



WESTERN RECORDER

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FOR THE RECORD

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O, little town

Bethlehem's mostly Muslim shepherds not seeking manger

By Tobin Perry
SBC International Mission Board

BETHLEHEM, Israel (BP)—Hussein El Abed leans against a stone wall on the side of a narrow dirt road. The sun is just beginning to set. He waits.

Unlike Christians around the world, this 54-year-old Palestinian shepherd in Bethlehem isn't waiting for Christmas Eve to begin. When the sun sets, Hussein and more than 1.2 billion fellow Muslims worldwide will sit down to a meal that breaks their sunrise-to-sunset Ramadan fast.

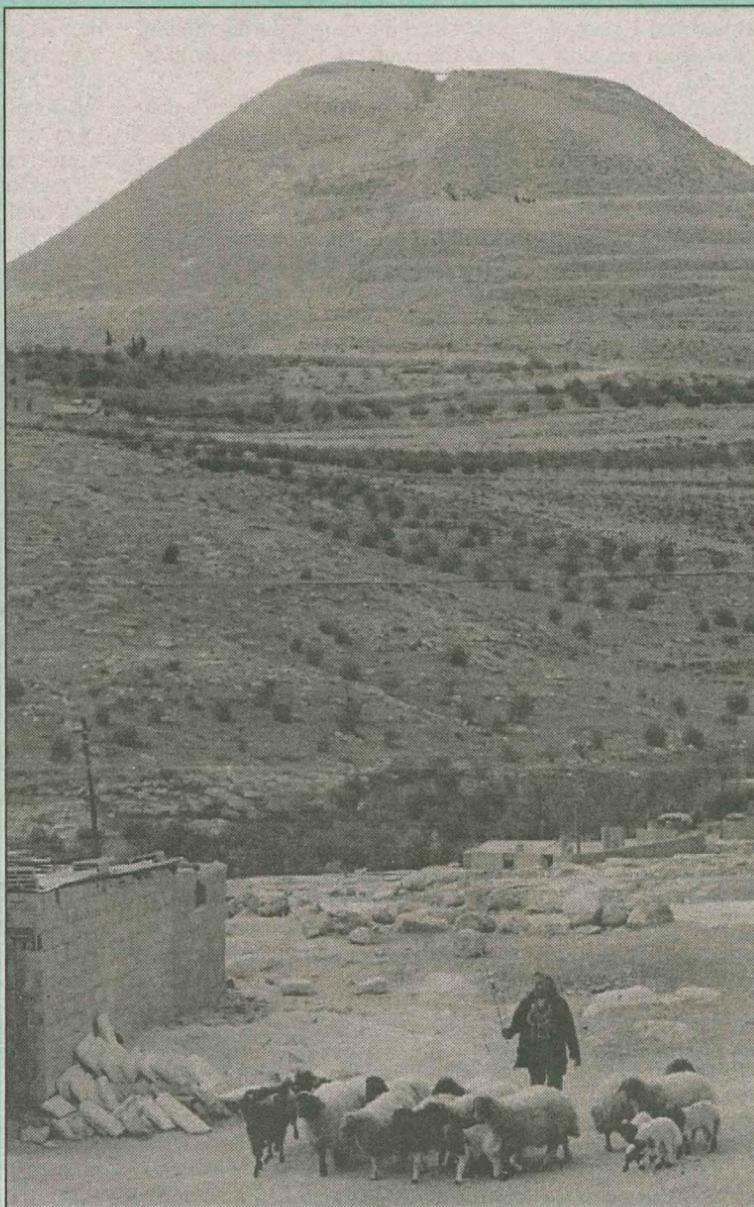
As evening approaches, not a single star will be visible in the mostly cloudy sky, certainly not like the one that guided the shepherds 2,000 years ago. But would-be wise men can follow a modern-day light source—car lights—to Manger Square, the traditional site for Jesus' birth.

Each year, nearly 15,000 tourists—equal to almost a third of Bethlehem's population—flood the small, not-as-sleepy-as-one-might-expect West Bank town to celebrate Christmas.

But most of the Christians making their way to Manger Square will come from somewhere besides Bethlehem. In recent years, Muslims have become the majority in this small town known worldwide as the birthplace of Christianity.

Southern Baptist representatives throughout the Middle East are

□ See Bethlehem shepherds ..., page 6



KEEPING WATCH Shepherds like Achmud Hammeeda are less common today than they were at the time of Jesus' birth. Like most shepherds in Bethlehem, Hammeeda keeps his flock as a part-time job. And unlike the shepherds of Jesus' time, the Muslim Hammeeda won't be visiting the manger this Christmas. (BP photo by Grace Robinette)

Can three generations coexist in one church?

By Brenda Smith
Kentucky Baptist Convention

LOUISVILLE—When Pastor Bob arrives at his church office on Monday morning, he is greeted by a handful of messages.

"Your sermon emphasis on evangelism must have really motivated everyone," his assistant says with a smile. "You already have three messages this morning."

Ed, chairman of the deacons and member of the senior citizens ministry, called early and suggested the church's committee on committees appoint a special group to organize a revival.

Susan, a working single mother of two, faxed in her suggestion for a divorce recovery group. She had strug-

gled through a painful divorce and knows many of her friends face similar challenges.

Justin, a member of the college and career cell group, e-mailed Pastor Bob to say he already was organizing a group to return to Bosnia, where he had spent the previous summer rebuilding homes.

"These ideas are all great," the pastor thinks. "But how do I get everything on the same page?"

Bob and his congregation are facing a challenge many churches face today: three distinct adult generations, each with different approaches to ministry and different ways of commu-

nicating. "We have not had this many generations living and functioning in a culture at one time, and the number of

active members in each generation is so large," said Karl Babb, leader of a Kentucky Baptist Convention team studying intergenerational issues.

The team is one of five "cluster groups" studying major issues facing churches in the 21st century. The purpose of Babb's group is to help Kentucky Baptist churches get a handle on the challenges, opportunities and needs presented by the interaction of three distinct generations.

Babb said his group found that the three generations most active in church life—Builders, Boomers and Busters—all were shaped by different historical events and social influences. As a result, each generation approaches ministry in different, though equally valid ways.

Builders, those born between 1930 and 1945, were shaped by the Great Depression, World War II and the Industrial Revolution. As a result, they

□ See KBC team examines ..., page 3

Experts: 'Tis the season for holiday blues

By Kathi Wolfe
Religion News Service

PITTSBURGH (RNS)—Do you greet the holiday season with "Bah humbug!" rather than "Ho! Ho! Ho!?" Would you be thrilled if the Grinch did steal Christmas?

If you answered yes to either of these questions, don't worry. You're not deranged, malevolent or uncaring. You have the "Christmas blues."

Every year, between Thanksgiving and New Year's, when life becomes a whirl of parties, family get-togethers and gift-giving, some people suffer from the "holiday blues," say pastors and experts on popular culture.

Jonathan Himmelhoch, professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and an expert on the "holiday blues," says such blues are not a mental illness but "a normal reaction some people have to the holiday season with all of its social and moral complexity, with all its social and family interactions and demands."

The psychological data on the Christmas blues is contrary to what many people believe, according to William Nye, director of community services of Blanton Peale Institute, a pastoral counseling training center in New York.

"Christmas isn't the peak time for suicide," he said. "Suicide peaks in the spring."

Why do people get the holiday blues?

Experts cite a number of factors, ranging from the commercialism and hype that permeate the holiday season to the breakup of the traditional family.

"If you live alone and don't like it, you might get the blues," Nye said. "People with health or financial concerns might get the blues."

Perhaps the most common reason people experience the blues "is that Christmas touches our most idealized memories of our childhood. People feel blue because of the loss of that time in their lives ... over losing the ability to enter innocently into the joy of the season," Nye said.

Christmas often is a time of unmet expectations, said David Larson, president of the National Institute for Healthcare Research in Rockville, Md., and an expert on the relationship of spirituality and mental health.

"You have high expectations. But, then ... the parties you thought would be great aren't great. You see all these ads on TV for toys, but you can't get your kids everything they want. At Christmas dinner, Mom gets drunk again, a family argument erupts, the car breaks down or somebody has the flu. You get the blues."

Christmas often is a downer for Gen-Xers, the generation born between 1965 and 1980, said Andrew Rudd, assistant professor of communication

□ See Experts: People can ..., page 6

Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, December 20



Issues every church should address

BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **College students** from around the country donated \$3.4 million to mission activities through their Baptist campus ministries during the 1999-2000 school year. The money the students raise is sent to their state convention collegiate ministry offices to fund mission programs in their states, the nation and worldwide.

■ **Southern Baptist Theological Seminary** awarded degrees to 97 graduates during commencement services Dec. 15. The program was held in Alumni Chapel on the seminary campus in Louisville.

Korean partnership sparks 2,754 conversions

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—A total of 2,754 people professed faith in Jesus Christ during a recent partnership evangelism project involving Baptists from the United States and South Korea.

W.H. "Dub" Jackson, who helps organize partnership evangelism projects for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, led a team of 121 Southern Baptists from the United States to South Korea. The volunteers paired with Korean Christians to host 37 evangelistic campaigns in local churches.

"The experience is better in every way than any of us could have ever hoped for," said Alan Tungett, an employee of LifeWay Christian Resources who led one team. "There are very few things in my Christian life that can compare with what our team has experienced over the last few days."

Paul Dowdy, a volunteer from McKinney, Texas, led a team with Kim

Jo Mo, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Suwon City, Korea. Dowdy's team witnessed in apartments, public schools, a university and a Samsung Electronics building.

Kim's church averaged about 30 people in attendance before the evangelistic emphasis. Fifteen new members joined the church during the crusade and contacts were made with 20 other new believers.

Each of the volunteers teams conducted home visits during the days and held evangelistic services in the evenings.

The number of new Christians is significant for Baptist leaders in South Korea, who said they had been concerned about a lack of growth in their convention. They contacted Jackson last year to request volunteers for the nationwide campaign, which officials hoped would jumpstart new growth.

After the trip, one volunteer shared

how a young man had taken an American team member to visit his parents, and saw both of them accept Christ. Another team member told about seven junior high girls who prayed to accept Christ after meeting one of the American teenagers.

"We heard many wonderful testimonies of how God had worked during the crusades," said Dennis Brotherton, a Southern Baptist international missionary in Korea. "We give God the glory for all that He did during these wonderful meetings."

Jackson already is beginning to plan for a number of evangelism projects in Hong Kong, scheduled to take place July 18-31, 2001. Hong Kong Baptists have requested 20 teams to help 290 churches.

For more information, contact Jackson by phone at (915) 698-8480; fax, (915) 698-4000 or e-mail, whdub.jackson@compuserve.com.

Smaller churches gain capital fund-raising resource

NASHVILLE (BP)—Capital fund-raising help for smaller churches is available from LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Bridge to Tomorrow" is designed for churches averaging 125 people or fewer in Sunday school or worship attendance.

"Thousands of evangelical churches are growing beyond their physical plant capacity, and many other new congregations are ready to build for the first time," said Gary Aylor, director of LifeWay's church stewardship services department. "They have a real need to construct or remodel to realize their mission goals, yet they

need a resource they can conduct on their own.

"In most cases, for churches of this size," he added, "outside assistance is either too costly or is impractical because of the church's location."

Developed as a CD-ROM, Bridge to Tomorrow offers step-by-step instructions for conducting a capital fund-raising program, allowing users to review program steps prior to implementation. The program includes a multimedia presentation that introduces the user to the process, a campaign plan, communications helps and specially designed Sunday school lessons to use during the communication phase of the campaign.

Aylor said even without prior capital fund-raising experience, "church staff and lay leaders can carry out a program with confidence because the programmed instruction has been tested and proven successful."

Aylor said the campaign is based on a biblical foundation, with each principle supported by a corresponding model in Scripture.

