

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

WESTERN RECORDER

December 26, 2000
Vol. 174, No. 51

Notice: In observance of the Christmas holiday, the Western Recorder office is closed this week. The next paper will be published Jan. 9.

FOR THE RECORD

The year in review
Reporters rank two Baptist issues among the year's top 10 religion news stories. *Page 2.*

Whose shoes?
Why did a Campbellsville University student travel to Poland this Christmas with 64 pairs of shoes? *Page 3.*

Editorial
'Twas the day after Christmas ... *Page 5.*

Baptists
Churches in Alabama help tornado victims dig out. *Page 6.*

World
Observers fear religious freedoms might shrink in Russia. *Page 9.*

Patchwork of love

Hopkinsville church women quilt for those less fortunate

By Tonya Grace
Kentucky New Era

HOPKINSVILLE—A sewing machine hums in the background, keeping pace with the chatter of the women gathered around a nearby table.

Like the shoemaker's elves from the well-known fairy tale, the women busily ply needle and thread to the quilt spread out before them, weaving a little loving kindness and care into the sheets of fabric they are sewing together.

For these women of Christian County, sewing quilts for the people of the Appalachian mountains is yet another blessed opportunity for them to serve God.

"We're just fixing them so they'll be warm," says Fern Clark, a member of New Palestine Baptist Church in Crofton. "I think we're supposed to take care of people who don't have as much as we do. Maybe we don't have much, but we may have more than they do."

On a recent workday, Clark occupies herself with the task of hemming several of the quilts. She talks of the enjoyment of sewing and the ease of performing a skill you never quite forget, no matter how long it's been.

And with a few stray pins and needles tucked neatly in her blouse, she certainly looks the part of a practiced seamstress.

"I haven't fixed a quilt in 10



years," she admits. "But, anyway, you just get into it."

While Clark hems, other women are using crochet thread to tack the pieced top, batting and lining of their most recent project. On a table over in a corner lie stacks of finished quilts ready for transport to Hazard

in Perry County.

Last month, a group bundled the quilts, pillows and other items into a truck and took what likely will be the first of several trips to help that area's needy families.

Since October, women from
□ See Hopkinsville women ..., page 8

Hanukkah gives Messianic Jews time to focus on Christianity

By Michael Leathers
Illinois Baptist

ROCHESTER, Ill. (ABP)—The Arthur family gathered around the kitchen table in their duplex Dec. 21 to light the shamash, the name for the candle in the center of their nine-pronged menorah, to observe the first day of Hanukkah.

This Jewish holiday, however, holds an added dimension for this family that isn't part of the celebration for millions of other Jews who also began lighting candles last week at sundown.

Terry and Diane Arthur, along with their three children, attend Petah Tikvah, a Messianic Jewish congregation in Springfield, Ill. Their youngest son, 10-year-old Zachary, described his faith best when he explained how school friends have a hard time understanding his beliefs.

"A lot of times, I don't think they understand that if you're a Messianic Jew, you believe that Yeshua, Jesus, is the Son of God," he said.

That inability to understand isn't limited to schoolmates. Messianic Jews face misunderstanding from both ends of the religious spectrum. Their evangelical brothers often don't see the need for them to embrace their Jewish roots, and other Jews do not consider Jesus Christ to be the promised Messiah.

The heart of Messianic Judaism is about reaching other Jewish people for Christ, according to Mike Copen, the rabbi at Petah Tikvah in Springfield, Ill.

"We are not separating ourselves," he said. "We believe Yeshua (the Hebrew word for Jesus) is the Anointed One of God, that He was born of a
□ See Messianic Jews ..., page 7

Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, December 27

Among 2000's notables: Baptist Faith & Message, KBHC lawsuit

From the Ten Commandments in Frankfort to the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando to the Kentucky Baptist Convention meeting in Bowling Green, the year 2000 gave Kentucky Baptists a variety of events to remember.

Below is a sampling of the local, national and international highlights and, some might say, lowlights from the past 12 months:

Baptists unite. Baptists meeting from around the world Jan. 5-9 in Melbourne, Australia, as part of the 18th Baptist World Congress declare the next 10 years a "Decade of Racial Justice."

Lee leads WMU. Wanda Lee, president of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union since 1996, is elected Jan. 22 as the agency's 17th executive director.

Relief crews on the move. Kentucky Baptist disaster relief crews respond to two state disasters in 2000: Owensboro tornadoes in Jan-

uary and Vanceburg floods in February.

"Sold to the man with the pitchfork." A New Mexico teenager sells his soul for \$5 Feb. 13 using the online auction giant eBay. Shortly thereafter, eBay announces a ban on soul selling through its site.

The persecuted church. Christian-Muslim violence continues in Indonesia and Nigeria, causing the destruction of a Baptist seminary in Nigeria and a Christian university in Indonesia. In Laos, Christians are required to sign a document renouncing their faith or be subject to harassment, persecution and imprisonment.

Firing leads to lawsuit. The American Civil Liberties Union and Alicia Pedreira lead a group of civic and religious leaders in filing a

lawsuit April 17 against Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. Pedreira was fired by KBHC in October 1998 when officials learned she was a lesbian. The lawsuit, which has yet to come to trial, claims KBHC

should not receive state funds while basing its employment policies on religious beliefs. Later in the year, the lawsuit contributed to a standoff between KBHC and two state agencies over whether the state would renew its contracts with the Baptist agency.

You can't say that. Ohio's state motto. "With God, all things are possible," was ruled unconstitutional by the Sixth U.S. Court of Appeals and ordered to be thrown out April 25. The American Civil Liberties Union brought the suit against

the state, claiming the motto was an endorsement of the Christian religion.

Vermont paves way for gay marriage. Vermont's governor signs the nation's most sweeping same-sex union legislation on April 26. The measure allows homosexual couples the same rights and benefits as those afforded married heterosexual couples.

Surfin' with the Savior. In an electronic sign of the times, Siam Rogers becomes on May 1 the Southern Baptist North American Missions Board's first missionary devoted entirely to Internet evangelism.

Ten Commandments cases. A U.S. district judge orders on May 5 that officials in three southeastern Kentucky counties must remove Ten Commandments displays from public property. Lawsuits continue in an effort to re-post them in two court-
□ See 2000 review includes ..., page 2



2000 review includes Baptist statement, children's homes

Continued from page 1
houses and a school district.

Stanleys: It's over. Former Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley and his wife, Anna, divorce May 11 after 44 years of marriage and several years of separation. Despite an earlier promise to step down if he divorced, Stanley remains senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta. That move draws criticism from Prison Fellowship founder Chuck Colson.

"We're OK." On June 2, evangelical leaders, including Southern Baptists, issue a "Chicago Declaration on Religious Freedom" defending evangelism in a religiously pluralistic society.

Spotlight on India. Southern Baptists hold their 14th annual day of prayer and fasting for world evangelism on June 10. This year's focus: India's 850 million Hindus.

Baptist Faith and Message revamped. Amid much controversy, the Southern Baptist Convention adopts a revised version of the Baptist Faith and Message doctrinal statement at its Orlando, Fla., annual meeting June 13-14. Advocates say the statement recognizes the conservative shift by leaders during the past 20 years, including a strong emphasis on the Bible. Critics say the new statement elevates the Bible to the same level as the Trinity.

On again. Off again. On for now. Despite state concerns about Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children's pending lawsuit over hiring practices, KBHC agrees June 23 to a new contract to care for children under the care of the state. Four days later KBHC President Bill Smithwick calls off the deal because of reports

that state case workers might stop sending children to the agency regardless of the deal. Gov. Paul Patton asks KBHC to reconsider and new negotiations lead to a contract. The new pact could be voided, however, if the lawsuit against KBHC is successful.

Boy Scouts ban approved. The U.S. Supreme Court rules June 28 that the Boy Scouts of America has the right to bar homosexuals from being troop leaders. This ruling reverses an earlier decision by the New Jersey Supreme Court that firing homosexual Eagle Scout and troop master James Dale was unconstitutional.

It's true. Jane Fonda surprises the nation when she confirms in June that she has become a born-again Christian.

And Europe makes four. Leaders of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and European Baptist Convention sign an agreement in July finalizing plans for a three-year missions partnership beginning Jan. 1, 2001. The KBC also has partnerships with Baptists in Tanzania, Poland and New England.

Baptists invade Cuba. World Baptist leaders meet in July with Cuban president Fidel Castro, adopting a resolution encouraging "initiatives to ease sanctions on food and medicine affecting the people of Cuba" and coordinating Cuba's first public evangelistic rallies in 40 years.

Judge: No graven image. A U.S. district judge rules July 27 that a granite model of the Ten Commandments can't be placed on the Capi-

tol grounds in Frankfort. The monument was a 1971 gift previously stored but ordered displayed by a state Senate resolution.

Promises, promises. Promise Keepers holds its first-ever conference in Louisville's Freedom Hall, July 28-29 with an estimated 18,000 men and boys in attendance.

"How about Marilyn Manson instead?" An 8-year-old girl is barred from singing "Kum By Yah" at a talent show held Aug. 11 at her Florida day camp because the song is considered a violation of the camp's ban on religious songs.

And stay out. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago announces in late

September the hiring of the first full-time exorcist in its 160-year history. According to the church, the priest will be responsible for purging demons from possessed people.

"Abortion pill" moves forward. Despite opposition from anti-abortion leaders, the Federal Drug Administration on Sept. 28 gives approval for U.S. distribution of RU-486, the so-called "abortion pill."

A fall from grace. Mike Trout, well-known radio personality and top executive with Focus on the Family, resigns Oct. 11 from the organization after admitting to an extramarital affair.

"Welcoming but not affirming." The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's governing body on Oct. 13 adopts a stance against homosexuality described by leaders as "welcoming but not affirming" of gays.

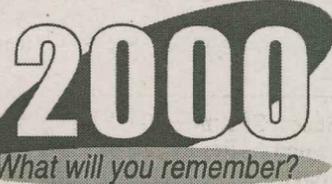
Carter: Bye, bye SBC. Former president Jimmy Carter announces Oct. 19 that he "can no longer be associated with" the Southern Baptist Convention. The move comes in protest to changes made in the Baptist Faith and Message statement and what he called the convention's new "creedalism."

Texans take money. At its annual meeting Oct. 31, the Baptist General Convention of Texas slashes \$5.3 million from its funding of the Southern Baptist Convention in protest of the convention's conservative leanings. Most of that is taken from the six SBC seminaries, whose leaders say they will require professors to teach in accordance with the revised Baptist Faith and Message. Still, the convention votes overwhelmingly to remain affiliated with the SBC.

