



WESTERN RECORDER

September 30, 1997
Vol. 171, No. 38**FOR THE RECORD****New radio show**

The Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee has approved plans for the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission to begin a new daily radio talk show. *Page 2.*

Trisler stepping down

Kay Trisler has announced her resignation as executive director of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union. *Page 3.*

Editorial

Common characteristics of healthy churches in Kentucky. *Page 5.*

Rich questions

Evangelical activist and author Ron Sider explains his updated perspective on rich Christians in a hungry world. *Page 6.*

Tithes seized

A bankruptcy court has seized tithes given to a Baptist church in Texas. Meanwhile, the pastor of a Minnesota church that experienced the same thing is appealing to Congress for help. *Page 7.*

Russian law passed

A revised version of controversial law to regulate religion in Russia was passed by the Russian parliament and signed by President Boris Yeltsin last week. *Page 12.*

Hillvue Heights resurrected from near-death to life

By Mark Wingfield
Editor

BOWLING GREEN—Seven years ago, Hillvue Heights Baptist Church had dwindled to fewer than 50 active members, had a \$400,000 debt, was on the brink of bankruptcy and had been without a pastor for more than three years.

Experts on church growth pronounced the small church on the southern outskirts of Bowling Green virtually unsalvageable.

"There weren't any pastors who wanted to come to a church in that kind of situation," explains member Keith Ward. "So we had a meeting and everybody said, 'We've gone as far as we can go; we'll have to put it in God's hands.'"

About the same time, Steve Ayers was preparing to graduate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and had a vision to start a church in Bowling Green, his hometown. He knew about the plight of Hillvue Heights and contacted them about becoming their pastor.

"They didn't call me; I called them," he explains. "I said, 'I have a vision for a church in Bowling Green and you have a building.'"

More conversation ensued, and then the church took a vote—not on Ayers as pastor, but on his vision. The struggling congregation adopted the new vision, called Ayers as pastor and began to remake itself.

Today Ayers jokes that he took a pay cut from a seminary pastorate to accept the full-time pastorate at Hillvue Heights. The church agreed to pay him \$7,000 a year.

His wife, Elizabeth, recalls moving light bulbs from room to room in the church because there was no money to buy more light bulbs.

Nevertheless, ignited by a renewed vision the congregation embraced Ayers' often non-traditional ideas and pressed on. Within a month, the congregation had tripled in size.

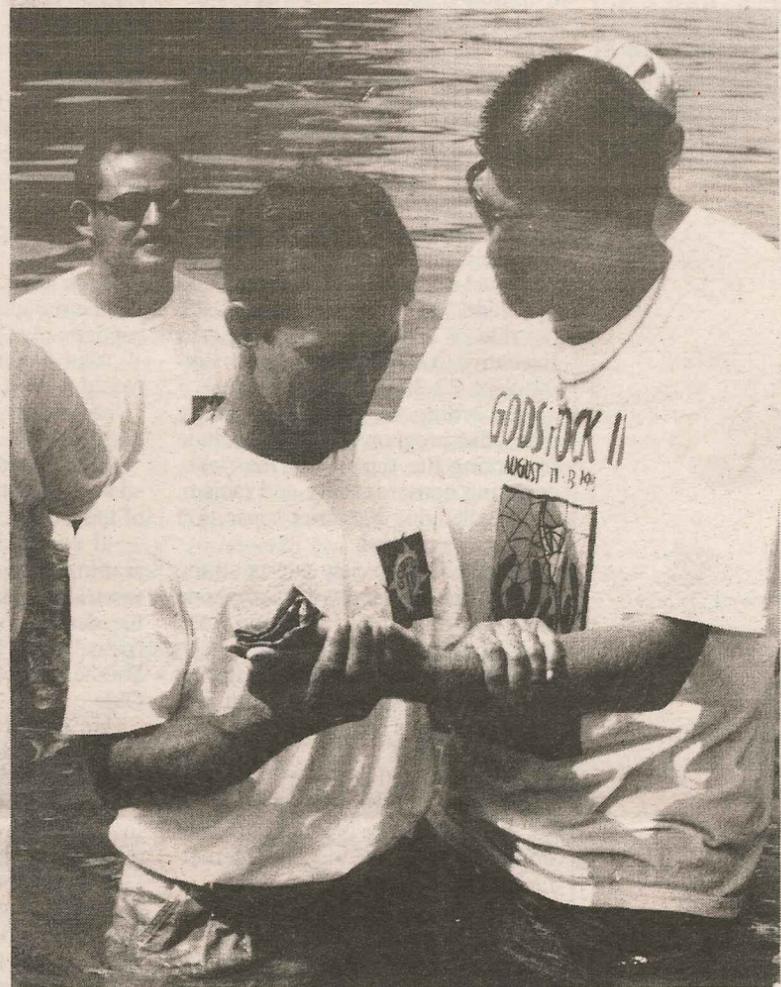
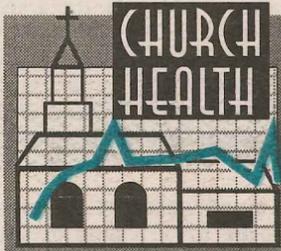
After that, growth continued exponentially. People began making professions of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior in every service; others who had been out of church for years came to renew their commitments and clean up their lives.

When the little country church building filled up, people would stand on the porch and peer in through the doors. What's more, those coming to Hillvue Heights increasingly included the boomers, busters and generation-Xers most churches have trouble reaching.

Today, Hillvue Heights runs up to 2,400 in Sunday morning worship, baptizes more than 220 people a year and has annual offerings of more than \$1.1 million. A new worship center that seats 1,600 has been built adjacent to the outgrown sanctuary.

This, according to Administrative Pastor Steve Dorris, is the result of a

□ See *Hillvue Heights* ..., page 9



NOT YOUR AVERAGE PREACHER Steve Ayers, pastor of Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green, baptizes a new convert in Barren Lake during the church's annual "Godstock" weekend retreat. Each year the congregation takes hundreds of people to Barren River Lake State Resort for a weekend of camping, fellowship and worship.

Missionary sees spiritual war growing in Israel

By Marty Croll
SBC International Mission Board

JERUSALEM (BP)—Spiritual oppression against faith in Jesus has reached an intensity in Israel unknown in modern days, according to a Southern Baptist International Mission Board worker.

When John Anthony came to the Holy Land 24 years ago, "one or two" struggling congregations of Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah were meeting for worship, he said. Now the number of such Hebrew-speaking congregations has grown to 52—and 11 are in Jerusalem. At least 5,000 Messianic Jews are thought to be living in Israel.

Anthony said he believes Satan is causing increased Muslim and Jewish Orthodox fundamentalism in the region to stop God's movement in drawing lost Jews to himself. Violence brought by religious extremists in the country reflects not only political

□ See *Missionary sees* ..., page 13

Divorce culture poses questions for church

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

When two members of the same church divorce each other, who gets the church?

It may sound like a preposterous question, but pastors report it increasingly is an issue as faith and family don't always walk hand-in-hand.

A recent survey by demographer George Barna found the divorce rate among "born-again" and fundamentalist Christians is 4 percent higher than the rate for non-Christians. And 87 percent of those divorces occurred after the individuals had become Christians.

"This isn't something you can talk about in the past tense," said Floyd Price, pastor of Scottsville Baptist Church in Scottsville and president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. "It's a continuing thing. In a small town, you can't hide it."

A split among couples is particularly difficult when one member is a native of the community. Even if that person is the one primarily responsible for the break-up, residents tend to side with the person they've known for years, Price said.

This leaves a difficult question of how the remaining spouse will be allowed to participate in the life of the

church, he said. "I'm not sure of the answers. I just know it's a conflict."

John Lepper, director of the KBC's family ministry department, once counseled a church pianist whose ex-husband moved away, then returned and married one of her friends.

"It caused hurt feelings," said Lepper, who served the church as interim pastor. "Neither wanted to give up the church because it was a very supportive and loving congregation. The last I heard they were both in the church and kept their distance."

"It's hard to describe. The pianist couldn't just walk out. She felt it was her church and she wanted to stay. (His return) created some embarrassment."

Divorce can be especially devastating to rural churches, according to Gary Farley, director of the Center for Rural Church Leadership in Atlanta.

Farley, who previously worked with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, once served as interim pastor of a church that foundered after its main female leader divorced and left the community.

The 15-member congregation recovered after a nearby church adopted it as a mission and sent members there to revitalize the body.

"It can be very disruptive if a main leader close to others in the church

leaves," Farley said. "I don't know what would have happened if the other church hadn't stepped in."

Another issue congregations grapple with is how to relate to those who have been divorced. Price pointed out many churches schedule special Sunday school classes for divorced singles, but that tends to isolate them and prevent them from healing.

"I think divorce pits raw humanity against deep spirituality worse than anything else that happens in a congregation," Price said.

"Divorce involves human feelings. We should be able to relate to anyone who claims Christ as Savior. But when two women have been married to the same man, how can they relate to each other?"

The break-up of marriage also impacts youth programs, Price noted. At Scottsville Baptist, a third of the children are missing every other weekend because of visits to non-custodial parents, he said.

However, there can be a good side to confronting the issue within a congregation, according to Dan Garland, pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Henderson. The impact of several divorces over the years forced Zion to take steps to deal with the problem, he said.

□ See *Divorce culture* ..., page 10

BAPTISTS

Executive Committee OKs new radio show, magazine

"I cannot help but think we are reaping some of the sins we have sown in the past, especially when I see the decline of the number of baptisms."

SBC President Tom Elliff

NASHVILLE (ABP)—The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee gave the green light for a weekly talk-radio program to be produced by the convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and a flagship magazine for the newly organized North American Mission Board.

The radio program, titled "For Faith and Family," will debut Jan. 21, 1998, the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized most abortions in the United States.

Commission President Richard Land said one goal of the program will be to fuel a campaign to overturn Roe vs. Wade. "We are going to turn back the tide of death," Land pledged to Executive Committee members meeting Sept. 22-23 in Nashville.

According to a media-strategy plan, other program topics will include promoting the sanctity of marriage, opposing homosexuality and racism, and challenging the strict separation of church and state.

Land will interview guests on the topic of the day and will take phone calls, electronic mail, letters and voice mail from listeners.

The program's annual budget is \$353,000 and will be funded in part through appeals for listener contributions, Land said.

The show will begin in several radio markets, which must be negotiated, and also will be broadcast live nationwide each day via the Internet, Land said.

"On Mission Magazine," the working title of the new North American Mission Board periodical, is slated for release in January/February 1998. Plans call for it to be bimonthly and, during its first one-to-two years, to be sent free to about 100,000 people.

It would replace magazines formerly published by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Radio & Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission. Those publications were discontinued when the three agencies were merged in a recent SBC reorganization.

In other business, Executive Committee President Morris Chapman called increased giving by churches through the Cooperative Program unified budget "a sign of good health" for the SBC but raised concern about declines in the percentage of gifts local churches and state conventions forward to national and international ministries.

"Perhaps the most devastating news about our health," Chapman said, is a decline in baptisms nationwide, despite record giving amounts.

Baptisms exceeded 429,000 in 1958-59, Chapman said. But in 1995-96, despite \$412 million given through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptist churches managed to baptize only 379,344.

"Our health is not everything we would want it to be," Chapman said. "Until we get a passion, we'll not see this change."

SBC President Tom Elliff attributed such statistical decline to "the law of the harvest."

"I cannot help but think we are reaping some of the sins we have sown in the past, especially when I see the decline of the number of baptisms," said Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla.

He called for Southern Baptist preachers who emphasize expository preaching, view the ministry as a calling rather than a profession, lead lives that are "spiritually consistent" and emphasize "doctrine, doctrine."

"We as Southern Baptists have so much for which we ought to be thankful," Elliff said. "God has taken a dinosaur by the tail and turned it around. God has caused a great ship to change course in the middle of the sea when it was adrift."

"While we are reaping, friends, we ought to be sowing as never before," Elliff said.

Executive Committee members dealt with several procedural motions referred by last summer's Southern Baptist Convention. In those actions, the Executive Committee:

- Declined to recommend changes

SBC to study link with BWA

NASHVILLE—At the request of Southern Baptist Convention President Tom Elliff, the chairman of the SBC Executive Committee has appointed a special committee to study the SBC's relationship with the Baptist World Alliance.

Elliff made the request during a speech to the Executive Committee Sept. 22. Executive Committee Chairman James Merritt named the study committee the next day.

"Over the years the SBC has enjoyed a positive and encouraging relationship with the Baptist World Alliance," Elliff said in a statement released through Baptist Press. "The BWA sometimes lends credibility to the Baptist witness in countries which might otherwise deny the opportunity for a significant presence. This is especially helpful for smaller Baptist conventions in developing countries or countries where Christian organizations are looked on with suspicion."

"Recently, however, questions have arisen regarding perceived changes in the mission, focus and doctrinal positions of the BWA," Elliff continued. "Since Southern Baptists give a significant amount to the BWA through our Cooperative Program (\$417,838 for the 1997-98 fiscal year), good stewardship requires that we be fully aware and in accord with their objectives, doctrinal positions and operational procedures."

Study committee members are Morris Chapman, president and chief executive of the Executive Committee, chairman; Jimmy Draper, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board; Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board; Elliff; and Joe Reynolds, Gary Smith and Bob Sorrell, all members of the Executive Committee.

in the way churches qualify for messengers to the annual meeting.

- Declined to limit criteria the SBC's committee on nominations can use to determine eligibility for leadership posts. The referred motion was prompted by the case of a Northern Kentucky layman who nearly was bumped from a nomination because his church allows members to give to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The committee on nominations for several years has adopted its own policies beyond those spelled out in the bylaws, including a policy that no one will be nominated whose church supports the Fellowship.

- Declined to recommend a change in a convention process that would have required every resolution submitted to a resolutions committee to be presented for debate by all messengers.

- Rejected another motion asking the convention not be scheduled im-

mediately following Father's Day, saying it could reduce the availability of meeting places. The convention is not scheduled to meet the week following Father's Day for the next five years, officials reported.

- Approved referred motions calling for more-readable messenger name tags and providing messengers additional information on the location of restaurants near SBC meeting sites.

- Approved a motion to consider New York City as a future meeting site.

A Cooperative Program work group tabled discussion on a referred motion that would create a new track in the SBC's unified budget. The new option would allow churches to send money directly to the Executive Committee to be split 50 percent with the SBC and 50 percent to a state entity designated by the church. The proposal will be considered at the Executive Committee's Feb. 16-18 meeting.