"Virtually every member of the church family is allowed to become a vital part of the church's desire to fulfill its ministry vision," he added.

Bridge to Tomorrow is available by calling (615) 251-2802. Introductory information may be viewed at www.lifeway.com/stewardship/twb.

Baptist leaders seek interracial cooperation

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—Paige Patterson, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention, recently joined hands on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, symbolizing the desire of convention leaders to work together to spread the gospel.

Shaw was elected president of the predominantly African-American National Baptist Convention in September 1999. He was accompanied to Southeastern by eight National Baptist pastors.

"This is the first time, as far as I know, that the president of the National Baptist Convention ever appeared on campus here," said Patterson, Southeastern president. "It is deliberately an effort on Dr. Shaw's part, and on my part, to set forward the task of interracial cooperation and bringing an end, if we possibly can, to the racism in this country."

Southern Baptist messengers adopted a resolution in 1995 asking forgiveness from African-Americans for racism. Messengers pledged to "commit ourselves to eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry."

Patterson said that while nothing official has been planned, the two groups have talked openly together in hopes of working toward cooperation.

Texas Baptist group studying capital punishment gets firsthand view of death chamber

By Ken Camp
Baptist General Convention of Texas

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (ABP)—When he was a younger man, Charlie Wise would have described himself as "adamantly, vocally" in favor of the death penalty.

Two decades of serving alongside his wife, Mary Alice, in prison ministry—including several years of weekly visits with women on Death Row—has changed his view.

"It puts a different face on capital punishment when you get to know the people," said Wise, a layman at Trinity Baptist Church in Gatesville, Texas.

But even all that experience didn't prepare him for his first visit inside the death chamber. As a member of a capital-punishment study committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Wise recently toured the Death House at Huntsville, Texas. The committee was formed in 1999 to explore issues related to capital punishment.

"It was chilling," Wise said, describing his first glimpse of the padded gurney in the tiny death chamber as "very sobering and disturbing."

As deputy chief of the civil division for the U.S. Attorney General's district office in Fort Worth, Mattie Compton has been in

prisons frequently. But it was her first visit as well to the Walls Unit and its Death House.

"For me, it was hard to separate my impressions of the death chamber itself from my overall thoughts about everything we saw and heard when we were in there," said Compton, a member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Fort Worth. "By the time we got to the death chamber, anyone could see I was very emotionally distraught. It was a cumulative thing for me."

Jim Young, who set up the tour, is the BGCT's coordinator of restorative-justice ministries. He previously worked 10 years as chaplain at the Gatesville Hughes Unit and the Huntsville Wynn Unit.

Since 1982, Texas has executed 236 convicted murderers by lethal injection at the Huntsville Death House. The Dec. 5 execution of convicted child-killer Garry Dean Miller set a new record of 38 executions in a single year.

After learning about the clinical precision with which the executions are performed, and being reminded of their frequency, Wise said he was disturbed to think that Texans have grown comfortable with the news of executions.

"In Texas, especially, we've got an assembly line for killing," he said. "Every

time we kill a person in Texas, it takes away from our own character and our sense of values."

Compton agreed that each execution take its toll on society in general. "Every time there is an execution, I have a horrible feeling that we as a society have failed."

Looking into the adjoining viewing rooms from the death chamber itself, Compton reflected on the family of the condemned killer and the family of his victim.

"I thought about these two sets of people, divided by a wall but connected by a shared measure of grief and loss," she said. But they were not the only group with whom she sympathized.

"I left with the impression there is an entire population of people who are broken, who have been thrown away and forgotten by society—not just the inmates, but also the staff. I had never thought about how administering the death penalty might impact the staff."

They are, indeed, the forgotten victims of each execution, Young noted. "I thought about the medical people behind the glass and wondered who ministers to them."

When he worked for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Young supervised the three chaplains involved in each execution—those who minister to the

inmate, the inmates' family and the victim's family.

The chaplains "are generally men who have been in the pastorate. They may have stood beside a hospital bedside as life-support tubes were disconnected. But it's different when you are standing there as tubes are inserted with the intent of taking a life," Young observed.

At least the chaplains have other chaplains with whom they can talk, to help process the experience of witnessing an execution. But regulations prohibit chaplains from anything other than "casual-contact visits" with correctional officers.

The Baptists who visited the Death House in Huntsville left with a renewed appreciation for those who serve in the death chamber.

"They do it out of a sense of duty, but you get the idea they wish they didn't have to do it," Wise said. "As a society, we're forcing it on them."

Young noted that the personnel working in the Death House are professionals who take pride in doing a good job. But that does not mean they think the job itself is good.

"They would not be heartbroken if there were no executions," Young said. "That's just one component of the job they do, but it's not one they relish."

Unity, organization among factors for Graham crusade

By David Winfrey
News Director

LOUISVILLE—Unity and organizational skills were among the factors cited for Billy Graham's accepting an invitation to lead a crusade in Louisville next year, a spokesman said.

Officials announced last week that Graham, who turned 82 in November, will speak June 21-24 at Papa John's Cardinal Stadium.

"Louisville has long desired a crusade, and the churches there have been working toward unity," said A. Larry Ross, spokesman for Billy Graham. "This has been a longstanding invitation with correspondence going back to 1973."

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association does not plan its events in isolation, but only responds to the invitation of local churches, Ross noted.

Even then, he added, Graham and others are looking for evidence that area churches are united in their effort to create an evangelistic event that will include all segments of the community. "It's really the churches that own the crusade."

Racial and spiritual unity was a major theme earlier this year when Tony Evans preached at a three-day crusade June 19-21 at Louisville's Freedom Hall.

Dan Garland, leader of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's evangelism growth team, said that helped show Graham officials that Louisville could host a Graham event.

"At the end of the Tony Evans crusade we asked for Franklin Graham (to lead a Louisville crusade), never dreaming we could get Billy Graham," Garland said.

Because of health concerns for Graham, who has Parkinson's disease, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association now schedules crusades with less lead time than in the past, Ross added.

"Louisville seemed to be the one (location) most at the point where the preparations could be completed for a June crusade," he said.

Officials had held off planning Graham's 2001 schedule until after the November crusade in Jacksonville.

Graham has responded well to a medical procedure this past summer at the Mayo Clinic, Ross added.

In Jacksonville, "he had the energy and strength of five to 10 years ago when he preached his sermons," Ross said Monday. "I was just with him yesterday and he looks better than he even did in Jacksonville."

Approximately 242,000 people attended the Jacksonville event.

A formal announcement of the Louisville crusade is scheduled for Jan. 16. Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, will serve as chairman of the Louisville crusade's executive committee. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association will announce in the ensuing weeks and months the speakers and recording artists who will participate in the crusade.

"There are few events that can come to a city that will have the kind of sig-

nificance and profile as a Billy Graham crusade," Mohler said.

Local officials are hoping for about 200,000 people to attend the four-day crusade, he added. "We look forward with expectation to what God is going to do during those very critical days."

This will be the second Graham crusade in Louisville. The first was Sept. 30-Oct. 28, 1956. That month-long event drew a total attendance of 492,740 with 6,870 spiritual decisions, Ross said.

Nell Bruce, prayer consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, said she looks forward to helping coordinate an area-wide prayer emphasis in preparation for the crusade.

"To be able to pray across denominational lines and racial lines and look to Jesus is absolutely wonderful," she said. "Many people have prayed over the years that Louisville will be a place that radiates the presence of God."

Bruce, who was prayer coordinator for the recent Tony Evans Crusade in Louisville, said one goal of the prayer emphasis is to "pull together an on-going Louisville prayer group that will meet several times a year."

Citing Graham's declining health in recent years, Bruce said, "This man of God is coming to the end of the road. These days of opportunity that God is giving us in these closing years are very, very important. I look with anticipation to this being one of his greatest crusades; at this point in life you give it all you've got."

With additional reporting by Baptist Press

Frequently asked questions

How do churches participate in a Billy Graham crusade?

In addition to prayer and inviting friends and family to the event, there are three common volunteer opportunities: Counselors help inquirers at the meetings; singers are needed for the volunteer choir; and several hundred ushers are required for each service. Officials will announce next month how to contact the Louisville planning office.

How is the administration of a crusade organized?

The actual administration is in the hands of a local executive committee of Christian laity and clergy. Members of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association work closely with the executive committee, giving it the benefit of their experience. This executive committee is the policy-making body for the entire crusade. It selects the chair and members of the general crusade committee and leaders of the working committees and subcommittees for the crusade.

How is the money raised to meet budget requirements?

The largest single source of crusade income is the offerings taken at the meetings. Usually, about half of the budgeted amount will be received from offerings, while the other half usually comes from individuals and organizations supportive of the crusade.

What happens to the thousands who respond at Billy Graham crusades?

A study completed in 1988 involved 15,000 interviews with BGEA inquirers, over a 30-year period. Findings from this research were published in a book, "Billy Graham: Do the Conversions Last?," by Robert Fern. That research indicates that 70-80 percent of inquirers remain steadfast in their decision to follow Christ. Also, approximately one out of every 100 of those converted in a BGEA crusade has entered the Christian ministry in some way.

KBC team examines intergenerational issues

Continued from page 1

tend to be fiscally and socially conservative. They dislike borrowing money and place a great deal of trust in institutions and tradition. Builders are comfortable working through the channels and planning carefully.

Their offspring, the Boomer generation born between 1946 and 1964, have a radically different perspective of the world. This generation that came of age during the social and political upheaval of the 1960s—including Watergate, the civil rights and women's movements, and the Vietnam War—distrusts authority and institutions. Attaining personal happiness is of paramount importance to Boomers. They are interested in ministries that meet personal needs, such as issue-based small groups.

Busters, those born between 1965 and 1983, were shaped by such events as the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of their own families. Nearly one-third of all Busters were raised in single parent homes. Busters, like their Boomer parents, don't trust institutions and therefore demand integrity in organized religion. They seek faith families whose words are backed by deeds, and they are most attracted to social welfare outreach and hands-on mission projects.

Hard on the heels of the Busters are the Bridgers born between 1977 and 1994. Though most are still teenagers

and children, Bridgers already are adding another dynamic to the mix, Babb said. While Bridgers for the most part have not assumed leadership in the church, churches should prepare for the time when they will.

While the differences in adult generations can be a rich resource for churches, they more often are the source of conflict and competition. These generations can clash over issues ranging from worship styles to decision-making to missions giving. The source of the conflict is not necessarily differences in generational influences and mindsets; rather, the source of the conflict is stilted, broken communication.

"We've moved from a one-room school house to being segmented by age," Babb explained. Specialized ministries are good at meeting needs in an age-appropriate fashion, but at the cost of intergenerational isolation.

"If families were more intact, this wouldn't be a big thing," said Babb, "but the family is so shattered that it just accentuates the differences."

The key to overcoming the conflict lies in helping generations bridge the gaps and value diversity. Bringing the generations together might mean reintegrating generations, but it also can mean simply fostering interaction between the groups. The process begins with intentionally finding ways to get people of different ages together.

"Why don't your senior adults and day care get together?" Babb suggested. An increasingly mobile society means that grandparents and grandchildren often are separated by several hundred miles. Seniors can help mentor children and provide stability.

At one church, senior adults wanted to learn how to use e-mail, so they partnered with a local elementary school. The technologically savvy elementary students tutored the adults, and the adults became advocates for the children rather than adversaries.

"It doesn't solve the whole problem, but it bridges the gap with relationships," Babb added.

After more than a year of study, prayer and field testing, the intergenerational cluster group is moving in several ways to help churches address intergenerational issues.

The group is working to integrate an intergenerational component into all KBC training events, including Super Saturdays and the annual evangelism conference. Churches also will be encouraged to explore intergenerational issues with the help of a discussion guide developed by the group.