Like father, like son. Evangelist Billy Graham's son Franklin is officially named Nov. 17 to be CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

KBC happenings. Messengers to the Kentucky Baptist Convention elect retired Southern Baptist missionary Jim McKinley as president at the annual meeting in Bowling Green Nov. 14-15. Messengers also vote to form a committee to study what response to make to the amended Baptist Faith and Message statement.

Baptists respond to disasters. Southern Baptists send aid around the globe in 2000. Workers assist more than 200,000 Ugandans displaced by civil war. Baptists also continued cleanup and relief efforts after flooding in late 1999 caused massive landslides in Venezuela. Southern Baptists also responded to needs in Mozambique (cyclones and flooding) and Ethiopia (drought and famine).



'Can I quote you on that?' Selected quotes from 2000

"You learn a lot about your prayer life when the walls and roof are coming apart all around you."—Harris Malcolm, pastor of First Baptist Church in Camilla, Ga., after a series of tornadoes left a five-mile path of destruction.

"It further divorces the idea of motherhood, being with child, from pregnancy."—Judith Brown, president of the American Life League, on "the abortion pill," RU-486.

"We're not going to do Disney. We felt like some alternative was appropriate."—Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Vice President Jack Wilkerson explaining the SBC promotion of a vacation planner in convention city Orlando for trips including Sea World, which is owned by Anheuser-Busch.

"We have no choice but to say whatever the Bible says, what God says. If that's offensive, we're sorry, but their argument is not with us, it's with God."—Former Southern Baptist Convention president Paige Patterson regarding protesters of SBC's statement on homosexuality.

"As an evangelical, I believe that the Roman Catholic Church is a false church and it teaches a false gospel."—Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, during an appearance on CNN's "Larry King Live."

"We can't even begin to meet the needs we see."—Winston McCarty, pastor of Fleming Baptist Church, regarding the Kentucky church's outreach ministry receiving more requests for aid after congressional welfare reform changes.

"When a man fears God, the first place he is going to seek reconciliation is home."—Tony Evans speaking on reconciliation during the Tony Evans Greater Louisville Crusade June 19-21.

"We have the answer in Jesus Christ and, sadly enough, we are keeping that to ourselves by not stepping out."—Cathy Neel, director of the Infant Resource Project in Louisville, on Kentucky's high rate of unwed mothers.

"What's wrong with teaching our children 'Thou shalt not kill?'"—Herschel Walker, pastor of Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church in Corbin, supporting the Kentucky Senate resolution affirming the Ten Commandments.

"We place a lot of emphasis on role models."—Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children President Bill Smithwick, defending the agency's hiring practices which exclude homosexual employees.

"I've worn out a whole set of Braille New Testaments."—Nadine Hammonds, a blind woman who has memorized the New Testament.

Two Baptist-related stories make religion writers' top 10

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Two stories about Baptists have made national religion reporters' list of top 10 faith-related stories of the year.

The annual poll, conducted by Religion Newswriters Association, surveyed reporters who cover religion in the secular press. Ballots were mailed earlier this month, and 37 active members submitted their votes.

The selection of Democratic vice presidential candidate Sen. Joseph Lieberman—an Orthodox Jew—was listed as the top religion story of 2000.

Lieberman's run for vice president as the first Jew on a major party ticket was significant in an election in which both parties were wooing religious voters.

Rounding out the top 10 news stories:

■ The pope's trip to the Middle East, which included meetings with Yasser Arafat and Holocaust survivors and an expression of sorrow for anti-Semitic violence by Christians.

■ The eruption of violence in the Middle East in the fall, with the fragile peace process between Israelis and Palestinians crumbling.

■ The fight over the role of gays and lesbians in the mainline Protestant churches, coupled with a decision by

Reform rabbis to bless same-sex unions and a move by Vermont to allow benefits for same-sex couples.

■ The Southern Baptist Convention's statement in the Baptist Faith and Message that women are excluded from being pastors of a church.

■ A controversial theological document issued by the Vatican that said only the Roman Catholic Church holds the "fullness of salvation" and that non-Catholic churches are "deficient."

■ The cracking of the shaky unity in the Southern Baptist Convention, with moves by individual state conventions to cut financial contributions to the national church, and former President Jimmy Carter cutting his ties to the SBC because of its "rigid" doctrines.

■ The pope's "mea culpa" on behalf of the sins of the church over the past 2,000 years.

■ A historic agreement between Lutherans and Episcopalians that will allow both churches to swap clergy and share in common mission projects, particularly in urban and rural areas.

■ The election of Vashti McKenzie as a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first woman bishop in the predominantly black denomination.

Elizabethtown church sends shoes, student to Poland

By Victoria Moon
Staff Writer

ELIZABETHTOWN—On Christmas Eve, Dana Jenkins, a petite 20-year-old blonde, boarded a plane headed for Poland with three suitcases full of shoes.

Jenkins isn't obsessed with footwear. She is carrying the goodwill and charity of her church to 64 orphans in Marwica, Poland, four hours outside of Warsaw.

Jenkins, a junior at Campbellsville University, went on a mission trip to Eagle's Nest orphanage this summer.

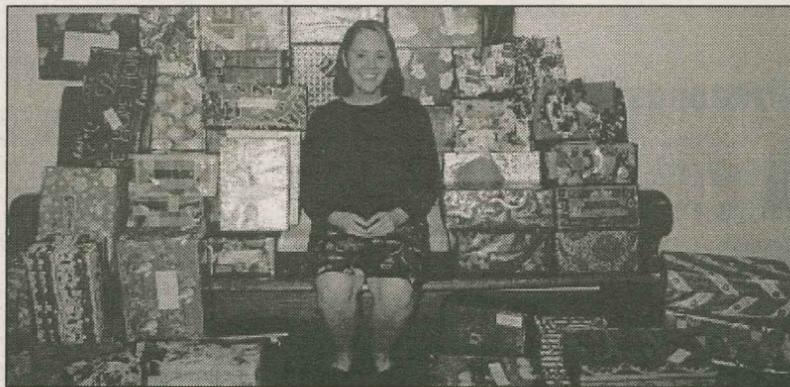
Before leaving for the trip, friend and fellow church member Lawanda Nolan, children's missions leader at Valley Creek Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, asked Jenkins to see if there was a mission activity for the church kids.

Jenkins recalled that conversation when she noticed the shoes many of the orphaned children were wearing. "They had shoes, but they weren't in very good shape and they didn't get new shoes very often."

Her mother, Judy, was touched by one story her daughter shared after returning from Poland. "The kids had only one pair of shoes (each), and when they got torn up they had to go borrow a neighbor's hot glue gun and glue them back together."

"I thought of all the shoes in my closet," her daughter added, "and I wanted to do something."

She noted the shoe size of the children and teens at the orphanage before



SHOES, SHOES, SHOES Dana Jenkins sits among gift boxes full of shoes. The student at Campbellsville University traveled to Poland last week, taking 64 pairs of shoes to orphans in Marwica.

returning to the States. She then discussed with Nolan and Valley Creek Baptist Pastor Steve Hill the possibility of the church purchasing shoes for the kids. They assembled a list of names, ages, gender and shoe sizes of every orphan and asked church members to "adopt" an orphan and buy them a pair of sneakers. Within two weeks all 64 names were adopted and sneakers began pouring in.

Some of the members did even more, buying enough socks to give each orphan at least one pair. Each pair of sneakers was sized up one half-size to accommodate the children's growth during the months since Jenkins left Poland.

Jenkins and Nolan said they were not surprised by their church's response to the orphans' need. "This church is such a giving church," Jen-

kins noted. "I thought this might be too much with other projects they had going, but they really jumped on board."

"This project made us really feel like we were involved," Nolan said. "This was so much more personal than just writing a check."

But collecting the shoes was only part of the story, as Jenkins and Nolan quickly found out. "We found out UPS was going to charge us \$1,800 to send the shoes," Nolan said. As a result, she started exploring other options to send the boxes of shoes.

"We contacted different airlines and the post office, the American Red Cross and missionaries with the partnership for Poland ... but we had all kinds of problems. We just prayed and prayed," she said.

Nolan began joking with Jenkins' mother that it might be cheaper just to

buy a ticket for her daughter and send the shoes as her luggage.

"I thought it would be neat if I could go back over there and take the shoes back with me," Jenkins said, "but I didn't think it would happen." At least not until her mom discovered it really would be the cheapest way to ship the shoes.

"Jesus knew He wanted those shoes to go at Christmas time," Nolan said. "Everyone here was really excited."

Funds for the trip were provided partially through church members' donations originally meant to cover the shoes' shipping costs. Jenkins' parents chipped in the rest. She left for Poland Dec. 24 and will return Dec. 31.

"I am so excited that I'm going to be able to go back and see everyone again," she noted. "Any time you get so close to people it always hurts to say goodbye and know you probably won't see them again. So it's great to be able to go back again."

The church's gift of socks and shoes has done more than just bring comfort to 64 orphans in Marwica, Poland. It also has made Jenkins even more missions-minded.

"This whole thing has made me think of that verse where Jesus says, 'What you do to the least of these, you have done unto Me,'" she said. The orphanage is not a Christian organization, she added, calling the shoes a step toward spreading the gospel in a tangible way.

"We won't see results now, maybe," she said, "but we will in the future."

BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ **The Kentucky Baptist Foundation** recently elected officers for the 2000-2001 year. They are: Chairman John Trisler of Harrodsburg, Vice Chairman Arnold Caddell of Burlington, Secretary Glenn Armstrong of Beaver Dam, Assistant Secretary Laurie Valentine of Louisville and Treasurer Barry Allen of Louisville.

■ **The Kentucky Baptist Fellowship** recently moved its offices. The new address is 225 S. Hurstbourne Parkway, Suite 205, Louisville, Ky., 40222-4929. The new phone number is (502) 426-1931.

Poland partnership coordinators urge Kentucky Baptists to serve

After spending five months in Poland, John and Jan Strimple are glad to be back in Kentucky for the holidays. But they also look forward to returning to Poland next month to continue their work as on-site coordinators for the Kentucky Baptist Convention's missions partnership with the Baptist Union of Poland.

Strimple, former pastor of Mallard Point Baptist Church in Georgetown, said the couple's initial stay in Poland "was a very difficult but very rewarding five months."

"For me, it was a lot more difficult than I expected it to be because of the language barrier," he said. "We were kind of shell-shocked for a while."

Despite the challenges, Mrs. Strimple added, "We knew we had to be out there working so we just did it. I looked on it more as an adventure." See said meeting Kentucky Baptist volunteers at the airport "and seeing the difference they made while they were in Poland was exciting."

Baptists in Kentucky and Poland are concluding the second year of a partnership agreement that originally was scheduled to last three years. At the request of Polish Baptist leaders, however, the KBC Executive Board voted earlier this month to extend the partnership through 2003.

