

VISIONS



June / July '06



Joy Yee,
featured speaker
CBF moderator



2006 General Assembly

General Sessions – June 22-23

Auxiliary Events – June 21 & 24

Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, Ga.

Highlights



Trevor Hudson
featured speaker
a call to justice
and mercy



Al Staggs
worship leader
dramatic gospel
interpretations



C. Michael Hawn
artist in residence
worship arts from
around the world



Alicia Walker
worship planner
intentional focus
on worship

*Worship opportunities • HIV/AIDS Summit, Wed. & Thurs.
Theological Education Banquet, Wed.
Companions in Christ Training, Sat.
National Hispanic Gathering, Sat.*

**There is no charge to attend the General Assembly.
Register and reserve your hotel room at www.thefellowship.info.**

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship 
www.thefellowship.info
(800) 352-8741

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Interfaith Relations

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VISIONS is published six times a year
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All questions and comments may be
directed to Nancy Copeland,
478-742-1191 ext 27 or ncopeland@cbfga.org.



Being the Presence of Christ for Each Other

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO I was attending a CBF meeting in Atlanta. Occasionally the state, regional, and national coordinators get together to exchange ideas and encourage one another. During the meeting I received a phone call from my wife telling me that our daughter was on the way to the hospital to deliver our first grandchild. I left the meeting in Atlanta and got to the hospital an hour before the birth. Sitting in the waiting room I had time to reflect on the event. The room was packed with family, church friends, and other friends from the community. I was amazed at how many had come for the event. I began thinking about what it meant that such was the case. I decided that we all came because we knew something important was about to happen. The birth of a child is a special thing. We did not want to miss it.

We also came because we wanted to offer support. We could not be in the delivery room, but we could be near by. We could not have the child for Anna, but we could pray for her, her husband, and the baby. Just our being there was enough to give my daughter the extra strength she needed. It meant a lot to her. In some sense we all came to the hospital because we needed to be there. The birth, growth, and development of a human life are parts of an ongoing process. Experiencing new birth was not just something happening to my daughter

and her new daughter, Madeline. It was being experienced by all of us. Life was being rekindled in all of those in the waiting room. We needed it more than we knew.

This year the annual CBF General Assembly will be in Atlanta. Again I find myself asking the same question. Why should we attend the General Assembly? Remarkably I find myself coming up with similar answers. We need to go because it is important. Admittedly, it is not on the same level as the birth of a child, but important nonetheless. It is where family, friends, and other colleagues gather to reconnect. It is our way of making a statement about this movement of God's grace, one we call CBF, that is central to who we are as Baptist Christians. Attending is our way of showing support to our field personnel and our state and national leadership. On Sunday morning it means something when a church member gives the pastor or staff member a hug and says, "Thanks for what you do." The General Assembly is the place where this kind of affirmation can be openly expressed. Finally, we need to go because of what it can mean for us. It can be our upper room moment where we experience God's presence, encourage one another, and get ready to engage the world. Being at the birth of my first grandchild has given me a better understanding and appreciation for the cycle of life. Some might think it a stretch, but being at the General Assembly has the potential to help all of us better understand and appreciate this movement through which we serve. I plan to be there. I hope you will too.

Frank Broome

Coordinator, CBF/GA
fbroomecbfga.org



June 21-24
Atlanta

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
2006 General Assembly



A Time for Everything

THE WRITER OF ECCLESIASTES says there's a time for everything. I agree. In particular, I agree that it's time for CBF/GA to benefit from the leadership of a new moderator! Now, don't get me wrong — I've enjoyed serving in this capacity, and I look forward to whatever future challenges may come my way. But God has blessed CBF/GA with many whom He has gifted to

serve and lead you. Renée Bennett and Darrell Watson, our new moderator and moderator-elect, are among this group, and I look forward to supporting them as they serve, guide, and lead us this year. I am confident that the Coordinating Council and the entire CBF/GA will benefit from their service.

As I have said before, both privately and publicly, we have a truly outstanding staff that simply does a magnificent job, day in and day out. They have made my job easy, and I want all of you to know how well they do their jobs. Frank and all the other staff members thank you!

Believe it or not, the writer of Ecclesiastes says there's even "...a time to be silent...."

Sometimes, it's difficult for me to recognize that time, but I've promised Renée that I will do my very best to find it while serving as immediate past moderator. It will be challenging, but it will also be fun!

Finally, thank you, all of you, for giving me this opportunity to serve God and you. I have learned much, and have been blessed.

Al Shauf
Past Moderator, CBF/GA

A Strong Fellowship, a Strong Presence, a Strong Future

A strong fellowship, a strong presence, a strong future for CBF/GA ...
To listen, to support, to lead, to challenge....
I hope it all matters this year!

AS WE MOVE FROM EASTER TO PENTECOST, we are reminded of the power that is ours to be the presence of Christ in the world. We've been commissioned and empowered and "let loose" on a world in need! Will it matter? The answer to that question is in each personal response to God's call, hopefully, a resounding YES, HERE AM I.

The privilege of serving as Moderator of CBF/GA for the next year allows me to say yes to an opportunity that I pray will "matter" in the Kingdom. My words to Frank Broome in accepting the work of the Moderator were: "I want it to matter that I have spent a year as Moderator." One of my goals is to listen to staff, the council, and members of the Fellowship. I want your ideas and evaluations to matter to the strengthening and growth of CBF/GA. I also want to support Suzanne Powell, Nancy Copeland, and Rachel Britt in their administrative and programmatic work. They are so capable, each a leader in her respective role. I want to support Alan Mitchell as he matches churches and ministers in Reference and Referral. Alan has a vital role in strengthening CBF/GA congregations and the ministers who serve these churches. I want to support Frank Broome as Coordinator. Frank is highly respected among his colleagues for his ability to understand and communicate the "big picture" for the mission and future of CBF/GA

and CBF/National. I want to support Jimmy Lewis as Missions Coordinator, a man of great compassion and resourcefulness for people most in need. I

want to support Devita Parnell as Associate Coordinator for Congregational Life who brings outstanding present and future leadership to a growing organization. I also want to lead the Coordinating Council by challenging us to increase and enhance the presence of Christ both within and without our fellowship through active leadership in CBF/GA and CBF/National.

A strong fellowship, a strong presence, a strong future for CBF/GA To listen, to support, to lead, to challenge ...
I hope it all matters this year!

Renée Bennett
Moderator, CBF/GA





Step Outside the Boundaries

Our message as Baptists who cherish religious freedom for all people and who respect those who may hold different views about life needs to be told.