BAPTIST BITS

- **Alliance identifies with poor.** Directors of the Alliance of Baptists have proposed a new mission statement linking the group with concern for the poor and oppressed, ecumenical relations and the environment. Meeting Sept. 18-20 in Washington, the group's board of directors also voted to launch a monthly publication and a partnership with Baptists in Zimbabwe. The proposed new mission statement says the Alliance will make the worship of God primary in all gatherings, foster relationships with other people of faith, create places of refuge and renewal for those who are wounded or ignored by the church, side with those who are poor, pursue justice for those who are oppressed, care for the earth and work for peace.

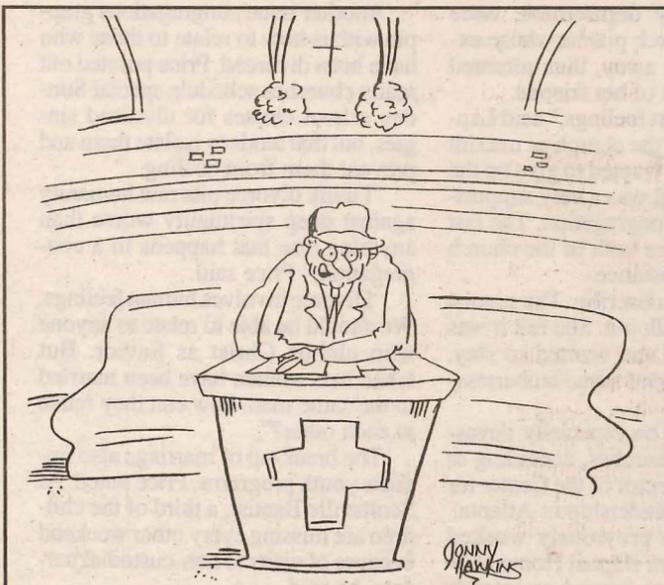
- **North Korea relief eyed.** Southern Baptists propose pumping up

to \$5 million into North Korea during the next several years to help devastated farmland bloom again. A long-range project being developed by the International Mission Board and Texas Baptists will be the focus of a survey trip scheduled to begin Oct. 21. North Korean officials have said they want to work with Southern Baptists partially because Southern Baptists promise only what they can do and then deliver on their promises, said Tom Williams, who leads IMB work in the Western Pacific.

- **Pastor nominated in Carolina.** James Howard Royston, a former North Carolina pastor, will be nominated by the executive director search committee to the Baptist State Convention's general board on Sept. 30, according to an announcement by Marion Lark, search committee

chairman. The nominee, a native of Johnson City, Tenn., has been pastor of 1,300-member Colonial Heights Baptist Church in nearby Kingsport since 1991.

- **Rains to NAMB.** Kenny Rains, former director of adults in missions for the Southern Baptist Convention's Brotherhood Commission, has accepted a position with the media and missions education group of the new North American Mission Board. Rains will become NAMB's manager of missions opportunities/events, with responsibilities for encouraging awareness of missions education and opportunities in Southern Baptist churches. He also will coordinate NAMB involvement in SBC mission education events such as World Missions Conferences and Jericho missions festivals.



"I have a cute little illustration to share with you about my barber yesterday as I was witnessing to him against his will."

Georgetown hunger project honors Perkins

GEORGETOWN—About \$12,000 could be raised to fight world hunger, if students at Georgetown College respond to an effort in memory of a Kentucky missionary kid who died Easter Sunday.

The "Memorial Assault on World Hunger" honors the memory of Ben Perkins, the 16-year-old son of missionaries Ken and Beth Perkins. Ben Perkins died of an asthma attack March 30 in Kenya.

The Perkins family served as missionaries-in-residence at Georgetown College during their previous furlough and recently returned to Georgetown in the same capacity on another furlough.

Organizers of the project have distributed rice bowl banks to 1,400 students at the Baptist college. Students have been asked to put in a dime a day through the end of November, which would total about \$9 per bank.

With full participation, the contributions should amount to more than \$12,000. The money collected will be sent in the name of Ben Perkins to the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board to be used for world hunger relief.

"The idea for this memorial came when Beth and Ken requested contributions to the SBC hunger fund in lieu of flowers at Ben's death," said Ken Holden, pastor of Georgetown Baptist Church, which is co-sponsoring the event with Georgetown College campus ministries. "The Perkinses have spent many years overseas ministering to people in famine-stricken areas."

Holden added that the use of small rice bowl banks for projects of this kind was started in this country about 20 years ago. The bowls signify that a small portion of rice is all that many people around the world have to eat each day. The youth group at Georgetown Baptist Church purchased the banks at a cost of \$700. Becky Botkin, an employee of the college, is youth minister at the church.

"Beth and I are thrilled that this tribute to Ben is taking place, and he would be pleased as well," said Ken Perkins. "Especially since it will benefit such a worthy cause. We have spent 14 years in Africa, including the last six in the horn countries, where the need for food and other supplies is overwhelming. Ben and our other two sons were very supportive of our work. They accompanied us on treks into the bush and when trips were too dangerous, they kept things running smoothly at home."

Ben and Beth Perkins both are Georgetown College graduates.

Trisler leaving helm of Kentucky WMU

By Mark Wingfield
Editor

Kay Trisler has announced her resignation as executive director of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, effective Nov. 1.

"This is my decision," she said. "The bottom line is I miss hands-on ministry."

Trisler said she intends to pursue some type of part-time vocational ministry in Kentucky and is interested in helping launch one of WMU's newest programs, Christian Women's Job Corps.

Kentucky WMU President Peggy Hicks said Brenda Price, currently WMU associate for Mission Friends and Girls in Action, will serve as interim executive director until Trisler's successor is found. Hicks said she hopes to name a search committee this week.

Trisler joined the Kentucky WMU staff in November 1995. She succeeded Dee Gilliland, who retired after 11 years as executive director.

Trisler's tenure at the helm has been marked by numerous changes

and challenges, many of which were in the wings before she came on board.

"She's taken us through a period of great transition, with change in many things: our relationship with the convention, move to a new building, adding new staff, all during a time when national WMU has gone through changes too," Hicks said. "She has done a wonderful job for us and has prepared us for the future."

Both Hicks and Trisler noted that Trisler had made a commitment to serve at least two years as executive director.

"Just as I knew that without a doubt this was where the Lord was leading me to serve when I accepted this position, I now know that it is time for me to leave," Trisler wrote in a letter to the WMU executive board and staff.

"With every assurance, I can tell you that administratively we are in good shape," she added.

Hicks concurred: "She has done an excellent job administratively, getting things in shape. We are strong and moving on. She came in and has done

what I feel is one of her strong commitments: to move us on."

In her letter, Trisler noted several challenges that face WMU.

"Members of WMU who are my age (55) and older have difficulty with the changes that are taking place in the church today," she wrote. "Leaders are faced with the challenge of pleasing those who want WMU 'as usual' and trying to enlist those younger women who will not be a part because they like new and different ways of doing missions."

"Change comes slowly in our organization, but if we do not change some of the ways we do things, the years ahead will be very difficult. Long meetings, slow decision-making processes and trying to be all things to all people will continue to deter what we could be doing in missions."

Hicks said she hopes the search committee will have a recommendation for Trisler's successor as early as April, "but we're not going to rush into it." The WMU executive director is elected by the WMU executive board upon recommendation by the search committee.



Kay Trisler

Drakesboro leaves Muhlenberg Association

By Mark Wingfield
Editor

DRAKESBORO—Faced with an ultimatum to come in line with "the position of the association" on women's ordination or be kicked out, First Baptist Church of Drakesboro voted Sept. 24 to remove itself from Muhlenberg County Baptist Association.

Pastor David Flack said the church voted by a 83 percent to 17 percent majority to leave the association.

The vote came one month after the association in its annual meeting adopted a motion to remove the name of Angie Flack from its Book of Reports under a listing of ordained ministers other than pastors. The association also voted to place the Drakesboro church under watchcare status for one year, during which time it could come in line with the association's unwritten policy against the ordination of women or be expelled from the association.

Angie Flack is an ordained pastoral counselor and a member of the

Drakesboro church, although the church did not ordain her and she holds no position with the church. Her husband is the church's pastor.

"The church felt it was an issue of integrity, with the action the association took at the annual meeting," David Flack explained. "We did not feel we could remain a part of a group that conducted business in that manner, specifically altering the record of minutes within the association."

"We reported Angie's ordination in good faith on our annual profile," he added. "The association should in good faith report that. An alteration of our church record speaks of the integrity of what the association is willing to do."

The Aug. 28 action by the association brought to a climax a controversy that had been brewing for nearly a year, since Angie Flack's name had been listed in the association's 1996 Book of Reports.

Another church, Second Baptist Church of Greenville, already has left the association in protest of the way

the association has treated Angie Flack and other women. The association does not allow women to serve as messengers or hold seats on the executive board.

David Flack said he does not know whether the Drakesboro church will seek affiliation with another association. "That's an option we're open to, but we have no immediate plans."

Rather than igniting controversy within the Drakesboro congregation, the challenge from the association actually has been an opportunity for growth, he reported.

"It has been an opportunity for the church to examine where it stands on issues of church autonomy and the priesthood of the believer, some of the very basic Baptist principles, and affirm the Baptist heritage that we come from. That has really guided us in the direction of becoming much more comfortable with stating who we are."

"Hopefully we can move into our community offering a place of worship that would be appealing to many people," he said.

BLUEGRASS BURGEOO

■ **Ralph Curry dies.** Ralph Curry, professor emeritus of English at Georgetown College, died Sept. 23 in Georgetown. He was 73. Funeral services were held Sept. 26 at Georgetown Baptist Church.

■ **Renovare' conference set.** A Renovare' conference with author Richard Foster is scheduled for St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville Nov. 7-8. Foster is author of six books, including "Celebration of Discipline" and "Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home." For registration information, call the church at (502) 896-8882.

■ **Children blessed.** Kentucky Baptist

Women in Ministry had a baby blessing at its annual retreat this year. Four women at the retreat gave birth or adopted children during the past year. Each mother received a servant's towel with messages from all who were present, and the children received blessings baskets with prayers of hope and encouragement. Mothers and children honored were Sherry McGlaughlin and Johnna, Micki Davis Robison and Jeremy, Terri Springer and Sherman, and Mary Royals Driskill and John Mark.

■ **Ministers' Wives Fellowship.** This year's annual meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Ministers' Wives Fellowship will feature a dinner theater format with an

inspirational message and entertainment during the meal. The theme for the Nov. 11 dinner is "Hello, Lord! It's Me Again." Tickets are \$7 if ordered prior to Nov. 7 by writing to Debbie Overton, 12235 Bordeaux Dr., Lexington, Ky. 40504.

■ **Georgetown hosts prospects.** High school juniors and seniors and their parents are invited to visit Georgetown College Oct. 4. The annual VIP Day begins at 9 a.m. and concludes at 1:30 p.m. Visitors also may attend the 1:30 p.m. football game between Georgetown and Mississippi College. A similar event will be held Nov. 1. For information on either day's activities, call (800) 788-9985.

OPINION

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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Communion is limited

The response of Dan Lane (Sept. 16, page 4) to your well-stated editorial concerning babies and Communion (Sept. 2, page 5) is disturbing, especially coming from a Baptist pastor.

If Lane finds placing the requirement of baptism as a prerequisite to participation in Communion to be exclusive, he is correct. It is indeed exclusive, and necessarily so.

Upon re-reading the text of the Great Commission it should be understood that there is a clear order: 1) to make disciples (salvation), 2) to baptize those disciples (entrance into the local church), and 3) to teach them to observe all things that Christ commanded (which would include Communion).

I agree with Lane that to teach this exclusive order suggests that those who have not been properly baptized into a local New Testament church are, in a sense, outside the family (the church family). Again, this is in accordance with God's word.

Next, while there is not room in this letter to fully debunk the recurring myth that Lane calls the "semi-doctrine" of the age of accountability, it is sufficient to say that the teaching coming from our Baptist pulpits had better be fully founded upon biblical doctrine and not on some man-made, humanistic apologetic.

Finally, Lane states that "If I err, I err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion." Here we may be able to see into the heart of what some have called the greatest heresy of the modern church: inclusivism. The gospel is indeed exclusive, as is membership in the local church. Somewhere during the past 30 years or so, Baptists have strayed from a "Thus saith the Lord" theology to an "It only seems fair to me" or a "Well, I think ..." ideology.

*Jonathan G. McGuire
Lexington*

Did he or didn't he?

An abundance of unresolved issues face Baptists today. For example, one that particularly annoys me is whether or not Elijah Craig really invented the process of distilling bourbon whiskey.

What makes this question so intriguing is that Craig was a minister of the gospel, a Baptist and founder of Georgetown College. All my life, I have had members of other denominations and even some good Baptists with a sly wink of the eye defend alcoholic beverages with, "A Baptist preacher invented bourbon, didn't he?" In those last two words lies the hitch—did he or didn't he?

All of us seem to relish the perpetuation of this fact or myth. The fact of the matter is, no one really knows for sure. He may have, or he might not have.

Craig was born in Virginia in 1743 and died in 1808. Many others distilled this type of whiskey, and it was first advertised in 1821

in Bourbon County. We know Craig distilled it, but he also made rope from hemp. Do you for a minute think he (wink, wink) might have developed a more unique way of using hemp?

He was involved in many church controversies. Was he a "rabble-rouser"? He was a virtuous man, but he died poor. Did he die poor because he was a Baptist preacher, or because he invented bourbon whiskey? He died at age 65. Was he an alcoholic perhaps? He had two families—what happened to his first wife? Why isn't there an "Elijah Craig Bourbon Whiskey" on the market? What happened to the money or property he owned after he laid out Lebanon (later Georgetown) if he died poor?

To stop all this eye-winking and facetious remarks, someone needs to search out the truth. Baptists are great proponents of the truth, and the truth will set us Baptists free from the snide remarks that have been repeated for at least a half-century of my life.

*Oscar Davidson
Somerset*

Keep Commandments

Alabama Circuit Court Judge Roy Moore means well, but rather than displaying the Ten Commandments engraved in pinewood in the courtroom or anyplace else, God wills that the Commandments be engraved on our hearts.