"One of the major benefits is the encouragement this will give to the Polish Baptists," Mrs. Strimple said. "In a country of more than 40 million people, there are only 4,000 Baptists.

The fact that Kentucky Baptists would give time, money and energy to come over there is really encouraging to them."

The Strimples worked with 20 teams of Kentucky Baptist volunteers in Poland this year. The volunteers were involved in such projects as evangelism, construction, vacation Bible school and teaching English.

"We are planning for and expecting 300 volunteers next summer," Mrs. Strimple told Executive Board members. "We are praying that the Lord will send workers into His harvest field."

Strimple said the partnership offers a timely opportunity to impact Poland with the gospel.

"I think the main thing we need is to have an evangelical influence in Poland," he said. Since the collapse of communism a decade ago, "the whole country now is going into humanism and secularism," he explained. "It's really turning into a pagan country; they're worshipping the dollar. ... The more evangelical influence we can get in there and the more volunteers, the better it will be."

"We've seen God at work in isolated places in the country and that's really spreading," Strimple added. "We go back with tremendous expectations."

For information about partnership missions, contact the KBC partnership missions office at (502) 244-6462 or toll-free in Kentucky at (888) 254-5724.

Polish pastor seeks English teachers from Kentucky

LOUISVILLE—Daniel Trusiewicz is looking for a few good teachers.

The Baptist pastor from Poland was in Kentucky last month, visiting churches, recharging his spiritual batteries and getting some ideas for ministry. He also was asking Kentucky Baptists to consider whether God might be calling them to Wroclaw, Poland, and its English language school.

Started 10 years ago, the school at Wroclaw Baptist Church has about 400 students, mostly college-age, who take classes for up to four years, Trusiewicz said. "Our school is known for good proficiency, for good standards because all teachers are committed Christians."

The school needs five teachers and offers volunteer opportunities ranging from two weeks to two years. "It is difficult to find someone for a lifetime," he said jokingly.

Anyone interested need not fear the language or the culture, Trusiewicz noted. Teachers who speak only English are welcome. They will find "an environment of Christian English-speaking people," he said. Even the church services at his church are translated into English.

For short-term volunteers, there are two-week summer language camps. For those seeking a longer experience, teachers will need to take an exam on teaching English as a foreign language. While volunteers will need an outgoing personality and skills in teaching, "a basic requirement is, naturally, commitment for Christ and to church," Trusiewicz said.

Trusiewicz spent two weeks traveling through Kentucky, visiting some of the churches that sent volunteers to Wroclaw as part of the partnership

between Baptists in Kentucky and Poland. Churches he visited included First Baptist Church of Burlington, Woodland Baptist Church in Louisville, First Baptist Church of Monticello and First Baptist Church of Fort Mitchell.

"It has been very encouraging," he said. "I enjoyed it greatly. I think my vision has been enlarged because I could see different ministries that we don't have."

In Burlington, for example, outgoing KBC president Terry Wilder showed Trusiewicz how First Baptist Church is using its gymnasium as an outreach to young people.

Building a church recreation center is considered an innovative project for a church in Poland, he said. Some members oppose the idea. "We believe that it's an important project for future generations. We want to attract young people to Christ."

Wroclaw is the fourth-largest city in Poland. Trusiewicz said his church has about 400 members and is involved in planting other Baptist churches.

Though Wroclaw has more than 1,000 years of history, Trusiewicz said he considers it to be a young city because it has many young residents. The city's name is translated "gates of glory," he said.

"It's a wonderful name," he added. "I cannot wait until the glory of God can be revealed in an even more powerful way in our city."

For more information about the English language school at Wroclaw, contact the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership missions office at (502) 244-6462 or e-mail the school at wsj@opnt.optimus.wroc.pl.

WESTERN RECORDER

P.O. Box 43969
Louisville, KY 40253
(ISSN 0043-4132)

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

Western Recorder is published weekly by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253, except for one week in July and December. For general information, call (502) 244-6470. Fax: (502) 244-6474. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

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POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to: Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253.

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Don't judge others

In the Dec. 12 letter titled "A Fork in the Road," the writer stated that the road of moderation did not exist.

He told us to read Matthew 7:13-23 and then he went on to explain that we are either for God or against God. His stated view of "moderates" are those who run around oiling squeaky wheels, trying to keep everyone happy and that a "true" Christian can't be lukewarm. The inference is, I think, that oily moderates aren't "true" Christians.

I turned in my Bible to chapter 7 of Matthew. Lo and behold, my eyes fell to Matthew 7:1-2, "Do not judge or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged and the measure you use, it will be measured to you." In my Bible, those words are in red because Jesus is speaking.

I read Romans 1:18-32 also, as the letter writer suggested. Homosexuality isn't the only sin Paul mentions in this passage. There is a long list that includes greed, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, boastful, disobedient, senseless, faithless, heartless and ruthless.

Paul doesn't stop there. He goes on to say in Romans 2 that we who pass judgment on someone else have no excuse because at whatever point we judge another, we condemn ourselves. Oops, there it is again!

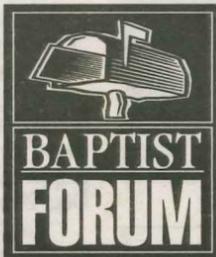
Jesus gave us the best example to follow when He told the adulterous woman in John 8:11, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and leave your life of sin." Aren't you glad that we live under God's grace and mercy?

Aren't you glad that we serve a living, loving Savior? Isn't that good news?

Ruthanne Boyles
Frankfort

Preconceived mold?

"A Fork in the Road" strikes a knife in the heart of every free Baptist.



While I admire the writer's use of Scripture to make his points, I cannot agree with his conclusions. His embrace of a state religion is short-sighted and way off base. Such a concept is a sure sign of limited freedom of religion and speech. Further, the posting of the Ten Commandments is best left to the homes and

hearts of believers, not on every public building. (I wonder if his church has them posted in Sunday school rooms.)

Apparently his definition of the "real" church, "traveling the straight and narrow," espouses "good old slavery" as well as "an eye for an eye," stonings and other barbaric practices that can be found in Scripture. Might as well throw in easy divorce for males, and maltreatment for women in general.

His attack on "moderates" is unwarranted. Looks like another soul has succumbed to the language of those who would control the words and thoughts of all Baptists, which would require them to fit into a preconceived mold.

Phil Stromowsky
Louisville

A Baptist blessing

It has been my privilege to serve on the Western Recorder board of

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

A memorable year among Kentucky Baptists

The year 2000 has been a memorable one in many ways for Kentucky Baptists. I would like to reflect on a few of the highlights:

Churches and associations across Kentucky celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Cooperative Program. Through "Operation Cooperation," Kentucky Baptists celebrated by providing a wonderful ministry to people in need. In 76 blood donor drives, more than 3,400 units were collected. Additionally, Kentucky Baptists extended the celebration by a record dollar increase in Cooperative Program gifts to missions and ministries. The missions offerings also reached new records. The CP celebration culminated during the KBC annual meeting with a drama on this special partnership's origin at First Baptist Church of Murray, a missions video and music by Clay Crosse. Many thanks to the celebration committee and all Kentucky Baptists for their heart for missions.

"Celebrate Jesus 2000" placed evangelism on center stage in church-

es and associations. Thirty-two associations celebrated with crusades or simultaneous evangelism emphases. The Greater Louisville Tony Evans Crusade crossed racial and denominational lines around the theme of reconciliation to Christ and others. The Franklin Graham Crusade in Lexington was a glowing success with thousands of decisions for Christ.



Bill Mackey

In addition to international mission partnerships with Poland and Tanzania, the Kentucky Baptist Convention added a partnership with the European Baptist

Convention. More than 300 volunteers participated in KBC partnerships this year and witnessed many decisions for Christ.

One of the most visible ministries in churches and associations has been Hispanic work. More than 70 ministry locations have been established, and hundreds of people have professed faith in Jesus Christ.

The Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children faced a major challenge but we rejoice with President Bill Smithwick that children will have the op-

portunity to continue receiving quality professional care and Christian love and hope. All KBC institutions and agencies have overcome limited financial resources to provide effective ministries.

The collegiate ministry emphasis has been strengthened by the development of strategies by Tommy Johnson to reach international students and Penny Cruse to assist students in sharing the gospel daily on college campuses. Randy Record and local church leaders have supported middle school and high school student-led initiatives to share the gospel with their peers.

In Eastern Kentucky, eight new ministry centers have been established by churches and associations to meet physical and spiritual needs.

One of the five big objectives of the KBC staff has been reaching young adults. This was a focus for the state evangelism conference and a focus for the record number of participants at Super Saturday church leader training conferences.

There are people and ministries too numerous to mention but they all have contributed to a memorable year among Kentucky Baptists.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

FAMILY

List of financial resolutions aids New Year's plans

By Jeremy White

As you think about your New Year's resolutions, here are several financial resolutions that might apply to you and your family:



■ Determine to be content and thankful. Attitude is half the battle with your finances when your yearnings exceed your earnings. By giving thanks and counting God's blessings, you can flee more easily from financial temptation.

■ Begin tithing.

■ Increase your percentage of giving (if you already are tithing) by at least one-half of one percent. Why not challenge yourself and go beyond past giving levels?

■ Use a budget to help you spend less than you earn.

■ Pay off your credit card balances this year.

■ Pay yourself by saving at least 10 percent of your income.

■ Review your life insurance to ensure your family is protected.

■ Pay off your car loan and keep driving a debt-free car.

■ Teach your children how to manage money.

■ Make an extra mortgage payment to reduce your loan principle.

■ Update your will. Changes with family, assets, jobs, desires or health may indicate the need to update your will.

■ Obtain long-term care insurance. The most significant uninsured risk of people in their 50s to 70s is a nursing home or extended home care draining their lifetime savings.

■ Get your taxes done earlier this year and consider professional assistance.

■ Read a book about finances.

■ Establish and maintain an emergency savings account of three to six months living expenses.

■ Consider obtaining disability insurance.

■ Increase the amount you are saving for retirement.

■ Compile a list of financial assets and accounts, location of important papers and contact phone numbers for your heirs or your caregivers in the event of a disability. Tell your family where you keep this list.

■ Review your investment portfolio allocation.

■ Review your estate to plan to reduce estate taxes.

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant in Paducah. He presents financial seminars and workshops at churches and conferences.

Should parents shelter children from scary books and movies?

Q: Should I let my child watch scary movies and read scary books?

The popularity of scary stories, monster movies and haunted house attractions at theme parks proves that fright can be a form of fun for many children. At the same time, some children do not like being frightened in any form or fashion. How can parents know what to let their children watch and read?

