

EDITORIAL: Race relations, pastors & grace

March 28, 2008

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Barack Obama and Jeremiah Wright have raised two issues that are both sensitive and explosive—race in America and the relationship between pastors and churches.

The last time we saw such a clear picture of our U.S. racial divide occurred more than a dozen years ago, when a jury declared O.J. Simpson not guilty. Lately, we've seen endless news clips and YouTube loops of [Wright's angry sermons](#) on white racism and Obama's response. We've watched a plethora of pundits tar Obama with Wright's brush, theorizing the presidential candidate must agree with his former pastor, or else he would have moved his church membership.



Sadly, we haven't heard from many folks who seem willing to learn from what we're seeing and hearing. Since the presidential nomination hasn't

been wrapped up, we've got Democrats bashing Democrats and Republicans exulting over an "October surprise" in March. But few voices have asked how we can parse reason from rhetoric.

Racial relationships are tenuous, and racial reconciliation is hard work. That's true even under the best of circumstances, which excludes most of what passes for racial relationships in this country.

Faith Digest

March 28, 2008

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Faith Digest

ACU freshmen get cool gadgets. Abilene Christian University will be the first university in the nation to provide all incoming freshmen with an Apple iPhone or an iPod touch, according to school officials. ACU, which is affiliated with the Churches of Christ, said 93 percent of students already bring a computer to campus. iPhones or iPods will be distributed beginning this fall and will allow students to receive homework alerts, answer in-class surveys and quizzes, and check their meal and account balances, along with more than a dozen other web applications, said Kevin Roberts, the school's chief information officer.

[Read more...](#)

Bin Laden targets pope over Muhammad cartoons. A new audio

recording by Osama bin Laden accused Pope Benedict XVI of participating in a “new crusade” against Islam, including the publication of cartoons that depict the Prophet Muhammad. “Your publication of these drawings, part of a new crusade in which the pope of the Vatican has a significant role, is a confirmation on your part that the war continues,” bin Laden said in the recording, addressed to “the wise persons of the European Union.” A Vatican spokesman quickly responded, calling bin Laden’s accusation “totally unfounded,” and stressing the pope had condemned the offending images. The drawings in question are evidently the 12 cartoon portrayals of Muhammad published by a Danish newspaper in September 2005, and subsequently reprinted in newspapers in other countries—most recently on the second anniversary of February 2006 violent protests by Muslims that left at least 50 people dead.

Howard Payne students assist community center in Austin

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Members of
the Howard
Payne
University
spring break
mission trip
team were
(left to right)

Katy
Blackshear,
BSM
director;
Glenn Hopp,
professor of
English;
Emily Touw;
Jennifer
Brock; Donna
Dyer;
Rebekah
Reed; L J
McCulloch;
Zach
Stallings;
Darren
McElroy;
Chris Beaty;
James
Griffith and
Tyler
Malone.

(Photo
provided by
Emily Touw)

• [See
Complete
Spring Break
Ministry
Coverage
Here](#)

Howard Payne students assist community center in Austin

By Kalie Lowrie

Howard Payne University

AUSTIN—Baptist Student Ministries Director Katy Blackshear led 10 Howard Payne University students over spring break to work with the Baptist Community Center Mission in Austin.

Sophomore Jennifer Brock found that there were “many opportunities to serve Christ, you just have to be ready to do anything.”



Howard Payne sophomore Chris Beaty sings songs with children at the Baptist Community Center Mission. (Photo by Jennifer Brock)

IN BETWEEN: Welcome, all Texas Baptists

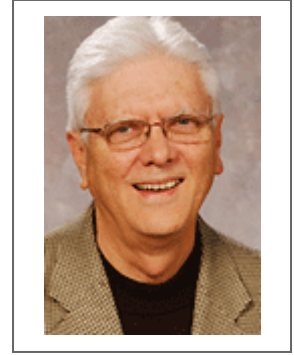
March 28, 2008

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IN BETWEEN: Welcome, all Texas Baptists

I want to thank Chairman John Petty, the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board and Texas Baptists for allowing me the privilege to serve you during these three months. Also, I want to thank the Executive Board staff, which in my opinion is the world's best denominational staff.

March 31 marks the day when Randel Everett begins his ministry as our executive director. He has asked me to serve with him for a few weeks after his arrival, and I am honored to do so.



One discovery I made in these few weeks is the overwhelming need for all Texas Baptist leaders to continue welcoming those who align with the Southern Baptist Convention. I am not speaking of our brothers who have formed another state convention in Texas with SBC in its name. I am speaking of the hundreds of churches who identify with the BGCT and the national SBC and who send their offerings to both organizations.

Yes, it is important to be on guard for those who would lead us away from Baptist distinctives—religious liberty, priesthood of believers, authority of Scripture and the autonomy of the local church. Thankfully, there are those among us who watch carefully so we don't walk down the path of creedalism.

ANALYSIS: Living in the gray with the Man in Black

March 28, 2008

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ANALYSIS:

Living in the gray with the Man in Black

By Cathleen Falsani

Religion News Service

CHICAGO (RNS)—It has been suggested, on more than one occasion, that if another face were to be added to the quartet of Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln on Mount Rushmore, it should be Johnny Cash.

The Man in Black would have my vote.



