

RIGHT OR WRONG? Christians and politics

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Question: How can I convey to my congregation the necessary, but appropriate, ways to interface and engage as Christians in the political context?

Answer: I've been told that if you want to make friends and influence people, you should never talk about religion or politics. If talking about religion and politics is not a good idea, imagine trying to find appropriate ways to relate the two. However, let me propose my Top 10 Ways for Christians to Engage Political Issues:

10. Remember that Christians are citizens of two kingdoms. Jesus recognized this with his response to a question about paying taxes: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Luke 20:25). Jesus came preaching the reality of God's kingdom to people expected to declare allegiance to the Roman emperor.

AROUND THE STATE

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- Youth With a Mission will host Take Action, a free youth event, March 4. Take Action will show participants the world of missions through video, drama, music and multimedia presentations. It also will feature workshops, exhibits, speakers and contemporary worship music. The event is free and includes a sack lunch, but a \$5 donation is requested to offset costs. It will be held at Twin Oaks Ranch, six miles west of Lindale from 9:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. For more information, call (903) 882-5591.

Sarah Mercer and Daniel Dill were just two of the Dallas Baptist University students author and speaker Henry Blackaby visited with following his recent speech on the campus.

Blackaby stressed to students the importance of committing their lives to the plans God had for them.

Later, at a luncheon for faculty and staff, he encouraged them not to grow weary in their efforts to make a difference in the lives of students.

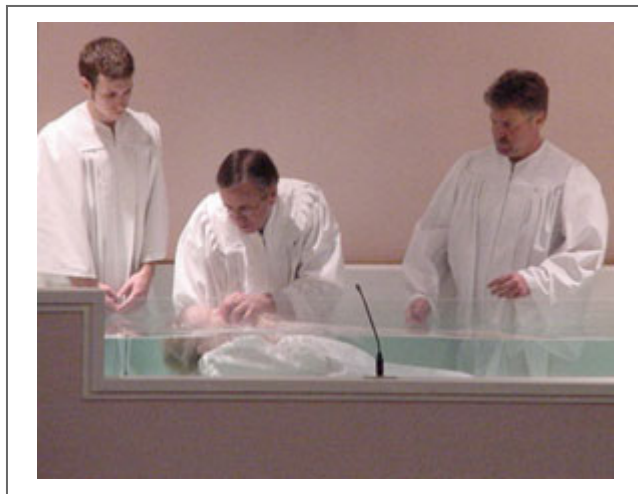
Photo by Blake Killingsworth/DBU

- Eight vocalists from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor will join more than 250 college singers from across the southwestern United States in

performing at the American Choir Director's Convention in St. Louis, Mo., March 10. Making the trip will be Austin Daniel, Amanda Cantu, Megan Bender, Jonathan Owens, Christa Wright, Reagan Cush-man, James Venable and John Cawthon.

- A Senior Saints Summit will be held May 15-18 at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. This year's theme, "Being the Presence of Christ" will be led by Russell Dilday, preaching; Larry Putman, music; Bill Muske, morning devotionals; and Charlie Robinson, Bible study. Cost is \$125 per person or \$240 per couple before March 27. Costs increase \$10 after that date. Add \$20 for single occupancy. Fees include all sessions and nine meals. To register or for information, call (254) 295-4606.

- Dallas Baptist University was the host of the annual Christian Association of Stu-dent Leaders conference. Spon-sored by Texas Baptist universities and the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the conference seeks to encourage fellow student leaders to make a difference on their campuses through workshops, roundtable discussions and general meeting sessions.



Pastor Jerry Raines of Hampton Road Church in DeSoto baptized 100-year-old Zula Campagna Feb. 5. Assisting Raines were Joe Bob and Chris Kindred, Campagna's grandson and great-grandson.

Buckner adoption

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Buckner adoption

Adopting a child of another race brings joy along with "a fair share of challenges, acknowledges Adela Jones, clinical director for Buckner Adoption and Maternity Services. "While your love for your child is unconditional, the world we live in demands that you deal with sometimes-difficult issues."

