

DECEMBER 8, 1998
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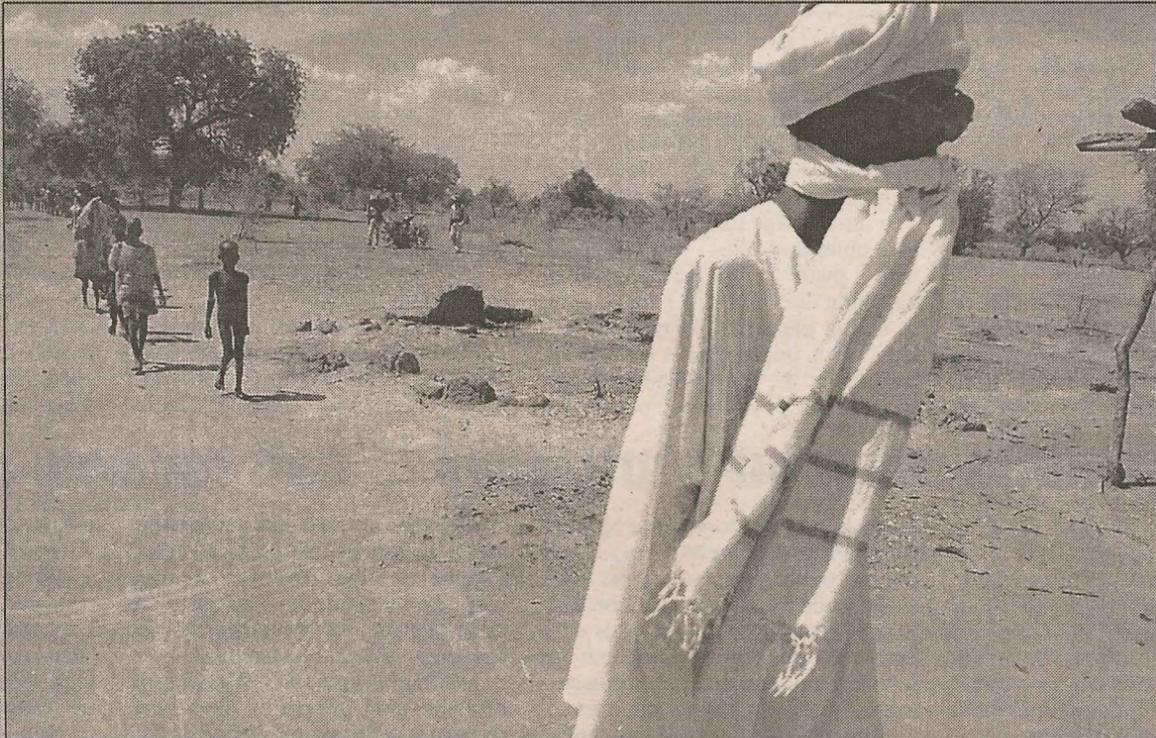
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All manner of evil



Persecution of Christians is widespread & complex issue

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A Presbyterian pastor overlooks threats and builds the first Christian church in his region of Pakistan. A mob destroys the church. Masked men invade the pastor's home and stab him to death.

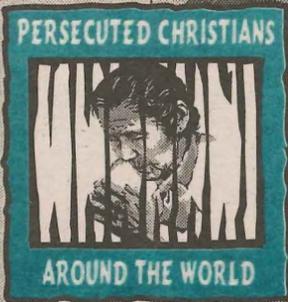
A man leaves Islam to become a Christian. Egyptian secret police arrest him without a formal charge and torture him with an electric probe to make him inform them about other converts.

A Roman Catholic boy in southern Sudan plays in the trees with his friends. Soldiers waging a holy war capture him and send him into slavery, where he is given an Islamic name and beaten with sticks by his master's wives.

From Bosnian Muslims to Soviet Jews to Buddhists in Tibet, Americans long have been concerned about the rights of religious minorities around the world.

Only recently have Christians been added to that list.

In the United States, where more than 80 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians, the First Amendment right to freedom of religion is so firmly entrenched it's often taken for granted. Reli-



SIGNS OF PERSECUTION Around the world, Christians are tortured, beaten, raped, imprisoned, enslaved and killed because of what they believe. This week's Western Recorder takes an in-depth look at the persecution of Christians. ■ **Top:** An Arab slave trader in Sudan leads 231 slaves to their freedom, paid for by Christian Solidarity International. ■ **Above:** Little but the front door remains of the church that was being building near Lahore, Pakistan. Stories on pages 6-11. (RNS photos by Benjamin Brink)

gious persecution doesn't raise many flags here.

In recent years, however, an increasingly active coalition of evangelical Christians, human rights organizations and Jewish opinion leaders has brought to light the plight of Christians in countries where they are vulnerable minorities.

Through books, videos, sermons, prayer circles and Internet discussion groups, this loosely bound group has been alleging that in dozens of countries throughout the world, Christians are victims of abuse, violence and discrimination because of their faith.

The issue made its way to the U.S. Congress this year. In October, lawmakers passed and President Clinton signed the International Re-

ligious Freedom Act. It is backed by a wide range of conservative and liberal religious groups.

The law provides for a range of penalties against nations that persecute based on religious beliefs. Although the law covers freedom of all religions, the focus is clearly on Christianity.

When a pattern of persecution persists, the law forces the president to take action. The sweep of possible redress is wide, ranging from a private diplomatic protest to economic sanctions.

Still, little public attention has been given to the Christians abroad who supposedly will benefit.

There is ample evidence of persecution. Around the world, Chris-

Kentucky WMU launching job training to help women in need

By Suzanne Darland
State Correspondent

LOUISVILLE—A Women's Missionary Union program to help women get jobs and out of poverty soon may take root throughout Kentucky.

Women from 20 Kentucky communities recently attended the training session for Christian Women's Job Corps, a training and mentoring program to help women enter the job market.

"People from areas that I never would have dreamed of are hearing about it and are committed to making it work," said Denise Jones, WMU associate for adults.

The program began as a pilot project in 1995 and has received rave reviews, Jones said. "This is a completely new program that national WMU has started, and it has received so many accolades."

Already, WMU leaders in Northern Kentucky, Lexington and Lookout have established programs, she said.

About 40 women attended the recent training session in Louisville, Nov. 13-14. Potential site coordinators came not only from Kentucky, but also Alabama, Indiana and Ohio.

Christian Women's Job Corps is aimed primarily at low-income women and is timed especially well with recent welfare reforms moving women into the workforce, said Bill Mackey, Kentucky Baptist Convention executive secretary-treasurer.

Angela Dennison, with the family mentoring program of Volunteers of America in Louisville, told those in training Nov. 13-14 that in 1996 Congress passed a bill that changed the entire welfare system.

Whole groups of women are reaching a two-year limit on benefits and must be involved in some kind of volunteer or work activity to continue receiving such benefits as day care assistance or medical care.

In Kentucky, she said, 90-95 percent of families in poverty are headed by single mothers, and 32.5 percent of children under 5 are in poverty.

Becky Carnell, literacy consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, told those in training that 75 percent of unemployed adults read below the fifth-grade level. Of the 50 least-educated counties in the United States, 23 are located in Kentucky, she added.

"Women need access to jobs that pay enough, and they need training to get those good jobs," she said.

Christian Women's Job Corps helps equip women with life skills to find good jobs, and it uses Christian women to do it, she said. That Christian context, which includes weekly Bible study, makes the program different from any offered by the state.

Another difference is that it relies

Moving? See page 4 (1208)

□ See WMU's Christian ..., page 3

Chaplains take Christ to prisons, hospitals & military

The Chaplaincy Commission of the North American Mission Board recently announced that more than 3,000 Southern Baptist chaplains are serving under endorsement around the world.

By James Dotson
SBC North American Mission Board

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)—William Garris admitted he often has an R-rated ministry. It comes with the territory as a prison chaplain.

Garris was a U.S. Air Force air traffic controller, but became a pastor after retirement. He said he discovered his specific calling after being asked to volunteer two mornings a week at a local prison.

Garris was one of several chaplains who shared testimonies of their work in conjunction with a recent orientation for Southern Baptist Convention chaplains and their spouses.

The Chaplaincy Commission of the North American Mission Board, the endorsing body for Southern Baptists, recently announced that more than 3,000 Southern Baptist chaplains

are serving under endorsement around the world. That fulfills one of the original goals of the SBC Bold Mission Thrust initiative.

Garris told of one inmate who recounted gruesome details of stabbing a man during a robbery. "You really want to look the other way, but I never could," Garris said. "I remember that Jesus told us, 'When I was in prison, you visited me.'"

Another time, an inmate described growing up with a prostitute for a mother and an alcoholic father who supplied his mother with customers. The inmate was forced to steal food as a child and often was threatened with a pistol by his father. He grew up hating the world, even to the point of taking pleasure in smashing rich kids' lunch boxes. Garris said the inmate called the chaplain the only person in his life whom he could call a

friend.

"I knew I was where God wanted me to be," Garris said, later noting he has counseled 9,678 inmates during his ministry and baptized 73.

"I have learned the difference in feeling sorry for someone and having the same compassion that Jesus would," he said. "Regardless of their morality, they all have one thing in common. They are hurting. What would Jesus want us to do?"

Doyle Oliver, a chaplain for diabetes and heart patients at St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta, said he often sees patients and their families during the greatest crises in their lives.

"We are a fast-paced hospital, with tremendous pressure," he said. "But it is one of the most challenging places I've ever been in to minister to people that are hurting and scared and have to make life-changing and life-

threatening decisions."

Capt. William Johnson, a U.S. Army chaplain, said God intervened to allow him into the chaplaincy program at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary despite an apparent lack of experience. He currently serves at McDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Fla.

"I think it's the best job in the ministry, I really do," he said. "Because where the troops are, that's where we go. I have been in airplanes and seen troops come to know Christ. I have been on the flight line and seen troops come to know Christ."

Southern Baptist chaplains serve around the world in health care, military, private industry and other fields. NAMB's chaplaincy evangelism team provides official endorsement, conferences, field visits, pastoral care and other support.

Local churches set the course for the state convention and other Baptist bodies—"not the other way around," said William Pinson, executive director for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

DALLAS (ABP)—Leaders of the Baptist General Convention of Texas responded cautiously to a proposal that the state's Baptists could become the hub for a new Baptist Convention of the Americas.

Baylor University Chancellor Herbert Reynolds described his vision for a new organization linking like-minded Baptists throughout the Western Hemisphere Nov. 10 at an annual breakfast meeting of the moderate group Texas Baptists Committed.

Among resources Texas Baptists could bring to the venture, he said, is the \$43 million in annual budget and missions contributions that now goes as "tribute" to the conservative-dominated Southern Baptist Convention.

The Baptist General Convention's president and top executive officer both responded to Reynolds' com-

ments in a news story in the Nov. 25 Baptist Standard newspaper. While not discounting Reynolds' plan, the leaders said the state convention likely will consider many changes as it enters the new millennium, but for now its emphasis should be on assisting and equipping Texas churches.

Russell Dilday, president of the 2.5 million-member state convention, said Reynolds' plan is "visionary" but is just one model for Baptists to consider in deciding how to shape a denominational expression that will be effective in the 21st century. Dilday predicted there will be other proposals.

"Baptists in Texas should welcome designs from across the state suggesting new ways we can work together to accomplish the Lord's work in our state," Dilday said.

As the state convention's president, Dilday said, he believes the convention's immediate focus should be on Texas. "It is important to quickly and effectively respond to the new

challenges our Lord puts before us in the 21st century," Dilday said. "Then together we can discover creative ways to cooperate and partner with other Baptist entities in the broader challenge of world missions."

William Pinson, BGCT executive director, said questions have been raised about Reynolds' remarks. Pinson noted that Reynolds spoke to a group of Baptists at a breakfast which was not part of the convention program, and that the views he presented were his own, and not an official position of the BGCT.

Pinson said local churches set the course for the state convention and other Baptist bodies—"not the other way around."

Pinson said a strong "church-first" emphasis is behind the state convention's policy of allowing churches flexibility in how their contributions to the convention are disbursed. Texas offers churches four options for passing funds on to various world

mission causes beyond the state convention.

Pinson also said he expects other proposed realignments of the state's Baptists. He said that while such talk "can be disconcerting, it is encouraging to see strong interest in the life of our denomination."

Baptist Standard Editor Toby Druin wrote in an editorial that he does not expect to see Reynolds' vision take place in the near future.

"In spite of the fact that Texans for the most part have continued to reject the rightward swing of the SBC, loyalty to the SBC, especially to its missions programs, has never wavered for most Texas Baptists and is not likely to do so," Druin wrote in an editorial in the paper's Nov. 25 issue.

Druin stated he was "very skeptical" when he heard Reynolds lay out his plan for the Baptist Convention of the Americas. "But I can't help wondering if the next 35 years will bring about as many changes as the last 35."

BAPTIST BITS

■ **BWA meeting in Cuba proposed.** Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Denton Lotz announced he will recommend that an invitation from Cuban Baptists be accepted for the BWA General Council's July 2000 meeting to be held in Havana. Lotz's announcement followed his return from a visit to Cuba Nov. 25-Dec. 1. Lotz also issued a statement calling on the United States to end its long-standing embargo of Cuba, calling it "a failed policy."

■ **BWA affirms 2000 meeting dates.** Jan. 5-9, 2000, has been reaffirmed by the Baptist World Alliance as the dates for the 19th Baptist World Congress in Melbourne, Australia. Because of concerns about the potential "Y2K," or year 2000, computer problems that computer systems would not recognize 2000 and malfunction, the international core Congress leadership on Nov. 19 discussed several options and unanimously agreed to keep the date. Said Jim Scott, Congress program chairperson, "I checked with several leading

organizations and was satisfied we should hold our date."

■ **BCE launches web site.** The Baptist Center for Ethics has launched a new web site for congregations and their leaders. The site contains writings about news, headline issues, detailed information about BCE's resources, book recommendations, family-centered articles, a discussion board and links to other organizations. The address is www.baptists4ethics.com.

■ **BCA scholarships available.** Baptist Communicators Association will offer three scholarships to students training to pursue careers in religious communication. The Dan Martin and Al Shackelford scholarships will give \$1,000 to an undergraduate student and \$500 to a graduate student. The Alan Compton and Bob Stanley Minority International Scholarship will give \$1,000 to an undergraduate student of minority ethnic or international origin. For an application

or more information, please contact BCA administrative coordinator Keith Beene at (615) 904-0152 or scholarship committee chairman David Winfrey at (502) 244-6471.

■ **Former SBC leader dies.** Prominent conservative Oklahoma pastor and former Southern Baptist Convention leader Eldridge Miller died Nov. 17 after a triple-bypass heart operation. Miller, 71, served terms as both recording secretary and vice president of the SBC Executive Committee during an era that saw that body fire the top editors of Baptist Press and sever ties with the Baptist Joint Committee. While serving on the SBC Executive Committee, Miller also represented Oklahoma at closed-door meetings to discuss strategies for conservatives to extend their control of the national denomination into Baptist state conventions.

■ **Dutch Baptists debate women pastors.** Traditionally, only men have been pastors

of Dutch Baptist churches. Recently, however, two congregations affiliated with the Union of Baptist Churches in the Netherlands have inducted female pastors. At the union's 1998 annual meeting in Hoogezand, delegates discussed the issue at length before approving a recommendation to allow individual churches to decide for themselves.

■ **Poole tapped for ABP post.** Philip Poole will join the staff of Associated Baptist Press Jan. 1 as executive director. Poole, who has been executive assistant to the president at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., will function as chief operating officer for ABP, with key responsibilities in administration, development, public relations, marketing, operations, information systems, budgeting and personnel. Greg Warner will continue to serve as the agency's chief executive but also will become editor of FaithWorks, ABP's new Christian-lifestyle magazine.

