



WESTERN RECORDER

December 13, 1994
Vol. 168, No. 49**FOR THE RECORD****Angels**

Americans have an renewed fascination with angels, but Baptists historically have not talked much about the theology of angels. See pages 1, 6, 7 & 8.

Book withdrawn

The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board has suddenly withdrawn plans to publish a theology book written by a former Kentuckian. See page 2.

Split considered

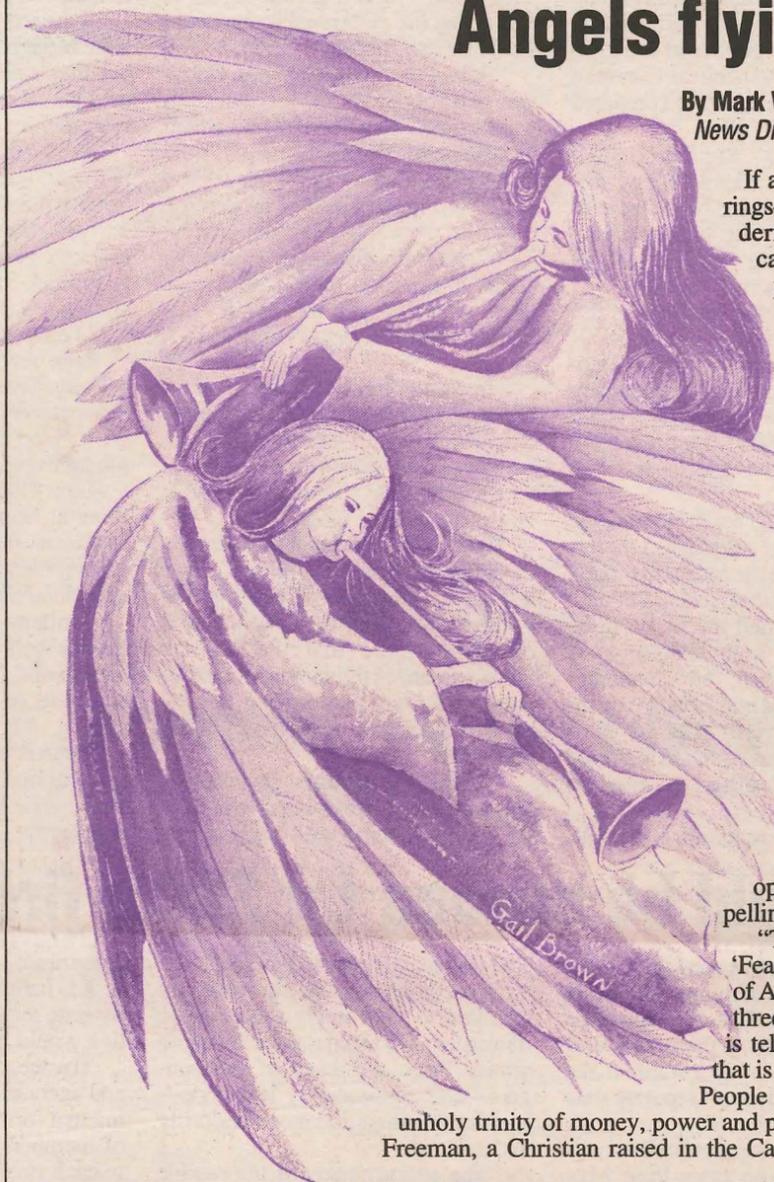
Conservative Baptists in Virginia are studying the possibility of forming a new state convention. See page 2.

CP down

Receipts for the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program budget are down for the first quarter, but the way the calendar fell may explain the dip. See page 3.

Editorial

True conservatives should oppose a school prayer amendment. See page 5.



Angels flying high in American culture

By Mark Wingfield
News Director

If an angel gets wings every time a bell rings—as Clarence claims in "It's a Wonderful Life"—the constant ringing of cash registers with the sale of angel products this Christmas signals a bumper crop of angel graduates.

Angels appear everywhere this holiday season.

They're on Christmas trees and Christmas cards, to be sure. But they're also the subject of prominent displays in virtually every book store in the nation. They're on magazine covers, posters, jewelry, T-shirts and knick-knack shelves.

Angels appear to be ringing more cash register bells than church bells this season.

But if you listen closely and move beyond the cry of commercialism, you'll hear a common message resounding across religious traditions: Angels are for real.

And, ironically, the quiet message attributed to angels directly opposes the loud commercialism propelling the current angel frenzy.

"The chief message of the angels is 'Fear not,'" said Eileen Freeman, founder of Angel Watch Foundation and author of three best-selling books on angels. "God is telling us not to be afraid, and I think that is a very important message in our age. People have not turned to Jesus, but to the unholiness of money, power and prestige."

Freeman, a Christian raised in the Catholic faith and a graduate of Notre

Dame University, founded Angel Watch two years ago as a non-profit foundation to help people search for God through the work of angels.

She's not alone in this emerging cottage industry that's part spiritual and part sales. Consider these trends:

■ Five years ago, only five books about angels were in print in the United States, according to Gannett News Service. Today, at least 200 books on angels line the shelves of both religious and secular book stores. Many have become best-sellers.

■ Linda Whitman Vephula, a Baptist in Atlanta, recently launched a new nationwide magazine devoted exclusively to angels. The Angel Times is a 68-page glossy color magazine hitting national newsstands this week priced at \$5 per copy. It's not intended to be a commercial venture, she explained, but is her response to the ministry of angels.

■ Hollywood has jumped on the angel bandwagon, with several television specials and a new angel-oriented series, "Touched By An Angel." Angels are becoming a staple of the TV talk show circuit and real-life drama programs.

■ Kay Martin Curry of Virginia founded Twenty-eight Angels Inc. as a clearinghouse for angel information. Dozens of people call her toll-free line daily to report angelic encounters and seek spiritual direction. She speaks around the nation and this year sponsored her first international conference on angels and art in Italy.

■ More than 70 percent of American adults believe in angels, according to the Gallup Poll, and nearly half of all Americans believe they have a guardian angel, according to a survey. See *Angels flying high ...*, page 6

This Christmas means freedom

NASHVILLE (BP)—Christmas will be a celebration of freedom this year for Omar and Aurelia Fernandez.

This will be the first Christmas in four years the Cuban couple has been together. He defected to the United States in 1991 while in New Mexico on a temporary assignment. She finally received a permanent exit visa to leave Cuba this summer.

The Fernandezes plan to celebrate their first Christmas together in freedom with members of International Community Church in Albuquerque, N.M., a Southern Baptist church where Fernandez was pastor when he first defected to the United States.

"They prayed for my wife's freedom for four years, and they have never met her yet. So we are going there so she can meet them and they can meet her," he said.

Fernandez, an anthropologist and archaeologist, was on a temporary work visa for the University of New Mexico when he asked for political asylum just four days after arriving in the U.S. See *Couple will ...*, page 9

Moving? See page 4 (1213)

'Experiencing God' heals church's wounds

By Marv Knox
Editor

MAYFIELD—An experience with God healed old wounds that threatened to kill Northside Baptist Church in Mayfield.

Northside held Kentucky Baptists' first Experiencing God Weekend this fall, and it happened none too soon, said Pastor Robert Johnson.

"It's given our church hope for new life," Johnson said. "This church was really dying, even if people on the outside and some on the inside didn't know it. But the Lord used our Experiencing God Weekend to give our church back to himself and to bring our people back together."

Northside had been ill in recent years, with some members barely acknowledging each other's presence, Johnson explained, offering an assessment confirmed by several members.

"Our church was kind of divided," echoed Imogene Dillingham, a longtime member. "It has brought our church back together like I never dreamed it being again, at least for years. But it all happened in one weekend."

"We were like most churches that have a clique, but now there is none," added member Gene Spain. "We had people who might not have been ene-

mies, but they weren't treating each other as they should. But now, when one family in our church hurts, we all hurt."

At the urging of Johnson, who became pastor 18 months ago, the church's leaders participated in Experiencing God, a 13-week course prepared by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. The primary thrust of Experiencing God is to help Christians see what God is doing in the world and then to understand how they can be a part of that divine action.

Experiencing God Weekends developed out of the success of the Experiencing God program. The Northside experience was the first such weekend in Kentucky, sponsored by Kentucky Baptist Brotherhood. About 50 volunteers came from various states to help lead church members through the experience and teach them the "seven realities" that comprise the core of the program.

"We did not have the typical Experiencing God Weekend; we didn't get to cover all seven realities," Johnson said. "The Lord changed our schedule. On Saturday night, the Lord moved in, and people were asking each other for forgiveness."

That spiritual movement continued Sunday morning and literally erupted Sunday evening, he said. The

Sunday night service began about 5:45 and continued until about 10:45, with no sermon, only the sharing of testimonies from members. Two young women who attended the service committed their lives to Christ through the witness of church members.

"It was a real unique time," Johnson said. "I've been in a lot of tremendous services, and I've never seen anything like it."

"Nobody wanted to go," Dillingham recalled. "Brother Johnson would say, 'If no one has anything more to share, we will close,' and before he could finish, several people would be going to the mike."

The revival started that weekend has continued, with members still sharing their spiritual experiences and maintaining the new bonds of relationship, and with people coming to accept Christ as their Savior.

"It's made a big impact, absolutely," said member Barry Kennemore. "It's helped our church see we are a body of Christ, and we should take care of each other."

"I've talked to several people, and they're all wanting to do more for the Lord now. It's been amazing to see people come out of the woodwork to say, 'I'm willing to do this and to do that.'"

See *'Experiencing God' ...*, page 3

BAPTISTS

Board withdraws book over unnamed doctrinal issues

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP)—In an unusual move, the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board has withdrawn plans to publish a book it already has advertised, alleging unspecified doctrinal problems.

The book on hermeneutics—or principles of biblical interpretation—was written by Charles Scalise, a former faculty member at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, who now teaches at a branch of Fuller Theological Seminary in Seattle, Wash.

The book had been scheduled for release and featured in the 1995 academic catalogue of Broadman and Holman, the arm of the Sunday School Board that publishes books, Bibles and reference materials.

Scalise said he signed a contract to write the book in 1992 and turned in the completed manuscript last July. In November, Scalise received a letter informing him the publisher had changed its mind about releasing the book "basically for unspecified denominational doctrinal parameters," he said.

