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*FaithWorks magazine*

HOLLYWOOD (ABP)—On the heels of "Harry Potter," a movie with magical themes that some critics charge is unchristian, another popular fantasy novel is about to hit the big screen.

The anticipated blockbuster "The Fellowship of the Ring" is expected to take the already legendary renown of author J.R.R. Tolkien to another level.

Scheduled to hit theaters Dec. 19, it is the first installment of an ambitious attempt to translate Tolkien's classic "Lord of the Rings" series in film.

New Line Pictures reportedly budgeted \$50 million to promote the first installment. Next year will see the premiere of "The Two Towers," followed by "The Return of the King" in 2003.

It continues an unlikely prominence for a conservative Oxford don who made up entire languages for his private amusement.

In fact, he wrote "The Hobbit," the prequel to "Lord of the Rings," after encountering a blank page while grading exams. He impulsively jotted down, "In a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit."

Not knowing what a "hobbit" was, he wrote an entire novel to answer his own question.

Tolkien's three-volume set has sold more than 50 million copies since publication of the first volume in 1954. A special edition released by Houghton Mifflin this year has sold 250,000 copies so far.

Tolkien, who died in 1973, despised machines. He only briefly owned an automobile and never a dishwasher. One must wonder what he would make of the high-tech special effects that pervade director Peter Jackson's film version of "The Fellowship of the Ring."

Another question is how audiences who objected to mythical themes in Harry Potter will receive similar fare in Tolkien's writings. While Tolkien was politically conservative and a devout Christian, his works have been subject of broad interpretation by various groups. For example:

■ Songs by rock band Led Zeppelin in the 1970s borrowed images from Tolkien. The Hobbit habit of ingesting mushrooms and smoking "pipe weed" got translated into drug use for counter-culture readers.

■ Symphonies have performed "In Memoriam Tolkien," a composition by Stan McDaniel, philosophy professor emeritus from Sonoma State University in California. McDaniel also received a "doctor of honorary hobbit" degree for an article he wrote about linguistic arguments that Tol-

□ See Tolkien's Christian ..., page 8

**Bringing Douglas home***Cadiz couple returns to Singapore for body of son*

SINGAPORE—Douglas will forever be a little boy.

The treasured black-and-white photographs, nearly 35 years old now, tell only part of the story.

Douglas's parents, Cadiz residents Ruth and Bill Clark Thomas, arrived on the tropical island of Singapore in 1963.

Not the modern paradise it is today, Singapore—with its rice fields and traditional Malay villages—was a wonderful setting for a young family beginning their ministry with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Unlike most missionary families of that era who traveled by ship, the Thomases, with their 2-year-old daughter, Dorothy, arrived in Singapore by airplane. This was necessitated by the fact that Mrs. Thomas "was great with child," her husband says.

It was in this new land—four months after their arrival—that Douglas was born. And tragically, just 17 months into their missionary career, it was where his grieving family laid him to rest.

When Douglas, just 13 months old, died in an accidental drowning, the Thomases faced a reality they never could have imagined. Their next steps would set the pace for not only their own future, but for the lives of countless others they would impact along the way.

Nearly 25 years have passed since the Thomases last stood on Singapore soil; a nation where they literally planted their hearts and lives. And now this fall, with word that the Christian cemetery where they buried their son is to be reclaimed for high-rise apartments, they returned to take part of it back.

"We always knew we wanted to come back," Mrs. Thomas says. "But it took the destruction of the cemetery and the exhumation of our son's grave for us to say, 'Now is the time. We cannot wait.'" The homecoming that awaited them was more than they could have dreamed.

The months after the accident were "the most difficult we'd ever experienced," Thomas remembers vividly. "Our daughter Dorothy once said during that time: 'There's not many of us left.' It was a time of crying out to God."

So young and so new in a foreign country a world away from family members, the Thomases turned to the only family they had, the very people they had come to minister to: the Singaporean Chinese



**EMOTIONAL REUNION** Ruth and Bill Clark Thomas stand by the grave of their son Douglas in Singapore before his body is exhumed to be brought to Cadiz. (IMB photos)

community.

Khan Hui Neon, in his late teens at the time and a member of Kay Poh Road Baptist Church where Thomas was serving as honorary pastor, remembers well the impact the family's decision had on him and others.

"There was another man in the church, Mr. Tan Chin Thye, who had just lost his son," recalls Khan, who, like several other young people from the church, went on to receive a seminary degree under the tutelage of Thomas. "He was a wonderful chap, this young man, Singapore's version of an Eagle Scout."

"After Douglas died, Bill and Ruth both went to Brother Tan's house," he said. "When he opened his door, they laid their heads on his shoulders, Bill on one side and Ruth on the other, and they cried and cried."

With other Southern Baptist missionaries and a small foreign community in Singapore, many of the Chinese residents assumed the Thomases would go to "their own" for comfort. Later, they asked them why they had gone to the Chinese man.

"He knew what we were going through," Thomas simply told them. "He knew that kind of pain."

Both Thomas and Mrs. Thomas

readily admit it was only God's strength that kept them in Singapore at that time.

"If we had retreated to the States, I don't know if we'd ever have come back," Thomas admits. "Our missionary ministry would have been over before it began."

"That one act meant so much to this community," says Khan, himself now a pastor at Kay Poh Road Baptist Church. "They sought their strength and comfort from the Chinese community. They didn't run."

Further taking care of their grieving family, the Chinese community of Kay Poh Road Baptist Church handled all of Douglas's funeral arrangements.

"All 12 of the Baptist churches were there, and all our Southern Baptist colleagues were present. It was a very worthy and wonderful service. I've carried it with me around the world," Thomas says.

In the grief that followed their son's death, the Thomases began to "cry out to God to restore our joy," he says. Their Chinese brothers and sisters joined them in their petitions.

"Immediately, they began to pray that we'd have another son," Mrs. Thomas says. "I didn't have the

□ See Kentucky missionaries ..., page 7

# BAPTISTS

## SBC presidents distribute Pressler book

Paul Pressler's book, "A Hill on Which to Die," was mailed to 42,000 Southern Baptist pastors. The paperback books, funded by a group of Pressler's supporters, cost \$3.50 each.

By Steve DeVane  
*North Carolina Biblical Recorder*

A book highlighting the conservative side of the battle for control of the Southern Baptist Convention is being mailed to about 42,000 pastors.

Paul Pressler's book, "A Hill on Which to Die," was sent to every pastor in the SBC, according to a letter accompanying the book. SBC President James Merritt and eight former SBC presidents signed the letter.

Pressler and Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and one of the signers of the letter, are considered the architects of the conservative rise to power in the SBC in the 1980s and early '90s.

Critics call their efforts a "take-over," while supporters refer to it as the SBC's "conservative resurgence."

"It has become increasingly apparent that many have forgotten the conditions which necessitated the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention," the letter said. "The oncoming generation needs to know what transpired."

The letter said the presidents want

every pastor, every seminary student and Southern Baptists in general to know and understand the issues.

