

PASTOR TAKES TO BARGAINING

Retired pastor Rudy Pulido assists a St. Louis union at the bargaining table as another way to assist his community.

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CN ASSIST E. EUROPE EFFORTS

Churchnet commits at least \$300 per month to the European Baptist Federation to support church planting efforts.

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EDITORIAL

Word&Way will expand its ministry — denominationally and geographically — to increase its effectiveness to the Baptists it serves.

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Word&Way

SERVING MISSOURI BAPTISTS FOR OVER A CENTURY



TORNADOES RIP MIDWEST

Deadly tornadoes rip across the Midwest killing at least 39 people. Baptists are mobilizing for clean up.

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FAITH & politics

BY VICKI BROWN

Word&Way Associate Editor

WHILE THE U.S. CONSTITUTION SPECIFICALLY SPELS OUT THAT NO RELIGIOUS LITMUS TEST SHOULD BE USED TO DETERMINE WHO HOLDS OFFICE, CHRISTIANS STILL GRAPPLE WITH IF AND HOW THEIR FAITH SHOULD INFORM THEIR CHOICE IN CANDIDATES. AND THEY OFTEN USE THE BIBLE TO BACK THEIR DECISIONS.

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ALSO IN THE NEWS

LOPER WILL STEP DOWN AS MEDICAL/DENTAL EXEC.

Dr. Fred Loper will step down as the executive director of the Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship to work in a local clinic.

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NEED HELP TO FIND SOME FORGOTTEN INFORMATION?

The media column points out several places to find that bit of information at the back of your brain or on the tip of your tongue.

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TWO LONGTIME MISSION WORKERS PASS AWAY

Former Arkansas WMU and state mission worker Monica Keathley and retired NAMB missionary Beverly Goss pass away.

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PAGES 1, 6-9: Faith and politics sometimes can mix



FAITH & politics:

*Are religious
litmus tests
for public office
appropriate?*

(Continued from page 1)

Recently, *RELEVANT* magazine published a series of opinion pieces in which selected writers shared their reasons for choosing to participate with a particular political party or none at all. All of them pointed to Scripture to support their conclusions.

Caryn Rivadeneira chose the Libertarian Party partly because Jesus called the church to help people who need assistance, but she believes the church has abdicated that responsibility.

Republican Matthew Anderson pointed to 1 Timothy 2:1-2 and Revelation 13:1-10. God has given the government the power of coercion. Republicans recognize the power but choose not to force taxpayers to meet society's needs. They recognize needs but choose to allow people to meet needs voluntarily.

On the other hand, Democrat David Masciotra used Romans 12, Matthew and James to bolster arguments for government participation in social justice and service.

C. Christopher Smith even pointed to Jesus' ministry as justification for his "discipline of not voting."

The constitutional prohibition on a religious test for public office means any qualified person, regardless of his or her faith tradition — or lack thereof — can run.

But should Christians apply their own "test"?

No, according to the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. "People often focus on religion, but they shouldn't make a decision [about a candidate] based on religion alone," Executive Director Brent Walker said.

"Article 6 [of the Constitution] keeps government from setting a religious test.... We should not just abide by the letter of the law,...but voters also ought to exercise that same restraint," he added. "Religion is part of the mix but...shouldn't be the primary factor."

The way in which a politician practices his or her faith, rather than the religion itself, plays into that mix. For

example, if a candidate holds to a faith tradition that is based upon and highly values peace, how will that affect foreign policy decisions or his or her reaction to the threat of war?

Citizens shouldn't vote on the basis of "theology for theology's sake," Walker added, "but on whether it makes a difference in the performing of the office."

Religious liberty

Ethicist Bill Tillman, the Baptist General Convention of Texas' director of theological education, pointed out that historically, Baptists have championed religious liberty.

In Great Britain, "Thomas Helwys ...asked for no religious test to be mandated from the English throne as to who could have religious services. Helwys' conviction was that one's conscience, part of the image of God implanted in us, was of such worth that no king, government or anyone had any business mandating how it should work," Tillman said.

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(Continued from page 6)

Many Baptists have lost that perspective today, especially in parts of the country where they represent the religious majority, he said.