"By breaking its contract to pub-

lish this book, Broadman and Holman publishers has demonstrated that it is an untrustworthy partner in the ministry of serious evangelical Christian publishing," Scalise said in a prepared statement.

John Landers, Sunday School Board editor of academic books, disputed that the publisher broke the contract. "I would say we withdrew from the contract because we didn't have an acceptable manuscript," he said.

Landers said after reading the full manuscript, "I simply concluded it was not in the parameters of the 'Baptist Faith and Message,'" a statement approved by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963 which the Sunday School Board uses as its doctrinal guide.

Asked how the book violates the Baptist Faith and Message, Landers said it was "more the tone of the book than any particular sentence, I think."

Scalise defended the book, titled "Hermeneutics and Theology: A Scriptural Approach," as "an attempt from a committed conservative evangelical perspective to offer an introduction to hermeneutics and theology to Baptists and other evangelical Christians."

The Broadman catalogue, in a full-

page listing, describes the book as exploring the relationship between Scripture and theology.

"Before the Enlightenment, Christian disagreements on this question were tempered by a core of agreement on foundational issues regarding the historical accuracy of Scripture," it says. "With the advent of modernity, however, even those foundational issues came into dispute as Christians began to question traditional definitions of history and debate the relationship between history and theology."

"In this volume, Charles Scalise introduces the hermeneutical problem that has divided Christians for two centuries and presents a canonical way for thinking Christians to reflect on the doctrine of God."

Word of the decision to withdraw the book created something of a stir at a recent professional meeting that Landers attended, he said. Rumors circulated there that the Sunday School Board is tightening its restrictions on writers and bowing to conservative political pressure in editing decisions.

"I think our doctrinal statement is the same it's always been, which is the 'Baptist Faith and Message,'"

Landers responded.

"I heard rumors that pressures were brought to me by certain people, but that's not true," he said. "I also hear people in Louisville were bringing pressure on me. Not true."

Before this fall, both Scalise and his wife, Pamela, were on faculty at Southern Seminary in Louisville. He was assistant professor of church history and associate editor of the faculty journal, "Review and Expositor," and she was associate professor of Old Testament.

Both accepted teaching positions at Fuller Seminary after he reportedly was passed over for tenure in Louisville. Last summer, some Baptist moderates suggested Scalise had been a victim of the change in administrations at Southern Seminary. When contacted by the Western Recorder for comment this fall, Scalise declined to be interviewed.

Landers said it is unusual for Broadman to reject books for doctrinal reasons. "This is the only case I've ever had of anything like this," he said.

Landers also said he expects Scalise will find another publisher for the book, since he still owns rights to the manuscript.

Virginia Baptists could be headed for SBC's first split

RICHMOND, Va.—Virginia Baptist conservatives are weighing the possibility of starting a new state convention as an alternative to the 171-year-old Baptist General Association of Virginia.

The executive committee of Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, formed in 1993 to counter

what it called the leftward drift of the existing state convention, asked the group's president Dec. 8 to appoint a committee "to study the procedures and requirements" to establish the conservative body as a "separate state convention."

If the panel's recommendations—to be reported no later than May 1995—culminate in a new convention of churches, it will be the first formal state schism in Southern Baptists' prolonged theological fight. And it could create enormous questions about relationships and membership for the Southern Baptist Convention, which currently associates with just one convention in each state.

Until a decision is made, the executive committee of the conservative body has offered to receive funds for the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget from churches and pass them on to the SBC, bypassing the traditional route through the Virginia Baptist convention.

"In some ways it would have been good to take this action three years ago," said Terry Harper of Colonial Heights, Va., the conservative group's first vice president.

It's now obvious conservatives are not wanted, he said, "so it's time to go and do our own thing."

Conservatives have opposed the Virginia convention's development of financial giving plans making it easier for churches to support non-SBC ministries—including the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship—through the state convention's budget.

But approval last month of a plan making gifts to Virginia Baptist ministries the only basis for church representation in the Virginia convention apparently precipitated the move to form a new convention. Previously, representation in the state convention

also was tied to gifts to the SBC.

Since conservative churches are reluctant to fund many state Baptist ministries in Virginia, their ability to amass large numbers of messengers—and consequently influence—at state meetings has been seriously undermined.

"The action makes it impossible for conservatives to ever hope to effect change in Virginia through the voting process," said T.C. Pinckney of Alexandria, Va. "We have in effect been disenfranchised."

Pinckney is a prominent conservative leader nationally and a member of the SBC Executive Committee. Ironically, moderate Baptists in Virginia and elsewhere claim Pinckney and other conservatives have left moderates disenfranchised at the national level.

Yet Pinckney said a new state convention "is not something that was chosen or desired by conservatives. The rules of the game have been changed and we are exploring a new possibility with regret and sorrow."

Leaders of the Virginia convention also expressed regret.

"I'm disappointed that this group feels it necessary to take this action," said Executive Director Reginald McDonough. "I personally feel that Virginia Baptist leadership is trying hard to give every person in the state an opportunity to stand on their convictions but at the same time be active in the Virginia Baptist program."

If the Virginia convention splits, this would be the first time for the SBC to face the dilemma of relating to two conventions in the same state.

Among the questions raised:

■ Can the SBC properly relate to two conventions in the same state?

■ If so, how would representation on national boards and agencies be

determined?

■ If national money is to be given for state mission work, which convention would receive it?

Trustee positions on SBC boards and agencies are apportioned according to a formula based on the number of members in cooperating churches in each state.

"If a second convention is organized within a state, it will obviously require more study because all of the questions have not yet been determined, much less the answers," said Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee. "While I see the need to rethink how the SBC would work in an environment in which there are two state Baptist general bodies, my opinion is that cooperation with a second state convention is not legally outside the parameters of the constitution and bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Roy Smith, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and president of the national group of state convention executive directors, said he believes the proposed Virginia action would cause fragmentation, frustration and conflict.

James Guenther, the SBC's legal counsel, said he does not understand the SBC's representation process to have a connection with a state convention per se.

Guenther said the representation called for in SBC bylaws is based on total Baptist membership in a state. Thus the representation available to any state on SBC boards and agencies would be based on the total number of members in cooperating churches, regardless of which state organization their churches were affiliated with.

Compiled from Associated Baptist Press and Baptist Press reports

"I heard rumors that pressures were brought to me by certain people, but that's not true. I also hear people in Louisville were bringing pressure on me. Not true."

John Landers, editor of academic books with Broadman & Holman



The blessed hope of the youth pastor

Number of Sundays slows first-quarter CP

By Marv Knox
Editor

After the first quarter of its fiscal year, the Kentucky Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget has fallen behind last year's pace and the rate needed to reach this year's budget.

The Cooperative Program received \$4,043,030 at the end of the first three months of the 1994-95 fiscal year, according to figures released last week by the Kentucky Baptist business office.

That amount is \$277,512 (6.4 percent) below receipts for the September-November quarter last year. It's \$421,482 (9.4 percent) below budget for the first quarter of this year.

But the calendar may be the culprit, said Barry Allen, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's business manager. "There is one primary explanation" for the first-quarter shortfall, he said. "It's all in the way the Sundays have fallen."

He points back to August, when the last Sunday fell three business

days before the end of the month and the end of the KBC's fiscal year. That allowed most churches to get their monthly Cooperative Program contributions to the KBC business office before the books closed on the 1993-94 fiscal year, he said.

That accounts for abnormally high August receipts, almost \$1.9 million, and unusually low September receipts, not quite \$1.4 million.

The high August receipts propelled the 1993-94 Cooperative Program to a record \$17.9 million, which far surpassed both the previous year and the budget goal.

Comparatively, however, that handicapped September, since a typical month's receipts usually includes a significant amount of money collected by churches the previous month.

"This usually happens from time to time, and we spend the whole rest of the year catching up," Allen reported. He noted receipts for October and November weren't far off the pace of the same months the previous year,

but that the remaining months of the fiscal year will need to be stronger to catch up to last year and to the current \$17.8 million goal.

Cooperative Program funds are collected by churches and sent to the KBC, where 63 percent is kept for statewide ministries and 37 percent is sent to Southern Baptist Convention causes.

Kentucky's portion of the receipts is supplemented by additional funds designated for use only within the KBC.

The Kentucky-only receipts are off last year's pace too. The Kentucky-only account has received \$69,691 during the first quarter of this fiscal year, compared to \$95,314 a year ago, for a \$25,623 (26.9 percent) shortfall.

Combined receipts for the KBC portion of Cooperative Program and Kentucky-only contributions totaled \$2,616,800 for the first quarter of this year. That amount is \$200,456 (7.1 percent) below last year and \$295,841 (10.1 percent) below budget.

Beware of burnout, Baptist educators told

FRANKFORT—Burnout sounds an alarm that life is out of balance, Dennis Williams told participants at the Kentucky Baptist Religious Education Association's annual meeting this fall.

"Burnout in Ministry" was the theme for the meeting, held at Crestwood Baptist Church. Williams, dean of Christian education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, led participants in a study that could be applied to many professions and vocations.

Burnout often results from either too much or too little stress in one's life, he reported, leading participants to assess their own lives in reference to the debilitating condition.

Burnout reveals itself in numerous symptoms, he noted. They include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplish-

ment, headaches, chronic emotional exhaustion, feelings of helplessness, absenteeism and leaving one's vocation altogether.

People can prevent burnout by acknowledging several realities, Williams said.

- They include:
 - One individual cannot do everything.
 - All tasks are not equal.
 - What a person does doesn't determine who she or he is.
 - No choice is ever one person's alone.
 - The gospel calls Christians to be good stewards of God's gifts.
 - Individuals must change what can be changed and adjust to what cannot be changed.
 - Life and ministry should be considered a relay race rather than a rat race.

Ministers and church workers particularly must avoid the Messiah Trap of believing "if I don't do it, it won't get done; and everyone else's needs take priority over mine," Williams encouraged.

"Our responsibility always is greater than our ability," he added. "Ministry must be shared."

The burnout theme struck a responsive chord with Kentucky Baptist religious educators, with attendance at this year's meeting up 25 percent, said KBREA President Darryl Wilson, minister of education and administration at Eastwood Baptist Church in Bowling Green.

The association is open to ministers of education, youth, recreation and preschool/children, as well as students, professors and church members interested in the advancement of religious education.

'Experiencing God' heals Mayfield church

Continued from page 1

"Our church has grown closer, and we're looking for more ways to work with God. It seems like people are more excited."

