

Obama again refutes Muslim rumors; Jewish leaders denounce e-mails

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Obama again refutes Muslim rumors; Jewish leaders denounce e-mails

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (ABP)—Churchgoing Congregationalist Barack Obama is being forced once again to explain that he is not secretly a Muslim bent on furthering an international Islamic conspiracy by winning the presidency.

Jewish and other religious leaders have joined him in denouncing an e-mail campaign that has resurfaced in primary states in recent weeks. Various versions of the messages have spread since at least January of 2007, when the conservative online magazine Insight published an article that falsely asserted Obama attended a madrassa—an Islamic religious school—while he lived in Indonesia.

BaptistWay Bible Series for January 27: Me first

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BaptistWay Bible Series for January 27

Me first

- Mark 9:30-37

[By Andrew Daugherty](#)

Around the State

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Around the State

- **Buckner Adoption** will hold informational meetings for families interested in adopting internationally or domestically. Each meeting will detail the adoption process, fees and children available for adoption. All meetings will be held at the Buckner Children's Home campus, located at 5200 South Buckner Boulevard in Dallas. Prior to attending each workshop, families must complete a free pre-application and questionnaire, available

online at www.buckneradoption.org. There is a \$50 materials fee for each meeting. Meetings have been scheduled for Feb. 15, 1:30 p.m.-5 p.m., international; March 7, 1:30 p.m.-5 p.m., international; April 11, 1:30-5 p.m., domestic infant; April 22, 6 p.m.-9:30 p.m., international; May 9, 1:30 p.m.-5 p.m., international; July 25, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., domestic infant; July 25, 1:30 p.m.-5 p.m., international; Aug. 22, 1:30 p.m.-5 p.m., international; Oct. 10, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., international; Oct. 10, 1:30 p.m.-5 p.m., domestic infant; and Nov. 21, 1:30 p.m.-5 p.m., international. To register, contact Sharon Hedrick at (866) 236-7823 or shedrick@buckner.org.

The Immortal Ten, a work by sculptor Bruce Green, has been erected on the Baylor University campus to memorialize the 10 Baylor students who died in a bus-train collision Jan. 22, 1927, in Round Rock.

One of America's first athletic tragedies happened on a rainy day as the men's basketball team headed to Austin for a Southwest Conference matchup with Texas. As a result of the tragedy, the remainder of the 1927 season was canceled, and the first highway overpass in Texas was constructed in Round Rock.

- **Five Baylor graduates** were honored by the Baylor Alumni Association as distinguished alumni at a black-tie banquet Jan. 11. Honorees were Steven Browning, the U.S. ambassador to Uganda; Virginia DuPuy, mayor of Waco and CEO of DuPuy Oxygen; Mark Hurd, CEO, president and chairman of the board of Hewlett-Packard; James Shelhamer, deputy chief of the clinical center's critical care medicine department at the National Institutes of Health; and Abelardo Valdez, a lawyer and former U.S. ambassador and chief of protocol for the White House.
 - **East Texas Baptist University's** department of nursing saw its first fall graduating class last semester. The four graduates were Peggy Gardner of Sherman, Caroline Caskey-Hardee of Liberty City, Helena Reed of Shreveport, La., and Jennifer Reznicek of Kaufman. All four already had been hired by hospitals upon graduation. One hundred eight students received degrees during fall commencement.
 - **Entrepreneur, author and philanthropist Paul Meyer** of Waco was awarded an honorary doctor of humanities degree during University of Mary Hardin-Baylor fall commencement ceremonies. Meyer provided the lead gift for the Paul and Jane Meyer Christian Studies Center, which will be completed this year. The facility will provide a new chapel, classrooms and office space for the College of Christian Studies. One hundred eighty-three students received degrees during the ceremony.
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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries by **Gerald L. Sittser (IVP Books)**

Gerald Sittser, professor of theology at Whitworth College in Spokane, Wash., gives great amounts of information and insight into the lives of men and women of faith, from the time of the early church to the present.

Water from a Deep Well reveals myriad movements within the Christian community. From the early church fathers and the desert saints to present-day evangelicals, Sittser details the actions and commitments of those who lived their lives in devotion to God.

Chapters focus on early-church martyrs, the organizers of church orders, the significance of cathedral construction and icons, monasteries, Christian mysticism, the reformers, conversion, preaching and mission movements. Loaded with many topics that one would expect to study in a church history class, his book is richly documented. But because of its breadth, the book does not go into depth, providing only enough information to offer an overview of the movements and the lives of the people involved.



What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com.

Baptist Briefs

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Baptist Briefs

Church compensation survey under way. The 2008 compensation survey for Southern Baptist churches, a joint effort of Baptist state conventions, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources, is online at www.LifeWay.com/compensationsurvey. All ministers and employees of Southern Baptist churches are encouraged to participate. Answers to the online survey are kept confidential and are not reported individually. The survey takes, on average, less than 10 minutes to complete. In addition to salary and benefit information, participants in the survey will need to have available their church's average weekly worship or Bible study attendance, resident membership and annual budget. LifeWay and GuideStone are pooling resources to conduct the online survey, compile the data and make available an online reporting tool for users to access results. Southern Baptist church ministers and employees may complete the survey through April 15. For staff at churches without Internet access, a paper copy of the survey may be obtained by contacting GuideStone Financial Resources at (888) 98-GUIDE (984-8433).