"In losing a minority perspective, ...ironically, some Christians who have never felt a religious persuasion to be mandated lean on getting elected officials to do their commissioned work," Tillman said.

"The United States government was set up as a secular state, a grand vision, that peoples' individuality and sensitivities to the larger social well-being would be what is important."

While some Baptist leaders agree public servants have a right to practice or not practice faith, they also believe Christians should consider the biblical perspective when dealing with political issues. Many Southern Baptist state conventions have a Christian life commission or have a volunteer or staffer to articulate moral and ethical stands to their legislators.

Louisiana Baptist Convention

trustees recently named Kelly Boggs as their state convention's public affairs officer. He also serves as editor of the *Baptist Message*, the convention's news journal.

"I'm interested in issues that have become politicized," he said in a recent interview. "I've always felt strongly about speaking out" on those issues.

Noting that his father had fought in World War II, he added, "It is my opinion that because of what they [servicemen] did...the least I can do... is take a stand publicly for what they fought for."

Christians are called to be "salt and light." The United States is a "participatory democracy, and citizens have the right to participate," Boggs said. "America has been shaped in debate... respectful debate for the most part.... I have just wanted to present ideas from a Christian worldview."

Political choice

Although religion — particularly

Mitt Romney's Mormon faith — continues to generate controversy in the 2012 election cycle, candidates may not be able to count on faith to garner as many votes as it may have done in the past.

According to a September 2011 LifeWay Research online survey, only one in six Americans is more likely to vote for a candidate who publicly expresses his or her faith than for candidates who do not. That's especially true among voters under 29.

Even though religion may not play as prominent a role, there are still "too many candidates trying to posture themselves as religious champions," according to Rudy Pulido, long-time president of the St. Louis chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, who just recently stepped down.

He believes Americans are no longer "challenged" to fight for religious liberty because the law allows each person to worship as they wish, and have many outlets to express their beliefs.

According to a September 2011 LifeWay Research online survey, only one in six Americans is more likely to vote for a candidate who publicly expresses his or her faith than for candidates who do not.

FAITH & politics: Making choices in a fallen world

By VICKI BROWN

Word&Way Associate Editor

Passion and conviction often direct a Christian in choosing public servants. Economic concerns, social justice, foreign policy or a host of other issues can be of primary concern.

Suppose Candidate A's approach on one issue matches, but his stand on another does not. Candidate B indicates her stand is just the opposite on the two. How does a person of faith choose when his or her values clash?

"No candidate is going to agree with you 100 percent of the time," noted Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. "You must balance out which candidate reflects your understanding...on issues that matter."

Furthermore, Christians should be realistic in their expectations, in terms of finding a candidate whose values mirror their own.

"The first thing Christians need to recognize is that they are voting for an elected official, not for their pastor. The expectations need to be differentiated," said Van Christian, pastor of First Baptist Church in Comanche, Texas.

Followers of Christ have to decide which political values are most important and establish priorities — or rather, acknowledge priorities they already hold, Christian noted. "We have to be honest with ourselves about whether they are in the same order biblically," he said.

"Christians should work from what is clearly defined in Scripture out to the more general principles. Those issues that are clearly defined should be at the forefront, and those that are based on general principles should be more toward the back.... There are issues that trump others."

The gospel can keep believers focused, noted Bill Tillman, director of theological education for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Christians are citizens of both heaven and of a particular geographical location.

"All issues [and] positions, all other ideals — for the Christian — must be filtered through the gospel. When a candidate's particular conviction begins to abridge gospel values, it is time for a Christian to begin to question that

particular conviction," he said.

The Bible should be a Christian's guide, said Kelly Boggs, the Louisiana Baptist Convention's public policy officer and editor of the *Baptist Message*. Formation of values "starts way before talking about politics," he said. "Hopefully, people have formed their values on the Bible, ...and hopefully, they are informed."

After looking at the individual candidates, party platforms and the issues, "then you've got to choose — what is right for me," Boggs added.

out for the good of the majority and protect the rights of the minority when we vote."

Lee Wilkins, who teaches journalism ethics at the University of Missouri, considers community. "I'm leery of making a decision based on a single issue. There is a huge range of choices — everything from war and peace to tax issues.... I think all politics is about community," she explained.