One example of the church's newfound unity is that it has dissolved all its committees, except for the board that supervises its school and the trustees that oversee the property, Johnson said.

This development has moved Northside away from tight control by a few people and given it back to all the people, he explained. For example, the church recently developed and adopted its full budget in open business meeting. "It allowed people to say, 'This is what we think God wants us to do,'" he reported.

The renewed vigor of the Experiencing God Weekend is expected to persist. Beginning next year, practically the whole church will have an opportunity to participate in the 13-week Experiencing God course, when it is offered in adult Sunday school,

Johnson said.

And Northside members expect the results of their spiritual renewal to impact the community.

The first reason is because it's still changing member's lives, Kennemore stressed. "It's completely turned my thinking around," he said. "I've always known God was 'out there,' but I didn't really understand he wanted to use me. I didn't realize I could literally be in touch with God every day."

"It's showed me a different outlook on a lot of things," Spain added. "For example, when someone joins the church, now I look to see where God's going to put that person to work. I'm more aware of where God's working, and it's revolutionized my life. ... My relationship with my wife is even greater than it was."

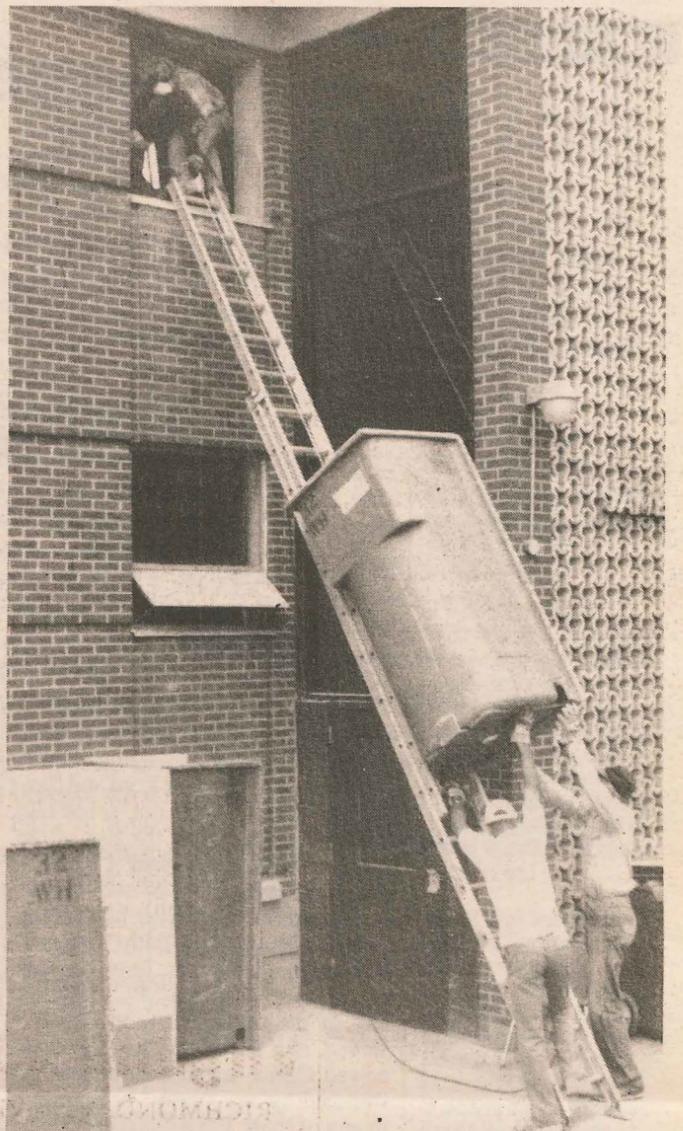
Charlie Simmons, director of missions for Graves County Baptist Association and a participant in the weekend, predicted Northside's results would affect nearby churches.

"It's going to have an impact on the whole community," he predicted. "It's going to help other churches see they can have a real experience with God and come back to what God would have us do. ... It's going to be another means God will use in bringing an awakening to his people. We'll see a lot of Experiencing God Weekends in our area and across the state."

That's true, noted Kentucky Brotherhood Director Bob Simpkins. Brotherhood plans to sponsor the weekends in other churches, beginning with Westport Baptist Church in Westport in January.

"It's one of the greatest tools to help a church that wants to find out what God's doing and get in on what God's doing," Simpkins said. "It moves beyond personal goals that man can set and involves us in a God-sized task."

And that is worth the effort, Dillingham said: "It was one of the most wonderful experiences I've ever had."



BLUEGRASS BURGEOO

■ **Alumni director named.** Stephen Foss has been named coordinator of alumni services at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Foss previously was an executive with the Sara Lee Corp. Currently, he is a second-year master of divinity student at the seminary.

■ **Gyertson to speak.** David Gyertson, president of Asbury College in Wilmore, will speak at commencement ceremonies for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at 10 a.m. Dec. 16. The seminary is scheduled to award degrees to 140 graduate-level students and diplomas and certificates to 40 graduates of Boyce Bible School.

■ **Gilliam elected.** Jay Gilliam, a second-year pre-med student at Kentucky State University, was elected president of the African American Christian Leadership Training Conference Nov. 20. The annual conference drew 53 African American students from six Kentucky campuses. Keynote speaker was Kelvin Gray, pastor of New Mount Zion Baptist Church in Shelbyville. The conference also included 15 small-group seminars on topics ranging from a survey of the Black Muslim movement to helps for improving academic skills.

SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS

Members of the Kentucky Baptist Campers on Mission group hoist a shower stall skyward as part of a renovation project they completed this fall at Oneida Baptist Institute. During the fall break, when most students were away, 45 volunteers remodeled two bathrooms in a girls' dormitory, sandblasted and repainted the school's swimming pool and built a new campground with 24 full hook-ups. Campers on Mission is a national organization of Southern Baptist volunteer missionaries who also enjoy camping. The Kentucky chapter is relatively new but already has been recognized by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board for its outstanding work.

WESTERN RECORDER

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*Earnestly contend for the
faith which was once for
all delivered to the
saints.—Jude 3*

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Not an influence

Once again at the Kentucky Baptist Convention we heard the line, "Unity is a great witness." This is not true. Nobody cares if Southern Baptists are "unified" except for a few Southern Baptists.

Lost people don't care whether Southern Baptists are unified or not. Lost people don't care if we "work toward accomplishing common goals in spite of our differences." Denominational "unity," or the lack of it, does not affect our witness for Jesus Christ at all. Lost people—and probably most Southern Baptists!—are more concerned about what happens to O.J. Simpson, Jeffrey Dahmer or Tonya Harding than with anything that happens at a Southern Baptist Convention or KBC meeting. We have seriously inflated egos if we think otherwise.

In these last 15 years of denominational controversy, I have witnessed to many people. Some of them received Christ as their Lord and Savior. Of those who did not, some said that it was because of the sins of the televangelists. Some said it was because of the problem of evil. Others had different excuses. But none of the people I shared my faith with said they did not believe in Jesus because of controversy in the SBC, KBC or any of the associations in which I served. Nor did any of those who received Christ say that they were influenced by any "unity" or harmony in any of these Baptist bodies.

Denominational unity does not affect our witness for Jesus Christ.

*Michael Barley
Louisville*

Wilted TULIP

An ancient flower has cropped up in the Southern Baptist theological garden. It's called TULIP. Its generic

Australian Blue Heelers

Our son brought home a new puppy—an Australian Blue Heeler. I had heard about the breed through our daughter, but had not thought about the spelling of "heeler/healer." It seems the dogs get this part of their name because they are always nipping at the heels of the animals they are trying to corral.

I learned quickly why the name fitted them so perfectly. I was sitting in my favorite spot on the soft, white couch with my feet dangling over the sides. After only a few brief moments, the puppy was biting my heels with her razor-sharp teeth. I pulled my feet back onto the couch out of her reach, but when I again became preoccupied in reading the newspaper, my feet once again slipped over the side of the couch within reach of the "Heeler." The alert puppy again nipped my heels.

The keen eye of that puppy enabled her to catch me off-guard and my feet within her reach. This reminded me of the reality that Satan is ever alert to catch us off-guard and

name is five-point Calvinism.

Anatomically, it may be outlined as follows to describe our human condition: T for total depravity, U for unconditional election, L for limited atonement, I for irresistible grace and P for perseverance of the saints.

Southern Baptists who hold to unconditional election and a limited atonement pose a threat to further division among us. The former doctrine holds that God has arbitrarily selected a certain number to go to heaven and to hell, all for his sovereign glory. The latter means Christ died for a limited number and not for everyone. How can

such dogmas be defended in light of John 3:16 and the thrust of the whole New Testament? Why evangelism? Why missions?

The "ordo salutis" of unconditional election is regeneration, repentance, faith, justification and sanctification. I know few Southern Baptists who hold this view.

Five-point Calvinism is an artificial, unbiblical system imposed upon the Bible. It is time to defoliate the TULIP.

*Henlee Barnette
Louisville*

God wants all

Has God ordained that some particular persons will be saved and some other particular persons will be damned eternally (WR, Nov. 8)?

II Peter 3:9 says: "The Lord ... is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

God's intention is stated negatively, that God does not want any persons to perish, and positively, that God wants all to repent. God wants all to believe in Jesus and be saved. How will those who believe in double predestination interpret this verse?

John 3:36 says: "Whoever puts his faith in the Son has eternal life; but

whoever rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him."

If Robert and Edith choose to believe in Jesus, they will have eternal life; if they choose to reject Jesus, they will be punished eternally. Their destiny is determined by how they deal with Jesus. If God had pre-ordained that they reject Christ, isn't God unjust to punish them? God programmed them to reject Christ. So rejecting Christ was not their choice. Why should they be punished?

God meant to save all persons. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." This verse contemplates a class of persons. Anyone who believes in Jesus becomes a member of the class. "Whoever" does not designate any particular person(s).

*Constancio Amen
Louisville*

Accidental omission

Thanks to Jacob Zimmer, who wrote (WR, Nov. 29) about an error in the Georgetown College supplement to the Western Recorder. We stated Georgetown was one of only four Baptist liberal arts colleges to be listed in U.S. News and World Report's "1995 Annual Guide to America's Best Colleges."

U.S. News uses 14 categories to rank colleges and universities, and we want to apologize for failing to clarify that the four we mentioned are Carnegie Baccalaureate Liberal Arts College I institutions and were listed in the category containing the 164 national liberal arts colleges.