In response to interest from families who have adopted across color lines, Buckner has launched Shades of Love, a family-oriented support group that will include quarterly group sharing sessions, topical seminars, fun family outings and playtime for the children.

Two founding families will lead Shades of Love, and members will determine the group's evolution, Jones said. Shades of Love is open to everyone who has adopted a child of color, whether or not the adoption was through Buckner.

Jones asked for input from interested families, “a few families willing to share the responsibility of shepherding the group” and ongoing participation.

Adoptive families find God’s love across racial lines

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Adoptive families find God’s love across racial lines

By Felicia Fuller

Buckner Benevolences

AUBREY—With her pigtails, purple separates and painted fingernails, 5-year-old Quincy is the quintessential girly girl. She even slurps fruit juice with gentility—pinkie extended, lips lightly pursed around the straw.

Melanie Avent
of Waxahachie
embraces her
two adopted
children,
Gracen and
Ross. Photos
by Russ
Dilday/Buckner
Benevolences

She is her mother made-over—apart from one feature. Quincy is black. Her mom, Heather Walden, is white—a bond made possible through adoption.

BAPTIST BRIEFS

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BAPTIST BRIEFS

Florida church considers Dallas pastor. Mac Brunson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, was slated to preach in view of a call to First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., Feb. 19. Jerry Vines has been pastor of the Jacksonville church 23 years. Brunson, 48, has been pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas since 1999, and also serves as chancellor of Criswell College. He made announcements about the call of the Jacksonville church in each of his church's three morning worship services

Feb. 12. Brunson served previously in churches in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. He was president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in 2003. Brunson and his wife, Debbie, have three children. He is a graduate of Furman University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Ministers tax guide available. Ministers can find help in preparing their 2005 federal income tax returns from an annual tax guide published by GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. The free guide details recent changes to tax laws and their effect on ministers written by Richard Hammar, a CPA, attorney and widely published author who specializes in legal and tax issues for ministers. GuideStone's legal and compliance staff edits the guide to address tax issues that affect the greatest number of Southern Baptist pastors. The tax guide can be obtained in an electronic format by visiting the GuideStone website at www.GuideStone.org. Copies can also be obtained by calling customer service at (888) 98-GUIDE (984-8433) between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. weekdays.

N.M. Baptists elect executive director. After a 17-month-long search, the Baptist Convention of New Mexico has unanimously elected Joseph Bunce as executive director. The assignment became effective immediately. A New Mexico native, Bunce served as pastor of churches in New Mexico and Missouri while getting his education. He earned a bachelors degree from Eastern New Mexico University, a master of divinity degree from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California. He now serves as a member of the Golden Gate Seminary board. Bunce replaces Claude Cone, who announced his plans for retirement in July 2004. Cone will continue to serve as the convention's executive director emeritus and pastor of Monterey Baptist Church in Albuquerque.

National Campers on Mission rally set. Campers on Mission will hold its national rally June 7-9 at the Dixie Classic Fairgrounds in Winston-Salem,

N.C. The event is timed so participants can join in activities related to Crossover Triad, an outreach effort designed to coincide with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in nearby Greensboro, June 13-14. Scheduled speakers at the rally include James Atkins, pastor of West Asheville Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C., and Ken Hemphill, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and current strategist for the SBC's Empowering Kingdom Growth emphasis. Registration forms and further information are available at www.comnatrally2006.org, from state COM presidents or by e-mailing comnatrally2006@yahoo.com. Rally coordinator Joyce Camp can be reached at (336) 407-3250.

Ouachita seeks new education dean. Ouachita Baptist University has formed a search committee to find a new dean for the Michael D. Huckabee School of Education. Stan Poole, vice president for academic affairs at Ouachita, will chair the committee. Current Dean Jeanna Westmoreland will leave Ouachita in June when her husband, Andrew Westmoreland, becomes president of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

SBC registration opens. Churches that plan to send messengers to the 2006 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C., can register online. Registration also is open for families who plan to enroll children in the preschool child care or the children's conference, scheduled in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting. For registration information, visit www.sbc.net and click on "2006 SBC Annual Meeting."