"We must ask: What is best for me? What is best for my community? And I assume people in my community are not going to be like me, so I also must ask: What is best for people unlike me? They may be poorer, richer, of different faiths.... We're too focused on 'me.' It's I-I-I-I. But it's not about 'I' but about 'we'...the people plural."

Wilkins emphasized that when an issue "seems to strike at core values, I must ask which ones.... Then I ought to ask: How does...the range of policy proposals fit into my value structure?"

"We should not be afraid to ask candidates questions. We should go beyond the first minute of sound bite and then ask the deeper questions," she said.

Wilkins added most people hold to values deeply and usually concurrently, rather than as separate beliefs, and systems of thought teach respect.

"I know of no religious or philosophical system that holds to demonizing people for what they believe, and I am exceptionally

wary of people who ask me to do that," she said.

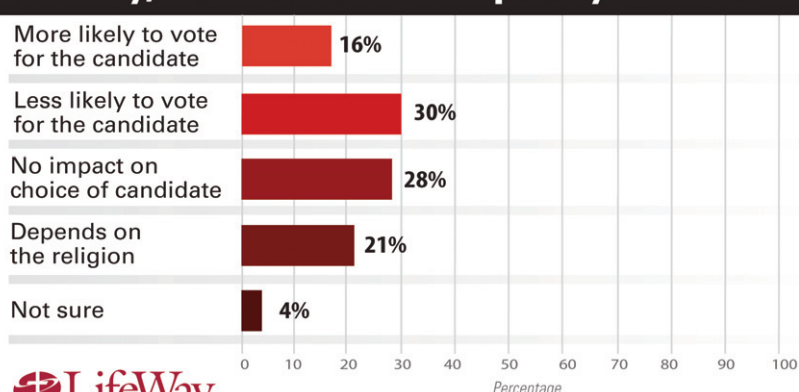
When struggling with decisions, people of faith must remember they "live in a fallen, quite mortal world," Tillman said.

"As we begin to support a particular candidate...we must figure out where they come out mostly, not just on one issue. Confusing? Dilemma-producing? Yes, but if we really do invest some time into the political sphere, we will find ourselves making these matters a point of prayer, ever more seeking the will of God for ourselves and beyond ourselves. The results of such seeking can't be bad at all."

With additional reporting by Ken Camp

Among Adult Americans

When a candidate running for office regularly expresses religious conviction or activity, how does that impact your vote?



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Matt Paxson, an associate pastor at Fairview Baptist Church in Fredericksburg, Va., and a candidate for mayor in that city, believes voters must remember that each candidate reflects his or her "larger" party.

"Although there are times when candidates of one party might appeal to me, it is important that I remember that they represent a larger party that has identified platforms," he said.

Concern for the greater good, as opposed to self-interests, directs some believers' choices.

"Community is important. What will benefit the community as a whole?" noted David Morgan, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Harker Heights, Texas. "We should look



FAITH & politics:

BY VICKI BROWN

Word&Way Associate Editor

People of faith must measure the truthfulness of what they hear and see during an election year — and they must be especially careful about the information they pass along.

Believers should weigh information they glean or that they receive from others. What is the source? Is that person trustworthy? From how many sources did it come?

"It requires work in this day and age to take mediated information and make a cohesive whole," noted Lee Wilkins, a University of Missouri broadcast journalism professor who also teaches ethics.

"Information is trustworthy essentially if you're getting the same thing from multiple sources...as long as they are independent of one another," she said. "Consumers need to be careful not to blur information [that's written] for information or for persuasion."

Direct mail from the candidates themselves tends to be persuasive,

Wilkins emphasized. "People are getting...more information from the 'Net.... You must understand the originator of the information and if it is attempting to inform or to persuade," she said.

Kyle Kondik, a political analyst for Sabato's Crystal Ball at the University of Virginia Center for Politics, agreed. Voters must be aware that candidates sometimes stretch the truth "to make

Check before passing info

themselves look good and their opponents look bad. Complicating matters is that, with some ads, it's almost impossible for voters to determine who is responsible for a specific ad," he said.

