

# Baptist Briefs

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**Students to learn firsthand about global development.** Three students with Texas ties—Samford University’s Mary Beth Gilbert of Dallas, Trinity University’s Emily Morrow of Aledo and Gordon College’s Meredith Wilkinson of Waco—will participate this summer in a seven-week Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missions immersion experience focused on the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals. They are among 12 college students and recent graduates who will have the opportunity see firsthand how missions personnel are working to reach the goals. Sponsored by the CBF Student.Go program, participants will travel to Romania, Ethiopia, Uganda, Haiti, New York City and Washington, D.C. Students will have the opportunity to witness ministries that relate to all eight of the goals focused on hunger, education, child mortality, gender equality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability and economic development. Students also will visit the United Nations’ headquarters in New York City, the ONE Campaign headquarters and Bread for the World in Washington, D.C., to learn how they can be advocates for hungry and hurting people around the world, and they will attend the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

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**Baptist pastor released from prison.** Zaur Balaev, the Baptist pastor from Azerbaijan who was sentenced to two years in prison Aug. 8, 2007, was freed from prison March 19. “Baptists from all over the world rejoice in

God's answer to our prayers for the release of our brother, Zaur Balaev," said Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam. "His patience in suffering and courage in the midst of trial has provided for us a splendid example of discipleship in the modern world. We look forward to giving him a platform to talk to Baptists about his faith and his experience."

**Bangladesh leader named human rights award recipient.** The Baptist World Alliance will present its 2008 Denton and Janice Lotz Human Rights Award to Dennis Dilip Datta, a Baptist leader in Bangladesh recognized for his advocacy for restoration of democracy and establishment of religious freedom in his country. Datta is founding general secretary and current president of the National Christian Fellowship of Bangladesh, which takes special interest in human rights causes. Datta, former president and general secretary of the Bangladesh Baptist Fellowship, has served on the BWA General Council and as a member of the BWA Commission on Freedom & Justice and the communications committee. The human rights award will be presented to Datta during the General Council meeting in July in Prague, the Czech Republic.

**CBF receives \$1 million gift.** The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has received an anonymous \$1 million gift to fund micro-finance loans in poor countries and other CBF ministries. Half of the \$1 million gift will be used for a new finance initiative coordinated through the CBF Foundation. The group currently is conducting due-diligence research on creating a fund designed to give the organization and its partner churches and ministries a way to invest funds in micro-finance banks around the globe. Micro-finance banks lend small amounts of money to people in developing countries as start-up funds for small businesses. The donor designated the other \$500,000 of the gift for a number of Fellowship-supported ministries,

including equipping CBF field personnel with computers, supporting missions opportunities for undergraduate students, and care and wellness programs for missionaries.

**Baptist women's leader dies.** Judith Chambers of Canada, president of the North American Baptist Women's Union from 2002 to 2007, died March 14. During her tenure as president, the organization upgraded its communications, sought a deeper understanding of relationships across cultures, enlisted young women on the union's Young Adult Committee, and focused on leadership training. She was a public educator more than 30 years and a longtime missions volunteer.

**Schools' group picks leader.** The International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities has elected Michael Arrington, provost of Carson-Newman College, as executive director. Arrington, 62, succeeds Thomas Corts, who in September was named by President Bush to coordinate education initiatives for the United States Agency for International Development. Arrington will retire as provost at Carson-Newman effective at the close of the academic year.

**South Louisiana church seeks mission volunteers.** First Baptist Church of Houma, La., will begin construction on a Christian school May 1 and needs mission volunteers to help with the project in order to have the building ready for students Aug. 1. Adequate housing and shower facilities are available at no charge to volunteers. Contact Dean Legg or Steve Folmar for more information at (985) 851-2520.

**Mohler recuperating from surgery.** Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has undergone successful surgery to remove a tumor from his colon. The surgery was performed in Louisville, Ky., March 20. Results of pathological testing revealed the tumor was not cancerous. Doctors expect Mohler, 48, to have a full recovery.

**Ouachita dean nominated for CBF post.** Hal Bass, a dean at Ouachita Baptist University, has been nominated to be moderator-elect of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Bass is a native of Corpus Christi who graduated from Baylor University and Vanderbilt University. He teaches political science and is dean of the School of Social Sciences at Ouachita. North Carolina pastor Jack Glasglow is the current moderator-elect. He will assume the office of moderator June 20 at the conclusion of the CBF General Assembly in Memphis, Tenn. Harriet Harral of Fort Worth is the fellowship's current moderator, and she will become chair of the nominating committee after the general assembly.

**SBC preschool/children's registration opens.** Registration is open for families planning to enroll their children in June 8-11 preschool childcare or the children's conference in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Indianapolis, Ind. For all information regarding registration, visit [www.sbc.net](http://www.sbc.net) and click on "2008 SBC Annual Meeting" then "Children/Students."

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.