CBF to lease building from Mercer. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has signed a 10-year lease with Mercer University for offices previously

occupied by the Georgia Baptist Convention. The state convention recently moved to new office building in Atlanta's northern suburbs. CBF will rent the offices—which are part of Mercer's Atlanta campus—in an agreement that solidifies the existing partnership between the two groups. CBF has occupied offices elsewhere on the campus since 1997, occupying space on the second floor of Mercer's McAfee School of Theology building. With the new lease, the Fellowship will move into a 19,000-square-foot space on the first floor of a facility that houses administrative offices and conference facilities. The building also is the new home of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, which moved into the facility last year. The American Baptist Historical Society is scheduled to occupy space in the building as well.

Cartoon

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2nd Opinion: Looking for something reliable

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2nd Opinion: Looking for something reliable

By Bruce Lampert

The tradition of Groundhog Day came to the United States from Northern Europe. Legend has it the groundhog awakens from his winter sleep on the second day of February. He sticks his head out of his den and looks around. If the sun is shining, he can see his shadow. The shadow frightens him, so he scampers back into his hole—six more weeks of winter! But if it's cloudy that day, then the groundhog can't see his shadow, and he will stay outside his hole. This means spring is on its way.

Obviously, there's nothing scientific about Groundhog Day, but there was at least some scientific observation involved in its origin. Somewhere in the misty past, somebody figured out the relationship between the weather on the second day of February and the weather patterns of the following several weeks. Then they associated that relationship with a familiar woodland creature, and they passed the information along. Soon it became part of folk wisdom.

We shouldn't be too hard on folk wisdom. There's actually some real wisdom in it—like the Farmer's Almanac, which still enjoys a wide circulation. For some reason, people who plant their gardens by the signs

in the moon seem to make better gardens than those who just plant when they get a chance.

Stop complaining, and life becomes more enjoyable

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Stop complaining, and life becomes more enjoyable

By Shona Crabtree

Religion News Service

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (RNS)—Last year, Will Bowen gave a sermon challenging listeners not to complain for 21 consecutive days. He handed out purple bracelets as a reminder.

One year later, 4.6 million people in more than 80 countries have taken up the challenge. Bowen's recent book, *A Complaint Free World: How to Stop Complaining and Start Enjoying the Life You Always Wanted*, extols the spiritual virtues of a complaint-free life.

Will Bowen

Death penalty opponents find new allies among evangelicals

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Death penalty opponents find new allies among evangelicals

By G. Jeffrey MacDonald

Religion News Service

CARRBORO, N.C. (RNS)—Stephen Dear has spent the past 10 years waging an uphill battle to abolish the death penalty in the American South—with virtually no help from the region’s powerful evangelical ministers.

But unlike in years past, Dear has new confidence that within six months, he can round up 100 conservative clergy in North Carolina alone to sign an open letter denouncing the current system of capital punishment.

DOWN HOME: Comic's nonmarriage not funny

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DOWN HOME: Comic's nonmarriage not funny

Did you see where comedian Eddie Murphy's New Year's Day wedding on the South Pacific island of Bora Bora to movie producer Tracey Edmonds was "only symbolic"?

I wonder if Edmonds' daddy is scouring all the wedding photos, looking to see if he can find evidence that Murphy had his fingers crossed behind his back. Maybe Murphy walked his new bride back down the aisle, looked over his shoulder, lit up the room with his zillion-watt grin, and shouted, "Just kidding!"

Now, I'll be the first to admit Murphy is a talented comedian and a very, very funny guy. I still crack up remembering some of his "Mr. Robinson's Neighborhood" and "Buckwheat" skits on *Saturday Night Live*. His *Beverly Hills Cop* franchise had its moments of jocularly. And his sidekick Donkey stole every episode of *Shrek*.

But this just ain't funny.

EDITORIAL: Countries, conventions need free press

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EDITORIAL: Countries, conventions need free press

A friend forwarded an e-mail citing the “memoirs” of Vo Nguyen Giap, a general in North Vietnam during its war with the United States. The e-mail quotes Giap as saying: “Your media was definitely helping us. They were causing more disruption in America than we could in the battlefields.” It then makes a contemporary application: “The exact same slippery slope, sponsored by the U.S. media, is currently well under way. It exposes the enormous power of a biased media to cut out the heart and will of the American public. ... Do not fear the enemy, for they can take only your life. Fear the media far more, for they will destroy your honor.”



The quote is bogus (debunked by websites snopes.com and about.com), but the e-mail illustrates a common perception—a free press is dangerous for freedom. Such thinking is broad-based—in society and among Baptists. How ironic that free people don't seem to value one of the freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment. Some considerations:

Even if you were to believe in this quote, a communist general isn't exactly the most reliable commentator. We fought a war with his kind precisely because they deny freedom. And what do communists and other despots do upon seizing power? They take over the media, so that they control exactly what the people hear and read, what they believe they know, and, eventually, what they think. This is the polar opposite of democracy.

Still, some Americans reflexively complain about the media. They say they want Supreme Court justices to interpret law based exclusively upon what the Founding Fathers wrote in the Constitution. But these same people seem to think the Founding Fathers were out of their minds when they included freedom of speech and freedom of the press in the First Amendment. The Fathers knew what they were doing. And people today can't have it both ways.

**ENGAGE: The most effective
evangelism tool? The one
Christians will use**

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During a breakout session at the Engage evangelism conference, Texas Baptists talk about how to share the gospel in a postmodern context.

ENGAGE: **The most effective evangelism tool?** *The one Christians will use*

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

ROCKWALL—The most effective evangelism tool for any Christian is the one he or she actually uses, speakers told participants at the Engage evangelism conference, sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

James Lankford, student ministry and evangelism specialist with the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, said Christians have made evangelism seem complicated, creating an environment where laypeople don't feel

qualified to share their faith.



Jon Randles, evangelism director for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, told the Engage conference that Christians must be intentional about living evangelistic lives by seeking to build relationships with non-Christians and praying for people around them.