

DOWN HOME: Her world grows & also shrinks

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We're breathing easier at our house these days. Molly, our youngest daughter, returned home after studying in Europe for a semester.

Back when I was in college, I thought "suffering for Jesus" as a summer missionary in Colorado was pretty exotic. I never dreamed of spending a semester overseas.

But Baylor University's international studies program figured large when Molly evaluated where to go to college. And thanks to scholarships and variations in tuition, she wound up studying at the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands for not much more than the cost of a normal semester in Waco. So, her dream became a reality.

Joanna and I watched from afar. Through the semester, we traded instant messages online and even talked through Skype, a telephone program that works on my laptop computer. We monitored Facebook for new pictures of our darlin' daughter in exotic places.

EDITORIAL: Why can't we all disagree agreeably?

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EDITORIAL: Why can't we all disagree agreeably?

You probably aren't surprised to learn we get a lot of mail here at the Baptist *Standard*. For generations, Baptists have interpreted their foundational doctrines—soul competency and the priesthood of all believers—to embrace a corollary: the right to write a letter to the editor. That's good. Soul competency and individual priesthood affirm God's grace in the life of each Christian. So, we expect to learn from each other as grace works in our lives. And even when we read letters with which we disagree, at least we learn about others' perspectives. At the *Standard*, we also value letters to the editor because we value our fellowship with the believers who write them.



An occupational hazard of being a newspaper editor is receiving mail from people who think you're (a) dumb, (b) mistaken, (c) doing a crummy job, (d) preparing to roast in hell or (e) all of the above. Readers never see the majority of those letters, because people who set out to prove points (a) through (e) usually blow past the *Standard*'s 250-word limit before they

even get warmed up. Then, by the time I offer to publish a condensed letter, they've calmed down and don't feel compelled to condemn me to a fate worse than death.

While I hate to admit it, I'm lousy at predicting what will set readers off. (One exception: Anything about worship music generates tons of mail.) When I fret, nothing happens. Then, when an "innocuous" edition comes out, the letters pour.

Those are the weeks when friends offer sympathy, but I tell them I've got it easy compared to pastors. Readers can take me to task, but they live elsewhere, and I worship in the company of my friends. But a pastor gets criticism and then has to stand in the pulpit on Sunday and see the faces of the folks who are after him. Now, that's a challenge, and it's a pity more people don't appreciate how hard it is.

New HPU lectureship weds evangelism to ethics

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Jimmy Allen (2nd from left), David Sapp (2nd from right) and Richard Jackson (right) delivered the inaugural Currie-Strickland Distinguished Lectures in Christian Ethics at Howard Payne University. Gary Elliston (center, back) endowed the lectures in honor of David Currie (left) and in memory of Phil Strickland, whose widow, Carolyn, attended the event.

New HPU lectureship weds evangelism to ethics

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

BROWNWOOD—Evangelism and ethics both grow out of a vibrant relationship with the God who is love, speakers told participants at the inaugural Currie-Strickland Distinguished Lectures in Christian Ethics at [Howard Payne University](#).

People cannot fully come to know God apart from the Bible, but they cannot really know the Bible apart from God, said David Sapp, pastor of Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga.

IN FOCUS: Hopeful conversations across Texas

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IN FOCUS: Hopeful conversations across Texas

It has been a privilege for me to travel throughout much of Texas during the last month and see God at work in many of our churches and institutions.

I had the opportunity to meet with more than 1,000 of our pastors and numerous leaders of our institutions. I have been on the campuses of several of our universities, met with more than 90 percent of our directors of missions, been engaged in conversations with some of our Baptist Student Ministry directors and interns, and preached in several of our

churches. I was privileged to attend the annual Woman's Missionary Union of Texas meeting, the Hispanic preaching conference and the minister of education retreat. In each situation, there was a spirit of optimism and a desire to work together in our kingdom assignment.



Missions, evangelism and discipleship (through Sunday school or other small groups) were at the heart of the conversations. Questions were raised about what we need to do to better reflect the ethnic diversity of Texas and how to allow Texas Baptists 35 years old and younger to become more involved in the leadership of our churches. A strong loyalty to our schools and agencies was expressed from alumni and families who had been directly affected by BGCT partners.

Some misconceptions were addressed. Our recent reduction of budget led to the belief that giving through the BGCT Cooperative Program was declining. Fortunately, that is not true. At the end of April, our gifts through the Texas CP were slightly ahead of last year. The majority of BGCT operating funds comes from two sources—Cooperative Program giving from BGCT churches and investment income from funds provided over the years through faithful Texas Baptists. The 2008 BGCT budget called for an increase in CP giving of about \$3.4 million, or 8.5 percent. It also projected the use of \$6.8 million in investment funds, which is \$1.9 million beyond the level called for by a new state regulation that went into effect this year. As a result, we anticipate BGCT budget income about \$5.3 million less than what was projected. I'm hopeful the trend of increased giving will continue so we can approach the 2009 budget realistically and hopefully.



