

Baptist Briefs

March 3, 2007

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Hammond recommended as NAMB president. The [North American Mission Board](#)'s presidential search committee has recommended Geoffrey Hammond to become the agency's next president. Hammon is senior associate director of the Souther Baptist Conservatives of Virginia. The NAMB board will vote on the recommendation at its March 20-21 meeting. Hammond, 49, is a graduate of Spurgeon's Seminary in London and earned a doctor of ministry degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Final Arizona defendants sentenced. The five final defendants affiliated with a fraud scandal at the Baptist Foundation of Arizona [have been sentenced](#). Donald Dale Deardoff, former BFA treasurer, received four years in prison and was ordered to pay \$150 million in restitution. Sentenced to three years of supervised probation and ordered to pay restitution after accepting plea agreements were Harold Dewayne Friend, a businessman who allegedly participated in fraudulent financial transactions; Jalma W. Hunsinger, director of two BFA subsidiaries; Edgar Alan Kuhn, former president of two BFA subsidiaries; and Richard Lee Rolfes, former owner of a firm that provided accounting services for some BFA subsidiaries. Last September, former BFA President William Crofts and former legal counsel Thomas Grabinski were sentenced to eight and six years, respectively, on fraud and racketeering charges.

2nd Opinion: Peril of the church on the defensive

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2nd Opinion: Peril of the church on the defensive

By John Pierce

The counterculture approach that Jesus took and taught focused on loving enemies, embracing outcasts and giving second chances to those soundly condemned by the religious establishment. I never thought of Jesus as a culture warrior on the defensive.

However, many modern church leaders—including some high-profile Baptists—seem to relish that role.

The church on the defensive is neither attractive nor effective. It is driven by fear and sees all sorts of sociological and scientific changes—as well as most theological rethinking—as threatening.



DOWN HOME: What's better than Wheel O'Meals?

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DOWN HOME: What's better than Wheel O'Meals?

"Where do you want to go for dinner," Joanna asked.

"I don't care," I replied. "Where do you want to go?"

"Doesn't matter. You pick."

"No, I picked last time. It's your turn."

EDITORIAL: Two issues resolved, 3rd straight ahead

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EDITORIAL:

Two issues resolved, 3rd straight ahead

The last time we met on this page, we waited to see how the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board meeting Feb. 26-27 would turn out. The board faced three key issues. It deftly resolved two of them, but the third still stands as Texas Baptists' most crucial challenge:

- **Church-starting scandal.**

A special oversight group presented a positive report on the convention's response to misappropriation of church-starting funds in the Rio Grande Valley. Executive Board staff took the lead and, supported in some cases by Executive Board directors and others, moved to implement all seven recommendations offered by outside investigators who uncovered the extent of the scandal. Although some parts of a few recommendations are not completely functional, progress has been solid. (See story, page 2.)



“Vigilance” is the watchword for moving forward in BGCT church-starting. But Texas Baptists can feel confident lessons have been learned, accountability processes are being put in place and we will benefit from a stronger, more reliable church-starting program.

Politics plays role in hunger elimination, Beckmann says

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Politics plays role in hunger elimination, Beckmann says

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

AUSTIN (ABP)—The movement to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty for millions of people around the world is not a lost cause, the president of [Bread for the World](#) stressed.

In fact, despite the population explosion, the number of people who are undernourished is slightly lower now than it was in the early 1970s, David Beckmann said. He participated in the Ethics Without Borders conference in Austin, organized by the Baptist General Convention of Texas' [Christian Life Commission](#).

David Beckmann of Bread for the World says he believes it is possible to cut hunger and poverty in half before 2015.
(Photo by John Hall)

‘Clash of civilizations’ view too simplistic, expert says

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‘Clash of civilizations’ view

too simplistic, expert says

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

AUSTIN (ABP)—The “clash of civilizations” view of Muslim and Christian conflict only prolongs problems and encourages dangerous forms of fundamentalism, a prominent scholar told participants at the Ethics Without Borders conference.

