

Texas Tidbits

March 2, 2006

Posted: 3/03/06



Texas Tidbits

Pro alums help improve Baylor Ballpark. Baylor University alumni Jason Jennings and Kip Wells recently contributed \$50,000 each toward \$400,000 in Baylor Ballpark improvements, including a new scoreboard. Jennings, a pitcher for the Colorado Rockies, and Wells, a pitcher for Pittsburgh Pirates, recently participated in an exhibition game against the 2006 Baylor squad at the ballpark.

Hardin-Simmons tops \$100 million endowment. Hardin-Simmons University has exceeded \$100 million in endowment, 10 months ahead of the goal President Craig Turner announced in his 2001 inaugural address. At that time, Turner launched the Securing the Future fund-raising campaign to increase the school's endowment from \$57.5 million to \$100 million by the end of 2006. The campaign has netted \$42.5 million.

Baylor University names interim CIO and dean. Baylor University has named Becky King interim chief information officer and William B. Hair III as interim dean of libraries. King has been director of information services, and Hair was associate dean and director of university libraries. They assume responsibilities previously held by Reagan Ramsower, vice president for finance and administration.

TOGETHER: Mandate & mission push Texas Baptists

March 2, 2006

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TOGETHER: Mandate & mission push Texas Baptists

Texas Baptists are a special kind of people. We believe God has given us a great mandate and a great mission—to love him as we love nothing else, to love our neighbors as we love ourselves and in that love to go everywhere calling people to follow Jesus Christ. And we believe that if God is in something, then he will provide a way to get it done.

Quite simply, Texas Baptists like being on the cutting edge of God's purposes in the world. I was reminded of that this past week. It was an emotional and intense time.



Executive Director
BGCT Executive
Board

It may seem a bit mundane, but the reorganized Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas met for the first time Feb. 27-28. We had dreamed of an Executive Board that would be more actively involved in directing the activities of our convention, and at this first meeting, we began to see that dream come to life.

Churches need to welcome guests

March 2, 2006
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Churches need to welcome guests

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)—When Thomas Hammond led a workshop eight years ago on how churches can become more visitor- friendly, he had no idea he would stimulate an ongoing series of sessions that continue today.

“I’m amazed at the ride because people have heard about it,” said Hammond, who estimates he has traveled to 20 states to present the workshop. “It’s meeting a need that we’ve neglected.”

WorldconneX adds three staff positions

March 2, 2006

Posted: 3/03/06

WorldconneX adds three staff positions

By David Williams

WorldconneX

WorldconneX, a missions network Texas Baptists launched two years ago, is adding three staff positions to help churches send their members on long-term missions assignments.

The three new positions are team leaders for mobilizing churches, front-

line services and systems support.

EDITORIAL: Offer letters to reduce global poverty

March 2, 2006

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EDITORIAL: Offer letters to reduce global poverty

Can you afford to invest \$1.17 and a few minutes to reduce global poverty? That's the cost of three first-class stamps and the amount of time you'll need to write your senators and congressional representative, urging them to direct an additional 1 percent of the federal budget to defeating global poverty, hunger and AIDS.

This is a goal already claimed—but not yet funded—by our government. The United States has joined 188 other countries in agreeing to the Millennium Development Goals, a set of eight objectives for overcoming poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental damage and discrimination against women. The cornerstone of the project is a worthy target—cutting poverty in half by 2015. President Bush has signed on to this grand plan. Last year, he pledged to double all foreign assistance in order to ensure progress.



Two obstacles stand between the president's intention and reality. First is congressional approval; the House and Senate have to ratify a budget that includes such funding. Second is allocation of resources. Less than half of all U.S. foreign aid goes to poverty-focused development assistance, or programs that actually eliminate poverty. For example, last year, the United States spent \$19.5 billion on foreign aid, but only \$9.6 billion (49.2 percent) focused on poverty reduction and helping countries provide health care, schools, clean water, sanitation and roads—the kind of infrastructure necessary to help people climb up out of the pit of poverty.

Family Bible Series for March 12: A Christian's persistent prayer strikes fear in Satan

March 2, 2006

Posted: 3/01/06

Family Bible Series for March 12

A Christian's persistent prayer strikes fear in Satan

• Luke 11:1-13

By Greg Ammons

Explore the Bible Series for March 12: Open up to an intense experience with God

March 2, 2006

Posted: 3/01/06

Explore the Bible Series for March 12

Open up to an intense experience with God

• Isaiah 5:1-6:13

By James Adair

Baptist University of the Americas, San Antonio

This week's lesson from the prophet Isaiah includes two well-known

passages, the parable of the vineyard and the call of Isaiah, as well as a section containing six woes against evildoers. These two chapters discuss the problem of greed and the justice a holy God demands, and they suggest the proper human response to the divine call.

Storylist for 2/6/06

March 2, 2006

Storylist for week of 2/6/06

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Arson suspected in Alabama church fires

March 2, 2006

Posted: 2/6/06

Arson suspected in Alabama church fires

By Hannah Elliott & Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

CENTREVILLE, Ala. (ABP)—Federal officials suspect arson in a series of fires that damaged or destroyed five small Baptist churches in rural Bibb County, Ala., the night of Feb. 2-3.

In addition, a sixth church in neighboring Chilton County burned the same night, but church representatives said it may have been due to an accident.

Investigators from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms joined state and local authorities the morning of Feb. 3 to determine the cause of fires that “were set as fast as they could drive from one location to the next,” Bibb County Deputy Sheriff Kenneth Weems told the Associated Press.

The five Bibb County churches were all located near U.S. Highway 82 and the blazes began within about three hours of each other, news reports said. The area is located about 50 miles southwest of Birmingham.