We recognize that there are many excellent Baptist colleges and appreciate Mr. Zimmer for bringing this to our attention.

*Leigh Anne Hiatt
Public relations director
Georgetown College
Georgetown*

Dogs are always on guard too—unlike us, who become so preoccupied with our own desires that we forget we should be "about the Master's business."

Like human beings, these dogs often "whine" when being weaned, trained or acclimated to new surroundings. Yet, once through the period of trial, they are set on their course. People who go through periods of trial often grow into a new level of faithfulness and service.

Blue Heelers know what they are bred for and respond instinctively. Ours has convinced me she knows her master, is obedient to his commands and is faithful in completing the tasks for which she has been trained.

Our Master would have us to know him, to be obedient to his commands through his word and to be faithful to the tasks to which we have been called.

(The writer is Mrs. Naomi Paul, retiring this month from 12 years of faithful and effective ministry in the KBC Executive Office. For the past several years, she has transcribed my weekly column. I will miss her.)

William W. Marshall is executive secretary-treasurer of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

BAPTIST FORUM

ON MISSION TOGETHER



William W. Marshall

their master—even in face of danger or physical pain.

Our pastor tells the story about a woman whose dog followed her to church each Sunday and lay under the pew where her "master" sat. This was a regular routine for years until the lady died. The folks of that church said this faithful dog came to church every Sunday for a period of time, and curled up under the pew where her "master" sat for so many years.



Gifts of love

By Jewell Nelson

A hand-crafted deformed cat made of clay; two buttons stitched on a scrap of fabric; a large printed misspelled poem about Thanksgiving; a crayoned nativity scene. Why are these gifts still a part of my treasures? Because they were made and given to me by young children I have known and loved.

Parents, encourage children to give of themselves instead of their (your) money when thinking about gifts for Christmas.

■ Use children's paintings and drawings to wrap gifts. Edgings from computer printouts can make festive ribbons.

■ A child's personal designs may be made by pressing a hand or foot on a sponge damp with poster paint.

■ Frame a child's drawing or poem as a gift to someone who loves her.

■ Use an old frame and let the child glue buttons, sequins or shells onto the frame.

■ Various shapes and sizes of tin or cardboard containers may be covered with cut-out drawings or designs, felt, wallpaper or adhesive contact paper. Give a container with cookies inside. Other suggested uses: as holders for pencils, jewelry, gloves, photos, or the large cylinder containers may be used as wastebaskets.

■ Children might decorate lunch bags with brightly colored poster paints and stencils.

■ Christmas cards or stationery can be made by making designs with stencils or rubber stamps, which may be purchased at gift or card shops.

■ Children can make special "coupons" refundable for chores.

■ Make a cassette tape with voices from all family members to send to friends or relatives.

■ Puzzles may be made by gluing a glossy picture from a magazine onto cardboard, then cutting the composition into easily manipulated puzzle pieces. The gift puzzle may be put into a self-seal bag.

■ Cookies, candies or other nibbling foods made with the help of a child are welcomed gifts.

Remind children often about Jesus, the greatest gift of all. (See John 3:16.)

Jewell Nelson is associate director of the KBC's Sunday school department.

■ Send your questions about children, teens, marriage, singles or aging to "Family Forum," Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, Ky. 40253.

EDITORIALS

True conservatives oppose prayer amendment

Why do so many people who advocate less government want our government to regulate prayer? And why do so many people who call themselves conservative want to subvert the will of this nation's founders?

These are good questions to ask as we peer into the political backyard of 1995. While some conservative reforms may prove beneficial, Americans who value religious liberty have reason to be alarmed. House Speaker Newt Gingrich wants to vote on a school prayer amendment by the Fourth of July. That bombshell's more dangerous to liberty than live fire crackers in a gunpowder factory.

On its face, a school prayer amendment is bad news, even by standards of the neo-conservatives who tout it.

First, they decry the ruinous nature of Big Government. They recount a litany of woes, including the welfare crisis, unemployment, poverty and small-business failure, as examples of how government ruins what it runs. So why would they want government to meddle in religion, which is what would happen with a school prayer amendment?

Second, true conservatives preserve established traditions. But neo-conservatives' school prayer stand counters the concerns of such national luminaries as James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, as well as Baptist forebears Isaac Backus and John Leland. The new "conservatism" fails to conserve, but rather debunks, the insights of the founding fathers, who knew firsthand the peril of a marriage between church and state.

Furthermore, a school prayer amendment is bad news for several broader-based reasons:

■ It's unnecessary. As long as a person of faith has a mind, nobody can prohibit prayer. Your children and mine still can pray in school, and nobody can stop them.

Some school prayer supporters want an amendment to protect other forms of religious expression. They advocate the rights of student reli-

gious groups to assemble, of students to wear religious messages on their clothing, and of students to offer religion-based views in classroom discussion. This freedom already is protected by the First Amendment, the 1984 Equal Access Act and the 1994 Religious Freedom Restoration Act. We should let the courts uphold these provisions, not layer them with questionable laws and redundant amendments.

■ It's cruel, if not coercive. Although an amendment would stipulate no one will be required to pray and the state won't write the prayer, that's flimsy protection. Anyone who knows children knows the cruel power of peer pressure. Teachers' implementation of the amendment will ratchet that pressure up to coercion; even if teachers don't say the prayer, they will be the authority behind it. And although the state, through the school board, won't write the prayer, it will choose which prayer is said. Majority-picked prayers will violate the consciences of children with minority convictions. If that doesn't bother you, imagine you're the Baptist parent of a child in Boston, Salt Lake City or Los Angeles

■ It mocks genuine religion. Baptists long have upheld the principle that authentic faith must be free. State-written, state-sanctioned prayers aren't free and don't produce faith. If they seek to represent authentic views, they run roughshod over students who don't share those views. And if they are addressed "To Whom it May Concern," they're not worth the air required to say them. A generation brought up on state prayers won't know true prayer from patty-cake.

■ It's not the state's business. From Abraham and Sarah on, families have been responsible for the spiritual care of children. Since the time of Christ, the church has been responsible for evangelism and discipleship. Government never has and never will have a valid role in religious training. Let the public school manage its academic curriculum. Let parents and the churches tend to the spiritual health of young souls.

Marv Knox

So-called conservatives contradict their political label when they propose a school prayer amendment. Such a scheme would extend the government's grasp into the most private affairs of American citizens. It also would confound the intentions of this nation's founders, who firmly grafted the First Amendment onto the Constitution.

Mid-Continent grateful for KBC's 'statement of relationship'

Mid-Continent College would like to thank Dr. Bill Marshall, the Executive Board, the administrative committee, the subcommittee and all Kentucky Baptists for adopting the official "statement of relationship" between the Kentucky Baptist Convention and Mid-Continent College. We would especially like to express our sincere appreciation to Dr. M.A. Winchester for the excellent leadership as chairman of the subcommittee.

Even though Mid-Continent has always been a Kentucky Baptist institution and a Southern Baptist institution by birthright, this statement provides for clarity and understanding. The college was started as the West Kentucky Baptist Bible Institute by

the West Kentucky Baptist Association. The first session was on Jan. 10, 1949, in the basement of First Baptist Church of Clinton. By 1950, the Kentucky associations of Blood River, Graves County and West Union had

joined in electing trustees and sponsoring the institution. The West Kentucky Association is affiliated with the KBC and the Southern Baptist Convention, therefore giving the institution a Kentucky Baptist and Southern Baptist birthright.

The general opinion of Baptists in West Kentucky has always been that Mid-Continent literally saved the entire Jackson Purchase Area from the independent movement. The leadership of the college has always been mainstream Southern Baptist with an

emphasis on missions and evangelism. The high percentage of Cooperative Program giving by West Kentucky churches is due in a large measure to the influence of Mid-Continent College.

Much progress has been made in the last decade as the college prepares to enter the 21st century. Full accreditation was received by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1987, with reaffirmation for a 10-year period in 1992. A president's home, dining hall and women's dormitory have been added to the other four buildings on the 90-acre campus that was acquired in 1976. Plans are in the making to expand the curriculum with additional majors to train bivocational pastors and to reach a larger constituency. There are six

seminaries represented among our faculty. A capital funds campaign will be launched in 1995 for funding married housing, a faculty and student center, scholarships and increased endowment.

Mid-Continent is committed to doctrinal integrity and to join with Kentucky Baptists and all Southern Baptists in carrying out the Great Commission. With the action of the KBC, we are better prepared to perpetuate our Southern Baptist witness and testimony in West Kentucky and throughout the area.

Thank you, Kentucky Baptists, for this special recognition as part of the Kentucky Baptist family.

LaVerne Butler, president
Mid-Continent College
Mayfield

"With the action of the KBC, we are better prepared to perpetuate our Southern Baptist witness and testimony in West Kentucky and throughout the area."

LaVerne Butler

THANK YOU

If you haven't finished shopping, here's a timely hint: Bow-wow

By now you're starting to get desperate. Only a handful of shopping days remain until Christmas, and the unfinished portion of your gift list seems to be growing larger and longer.

May I offer a suggestion? Bow-wow.

That's right, give dogs. People still stuck on your list obviously are tough buys. Otherwise, you would've picked out something long ago.

Well, have no fear. Did you ever see a heart so cold that wouldn't melt at the sight of a puppy? If you give a dog, you'll give a gift that will be remembered for a lifetime. Dogs make perfect gifts for several reasons:

■ They're cheaper than children.

You don't have to buy Nike sneakers and Indiglo watches for canines.

■ They're friendlier than spouses. People have their days, and you just can't please everybody all the time. Not so with dogs. A puppy always is happy to see you at the end of the day and eager to greet you in the morning.

■ They're as faithful, loyal, obedient and kind as a Boy Scout. Only you don't have to take dogs camping or buy them uniforms.

■ They double as a burglar alarm.

Dogs have keen senses of smell and hearing, so nobody can sneak into your house

at night. If you give a really big dog, your giftee can roll over and go back to sleep.

And even if you give a small dog, at least your fortunate friend will know exactly when to dial 911.

■ They're as good as several gifts rolled into one.

For example, if you give a dog, your lucky loved one can throw away the broom and dustpan.

We got our dog, Betsy, three years ago, and we've hardly needed to sweep the kitchen since.

The hound lives to lick crumbs.

