

Urban population crunch prompts crowds in church

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Urban population crunch prompts crowds in church

By Jennifer Koons

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Predictions that increased urbanization around the world would lead to a more secularized society are unfounded, and in fact the opposite may be true, according to a new report from the [United Nations Population Fund](#).

“Rapid urbanization was expected to mean the triumph of rationality, secular values and the demystification of the world, as well as the relegation of religion to a secondary role,” the report said. “Instead, there has been a renewal in religious interest in many countries.”

The global population influx into urban centers has produced an increased interest in religion—just the opposite of expectations.
(United Nations / RNS)

Cybercolumn by John Duncan: Above, where Christ is

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CYBER COLUMN: Above, where Christ is

By John Duncan

I'm sitting here under the old oak tree, wondering where the summer has gone. Here in Texas, August beckons. Gerard Manley Hopkins, the poet, once quipped, "Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain." I have been away from the church for a sabbatical of sorts, rest, finding pleasure in reading and writing and resting and longing to return to my post as pastor to be with the people of God. The Lord is sending my dry roots rain. I feel refreshed.

John Duncan

I find myself thinking of the future, climbing Jacob's ladder to peer in to what God has in store; gazing at Jeremiah's future and a hope; scoping Paul's letter to the Colossians (3:1) from prison where from the deep and dark he declares, "Keep seeking those things above, where Christ is... ." I think of the future, one with no land phones and digital, of green cars in an eco-friendly society and HD TV where at least we yearn to see the Dallas Cowboys or Dallas Mavericks in multi-color championships on crystal-clear screens. I think of the future, cancer walks and cancer research and cancer cures on the horizon. I think of the future, political speeches winding down and electronic election polls minus the chads; of hyped cars with powerhouse engines advertised with mega "horsepower"; of outsourcing in business and televised conference calls in HD TV with clear sound like talking to the neighbor next door; and of churches with digitized sound and big screens and bands like the Beatles echoing praise choruses and rhythmically blasting hymns high to the heavens. The future is wide screen and wide open. Yes, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is.

Pope's assertion finds parallels in Baptist successionism

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Pope's assertion finds parallels in Baptist successionism

By Robert Dilday

Virginia Religious Herald

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP)—Pope Benedict XVI's [recent reaffirmation](#) that the “true church” lies in an unbroken line of succession from Christ and his apostles might resonate in an unlikely place—conservative Baptists who trace the roots of their denomination back to Jesus—and sometimes beyond, to John the Baptist.

Baptist successionism—a theory which emerged on the 19th-century American frontier—claims to find a line of historical continuity in doctrine and practice from Jesus himself to today's Baptist churches. True Christian churches, goes the theory, are marked by distinctive baptistic characteristics, such as autonomous government, closed communion and baptism by immersion. Such churches have existed since New Testament times and can be traced through history in dissenting groups such as the Donatists, Albigenses, Cathari, Waldenses and Anabaptists.

Baptists, other Christians push for reform in farm bill

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Baptists, other Christians push for reform in farm bill

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (ABP) —Baptists and other Christian groups are asking Congress to seize an opportunity to reform the way the government relates to farmers—for the sake of the poor in the United States and around the globe, they say.

A group of Christian leaders have urged House members dealing with the [2007 Farm Bill](#) to consider re-prioritizing how the government doles out support for farm subsidies, food stamps, rural development and foreign aid.

Harry Potter, move aside. Christian fantasy has arrived

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Harry Potter, move aside: Christian fantasy has arrived.

By Juli Cragg Hilliard

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Whether their books feature dragons, firefish or sword-wielding soccer moms, writers of Christian fantasy fiction are clamoring for a spot in the marketplace.

Fantasy fiction in general commands a large following and copious real estate in bookstores. But while websites and Christian writing conferences brim with writers working on Christian fantasy, most publishers are just starting to be open to these new books.