Know your children. What bothers one child might not bother another. What keeps one child awake at night might make another child laugh.

Consider the medium. Children might find some films less frightening on video. The dinosaurs in "Jurassic Park," for example, don't have the same impact on television as they do in a theater on a huge screen with sound blasting. Videos also give you the opportunity to skip extremely graphic scenes.

Ratings and recommendations cannot always be trusted, so when in doubt, see the film for yourself first. Things we see become a permanent part of our minds, and many movies are extremely graphic.

Books are less visual than movies, but they can be just as frightening. Many children's books feature wicked witches, trolls, monsters and a whole assortment of evil characters. Reading to your children will allow them to enjoy scary stories within the sense of safety that your presence brings.

As they grow, most children gradually will learn to distinguish between fiction and real life, and to know what can hurt them and what can't. They will learn to enjoy the role that a good scare often plays in a good story.—David Garrard

Q: I've just returned from a single adults leadership conference all pumped up and ready to get started. What leadership structure should I use for single adult ministry? What resources would help?

Sometimes the most tempting thing to do after coming home from a conference is to implement something fast. Instead, let the organization be as organic as possible. Let it grow from the ground up.

Ask: "Who are the leaders?" If this is not readily apparent, gather a group of potential leaders to work through "Start a Revolution" by Stephen Felts. The core of this book is the second chapter, which contains both a spiritual gifts inventory and a personality profile. Have each person introduce themselves in terms of what they have discovered. You likely will find God's design in the group He has assembled.

Then have the group read "Calling" by Rich Hurst and Frank Tillapaugh. The emphasis of this book is that all Christians are ministers. The church staff and you as the coordinator are there to equip, train and encourage those ministers for the work of the kingdom of God.

Why focus so much on leadership training? Jesus concentrated on potential leaders, and it wasn't long before that rag-tag band of single and married adults turned the world right side up for God. As the structure of the early church varied from congregation to congregation, so it will today. The structures you already have in place might work. And they might not. Either way, discern what God is doing and follow Him there.

Communication is key. When you keep the lines of communication open, the needs of each leader are met. Teamwork is the vital engine for the organization God will be guiding you to develop in your particular situation.—James Stillwell

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.



'Twas the day after Christmas

'Twas the day after Christmas;

Oh my, how time flies!

Harried clerks heard folks shouting:

"Wrong color!" "Wrong size!"

The stockings and gift bags were strewn everywhere.

Ol' Santa was long gone—at least for this year.

The children were grumpy; how their tummies did ache

From sugerplums, pecan pie and red velvet cake.

With Mom on the couch and me in the recliner

Surely a quick nap would help us feel finer.

Amid my nap-dream, there arose a commotion.

My brain started spinning with yuletide emotion.

I saw a small stable where cattle were bedded.

I wondered just where this dream sequence was headed.

When what to my sleep-laden eyes should appear
But a vision of the Christ Child drawing near.

He grew strong and tall as He strode past the manger
Toward rejection by man and death as a stranger.

He was baptized by John, then recruited 12 guys
Whom He urged to be faithful and not compromise.

Pete, John, Jim and Andy; Phil, Tom, Bart and Matthew;
James, Thad, Judas, Simon—in this dream—were His crew.

He worked many miracles—too many to count.
Those once deaf, blind and lame found a life-healing fount.

Next came Gethsemane and Calvary's cross;
His perfect blood was spilled to save us from loss.

My dream flew fast-forward to the first Easter morn
When my Savior arose and man's hope was reborn.

When we turn in repentance and trust Jesus' name,
The reward that we gain outshines earth's wealth or fame.

The babe in the manger—the true King of Kings
Now calls us to focus on eternal things.

The life that He offers is truly abundant;
It's great, grand, glorious—and that's not redundant.

He calls us to witness, to worship, to pray.
Oh, what a dream I dreamed on that post-Christmas day.

As I watched and listened, Christ rose out of sight
With a promise to return some day or some night.

"I go to prepare a place for you," my Lord said.
"Make certain that others are taught, led and fed."

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

I yawned and I stretched as my dream came to a close
Then a strange shiver flew from my head to my toes.

I gazed at the remnants of our holiday fun,
Reminded of the season's real reason—God's Son.

For it's not in the gifts, decorations or food.
That we truly discover a Christmas-y mood.

The answer is found in the Gift we receive
When we bow at the foot of the cross and believe

That the tiny Christ Child born in old Bethlehem
Is the Alpha, Omega—eternal I AM.

It's the day after Christmas; what will you do?
Accept Him, reject Him or just fill a pew?

I pray you discover the true Christmas Light
Who offers eternal peace, joy and delight.

'50 issues' offers 'structural, spiritual choices'

By Trennis Henderson

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18a).

Welcome to the 51st and final installment of the Western Recorder's 2000 series, "50 Issues for the New Millennium."

The past 50 issues of the Recorder have addressed such diverse topics as church health, reaching Generation X, Internet ministry, racial reconciliation and coping with aging. The goal of the year-long series was to highlight issues of concern to Kentucky Baptists as we pursue ministry in the changing world of the 21st century.

Writing in the 1975 book, "Baptists in Kentucky, 1776-1976: A Bicentennial Volume," Harold Sanders asked, "Why study the future at all?" His answer: "If Kentucky Baptists are to face squarely their third century of preaching the gospel, they should know what kind of a world they are to face and take stock of their resources for the task."

Sanders, who retired in 1972 as Kentucky Baptist Convention execu-

tive secretary, noted that Baptists of the 21st century need to develop "more options to make structural and spiritual choices rather than have crash programs to solve each crisis."

"50 Issues for the New Millennium" has sought to explore "structural and spiritual choices" that will serve Kentucky Baptists well in the decades ahead. Among practical suggestions shared this year are:

■ **Partnership missions.** Calvin Wilkins: "Partnership means joining hands and hearts in a God-called task. It means accepting the Great Commission and joining together to accomplish it."

■ **Single adults.** Todd Cravens: "The most effective way to minister to single adults is through relationships. Jesus is our best example. He had 12 disciples who were closest to Him, with three being His intimate friends."

■ **Blended families.** Karl Babb: "In ministering to blended families, think holistically. Issues to consider include grief, relationship building, changes in family structure and complex legal and financial matters."

■ **Internet ministry.** Lisa Erwin: "There are many ways churches can

minister online. Begin by identifying one or two dynamic ministries of your church and make a commitment to bring the fruit of those ministries to your Web site. ... Effective Web ministry means finding the niche God has in mind."

■ **Contemporary Christian music.** Larnelle Harris: "Where is Christian music going? I have no idea. I don't know anyone who does. Yet let us hear music that helps us respond with awe, devotion and commitment to our Lord. And yes, that will be different for each of us."

■ **Prayer walking.** Nell Bruce: "Jesus is our perfect example for prayer walking. Everywhere Jesus went He walked, and as He walked He prayed. ... How wonderful and awesome for us to join Jesus in prayer as our hearts go out to those He has placed in our path."

■ **Racial reconciliation.** Lincoln Bingham: "Racial prejudice and misguided racial pride have hindered the witness of believers and impugned the integrity of Christ's work on the cross. ... Only when we see ourselves as one will we be able to witness to everyone."

■ **Church starts.** Alan Witham: "Lord, give us eyes to see the people of Kentucky as You see them. Give us willing hearts to start churches that will reach people who are ready for the good news of the gospel."

BAPTISTS

Baptists help Alabama tornado victims dig out

Texas Baptist Men ship bargain coats to Serbian children

DALLAS (ABP)—The Texas Baptist Men missions organization has shipped 10,000 coats to Yugoslavia, with the goal of making the New Year happier and the winter warmer for many Serbian children.

But the mission group received an early Christmas present of its own when leaders found a project initially expected to cost \$50,000 could be done for \$13,000.

The organization's executive board recently voted to participate in the "Coats for Kids" project. The men were told that the Bread of Life ministry would distribute coats in early January to children and youth throughout Serbia.

Mission leaders expected to be able to buy each coat for less than \$5 by purchasing in large quantities. But when executive director Jim Furgerson began checking with suppliers in Europe, the best price he could find initially was about \$7.

However, a contact in Amsterdam asked if reconditioned coats would be acceptable. After an assurance that the reconditioned coats were "like new," Furgerson asked how much they would cost.

"Seventy-five one dollars, American," his source replied in stilted English.

At first, Furgerson thought he meant each coat was \$75 dollars.

But the supplier explained that he meant the cost per coat was 75 cents. Furgerson immediately placed an order for 10,000 coats, which already have been shipped to Belgrade.

With about \$13,000 already contributed, Texas Baptist Men was able to purchase not only the coats, but also a large container filled with heavy, long underwear for the Serbs.

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (BP)—Southern Baptists from across the nation have been quick to respond to victims of a string of deadly tornadoes that ripped through Alabama Dec. 16.

The storms killed 12 people, injured dozens and damaged more than 400 homes and businesses.

The category F4 storms reportedly packed winds of nearly 200 mph. The death toll made the tornadoes the most deadly storms in the U.S. this year.

Gil McKee, pastor of First Baptist Church of Tuscaloosa, said his congregation was hard-hit by the tornadoes. Five of those killed in the storm had direct connections with the church and at least 30 church families lost their homes.

"We have three families who have lost loved ones, and we're still trying to get a solid number of families in our church who have lost their homes," he said.

Within minutes of the tornado, McKee said the staff of the 5,000-member church was deployed to minister in the midst of the chaos.

"My first action was to check on our church families and we sent our pastoral staff to the hospital as people were being brought there," he said.

The church also is ministering to the community at large. McKee said the church has organized and dispatched clean-up crews into the community.

Three churches in east Alabama were heavily damaged, according to Bob Thornton, a spokesman for

Etowah Baptist Association.

Earlier Saturday morning at least 10 people were injured when a tornado hit the town of Geneva, Ala., located near the Florida-Alabama border.

Tuscaloosa's Valley View Baptist Church was turned into a medical triage unit during the moments immediately following the storm, according to senior pastor Mike Hall.

"We are located across the highway from the most heavily damaged area and it turned out we were the only facility that had backup power generators," Hall said. "We had 50 to 70 medical personnel working in the church to help the injured."

Hall said several church members showed up to help prepare food, clothing and bedding for hundreds of victims.

"I would say that there were several hundred people coming in and out of the church building throughout the day," he said. "We were literally flying by the seat of our pants. It's really interesting to see how the Lord gave us direction and kept things running smoothly."

"Folks just started showing up and making soup," Hall added. "It's a great testimony to the community spirit in this part of the city. It's remarkable how many people just showed up."

Hall estimated that at least 25 families who are church members lost their homes. One of them was worship director Charles Foster, who arrived at church and led the singing of

Christmas hymns as usual Sunday, even though his home is now four walls and nothing else.