"Political action committees... might have flowery, meaningless names that tell voters nothing about who they actually support," he added. He pointed out that "Restore Our

Future" is a Super PAC that supports Mitt Romney, while another, "Winning Our Future," supports Newt Gingrich.

"Not only are these names effectively meaningless, but they are so similar that it's hard even for people who closely follow politics to tell them apart. In order to get a more accurate view of what's going on, voters should probably pay attention to people or news outlets that they know and trust," Kondik said.

Because a great deal of the information about candidates and their stands is drawn from sometimes not-so-trustworthy sources, people of faith must be careful about passing it to others.

They also must make certain that they aren't simply passing along their own interpretation of the information they've found. Too often, "Christians latch onto one issue at the exclusion of everything else," Van Christian, pastor of First Baptist Church in Comanche, Texas, said.

"We are horrendously guilty of the urban legend syndrome. If it sounds

good to us and seems plausible, we want to warn everybody about it," he added.

Even if the information comes from those closest to a believer, he or she must still test it. "If you have family and friends and other people in your circle...whom you trust...still check it out...," Wilkins said.

"We all have our filters...but we can all think for ourselves, independent of government...and of other powerful forces in our lives, whether...a teacher or a cleric. As Americans, we get riled up when a Muslim cleric tells a group what to do...but we tend to look at that differently when it's close to home....

"People should be able to respond to information with the question: How do you know that?"

Christian recognizes that believers often pass along information to help others but he suggests thinking before sharing it. "If we were discussing politics with Jesus, would we do it the same way we do with others?" he asked.

With additional reporting by Ken Camp

Politics & MEDIA: Learn to recognize bias, determine reliability

BY VICKI BROWN

Word&Way Associate Editor

Voters want and need reliable and truthful information about candidates at all levels of government and from all political perspectives. But in an information age that overwhelms the electorate with sheer volume at breakneck speed, what factors should people of faith keep in mind as they glean information from mainstream and religious media?

"People come to media already with certain biases," noted Debra Mason, executive director of the Religion Newswriters Association, an organization for religion writers in the mainstream media. "Sometimes they can't separate out those attitudes."

Voters need to be aware of their own biases, including those in their own faith tradition. Then they also must look for the bias that the media they use also likely will reflect.

"World [magazine] may appear to be using the same standards and approach as the New York Times, but, in fact, it is using a Christian frame to everything it reports," Mason said. "That's not necessarily bad...readers just need to recognize that."

Readers looking for information also should be aware that a look of professionalism, particularly online, doesn't necessarily mean the information is reliable.

"It's very easy to have a site that looks professional and sounds professional as if it has been done by professional journalists but that still is propagandistic," she said.

"That is harder to discern."

But Mason encourages all voters to be as informed as possible and to use a variety of media as they research candidates and issues. She offered some tips for discovering legitimate and credible sources of information:

- "Look at the issues that are raised to high prominence," she said. Prominently featuring certain, especially highly emotional, issues, even when those issues are not major concerns in the campaign, could indicate a bias. Ask, "Are those editors using those issues because they are highly salient to a particular group?"

- Look for diverse comments on the site. "If the journalists are annoying both sides, sometimes that's a clue that the site is offering a little of both sides of issues," Mason said.

- Is the medium's ownership clear? "If you can't find out who owns it...or is producing it, you have to wonder why that information is so elusive."

- Don't assume a secular medium holds higher journalistic standards than does a religious one, with the additional assumption that one medium treats information more fairly or accurately. "The selection of news may be more narrow [in a religious medium], but the treatment of news may be just as fair, and the censorship may be light," she explained.

- Diversity can provide more angles to veracity. "Any story with diverse sources and with a lot of different points of view is going to get closer to the truth," she said.

"Bloggers are basically offering their opinions."

Media consumers need to be aware of the difference between blogs — personal journals on the Internet — and news stories online. People "sometimes don't notice or discern the difference between news and commentary," she said. Realizing the distinctions will help voters determine possible bias.

- Voters must be cautious with political polls and numbers, Mason noted. "Numbers can be used in deceptive ways. It's important to look at where they [writers] are getting the numbers and how the poll is being done. Do they tell you how the numbers are being used? You can use numbers to support assertions or to deceive."

