

Baker Publishing Celebrates 75 Years

As Baker Publishing celebrates its 75th anniversary, President Dwight Baker has seen Christian publishing grow from its roots as small businesses to a vine that spreads across many markets and purposes. However, he thinks Christian publishing will always address its core purpose of serving the church with significant new voices.

The insular character of Christian publishing peaked toward the end of the 20th century as the popularity of new authors and titles became mainstream. Yet, even back to the 1980s, the more active evangelical publishers were independents, Baker says.

“Since then, corporate publishing houses have made significant investment into the Christian marketplace,” he says.

He admires and envies what these publishers have achieved as they identified a business opportunity and took it. And while having giant competitors is a challenge to independent publishers, Baker says he celebrates this expansion of the Gospel.

He also thinks the independent business

model is important and will continue.

“The major publishers have other business interests that mix publishing with other priorities, so much of their concern is not about serving the church,” Baker says. “That’s our distinctive. We’re about serving the church; that is the beginning and the end of it. We have no other priorities to distract us from that commitment.”

He sees corporate investments into Christian publishing as a signal that independent publishers might have done more to meet growing demands.

“We were apparently not prepared for all the requirements,” he said. “One hundred years ago, Christian publishing stepped up to address a new gap, and God used those resources to fill a need. Much later, when the demands of the church outpaced our resources, God enlisted others for that important work.”

He points to media mogul Rupert Murdoch, head of NewsCorp and several Christian-publishing houses and imprints, as the dominant Bible supplier in our market.

“I am amazed how God uses creative means to resource the church—even through people we wouldn’t expect. We trust that God uses Baker in that same manner. But we must ask ourselves, ‘Are we fully prepared to accept that responsibility?’”

Looking into the future, Baker sees continued plurality of Christian and general-market publishers as they pursue the same readers.

“Publishers and retailers are mixing up general interest and Christian books, and the separation between the two categories is less obvious,” he says.

Celebrating the 75th anniversary of the company founded by his grandfather, Herman Baker, is recognizing a legacy of filling the needs of Christian readers as the greatest obligation.

It’s a longstanding tradition of independent publishing, he says, pointing to three other industry publishers that started in Grand Rapids, Kregel, Wm. B Eerdmans, and Zondervan, with all except Zondervan remaining family owned.

“It was a striking realization to discover we’re the youngsters at 75 years,” he says. “That fact reflects much about the endurance of this profession and independent publishing. It’s a legacy that we are privileged to maintain.” R•R



Dwight Baker,
President
1997-present



Richard Baker,
President
1987-1997



Herman Baker,
President
1939-1987



Early Baker Book House during the holidays.



Baker Book House today.

Calling, Mission Are Behind ICRS’s Theme

Renewing our sense of calling and mission as we share what God is doing in and through us is part of what’s behind the International Christian Retail Show’s theme, “Cause to Celebrate” June 22-25 in Atlanta.

“It’s a time to encourage one another, learn new things, lift each other up, and serve together,” said CBA President Curtis Risky. “This year, we have more reason than ever to gather, as we celebrate the resilience and strength of our industry. We celebrate the future to which God is calling us. And we celebrate the fact that, after 65 years of CBA’s ministry, we still need each other and have a focal point where we can meet and journey together.”

Event highlights include the 20th anniversary of the Children’s

Product Trends Workshop by Mary Manz Simon, Ph.D., who helps retailers effectively connect with families. Debut Avenue has more new products and new vendors than ever.

Faith leaders sharing time and ideas include pastors Ravi Zacharias, Kyle Idleman, Gary Wilkerson, Charles Stanley, and Palmer Chinchin. Phil Robertson and his son Alan Robertson of *Duck Dynasty* and many authors, including Angela Hunt, Jerry Jenkins, Karen Kingsbury, and more, will be there along with popular artists and worship leaders.

For more information and to register, visit www.ChristianRetailShow.com. R•R