Superficial display of the Ten Commandments for show is not pleasing to God. Obeying the Commandments is to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. That is what is required of all of us and is what pleases God. Obeying the Commandments is to love God with all our heart, mind and soul and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Pure and genuine religion involves sharing our food with the hungry, housing the homeless poor and giving clothes to those who have nothing to wear. It involved taking care of suffering orphans, widows and our own relatives. It is seeing that oppression is ended and justice is done. It is keeping oneself from being corrupted by the world. One can feel good about displaying the Ten Commandments engraved in stone, but fail to practice pure and genuine religion which emanates from the heart.

The rich young ruler, who had an encounter with Jesus Christ, embraced outward forms of religion. He said he kept all the Commandments, but couldn't enter the Kingdom, because he was unwilling to share his wealth with the poor. He evidently did not understand the meaning of the first Commandment; love of money was first in his life, his god.

Fifty years ago, the Ten Commandments were displayed on the walls of every classroom of my elementary school. What really influenced my life then was the daily, living example of one who practiced as well as humanly possible Command-

ment-embodied pure and genuine religion. That was my minister father.

*Paul L. Whiteley Sr.
Louisville*

Go to Russia

Recently I was blessed to go to Russia on a construction/evangelism team, as part of our Kentucky/Russia Baptist partnership. The experience was exciting to say the least.

During this trip Steve Cable (Big Bone Baptist), Sherry Burkhart (Fort Mitchell Baptist), Billie Henson and Michelle Wright (Florence Baptist), Danny Black (Grassy Run Baptist), Jerry Thornton (Crittenden Baptist), Margaret Day (First Baptist, Russellville), and I stood with Larry and Joy Lindsey, Bob and Nancy Walden (Southern Baptist missionaries to Russia), in the middle of Red Square, Moscow. We prayed, sang hymns and praise songs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and then we passed out gospel tracts.

Later in the week we proceeded to take a six-hour bus ride to Udomyla, where we would help our brothers and sisters build their church building. We were blessed to bring \$6,400 with us to help them, but they need more. In fact, they need an estimated \$72,000 more to finish.

The Baptist church in Udomyla is comprised of a fervent, loving group of believers. They have about 45 members in their congregation and they are the only organized church in their city. (About 40,000 people.) I implore Kentucky Baptists not to lose interest in the Lord's work in Russia.

*Gary N. Wilson
Alexandria*

Calvinist sayings

People get so fired up about the ever-divisive Calvinist issue that I decided to lighten things up a bit with these top 11 sayings of Calvinists:

11. Muslim to Calvinist pastor: "You have plagiarized the Koran!"

10. Officer to soldiers: "OK, all the elect get on the front lines—we want the damned to enjoy life on earth a little longer."

9. Husband to wife: "Let's not have children lest we gamble having a non-elect child."

8. Calvinist lost person: "I really wish I could be saved but it just wasn't meant to be."

7. Calvinist saved person: "Since this election happened without my vote, like it or not I'm heaven bound."

6. Lost person pastor wannabe: "If I were one of the elect, I'd probably be called into the ministry."

5. Satan to his demons: "Being the devil is super easy since God sends us people automatically."

4. Mr. Budget to finance committee: "Since God has already made up his mind, let's save a bunch of money and defund missions."

3. Member to pastor: "Since you've convinced me I am one of the elect, I have decided not to attend worship or tithe anymore."

2. Pastor to member: "My work is completely done. See you guys at the golf course."

1. Announcement in bulletin: "Don't forget puppet practice tonight."

*Paul Gunn
Owensboro*

CHILDREN

How should I select a day care center?

By Jewell Nelson

Q. Can you give me guidelines on how to select a day care?

A. Visit day care centers. Observe. Is the center clean, fresh-smelling and pleasant?

Listen.

How are teachers relating to children? Teachers who use soft voices with positive guidance are working on quality.



Ask questions. Is the center licensed by the state? What is the background and experience of the director and teachers? Are they trained in CPR and first aid? Are they in a continuing early childhood educational program? (Kentucky requires at least 12 additional educational hours a year.) Is the teacher/child ratio adequate? How many children would be in the room with your child? How many teachers?

Ask for a copy of the center's policies. This should include the philosophy of the center and guidelines to help teachers and parents work together in meeting needs of the child. Guidelines for safety in the building and outdoors should be in writing and obeyed.

Security measures must protect your child. The only adults allowed to pick up a child must be approved, in writing, by the child's parent or guardian.

Hygiene practices must be adequate enough to protect against AIDS and other contagious diseases.

A center that posts its latest state inspection is a center to consider. If it is not posted, feel free to ask to see the latest inspection report made by the state.

Does the center use an age-appropriate curriculum that encourages choices of activities and creativity (no color sheets or workbooks, please)? Do story time, snack time and nap time fit into the schedule? Television sets in the rooms may tell you that videos are more important than personal interaction and teaching; beware.

The last question: Would I feel comfortable leaving my child here?

For detailed information and referral agencies, call Child Care Aware at (800) 424-2246.

Jewell Nelson is former 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.

HE SAID/SHE SAID

When your dad starts dating, you wonder who's the parent

SHESAI



Alison Wingfield

We are experiencing role reversal in my family. I have become the parent and my dad the teenager.

He has started dating for the first time in 40 years.

I knew this day might come. It is yet another painful adjustment and acknowledgment that life has to go on—even after your mother dies.

But I didn't realize how I would feel. Especially when my dad met someone special almost right away.

My dad and I are very close, so he called and told me all about this woman and how special and wonderful she was and what a great time he was having.

On the one hand, I was happy for him. On the other hand, I was sad, jealous and scared all at the same time.

Needless to say, I was not easy to live with during this time. (Editor's note: She's really telling the truth here.)

And my dad, being a male and therefore from Mars, had no idea how great an impact this was having on me. The more he sang her praises, the worse I felt. And believe me, whenever he called, all he talked about was Connie. As a female, I couldn't help but feel threatened by this paragon of virtues.

To understand some of my trepidation about this whole matter, you have to understand my dad. This is a man who takes six months to buy a toaster, because he has to check Consumer Reports and research all the prices.

This same man was obviously in love and practically giddy after dating this woman less than a month.

Despite being from Mars, Daddy finally clued in that I was less than enthusiastic, and we have had several helpful heart-to-hearts that have gone a long way to helping me adjust and understand.

If this is a preview of how Luke and Garrett are going to be when they start dating, I had better start preparing myself now. Of course, they probably won't tell me anything about what's going on, so I'll just be clueless.

Considering how I've handled this situation, maybe the less I know, the better off I'll be.

HESAI



Mark Wingfield

I've heard about the so-called "Sandwich Generation," middle-aged adults who are squeezed between caring for children at home and aging parents. That's not our problem at all.

We're having to keep up with our children and my father-in-law, who suddenly appears more like a teenager than a retiree. We can't keep pace with either side.

The most noticeable change with Alison's dad is his phone-calling pattern.

Ever since Alison's mother died, we've talked with him several times a week, for an hour minimum each time. Now we do good to find him at home, and the conversations are much shorter because he's either just come in from going somewhere with Connie or is preparing to go somewhere with Connie. His schedule is worse than ours.

It's amazing what energy love generates.

While we look forward to meeting Connie and are delighted that Alison's dad has found so much joy after all the pain of battling a spouse's cancer, the hardest thing for us is coping with one more change. The sudden potential of becoming part of a blended family makes my head spin.

This all reminds me of the counsel of the author of Ecclesiastes, that there is a time and a season for everything: A time to be born and a time to die; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance.

Maybe we just needed some advance warning that the seasons were going to change so fast.

Habits of healthy Kentucky churches

For the past 18 months, the Western Recorder has been featuring profiles of healthy Kentucky Baptist churches. We've written about churches large and small in size, rural and urban in location, conservative and moderate in theology, old and relatively young in age, wealthy and not-so-wealthy in finances.

All this has been leading up to the Kentucky Baptist Convention's first-ever Church Health Summit, to be held Oct. 10-11 in Bowling Green.

The focus of this summit will not be merely on church growth, but on church health. And there is a difference. Believe it or not, a church can be growing and not be healthy. And a church can be healthy without experiencing record-setting numerical growth. Churches may grow in ability to make disciples or do ministry, for example.

The bottom-line, of course, is that healthy churches do grow. The Church Health Summit will use data from an extensive statewide research project to demonstrate just what makes a church healthy and thus leads to growth.

The data, compiled by Vernon Cole and Cynthia Woolever, is compelling and helpful. Leaders from every KBC church should attend the conference to hear about this important research and learn about God's movement across our state.

Beyond the empirical research, what we've attempted to do in the Recorder is flesh out the raw data by telling the stories of real churches. You'll find another in this series beginning on page 1 of this week's paper.

Throughout these stories of Kentucky churches, several common themes have emerged about healthy churches in our state:

■ *They are Spirit-led and Spirit-filled.* Certainly

every Baptist church claims to be Spirit-led, but there appears to be a distinction between the average church and churches where supernatural things happen and are recognized as such. This is nothing that can be manufactured or learned from reading a church-growth book. It is a mystery, and that's what makes it unique.

■ *They engage in serious prayer.* Again, most Baptist churches pray. But there is a distinction between routine, rote prayer and the kind of earnest, gut-wrenching, pleading

prayer that penetrates healthy churches. Healthy churches make a habit of intensive prayer, both privately and corporately.

■ *They are filled with enthusiasm.* Healthy churches are not dull. They don't all sing the same kind of music, but whatever music they do sing, they sing with gusto. Their worship times are exciting, energetic and filled with enthusiasm. Worshipers leave with a sense of hope and a desire to come back to church again for another dose.

■ *They offer a personal touch.* Not only are these churches friendly, they put feet and hands to their smiles. They reach out and touch those outside the fold as well as those inside the fold. They genuinely care about other people and make ministry a priority.

■ *They desire to be healthy.* This may sound overly simplistic, but it isn't. Too many churches, like some people, really enjoy bad health. Healthy churches focus on what makes them healthy. They don't brush problems under the rug; they deal with them and move on rather than letting the trials of life consume them.

These observations are only the tip of the iceberg. If you want the full story, attend the Church Health Summit. Your church could be better for it.

— Mark Wingfield

EDITORIAL

Kept by grace

By Carey Newman

As we walked up the 15th fairway, my friend began to tell me about a real fear of his. "I have been a Christian since my teenage years. In all that time I never doubted my salvation. Only recently has any uncertainty crept into my mind."

We finally found my ball and I played. I asked him what he meant. He answered: "The more I honestly and frankly evaluate how I fail at being a Christian, the more I realize just what a perilous position I'm in. I read in the Bible about 'falling away' from God and I fear that is exactly what I do sometimes. How can I be sure that I'm really saved when I still sin?"

We must admit there are some texts which suggest a Christian could lose salvation. Several in Hebrews jump to mind; but there are others. Paul can even wonder out loud if some of his converts had experienced so many things "in vain." Despite these, there are good reasons why Christians can overwhelmingly embrace the eternal security of the believer.

The first reason centers in the cross and resurrection. Just as the death and resurrection are unrepeatable, unique events, so too our experience of these events is unique and unrepeatable. That is to say, because Jesus only lived and died once, so our conversion only occurs once. Christians can no more be re-converted than Jesus can be re-crucified. (This is really the argument of the Book of Hebrews.)

A second reason for confidence can be seen in the way in which the New Testament describes the work of the Holy Spirit. In and through our conversion the Holy Spirit becomes part of us and we become part of the Spirit. Conversion is thus incorporation and participation. It would take a power equal to or greater than the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit to remove us once again—and there is no such power.

But the greatest reason for confidence is God himself, his stable, unchanging and trustworthy character.

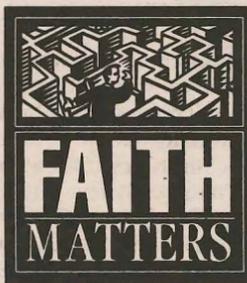
Each day Savannah (our 2-year-old) goes through a ritual. As she gets

out of bed, she surveys her room (like queen of her kingdom) and selects one of her toys. This toy then becomes what Leanne and I fondly refer to as the "TOC" (Toy of Choice). No matter where Savannah goes during the day—upstairs, downstairs, the backyard or into the car—this privileged toy accompanies her.

Unlike many children who latch on to one toy, Savannah is very democratic: yesterday it was Barney; today it is a Dr. Suess book; tomorrow it may be her little fire truck. Leanne and I have often pondered the emotional trauma Savannah's toys must experience at the moment of selection. Their destiny is determined by the whimsy of a 2-year-old's wishes.

The greatest reason to reject the prospect of "falling from grace" is that it cuts against the character of God. The God of the Bible is not fickle or capricious. God is sure and faithful; and thus when God promises to complete what he has started in us, that is exactly what he will do. Behind our experience of the Spirit and behind the death and resurrection stands God. Our salvation is as sure as he is—no more, no less.

Despite the seriousness of sin and reality of honest doubts, I told my friend to sleep well, for nothing can separate us from the love of God which we have experienced in Christ.



Sider discusses updated views on wealth and hunger

"Materialism and consumerism drive us into a rat race where we destroy ourselves, neglect our families, ruin the environment and neglect the poor."
Ron Sider

Editor's note: Two weeks ago, Wayne Hager reviewed the revised edition of "Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger," by Ron Sider. The following interview with Sider is a follow-up to that review.

ST. DAVID'S, Pa. (RNS)—Christian activist Ron Sider's first book, published two decades ago, has sold nearly 350,000 copies, a rare accomplishment for a title that's not an inspirational novel or a "how-to" guide on losing pounds or finding wealth.

In fact, "Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger," which recently was re-released in a revised 20th anniversary edition, stirred a socially complacent evangelical world with its serious and sometimes disturbing examination of American affluence and consumerism in light of biblical teachings on care for the poor.

An ordained minister in both the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ denominations, Sider has been a professor of theology and culture at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in St. David's, Pa., since 1978. But he's not just a thinker; he's also an activist—founder and president of Philadelphia-based Evangelicals for Social Action.

Sider is one of the driving forces behind Call to Renewal, an alternative faith-based voice to the Religious Right.

In a recent interview, Sider spoke of how he and the world have changed since "Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger" was first published.

Q: How much does a person have

to earn, spend or own to be rich?

A: Wealth and poverty are relative. We would all agree that there are some very poor people in this country, but they have a lot more to live on than half of the world's people, who live on less than \$2 a day, according to the World Bank.

Q: Don't certain Bible passages call riches a blessing from God?

A: If we live the way God wants us to, there's the real likelihood we will have a sufficiency of the good Earth's bounty. But there are also sinful oppressors around, who take people's land and don't allow them to earn the resources they need to make their way. So being poor doesn't mean one has been sinful or disobedient.

