

Around the State

March 28, 2008

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The Baptist Student Ministry of Texas A&M University led a tour of Texas for international students during spring break. Students from China, Iran, Taiwan and South Korea were escorted by several American students as they traveled to parts of Texas they previously had not experienced. While they enjoyed the Stockyards of Fort Worth, The Sixth Floor Museum in Dallas and other sights, for many the Palace of Wax Musuem in Grand Prairie and its display of the ministry of Christ from birth through resurrection had great appeal, leaders said.

Around the State

- **The International Mission Board** will hold a missionary appointment service at First Church in Sunnyvale April 9 at 7 p.m. More than 90 missionaries will be commissioned.

- **Theologian James Leo Garrett** will speak at Howard Payne University April 17 at 7 p.m. He will give an overview of the work of 10 Baptist theologians since World War II.
 - **The Baptist General Convention of Texas** will hold its Single Adult Leadership Conference at First Church in Sunnyvale April 18-19. For registration or information, go to www.bgct.org/singleadult.
 - **Wilshire Church in Dallas** has been chosen by the North Texas Food Bank as one of 10 local congregations to participate in Oprah's Big Give, a national community service project to be broadcast nationwide on ABC television. Wilshire members, and anyone else who wants to participate are asked to donate 18-ounce plastic containers of peanut butter with \$1 bills attached by April 16. The peanut butter will be used for distribution through Food 4 Kids, and the cash will help North Texas Food Bank purchase additional food for the program. The goal is 10,000 jars of peanut butter and \$10,000. The event will culminate on the afternoon of April 20, the date of the national broadcast.
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Baptist Briefs

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Baptist Briefs

Students to learn firsthand about global development. Three students with Texas ties—Samford University's Mary Beth Gilbert of Dallas, Trinity

University's Emily Morrow of Aledo and Gordon College's Meredith Wilkinson of Waco—will participate this summer in a seven-week Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missions immersion experience focused on the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. They are among 12 college students and recent graduates who will have the opportunity see firsthand how missions personnel are working to reach the goals. Sponsored by the CBF Student.Go program, participants will travel to Romania, Ethiopia, Uganda, Haiti, New York City and Washington, D.C. Students will have the opportunity to witness ministries that relate to all eight of the goals focused on hunger, education, child mortality, gender equality, maternal health, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability and economic development. Students also will visit the United Nations' headquarters in New York City, the ONE Campaign headquarters and Bread for the World in Washington, D.C., to learn how they can be advocates for hungry and hurting people around the world, and they will attend the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

Baptist pastor released from prison. Zaur Balaev, the Baptist pastor from Azerbaijan who was sentenced to two years in prison Aug. 8, 2007, was freed from prison March 19. "Baptists from all over the world rejoice in God's answer to our prayers for the release of our brother, Zaur Balaev," said Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam. "His patience in suffering and courage in the midst of trial has provided for us a splendid example of discipleship in the modern world. We look forward to giving him a platform to talk to Baptists about his faith and his experience."

Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

[The Great Awakening by Jim Wallis \(HarperOne\)](#)

Spiritual awakening doesn't become genuine revival until it moves beyond the salvation of individuals and begins to transform society in general, Christian social activist Jim Wallis maintains. Just as surely as an earlier Great Awakening led to the abolition of slavery, Wallis believes a new spiritual awakening is stirring. And it seems to be leading 21st century Christians to address social challenges that cut across categories of liberal and conservative politics.

In this engaging book, Wallis points to evidence of the Holy Spirit's movement. He sees it in the insistence of some evangelicals that a consistent pro-life ethic not only includes opposition to abortion, but also demonstrates concern for the poverty that drives some women to make desperate choices about terminating a pregnancy.

Off the Bookshelf
What's everyone reading anyway?

What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com.

And with the passing of the old generation of the Religious Right, he sees the potential for a new politically engaged group of “values voters” to emerge—voters who believe it takes both a village and a family to raise a child, who care about stewardship of creation and who recognize the radical demands of claiming Jesus Christ as Lord.

Cartoon

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Capacity crowd at Congreso called to “higher life”

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Capacity crowd at Congreso called to 'higher life'

By **Miranda Bradley**

Texas Baptist Communications

BELTON—Nearly 3,000 teens and young adults gathered on the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor campus Easter weekend, setting record attendance for Congreso, a gathering of Hispanic Texas Baptists.

“This is the biggest Congreso we have ever had,” said Angie Tello, Baptist General Convention of Texas Hispanic evangelism events coordinator. “I’m a little surprised that so many teenagers spent their Easter vacation here, but it shows just how dedicated today’s youth are to the Lord.”

A record number of people packed Congreso, a BGCT-sponsored event for Hispanic youth and singles. More than 200 people made spiritual decisions during the event.
(Photo/Ferrell Foster/BGCT)

• [See a slideshow of images from Congreso here.](#)

New Baptist Covenant: Another meeting approved, but no permanent structure

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New Baptist Covenant: Another meeting approved, but no permanent structure

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

ATLANTA (ABP)—Organizers of the recent [New Baptist Covenant celebration](#) are recommending a repeat of the historic event in 2011 but not a new denomination or other permanent organization.

The event drew an estimated 15,000 Baptists from across denominational, ethnic and ideological lines to Atlanta Jan. 30-Feb. 1 for fellowship, worship

and discussion about cooperation on evangelism and other areas about which they can agree.

Supreme Court to revisit decency standards

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Supreme Court to revisit decency standards

By Greg Trotter

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The U.S. Supreme Court announced it will revisit limits on on-air vulgarity in the court's first case on unsavory speech in almost 30 years.

