

Case of state's grant for religious education goes to Supreme Court_60203

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Case of state's grant for religious education goes to Supreme Court

By Robert Marus

ABP Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON (ABP)-The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case that may decide whether the government is required to fund religious organizations in some circumstances.

Discovery opens eyes to America and hearts to God_60203

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Discovery opens eyes to America and hearts to God

By George Henson

Staff Writer

COLLEGE STATION-For 35 years, women from around the world have found a place to gather, learn skills and gain an introduction to Christianity at a College Station ministry.

James Dobson changes roles_60203

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James Dobson changes roles

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (RNS)-James Dobson, longtime president of Focus on the Family, will expand his role as chairman of the conservative Christian group but pass on the presidency to a successor.

Don Hodel, former president of the Christian Coalition and a Cabinet member in the Reagan administration, began serving as president and CEO May 15.

“This redefined responsibility will assure Dr. Dobson's continued leadership of the organization but without the burden of day-to-day management,” the ministry announced. “It will allow him to spend more time on ministry objectives that only he can accomplish.”

DOWN HOME: A dog-gone tale and a broken fence_60203

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DOWN HOME: A dog-gone tale and a broken fence

Now I know the cost of our dog, Betsy: 85¢.

That's how much I spent to replace the broken plank in the fence, where she escaped into the wide, wild world.

Betsy got out on Friday night, and I could kick myself for not fixing the fence earlier.

EDITORIAL: Christians must not block path to Middle East peace_60203

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EDITORIAL: Christians must not block path to Middle East peace

Some U.S. Christians have tried to draw detours on the “road map” to peace in the Middle East. They need to step back from the table and allow residents of that region, who actually must follow that map, to negotiate its course with help from advocates of lasting peace.

For many years, Christians who think they have figured out the scenario for the end of time and believe the geography of Israel and Palestine holds a key to that scenario have inserted their influence into Middle Eastern affairs. While they are not the sole cause of Israeli-Palestinian bloodshed, their views and their involvement have hindered the peace process. On the one hand, they have given intransigent agents within Israel the sense they can act with impunity, believing strong political forces within the United States will back them, no matter what. On the other hand, they have exacerbated many Palestinians' hopelessness-born anger, feeling they have nothing to lose and will be condemned, no matter what.

**Does any group
have a right to
impose its
theological
understanding
of history upon
the peace
process in
Israel and
Palestine?**

People of all faiths, particularly Christians, Jews and Muslims, should be concerned about and strive for peace in the Middle East. The strip of land along the Jordan River is holy ground. More importantly, however, all the people who live there were created in God's image and should be able to live in peace, without fear of suicide bombers or military mortar.

CYBERCOLUMN: Music and worship_simpson_60203

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Posted 5/30/03

CYBERCOLUMN:

Music and worship

By Berry D. Simpson

I recently attended a Sunday evening service in a Midland-area church, and it was the loudest worship service I ever experienced (unless I count that one Sunday morning in a premier Dallas church when the organist pinned me to the pew, blew my hair straight back and rendered me unable to speak due to the compression waves moving through my windpipe). I've been to a few very loud rock-and-roll concerts, including Rock the Desert here in Midland, but I was expecting the high volume on those occasions. This time in this church, I was caught completely off guard. Maybe the fault was mine for being on the front row of the church very near the speakers.

I must say the praise band was excellent. They were solid musicians and showed long hours of practice. Everyone else in the church was having a great time singing with the band and praising God. It's true that I thought they were singing the same simple chorus over and over, forever and ever, and I longed for a hymn or ballad where the words changed occasionally, but everyone else seemed to be enjoying this powerful experience. I have no reason to doubt that their worship was authentic and true and sincere. They were in the right place doing the right thing; I was the one who didn't belong.

COMMENTARY: Start with a

huugg_cosby_60203

October 14, 2003

Posted: 6/04/03

COMMENTARY: Start with a huugg

By Terry Cosby

Dallas has a lot of concrete and asphalt. It has a lot of people, too. I saw a few of them recently.

Going to the oncologist's office is never fun. We took my mother-in-law for a checkup. Sometimes, it's OK when you leave and you've gotten pretty good news, as we did. Other people I worry about.

Rick McClatchy to lead CBF Texas_60903

October 14, 2003

Posted: 6/06/03

Rick McClatchy to lead CBF Texas

By Mark Wingfield

Managing Editor

Rick McClatchy has been named the first full-time coordinator of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Texas.

ANOTHER VIEW: Huge farms harvest ethical issues _farley_60903

October 14, 2003

Posted: 6/06/03

ANOTHER VIEW: Huge farms harvest ethical issues

By Gary Farley

Even while the small textile and electronics plants of rural America have been closing, modern agriculture has become increasingly industrialized.

Traditionally, family farms produced a healthy assortment of row crops, forage and livestock. Presently, they are being replaced with massive operations that specialize in one or two products. De-industrialization in one facet of the rural economy is being accompanied by re-industrialization in the agricultural sector.

Gary
Farley

Recent tours of the major agricultural operations in my western Alabama county have taken me to pig nurseries where two workers are raising 4,000 piglets inside large, enclosed sheds. Due to careful genetic work, each pig parlor resident looks like every other inhabitant. The ideal is a lean, meaty porker.

DOWN HOME: The kid's home; we adjusted OK_60903

October 14, 2003

Posted: 6/06/03

DOWN HOME: The kid's home; we adjusted OK

Sometimes, the worst part of any new event is all the “expert” information you get ahead of time.

Take medical procedures, please. If you've ever had surgery and other people knew about it in advance, you probably heard enough worst-case scenarios to fill several episodes of “ER.”

