

Seven tips for the 2007 tax-filing season

December 14, 2007

Posted: 12/14/07

Seven tips for the 2007 tax-filing season

By Sherre Stephens

Get Organized.

Early preparation for the upcoming tax filing season is best. A survey for the 2006 tax season showed that 2 in 5 Americans procrastinate when it comes to filing their tax return. Whether you are an early or late preparer, here are tips to aid in preparing your 2007 tax return.

**End of CBF/ABC partnership
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End of CBF/ABC partnership leaves future of medical/retirement benefits in doubt

By John Pierce

Baptists Today

ATLANTA (ABP)—A seven-year partnership between American Baptists and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which has allowed CBF-related churches to buy retirement and medical benefits, will end Dec. 31.

The end of the partnership is leaving some church leaders confused about the future of their benefits. The arrangement is between CBF's seven-year-old Church Benefits Board and the 96-year-old Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of the American Baptist Churches.

Huckabee's surge in polls brings new media attention, scrutiny

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Huckabee's surge in polls brings new media attention, scrutiny

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (ABP)—Mike Huckabee has gone from long-shot candidate to serious GOP presidential contender in only a few weeks—and his media coverage has gone from curious bemusement to serious analysis of his past record.

The result is both good and bad for the former governor of Arkansas and pastor who served as president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Mike Huckabee

Former atheist shapes God-centered program in Moldova

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Tatiana Ceban is working with Children's Emergency Relief International to develop a transitional living program for young people who have graduated from the government-run orphanages in Moldova.

Former atheist shapes God-centered program in Moldova

By Craig Bird

Baptist Child & Family Services

SAN ANTONIO—Five weeks in North Carolina undid a lifetime of atheistic indoctrination for Tatiana Ceban. Nearly 14 years later, she is helping Baptist Child & Family Services craft a transitional living program for youth who have aged out of government-run orphanages in Moldova.

“The most important goal is to teach everything through God’s perspective,” she said.

BaptistWay Bible Series for December 23: More than meets the eye

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BaptistWay Bible Series for December 23

More than meets the eye

- Mark 4:21-34

[By Andrew Daugherty](#)

RIGHT or WRONG? Meaning of persecution

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RIGHT or WRONG? Meaning of persecution

The other day, my Christian neighbor and I had an “across the fence” discussion that turned to theology. When I mildly disagreed with him, he responded, “You are persecuting me!” and walked away. Just what constitutes “persecution for righteousness sake”? I think my neighbor is acting self-righteously.

Around the State

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Around the State

- **The School of Christian Studies** at East Texas Baptist University will sponsor a trip to Greece next summer. The trip will focus on locations associated with the Apostle Paul and his ministry. The trip departs May 30

and returns June 10 after a final evening in Vienna, Austria. A \$500 deposit is due Feb. 1. For more information, call (903) 923-2182.

- **William Brackney** was the keynote speaker for Dallas Baptist University's Gallup Lecture. He addressed issues of Baptist identity and tradition within the academic world.
- **Howard Payne University** bestowed two honorary degrees during Dec. 15 commencement ceremonies. James Guenther and Cynthia Clawson each received honorary doctor of humanities degrees. Guenther has served as general counsel of the Southern Baptist Convention more than 40 years. An alumnus of HPU, Clawson has been a Christian recording artist more than four decades and is a member of the Texas Gospel Music Hall of Fame. Seventy-two undergraduate degrees also were awarded.
- **Nearly 800 Baylor University students** expected to participate in commencement exercises Dec. 15. During the ceremony, the Abner V. McCall Religious Liberty Award was to be presented to U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards.

Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

***Christianity's Family Tree* by Adam Hamilton (Abingdon Press)**

How did all the Christian denominations come to be? What do they believe? More importantly, what can they teach me about being a better disciple of Jesus Christ? These are the questions Adam Hamilton's *Christianity's Family Tree* sets out to answer.