The Bible does say God rewards obedience with material abundance. But there are more verses which say people are rich because they have oppressed others.

Q: What's so bad about riches anyway?

A: The most serious problem is a growing materialism and consumerism. North Americans are enormously wealthy. Ours is one of the richest societies on Earth. And we are more and more seduced by that, and by the constant advertising that tells us we get joy and fulfillment through more and more things. That's fundamentally unbiblical, it's contrary to every major world religion, and it flatly contradicts Jesus, who made it very clear

that joy and fulfillment come through right relationships with God, then right relationships with our neighbors and with the Earth.

Materialism and consumerism drive us into a rat race where we destroy ourselves, neglect our families, ruin the environment and neglect the poor.

For example, the giving patterns of American church members have been in a steady decline since 1969, even though there's been a steady increase in our income during the same time.

Q: What's changed in the world—and in your thinking—about these issues in the past 20 years?

A: As for the world, there's good news and bad

news. Fewer people are chronically malnourished today, down to 20 percent of the world's population, and health and immunization programs have wiped out some diseases. But we've still got almost a quarter of the world's people living on a dollar a day.

As for me, I know more about economics now. And I am more clear in this edition of the book that I favor free-market economies over any other alternatives. I don't think the Bible specifically prescribes democracy or market economies, but I do think biblical principles, along with careful analysis of our world, pushes us toward these things.

Also, the first edition of the book

stressed total equality of income more than I would today. Every person should have equality of economic opportunity, but the fact that we're free and make choices means that some will have more and some will have less. Still, at least a quarter of the world's people have virtually no capital, and another quarter have very little. The richest 20 percent of the world's people have the vast majority of capital, and the bottom 60 percent have very little.

Q: On a personal level, what do you and your family do to live a simpler lifestyle?

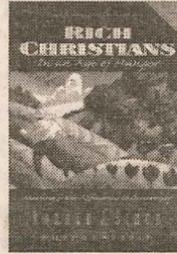
A: We try to follow the graduated tithe, a practice described in the book, which says the more you make, the higher percentage you give away. We don't always succeed, but we've been trying to give away a third of our income.

Q: Can a Christian own a BMW?

A: This Christian could not. I'll let other people wrestle with that for themselves, although I suggest they answer that question by carefully looking at what the Bible says about the poor.

Q: Any closing thoughts?

A: Christians in general and evangelical Christians in part in this country really face a fundamental question: What do we want to be known for? Do we want to be known for going first class and having fancy churches? Or do we want to be known as a voice for the poor and needy? And is there any question what Jesus would recommend?



The Power of the Call. Henry Blackaby and Henry Brandt. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997. 260 pages. \$19.99 ♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

Stress, burnout, forced terminations, broken families, moral failure, depression and general lack of effectiveness—all of these words or phrases describe the situation far too many pastors (and their congregations) face.

Henry Blackaby, co-author of "Experiencing God," and Henry Brandt, counselor and author, observe that pastors who face the loss of joy in their ministry and the brokenness of lost dreams (or jobs), want to know how they got into their current crisis and what they can do to recover their sense of joy in life and ministry.

This book is written with two audiences in mind. For those walking through the dark valley of discouragement and lost hope, Blackaby and Brandt offer a blunt yet compassionate diagnosis of the factors which lead down that path. At the same time, they offer a prescription for getting back on track.

For those who have yet to face self-doubt and loss of direction, they offer the challenge to remember and nurture the foundation for all ministry. They advise both groups to recall the need for a growing, intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Overall the presentation gets to the basics of what it means to be a Christian and a pastor. It challenges the reader to take seriously his or her role

as one responsible to lead people to Jesus. The book suffers from choppy writing and uneven editing. Much of the real punch is lost by sloppy writing. *Jim Holladay*

Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church. Danny Morris & Charles Olsen. Alban Institute, 1997. 144 pages. \$11.95. ♦♦♦♦

Why is God strangely absent from the decision-making processes of the local church? Sure, we begin most committee or business meetings with prayer, but why do we leave most church meetings feeling that most of them "do not connect with the deeper meanings of life and faith?"

Morris and Olsen argue that most of us actually fear getting too close to God, or allowing God to get too close to our work. At heart, we are afraid "God will only make life difficult."

Yet the church is called to yearn for God's will to be done. Morris and Olsen challenge the church to remember that members are called to be God's primary instrument through which his will is executed. Consequently, "attending meetings should involve doing worshipful work, which is both the character and method of discernment."

The authors define discernment as a process of seeing reality from God's perspective. After defining basic terms, they turn to describing, in practical terms, a process for engaging in

spiritual discernment.

In this brief treatment of an unfamiliar decision-making process, Morris and Olsen do an excellent job of defining terms, setting out the rationale for changing the way we do business and outlining in understandable terms a process for what they propose. *Jim Holladay*

Looking ahead to Christmas: With less than three months until Dec. 25, retailers soon will turn their attention to items for Christmas shoppers. It is not too early to start thinking about books you may want to give and make sure they are available. Checking with your local book store now, and ordering if necessary, can save you a lot of panic in November and December.

The following books are not new this year. In fact, one is a cloth edition of a nearly 40-year-old book. Both books, however, are worth your consideration, along with thousands of others.

The Angel Doll: A Christmas Story. Jerry Bledsoe. Down Home Press (P.O. Box 4126, Asheboro, N.C., 27204), 1996. 125 pages. \$14.95. ♦♦♦♦

The story is simple and sentimental and just the kind that becomes a part of family traditions at Christmas. Two boys, in Thomasville, N.C., are thinking about the gifts they might possibly receive at Christmas. Set in the early 1950s, the sister of one of the boys is slowly dying of polio and

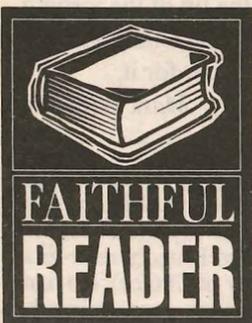
has only one request for Christmas—an angel doll.

No one in Thomasville ever has seen such a doll and the boys set out to find one for Sandy before Christmas. As the boys search for the doll, and even find a way to get one, they find out what real love is all about. The plot has no really surprising turns: everyone but the characters can see where the story is going. Nevertheless, the short story is beautifully written and will aid the reader in getting into the Christmas spirit. *Wayne Hager*

Stories of Christmas Carols. Ernest K. Emurian. Baker Book House, 1996. \$12.99. 149 pages. ♦♦♦♦

First published in 1958, this collection of background information on the most popular carols is now available as a cloth gift book. The stories of some carols, such as "Silent Night," have been told many times, and sometimes, in different ways. Other carol stories will be new. Either way, attaching a story to the carol somehow enhances the beauty of the carol. The lyrics of each of the 12 carols follow the story.

Pastors, teachers and others can use the book for illustrative material. Those who lead the singing of carols may be interested in sharing background information about carols as they are sung in the congregation. The stories can be read privately to add to one's own observance of the Christmas season. *Wayne Hager*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Midlane Park Baptist Church in Louisville, and Jim Holladay, pastor of Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville. Holladay and Hager welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: docholladay@juno.com or jwhager@juno.com

Congress hears case of bankrupt tithers

WASHINGTON (RNS)—It's not about money, it's a matter of principle, maintains Pastor Stephen Goold, who unsuccessfully battled the courts and creditors for the right to keep thousands of dollars in donations from a bankrupt, church-going couple.

Goold's church, Crystal Evangelical Free Church in New Hope, Minn., spent \$280,000 in legal fees in its effort to stave off the couple's creditors and retain more than \$13,500 in donations from bankrupt Bruce and Nancy Young, the pastor told a Senate panel committee Sept. 23.

Goold's legal battle at the Supreme Court level has failed. Although the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled

in favor of Crystal Evangelical in 1996, the Supreme Court overturned the lower court's decision after striking down the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act on which the 8th Circuit relied for its ruling.

The church subsequently was told by the court to return all the money the Youngs donated before they declared bankruptcy.

Goold now has turned to Congress. He wants Congress to pass legislation preventing creditors from seizing donations those in debt give to the church.

Arguing that tithing is a spiritual duty, Goold told the Senate Judiciary Committee that bankruptcy law "must

be rewritten because the Scriptures won't be" rewritten.

The Youngs said they were observing the Old Testament practice of tithing, by giving 10 percent of the gross earnings from their electrical contracting business.

According to legal scholars, the Minnesota case represents the first time creditors were successful in getting a bankruptcy judge to let them seize a church contribution. Opponents of the bankruptcy reform legislation, which is being crafted by Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, say it will encourage debtors to give their money away rather than pay their creditors.

Another church loses tithes of bankrupt man

BAYTOWN, Texas (ABP)—A state judge in Texas has ruled a Baptist congregation must relinquish tithes contributed by a church member who filed for bankruptcy.

Judge Tom Sullivan of Harris County Civil Court ruled that Cedar Bayou Baptist church in Baytown must turn over four years of tithes donated by church member Leland Collins to a creditor.

Cedar Bayou Church has voted to appeal the ruling, which awarded creditor Bill Gregory \$27,687—the amount Collins gave the church from Oct. 15, 1988, to Oct. 13, 1992—plus interest.

Gregory's company, Gregory-Edwards Inc., sued Collins and two other former employees in 1990, claiming they had been overpaid by \$90,000.

Gregory-Edwards won that case, and Collins declared bankruptcy to protect personal assets including his home, vehicle and retirement ac-

counts. The bankruptcy case was settled in 1994.

In June 1994, Gregory-Edwards sued Cedar Bayou Church for the tithes Collins contributed during the period he owed money to the firm.

The judge's ruling hinged on the contention that Collins made his contributions to the church "without receiving a reasonably equivalent value in exchange."

The church turned down several offers to settle the case, because a settlement would have violated the congregation's convictions regarding church-state separation, Pastor Richard Steel said.

"This case is not about bankruptcy," Steel contended. "The case is about religious liberty, about the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

"If a court can declare that a church member does not receive any 'reasonably equivalent value' for his tithes to his church, then the court is defining

how one can practice his religious faith and oversteps its dominion in the realm of that relationship between church and state.

"No court has the right to define one's practice of religion and his attendant gifts in support of his religious faith," Steel said.

Collins' gifts to the church were not fraudulent and not intended to shelter money from Gregory, Steel contended.

Collins "has been a tither since he's been a member of this church—40 years or more," he said.

For his part, Gregory insisted the case is about fairness, noting Collins owed him the money before the bankruptcy petition was filed.

"The money he paid to the church was my money, not his money," Gregory said. "If someone had taken a pistol and robbed me and donated the money to the church, would the church have to return the money? Yes."

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Charitable giving bill introduced.** A bipartisan group of House members has introduced legislation that would expand the tax deduction for charitable contributions to all taxpayers—not just those who itemize their tax returns. Under the bill, non-itemizers would be allowed to deduct 50 percent of their annual charitable contributions over \$500 each year. According to a study by Price Waterhouse, the bill—the Charitable Giving Relief Act—would increase charitable giving by approximately \$2.7 billion a year and would spur \$16.5 billion in charitable contributions between 1998 and 2002.

■ **\$1.9 million given for theological research.** The Henry Luce Foundation has awarded a grant of \$1.9 million to the Association of Theological Schools to continue the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology program to nurture scholarship deemed to shape theological education, church life and the broader society into the next century. Under the grant, seven theological scholars at ATS member schools will be selected for 12-month fellowships in specific areas of study.

■ **New Era founder sentenced.** John Bennett Jr., whose Foundation for New Era Philanthropy turned out to be a fraud, was sentenced Sept. 22 to 12 years in prison in the biggest charity swindle in the nation's history. Bennett, 60, tearfully reading a 15-minute statement, accepted blame for his deeds, but reiterated his contention that he was delusional at the time and that he did not intend to defraud anyone. Bennett will not get a chance for parole but can move to a halfway house after serving 11 years. In all, New Era took \$354 million from 500 non-profit organizations, including more than 190 evangelical Christian ministries.

■ **Singer Rich Mullins dies.** Contemporary Christian singer Rich Mullins died Sept. 19 in an automobile accident. Mullins, 41, was run over and killed by a tractor-trailer after being thrown from a sports utility vehicle that went out of control near Lostant, Ill. The accident occurred as Mullins and his drummer, Mitch McVicker, were driving to a benefit concert in Wichita, Kan., scheduled for Sept. 20, the Associated Press reported. Mullins' biggest hit was "Awesome God," which he recorded in 1988 and has been sung in churches across America. Other chart-topping songs included "Sometimes by Step," "If I Stand," "Let Mercy Lead" and "While the Nations Rage."

■ **Senate OKs religious workers visa bill.** The Senate has approved a measure that would make permanent a provision in the U.S. immigration law allowing foreign religious workers to come to the country to engage in religious and charitable activities. The bill, passed by voice vote Sept. 18, must still be approved by the House. Sen. Spencer Abraham, R-Mich., said at a hearing he was prompted to introduce the legislation because of a letter from Mother Teresa shortly before her death asking him to "Please, help us and our poor by extending the law."

■ **Retailers unharmed by Bible controversy.** A majority of Christian booksellers report a recent squabble over an inclusive-language Bible had little or no impact on Bible sales, according to a new survey. Of the nearly 140 selected retailers surveyed by the Christian Booksellers Association, 97 percent said Bible sales remained steady. In fact, nearly 40 percent of retailers reported Bible sales were up or have remained the same.



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CHURCHES

Explanation of church turnaround: 'It's a Jesus thing'

By Mark Wingfield
Editor

In a nutshell

Pastor Steve Ayers suggests these basic steps for following the Acts 2 model of church health:

■ **Start with prayer.** "Most churches don't really pray," he notes.

■ **Repent.** Acknowledge that on your own you cannot do what must be done.

■ **Trust God for the provision.** Rather than spending vast amounts of energy worrying about where resources will come from, learn to trust God to be faithful to advance God's cause, he says.

■ **Seek "power from on high."** The typical Baptist response to this assertion is to ask how to obtain power from on high, Ayers notes. But he says that's the wrong question. "Be open to receive it from the Holy Spirit, but the hardest part is you've got to wait."

■ **Be faithful with what you have.** "Stop looking for an expansive ministry and be faithful with what's in front of you."

BOWLING GREEN—Ask Pastor Steve Ayers what's the latest book on church growth he's read, and his answer is quick: Acts chapter 2.

The extraordinary growth at Hillvue Heights Baptist Church over the last seven years is not the result of following the Willow Creek model, Saddleback model or any other contemporary model for churches.