An intergenerational awareness packet and activity packet also is available to churches. The packets contain research on generational influences and differences, a scriptural basis for engaging different generations and suggestions for intergenerational activities.

For more information about intergenerational issues, contact Karl Babb in the KBC family ministries department at (502) 254-4719 or call toll-free in Kentucky (888) 254-5704.

McKinley names committee chairmen

LOUISVILLE—Kentucky Baptist Convention President Jim McKinley has appointed chairmen to lead 16 standing committees of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and KBC Executive Board for the coming year.

Those appointed to chair KBC committees are:

- **Committee on Arrangements:** Charles Midkiff, pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville.
 - **Committee on Committees:** Mike Melloan, a member of Yellow Creek Baptist Church in Owensboro.
 - **Committee on Constitution and Bylaws:** Ted Sisk, retired pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington.
 - **Committee on Credentials:** Bill Tichenor, retired pastor of First Baptist Church of Princeton.
 - **Committee on Nominations:** Mark Galloway, pastor of First Baptist Church of Morganfield.
 - **Committee on Order of Business:** Herschel Morgan, pastor of Bethabara Baptist Church in Philpot.
 - **Committee on Public Affairs:** John Chowning, pastor of Saloma Baptist Church in Campbellsville.
 - **Committee on Resolutions:** Dennis Phelps, associate pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.
- Those appointed chairmen of Executive Board committees are:
- **Administrative Committee:** Billy Compton, pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.
 - **Agencies and Institutions Committee:** Travis Collins, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mt. Washington.
 - **Business and Finance Committee:** Bob Long, pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville.
 - **Church Growth Committee:** Craig Loscalzo, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington.
 - **Evangelism Growth Committee:** Steven Hill, pastor of Valley Creek Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.
 - **Missions Growth Committee:** Glenn Armstrong, pastor of Beaver Dam Baptist Church.
 - **Leadership Development Committee:** Bob Swift, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mayfield.
 - **Nominating Committee:** Ross Bauscher, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church in Owensboro.



Issues every church should address

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

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God's great gift

God's gift of His Son, Jesus the Christ, cannot be fully expressed in words. So the apostle Paul declares: "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

No language can give full expression to the incarnation of God in Jesus. It is a wonder beyond words. Indeed, the apostle had to coin a word for unspeakable (anekdiegetoi). It may be translated in many ways but none of them can capture the full meaning of God's gracious gift. So let us give thanks for:

- His indescribable gift.
- His inexpressible gift.
- His unspeakable gift.
- His unsearchable gift.
- His inestimable gift.
- His indefinable gift.
- His incredible gift.
- His incomprehensible gift.
- His inconceivable gift.
- The gift of Christ Himself (John 3:16).

We can do this by exercising the gifts God has given us in terms of prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, acts of mercy, healers, helpers, administrators, evangelists, pastors and others. Every Christian has at least one grace gift of which he or she is a steward.

Take the gift of teaching. In my hometown of cotton mills, there was a Sunday school teacher. He was crippled, had an eighth-grade education and stuttered when he talked. Out of his class came 26 people who became ministers with college and seminary training. One of them was Wayne Oates, the internationally known scholar and writer. Also hundreds of the teacher's students became leaders in various professional roles.

When I asked this humble teacher how he did it, he replied: "Well, I don't have much education; I can't talk very well; I'm not much to look at. I guess it's just because I gave God all I've got."

God has given us all He's got for

our redemption in Jesus the Christ. Out of hearts of gratitude, we exercise our grace gifts for His glory.

*Henlee Barnette
Louisville*

Advent celebration

Celebrating Advent offers us the opportunity to love and receive again God's wondrous grace as revealed in the birth, life and death of the Prince of Peace.

God so loved the world He took on human form through His Son, Jesus, to show us via word and example how to live and love. Jesus lived a sinless life, but loved sinful humankind so much He died a painful death to save us from our sins. But Jesus did not abandon us follow-

ing His resurrection and ascension into Heaven.

God is still with us even 2,000 years after Jesus went to prepare an eternal home for us. With Jesus' ascension came God's return to earth by way of the Holy Spirit. God's infinite love—Holy Spirit—descends on us like a hovering dove. Jesus came to earth to live among us and save us, then sent the Holy Spirit to live in us.

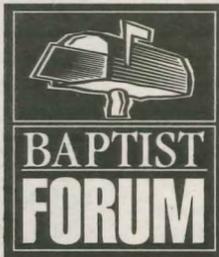
The dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit who descended upon Jesus at his baptism. Today the dove also is the emblem of peace. God in us—Holy Spirit—calls us to be peacemakers, children of God. With God, all things are possible, even peace on earth and human goodwill.

If we would begin to wage peace at home and abroad, Christmas in the year 2000 could be the best ever since Christ's birth. Only the Holy Spirit can lead us to the truth in all things.

*Paul Whiteley Sr.
Louisville*

True Baptist unity

I lost and Baptists won. As president of Baptist Bible Institute, I rec-



PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Experience the blessing of giving

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 10:35).

Christmas is a time for giving and receiving. God has given us so much in His Son, Jesus Christ, and we have received so much from those who have served before us. In all that we do we stand on the foundation of their faithfulness and service.

There are many opportunities to give during the Christmas season. Already this year, a friend of mine called to share the need of another friend in the Louisville area; our executive office staff has continued a tradition of providing gifts through an Angel Tree program; and I have become aware of many community projects worthy of support. The season also is an excellent time to support our fine Kentucky Baptist institutions.

I'm also aware that there are so many little things that can be done for neighbors and friends who have

needs. For some, we just need to give the gift of time and a word of encouragement.

As I think of examples of wonderful Christmas giving, I am reminded of a businessman in Eastern Kentucky who had grown up very poor in Paducah. Each Christmas he challenged a local merchant to match his purchase of toys for 100 children who would be disappointed otherwise.

I also think of a fellow convention staff minister in South Carolina who has two adopted children. His daughter is a diabetic and needs a kidney transplant. She went on the Internet to seek contact with her unknown mother. A few weeks ago she heard from her biological mother who is willing to be her donor. For a daughter who has had many struggles, this is a wonderful gift in so many ways.

One of the ways in which we all have an opportunity to be a part of spe-

cial giving this Christmas season is the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. I was reminded again about how important this offering is when at the conclusion of the December Executive Board meeting, President Jim McKinley shared briefly about his family's first Christmas in Bangladesh. It was a real challenge to be able to celebrate in a Muslim culture, but that Christmas proved to be one of their most meaningful. Jim requested prayer for international Christians who will celebrate Christmas with few expressions but with much love and hope.

A pastor from Logan County shared with me how blessed his congregation has been because they have exceeded their goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The congregation also gives more than 15 percent to the Cooperative Program.

When we have been so blessed by others, we know that we must learn the joy of giving.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

commended that the name be changed to Providence Baptist Theological Seminary. As independent Baptists the trustees voted to call it New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Next step, I resigned to become CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. Trustee P.I. Lipsey did not want me to go to Nashville. He argued, "That job will make you just the kingpin of the convention."

As a former pastor of a Tennessee country church I understood that the kingpin of a wagon only holds all the parts together. It does not move it like the wheels or guide it like the wagon tongue. But the kingpin does keep the wagon bed, wheels and tongue from pulling apart.

Fifty-five years ago I resigned the presidency in New Orleans to be a kingpin and work to hold the Baptist organization together. During World War II we had begun to scatter. Arkansas Baptists were then doing what Texas Baptists are now doing—going their independent way. No criticism; only pride in Baptist freedom!

The kingpin is not pope. The pope defines the outer edges of the Catholic Church by decreeing who is not a Catholic. The Baptist way is more difficult but works better.

Forget the edges. Raise a Christ-honoring standard to march behind. Let the edges be ragged with maybe a few who really do not fit—maybe a few Arminian Methodists or Calvinistic Presbyterians.

Back then Missions Secretary Theron Rankin proposed the standard to pick up the tempo of our marching together—"Advance Program of World Missions."

No one criticized the dissidents or tinkered with the organization. Each church, association, state convention and agency independently tried to get in step. We marched together under our Lord's Great Commission. The organization was not just healed; it was strengthened for God's glory.

*Duke McCall
Jupiter, Fla.*

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

STEWARDSHIP

Look for ways to include Christ in Christmas plans

By Doug Strader

Each year on Christmas Day the Louisville Courier-Journal



runs a cartoon that the late cartoonist Hugh Haynie drew several years ago. It depicts a person sitting in a pensive mood

with presents all around, and the image of Jesus over the entire cartoon. The person asks himself, "Did I leave anyone out?"

We are making plans to celebrate Christmas again in a few days. Most of us who are affluent are busy buying gifts for family and friends. While there is nothing wrong in doing that, maybe we should ask ourselves if we have left anyone out, especially Jesus!

In the days left until Christmas, why not add to your own Christmas traditions by doing some special things for other people? Consider the following ideas that might be helpful to you and your family as you celebrate the birth of Jesus:

- Give a generous offering to your church for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. If you have children, let them participate by giving their own money.

- Find a family that is in need of food, clothing, medical attention and toys for the children and help that family.

- Participate as a family in your church's Christmas celebrations.

- Help someone who does not drive by taking him or her to do Christmas shopping.

- Find individuals who cannot wrap their gifts and wrap their gifts for them.

- Take some homemade cookies, breads or candies to shut-ins, widows and workers.

- Find a family that has no one with whom to celebrate Christmas and invite them to your family Christmas celebration.

- Visit people in the hospital and nursing homes and share some cookies, candy or breads.

- Take your family and sing Christmas carols to some shut-ins.

I have not attempted to be all-inclusive in this list, but perhaps it will inspire you to find some way to help make Christmas more meaningful to those who need it the most. Please remember in the midst of all your spending, not to forget the One who is the reason for the season. This could be some of the best stewardship of our God-given resources.

Doug Strader is director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's stewardship department

Holiday dither: How do couples decide which relatives to visit?

Q: My husband and I both want to celebrate Christmas with our parents and siblings. Since we can't be two places at the same time, how should we decide where to spend the holidays?

The tree's decorated. Friends are invited for a Christmas gathering. Cookies and cakes are baked. Now this troubling question pops up again. Who do we spend the holidays with?

At first, it's tempting simply to take the easy route. For some couples, this might mean alternating Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations with family members every other year. For other families, however, parents and siblings are out of town or spread over the country. For still others, family traditions and expectations make any changes difficult.

Above all, Christmas is a celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. What decision then honors Christ the most? Christ came and brought love, compassion and understanding to a torn world. In deciding where to spend Christmas, couples need to discuss what will bring that same harmony Christ wants for us into the lives of family members.

It may be that one spouse's family might need family support more in a particular year. Couples also might want to spend Christmas with each other and share other days in the holiday season with parents and siblings. Establishing new Christmas traditions offers the opportunity to bring newness and freshness to holiday celebrations. This sounds a lot like what Christ bought at Christmas—a new look at life.

Harmony and newness are gifts that spouses can give each other as they honestly discuss their hopes for the holiday season. The important thing is for spouses to share feelings honestly and make a joint decision acceptable to both. Family Christmas celebrations can vary or stay the same from year to year. The important key for couples is to honor Christ and each other with a spirit of love and cooperation. Merry Christmas!—*Suzanne Coyle*

Q: What should we tell our three teenagers about their grandfather's illness? He has cancer and it does not look good for the long term. I hate to hurt them because they love him so much. They know he has been in the hospital, but they do not know that this is so serious.

First discuss this with your father. He needs input into the decision. What does he know and how much does he want them to know? When does he want them to be told?

Second, tell your children the truth as far as you know. Do not paint a false picture in order to build hope. Be honest, but not pessimistic. They need to know enough to adjust to the changes in his lifestyle. They do not need to know all that he knows, but they should not be left in the dark.