Judge dismisses Klouda lawsuit against seminary

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Judge dismisses Klouda lawsuit against seminary

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

FORT WORTH (ABP)—A federal judge has ruled Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's decision to fire a female Hebrew professor was akin to a church's decision to fire its pastor and therefore outside the purview of the civil courts.

U.S. District Judge John McBryde dismissed all of the complaints in [Sheri Klouda's lawsuit](#) against her alma mater and former employer.

Sheri Klouda

Lamar students minister in South Texas

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Lamar students minister in South Texas

Lamar University students sing in the Escobares town square.
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Lamar University student workers paint faces of children during Vacation Bible School in the South Texas town of Escobares.



Young children enjoy a Vacation Bible School at Primera Bautista Iglesia de Escobares led by Lamar University student missionaries.

- [See Complete Spring Break Ministry Coverage Here](#)

Texas Baptist Forum

March 28, 2008

Posted: 3/28/08

Texas Baptist Forum

Reason to swap

Regarding your editorial on “U.S. faith swapping,” ([March 17](#)) illicit affairs are not the only reason to leave a marriage. Sometimes the spouse is overbearing, neglectful and abusive.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jump to online-only letters below |
| Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com ; 250 words maximum. |



“Honestly, if we could harness some of the emotion from this and turn it to evangelism and missions, we could see a massive change in our missionary and evangelistic endeavors.”

Frank Page

Southern Baptist Convention president, commenting on the furor after some Southern Baptists—including Page —signed a statement calling for environmental protection (Baptist Press/RNS)

“One day, I have to give an account to God and not to nobody else of what I’ve done in my life. And that’s why I’ve said and shared the stuff with y’all that ... I wouldn’t like to share with y’all.”

Andy Pettitte

Yankees pitcher and Baptist Sunday school teacher, telling Congress he used human growth hormone but did not consider it cheating (New York Daily News/RNS)

“Women have two places—in front of the sink and behind the vacuum.”

Micah Armstrong

Evangelist, preaching to University of Alabama students, also saying they will go to hell for drinking, cursing, having pre-marital sex, watching movies or reading Harry Potter books (Associated Press/RNS)

Having come of age spiritually in the midst of the Baptist infighting of the 1980s and 1990s, I, like many of my generation, left an unhealthy Baptist marriage and sought less contentious places of worship.

At Baylor University in the late 1980s, I watched as my professors were abused in photocopied publications passed around campus and at Baptist General Convention of Texas meetings. I attended those meetings, which were as partisan and divisive as mainstream politics.

Sam Houston State teams at Mission Arlington

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Sam Houston State teams at Mission Arlington		
		

Erika Rangel from Sam Houston State University spends quality time with a little girl at Mission Arlington.

Brock Wardlaw from Sam Houston State University gives a boy at Mission Arlington a ride on his shoulders.

Zach Massey from Sam Houston State University gives a piggyback ride to an Arlington child.



Michael Bosquez from Sam Houston State University enjoys time with children in Arlington.

Sam Stokes from Sam Houston State University hangs out with a group of children in Arlington.



The Baptist Student Ministries at Sam Houston State University sent 25 volunteers to Mission Arlington. The student missionaries conducted service projects including free garage sales, passing out flyers at apartment complexes, organizing and cleaning, and filling Easter eggs. Students worked with about 60 children in the afternoon at an apartment complex— singing, praying, playing games and teaching Bible stories.

• [See Complete Spring Break Ministry Coverage Here](#)

Report: Without changes, selling lottery doesn't add up

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Report: Without changes, selling lottery doesn't add up

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

AUSTIN—Unless gambling is expanded, selling the lottery will not produce the \$14 billion Gov. Rick Perry has estimated, according to a report released by a watchdog group March 26.

[Texans for Public Justice](#) reports that documents given to the governor's office suggest gambling in Texas would need to be expanded in order to generate the kind of income Perry has suggested. The extension of gambling would allow the lottery to show increasing sales, making it more attractive to bidders.

Texas Tidbits

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Texas Tidbits

Baylor Garland medical team serves in Honduras. Health care professionals from Baylor Medical Center in Garland recently served on a medical mission to Honduras, working with Mission Predisan. Physicians, nurses, pharmacists, translators, anesthesiologists, sterile processing technicians and others who made the trek donated their medical services. At a clinic in Catacamas, the operating room team performed 27 surgeries in three and a half days. Part of the mission team traveled to remote mountain clinics, where they treated 300 patients in three days, working by candlelight in facilities that lacked electricity and plumbing.

Gracewood benefits from matching grants. [Children at Heart Ministries](#) has received two matching grants to expand its Gracewood program for single mothers and their children. The Christ Is Our Salvation Foundation will match up to \$220,000 for operating expenses related to Gracewood's expansion, which includes the first residence on a new northwest Houston campus and the conversion of existing offices to a residence at its original campus in southwest Houston. The Leroy and Merle Weir Charitable Trust has made a \$275,000 challenge grant toward construction of an additional residence on the northwest campus in Houston.

When the preacher loses his cool, should church members take a hike?

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When the preacher loses his cool, should church members take a hike?

By Jim White

Virginia Religious Herald

The now-familiar images of Jeremiah Wright, former pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, calling down God's wrath on America raise questions for Christians: What place does rage have in the pulpit? And when should worshippers show their displeasure with the pastor's preaching by leaving the church?

Professors Beth Newman of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and Roger Olson of Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary in Waco agree Wright's anger must be understood within the context of the African-American experiences and worship.