"This church has been so loving and so caring about me, this was the only place to come," he said. At least 20 church members came up to him after the service to offer empty boxes, pickup trucks and their own hands to help him salvage clothing and furniture.

Foster stood up during the service and told of hiding in a bathroom of his house while glass and boards exploded around his family.

"I think the emotion hit me this morning," he said afterward. "I had to be strong yesterday, but you know, it's OK. We weren't hurt. We just lost material stuff."

Hall sees the church's relief effort as a test of the congregation's Christian mandate. God put Valley View in that spot for a reason, he said, and Saturday was its time to prove itself.

"Although it looks bleak, a light shines through the darkness," Hall told the congregation. "Nowhere in the Bible does it say a Christian sits on his hands. Let us look for an opportunity to share the light."

Macedonia Baptist Church in Coates Bend, Ala., which sustained moderate storm damage, also served as a temporary shelter.

"In the midst of the destruction and looking at the damage, God was merciful," said Macedonia Pastor Dave Roberts. "Homes can be replaced, churches can be replaced, but lives cannot."

Religious groups urge equal access

WASHINGTON (ABP)—Nine religious organizations want the nation's highest court to send a clear signal that school districts may not bar religious groups from after-hours use of facilities that are otherwise open to community groups.

In a friend-of-the-court brief, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and eight other groups argue that denying access only to religious groups violates the First Amendment.

The religious groups want the U.S. Supreme Court to invalidate a New York school district's policy that barred the use of its facilities by individuals or organizations "for religious purposes."

The Good News Club, a non-denominational Christian youth group, challenged the policy when denied after-hours use of a facility in Milford, N.Y.

A trial court and the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the school district. The appeals court said the club's activities go beyond simply teaching moral values from a religious viewpoint and "fall clearly on the side of religious instruction and prayer."

The religious groups argue that by singling out religious groups for adverse treatment, the policy violates their free-speech rights.

Thanks, staff

For our staff at both Jonathan Creek and Cedarmore, the Christmas season brings a much-needed opportunity for every worker to take a breather from the pressures and demands of camp and conference ministry.

For all intents and purposes, we are closed the week between Christmas and New Year's. Many of our staff members take another week of vacation and make it a two-week break.

We gear back up immediately after New Year's. And while the guests don't come back in big numbers until February, our staff turns up the burners on preparation and planning for camp season.

I want to express my appreciation for our staff

at Jonathan Creek and Cedarmore. We have lots of men and women who work hard all year, laboring behind the scenes to make our ministry work. To be certain, our leadership teams get most of the attention. Our directors and associate directors go hard. But it is the support staff on whom we rely to make things work. Everything from preparing food to cleaning rooms to grounds keeping to maintenance, the tasks that have to be done each week are numerous.

My first few years of employment (30-plus years ago!) were in the hotel business. In a few years I had done everything from bellman to maintenance engineer (those of you who know me will know that's a joke) to sales manager to general manager. I learned firsthand that it takes a genuine team effort to keep a hotel running smoothly, that one man or woman can't do alone.

The lessons I learned then are applicable today in our conference center ministry. One of my personal objectives for the new year is to work with our leadership team, encouraging them to more effectively communicate with and encourage all those staffers who work behind the scenes.

I don't get the chance to offer this public expression of thanks often enough. But I write this to all our readers and our staff, expressing my thanks for all the work that is done. I pray that the year ahead will be a great one for each of you individually and that God will continue to lead us in our ministry at Jonathan Creek and Cedarmore.

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

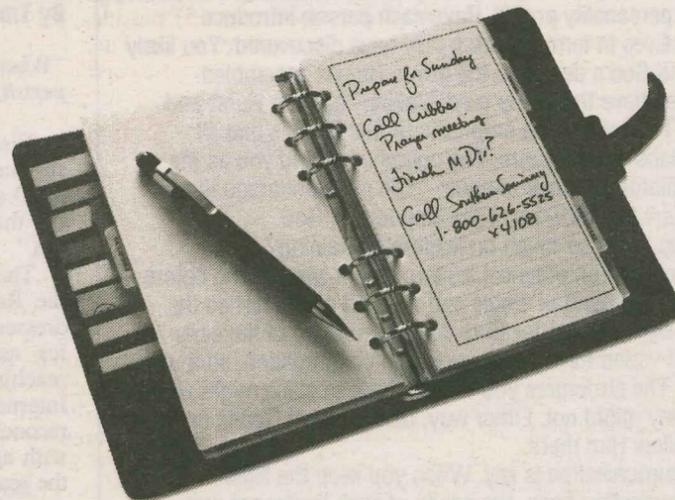
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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Messianic Jews find special meaning during Hanukkah

Continued from page 1
virgin. We just don't follow the Christian calendar."

The priority for many Messianic Jews is to "first bring other Jews to the knowledge that Yeshua is the Messiah." And that's a hard sell because Jewish people are skeptical of those who follow the Christian faith, Copen said, often with sound reason. History is filled with examples of people, most notoriously Adolph Hitler, who persecuted Jews while claiming to do so in the name of Christ.

Jewish leaders have been highly critical of efforts by Southern Baptists to target Jews for evangelism. Last year, a Southern Baptist International Mission Board prayer guide focusing on Judaism that coincided with Jewish High Holy Days set off a firestorm of criticism. Southern Baptist leaders defended the approach, saying the gospel is for everyone, but urged sensitivity in witnessing to people of other faiths.

Messianic Jews are careful to avoid terms like "being saved," which immediately turn off other Jews. They seek to persuade other Jews that they do not have to walk away from their heritage to be followers of Jesus.

In that sense, for Messianic Jews, Hanukkah fulfills their heritage and puts the focus on Christ, according to Steve Barack, rabbi for B'nai Ohe Beth Tefilah, a Messianic Jewish congregation that meets in a Lutheran church in Lindenhurst, Ill., north of Chicago. "We see Hanukkah as a very spiritual



HANUKKAH The Arthur family of Rochester, Ill., are among Messianic Jews who observe the eight days of Hanukkah. They attend Petah Tikvah, a Messianic Jewish congregation in Springfield, Ill. (Illinois Baptist photo by Michael Leathers)

event. We can be overjoyed with the fact that God has dedicated Himself to us, even to the point that He sent His Son to die for us."

Hanukkah, also known as the Feast of Dedication and as the Festival of Lights, is celebrated for eight days, starting on the 25th day of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar and ending on the second of Tevet. That first day this year was Dec. 22, but because all Jewish holidays begin at sundown, the first candle was lit on the evening of Dec. 21.

A common misconception about Hanukkah is that it is the Jewish coun-

terpart to Christmas, perhaps because the two holidays are celebrated about the same time of year.

The origin of Hanukkah traces back to about 165 years before Christ's birth when Antiochus IV desecrated the Jerusalem temple when some Jews continued to refuse to convert to Hellenism, the ethical system of ancient Greece, and abandon their distinctive culture.

As the story goes, an army of Jewish rebels led by Judas Maccabeus drove out the Syrian forces and recaptured the temple. During the temple's rededication, they fixed the broken

menorah, a symbol for the light of God, but found only enough specially prepared oil for one day. About eight days would be needed to prepare new oil. They lit the menorah, and its oil miraculously lasted for the full eight days.

Just as the temple was rededicated, those who observe Hanukkah also rededicate themselves to God. As the shamash is used to light an additional candle each night after sundown, many families spend that time in about 30 minutes of quiet reflection.

The Arthurs usually spend that time around their kitchen table reading a passage from the Old Testament followed by a discussion.

Copen and his wife will "darken everything in the house and just sit and watch the candles." It's an ideal time to shed the fast and furious pace of life and focus on God with your family, he said.

The Baracks teach their children that lighting each candle is a reminder that God calls them to be the light of the world and to keep the hope of Christ alive.

Most Jews in today's secular society don't make the connection with the spiritual significance behind Hanukkah, Barack said, just like most gentiles cast aside the religious meaning of Christmas. But he has learned as a Messianic Jew that God has fulfilled what He has promised. "He's made a place for us to have a very close relationship with Him. And that's what Hanukkah means to me."

With additional reporting by Bob Allen

A common misconception about Hanukkah is that it is the Jewish counterpart to Christmas.

Sharing Christmas blessings

By Robert Dunston

Cumberland College's Mountain Outreach held its annual Christmas Gift Day on Saturday, Dec. 2.

At 7 a.m., 31 Cumberland College students, 15 youth from First Baptist Church in Williamsburg, three volunteers from the community and Mountain Outreach Director Jane Whitaker met for breakfast and prayer to begin their busy day of ministry.

Heather Murphree, the daughter of Jerry and Jackie Murphree of Jonesville, Va., serves this year as student coordinator of Mountain Outreach. She organized the students and volunteers for Christmas Gift Day. Volunteers greeted people as they entered the warehouse, assisted them in signing in, distributed tickets for door prizes, helped families find appropriate clothes and items and managed the toy area.

Students from Appalachian Ministries, another of Cumberland College's ministries, played with children and helped them make crafts. Other volunteers visited with families, helped them carry bags and boxes to their vehicles and handed out hot chocolate.

When the doors opened at 8 a.m., 180 people already were in

line. During the next eight hours, Mountain Outreach ministered to 392 families representing 1,616 people.

Every 15 minutes, organizers drew a name for a door prize. Mountain Outreach gave away as door prizes 55 bicycles, a 19-inch television, a computer with software and a stair-stepping machine.

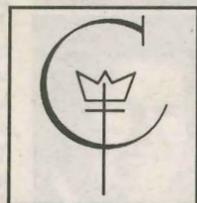
Everything distributed during the day was donated by individuals and groups who were eager to share the joy of Christmas with others.

As the time drew near to announce another door prize, one of the volunteers was speaking to a woman who said her son was hoping for a bicycle but the family had no money available to purchase one. Suddenly the woman heard her name called. She had won a bicycle! Her tears of joy and the joyous tears of many others filled everyone that day with the joy of giving.

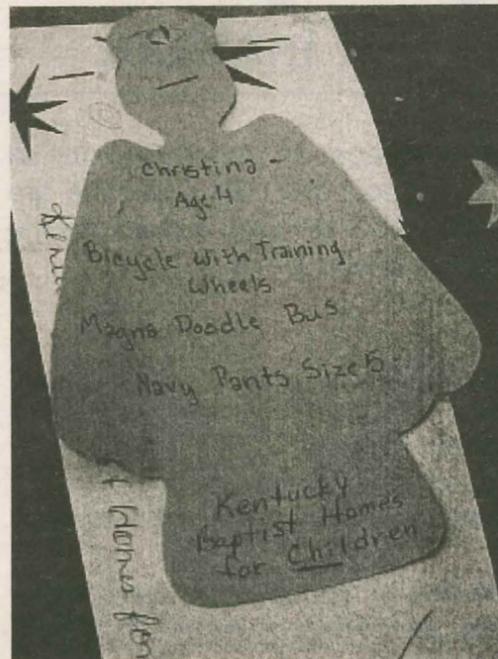
Christmas Gift Day came as a result of the joyous giving of many people. Their joy came, as does ours, from the joy of knowing Christ, God's great Gift to us.

