

Christian Churches Together seeks united front against poverty

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PASADENA, Calif. (ABP)—Leaders from 36 Christian bodies and religious organizations have issued a joint statement addressing domestic poverty and urging constituents to alleviate the problem as part of their Christian duty.

“As Christian leaders in the wealthiest society on earth, we are called by God to urge our churches and nation to strengthen and expand efforts to address the scandal of widespread poverty in the United States and around the world,” the statement said. “The gospel and our ethical principles place our service of the poor and vulnerable and our work for justice at the center of Christian life and witness.”

Leaders convened at a meeting organized by [Christian Churches Together](#), a loose coalition begun in 2001 to unify the “diverse expressions of Christian faith today.” It includes representatives from evangelical, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Protestant congregations.

Leonid Kishkovsky of the Orthodox Church of America said the annual gathering is “good news” for American Christians.

Human trafficking—exotic and close to home

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Human trafficking—exotic and close to home

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

AUSTIN—Lauran Bethell likes dark streets and late nights. She loves prostitutes.

She's a self-described "missionary who hangs out in red-light districts."

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

No pope for Anglicans. An Anglican-Catholic commission has warned that doctrinal disputes within the Anglican Communion are an obstacle to unity between the two churches. An upcoming report by the [International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission](#) lays out areas of doctrinal agreement and disagreement between the two churches and outlines ways to continue ecumenical dialogue. But contrary to rumors, officials said, the report does not propose a plan for Anglicans to unite under the pope. “Talk of plans to reunite the two communions is, sadly, much exaggerated,” the commission said. The “present context” of Anglican dispute would make it premature to issue a formal Anglican-Catholic statement of shared beliefs, which was the goal set by Anglican and Catholic bishops who launched the commission in 2000.

Beliefnet names ‘most influential black spiritual leaders.’ Two Texas pastors—T.D. Jakes of the Potter’s House in Dallas and Kirbyjohn Caldwell of Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston—have been listed among the 17 “most influential black spiritual leaders” by [Beliefnet](#), an interfaith website. “Whether inspiring their congregations to stand up against social injustice or urging a focus on God-centered family values, African-American religious leaders are a crucial component of a rich and diverse spiritual landscape,” the Beliefnet editors wrote in their introduction to the list. Others on the list include William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, and Gardner Taylor, senior pastor emeritus of Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Author seeks to connect the dots between sex and God

March 3, 2007

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Author seeks to connect the dots between sex and God

By Charles Honey

Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (RNS)—About halfway through his new book, [Sex God](#), Rob Bell recalls a scene of exquisite torture at a middle-school dance.

He was 12, lined up with all the boys on one side of the cafeteria, while all the girls were lined up on the other. Then he worked up the guts to “bravely venture across this massive chasm” and ask a girl to dance.

Continuous ministry key to

transforming neighborhood

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Former Hardin-Simmons University students Lindsey Snodgrass (left) and Cassie Cash help decorate a Friendship House designed to bring a community together. (HSU Photo)

Continuous ministry key to transforming neighborhood

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

ABILENE—Two years ago, Hardin-Simmons University called Danyel and Brandon Rogers to a special task—transform a neighborhood.

After moving into the community and building relationships with their

neighbors, they started ministry programs for children and mothers.

SBC leaders acknowledge Baptist bloggers here to stay

March 3, 2007

Posted: 3/02/07

SBC leaders acknowledge Baptist bloggers here to stay

By Phillip Jordon

Associated Baptist Press

JACKSON, Tenn. (ABP)—Like it or not, Baptist bloggers are here to stay, speakers at a conference on Baptist identity agreed.

And people who want to bring healing to the Southern Baptist Convention should listen to the bloggers' critique, several speakers added during the conference, titled "Baptist Identity II: Convention, Cooperation and Controversy."

Page cautiously optimistic about Southern Baptists

March 3, 2007
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Page cautiously optimistic about Southern Baptists

By Tony Cartledge

North Carolina Biblical Recorder

PHILADELPHIA—The future is bright for the Southern Baptist Convention if its members have the right mindset, follow the right motives and adopt the right methodology, [SBC President Frank Page](#) told a group of Baptist state newspaper editors.

Repeating themes he has emphasized in several recent speeches, Page said he is challenging the SBC to be “more authentic in faith and more intentional in sharing the gospel,” to “reach the lost and challenge the saved.”

Will associations, conventions

become relics?