Years ago, I had a hernia repaired, and several of my friends found out in advance. They managed to remember every stitches-ripping malfunction

and every gauze-left-in-the-gizzard malpractice known to medical science. Turns out, the operation and recuperation were a walk around the block (just what the doctor ordered) compared to listening to my buddies recite everything that could go wrong.

MARV KNOX <i>Editor</i>

EDITORIAL: Take steps to strengthen, lengthen ministers' tenures_60903

October 14, 2003

Posted: 6/06/03

EDITORIAL: Take steps to strengthen, lengthen ministers' tenures

What enables a minister to stay with a church a long time? Two articles in this week's Standard explore that theme, as some of Texas Baptists' longest-tenured pastors and a minister of music discuss their calling and careers. Their stories build a solid case for investing many years of ministry in one church.

Several personal qualities seem to help these ministers remain effective in their churches through many years. They're patient and mature. They focus on preaching and ministry. They work hard to stay current in professional disciplines. They handle conflict well. They love their people.

But long, successful tenures are not the domain of the minister alone. Like any other relationship, the bond between ministers and churches thrives on reciprocity. Your church can take several steps to strengthen and lengthen the service of your ministers, whether you only have a pastor or a large staff:

Long, successful tenures are not the domain of the minister alone. Like any other relationship, the bond between ministers and churches thrives on reciprocity.

CYBERCOLUMN: Can we keep from singing?_younger_60903

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CYBERCOLUMN:

Can we keep from singing?

By Brett Younger

The persistent demand throughout the Bible that we sing may at first seem cruel to those of us whose musical gifts do not fill the buckets in which we cannot carry a tune. The cacophonous among us have learned to sing off-key at a volume that doesn't draw attention with a rhythm that only we recognize.

Fortunately for the disharmonious, singingâ€”at least the kind of singing described in Scriptureâ€”has little to do with quality of voice and everything to do with openness of spirit. The tone deaf in Ephesus were glad to hear the Apostle Paul say their “singing and making melody to God” was to take place “in their hearts.” It's comforting for some of us to know that singing is not about what gets to the ear, so much as it is about what penetrates our souls. Maybe every now and then, just to make that clear, pastors should sing solos. Or maybe not.

Brett Younger

We become too sensible to sing. We mistakenly admire efficiency more than spirit. We have a preoccupation with what seems useful. Without a song in our hearts, we become dull people, tempted to baptize our grouchiness and call it maturity. The opposite of singing is not silence, but critical restraint. Hell is the refusal of the heart that will not join in the melody of grace. God, deliver us from being the kind of rigid, clenched-teeth people who try to be more spiritual, more earnest than God. Faith doesn't burden us with the heaviness of the world but gives us a lightness of spirit.

Have you heard how it is that angels fly? G.K. Chesterton said, "Angels can fly because they take themselves so lightly." Conversely, someone suggested that Satan fell to hell by the sheer weight of gravity. He took himself so seriously. Making melody in our hearts leaves us less pretentious, artificial and scared. Friedrich Nietzsche said, "Without music, life would be a mistake." Without music, life would be angrier and more selfish.

If there's no music bursting within us, if what's in our heart is not a melody, then we need to open ourselves again to the joy God has offered. The Christian hope is to be sung. We cannot explain the grace of God, and music comes closest to expressing the inexpressible. Music picks up where words fail.

That's why when you open the Bible you hear music: The prophet Miriam, tambourine in hand, singing at the Exodus; King David auditioning musicians to lead in worship; psalmists writing symphonies for harps, lyres, trumpets, timbrels, strings, pipes, and loud clashing cymbals (never a mention of quiet, soothing cellos). The hymns of the early church are sprinkled through the New Testament. At the annunciation, Mary bursts into the "Magnificat." At Jesus' birth, a choir of angels break into song. Paul and Silas have Favorite Hymn Night in prison. In Revelation, "The Hallelujah Chorus" ushers in the kingdom of God. On virtually every page, there is the music of God above the ordinary, the song of the holy that transcends what is expected.

A theology student went to the philosopher Paul Tillich with some nagging questions about faith. Tillich responded to this young person by playing a recording of "Credo (I Believe)" from Bach's B Minor Mass. "Credo" does not explain the Nicene Creed, but surrounds it with violins, trumpets, flutes, oboes and voices. Tillich realized that the most satisfactory answers to that student's questions were more likely to be found in music than in sharper reasoning.

God loves us enough to invite us to sing. Is there any one of us so sunk into sinful, sullen silence that we cannot, that we will not, praise God for such love?

We have a song that we need to sing. There are people who don't just live but sing life—4-year-olds on their good days, poor people who don't consider themselves poor, truly funny comedians, the best writers, genuine Christians, the ones who sing alleluia for the good they have been given.

In the early 1960s, when racial conflict was first erupting in the Deep South, a Southern white person went to where the trouble was hottest to see for himself what was going on. He watched African-Americans asking for their rights and watched them being beaten back. He returned home, and a friend asked about what he had seen.

He said: "It looks bad. The culture's against them. The laws are against them. The FBI is against them."

His friend said, "So, you think they're going to lose?"

"No, I think they're going to win."

"You just said the laws are against them, the FBI is against them, and the whole culture is against them. Why do you think they'll win?"

"They have this song."

We have a song, a song born within us each time we open our hearts to God's presence. We have 'the song of Gods goodness, the hymn of the Almighty's grace, the melody of the Creator's mercy, the psalm of the Spirit's love. How can we keep from singing?

Brett Younger is pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth

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.