The fires completely destroyed Ashby Baptist Church in Brierfield, Rehobeth Baptist Church in Randolph and Pleasant Sabine Baptist Church near Centreville. The other two churches, Old Union Baptist in Brierfield and Antioch Baptist in Antioch, sustained damage but escaped complete destruction.

All of the churches but Pleasant Sabine belonged to the Southern Baptist Convention, the statewide Alabama Baptist Convention and the local Bibb County Baptist Association.

No one was injured in any of the fires. But they called to mind a rash of arsons—many of them racially motivated—that destroyed dozens of African-American churches across the South in the late 1990s. Several of those crimes remain unsolved.

Four of the Bibb County churches were home to predominantly white congregations, while the Pleasant Sabine church is historically African-American.

David Hand, pastor of Old Union Baptist Church, said the community remains in disbelief. “Our congregation is pretty upset, but we are also

thankful, because others lost a lot more than we did,” he said.

Hand said Old Union’s damage resulted from two separate fires. The damaged areas include the pulpit, communion table, the American flag and the carpeting surrounding those areas.

The suspected arsonists also kicked in the back door according to Hand—which officials said was a common thread between several of the fires.

“There is a lot of sadness around the area, but we are all pulling together,” he said.

Alabama Baptist Convention Executive Director Rick Lance released a statement saying the group was responding in multiple ways to the fires.

“We’re working with the leadership of the Bibb Baptist Association to provide prayer support and damage assessment for these churches,” he said. “As quickly as possible, we anticipate having mobile chapels available for use by the two churches whose facilities were destroyed.

He also said the state convention would provide “appropriate financial assistance” to the convention-affiliated churches damaged. All of the churches have small congregations and budgets.

As of press time, police had made no arrests nor released the names of any suspects. Alabama lawmakers have offered a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the arsonists.

The Alabama Baptist contributed to this story

Jeanie Miley: Sugar Daddy or Redeemer?

March 2, 2006

Posted: 2/10/06

CYBER COLUMN: Sugar Daddy or Redeemer?

By Jeanie Miley

Driving down one of the major streets in my city, I nearly swerved over into the other lane when I saw the billboard on a church building.

“God is not your sugar daddy,” the sign proclaimed, and I laughed aloud.

“No kidding!” I thought, making a mental note to relay that wise quip to friends who struggle with me about how best to communicate and live the gospel challenge.

Jeanie Miley

There’s nothing in the biblical revelation that seduces anyone into thinking that God might fulfill the road of sugar daddy or cosmic bellhop.

I go back and read about Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness, and I am comforted and strengthened over and over again by the knowledge that even Jesus, God Incarnate, struggled mightily with what kind of Messiah he

would be.

Sometimes, I am astonished all over again by the vulnerability and transparency of Jesus. Even after all these years of studying and teaching the gospel narratives, I get goosebumps when I really think about the fact that the Son of God revealed his struggles in the wilderness and in Gethsemane to his close friends. What kind of God is that?

It is staggering to me to know that Jesus could have wielded all kinds of power over others but chose, instead, to be self-limiting and take the path of integrity and love. It never ceases to amaze me that Jesus could have drawn even bigger crowds by making the focus of his ministry the meeting of peoples' immediate physical needs but chose to save them and set them free.

I study the life of Jesus—the events and encounters, the teachings and the miracles—to seek and to find the light I need to take the next step in my own life, and sometimes, when I'm wrestling with a decision of my own, I remember the standard Jesus set for us when he stood up to the temptations of instant gratification, the quick buzz and worldly control and power, and chose to be the kind of messiah who would heal and liberate human beings, transforming and empowering them.

It seems pretty clear to me that the body of Christ on earth, the church, has to take trips to the wilderness now and then, as well, to wrestle with what kind of church it is going to be. Like Jesus in the wilderness, the church and churches face the same kinds of temptations in shaping the ministries and activities of the contemporary church in a contemporary culture.

Our minds have been trained for sound bites, and we have learned to have short attention spans. We crave to be entertained with sensory stimulation, and when it is thrilling, we want more of it next time. We are a culture with many addictions, and, according to people who observe cultural

trends, narcissism and self-absorption are growing by leaps and bounds.

And so it is that we who love and serve and plan the programs of the church must continue to ask ourselves if we are addressing the problems of our culture and helping people become whole and mature, or if we are, in fact, colluding with the culture to keep people immature.

We who love the church must keep on going into the wilderness and putting our programs to the tests that Jesus faced and make the hard decisions to be about the work of Christ, as the body of Christ.

You can't have it both ways. The One we worship can't be a sugar daddy if he's going to be Redeemer.

Jeanie Miley is an author and columnist and a retreat and workshop leader. She is married to Martus Miley, pastor of River Oaks Baptist Church in Houston, and they have three adult daughters. Got feedback? Write her at Writer2530@aol.com.

Cybercolumn by Brett Younger: Forgiveness at the Holiday Inn Express

March 2, 2006

Posted: 2/24/06

CYBER COLUMN:

Forgiveness at the Holiday Inn Express

By Brett Younger

Not long ago, we traveled down to Houston for Carol's grandmother's 100th birthday. The party was at the nursing home from 1:30 to 3:30. We had to stop so they could serve supper. We stayed at a fancy two-star hotel that night. About 8:00, Carol was talking to her parents and our children were watching a game on television, so I decided to find a quiet place to read Dietrich Bonhoeffer. When I walked into the lobby, the woman behind the desk—she looked about 20—said, "Can I help you?"

"I'm just looking for a quiet place to read."

BaptistWay Bible Series for March 5: Replace despair over circumstances with faith

March 2, 2006

Posted: 2/23/06

BaptistWay Bible Series for March 5

Replace despair over circumstances with faith

- 1 Samuel 1

By Joseph Matos