RIGHT or WRONG? No-smoking

ordinances

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RIGHT or WRONG? No-smoking ordinances

Cities and towns across the country are debating no-smoking ordinances. This seems imbalanced—the wants of some citizens are overruling the rights of others. Where should a Christian come down?

Balancing the rights of individuals against the health and welfare of the public has been hotly contested. Should a veteran who has risked life to defend freedom have the right to smoke in a public place? Increasingly, local governments are saying “No” and writing strict ordinances that prohibit or limit smoking in public spaces. Is this an infringement on freedom that Christians should resist?

[Previous Columns](#)

Special teachers minister to

special friends at West Texas church

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Benny Thompson (center), along with his wife, Martha, leads a Sunday school class for the mentally challenged at Corinth Baptist Church near Cisco.

Special teachers minister to special

friends at West Texas church

By George Henson

Staff Writer

CISCO—Corinth Baptist Church sits almost exactly halfway between Cisco and Eastland on an unpaved road. While it's quite a way from any town, distance has not stopped the church from reaching arms of love to developmentally challenged adults throughout the region.

Martha Thompson and her husband, Benny, had taught a class of young couples for several years before they started a special friends class for developmentally challenged people five years ago.

BWA celebrates freedom, promotes reconciliation

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BWA celebrates freedom, promotes reconciliation

By Tony Cartledge

N.C. Biblical Recorder

ACCRA, Ghana (ABP)—The twin themes of freedom in Christ and reconciliation that leads to unity echoed throughout the July 2-7 annual gathering of the Baptist World Alliance.

With more than 110 million members, the Alliance is the world's largest Baptist umbrella organization. Meeting in West Africa, delegates elected Neville Callam—a Jamaican whose ancestors were slaves from West Africa—as the body's new general secretary. Denton Lotz, who has been general secretary since 1988, will retire later this year.

Neville Callam

Jamaican pastor elected BWA general secretary in historic vote

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Jamaican pastor elected BWA general secretary in historic vote

By Trennis Henderson

Kentucky Western Recorder

ACCRA, Ghana (ABP)—Neville Callam, a Jamaican pastor, theologian and author, was unanimously elected July 6 as the first non-white general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. He is also the 102-year-old alliance's first leader not from the United States or Europe.

Callam, senior pastor of two congregations in Jamaica, is a former BWA vice president and former president of the Jamaica Baptist Union. Active in BWA for more than 20 years, he currently serves on its implementation task force, which restructures the organization's work for the future.

New Baptist
World
Alliance
General
Secretary
Neville
Callam
speaks at the
BWA's
service of
memory and
reconciliation
at Ghana's
Cape Coast
Slave Castle.

Floods pour in; Baptist love pours out

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Floods pour in; Baptist love pours out

By Barbara Bedrick

Texas Baptist Communications

WICHITA FALLS—As Texas Baptist Men volunteers cut out soaked sheetrock and carried out a ruined piano, organ and other debris from inside Primera Iglesia Bautista, members continued to worship—at a nearby funeral home.

The temporary church sanctuary has not stopped God from saving lives. Pastor Simon Flores believes holding worship services at the funeral home actually led two mothers to Christ.

First
Baptist
Church of
Eastland
member
Carol
Brittain
holds two
of the
precious
memories
she saved
from
recent
floods.
Water
rose 10
feet in her
home, but
Texas
Baptist
Men
volunteers
and the
BGCT
Disaster
Response
Team
have
moved
quickly to
help.

BaptistWay Bible Series for July 29: Toward a more meaningful life

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BaptistWay Bible Series for July 29

Toward a more meaningful life

- Ecclesiastes 9:7-10; 12:1-8, 13-14

[By Andy Rodgers](#)

Bible Studies for Life Series for July 29: Agreeing on the basics

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Bible Studies for Life Series for July 29

Agreeing on the basics

- Acts 15:1-2, 4-5, 12-15, 23-29

[By David Harp](#)