"We feel most strongly that 'A Hill on Which to Die' is must reading for an informed Southern Baptist," the letter said. "Since each of us has served as president of the convention during the period of the conservative resurgence, we feel strongly about the issues dealt with in the book."

All but two of the SBC presidents during the conservative rise to power—Charles Stanley and Jim Henry—signed the letter.

Patterson, who served as SBC president in 1999-2000, said in a phone interview that "a number of people" approached Pressler about making the book available to all Southern Baptist pastors. Patterson said he didn't remember who the people were or how much the project cost.

Patterson said Pressler contacted him about the idea. "I said 'I think it would be a fabulous thing,'" Patterson added. He predicted even Pressler's sworn enemies will "probably get a kick out of reading" the book.

"Those who love him will love him

more when they read it," Patterson said. "Those who are undecided might gain some insight."

The letter said tax-deductible contributions to offset the cost of the project can be sent to First Baptist Church in Houston. The book's paperback version, which was sent to the pastors, costs \$3.50 each, according to the letter.

Kirk Boudreaux, director of financial services for the church, said Pressler is a member of the church. The church has not put money into the project but does receive and pass along tax-deductible contributions to LifeWay Christian Resources, Boudreaux said.

The church has received a few checks and forwarded the equivalent amount of money to LifeWay, he said.

The book was mailed to pastors in an envelope with a LifeWay return address.

LifeWay officials said the agency didn't spend or invest money in the mailing. They said Pressler told them a group of his supporters funded the project. Pressler could not be reached for comment.

## Southwestern dean 'reassigned' after 2 years

By Mark Wingfield  
*Texas Baptist Standard*

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP)—Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's theology dean has been "reassigned" less than two years after his election to the post.

Seminary President Ken Hemphill told faculty of the School of Theology Nov. 29 that he intends to move Dean David Crutchley to a newly created position of dean of globalization.

Crutchley indicated he has not decided whether to accept the appointment. Should he decline the new post, he would remain on the faculty.

A news release from the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said Crutchley would serve as theology dean until Dec. 31. He will then "return to the classroom while he prays about God's direction for his next stage of ministry."

While Hemphill did not discuss reasons for the reassignment, some trustees reportedly have grown impatient with the amount of time it is tak-

ing to replace moderate holdovers from the previous president's administration with a more staunchly conservative theology faculty.

Crutchley, a South African native, joined the Southwestern faculty in 1999 after 14 years of teaching at Cape Town Baptist Theological College in South Africa. He was elected dean in March 2000, succeeding Tommy Lea, who died of cancer.

Crutchley's election followed an eight-month search. At the time, Hemphill lauded him as the best possible candidate because of his "vision for building a world-class faculty."

That task became complicated, however, after trustees tightened theological requirements for teachers. Crutchley spent much of his two-year tenure bringing the current faculty in line with a trustee requirement that all elected and adjunct faculty affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message doctrinal statement.

Two faculty members resigned rather than sign the faith statement. Others reportedly moved up their re-

irement plans or took other teaching positions over disagreement with revisions in the statement.

The seminary reportedly began the fall semester with up to 15 vacancies on the School of Theology's full-time faculty.

In announcing his decision to reassign Crutchley, Hemphill did not identify any concerns about the way the dean had handled his responsibilities over the last 21 months.

The reassignment "is a decision that I believe is in the best interest of the seminary," Hemphill said. "The critical issue for me is to ensure that our personnel are in the position that maximizes their greatest strengths and passion."

In response to Hemphill's announcement to the faculty, Crutchley read a brief statement in which he spoke of his "heavy heart" over the matter and acknowledged that "my days as dean of the School of Theology have come to an end."

He explained that he has "not found peace with this reassignment."

### BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **Michigan Baptists retain 1963 statement.** Michigan Baptist messengers narrowly defeated a plan to change a reference in the state convention constitution from the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message to the 2000 version of the faith statement. The proposed amendment, introduced at last year's annual meeting, failed by two votes—106 to 54—to receive the necessary two-thirds majority to be implemented. In other action, messengers voted to begin the process, as funds allow, to relocate the state office facility.

■ **New England welcomes executive director.** Messengers to the Baptist Convention of New England welcomed new Executive Director James Wideman to his first annual meeting in that role. He previously was director of missions for Vermont's Green Mountain Baptist Association. Messengers elected all four convention officers by acclamation. They also adopted a resolution remembering those killed and injured during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.



## Baptist leaders join call to pray for Muslims

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Six Southern Baptist leaders have joined Southern Baptist Convention President James Merritt's call for a day of prayer for Muslims on Dec. 16.

SBC Executive Committee President Morris Chapman, International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin, North American Mission Board President Robert Reccord, LifeWay Christian Resources President Jimmy Draper, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission President Richard Land and Woman's Mission Union Executive Director Wanda Lee joined Merritt in signing a Nov. 30 open letter asking Southern Baptists and other Christians to pray that God would speak clearly to Muslims and "reveal Himself" at the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month.

"God has been powerfully moving all over the world since Sept. 11," said the letter. "This movement of the Holy Spirit may be most evident among the world's 1.2 billion Muslims. Missionaries report they have never seen such openness to the gospel."

"Right now, Muslims are observing their holy month of Ramadan, and many Christians have been praying that God would speak to Muslims about His love for them and their need for His forgiveness. In recent years, God has honored our prayers with multitudes of Muslims coming to Christ."

"We see the opportunity increasing for Muslims to come to Christ, especially since devout Muslims will soon observe the 'Night of Power,' spending the entire night in a prayer vigil in which they ask God to reveal Himself to them."

This year, Muslims worldwide are observing Ramadan from Nov. 16 through Dec. 15. The letter calls for Christians to unite in prayer on the following Sunday, Dec. 16.

Merritt's letter cautioned Christians not to equate Muslims with the terrorists who carried out the Sept. 11 attacks. Rather, he wrote, Christians should be concerned over the spiritual lostness of Muslim people.

"We all understand that the vast majority of Muslims do not support the atrocities committed in the name of Islam," the letter said. "But we also understand that 1.2 billion Muslims are hopelessly lost without Christ."

A page of prayer points for the emphasis is available at [www.acalltoprayer.net](http://www.acalltoprayer.net).

Southern Baptist leaders previously have issued calls to pray for Jews and Hindus to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

## Negotiation on KBC facilities hits 'obstacles'

LOUISVILLE—Negotiations on the option of swapping Kentucky Baptist Convention facilities and property for a new facility to be constructed by next summer hit a snag last week.

Despite the setback, KBC leaders indicated they plan to continue exploring the possibility of a future facility exchange or other construction options.

Plans to construct a new Baptist Building facility by July 1, 2002, hinged on an area developer successfully negotiating an agreement with the Jefferson County government to lease the existing KBC facilities in Middletown.

Developer Fred Faulkner recommended Dec. 5 to the KBC's building project workgroup that convention leaders not pursue the county government lease, according to a memo to employees by KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey.