Whitetree's courtesy call has lasted 15 years in Lookout

By Deborah Brunt
Baptist Press

LOOKOUT (BP)—Greg Whitetree knew he was going to say no. He had come this far only because his boss, Bob Jones, had insisted, "At least, go there and look around."

"All right," Whitetree finally agreed, "I'll go look."

A few days later, Jones, and Whitetree and his wife, Alice, took the interstate southeast from Louisville. Five hours later, they reached Pike County at the state's easternmost tip.

They had long since left the interstate. Here, Whitetree recounted, "the mountains got more and more steep, the valleys more and more narrow." The Whitetrees had entered the western edge of the Appalachians, near land where Daniel Boone once scouted.

"We crossed a one-lane bridge," Whitetree continued, then they were on a very narrow two-lane. Many places, Jones had to drive with two wheels over the center line to keep from sideswiping a mountain or going into a creek. Somehow, he also had to avoid colliding with the coal trucks that whizzed past.

Finally, the three reached a small, yellow, concrete-block building. A sign announced, "Marrowbone Baptist Center."

Whitetree couldn't imagine how anyone could run a Baptist center in

such an isolated place. Yet he had been asked to serve as its director.

No way, he thought again. It wasn't that Whitetree shied away from hard assignments. For 13 years, he and Alice had welcomed them.

In 1969, Whitetree was finishing his last semester at Memphis State University and working as a probation officer for juvenile court. Because his job required night and weekend work, he often missed church. But one Sunday, he took advantage of a rare opportunity to attend an evening worship service.

That night, he and his wife witnessed a commissioning service for two couples going out as US-2ers. It was the first time the Whitetrees had heard of the US-2 program, in which college students serve for two years as missionaries through what then was the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The next year, the Whitetrees went to Honolulu as US-2ers to work with children in inner-city housing projects. There, they said, both realized God was calling them to be career missionaries.

After being students at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, they spent seven years starting Baptist centers and churches in Davenport and Des Moines, Iowa. Then, they returned to Louisville, where Whitetree coordinated the work of two Baptist centers.

Now, Jones, who at the time was head of the direct missions department for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, was challenging Whitetree to give up his position in Louisville for a post that was extremely—well—rural.

Whitetree is a Native American. In his early years, he lived on the Cherokee Indian reservation in North Carolina's Smoky Mountains, only about 120 miles from Pike County, as the crow flies. But at age 5, Whitetree had moved with his parents to Memphis, and he'd lived and worked in urban settings ever since.

During their Appalachian visit, Jones said to Whitetree, "I want you to meet Freeda Harris." Leaving the yellow concrete-block building, Jones and the Whitetrees made their way to Harris' home. There, the Whitetrees learned the story of the Baptist center.

"Freeda started the ministry by walking the hollers inviting children to come to her house for refreshments and Bible stories," Whitetree recounted. "Children came in large numbers."

Southern Baptists took official notice of Harris in the 1960s, making her a home missionary associate. She ran the Marrowbone Baptist Center until she had to take early retirement in the late 1970s because of her health.

Afterward, two other center directors came. Both were single young women. Both were lonely in Pike County. Each stayed only about two years.

In the months since the second resigned, several people had been offered the position. All turned it down for various reasons: "Too far from medical care." "Too far from places of continuing education." "Too far from centers of commerce."

"Freeda was talking to us, and she was crying," Whitetree recalled. "The center had been closed 18 months. She was afraid it wasn't going to reopen. Then the tears dried up. She said, 'If you're the one God's calling—and I believe you are—he has a message for you.'"

"She opened her Bible to Deuteronomy 11:10-12. Jones had to turn the pages for her because her arthritis was so bad. She read, 'For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out ... (But it) is a land of hills and valleys ... a land which the Lord thy God careth for.'"

"As Freeda read, God spoke to Alice and me. I was crying. Alice was crying. When we got back to the car, both of us said, 'God is calling us here.'"

That was 15 years ago. Whitetree, a missionary with the North American Mission Board, still serves as director of Pike County's Baptist center, renamed the Freeda Harris Baptist Center in 1990.

"We feel as strongly called here today, as we did when Freeda was talking to us," Whitetree said.

BLUEGRASS BURGEOO

■ **Georgetown College** recently named Charles Boehms as executive vice president and provost. Boehms, who previously was vice president/provost, will supervise the day-to-day operations of the college. Also, Keon Chi, chairman of the political science department, was named interim academic dean.

■ **Kentucky Baptist Youth Ministry Association** recently elected officers: President Joe Ball of Edgewood Baptist Church in Hopkinsville; Vice President Art Rogers of First Baptist Church in Russellville; Secretary/Treasurer David Preston of Campbellsville Baptist Church; and Editor Mark Hazle of First Baptist Church of Somerset.

■ **Dixie Mylum Lusher**, author of two books about Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union's history, died Nov. 29 after a long bout of cancer. She had served on several Kentucky Baptist Convention committees, on the Kentucky WMU executive board and as vice president of Kentucky WMU.

■ **Ken Walker**, a state correspondent for the Western Recorder, has co-authored the book, "Rescued By The Cross," with youth evangelist Ken Freeman. The book, which tells the story of Freeman's youth and conversion to Christianity, is intended to provide hope and encouragement for young Christians who have had difficult pasts.

WMU's Christian Women's Job Corps trains leaders for Kentucky

Continued from page 1

on one-to-one mentoring. Each woman in the program covenants with a mentor for at least a year.

"That's the beauty of CWJC," said Debbie Nowell, director of church and community missions for Montgomery Baptist Association in Alabama. "The mentors are there for a year, two years. They show how there are those who can love and can make a commitment to them."

Many clients don't understand that kind of friendship. They're more familiar with being used, lied to and cheated on, she said.

That Christian friend is what's made the ministry successful in pilot sites in Texas and South Carolina. Nowell regularly checks in with her charge, encouraging her when she's disgusted with work or discouraged when her children wear her out or the car won't start.

"Women helping women is really powerful," said Nowell. "It's affecting the lives of the women we're helping, but also the women who are doing the helping."

"There's no typical client," added Nancy Brown, a mentor from South Carolina. "Some will be spiritually hungry and never have been in church before. Some will feel totally unworthy."

By being a friend, mentors often can share the love of Jesus and his message of salvation. "God doesn't want extraordinary people doing extraordinary things," she said. "He wants ordinary people doing ordinary things exceptionally well."

"Imagine that someone finds a flat tire when she goes out to her car,"

Dennison said. "She doesn't have an AAA card like we do; she probably doesn't even have a spare tire in the trunk. Her boss isn't sympathetic; he could replace her tomorrow. Wouldn't it be great if she could call, if she has a phone, and ask, 'Can you help me?'"

Nowell emphasized that mentors must not "mother" the women. "We need to be empowering," she said. "We don't want them to be dependent, but independent." Mentors are advised not to give money to their clients.

Instead, mentors are to give frequent encouragement and praise to boost self-confidence and guide clients through the maze of work ethics and other obstacles.

Besides mentors, the ministry features Bible study, either one-to-one or with a group, and usually a multiweek job-preparation class. Classes often include guidance in résumé writing, interviewing and work etiquette. Other options are personality inventories, personal grooming, nutrition and computer training. "We take a lot of field trips," Nowell said.

Job Corps usually doesn't offer high school degree courses or other programs offered by secular agencies.

"There's no need to reinvent what's already being done," Nowell explained. Each client completes an assessment before she enters the program to determine what she needs to get a good job.

In some states, like Alabama, Job Corps is approved as a substitute for its state program moving women from welfare to work. The ministry has received other accolades from governors and Vice President Al Gore, as

WMU's Keith leaving for North Carolina

Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union Associate Julie Keith said she'll remember her work with teens and ministry issues as she leaves the auxiliary agency for which she has worked the past five years.

Keith recently resigned following the birth of her first child, Chandler, and her husband's acceptance of a job in their home state of North Carolina.

As a WMU associate, Keith was responsible for Acteens, the teenage missions education and involvement arm of Woman's Missionary Union.

She also had responsibilities with Project Help, the annual social ministries emphasis by national WMU. Keith helped organize Kentucky WMU responses for such issues as AIDS awareness and child advocacy. "I think we've branched out to touch the community and meet their needs," she said.

Through the AIDS task force,

well. Churches can support the ministry, Nowell added. Needs include free child care during training as well as for a period of time after the mother has begun working.

Mechanics could work on cars and make them available to low-income women. Or they could agree to keep the women's cars in good condition, she added. Networking in Nowell's association has also brought other donations from service groups or busi-

nesses, including lunches, used computers and clothing for work.

Dale Tucker, director of the office of human services for the city of Louisville, pointed out that not all potential clients of Job Corps are low-income women. Immigrants could benefit from such a program as well. "Most immigrants come with college degrees; some have Ph.D.s," he said. Ministering to internationals "brings the foreign mission field to our doorstep," he said.

Keith said reports about youth wanting to be involved in missions are true. "It gives me hope for teenagers," she said. "I think youth today have a strong commitment. Youth get up at 5 a.m. prayer time. I think they're serious about their commitment when sometimes it's easy to get complacent."

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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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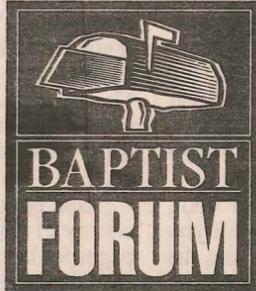
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Angry alignment

I believe that Toby Druin's "Counter Point" article found in last week's paper may typify the way many moderate Southern Baptists feel. They are angry at the conservatives who have gained power so they side with the moderate wing of the convention, those formerly in power, but they don't agree with them either. For example, Druin calls Foy Valentine a "good" Baptist source, quotes him, and then proceeds to eloquently and correctly disagree with what he said.

Dr. Mohler's argument, on the other hand, was thorough and logical, bringing into historical perspective the need for the conservative resurgence. While I do take issue with the conservative wing's use of what I consider a "good ol' boy" system of electing committee members, etc. on both the state and national levels, I must say that I thank God for the denomination. I would rather be on the fringe with conservatives than in the middle with moderates.



Joseph Vest
Burgin

Mohler's enabler

I would like to offer an expanded view of Al Mohler's Nov. 24 article regarding Clinton's Baptist roots and how they participated in his scandal. It is Mohler's view that liberal Baptists are his "enablers." The term "enabling" has gained recent popularity out of the addiction and recovery movement. The process of enabling has been a major focus in this movement in terms of helping individuals look at the entire "sick system" and move away from patterns of blaming the individual with the active disease or problems. The benefit of this awareness is to focus on what fulfillment I can bring to my life versus trying to find satisfaction in blaming or

controlling others. If enabling is a systemic problem where others participate in problems, then perhaps the system could include not only how liberals "enable" Clinton, but also how Clinton serves as Dr. Mohler's enabler. The reality is that Dr. Mohler has gotten a tremendous amount of attention and publicity from Clinton's woes. And he seems to enjoy it on some level as he is never more energized and animated as when he describes the "serial" nature of his problems. "Serial" is the term used most often in association with people like John Wayne Gacey or Jeffrey Dahmer.

What I have personally learned from people in recovery who struggle with enabling and seek to understand it is that part of their view of growing spiritually has to do with what is called a moral inventory. Not someone else's, but mine. I would much rather look at the faults of others rather than my own. If there is but one attitude and behavior that liberals, fundamentalists, Clinton and Mohler could agree upon, this should be it.

Kirk Hall
Louisville

Context, please

As a faithful reader of the Western Recorder, I see many articles written by people who make the Bible teach something that just isn't there. These people are sincere, I know, but they are a threat to the greater cause of Christianity. When non-Christians read and then test some of these proclamations and find them false, it gives them more reason to believe.

In the Nov. 24 issue, Psalm 137:9 was presented to teach that anyone was happy who aborted a baby. Even if that was true, the Scripture did not say that. In fact, that particular verse condones the destruction of children. The whole Psalm is lamenting what Israel's enemy, Babylon, did to them during the 586 B.C. destruction.

My wife and I took part in the ex-

cavation of that destruction in Jerusalem. It was horrendous, and I can understand why the psalm takes the position of wishing ill on the country who devastated it.

In real estate, the three most important things are "location, location, location."

In Scripture, the three most important things are "context, context, context."

Remembering that the word "happy" in Hebrew is sometimes translated "blessed" in the New Testament, Psalm 137:8-9 reads, "Blessed is he who repays you for what you have done to us. Blessed is he who seizes your young children (not just infants) and dashes them against the rocks."

The destruction wrought by the godless Babylonians, and allowed by our loving God was terrible. Maybe you need to have taken part in its excavation to realize why verses like this would appear in the Bible.

If you are ever in Jerusalem, view the display called the "City of David Excavations." See for yourself the terrible conditions under which Old Testament people lived and died. You will appreciate them more for it.

Gene Iglehart
Bowling Green

Money talks

In the Nov. 24 issue, under "Baptist Bits," I wondered why North Carolina Baptists stopped short of severing ties with Wake Forest University for "selling alcohol on campus." Then I read on, and there, in black and white, was the answer. "The school annually contributes more than \$453,000 to Baptist student scholarships and other Baptist work on campus." It just goes to show us that "money talks," and if you give enough of it to the Baptists, they will allow activities they might normally not tolerate. As long as Wake Forest keeps the money coming, we dare not sever our ties with them, no matter what they allow on their campus. That's just my opinion. What about other Baptists?

Don Daniel
Lebanon Junction

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Fulfilling the mission

God has been at work with the Kentucky Baptist Convention staff in developing a vision statement. The entire staff felt the presence of God as we developed this statement. One person said, "When I come to work, I want a statement that will inspire and challenge me for the day."

We were trying to answer three questions in the vision statement: who are we, to whom do we relate and what do we do? During a period of weeks, and after considering the meaning of every word, we felt led by God to this statement: "As a servant team, empowered by Jesus Christ, we work with Kentucky Baptists in fulfilling their God-given mission."

I would like to share with you the significant meaning of the phrases and words in the statement as follows:

■ *As a servant team.* It was very important to the staff that we see ourselves as servants of Jesus Christ, working together as a team prepared and ready to serve the needs of Kentucky Baptists. As a team, we will build on the strengths of each staff person to serve the churches effectively.



Bill Mackey

■ *Empowered by Jesus Christ.* The staff feels very strongly about their relationship with Jesus Christ, and the absolute necessity of walking each day with him. Empowered is a strong word and indicates our complete dependence on the power of God. Jesus Christ is our life and strength through the Holy Spirit.

■ *We work with Kentucky Baptists.* This means we serve all Kentucky Baptists, including individuals, churches, associations of churches

and institutions and agencies. Our purpose is to serve all Kentucky Baptists, although our primary target might be churches.

■ *In fulfilling their God-given mission.* The word "fulfilling" is a stretch term. We dare to believe that by faith we can be used by God in accomplishing his mission. "Their" means that our work is customized for the individual or group being served. We believe our "God-given" mission deserves our best commitment and sacrifice because it comes from God.

■ *Mission.* God has an eternal purpose for every person and church. We work for people and churches in discovering and fulfilling their mission to the world. And because it is God's mission, it must be pursued with passion.

Pray for us as we work with Kentucky Baptists in fulfilling their God-given mission.

Bill Mackey is executive secretary-treasurer of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

ANNUITY

Do retirement plans make good lenders?

By Don Spencer

If you have an expense that requires borrowing money, your thoughts might turn to a favorable lender, yourself.

If you're in a 401(k)

or a 403(b) retirement plan, it's likely your plan charges a hard-to-beat rate of about 9 percent right now. Money for your loan is deducted from your retirement account. Payments, including interest, are then credited back to your account.

Sound good? Think again.

First, a loan eliminates one of your plan's biggest advantages, tax deferral. If you borrow from your tax-deferred plan, money you use to repay the loan might be taxed once as income and again when you withdraw it in retirement.