As the name implies, Hamilton views the various denominations as part of the whole Christian family. Seen from his self-acknowledged United Methodist viewpoint, Hamilton's outlook on church history is charitable and lucid. He neither ignores nor dwells on the major theological differences. Instead, he finds the strengths all Christians can learn from the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal and Methodist traditions.


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

Christianity's Family Tree is first and foremost a book of discipleship, and it never strays from this main goal of making "more authentic and effective disciples of Jesus Christ." Through solid historical and theological detail, Hamilton delivers a read on the denominations that will inspire faith. It is ideal for any small group that desires to learn how the history of the various churches can deepen their journey with God.

Baptist Briefs

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Baptist Briefs

Three of ten recent SBC seminary grads are Calvinist. Nearly 30 percent of recent Southern Baptist Convention seminary graduates now serving as pastors identify themselves as Calvinists, according to findings by LifeWay Research and the North American Mission Board Center for Missional Research. In the SBC at large, by contrast, the number of pastors who affirm the five points of Calvinism is about 10 percent, said Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research.

Pastor's name found on hit list. Suspected terrorists included a Baptist pastor on what appears to be a hit list, the Baptist World Alliance reported. Ertan Mesut Cevik, pastor of a Baptist church in Izmir—Turkey's third-largest city—received increased police protection after his name was found on a list carried by three suspected terrorists. The three, who have been arrested, are suspected of planning wide-scale attacks after a large cache of weapons was found in their possession. Cevik has been under police protection since April, after he hosted a funeral service for one of three Christians who was killed in Turkey. After the funeral, a Turkish newspaper article accused Cevik and his church of engaging in “coercive evangelism” by using money and drugs to attract young people. The church denied those charges.

Cartoon

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Posted: 12/14/07

DOWN HOME: Topanga's lucky tree wasn't aglow

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You almost have to be a hurdler to get around our house these days.

Blame the dog. Or the Christmas tree.

We should've seen this coming when we got a new puppy last spring. But we were in love with our little flicker of fur and gave no heed to the morrow—or at least to the Christmas season.

Topanga made herself right at home from Day One. Very soon, Joanna and I understood what the breeder meant when she told us, “This dog wants to be a person and sees no reason why she shouldn’t be a person.”

EDITORIAL: The gospel in one stunning eyeful

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EDITORIAL: The gospel in one stunning eyeful

Christmas pageants often remind us Baptists of something we’re all too prone to forget: Worship can engage all the senses. The Baptist branch of the Christian family tree grows mighty close to the huge Protestant Reformation branch, which rejected the Roman Catholics’ statuary and the Orthodox’s icons, so precious few visual elements remind us of the God we worship and the Christ we adore. We also don’t go in for all that incense, which just might cause us to think of the Holy Spirit, whose pervasive presence we desperately need. Since most Baptists long ago substituted juice for wine and unleavened chicklets for bread, we gave up on the sense of taste in worship. And with screens flashing songs and Scripture, many of us don’t even enjoy the tactile sensation of holding a hymnal and caressing a Bible anymore.



Maybe an ear should be the Baptists' symbol for worship. We're all about listening to fine singing and good sermons. But you could check your eyes, nose, tastebuds and fingertips in the foyer of most Baptist churches and get along in worship just fine.

Except at Christmas. One of the best things about our Christmas pageants is they remind us worship should be a sensory experience. If your church is anything like ours, this is the one time of year when you can go to a worship service and enjoy a sensory feast. Even if your shepherds don bathrobes and your wise men drape themselves in bedsheets, a Christmas pageant is a celebration for all the senses. (OK, unless your pageant's "actors" include a donkey, sheep, goats and/or a camel or three, your sense of smell probably isn't stimulated.) Often, after the music has ceased, we recongregate in the fellowship hall to enjoy Christmas goodies. Let's hear it for the tastebuds.

Our church's 2007 Christmas pageant certainly did not disappoint. We're blessed with a terrific choir and an excellent orchestra, so music always floods our sanctuary with vibrant, joyful reminders of the splendors of this season. This year was no exception. Truly superb.