

DOWN HOME: Procrastination or patience?

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Remember the dead section of our favorite maple tree? I told you about it before.

Well, it's not there anymore.

A recap: The top eight or 10 feet of the center branch of our stately maple tree turned bitter brown and died. A boar squirrel scraped the bark off all the way around the trunk about 20 feet up, sprayed it to mark his turf, and waited for the leaves to die so he could use them to build the nest for his first offspring.



Following the advice of our local "tree doctor," I sprinkled red fox urine on the trunk. The squirrel, fearing its mortal enemy, decided a few leaves weren't worth becoming the main ingredient in a fox version of burgoo. So, he stayed away.

EDITORIAL: Confession comeback? Let's hope so

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Thirtysomething years ago, a young couple “got in trouble,” as we used to say back then. The girl was a bright, outgoing high school cheerleader, the delight of her prominent church, where her father was the pastor. The boy was a friendly, polite football player, not a star but good enough to make the team, and a member of the church’s youth group. They were well-liked and respected—the kind of kids you’d want your children to hang out with. But since biology is impervious to whether the participants are “good” or not, they did something scandalous, and she got pregnant.

Have you ever noticed how nothing travels faster than bad news about good people? All our school and half the town must’ve known about her condition before she got home from the doctor’s office.



If the next Sunday wasn't High Attendance Day at their church, you

couldn't convince the ushers otherwise. A huge crowd turned out. Human nature being what it is, the worshippers' motives were mixed. Some attended to support the humiliated pastor and wife. Others showed up to feast on their shame.

What happened that morning shocked every student in our school. That pastor-father commanded his daughter and her boyfriend to stand before their church and confess their sin. Their tears outnumbered their words, but they got it out: We disobeyed God. We brought shame upon our families, our church, ourselves. We are sorry.

Faith Digest

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NCC nominates new leader. The National Council of Churches has nominated a veteran educator and ecumenist to be its next general secretary. If affirmed next month by the council's governing board and general assembly, Michael Kinnamon will assume the helm of the New York-based ecumenical agency in January. Kinnamon, a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister and professor of ecumenical studies at Eden Theological School in St. Louis, serves on the NCC's governing board and chairs its justice and advocacy commission.

Conservative Episcopalians explore alternative church. Some Episcopal bishops and more than 200 Episcopal congregations have taken a first step toward forming a new alternative to the Episcopal Church that will unite conservatives irked by the church's liberal drift. Meeting in Pittsburgh, the Common Cause Council of Bishops brought together nine North American splinter groups to lay the groundwork for a conservative counterpart to the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. Conservative Episcopalians, a minority in the American church, have decried the church's stance on gay rights, especially the 2003 election of an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire.

Southerners give more to religious organizations

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Southerners give more to religious organizations

By Heather Donckels

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The numbers prove it: Southerners are more generous to their churches, while lagging in other categories of giving.

Using data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a new study by empty tomb inc. shows that in 2005, Southerners gave an average \$816.81 per household to church and religious organizations while Northeasterners gave only \$453.84. And the South has been outpacing the Northeast in religious giving almost 20 years.

The Preacher and the Presidents: Billy Graham in the White House

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Book Review

[*The Preacher and the Presidents: Billy Graham in the White House*](#)

by Nancy Gibbs & Michael Duffy (Center Street)

A deadly trio of temptations—money, sex and power—have ruined the lives of many influential people, including ministers. When he still was young, evangelist Billy Graham wisely created rules that would safeguard his ministry against any appearance of sexual or financial impropriety. He pledged never to be alone with any woman other than his wife, and he instructed his evangelistic association to place him on a salary no greater than the income of an average large-church pastor.

But as Gibbs and Duffy—veteran reporters for *Time* magazine—note, Graham learned lessons about succumbing to the temptations of power the hard way.

For more than 50 years, Graham received unprecedented access to the White House, serving as pastor, counselor and even political adviser to presidents. Along the way, the evangelist grew in his understanding of how a close relationship with the nation’s chief executive could either benefit or blemish his ministry—open doors for the spread of the gospel or tie the kingdom of God too closely to the kingdoms of this world.

The authors faithfully record innocent missteps such as when the young evangelist naively told reporters the details of a meeting with Harry Truman and then Graham and his associates, in their pistachio-green suits and white bucks, kneeled to pray on the White House lawn at the request of news photographers. Truman became incensed at what he saw as Graham’s grandstanding, and he did not reconcile with him until Graham visited his home in Independence, Mo., 18 years later and apologized profusely for the blunder.



What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com.

Texas Baptist Forum

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BGCT & the future

Tim Ahlen's innovative letter about "The Great Commission Initiative" ([Oct. 1](#)) appeared in the same issue as the editorial "If we don't change, this is just Round 1," which demonstrates a common-sense approach that is greatly needed.

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

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



“What’s centrally important is our concern for missions and evangelism, relief and development, human rights and theological reflection.”

Neville Callam

Baptist World Alliance general secretary (RNS)

“Please pray for me as I continue to meet with persons such as Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and Bill Richardson. I already have spent time with leaders such as John McCain, Mike Huckabee and Rudy Giuliani. I have spoken on the phone with persons such as Mitt Romney.”