Second, interest you pay back to your account could be less than the amount your account might otherwise earn. Plans often use prime rate plus 1 percent as the interest rate you pay. Since 1950, the prime rate plus 1 percent has averaged 8.26 percent while stocks have averaged 12.8 percent. Using these average returns during a five-year period, \$25,000 would earn more than \$9,500 more in stocks than it would using prime rate plus 1 percent.

Third, if you fail to repay your loan as required, you could have adverse tax consequences. In this situation, an unpaid balance is treated as an early distribution from your retirement plan. Ordinary income tax is due plus a 10 percent penalty tax if you are under age 59 1/2. For some employees in a 401(k) plan, if you leave your job before you've repaid the loan, you must settle the debt. Generally, if not settled within three months, it is treated as a withdrawal and you are liable for the income tax and 10 percent penalty tax.

Finally, if you stop contributions to your plan until your loan is repaid, you will significantly reduce your retirement benefit. According to a recent study by the U.S. General Accounting Office, your plan could be worth at least 20 percent less by the time you retire.

Borrow from your retirement plan only if you can keep investing while you repay the loan and after you've exhausted all other avenues of funding.

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



What should parents tell their children about Santa Claus?

What should I tell my children about Santa?

Much has been written about what parents should tell their children about Santa Claus. I find it helpful to consider this question from two perspectives—one developmental, one spiritual.

From a developmental standpoint, the issue usually takes care of itself. Part of growing up involves learning to distinguish between fact and fantasy. The normal process of development teaches most children how to differentiate in the proper ways between what is real and what is not. Watching cartoons, reading stories like Peter Pan and believing in Santa Claus won't keep children from eventually learning that animals can't talk, people can't fly and that Mom and Dad are Santa's best friends.

The innocence and magic of childhood flies by all too fast. Children should be allowed to enjoy these days while they last without being pushed into adult levels of thinking and understanding. You might have to dodge a few questions to keep the magic alive, but in doing so you are giving your child the gift of their childhood, not robbing them of a reality they will soon discover for themselves. (Do you know any children who hate their parents for playing Santa?)

From a spiritual standpoint, there are many things parents can do to teach children the true meaning of Christmas and counter the commercialism Santa and the season bring. Put Christ at the center of your family celebration. Include a nativity scene in your decorations. Observe Advent together. Attend Christmas worship services and celebrations. Collect food, clothing and gifts for needy families. Talk about the traditions of trees and lights and gifts. Help children understand these all are things we do to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Go caroling. Give to missions. Have a brief time of family worship Christmas morning.

As time passes, experiences of worship, celebration and thanksgiving, coupled with teachings about the true meaning of Christmas, will find a permanent home in their hearts. Belief in Santa will find its rightful place alongside (hopefully) many other cherished childhood memories.—David Garrard

My husband and I have been married five months and we argue a lot about how to do things (how to cook, where to go on vacations, how to decorate our apartment, etc.). We each tend to want to do things as our own families did. How do couples build their own way of doing things?

Sometimes it is a challenge to become a family of your own, rather than relying too much on your individual families of origin. It is important to develop your own way of doing things, while continuing to feel a part of the families from which you came. Much of it will happen in time to the extent that you rely more on each other rather than on your families of origin for your needs. There are some things you can do, however, that might help this process along:

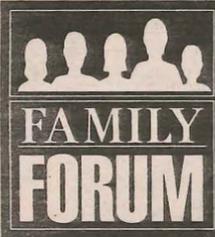
■ **Consider alternating the way you do things.** For instance, take turns cooking foods you especially enjoyed as children. You might find that your spouse's favorite becomes one of your favorites too.

■ **Combine your options, when possible.** You might plan a vacation in which you can do more than one thing. For instance, choose a secluded area away from the crowds, but close enough to a city that you can enjoy some of both.

■ **Start something new.** You might find it fun to create traditions that are entirely your own without borrowing from either family.

The most important thing is to not let this become a bigger issue than it needs to be. After all, the real, underlying issue seems to be: "How do we become a family to each other?" which actually can be more of a challenge for a new stage of life, than a problem that will divide you.—Susan Howell

Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, Ky. 40253 or e-mail us at wesrec@ntr.net.



In missions, it's harder to send than go

Some things have surprised me in Africa the past 15 years. I was surprised at people's joy in extreme poverty. I was surprised that men hold hands publicly in African cultures, not men and women. I was surprised at the responsiveness of people who had never heard of Jesus.

Other things did not surprise me.

Having grown up in rural Kentucky, I was not surprised by outdoor toilets, the great fellowship experienced by friends at a meal or the joy that country folks have in singing. Similar to my upbringing, I enjoyed listening to the farm and stock prices broadcast into rural areas by African radio. I was not surprised by the plight and sins of the cities, nor by tribalism. I was not surprised that people of different tribes, colors and languages expected us to live incarnationally before attempting to share Jesus.

But the greatest surprise of all was that I had the relationship between sending and going reversed. I believed going was the most difficult of the two.

Implicit within my religious heritage was the perception that the hardest task ever attempted was to leave home, board a plane and spend one's life in a foreign land. It has not always been an easy task, but one that we would not trade for a life in "Christianized" countries. We have learned that living for Jesus is complimented by having a Savior worth our very lives. We discovered the difficulty of incarnating Christ in the townships of apartheid and the persecution within the Horn of Africa. It has been tough going into a lot of these places. Yet, we were not prepared for the toughest task of all.

The most difficult ministry undertaken has not been going, but sending others in our place.

Going is easy. Going is fun. Going receives attention as missionaries are feasted, honored and placed upon pedestals. Suddenly, in a matter of months, instead of traveling to the edge, we assumed responsibility for sending others to the edge. We were their

life line, prayer warrior, pastor, link to family and their safe harbor for retreat and healing.

Hear a very clear word. Sending is harder than going.

Which is the most demanding, hanging on a cross or sending your only son to die? Picture yourself incarnating Christ in a culture defined by war, famine and persecution. You decide who goes; you or your child; you or your spouse. Who would go, yourself or the one you love the most in this world? If we grasp the responsibility of the sender, it will either revolutionize our faith and churches or we will cease to send.

It is the month of Lottie Moon, a \$110 million offering for international missions. The theme is "Wonder Working Power." Sending missionaries is much more than dollars, a prayer calendar, an occasional letter or visit to your church.

Who is responsible for leading the children of the church to Christ? You are.

Who is responsible for doing mission education? You are.

Who is responsible for sending them into the world? You are.

Who is responsible for holding the ropes, praying without ceasing, crying out to God for their constant witness and safety? You are.

Who waits for the phone to ring, an answer to prayer, a letter or good news from afar? Do you?

Who provides healing to those servants who have been ravaged by the consequences of living among the lost?

Grasp the awesome responsibility of the one who sends the "lambs among the wolves." Stand where God stood as he sent Jesus, as Jesus sent the 12 and the 72. Sending is "Wonder Working Power" and offerings totaling \$110 million. But it is much more.

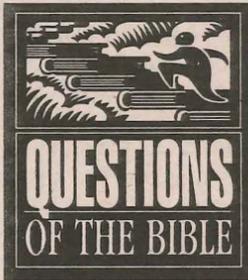
It is the hardest task in all the Kingdom of God.

Ken Perkins is missionary in residence at Georgetown College

Why am I so favored?

By Bob Long

"At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'" (Luke 1:39-45)



In Lewis Carroll's delightful children's classic, "Alice in Wonderland," the heroine is lost in a fantasy world. Yet there is one strand of reality to which she holds: her return home. That single thought runs throughout the story. Today's question points to a great theological reality running throughout the story of humanity. It's as true today as ever before. The thought: "It's always a good thing to find God involved in a human life."

Having heard of her cousin's preg-

nancy, Mary returns to her ancestral homeland in the hill country. Her mind races with all she's been told of the immediate future. Back home she will have the time to ponder these things and discover something of their significance. Upon arriving, Elizabeth embraces her with a strange greeting: "But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" How strange those words must have sounded to Mary. But their truth is a wonderful strand of reality running throughout our turbulent existence.

The Greek words which form the question would most directly be translated, "But in what way has this come to me?" The NIV translators added a measure of interpretation to their translation making this question a powerful testimony concerning God's nature. Based on the grand gift which is the coming of Christ, the NIV correctly reflects how good it is to discover God's involvement in human affairs.

I can't help but reflect on the difference between this question in Luke

and Jacob's thought upon awakening from his dream at Bethel (Genesis 28). Jacob felt Bethel to be a fearsome, awful place, nothing less than the house of God. How do we get from fearsome to good? How do we grow from a Genesis feeling to a Luke declaration? It only happens as we discover the nature of God.

Where God builds relationships, they are developed on love, responsibility and consistency. We come to agree with Elizabeth as we discover how very much we are loved by God. How sad it is to find one who never has known God's love. But there's more. God accepts the responsibility to maintain and build that loving relationship. While we can't say the same, God never neglects the relationships he builds with us.

Accepting that responsibility makes our relationship with God fresh with each new day. It also leads to a marvelous consistency. We depend on God being ever the same. More than a question, Elizabeth's words are a statement of faith. It is a good thing to discover God's involvement in your life.



Bob Long is pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville

China's Christians polarized by registration laws

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

The Chinese government demands authority over nearly every aspect of citizens' lives, from family planning to the stock market. This control is more political and social than religious, but it clearly includes religion.

JIADIAN, China (RNS)—The presses are humming at the Love of Christ printing plant in this industrial suburb of Shanghai.

One line is spitting out 1999 calendars depicting Bible scenes. Another turns out the monthly magazine of the China Christian Council.

"This is freedom, religious freedom," shouts plant supervisor Xu Minghan over the churn of machinery. "We can print anything we need!"

Yet in the industrial town of Zhengzhou, 400 miles away, Zhen Shuqian is suffering, not celebrating.

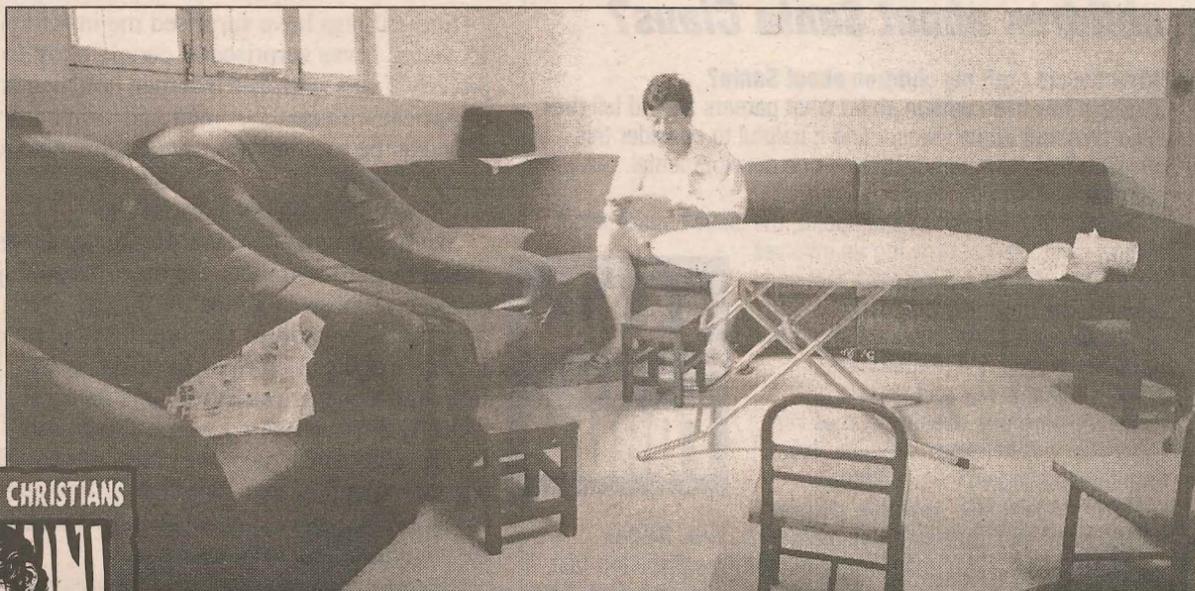
Zhen, the leader of the Fancheng Christian Fellowship, kneels on the floor. He moans in prayer, trying to decide whether he should be among the first to publicly challenge a government with a long track record of crushing its dissidents.

"We have been persecuted for so long," he prays. "Do you want to speak out now? ... We have been so careful, but we still get arrested."

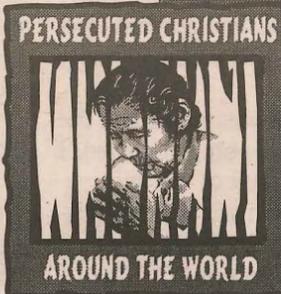
Xu, with his printing plant, and Zhen, with his prayers to stop persecution, illustrate how China's Christians are polarized regarding their relationship with the government.

Few would dispute that, compared with the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, when all religion was outlawed, this is a golden age of religious freedom. Official religious leaders point to the existence of 10 million Protestants. Twenty million copies of the Bible have been printed since 1980.

"Americans cannot imagine what is happening today in terms of China's religious policy," said Xu, the printing supervisor and vice president of East China Theological Seminary, which is adding buildings to accom-



ON THE RUN Zhang Rongliang, who leads an illegal house-church network in China, reads a letter from one of the estimated 10 million believers in his far-flung flock. Zhang, who has been imprisoned three times, is always on the move. (RNS photo by Benjamin Brink)



modate a waiting list of students.

Yet Zhen and other underground Christian leaders said oppression—not tolerance—is increasing in China.

These underground Christian leaders describe lives as fugitives. They speak of campaigns of harassment, scores of arrests and jail terms that routinely include torture with the dreaded "dian bang," or electric stick.

Why is one group of Christians satisfied and the other oppressed?

The answer lies in the way these two groups respond to the Chinese government's profound need to control.

The Chinese government demands authority over nearly every aspect of citizens' lives, from family planning to the stock market. This control is more political and social than religious, but it clearly includes religion. Each church must register with the Religious Affairs Bureau, which, along with local authorities, governs

church activities.

The official, or "registered," churches have agreed to comply with government orders. They see it as a practical matter, irrelevant to their spiritual lives. In philosophy and approach, these churches resemble mainstream Protestant denominations in the United States.

Members of the underground, or "house church," movement refuse to register on the grounds that doing so requires submission to a government hostile to unbridled Christianity. They cite biblical passages that, in their interpretation, command them to resist such earthly authority.

Nearly all the dissidents fall under a theological umbrella that in the United States would be called evangelical.

These underground Christians say they have at least as many believers as the official churches and possibly many times more.

Chongwenmen Christian Church in Beijing is China's largest registered Protestant church. Services draw more than 2,500 people to seats inside the church and outside, where monitors broadcast the services.

Li Peiyong, a 34-year-old seminary graduate and pastoral assistant, said that 10 years ago, only 300 people attended on an average Sunday.

As a registered church, Chongwenmen complies with Decree No. 145, "Regulation Governing Venues for Religious Activities," written in 1994.

Human Rights Watch/Asia says these requirements effectively squelch the free practice of religion. In a 1997 report, the human rights group said that by requiring registration, the government can block the selection of clergy, supervise financial affairs and veto building programs.

Publication of Bibles, religious books, magazines and other materials is subject to government scrutiny, as are seminary students. Proselytizing among citizens younger than 18 is forbidden. Sermons can be checked for content.

Li dismisses such Western human-rights reports. She said ministers can preach as they please, to whomever they please. She conceded there is no proselytizing outside church property

but said with such booming attendance, there is no need for it. "This church is as free as Christian churches in the United States."

What about reports of imprisoned church leaders? "Maybe during the Cultural Revolution, but I have never heard of this thing now."