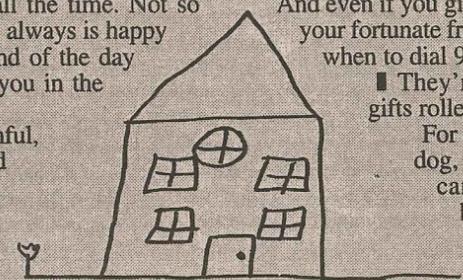
Beyond that, a person who has a dog

doesn't need to buy a new TV or VCR the next time lightning strikes the house. With a dog, all you need is a rawhide bone or stuffed animal, and you've got hours of entertainment.

■ Dogs are holy. The children in our house and I have not ascertained if dogs go to heaven, but I can verify that, as faithful yet soulless creatures, they won't introduce sin into a home. At least they won't after they're potty trained.

■ Best of all, the gift of a dog takes care of gift-giving for years and years. If your friend or loved one appreciates the puppy, you can always buy something for Fido at Christmas. And if not, you can bet you'll be told what to get for Christmas next year.

Marv Knox



down home

Angels in the Bible

■ **Genesis 16.** The "Angel of the Lord" comforts Hagar as she flees from Abraham and Sarah.

■ **Genesis 22.** The "Angel of the Lord" stops Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaac.

■ **Genesis 19.** Angels go to Sodom to lead Lot and his family away before the city is destroyed.

■ **Genesis 24.** Abraham tells Isaac an angel will help him find a wife.

■ **Genesis 28.** Jacob sees the angels of God ascending and descending into heaven in a dream.

■ **Genesis 31.** An angel speaks to Jacob, telling him to flee from Laban, his father-in-law.

■ **Exodus 3.** The "Angel of the Lord" appears to Moses in the burning bush.

■ **Exodus 14.** An angel goes before and after the camp of Israel as they fled Egypt.

■ **Exodus 23, 32 & 33.** An angel leads the children of Israel as they journey to the Promised Land.

■ **Numbers 22.** The "Angel of the Lord" appears to Balaam and gets his attention through the antics of a donkey.

■ **Judges 6.** The "Angel of the Lord" appears to Gideon.

■ **Judges 13.** The "Angel of the Lord" appears to the wife of Manoah and tells her she will bear the child Samson.

■ **2 Samuel 24.** An angel destroys Jerusalem through a plague.

■ **2 Kings 19.** The "Angel of the Lord" kills 185,000 Assyrians.

■ **Zechariah 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6.** An angel converses with the prophet.

Protestants have been wary of angel talk

By Mark Wingfield
News Director

Angels appear throughout the Bible, but Christians in this century—particularly Protestants—have been hesitant to talk about them or study them.

In 1975, Billy Graham was preparing a sermon on angels and discovered scant resources in his library on the topic. So he researched and wrote his own book, called "Angels: God's Secret Agents." It became a national best-seller and now has returned to prominence.

Graham's book and interviews with several theologians and students of angelology provide a basic outline of orthodox Christian beliefs about angels. But the subject still has few clearly defined parameters of what is orthodox and what is not.

Baptist scholars generally agree on at least three points, however:

■ Angels are an obvious part of Scripture, and their existence cannot be denied.

■ The role of angels is not clearly described in the Bible.

■ The Bible affirms the existence of both good angels and fallen angels, or demons.

"There's a great deal of ambiguity, and I think purposely so," said Gerald Keown, an Old Testament professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. "We do not have a clear-cut biblical perspective that would define the role of angels. I think this is a subject inten-

tionally left shrouded in mystery."

One of his colleagues, New Testament professor Cary Newman, believes the mystery of angels also may have been left a mystery to avoid the human temptation to worship angels over Jesus Christ.

Even most Christian-oriented people on the angel-promotion circuit readily acknowledge this danger. The Bible includes several instances, they note, where people who attempt to worship angels are rebuked.

The most notable example is recorded in Revelation 22, where the Apostle John, upon being returned to the island of Patmos after his revelation of end times, falls down to worship the angel who has escorted him. "Do not do it," the angel says. "Worship God."

Angels are essentially good beings who may be used for evil purposes, Newman said. "I wouldn't pray to an angel; I pray to Jesus. I don't seek the enablement of an angel; I seek the enablement of the living Christ. ... Anything you appeal to an angel to do, Christ does better."

Newman said as a pastor he would not preach a sermon series on angels or encourage his congregation to become fascinated with angels because of the danger of angel worship. "I want them to fall in love with the risen Christ" rather than angels, he said.

Another New Testament scholar, Clint Arnold of Biola University, believes angel worship was the sin of the Colossian church that prompted the Apostle Paul to write them with fur-

ther instruction.

In Colossians 2:18, Paul writes: "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head ..."

Arnold has studied every available fragment from Asia Minor with an inscription related to angels that was written during Paul's time. His research and view of the Colossian heresy will be published in a forthcoming book.

Both the Hebrew and Greek words translated "angel" literally mean "messenger." The word is used 111 times in the Old Testament and at least 165 times in the New Testament, according to James Leo Garrett, theology professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

"The history of Christianity really has mixed reviews of angels," said Timothy Weber, church history professor at Southern Seminary. "The Catholic tradition made angels an important part of Christian piety and talked a lot about guardian angels."

"Protestants tended to look at all the angelic hosts ... as taking away from the biblical revelation in many ways. They said, 'If you've got the Holy Spirit and you've got the Bible, why do you need angels?'"

"They didn't deny angels; they just didn't know what to do with them."



Angels flying high in American culture this Christmas

Continued from page 1

According to a poll for Time magazine. People promoting angels today range all the way from the founder of the Psychic Friends Network to an ordinary-Baptist minister and his wife.

This wide range of influence causes Maurice Smith, a Southern Baptist expert on New Age movements, cults and world religions, to issue a warning to curious Christians: "All of us need to be careful that we do not assume that everybody who believes in angels has the same concept of angels we have."

Since the subject of angels has not been widely discussed, Baptists have no common doctrine on the issue, he said. "Therefore, people hold many of their beliefs in a kind of popular mode. There are no guidelines. You can't go out and get the official Baptist book on angels."

This creates a strange mix whereby people who hold highly orthodox views in other areas blindly accept unorthodox views about angels, said Smith, who retired this year from the interfaith witness staff of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

For example, "Baptists traditionally have believed that angels are a created order of beings and that they are not people who have died," Smith said. "But in the popular vein, angels often are people who have died."

Another danger with the fascination with angels is the threat of universalism, Smith said. Universalism is the belief that all people will go to heaven, or that all spiritual roads lead to God.

The "folk religion" fostered by the modern discussion of angels "tends to encourage Baptists and other Christians to become universalists," Smith said. "Wherever they see angels, they tend to give them credibility."

"We see angels as a common denominator of the religions of the world," said Vephula, publisher of Angel Times. She considers herself a Christian and a Baptist but remains open to other religions.

Likewise, Curry, founder of Twenty-eight Angels Inc., identifies herself as a Christian but believes angels carry God's message to people of all faith groups. "All the religions should be working together," she said.

While Vephula and Curry have gotten into the angel business with an inclusive view, others have entered with a more narrow view.

Freeman, founder of Angel Watch Foundation, strongly emphasizes her ties to Catholicism and Christianity.

"I'm trying to educate people about who angels really are," she said. "There's so much information out there that is not biblically based."

For example, Freeman cites the wildly popular book by Betty Eadie, "Embraced by the Light," in which Eadie tells how her life was changed by an angelic encounter.

"I'm sure she had a genuine angel experience, but it gets mixed up with her Mormon background and strange theology," Freeman said.

Like Freeman, Marilynn and William Webber got into the angel busi-

ness with a desire to promote orthodox Christian views.

They met at Wheaton University, and he holds a doctorate from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, a Southern Baptist school in Kansas City, Mo. He has been pastor of several Baptist churches over the last 40 years.

Together, they have written "A Rustle of Angels," which has sold 200,000 copies in hardback to date. The book includes dozens of personal stories of human encounters with angels but also a strong evangelical witness.

"There are so many myths out there and New Age ideas," Marilynn Webber said. "We decided there needed to be more of a foundational idea presented."

They decided to write the book in a popular format rather than a Bible study format so it would appeal to non-Christians as well as Christians and could be sold in secular book stores, her husband added.

The book has proven to be a good bridge to Christian faith for people interested in angels who are not Christians, Mrs. Webber said. She and her husband also host "angel teas" in their home, to which they invite people interested in angels for discussion and ultimately present a Christian witness.

"Because there's such an interest in angels outside the church, it gives Christians a wonderful opportunity to use this interest as a beginning to wit-

ness," Mrs. Webber said.

How to explain the current surge in interest with angels varies depending upon one's view of angels.

Curry, founder of Twenty-eight Angels Inc., sees the phenomenal interest as a sign of spiritual renewal across America. "This is an opportunity for us to realign our priorities and choose the pathway of the divine rather than the pathway of materialism," she said.

Freeman, founder of Angel Watch Foundation, said the increasing interest in angels is "part of a great revival of spirituality in America."

After several decades of seeking material gain, people's spirits have become malnourished and people are "coming up for air," she said.

The Webbers also see signs of increased spiritual interest but worry that too many people may latch onto angels and not see the God the angels serve.

"Times are tough, and in tough times people are more open to the spiritual," William Webber said. "Angels are a way of finding hope and being spiritual. But God's angels always want to point to Jesus Christ. For many people, unfortunately, angels become an end in themselves."

Smith, the interfaith witness expert, sees a different pattern.

"The interest in angels is a mixed signal," he asserted. "It's not necessarily a sign of spiritual awakening. As much as anything, it's a sign of spiritual confusion in this country."

Q. What are angels?
A. Most angels are good, although some are evil.

Q. What are the different types of angels?
A. Angels are divided into three groups: seraphim, cherubim, and guardian angels. Seraphim are the highest and most powerful, cherubim are the next highest, and guardian angels are the lowest and most common.

Q. Can angels be seen?
A. Yes, but only by people who are spiritually sensitive.

Q. How can I communicate with angels?
A. Through prayer and meditation.

THEOLOGY

Do you have a guardian angel? Many Americans believe so

By Mark Wingfield
News Director

Ten years ago, Brenda Curry was living alone in a rough neighborhood of Kansas City, Mo. One night while driving home after a church activity, a blizzard stranded her a short distance from her apartment.

Remembering her surroundings and the fact a rapist was stalking the neighborhood, she immediately closed her eyes and prayed: "Lord, I'm scared. Please help me."

