

# Baptist Briefs

April 11, 2008

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## Baptist Briefs

**Missouri Baptist Convention faces countersuit.** The Missouri Baptist Convention could face paying more than \$10 million to a developer over land formerly owned by [Windermere Baptist Conference Center](#). William Jester of Springfield, Mo., has filed a counterclaim to legal action convention officials originally filed against him and the conference center in 2006. Jester accuses the original plaintiffs of hurting his business and defaming his character through the lawsuit and publicity associated with it. As part of a debt-restructuring plan to cover costs of expansion, Windermere transferred 943 acres to National City Bank of Cincinnati in 2005. The bank then sold the property to Jester's Windermere Development Company. The convention sued, seeking to stop all land transactions at Windermere pending the outcome of a separate convention-filed suit against the conference center and four other institutions that removed themselves from the convention's control in 2000 and 2001. In 2002, the convention filed suit to regain control of the agencies' boards. In that case, a circuit court judge ruled Windermere had acted legally when its trustees changed the center's corporate charter to appoint their own successors. The convention plans to appeal that ruling.

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**Missouri layman proposes peace committee.** As battles continue to roil the Missouri Baptist Convention, prominent layman Kent Cochran is proposing a miniature recreation of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace

Committee. Cochran wants the convention's executive board, scheduled to meet April 14-15, to establish a 14-member committee representative of both sides within the embattled convention. "I'd be in favor of everything I could do to promote and bring about peace, but I'm not sure a peace committee is going to be an answer," convention President Gerald Davidson said, adding that based on his recollection of the SBC Peace Committee in the 1980s, "the peace committee didn't solve many problems at that time."

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## **Good leaders in business and church possess some of the same qualities**

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## **Good leaders in business and church possess some of the same qualities**

**By Ken Camp**

*Managing Editor*

The same leadership skills that make many of the best business leaders successful also can enable church leaders to fulfill their potential, some

Christian business experts note.

“In both worlds, ... leaders go first. Leaders set the culture,” said Craig Howard, a human resources executive with Coca-Cola and former bivocational pastor.

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# Churches taking care of business

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## Churches taking care of business

**By Ken Camp**

*Managing Editor*

Churches can learn from business —the good, the bad and the ugly.

Some best practices in the corporate world translate well to the nonprofit sector, including churches, experts insist. And at the same time, churches can benefit by looking at some lessons failed businesses learned the hard way.

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# Cartoon

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## **DOWN HOME: Is it a bathroom or spiritual metaphor?**

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### **DOWN HOME: Is it a bathroom or spiritual metaphor?**

Call it The Law of Unintended Home Improvements.

Or maybe call it The Difference Between Husbands and Wives.

I'm not sure what you call it, but we've got Exhibit A at our casa in Coppell.

Where to start? Where to start? I guess at our "beginning."

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# EDITORIAL: Ring the bell to end feeding frenzy

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## EDITORIAL: Ring the bell to end feeding frenzy

One of the problems with feeding frenzies is the invitation never says when the feeding is supposed to finish and the frenzy is supposed to fizzle.

That's what we're up against as the mantle of Baptist General Convention of Texas executive leadership passes [from Charles Wade to Randel Everett](#). For the past couple of years or so, the frenzy focused on Wade and his leadership among Texas Baptists, particularly the Executive Board staff. Some criticism was justified; some was not. But the feeding frenzy became a habit. Now, we're left wondering if blaming, name-calling and finger-pointing have become a reflexive template for corporate behavior. If so, the result will be wholly unfair to Everett, who just got here after many years out of Texas and who inherited, but did not create, the status quo.



So, will the sharks swim away and give Everett room to start fresh? Or will they continue to circle and bite, exacting a price for the simple sin of accepting the job and showing up? We'll see.

Over and over, the feeding frenzy focused on three issues that need to be laid to rest so Everett can begin with blessing:

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## Faith Digest

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## Faith Digest

**Most ministries submit materials to Grassley.** Two-thirds of the prominent ministries Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, is investigating are cooperating with requests to provide financial information. Bishop Eddie Long's New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, Ga., said it will provide information April 15, Grassley's staff announced. A lawyer for Randy and Paula White, who led Without Walls International Church in Tampa, Fla., told Grassley's office materials had been sent. The senator's office already had received materials from Joyce Meyer Ministries in Fenton, Mo., and Benny Hinn Ministries of Grapevine. Creflo Dollar Ministries in College Park, Ga., has refused to submit financial records, and Kenneth Copeland Ministries near Fort Worth responded to the request but hasn't provided sufficient materials. Grassley, top-ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, plans to "continue dialogue" with those two ministries, his office said.