People in the underground churches, however, said imprisonment is still a reality. As recently as Nov. 11, news reports from China said more than 140 members of underground Protestant churches had been arrested.

Zhang Rongliang said he's been arrested three times. Zhang has no printing plant, church building or seminary. What he does have, he said, is an underground flock of 10 million uncompromising believers.

In August, Zhang and 11 other house-church leaders met in a two-story house just outside Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan province. The 12 men and women believe they represent at least 15 million Christians scattered throughout the country.

For the first time, several of these leaders decided to speak out, agreeing to have their pictures taken and names printed in the Western media. They said the rest of the world must know about their suffering, even though emerging from the underground could send them back to jail.

Zhang, 47, emerged as the group's spokesman. He said he travels by train and van to solve problems among his far-flung congregations, never staying in one place for more than four consecutive nights and always keeping his cell phone at his side.

He said he's been on the run since February 1994, when he was released after spending 14 days in a labor camp on a charge that he held unauthorized religious meetings with foreigners.

He said he was in a labor camp from 1967 to 1974 after being accused of fomenting "counterrevolutionary activities under the guise of religion."

A peasant farmer who once was a communist, Zhang said he doesn't see himself as a counterrevolutionary or any kind of threat.

"Tell the government," he said, "that we are their good friends, not their enemies."

Chinese Christians seek 'accurate portrayal'

NEW YORK (ABP)—Christians in China are "terribly offended" at reports of widespread religious persecution in their nation, said the delegation of a mainline United States religious delegation recently back from an 8-day visit to China.

Chinese Christians asked the 7-member delegation from the National Council of Churches "to advocate for a more accurate portrayal of their situation," said Joan Brown Campbell, the ecumenical organization's general secretary.

"Are there regulations to be observed by churches in China?" she asked. "Yes, and by all organized bodies. Are the regulations onerous and restrictive? Sometimes. Many of them we would not accept in our country. Are laws guaranteeing religious freedom unevenly applied? Yes."

But overall, Campbell said, the group witnessed Oct. 8-15 a Chinese church marked by rapid growth and increasing vitality. "These people deserve our support," she said.

The delegation's program included briefings

by the China Christian Council and discussions with U.S. Embassy officials in Beijing. They visited Yenjing Seminary in Beijing and had meetings with top Chinese officials and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Over and over, Campbell said, Chinese Christian leaders told the group, in effect, "Are you listening to us? Do you not see our growth? We are doing the best we can. We are running to catch up!"

Ambassador Andrew Young, another delegation member, said Chinese Christians didn't deny that serious persecution occurred during the Cultural Revolution.

"They said one of the reasons the church grew so after the Cultural Revolution was because during it, Christians didn't turn in their neighbors. They suffered themselves rather than implicating others," he said. "The moral example they set during the Cultural Revolution was the key to their evangelism and propagation after the Cultural Revolution. That's a story you never hear."

Pakistan's Christians treated as 'second-class citizens'

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan (RNS)—According to the law, no one should have been able to take Seema and Khushi Masih's daughters away from them.

According to the law, all parents in Pakistan—including Christian parents such as the Masih—have the right to raise their children in their own faith.

But the law isn't always followed in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Particularly when it comes to Christians.

The three girls were taken Jan. 25 by the family's landlady and her husband, who had police escorts. The couple claimed the children had converted to Islam and should no longer remain in a Christian home. The Masih said their daughters are still Christians, and even if they did convert to Islam, they should stay with their parents.

But 14-year-old Nadia, 11-year-old Nyla and 9-year-old Nabila are gone, and it's unclear whether they'll ever be allowed to return home. Two sons and another daughter still live with the Masih.

The city magistrate overseeing the case admitted he decided against the Christians not on the basis of law but on public sentiment and a concern he could have a religious riot on his hands.

"Legally speaking, they should have been given to their parents," said Kamran Abdullah Siddiqi.

But Siddiqi said if he did that, "Some crazy person would come and say these are the children of Islam. They'd say we're going to chop you. We're going to shoot you. We're going to—what did the KKK used to say in America?—lynch you."

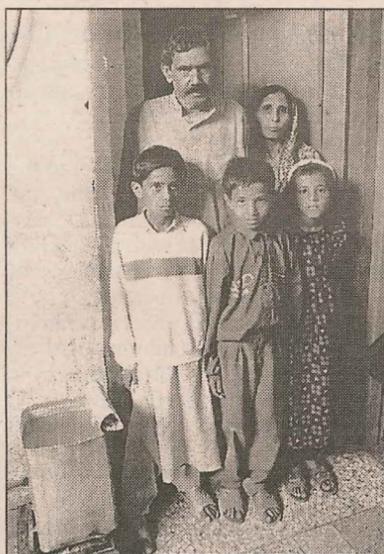
Article 36 of Pakistan's Constitution promises to safeguard the rights and interests of religious minorities. But human rights organizations say that's not happening. The U.S. State Department agreed, citing a government-fostered "atmosphere of religious intolerance" that has led to violence against religious minorities. In Pakistan, 97 percent of the population is Muslim; the rest is made up mostly of Christians but also Hindus, Buddhists and other groups.

In the 1980s, the United States gave Pakistan billions of dollars for economic development. But in recent years, concern that Pakistan was developing a nuclear bomb has prompted sanctions, slashing aid to millions

'My husband was martyred,' pastor's widow says

SHEKHUPURA, Pakistan (RNS)—In Shekhupura, a rural area 19 miles from Lahore, Pakistan's third biggest city, the story of Pastor Noor Alam's murder and the burning of his church has been told again and again.

According to Alam's widow, Sakina, and his daughter, Shazia, Alam bought a plot of land in 1997 and started construction of a church. Three months later, according to Sakina Alam, a mob destroyed the church. Alam held the Christmas service in his home that year. Sakina Alam said he



CHILDREN TAKEN Only three children remain with Khushi and Seema Masih in their apartment in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, after a police-escorted mob took away three of the couple's children in January. (RNS photos by Benjamin Brink)

of dollars, most for humanitarian work, food and counter-narcotics efforts.

The country's decision to test nuclear weapons in May further cooled U.S.-Pakistan relations.

Pakistan's pattern of religious persecution, documented for years in U.S. State Department reports, could lead to further sanctions.

David Forte, a professor at Cleveland State University and an expert on Islamic law who testified before Congress, said Pakistani Christians encounter the same institutionalized injustice African-Americans experienced before civil rights.

"In both instances," he says, "the minority is disenfranchised. It has no effective vote. It is subject to a legal system arrayed against it. Arbitrary violence against it goes unpunished."

Glynn Wood, a professor at the Monterey (Calif.) Institute of International Studies who has studied Pakistan for 30 years, said general social turmoil contributes to the problem. "The Pakistani Christians are right in saying that when their people are murdered, justice is not being pursued vigorously," he said. "But it's not being pursued vigorously for the rest of the population as well. It's very, very lawless."

Even some government representatives agree.

Ahmed Balal, deputy director of the new human rights department of Pakistan's ministry of law and justice

told the 25 families making up his Presbyterian congregation: "Even if I have to lay my life down for the rebuilding of this church, I will."

On Jan. 28, his family said, he did just that.

Just after midnight, Alam heard a noise in the house. Walking upstairs, he encountered three men wearing bedsheets over their heads, according to Alam's wife and daughter. He was stabbed in the chest, stomach and above the right eye.

"My husband was martyred," Sak-

ina Alam said. "As Jesus was crucified, and as blood dripped from his head, he was silent. And so was my husband."

No one has been arrested or charged in the crime, but police said they are investigating.

"This wasn't a religiously motivated murder," said Ghulam Rasul, the police officer overseeing the investigation. He speculated that the three attackers were robbers from outside the region, caught by Alam in an act of thievery.

His point: everyone—not just Christians—has something to fear in Pakistan.

"Compare a Christian with a Muslim citizen of this country," Balal said. "Is he any less protected? The majority of the people are unprotected. Everyone is unprotected."

Yet Christians in Pakistan say they are protected even less.

"We are unequals among equals," said M.L. Shahani, who, until he left the bench earlier this year, was Pakistan's only Christian judge.

"We are being treated as second-class citizens," said Bishop-elect Inayat Ejaz of the Church of Pakistan, a Protestant denomination made up of Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and members of the Church of Scotland.

British missionaries brought Christianity to Pakistan in the 1800s and 1900s. Today, no one knows for sure how many Christians are in Pakistan, but they are the nation's largest religious minority group.

Pakistani Christians are dirt poor in a poor country, where the average income is less than \$500 a year.

Fewer than half of Pakistan's citizens can read and write; fewer than 7 percent of Christians can. Christians often do the low-level sanitary work, cleaning toilets and collecting garbage, that others refuse to do. Because of this association with filth, Muslims in some parts of Pakistan will not touch a utensil used by a Christian unless it is washed first.

Asma Jehangir, chairwoman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, said things are getting worse, not better, for Christians.

"Incidents are increasing. Insecurities are increasing," she said. "You have legislation that is discriminatory. You have court judgments that are biased. It's not just that people are socially discriminated against now. It's persecution."

A practicing Muslim and an attorney, Jehangir said she defends Christians because "justice must be given to all."

Blasphemy claims draw mobs

RANGPUR, Pakistan (RNS)—Under Pakistan's blasphemy law, a mere complaint by a private citizen can result in an arrest without a warrant, even if there is no evidence.

Bail is often hard to obtain or not granted at all.

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto tried to amend the law but backed away when radical Islamic groups called for the death of anyone supporting change.

According to Compass Direct, an American-based Christian news service that monitors worldwide religious persecution, more than a dozen people have been jailed on blasphemy charges in the past seven years. No one has been executed, though four have been sentenced to death and five have been killed while in custody, the organization says.

In April, a young Pakistani Christian, Ayub Masih, was condemned to death for allegedly making a positive reference to Salman Rushdie's book "The Satanic Verses," which Iranian religious leaders have declared blasphemous.

Roman Catholic Bishop John Joseph came to Masih's defense. In a development that sent both Muslims and Christians to the streets in protest, the bishop killed himself on April 27. Supporters said he did it to draw worldwide attention to the blasphemy law.

Only a handful of people have been convicted of blasphemy, but others, such as schoolteacher Katherine Shaheen, have had their lives shaken through accusation.

Forced into hiding, she agreed to tell her story on condition her location not be identified. In 1995, she was accused, then cleared, of committing blasphemy.

She was the only Christian on the staff of the Government Girls High School in Rangpur, teaching biology and chemistry. But problems emerged, she said, when one school administrator told her she must convert to Islam and another ordered her to allow his relatives to cheat on an exam.

Shaheen said she refused and was accused of blasphemy by several students and teachers. A judicial inquiry was held, and the charges were dropped.

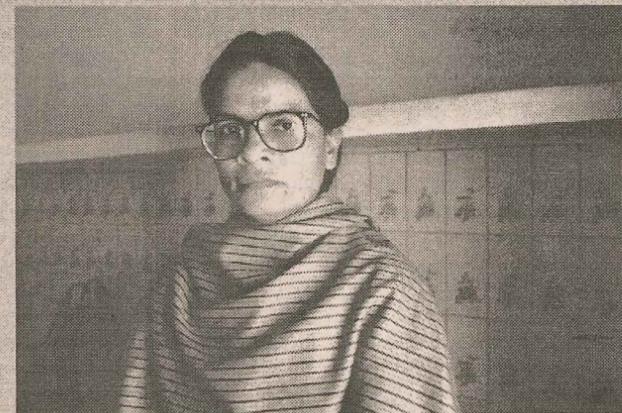
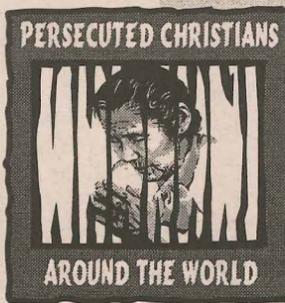
Members of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan attended the public proceedings and wrote that "the false and baseless" charges were motivated by "professional jealousy, personal grudges and religious intolerance."

It added that "the case against Ms. Shaheen was a clear example of abuse of the blasphemy law."

Shaheen thought the matter was over. But it was just beginning. She was labeled an enemy of Islam in a daily newspaper. A mob burned her in effigy, shouting "blasphemer" and "kill her."

She fled. Since then, she said, police have harassed her family.

"They're looking for me so they can kill me," she said, even though, under the law, she is innocent.



IN HIDING Katherine Shaheen, a Christian schoolteacher, was labeled a blasphemer by a Pakistani newspaper, and a mob burned her in effigy in front of her school. She has gone into hiding. "They're looking for me so they can kill me," she said.

Religion inflames sides in Sudan's bloody civil war

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

AWEIL, Sudan (RNS)—Geng Kuack Athiang lost a childhood of playing in the trees with friends when soldiers on horseback stormed into his village and captured him. He said he was sent into slavery and given an Islamic name.

Achol Deng Ngong lost her innocence after a similar attack on another village separated her from her husband and child. As a slave, she said, she became the concubine of a master who forced her to face Mecca and pray.

Peter Mayen Akot lost the church he helped build when soldiers scaled its roof and tore down a large cross that was the Roman Catholic community's most sacred symbol. Akot said he watched from a hiding place as the church went up in flames.

Such stories are common in the southern part of Sudan, Africa's largest and poorest country, where persecution of Christians in the name of

Islam has become a hallmark of a brutal civil war.

The Christians don't blame Islam, which, like Christianity, is by definition a peace-loving religion. But they do blame a northern military regime for turning a decades-old conflict into a jihad, or "holy war," targeting the black Christians of southern Sudan.

In Sudan, the boundary between north and south has long been considered a dividing line between an Arab-Muslim culture and an African one that incorporates Christianity and tribal religions.

In the first half of this century, a colonial British government channeled Christian missionaries to the south while prohibiting Islamic proselytizing. The two sides have been at war almost continuously since the British left in 1956. An estimated 1.5 million people have died in the fighting. Meanwhile, famine brought on by the conflict has killed or threatened more

than a million people.

This is a war about culture, language, race, political systems and allocations of natural resources.

It is also about religion.

Bona Mawal is a consultant to the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the rebels of the south. He credits Christian nuns and priests with giving him and nearly all the learned people of southern Sudan an education.

Mawal, 60, has degrees in economics, journalism and international affairs. He has taught African history at Oxford University in England.

He said he has lost 19 brothers to the war.

"This is attempted genocide," he said. "It's an effort to wipe out an African group. That African group happens to be largely Christian, which

makes their urge to commit genocide even stronger."

Since 1993, the United States has considered Sudan a state sponsor of terrorism. A congressional mandate forbids U.S. economic or military aid to such countries. Although humanitarian aid has not been cut

off, the United States last year imposed an embargo forbidding most companies from trading with Sudan.

In 1983, the Arab government of northern Sudan instituted strict Islamic law in the entire country. Then came a 1992 fatwa, a religious decree that gave theological justification to the extermination of non-Muslims. Gaspar Biro, special investigator for the United Nations, said the northern government publicly supported this.

A northern political party—the Umma Party, comprised mostly of Muslims—is aligning itself with the rebels of the south while accusing the government of distorting Islamic principles.

Mohammed Abdglrman Salih, an Umma Party official, shook his head

as he inspected a southern Sudanese village recently attacked in the name of his religion. "They just talk about Islam to gain support from the Muslims in the north," Salih said. "We condemn this."

Abdullahi An-Naim, an expert in Islamic law from northern Sudan who now teaches at Emory University's law school in Atlanta, said, "To call it jihad does not make it jihad in Islamic terms." The use of the term, he said, meets neither the classic military definition nor the common usage of jihad, which for most Muslims means "struggle" or "effort" on behalf of Allah, and has nothing to do with war.

That may be true, said Roman Catholic Bishop Marcus Gassis. But it doesn't negate the fact that Christianity and its followers have been singled out for destruction in the name of another religion. "It's religious persecution."

