

Mainstream Baptists hear Shurden, honor Lolley

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Mainstream Baptists hear Shurden, honor Lolley

By Brian Kaylor

Baptist General Convention of Missouri

ATLANTA—The New Baptist Covenant meets an important need, and historian Walter “Buddy” Shurden told Mainstream Baptists why and how.

Shurden addressed the Mainstream Baptist Network at a Feb. 1 breakfast held in conjunction with the celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in Atlanta.

Public servants & preachers challenge Baptists to welcome

â€œthe strangerâ€œ

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Public servants & preachers challenge Baptists to welcome ‘the stranger’

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

ATLANTA—The biblical command to “welcome the stranger” encompasses support for all of those on society’s margins, prominent preachers and public servants told participants at the celebration of a New Baptist Covenant Feb. 1.

In the Friday-morning plenary session of the Atlanta event, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, Texas preacher Joel Gregory and former Surgeon General David Satcher insisted the plight of immigrants, the hungry and people lacking proper health care should be of utmost concern to followers of Christ.

Covenant participants close

gathering with determination but few specifics

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Covenant participants close gathering with determination but few specifics

By Greg Warner

Associated Baptist Press

ATLANTA—"We don't want this to be a wasted moment," Jimmy Carter said, describing the excitement and concern he said he found among participants in the first-of-its-kind New Baptist Covenant, which wrapped up its three-day gathering in Atlanta Feb. 1.

As the unprecedented event came to a close, participants and organizers alike pondered the challenging task of turning energy and enthusiasm into tangible action.

Need for church response grows

as HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to spread

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Need for church response grows as HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to spread

By Carla Wynn Davis

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

ATLANTA—About ten years ago, when Wayne Smith stepped into his first HIV/AIDS education class, the other students started applauding. A member of Central Baptist Church of Bearden in Knoxville, Tenn., Smith didn't realize how significant his church affiliation would be. For those gathered, Smith's presence sent a message.

"The church had come. It wasn't Wayne Smith. It wasn't Central Baptist Church Bearden. It was somebody from some church in this town has come," Smith said.

Baptists challenged to advocate for reform of a broken criminal justice system

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Baptists challenged to advocate for reform of a broken criminal justice system

By Bob Perkins

ATLANTA—It's imperative that Baptists ask tough questions in order to spark reform of the U.S. criminal justice system, according to panelists engaging the criminal justice system breakout session Feb. 1 at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration.

Wendell Griffen, judge in the Arkansas Court of Appeals, said its time for Baptists to speak out about a broken system.

"Baptists should demand that the criminal justice system stop wrongful prosecutions," Griffen said. "We who believe that Jesus was tried and punished wrongly should demand transparency in the criminal justice system."

• [See latest photos](#) and the latest [video clips](#) from the New Baptist Covenant Meeting. ([And go here to see our complete coverage of the event](#)).

Griffen said the recent trend has been to hire more police officers and build more prisons, but that's not a good solution.

Any church can participate in

disaster relief, Baptists are told

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Any church can participate in disaster relief, Baptists are told

By Bob Perkins

ATLANTA—To test how prepared churches are to face natural disasters, panels offered suggestions for participants during a special interest session at the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant meeting Feb. 1.

For example, conference leaders asked participants if they have “go bags” in their churches that are easily accessible for church members in the event of an immediate forced evacuation.

From New York City following Sept. 11, 2001, to the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina, panelists shared their experiences organizing church responses to disasters. Willard Ashley, founding pastor of Abundant Joy Community Church in New York, said disaster can strike at any time and churches should be prepared.

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Pastors: World waits for authentic messengers

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Pastors: World waits for authentic messengers

By Norman Jameson

Biblical Recorder

ATLANTA—People outside the church will hear a gospel message only from a passionate messenger who lives an authentic, transformed life, said two pastors leading a special interest session on evangelism at the celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in Atlanta Feb. 1.

“The proclaimer of the good news must be gripped and transformed by the presence of the living word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit,” said Brenda Little, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church of Christ in Evanston, Ill. “Saved and satisfied is not going to work.”

Sexual exploitation alive in America; churches can end it

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Sexual exploitation alive in

America; churches can end it

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

ATLANTA (ABP)—Many churchgoers know human trafficking and sexual exploitation are global issues. But more than 200,000 children in the United States have become “sex commodities” as well, Baptist social workers say.

Ellyn Waller and Brenda Troy led a discussion about exploitive sex at the New Baptist Covenant meeting Feb. 1 in Atlanta—a city with the nation’s second-highest rate of human trafficking, they said.

Panelists offer practical suggestions for peacemaking

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Panelists offer practical suggestions for peacemaking

By Patricia Heys

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

ATLANTA—David Gushee and Stan Hastey offered Baptists ways to promote peacemaking during a special interest session Feb. 1 at the celebration of a New Baptist Covenant.

Gushee, a professor at Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta and recent author of *The Future of Faith in American Politics*, talked about just war theory and its seven criteria. He also outlined the 10 best practices of peacemaking from Glen Stassen's book *Just Peacemaking*.

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Rogers challenges churches to engage in justice issues

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Rogers challenges churches to engage in justice issues

By Jeff Huett

Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

ATLANTA—Participants at a session held in conjunction with the New Baptist Covenant celebration in Atlanta received a lesson in “going upstream” to address the root causes of injustice.

Melissa Rogers, a visiting professor of religion and public policy at the Wake Forest University Divinity School in Winston-Salem, N.C., led a special interest session that focused on matters at the intersection of faith and public policy.

Baptists wrestle with ways to

find common ground with other faiths

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Baptists wrestle with ways to find common ground with other faiths

By Sue H. Poss

CBF of South Carolina

ATLANTA—As Baptists seek common ground to work with people of other faiths, they face the challenge of finding ways to be relevant in an interfaith context while retaining their own distinctive identity.

“We often don’t reach out to other faiths because we are scared of losing what’s essential about our Baptist faith,” said Noel Erskine, associate professor of theology and ethics at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Ga. “We are so afraid of losing our identity that we are not relevant in a multi-faith context.”

Relationships needed to break

poverty cycle

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Relationships needed to break poverty cycle

By John Pierce

Baptists Today

ATLANTA—While soup kitchens and clothes closets meet some basic human needs, something more personal is needed to counter poverty, said one who lives and works among the poor.

“We need football games, where we can play together,” said Jimmy Dorrell of Mission Waco, a multifaceted ministry with impoverished persons in Central Texas.