THE TASK OF BUILDING relationships beyond Baptist life is essential to us “Cooperative Baptists.” This work in Georgia is being led by CBF/GA’s Interfaith Task Force. The Interfaith Task Force seeks to facilitate understanding between the CBF community and people of other faith traditions, both Christian and non-Christian. Although it is debated whether our work is ecumenical, inter-religious, interfaith — or all three — we have chosen the name “interfaith” to include those beyond the Baptist borders. However, I will admit that

there are relationships that need to be built even within the Baptist family — wouldn’t you?

Over the past few years the task force has sought to accomplish its mission by offering workshops on interfaith issues at statewide meetings. You may remember the rabbi who “Spoke the Truth about Judaism” at our 2005 General Assembly or the panel of clergy from Baptist, Islamic, and Jewish congregations in Athens that during the 2006 General Assembly told their story of friendship and common work. CBF/GA has also offered, on behalf of our churches, words of blessing and celebration to both Jewish and Islamic congregations across the state during the holy days of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Ramadan, and Passover. We have also offered words of condolence and sympathy to both the Catholic community when Pope John Paul II died and to the Jewish community when President Sharon was ill. We have encouraged churches in their own communities to do the same and have even provided sample letters to get them started! (Check them out on our new website at www.cbfga.org!)

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Visions* highlighting interfaith issues and will be inspired to step outside the boundaries of your local Baptist church and perhaps your closest circle of friends.

If you are already building those bridges in formal or informal ways, please contact our office to share your story. We want to continue to lift up examples of congregational “success.” Our message as Baptists who cherish religious freedom for all people and who respect those who may hold different views about life needs to be told. Let’s continue to befriend others with our message of freedom and grace!

Devita Parnell

Associate Coordinator for
Congregational Life, CBF/GA
dparnell@cbfga.org

The CBF / GA Interfaith Task Force

consists of laity and clergy from across the state who have a particular interest in guiding our work. The members are

Wayne Martin, *Chair*

Michelle Brooks, *Vice-Chair*

Dan Ariail

Julie Long

Denny Spear

Richard Swindle

Jack Colwell

Colin Harris

Jack Caldwell



Available SOON!

Good Will for the Common Good:

A Resource for Nurturing Baptists' Relationships with Jews

This how-to resource on beginning dialogue with Jewish neighbors and working together in efforts that benefit the community at large focuses on poverty, justice, homelessness, separation of church and state, civil rights, and more.

Learn how to reframe your thoughts, speech, and actions as they relate to our Jewish neighbors. The resource has four Bible studies, each dealing with one of the four cardinal virtues: wisdom, balance (temperance), courage, and justice. The DVD component has an introduction and a chapter related to each of these four cardinal virtues. The printed curriculum has separate student guides and leader guides.

Both the DVD and the illustrations in the Bible studies are balanced as far as offering perspectives from both Baptists and Jews. It also presents positive, healthy models of Baptists and Jews who have solid and productive relationships.

Visit www.ethicsdaily.com to check on availability and release date.

Baptists, Jews, Muslims, and Dairy Farmers

I GREW UP IN A RURAL, small county in Middle Georgia. In this comparatively ordinary slice of red clay there were three kinds of people: Baptists, Methodists, and dairy farmers. The first two groups got along reasonably well, yet maintained mutual suspicion of each other. Baptism by immersion, candles at the altar, and pulpit vestments, however, were not insurmountable differences. Dairy farmers pretty much got along with everybody else so long as their herds remained in their proper pastures.

It was not until I attended a Baptist college that I would interact with a larger collection of Christians from other denominations. I kid you not; I had never met a Catholic until my freshman year. It wasn't just other Christians I came to know in my college experience, but Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and even, gasp, agnostics, atheists, and at least one practicing surfer from California.

Nearly twenty years later on September 11, 2001, the unthinkable happened not just in New York, but across the globe. I was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Marietta and had been there long enough to know many of the religious and civic leaders of the community. Although I did not appreciate it then, I have since learned that my most important relationships included the religious leaders of both the local synagogue and mosque. I shall never forget calling the mosque the afternoon of September 11th and leaving a message. I said something along these lines: "We are all struggling with this morning's events but I fear that you may be the recipient of some harassment. I want you to know that First Baptist Church is praying for you." The director of the mosque told me later that week that out of all the hate calls they received that day Baptists consistently voiced their love and support to the Muslims of Marietta. During the remainder of my tenure in Marietta I enjoyed the fellowship and friendship of both the Muslim and Jewish community. I am convinced it made me a better pastor.

When First Baptist Church of Augusta called me to serve as their next pastor the church held an installation service. They invited the predictable slate of community leaders and local ministers to participate in the service. The church also included one of the local rabbis, David Sirull. Out of all the local pastors — Baptist and otherwise — that I have come to know since arriving in Augusta, Rabbi David Sirull is the one I know best. We frequently lunch together and discuss everything from world events, religious issues, community concerns, and the shared hardships of leading our respective congregations. Currently David and I are working on a Clergy Support Group whose purpose is to simply provide a forum where we can share our vocational journeys and offer encouragement to one another.

" ... open gates to neighbors and share from our pastures friendship, support, and our common journey."

When I think about my Muslim and Jewish friends that I have been blessed to know over the years it is too predictable and trite to say we have more in common than not. We have our differences — sometimes big ones. We hold distinct religious convictions that at the end of the day we will not agree over. We raise our families differently, have different diets, vote for different candidates, and in some areas have different values. This of course is the way it is when we reach beyond Baptist walls, but even within our rather obscure circles.

There is an essential truth, however, that grounds and connects us. We read about it in Genesis 1:27: *So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them* (NRSV). I do not have all the theological, sociological, or anthropological resources to settle my differences with Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Presbyterians, Rotarians, or Shriners! But I can see within my brother and sister the image of God emerging. By looking beyond my own reflection to the rich diversity that is a part of my region I get not only a better idea of who God is in this world, but who God is in me.

My relationship with other religious groups and their leaders started out on pragmatic grounds. It is important to be familiar with the diverse matrix of a given community. Yet the need for clergy and laity in developing meaningful relationships beyond our "steeped" walls is vitally a spiritual issue. Our relationship with God and with ourselves is deepened when it includes others.

A good dairy farmer knows that good fences make for good neighbors. The poet Robert Frost said as much. As the son of a dairy farmer, I would like to suggest a counter-notion. We need to open some gates to our neighbors and share from our pastures friendship, support, and our common journey. We will not resolve our many distinctions, but our view of the world and of God will grow accordingly.

Greg DeLoach
Pastor, First Baptist of Augusta



Are You a Bridge or a Wall?