Horse-riding bands of militias pour down from the north to attack not only the villages but also their churches.

It happened in Maper Giir on April 4. More than 20,000 people were displaced in the raid, and 436 women and children were captured and presumably taken into slavery, says the village's chief, John Aher Arol Aher.

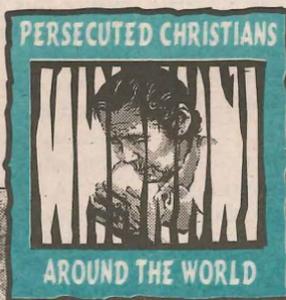
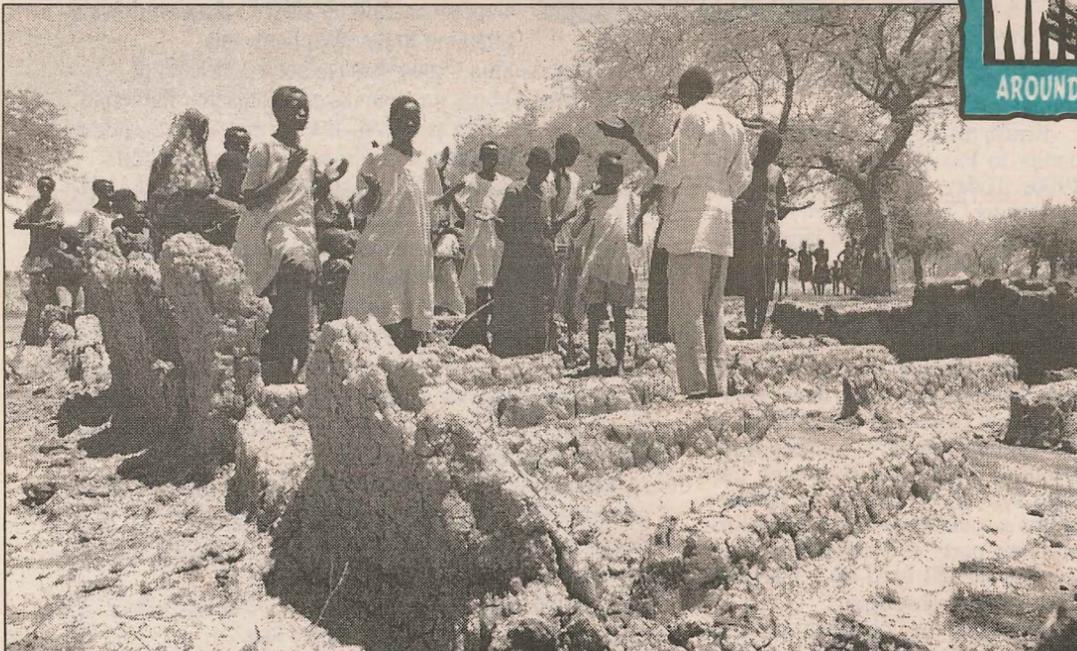
But what struck Peter Mayen Akot, 22, and Samuel Akot Agok, 25, was what the troops did to the village's Catholic church.

They said they watched two soldiers scale the thatched roof, tear off the church's cross and toss it to the ground. Another soldier threw the cross into the sanctuary before setting fire to the structure, they said.

"It's part of the persecution of Christians," Gassis said. "They want to wipe out even any sign of Christianity from the land."

Akot said church attendance has increased since the attack, even though services must be held under trees. "This has made people even more determined to be Christians," Akot said. "The church is even fuller now because of this persecution."

BURNED UP, NOT OUT
A congregation sings and worships amid the remains of a Catholic church that was set afire by soldiers in Maper Giir, Sudan. (RNS photos by Benjamin Brink)



Slavery and starvation are weapons along with guns, swords and fire

MALUAL KON, Sudan (RNS)—In Sudan's civil war, slavery is a weapon.

The United Nations and human rights organizations have documented slavery in Sudan for years. The Sudanese government blames it on tribal disputes. Some question whether the captives' fates amount to slavery.

In a 1995 report, Human Rights Watch/Africa asserted that it's fair to call the victims slaves. "They were taken as war booty," the reports said. "They ended up far from their villages of origin, performing unpaid household labor and herding animals; some were sexually abused by their masters."

Roman Catholic Bishop Marcus Gassis said human rights organizations and media reports often overlook the increasingly religious aspect.

"Slavery is now occurring in a holy war," Gassis said. "Anything they get from holy war is their property, including the

human person. This is their interpretation of jihad."

Geng Kuack Athiang, 15, recently got to go home. His ordeal began three years ago, he said, when he and his friends, playing in the trees, heard machine guns.

Athiang ran into three soldiers on horseback. Whether they were from the National Islamic Front or from a tribal militia group doing the army's bidding, Athiang does not know.

He said he saw more than a dozen men executed, the skulls of children crushed, the arms and legs of a dozen older boys amputated.

Athiang appears fortunate. He was taken into slavery and forced to look after cattle. His master rarely beat him, he said. And he wasn't forced to memorize the Koran and learn Islamic prayers, as many slaves are.

Achol Deng Ngong, 30, saw her Christianity as part of her identity. When



BLOOD MONEY A representative of Christian Solidarity International hands over the equivalent of almost \$17,000 to an Arab slave trader in exchange for slaves' freedom.

told to face Mecca and pray five times a day, Ngong said she played dumb and refused to participate. But she said she couldn't refuse her master, who once stabbed her in the shoulder when she tried to resist his sexual advances.

She bore two sons to her master, she said. They were given Muslim names.

Famine is another man-made weapon of war in southern Sudan. It's enough to drive David Kagunda, field program officer for the United Nations' Operation Lifeline Sudan, crazy.

Kagunda's job is to feed people, not save souls. But as he sees it, religion has as much to do with the starvation as anything.

The United Nations wanted to send food to the hardest-hit area, the vast Bahr el-Ghazal province, in January. But the food stayed in warehouses in Kenya because the government in Khartoum denied all flights.

By May, the government succumbed to international pressure and lifted the flight ban. According to Kagunda, the delay potentially cost 450,000 lives, nearly all of them Christians and animists.

"We can't say people are being starved just because of religion," Kagunda said. "But if these were Muslims in the south, all these restrictions and denials of access to get food in just wouldn't be there."

In Egypt, Christianity allowed but not conversion

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

CAIRO, Egypt (RNS)—For evangelical Christians such as Luis Palau, nothing is as important as "making disciples of all nations."

But Egypt follows the prophet Mohammed with equal fervor. It rejects the notion of converting its people—particularly to a religion associated with the West, a religion, it's still remembered, that persecuted Muslims during the 11th century Crusades.

That's why the gathering last February at Kasr el-Dobara Presbyterian Church in Cairo was so radical—and so dangerous.

Palau, of Beaverton, Ore., was preaching that Christ is the way. The only way.

Five blocks from the Nile River, tucked into a crowded neighborhood, the narrow five-story building—the largest Protestant church in the Arab world—is easy to miss on most nights. But that was no ordinary night.

Worshippers jammed the sanctuary and poured into nearby rooms fitted with closed-circuit television. Hundreds more pressed against a gate, where armed police stood guard.

For four nights, to the melody of Western songs translated into Arabic, Palau preached the Christian message of salvation from sin and death.

At crusades in the West, converts commonly flock to the altar in a public acknowledgment of conversion. But if anyone converts during this crusade, the rest of the worshippers never see it.

Why? Arab authorities say the effort to "save" Muslim souls, though not against Egyptian secular law, is certainly against Islamic teaching, which prohibits conversion and, according to some interpretations, merits punishment by death.

What's more, Muslims say such conversion is unnecessary because Islam is a more advanced relative of Christianity, recognizing both Jesus and Mohammed.

"If you're a Muslim, you're a

Christians: Can't we just get along?

CAIRO, Egypt (RNS)—Although evangelical Christians challenge the Muslim majority in Egypt, most native Egyptian Christian leaders emphasize getting along. Privately, some say they fear that making a fuss about religious persecution could haunt them.

"It's not a matter of Christianity vs. Islam but a question of who will rule the country—the civil government we have or an Islamic regime?" said Safwat el-Baiady, president of the Egyptian Council of Protestant Churches. "It's wise that the church support the government; otherwise we'll face an Islamic regime, which isn't good for the church."

"We live in a better situation than any other religious minority in the world," said Nasim Mijalli, a literary critic and one of a handful of Christian professors at the University of Cairo. "Historically, we have lived in peace with the Muslims for hundreds of years."

An indentation just above the bridge of Mustapha el-Sharkawy's nose tells a different story.

The scar developed when police put a blindfold over Sharkawy's face, then tied a rope around it, said the 38-year-old father of two.

That was in 1991, during a 10-month prison stay. When the rope was finally loosened after two weeks, the blindfold stuck to Sharkawy's face, he said. It took five minutes to peel it off.

Even though no formal charges were filed against him, Sharkawy said he was interrogated for two weeks, then put into solitary confinement and tortured.

Sharkawy said his crime was conversion and afterward international human rights organizations and members of the U.S. Congress complained to the Egyptian government. But his problems didn't end.

He said he was fired from two jobs after policemen told his Muslim employers he was an apostate. "I can work as a Muslim. I can work as a Christian," he says. "But I can't work as a (known) convert."

In March, Britain gave Sharkawy and his family temporary refugee status on the grounds he was persecuted because of his conversion to Christianity.

Christian-plus," says Mo'ti Bayoumi, dean of Islamic theology at Al-Azhar University, the Harvard of the Islamic world.

Although some point to evangelical churches like Kasr el-Dobara as evidence of Egypt's tolerance, the U.S. State Department and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International cite instances of arrest and torture of converts in Egypt. In addition, they allege that Christians are underrepresented in Egypt's government, discriminated against in education and business and increasingly targeted by terrorists.

"Whoever is baptized will be persecuted," said pastor Menes Abdul Noor, who heads Kasr el-Dobara and hosted Palau's visit.

Noor said converts he has baptized face rejection by family and friends. As many as 10 converts a year have

been arrested and some have been tortured, he said.

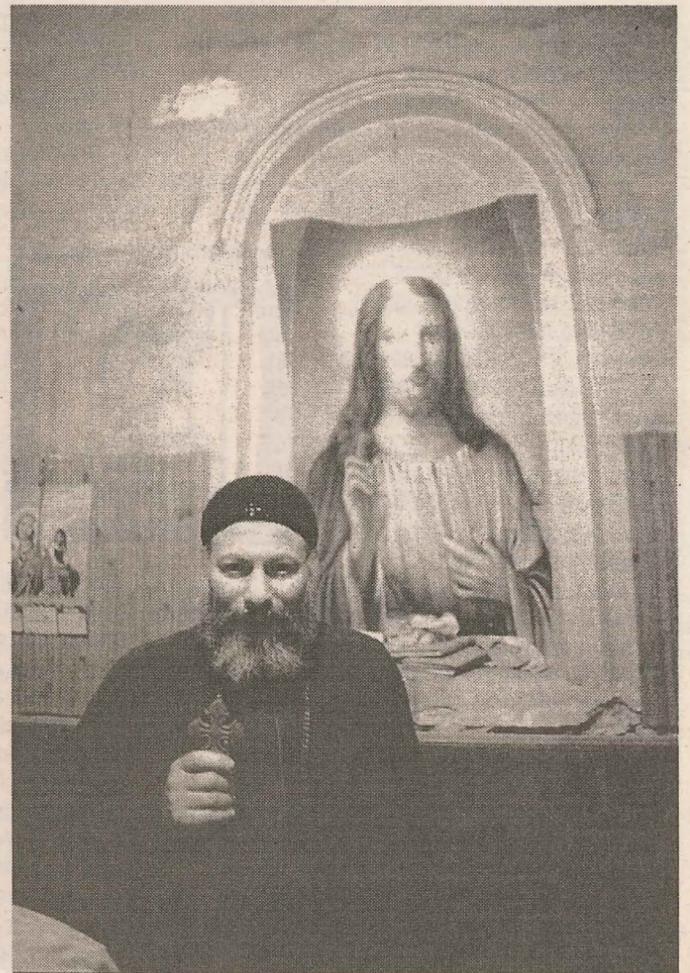
The U.S. State Department says it has "credible reports" of at least two converts being physically abused by state security officers.

Egyptian authorities interrogate him almost monthly, Noor said. He suspects his office and telephone are bugged. "Am I in danger? Of course. So was the Apostle Paul. So was James, the second martyr. So was Stephen, the first martyr. These are the facts of life."

Even without converts, Egypt is the most Christian country in the Middle East, owing to the efforts of evangelists nearly 2,000 years ago.

By the early seventh century, nearly all Egyptians were Christians. According to tradition, it was St. Mark, a companion of Paul, who founded the Egyptian Orthodox Church about 60 A.D.

After Muslims invaded Egypt from



COPTS The pastor of El-Moallaga Church in Cairo, Egypt, pauses as he blesses the elements of the Eucharist before passing out the bread and wine as symbols of Christ's Last Supper. The church is within a cluster of "Coptic" churches. After Muslims invaded Egypt from Syria in the 7th century, most Christians converted to Islam. Those who did not are called Copts—a derivation of the word "Egyptian." (RNS photo)

Syria in the 7th century, most Christians converted to Islam. Those who did not are called Copts—a derivation of the word "Egyptian." According to government statistics, there are 6 million Copts, but Egyptian Christian leaders claim at least 10 million.

Compared with some Islamic countries, Egypt is a haven of freedom. Christians walk the streets wearing crucifixes.

But that doesn't make them immune. In March, Islamic militants wearing masks and military fatigues walked into the predominantly Christian village of Ezbet Dawoud, 300 miles south of Cairo, and shot everyone in sight. Thirteen men were killed. In February, gunmen killed nine Christians who were attending a youth meeting at a Coptic church in Abu Qurqas.

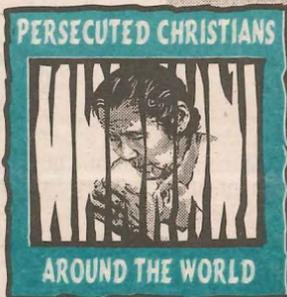
The Egyptian government strongly denies that Christians are persecuted. Still, shrill advertisements placed in American newspapers this year by the American, Australian, Canadian, British and European Coptic Associations hold the government responsible.

Privately, many Copts say their situation is more subtle and complex.

Copts have risen to prominence in some business circles, but of the 400 members of Parliament, only five are Christian. The nation's most influential university, Al-Azhar, is open only to Muslims. Students say a double standard exists in the way they are treated at colleges as well as in the workplace.

Noor expects Muslim converts to Christianity to continue to be mistreated. He says he will continue to preach and to baptize until he dies or is jailed.

"We have to expect persecution," Noor says. "This is part of our Christian faith. Why run away from it?"



Persecution law could muddy Egypt, U.S. relations

CAIRO, Egypt (RNS)—Egypt poses a unique test for a new American law that requires the president to take action against countries that persecute on the basis of religion.

American evangelicals provided much of the impetus for a law enacted by Congress in October.

But Egypt is a key U.S. ally, acting as a stabilizing force in the volatile Middle East. It receives \$2.1 billion a year from the United States, the second-largest recipient of aid behind only Israel.

The U.S. State Department has criticized Egypt's mistreatment of converts. The issue could become more volatile if mistreatment is cited as a reason for a sanction under

the new religious persecution law.

The new law says freedom of religion is an inalienable right not just in the United States but everywhere, and it cites international documents to prove its point.

The 1948 U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for which Egypt voted, states that every person has an inherent right to worship as he or she pleases. That right, according to the declaration, "includes freedom to change his religion or belief."

But some Asian and Islamic countries have argued since then that the religious clause of the declaration strongly reflects Western values, at their expense.