Finally, be prepared to talk and answer their questions as much as possible. Listen to their emotional reaction. They might begin the anticipatory grief process. Let them adjust to the shock of this news and then talk again. Help them to talk about their feelings. Suggest that they talk with their grandfather about how special he is to them. Building memories can help them face his death whenever that comes.

As they process their feelings, remind them to grieve as those who have hope. Talk about faith issues with them and answer their questions. They might wish to talk with your pastor or a counselor. Share your thoughts and feelings with them also.—*Wade Rowatt*

Family Forum writers are Suzanne Coyle, associate director of Cornerstone Counseling for Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children; David Garrard, minister to children at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville; Jon Rainbow, a clinical gerontologist and professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Wade Rowatt, director of the St. Matthews Pastoral Counseling Center in Louisville; and James Stillwell, minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington. Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253 or e-mail us at wesrec@ntr.net.



The presence of Christ is best present of all

Barbie dolls, razor scooters, DVD players, ties, jewelry, fondue pots. Whether you're watching TV commercials, listening to radio spots or scanning the latest sale bill, it's clear that corporate America has one definition of Christmas—a season to sell presents, presents and more presents.

While the spirit of giving is a wonderful part of the holiday tradition, gift buying and giving can consume so much time, money and energy that the greater meaning of Christmas gets carelessly shoved aside.

Most church services this time of year seek to emphasize the importance of focusing on Christ instead of commercialism; the manger rather than the mall. Christmas pageants, caroling, food baskets for the needy, financial gifts to support international missions and other ministry opportunities gently remind us what the spirit of Christmas giving truly means.

Yet for many of our friends, neighbors and co-workers, the Christmas season is nothing more than festive decorations, exchanging gifts, attending countless parties and getting a few days off from work or school.

Christians easily can fall into the same hectic routine, scurrying from one activity to the next with little thought about the eternal significance of the celebration of Christ's birth.

Perhaps, even in the midst of another non-stop Christmas season, we should pause long enough to reflect on the wondrous message of that first Christmas day. It is a vivid reminder that the holiday season is not about Christmas presents, but the presence of Christ.

Yes, Jesus did bring a number of presents with Him when He was born in Bethlehem, but not the kind of presents we lavishly wrap and stack beneath a tree.

The first present produced by Christ's presence was the gift of joy. "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," the heavenly messenger announced in Luke 2:10. Some

2,000 years later, we enthusiastically affirm, "Joy to the world! The Lord is come."

Christmas joy is based on the birth of the Savior who came to rescue His people from their sins. Do you know someone who needs to receive the gift of spiritual joy this Christmas? There's no better time to share the message of Christian joy than during the celebration of the Messiah's miraculous arrival among mankind.

Coupled with the gift of joy is the gift of hope—not some wishful-thinking type of hope but the kind of certain, confident hope the apostle Paul described as "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Such hope is reflected in the angel's announcement: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

The life-changing hope that accompanied Christ's mission on earth is expressed in the classic Christmas carol that declares: "O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie! ... The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." In a world filled with hopelessness, the hope available through the

presence of Christ is a priceless gift.

Along with joy and hope, the presence of Christ also provides the present of peace. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," the heavenly host proclaimed. In the midst of cultural chaos and complacency, Jesus offers "peace that passes understanding" that can radically transform individual lives.

Christ's presents of joy, hope and peace are wrapped by His Father in the precious package of love. "For God so loved the world that He gave ..." is the source of our Christmas celebrations throughout history.

There's nothing wrong with the holiday traditions of Christmas decorations, gift-giving and parties galore. But as you exchange gifts and greetings with family and friends, don't forget to include a generous supply of joy, hope, peace and love—timeless Christmas presents that truly reflect the presence of Christ.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Denominations: What does the future hold?

By Eldred Taylor

"So every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

What is a denomination? To denominate is to identify who one is and what one believes as distinguished from others.

Five Baptist distinctives set us apart from those who believe differently: the authority of Scripture, congregational government, baptism by immersion of believers only, separation of church and state and the sufficiency of the individual to come to God through Christ. Other religious groups may believe some of these five things but not all five together. Only Baptists believe all five of these distinctives.

Under God we are to identify who we are and what we believe. Thus, we are driven by the Great Commission to take the gospel to the whole world. Only then will we be prepared to give an account of ourselves to God.

Driven by the Great Commission and standing firm in our distinctive beliefs, Baptists became a denomination in the last millennium. Realizing that people who were distinctively

alike could work together to better accomplish God's kingdom work, Baptists banded together in associations and later into conventions. These organizations were for the purpose of fellowship, mutual encouragement and cooperatively advancing the cause of Christ. Because of the strength gained in this unity, the denomination came to mean much, especially in the 20th century.

As we enter a new millennium, "the times are a-changing." Many "boomers" and "busters" are not very interested in denominations. They often are not particularly interested in doctrines. Unfortunately this hinders their knowing who they are and what they believe.

On the positive side, the boomers and busters are interested in ministry to themselves and others. Thus, the local church and its ministry are very important to them. They want a hands-on part in the church's ministry.

From the beginning of Baptist organization and denominational life the authority for what was done rested in the churches. The authority flowed up from the churches to the denominational leadership. Only in recent years have we seen attempts to turn the direction

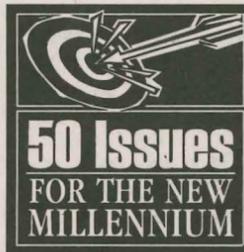
around to make it flow from the top down to the churches. This trend must stop or we will become a hierarchy with the authority coming down from the top instead of a democracy with the authority rising from the churches, each of which is autonomous.

So what is the role of the denomination in the new millennium? From the New Testament I discover that Jesus Christ established the church and promised that it would stand until His return. Therefore, I want my service to God channeled through my church, which will last.

Nothing is said in the New Testament about associations, conventions or denominations. Although important and helpful, these are of human origin while the church is of divine origin. Therefore, the denomination must assume a servant role, receiving authority only from the churches, and in turn, serving only to help the churches do their ministry.

To do effective ministry and make the denomination an effective channel, churches must not neglect to teach our Baptist distinctives so we know who we are and what we believe. Then denominations can be effective channels to help churches carry out the Great Commission.

Eldred Taylor, retired executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, is parliamentarian of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.



CHRISTMAS

Experts: People can take steps to lessen the Christmas blues

Continued from page 1

at Malone College in Canton, Ohio.

"We want Christmas to help us find continuity and reconciliation," he said. "We want to celebrate traditions and our values with our families."

It's hard for Gen-Xers to find continuity at Christmas, said Rudd, who at 30 calls himself a Gen-Xer. "Many Xers' parents were divorced when they were growing up. Holiday traditions and reunions are disrupted by the presence of step-siblings and stepparents."

Does faith—or questioning one's faith—play a role in the Christmas blues?

"I doubt if faith is a factor," Nye said. "I don't find that people have the same doubts about Christmas that they do about Easter."

Sharon Solt Joseph, pastor of the Church of the Manger United Church of Christ in Bethlehem, Pa., has a different perspective.

"Some people have a hard time when they hear Christmas stories that tell about angels and a virgin birth. If they don't believe these stories, they begin to question everything they believe, including the existence of God."

This cuts them off from their faith, she said, "the thing that could comfort them" if they are blue at Christmas.

Christmas can be "especially difficult" for people who have been recently widowed, added Cheryl Perry, a developer of the "Whole People of God" church materials and curriculum distributed by Logos Publications and Wood Lake Books.

"Christmas comes at the darkest time of the year. Some churches hold 'blue Christmas' or 'the longest night' worship services on Dec. 21, the day of the winter solstice." At these services, candles are lit and prayers are said to comfort the bereaved and to remember loved ones who have died.

People with the Christmas blues should take heart, the experts said. "The demands of the season will end," Himmelhoch said. "Spring will come. You'll get over the blues."

Nye, however, cautioned that people should talk to their pastor or a mental health professional if they are depressed and should seek help if they have two or more symptoms of depression such as loss of appetite, sleeplessness, loss of weight or loss of energy.

People can lessen the impact of the holiday blues, Larson said. "Set limits on your time and on your budget. For instance, send holiday cards out after Christmas."

And, Larson added, don't forget that even with the holiday blues, "For many, including myself, Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. You just have to prepare for it."

Bethlehem shepherds no longer visit manger

Continued from page 1

earnestly trying to reach Palestinians like Hussein.

"It's a God-sized task," said one Southern Baptist representative working with Palestinians in a country near Israel. The worker asked not to be identified because of he and his wife's Christian work in a sensitive region. "We have no idea how He will choose to work."

One hopeful sign rests in the legendary hospitality of Palestinians.

"The hospitality has always given me hope," his wife said. "Because if they invite me into their homes, they might invite Christ into their hearts."

Before recent Israeli-Palestinian conflicts escalated tensions, Christians and Muslims peacefully coexisted in the area for centuries.

"We've lived together as neighbors for generations," said Achmud Hammeeda, a shepherd who lives in an area called Beth Tamaar, just nine miles from Bethlehem. "We've lived together very peacefully."

But for Hussein the more important image of peace this Christmas Eve is of him and his sheep. Hussein puts his fingers to his lips and makes a high-pitched sound. Like a heavenly Christmas choir, his sheep bleat a collective "baaaah."

"See, I told you the sheep know my voice," Hussein said with a laugh.

Not only do the sheep know the shepherd but the shepherd knows the sheep. Although he doesn't use human names, he does name them after prominent characteristics, such as "Black Face." In a way, Hussein sees them as part of his family.

"We do much more to harm sheep than they harm us," Hussein noted.

Unlike Christmas cards showing shepherds in fields, letting their sheep graze on rich, green pastures, Bethlehem's lack of water in recent times has reduced the landscape to rocks and dirt.

Sometime around March, as grass starts reappearing, sheep (and all of the goats mysteriously left out of traditional nativity sets) will reappear on the countryside. But until then, many of the

sheep have to be content with a diet of barley feed in their pens.

Today, few shepherds in the Middle East actually make their living exclusively from shepherding. Hammeeda feeds his 13 children by making bricks for the construction trade.

His family, originally Bedouins, has raised sheep for generations. His father and several brothers all live within close proximity. Evenings, especially in the month of Ramadan, are spent on Hammeeda's porch chatting about daily events and telling stories.

For many Muslims, it's a time to get together with relatives and catch up on the year's activities. Spiritually, it's a time for prayer, reflection and generosity, according to Muslim tradition.

The month is concluded with an evening called the Night of Power, when Muslims believe they have direct access to God as "the heavens open wide."

Southern Baptists see the time as a crucial one to pray for Muslims and have for several years promoted 30 days of prayer for Muslims during Ramadan.

"Most people say they are closer to God during this time," Hammeeda said. "But I am not sure."

More information about the Muslim holy month of Ramadan is available at the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's Web site at www.imb.org/TConline/200012/ramadan.htm.

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If you are over the age of 60 there are planned gift options with attractive ways to ensure income to you and other family members during your and their lifetimes to generate tax advantages to you and to provide financial benefits to your church and to the other Baptist causes that are near and dear to your heart.

A planned gift is different from other gifts. While it often entails an immediate transfer of money or property, the recipient organization's benefit from it is most often deferred. The passage of time is your lifetime and the lifetimes of family members, if they are involved in the gift benefits.

A planned gift is over and above your regular tithe and offerings. It typically, but not always, is directed for some specific use, like your

church's facilities, mission projects, scholarships, special needs ministries, music ministry, benevolence, etc.

If you want to know more about how to make a planned gift for the benefit of your church and other Baptist causes, please contact Laurie Valentine or me. Furthermore, if you want to know more about how

to incorporate planned giving into your church's stewardship program, please contact us. We are only a toll-free call away, and there is no cost to you or your church for our consulting services. In fact, you and your church already have paid for the services by your gifts through the Kentucky Baptist Foundation. A portion of those gifts provides an operating subsidi-

dy to the Kentucky Baptist Foundation.