I'M FROM A SOMEWHAT "mixed up" family — denominationally diverse, that is! My mother was a Baptist, my father a Lutheran; two aunts joined the Methodist denomination, and Aunt Sarah, my father's baby sister, converted to Judaism. A sister became a Methodist and a brother joined the Catholic Church. But should anyone question my "baptistry" I can say with a somewhat proud humility, that, if the dead could talk, my mother's relatives buried in western South Carolina could tell you that the famous Baptist missionary Luther Rice is buried next to Cousin Myrtle in the Pine Pleasant Baptist Church cemetery outside Saluda, S.C., a place Rice personally chose as his burial plot during his days of illness before his death on September 25, 1836.

In the spirit of Roger Williams, that first great Baptist in America, the Martin family reunions made room for Methodists, Baptists, Jews, and a Catholic ... and I believe a couple of "nothingists" as well. My Methodist cousins were just that: cousins who went to a different church. And my Catholic brother was no less my brother because he crossed himself in a Catholic fashion. And Aunt Sarah, her Jewish husband, and Jewish children were more aunt, uncle, and cousins than they were Jews.

Being from a "mixed up" family has made me a better Baptist and not a poorer one. I've always been comfortable in a community where Baptists rub shoulders with other faiths and religious practices and face daily those with different views. With the Methodists, Lutherans, Catholic, and Jews in my family I learned early in life how to get along with people of different faiths. The fact is they chose to become a part of a particular faith — for whatever reasons. They could just as easily change back to another faith, if they wished. But they could not escape the fact that we were related to each other because we were part of the Martins and Derricks of Plains, Ga. I'm a richer person

because of my relationship with those of my larger family.

Your "Baptist credentials" are probably as good as mine but maybe for you, Methodists, Catholics, and Jews — and as far as that goes, Presbyterians, Lutherans, or whatever — are just that.... strangers to your understanding of the things of faith. Of course, wherever there is denominational diversity, there is always different understandings of faith matters, differing interpretations of the Bible, opposing theological views, and sometimes conflicting thoughts about our social obligations. Some may have missed the significance of matters we believe are crucial to the things of Christ. Others may place extreme importance on matters that we feel have little to do with the larger issues of faith. Still others may hold a view of life that appears to have left God out of the picture.

In that world of theological diversity — outside our denominational mindset, far from where denominational loyalists tend to see the same thing, feel the same way, and look in the same direction — there are challenges to one's faith that can be both frightening and painful. But it is in that world where religions of all sorts are vying for attention that is found some of the greatest friendships and most rewarding relationships one can ever find. If we can begin to see the world's population as similar to a family with aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, with distant cousins or even in-laws with whom we have a certain connection, we can reap some of the joys of interfaith and inter-religious friendship and relationship.

The driving mission of the Interfaith Task Force of CBF/GA is to establish friendship with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and other non-Christian bodies in our state. Our friendship with the Jewish community is growing. Our positive work with the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee has not only enhanced our friendship but produced areas in which we can work together. A sub-committee from our Task Force is meeting with a group of Jewish leaders in Atlanta to create a Jewish/Baptist Symposium to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. Hopefully, within the next year we will be able to conduct such a seminar and with God's blessings hold similar gatherings in various sections of our state. With the assistance of the Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, CBF/GA recently presented a copy of the DVD, "Theologians Under Hitler," to the Breman Holocaust Museum in the Jewish Federation of Atlanta.

We are making progress in establishing relationship with a Turkish group of Muslims in Norcross, Ga. Our Task Force has met with a few of its leaders, and we see great possibilities of friendship with this Muslim group and other groups as well. On the back burner, but no less important to the Interfaith Task Force, is building friendship with the Hindus and Buddhists since they are a growing segment in the larger religious community in Georgia. If there is a

(continues to next page)

Chinese restaurant in your community, the owner is more likely Buddhist than Baptist (there are a lot of Chinese Baptists, ... remember Lottie Moon?). And if there is an Indian doctor in your area, he or she is likely Hindu.

Friendship with those of other religions can often be as educational as it is social. Such relationships have caused me to deepen my own understanding of my faith and helped me articulate more clearly what I believe about Christ. Rabbis and Jewish friends have given me a greater understanding of certain ancient Biblical concepts, that as a Christian, I could not appreciate as much as the Jews. That understanding has shed some light on particular Christian thoughts.

Several years ago a rabbi was talking to a group of us Christians and Jews about the Jewish views on death. As a beginning point, he reminded us that during Biblical times, a person was considered dead if he did not move for three days. And I said to myself: "Another reason Jesus was in the tomb for three days — had he been buried for only a couple of days, someone would have surely claimed that His resurrection was a hoax since it was not certain that he was actually dead." A few weeks ago, Rabbi David Saperstein was speaking at the inaugural WALTER B. AND KAY W. SHURDEN LECTURES at Mercer University. In passing, he commented that we all go back to Adam and Eve and that there was a reason for that — since we are all related, no one could claim superiority over another. So, while many of us Baptists have been debating whether Adam and Eve were individual persons or symbolic representatives of the human race, we may have missed one of the great lessons of the Scriptures. Biblically, we are all brothers and sisters, descendents of Adam and Eve and no one can claim to be superior to another. We can learn a lot from the Jews, and I suspect they could learn something from us...if we could become friends.

(continues to page 9)

Fellowship Attends New Ecumenical Group/ Atlanta Meeting

*By Christian Churches Together
Communications*

ATLANTA – Thirty-four churches and national Christian organizations, including the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, formed the broadest, most inclusive fellowship of Christian churches and traditions in the United States in a gathering at Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center near Atlanta, March 28-31.

National leaders from five Christian families — Evangelical/ Pentecostal, historic Protestant, historic racial/ethnic, Orthodox, and Catholic — representing more than 100 million Americans, made the historic decision to organize officially as Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT). Its mission is "to enable churches and Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world."

From its beginning, CCT has given priority to prayer and worship, to building relationships of trust, and to discerning challenges that need to be addressed in society for more faithful Christian witness. In this meeting, the group focused on the issue of poverty in the United States, engaging in biblical reflection and in conversations with those who have experienced poverty as well as those with academic expertise.

"The birth of CCT is a historic event," said Daniel Vestal, the Fellowship's national coordinator. "It represents the broadest ecumenical body in the U.S. and offers great hope for a new unity in the body of Christ."

Affirming that overcoming poverty is "central to the mission of the church and essential to our unity in Christ," participants committed themselves to work together to address the causes of poverty in the United States.

The vision of CCT began with a diverse group of Christian leaders gathered in the fall of 2001 who expressed a longing for an expanded Christian conversation in the U.S.