The 1948 U.N. declaration creates a dilemma for Muslim countries. Do they abide by the international standard and disobey Islamic law? Or do they honor Islamic law and risk the disapproval of other countries?

"The challenge for us as Muslims is to either subscribe to what we have already committed to or provide an alternative, universalist vision," said Abdullahi An-Naim, an expert on Islamic law and a professor at Emory Law School in Atlanta. "On the question of freedom of religion, are we saying Muslims have the right to convert others to Islam but not allow them the right to convert Muslims to their religion?"

Will U.S. protests against persecution do any good?

WASHINGTON (RNS)—When the United States points a long finger of moral indignation, alleging violations of religious freedom, the response is often, "Who asked you?"

Even in the United States, many ask: "Can we do anything to help? Should we?"

As the world's premier superpower, the United States has long been the international cop on a wide range of human rights issues. Now that Congress has enacted a law making religious freedom a foreign policy mandate, the United States also will be policing and punishing persecution of all faiths in other countries.

In general, the more desperate Christians see their condition, the more they want the United States to take decisive action.

Alexander John Malik, the bishop of Lahore for the Church of Pakistan, said the Christian minority in his country needs pressure from the West to make the government drop a blasphemy law used against Christians—even if it means more trouble in the short run.

"We always suffer," Malik said. "We don't mind that."

The bill provides 15 possible responses, from a simple diplomatic reprimand to economic and trade sanctions.

In the past, the United States has sanctioned Pakistan and Sudan, among others, for various human rights violations. In places such as Sudan, where a civil war has ravaged religious minorities and others for 40 years, there might be little more

the United States can do.

But Egypt, which depends on more than \$2 billion annually in U.S. aid, and China, a key trading partner, could be jolted by economic sanctions.

Sanctions are controversial. USA Engage, a coalition of 497 businesses, says sanctions hurt U.S. business while accomplishing their goals.

Some Christians abroad fear a backlash.

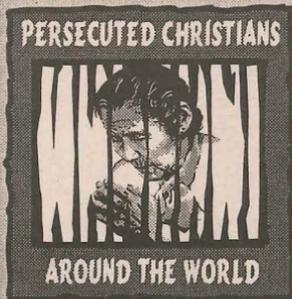
M.L. Shahani, formerly Pakistan's only Christian judge and now in private practice, advises caution. He said the Muslim majority in his country will blame Pakistani Christians if the United States imposes sanctions.

In Egypt, Safwat el-Baiady, president of the Egyptian Council of Protestant Churches, said

sanctions could harm Christians in that country. "The majority will think it's the problem of the Christians as to why they are losing the U.S. aid."

Some suggest more individual approaches. Two Democrats and two Republicans in Congress have formed the Religious Prisoners Congressional Task Force, which aims to orchestrate letter-writing campaigns on behalf of religious prisoners in foreign countries.

Rep. Joseph Pitts, R-Pa., a group member, said such efforts can be effective. "When congressional members engage in advocacy with key government officials, prisoners' lives can change for the better, prison conditions alter, torture ceases and prisoners may even be released."



On the road again?

In my ministry with our Kentucky Baptist Assemblies, I spend a great deal of time out of the office. As a matter of fact, it's a matter of debate as to where my office really is.

Often I'm at Cedarmore, sometimes at Jonathan Creek. I live in Louisville and do a good deal of work at home, and sometimes I am simply "in between."

We don't have a central office, as such. Maybe someday the need will arise, but right now our system works fairly well.

One of the tasks that frequently takes me out of the office is the opportunity to preach and speak across the state.

I was able to make several of our associational meetings for the specific purpose of talking about what God is doing at Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek. I stay fairly busy, but it is one of my responsibilities that I enjoy a great deal.

I am privileged to travel Kentucky preaching the word and talking about the blessings God continues to bring to Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek.

I suppose at times my enthusiasm might be a little obnoxious, but I am so blessed to be God's

instrument at this time in the life cycle of our camps and conference centers.

There is so much to be excited about. Our ministry numbers at Cedarmore are running about 64 percent ahead of where we were a year ago. And while we're not about numbers, we need people to be successful in the years ahead.

If you have brought a group to Cedarmore or Jonathan Creek, we appreciate your support.

If you haven't, come see us and give us a chance to serve you and meet your needs with regard to conferences and retreats.

We still have lots of space available for spring, but it's going fast.

Will you consider either Cedarmore or Jonathan Creek for your next function? We offer a genuine opportunity for you to "retreat" and be drawn near to God.

Come let us serve you in the near future at your Kentucky Baptist conference centers.

Rusty Ellison is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies, Box 37, Bagdad, Ky. 40003. Call (502) 747-8911

KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



Rusty Ellison

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Persecution of Christians both widespread & complex

Continued from page 1

Christians are being tortured, beaten, raped, imprisoned, enslaved and killed—in large part, advocates say, because of what they believe.

Still, Christian persecution is much more complicated than it first appears.

It is rarely an issue of people suffering solely for their faith, as portrayed in emotion-charged videos and fund-raising letters.

Instead, victims often are caught in a nexus of social and political as well as religious currents. In places such as Sudan, religious persecution has become an instrument of war. In countries such as Egypt and Pakistan, it's intermingled with social tensions and the perception that Christianity is the oppressive religion of the West.

In China, the communist government sees Christianity not so much as a spiritual threat as a political one. Complicating that picture is the fact that many Chinese Christians say they

are experiencing a golden age of religious freedom—if they abide by the government's controls.

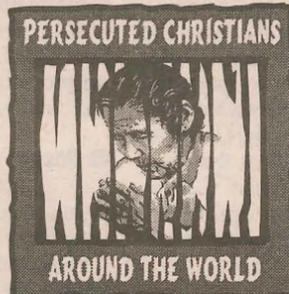
In many parts of the world, governments might have good reason to fear Christianity. History proves it can inspire followers to acts of bravery, and sometimes rebellion, in the name of an invisible God who is seen as more powerful than the state.

With its biblical stories of first-century martyrs and Beatitudes saying "blessed are those who are persecuted," Christian philosophy is viewed by some as a self-fulfilling prophecy. In China, for example, some Christians view persecution as a spiritual badge of honor and a precursor for church growth.

"It's good for the church, like

growing pains with children," said Allen Yuan, 84, a Chinese underground church leader who spent more than 21 years in a labor camp.

Peasant Chinese pastors have developed a slogan: "Prison is our seminary."



Before it became a political issue in the United States, the mandate to find solidarity with suffering Christians was primarily a spiritual matter.

Voice of the Martyrs, an Oklahoma-based organization, has been focusing on persecution since 1967. It emphasizes

biblical passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:26, which tells Christians to care for one another as if they were all parts of the same body: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it."

But it was a Jewish attorney and Washington, D.C., power broker who turned persecution of Christians into a political issue.

Michael Horowitz said his awakening occurred in 1994, when he hired Geteneh Getanel, a Christian Ethiopian, to live in his home and do housework.

The domestic helper tried, unsuccessfully, to evangelize Horowitz, who describes himself as a "traditional conservative Jew." But in the process, Getanel recounted how he had been imprisoned for preaching in Africa, then tortured by having boiling

oil poured on the soles of his feet as he was whipped by metal cables.

Horowitz had served as the Reagan administration's general counsel for the Office of Management and Budget and as a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a nonprofit think tank that analyzes public policy issues.

Horowitz fired off letters to 143 missionary organizations across the country, saying he was "pained and puzzled" about their relative lack of interest in coming to the aid of fellow persecuted Christians around the world.

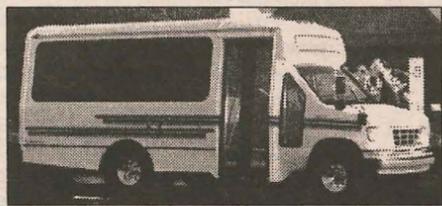
"What struck me," Horowitz said recently, "is how Christian leaders were so intimidated in speaking out on behalf of their own. It was a fear that if they did that, they would be reminded of all the sins that have historically been made in the name of Christianity. But I challenged them. I said, 'Would you be willing to speak of your own virtue instead of just your own sins?'"

In 1996, Horowitz drafted "A Statement of Conscience," which was adopted by groups including the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Association of Evangelicals. That and similar efforts laid the foundation for the bill Congress passed this fall.

A Jew had awakened American Christians to fight for their brethren in other parts of the world. Horowitz argued that if the United States fails to take decisive action, Christians will become "the Jews of the 21st century, the scapegoats of choice of the world's thug regimes."

"What struck me is how Christian leaders were so intimidated in speaking out on behalf of their own."

Michael Horowitz, who drafted "A Statement of Conscience"



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Peace

By Monica Haydon

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

In the past few years God has made these verses come to life for me. As a college student, I have experienced many tense and stressful times. It is during those times that I have searched through my past, looking for moments when I felt God's peace the strongest, and it is during those times that God has shown me what his peace truly is.

My nephews, Jordan and David Stephen, arrived in my family at two crucial points in my life. Jordy was born my freshman year in high school, and David Stephen was born just before my freshman year in college. At these two times of major adjustment in my life, God used the touch of those precious babies to reassure me of his love and presence in life.

I felt the strongest peace when I held those two angels and watched them sleep. It was a peace unlike any other peace I have ever experi-

enced. They were so trusting and needy, and I was the one designated to meet their needs at that moment. How awesome is the peace God provided through those precious children.

Even now as my two babies are growing up, I still experience that peace when I take the time to sit and do with them whatever they desire.

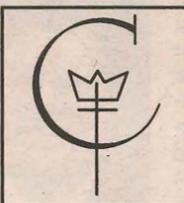
They are innocent, full of life, and they radiate God's unconditional love. There is not a doubt in my mind that God attempts to restore a little peace to this hurried world every time he sends a newborn into the loving arms of its family.

Monica Haydon is the daughter of Jessie and Betty Haydon of Springfield. She

is a junior majoring in both psychology and religion. Haydon plans to attend seminary, but is considering service in the Journeyman or US-2 program immediately after graduation. Her commitment to missions has led her to serve for the past two years in Vermont as a summer missionary. Recently she was selected to participate in a mission team to Bosnia for several weeks in May 1999. Her life is an expression of bringing peace and wholeness to others through Jesus Christ. — Robert Dunston

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

CUMBERLAND
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Christ-centered, now and always

Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children provides care and hope for hurting families and children through Christ-centered ministries.

I really like the clarity of our mission statement. But I know that being Christ-centered means different things to different people. There are two dynamics to KBHC's definition of Christ-centered ministries.

Let me start by saying that people outside the faith will find these dynamics difficult to grasp.

First, KBHC tries to create and maintain ministries that reflect the grace of God demonstrated by, and experienced through, faith in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

It doesn't matter what someone has done or failed to do. It doesn't matter what has hap-

pened to them. It is our viewpoint that all children and families are within the reach of God's grace. We do not discriminate regarding those we serve because we all are in need of his touch.

Christ-centered ministries also mean we hold to some basic values. Something is valued when it is singled out as being special.

There are certain principles this agency holds as special. We strive to promote and model traditional

Judeo-Christian values. We stand for values set forth in Scripture that support one husband, one wife and then a child as the healthiest way to perpetuate the human race. We hold fast to presenting our traditional family values and love homosexuals and others outside them at the same time.

Some people have difficulty reconciling the two pillars of this definition of Christ-centeredness.

Today, if you stand for your values, others mark you as a bigot. Tolerance, relativism and popular opinion are replacing our moral compass.

Does grace for all mean there can be no stand for values?

What must be understood is that grace intrinsically has values. One

without the other leads to either libertarianism or legalism. Replacing values with unbridled tolerance only cheapens the Father's perfect plan of reconciliation through Christ.

Bill Smithwick is president of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, 10801 Shelbyville Road, Middletown, Ky. 40243. Call (800) 456-1386. KBHC's Internet address is: <http://www.iglou.com/kbhc/>

HOMES FOR
CHILDREN



Bill Smithwick

Falwell, tired of being 'token conservative,' launches show

LYNCHBURG, Va. (ABP)—Saying he's tired of being the "token conservative" on America's "liberal" talk shows, Jerry Falwell has launched his own weekly television talk show.

"Listen America with Jerry Falwell" premiered in October and is rapidly expanding its viewing audience, Falwell reported in the December issue of his National Liberty Journal newspaper.

The 60-minute program, carried on broadcast and cable outlets, also is available to individuals with satellite dishes.

By January, the program should be carried on networks that reach 60 million homes, Falwell said.

The program is "distinctively different from all other talk shows because it is not only politically conservative but approaches every issue from the Judeo-Christian perspective," he said.

"As program host, I try hard to show why CNN calls me the 'Godfather of the Religious Right,'" he added. "I attack liberalism and anti-Christian forces in the head-on, straightforward and hard-hitting manner as I have while a guest on the network shows over the past 20 years."

Topics of Falwell's programs to date have included the year 2000 computer problem, "the gay and lesbian agenda," the Clinton impeachment hearings, and the "Disney betrayal of the family."

Falwell's initial guests have included two veteran talk show hosts, Larry King and Geraldo Rivera.

Another of his initial guests was Paige Patterson, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

"Listen America" airs live on Fridays at 10 p.m., eastern time.

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Miami bars gay bias.** More than two decades after singer Anita Bryant led a successful campaign against gay rights, Miami-Dade County commissioners have voted to ban discrimination against gays. A similar ordinance was tossed out in 1977 when Bryant's Save Our Children group mounted a highly visible protest against the law. The county was one of the first to offer civil rights protection to gays and one of the first to repeal such a measure. With members of the Christian Coalition praying against the measure nearby, commissioners voted 7-6 to bar discrimination against homosexuals in housing and the workplace.

■ **Poll shows anti-Semitism drop.** A new poll found Americans to be less anti-Semitic than ever, but also said blacks are nearly four times more likely to accept negative Jewish stereotypes than are whites. The Anti-Defamation League poll indicated 12 percent of Americans hold "strongly" anti-Semitic views, down from 20 percent in 1992. But approximately 25 million Americans—more than one-in-10—continue to embrace a wide range of stereotypes about Jews, including "Jews have too much power" and "Jews are more loyal to Israel than America," according to the poll.

■ **Sodomy law struck down.** The Georgia Supreme Court struck down

the state's 156-year-old law against sodomy Nov. 23. The ruling was hailed as a victory for gay rights activists opposed to anti-sodomy laws throughout the United States. Chief Justice Robert Benham penned the court's majority opinion, which said citizens are entitled to privacy. The Georgia ruling was counter to a 1986 U.S. Supreme Court decision that held the U.S. Constitution provided no protection for private homosexual conduct.

■ **Gospel singer, composer dead.** J.D. Sumner, a Grammy Award-winning gospel singer known for his deep bass voice, died Nov. 16 after a heart attack. Sumner, 73, died in Myrtle Beach, S.C., where he was performing with the Stamps Quartet. He became leader of the quartet in 1963 and grew to prominence in the gospel music field. His group provided back-up vocals for Elvis Presley from 1972-77. Sumner composed more than 500 gospel songs during his time with the group and was instrumental in the creation of the Gospel Music Association and the National Quartet Convention.

■ **Abortion ban struck down.** A Florida federal judge has struck down as unconstitutional a state law favored by opponents of a controversial late-term abortion procedure. The procedure dubbed "partial-birth abortion" by opponents has been at the center of the nation's ongoing

and heated abortion debates. Doctors argued during an earlier hearing on the law that while so-called "partial-term abortions" were the ostensible target, nearly all abortions could fall under the law's jurisdiction.

■ **"Wild prophecies" shunned.** The bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have issued a pastoral letter dismissing "wild prophecies" that the world is about to end and declaring the third Christian millennium should be welcomed with hope. "The end of the millennium continues to spawn all kinds of wild prophecies about the end of the world," the letter stated. "As Christians, we live each day as if it could be the last, and embrace each new day as a gift of God." The statement is meant to counter "millennialist" theories for which it said there is no biblical basis.

