

Study finds limits to Willow Creek's success model

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Study finds limits to Willow Creek's success model

By Adelle M. Banks

Religion News Service

CHICAGO (RNS)—Willow Creek Community Church, the suburban Chicago megachurch that has become a model for some of the nation's largest churches, started more than a quarter-century ago by asking the question: Why don't people go to church?

Now, church leaders are looking for new ways to keep them there after new research revealed that worshippers' spiritual growth did not keep pace with their involvement in church activities.

- [Time to revamp discipleship methods?](#)
- [Raising the bar for membership](#)
- Study finds limits to Willow Creek's success model

Raising the bar for membership

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Raising the bar for membership

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

DALLAS—In a growing number of Baptist churches, new arrivals learn an important lesson early: Membership has its privileges, but it also has its responsibilities.

“We want to create a culture of discipleship here,” said John Wilson, minister of Christian education at Friendship-West Baptist Church, an African-American megachurch in southwest Dallas.

**New
requirements
create culture of
discipleship,
some churches
insist.**

Time to revamp discipleship methods?

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Time to revamp discipleship methods?

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

More than two decades after he helped many Baptist churches breathe new life into discipleship training, Roy Edgemon believes it's time take a new look at how churches make disciples.

In the early 1980s, the Southern Baptist Convention's Sunday School Board

asked Edgemon to revamp its approach to discipleship as attendance to Sunday night church training was on what seemed an irreversible decline.

**Some experts say,
'Absolutely, yes'**

- Time to revamp discipleship methods?
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Faith Digest

January 4, 2008

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Faith Digest

Virginia Tech professor named 'most inspiring.' A Holocaust survivor who helped save students' lives before dying during a shooting spree at Virginia Tech last April was named by [Beliefnet.com](#) as its most inspiring person of 2007. Liviu Librescu, 76, was one of 32 killed at the school in Blacksburg, Va., but is credited with preventing more deaths by barricading the door of his classroom and telling students to jump out of windows to avoid the gunman. Librescu is the eighth person to be so

honored by Beliefnet. The previous year, residents of the Amish community of Nickel Mines, Pa., were recognized for their forgiving reaction to the murder of five schoolgirls.

Egg-producing monks crack under PETA pressure. A Trappist abbey in South Carolina has announced it will end its egg production business after accusations of animal cruelty by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. PETA accused the monks of mistreating chickens on their egg farm and sent an investigator, posing as a retreat participant at the abbey, who found evidence of “shocking cruelty” to the hens. Earlier, abbey officials said the monks had followed guidelines of the United Egg Producers to ensure the hens were treated well, and an audit found the abbey to be in compliance with the guidelines. Stan Gumula, abbot of Mepkin Abbey, said the monks will phase out egg production over the next 18 months and seek a new industry that will aid them in meeting their expenses. The monks follow a tradition of agricultural work as a basic component of monastic life.

**Habitual Sin: Pastor's
experience shows Christians**

can find freedom

January 4, 2008

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Habitual Sin: Pastor's experience shows Christians can find freedom

By George Henson

Staff Writer

JAYTON—For years, David Erik Jones worked hard to keep his sin hidden. But now it seems everyone knows—probably all 513 people living in Jayton. They know because he told them, and he wrote about it in his book—*My Struggle, Your Struggle: Breaking Free from Habitual Sin*.

“I can’t believe I’m actually talking about something that I worked so hard for so many years to keep hidden,” Jones said. But he hopes his confession will help other Christians confront their sin and discover hope in his story of deliverance from a longtime addiction to pornography.

[Read more](#)

Prayer heals honest Britâ€s

legs but cannot cure bureaucracy with no “miracle” button

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Prayer heals honest Brit's legs but cannot cure bureaucracy with no 'miracle' button

By Al Webb

Religion News Service

LONDON (RNS)—A British pastor's wife who claims the power of prayer cured her injuries was told her incapacity benefits could not be stopped because the government's computers didn't have a “miracle” button.

As a result, June Clarke of Plymouth, England, received more than \$7,000 she didn't even want—and she could not get the government to take it back.

Mayors' report says cities seeing more emergency food requests

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Mayors' report says cities seeing more emergency food requests

By Adelle M. Banks

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A majority of U.S. cities participating in a recent survey have seen an increase in the number of requests for emergency food assistance, the U.S. Conference of Mayors reports.

The Washington-based conference recently issued its annual Hunger and Homelessness Survey, saying 16 of the 19 cities that responded to questions about hunger saw increases in requests for emergency food aid in the last year. In addition, an average of 17 percent of people seeking food assistance are not receiving it.