It might be dubbed the Hillvue Heights model or "Hillvue Happening" by some, but to Ayers it simply is the result of applying the principles of the second chapter of Acts, the biblical account of Jesus' disciples receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and launching the early church.

Or as Ayers and other members of his staff frequently say, "It's a Jesus thing."

"People are having a real encounter with God, and they've got to tell somebody about it," Ayers explains.

That creates natural passion for evangelism by relationships, he says, noting that Hillvue Heights has no formal evangelism program.

To illustrate how strong the desire is to tell others about what God is doing at Hillvue, staff members tell the story of a recent convert who brought his ex-wife's new husband to church with him. The man couldn't bear the thought of his child's new step-father not having a relationship with Jesus.

While many church-growth experts advise targeting specific demographic groups, Hillvue Heights spurns such counsel. The target group for Hillvue Heights is "anybody with a pulse," Ayers jokes.

One secret of the church's growth and health is that everyone who comes is genuinely accepted, he says. "That can only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit. You cannot do that by targeting a specific audience."

Members concur.

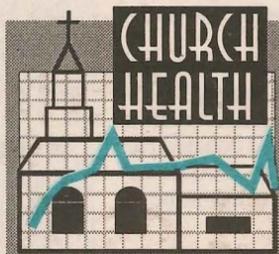
"Money, status or wealth don't seem to make any difference," says



SONGS OF PRAISE One of Hillvue Heights' four praise bands leads Sunday morning worship. The music at Hillvue Heights is contemporary and upbeat, but spans a wide range of styles. Words to the songs, many of which are original pieces, are projected on two large screens.

Barry Claypool, who's been in the church about six years. "If you've got \$2 or \$2 million it doesn't matter. A lot of churches around here, it's a status thing."

People of all backgrounds talk about the love they feel at Hillvue Heights. "People love one another enough to genuinely be their friend," says Steve Dorris, administrative pastor.



Adds Youth Pastor Tim Colovos: "Hillvue does all the things the churches I grew up in said they believed in."

The church has adopted a simple, one-sentence mission statement that is the measuring stick for evaluating any new ministry: "Hillvue Heights Church exists to lead the community to a conversion with Christ, so sin can be healed and people can develop into ministers of God's grace." With an emphasis on the words "conversion,"

"healed" and "develop," the mission statement is called the "CHD" for short.

Hillvue's leaders have broken down the teachings of Acts 2 into five major thrusts, also dubbed "The Big Five that Keep You Alive."

Those thrusts are (1) worship; (2) teaching; (3) fellowship; (4) prayer and (5) service.

When all five aspects come together and intertwine, it creates a strength like that of a sturdy rope, says Mike Juett, lead pastor for Hillvue's new Logan County extension and former associate pastor at the main campus.

These priorities aren't fulfilled through a plethora of programming, although the church does have some basic organization.

Keith Ward, a member of the original congregation who now serves as one of seven deacons, explains: "We had all kinds of programs, and none of them worked."

The church's current program is simply to "love Jesus," Ward says.

"He's first and foremost. We don't have programs like other churches."

Actually, Hillvue Heights does have a Sunday Bible study program for all ages, although it's not a traditional Southern Baptist Sunday school structure. Traditional children's classes are offered, and a few traditional adult classes are available as well. But the majority of adult classes are offered in "semesters" and are built around specific topics such as "What God Expects for Ordinary People" or "Jesus and the 12 Steps."

Hillvue Heights also has a thriving youth ministry and university ministry, as well as a full Wednesday night program for children and adults. And in this non-traditional church, one of Southern Baptists' most traditional programs has found a huge following.

The Royal Ambassadors missions program for boys is thriving at Hillvue Heights, Juett reports, to the point of creating reverse peer pressure in some of Bowling Green's schools. "They go to school with their RA vests on and say to the other kids, 'Why don't you have one?'"

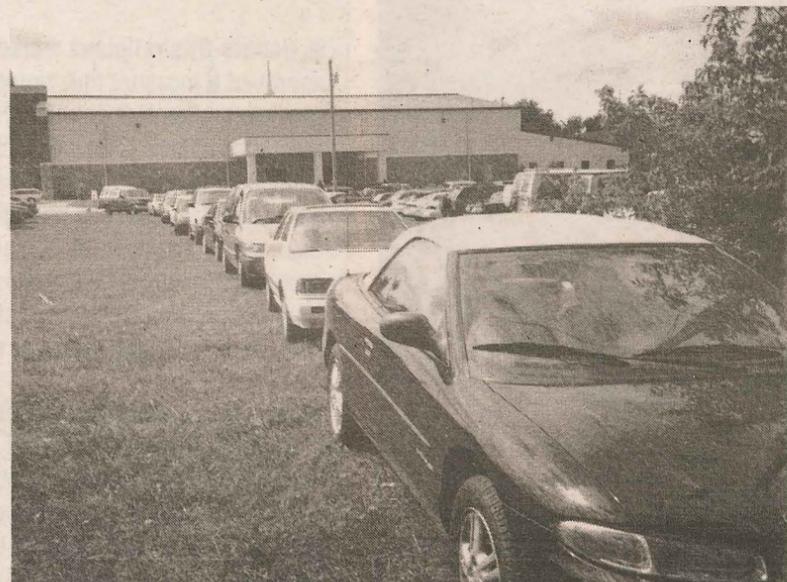
The changes that returned Hillvue Heights to health did not come without conflict, although Ayers says most of the conflict originated outside the congregation rather than inside.

Changing the music style used in worship happened with "hardly any conflict," he reports.

The church's seven deacons meet only to pray. Monthly or quarterly business meetings are a thing of the past. The congregation has empowered a business administration team to give guidance to the staff and has only one annual business meeting.

Last year Administrative Pastor Steve Dorris scheduled a forum to discuss the budget. Only four people showed up, and they all said they only came to express their support.

"We don't have to have a lot of business meetings because the church is focused on the mission," Ayers says.



HILLVUE HAPPENING ■ Left: On Sunday mornings, cars overflow the gravel parking lots at Hillvue Heights and fill up an adjoining grassy field. ■ Right: Pastor Steve Ayers offers Communion to a member of the congregation. The church serves Communion at stations throughout the 1,600-seat auditorium, with staff and lay leaders offering bread which is then dipped in a common cup.



CHURCHES

Hillvue Heights resurrected from near-death to life

Continued from page 1

group of original members of the church who "laid down their personal preference (about how church should be done) to allow God to move. Once they were able to see God can move in a powerful way in a non-traditional setting, it wasn't a matter of preference. The Spirit brings unity."

That assessment is shared by Ward, who was among the members of the dying congregation. "It took a lot of praying," he admits.

And while the changing worship styles and approach to church life should have been hard for older members to accept, it really wasn't because they saw the immediate good.

"I never saw a church reach some of the people we reached," Ward explains. "It's worth anything."

"The easiest way for me to describe how you can put aside all preference is to look at those people you saw come here in pain and see the difference later," adds Dorris.

Indeed, Hillvue Heights has drawn people from the most unlikely places—from the bar scene, from every addiction imaginable, from emotional brokenness, from absolute ignorance of the gospel message.

Those people have come into the church, found emotional and spiritual healing, been energized and now offer their gifts to help bring others.

The church has four praise bands that rotate responsibilities for worship leadership. Many of the members of those bands previously played together in bars or other bands. Now they

draw upon what God has done in their own lives to not only perform but to write music that tells the story.

Jeff Brooks is one of those musicians. Earlier in his life he had dropped out of church, began playing the bar scene and living for himself. Five years ago, his girlfriend brought him to Hillvue Heights, where he renewed his commitment to Christ and then offered his talent in service to God. Today, he leads one of the four praise bands and writes much of the music sung in worship.

On a recent Sunday, he and the band opened worship with one of his original songs, "You've Got to Walk With Jesus," which told their own story but in a musical style much more akin to Bonnie Raitt than Fanny Crosby.

"We play the kind of music people would listen to anyway," whether they were in church or not, because many of the people coming to Hillvue have no basis for understanding traditional church music, he explains.

"The style of music is different, but the message is the same," he says. "We want the music to be a God thing. You get people into where they need to be and then they hear the message."

Worship at Hillvue Heights is loud and bursting with energy.

The band pumps up the volume while the congregation stands and sways and claps during more than a

half-hour of worship music. Ayers moves around the stage without the aid of pulpit or notes as he preaches.

When new converts are baptized at Hillvue Heights—which is usually several people every week—they give verbal testimony that Jesus Christ died and was resurrected to pay for their sins. And the congregation applauds and shouts.

"How can you contain crack addicts whose lives have been changed?" Ayers says to explain the atmosphere. "They didn't just get promoted from one adult class to another. They got converted."

The church's new worship center looks more like a theater than a sanctuary, with a long curtained stage running almost the full length of the room.

Rows of stage lighting shine down from the front and back of the stage, with a traditional baptistry and three wooden crosses giving about the only immediate clues that this is a church.

While the worship is contemporary in format, Ayers is the first to point out that it's definitely not "seeker-sensitive," the label most often attached to churches like this. "There's nothing sensitive about me," he explains with a huge laugh.

Indeed, while many of the traditional trappings of church have been removed—hymnals, pews, stained glass and robed choirs—Ayers makes

no effort to sugar-coat his message. He preaches with the brutal honesty of an old-fashioned evangelist but without using churchy language.

In a recent sermon on Jesus' parable of the sower, for example, Ayers' primary illustration was this: "You can't grow corn on I-65."

The application: God's Spirit cannot take root in hard-hearted people. God's seed is perfect; the difference is what type of soil a person provides for it to be planted in.

He talked about God's desire to hack down the unholy thorns in a person's life, and then he called the congregation to repentance and commitment to Jesus. Dozens of people streamed to the altar to pray and to commit their lives to Christ. So many, in fact, that Ayers had to stop the music and appeal for more counselors to come forward.

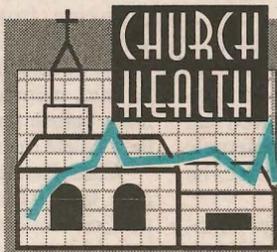
People come to Hillvue Heights from a 10-county region, with some driving from as far away as Paducah. As a result, the church recently birthed an extension congregation in adjoining Logan County, with about 200 people attending.

The irony, Ayers points out, is that this is the church the so-called experts once said couldn't grow. Among the critiques: Hillvue Heights' location on the far south side of Bowling Green just off the Natcher Parkway was the wrong place to grow.

As it turns out, Ayers said, "It may be a bad location for a local church, but it's a great location for a regional church."

"How can you contain crack addicts whose lives have been changed? They didn't just get promoted from one adult class to another. They got converted."

Pastor Steve Ayers, explaining the energetic atmosphere at Hillvue Heights



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ISSUES

"A church needs to have a plan to refer divorced families for help. Otherwise these problems will surface."
Wade Rowatt

Divorce recovery and prevention both urged

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

LEXINGTON—While Immanuel Baptist Church has a divorce recovery program, singles minister James Stillwell believes the best answer to resolving marital problems comes from divorce prevention.

Two years ago Immanuel began using the "Prepare" inventory, designed by University of Minnesota professor David Olson. The list of more than 100 questions screens potential partners for common interests.

It asks about such factors as marital experience, personality type, communication style, financial perspective, attitudes toward children and parenting. The university scores the tests and provides a reading of the couple's compatibility.

Of the 21 couples Stillwell has guided through the inventory, at least one decided not to marry. Others have acknowledged problems in the relationship that needed to be resolved, he said.

Couples must complete the inventory to be married at Immanuel, he said, and all the church's pastors are trained to administer it.

The divorce recovery ministry motivates him to do pre-marital coun-

seling, Stillwell added.

"What we talk about in divorce recovery is if you don't do an autopsy of your marriage and how it broke down, you're going to repeat the mistakes," he said. "I prefer to focus on the front end and help people realize marriage is hard work."

Still, Wade Rowatt, director of the pastoral counseling center at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, said churches need to offer divorce recovery programs as well.

The dissolution of a marriage damages all concerned, he said. One study by a doctoral student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary showed that churches usually support the female side in the aftermath of divorce, he pointed out.

Both men and women suffer financially and emotionally, while children often feel abandoned, embarrassed or that their father no longer cares for them, he said.

"Divorce is hell and it really hurts," Rowatt said. "Those hurting people aren't going to be silent. They're going to cry out for help. A church needs to have a plan to refer divorced families for help. Otherwise these problems will surface."

John Lepper, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's director of family min-

istries, believes this crisis is an opportunity for church members to show grace and support, both individually and corporately.

Pastors can play an important role too, he said, by reaching out and taking divorce victims' pain seriously.

"Pastors can lead the church to be that kind of caring community," he said. "They can preach on the issue—not shrinking from the ideal that divorce should not occur, but also not shrinking from the ideal that we should follow in Christ's footsteps."

By developing closer relationships, he said, members can confront problems before they become so serious they cause the marriage to dissolve.

Clark Hensley, former family ministry leader for the Mississippi Baptist Convention, thinks the church also should take a redemptive stance toward the divorced.

Divorce is not the unpardonable sin, Hensley said, and churches that offer people support instead of pulling away from them may find it results in a more evangelistic spirit.

"I don't think it's a 'buy-in' of secularism as much as it is a matter of correct biblical theology of the grace of God," he said. "It's about how he acts toward us as sinners and how we ought to act toward each other."

Divorce culture poses questions for churches

Continued from page 1

"People said, 'We've got to do something about this.' It became a strategy. We tried to strengthen families."

Among the steps implemented at Zion:

■ Moving most committee meetings to Sundays and Wednesdays, either before or after services, to reduce the time members spend away from their families.

■ Sponsoring a winter marriage retreat, sometimes in cooperation with other churches.

■ Two years ago the family ministry council organized a series of six two-hour sessions to deal with such issues as finance, conflict and the biblical basis of marriage. Offered at least twice a year, the program includes longtime marrieds serving as mentors to younger couples.

■ Each spring in the weeks leading up to Father's Day, Garland preaches a series on family or marriage issues.