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**Ten percent of voters wrong about Obama's religion.** One American voter in 10 believes Sen. Barack Obama is Muslim, despite the presidential candidate's frequent descriptions of his Christian faith and a high-profile flap over his former pastor. According to a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, a majority of voters—53 percent—correctly identify Obama as a Christian. But 16 percent of conservative Republicans, 16 percent of white evangelical Protestants, 19 percent of rural Americans and 10 percent of voters overall believe the Illinois senator is Muslim. Confusion over the candidate's religion crosses party lines. Fourteen percent of all Republicans, 10 percent of Democrats and 8 percent of independents think he's Muslim, according to the survey.

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## **Feds say minister diverted flood aid**

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## **Feds say minister diverted flood aid**

**By Bruce Nolan**

*New Orleans Times-Picayune*

NEW ORLEANS (RNS)—Federal prosecutors have charged the former pastor of a church damaged by Hurricane Katrina with diverting thousands of dollars in private donations and public flood relief money to his private

bank account.

The U.S. attorney's office said it filed a bill of information charging Noah A. Thomas Jr., former pastor of Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church, with a single count of mail fraud. He led the church until October 2006, authorities said.

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## **Veteran pastor sees last five years in for-profit hospital as expansion of ministry**

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George Gaston, vice president of ministry at Baptist Health System of San Antonio, poses with a family who moved into a Habitat for Humanity House built by volunteers from the hospital system.

**Veteran pastor sees last five years in**

# for-profit hospital as expansion of ministry

**By Karen May**

*Baptist Health Systems*

SAN ANTONIO—George Gaston served 25 years as pastor of Texas Baptist churches. For the last five, he has been vice president of a for-profit hospital system. And Gaston has found the latter role fulfilling—and the fulfillment of God’s calling for this season of his life.

Gaston serves as regional vice president of ministry for Baptist Health System in San Antonio. In that role, he has led efforts to strengthen the Christian mission and pastoral presence in the health system’s five hospitals and various other health-related businesses, as well as its presence in the community.



Gaston offers a prayer, asking God's blessing on a Habitat for Humanity House built by volunteers from the hospital system.

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## **Some Jews âuneasyâ with high-profile Christian allies**

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### **Some Jews 'uneasy' with**

# high-profile Christian allies

**By Omar Sacirbey**

*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON (RNS)—In re-cent years, conservative Christians have emerged as some of the most vocal supporters of the state of Israel—support many Jewish groups have welcomed at a time when they feel Israel is under siege.

One of the loudest voices has been John Hagee, the San Antonio megachurch pastor who recently endorsed John McCain's White House bid and raised the ire of Catholic groups with statements that even some Jews called vicious and inflammatory.

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## **Rising food, transportation costs raise need for gifts to hunger offering**

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## **Rising food, transportation costs**

# raise need for gifts to hunger offering

**By John Hall**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

DALLAS—The rising cost of food and transportation heightens the need to give to the Texas Baptist Offering for World Hunger, according to leaders of the effort.

Faith-based and secular agencies worldwide are facing an economic crunch as they battle soaring fuel and food costs globally. The increased costs mean fewer people can be fed with the same amount of resources.

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## **IN FOCUS: Focus on & share the hope of Christ**

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### **IN FOCUS: Focus on & share the hope of Christ**

“Four hundred sixteen children are taken from a West Texas polygamist compound.” “A 48-year-old grandmother and her 5-year-old granddaughter were killed by a gunman when a child’s birthday party turned violent.” “Home sales decline last month, the steepest so far, putting the entire first

quarter into a double-digit downturn.”

We are reminded of the sorrow and fear in our world each morning when we read the paper. Our own lives also are interrupted by challenges and heartache at unexpected times. Yet we still are called on to proclaim a message of hope. How can we do this with integrity?

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In Colossians 1:27 we read, “Christ in you the hope of glory.” Hope is not what we wish to experience or imagine. Hope doesn’t come from pretending that bad things are not happening. The hope we proclaim is the transformational hope we know in Christ. As Texas Baptists, we must focus continually on the hope of Christ that God makes available to the world through us.

As I begin this journey with you as your executive director, I am filled with hope. I am certainly not looking at the world through rose-tinted glasses, yet I am reminded constantly of the power of Christ.