■ **Scientology pleads not guilty.** The Church of Scientology on Nov. 30 pleaded not guilty to charges of abuse, neglect and practicing medicine without a license in connection with the death in Clearwater, Fla., of a member who was under the church's medical care. Lisa McPherson, 36, died in December 1995. McPherson was under round-the-clock church care. An autopsy revealed she died of a pulmonary embolism caused by prolonged bed rest and severe dehydration, according to the New York Times.

It really was a special day

Everyone has his or her favorite holiday, and I have mine. Thanksgiving has always been special for me. Even though I came from a broken home and cannot remember ever having a Thanksgiving meal with my natural mother and father, I do remember sharing Thanksgiving meals with my family, such as it was.

For the past 15 years, I have had the privilege of spending Thanksgiving with our Oneida family. It was a little odd at first, eating the Thanksgiving meal with 200 people instead of the traditional 15 or 20 family members.

Over the years I have grown to love and appreciate the opportunity to share this holiday meal not only with my family but also with many co-workers, a host of students and many other Oneida friends. Very early on Thanksgiving morning, our cooks began arriving to prepare the noon meal. As they do each year, they left their families at home in order to prepare a delicious meal for us. Twenty large turkeys were put into the ovens. More than 100 bowls of corn, green beans, dressing, gravy, cranberry sauce and biscuits also had to be prepared. Several of our girls helped prepare the meal and decorate the tables. We do our very best to make this meal as much like home as possible.

About 11:30 a.m. the families started to arrive. We do not allow anyone to enter the dining room until everything is prepared. Our goal is to have everything ready by noon. The cooks were busy putting all the food on the tables, filling the water cups and tending to last minute details. The crowd outside grew larger and larger. In addition to the faculty and staff, there were many other guests. Some were parents of our students who came to share the meal with us. Several of our faculty and

staff had parents and siblings visiting for the holidays. In addition to these friends, there were our dorm students, nearly 60 in all. Many of these students live too far away to make the trip during the four-day break. Some could not afford the expense of traveling back home with the Christmas-break just three weeks away. Still other students either could not go home or chose not to go home for various reasons.

By noon the foyer and sidewalk were full of hungry boys, girls, moms, dads and others. Just after noon, we let them in to be seated. It was close, but with a little help finding an empty seat here and there all were seated. I reminded everyone of God's goodness to us and of the many Oneida friends who helped make this meal and our school possible. The blessing was offered and at the utterance of "Amen," the food began to be passed around. Many of our international students have no idea why Americans celebrate Thanksgiving, but trust me, it doesn't take them long to enjoy the food just as we do.

The turkey, dinner rolls, dressing and gravy always are the most popular. Initially, with all of the food being passed there is little time to eat. Finally, things begin to settle down and everyone is able to enjoy the delicious meal. After seconds and a trip to the dessert table a time or two, the students begin to head back to the dorms for a nice afternoon nap. The faculty, staff and guests also make their way back to their homes.

What a wonderful day it was!

W.F. Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, P.O. Box 67, Oneida, Ky. 40972. www.oneidaschool.org

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Christmas at Clear Creek

The 29th annual Christmas Shopping Spree was Dec. 1. Churches and friends sent gifts and several thousand dollars to purchase additional items. Faculty and staff converted the family life center gymnasium into a shopping mall.

At 5 p.m. students began to shop, with separate shopping times for men, women and singles. By 7 p.m., everything was gone. One first-year student commented, "I was overwhelmed by it all." A senior said, "This was the best shopping spree we've had." One couple who recently became guardians for three children was thrilled to receive two bicycles and other toys.

The next day was Turkey Day, a campus tradition started in 1968 by alumnus Don Burnett. After Burnett's death in 1971, President Aldridge agreed for me to continue the event. Except for my years in the Philippines and last year, I have been present to distribute turkeys. Primarily alumni fund the project.

After chapel, each full-time student received an envelope containing \$50, and 175 frozen 10- to 12-pound self-basting turkeys awaited when classes dismissed at 12:50 p.m. Cars circled in front of Kelly

Hall to receive a turkey and a bag of potatoes. Don Colyer, a 1978 alumnus, has brought a ton of potatoes the last six years.

Friday evening, Dec. 5, the campus family gathered for a live nativity and lighting of the campus tree. As Luke 2 was read, students dramatized the Christmas story. A large crowd went to Kelly Hall for refreshments and singing. Students will enjoy Christmas even more when final exams end Dec. 18.

Pray for seniors who wait for the Lord to provide a ministry opportunity. Pray for new students who move to campus in January. Pray for three of our staff involved this month in the Novgorod Russia Pastor/Church Planter School.

Jay Barnett returns from Russia Dec. 15. Bill and Loretta Pfoff left Dec. 5 for a six-month sabbatical. He will teach four courses and write Sunday school material for Russia Baptist churches. Bill Helton and four students will be in Novgorod Dec. 8-23. Our Christmas celebration also includes giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

BOOKS

Don't Know Much About the Bible: Everything You Need to Know About the Good Book but Never Learned. Kenneth Davis. William Morrow and Co., 1998. 533 pages. \$25. ♦♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

Kenneth Davis observes that while there are more than 3,000 English versions of the Bible, "most of us don't know much about the Bible." This book is Davis' attempt to remedy that.

Not exactly a Bible commentary or a defense of Scripture, "Don't Know Much" draws the reader into the fascinating world of the Bible, its characters and its message.

Though not a Biblical scholar (he is a historian), Davis often highlights parts of the Biblical narrative overlooked in more traditional commentaries. For example, Esau, though often portrayed as the fool, actually presents a model of grace and reconciliation. On occasion, while being impressed with an insight, I was frustrated by the lack of footnotes or citations which would allow me to verify Davis' assertion, such as his contention that the number 666 is a Greek letter code for Nero, emperor of Rome.

Davis might frustrate those looking for affirmation of a literalist interpretation, but he comes through as a man of faith who believes the Bible has been neglected too long. His book will aggravate, challenge and surprise. But most of all it might get you to read your Bible. *Jim Holladay*

Holman Concise Bible Commentary. Edited by David Dockery, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998. 681 pages. \$19.99. ♦♦♦♦♦

Ordinarily, I find one-volume Bible commentaries a bit like drinking skim milk. The bare necessities are present, but the taste is thin and watery. But David Dockery has compiled a surprisingly useful book. While one should not expect to find in-depth help on a particular passage, the "Concise Bible Commentary" provides a satisfactory overview of each book and highlights most of their major themes.

While staying within the strictures of an inerrantist view of Scripture, the authors nonetheless deal soundly and fairly with differing viewpoints. For example, in dealing with the authorship of the Pentateuch, Eugene Merrill, while leaning toward Mosaic authorship, surveys without prejudice the differing theories.

A particularly useful feature of this commentary is the use of sidebars and charts. Dockery does an excellent job of using them to study words, explore certain themes, compare and contrast differing movements and schools of thought as well as to chart historical timelines.

I wouldn't recommend a pastor use this book as a primary source for Bible study, but it could be a place to turn to refresh one's memory or to guide a reader to more in-depth resources. This commentary would be

a worthy edition to any church library or an excellent Christmas gift for Sunday school teachers. *Jim Holladay*

Faith and Ethics: Tough Choices for the 21st century. Howard Roberts. Smyth and Helwys, 1998. 176 pages. \$18. ♦♦♦♦♦

Roberts begins his book by addressing a unique foundational issue—how we deal with death. Roberts contends we first must learn how to deal with our own mortality in order to fully address other ethical issues. The way we face our own mortality, he says, indicates our true colors. By confronting this topic we learn we must pin our hopes on God's mercy and not our own goodness.

The discussions that follow in Roberts' book are more conversations than academic essays. Chapters lay out the facts of an issue as Roberts sees them and then apply the basic elements of faith in order to move the reader to a response. Each chapter concludes with a series of questions that provide a good basis for group discussion.

Following chapters about poverty, AIDS, aging, gender, racism, pluralism, peace and ecology, Roberts concludes by looking at some specific issues related to death that still are in flux for him—assisted suicide and genetic testing and engineering. Because Roberts has considered his ethical discussions in light of how we face death, his final discussion under-

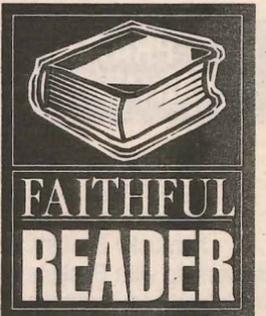
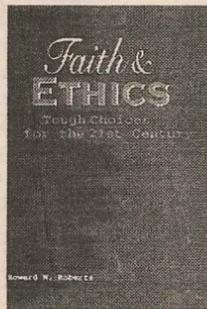
scores that all ethical issues continue to be impacted by developing technology that force us to rethink issues of life and death. *Wayne Hager*

Ready, Set, Read! A Start-to-Finish Reading Program any Parent Can Use. Barbara Curtis. Broadman and Holman Publishers. 1998. 166 pages. \$9.99. ♦♦♦♦♦

The purpose of this book is to provide some guidelines for parents to ensure that their children will not only learn to read but develop a real love for reading.

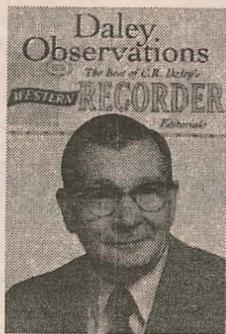
The author assumes that any parent capable of reading this book can follow the suggested basic program and teach a child to read. In order to do this, Curtis suggests three stages in reading, which also form the book divisions—ready, set and read. At each stage, which corresponds to two-three years of development, Curtis outlines an interactive program that brings parent and child together in the journey toward reading. The programs are easy to follow and include helpful synopses of research that validate the program steps.

At the core of each chapter is a bibliography. The list includes familiar classics as well as new Christian literature. The balance between the two is good and helpful. Overall this is an encouraging book and is worthy of being considered as one resource parents can use to prepare their children for the future. *Wayne Hager*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C., 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@surry.net

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PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for these people and projects which are part of Kentucky Baptists partnership with Baptists in Poland and Tanzania:

■ Robert and Barbara Springle who will leave Warsaw, Poland, Dec. 14 for a six-month furlough in the United States. Springle is pastor of the International Baptist Church in Warsaw.

■ Missionary Journeyman Melody Ragains as she works with youth at the Bytom church in Gliwice, Poland.

■ Missionaries Charles and Carolyn Dixon who work with the Luguru people of Tanzania and Urban Morogoro. They are asking God to raise up intercessors for their work.

■ The Tongwe people group of western Tanzania who have little access to the gospel and are involved in witchcraft and magic. Ask God to inspire Tanzanian Baptists to start church-planting work among the Tongwes.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ BOWLING GREEN—The choir and orchestra of Living Hope Church will present "Come Celebrate Christmas," Dec. 12, 7 p.m.; Dec. 13, 6 p.m.; Dec. 14, 7 p.m. For free tickets call (502) 843-9462. Brad Johnson is pastor.

■ BURLINGTON—Bullittsburg Church will present a live nativity Dec. 11, 12, 18 & 19. Dec. 13 the Valley Boys will sing. For information, call (502) 689-4945. Ronald Stinson is pastor.

■ CRAB ORCHARD—Liberty Church licensed Lonnie Edwards to the gospel ministry. Robert Collins is pastor.

■ CRESTWOOD—Ballardsville Church held a prayer and offering service for the Honduras disaster relief effort, raising more than \$27,000. Tommy Purvis is pastor.

■ CORBIN—Amy Schlayer has resigned as associate minister at First Church. Barry Howard is pastor.

■ ERLANGER—Anchor Church called Darryl Crenshaw as pastor.

■ GLENCOE—Bill Graham, former pastor of Pride Church in Sturgis, has been called to Ten Mile Church.

■ HEBRON—Hebron Church will present "Christmas is Calling You Home" Dec. 17-19, 7 p.m. His Kids will present, "It All Happened In The Country" Dec. 13, 7 p.m. For information, call (606) 689-7282. Ryan Wagers is pastor.

■ HENDERSON—Immanuel Temple will have a classic Christmas service of traditional carols and songs Dec. 13 at 6:30 p.m. The chancel choir will present "Merry Christmas Henderson" Dec. 20, 6:30 p.m. A candlelight service will be Christmas Eve, 6:30 p.m. Joby Tricquet is pastor.

■ HOPKINSVILLE—Casky Church adult choir will present "Rejoice, O Earth" at Chapel House, Dec. 16, 6 p.m.; Dec. 20, 11 a.m. worship service. Preschool children's choir will present "Why We Sing Carols," Dec. 20, 6:30 p.m. Bob Morgan is pastor.

■ KEVIL—Newton Creek Church will present a live nativity scene Dec. 18-19, 6 p.m. Rodney Cude is pastor.

■ LOUISVILLE—Third Avenue Church adult choir will present "Reflections of Christmas," Dec. 20, 10:50 a.m. David Green is pastor.

■ MORNING VIEW—Oak Island Church has called Glenn Strausbaugh as pastor.

■ OWENSBORO—Bellevue Church will present "A Bellevue Christmas 1998" Dec. 13, 4 p.m. & 7 p.m. For free tickets call (502) 685-5103. Gregory Faulis is pastor.

Lolete Dotson, retired International Mission Board missionary to Nigeria, will be at Seven Hills Church on Dec. 13. Dotson will speak in the 10:30 a.m. service and lead a mission study at 5 p.m. T.A. Prickett is pastor.

■ PARIS—Jay Robison has resigned as pastor of Central Church. Robison has accepted the pastorate of Trinity Church, Lexington. Former pastor, Don Carroll has been called as interim pastor of Central Church. Carroll retired from White Sulphur Church, Georgetown.

■ PADUCAH—Leigh Ann Summers, Bellview Church, has been selected to serve as a Kentucky Acteen Panelist. E. Lee James is pastor.

Paducah First Church licensed David Melber, director of activities, to the gospel ministry. The sanctuary choir and instrumentalists will present "Candle Light Christmas Special" Dec. 20, 6 p.m. A candlelight communion service will be held Christmas Eve, 5 p.m. Kevin McCallon is pas-

tor.

Park Avenue Church called Hershel Spears as pastor. Spears is a Christian school teacher.

Twelfth Street Church called Andrew Lampkins as part-time youth minister. Denzel Dukes is pastor.

■ SALVISA—Jim Hensley has retired as pastor of Salvisa Church and is available for supply, interim and revivals. To contact, call (606) 734-4992.

■ SOMERSET—Pleasant Hill Church will present "Journey to Bethlehem," a re-creation of Bethlehem, Dec. 17-20, 6-9 p.m. For information, call (606) 679-3402. Larry O'Bryan is pastor.

Bob Browning resigned as pastor of Somerset First. Browning has accepted the pastorate at Smoke Rise Church, Stone Mountain, Ga.

Somerset First will present its Living Christmas Tree Dec. 12, 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 13, 5 & 7:30 p.m. For free tickets call (606) 678-5106. The Young Musicians II Choir will present "The Late Great Potentate" musical, Dec. 20, 7 p.m.

■ WHITESBURG—First Church called Angie Tate as director of children and youth. Tate previously served as a student director in Hawaii through the North American Mission Board. Tony Brown is pastor.

Agency: Poll shows homeless stereotype out of date

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The prevalent stereotype of America's homeless as long-term drifters is woefully out-of-date, according to a recent study.

A 1998 survey of 20,000 homeless people released by the International Union of Gospel Missions shows 61 percent said they had been homeless less than a year.

That figure is 11 percentage points higher than the findings of a 1989 survey.

Seventy-two percent of survey respondents come from within their communities, a 12 percentage point increase from the original survey by

the association of rescue missions.