"We lament that we are divided and that our divisions too often result in distrust, misunderstandings, fear and even hostility between us. We long for the broken body of Christ to be made whole, where unity can be celebrated in the midst of our diversity. We long for more common witness, vision, and mission."

Over these past years, a process of mutual engagement, agreement on purposes, and organizational planning has now resulted in a historic new expression of relationships among churches.

"We finally found the courage to confront our obvious and longstanding divisions and to build a new expression of unity, rooted in the Spirit, that will strengthen our mission in the world," said Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, who has served as interim moderator. "We are filled with excitement, hope, and expectation for how God will use this new expression of our fellowship together."

In addition to the 34 participant churches and organizations, eight churches and national organizations, who are considering participation, were present as observers. CCT continues to extend a warm invitation to all churches, Christian communities, and national Christian organizations to consider becoming active participants and working together with others to present a more credible Christian witness in and to the world.

For more information visit www.christianchurchestogether.org. ■

Resource Wise

An entry point in building relationships with those of other faith traditions can be through collaboration on projects or issues that all of humanity face. We start with what we share in common, rather than by arguing about the differences that divide. Here are two projects/ministries, centered around human rights and homelessness, that have united many across denominational and faith lines.

Save Darfur Coalition (www.savedarfur.org)

The Save Darfur Coalition is working diligently to end the genocide in Darfur, Sudan. Despite the devastation of the past tsunamis and earthquakes, the United Nations has called Darfur “the world’s greatest humanitarian crisis.” Since the beginning of the violence almost three years ago, the horror continues. Women are still routinely raped as a means of ethnic cleansing, and children still go hungry.

Through the Million Voices for Darfur Campaign, the Coalition sent a million postcards to President Bush on April 30, 2006, asking him to live up to his own words to stop genocide by using the power of his office to support a stronger multinational force to protect the people of Darfur.

CBF/GA’s Interfaith Task Force is collaborating with over 40 other faith groups and organizations in the Save Darfur Coalition of Georgia, which plans to offer a day of community education in the fall of 2006. Look for more details on the Georgia coalition at www.ajws.org/darfur.

Interfaith Hospitality Network

(www.familypromise.org)

Homelessness is a huge problem in America. Hundreds of thousands of Americans, both children and adults, are homeless. Traditional families, single parent families, veterans, working people, victims of domestic or neighborhood violence, and many others make up America’s homeless population. Many people are shocked to learn that women and children make up over half of the homeless population. The Interfaith Hospitality Network, an organization that enables different congregations of faith to work together, strives to provide compassionate assistance for the homeless.

“The Interfaith Hospitality Network program brings shelter, meals, and support services to families without homes.”

Patty Freeman-Lynde is the executive director for the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Athens. You can contact her at ihnathens@bellsouth.net or 706-425-1881 to find out more about one Georgia chapter.

Additional Interfaith Resources

Abdul-Ghafur, Saleemah, (editor). *Living Islam Outloud: American Muslim Women Speak*. Beacon Press, 2005.

Baptist Center for Ethics — www.ethicsdaily.org. Click on “World Religions” for articles, news stories, and book reviews.

“Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Ecumenical Relationships: Building Bridges, Not Barriers” To order visit www.thefellowship.info/TheCBFStore. This free brochure describes the nature and importance of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and relationships and offers suggestions to help build bridges of understanding to people from other faith traditions without surrendering your personal beliefs.

Cox, Harvey. *Many Mansions*. Beacon Press, 1992. Cox, a Professor at Harvard Divinity School, writes about his encounter with the Muslim, Buddhist, and Jewish faiths.

Cunningham, Philip A. and Arthur F. Starr, editors. *Sharing Shalom: A Process for Local Interfaith Dialogue between Christians and Jews*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press. A six-session dialogue process for Jews and Christians to understand better one another’s traditions. It consists of opening activities, short essays written by a Jewish and a Christian author for each session, and a closing prayer experience. Visit www.paulistpress.com for other interfaith resources.

Friendship Press Catalog — www.nccusa.org/friendshippress/index.html. Friendship Press of the National Council of Churches offers more than 150 books and other resources of interest to adults, youth, and children, many with companion study guides. Offering books on cross-cultural understanding, global living, spirituality and faith, child advocacy, human rights, world peace, and related subjects.

Istanbul Center for Culture and Dialogue
www.istanbulcenter.org/root/en/interfaith.asp.

Mulholland, Jim and Phillip Gulley. *If God is Love: Rediscovering Grace in an Ungracious World*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2004.

Mulholland, Jim and Phillip Gulley. *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2003.

Sample Letters to the Jewish and Islamic Communities

Check the “interfaith” page under “church life” at www.cbfga.org for sample letters that local Baptist congregations can send to neighboring Jewish or Islamic congregations offering words of blessing as they celebrate their holy days. The selection includes sample Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Ramadan, and Passover letters.

Smith, Michael and Rami Shapiro. *Let Us Break Bread Together: A Passover Haggadah for Christians*. Paraclete Press, 2005.

Speight, R. Marston. *Creating Interfaith Community*. New York: General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 2003.

The Regional Council of Churches of Atlanta

www.rccatl.org. As a “congregation of congregations,” The Regional Council of Churches of Atlanta is a relevant place for Christian clergy, laity, and community leadership to nurture a collective mission in an ever-changing world and the fast-changing region of Atlanta. Believing in the power of unity, the Council seeks to reinforce the worship and work of individual congregations and magnify the leadership of the Atlanta region’s Christian community.

World Council of Churches — <http://wccco.org/wcc/news/pubs/index-e.html>. Publications include study guides and books on major ecumenical concerns.

Two Essentials of Dialogue

“...To love human beings means to be respectful of the Creator.”

AT ISTANBUL CENTER for Culture and Dialogue, we try to promote mutual understanding and respect among people from different backgrounds. It's very important for people of faith to learn about each other and try to do their best to develop a sincere friendship. Here it comes to the key concept: "Dialogue."

I would like to mention two essentials of "Dialogue:"

The first essential of dialogue is love.

Existence is created because of love. If there were no love from God to create, there would be no moon, sun, and stars. Hence, each planet is a love poem, our globe is the rhyme of this poem, and the entire existence is the song of it... And human beings, as the concise summary of this whole existence, are the orchestra chiefs of this giant chorus. Therefore, not only in dialogue, but in any interaction that occurs between two or more human beings, love plays a crucial role.

Love is the most direct way leading to the hearts of people. Only those who overflow with love can build the happy and enlightened world of the future. Those who follow it are not rejected; even if they are rejected by one or

two people, they are welcomed by thousands. Once they are welcomed through love, nothing can prevent them from attaining their object.