Let me also remind you January is "Make Your Will" month. What a great opportunity for you to consider a planned gift. What a great opportunity for your church to provide its members information about how to make a planned gift.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

Barry Allen is president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, 10605 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40223; (888) 254-5701

27th Annual Living Nativity
Glen's Creek Baptist Church
December 21, 22 & 23
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Come to the Creek and experience the true meaning of Christmas. Your children will love it. Bigger and more beautiful than ever!

Directions: Turn onto Elm Street from Main, drive five miles—the church is on your left. Watch for the signs.

"Celebrating 200 years" 1801-2001
Mickey D. Hyder, pastor

KENTUCKY

Paducah couple to coordinate Europe partnership work

Kenneth and Marianne Brown have been named the on-site coordinators for Kentucky Baptists' next international missions partnership.

Brown, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Paducah, and his wife will help coordinate the work of volunteers involved in the KBC's partnership with the European Baptist Convention. The partnership officially will begin in January 2001.

KBC partnership missions director Calvin Wilkins said the Browns' ministry experience will be a major asset in working with European Baptist pastors and churches.

Brown has been pastor of Trinity Church since 1994. He previously was pastor of Good Hope Baptist Church in Hampton, West Paducah Baptist Church, Baptist Tabernacle in Paducah and First Missionary Baptist Church in Benton. He also has been involved in international mission projects in Brazil, Haiti and Tanzania.



The Browns

KBC extends partnership with Poland 2 years

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

Volunteers interested in taking part in the Kentucky Baptist Convention's mission partnership in Poland still have time. The KBC Executive Board voted last week to extend the partnership with Polish Baptists by two years.

The partnership, originally approved for three years, was scheduled to conclude at the end of 2001. At the request of Polish Baptist officials, state convention leaders voted Dec. 12 to continue the partnership through 2003.

In a letter to KBC partnership missions director Calvin Wilkins, Polish Baptist leaders Leszek Wakula and Andrzej Seweryn wrote, "We appreciate the tremendous efforts of the Kentucky churches in supporting the work of the gospel in Poland." Wakula is general secretary of the Baptist Union of Poland and Seweryn is president.

"We believe that the relationships that have been established between us ... are extremely valuable and we would like to see them develop further," the letter added. "We are in a period of tremendous change and opportunity in Poland and we think that the stability of our partnership will put us in the best position to take advantage of this for the gospel."

Wilkins said more than 130 Kentucky volunteers served in Poland this year. He said as many as 150 to 175 workers will be needed in 2001.

"There's a strong support among

Kentucky Baptists for what we're doing," Wilkins added. "We also are getting word back from the churches in Poland about how much of an encouragement it has been for teams to come in and work with them."

In addition to the partnership in Poland, Kentucky Baptists are in the second year of a three-year partnership with Baptists in Tanzania. The KBC also will launch a three-year partnership with the European Baptist Convention next month.

In other action, Executive Board members dedicated a new prayer room in the Baptist Building and approved the distribution of year-end funds.

Larry Martin, leader of the KBC missions growth team, said the prayer room will help highlight the convention's emphasis on pursuing authentic spirituality.

"It is through prayer that God moves," Martin emphasized. "The challenge before us is so much bigger than we are. Our desire is that God moves in such a way that only He can get credit for it."

Board members approved the distribution of more than \$2.2 million in year-end funds. The total includes more than \$1.67 million in Cooperative Program challenge funds as well as state mission reserve funds, unused Executive Board funds and investment income.

The KBC forwarded more than \$590,000 in CP challenge funds to Southern Baptist Convention causes. Other recipients include KBC agencies

and institutions, new work and church growth projects, collegiate ministry, evangelism emphases and a \$100,000 allocation to assist renovation efforts at Cedarmore Baptist Assembly.

The Executive Board's administrative committee approved several personnel recommendations, including approving Michael Hendricks as the Baptist Building's new local area network computer administrator.

Hendricks, a member of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, currently is a senior engineer at Micro Computer Solutions. He will assist Troy Fulkerson, KBC director of information services, in maintaining the Baptist Building's computer network.

In other actions, administrative committee members approved plans to reconfigure positions in campus ministry and church leadership.

Mel Doughty, who has served 19 years as a part-time campus minister in Western Kentucky, will become the West Kentucky collegiate ministry consultant, providing assistance to campus ministries throughout the western half of the state.

Joseph Ball will become part-time campus minister at Hopkinsville Community College and a part-time campus minister's position also will be established at Mid-Continent College.

Chip Miller, who is retiring this month as KBC church leadership specialist, will continue to serve as a part-time consultant in that area. Additional changes in that area will include hiring a full-time secretary and a part-time preschool consultant.

"Our desire is that God moves in such a way that only He can get credit for it."

Larry Martin, KBC missions growth team leader

Thanking God

By Robert Dunston

Yiah Ling Si, the daughter of Sui-Hai Si and Gaik-Eng Giam of Malaysia, wrote this week's Advent devotional on love and joy.

Yiah Ling is a senior at Cumberland College with a major in psychology and a minor in religion. She also competes on the Cumberland College tennis team.

"Lord Jesus, thank You. Thank You for facing 'trials of many kinds' for my sake.

"Thank You for suffering the pain of separation from Your Father, so that I might know the joy of being reconciled to Him.

"Thank You for enduring death on the cross, so that I might know the joy of eternal life.

"Thank You for bearing the stripes of my wounds on Your back, so that I might know the joy of being healed.

"Thank You for allowing Yourself to be 'led like a lamb to the slaughter' (Isaiah 53:7) in taking the punishment for my sins, so that I might know the joy of forgiveness in a gracious God.

"Thank You for enduring the horror of betrayal, so that I might know the joy of Your everlasting faithfulness.

"Thank You for Your willingness to be 'despised and rejected by men' (Isaiah 53:3), so that I might know the joy of being loved and accepted by God.

"Thank You for enduring all for my sake. My joy was Your joy, because the Father's joy was Your own. You did not seek Your own pleasure in the midst of suffering,

but in them sought to please the Father in every way.

"Lord, teach me to be thankful for the trials I face, for through them I find Your joy, 'mature and complete, not lacking anything' (James 1:4).

"May He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen' (Hebrews 13:21)."

All of us at Cumberland College wish you a blessed Christmas season as we celebrate God's great love for and gift to us.

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

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



The sting

The e-mail, faxes and voice mail have been buzzing with news of all you are doing to make the holidays brighter for our children and families.

Some of our most generous Christmas sponsors are the smallest congregations in the commonwealth, small in numbers but certainly not in heart. Pizza parties, Bibles, altars filled with white-wrapped gifts, Christmas pageants and concerts, cookies, candy, potlucks and those stockings and brightly-wrapped surprises, you've given it all. Some of you have given our kids their first chance to sit on Santa's lap. Some of you will witness children experiencing their first Christmas as believers. You've had a hand in it all. You've done so much, but I have one more request.

Because the needs of the kids have changed, fewer and fewer of them can spend holidays with their family or as a temporary guest of a generous family in the community. Our staff is required to complete hours of training, so are our foster parents and people who provide respite care for foster parents. While we still have children and teenagers who are mature and healthy enough to handle a week or weekend away

from those trained eyes, many are not. The result is, more of our kids will be on campuses this Christmas rather than at a home with family or friends. That is why I am writing today.

Please pray for these special kids. Even with the outpouring of generosity, love and concern Kentucky Baptists have showered upon these

young ones, on Dec. 25 it will be them and their staff. All the special events, dinners, parties and planning won't take the sting out of being "in care" on Christmas Day.

Pray for God's comfort and peace to be upon them and that He will encourage and empower those special staff members who will be ministering to them that day. Pray too for our foster families who strive so hard to

make the holidays bright for children who long for the families left behind, or the families that never existed in the first place. Pray for a healing balm this Christmas.

Thank you for all you do. God bless and Merry Christmas.

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

NATIONAL NOTES

■ No room for manger in Lexington, Mass.

The 70-year tradition of a Christmas creche on the public green in Lexington, Mass., must end in order to preserve the spot's historic character, a federal judge ruled. U.S. District Judge Nancy Gertner upheld a local ordinance banning all displays, religious or otherwise, from the town green. The ordinance specifically bans the private placement of "unattended structures" on the green for more than eight hours. The Knights of Columbus sued on First Amendment grounds to get the ordinance struck down and gain permission to erect the scene again this year.

■ 'Jesus' visits Florida for Christmas.

Postal workers in central Florida have an extra set of packages to deliver this holiday season: more than a half million copies of the "Jesus" video produced by Campus Crusade for Christ. In the largest single-city distribution thus far, Christian leaders are supporting the delivery of about 545,000 copies of the video in the greater Orlando area. Paul Scroggins, executive director of Vision Orlando, a coalition of pastors and other ministry leaders, said the project will cost \$1.3 million. The money was raised by individuals and churches in the Orlando area.

■ Religious freedom issues spark concern.

While the U.S. State Department has taken some steps to address the issue of religious freedom worldwide, a recent

report concluded that the government apparently has done little to integrate concern for religious freedom into U.S. foreign policy. The report by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom criticized the State Department for failing to adjust U.S. policy toward "a number of countries where the conditions of religious freedom have deteriorated."

■ Voucher case may reach Supreme Court.

A taxpayer-funded school voucher program in Ohio has been struck down by the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Legal experts predict the Dec. 11 ruling could lead to U.S. Supreme Court consideration of the issue. The appeals court decision upholds a December 1999 decision by a federal district court judge who ruled that the program violated the separation of church and state. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said U.S. Supreme Court involvement in the case would make it "the most important case about public schools and church-state separation in decades."

■ Religious leaders condemn racism.

More than 30 leaders of faith-based organizations have endorsed a joint statement declaring racism to be "evil" and calling on people of faith to be proactive in its eradication. The one-page statement, endorsed by representatives of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Native American and

Hindu organizations, was released Dec. 13 at a news conference at the Washington National Cathedral. Sanford Cloud, president of the National Conference for Community and Justice, said the statement's proposals are "grounded in the concept that racism is incompatible with God's intention for humanity."

■ Church urged to ban same-sex unions.

If the Presbyterian Church (USA) allows the blessing of same-sex unions, it will lead to the demise of the 2.5 million-member church, according to a network of 37,000 Korean Presbyterians. In a Dec. 11 letter, the National Korean Presbyterian Council pleaded with the denomination's regional presbyteries to ratify a ban on same-sex unions that was narrowly approved at the church's annual meeting in June. The letter emphasized there is "no doubt" that homosexual relationships are "incompatible with God's created order."

■ Time names religious "innovators."

Time magazine has named six "innovators" in the world of religion and spirituality. The six include T.D. Jakes, pastor of the 26,000-member Potter's House in Dallas; Virgilio Elizondo, rector of the San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio, Texas, who pioneered the belief that Jesus was of mixed racial heritage; Steve Waldham, a 38-year-old Internet entrepreneur who founded Beliefnet.com, the Web's hottest religious site; Byron

Kate, a divorced grandmother who developed "The Work," a New Age-Zen Buddhist program to help people take responsibility for life's problems; Tariq Ramadan, a Geneva-based lecturer who says European Muslims need to develop an "independent Islam"; and Jan Willis, a professor of Buddhism at Wesleyan University.

■ Singer dies after motorcycle crash.

Kevin Mills, 32, a member of the Christian rock groups Newsboys and White Heart, died Dec. 3 after a motorcycle accident in Hollywood. Mills, who was from Louisville, was a singer and bass player. The Newsboys have sold nearly 3 million records and earned three Grammy nominations. White Heart started in 1982. Newsboys, a band from Australia now based near Nashville, was formed four years later.

■ Two Christian Web sites shut down.