Mackey noted that issues cited by Faulkner included concern that county officials did not want to lease the entire facilities and that Jefferson County Fiscal Court would not be able to finalize plans for a lease prior to January. The memo noted that would create "a major timing barrier" in constructing a new facility in time to meet the county's need to occupy the facilities by July 1.

The KBC workgroup assigned the responsibility of overseeing any facility transition was scheduled to meet prior to this week's KBC Executive Board meeting to finalize a recommendation to the board.

Mackey said one of the benefits of any new proposal is that "the time crunch isn't there" to complete a major building project by July. "The pressure is off and that's one of the things I think everyone is relieved with," he added.

Faulkner "still feels there are good possibilities that an exchange agreement can be reached," Mackey said. "It will all depend on the action the Executive Board takes as far as what the future possibilities are."

Jerry Dooley, vice chairman of the project workgroup, chaired the Dec. 5 meeting with the developer.

"The process is not dead," Dooley emphasized. "I'm still very confident that somewhere down the road we're going to end up in a new building because I think that's best for the KBC and is better stewardship of our assets."

Noting that the initial proposal "had too many obstacles to overcome," he said exploring other options "is the right process" to allow convention leaders to "find a way to do what's best."

## Barriers fall as two churches become one

By Tonia Holbrook  
Louisville Courier-Journal

LOUISVILLE—Meeting together for the first time Dec. 2, Bicknell Avenue Baptist Church's dozen members shook the hands of their newest brethren as all 148 of them filed by.

The sermon was delivered by a new pastor, and the hymns sounded a little more boisterous than usual, but the pews were filled after years of being mostly empty. And that's something to rejoice about, members said.

Temple of Faith Baptist Church and Bicknell Avenue Baptist Church merged on Dec. 2, keeping the Temple of Faith Baptist Church name but breaking some barriers in the process.

Theirs is a story of two churches—one in Louisville's West End, the other in a South End neighborhood; one predominantly African-American, the other whose members are white; one with a burgeoning membership, the other shrinking till only a dozen remained on their roll.

The merged church hopes to "model to the community the transcending nature of Jesus Christ," said its pastor, Joel Bowman. "All barriers are coming down," including race and socioeconomic class, he said.

Temple of Faith was formed June 3, just six months ago, with 120 charter members. But it has since gained a number of members and outgrown its building.

The church had been meeting in a room that seated only about 110 people. "We were packed in there like sardines," Bowman said, adding that the sanctuary in Bicknell's building, now the home of the merged church, seats 400 and also has classroom space.

Bicknell Avenue Baptist started in a tent in 1948 and grew to about 500 members at one point. But its members aged and many died, and younger members moved away. It had not had a full-time minister for some time.

Donald Tucker, a Bicknell deacon, told the congregation he believes that it will flourish again.

In September, Tucker approached Jim Martin of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—not to ask for help, but to offer Bicknell's building to a growing church.

When Martin—interim director of the seminary's Nehemiah Project, which tries to rejuvenate churches—



heard of Temple of Faith's growing pains, he introduced the churches' leaders.

And although giving up the church was bittersweet for Bicknell Avenue's members, it will be a blessing in the long run, said Tucker's wife, Ozetta.

"I feel like God is in this," she said. "I hope and pray they can reach out to the community like we no longer can."

Temple of Faith is thankful for such generosity, Bowman said. The merger means no more lease or mortgage payments. And that means Temple of Faith can spend more money on ministry itself, he said.

"Now, when I think about what it means to be a Christian, I'll think of the members of Bicknell Avenue Baptist Church," Bowman told the congregation. "If it weren't for their caring, sharing and giving attitude, we would not be here."

To honor the members' generosity, Temple of Faith members stipulated in the motion for merger that Bicknell's history be prominently displayed in the church.

All parties gave up something, Bowman said. Bicknell Avenue's congregation gave up its building, and Temple of Faith gave up its "comfort zone," he said. And two other groups that use the church also have agreed to share the space—Faith, Hope & Deliverance Ministries, a congrega-

tion that has been renting the church after Bicknell Avenue's morning services, and South Louisville Community Ministries, which runs outreach programs in adjacent buildings on the church grounds.

Faith, Hope & Deliverance Ministries will continue to meet there after Temple of Faith's Sunday services until its lease is up next month.

The merger was an unusual one, said Wesley Pitts, executive director of missions of Long Run Baptist Association. Pitts, who serves as a moderator for such mergers, said the mood typically isn't as light.

"Usually, you have one side sitting over here and one side sitting over here," Pitts said, gesturing toward the congregation. "And the last thing they want to do is merge."

Also to mark the occasion, 11th Ward Alderman Lawrence Montgomery read a proclamation from Louisville Mayor Dave Armstrong declaring Dec. 2 Temple of Faith Baptist Church Day.

"This is a blessing for all of Louisville," said Montgomery's grandson, Lawrence Tyree, 27, who joined the church Dec. 2. "It's going to help people in the south and west Louisville ... bring diversity together."

"We want people under one God," he said.

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**FELLOW MEMBERS**  
Christine Jarboe (center) and her husband, William, welcome Violet Montgomery to the former Bicknell Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville. The congregation celebrated its merger with Temple of Faith Baptist Church earlier this month. The Jarboes had been Bicknell members for 44 years. (Photo by Jamie Rhodes, courtesy of the Louisville Courier-Journal)

## Baptists gear up to battle expanded gambling

With the 2002 session of the Kentucky General Assembly less than a month away, anti-gambling advocates are gearing up to combat an expected push for expanded gambling in the commonwealth.

The Kentucky Baptist Public Affairs Committee is working alongside the interdenominational Temperance League of Kentucky and Citizens Against Gambling Expansion, a coalition of religious and social-concern groups, to challenge legislative efforts to allow video gambling at Kentucky race tracks.

PAC will send a packet of information in early January to Kentucky Baptist pastors, church clerks, directors of missions and Woman's Mis-

sionary Union leaders in an effort to mobilize Kentucky Baptists to oppose expanded gambling.

In a cover letter to accompany the mailout, PAC Chairman Floyd Paris warned that projected budget shortfalls for the state might cause some legislators to be "very tempted to compound this problem by greatly expanding gambling in an effort to make up the shortfall."

Paris, pastor of Unity Baptist Church in Ashland, added that such action "will in the long term do much more damage than good."

Calling on Kentucky Baptists to write personal letters to legislators opposing gambling legislation, Paris noted, "We can make a difference but

only if we take initiative."

Temperance League Executive Director Claude Witt said it's debatable whether gambling proponents can achieve their goals without a constitutional amendment. He added, however, that pastors and church members still need to contact legislators to express their views.

Senate Majority Leader Dan Kelly, R-Springfield, said he believes it would be "a mistake to expand gambling" in an effort to increase revenue for the state.

"Gambling brings with it tremendous social costs that should not be encouraged or incurred by government to raise revenues," Kelly said. "I think it's the wrong approach."