Lawaune
Stockton sits
with her cup in
front of a
downtown fast-
food restaurant
in Washington
and makes
about \$20 a day.
The U.S.
Conference of
Mayors recently
issued its annual
Hunger and
Homelessness
Survey. (RNS
photo/Ann-Marie
VanTassell)

Texas Baptist Forum

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Texas Baptist Forum

Remove applause cause

I asked one of my students who was in a college singing ensemble how the summer tour went. He told of singing at a megachurch in the Midwest. The group thought they were to be the special feature at the Sunday morning service, only to find out they were to be squeezed in between the free china giveaway and the parachute drop.

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

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



"Americans have tested that wall (of separation between church and state) in every possible way. We've run trucks up against it, we've thrown firecrackers at it, and the wall has stood pretty strongly. And it requires, I think, constant vigilance."

Jon Meacham

Newsweek editor (CBS News Sunday Morning)

"We find ourselves capable of worry, but I heard recently a great saying that I want to pass on to you: Control those things of which you have control and let go of everything else."

Roland Barlowe

Baptist minister affiliated with Marketplace Chaplains USA (RNS)

"He who does not know how to say 'no' to himself does not know how to say 'yes' to his neighbors."

Raniero Cantalamessa

Preacher to the papal household, speaking about how lust hurts both individuals and other people (Catholic News Service/ RNS)

Do you feel your church is moving in that direction? The solution to this

problem is simple. Here is a way to convert your church from an entertainment center to a worship center: Remove all elements in the Sunday morning service for which there is applause.

What remains are congregational singing, prayers, Scripture reading, responsive reading and sermon. I know it seems odd today to have only these things, but you will be amazed at what the Holy Spirit can do with them.

2007 a quiet year, but signs of change in the air

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2007 a quiet year, but signs of change in the air

By Kevin Eckstrom

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—History books are full of dates that mark seminal events: 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door and launched the Protestant Reformation; or 1973, when the Supreme Court legalized abortion.

But boldface dates are preceded by less prominent but nonetheless decisive times: 1516, when a Dominican named Johann Tetzel led the sale of indulgences that deeply angered Luther; and 1970, when a young Texas woman named Norma McCorvey (Jane Roe) filed suit to obtain an abortion.

The Christian Coalition decided to sit out the 2008 presidential race.

On the move

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On the move

- **Bill Anderson** to First Church in Wichita Falls as interim pastor.
- **Vernon Andrews** to First Church in Waelder as pastor from Choate Church in Kenedy.
- **John Cox** has resigned as pastor of McMahan Church in Dale.
- **Kim Greer** to First Church in Oklahoma City as minister of music and

worship from First Church in Lewisville, where she was music minister/children, middle school and creative arts.

College students' spiritual interests increase; worship attendance drops

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College students' spiritual interests increase; worship attendance drops

By Adelle M. Banks

Religion News Service

LOS ANGELES (RNS)—Though college students' attendance at worship services declines, their interest in spiritual matters grows during their time on campus, a new UCLA study shows.

UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute compared the views of students who were freshmen in the fall of 2004 with the same students' thoughts in the spring of 2007, when they were juniors.

Texas Tidbits

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Texas Tidbits

Texas Acteens Panelists named. Two teenaged Texas Baptists—one from Garland and the other from Austin—have been named to the Texas Acteens Advisory Panel for the next year. Carrie Busha from Freeman Heights Baptist Church in Garland is a senior at Naaman Forest High School. Laura Herrera from Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin is a senior at McCallum High School. Texas Acteens Panelists were selected on the basis of demonstrated commitment to ministry, missions awareness and servant leadership.



Carrie Busha



Laura Herrera

Wayland names mission center director. Veteran missionary Richard Shaw has been named director of the Wayland Baptist University Mission Center. Shaw will develop curriculum for the new center, as well as serve as an assistant professor of religion and dean of Wayland's Kenya campus.

Shaw's goal in developing the curriculum is to incorporate all disciplines of study into a mission emphasis. Shaw served 12 years with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo. He also worked with the United Nations, serving as a human rights advocate and working with women, children and people with HIV/AIDS. He and his wife, Martha, have two children living at home—Benjamin, 9, and Grace, 7. Their older daughter, Faith, is a student at Asbury Theological Seminary, and their son, James, recently graduated from Baylor University.

Clarification: Due to a pending vote in Congress, Rep. Chet Edwards was unable to attend the Baylor University commencement Dec. 15 to receive the Abner V. McCall Religious Liberty Award. Baylor will present the award to Edwards at a later date.