After Cher and Nicole Richie used expletives during the 2002 and 2003 Billboard Music Awards on the Fox network, the Federal Communications Commission reprimanded Fox and changed its policy to penalize "isolated" and "fleeting" expletives that invoke "sexual or excretory organs or activities." Previous FCC policy had penalized only repetitive and deliberate obscenity on the airwaves.

DOWN HOME: From ‘Please, Jesus!’ to a new morning

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DOWN HOME: From ‘Please, Jesus!’ to a new morning

Theological insights sometimes occur at the strangest moments.

I realized this truth as I shivered under the covers in our guest bedroom, debating whether I really wanted to see another sunrise.

Here’s what I learned: Any time you’re praying in the middle of the night and the operative phrase is “Take me, Jesus,” you know you’re in sad shape.

Technically, my “shape” was the fetal position. It provided an appropriate metaphor for the angst a person feels in the middle of the night when you wonder if your insides are about to explode spontaneously.

EDITORIAL: Race relations, pastors & grace

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EDITORIAL: Race relations, pastors & grace

Barack Obama and Jeremiah Wright have raised two issues that are both sensitive and explosive—race in America and the relationship between pastors and churches.

The last time we saw such a clear picture of our U.S. racial divide occurred more than a dozen years ago, when a jury declared O.J. Simpson not guilty. Lately, we've seen endless news clips and YouTube loops of [Wright's angry sermons](#) on white racism and Obama's response. We've watched a plethora of pundits tar Obama with Wright's brush, theorizing the presidential candidate must agree with his former pastor, or else he would have moved his church membership.



Sadly, we haven't heard from many folks who seem willing to learn from what we're seeing and hearing. Since the presidential nomination hasn't

been wrapped up, we've got Democrats bashing Democrats and Republicans exulting over an "October surprise" in March. But few voices have asked how we can parse reason from rhetoric.

Racial relationships are tenuous, and racial reconciliation is hard work. That's true even under the best of circumstances, which excludes most of what passes for racial relationships in this country.

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

ACU freshmen get cool gadgets. Abilene Christian University will be the first university in the nation to provide all incoming freshmen with an Apple iPhone or an iPod touch, according to school officials. ACU, which is affiliated with the Churches of Christ, said 93 percent of students already bring a computer to campus. iPhones or iPods will be distributed beginning this fall and will allow students to receive homework alerts, answer in-class surveys and quizzes, and check their meal and account balances, along with more than a dozen other web applications, said Kevin Roberts, the school's chief information officer.

Bin Laden targets pope over Muhammad cartoons. A new audio

recording by Osama bin Laden accused Pope Benedict XVI of participating in a “new crusade” against Islam, including the publication of cartoons that depict the Prophet Muhammad. “Your publication of these drawings, part of a new crusade in which the pope of the Vatican has a significant role, is a confirmation on your part that the war continues,” bin Laden said in the recording, addressed to “the wise persons of the European Union.” A Vatican spokesman quickly responded, calling bin Laden’s accusation “totally unfounded,” and stressing the pope had condemned the offending images. The drawings in question are evidently the 12 cartoon portrayals of Muhammad published by a Danish newspaper in September 2005, and subsequently reprinted in newspapers in other countries—most recently on the second anniversary of February 2006 violent protests by Muslims that left at least 50 people dead.

Howard Payne students assist community center in Austin

March 28, 2008

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Members of
the Howard
Payne

University
spring break
mission trip
team were

(left to right)

Katy
Blackshear,
BSM
director;
Glenn Hopp,
professor of
English;
Emily Touw;
Jennifer
Brock; Donna

Dyer;
Rebekah
Reed; L J
McCulloch;
Zach
Stallings;
Darren
McElroy;
Chris Beaty;
James
Griffith and
Tyler
Malone.

(Photo
provided by
Emily Touw)

• [See Complete Spring Break Ministry Coverage Here](#)

Howard Payne students assist community center in Austin

By Kalie Lowrie

Howard Payne University

AUSTIN—Baptist Student Ministries Director Katy Blackshear led 10 Howard Payne University students over spring break to work with the Baptist Community Center Mission in Austin.

Sophomore Jennifer Brock found that there were “many opportunities to serve Christ, you just have to be ready to do anything.”



Howard Payne sophomore Chris Beaty sings songs with children at the Baptist Community Center Mission. (Photo by Jennifer Brock)

IN BETWEEN: Welcome, all Texas Baptists

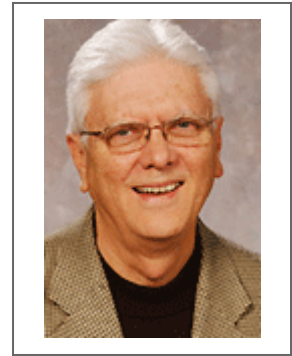
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IN BETWEEN: Welcome, all Texas Baptists

I want to thank Chairman John Petty, the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board and Texas Baptists for allowing me the privilege to serve you during these three months. Also, I want to thank the Executive Board staff, which in my opinion is the world's best denominational staff.

March 31 marks the day when Randel Everett begins his ministry as our executive director. He has asked me to serve with him for a few weeks after his arrival, and I am honored to do so.



One discovery I made in these few weeks is the overwhelming need for all Texas Baptist leaders to continue welcoming those who align with the Southern Baptist Convention. I am not speaking of our brothers who have formed another state convention in Texas with SBC in its name. I am speaking of the hundreds of churches who identify with the BGCT and the national SBC and who send their offerings to both organizations.

Yes, it is important to be on guard for those who would lead us away from Baptist distinctives—religious liberty, priesthood of believers, authority of Scripture and the autonomy of the local church. Thankfully, there are those among us who watch carefully so we don't walk down the path of creedalism.