- Who has been interviewed for the article? While a story might quote sources, does it adequately identify the individuals' connection to the candidate? "The closer someone is to the person written about, the more accurate you hope the information will be," Mason explained. "But you also have to consider the level of the investment of that [source] in the candidate. But at least that person is on the record."

- Voters also must remember that today's media have "a huge opportunity for rumor and conjecture" because they must offer news 24 hours a day, seven days a week. "That's what's so hard today — the 24/7 news cycle," Mason said. Media "risk publishing or distributing errors more frequently and more easily than with longer and more predictable publishing cycles."

Baker: Faith & politics mix in public arena

BY VICKI BROWN

Word&Way Associate Editor

COLUMBIA — Judy Baker could push her faith as a cornerstone as a candidate for public office.

After all, in addition to earning a master's degree in healthcare administration at the University of Missouri, she also holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. And she's married to John



Judy Baker

Baker, a longtime minister and former pastor of First Baptist Church in Columbia.

Judy Baker has a grasp on theological nuances, and has served others because of her faith. She also understands political systems — serving in the Missouri House of Representatives from 2005-2009 and most recently, as regional director for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Now, she is one of three candidates seeking the Democratic nod for the state lieutenant governor's post.

But what should that experience mean in the public eye? Simply that she as a candidate and Missouri's voters must be careful that faith is not used for political ends.

While Baker believes that "God alone...has the authority to measure faith," she also feels that candidates' actions can reveal "the character and values that demonstrate a heartfelt faith and the heart of God," she said in a recent email.

"However, it must be kept in mind, in our country where the First Amendment guides our civil framework, that each candidate is not really running for priest- or pastor-in-chief," she said.

Baker pointed out that while a candidate's "character and principle" should be considered, voters also must measure "other aspects of fairness, tolerance and competence."

"[B]eing a good Sunday School attendee doesn't necessarily indicate you are the best candidate to lay roads, provide fire and police services or lead the military," she said. "So a balance of the faith aspects and competencies claimed should all be considered. The former is a determination based on character and values, the latter...on competencies in a complex world."

Because no single candidate embodies all the traits and values a voter might hold dear, people of faith often may be faced with determining which beliefs will guide political choices.

"A voter who wishes to follow Christ to make these important decisions should do just that — follow Christ," Baker said.

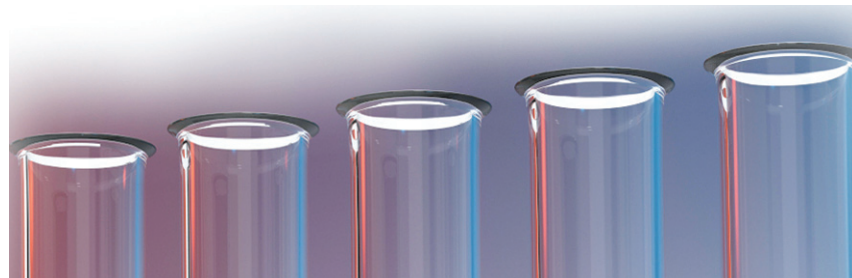
She recommends turning to Scripture and prayer. She also believes Christians should reflect on their understanding of Jesus' priorities, which she sees as "love, forgiveness, grace and justice."

"I balance these things always with the dedication as an American to the ideals of religious liberty," she said.

As believers try to determine their candidate choices, they have "a duty to do their homework and carefully consider all the claims" those running for office make, Baker noted. Christians should filter claims "through the lens of the teachings of Jesus Christ" as they focus on "major" issues.

"For me, the majors would include seeing to the needs of one's neighbor, seeking justice for all and building bridges of understanding for greater public good," she explained. "Jesus, the Christ, was foremost a healer. He fed the hungry. He sided with the oppressed. He spoke truth to power."

Jesus also often addressed the corrupting influence of money, she added. In today's climate in which politicians seem to have "unlimited and unmonitored resources," Baker suggests Christians "be diligent to evaluate campaigns carefully and not to believe everything you hear...."



Church-state problem stems from employer-based insurance

BY BOB ALLEN

Associated Baptist Press

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (ABP) — A Baptist church-state scholar says religious liberty concerns about new coverage mandates come with the territory in America's employer-based health insurance system.