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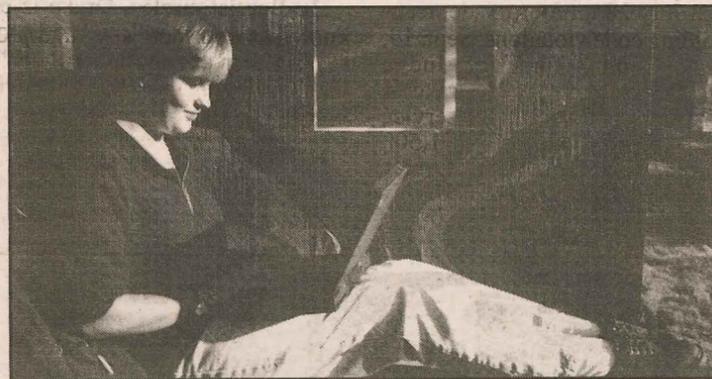
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Wiley Drake: Conservative Baptist & social activist

By David Finnigan
Religion News Service

BUENA PARK, Calif. (RNS)—Cancer, in the form of the homeless and dying Peter Maniaci, is literally on the parking lot of the church of Wiley Drake, a Southern Baptist preacher known and criticized for his anti-Disney boycotting by day and crusading on behalf of the homeless by night.

Maniaci is dying of cancer in a motor home on Drake's church property and has become something of a symbolic epigraph for Drake's ministry—a ministry that has made the conservative a center of controversy, a convicted criminal and a puzzle to political pigeonholers.

"I'm making a difference for him, 'cause he has no family and now he does," said Drake, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park. "He has a pastor and a church and a place to live out the (last) few months of his life."

Locally, Drake, 53, has been the center of controversy since city officials prosecuted him this summer after more than a year of flare-ups over the housing of about 50 homeless people on church property each night.

A sympathetic California jury reluctantly convicted Drake and his church July 28 on four misdemeanor or building code violations. Sept. 19, Orange County Superior Judge Gregg Prickett sentenced Drake to 1,500 hours of community service and then credited him with 1,500 hours of service for the efforts to aid the homeless he already had performed.

Now Drake is trying to help the homeless get into local motels and apartments because his church has been ordered to move the campers used to house the homeless off its property.

In addition, Drake and his 75-member church—down from 250 members when he started his work with the homeless—run the Here's Hope Social Ministry Center, feeding some of the estimated 15,000 homeless in Orange County.

The poor can get a meal, a bed, some clothes, a shower and a mailbox address to put on job forms. Drake said he gives out about 25,000 pounds of groceries per month, including food from the local St. Vincent de Paul Society, a Roman Catholic organization that helps the poor.

Observers view the portly, gray-haired Drake these days as a media-hungry preacher with a heart for the poor. But he once was an alcoholic and ultimately a fired middle manager.

The decorated Navy veteran came to faith in Jesus after cradling a wounded soldier who told the young Drake, "Don't let me die, don't let me die." But the soldier did die as Drake held him in a helicopter gunship hauling the wounded out of a firefight in Vietnam.

In Baptist circles, Drake is best known as a former "spy" and proud foot soldier of the "inerrantists"—those believing the Bible to be without error—during the 1980s battle for administrative control of the Southern Baptist Convention.

More recently, Drake has become known for his staunch oppo-



sition to the Walt Disney Co. During the 1996 annual meeting of the SBC, he pushed for a failed Disney boycott resolution. But at their meeting this year, Southern Baptists passed a milder, more polite resolution asking members to "refrain from patronizing" Disney and its 200-plus subsidiaries because of what they believe to be its pro-homosexual policies in employment and marketing.

But despite his anti-Disney stance, Drake still allowed himself to be seen at a Christian concert at a local baseball stadium owned by Disney.

"We're in what I call a 'pragmatic boycott,'" Drake said of his attendance at the August concert. "You pick and choose."

In his daily contact with the poor in his local community, Drake has become a pragmatic fundamentalist, a man believing in the inerrant word of God in a very errant world.

"Your major social movements often ... have had social roots within the evangelical tradition," said Tom Wolf, a Southern Baptist minister and Biola University urban studies instructor in nearby La Mirada. "I'm grateful for his general direction, for a person compassionately involved in the life of others in the name of Christ."

Drake's zeal for the homeless is akin to Salvation Army officers and other Protestant evangelists who are simultaneously social conservatives and rescue-mission staffers.

"Drake's very much a part of that tradition," said Wolf, adding that the tradition condemns homosexual sex because "the Christian faith holds that human life is structured as male-female life. When someone says that today, it is considered an almost peculiar and odd position."

One of six children born to poor parents in southern Arkansas, Drake was a dropout who spent his teens drifting on freight trains, following carnivals and rodeos. After his Navy service in Vietnam, he worked as a machinist before becoming a preach-

er in Southern California.

"I've always been a gabber, and I knew God wanted me to use my natural talents," said Drake, a father of four and a grandfather of three.

After joining the Jesus movement in the late 1960s, Drake put aside preaching for a marketing job in New Jersey. But he said the late '70s are a blur from severe alcoholism.

"A big part of three or four years, I honestly have very little knowledge of what happened," he said.

Drake was fired around 1980, and sobered up—"not a drop" since, he said. He returned to preaching and began writing the church news column for an Atlanta, Texas, newspaper.

With press credentials, Drake attended SBC annual meetings, gaining access to the press room. He became a spy for the inerrancy movement, observing and taking notes on moderates who felt freer to speak in a newsroom than on the convention floor.

When asked if inerrancy leaders like Paul Pressler, a former judge in Texas, asked him to spy, or if he reported to Pressler, Drake said, "I volunteered. I was not recruited. I was writing and working in the newsroom, (which) gave me an undercover, inside track at the convention. I saw the need to be in the battlefield of inerrancy."

In 1987, Drake left much of the infighting behind, coming to Buena Park and staying. He embraced the poor after being what he called a "hypocritical" fundamentalist for ejecting a bum from church property years ago, a man Drake said could easily have been won to Jesus.

Despite the court's ruling this summer, some of the county's 15,000 homeless still regularly show up at Drake's church. And they can be saved, he said, not with fire-and-brimstone, but with simple math.

"If every church in Orange County would take in four people, we would have no homeless in Orange County," Drake said.

ON STAGE Wiley Drake, shown in this news conference photo from the 1996 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans, casts off his Mickey Mouse tie to demonstrate his call for a boycott of the Walt Disney Co. Drake, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park, Calif., has moved from that limelight to a nationally watched court fight over his church's ministry to the homeless. (BP photo by Van Payne)



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President Yeltsin signs revised Russian religious bill

"We're carrying on our work and trying to be obedient day by day to what the Lord leads us to do."

Matt Spann, administrator for the organization of SBC missionaries in Russia

MOSCOW (RNS)—Despite the protests of American evangelicals and government officials, Russian President Boris Yeltsin has signed a controversial new law that would regulate religion in Russia.

The Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, unanimously passed the new law Sept. 24. The Duma, or lower house, had approved the law the previous week. Yeltsin signed the law Sept. 26.

The law gives special status to the Russian Orthodox Church and, to a lesser degree, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and "Christianity," defined as "traditional" Russian religions.

"Christianity" is not defined in the law.

The law is widely viewed outside of Russia as seeking to protect the Russian Orthodox Church from losing members to western Protestant, Roman Catholic and other non-Christian "new religions."

U.S. evangelicals, the White House, Pope John Paul II and, most recently, Vice President Al Gore, have objected to the proposed legislation, calling it anti-democratic and a reminder of the former Soviet Union's authoritarian approach to religion.

One of the law's clauses most criticized outside Russia says religious

groups must be present in Russia for 15 years before they can publish or distribute religious literature or invite foreigners for preaching activities.

The Los Angeles Times, however, reported Sept. 24 that Russian government and church officials are offering assurances that the pending legislation will not be strictly enforced.

Those assurances have prompted some U.S. church officials to urge colleagues to avoid a potentially bitter confrontation with Russian church leaders over the issue.

There was no immediate word on what impact the new law will have on Southern Baptist Convention mission-

aries in Russia or on the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership with Russia. Previously, SBC and KBC officials have expressed extreme displeasure about the potential impact of such legislation.

"We're carrying on our work and trying to be obedient day by day to what the Lord leads us to do," said Matt Spann, administrator for the organization of SBC missionaries in Russia.

"You almost have to have a crystal ball to know what effect it could have," Spann said. "So much seems to depend on how local government officials interpret it."

U.S. bill against religious persecution hitting roadblocks

WASHINGTON (ABP)—A bill to address global religious persecution that at first appeared to have broad support now faces delays and opposition from lawmakers and some religious and human-rights groups.

The "Freedom From Persecution Act" would create a special White House office to monitor religious persecution and would cut off foreign aid to countries which engage in or condone persecution.

Introduced by Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., and Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., the bill had 105 original co-sponsors and the blessing of Republican leadership.

More than 80 religious and public policy figures, including the presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Association of Evangelicals, sent a letter requesting

congressional leadership vote on the measure by November, when many churches are observing a "Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church."

Recently, however, critics have come forward, claiming the bill creates another layer of bureaucracy, elevates religious persecution above other human rights and is too broad in its use of sanctions, which could result in greater persecution.

The House International Relations Committee has on several occasions postponed efforts to finalize the bill.

In September, a subcommittee approved an amended version of the bill, offered by Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J., which addresses some concerns raised by critics.

Rep. Tom Lantos, D-Calif., an original co-sponsor of the bill, said he

would withdraw his support unless additional changes are made.

"There are ... those who oppose putting teeth behind legislation dealing with human rights. I have no common cause with them. But I do have some concerns about the legislation in its current form," Lantos said.

Lantos criticized the bill's "one-size-fits-all policy" in which sanctions kick in automatically when religious persecution is documented, which he said may be "counterproductive to U.S. national interests."

Another critic, Rep. Matt Salmon, R-Ariz., said, as a fiscal conservative, he has problems with establishing a new office in the White House and adding a layer of bureaucracy.

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. sent a letter to

members of the committee listing its reasons for opposing the Wolf-Specter approach. The letter also stated a commitment to finding an agreeable alternative.

A Wolf spokeswoman acknowledged receiving an alternative proposal from the NCC but said it didn't go far enough in getting tough on religious persecution.

The spokeswoman said Wolf is frustrated with recent opposition from "inside-the-beltway types who are flooding Washington with lobbyists."

"The voices of Christians in the pews are being drowned out," she said.

NCC Associate General Secretary Albert Pennybacker disagreed with claims that the bill's opponents are unwilling to be tough on persecutors.

Jennifer Van Camp

By Robert Dunston

Jennifer Van Camp was one of many Cumberland College students serving this year in summer missions. Jennifer joined six other young people from around Kentucky to form Son Celebration, a team ministering through music.

Following two weeks of training, the team ministered for six weeks in camps and two weeks on the road. For Jennifer, the best part of the summer was working with other team members. She says, "There were six other people on the team all with the same goal, the same focus—to share what Jesus had done for them as the opportunities happened."

Jennifer and the team worked at Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek camps. Her assignment was to work with seventh through 12th graders, leading Bible studies, recreation and singing for 30 to 40 young people each week. Presenting the same material each week might have become boring, but Jennifer concentrated on the young people. While the material was familiar to her, she knew it was fresh to each new group. During one week at camp, youth from her home church attended. God provided a special bless-

ing as Jennifer had the joyful opportunity to see her sister rededicate her life to Christ.

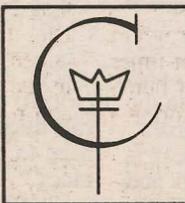
In addition to the weeks in camp, Jennifer and the team traveled to more than 20 churches presenting the gospel through music. God blessed as the team served him.

"A summer of goodbyes" is the phrase Jennifer uses to describe her experience. At the end of each week, she said goodbyes to young people whom she had come to love. At the end of the summer, she said goodbye to her fellow team members. Despite the difficulty of parting, Jennifer says, "God became real to me through the youth, through my team and through the different experiences we had."

Jennifer is the daughter of Ray and Barbara Van Camp of Lexington, where her father is pastor of Durbin Memorial Baptist Church. At Cumberland she is a junior majoring in communications. Before her summer experience she was interested in journalism and advertising but now she is praying and considering how God can use her in his service.

Robert Dunston is chairman of the religion department at Cumberland College, 6000 College Station Dr., Williamsburg, Ky. 40769

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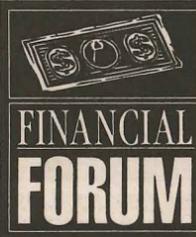


FAMILY

Financial planning for new parents

By Don Spencer

Becoming a new parent can be a time of emotional peaks and financial valleys. The new financial responsibilities can be overwhelming. This also is a perfect time to evaluate several keys areas of financial planning:



■ **Family budgeting takes on a new urgency.** According to government statistics, annual spending on a child from birth to age 18 averages in excess of \$5,000 per year. Babies have a way of changing spending habits. Make a list of income from all sources and the corresponding expenses. Seeing the expenditures in writing will give you an idea of where you need to make changes to cover the new expenses. Reminder: A budget is simply a "spending plan."

■ **Health insurance strategies should be considered.** Make sure the child is added to your medical coverage. Generally, you have 30 days to add the baby with guaranteed coverage. If husband and wife both work and have separate insurance, examine benefits and costs to determine which policy should cover the child. Sometimes, it may be best to consolidate coverage in a single family medical plan.

■ **Re-think life and disability insurance needs.** You may have had little or no life insurance before, but that's another responsibility that comes with parenthood. Generally you should have coverage equaling 5 to 7 times your compensation. You're more likely to become disabled than to die prematurely, so don't overlook disability insurance. Generally, you should have coverage that would replace about 60 percent of your income.

■ **Rethink your savings strategy.** New parents rarely set college savings as a priority, given current financial demands. Savings for an emergency fund and tax-deferred retirement savings will be a priority. After that, start thinking about college. Above all, don't avoid or put off saving. The financial needs will only increase in the future.

■ **Update your will.** This is probably one of the last things a new parent will think about but it is critical. If you and your spouse die prematurely, you want to have the choice of a guardian for your children. Your will also can be used to create a trust to hold your child's inheritance.

Don Spencer is a certified financial planner and directs the Kentucky Baptist Convention's annuity department.

Missionary sees spiritual war in Israel

Continued from page 1

struggle but also supernatural opposition against Jesus as Messiah, he said.

Anthony's 15-year-old son, Mark, recently came face-to-face with this violence. He deliberately entered the crowded Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall in Jerusalem just seconds after two bombs exploded there Sept. 4—either by courage, inspiration from God or simply a response to hurting people.

"When I asked Mark why he went into it all, he said he pulled his cross on a chain out from under his shirt and was going to go help the people and thought, 'If they saw my cross and knew I was a Christian, maybe some of them would believe in Jesus,'" recalled his mother, Connie Anthony.

A classmate found him 10 to 15 minutes later just outside the area, dazed and stiff. They walked together to the Anglican International School, where both are students.