Two men suddenly appeared at her car window. One was white; one was black. Both appeared to be in their 30s, she recalled, and both looked like they could blend in with the street population in downtown Kansas City. But instead of being afraid, "the strangest peace came over me," said Curry, who now lives in Berea and is a member of Berea Baptist Church. "The first man said, 'I'm your guardian angel. Where do you need to go?'"

"I said I lived just a half a block up the road. He said, 'OK, we'll give you a push.'" The man also instructed her,

"Don't stop, and don't look back."

The men pushed the car to Curry's building, and she immediately got out to thank them.

But by the time she opened the car door to speak, the men were gone.

The men left no footprints, and no tire tracks appeared in the snow. And she had parked in a large open area with no hiding places, she said.

Curry immediately believed the man's statement that he was her guardian angel, she said.

"I've been a Christian for many years, and I was raised to believe I had a guardian angel to watch over me," she said. "But I never expected to have an encounter."

"I guess I really believe I was about to be in a dangerous situation. They knew if I stayed stuck in the snow there, someone would come and harm me."

Curry also believes the message of "Don't stop, and don't look back" had a double meaning.

At the time, she was newly divorced and trying to start over. That advice provided encouragement to her then and to this day, she said. "Every time I get in a bad situation, I remember, 'Don't stop and don't look back.'"

Was the man really her guardian angel? And do guardian angels really exist?

A growing number of Americans believe the answer to both questions is yes. Dozens of books on the market today are filled with similar stories of human encounters with angels, mainly "guardian" angels who rescue people from peril.

Major national polls have found about 70 percent of American adults believe in angels.

A national poll by Yankelovich Partners Inc. for Time magazine last year found 46 percent of Americans believe they have a guardian angel and 32 percent believe they have felt an angelic presence in their lives.

The Barna Research Group reports 77 percent of Americans believe unseen spiritual forces affect the material world.

Billy Graham affirms the work of angels in people's lives but stops short of fully endorsing the idea of guardian angels. "If you are a believer, expect powerful angels to accompany you in your life experiences," he wrote in his 1975 bestseller "Angels: God's Secret Agents."

However, "The most important characteristic of angels is not that they have power to exercise control over me, or that they are beautiful, but that they work on our behalf," Graham also wrote.

Marilynn and William Webber, Baptists who have written a fast-selling book on angels, affirm the presence of guardian angels. Both cite personal experiences where they believe guardian angels saved them from certain death.

Kay Martin Curry, founder of Twenty-eight Angels Inc., a Virginia-based clearinghouse for angel information, definitely believes in guardian angels.

"Everyone has a guardian angel assigned to them from the moment of creation. Sometimes there are other angels as well that accompany us," said Curry, who

describes herself as a Christian. "If everybody could really connect with their guardian angel, their relationship with Christ would be enhanced, not hindered."

James Leo Garrett, theology professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, cites three Scripture passages that support the idea of angels acting as guardians.

In Matthew 18:10, Jesus warns his disciples, "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father, who is in heaven."

In Luke 16:22, Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and notes "the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom."

In Acts 12, an "angel of the Lord" rescues Peter from prison, and when Peter reappears later, his followers mistakenly think the person is his angel.

While biblical evidence may be found to support the idea of guardian angels, many Protestant scholars warn that an over-emphasis on guardian angels can be damaging.

It is dangerous to rely so heavily on a belief in angels that the need for Jesus is reduced, said Cary Newman, who teaches New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

Newman, who has studied angelology extensively, said he has trouble with the idea of "angels watching over me."

"Christ is watching over me," Newman asserted. "If it's only angels watching over me, then I'm in real trouble."

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. Where did angels come from?

A. Most Christian scholars believe angels are spiritual beings created by God, although the Bible does not clearly state when and how angels were created.

Q. What do angels look like?

A. Angels are spirit beings, "minds without physical bodies," according to Marilyn and William Webber, Baptists and authors of "The Rustle of Angels." However, when angels do appear to humans, they usually take on human forms "most characteristic of those living in that area," the Webbers add.

Angels sometimes appear in different forms, such as brilliant light, according to the Webbers and other scholars.

"Apparently angels have a beauty and variety that surpass anything known to men," Billy Graham wrote in his 1975 book, "Angels: God's Secret Agents." Graham says he understands the Bible to teach that angels do not age, are sexless and never die.

Q. Can humans who have died come back to earth in the form of angels?

A. While this idea has been popularized on television and in movies, it is rejected by most Christian scholars. "Many people are comforted by the thought that their child who has died has become an angel," the Webbers note. "According to the Bible, angels are not humans who have died, whether babies or adults."

Q. How do angels differ from humans?

A. Most Christian scholars believe angels are a different order of creation than humans. The Webbers note that humans are born but angels are created directly by God.

Graham notes that while Christians are joint heirs with Jesus through redemption, angels are not. "God is not called 'Father' by the holy angels because, not having sinned, they need not be redeemed. And the fallen angels cannot call God 'Father' because they cannot be redeemed."

Q. How many angels are there?

A. The Bible uses terms such as "thousands upon thousands" and "10,000 times 10,000" to describe an infinite number of angels.

Q. Are there different kinds of angels?

A. The Bible seems to indicate different types of angels, ranging from cherubs to archangels. Different views exist on how many types of angels there are and how organized they may be. Some people have worked out elaborate charts of angel hierarchies, while others dismiss such organization as uncertain.

Q. What do angels do?

A. The word angel literally means "messenger," and most scholars believe angels are God's messengers to humans.

In his "Systematic Theology," Southern Baptist theologian James Leo Garrett outlines five primary functions of angels mentioned in the Bible: wor-

ship of God; obedient service of God; interpretation of the word and will of God; serving as special agents to support God's plan for salvation; and guardianship of human beings.

The Webbers list at least 14 functions of angels: worship God, administer God's government, rejoice when sinners repent, serve as guardian angels, do battle for God, carry out God's justice, give encouragement, strengthen people, serve as messengers, help people realize they have been cleansed from sin, guide and direct the thoughts of people, help bring people to salvation, watch how humans live their lives, escort dying people to heaven.

Q. How does the work of angels differ from the work of the Holy Spirit?

A. This is a "tough question," according to Eileen Freeman, founder of Angel Watch Foundation, author of three books on angels and a graduate of Notre Dame University with a master's degree in sacred Scriptures.

"The work of the Holy Spirit is a universal work that angels don't have," Freeman suggested. "Angels seem to bring rather specific kinds of messages for specific actions or parts in our lives. The work of the Holy Spirit is kind of like blanketing the whole earth."

Cary Newman, New Testament professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, admits this question is one reason he is cautious about emphasizing the role of angels too much. The empha-

sis of the New Testament is on Jesus and the cross, not on angels, he said. "The work of the Holy Spirit is basically the resurrection Spirit of Christ. The Spirit is the way Christ works in me."

Q. Why do angels not always protect humans from harm?

A. "We have searched for, but we have not been able to find, the pattern that explains why God at times has his angels intervene and at other times does not," the Webbers reply. "The Bible teaches that God sends his rain on the just and the unjust alike. God is sovereign, and for reasons of his own may have his angels help the unjust. He is not obligated to explain to us why he chooses to have his angelic hosts help one person and not another, or to rescue in one circumstance but not in another."

Q. Who is the "Angel of the Lord" referred to in the Old Testament?

A. The phrase "the Angel of the Lord" appears in at least 16 chapters of the Old Testament, including pivotal appearances to the patriarchs, such as Moses at the burning bush. In his "Systematic Theology," Garrett offers four possible interpretations of this difficult biblical concept: that the Angel of the Lord is the pre-existent Logos who would later become incarnate in Jesus Christ; that the Angel of the Lord was an angel acting as the ambassador of the Lord; that "Angel of Yahweh" is a literary device perhaps referring to God; and that the Angel of the Lord is God himself.

About the art

The angels depicted on page 1 and page 7 are the creation of Ken and Gail Brown, Texas Baptists and internationally known artists. They offer free samples of their watercolors, charcoal drawing, pen-and-ink drawings and calligraphy. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Box 22 AB, McKinney, Texas 75069.

Angels in the Bible

- **Daniel 3.** An angel rescues Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego from the fiery furnace.
- **Daniel 6.** An angel saved Daniel from the lion's den.
- **Daniel 8.** The angel Gabriel interprets a dream for Daniel.
- **Daniel 10.** The angel Michael appears to Daniel.
- **Ezekiel 10.** The cherubim are identified as surrounding the throne of God.
- **Luke 1.** The angel Gabriel announces the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah and the birth of Jesus to Mary.
- **Matthew 1.** An angel announces to Joseph the birth of virginal conception of Mary's child.
- **Luke 2.** The angels praised God at the birth of Jesus.
- **Mark 1.** Angels ministered to Jesus after his wilderness temptations.
- **Luke 16.** Poor man Lazarus is carried to Abraham's bosom by angels.
- **Luke 22.** An angel appears to strengthen Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- **Matthew 28.** An angel rolls away the stone of Jesus' tomb.
- **Acts 5.** An angel opens the prison doors to free the apostles.
- **Acts 8.** An angel directs Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch.
- **Revelation.** An angel transports John to heaven to reveal a vision of the end times, in which angels appear in numerous forms.

Fallen angels especially shrouded in mystery

By Mark Wingfield
News Director

If the subject weren't so deadly serious, it might be the caption to a Far Side cartoon: "Angels gone bad." While the Bible affirms the existence of angels of light, it also acknowledges angels of darkness.

And while the Bible paints an incomplete picture of angels of light, it provides even less information about angels of darkness, or demons.

Those who promote the existence of God's angels at work in the world today quickly acknowledge the existence of other spiritual forces as well, often called "fallen angels."

"There are fallen angels," said Kay Martin Curry, founder of Twenty-eight Angels Inc., a national clearinghouse for angel information. "They are the ones that do not carry the light of God."

"There are good angels, and there are angels who have been turned to the dark side," affirmed Cary Newman, New Testament professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "This seems to me to be a New Testament teaching."

Although many different theories are offered to explain the existence

of Satan, the Bible gives a few clues. Ezekiel 28, for example, talks about Lucifer falling from the position of "guardian cherub" to a corrupt state.

Many Christian scholars believe Lucifer fell from heaven because of his pride and desire to be like God himself. This view says God expelled Lucifer and thousands of his angelic followers with him. Lucifer became Satan.