## WESTERN RECORDER

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

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## Baptist cooperation

While recognizing the futility of attempting to debate someone who buys ink by the barrel, I feel an obligation to respond to a few of the fallacies written in the editorial dated Nov. 27.

Webster's dictionary defines to "cooperate" as "To act or operate jointly with another or others, to the same end; to work or labor with mutual efforts to promote the same object."

The intent of my motion was to clarify how Kentucky Baptist churches relate to Article 3 of our Constitution. The article uses the phrase "a cooperative, affiliated member of the Kentucky Baptist Convention." It's important to understand what cooperative and affiliated means. It is my understanding that the KBC is a voluntary association of "cooperating" South-

ern Baptist churches. (I don't know of any other denominations represented.) How then can a church be part of an association of "Southern Baptist" churches and not be Southern Baptist?

The KBC Web site declares that "The Cooperative Program is an agreement among Southern Baptist churches, Baptist state conventions and fellowships and the Southern Baptist Convention to work together in Great Commission ministries. It is a way of working together and a financial channel of cooperation through which mission dollars are combined into a unified budget supporting Southern Baptist missionary, education and benevolent ministries in each state, the nation and throughout the world."

Maybe I am oversimplifying the issue a bit, but it seems fairly plain to me that a church that does not support

who Southern Baptists are cannot possibly be considered to be "sympathetic with the purposes and work" (Article 3.1) of Kentucky Baptists. It seems therefore that it is neither I nor my motion that is causing the "disunity" but the churches that choose to separate themselves from what we as Southern Baptists have covenanted together to accomplish.

Jay Adkins  
South Shore

## Tolerance prevails

With religious fundamentalism fanning the flames of intolerance and hatred in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Northern Ireland, I celebrate that the voices of religious tolerance prevailed at the recent Kentucky Baptist Convention. Inclusion was the verdict. Such a meeting was truly a Thanksgiving blessing that all God's children could enjoy.

Buddy Revels  
Louisville

## Healthy tips aid holiday season

By Branda Polk

NASHVILLE (BP)—With the 2001 Christmas season officially in full swing, I enjoy the constant reminder of the birth of our Savior. God's gift of Jesus provides redemption and the promise of abundant and eternal life.

God gave His very best to us through Christ, and all He asks

for is our best in return. One of the best gifts we can give back to God is the proper stewardship of the body He gave us to live in.

A healthy body is a powerful ministry tool that God can work through in the years He allows you to serve on this earth. Our bodies are a precious gift from God and deserve proper care and treatment. When we fuel and use our bodies as God designed, we reap the benefits

of good health.

The holiday season can present some interesting challenges to maintaining good health. Here are a few tips modified from LifeWay Christian Resources "Fit 4 Nutrition Study" that can help you enjoy the festivities without adding extra pounds:

■ If you are in charge of a holiday celebration, plan activities that don't include food.

Board games, charades, walking to see Christmas decorations, caroling in the neighborhood or ice-skating are active, interactive and fun ways to celebrate with friends and family.

■ When at a party or dinner, eat slowly. When you eat slowly it gives your body time to digest the food and be satisfied. You also will be more in tune with the Christmas carols when you are full without stuffing yourself.

■ If you feel you must taste some

of everything, fill your plate with small servings. Avoid going back for seconds.

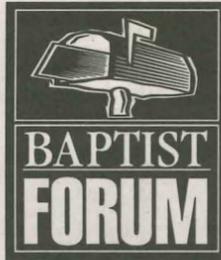
■ Don't apologize for making wise choices. It is your decision to honor God with your food choices. Avoid allowing others to sway your commitment or pressure you into changing your mind.

■ Don't impose your views on others. Lead by example, not words.

■ Maintain your regular activity level as much as possible. In reality, parties and other social gatherings are a small part of the season. Schedule your time to include exercise and healthful meal choices during the day and at home.

■ Avoid a "dieting" mentality. Enjoy the season. Trust yourself to make the best choices in every situation. Depriving yourself will only lead to overindulgence.

Branda Polk is health ministry specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.



## FAMILY

### Avoid common financial miscues during Christmas

By Jeremy White

The time of joy at Christmas often turns into a time of financial stress. Typical financial mistakes at Christmas include:

■ Giving too many presents—especially to

children. Admittedly, I don't remember being concerned about this as a child, but I now see that children receive so much from so many different sources. Most Americans have too much stuff already. We have to buy containers, expand garages and rent storage to keep all of our stuff.

■ Giving the wrong items. We often buy things that are useless, meaningless or frivolous. Most people desire connecting through relationships, not more material items.

■ Giving too little to missions or charities. If you totaled up your Wal-Mart expenditures, how would that compare to what you gave to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering or to the food pantry ministry in town?

■ Giving to too many people. Gift exchanges at work or at a Sunday school party cause more outlays, more shopping and more stress.

■ Borrowing on credit cards to purchase gifts. Giving too much to too many often leads people to use credit. This causes stress after the Christmas holidays. Are you really helping your kids' future by borrowing on credit to buy the toys of today? Most parents are behind on their college savings plans but on track to have full closets and attics.

Please don't think that I'm Scrooge-like or thoughtless. I applaud, as does the Bible, generous giving. It's just that many of us can do better at Christmas. Here are a few ideas to begin your creative thinking of meaningful gifts:

■ Write and frame a tribute of praise to someone.

■ Have your kids make memorable presents for relatives.

■ Give your children a coupon for a half-day with you. (Let them choose the activity.)

■ Give a coupon to offer babysitting, lawn or laundry services to someone.

■ Write a poem for poetry lovers or compose and perform a song for music lovers.

■ Contribute money to a church, mission or charity in honor of someone.

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant in Paducah. See other financial and tax tips at his Web site at [www.consultcpa.com](http://www.consultcpa.com).

## FIRST PERSON

## Words of thanks from New York

"Southern Baptists are a family. Southern Baptists are generous. The disaster in New York provided a great opportunity to witness to the people of New York. People are searching for meaning and wondering about the future," said J.B. Graham, executive director of the New York Baptist Convention. "The work is not over. The political leaders of New York City know about the contributions of Southern Baptists."

J.B. spoke with tears in his eyes and a soft voice as he expressed appreciation for the response of Southern Baptists to the disaster. As he addressed the Nashville gathering of state executive directors, he praised God for the half-million meals that Southern Baptist disaster relief workers served.

At the time he spoke the New York convention office had received more than \$860,000 for families of victims. Metropolitan New York

## PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Come on through. Thanks for what you are doing."

This is another example of how Southern Baptists come together around the mission of our Lord.

We are so grateful for the Kentucky Baptist disaster relief workers who are a model for all Southern Baptists in responsiveness, skill and faithfulness under the able direction of Larry Koch. More than 300 Kentucky volunteers have served in New York and the number of volunteers continues to grow as teams help clean apartments in the affected area.

Due to the loss of a storage facility used for disaster relief equipment in Franklin, there currently is a special effort to build a facility adjacent to the association office in Lincoln County to store and repair equipment and stage responses. Local volunteers are committed to coordinate the construction and the future use of the facility. If you have interest in helping with this project, please contact Larry Koch at (888) 254-5720 or (502) 244-6489.