Seven people were killed in the attack, including the three terrorists, who blew themselves up.

Another recent incident of Islamic extremism came July 30 when two suicide bombers detonated 22 pounds of explosive and sharp metal shrapnel in Jerusalem's bustling Mahaneh Yehuda vegetable market.

The market is just a five-minute walk from Baptist House Center, site

of Jerusalem Baptist Church, where John Anthony is pastor.

Besides the bombers, 13 people were killed. Eighty-two others were hospitalized, including 18 in critical condition.

"A number of our friends shop at this location on a regular basis, not to mention the occasional visits we make there," Anthony said. "I guess it just gets closer all the time."

One of Anthony's friends, Petra Heldt, was hospitalized in the attack with burns on her face and arms. She directs the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Jerusalem.

"There is a supernatural element of the enemy that is moving against believers in Israel right now. Read the Book of Mark ... read about the demonic activity. The Book of Mark is alive and well today in many ways in Jerusalem," he explained.

The Anthonys believe they have watched "waves" of spiritual oppression sweep across Israel. From 1972 to 1982, people bashed out windows at the Baptist center 10 or 12 times and bombed it twice. "We were threatened, harassed, spit at, demonstrated against, and our church was burned down. I thought I was going to be killed several times. My wife was attacked twice on the street by Muslims. "That was a real oppressive time,"

Anthony said.

Still, opposition then came from a few extremists. And for the next five years even that seemed to dissipate. The number of Jewish believers in Jesus continued to multiply. Then in 1987 Palestinians launched the "Intifada," an uprising against the Israeli government. Violence again became commonplace. And it presented a new obstacle for the gospel.

In 1994, the process to bring peace between Israel and the Palestinians seemed to offer a return to normalcy. But in late 1995 a Jewish fundamentalist assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in an attempt to derail the peace process.

"With the assassination, (and) until now, we're in a whole new season of satanic oppression," Anthony said. "What's happening right now is that with the rise of Jewish Orthodox fundamentalists and their growing power, there is persecution openly against believers in the Messiah."

A proposed law working its way through the Israeli legislature would limit evangelical work among Jews. The law has received wide publicity and is considered by many Jews to be undemocratic. Its ultimate passage or rejection will be a partial test of fundamentalist Orthodox Jews' power to influence Israeli society today.

"What's happening right now is that with the rise of Jewish Orthodox fundamentalists and their growing power, there is persecution openly against believers in the Messiah."

Southern Baptist missionary John Anthony

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: Growing church seeks full-time music worship leader. Forest Park Baptist Church, Bowling Green, KY 42101. (502) 843-3419; Fax: (502) 843-3434.

NEEDED: Mothers day out director for two-days-per-week program at Rockford Lane Baptist Church. If interested, or for more information, contact Ron Abrams, pastor, at (502) 447-2591.

SEEKING: Louisville church seeks full-time children/preschool minister. Experience required; generous salary and benefits. Send resumé to: P.O. Box 221066, Louisville, KY 40222-1066.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of LaCenter, Ky., is currently accepting resúmes for a full-time minister of music, C/Y. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 239, LaCenter, KY 42056.

MEDICAL: Diabetics with Medicare or insurance, get your diabetic supplies mailed to your home. Insulin-dependent only call: (800) 337-4144.

FOR SALE: 1970 MCI Challenger 39-passenger bus. Mileage 182,995. If interested, please call Nancy Myrick, (502) 368-0239, or Rev. Jacky Newton, (502) 368-5806.

SEEKING: Salvisa Baptist Church is presently searching for a part-time minister of youth. Please send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Salvisa Baptist Church, P.O. Box 75, Salvisa, KY 40372.

SEEKING: Wonderful opportunity for minister of music and youth at a well-established Southern Baptist church with a large family life center. Qualified persons with experience please send resumé to: P.O. Box 3705, Highway 266, Corydon, KY 42406.

WANTED: Resident counselor (male only), Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. Teach daily living skills to youth in foster care. Apartment in exchange for services. Contact Jeanette Stratton at (502) 583-1452, 9-5, Monday-Friday.

SEEKING: Growing church in western Shelby County seeks part-time minister of music and worship. Reply to: Personnel Committee, Simpsonville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 56, Simpsonville, KY 40067.

SEEKING: Woodland Baptist Church is seeking a part-time interim minister of music and worship to serve approximately six months. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Woodland Baptist Church, 809 N. Pope Lick Road, Louisville, KY 40243-2133.

NEEDED: Youth minister for well-established, dynamic program. Excellent opportunity for part-timer. Resumé to: Evergreen Baptist Church, 2698 Evergreen Road, Frankfort, KY 40601.

SEEKING: Minister of music/outreach for Northern Kentucky Southern Baptist church. Resúmes must be received by Nov. 15. Grant's Lick Baptist Church, 175 W. Clay Ridge Road, Alexandria, KY 41001. Call (606) 635-2444. Dr. Paul E. Broyles, pastor-teacher.

SEEKING: Parkway Baptist Church of Bardstown, a church with new facilities and explosive growth, is seeking a full-time minister of youth and education to develop a comprehensive program for learning and ministry. Interested candidates should send a resumé and references to: Pastor Eddie Benton, Parkway Baptist Church, P.O. Box 395, Cox's Creek, KY 40013.

WANTED: Good set of used handbells (2 or 3 octave set) needed for growing music ministry. Call Eric Allen at (502) 827-8222.

FOR SALE: Wooden classroom chairs and desk-top chairs, \$5 each. Contact Lewis Lane Baptist Church, 2600 Lewis Lane, Owensboro, (502) 684-4266.

SEEKING: Minister to youth (half-time) for dually-aligned CBF/SBC church. Community-located church, solid foundation and great potential; salary and insurance provided. Send resumé by Oct. 15 to: First Baptist Church Shepherdsville, P.O. Box 26, Shepherdsville, KY 40165.

FOR SALE: 42-passenger GMC 4904 coach, air conditioned, restroom, refreshment center, video system, less than 30,000 miles on 8V-71 Detroit Diesel engine. Extremely well maintained. Coach is in beautiful condition inside and out. Completely updated and refurbished less than four years ago. Must see to appreciate. Asking \$49,000. Call (606) 277-7391; ask for David.

SEEKING: Vine Run Baptist Church of Dry Ridge, Ky., is currently seeking a part-time minister of music. Resumé to: Vine Run Baptist, 8805 Warsaw Road, Dry Ridge, KY 41035, or call (606) 428-0444.

SEEKING: Memorial Baptist Church of Columbia, Mo., is seeking a full-time minister of education. Qualifications include five years experience as a full-time minister of education and a Master's of Religious Education degree. Resumé may be mailed to: Dr. Bob Webb, Memorial Baptist Church, 1634 Paris Road, Columbia, MO 65201.

PEOPLE

PRAYER PARTNERS

Pray for these specific needs related to Kentucky Baptist partnerships with Russia and New England:

■ **Connie Robbins** in Khabarovsk, Russia, as she develops evangelism and discipleship materials in Russian.

■ **Marlene Roberts**, International Service Corps missionary in Penza, requests prayer that she will be "disciplined in the area of time management."

■ Follow-up needed for the work of a Sept. 13-21 Kentucky evangelism-medical team in Bryansk, Russia.

■ Follow-up needed for the work of a Whitley City, Ky., summer mission team in Ledyard, Conn.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Ann Tatum

■ **BENTON**—First Church ordained Minister of Music/Associate Pastor **Mark Doom** to the gospel ministry Sept. 14. **Don Wilson** is pastor.

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—**Bill Beard**, director of missions at Taylor County Association for more than 10 years, will retire Oct. 15.

■ **DEXTER**—Dexter Church ordained Associate Pastor **Carl Butler** to the gospel ministry Aug. 3.

■ **FRANKLIN**—New Hope Church called **Jerry Butcher Jr.** as minister of music. Butcher is a graduate of Georgetown College.

■ **LAWRENCEBURG**—Alton Church will celebrate its 52nd anniversary Oct. 5. An all-day event is planned.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Cloverleaf Church will host the Journeymen of Shepherdsville in a gospel music concert Oct. 12 at 6 p.m. Call (502) 367-0218 for more information.

Lakewood Church celebrated its ninth anniversary Sept. 25.

Lyndon Church called **Robert Fuller** as interim minister to youth.

Fern Creek Church ordained **Rhonda Hibdon**, **Larry Marcum** and **Ruth Uphaus** as deacons Sept. 28.

Ridgewood Church has designated pastor installation and appreciation day for its new pastor, **Louis Twyman**, Oct. 5. Special guests will be

present during the 10:45 a.m. worship. Call (502) 935-1952 for information.

■ **MURRAY**—Sugar Creek Church ordained **Ralph Duncan**, **Gerald Walker** and **Scott Wyatt** as deacons Aug. 17. **Bill Miller** is pastor.

■ **OWENSBORO**—Bellevue Church called **David Hankins**, vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in Nashville, as interim pastor for a six-month period.

■ **PARK CITY**—Park City Church awarded perfect attendance pins Sept. 7 to 11 people for two years' attendance, two for six years, one for seven years, one for 11 years, two for 12 years and one for 57 years.

■ **PINEVILLE**—First Church called **John Birchett Jr.** as minister of education and youth. Birchett began his new ministry Sept. 1.

■ **RICHMOND**—Harris Memorial Church called **Loren Hooker Jr.** as pastor. He was ordained to the gospel ministry Sept. 14.

■ **SANDERS**—A group from Jordan Church attended the installation service and reception for **Molly Marshall** as professor of theology and spiritual foundations at Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, Kan., Sept. 17. Marshall is the church's former pastor.

■ **SONORA**—First Church called **Bruce Underhill** as associate pastor



FOUNDATION GIFT Steve Hadden (second from right), pastor of Crestwood Baptist Church in Crestwood, presents a check from Baptist Healthcare Foundation to Geoff Stock, deputy chief of the Westport EMS. The Foundation gave \$3,800 toward the purchase of an automatic external defibrillator, which administers electric shock to restore a normal heartbeat. Hadden is a member of the foundation's board of directors. Also shown are David Gray, administrator of Tri-County Baptist Hospital; Donald Belknap, Tri-County emergency room physician; and James Hannah, chairman of Tri-County's board.

to youth. **Jamie Durham** was called as minister of music. Underhill will begin his new ministry Nov. 1. Durham began Sept. 28.

■ **SYMSONIA**—Elva Church ordained **Tim Franklin** to the gospel ministry Sept. 7. Franklin is pastor at Flint Church in Murray.

■ **TAYLORSVILLE**—Kings Church will host the Journeymen quartet Oct. 5 at 7 p.m. Call (502) 955-5480 for more information.

Little Mount Church will sponsor a fall festival Oct. 4 at 10 a.m. The all-day event will include a flea mar-

ket and other booths. Music and entertainment will be provided throughout the day. Call (502) 477-8432 for more information. Also, a fall revival service will be held Oct. 5-8. Morning service at 11 a.m. and evening services 7 p.m. **Billy McKay** of Pelehatchie, Miss. will be guest speaker.

MISSIONARY UPDATE

■ **Karen Wright**, missionary to Chile, is on furlough in Louisville until Jan. 5, 1998. She may be reached at (502) 897-4346.

'I have not been saved ...'

Normally, the first places visitors go when arriving at Oneida are the rest rooms located in the administration building. If you have used those rest rooms, have you ever considered who cleans them?

"Mike" (not his real name) is in charge of two or three other boys who clean those rest rooms. It is very encouraging to see Mike supervise the crew who cleans this area every day after school and on Saturday mornings. I am encouraged whenever I see Mike because of the progress he has made with us. This progress did not occur overnight, however.

Mike first came to Oneida a little over two years ago, and was another student who came to us from a single parent family. His grades were average. He had been expelled from school, and had been getting deeper and deeper into drugs.

We were excited to have Mike, and we really believed Oneida was the best place for him.

Like many students, Mike did relatively well the first two or three months, but when he got settled in and felt comfortable things began to unravel. From September 1995 through March 1996, Mike was suspended eight times. On more than a dozen other occasions, he had been sent to the office. We warned Mike that our patience was running out. He had already used up his "70 times seven" a couple of times over.

Finally, in April 1996 we had to send Mike home. Like a score of other parents, his mother was unhappy with us and felt we could have done more.

Mike had only been gone a few days when this letter came to me:

"I'm sitting here in my room writing this letter requesting your permission to let me return to

OBI. I did not fully appreciate that my being at Oneida was a privilege. I took it for granted. In my mind I thought I would never be expelled ... I sincerely hope that you will let me back ... Please respond to this letter as soon as possible."

You probably think I wrote Mike a letter right away telling him to come back, right? Wrong! I did not believe that Mike had truly learned the needed lesson in such a short time. As much as I wanted to let him return, I had to say no. I knew that Mike could request to return at a later time if he were really sincere.

That second letter did come eight months later. Here is part of what he wrote:

"When I was last at Oneida almost a year ago I was expelled for being suspended too often ... and generally messing up at school. ... I hope that you will please take into consideration all that I have said. One last thing is with God, I have not yet been saved or anything like that, but I am searching for God trying to find him at Oneida. Oneida would help me a great deal with that."

Mike was allowed to return in February, shortly after this second letter was written. When we sent Mike home, his report card had some average grades including two "F's" and one "D." His latest report card had two "A's" and five "B's"—no "D's" or "F's." He is doing much better in every area of his life and has earned the right to be in charge of the crew that cleans the administration building.

Has he invited Christ into his heart? No, but Mike says he believes there is a God and wants to know more about him. When Mike came to us he did not believe that God existed, and certainly did not believe God cared about him.

Please add "Mike" to your prayer list.

W.F. "Bud" Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, P.O. Box 67, Oneida, Ky. 40972

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Churches support Beyond 2001 Campaign

The church goal for Clear Creek's Beyond 2001 Campaign is \$610,000. We have reached nearly half of the goal with pledges and gifts totaling \$480,164. In recent days these churches have made campaign commitments:

■ Mount Pisgah Church in Bremen decided to send \$100 a month for three years in honor of former

pastor Archie Oliver. The funds strengthen the Archie Oliver Scholarship endowment with the interest used to assist students who come from associations where Oliver served. Mount Pisgah's pastor is Todd Gaddis.

■ Pastor Bill Crosby presented the need to Erlanger Church in northern Kentucky. The congregation approved the three-year pledge of \$6,000. Their gift goes into the north central region scholarship endowment. During my nine years at Clear Creek, we have had students on campus from this section of the state.