Revelation 12 talks about a "war in heaven" in which the archangel Michael and his angels fought Satan. "The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him."

The Bible strongly affirms the teaching that Satan and his followers are less powerful than God and ultimately will be destroyed.

In their book "The Rustle of Angels," William and Marilyn Webber offer this reminder: "Take courage, for although there is a spiritual struggle, good and evil are not evenly matched. God is the Creator; Satan is a created being. God is all-powerful; the devil's power is limited. ... Satan will not be able to thwart God's plan. God will triumph, and Satan will be defeated."

The Webbers offer their readers six ways to discern between what is of God and what is of Satan related to angels:

■ "God and the holy angels will never tell you anything that is contrary to what is found in the Bible."

■ "A message from God's angels will always be in the spirit of Christ."

■ "A genuine encounter with an angel will always glorify God, not the angel."

■ "Angels ordinarily leave a person with an unexplainable sense of peace and a greater love for God."

■ "God's angels do not act to grant one person's selfish desires to the detriment of others."

■ "Prayer should be used to confirm the genuineness of an encounter with an angel."

Also, whether angels strike fear or peace in a person is not an indicator of good or bad, the Webbers add. They note good angels sometimes carry messages of God's judgment and fallen angels sometimes falsely portray themselves as good.

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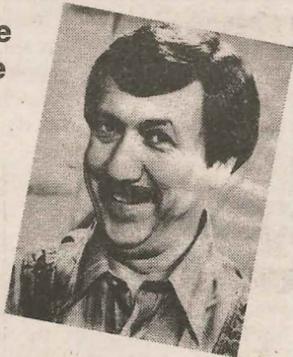
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You only have to pick up the newspaper on any given day to know that the numbers of hurting children and families are increasing.

Abuse, neglect and violence against children are so prevalent in our society today that this ministry is daily bombarded with calls for help.

This year Kentucky Baptists have really stretched to meet more needs.

In February, Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children assumed the operation of a shelter in Somerset that was about to close. In just nine months of operation there, 147 children have been served.

Cornerstone Counseling has opened seven new offices and provided professional Christian counseling to more than 500 individuals, couples, and families.

During 1994, more than 30 families have been trained and licensed to provide hurting children with foster care. More than 60 children have been served in KBHC foster care homes this year. Foster care workers were added in western Kentucky, eastern Kentucky, and in the Louisville area to support these families and recruit new ones.

HOMES FOR CHILDREN



Curtis C. Mooney

Work also has been ongoing at Spring Meadows Children's Home in Middletown, Glen Dale Children's Home in Glendale, the Baptist Youth Ranch in Elizabethtown, the Genesis Home in Mayfield, the Dixon Shelter in Dixon, and the Baptist Youth Shelter in Morehead as well as through the First Step Pregnancy Counseling and Adoption Service and the Center for Independence. All total, the various ministries of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children have been able to help more than 1,200 children and families during this calendar year—a total that is 50 percent higher than the 743 served in 1993.

Many of you will be praying in the next few weeks about your year-end gifts. As you ask the Lord for guidance, I ask you to consider this ministry. Please be a part of helping make life better for the children of Kentucky. If you have a question about our programs or specific giving opportunities, please call us at 1 (800) 456-1386. You will not find a more fulfilling Christmas gift of love!

Curtis Mooney is president of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, 10801 Shelbyville Rd., Middletown, Ky. 40243.

Clinton prohibits funds for human embryo research

WASHINGTON (ABP)—Rejecting a recommendation by a federal advisory committee, President Clinton ordered Dec. 2 that no federal funds be spent on human embryo research.

While acknowledging that research on human embryos can benefit medical research—including advances in in-vitro fertilization—Clinton said the subject "raises profound ethical and moral questions as well as issues concerning the appropriate allocation of federal funds."

"I do not believe that federal funds should be used to support the creation of human embryos for research purposes and I have directed that the National Institutes of Health not allocate any resources for such research," Clinton said.

White House officials said the president's statement prohibits only the creation of embryos for federally funded research and would not prevent studies using embryos that were surplus from in-vitro fertilization clinics.

Clinton also announced he will establish a bioethics advisory commission to further discuss such issues.

Couple will celebrate Christmas freedom

Continued from page 1

United States. Now he is resource production manager in the multicultural leadership department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

The couple sees more to celebrate this Christmas than their reunion, as miraculous as that is. This will be the first Christmas the Fernandezes have celebrated Christmas together in complete freedom since 1959—the year Christmas was banned in Cuba.

"On that year, Christmas stopped being a holiday, and became a normal work day," Fernandez said. Christians would be reported to the government if found celebrating Christmas.

However, the Fernandezes continued to celebrate Christmas in secret, he said.

"We would put up a small tree—

less than 2 feet tall and any kind we could find. We would decorate it with silver balls rolled from chocolate wrappings."

The Fernandezes would then paint pine cones in different colors for their tree.

On the night of Christmas, the family would gather around the dinner table, sing Christmas carols and pray together.

"We might not have had enough food to put on the table, but celebrating Christmas was more important than eating," he said.

This Christmas the Fernandezes also will remember other members of their family who remain in Cuba: their son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, Fernandez's mother and Mrs. Fernandez's sister and brother.

"We are praying for a miracle for their freedom," he said.



FREE AT LAST Omar and Aurelia Fernandez, Baptists who came to the United States from Cuba, will celebrate Christmas in freedom this year. (BP photo by Rex Perry)

Oregon suicide law stalled

SALEM, Ore. (ABP)—Oregon's new law permitting doctor-assisted suicide for the terminally ill was put on hold Dec. 7 when a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order.

U.S. District Judge Michael Hogan issued the order the day before the controversial law was to take effect. Hogan plans to hear arguments Dec. 19 on whether the law is constitutional.

Oregon voters narrowly passed the assisted-suicide measure Nov. 8. It is the first law of its kind. Right-to-life groups and other opponents immediately attacked the law on legal grounds.

In a news story just after the Nov. 8 election, the Southern Baptist Convention's consultant on biomedical issues decried the Oregon law as "a rejection of over 2,500 years of Western medical tradition."

"Physicians have been healers, not killers," Ben Mitchell of the SBC's Christian Life Commission told Baptist Press. "The very profession of medicine is at stake in this legislation."

Land asked to help on school prayer measure

NASHVILLE (ABP)—Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, met Dec. 7 with the Congressman responsible for drafting the Republican proposal for a school-prayer amendment.

Land told the Nashville Tennessean he expects the CLC's conservative agenda to get a more sympathetic hearing in the new Congress, and this is evidence of that change.

Under Land's leadership, the CLC has become a vocal critic of President

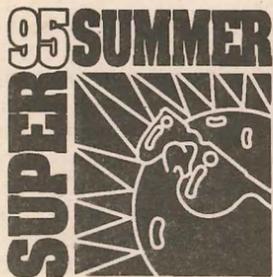
Bill Clinton. Several members of the CLC's staff have strong ties to the Republican party. The CLC's legislative affairs director based in Washington, James Smith, is a former aide to Rep. Newt Gingrich, R-Ga.

Land met Dec. 7 with Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., who has been designated by Republicans to draft a proposal for a school-prayer amendment to the Constitution. Incoming House Speaker Gingrich, also a Southern Baptist, wants Congress to vote on an amendment next year.

Land told the Tennessean his concern is that an amendment ensures that prayers always are initiated by students, not adults. As he envisions it, students could vote on who should give prayers, when and where.

Such an amendment, he said, should also guarantee that students can speak among themselves about their beliefs without harassment.

"There's no perfect solution, but if an amendment is done right, it will vastly increase public support for public education," Land predicted.



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PEOPLE

KENTUCKY KERNELS

Among U.S. cities with populations of 200,000 people or more, Louisville has the third-highest percentage of residents age 65 or older. Nearly 17 percent of the 271,000 people who live in the City of Louisville are 65 or older. Louisville is surpassed in this category only by St. Petersburg, Fla., and Pittsburgh.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Ann Tatum

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Campbellsville College has appointed the following to the board of advisors: **Nancy Cox Padgett, Ed W. McGuire, Paul Lee, Walker Hatton and Hillary Riggs.** The board of advisors assists and promotes the development of the college, advises the college relative to new academic programming, involves other people with the institution, creates goodwill and assists in the recruiting of gifted students.

■ **CARROLLTON**—First Church held its annual Christmas cantata Dec. 11.

■ **CENTERFIELD**—Centerfield Church called **David Heller** as part-time youth minister. He is a student at Southern Seminary.

■ **CRESCENT SPRINGS**—The children and youth of Crescent Springs Church performed excerpts from the musical "Gettin' Ready for the Miracle" Dec. 11.

■ **LAGRANGE**—Buckner Church called **Ken Shearer** of Pennsylvania as part-time youth minister. He is a student at Southern Seminary.

■ **MURRAY**—Westside Church held a note-burning ceremony

Nov. 27, marking the retirement of debt for the worship and education facilities, first occupied in March 1991.

■ **OWENSBORO**—Bellevue Church called **Phil Bradley** as minister of education and discipleship. He will begin his new ministry Jan. 1.

■ **SOMERSET**—**Eddie Mosley** resigned as education and youth director at Beacon Hill Church.

■ **WINCHESTER**—Northside Church ordained **Jesse Kline** to the ministry Oct. 13.

■ **WHITLEY CITY**—First Church dedicated its new worship center, office complex and Goodan Ministry Center Nov. 13. **Bob Browning** brought the dedication sermon.

CORRECTION

■ **PAINTSVILLE**—First Church called **Gary Ralls** as minister of missions, outreach, children and youth. He began his new ministry Aug. 15. He was incorrectly listed as Gary Rales from Pineville.

Jesse Hatfield dies in Leitchfield

LEITCHFIELD—Jesse Hatfield, a pastor and counselor and former director of Spring Meadows Baptist Children's Home, died Nov. 4 at his home in Leitchfield. He was 71.

Hatfield retired last year from New Life Counseling Center in Louisville, where he was a counselor. In addition to his earlier work at Spring Meadows, Hatfield served as pastor of several Kentucky Baptist churches: First Baptist of Big Clifty, First Twelve Mile Baptist in California, Mount Zion Baptist, Stanford Baptist in Stanford, First Baptist in Barbourville, Beechland Baptist in Louisville and First Baptist of Princeton. He also served First Baptist Church of Aurora, Ind.

He was a graduate of Georgetown College, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Louisville Presbyterian Seminary.