Love is the essence of entire creatures, and it is the strongest link that connects them to each other. Therefore, not to approach one another with love hurts both the Creator and the Lovers of the Creator. To love human beings means to be respectful of the Creator.

In that respect, we can suggest two different methods for loving human beings.

- The first is to know yourself and your relationship with your Creator. The one who explores his own treasures and their connection with his Creator begins to realize that others have similar treasures in their essence and these treasures are connected to God as his own treasures.

Yes, the one who knows himself thinks in this way and then, he begins to love others.

- The second method for loving others is to love God. Loving God is the starting point of every kind of love. Loving God is the purest love, and it

is the fountain of other types of love. If we will love someone and feel compassion towards him or her, this love and compassion always flows from God to us. If we fail in loving God, we fail in loving each other. Today, if we cannot love each other as we wish, it is because we could not love God, as God deserves.

The second essential of dialogue is an eagerness to embrace the other, which comes out of love.

Embracing the other and accepting him or her as he or she is is the way to be accepted by the other. Therefore, eagerness to embrace the other and to actualize it is a wise action. If embracing the other is a wise action, then not arguing with the other after embracing him is the wisest one.

As I conclude, I would like to state that I always get much inspiration from Turkish-Muslim scholar Fethullah Gulen on these issues.

Iman Suleyman Eris

Director of Education at Istanbul Center for Culture and Dialogue, 6760 Jimmy Carter Blvd., Suite 125, Norcross, GA 30071

www.istanbulcenter.org/root/en/interfaith.asp

Are You a Bridge or Wall?

(continues from page 7)

Over the years I have found that a friendship between a Baptist and a Jew is a friendship unlike any other friendship. Try to visualize a Chanukah/Christmas party in a Jewish home where Christians explain what Chanukah means and Jews tell the Christmas story as the Christians eat latkes and the Jews drink eggnog — non-alcoholic of course! And as a benediction, the Jews join the Christians in singing Christmas carols and the Christians join the Jews in spinning the dreidel and singing Chanukah songs. This has been a part of my friendship with the Jews that remains close to me to this day.

The Interfaith Task Force of CBF/GA is trying to develop friendship with members of other faiths and religions in our state. If in that friendship we become more tolerant of

other people's views because we know and respect them, well and good. If in that friendship, we begin to see another perspective of God we've never seen before, we will be grateful for it. If in that friendship, we build bridges to other people and break down the walls that separate communities and neighborhoods, we will rejoice in the result. If in that friendship, someone from another faith learns something about our faith, we will be thankful for the witness. If in that friendship, someone from another faith tradition wants to apply something of our faith tradition to his or her life style, we will delight in the opportunity to share our faith and concepts with others. If in that friendship, God uses our relationship with other faiths to create a more peaceful community, we will rise and say: "Thank You, Lord, for helping this Baptist part of the children of God become a peacemaker in the state of Georgia."

Wayne Martin

Chair, CBF/GA Interfaith Task Force

Is That a Rabbi?

WHAT WAS A RABBI DOING in a Baptist Sunday School class?

Some church members wondered why we invited the rabbi from a nearby temple to come to one of our adult classes on a Sunday in September. It's certainly not surprising for Baptists to question why we would stray outside of our normal spiritual boundaries. After all, we are not known for being ecumenical, let alone crossing the interfaith line. But should these perceptions and traditions define Baptists in a postmodern world? Would building relationships with people from other religions and learning about their traditions be unacceptable and even offensive to our Lord? The Faith & Issues class at Smoke Rise Baptist Church takes on all of the challenging issues of our culture based on the stated purpose of the class: "We seek to be a community which is intentional about learning how to follow Jesus in a changing and challenging world. We believe in the worth of every person, openness to diverse views, and — as an essential part of a growing faith — a willingness to ask questions."

Wayne Martin, Smoke Rise member and a retired pastor who serves on the interfaith task force for CBF/GA, has a passion for reaching out beyond the Christian community and building bridges where none exists or where such attempts have been damaged in the past. He first developed some vital relationships with the Jewish community while serving a church in Hollywood, Florida. "I learned that we have more in common than we have differences. It's exciting to know how much we are alike and that we struggle with many of the same issues."



Rabbi Ronald Bluming of Temple Beth David in Snellville, GA (left), and Wayne Martin.

What did we learn from a rabbi on this Sunday morning?

- The Jewish Holy days and traditions come alive when heard from one who understands their origins and personally celebrates them.
- Rabbis struggle with congregational issues much the same as Christian pastors do on any typical Sabbath or Sunday.
- Humor is not only appreciated but a wonderful teaching tool!
- Respect speaks louder than any word can and crosses the divisions humans tend to erect.
- We do not have to give up our own traditions or deep convictions in order to meet a person of another faith.
- Last, but not least, Christians and Jews can learn from each other and celebrate what we have in common, and in so doing, model a way of living together in a world hungry for peace.

Wayne shares that "getting to know the Jewish leaders in my community made me look at my own faith in a deeper way and appreciate what I personally found in Christ and in my faith tradition."

Was Jesus offended that we opened our doors to make a Rabbi feel welcomed? I am struck by the irony of this question. I imagined that he was pleased that something gracious was happening from the people who claim him as Lord. Maybe the apostle Paul said it best: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Kathy Dobbins

Minister of Adult Education & Outreach, Smoke Rise Baptist Church

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is an excerpt from a sermon by Daniel Vestal, CBF Coordinator. To read the entire sermon visit www.thefellowship.info/News/GACoverage/050702vestal.icm.

"Being the Presence of Christ in All the World"

"FOR 30 YEARS Jesus lived quietly in the community of family and synagogue. And then for three years he lived in a community of disciples and friends in which He literally invested Himself and poured out His life. Practicing solidarity, creating community, nurturing relationships, making peace is intrinsic and essential to the ministry of Christ.

"In May (2005), Earlene and I went to Turkey to be the guest of the Istanbul Cultural Center in Atlanta. It was a wonderful trip and a beautiful experience of interfaith dialogue and community building. We ate and stayed in Muslim homes, visited their mosques, their schools, and their places of history. The people opened up their homes and hearts to us. They gave us gifts and shared hospitality and friendship. They treated us with grace and shared their faith and lives. They prayed in front of us with sincerity and humility. And most of all they loved us.

"To be honest with you, it was a great challenge to me. It convicted me of how little I do for the Lord that I love. One night we were at a banquet and a Muslim woman took a ring off her finger and gave it to my wife. Afterward, I thought, 'They are doing exactly what we are to be doing.'

"As Christ's presence, we build bridges and break down barriers between people. Whenever and wherever possible, we nurture community and understanding. We are peacemakers who do not live in isolation and retreat from the world."