Melissa Rogers, director of the Center for Religion and Public Affairs at Wake Forest Divinity School, said in a *Huffington Post* article that if the Obama administration's attempt to provide free birth control coverage to all women while respecting the conscience of religious employers who oppose contraception on moral grounds sounds complicated, "that's because it is."



Melissa Rogers

"Indeed, my hope is this episode will prompt us to reconsider our employer-based health insurance system," said Rogers, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and former chair of President Obama's first Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

The Obama administration's recent proposal to take religious organizations that object to contraception coverage out of the equation by requiring insurance companies to pay for it "makes good sense to me" and to a lot of Catholics and other people of faith who say it works well for them, Rogers said.

Some Catholics who oppose artificial birth control and evangelicals who believe "morning-after" or "Plan B" birth control pills cause an abortion, however, still object to supporting such coverage even indirectly and believe forcing them to provide it tramples on their religious liberty.

The Affordable Care Act, passed by Congress and signed into law by the President in March 2010, requires employers to cover preventive services like mammograms, colonoscopies, immunizations and pre-natal and new baby care with no out-of-pocket costs. The administration included FDA-approved contraceptives and sterilization among covered services. The White House originally announced a conscience clause exempting churches from the requirement, but not institutions like church-run hospitals and schools.

After receiving backlash, the president said nonexempt religious organizations would be treated essentially the same as churches and would not have to pay for birth control if they object. The White House has promised to work out a similar arrangement for self-funded insurance providers like GuideStone Financial Resources.

The Obama administration is right to take seriously legitimate religious-liberty concerns in developing its coverage rules. It is not the government's business to determine whether a certain faith's beliefs are "right," Rogers said. At the same time, allowing employers' to use their religious convictions as an excuse to deny federal benefits to their workers "would be disturbing."

Rogers said the tension is inherent in the U.S. health-care system, where most people are insured through their jobs. "It is right to honor the religious objections of faith-based employers, but it is also right to ask why we retain a system where the health coverage employees receive may be limited by those objections," she said.

Primitive by today's standards, the cost of medical care was not a major concern for Americans prior to the 20th century. Then populations moved into cities, healthcare moved from homes to hospitals, technology advanced and medicine took on an increasingly larger role in people's lives.

SBU musicians make honor band

BOLIVAR — Five Southwest Baptist University students have been selected as members of the 2012 Missouri All-Collegiate Honor Band.

They include Lucas McLaughlin of St. Joseph, trombone; Taylor Katz of Hampton, Iowa, euphonium; Andrew Lewis of Kansas City, percussion; Lauren Griffis of Bentonville, Ark., clarinet; and

Jamie Penick of Nixa, clarinet.

Students performed Jan. 25-28 for the Missouri Music Educators Association Conference at the Tan-Tar-A Resort in Osage Beach.

Steven Thompson of Spokane, Wash., alto saxophone, and Matt Hopwood of Bolivar, percussion, were chosen as alternates.

CHURCH CHANGES

Bement Baptist Church, Sikeston, has called **BOCK WHITE** as pastor. He and his wife, Laura Beth, have a daughter.

STEVE WARD has resigned as pastor of CrossPoint Fellowship in Springfield to accept a pastorate in Arkansas. His wife's name is Linda.

CARL REES recently retired as evangelism and missions pastor at Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Springfield. His wife's name is Martha.

DAVID WELDY of Shawnee, Kan., has been called as music director at First Baptist Church, Grain Valley.

First Baptist Church, Grain

Valley, has called **ROBERT STRONG** as its new pastor. His wife's name is Hannah.

DANE HERNANDEZ is the new youth director at First Baptist Church, Grain Valley. He and wife Carrie have three daughters.

ROB HURTGEN is the new pastor of First Baptist Church, Chillicothe. He and wife Shawn have five children. He has been serving as pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church, St. Louis.

East Sedalia Baptist Church has called **SCOTT BRAUN** as pastor. He and his wife, Priscilla have two children and are expecting a third child.

AMY TILLEY has been called as worship leader at First Baptist Church, Sedalia. She and her husband, Jeff, have three sons.