Thank you, Kentucky Baptist disaster relief volunteers.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention



Bill Mackey

the walls. Jordan sent a secretary to help answer the phone. J.B. said that he would never forget the bravery of this young woman.

He also told of a group of disaster relief workers who had finished their shift and were waiting to buy tokens for the subway when a security guard recognized their distinctive yellow shirts. He said, "Aren't you the Southern Baptist workers?"

## What's the difference between depression and holiday blues?

**Q: My mother seems to be despondent during the holidays. Is there any way to know if this is more than a seasonal concern?**

For many people, the holiday season is a special and joyous time, yet for others it can be a very difficult and sad time of year.

Some people find themselves feeling down because of the holiday pressures, such as buying gifts when they have little money to spend, dealing with family members and handling dozens of responsibilities and social functions.

Others, who have few family members or friends nearby, may feel lonely. These are normal reactions, which often are described as holiday blues. But other people might be suffering from depression and need pastoral counseling.

The holiday blues are a normal, temporary reaction to life situations. Helpful responses are to be a good listener and to allow time to heal.

Depression is a common but serious mood disorder that is pervasive, intense and attacks the mind and the body at the same time. Depression can result in a serious disturbance of work, social and bodily functioning. Unlike grief or passing sadness, depression usually does not respond to a change in circumstances nor does it tend to dissipate with time. It affects the way a person eats, sleeps, thinks and feels. Left untreated, depression can result in disruption of relationships, disability or even death.

Studies show that clinical depression may be associated with an imbalance of chemicals in the brain that carry communications between nerve cells that control mood and other bodily systems that are disturbed in depression, such as sleep and appetite. Life experiences such as severe stress or loss, other medical illnesses and certain personality traits and genetic factors also might trigger depression.

In most people, depression can be treated successfully, either with medication, counseling or a combination of the two. A depressive disorder is not a passing blue mood, a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. Without treatment, symptoms can last for months or years.—*Jon Rainbow*

## Q: How can I help my child develop strong character?

Character comprises the essence of who we are. Christian parents want their children to develop and display Christian character—to have the mind and mannerisms of Christ.

Character, of course, develops over a period of time. It forms as the result of lots of little decisions and influences played out over a long time. Teach your children the importance of choices and help them choose wisely. Guide the use of their time. Challenge them to fill their minds with good stuff—to think about things that are pure, right, true and lovely (Philippians 4:8).

Encourage your children to read and memorize Scripture. David strengthened his character by hiding God's Word in his heart (Psalm 119:9). Your children can do the same.

Read stories of courage, honesty and virtue to your children. Resources like William Bennett's "Book of Virtues" are excellent. Make sure your children are familiar with John Bunyan's classic story, "Pilgrim's Progress."

In "The Hand of God," Oswald McCall reminds us that we gather to ourselves the images we love; their likeness and nature end up in us. Help your children gather goodness into their eyes, ears and minds, and you will help them develop strong Christian character.—*David Garrard*

*Family Forum writers are Suzanne Coyle, 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; James Stillwell, minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington; and Scott Wigginton, director of LifeCare Counseling at Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville. Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253 or e-mail us at wesrec@ntr.net.*



## Christmas 2001: A prayer for peace & hope

Holy Father,

Thank You for Your perfect wisdom, especially during these recent months of tragedy, grief, confusion and warfare. As we immerse ourselves in celebrating a season of "peace on earth, good will to men," help us gain a fresh sense of Your wisdom in addressing the challenges and crises of daily life. Whether it's knowing the best way to pray for world leaders and events, how to relate effectively to people we encounter from different cultures or what to tell our children and grandchildren about issues of the day, please remind us to consciously seek Your will in all that we say and do during this holiday season and beyond.

Thank You also, dear God, for Your eternal holiness. In a world marred by hatred and bloodshed, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the negative aspects of life. Even amid the joy of Christmas festivities, loneliness, depression, financial strain and frenzied schedules can crowd out reflections on the holiness of the holiday. Guide us to reserve ample time during these hectic days to quietly focus on what it truly means to experience the "silent night, holy night" of the earthly arrival of the "Son of God, love's pure light." Father, Your Word reminds us that You are wholly holy in every facet of Your being. Teach us to reflect Your holiness in every relationship and every conversation.

Thank you, Lord, for Your unwavering love in the midst of life's uncertainties. Even when we disappoint You and fall short of Your expectations, thank You

for graciously choosing to forgive us when we sincerely confess our sins and shortcomings. Lead us to share that same spirit of love and graciousness with those who cross our paths, whether family and friends or strangers in need of a kind word or a thoughtful deed. Let each act of kindness be both heartfelt and creative, whether it's as timely as donating funds to aid Afghani orphans or as simple as permitting a fellow shopper to pull ahead of us into a prime parking spot at the mall.

Thank You, above all, for the gift of Jesus Christ wrapped as a tiny bundle in a Bethlehem manger. Remind us that the Christmas season is not primarily about gift-giving and parties, but about the miraculous birth of our Savior which the angel proclaimed as "good news of great joy for all people."

In honor of You giving Your very best to the world on that first Christmas day, help us give our best to one another this Christmas season. As we long for peace on earth for the benefit of all mankind, prompt us to

pray for soldiers who face danger half a world away, hungry and hurting refugees whose world has been turned upside down and neighbors who don't know where to turn to find true peace.

In the words of the prophet Isaiah, our Messiah is described as "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." He remains the answer our troubled world needs today and forever.

Thank you, Father, for sending the perfect Christmas gift. In the holy and eternal name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

### STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

## Partnership missions reflects KBC focus on volunteerism

By Duane Bolin

I am convinced that the story of the Kentucky Baptist Convention in the 20th century was "a story of co-operation." Certainly, the 2001 KBC annual meeting in Murray bore witness to the theme of cooperation.

Former KBC Executive Director William Marshall (1983-1997) concluded that the Kentucky Baptist response to the controversy that has wracked the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979 indicated that Kentucky Baptists "as a whole, were not easily provoked or moved by religious politics."

Rather, he said, Kentucky Baptists have responded "faithfully and energetically to a movement more powerful and persuasive than the controversy." Marshall was convinced that the movement he labeled "volunteerism" would be recognized by historians as "the most visible sign of God's own spirit during these years."

Kentucky Baptist involvement in volunteerism reflected a desire for more personal, hands-on experience in missions. In the 1980s an increasing number of Kentucky Baptist churches designed missions opportunities of their own. Then, under

Marshall's leadership, the KBC built on these local efforts to fashion a convention-wide thrust for volunteer missions.

Kentucky became a leader in the volunteer missions movement. Specific partnerships were developed between Kentucky Baptist churches and Baptists in Kenya, Brazil, Russia, Ohio, Utah-Idaho, and later with Poland, New England, and Tanzania. Former KBC partnership missions director Calvin Wilkins and outgoing KBC president Jim McKinley traveled recently to Tanzania to take part in ceremonies to close out that recent partnership effort.