Frank Page

Southern Baptist Convention president (RNS)

“The KKK is our own terrorist organization. They have murdered, lynched and terrorized thousands of people in this country, or inspired the same. It is disingenuous of us to say that someone in Saudi Arabia ought to do something about their (Muslim) hate groups and then us not do the same.”

Jeremy Lucas

Pastor of St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Athens, Ala., on his plans to organize a silent counter-protest to a rally by the Ku Klux Klan (Huntsville Times/RNS)

I served 24 years on the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board staff and five years at the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board. During this time, a major shift took place in the SBC, which preceded an equally dramatic shift in the BGCT.

As a former employee of both conventions, I have been an interested observer, but not participating in the politics. From the beginning, the problems were more about conflicting personalities than fundamental issues. All my friends on both sides believe the word of God is “inerrant.” Some say it without using this word.

Book by former student-body president aims to correct record on Little Rock

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Book by former student-body president aims to correct record on Little Rock

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (ABP)—Ralph Brodie has been waiting for 50 years to

tell his side of [the desegregation crisis at Little Rock Central High School](#). A lot of his classmates have been waiting, too.

“The main thing ... is that the student body of Central High in 1957-58 had a class full of extraordinary students who, both academically and athletically, would have been the envy of any high school in the country in normal times,” he said. “And, in extraordinary times, we really should look at them and be proud of their conduct, despite the fact that there might have been 50 or 60 kids in a 2,000-student body who caused problems.”

East Texas pastor to be nominated for BGCT 1st VP

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East Texas pastor to be nominated for BGCT 1st VP

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

East Texas pastor Mike Massar—whose church launched a satellite campus and has become involved in extensive hands-on worldwide missions under his leadership—will be nominated for first vice president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas at the BGCT annual meeting in Amarillo, Oct.

29-30.

Roger Paynter, pastor of First Baptist Church in Austin, announced his intention to nominate Massar, saying First Baptist Church in Tyler has “broadened the scope of its ministry” to an “amazing” degree during his 10 years as pastor.

Mike Massar

Rain couldn't put the brakes on church's car rally

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Braving
the rain,
Roger
(left) and
Aaron
Simmons
of
Mesquite
check
under the
hood of a
1955 Ford
F-100
pickup
truck that
was
exhibited
at a car
and truck
rally
sponsored
by Mimosa
Lane
Baptist
Church of
Mesquite
and its Pit
Stop
Ministry.
(Photo/Ken
Camp)

Rain couldn't put the brakes on church's car rally

In spite of intermittent rain throughout the day, visitors stopped at Mimosa Lane Baptist Church in Mesquite to see more than 50 cars, trucks and motorcycles on display at the church's third annual Motorama rally.

The church's Pit Stop Ministry—a volunteer program that provides basic auto maintenance and simple repairs, particularly for single mothers and needy families—sponsored the event. The church asked exhibitors to make a donation to Texas Baptist Men disaster relief as their entry fee, and the car rally raised \$640 for disaster relief.

Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteers from Dallas Baptist Association gave away 330 hot dogs, and as visitors learned firsthand about TBM's disaster relief ministry, many searched out organizers to make a donation, George Felker of Pit Stop Ministry noted.

Presidential hopefuls look to theologian Reinhold Niebuhr

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Presidential hopefuls look to theologian Reinhold Niebuhr

By **Benedicta Cipolla**

Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Thirty-six years after his death, Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr seems more alive than ever. Perhaps not since President Jimmy Carter acknowledged Niebuhr’s influence during his 1976 campaign has his name been on the lips of so many politicians and pundits.

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama told *New York Times* columnist David Brooks that Niebuhr is “one of my favorite philosophers.”

Reinhold Niebuhr

On the Move

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On the Move

- **Dale Berry** to Bethel Church in Nocona as pastor from First Church in Jacksboro.

- **Carl Bilderback** has resigned as pastor of First Church in Pottsville.
 - **Craig Blakeslee** to First Church in Harlingen as minister of children and discipleship from Arroyo City Chapel in Arroyo City, where he was pastor.
 - **Shannon Bond** to First Church in Bangs as minister of youth.
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Texas Tidbits

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Texas Tidbits

Childcare offered for BGCT annual meeting. Free childcare will be provided for messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting Oct. 29-30 in Amarillo. Care for children ages 2 months through 10 years will be offered at the north entrance of First Baptist Church at 1208 S. Tyler Street. First Baptist Church childcare providers are licensed by the state of Texas. All workers have been processed through background checks and received formal training in caring for children. The service will be offered Oct. 29 from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Oct. 30 from 6:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Advance reservations are required by calling Elaine Clark at (806) 373-2891, ext. 255 or via e-mail at elainec@fbc-Amarillo.org. Children will receive breakfast on Monday and Tuesday and lunch and dinner on Monday, with snacks and beverages available at all times.

CityReach West Texas scheduled. CityReach West Texas, scheduled immediately before and after the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting, Oct. 29-30 in Amarillo, provides Texas Baptists opportunities for hands-on involvement in missions. Projects include constructing a house with Habitat for Humanity, servant evangelism, prayerwalking and block parties. For more information on CityReach, call (888) 944-2400.