Gaylord Entertainment, a Nashville-based company, has announced it will close its Internet operations, including Musicforce.com and Lightsource.com, two Christian Web sites. The company, whose holdings include the Grand Ole Opry, announced Dec. 5 it will no longer be in the Internet business. It reported losses of \$48 million in the first three quarters of the fiscal year. Earlier this year, the company closed Z Music Television, its 24-hour cable channel that featured Christian music videos.

Don't forget the gifts

During this very special season, each of us must search our hearts and dig deeply into our spiritual resources to make sure we are presenting the proper meaning of Christmas to others.

We must not drift away from the true meaning of Christmas. The adage "actions speak louder than words" is certainly true with students. Words carry a lot of weight, but actions speak volumes. Our students will listen to what we say, but they will long remember what we do.

All of our faculty and staff work with young lives that are impressionable and are easily drawn to a commercial approach to the holidays. We have the opportunity to provide guidance and direction to our students. Many have never given much thought to the true meaning of Christmas. If you were to ask them what it means to them, they likely would give you a long list of things they would like to have under the tree on Christmas morning.

Recently, one of my teachers put on paper some of his thoughts about the challenges facing him during this season. I thought you would enjoy reading what he wrote.

"It's Christmas! I know this because of the decorations, hustle and bustle that fill (my) environment. I spend my days with students. I am a teacher. And if you know young people, nothing makes them more excited than the upcoming holidays. The holidays often bring thoughts, feelings and emotions that need to be shared. And, while focusing on this most holy of seasons, I must ponder several questions:

"Where is the hope? Young people seem to feel that we live in a time of utter hopelessness. Many of my students come from broken homes, improv-

erished living conditions, environments filled with drug use and sexual abuse. Almost everywhere they turn, the world provides no sense of rescue. Where is the hope in these situations? It stems from a gift of hope that comes only through Jesus Christ. May God guide me in teaching the hope that comes from His Son!

"Where is the comfort? Peer pressure, popularity, school life and a hoard of other influences affect today's students. 'Where do I fit in?' 'Does he/she really love me?' 'When will graduation ever come?' are all questions my students are confronted with on a regular basis. Amid such confusion and distress, where is the comfort for these young lives? It comes from the gift of comfort that is found only in Christ Jesus. May God give me strength in providing comfort for my students by showing them Christ's abundant love.

"Where is the meaning? The worldview of success is materialism. It is a vicious cycle of 'get more-want more,' and many young adults live by this code. They are left to find meaning in 'stuff.' But is this to be the purpose of one's life?

No! Where is the meaning that will shape my students' futures? It comes from the gift of meaning that is freely given by God through the life of Jesus Christ. Please God, allow me to live each day in such a manner that I bring the meaning of Christ to every student I touch.

"The most precious gift to give this season was purchased and paid for over 2,000 years ago on the hill of Calvary."

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

W.F. Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, P.O. Box 67, Oneida, KY 40972. www.oneidaschool.org; e-mail: president@oneidaschool.org

Nebraska family at Clear Creek

First-year student Richard Fain had an eventful trip when he and his family moved to campus from Nebraska, an 1,100 mile journey.

The second day out, going through St. Louis, the pickup truck broke a rear wheel stud. "It was amazing to see God's hand at work; folks were helpful and cooperative," Fain said.

"Although we were headed in the right direction, I was a little discouraged the next morning when we found another loose lug. We got back on the road about noon and arrived at Clear Creek about 2:30 in the morning. I expected to find an empty campus but a gentleman was waiting for us. When I saw him I started crying."

Richard and Linda Fain have a 25-year-old daughter, Amy, in Connecticut, and two children on campus, Abigail, 13, and Adam, 16. "They are doing really fine in school and adjusting well," Mrs. Fain said. "The Lord blessed us when I secured a job in the secretarial pool and Richard went to work on the mowing crew."

The Bible promise, "a child shall lead them," was fulfilled in this couple coming to Christ.

"Amy was about six years of age and her friends talked about Bible school," Fain recalled. "Amy asked, 'Why can't we go?' I tabled the idea for a few days but the question came back up again as we talked.

"After chores one Saturday I announced, 'We're going to church tomorrow.' That was the beginning. About a month later my wife and I received the Lord in our home. We were baptized together," he recalled.

The call to ministry came 10 years ago. "I drove a truck for 20 years and many times on the road the Lord would tell me, 'I've got a job for you to do.' I saw it as a ministry to people on the road; letting them know how I

was changed," Fain explained. "Plenty of witness opportunities came as we drove from Nebraska; I talked with several drivers on the CB. I believe God wants me to be a pastor, but I also want to minister to truckers. I know where they are hurting."

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

BOOKS

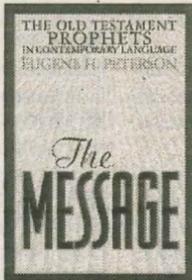
The Message: The Old Testament Prophets in Contemporary Language. Eugene Peterson. Navpress, 2000. 585 pages. \$21. ♦♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

Several years ago, Fred Craddock delivered two back-to-back lectures at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville titled, "When the Familiar Becomes Strange" and "When the Strange Becomes Familiar."

The central theme of the presentations was that Jesus often used stories and images common to the people of Palestine, but gave them a unique and unexpected twist in order to grab their attention and trigger a fresh examination of their relationship with God. Craddock challenged preachers in his audience to do similar work in their preaching. Then, like Jesus often did, Craddock encouraged preachers to help the unfamiliar God to become more comprehensible to the listener.

In "The Message," Eugene Peterson works at both sides of that task of proclamation. By trying to cast the message of Scripture in the common language of the workaday world, he hopes to convince religious and secular people to read Scripture from a different perspective, thereby allowing the message to seep into the soul and enrich the reader's awareness of God's presence. Those who are familiar with the previous volumes of "The Message" are aware of Peterson's vivid, often jarring presentation of the Word.

"The Message" is a dynamic rendering of scriptural texts: It is an excellent tool for devotions, introducing people to the gospel, etc. I would not recommend it as a primary study Bible. *Jim Holladay*



Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They Share a Common Future? Edited by Thomas Rausch. Paulist Press, 2000. 178 pages. \$12.95. ♦♦♦♦♦

Several years ago, several Catholic and evangelical scholars and leaders issued a document titled "Catholics and Evangelicals Together." Published first in Richard John Neuhaus' journal *First Things*, the essay summarized areas of agreement and divergence between evangelicals and Catholics.

The notion that Catholics and evangelicals could share any areas of common faith and proclamation set off a firestorm of protest within both communities. So intense was the protest, that a couple of Southern Baptist signers were forced to distance themselves from the statement.

Despite the resistance, the dialogue between evangelicals and Catholics has continued. This book is an attempt "to try to move the conversation between Catholics and evangelicals forward." It uses three movements to develop the conversation: an exploration of the history of relations between Catholics and evangelicals, an examination of the two major theological issues that divide them—the doctrine of salvation and the nature of the church, and a review of the signs of hope for the future.

At first blush, the book seems like an esoteric, academic exercise that bears little relevance to the ongoing life of the church. But there is some good stuff in its pages. Moving back and forth between Catholic and evangelical writers, the book will challenge those of us on the more evangelical side to examine more thoroughly our understanding and proclamation of the grace of God, to expand our thinking on how that grace is experienced and to develop a fuller understanding of the church. *Jim Holladay*

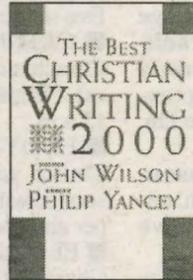
The Best Christian Writing 2000. Edited by John Wilson. Harper San Francisco, 2000. 340 pages. \$15. ♦♦♦♦♦

Diversity is an overused term in these modern times and a misattributed term as well. While many cultural pundits attribute our new American diversity to living in a postmodern era, it actually stems from our awakening to the fact that we are, indeed, a multicultural society. There is no such thing as a single defining American experience, other than the fact that we all, for better or worse, believe in America.

In "The Best Christian Writing 2000," one sees that there is no defining Christian experience as well, other than the fact that we all believe in Christ.

By collecting the essays of 27 Christian writers, editor John Wilson shows just how diverse the body of Christ is. From a defense of stay-at-home moms by Bethany Patchin, to a one-page cartoon and barbed commentary titled "Conversations Overheard at an Amy Grant Concert" by Todd and Jeff Hafer, this is a book celebrating just how broad the spectrum is of the colors, ideas and backgrounds of Christ's followers. Writers from Judaic, Catholic and Orthodox backgrounds show up here, as well as those from more conservative and fundamentalist backgrounds.

For the most part, this is a collection of essays that might easily turn up in any of the myriad "The Best" collections floating around today. While one or two essays lean a bit more toward pedantry than art, overall it is a fascinating look at the body of Christ somehow working today despite its members' many differences. *Victoria Moon*



Learning While Leading: Increasing Effectiveness in Your Ministry. Anita Farber-Robertson. Alban Institute, 2000. 153 pages. \$15.95. ♦♦♦♦♦

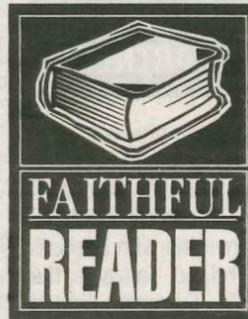
Anita Farber-Robertson's purpose in writing this book is to challenge ministers to stop being involved in unproductive behavior that causes them to be ineffective in ministry.

She makes an interesting case that much of our unproductive behavior as leaders revolves around being trapped by abiding social values that set us up for failure. Farber-Robertson identifies four social virtues that are pivotal in our interaction with others: being helpfully supportive; respecting people; being strong; and maintaining integrity.

The problem is how we define these values. For example, to be seen as helpfully supportive often means we offer approval and praise while minimizing disapproval and blame, or we simply tell people what they want to hear. Farber-Robertson says we must change how we define these values. To be helpfully supportive she suggests a different definition than one described above: help individuals become aware of the reasoning process and become aware of gaps and inconsistencies. She offers alternative definitions for each of the social values.

Behind each of these new definitions is the commitment to constant learning on the part of the leader. For most leaders this will mean radical personal transformation.

If you are wondering why your leadership continues to produce little effect, Farber-Robertson can guide you down a path of examining your own behavioral patterns for the source of your ineffectiveness as a leader rather than just complaining you do not have good followers. *Wayne Hager*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C.; Jim Holladay, pastor of Lyndon Baptist Church in Louisville; and Victoria Moon, librarian for Deer Park Baptist Church in Louisville. They welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: jwhager@surry.net, docholladay@juno.com or sdmoon@gateway.net.

Advent books offer readers a guide for focusing on meaning of Christmas

By Nancy Haught
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—It's hard to resist the countdown to Christmas, the one that calculates the waning weeks in "shopping days left" and measures progress by items crossed off a "to do" list.

We sing of "peace on Earth" but grow increasingly anxious. Dec. 25 looms more as a deadline than a lifeline.

Christians trying to stay focused on the meaning within the madness might be hard pressed to remember their faith, let alone hold it up to the light, stretch it a little and mend its thin spots in preparation for the coming of Jesus.

But that is what Christians are called to do in the weeks before Christmas.

The season of Advent, which began Dec. 3, is a solemn time of expectation and hope that culminates in "a coming," or "adventus" in Latin. Many churches and families mark the progress of Advent with wreaths bearing four candles, one for each Sunday in the season, until all four burn, announcing that Christmas, the birth of Jesus, is at hand.

The Advent wreath, with its light that grows stronger as Christmas draws nearer, is meant to be an outward sign of an inner journey, a movement from darkness toward light.

For centuries, Christians have taken time during Advent to make that trip, often relying on books to guide or inspire them, to make the familiar themes of Christmas new again. Here is a sampling of Advent reading available to modern sojourners who are Bethlehem-bound:

"**Wonderful Counselor: A Fortnight of Christmas Meditations**" by Larry Libby and Steve Halliday. Two Oregon authors offer 14 brief chapters focused on one of the names of the Messiah mentioned in Isaiah 9:6. The resulting essays and short fiction ask and answer questions about what it means that Jesus is called "Wonderful Counselor." The writing is straightforward, sometimes funny and always thoughtful.