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

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www.kbhc.org 1-800-456-1386

Hopkinsville women make quilts for those less fortunate

"We want to help them meet the needs of their neighbors."

Arlene Miller

Continued from page 1

churches throughout the county have been making the quilts, according to Arlene Miller, a member of the New Palestine church who visited Hazard and initiated the local project after learning of similar efforts in that city.

"We recently learned that the women of (Hazard's) Lothair Baptist Church are meeting each Saturday to work on quilts and offer sewing lessons to anyone interested," Miller explains in a written synopsis of the project. "I shared this with my church and others, and we feel we can help. ... We want to help them meet the needs of their neighbors."

Miller says women from other churches have joined New Palestine to host their own quilting parties, enjoying the fellowship and an opportunity for older women to teach the younger ones a skill that is not as common as it once was.

At South Union Baptist Church in Hopkinsville, member Jean Boyd—who'd never put a quilt together—learns at the hands of several practiced quilters who encourage her and teach her how to tack the material.

"I told them that I would come and participate and be with them, and maybe I could cut patterns or press the pieces for them," she recalls. "They taught me how to do it, and I had a good time. I felt good about thinking that I had done something that might keep an older person or a child warm this winter."

By the end of the day, the women of South Union have tacked two quilt tops and started another.

Women from Sinking Fork Baptist Church also had a quilt-making day and donated four completed quilts, and members of four churches—including Pembroke, Concord, Edgewood and New Palestine Baptist churches—pooled their talents to make a patchwork quilt of multiple colors.

The New Palestine group includes its senior adults, area residents and members of other churches—"just whoever has the time to stop by and join us," Miller says.

Among them is Lois Pack, a member of First United Methodist Church who takes part in the Baptist church's Keenagers group and helps regularly with mission projects like the quilts.

Pack, 80, says she has never visited the Appalachian Mountains, but sympathizes with the people's plight and believes it's a Christian's duty to help those in need.

"Arlene (Miller) has (been), and she says a lot of their houses are not very good," Pack recalls. "They have no electricity or running water so they need something to keep them warm."

Others working alongside her—like Lenore Canterbury, who once lived just across the river from Hazard—remember the poor living conditions firsthand and say they are especially pleased to be able to help those living there now.

"We just had to help each other," she recalls, "and now that we've moved away, we can still relate to their need."

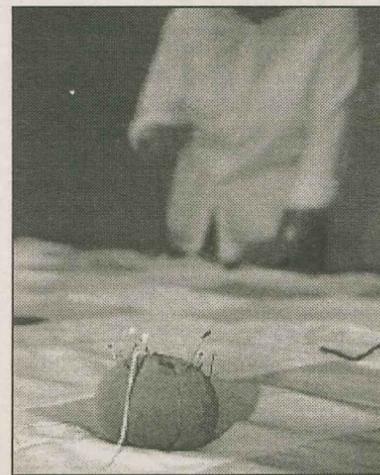
Interest in the women's project has intensified in the weeks since Miller first shared her idea; the news has now

spread to include not only churches of Christian County Baptist Association, but other denominations, local businesses and individuals.

One Pembroke woman gave three boxes of fabric and a partial quilt top. Factories have donated supplies and labor, and numerous churches have helped with fabrics, quilt linings and other materials.

Even individuals in nearby Trigg County have offered help, and the project likely may grow, according to Miller, who has been asked to coordinate a statewide effort.

This story originally appeared in the Kentucky New Era newspaper in Hopkinsville. It is reprinted with permission.



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Season's greetings from Oneida Baptist Institute

At this time of the season, we pause to give thanks for all who have supported us throughout the past year. We are grateful for our many friends from Kentucky and across the United States. We appreciate all who have...

- visited our campus
- referred students to us
- volunteered on campus
- prayed for our ministry
- sent notes of encouragement
- given financial and other donations

You are part of our Oneida family. You share in our ministry as we tell young people the good news of Jesus Christ.



"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith..."

— Colossians 1:3-4

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

Sharing our heart for missions in Russia

Professor Bill Pfoff and four students returned from Novgorod, Russia, Dec. 20. The three-week mission resulted from contacts made in 1996 during the Kentucky Baptist Convention-Russian Baptist partnership.

The crucial need for trained leaders brought an invitation for Clear Creek to help with Southern Baptist International Mission Board-sponsored pastor-church planter schools. We have sent teachers to three cities, and this is our second time to sponsor the Novgorod school.

In 1999, Pfoff took a six-month sabbatical in Russia with many opportunities to place Bibles in public schools and libraries. He spoke to the military preparedness class at Novgorod University and gave Bibles to the students.

His guest was a Lieutenant Colonel of the Russian army trained to fight NATO troops. During the cold war, Pfoff trained bombing crews that targeted the cities where the Russian colonel lived. "After we had been adversaries for 25 years, we met in the Novgorod church, both of us believers and brothers in Christ," Pfoff stated.

This fall, the Novgorod church dedicated a new facility with a val-

ue of nearly \$2.5 million, much of it contributed by American Christians. The church plans to establish 40 churches in the region. Since 1997, 12 house churches have started. These are registered with the government with leadership trained by Clear Creek faculty. Kentucky churches gave money to purchase the homes.

"I doubt if any of us had an idea of the impact we would have when the partnership began in 1996," Pfoff noted. Kentucky churches also provide scholarships for some of the 40 current students in Novgorod. The Clear Creek Brotherhood raised more than \$2,000 at a fall festival mission auction to support one of the students.

Assistant Professor of Bible Fred Cummings taught at the school in November and observed, "I expect the next great awakening to happen in Russia and perhaps God will use these men trained by Clear Creek. The heart of Clear Creek is missions, and the Russia partnership has deepened our heart for missions."

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

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

Russia church groups fear religious freedom shrinking

By Frank Brown
Religion News Service

MOSCOW (RNS)—A recent appeals court decision against the Salvation Army in Moscow appears to be an ominous sign for dozens of religious organizations with links to the West, just as they face a year-end deadline for registering with the Russian government.

The decision could well force the Salvation Army to relocate its headquarters, move five congregations into home churches and shut down operations that include providing about 6,000 meals a month to the city's homeless and poor.

"In terms of the legal processes, it is the end of the road," said Col. Ken Baillie, an American who commands the Salvation Army's operations in Russia and four other former Soviet republics.

"We've had registration here for six years. Never a problem. With the new law, we had to re-register," he said, adding that an appeal to Russia's Supreme Court was unlikely.

The appeals court upheld a lower court ruling that the Salvation Army is a foreign-based "military association" and therefore ineligible for registration as a full-fledged religious organization. Under a controversial 1997 law, the registration is necessary for religious groups to function as legal entities with the right to enter into contracts, open bank accounts and hire employees.

According to the most recent statistics from the Justice Ministry, about 60 percent of the religious groups required to register by Dec. 31 have completed the process. Failure to do so could result in court-ordered "liquidation" under a law adopted earlier this year that extended the original deadline by one year.

In addition to the Salvation Army, local congregations of evangelical Protestants throughout Russia have sought court orders forcing the Min-



CLAMP DOWN? Kentucky Baptists pray for Moscow in this 1997 photo. Some Christians fear that religious groups in Russia with ties to the West might see their freedoms reduced in 2001.

istry of Justice to re-register them after initial denials.

Southern Baptist International Mission Board officials are monitoring the situation, but spokesman Mark Kelly said the Russian Baptist union in Moscow has not had difficulty in registering.

"We don't have any indication that it's going to affect churches that are part of the Russian Baptist union or that it will affect Southern Baptist workers who relate to those workers," he said.

Kelly noted that the greater concern is in how Baptist churches are treated by their local governments.

"In a country as large and diverse as Russia, application of the law often differs according to the interpretations of local officials," he said. "Russia is struggling with many cult groups that flooded into the country after the collapse of the Soviet Union."

But one of Russia's top religious freedom lawyers, Vladimir Ryakhovsky, said he worries the decision against the Salvation Army bodes ill for other minority faiths based outside Russia, including Mormons, Roman Catholics and various Protestant

groups.

Ryakhovsky, who has also helped Jewish, Muslim and Old Believer Orthodox communities fight for registration, said Pentecostal Protestant groups typically have the most problems.

"These are big churches and very active. They will have several thousand parishioners, young people, professionals," Ryakhovsky said, adding that in small, provincial towns such a congregation stands out. "Of course, someone doesn't like this. And, often the local Orthodox priest will put pressure on the Ministry of Justice."

Leaders of the 80-million member Russian Orthodox Church, the country's most dominant and politically connected faith, consistently deny meddling in the process but, at the same time, vow to vigilantly protect their faithful from what they consider to be dangerous sects.

Of the up to 16,000 religious organizations that must re-register, those affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church are the most numerous.

Ryakhovsky speculated that if enough of them fail to make the deadline, "there will be a lot of pressure to extend it" a second time.

Meanwhile, the Russian Orthodox Church is further strengthening its ties to various government departments, often assigning a patron saint, ranging from St. Barbara for the Ministry of Defense's Rocket Corps to a recent naming of St. Matthew for the much-dreaded Tax Police.

Aside from the re-registration requirement, other aspects of the 1997 law are causing problems. For example, the head of a religious organization must be a Russian citizen or permanent resident. This requirement means that the foreign bishops of two of Russia's four Roman Catholic Apostolic Administrations—dioceses answerable directly to the pope—cannot register as legal entities.

Both bishops had their initial applications for Russian citizenship denied earlier this year and are now hoping the Holy See can work out a deal through diplomatic channels. A Vatican diplomat in Moscow who asked that his name not be used said Rome has made a formal request to Russian President Vladimir Putin that the bishops be granted citizenship.

With the approaching Dec. 31 deadline and the requirement that non-registered groups be "liquidated," the next few months are shaping up to be a crucial test period of Russia's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance.

The U.S. government, for one, is planning to keep a close eye on the situation.

In a telephone interview from Washington, Steven McFarland, executive director of the government's Commission on International Religious Freedom, said, "We're looking at early spring" to issue an assessment of the situation in Russia.

McFarland said the commission, which can recommend possible sanctions to the U.S. president, is hoping "international financing and aid will provide a significant degree of leverage, as well as Russia's desire to be regarded as a civilized nation."

