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November 30, 2007

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COTULLA—Hunting means big business in South Texas, worth tens of thousands of dollars each year to ranchers and the overall local economy. First Baptist Church of Cotulla decided to capitalize on the annual influx of visiting hunters—not for the benefit of their church, but for God’s kingdom.

Pastor Steve Parker recognized what happens every hunting season. The town fills with visitors from all over the world. The county continues to lengthen its airport runway to accommodate ever-larger corporate jets.

After observing this for a couple of years, Parker and other church leaders asked what they could do to minister to local residents who work on the ranches 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as well as to visiting hunters who might be interested in attending an informal worship service.

The church developed strategies to meet both needs. It declared the first Sunday of whitetail deer season this year “Camo Sunday” and advertised it on a sign in front of the church, located on the main thoroughfare through town. Members were encouraged to attend church wearing camouflaged clothing, and about two-thirds did—enough to make any hunter in his or her gear feel welcome.

Cartoon

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Conservative Christians show growing acceptance of divorce

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Conservative Christians show growing acceptance of divorce

By Adelle M. Banks

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—When Pentecostal power couple Randy and Paula White recently announced they were headed to divorce court, the most remarkable part of the reaction was that there wasn't much reaction at all among their supporters.

For increasing numbers of clergy, a divorce no longer generates the kind of career-killing hue and cry of decades ago, in part because plenty of people in the pews have experienced divorce themselves.

DOWN HOME: Children of Zacapa: God bless them all

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DOWN HOME: Children of Zacapa: God bless them all

Pichi grabbed my attention. Alex fired my imagination. Manuel warmed and broke my heart.

They live in an orphanage in Zacapa, Guatemala. I met them when a group from my church, First Baptist in Lewisville, spent most of a week there. We'll send three mission teams per year for at least three years to Zacapa, working in cooperation with Buckner International.

Pichi came up to me as we entered the compound. She didn't say a word, but she spoke with the biggest, brownest 4-year-old eyes I've ever seen. She smiled; I got weak in the knees.

Later, Pichi nestled into my lap as we listened to a Bible story delivered in English and translated into Spanish. She didn't squirm, but leaned into my chest and traced the outline of my fingers with her own. If the laws of two countries didn't prohibit it, I'm sure I could've been convinced to buy an airline ticket and bring her home to Texas.

EDITORIAL: A view from both sides of the pulpit

November 30, 2007

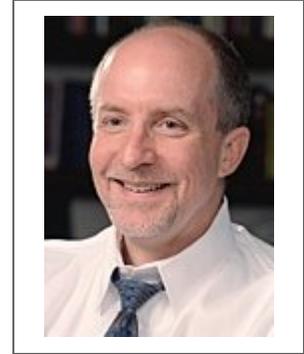
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EDITORIAL: A view from both sides of the pulpit

Preaching is a lot like playing shortstop.

When I was a young man, Hall of Famer Ozzie Smith mesmerized me with the way he played shortstop for the St. Louis Cardinals. With Ozzie, grace defied gravity. He turned baseball into ballet, equal parts beauty and power. Most amazingly, he made it all look so simple and easy. I wanted to be like Ozzie; I wanted to play shortstop.

Then, just once, the manager of our church-league softball team moved me from right field to short. I was thrilled. Then humiliated. When I tried to field grounders, somebody in the stands wondered why I wore cinder blocks instead of cleats. And when I tried to throw a runner out at first, the second baseman ducked. It was a long night.

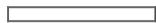


Like playing shortstop, preaching is a lot harder than it looks. In this issue, we're examining this divine craft. Preaching, not shortstop. I spend most Sundays in a pew, listening to someone else preach a sermon. So, I resonate with Baptist laypeople the world over. But my job sometimes affords me the opportunity to stand behind a pulpit and seek to deliver a message from God. So, I empathize with preachers. From that vantage point, I'd like to offer a few words to both groups.

Engage conferences designed to inspire, equip for evangelism

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Engage conferences designed

to inspire, equip for evangelism

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

DALLAS—[Engage](#) and [Radical Engage](#)—conferences designed to inspire and equip Texas Baptists to evangelize the state—are scheduled Jan. 13-15 at LakePointe Church in Rockwall and feature speakers from around the nation.

The events continue a long tradition of bringing Texas Baptists together to focus on what God has called them to do—share the gospel, said Jon Randles, director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Evangelism Team.