— Daniel Vestal

Missions Updates:

Lewis Resigns as Missions Coordinator

Following five years of service as the Missions Coordinator for CBF/GA, Jimmy Lewis returns to the pastorate. We are grateful for his service, and we look forward to working with him as he assumes his duties as pastor of First Baptist Church, Jasper.

—Frank Broome

May 8, 2006

On May 6, 2006, the First Baptist Church of Jasper called me to serve as their pastor. I have accepted the call and am submitting my resignation as the Missions Coordinator for Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia.

It has been a real honor to have served with you and the Macon staff. This has been a time of real joy and growth in my life and ministry. I have had the opportunity to visit some of the finest churches in Georgia. These churches are all seeking to be the presence of Christ in their own unique

communities. They are seeking to be faithful to the great commission. I have been blessed by their faithfulness.

The Coordinating Council and missions committee have been cooperative and supportive. I have enjoyed working with the fine lay people during my time as Missions Coordinator. The laity of this state is making significant investment in the Kingdom through their churches and through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia.

I would like to make my resignation effective May 31, 2006, if this is agreeable with you and the appropriate committees.

In Christ,
Jimmy Barron Lewis



Nash Nominated as CBF Global Missions Coordinator

By Lance Wallace, CBF Communications

ATLANTA – A former missionary kid with extensive local church ministry experience and highly-regarded academic credentials has been nominated as the candidate to fill the vacant position of global missions coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.



A search committee appointed by the CBF Coordinating Council has offered Robert N. "Rob" Nash, Jr., dean of the school of religion and international studies at Shorter College in Rome, Ga., as the candidate for the top administrator post for CBF Global Missions. The Council will vote on the nomination at its next meeting, June 21, in Atlanta.

"We were blessed with the opportunity to review many strong resumes and to consider multiple candidates who were qualified to do this job," said search committee chair, Tim Brendle, a retired pastor from Richmond, Va.

"We are convinced that God led us through this process to the candidate we are recommending. Rob Nash truly has a heart for missions and the capacity to express our shared missions calling in fresh and challenging ways. I believe he can kindle new excitement in our churches and among our field personnel."

The search committee was made up of Jana Benjamin of Tullahoma, Tenn.; Rusty Brock of Ardmore, Okla.; **Frank Broome** of Macon, Ga.; Beth Fogg of Richmond, Va.; Harriet Harral of Fort Worth, Texas; and Earl Martin of Jefferson City, Tenn.

"Each committee member has approached this work as a sacred task," Brendle said.

"Every member has contributed significantly throughout the process. We are grateful for the input given by field personnel, staff, and church members. Most of all we are grateful for the prayer support we have felt during this journey."

Nash, 47, lived 13 years in the Philippines where his parents served as Baptist missionaries. He has also studied in or made extended visits to more than 30 countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and South America.

"I am humbled by the confidence that the search committee has placed in me as its nominee for this position and awed by the prospect of ministry alongside CBF's field personnel and staff in the U.S. and around the world," Nash said. "At the same time, I wait with eagerness to join the whole CBF family of churches, partners, and individuals in shaping our calling to the world's most marginalized and neglected people."

CBF Global Missions currently has 164 field personnel serving among the most neglected around the world. The coordinator position has been vacant since March 31, 2005, when Coordinator Barbara Baldrige resigned.

"Rob Nash will lead CBF global missions with vision and passion," said Daniel Vestal, the Fellowship's national coordinator. "In our brief history, CBF has been blessed with outstanding leader-

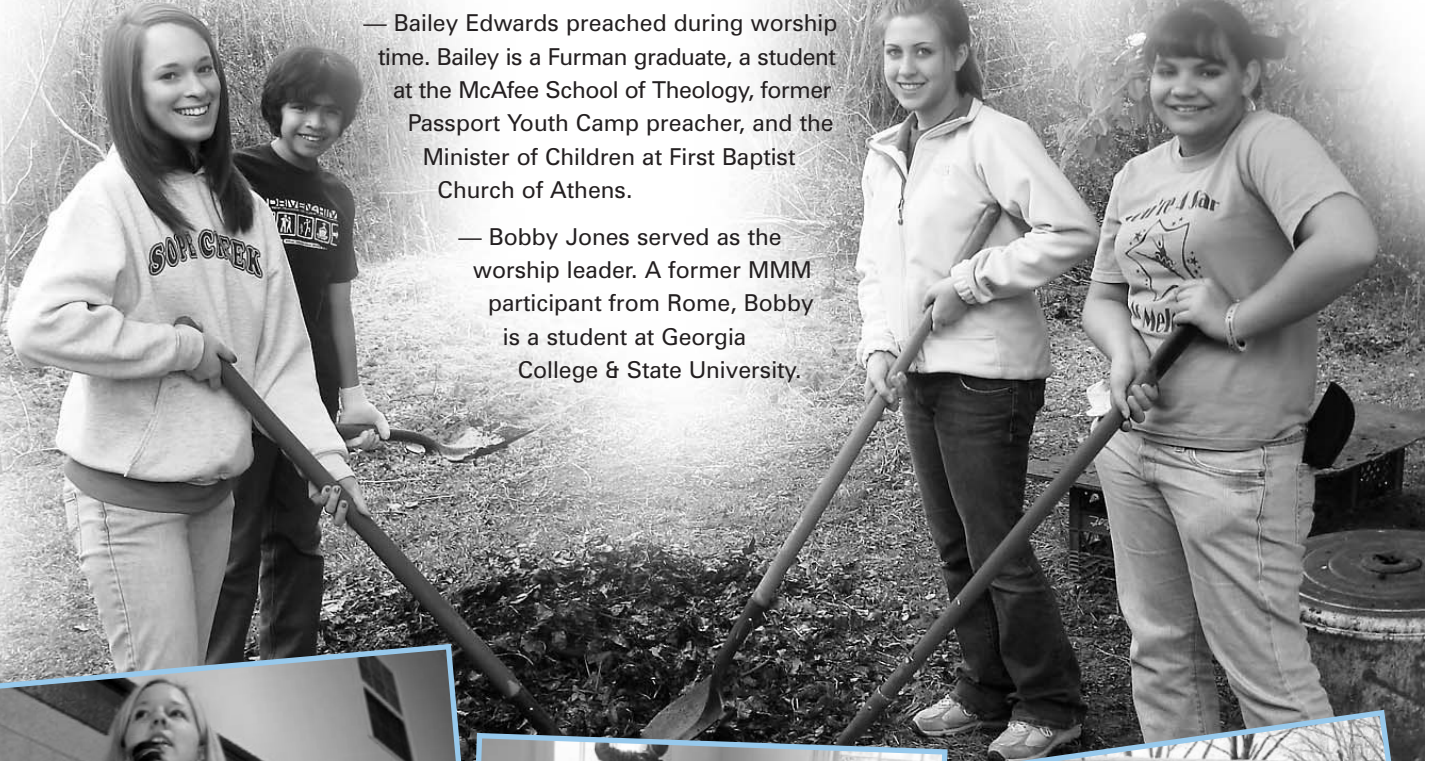
(continues to page 14)

“Catch the Disease” of Mission Madness

2006 Highlights — MMM’s tenth anniversary was celebrated with a Birthday Party.

— Bailey Edwards preached during worship time. Bailey is a Furman graduate, a student at the McAfee School of Theology, former Passport Youth Camp preacher, and the Minister of Children at First Baptist Church of Athens.