March 3, 2007
Posted: 3/02/07

Will associations, conventions become relics?

By Phillip Jordan

Associated Baptist Press

JACKSON, Tenn. (ABP)—Baptist state conventions and associations will soon cease to exist as they are currently structured, according to Mike Day, director of missions for the Mid-South Baptist Association in Memphis, Tenn.

“A new paradigm is on the horizon,” Day told participants at the “Baptist Identity II” conference at Union University. “It is not a fully developed paradigm. It is at the stage where it is embraced by a few, touted by a few, and discussed and dismissed by the many. But it is emerging.”

Tolerance, not uniformity, needed to keep SBC together

March 3, 2007
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Tolerance, not uniformity, needed to keep SBC together

By Phillip Jordan

Associated Baptist Press

JACKSON, Tenn. (ABP)—Dissatisfaction brewing within the Southern Baptist Convention “could re-ignite a battle we don’t want to fight again,” David Dockery warned at a conference on Baptist identity.

The need for greater unity among Southern Baptists emerged as the overriding theme at the “Baptist Identity II: Convention, Cooperation and Controversy” conference held at Union University.

Texas Baptist Forum

March 3, 2007

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Texas Baptist Forum

‘All will be well’

The [Feb. 19 editorial](#) notes valid concerns of the Baptist General Convention of Texas—missions funding, recent parliamentary rulings, etc. I believe reports from the Executive Board and the convention’s executive leadership will very much satisfy the concerns of all Texas Baptists who can

be satisfied.

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

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

Out ((Loud))

"The Holy Spirit works best when we're weak. There's pressure in the church to look like you're strong; it's a false sense of what it's like to be in Christ."

Kenneth Fong

Pastor of Evergreen Church in Los Angeles (Baptist World Alliance)

"I'm running for a secular position. I subscribe to what Abraham Lincoln called America's political religion. The Constitution and the rule of law are the highest promises I would make in taking the oath of office."

Mitt Romney

Presidential candidate, discussing the potential impact of his Mormon faith (USA Today/RNS)

"If your name is Barack Hussein Obama, you can expect it, some of that. I think the majority of voters know that I'm a member of the United Church of Christ, and that I take my faith seriously."

Barack Obama

Presidential candidate, explaining he doesn't believe voters have a 'litmus test' on religion or his childhood years spent in Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim country (RNS)

"If God is on anyone's side in this mess, he's on everyone's side."

Oliver Thomas

Minister and lawyer, commenting on strife in the Middle East (USA Today/RNS)

The matters this editorial mentions have been and are being addressed in appropriate ways by appropriate leaders, and all will be well, and we should not doubt that that is so.

For every true or perceived problem in church life, 1,000 great things are happening. They certainly deserve Texas Baptists' continued attention while problems are being corrected.

Mainstream Baptists cite freedom as Baptist hallmark

March 3, 2007
Posted: 3/02/07

Mainstream Baptists cite freedom as Baptist hallmark

By Marv Knox

Editor

IRVING—A refrain of freedom echoed throughout the [Mainstream Baptist Network](#) convocation Feb. 23-24.

About 80 participants gathered from across the South and Southwest for the sixth-annual event. The Mainstream movement is composed of Baptists who strive to preserve traditional Baptist doctrine and distinctives in the

face of fundamentalism.

Christians use movie to spotlight modern-day human trafficking

March 3, 2007

Posted: 3/02/07

Christians use movie to spotlight modern-day human trafficking

By Robert Marus

ABP Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON (ABP)—Nearly 200 years after [William Wilberforce](#) brought an end to England's slave trade, a wide audience has a chance to see his story told on film. But the producers of [Amazing Grace](#), and a wide coalition of Christian and other groups, hope the legendary reformer's inspiring tale will focus the West's attention on a more disturbing story—the modern-day slave trade.

The feature-length film uses the beloved hymn for its title and organizing theme in telling Wilberforce's story. After rediscovering his Christian faith in his 20s, the member of Parliament struggled for nearly three decades in

the 18th and 19th centuries to abolish England's trade in African slaves.

Actor
Youssou
N'Dour
portrays
freed slave
Oloudah
Equiano in
*Amazing
Grace*, a
new film
about
British
abolitionist
William
Wilberforce.
Equiano
worked
with
Wilberforce
to ban
slavery in
the British
Empire.
(RNS photo
courtesy
Samuel
Goldwyn
Films)