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

Christian groups commit to cooperation. More than 240 Christian leaders said they left an international summit in Kenya committed to building closer ties among the world's Christian denominations. The Global Christian Forum, meeting near Nairobi, brought together Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and Pentecostal and charismatic Christian leaders. It

also assembled groups that had sometimes been at odds, including the World Council of Churches and the more conservative World Evangelical Alliance.

Oral Roberts University president resigns. The embattled president of Oral Roberts University resigned amid intense scrutiny over allegations of financial, political and other wrongdoing at the charismatic Christian university in Tulsa, Okla. Richard Roberts, son of the university's namesake founder, submitted a resignation letter to ORU's board of regents Nov. 23. The resignation came just days before the board was scheduled to hear the results of an outside investigation of allegations against him and his wife, Lindsay. Roberts, chairman and CEO of Oral Roberts Ministries, had placed himself on an indefinite leave of absence Oct. 17 as university president. But he had said he expected to return to the post in "God's timing." He was the second president in the 42-year history of the 4,000-student university, succeeding his father, Oral Roberts, in 1993. The allegations that sparked the turmoil over Richard Roberts' presidency were raised in a lawsuit filed Oct. 2 by three former ORU professors who claim efforts to act as whistleblowers cost them their jobs. The lawsuit in Tulsa County District Court alleges illegal political activity and lavish, unchecked spending by Richard Roberts and his family.

Ghana minister to Texans: ‘We need help’

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Ghana minister to Texans: ‘We need help’

By George Henson

Staff Writer

DALLAS—Yaw Ofori traveled from Ghana to Texas to communicate a very simple message: “We need your help.”

Christians in Ghana need people to provide training to help them plant new churches, said Ofori, director of missions for the Ghana Baptist Convention. Of the 75 people groups who live in Ghana, 15 are unreached with the gospel, he said.

Yaw Ofori

Church greeter has firm grip on thousands of names

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Church greeter has firm grip on thousands of names

By Dee Anne Finken

Religion News Service

ANCOUVER, Wash. (RNS)—Some people preach. Others bear witness to their faith with a song of praise.

Rich Liedtke ministers with his hands. That is, he offers a firm, two-handed grip that lasts long enough for him to look straight into a churchgoer's eyes, memorize the face, and announce cheerfully: "Hi, I'm Rich. And you are?"



Rich Liedtke
greeted Kelli
Wright at the
Church of God
in Vancouver,
Wash. Liedtke
has
memorized
the names of
more than
3,000 people
who come
through the
church doors;
Wright was
the 3,000th.
(RNS
photo/Beth
Nakamura/*The
Oregonian*)

**Lewisville volunteers share pure
water and Living Water in**

Guatemala

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Truett
King of
First
Baptist
Church in
Lewisville
reads a
Bible story
during
Vacation
Bible
School,
part of the
church's
recent
mission
trip to
Guatemala.
(See Marv
Knox's
[Down
Home
column](#) for
a personal
glimpse
into the
Guatemala
trip)

Lewisville volunteers share pure water and Living Water in Guatemala

By **Marv Knox**

Editor

ZACAPA, Guatemala—Members of First Baptist Church in Lewisville delivered both Living Water and pure water during a late-fall mission trip to an orphanage in Guatemala.

They told the children about Jesus, the Living Water, who can quench their spiritual thirst. But they also completed a filtration system that now purifies the orphanage's parasite-laced water supply.



Brittainy Holmes of First Baptist Church in Lewisville shows Christ's love to a girl in an orphanage in Zacapa, Guatemala, during a mission trip coordinated by Buckner International. The church is sending three teams a year to the state-run orphanage.

Howard Payne coeds mentor girls at juvenile correctional facility

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Howard Payne coeds mentor girls at juvenile correctional facility

By George Henson

Staff Writer

BROWNWOOD—Each week, 39 Howard Payne University students travel a few miles down the road to another world. They visit the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex to show girls there how to experience the different life that Jesus offers.

Students Chassidy Carroll and Chaley Perkins share their lives with girls who need positive role models. Carroll, who helped begin the program three years ago, now mentors four girls during her twice-a-week trips to the facility.

Groups say hunger stats, food prices up

November 30, 2007

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Groups say hunger stats, food prices up

By Heather Donckels

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—While millions of Americans stock their kitchens for holiday feasts, many groups are concerned about people who will go hungry during the festive season—and in the weeks and months to come.

Inflation has made food more expensive, making it harder for families to put food on the table and more difficult for food banks to keep their shelves stocked.