The KBC provided the first on-site coordinator for a state convention partnership, a development pioneered by Marshall, and a model soon followed by other state conventions.

A three-year cooperative effort between the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the European Baptist Convention is now under way, Wilkins noted. This partnership targets approximately 67 English-language congregations in 22 European countries. The membership of those 67 churches represent Christians from 120 countries. One inter-

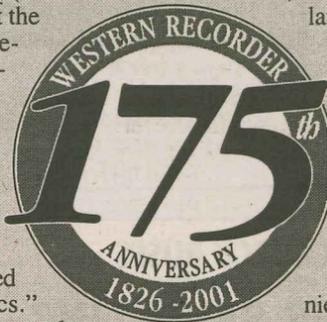
national church in Sophia, Bulgaria, for example, has about 50 members, but those members hail from 31 different nations. The churches' diverse membership offers tremendous opportunities to impact numerous nations with the gospel.

The volunteer movement also led to the creation of disaster relief teams. Again, Kentucky Baptists, this time under the auspices of the state Brotherhood department, took the lead among conventions east of the Mississippi River. Kentucky Baptist disaster relief teams gained national recognition for their quick response and food relief efforts following natural disasters, and most recently worked to alleviate the pain and devastation at Ground Zero in New York City.

In today's global community, Kentucky Baptists continue to lead the way in finding new paths for cooperative ministries.

Through the years of the 20th century the Western Recorder consistently covered the developments and ramifications of the controversy in Southern Baptist life. The state Baptist paper also has faithfully reported the positive innovations of new missions endeavors. One of the highlights of that coverage has been efforts in volunteerism, expressed specifically through partnership missions and disaster relief.

*Historian Duane Bolin is a member of First Baptist Church of Murray.*



## Methodists, Boy Scout to publish military devotional

NASHVILLE (RNS)—The United Methodist Church is hoping to raise \$3 million to republish a World War II devotional for 1 million members of the military, prompted by a Boy Scout whose grandfather cherished the book.

U.S. military officials have agreed to allow the devotional, "Strength for Service to God and Country," to be distributed to military personnel around the world. It was originally published and distributed during World War II by Abingdon Press, a division of the United Methodist Publishing House.

The project was started two years ago by Evan Hunsberger, a 15-year-old Boy Scout from Orange, Calif. His deceased grandfather, who was a military chaplain, carried the book with him during and after the war.

Hunsberger sought permission to republish the book as his Eagle Scout project, and spent 1,500 hours with a team of friends editing the book and updating it with new entries by Jewish, Catholic and Muslim clergy.

The church's Commission on United Methodist Men agreed to sponsor the project since it oversees the denomination's vast scouting programs. The commission also agreed to lobby military chaplains to approve the project. According to United Methodist News Service, the military is inundated with requests to send materials to overseas troops and at first was reluctant to approve the project.

Once the \$3 million is raised, the commission will publish the devotional in conjunction with Providence House Publishers, and Hunsberger will get his Eagle Scout badge.

## Wal-Mart to limit Salvation Army kettles

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (RNS)—If you go to Wal-Mart this year to do some holiday shopping, something might be missing: The constant ringing of the Salvation Army bell.

Red-clad collectors for the Salvation Army can no longer spend the entire holiday shopping season in front of Wal-Mart stores.

Beginning this year, the Army's volunteers must limit their annual presence to 14 days, and no more than three days can be consecutive. That's because Wal-Mart has tightened its policy toward outside groups in a two-pronged effort to be consistent on one hand and discourage labor unions on the other.

"If we allow all charitable organizations unrestricted access," said Wal-Mart spokesman Tom Williams, "then

legally, other organizations can say, 'If you allow them, then you have to allow us.'" And because federal law does not differentiate among signature collectors of any kind, Williams said, continuance of the historical carte blanche policy toward the Salvation Army could undermine Wal-Mart's practice of barring labor union organizers from its premises.

Unions have tried unsuccessfully for years to organize Wal-Mart employees. Tighter restrictions might serve as one more deterrent, but Salvation Army collections could suffer as a result, especially in communities where Wal-Mart is the primary shopping center, according to national Army spokesman Tom Jones.

"It's impossible to say how it will affect us" overall, Jones said. Last year, the Salvation Army collected

\$13 million in kettles outside Wal-Mart stores, he said. The total raised in kettles nationwide topped \$85 million, or 4 percent of the \$2.1 billion national budget. Monies raised pay for food, clothing and toys for the poor at Christmas as well as day care, substance abuse programs and other services year-round.

This year, Salvation Army volunteers intend to find other accommodating stores on the days when they can't go to Wal-Mart. Nevertheless, Jones said, the group is grateful for whatever time its volunteers are allowed to spend at Wal-Mart.

"They've got to do what's necessary to stay in business," Jones said. "But the Salvation Army continues to be very grateful for letting the kettles stand outside Wal-Mart stores. They don't have to do that."

## Robertson steps down as Christian Coalition head

By Adelle Bankss & Kevin Eckstrom  
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Religious broadcaster Pat Robertson resigned last week as president of the Christian Coalition, an organization with which he mobilized millions of conservative Christians to take an active role in politics.

In a Dec. 5 statement, Robertson, a candidate for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination, cited a renewed call to Christian ministry as the reason for his move.

"We are seeing an outpouring of revival power in the United States that exceeds anything that I have known in my lifetime," Robertson said. "With the few years left to me of active service, I must focus on those things that will bring forth the greatest spiritual benefit."

He said he plans to devote more energy to his role as chairman and CEO of the Christian Broadcasting Network, which he founded in 1960. He co-hosts the network's flagship program, "The 700 Club."

Angell Watts, spokeswoman for CBN, said Robertson's age was a factor in his decision.

"He's almost turning 72 and at that time of your life, you really have to think what's most important," she said. "To him, it's his original calling to the ministry."

Though seeming to move from dual focuses on religion and politics to solely the spiritual realm, Robertson voiced confidence in the success of his organization, from encouraging evangelical churches to be involved in political action to influencing the election of Christian conservatives.

"Without us, I do not believe that George Bush would be sitting in the White House or that Republicans would be in control of the United States House of Representatives," he said.

Some critics said it is too early to write obituaries for either Robertson or the Christian Coalition.

James Dunn, former executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and a frequent Robertson opponent on church-state issues, said he's not sure what Robertson means by full-time "ministry."

"He's talked about ministry many times before, but what he means by ministry is really political action," Dunn said. "I have to be

registered as a cynic about what he means by that, what else he has up his sleeve and how long (he waits) until something else pops up."

Those who have battled Robertson in the public arena said it would be a mistake to discount the formidable grassroots network he has assembled.

"The religious right movement in this country is much bigger than any one person, even if that person is Pat Robertson," said Welton Gaddy, executive director of the Interfaith Alliance and a frequent Robertson critic.

