

Prophetic preaching breaks down barriers, builds up God's kingdom

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By Jennifer Harris and Ken Camp

Word & Way and Baptist Standard

ATLANTA—Breaking down barriers, healing the hurting, challenging Christians to transcend categories of “us and them” and announcing the coming kingdom of God are just a few of the roles prophetic preachers must fill, according to speakers at a Baptist preaching conference.

Four preachers representative of varied traditions delivered sermons during a seminar on prophetic preaching held in conjunction with the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in Atlanta, Feb. 1.

Panelists urge New Covenant Baptists to fight institutional racism

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By Bob Allen

EthicsDaily.com

ATLANTA—The church's struggle against racism no longer is primarily about skin color but about institutions that bestow privilege on some and penalties on others, an activist, denominational leader and scholar said in a special-interest session Friday at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration in Atlanta.

"While I applaud the organizers of our event in coming together and asking the question of how do we move forward beyond race, I think the real challenge for us is to deal with that insidious cancer that is within the very fabric of our society, that I would term racism," said Aidsand Wright-Riggins, executive director of National Ministries, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

Separation of church & state can be complex, but it's worth the effort, speakers insist

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Separation of church & state can be complex, but it's worth the effort, speakers insist

By Robert Marus

ATLANTA (ABP)—Although often difficult to negotiate, drawing the proper line between church and state is worth it for both institutions, according to experts in the topic.

A panel of religious-liberty advocates addressed a small-group session of the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant Feb. 1. They said that religious is Baptists' birthright—but that the church-state separation that protects religious freedom is imperiled and need Baptists' advocacy.

"Whether we have a wall or a zone or a rickety fence or whatever, we must continue to have at least a strand or two of barb-wire to keep the institutions of religion from cozying up to the institutions of government," said James Dunn, a professor at Wake Forest University Divinity School.."

• [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](#)).

Medical professionals urge congregational health advocacy

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Medical professionals urge congregational health advocacy

By **Brian Kaylor**

Baptist General Convention of Missouri

ATLANTA—Medical professionals explained how the biblical calling to take care of the sick could be met by churches offering medical treatment and information Feb. 1 during a New Baptist Covenant special interest session titled “Reaching Out to the Sick.”

Offering advice, resources, contacts and a strong challenge, panelists addressed the health needs of people and how churches can help.

Time in God’s presence primary requirement for spiritual discipline

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Time in God’s presence primary

requirement for spiritual discipline

By Jim White

Religious Herald

ATLANTA—When it comes to spiritual discipline, simply spending time in God's presence is the primary requirement, seminary professors Linda Bryan and Loyd Allen agreed.

Bryan and Allen led a session titled "The Spirit of the Lord Upon Me" during the New Baptist Covenant gathering in Atlanta, Feb. 1.

Program enables watershed experience for seminary students

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Program enables watershed experience for seminary students

By Bob Perkins

ATLANTA—A program endowed by a \$100,000 gift from Oklahoma Baptist

Robert Stephenson has ensured that seminary students from around the nation could participate in the historic celebration of the New Baptist Covenant.

The Stephenson Seminary Scholars program helped underwrite the participation of 178 seminary students from 16 different divinity schools.

Bailey Nelson, the program's coordinator, said her involvement has been an inspiration.

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

"I am overwhelmed by the diversity of the group and the passion they show," Nelson said. "They are driven and hungry. Their big question is:

What's next?"

Biblical witness commands God's people to 'welcome the stranger'

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Biblical witness commands God's people to 'welcome the stranger'

By Patricia Heys

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

ATLANTA—Professors Daniel Carro and Richard Wilson drew on biblical examples as they discussed immigration issues at a special interest session “Welcoming the Stranger” Feb. 1 at the celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in Atlanta.

“Our question today is who is a stranger,” said Carro, as he showed the audience of more than 90 people a diverse array of faces. “If you can’t define who is a stranger, you can’t define who you should welcome. And friends, I presume that all of us are strangers. Each of us is a stranger to someone else. In the wrong place, in the wrong moment you become a

stranger, refugee, alien, non-entity, intruder, immigrant, trespasser, [and an] outlander.”

Christians called to tear down walls, not build them, South Texas pastor says

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Christians called to tear down walls, not build them, South Texas pastor says

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

ATLANTA—Christ came to tear down walls that divide people, a South Texas pastor told Baptists at a prophetic preaching conference. So, he asked, can Christians find any real security in a fence built along an “imaginary line” to separate two nations?

“Jesus didn’t come to build walls. He didn’t come to build fences. He came to tear them down,” said Ellis Orozco, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen.

Church security demands all hands on deck— but maybe not with arms

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Church security demands all hands on deck -but maybe not with arms

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

FORT WORTH—Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth has employed personnel to patrol its campus, escort women to their cars after dark and ensure buildings are locked since before Russ Hibner became the church's facilities manager seven years ago.

But after a security guard stopped a gunman who entered a Colorado Springs church in December, leaders at Travis Avenue Baptist decided to take another look at how it provides security.

What should worshippers do if their church is attacked?

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What should worshippers do if their church is attacked?

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

NEW YORK (ABP)—Last December, worshippers at a Colorado church lost two members to a murderous shooter. In 2006, a man entered an Oregon church and threw fuel during a Sunday service, intending to set the building ablaze. And in 2005, a man opened fire in a Wisconsin church, killing seven people and wounding four others.

In this day and age, even elementary schools are better prepared to deal with violent attacks than churches, experts say, because church-goers think it won't happen to them. But that false sense of security gives physical and psychological advantages to any would-be attacker.



The security of the believer: protecting churches from attack

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The security of the believer: protecting churches from attack

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

NEW YORK (ABP)—One day after a shooter killed two sisters at Colorado's New Life Church, Pastor Brady Boyd told reporters the church had become a target because of its size and its notoriety.

But the toll to the former church of Ted Haggard, the pastor accused of homosexual acts and drug abuse, could have been much worse, Boyd quickly added. The church security team quickly and effectively subdued the attacker, a 24-year-old man who ultimately was shot and killed in the attack.

A growing
number of
churches
are taking a
hard look at
providing
for the
security of
members
and guests.

**See
related
articles:**

- The security of the believer: Protecting churches from attack
- [Church security demands all hands on deck-but maybe not with arms](#)
- [What should worshippers do if their church is attacked?](#)

Baptists urged to reach out to

victims of sexual exploitation

February 2, 2008

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Baptists urged to reach out to victims of sexual exploitation

By Patricia Heys

CBF Communications

ATLANTA—Sexual exploitation is a worldwide issue, Luran Bethell told an audience at a special interest session of the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant.

Bethell, an American Baptist Churches USA global ministry consultant, led a panel discussion on sexual exploitation Jan. 31, at the Georgia World Congress Center. Panelists included Lia Scholl, founder of Star Light Ministries, Inc.; Susan Omanson, of the NightLight ministry center in Thailand; and Charity Marquis, who started a branch of NightLight ministries in Los Angeles.