"Russia is struggling with many cult groups that flooded into the country after the collapse of the Soviet Union."

SBC International Mission Board spokesman Mark Kelly

China 'protecting' religious freedom by bombing buildings

WENZHOU, China (RNS)—The Chinese government has justified as "protecting religious freedom" its new crackdown on unauthorized religious activity in Wenzhou city in Zhejiang province.

Reports, confirmed by the government, said hundreds of temples and churches in the southeastern region were destroyed.

"It is clear that China has been carrying out a policy of protecting religious freedom," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue told Reuters on Dec. 14.

A spokesperson for Wenzhou city's propaganda department told Associated Press the government has destroyed about 450 buildings since early December, but the Hong Kong-based International Center for Human Rights reports that 1,200 buildings have been destroyed with dynamite.

Wenzhou is known for its thriving religious community, which includes several small Christian churches estab-

lished by Europeans in the 18th and 19th centuries.

"In rural areas, religious superstition is still very rampant," said a spokesman for the Foreign Affairs Office in Wenzhou. "The government's goal is to demolish those illegal buildings as well as correct those decadent rural lifestyles."

Among those targeted in China's crackdown on nongovernment-sanctioned religious activities has been the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

Falun Gong was banned by authorities in July of 1999 as a threat to public order. It is a blend of traditional Chinese exercises and Buddhist and Taoist principles. On Dec. 12, Chinese authorities for the first time jailed a Falun Gong follower with permanent U.S. residency. Teng Chunyan, who is married to a U.S. citizen but still holds Chinese citizenship, was given a three-year sentence for "spying for overseas organizations and illegally providing intelligence on the state."

Pope: Unbelievers can be saved if they live a just life

VATICAN CITY (RNS)—Tempering a controversial Vatican declaration on salvation, Pope John Paul II said earlier this month that all who live a just life will be saved even if they do not believe in Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic Church.

The pontiff, addressing about 30,000 pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square for his weekly general audience, strongly reasserted the liberal interpretation of the Bible's teaching on salvation that emerged from the Second Vatican Council.

"The gospel teaches us that those who live in accordance with the Beatitudes—the poor in spirit, the pure of heart, those who bear lovingly the sufferings of life—will enter God's kingdom," the pope said.

"All who seek God with a sincere heart, including those who do not know Christ and His church, contribute under the influence of grace to the building of this kingdom," he said.

The pope appeared to take a far more

inclusive approach to salvation than the declaration "Dominus Iesus" issued Sept. 5 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which serves as the Vatican's guardian of doctrinal orthodoxy.

"Dominus Iesus" caused dismay among non-Catholics involved in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue by asserting that their rituals, "insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors, constitute an obstacle to salvation."

"If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking, they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the church, have the fullness of the means of salvation," the doctrinal statement said.

While giving his full support to the declaration, John Paul has been at pains since it was issued to reiterate his commitment to dialogue and his respect for members of other religions.

PEOPLE

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ **Urgent need:** Volunteers for two to three groups to go to Poland, the European Baptist Convention and Tanzania in January and February. Contact the KBC partnership office for details.

■ The people of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, many of whom are Muslim and are celebrating Ramadan this month, an annual time of fasting and prayer.

■ The children's ministries in the Baptist churches in Mbeya, Tanzania.

■ Spirit-filled Tanzanians to seize the opportunity to teach weekly religion classes in the nation's secondary schools.

■ The women's ministry in Morogoro, Tanzania, and the national pastors' wives who lead it.

■ The search committee for an executive director for the Baptist Convention of New England.

■ David Bunch, interim executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England.

■ Ignatius Meimaris, director of missions for Greater Boston Baptist Association.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Shirley Wooton

■ **CORBIN**—Central Church will celebrate its 80th anniversary Jan. 6-7. On Jan. 6 at 6 p.m. a praise service featuring the sanctuary choir and **Sounds of Praise** will be held. A reception will follow. On Jan. 7 at 10:30 a.m. the sanctuary choir will present a commissioned anthem, "Praise God" by **Ron Green**. A fellowship dinner will follow. For information, call (606) 528-6650.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Eric Garvey, pastor of Bashford Manor Church, died Dec. 18 at home. Garvey, 30, was a native of Covington. He is survived by a son and daughter, his parents and a sister. Burial was in Owenton Cemetery. Memorials can be sent to Baptist Homes for Children or Gideons International.

■ **Judy Daigle**, ministry assistant at Beechwood Church, resigned. Her husband, **Allan**, accepted the pastorate of First Church in Dayton. **Robert Blackburn** is pastor of Beechwood.

Todd Bishop, minister of youth at

Broadway Church, resigned to accept a church position in Nashville. **Ron Higdon** is pastor.

Cloverleaf Church will host **Son Rise** in concert for its watch night service Dec. 31 at 9 p.m. For information, call (502) 367-0218. **Geoffrey Lacefield** is pastor.

West Broadway Church will hold its watch night service Dec. 31 at 8 p.m. For information, call (502) 491-1920. **Skip Alexander** is pastor.

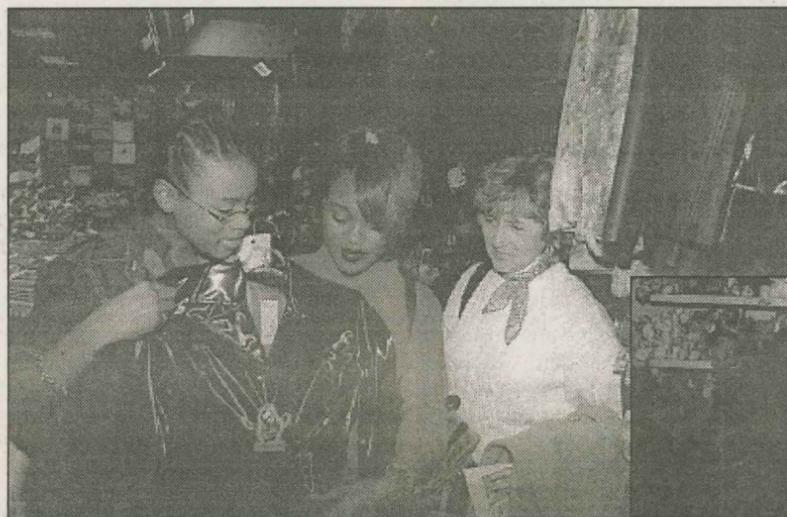
■ **PARIS**—Spears Mill Church ordained **Eric Sparks** and **Bobby True** into the deacon ministry. **J.T. Raftery** is pastor.

■ **STEARNS**—**Morgan Kerr** resigned as pastor of First Church to become senior pastor of First Southern Church, Canon City, Colo.

■ **TAYLORSVILLE**—Kings Church will host **Sons of the Father** in concert Dec. 31 at 7 p.m. A fellowship and candlelight midnight service will follow. For information, call (502) 538-6902.



NAIA CHAMPIONS Georgetown College's junior quarterback Eddie Eviston and junior wide receiver Cody Brown connected for three long touchdown passes as the Kentucky Baptist school posted a 20-0 victory Dec. 17 against Northwestern Oklahoma State University at a rain-soaked game to win the NAIA football national championship. Eviston was named the NAIA Football Player of the Year for the second year in a row. Last season, Northwestern Oklahoma rallied from a 20-0 halftime deficit for a 34-26 win over Georgetown. "It shows the heart of this club," said Georgetown head coach Bill Cronin. "It's kids wanting to get the job done. They (Northwestern Oklahoma) are bigger, but we wanted it more today. We stayed focused." (Georgetown News-Graphic photo by Steve Traynor)



KBHC CHRISTMAS CHEER ■ Far left: Residents and staff at Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children's Dixon Center in Webster County sing Christmas carols for the Palmer Place retirement center.

■ Middle: Helen Hickey, right, looks over a selection made by a resident of Genesis Home in Mayfield during a Christmas shopping spree. Members of Lone Oak First Baptist Church in Paducah provided gift certificates for girls at the facility.

■ Left: Kelsee Henson, right, looks at a potential Christmas gift pointed out by Rebecca, a resident of Genesis Home. (Photos by Dannah Prather.)

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: 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: 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: 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: 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: 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: Minister of students and activities. Southern Baptist, energetic, three years full-time or part-time experience, earned seminary or divinity school degree. Send resumé and references to: Mike Alldredge, search committee chairman, Golden Springs Baptist Church, 3 Robertsdale Road, Anniston, AL 36207.

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

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: 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: 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: 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: 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: 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.

Holy Land tour guides learn how to avoid violence

By Elaine Ruth Fletcher
Religion News Service

BEIT JALLAH, West Bank (RNS)—The Christian ministers, ranging from evangelicals to Catholic priests, stepped gingerly out of the Israeli tour buses and over the dirt that had been piled up on this back road tucked amid olive terraces.

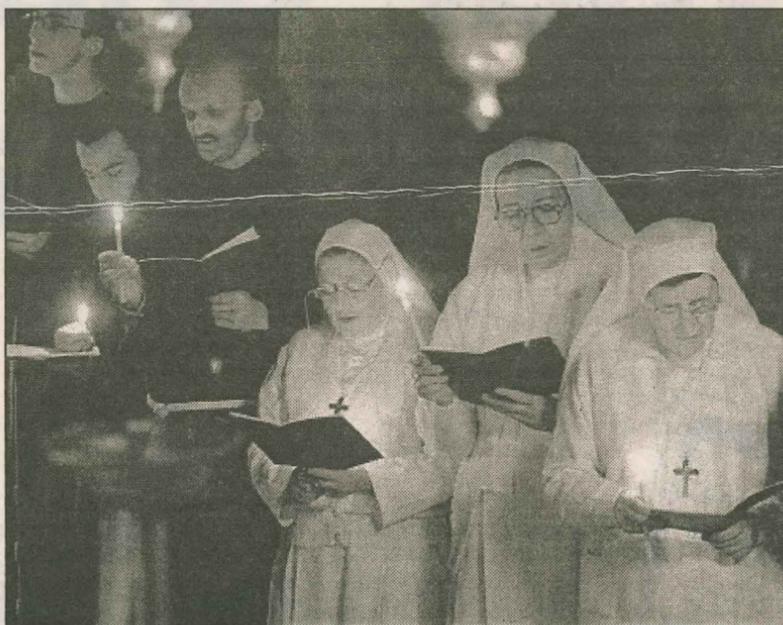
On the other side of the barricade, two Palestinian tour buses waited, their drivers eager to greet the delegation of clergy making their way into Bethlehem in advance of the Christmas season.

Until just last week, the main entry into the city of the Nativity had been closed by Israeli military orders. But Israeli and Palestinian tour operators, desperate for a little business, quickly worked out a way to circumvent the closure.