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.

BOOK REVIEW: Baptists shape church leaders of third millennium, author says

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BOOK REVIEW: Baptists shape church leaders of third millennium, author says

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

FORT WORTH—As Christianity's center of gravity shifts to the Southern Hemisphere, Baptists and likeminded evangelicals stand on the threshold of tremendous opportunity, said retired missions professor Justice Anderson.

Although Catholics have enjoyed established status in Latin America and Pentecostals groups have experienced explosive growth there, Baptists occupy "the golden mean between Roman Catholicism and Pentecostal extremes," said Anderson, who served as a missionary-professor 16 years at the International Baptist Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and 26 years as professor of missiology at South-western Baptist Theological Seminary.

Church fire investigations ongoing

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Church fire investigations ongoing

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

CENTREVILLE, Ala. (ABP)—Federal officials continue their investigation as 10 Baptist churches in rural Alabama burned in two weeks. Authorities speculated the rash of fires could be the work of two arsonists who may be “bosom buddies.”

The most recent blaze claimed the Beaverton Freewill Baptist Church, located near the Mississippi border in the northwestern part of the state. Inspectors said the fire was the work of an arsonist, and they noted witness reports about two white males in a dark-colored SUV at the scene of several of the crimes.

IMB backs away from trustee removal

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IMB backs away from trustee removal

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP)—Leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board will ask the agency's trustees to rescind an action that asked for the removal of a trustee.

But the trustee in question, Wade Burleson of Oklahoma, said the controversy that has erupted over the board's action isn't over.

Evangelical chaplains spark controversy

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Evangelical chaplains spark controversy

By Deborah Potter

Religion & Ethics Newsweekly

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The U.S. Armed Forces always have had chaplains, but as the number of chaplains from evangelical groups with a strong commitment to bringing nonbelievers to their faith has grown, so has a controversy about how the chaplaincy should carry out its ministry.

Historically, chaplains have served side-by-side with the troops in both peace and war, offering public prayers and private counseling—to all comers, of all faiths, believers and nonbelievers alike.

Bush challenges students to lives of service

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Bush challenges students to lives of service

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

BELTON—Former President George Bush stressed the importance of service, integrity and ties to family and friends during a lecture at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.

Former
President
George Bush
delivers the
McLane
Lecture at the
University of
Mary Hardin-
Baylor. Photo
courtesy of
the University
of Mary
Hardin Baylor

“There is no definition of a successful life that doesn’t include service to others,” Bush told a capacity crowd at the university’s Mayborn Campus Center, Feb. 10.

John Lilley seeks balance as he

leads Baylor University

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John Lilley seeks balance as he leads Baylor University

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

WACO—Baylor University bills itself as “a Christian university in the historic Baptist tradition.” And when President John Lilley uses the phrase, he emphasizes every key word.



“It’s not in just any tradition and not even just any Baptist tradition. It’s the historic Baptist tradition,” he said, stressing the university’s leaders hold a distinctively Baptist understanding of religious liberty and noncreedal, biblical faith.

Intelligent design discussion moves to university campuses

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Intelligent design discussion moves to university campuses

By Sarah Price Brown

Religion News Service

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (RNS)—When Hannah Maxson started an intelligent design club at Cornell University last fall, a handful of science majors showed up for the first meeting. Today, the high-profile club boasts more than 80 members.

Casey
Luskin,
founder of
the
Intelligent
Design and
Evolution
Awareness
(IDEA)
Center, a
small
nonprofit
organization
based in San
Diego,
speaks at an
intelligent
design club
meeting at
the
University of
California at
San Diego.
Photo by Brit
Colanter/RNS

Until recently, the nationwide debate over whether intelligent design should be taught alongside evolution was centered primarily in public elementary and high school science classes.