— Bobby Jones served as the worship leader. A former MMM participant from Rome, Bobby is a student at Georgia College & State University.



“As was the case again, MMM was excellent! Great work!”



“I was thoroughly impressed with this year’s MMM. Catching the disease, spreading the disease in the community, sharing one cup, reaching across borders – it all made sense and was easy to remember. I truly thought the whole weekend was amazing! Thanks for all your hard work!”

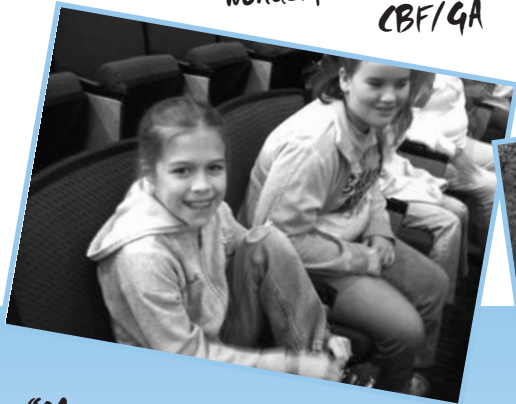
March 17-19 • Host: First Baptist Church Warm Springs • 297 participants • 2079 hours of mission service • 18 mission project groups served 23 mission sites

March 24-26 • Host: First Baptist Church Morrow • 347 participants • 2429 hours of mission service • 18 mission project groups served 22 mission sites

"It is a wonderful experience for youth. All of our youth & adults have said they would go again."



"Hats off to Scott Ford, March Mission Madness Coordinator, for another wonderful MMM year!"
CBF/GA



"My mission project was great! We had wonderful leadership from the church, and we had all of the supplies that we needed. I feel like we really helped the folks that we came to help."



"We all had a great time, and it was a very rewarding experience. I loved the interaction with all of the youth - from the very beginning to the very end!"

march mission madness
catch the disease
mmm 2006 • hosted by FBC Warm Springs & FBC Morrow • sponsored by CBF&G

Opportunities / Updates / Reports

People and Places

Dear Friends,

The ordaining council experience was humbling and a pleasure! On March 19th in the quarterly combined worship service, First Baptist Church of Augusta voted unanimously to ordain me. The service was Sunday, April 23rd, at 6:30 p.m. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Irene Bennett, Augusta, GA

Deepest Sympathy

Our deepest sympathies to the family of George L. Balentine at his death, and to J.R. Huddleston and family in the death of his wife, Halene Huddleston.

Financial Picture

2005-2006 Year-to-Date

June 1, 2005 – April 30, 2006

Budget Requirement	\$591,250.00
Undesignated Receipts	\$572,391.08
Over/<Under>	\$18,858.92
Designated Receipts	\$147,771.67

Rob Nash

(continues from page 11)

ship in global missions. Rob will lead in a way that builds on that past and also pioneers into the future. For me, his coming represents a wonderful gift of Providence. I am truly grateful."

Serving as dean since 2000, Nash has also served as associate professor of religion at Shorter as well as assistant professor of religion and chair of the department of religion at Judson College in Marion, Ala.

Nash's local church ministry includes serving as pastor of North Rolling Fork Baptist Church in Danville, Ky., and Buechel Park Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky. He has also served as interim pastor including Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Stone Mountain, Ga. and First Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga.

Nash earned a bachelor's degree in history and English from Georgia College and State University (GCSU) in Milledgeville, Ga., in 1981. He completed his master of arts degree in history from GCSU in 1982, followed by his master of divinity degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in 1985.

With a dissertation titled "The Influence of American Myth on Southern Baptist Foreign Missions, 1845-1945," Nash earned a Ph.D. from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1989. His other graduate studies include seminars in religious studies and American history at Indiana University in 1987 and a research grant at Regent's Park College, Oxford University, Oxford, England, in 1999.

Books he has authored or co-authored include the popular and influential *An 8-Track Church in a CD World: The Modern Church in the Postmodern World*, published by Smyth & Helwys in 1997, and the soon-to-be-published *The Idea of a Christian University: Faith-based Institutions in a Post-modern World*, published by Mercer University Press.

He and his wife and children, are members of First Baptist Church, Rome. ■

"Springing" and Moving

WELL, Spring has sprung, and ministers are on the move (and churches are on the prowl)! It is a privilege to be a part of your search for each other, and for the Will of God in your lives.

Congratulations to the ministers and churches who have gotten "married" to each other recently:

- FBC of Vienna has called **Matthew Stephens** as Pastor.
- **Quentin Madden** is Pastor of FBC of St. Simons.
- FBC of Hartwell called **Steve Williams** as Pastor.
- **Jim Starr** is the new Pastor for Fellowship of Edison.
- Mt. Zion in Macon has welcomed **Jason Thrower** as their new Pastor.
- **Steve Brown** now ministers at North River in Roswell.
- **Kendra Joiner** joined the staff at Beck's Baptist in Winston-Salem, NC.
- **Velvie Banister** is on staff at Allen Memorial Baptist Church in Salisbury, MD.
- **Jim Bruner** is Interim Pastor at Central Church in Gray.

- **Myron Fields** now serves at Isle of Hope Church in Savannah.
- FBC in Marietta welcomed **Cathy Anderson** to their staff as Minister to Children.

Résumés, résumés, we get stacks and stacks of résumés! Dear readers, would you be so kind to fill a request, and send us the names of churches who want the best? Occasionally, we will discover that one of our churches has been looking for some time to fill a vacancy on her staff, and we didn't even know about it. If you know of a church that is looking, please let us know. We want to help.

P.S. FBC in Eatonton is looking for an organist for Sundays only. (The pianist usually accompanies the choir.) Tim DeBorde is the Minister of Music.