This particular group of ministers was eager to see what the arrangements were. Most were tour group leaders who regularly visit the Holy Land and wanted to see for themselves just how badly the recent Israeli-Palestinian violence had disrupted access to the major pilgrimage routes.

What they found is that most holy sites in Israel are still accessible—and largely safe—for tourists, even if you have to take a roundabout way to reach them.

Most of the ministers came away impressed at how easily major tourism sites in Israeli-controlled Jerusalem and Nazareth could still be reached. And while chronic Israeli-Palestinian clashes on Bethlehem's periphery have made entry to the town of Jesus' birth



NATIVITY SINGING Franciscan monks and nuns sing and pray by candlelight in a grotto of the Church of the Nativity, the site where Christians believe Christ was born, in the West Bank town of Bethlehem. Tourism in Bethlehem has come to a standstill and has caused Bethlehem officials to cancel most festivities originally planned for Christmas. Still, tour guides say the city is safe for tourism. (Reuters photo)

more difficult, pilgrims from places as far-flung as Poland and Africa could still be found roaming through Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, in the historic core of the city.

In general, the pattern of violence near Holy Land tourism sites has assumed a relatively predictable pattern, which tour operators and foreigners living here have quickly learned to avoid, noted Pastor Lyndell Browning, a 36-year resident, addressing the visiting clergy.

In Jerusalem's Old City, for instance, Fridays are considered a bad day for sightseeing, because Muslim noon prayers have been a focus for clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police.

On the other hand, if Bethlehem's main entrance happens to be closed, due to the chronic violence around the contested religious shrine of Rachel's Tomb, then tour operators use a "back door" to the city via the Christian suburb of Beit Jallah.

Beit Jallah usually is peaceful by day—even though it has been the scene of violent Israeli-Palestinian exchanges in the late afternoon and evening. And so goes the litany.

"Tourists aren't targeted, and the tour guides know very well how to avoid the hot spots, when they might develop," said Browning, who heads a Church of the Nazarene congregation here.

Such comments won't sound very reassuring to many American tourists, who don't like to feel that their security is threatened in any way whatsoever, said Pastor Russell Williams.

"I'm pretty adventuresome. But the idea of roadblocks and having to change buses will scare most Americans. It's not going to make my people feel much more comfortable," said Williams, of Arlington Baptist Temple in Arlington, Texas.

But other members of the group felt reassured by the relatively peaceful scenes that they could observe in Jerusalem and Bethlehem during a five-day visit—scenes that contrasted sharply with the evening news reports of violence occurring in neighboring West Bank and Gaza communities.

"Visiting the Church of the Nativity was more relaxing this time," added Pastor Fre-Well Malone, noting that he wasn't crushed in the usual press of crowds.

Malone, who heads an evangelical church in Waycross, Ga., said he'd be returning soon with a group of church members. "And no, we're not afraid. We preach faith, and in particular, if people come here they believe that God will protect them."

"No, we're not afraid. ... If people come here they believe that God will protect them."

Pastor Fre-Well Malone
of Norcross, Ga.

Quarterback credits God for being one game from national championship

By Dana Williamson
Oklahoma Baptist Messenger

BETHANY, Okla. (BP)—Sounding more like a preacher than an All-American quarterback, University of Oklahoma quarterback Josh Heupel encouraged members of a Bethany, Okla., church Dec. 3 to keep their eyes "fixed on the cross."

Though currently sitting on top of the world and one game away from leading his team to a national championship, Heupel told members of Council Road Baptist Church he hasn't always had his heart in the right place.

He credited his relationship with God for grounding him in life.

Raised in the northeastern South Dakota city of Aberdeen with a population of 25,000-30,000, Heupel grew up around football. His father is a football coach at Aberdeen Central, and his mother is a high school principal.

Heupel's mother was quoted as saying when she handed 2-year-old Josh over the fence to his father during football practice, she knew she would never get him back.

"I was at my dad's practices, wanting to be the best athlete I could," Heupel said. "And I had some success in high school."

After graduation, Heupel went to Weber State College, where he was redshirted his

freshman year and unhappy.

"There was a weight on my shoulders, and I was not happy with who I was," Heupel said. "I wasn't strong enough to handle things in the right way. I was living for Josh Heupel, I placed football before God, and I didn't like who I saw in the mirror."

Heupel said he decided to go to a junior college, thinking a new place and new challenges would make him happy. "But I still wasn't happy, and I couldn't understand why I felt I was crumbling under the weight on my shoulders."

Heupel, who attends a nondenominational congregation in Norman, Okla., said he knew God but didn't love Him—and "there is a key difference."

"Once you know the Lord, you will go back to Him," Heupel said. "I decided I was going to bow down before the Lord and let Him take control of my life."

Immediately, he said, the weight was lifted from his shoulders, and when he looked in the mirror, he was happy with who he is because, "I know I have the victory that counts."

Heupel, who volunteers with second-grade transitional kids in reading and writing in a Norman school, said there was a change in him as a person and as a

football player.

"It wasn't that I was working harder," he noted. "I've always been a hard worker, but it was because God took charge."

Opportunities began to open up, he said, one of those being the chance to play for the University of Oklahoma.

"It wasn't until I gave Him the authority to let Him use me to reach others that He gave me the blessings in life I so desired."

The 6-2, 214-pound senior quarterback, who head coach Bob Stoops says is the reason the Oklahoma football team is where it is today, playing Jan. 3 in the Orange Bowl for the NCAA national championship, said it is amazing what God has done in the team as a whole.

"It's nothing I have done," Heupel emphasized. "It's God."

Now that he's living for God, Heupel said he is being showered with blessings.

Recognized as one of the top college football players in America, Heupel is reaping the rewards of an excellent season. While finishing second in the Heisman Trophy voting Dec. 9, he earlier pocketed the Sporting News, Associated Press and Walter Camp awards as the best football player in the nation, claimed the Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year Award and was named to several first-team All America squads.

In a football program largely noted for its running game, Heupel has set OU's single-season records for total offense and established single-game records for passing attempts, completions, yards, touchdowns and total offense.

But Heupel said living with blessings can be hard to do.

"You need to have a fear of God," he said. "A motivating factor is fear of failure and defeat. You don't want to lose what He's done in your life. A fear of God incorporates God in all you do."

When blessings start to become burdens, lean on God, Heupel said.

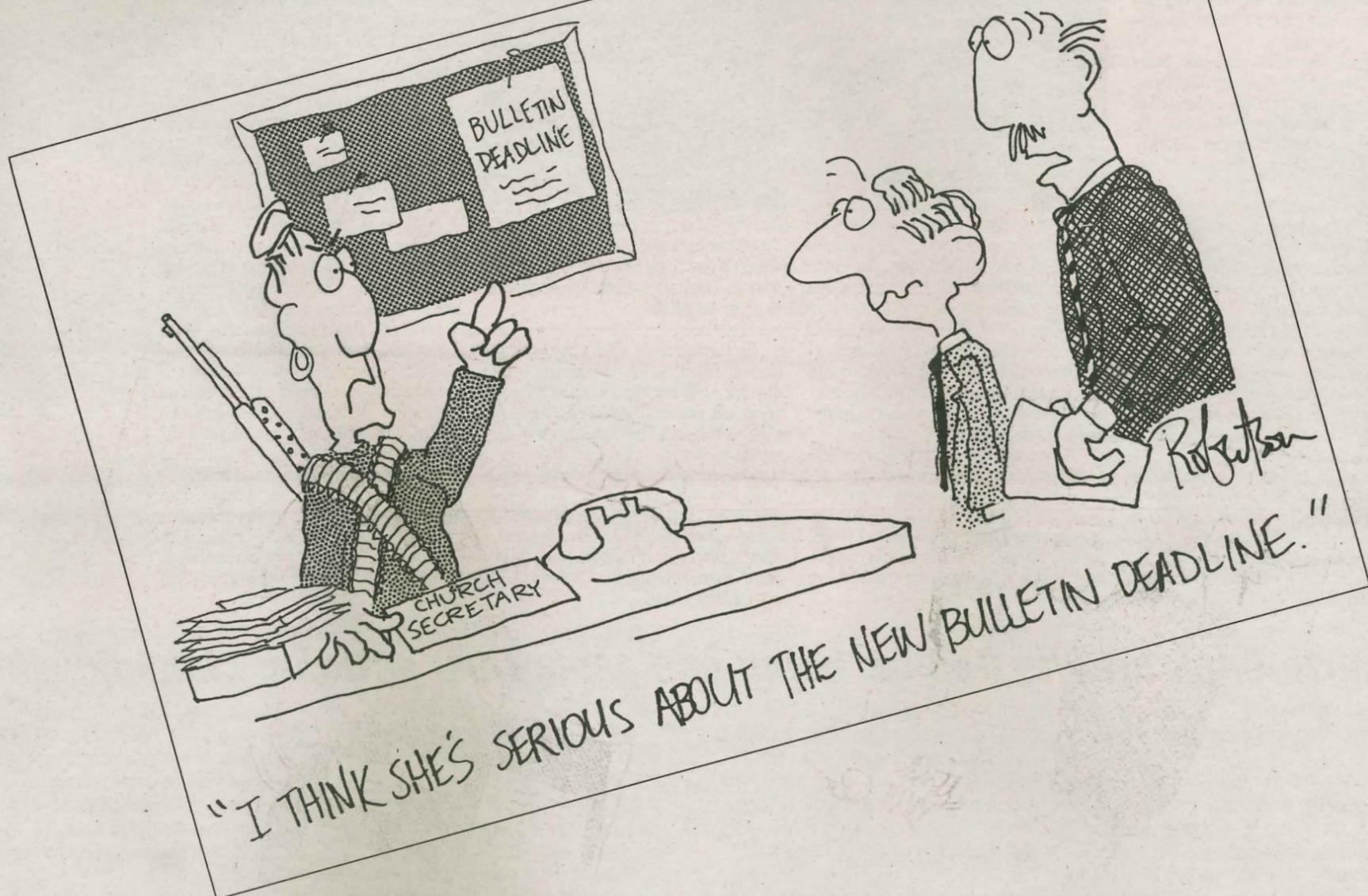
Preaching from Deuteronomy 8, Heupel said the story of God leading His people through the desert chronicles his testimony.

"I guess it's a lot like two-a-days," he said, referring to practice sessions before the season begins. "But you've got to keep pressing on. If I had not kept on, I would not be at the University of Oklahoma and would not know the blessings I have today."

Heupel emphasized the need for Christians to keep their eyes focused on Christ and the cross.

"God's promise is if you will accept Jesus, He will accept you," Heupel said. "It is amazing the turnaround He'll make in you and in those whose lives you impact."

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