"**On the Way to Bethlehem**" by Hilary McDowell. The author, a playwright and poet, asks the reader to imagine being a traveler on the road to Bethlehem. Six weeks' worth of daily readings incorporate

Scripture, reflection and prayer around each part of the journey, from packing the suitcase and saying goodbye to reaching the destination and turning homeward. McDowell's traveler is beset with doubts and worries but determined to "see the real stable" and discovers that she carries with her the calm she seeks.

"**The Heart of Christmas**" by Max Lucado and others. A half-dozen well-polished sermons by six noted preachers invite readers to see the familiar themes of Christmas from fresh perspectives. John Maxwell asks, "What do you do when you follow a star and find a stable?" He looks to the magi for answers. "When wise men find a stable," Maxwell writes, "they look for God."

"**Christmas With God**" by Rebecca Barlow Jordan and others. This small volume is packed with more than 90 short inspirational stories, so many there's no need to ration them to make them last through Advent. Each vignette begins with a Bible verse and introduces a character or two who share the struggle to keep Christ at the center of the season. In "Hope Is Alive," a weary clergyman imagines a

world without Jesus while in "The Twelve Days of Giving," a mother teaches her children that toys are not the be all and end all of perfect presents.

"**Christmas Abundance: A Simple Guide to Discovering the True Meaning of Christmas**" by Candy Paull. In a collection of poetry, thought-provoking quotes and short reflections, Paull suggests ways of appreciating the secular aspects of Christmas in a Christian context. She invites the reader to indulge in the sights, sounds and smells of the season without losing the golden thread of Jesus' birth that runs through it all.

"**All for the Newborn Baby**" by Phyllis Root, illustrated by Nicola Bayley. Don't dismiss this quickly as a children's book. Like the best of that genre, it rewards readers of all ages. Root draws on Christmas carols and legends from around the world to weave a simple lullaby that Mary might have sung to the baby Jesus. The spare but touching lyrics are the only words to accompany Bayley's lovely illustrations, which combine the vibrant color of stained-glass windows and the exquisite detail of illuminated manuscripts.

PEOPLE

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for these people and projects, which are part of Kentucky Baptists' partnership with Baptists in Poland, Tanzania, the European Baptist Convention and New England:

■ Sedge Fen Baptist Church in Suffolk, England. The church recently called a pastor after three years without one. David Heiserman and his wife, Denise, moved from India to serve the church.

■ Missionaries to Tanzania Carolyn and Charles Dixon who are on leave in Louisville.

■ Haruni Seleke Chiyawe as he serves as a pastor in Mbuyuni, Tanzania, and tries to build a structure for Galilaya Baptist Church. "He has the materials to build a roof on steel poles, and then they will gradually build the walls, but can use it as they build," a missionary writes. Pray that God will give encouragement since the work is slow.

■ Give thanks for a recent "True Love Waits" seminar in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, at which almost half of the 26 participants made commitments to purity until marriage. Pray that they will be faithful.

■ Native New Englanders Bill Graham and Eddie Williams as they plant a church in Lowell, Mass.

■ Continuing dialogue with a potential church planter from Ethiopia to work with Ethiopians in Greater Boston.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ CADIZ—Jerry Turner resigned as pastor of New Light Church effective Dec. 3. Terry Mitcheson was called as pastor effective Dec. 10.

■ HINDMAN—Hindman Church ordained Jarvis Williams and Mark Combs, students at Southern Seminary, into the gospel ministry. Mike Caudill is pastor.

■ OWENSBORO—Pleasant Ridge Church honored its pastor, Franklin Skaggs, on the 40th anniversary of his ordination, Dec. 4. Skaggs announced his retirement effective Jan. 1, 2001.

■ PADUCAH—Willis Henson, pastor of Lone Oak First Church, announced his retirement effective Feb. 4, 2001.

■ PLEASUREVILLE—Pleasureville Church called Mark Combs as minister to children and youth. Dale Niswonger is interim pastor.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

■ BAGDAD—Bagdad Church's adult musical will be presented Dec. 24 at 6 p.m.

■ BARBOURVILLE—Barbourville First Church will hold its Christmas Eve candlelight service at 5 p.m.

■ BOWLING GREEN—Living Hope Church will hold its Christmas Eve service at 6 p.m.

■ CAMPBELLSVILLE—Saloma Church's choir will present the musical, "Bethlehem's Child" Dec. 24 at 11 a.m.

■ EDDYVILLE—Eddyville First Church will hold its Christmas Eve service with a candlelight Lord's Supper and special music at 5 p.m.

■ ELIZABETHTOWN—Immanuel Church will hold its Christmas Eve candlelight service at 5:30 p.m.

■ FINCHVILLE—Finchville Church will hold its Christmas Eve service at

11:30 p.m.

■ GLENDALE—Gilead Church will hold its Christmas Eve candlelight service at 6 p.m.

■ JEFFERSONTOWN—Jefferson-town Church will hold its Christmas Eve service featuring carols, the Christmas story and a silent Lord's Supper at 10 p.m.

■ LEXINGTON—Russell Cave Church will host a traditional Christmas service Dec. 24 at 10:30 a.m.

■ LOUISVILLE—Beechmont Church will hold its Christmas Eve candlelight Communion service at 5 p.m.

Broadway Church will hold its Christmas Eve worship service at 11 a.m. and a candlelight Communion service at 5:30 p.m. and 11 p.m.

Carlisle Avenue Church's Christmas Eve morning service at 10:45 a.m. will feature the ladies ensemble and the sanctuary choir. A candlelight service will be at 6 p.m. featuring the children's choir, handbell choir, ensembles and sanctuary choir.

Hurstbourne Church will hold its

Christmas Eve Service at 5 p.m.

Melbourne Heights Church will hold its Christmas Eve candlelight Communion service at 5 p.m.

Rockford Lane Church will hold its Christmas Eve service at 5 p.m.

St. Matthews Church will hold its Christmas Eve candlelight Communion service at 5 p.m.

■ OWENSBORO—Walnut Memorial Church will hold its Christmas Eve candlelight service at 5 p.m.

■ PADUCAH—Paducah First Church will hold its Christmas Eve worship and Communion service at 5 p.m.

■ SCOTTSVILLE—Scottsville Church will hold its Christmas Eve Communion service at 6 p.m.

■ VERSAILLES—Versailles Church will hold a Christmas Eve Communion service at 5 p.m.

■ WADDY—Graefenburg Church will hold a Christmas Eve candlelight Communion service at 6 p.m.

■ WILLIAMSBURG—Williamsburg First Church will hold its Christmas candlelight Communion service at 5:30 p.m.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Beautiful, professionally remodeled ranch; country feel, city convenience. Half acre, 3-bedroom, 2-bath, garage and more. Must see. 10717 Blue Lick Road (Louisville). Call: Homebase, (502) 421-8987 or (502) 558-4757. Three percent down; seller pays closing costs.

FOR SALE: Kimball piano. Spinnet; plays well; cabinet in good shape; \$1,000. Call (270) 737-6645—leave message if no answer.

SEEKING: Piano and/or keyboard player needed immediately for an established Southern Gospel quartet based in Lawrenceburg/Frankfort area. If interested, please call (502) 839-3556 or e-mail stopher@kentuckyquest.net.

SEEKING: Recreation specialist/activities therapist. Mature Christian to work with children/adolescents. Requires BS/BA in recreation therapy or equivalent training. Base salary: \$23k plus benefit package; 10 percent additional to retirement annuity. Send resumé to: Tim Tharp, director of residential care, PO Box 579, Carmi, IL 62821, or phone: (618) 382-4165, ext. 14, or e-mail: timtharp@bchfs.com.

SEEKING: Ballardsville Baptist Church, a growing, mission-minded congregation, seeks applications for a full-time position from a person who senses a call to minister to youth and children. Bachelor's degree a minimum requirement; seminary a plus. Experience in youth and children's ministry. Seeking organized, people-oriented individual as a minister to youth and coordinator of children's programs. Compensation package negotiable. Send resumé to: Search Committee, Ballardsville Baptist Church, 4300 South Highway 53, Crestwood, KY 40014.

SEEKING: Calvary Baptist Church in Danville, Ky., is seeking a full-time student minister to direct children, youth and college programs. Send resumé by Jan. 15 to: Pastor Doug Wesley, 214 Lincoln Ave., Danville, KY 40422, or e-mail: wesley@mis.net.

SEEKING: Part-time youth pastor for Hillsdale Baptist Church, Ohio. Send resumé to: hbc@bright.net.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music and youth. Send resumé to: Fairview Baptist Church, PO Box 3006, Paris, TN 38242. Phone: (901) 642-2191.

SEEKING: Aftercare therapist. Mature Christian needed with MS/MSW-level degree, therapy degree or training and experience in family therapy to provide services to residents and families post discharge from residential care program. Base salary: \$27k plus benefit package; 10 percent additional to retirement annuity. Send resumé to: Tim Tharp, director of residential care, PO Box 579, Carmi, IL 62821, or phone: (618) 382-4165, ext. 14, or e-mail: timtharp@bchfs.com.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Ludlow is seeking a motivated worship and praise leader to help transition from traditional to blended service using the best of old and new. This individual will be responsible for incorporating instruments, praise teams and drama into services, as well as developing music programs for children through adults. Experience is required for this challenging and exciting full-time position. Please send resumé to: First Baptist Church, 400 Linden St., Ludlow, KY 41016.

SEEKING: Pastor for Ridgewood Baptist Church, the only CBF-affiliated congregation in the growing suburb of Southwest Louisville. Our small, diverse, missions-minded church is committed to historic Baptist principles and freedoms and is praying for God's leadership in this search process. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Ridgewood Baptist Church, 6209 Greenwood Road, Louisville, KY 40258.

SEEKING: Minister to student. Louisville church seeks full-time minister with heart for students. Proven experience requested. Forward resumé to: Maple Grove Baptist, 5911 E Manslick, 40219.

SEEKING: Younger's Creek Baptist Church, Elizabethtown, Ky., is seeking resumé for the position of pastor. Please send resumé to: 251 Younger's Creek Road, Elizabethtown, KY 42701, Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, Ashland, Ky., is prayerfully seeking a senior pastor. A progressive, multi-staff church, First Baptist has two morning services (one contemporary, one traditional), a very active Sunday school, and numerous opportunities for midweek prayer meetings and congregational fellowship. It is a church that reflects the values of true Christian love and gender equality. For more information about our church and the requirements of the position, visit our Web site at www.fbcashlandky.com. Resumés should be sent to First Baptist Church, PO Box 787, Ashland, KY 41105-0787, c/o Dr. Eugene H. Foster.

SEEKING: Part-time position coordinating overall children's ministry (preschool-sixth grade) at Rich Pond Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Ky. Responsible for directing preschool Sunday school, coordinating mission organizations and overseeing children's activities for churchwide and special events. Must share love of children and serve as a Christian role model. For information, call (270) 842-2593, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-noon.

SEEKING: East Cadiz Baptist Church of Cadiz is seeking a part-time minister of music. Send resumé to: M/M Search Committee, East Cadiz Baptist Church, 407 Third St., Cadiz, KY 42211.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth and education to lead an enthusiastic, ever-growing group of young people (75%) and provide leadership for our comprehensive ministry of Christian education (25%) in one of Kentucky's fastest-growing counties. Experience, training and undergraduate degree required; seminary degree strongly preferred. Please send resumé and letter of interest to FBC Search Committee, c/o Wayne Young, 2002 Keaton Lane, Lawrenceburg, KY 40342 by Jan. 31, 2001.