Abilene church leads drive to sweeten ministry to troops in Iraq

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Captain Matthew Van Hook, a battalion chaplain, is seeking to give troops in Iraq a welcoming place to find respite from their battles—a coffeehouse at Camp Taji called the Mud House.

Abilene church leads drive to sweeten ministry to troops in Iraq

By **George Henson**

Staff Writer

ABILENE—[Pioneer Drive Baptist Church in Abilene](#) is spearheading what has become a communitywide drive to help sweeten a chaplain's ministry to troops in Iraq.

Capt. Matthew Van Hook, a battalion chaplain, is seeking to give troops a welcoming place to find respite—a coffeehouse at Camp Taji called the Mud House.

Texas Baptist Forum

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Texas Baptist Forum

Climate change

Thank you for printing John Christy's excellent article on global warming ([April 28](#)). As a climate scientist, he is in a position to expose much of the overreaching we see on the subject—the bulldozer approach to rushing us all into acceptance of Al Gore's brainchild.

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

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

250 words maximum.



"We deplore those who are led astray—those Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, evangelicals, Pentecostals and many others who cut Christ's robes like bandits, who are like the soldiers who crucified Christ, who ripped apart Christ's holy coat."

Aleksei D. Zorin

Chief Russian Orthodox priest in Stary Oskol, Russia, in a televised sermon that denounced Protestant "sects" (New York Times/RNS)

"Whenever we see euphemisms in use, we can know that something morally dubious is going on.

Torture is not 'torture'; it is 'enhanced interrogation.' Genocide is not 'murder'; it is 'special treatment' or 'ethnic cleansing.' And a developing human being in its first stages is not a 'baby' but a 'potential life.'"

David Gushee

Ethics professor at Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology (ABP)

"To avoid misunderstandings I would like to say: I was atheist and I stay atheist."

Mikhail Gorbachev

Former Soviet leader, debunking rumors he converted to Catholicism (RNS)

There have been many articles and essays on the need to go slow on trying to control climate change. In a recent edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, Steven Hayward, author of the annual “Index of Leading Environmental Indicators,” demonstrates the mathematical chances for reaching the 80 percent reduction in emissions by 2050 being pushed by the major presidential candidates and the environmental lobby. In short, it ain’t gonna happen, and wishing won’t make it so.

Ken Boren

Methodists vote to retain policies on homosexuality

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Methodists vote to retain policies on homosexuality

By Daniel Burke

Religion News Service

FORT WORTH (RNS)—The United Methodist Church at its General Conference in Fort Worth held to its traditional rules on homosexuality, refusing to support or celebrate same-sex unions and maintaining language that calls homosexual activity “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Nearly 1,000 delegates at the quadrennial General Conference spent almost a full day debating Methodist policies on homosexuality. While many Methodists at the assembly acknowledged sharp disagreement within their church on sexuality and biblical interpretation, delegates voted down efforts that would reflect that division in church rules or social policies.

On the Move

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On the Move

- **Joe Carbanaro** to First United Methodist Church in Denton as business administrator from First Church in Denton.
 - **Rick Cochran** to First Church in Argyle as music minister from The Church at Trophy Lakes in Trophy Club.
 - **Jim Gatliff** to Hunt Association as director of missions.
 - **Bryant Johnson** to Enloe Church in Enloe as pastor.
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Future Focus Committee examines Cooperative Program giving trends

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Future Focus Committee examines Cooperative Program giving trends

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

DALLAS—A committee formed to look at the long-range future of the Baptist General Convention of Texas began by examining the past.

At its initial May 5 meeting, the [BGCT Future Focus Committee](#) reviewed the work of previous study committees and examined Cooperative Program giving trends over the last 10 years.

Expert offers tips to manage

mix of religion and politics

May 8, 2008

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Expert offers tips to manage mix of religion and politics

By **Marv Knox**

Editor

ABILENE, Texas—Religion and politics inevitably will mix—especially in the U.S. presidential campaign—but that does not mean Americans should sanction a free-for-all, church-state expert Melissa Rogers insisted.

Rogers, director of the [Center for Religion & Public Affairs](#) at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., delivered the annual T.B. Maston Christian Ethics Lectures at Hardin-Simmons University's [Logsdon Seminary](#) in Abilene.

Melissa Rogers

**See related
articles:**

- Expert offers tips to manage mix of religion and politics

- [Ground-rules recommended for religion in public schools](#)

Future Focus Committee examines Cooperative Program giving trends

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Ground-rules recommended for religion in public schools

By Marv Knox

Editor

ABILENE—Whatever the U.S. Supreme Court ultimately decides, communities should strive to have better conversations about the role of religion in public schools, Melissa Rogers told participants at the T.B. Maston Christian Ethics Lectures at Hardin-Simmons University's [Logsdon Seminary](#).

Rogers, director of the [Center for Religion & Public Affairs](#) at Wake Forest University, offered a few ground-rules for guiding the religion-in-schools debate in communities across the nation.

BaptistWay Bible Series for May 11: When the going gets tough

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BaptistWay Bible Series for May 11

When the going gets tough

• 2 Kings 18:1-19, 29-31; 19:1-11, 14-20

[By Kenneth Jordan](#)