## Franklin Graham: Muslims not 'evil'

NEW YORK (RNS)—Evangelist Franklin Graham has clarified his views on Muslims, saying he does not believe they are "evil people."

Graham drew criticism for previously reported comments in which he called the Islamic faith "wicked, violent and not of the same God."

Writing in The Wall Street Journal on Dec. 3, Graham said: "I do not believe Muslims are evil people because of their faith. I personally have many Muslim friends. But I decry the evil that has been done in the name of Islam."

He said he thought his previous statements were "greatly misunderstood."

"While as Christians we disagree with Islamic teachings, if we obey the teachings of Jesus we will love all Muslims," he said.

He noted that through Samaritan's Purse, an international relief organization of which he is the president, he has helped provide aid to Muslim people in such locations as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Iraq.

He added that he thinks it is important for people of faith to express their beliefs and to criticize persecution by Islamic regimes.

## A look at Christian camping

Last week I was privileged, along with others on our leadership team, to attend the convention of Christian Camping International. It was an interesting few days, with inspiring speakers including Chuck Colson, Alistair Begg, Crawford Loritts and Janet Parshall.

Jonathan Creek and Cedarmore have been CCI members for the past four years. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to this ministry/organization that brings together Christian camp and conference centers from across the country. It was through CCI that I began to grasp a vision of what both Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek might become in the future. The relationships that I have formed through CCI are invaluable. The information that CCI publishes is also worthy of note.

Consider, for example, some facts that can be gleaned from CCI/USA's 2001 industry survey of the more than 1,000 member camps:

■ CCI/USA members served 7.9 million guests last year! This marks an increase of 60 percent over the last decade.

■ Nearly 250,000 people made professions of faith at these camp and conference centers.

■ Camper days, the industry's

most accurate yardstick for measuring attendance, are up from 13 million to 23 million over four years.

These statistics and trends should encourage all Kentucky Baptists to continue prayerful support of both Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek. The trends at these two centers parallel to a great degree the national scene. The state of affairs of Christian camping has never been healthier. We should desire to continue to make improvements to both Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek that will allow both of these treasures to remain viable in the years ahead.

I am thankful God has called me to serve in this ministry in which we get to see Him work in remarkable ways. I hold to the belief that over the next decade we will see Jonathan Creek and Cedarmore move to the front of camping and conference centers in America. Do we have a long way to go? For sure. But I have had people pray over me, that God would guard the vision that He has given us for these places. And that's what He has done. My hope is strong that we will get there.

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

### KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



Rusty Ellison

### TEN COMMANDMENTS

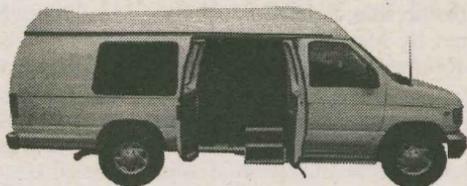
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## Kentucky missionaries return to Singapore for son's body

Continued from page 1

nerve. I was so scared because I didn't get to keep the one I had. So I didn't dare ask for another one. But they (the Chinese congregation) sure did."

It wasn't long before prayers were answered. Eight months later, the doctor told the Thomases they were expecting. A bonus was also added.

"When the doctor told me we were going to have twins, I saw God," Mrs. Thomas says. "And their birth 16 months after Douglas's death was the most dramatic sign for our faith that we've ever had."

Despite no history of twins in their family tree, the Thomases received their son, Charles, who was followed five minutes later by his sister, Cecilia.

Once again, the entire Baptist family in Singapore gathered at Kay Poh Road Baptist Church. This time, on June 20, 1966, a different kind of service was held. It was a service of thanksgiving, of restoration and of celebration.

"That day, Pastor Kwok, the senior pastor, came up to me, pointing excitedly at a text," Thomas remembers. "Don't you see it?" he was saying, pointing at Ephesians 3:20-21: 'God is able to do more than we ask or even imagine!' I did see it and I've been seeing it ever since. After our deepest sorrow, God gave us our most wonderful joy."

God's faithfulness in restoring their joy was a theme revisited as the Thomases returned to Singapore in September for their son's exhumation ser-



**CATCHING UP** More than 25 years have passed since the Thomases were in Singapore. Above, Bill Clark Thomas shows family photographs of their children and 14 grandchildren to friends at the welcome dinner hosted by Kay Poh Road Baptist Church. Thomas was honorary pastor there while serving in Singapore.

vice. Just as in years past, the friends and family of Kay Poh Road Baptist Church had taken care of all the arrangements for the service. At the small gravesite gathering, several spoke of the impact the Thomases had made during their time in Singapore.

"I never saw bitterness or resentment" in the Thomases life, Annie Tan said, sharing at the exhumation service.

Tan was only 9 years old when her mother told her about Douglas's death. "It was at that time that I knew there had to be more. They had the peace of God. Both of their lives are

living testimonies to so many people." She later received theological training from Thomas at Malaysian Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Part of my body and heart will always be here in Singapore," Mrs. Thomas says. "Douglas played such a vital role in our lives and ministry. His death made me more determined to be a good missionary because I gave up our child in the process.

"We didn't want to say we made a mistake in coming overseas," she said to the church members and old friends gathered for the exhumation service. "We were committed to staying, and

we couldn't have stayed without a family like you. You helped us be missionaries."

The Thomases will meet with their family and friends Dec. 29 to re-bury Douglas' remains. All four living children and 14 grandchildren are expected to meet at the Starkie Thomas Cemetery in Trigg County, near Cadiz, where generations of Thomas' ancestors are buried.

At the time of their retirement from the International Mission Board in 1997, Ruth and Bill Clark Thomas had served 34 years overseas. In addition to their service in Singapore (1963-67), they also have served in Malaysia (1967-77), Germany (1977-79), Thailand (1979-1985) and France (1985-95).

In retirement, they have served in several interim pastorates in the United States and France.

Son Charles Thomas serves as pastor of Glenville Baptist Church in Utica, south of Owensboro. His twin sister, Cecilia and her husband, Jeff Wallace, serve as missionaries to Spain with the International Mission Board. The Thomases oldest daughter, Dorothy, lives in Altadena, Calif., and their youngest daughter, Debbie, lives in Texas.

Douglas would be a man now. But instead, through his death, his parents say he helped them live and serve in the manner God intended.

This story was written by an International Mission Board reporter who serves in a country where security concerns prevent identifying the writer.



**THANKS** Ruth Thomas thanks Singaporean friends for attending the exhumation service for Douglas. The public is invited to attend the re-burial of Douglas, Dec. 29 at 10 a.m. in the Starkie Thomas Cemetery in Trigg County. For more information, call (270) 522-7666.

### Joy

By Robert Dunston

Chuck Huffman, associate professor and chair of Cumberland College's psychology department, wrote this week's devotional on joy based on John 10:9.

Huffman's wife, Ru Story Huffman, serves as Cumberland College's public services librarian. They have two sons and a daughter. Huffman's interests include music, movies, gardening, sports and reading.