He is survived by his wife, Nancy Hatfield of Leitchfield; two sons, David Browning Hatfield of Kingwood, Texas, and Jesse Mark Hatfield of Indianapolis; three daughters, Nancy Anne Whitehead of Louisville, Janice Lee Netherland of Campbellsville and Sharon Lynn Davis of Verona; his mother and stepfather, Ona and William Denton of Leitchfield; two brothers, Lionel Hatfield Sr. of Leitchfield and Edgar Hatfield of Louisville.

Funeral services were held Nov. 7 in Leitchfield.



Baptist Sunday School Board

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Oneida Baptist Institute: From the pastor's perspective

Oneida Baptist Institute and Oneida Baptist Church are inseparable as each carries out its unique role, serving the almost 600 students here in the little community of Oneida.

For almost 100 years our church has served the students, faculty and residents with a ministry that has been unparalleled in any community I have served or know anything about. Each day we are presented with a new adventure, never knowing what to expect, ever thankful for the opportunity of touching lives of hundreds of young people.

On any given Sunday, scores of teachers begin their day by teaching Sunday school classes for grades six through 12. The first Sunday school begins at 9 a.m. and takes place in the classrooms at OBI. A second Sunday school program begins at 10 a.m. in our church. In that program we present the gospel to seniors, class of all ages for the community and staff children, as well as for the adults.

At 10 a.m., after the first Sunday school is over, I preach to students in grades six through 11. That service is held in the school chapel. At 11 a.m. I rush over to the church where I preach again, this time to the seniors, staff and town folks.

In the evening worship we all go to the school chapel for services where everyone worships. It's the only way we can have a service where everyone can attend in a single room. We are blessed in having a large number of musicians who contribute their talents to the services.

Each year we have two revivals; one in the spring and one in the fall. During these revivals our evangelists' assignments are quite rigorous. In addition to preaching three times in the Sun-

day services and each weekday evening, the chapel services are given over to the revival as well. It is a time of great harvesting, and many young people are won to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Many of the young people who arrive in late August have never been in church and have no religious training. Children come to us from all over the world. There is probably no other place where so much can be done to reach the world with the gospel and not have to leave the immediate locality. We literally have a world-wide ministry. Young people come to know Jesus here and then go back to their own countries where they live out the teachings of Jesus they have learned at Oneida.

It takes many dedicated people to staff our Sunday school and provide opportunities for so many students. God has richly blessed us.

In addition to those young people who do not have church backgrounds, we also have some of the finest young Christian people to be found anywhere in the world. It is the

purpose of our church to provide a place for them to worship and grow in the gifts that God has given each one of them. For them, our church is their home-away-from-home while they are here with us. They are a great asset to our worship and a credit to their home churches. May our work continue to bring glory to the name of our Lord.

Written by Albert E. Griffin, pastor of Oneida Baptist Church

W.F. "Bud" Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, Oneida, Ky. 40972

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

It is worth the risk!

"Is it worth the risk?" retired Nigerian missionary Geneva Faw asked in chapel. "Ask those who live in northern Nigeria who had nine churches and pastors' homes burned last September. Ask the pastor who had all his Christian books burned. On the following Sunday, all the churches gathered to praise God."

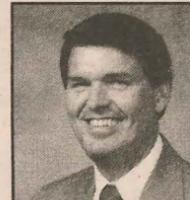
During the Nigerian civil war, Wiley and Geneva Faw kept a bag packed in case they had to leave the country. The pastor of their church was killed by militant Muslims. "I could never say it's safe. I do say the safest place to be is in the center of God's will."

The Faws' 32-year ministry demonstrates that missions is worth the risk. When they arrived, the area of their assignment (the size of Kentucky) had one association and a handful of churches. It now consists of two state conventions and 400 worshipping congregations.

For decades South Korea has lived under military threat from the communist North. Military readiness has resulted in mission opportunities for Korean Baptists. Academic Dean Malcolm Hester, a veteran of 10 years in Korea, recounted a request from the commander of the police academy. He is a Bap-

tist deacon and wanted a Baptist chaplain to work at the center which trains riot police. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering provided \$30,000 to erect a chapel and employ a chaplain. The military-evangelism department of the Korea Convention now has 30 chaplains. Over 8,000 professions of faith in Christ have been made by military personnel.

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Maxine Bumgarner, West Virginia WMU director, shared in a prayer pilgrimage which took her to Moscow, Uzbekistan and Mongolia.

Eight years ago West Virginia Baptists entered a prayer partnership for Mongolia. This unreached people-group seemed closed to the gospel. Today, there are at least 2,000 Christians and 24 churches in the country. First Baptist Church of Ulan-Bator is the only church officially recognized by the government. One of the missionary couples is the son of Clear Creek alumnus Vestal Meece.

Clear Creek responded to these missionary challenges by reaching our \$1,200 foreign missions goal. At Clear Creek we believe missions is worth the risk.

Bill Whittaker is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, Pineville, Ky. 40977

Church dramatists urged to point people to Jesus

By Charles Willis
SBC Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE (BP)—Bringing people to Jesus—and not calling attention to self—should be the focus of Christian drama, more than 2,000 people attending a recent National Drama Festival were told.

The festival, which offered a wide range of hands-on classes, as well as sessions dealing with the theological and philosophical aspects of drama in the church, was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Calvin Miller, professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and a keynote speaker, sounded a caution to participants, echoed by leaders of individual conference sessions.

Visuals aid worship along with words

NASHVILLE (BP)—A multi-sensory approach to worship makes the experience more meaningful and memorable, according to conference leaders at a National Drama Festival.

"We experience life through the five senses," said Harold Bryson, preaching consultant for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. "We cannot just massage the ear or appeal to the eye."

The Lord's Supper and baptism are examples Bryson cited for tying words and visuals together to make worship meaningful and memorable.

Cyndi Grace, drama coordinator for First Baptist Church of Clewiston, Fla., concurred.

"We are a visual society, so drama ministry puts a visual light on what the word says. The message in the Bible has been done through drama from its beginning. The Bible is full of drama, and Jesus was the best storyteller in the world," she said.

Bryson said he believes trends in worship indicate drama is assuming a significant role as drama replaces the sermon on some occasions in worship services and as pastors are increasingly using dramatic monologue to portray biblical figures.

Bryson said sermons need more pictures, and the use of drama to prepare the congregation for worship means drama can raise a question that is answered in the pastor's sermon.

Just as some churches use media, such as slides, pictures and other visual aids to augment sermons, drama-augmented sermons can add visual impact to the spoken word, he said.

Grace said she believes Jesus used stories to make his point with "a society that didn't understand."

Later in history, she said, theater began in the church to teach people who didn't have personal copies of Scripture.

Today, she maintained, drama serves as a non-threatening way to involve the whole person—intellectually, spiritually, physically and emotionally.

"Call attention to Christ," Miller urged the congregation of Southern Baptist artists, including actors, directors, producers, clowns, puppeteers, jugglers and mimes. "Don't absorb it (attention) all for yourself. Sometimes God redeems by art. He is always honored by artists who bring the congregation to salute Jesus Christ."

Ragan Courtney, freelance writer from San Antonio, Texas, agreed.

In a session on poetry and worship, Courtney said: "When poetry points to God, it becomes a different vehicle. We're not about doing little ditties for the Deity, but we write about the cost of being a disciple of Christ."

In a session on pageants, Wayne Johnson, minister of media at First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., urged conferees not to let the specta-

cle of a production overshadow the message.

"Don't ever sacrifice the story," he admonished. "When you lose the story, it is wrong. You design the story, and out of that all the other elements grow. Cute isn't what we are about."

Producers of religious pageants can create the illusion of spectacular biblical events, he observed, but "there are some things you can't do. Only God can do those."

Barbara Hall, drama director at First Baptist Church of Atlanta, said drama directors should view themselves as "believer-artists" who "must first focus on God, not themselves."

"As directors, we need to impart that to our actors. The most important thing about them isn't their talent, it's their relationship to the Lord," she said.

Cyndi Grace, a drama coordinator for First Baptist Church of Clewiston, Fla., said she believes "if God tells you to do it, it is going to be a successful thing."

"Keep your focus on the word of God and keep your ego in check," she warned. "Ego stands for 'Edging God Out.'"

Drama is not something done in church just for fun, said Claudia Hatfield, drama director from Emmanuel Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va.

"Drama is an offering," she maintained. "It is to make people think, to make the message come alive."

And in the smallest congregation attempting to use drama on a limited budget, she said having the right motive means "you have the greatest resource there is: the power of the Holy Spirit."



Dramatists urged to use their talents for God

NASHVILLE (BP)—Church drama directors have no reason to be apologetic, according to Wayne Johnson, director of media ministries at First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla.

Christians with dramatic gifts sometimes face a not-so-subtle disapproving attitude from other church members who see their work as too worldly, Johnson said. But he urged a large group of church drama directors meeting in Nashville recently to take pride in their work.

"We are those unusual 'Christian theater artists.' Some people see that as an oxymoron," Johnson said with a laugh. "But the Christian businessman is no more influential than the (Christian) performing artist. There are just fewer of us."

Just like painters, composers and sculptors, directors are artists who must think "in terms of this business of pictures," said Darrell Baergen, director of the Center for Christian Communication Studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

They must take responsibility for controlling "the big picture" of a play or pageant by arranging resources such as costumes, sets, make-up, lighting and sound, as well as the actors themselves, he said.

Barbara Hall, director of dramatic arts at First Baptist Church of Atlanta, said church drama directors should view themselves as "believer-artists" who "must first focus on God, not themselves."

"As directors, we need to impart

that to our actors. The most important thing about them isn't their talent, it's their relationship to the Lord," she said.

"It's amazing what God can do when we get out of doing things in our own strength. ... The best thing to have is an actor who knows he cannot do it in his own strength."

Church drama directors will struggle at times with a lack of commitment from actors, Hall said.

"In professional theater, you get paid for it. In community theater, that's probably (the actors') social life," she said, adding actors in church-related performances are almost always volunteers.

The key to motivation, Hall said, is to help the actors understand what they are involved in is ministry.

UP IN THE AIR Sean Hartzog (right) of New Heights Baptist Church in Louisville juggles pins with Larry Hammond of Cookeville, Tenn., during the recent National Drama Festival in Nashville. The conference offered sessions ranging from drama to juggling to mime. (BP photo by Jim Veneman)

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