■ Beechmont Church in Louisville made a \$3,000 pledge for the central region scholarship endowment. Pastor John Dever and the church recently hosted a luncheon for Long Run Association pastors.

■ Two churches provided funds for the construction of the new classroom building. Crittenden Church responded to our appeal through Pastor Bobby Barnes. The

church committed \$4,000 in honor of former pastor Raymond Lawrence and his wife, Eula. Central Church in Corbin approved \$30,000 over five years in honor of the Lawrences who served the church 1962-72. Joe Leonard has completed his first month as pastor of the church.

■ First Church in Paintsville made a one-time gift of \$1,000 for the northeastern Kentucky regional scholarship. Alumnus Drew Martin recently resigned as their pastor to become director of missions of Boones Creek Association.

■ Highlands Church in Lexington included Beyond 2001 scholarships in its budget and will send 1 percent of undesignated offerings. Delbert Walker is pastor.

■ Salem Church in Mortons Gap approved \$6,000 in honor of missionaries Charles and Carolyn Dixon, 1993 graduates now serving in Tanzania. The church gift provides financial aid for students from the western region of Kentucky. A 1992 graduate, Charles Evans, is pastor.

Many churches will make financial decisions during the next three months. Will your church include Clear Creek in their plans?

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Helping Hands come to the aid of elderly & disabled

By Yvonne White
Religion News Service

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (RNS)—When Beverly Livingston needed some things repaired around her house, the single mother of two didn't turn to the Yellow Pages. Instead, she called Joyce Egedy, dispatcher for the Helping Hands Ministry at Weatherly Heights Baptist Church.

Helping Hands is a unique ministry started by several local churches, offering assistance to single mothers, widows, the elderly and the disabled in an area ignored by most ministries—home and automobile repairs.

Helping Hands volunteers are not only eager to keep their repair skills fine tuned, but they also have a genuine desire to help others in need.

"We're all doing it for the same reason," said Don Routh, a member at Weatherly Heights. "It's an opportunity to reach out and help others and to be a Christian witness. It also helps you get to know other people in your church who you probably never would have known."

The program at Weatherly Heights is one of a number of similar ministries that have sprung up here in recent years.

Another, at Southwood Presbyterian, also calls itself Helping Hands,

while Willowbrook Baptist calls its similar ministry In His Name. They are all designed first to help those in need in their own church, but each makes exceptions for those outside their congregations.

Helping Hands volunteers offer advice on whether something needs to be repaired or replaced. If they can repair or replace it, they will, or provide names of trustworthy people who can do the job.

Helping Hands workers at Weatherly Heights and Southwood provide free labor and only charge for parts or other costs incurred. For those who can't afford to reimburse costs, the church helps out.

Sometimes money comes from donations by others who have used Helping Hands. And Willowbrook not only takes care of the labor, but also all repair costs.

For Beverly Livingston, Helping Hands has been a godsend.

"You never really know who to call or who you can trust," said Livingston, a kindergarten teacher. "They have been absolutely wonderful. Also, it doesn't take them several days to get here. They usually come right over when you call. If they tell me something needs replacing, I know they are telling the truth. I really appreciate what they've done for me."

Southwood's program concentrates on auto care. About three times a year, the Helping Hands volunteers there set up a car inspection area in the church parking lot. People bring their vehicles to be checked for problems, have minor repairs done or just get the oil changed, paying only for the oil and filter.

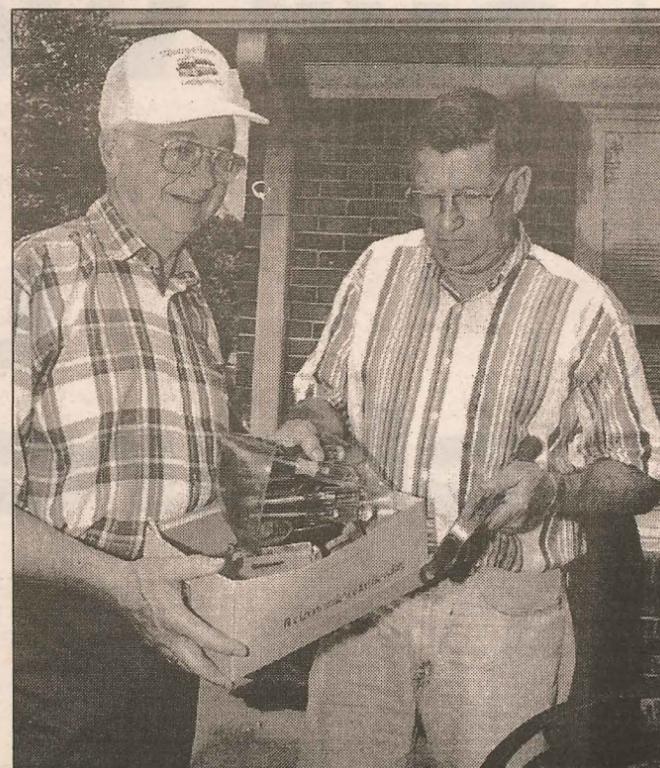
"It's a ministry mostly to help folks with financial limitations," said Scott Griess, director of Southwood's program. "Women have a tendency to be targets for unscrupulous people and get taken advantage of."

Willowbrook started its In His Name ministry about a year ago. It already has 40 volunteers, said Steve Beale, coordinator of men's ministry at the church. Besides auto and home repairs, volunteers cut grass and help with moving, painting and other chores that can be overwhelming to single women and the elderly.

"It's a good ministry and totally free," said Beale. "We help ourselves when we help others. We keep a record of what work we do on the cars for the next time we do an automotive check."

While many of the volunteers are retired men, others are still in the work force or are students. A few women also volunteer their time.

"We may not all be experts, but we



can give advice, and we hope it has wisdom in it," said Weatherly Heights' Routh. "Trust is one of our strong points because we don't have a monetary conflict of interest."

HELPING HANDS Tom Foster (left) and Don Routh of Weatherly Heights Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., pack up their tools after helping Beverly Livingston and her son. Several ministries are springing up to help single parents and the elderly with household work. "We're all doing it for the same reason," Routh said. "It's an opportunity to reach out and help others and to be a Christian witness."

Baptist congregations offer help to Kurdish refugee families

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)—Kurdish refugees seeking a fresh start in the United States are finding an abundance of aid and support from many Southern Baptist churches that have made a commitment to be their sponsors.

In the process, refugee families are being introduced to Jesus Christ by testimony and example.

In South Carolina, for instance, seven churches are sponsoring 10 Kurdish families and several single men. Most of the churches are sponsoring one family each, helping the family adjust to their new culture.

The churches provided minimal housing for at least the first 30 days and have assisted with necessary medical care, transportation and paperwork that accompanies applying for Medicaid, Social Security cards and food stamps.

The Kurdish families have a goal of becoming self-sufficient. Church members help them become familiar with the area, find employment, locate local banks and grocery stores and enroll the children in school.

Augusta Road Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., held English as a second language classes for all Kurdish refugees in the area, and First Baptist Church of Taylors, S.C., sponsored classes during the summer to prepare Kurdish children for school in the fall.

The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board helps coordinate refugee resettlement—including the families in South Carolina—through one of several national agencies that have contracted with the federal government to oversee resettlement.

In addition to the South Carolina families, NAMB also follows up on Kurdish refugees sponsored by five

churches in Georgia and Texas and hundreds of other refugees from other parts of the world.

Donoso Escobar, immigration ministries specialist for NAMB, said refugee resettlement is an important part of the board's evangelistic imperative.

From January through August of this year, his office has helped find sponsors for 412 refugees of many nationalities. They come to the United States at an influential time in their lives, Escobar said.

"My question is, what type of influences are these vulnerable people going to receive?" he said. "Wouldn't it be best to receive the influence of a Christian-minded individual of faith, and God's church? ... And then they see the love of Christ. That's a tremendous opportunity."

Escobar said history has shown the

value of ministry to refugees. "From refugee resettlements that we did very heavily in the '70s and in the early '80s, you can see hundreds and hundreds of ethnic congregations," he said. "And now these churches are sponsoring themselves people who can come here and listen to the message in their own language."

Despite their Muslim background, some refugee families in South Carolina have attended worship services or programs held at sponsoring churches. In all cases, refugees have been exposed to Christ and his gospel through relationships with their sponsors.

"I really believe that God has brought them here to hear the truth about Jesus," said Suzanne Barton of Taylors First Baptist. "You never know—they may be the ones to reach other Kurds with the gospel."

Church helps members know they're in the book of life, literally

By Dana Williamson
Oklahoma Baptist Witness

DEL CITY, Okla. (BP)—Do you know for certain if you died today that you would spend eternity in heaven?

More than 2,000 members of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, can answer that question with certainty.

We aren't talking about the Lamb's Book of Life, spoken about in the New Testament Book of Revelation, but the First Southern Book of Life which came about when staff members began to wonder why more of their members didn't attend church services.

Associate Pastor Ralph Speas said

some time ago Pastor Tom Elliff registered concern about First Southern's church membership.

"We had so many more on our rolls than actually come on a Sunday morning, he was wondering why we never see these people," Speas said. "He felt it was possible there were people out there who, although they had gone through baptism, had perhaps never been saved."

That's when the staff came up with the idea for a book of life.

The goal was to approach everybody on the church roll from the sixth grade up and ask them to write their personal testimony.

The staff designed a form, printed on parchment paper, which asks pertinent questions and records informa-

tion about members' conversion experience.

The process of compiling the book began about five months ago when Elliff preached a message on the Lamb's book of life. First Southern's Sunday school follows the worship service, so pages were passed out during the Sunday school time following the sermon.

Sunday school teachers shared the gospel, and several people were saved that day, Speas said.

"Some did not know what to put down on the paper," Speas recounted. "We told them that was all right, that a lot of people don't know for sure, but we wanted to help them. We asked them to put their name and phone number at the top of the page,

and someone would contact them, and visit with them so they could know for sure."

Speas said they tried to get all the sheets done that day, but every week "we have more and more of them dribbling in."

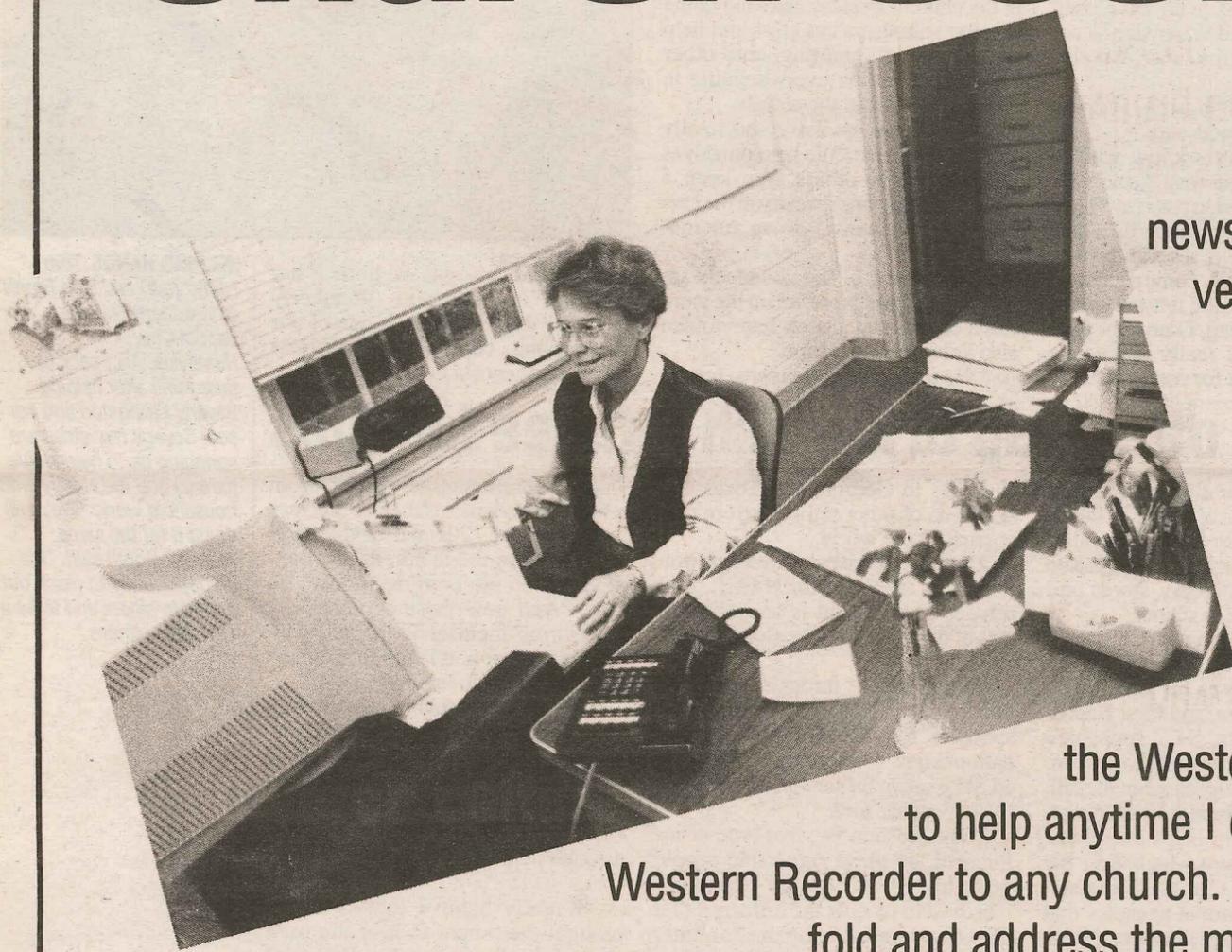
The church is committed to completing the task, no matter how long it takes, he said.

Getting the forms out to all the members and returned to the church has been a bigger process than he thought it would be, Speas added.

"When we read these, it's easy to see those who are really sure of their salvation and those who are not," he said. "It could turn out to be a great evangelistic effort. In fact, it already has."

Don't just take our word for it

Listen to the church secretary



“When we first started using the Western Recorder newspaper, I have to admit, I was very apprehensive. I just knew that page layout would be difficult to learn. Now I look forward to working on our weekly mailout because it allows me to be creative and isn't nearly as difficult as I thought. The staff at

the Western Recorder is always there to help anytime I call. I would recommend the Western Recorder to any church. Besides, now I don't have to fold and address the mailout. They do that for me.”

Alice White, secretary, Hurstbourne Baptist Church in Louisville

Western Recorder
Practical Resources for Christian Living