a Bible study at Mitchell College in New London, Conn. At first, it was he and another person. Then someone else joined him. A third person has said he will start coming, but hasn't shown up yet.

And it doesn't matter to Simpson. He wants people to hear the gospel and study the Bible, but he's not focused on numbers. He's more concerned about discipling college students who have little knowledge of the Christian faith, helping them mature spiritually.



Matt Miller, a recent Stephen F. Austin State University graduate, explains his interest in mission in [this short video](#). (requires Windows Media Player)

People in house churches report greater satisfaction than conventional churchgoers

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People in house churches report

greater satisfaction than conventional churchgoers

By Adelle Banks

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Worshippers who attend services in independent house churches report higher levels of satisfaction than Christians in conventional church services, a new study shows.

[The Barna Group](#) interviewed more than 2,000 Americans about their experiences in traditional congregations and the nondenominational churches whose services are held in homes or other locations than a church building.

Jubilee USA urges multilateral debt relief

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Jubilee USA urges multilateral debt

relief

By Katherine Boyle

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A coalition of religious and secular groups is working to ensure this month marks not only the beginning of a new year, but also a fresh push to eliminate the debts owed by impoverished nations.

[Jubilee USA](#) is using 2007 to advocate multilateral debt relief for poor nations, claiming they can ill afford to repay wealthy nations and institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Do conservative evangelicals regret justifying Iraq war?

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Do conservative evangelicals regret justifying Iraq war?

By Robert Marus

ABP Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON (ABP)—As the number of American soldiers killed passes

3,000 and Congress debates President Bush's latest strategy for winning the war, some Christians who supported invading Iraq in 2003 are wrestling with whether the invasion was a "just war" after all.

While most progressive evangelicals, mainline Protestant leaders and the Roman Catholic Church opposed the war prior to the March 2003 invasion, many Baptists and other conservative evangelicals justified the war in Christian theological terms.

Texas Baptist Forum

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Texas Baptist Forum

Drink to that?

The Baptist church has a dilemma—to condone or condemn the drinking of alcohol ([Jan. 8](#)). Has our lust for building bigger churches caused our pulpits to be silent on this issue?

<-- • [Jump to online-only letters below](#)

Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com; 250 words maximum.



“The war in Iraq was unjust; to continue it now is criminal. There is no winning in Iraq. This was a war that should have never been fought—or won. It can’t be won, and the truth is that there are no good solutions now—that’s how unjust wars often turn out.”

Jim Wallis

Sojourners e-mail newsletter

“The emerging Christian generation is more like the world than their predecessors. I think that shows the aggressive nature of culture. ... We do not realize how aggressive and corrosive culture is in the lives of our kids.”

Gregory Kouckl

President of Stand to Reason in Signal Hill, Calif., commenting on research that shows young adults hold much more liberal views on extramarital sex, pornography, homosexuality and sexual fantasies than their elders (ABP)

“The whole ‘Jesus is my boyfriend’ thing is gross. Jesus is not your boyfriend. I mean, he is the lover of your soul, but he’s not going to take you out on a date on a Friday night.”

Connally Gilliam

Author of *Revelations of a Single Woman: Loving the Life I Didn’t Expect* (The Washington Times/RNS)

In 1884, Leo Tolstoy wrote, “Then as now, it was and is quite impossible to judge by a man’s life and conduct whether he is a believer or not.” The overwhelming obstacle why people refuse to believe in Christ is not Christ himself but rather those who call themselves Christians. We must set ourselves apart, by word and deed, from worldly ways. Is having a glass of wine more important than the risk of hindering a believer or nonbeliever?

We, as a church, must choose to embrace or reject drinking. If we choose to condone it, let’s condone it publicly by putting a frozen margarita machine in our family centers. If we choose to shun drinking, let’s be bold in our belief.

On the Move

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- **Leslie Anderson** to First Church in Whitesboro as children’s minister.
- **Martha Angell** to First Church in Amarillo as interim minister to children.
- **David Beirne** to Travis Church in Corpus Christi as pastor from Fox Avenue Church in Lewisville.
- **Paul Brand** has resigned as youth minister at First Church in Whitewright.