

Baptist Briefs

August 18, 2006

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Foundation grant benefits CBF medical missions. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Global Missions received a \$66,000 grant from the W.C. English Foundation to support the ministry of a CBF medical missions worker in the Middle East. The grant will benefit a CBF worker who serves as medical consultant for a micro-enterprise that hires people with physical disabilities. She offers medical screening, first aid and health education to the employees.

No medical insurance rate increases for 2007. Participants in GuideStone Financial Resources' personal medical plans will receive no rate increase for 2007—the third year in a row with no rate hike, GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins reported to the agency's trustees. Other than regular age increases, no personal medical plan participants will receive rate increases, and 40 percent will see their rates decrease, he announced. All state Baptist conventions that have their medical coverage with GuideStone will receive no rate increase in 2007, and 46 percent of the conventions will receive a rate decrease. For all other group plans, 88 percent will receive no increase, and 53 percent will receive a rate decrease.

BUA students help alumni in churches across the South

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BUA students help alumni in churches across the South

Students from Baptist University of the Americas spent most of their summer traveling through the South—not South America, but seven states south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

BUA students worked on mission projects, conducted Vacation Bible Schools and participated in community outreach efforts with Hispanic churches led by alumni of the Texas Baptist school.

“The pastors were so happy to see us,” said Cesar Casasola, a student from Guatemala. “I was surprised to find so many Guatemalans who had come to work on the poultry farms in Alabama.”

The growing Hispanic churches in these communities are a vital source of social support, as well as spiritual nurture, he noted. The students learned how growing opportunities for Hispanic workers in these communities also bring occasional cross-cultural tensions that the churches help members learn to manage.

Cartoon

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When kindergarten teacher Conrad Hjort led worship

Artist offers new twist on ancient Christian symbols

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Scott
Cavness and
his brothers,
Jac and Tom,
use
perspective
sculpture to
present
Christians
with a means
to start
conversations
about faith.
Here a
mirror
reflects the
fish while the
head-on
perspective
offers the
cross. (Photo
by George
Henson)

Artist offers new twist on ancient Christian symbols

By George Henson

Staff Writer

LEWISVILLE—A new twist on a couple of Christian symbols may be just the conversation-starter needed to turn an accidental meeting into a divine appointment, a trio of Texas brothers believe.

Seen from one perspective, a cross is visible. From another, twisted metal bears no identifiable shape. A little more twist, and the fish symbol of Christianity appears.

2nd Opinion: Stem-cell stand: Right but doomed

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2nd Opinion: Stem-cell stand: Right but doomed

By David Gushee

President Bush's veto this summer of any change in his stem-cell research policy was derided by many as a sop to his conservative base. But the price the president and his party are sure to pay for this decision leads me to the conclusion that, whatever the politics of the move, the president actually has been persuaded by the moral argument against embryonic stem-cell harvesting.

Rather than simply dismiss this moral argument as "Luddite," as Rep.

Edward Markey, D-Mass., did, it would certainly demonstrate more respect for the deeply held beliefs of millions of Americans if the argument were taken seriously. It runs as follows:

However small or undeveloped an embryo might be, it is still human. It is what every one of us was at the earliest stage of life, because life develops along an unbroken continuum, from fertilization until natural death.

Russia-bound students discover missions in Dallas

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Go Now Missions workers help
Cornerstone Baptist Church in
Dallas conduct its children's
camp.

Russia-bound students discover missions in Dallas

By Laura Frase

Communications Intern

A bump in the road left three Russia-bound student missionaries in the midst of prostitution and drugs in South Dallas.

A student team originally planned to minister in Russian orphanages through Go Now Missions—the Baptist General Convention of Texas student missions program—but political turbulence postponed their trip. Three students chose to spend part of the summer at Cornerstone Baptist Church in South Dallas before traveling to Russia.



Divorce affects faith development

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Divorce affects faith development

By Deborah Potter

Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (RNS)—When Jen Thompson looks at family pictures, the memories still are painful. Her parents divorced when she was 14, and along with the sense of loss came a crisis of faith.

“My father was emotionally just barren—just not available,” she said. “So I came across as thinking that my father was just impossible to please. And that definitely carried over into my relationship with God—that I felt God was just very judgmental.”

DOWN HOME: Balls of fire & divining God's will

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DOWN HOME: Balls of fire & divining God's will

Some people try to discern God's will through every detail of life. But I'm glad the Lord's plan is broader. Otherwise, I might have left the ministry exactly 25 years ago.

Joanna and I thoroughly enjoyed our lives in Georgia in 1981. But we realized I needed to get a seminary education.

The natural response would have been to return to Texas, to Southwestern Seminary in Jo's hometown, Fort Worth.

But a job opened up at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and we moved about as fast as you can say "rental truck."



EDITORIAL: Just the antidote

for social isolation

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EDITORIAL:

Just the antidote for social isolation

America is an increasingly lonely place.

The average American's circle of close friends has closed significantly, signaled by a one-third drop in the number of people with whom we can discuss important matters.

These findings surfaced in research conducted by sociologists at Duke University and the University of Arizona. They compared national polls from 1985 and 2004. *American Sociological Review* published their study this summer. *Time* magazine and newswatch.com reported the findings.



The surveys revealed the average number of people with whom Americans can discuss important matters declined by almost one-third, from 2.94 people to 2.08. And nearly 25 percent of Americans said they have absolutely no one with whom they can discuss such matters. That figure has more than doubled.

TBM helps flood victims in El Paso

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TBM
volunteer
Rey
Villanueva
tears wet
insulation
out of an
El Paso
home.
(Photos
by John
Hall)
 [Onlin](#)
[e Special:](#)
[See a](#)
[flood](#)
[relief](#)
[video](#)
[here.](#)

TBM helps flood victims in El Paso

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

EL PASO—As floodwaters began to recede in much of El Paso, Texas Baptist Men volunteers rushed in to help victims of recent storms begin to put their homes back in order.

Working where as much as several feet of water entered homes, trained TBM workers from across the state started removing damaged furniture, belongings and drywall from flooded homes in the southern and western portions of the city.



Mary Bess Jackson removes damaged drywall in an El Paso home.

ETBU World Cup Team shares gospel with soccer fans

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East Texas
Baptist
University
students
Grace
Curry and
Jonathan
Heflin
entertain
at a block
party
during the
World
Cup.
(ETBU
Photos by
Allan
Thompson)

ETBU World Cup Team

shares gospel with soccer fans

By Mike Midkiff

East Texas Baptist University

East Texas Baptist University's Tiger World Cup Team journeyed to Germany this summer—not to play soccer but to share Christ with fans from around the world.

Allan Thompson, director of ETBU's Great Commission Center, led the nine-member student team, which served in Hamburg and Berlin with International Baptist Church and the Kickoff 2006 organization.

New faith-based initiatives chief named

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New faith-based initiatives chief named

By Adelle Banks

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Jay Hein, president of an Indianapolis-based

international think tank, has been chosen as the new director of the Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives.

Hein, president of the Sagamore Institute for Policy Research, will succeed Jim Towey, who left the White House post to become the president of Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pa., July 1.