Alan Mitchell
Reference &
Referral of CBF/GA,
amitchell@cbfga.org





CBF / National General Assembly

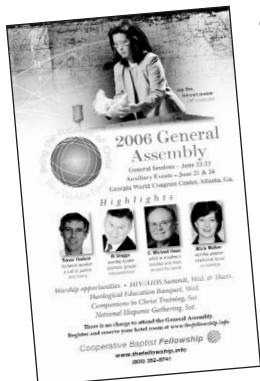
see ad on page 1

Children's Assembly

ONE of the frequently-asked-questions about General Assembly has always been: "What is there for kids?" The answer is the Children's Assembly. Information and registration forms are now available online about the Children's Assembly. You can visit this link, www.thefellowship.info/documents/Childrensregistration.pdf, or go to www.thefellowship.info/CL/GeneralAssembly/2006.icm for all of the latest Assembly information.

Church-wide Invitation

LOOKING for ways to get your church excited about the Assembly? There



are free items on the Web you can download, print, and distribute to your congregation. Currently on the site are bulletin inserts (left) and 11" x 17" posters. Coming soon

are PowerPoint slides (right) for those churches who make use of data projectors for announcements or imagery prior to worship. Go to www.thefellowship.info/CL/GeneralAssembly/2006.icm to download the promotional tools.



15 Reasons Why You Should Bring a Bus-Load of People to the CBF National General Assembly

- 1 *It's in Georgia (Atlanta)!*
- 2 Alicia Walker of Peachtree Baptist Church is the Worship Planner and a worship leader, Jim Ross of Madison Baptist Church is the Chair of the 2006 G.A. Steering Committee, and Charles Qualls of Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church is the Chair of the 2006 G.A. Local Arrangements Committee!
- 3 100 Workshops to choose from, including a "pastor's track" and "missions track!"
- 4 HIV/AIDS Summit!
- 5 Mass Children and Adult Choirs from Georgia!
- 6 Jubilate! Youth choir (mostly from Georgia churches) to sing!
- 7 Trevor Hudson, leader in the Methodist Church of South Africa, to speak!
- 8 Area attractions such as World of Coke, the Aquarium, and Centennial Park — make it a family affair — bring the kids!
- 9 Theological Education Banquet!
- 10 Michael Hawn, global musician, as artist in residence!
- 11 8 different worship styles to experience!
- 12 CBF/GA State meeting on Thursday at 3:45!
- 13 Downtown Atlanta hotels at a great price! (\$109/\$105)
- 14 Al Staggs as Clarence Jordan and Dietrich Bonhoeffer!
- 15 *We can't let North Carolina beat us in attendance!*



In conjunction with the HIV/AIDS Summit, a free concert with Salvador will be featured.

Broad range of workshop topics and auxiliary events offered at 2006 General Assembly

WITH MORE than 100 workshops, you are guaranteed to find at least one topic of interest at the 2006 General Assembly. Visit www.thefellowship.info/documents/workshops2006.pdf for the complete list of workshops. Whether you are the minister of missions at a large church, youth minister at a small church, or a committed lay person interested in spiritual formation, there's a workshop for you during one of the four sessions in this year's schedule.

Workshops will be held 9-10:10 a.m. and 2-3:10 p.m., on Thursday, June 22, and 2-3:10 p.m. and 3:30-4:40 p.m., on Friday, June 23.

To view the list of auxiliary events visit www.thefellowship.info/documents/AuxiliaryEvents2006.pdf.

Coming Up!

June 11-16
June 18-23

Touching Taliaferro with Love (TTWL) Day Camp

For additional information email Jimmy Lewis at jlewis@cbfga.org.

June 21, 2006

Baptist Women in Ministry

International Ballroom A-C, Omni Hotel at CNN Center

3:00 p.m. Business Session; 4:00 p.m. Worship

Theme for worship: "In a Different Voice." Open to all women in ministry and those who support women in ministry.

Contact: LeAnn Gunter, 404-634-2463, leann@peachtreebaptist.net.

June 22-23

CBF-National General Assembly

Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA

Visit www.thefellowship.info for information.

June 25-28

Summer Retreat for Vocational Formation

"Tapestry" www.healthychurch.org/

Intricately Woven — Wonderfully Made (Psalm 139)

A vocational formation retreat for high school juniors and seniors.

Contacts: Beth Kennett at 336-227-0287 or Dawn M. Hall at dmhall@wfubmc.edu or 336-716-0459.

June 26-29

TTWL Baseball Camp

For additional information email Jimmy Lewis at jlewis@cbfga.org.

June 28-July 01

PASSPORTkids!

Wesleyan College, Macon, GA

Visit www.passport-kids.org for information.

July 16-20

SOULfeast 2006

Lake Junaluska, NC

SOULfeast focuses on the central practices of our faith and provides rich settings for exploring these practices with new depth. The four days provide a true feast for our souls as we explore these topics: Christ, Creation, Creativity, Circumstance, and Community.

For additional information visit www.upperroom.org/soulfeast.

Aug. 20-25

CBF Boot Camp for Church Starts

Baptist Theological Seminary, Richmond, VA (BTSR)

Arrangements for room and board should be made through Jim Peak at BTSR. Email jpeak@btsr.edu or call 804-204-1230.

Sept. 11-13

Spiritual Formation Regional Retreat

Kavanaugh Life Enrichment Center, Louisville, KY

To register visit the fellowship's website at www.thefellowship.info/. For information email Rick Bennett at rbennett@thefellowship.info or call 770-220-1605.

Sept. 24-26

2006 Mercer Preaching Consultation

King & Prince Resort, St. Simons Island, GA

Visit theology.mercer.edu/calendar/special_events.html for details as they are finalized.

Oct. 8-10

Candler School of Theology

Fall Conference "Faith, Politics, and Policy"

For more information visit www.candler.emory.edu/ABOUT/fall_conference06/.

Nov. 5-6

CBF/GA Fall Convocation

First Baptist Church of Christ, Macon, GA

Dec. 29, 2006-Jan. 02, 2007

Antiphony

Hyatt Regency, Atlanta, GA

Conference created for graduate and undergraduate students with a focus this year on "Call and Response." To register visit www.antiphonyonline.org from Aug. 15 until Nov. 15.

2007

January 8-10

Spiritual Formation Regional Retreat

Simpsonwood Conference Center, Atlanta, GA

To register visit the fellowship's website at www.thefellowship.info/. For information email Rick Bennett at rbennett@thefellowship.info or call 770-220-1605.

CBF/GA...enabling the people of God who are committed to historic Baptist principles to carry out the Great Commission under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in a fellowship where every Christian has the freedom and the responsibility to exercise God's gift and calling.

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BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

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