Charles Kimball, who has visited the Middle East 40 times and worked closely with Congress, the White House and the State Department, spoke at the event, organized by the Baptist General Convention of Texas’ [Christian Life Commission](#).

Charles Kimball,
a religion
professor at
Wake Forest
University, says
an “us-versus-
them” mentality
toward Islam
shows a deep
bias on the part
of Westerners.
(Photo by John
Hall)

Networked church key to ministering in 21st century

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Networked church key to ministering in 21st century

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

AUSTIN—A “networked” church is poised for ministry in the 21st century, Anna Robbins of the [London School of Theology](#) claimed.

The world is being stretched by the simultaneous emphasis on context and culture as well as belief in a worldwide bond, Robbins said.

Development key in Texas Baptist fight against world hunger

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Development key in Texas Baptist fight against world hunger

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

The Texas Baptist [Offering for World Hunger](#) feeds people today, tomorrow and long into the future.

Funds given through the offering are used to purchase food for starving families around the world, but more than half of the donated money is used to empower people to support themselves.

Christian Churches Together seeks united front against poverty

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Christian Churches Together seeks united front against poverty

PASADENA, Calif. (ABP)—Leaders from 36 Christian bodies and religious organizations have issued a joint statement addressing domestic poverty

and urging constituents to alleviate the problem as part of their Christian duty.

“As Christian leaders in the wealthiest society on earth, we are called by God to urge our churches and nation to strengthen and expand efforts to address the scandal of widespread poverty in the United States and around the world,” the statement said. “The gospel and our ethical principles place our service of the poor and vulnerable and our work for justice at the center of Christian life and witness.”

Leaders convened at a meeting organized by [Christian Churches Together](#), a loose coalition begun in 2001 to unify the “diverse expressions of Christian faith today.” It includes representatives from evangelical, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Protestant congregations.

Leonid Kishkovsky of the Orthodox Church of America said the annual gathering is “good news” for American Christians.

Human trafficking—exotic and close to home

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Human trafficking—exotic and close to

home

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

AUSTIN—Lauran Bethell likes dark streets and late nights. She loves prostitutes.

She's a self-described "missionary who hangs out in red-light districts."

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

No pope for Anglicans. An Anglican-Catholic commission has warned that doctrinal disputes within the Anglican Communion are an obstacle to unity between the two churches. An upcoming report by the [International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission](#) lays out areas of doctrinal agreement and disagreement between the two churches and outlines ways to continue ecumenical dialogue. But contrary to rumors, officials said, the report does not propose a plan for Anglicans to unite under the pope. "Talk of plans to reunite the two communions is, sadly, much exaggerated," the commission said. The "present context" of Anglican dispute would make it premature to issue a formal Anglican-

Catholic statement of shared beliefs, which was the goal set by Anglican and Catholic bishops who launched the commission in 2000.

Beliefnet names ‘most influential black spiritual leaders.’ Two Texas pastors—T.D. Jakes of the Potter’s House in Dallas and Kirbyjohn Caldwell of Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston—have been listed among the 17 “most influential black spiritual leaders” by [Beliefnet](#), an interfaith website. “Whether inspiring their congregations to stand up against social injustice or urging a focus on God-centered family values, African-American religious leaders are a crucial component of a rich and diverse spiritual landscape,” the Beliefnet editors wrote in their introduction to the list. Others on the list include William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, and Gardner Taylor, senior pastor emeritus of Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Author seeks to connect the dots between sex and God

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Author seeks to connect the dots between sex and God

By Charles Honey

Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (RNS)—About halfway through his new book, [Sex God](#), Rob Bell recalls a scene of exquisite torture at a middle-school dance.

He was 12, lined up with all the boys on one side of the cafeteria, while all the girls were lined up on the other. Then he worked up the guts to “bravely venture across this massive chasm” and ask a girl to dance.