SEEKING: Church prayerfully seeks minister of music/youth (full-time or part-time). Please send resumé to: New Life Baptist Church, 1185 Shackelford Road, Florissant, MO 63031, Attn: Pastor Tim McIntyre. Phone: (314) 837-0626.

SEEKING: Youth minister. Music background a plus. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, PO Box 670, Whitley City, KY 42653, Attn: Staff Search Committee.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of education and administration to continue development of a comprehensive Christian education program in a growing church. Experience required, seminary degree in education preferred. Send resumé and inquiries to: Hunsinger Lane Baptist Church, 3400 Summerfield Drive, Louisville KY 40220, Attn: Minister Search Committee. E-mail: hlbadmin@altavista.com.

SEEKING: Part-time music minister. Primary responsibilities include: sharing in worship planning and leadership; conducting sanctuary choir; and overseeing volunteer-staffed children's music ministry. Please send resumé to: Albany First Baptist Church, 110 W Cumberland St., Albany, KY 42602, Attn: Music Committee, or call (606) 387-5909.

SEEKING: Immediate need for full-time administrative assistant for growing church. Experience necessary with emphasis on Microsoft Word and Excel as well as desktop publishing. Please forward resumé to: Personnel Chairman, Franklin Crossroads Baptist Church, 4695 Hardinsburg Road, Cecilia, KY 42724.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tenn., is receiving resumé for minister to families with children. This position is an opportunity for a high-energy individual, preferably seminary trained, to minister with preschoolers and children, their parents and leaders. Inclusive in theology and creative in ministry, FBC is supportive of both SBC and CBF. Resumés should be mailed to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 401 Gateway Ave., Chattanooga, TN 37402.

SEEKING: Farmdale Baptist Church, 5610 U.S. Highway 127 South, Frankfort, Ky., is seeking three part-time positions: children's minister, youth minister and organist. Send resumé to church in care of Personnel Committee.

CHRISTMAS

Hard work brings singing tree to life

By Cecile Holmes
Religion News Service

COLUMBIA, S.C. (RNS)—Christmas begins early at this capital city's Shandon Baptist Church, arriving as most Americans are still pondering how to turn Thanksgiving turkey into delectable leftovers.

The Saturday after Thanksgiving, a miniature army of volunteers descends on the suburban church. First, they unload the tractor-trailer stored most of the year at the rear of the church's 22-acre campus.

Then, working in assembly-line fashion from outdoors to indoors, volunteers pass yards of greenery, miles of electrical cable and hundreds of feet of garland from one person to the next. Inside, others sew costumes, saw and hammer to build an extension to the church's stage and painstakingly inventory the pasteboard platforms upon which choir members soon will stand.

For Shandon Baptist, this beehive of activity is only the first stage of an annual labor of love called "The Singing Christmas Tree."

The "tree" is a 35-foot-tall, 13-tier metal structure built in the shape of a tree that will hold up to 150 singers who become "human ornaments."

The performances, presented 11 times during five days in early December, use more than 20 miles of audio and lighting cable, 3,300 lights, 75 enormous reflective ornaments, 500 feet of garland, 66 velvet bows and a dump truck full of greenery.

Pete Richards, who works with a local construction firm, has called Shandon Baptist home since childhood. He has been part of the tree project, now in its 16th year, since the beginning. He and his family give many hours of volunteer time to the project.

"It's one of the major outreaches of our church," Richards said. "I feel like in some small way, I'm hopefully leading some people to Christ. Not to mention it's a great way to kick off the Christmas season."

This year, three generations of the Richards family are part of the tree. Richards and his son, Peter, are singers. Grandson Alex is part of the staged drama and Richards' wife, Brenda, plays the central role of a grandmother in the dramatic story told by the production.

Employing a computerized lighting system, "The Singing Christmas Tree" is beautiful to look at and a mind-boggling blend of creativity, volunteer labor and techno-wizardry. A fiber-optic star provides the background for the eye-catching presentation, a popular event in Columbia attracting about 13,000 people annually.

Weeks in advance, minister of music Dave Dupree sets up the organization of the singers on a huge pink, blue, orange and green chart, noting each choir member's physical height, musical part and the size of the pasteboard standing platform each will require during the production.

He begins working on a script with volunteer copywriters in early March. The theme changes annually but always is linked to the deeper meaning of the holiday season. Last year's theme was "the perfect tree," drawing



ANNUAL TRADITION The choir of Shandon Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C., performs its annual "Singing Christmas Tree" presentation. The 35-foot-tall tree holds 150 singers, 3,300 lights, 75 enormous reflective ornaments, 500 feet of garland, 66 velvet bows and a dump truck full of greenery. (RNS photo)

on the idea that every family yearns for that perfectly shaped fir tree to adorn with lights, ornaments and tinsel.

"The story line this year is (based on) someone who needs a heart transplant," Dupree said. "Here in Columbia in the last six or nine months, we've seen lots of stories of people who need heart transplants. In every story of that type, people say, 'It was a miracle what medical science can do, the fact that I can receive someone else's heart and live.'"

In a spiritual sense, everyone needs a new heart, Dupree said. "The story here is this person who needs a heart transplant, and that all of us need a new heart, a new heart in Christ.

"Just like someone has to die before a person can get a physical heart transplant, Jesus died on the cross so that we could get a spiritual heart transplant. So the miracle of Christmas is a new heart. You could call it the 'Heart of Christmas.' We call it the 'Miracle of Christmas.'"

When the production first began, performances were held at the church's former sanctuary, drawing about 4,000 people annually. The crowds were so large, Shandon Baptist moved the event to a local auditorium until its new, larger church facility was complete. Its current sanctuary seats about 1,250 people.

Dupree takes each singer's needs into account as he plans the human component of the tree.

"Some people are afraid of heights, so they'll be on the lower rows," Dupree said. "Some are claustrophobic so we put them on the outer edges. I also

try to account for their absence if they'll be out during a particular performance."

Dupree initiated "The Singing Christmas Tree" when he came to Shandon in 1985. He had seen singing Christmas trees in other locales, including Denton, Texas, and Columbus, Ga. Many churches treat the event as Shandon Baptist does, as a holiday celebration for their congregations and an outreach to their communities.

According to Dupree, singing Christmas trees were produced in 1933 at Belhaven College in Jackson, Miss., and at a Denver high school in 1941. Shandon Baptist decided to mount its own production because of the potential to reach so many people.

"Unlike a staged pageant or play, it's a real vertical medium," Dupree said. "It draws you up. Creatively, it takes in more of your senses."

Head seamstress Kathleen Dendy, responsible for making more than 50 children's costumes for this year's production, said she loves the work because it "touches the lives of more people than you can imagine."

Brenda Richards is a character in the drama and a volunteer in other areas. She said she's overwhelmed by all the people who give of their time to make the tree come alive. Volunteers range from medical personnel working backstage to the folks who hang in until 2 a.m., taking the tree down, when the last performance is done.

"I get a lump in my throat every year because of the joy of the family of Christ pulling together to share something like this," she said.

Author explores both sacred & silly in Christmas encyclopedia

By Douglas Todd
Religion News Service

WINNIPEG, Manitoba (RNS)—Despite researching Christmas for more than 10 years, Gerry Bowler says he never grew sick of the world's dominant holiday.

Bowler, the author of the new "World Encyclopedia of Christmas," also says he was forever changed by learning everything anyone ever wanted to know about Christmas—from the recipe for mulled glogg to "I Saw Three Ships," from "Beavis and Butthead Do Christmas" to solemn midnight

Masses marking the birth of Jesus.

"My love of Christmas really deepened during the process. I became less Protestant," said Bowler, a professor of history and culture at the University of Manitoba. He said he kept finding more layers of meaning in the holiday, which is marked in almost every country.



By becoming "less Protestant,"

Bowler said he means he moved beyond his own evangelical Protestantism. That perspective, he said, tends to see Christmas as a one-shot opportunity to hunker down with the family and moan about the crassness of it all.

Bowler, who attends a nondenominational church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, said he came to envy how Christmas in many parts of the world remains a mind-altering, sacred season lasting up to two months—a time for community, charity and discipline, as well as revelry, symbolic danger, humor and mysticism.

Christmas is when Eastern Christians enter 40-day fasts and many Western Christians give time and money to the poor. But Bowler suggests it's also when Christians, not to mention hundreds of millions of secular observers, should feel free to cut loose and revel in life.

Bowler came to the conclusion that Europeans and Latin Americans do Christmas in the most alluring ways, finding in it many different meanings.

Southern France, for example, has its famous Christmas festival of "The Thirteen Desserts." On Nov. 30, some Germans begin a lengthy Christmas season by divining future spouses. And Mexicans have the "Night of the Radishes" on Dec. 23, when they carve giant radishes into shapes from the Nativity story.

At the same time, Bowler noted Canada and the United States have created some of their own strange and powerful traditions, particularly in the 19th century, when the "dark and Dionysian side of Christmas got sweetened and it became more of a children's festival."

In more than 1,000 playful, provocative, detailed articles, the illustrated, 257-page book tells how people in different times and places culled diverse meanings from Christmas:

■ The Knickerbockers, a New York writers' group led by Washington Irving in the early 1800s, virtually invented the Santa Claus figure we know in North America. Instead of Santa being a church bishop, they made him into a chimney-sliding "nondenominational elf."

■ The "most bitter Christmas carol" Bowler found was France's "Noel Des Enfants." Written during the First World War, it urges the Christ child to avoid comforting German children.

■ In Quebec, people visit neighbors to collect money and food for charity. At each door they menacingly pronounce, "La Guignolee," which suggests they're ready to roast the feet of the eldest daughter unless they get a donation.

Bowler's list of weird and wonderful Christmas tie-ins and observances seems endless. As a result, he feels safe making only two generalizations about Christmas: Virtually everyone sees it as a holiday requiring some sort of celebration, and it is viewed as a time for miracles.

"While society becomes increasingly secular and science ever more intrusive," Bowler writes, "Christmas remains the only time of the year when miracles are considered possible, if not inevitable."



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NATIONAL ASSET MANAGEMENT – the same organization that manages the funds of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation – has created the new **National Asset Management Core Equity Mutual Fund** for individuals. The investment guidelines for this mutual fund are the same as the guidelines used in managing the large capitalization equity portion of the Foundation's Equity Fund, including the Christian ethical restrictions.

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A unique side benefit of this investment opportunity is that National Asset Management has agreed that for every account opened through this arrangement, 20 percent of its management fee will be paid to the Kentucky Baptist Foundation. None of the management fees received by the Kentucky Baptist Foundation will be retained by the Foundation, 100% will go to the Reaching Kentucky for Christ Fund administered by the Kentucky Baptist Convention. The management fee is not being increased to make this possible.

The Reaching Kentucky for Christ Fund will be used to reach people groups for Christ as the world comes to Kentucky. Kentucky currently has growing Hispanic and Asian populations and many of the countries of the world are now represented in the international students attending Kentucky's colleges and universities.

In addition, the Fund will be used to help churches and associations start new ministries in Kentucky. The Convention will partner with the associations and churches as they identify and implement new ways of sharing the Gospel in an increasingly secular culture.

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The Kentucky Baptist Foundation has been engaged by National Asset Management (NAM) to announce to Kentucky Baptists the availability of a personal investment opportunity in the NAM Core Equity Mutual Fund (Mutual Fund).

NAM, the Mutual Fund's investment advisor, is a registered investment advisor under the Investment Advisors Act of 1940, as amended. NAM currently serves as the institutional investment manager for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation.

The Kentucky Baptist Foundation will be compensated by NAM for the activities it undertakes to introduce this investment opportunity. However, the Foundation will direct 100% of its compensation to the Kentucky Baptist Convention for the Reaching Kentucky for Christ Fund. The annual compensation, 0.10% of the market value of the combined units owned by participating Kentucky Baptists, will not be charged as an additional fee to any person investing in the Mutual Fund.

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