

Self-examination benefits church with pastor, too

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Self-examination benefits church with pastor, too

By Jonathan Petty

Wayland Baptist University

PLAINVIEW—At some point, every church needs to step back and re-evaluate its purpose. Micheal Summers, [Wayland Baptist University's](#) director of church services, believes an intentional interim minister can most effectively lead churches through that process, but churches with pastors can benefit, also.

Summers has served as intentional interim throughout his 10-year tenure with Wayland. In his experience, he always has seen churches grow as a result of the process.

Micheal Summers

Standard, others launch new era of collaboration

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Standard, others launch new era of collaboration

The current print edition of the *Baptist Standard* represents the first in a collaborative venture that also involves Associated Baptist Press and the Virginia Baptist *Religious Herald* and soon will expand to include the Missouri Baptist *Word & Way*.

The editorial staffs of each partner in the venture now work together to select content for many of the pages that contain stories of general interest, including the cover stories and related articles. Lindsay Bergstrom of Associated Baptist Press then provides the graphic design for each of those jointly planned pages.

The collaborative arrangement not only provides cost savings for partner publications that split the cost of the design fee, but also broadens the scope of each newspaper, *Baptist Standard* Editor Marv Knox noted.

"*Baptist Standard* readers will benefit from the combined newsgathering resources of our partners as we work together," Knox said.

2nd Opinion: Good manners & speaking truth

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2nd Opinion: Good manners & speaking truth

By Beth Newman

The early onset of the presidential campaign has brought a call for a “return to civility.” There seems, however, little prospect for any immediate restoration of such civility, assuming it ever existed. We’re not sure any longer what such civility would look like; and there is a great deal at stake.

In Cormac McCarthy’s novel *No Country for Old Men*, Sheriff Bell is speculating on the causes of violence enveloping his Texas county: “It starts when you begin to overlook bad manners. Any time you quit hearin’ ‘Sir’ and ‘Ma’am,’ the end is pretty much in sight.” This observation provoked some amusement for reviewers, but McCarthy is quite serious. He knows—and we ought to remember—manners always are a code for something deeper. They proceed from a prior understanding of the world.

But as odd as it might sound, “manners” as lack of offense has led to a distortion of Christian discipleship. The pressure to be nice, maintain civility, get along, be agreeable has crippled our ability to speak truthfully.

Too often, these kind of “manners” picture God as a therapeutic nice guy who simply wants us to be nice too.

As is well known, Jesus’ words offended his listeners time and again.

DOWN HOME: Bundle of fur mends broken hearts

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DOWN HOME: Bundle of fur mends broken hearts

Guilt pangs strike at the oddest moments.

Like when I’m cuddling with her, amazed by her comely looks and loving nature. Suddenly, I realize the reason she’s here is because the one who came before her no longer is part of my life.

Then, when I’m startled or excited, I forget for a second, and I call her the name of the one who came before her. Although she never acknowledges the slip, I feel absolutely awful.

Adjusting to a new puppy never is simple. Especially when the one who came before her was part of our family 14 years.

EDITORIAL: BGCT prepares for torch to be passed

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EDITORIAL: BGCT prepares for torch to be passed

Charles Wade's [announced retirement](#) means 2007 will be an exceptional year for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Of course, Wade won't retire as executive director of the BGCT Executive Board until early next year. But several processes that will occur in the coming months will ensure 2007's legacy as a red-letter year in BGCT history: Wade will spend much of the year focusing on work begun during his tenure, seeking to complete several projects. A committee selected by Executive Board and BGCT officers will nominate Wade's successor, who should be elected in early fall. And the executive director-elect should work alongside Wade for three months, seeking to ensure a smooth leadership transition.



So, 2007 will be a pivotal year for the BGCT, as one era ends and another begins. This doesn't happen often. In the past century, only 14 people have held this post, and that number was padded by three short tenures in the late 1920s and early '30s. Only five leaders have been executive director in the past 54 years, and the impact of each rippled into the tenure of the next one. History teaches us the shadow of Wade's legacy will fall onto the new days of his successor.

At the proper time near his retirement, the Baptist Standard will offer a retrospective of the eight-year Wade administration. Now, however, several items bear remembering.

Fair Trade sales skyrocket

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Fair Trade sales skyrocket

By Katherine Boyle

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Fair Trade sales are skyrocketing across the nation, with programs selling more coffee, handicrafts and chocolate from Third World countries than ever before.

“Fair Trade gives people of faith the option of an ethical consumer choice,” said Kattie Sommerfeld, the Fair Trade projects coordinator at [Lutheran World Relief](#), where handicraft sales have doubled over the past year. “It’s a holistic approach to helping development.”