Now the discussion is spilling over onto university campuses. At nearly 30 public and private universities across the country, students have started clubs aimed at promoting intelligent design. The clubs, sponsored by the

Intel-ligent Design and Evolution Awareness Center—IDEA—a small, nonprofit organization based in San Diego, have been gaining members and visibility.

Proponents of intelligent design insist the theory, which says the universe is so complex that it must have been created by a higher being, is scientific. Opponents—including most of the nation's scientific establishment—put their weight behind Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, and dismiss intelligent design as a religious idea based on the biblical creation story in Genesis.

When Cornell's interim president, Hunter R. Rawlings III, denounced intelligent design as "a religious belief masquerading as a secular idea" in a speech last October, Maxson, a 21-year-old junior and president of the Ithaca, N.Y., school's IDEA club, responded with a press release. Rawlings' comments were a "gross misstatement," she said, and "an insult to people of faith throughout America."

Suddenly, Maxson, a self-described "bookish" chemistry and math major, found herself and her club in the spotlight.

"Before, we were just basically a science club," she said. "Now, we have to defend our ideas everywhere."

During one recent week, she was scheduled to speak about intelligent design at a campus discussion, make a presentation to a biology class and give an interview on local radio.

Intelligent design clubs at other universities also have been gaining momentum and attention. The first IDEA club meeting at George Mason University, a public school in Fairfax, Va., drew 20 people.

At a recent meeting, where a scientist guest speaker offered his criticisms of intelligent de-sign, 90 people attended.

Josh Norton, a 22-year-old math major who is president of the University of California at San Diego's club, said his group was meeting every week in order to plan an all-day conference on intelligent design for the spring.

Casey Luskin, 27, founded the first IDEA club in 1999, at the University of California at San Diego. Luskin, then a college junior, had become

interested in intelligent design after taking a biology seminar that taught about the theory. When Luskin graduated with a master's degree in earth sciences in 2001, he founded the IDEA Center to help other students start their own clubs.

If a high school or university student contacts the IDEA Center about starting an intelligent design club, the center will provide a curriculum with suggested discussion topics, books, videos and a bibliography of sources.

Recently the center helped start clubs at the University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif. A few high schools, including one as far away as Kenya, also have started IDEA chapters.

The organization is "very grassroots," Luskin said. Its seven staff members volunteer part-time. They operate on a budget of a few thousand dollars, which comes from individual donations, he said.

The group's advisory board includes Michael Behe and William Dembski, fellows at the Discovery Institute in Seattle, a think tank that is the driving force behind the intelligent design movement.

Dembski became the Carl F.H. Henry Professor of Theology and Science at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary last June.

Luskin recently started working at the Discovery Institute as a program officer concerned with public policy and legal affairs. Still, he stressed that the IDEA Center remains independent and receives no funding from the institute.

But Victor Hutchison, professor emeritus of zoology at the University of Oklahoma, who attended some IDEA club meetings on his campus, said he could not separate the clubs from the broader intelligent design movement, spearheaded by the Discovery Institute.

"I find that they are espousing exactly the talking points of the creationist Discovery Institute," said Hutchison, who described himself both as "an evolutionist" and "a person of faith."

The way Hutchison sees it, the clubs fit into what he calls Discovery's larger plan to attack evolution and replace it with the religious viewpoint of

biblical creationism and eventually “establish a theocracy.”

The IDEA Center says intelligent design is a scientific concept, not a religious one. But students came to the meetings with their Bibles, Hutchison said. The IDEA Center also requires its club presidents to be Christian.

Luskin explained that as a Christian group, “we wanted to be totally open about who we thought the designer was.” But, he added, “this belief about the identity of the designer is our religious belief; it’s not a part of ID theory.”

Hutchison nevertheless sees the requirement as a contradiction. “It just proves they are lying when they say it’s not religious-based,” he said.

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