Through surveys during the last 10 years, the association has chronicled the changing face of America's homeless. For example, the 1998 survey found that women with children composed 66 percent of the families surveyed, compared to 46 percent in 1989. Clients younger than 18 comprise 12 percent of the survey total in 1998, an increase of 4 percent from the 1989 survey.

"Rescue mission programs are changing to deal with the new demands required of them," said Stephen Burger, executive director of IUGM. "Specifically, missions

have developed or enhanced programs for women and children to meet the needs of the ever-increasing number of single-parent families on the streets," he said.

Burger said the effects of changes in welfare legislation on the homeless should be studied further.

"Twenty-two percent say they have lost government benefits in the past year—mostly women with children," he said.

Member missions of the IUGM provide shelter, emergency food, rehabilitation programs for addicted people and assistance to at-risk youth and poor elderly people.

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tenn., is receiving resumés for the position, minister of youth and recreation. This person will be one of six pastoral staff equippers for a congregation which supports both the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. FBC is a regional congregation averaging 600 to 650 on Sundays with a resident membership of 1,300. Inclusive in its theology and creative in its approach to ministry, FBC is seeking a high energy person who reflects this perspective. Applicants should be comfortable with liturgical and contemporary services. Resumés and references should be mailed to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 401 Gateway Ave., Chattanooga, TN 37402 by Jan. 15, 1999.

FOR SALE: Update your sound system. Two Electrovoice-interface audio mixing consoles, 32-channel modular. List \$16,500 each; asking \$4,900 each. Jim Cottrell, Severns Valley Baptist, (502) 765-7822, 862-9586.

SEEKING: Grayson County Baptist Association is currently accepting resumés for the part-time and/or bivocational position of director of missions. Resumés will be accepted until Jan. 10, 1999. All applicants will be prayerfully considered. Interested parties may submit to: Denver Blain, chairman of DOM Search Committee, 498 Mulberry St., Leitchfield, KY 42754.

SEEKING: Calvary Baptist Church of Tuscaloosa, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of education and administration to lead a fully developed education ministry and to administer financial and personnel matters. Calvary averages more than 1,000 in morning worship (800 in Sunday school) and about 500 on Sunday evenings. Calvary is located adjacent to the University of Alabama. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Calvary Baptist Church, 1121 Paul W. Bryant Drive, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401. Resumés will be accepted thru Jan. 31, 1999. (205) 758-0495 for more information.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music and worship. Please send resumé to Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, 8645 Kenwood Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45242.

SEEKING: Minister to children, part-time (20 hours/week). Principle function would be to assist church program leaders in developing a comprehensive ministry to preschoolers and children, grades 1-6. Please send resumé with references to: Dr. Scott Kilgore, Living Hope Baptist Church, 1805 Weston Ave., Bowling Green, KY 42104.

SEEKING: Bivocational minister of music. Ability to balance music (hymns, choruses) and to lead adults and children. Music experience/training preferred. Submit resumé to: Music Minister Search Committee, Hanson Baptist Church, P.O. Box 326, Hanson, KY 42413.

SEEKING: Church secretary; 30-35 hours/week. Send resumé to: Hunsinger Lane Baptist Church, 3821 Hunsinger Lane, Louisville, KY 40220.

SEEKING: Part-time minister to youth; 20 hours/week. Send resumé to: Hunsinger Lane Baptist Church, 3821 Hunsinger Lane, Louisville, KY 40220.

SEEKING: Part-time minister who uses music as a tool for leading worship and reaching others for Christ. Call Westport Baptist Church at (502) 222-0745, or send a resumé to: Search Committee, Westport Baptist Church, 6415 Washington St., Westport, KY 40077.

SEEKING: Calvary Baptist Church of Tuscaloosa, Ala., is seeking a full-time minister of music to lead a fully developed music ministry. Calvary is located adjacent to the University of Alabama and averages more than 1,000 in morning worship and about 500 on Sunday evenings. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, Calvary Baptist Church, 1121 Paul W. Bryant Drive, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401. Resumés will be accepted thru Jan. 31, 1999. (205) 758-0495 for more information.

New FROG bracelets making a riveting impression

By Ed White
Religion News Service

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (RNS) — So you're familiar with WWJD, the spiritual and marketing phenomenon that has teenagers asking, "What would Jesus do?" But are you ready to leap to FROG?

An Indiana company says it has the answer: Fully Rely On God, or FROG.

Like WWJD, those four letters and the web-footed amphibian are appearing on pins, bracelets, coffee mugs, shirts, caps, magnets and more.

Dicksons Inc. said it has sold more than 500,000 FROG bracelets nationwide since spring. The products, available through Christian bookstores, are mostly aimed at young people or leaders of youth groups. They sell for 98 cents.

"We are selling a lot of it, although the boom is not nearly as large as WWJD. It's still in its infancy," said Chris Tromp, manager of Christian products store in Grandville, Mich. "It's a breath of fresh air. To me, the statement is powerful."

Jeff Johnson, 13, said he believes he's in good hands with FROG around his wrist.

"When I took a test at school, I thought, 'What am I going to do?' I looked at my bracelet and said, 'Fully rely on God.' I got an A-plus. It gives me confidence," the eighth-grader said. "I wear it in the shower."

In January, his mother, Anna Johnson, is taking FROG bracelets, pencils and T-shirts to the children of Evangelical Free Church missionaries in Europe.

"WWJD is great, but it seems like

it's everywhere. It can lose its meaning," she said. "This is something new. The kids are going to think the frog symbol is neat."

Dicksons, based in Seymour, Ind., has been marketing Christian inspirational goods for 55 years. Its 71-page catalog offers a variety of products, from bookmarks and Bible games to scented candles and anointing oils.

Recognizing the wide appeal of WWJD, the company's sales crew decided "we needed to take the next step," said marketing chief Steven Mohler.

"WWJD bracelets have given kids something to start conversations. It's running its course," he said. "We're giving them something new to talk about. What would Jesus do? He would fully rely on God. ... Frogs are something accepted in the secular and Christian market. This fit right in."

Dicksons has protected its new products by getting trademarks for FROG and the phrase Fully Rely On God.

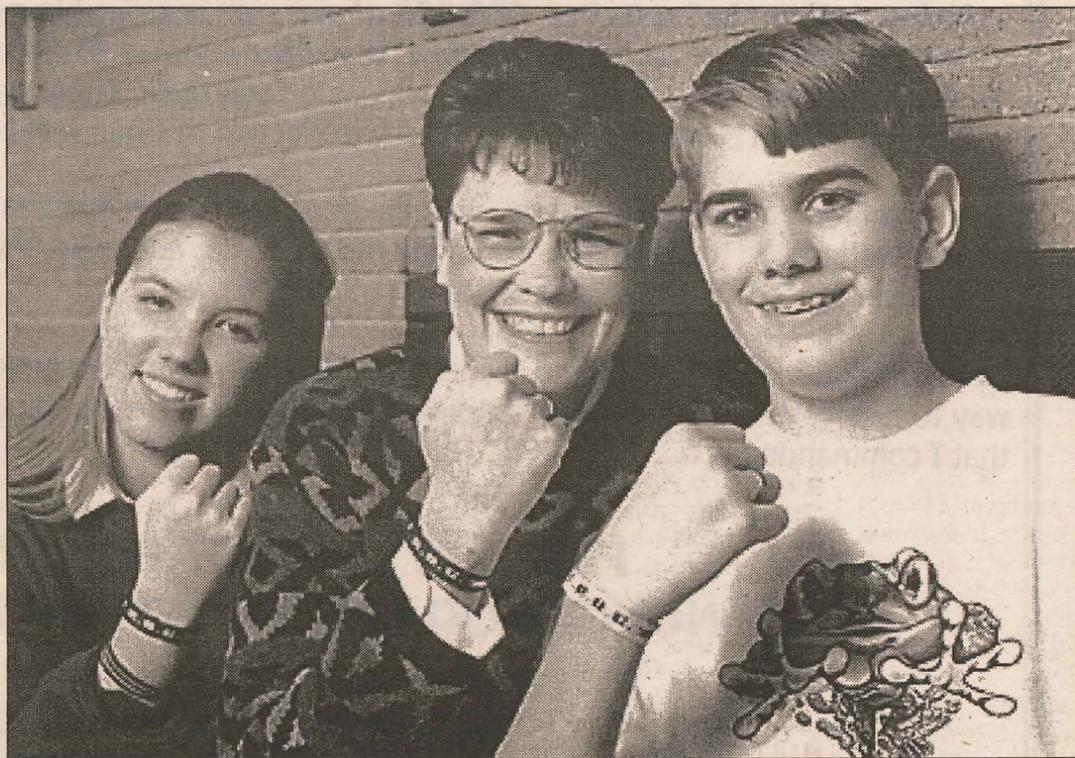
Did the company see a potential gold mine?

"We are in business to help our bottom line. No question," Mohler said. "But our mission is to serve customers by creating and distributing biblically-based gift products."

WWJD has its roots in Holland, Mich., where it was developed at Calvary Reformed Church by youth leaders Janie Tinklenberg and brothers Ken and Mike Freeman.

Ken Freeman, who promotes WWJD products through Lesco Corp. of Lansing, Mich., said FROG was displayed at a recent convention of Christian stores in Dallas.

"Is it competition? Oh, sure," he



said. "But that's what this is all about: People finding the next message, evangelizing. Some people are even putting WWJD backwards to say, 'Devil Just Won't Win.' We're working on samples now."

Leaders of some Christian youth groups in West Michigan said FROG hasn't caught fire yet. Brian Bosscher didn't discover it until last month when he was given pins while attending a retreat that emphasized reliance on God.

"I think it has even more value than WWJD," said Bosscher, director of

Youth Unlimited, which offers leadership training to youth pastors. "The imitation of Christ has to flow out of a dependency on him."

"I think there will always be a market for something like this," he said. "When they wear a bracelet, Christian kids are making a subtle statement on where they stand spiritually. You see a bracelet—'Oh, there's another Christian. I can connect.'"

"On the other hand, there's no guarantee that wearing a bracelet transforms someone into a follower of Christ."

FROG Jeff Johnson and his mother and sister model FROG wrist bracelets. The 98-cent bands seek to answer the question "What would Jesus do?" with "Fully rely on God." (RNS photo)

Kidney transplant an unexpected gift from an unlikely source

By David Briggs
Religion News Service

LYNDHURST, Ohio (RNS)— The first two times Diana Harrill felt God speaking to her, the voice was soft and asked her to pray for Toni Whatley's miraculous healing.

But the third time Harrill believes God spoke to her she sensed that this was more of a joint venture: God wanted her to donate one of her own kidneys to a woman who was barely more than an acquaintance.

So began the spiritual journey of two remarkable women—Harrill, a 47-year-old white woman raised in a suburb, and Whatley, a 46-year-old black woman who had overcome the racial hatred of school integration in Cleveland to find the faith to accept an extraordinary gift from a white person.

In a medical world where the gift of a kidney from an unrelated living donor is almost unheard of—it's been an "oh wow" moment, said Bernadette Koshla, a transplant nurse at University Hospitals of Cleveland until her retirement in August.

At the First Assembly of God Church in Lyndhurst, Ohio, what's transpired is nothing short of a miracle.

"When I think of a miracle, I think of Toni waking up one morning and

being completely healed," said Daniel Wood, pastor of the suburban Cleveland church. "But the miracles here seemed to be more in tune with what God was doing in Diana and Toni."

Harrill joined First Assembly in 1977. As the church attracted more black members, some whites left, but "I thought it was great," Harrill said.

Early last year, Whatley was just an acquaintance in Harrill's Sunday school class.

What brought the two together was Whatley's decision to share her pain of undergoing dialysis three days a week, a regimen that barely left her enough strength for anything other than work as a telephone operator at Cleveland Clinic and attending church.

For 40 days in the spring of 1997, Harrill joined with others in a liquid fast and sustained prayer for Whatley to be healed of her kidney disease.

When Whatley was not healed, Harrill said she began to hear the voice of God urging her to do more. When she understood God calling her to be a kidney donor, she did not even know if such a transplant was possible between people of different races.

As blood test after blood test came back positive, Harrill's decision was confirmed. The worries of her husband and son did not weaken her resolve.

"There's no way, if I felt the Lord leading me to do something, that I would allow anybody to stop me from doing it," Harrill said.

At a church retreat last fall, Harrill reassured Whatley that she was prepared for any outcome.

"I'm not afraid of dying," she said. "I felt I would be in heaven anyway, and that's got to be a whole lot better place than here. I felt I was in a win-win situation."

Today, the two women are close friends.

"She's such a beautiful person. I just delight when I see her," Harrill said.

"I know God has a sense of humor in how he put Diana and me together," added the cherubic-faced Whatley, whose peaceful countenance contrasts with the thin, intense Harrill.

Whatley, as a 7- and 8-year-old, was assigned with other gifted minority students to a school where at times they literally had to run for their lives from adults whose faces were filled with hatred at having black children in their community.

When Whatley chose First Assembly in 1981, it was in part an intentional statement that segregation may be unavoidable in other parts of her life, but it had no place in church.

But it was not until Whatley found the strength to discuss her condition



before her Sunday school class that her life would change.

When Harrill approached her about being a kidney donor, Whatley said, "I was very pleasantly surprised and speechless all at the same time."

After nearly five years of a life pretty much divided between work and dialysis, she remembers coming home from the hospital and enjoying a Wednesday afternoon.

"It has not only been a blessing for me as far as how my life has changed, it's been a special blessing experiencing the love of Christ to that magnitude," she said. "I, from this experience, learned how to receive graciously, with open arms, and it's been a wonderful gift."

ALMOST UNHEARD OF Friends, family and the local medical community have been impressed by the gift Diana Harrill (right) made of a kidney for fellow church member Toni Whatley. (RNS photo)

Power of Jesus being felt in Russia

The faculty and staff of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College are honored to have the opportunity to provide academic instruction to Russian pastors. During the 1998-99 academic year, ten instructors will travel to the city of Novgorod, Russia. Traveling in rotation, each professor will provide instruction for a two-week period.

In speaking of this unique opportunity, President Bill Whittaker said, *"The trustees went out on faith for this mission action that requires \$20,000 above our previously approved \$2.8 million school budget for 1998-99. We want to respond while the door is open to Russia."* During the year, Russian pastors will receive instruction in a variety of areas, including Systematic Theology, instruction in Old and New Testaments, Pastoral Care, the History of Baptists, and Introduction to Church Music and Worship.

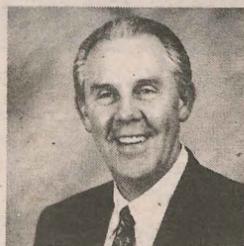
The Novgorod congregation is also working on a new church building. Students of the school pay for their education by working on the building. Each day the students, and often their spouses as well, work until class time. Classes begin at 4:00 PM and continue until 9:00 PM.

Clear Creek Baptist Bible College is committed to mission involvement. This ministry, to Russian pastors, is just one way to further fulfill Christ's commandment to "Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..."

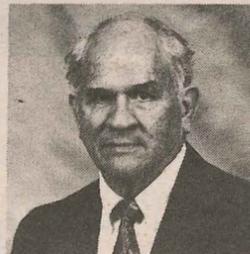
FACULTY AND STAFF PARTICIPATING IN NOVGOROD PASTOR/CHURCH PLANTER SCHOOL



Dr. Bill Helton



Dr. Jim Castlen



Dr. Bill Pfoff



Dr. Bill Whittaker



Rev. Charles Rice



Dean Fred Cummings



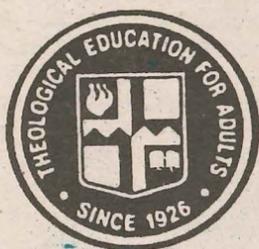
Rev. Jay Barnett



*Dr. James Ditty &
Dr. John Ditty*



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