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

Amish school reopens after shooting. Amish children entered their new school in Lancaster County, Penn., exactly six months after a gun-toting neighbor walked into their old schoolhouse and [shot 10 students, killing five](#). The Amish demolished the old schoolhouse to erase a reminder of the horror experienced there. Four of the five girls who were shot Oct. 2 have returned to the new school, called New Hope Amish School. The fifth, a 6-year-old, needs a feeding tube and is not able to communicate, the Associated Press reported.

Flying imams test tolerance. Six Muslim imams filed suit after being thrown off a US Airways flight when other passengers reported suspicious behavior. The imams allegedly were praying in their seats, speaking negatively about President Bush and the Iraq war and asking for longer seatbelts, which passengers feared would be used as weapons. The imams are suing the airline, the airport and “those who may have knowingly made false reports against the imams with the intent to discriminate against them,” according to a letter from the [Council on American-Islamic Relations](#), a Washington-based Muslim civil rights group. The news prompted the U.S. House to pass shield laws to protect individuals who report suspicious behavior.

Texas Baptist named to head international aid ministry

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Dearing
Garner,
recently
named
executive
director of
Children's
Emergency
Relief
International
(the overseas
arm of Baptist
Child &
Family
Services),
visits with a
resident of
the Brinzen
Home for
mentally
handicapped
adults in
Moldova.
Garner was
there
directing
distribution of
12,495 pairs
of winter
boots as part
of a CERI
program.
(BCFS
photo/Craig
Bird)

Texas Baptist named to head international aid ministry

By Craig Bird

Baptist Child & Family Services

Dearing Garner, longtime Texas Baptist pastor, has been named executive director of [Children's Emergency Relief International](#), the Houston-based overseas arm of [Baptist Child & Family Services](#).

Garner previously headed the agency's work in Africa. Steve Davis, who had the organization's work in Moldova, has been named associate executive director of the agency.

Are some people born to be religious?

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Alistair McGrath,
at podium,
presents his
arguments against
atheism at New
Orleans Baptist
Theological
Seminary. On the
other side was
Daniel Dennett
(right) of Tufts
University. Robert
Stewart, an
associate
professor of
philosophy and
theology (center),
moderated the
Greer-Heard
Point-Counterpoint
Forum.
(RNS/courtesy of
Boyd Guy/New
Orleans Baptist
Theological
Seminary)

Are some people born to be religious?

By Bruce Nolan

Religion News Service

NEW ORLEANS (RNS)—A recent debate at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was titled “The Future of Atheism,” but the heart of the dialogue explored a related question: Can mankind’s age-old belief in God be explained purely as a stubbornly recurring natural phenomenon—not much different than the common cold?

There is provocative evidence that is so, argued Daniel Dennett, a Tufts University philosopher, atheist and author of [*Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*](#).

When Howard Payne students show love to child, it leads Muslim family to church

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When Howard Payne students show love to child, it leads Muslim family to church

By Kalie Lowrie

Howard Payne University

Howard Payne
University
students (right
to left in the
foreground)
Lindsay
Brimer, Kristen
Griffin, and
team leader
Amy Perkins
help serve
lunch to the
homeless in
Harlem
through the
Salvation Army.
(Photo/provided
by Amy
Perkins)

NEW YORK—Adam, a little boy in Queens, brought his devoutly Muslim family to Sunday school at a Christian church. They never had been interested in Christianity before, but after Adam spent the week with nine Christian students from Brownwood, they were ready to see what it was all about.

Those nine students from [Howard Payne University](#)—along with 40 of their peers—traveled to New York City for spring break to minister to people in the Big Apple.

Churches show lasting benefits from intentional interim ministry, study says

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Churches show lasting benefits from intentional interim ministry, study says

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.—Churches that go through the intentional interim ministry process show lasting benefits, recent research has demonstrated.

The [Center for Congregational Health](#) examined churches 24 to 36 months after they completed the intentional interim process, paying particular attention to how it affected each church's new pastor.

Novel challenges readers to view gospel through the eyes of Judas

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Novel challenges readers to view gospel through the eyes of Judas

By Francis X. Rocca

Religion News Service

ROME (RNS)—A new book by a colorful British author and an Australian New Testament scholar offers a sympathetic portrayal of Judas as the unwitting betrayer of Christ.

[*The Gospel According to Judas, by Benjamin Iscariot*](#), published simultaneously in eight languages, is a work of fiction presented in the form of Scripture, complete with numbered verses, pages in gold trim and key passages highlighted in red ink.

Jeffrey Archer is
co-author of *The
Gospel
According to
Judas.*

(RNS/courtesy
Goldberg
McDuffie
Communications)