"Joy happens when we experience ourselves drawn into the understanding of God's love, where we know ourselves as more blessed and more capable of blessing than we had imagined possible. Hundreds of times words like 'joy' and 're-joice' appear in the Bible.

"Joy happens not when all is well but when we are connected to what God is doing in the world: loving, saving, redeeming and caring. It is not surprising that those who serve and share from their hearts find joy. They are connected, swept into the whirlwind of divine love. So, too, are those with a regular practice of prayer.

"Perhaps then the best way to prepare to receive the joy of Christmas is to avoid the superfi-

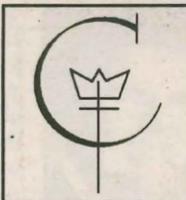
cial joviality that sugarcoats the season. Instead, we might savor those times when we feel the breezes of the divine touch us, telling us that we are loved, treasured and never alone.

"How many ways does God touch every life, every day? Embracing a friend, walking with someone you love, seeing a 'V' of geese as they fly through the sky, watching the sun set in a symphony of golden splendor, cradling a tender young child, wiping away tears as you page through a photo album packed with blessings and memories—thousands of experiences transport us to that larger world, bubbling with

gratitude and joy. "Then we might lay our hands to the labor of God to give life to the world. Joy will certainly follow. May peace and joy be with you all."

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

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



## Are these your cookies?

When you sponsor a child or family served by Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children this Christmas, you will be blessed, too! We can't promise you cookies and cocoa by the fireplace, but the Lord will smile on you for helping those in need.

To sponsor a child, teenager or family, call 1-800-456-1386!

## Merry Christmas!



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## Tolkien's Christian faith influenced world of the 'Rings'

**Tolkien said the only criticism of "Lord of the Rings" that ever bothered him, "was that it contained no religion."**

*Continued from page 1*

kien paid conscious homage to nature worship.

■ White supremacists appeal to "Lord of the Rings" on the Internet, apparently attracted by allusions to Germanic-Norse gods.

■ Stephan Hoeller of the Los Angeles Gnostic Society put Tolkien on level with the Bible in leading to spiritual salvation.

■ Many academics find the psychological work of Carl Jung illustrated in the storyline, while others prefer a Freudian interpretation.

■ Thousands of Web sites are devoted to Tolkien's trilogy, including reports on Russians role playing in the Ural Mountains, Norwegians reading the book on the radio and Dutch fans staging dragon fights.

Often overlooked, meanwhile, is the subtle Christian message underlying Tolkien's fiction.

In fact, Tolkien persuaded C.S. Lewis, who himself later wrote Christian classics, to become a Christian. The two are credited with paving the way for a new genre of devotional literature, influencing authors like Charles Williams, T.S. Eliot, G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy Sayers.

Tolkien omitted overt references to God, worship, prayer and Christianity in the 500,000 words of the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy. It wasn't an effort to hide his Christian faith, he said. Rather, he believed the technique communicated Christian values more effectively precisely because they were less obvious.

According to Tolkien and his close associates, the writings were grounded in an unstinting Christian conviction that, at the end of time, God would finally and forever defeat evil.

Tolkien rooted that conviction in his own faith in Christ.

Tolkien said that the only criticism of "Lord of the Rings" that ever bothered him, "was that it contained no religion."

He described his fictional Middle Earth as "a monotheistic world of 'natural theology.'"

The fact there are no churches, temples or religious rites and ceremonies "is simply part of the historical climate depicted" in his fiction, he said. "I am in any case myself a Christian," he said, even if his "Third Age" was not a Christian world.

Tolkien believed that eternal truths

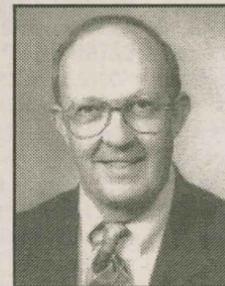
established in creation would be recognizable even in his fictional "sub creation."

"We have come from God and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth which is with God," he told C.S. Lewis during their late night discussion that resulted in Lewis becoming a Christian.

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### Not another report!

If you attended the Kentucky Baptist Convention in 2000, you might remember the two students from Oneida who gave their testimonies. I had wanted to do that for years, but was not sure if the people attending the convention would accept this type of report. Finally my desire to give it a try outweighed my concerns.

Without exaggerating, I want to tell you that the response was unbelievable! So many people came to our booth to express their pleasure with the testimonies. I never had gotten such a response when I gave the traditional report, so it did not take long for me to realize that those attending the convention preferred the students' report over mine.

On the way home last year I told my wife that I was going to do something similar in 2001. She agreed that the response had been overwhelming. By the time we were home, I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted in 2001 when the convention was in Murray.

I asked Denise Spencer, head of our publications department, to write eight short monologues depicting the most common circumstances that lead students to Oneida. I gave her some basic facts and information about our students. A few weeks later she put the monologues on my desk. I did not have to make a single change in the script; she provided me with exactly what I wanted.

When school began this fall, we made an announcement to our student body about the 2001 convention. We asked any students who wanted to be a part of the program to let me know. Nearly two dozen students volunteered. We asked each student to read the monologues to see if any one was about their particular situation in coming to

Oneida. As the students read the various parts, they were to write their names by the scripts that were similar to their stories.

Later, we selected eight students who would represent Oneida Baptist Institute at the convention. I watched only one rehearsal. They were instructed to speak up and to enunciate. This was especially difficult for the two international students who had been selected.

The students and three chaperones left after school on Monday and spent the night in Bowling Green. On Tuesday they got up a bit later than usual, ate breakfast and made their way to Murray. I had been anxiously waiting for them, even though they were right on time. When I took the students inside the events center and they saw the size of the building and the number of people present, I could tell some were having second thoughts. One or two even asked me if it was too late to change their minds. I smiled and told them that changing their minds now was completely out of the question!

They observed the proceedings from the balcony for about an hour and then we made our way to the staging area. After a few opening remarks, I introduced the students and they presented their program. I was so proud of them. This small group of students was able, with relatively few words, to tell why students come to Oneida and how they have been impacted by that experience.

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

**THIS IS  
ONEIDA**



**W.F. Underwood**

### Tennessee student commuted to college

Senior Brad Johnson will receive a Christmas gift that will never come again. He completes a weekly commute to campus for classes. Johnson finished the 128 hours required for the bachelor of arts degree on a Thursday-Friday schedule. He stayed one night on campus and made the 168-mile round trip from Seymour, Tenn.

Some semesters a 7:35 a.m. class required him to leave home at 5:30 a.m. "I'm grateful with all that driving I never had an accident or problem on the road," Johnson said. Soon after his May graduation, the family will celebrate the graduation of his daughter Jara from Seymour High School. She is captain of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

At Meridian Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., Johnson served as a deacon, Bible teacher, youth worker and a member of the church planning committee. He is now a member of First Baptist Church of Sevierville, Tenn.

Not many Christian workers have experience as a train robber.

"I was a train robber at Pigeon Forge for four years. Didn't make much money at it, so I gave up the job," Johnson said with the humor that helps him relate to people. "I

was fighting a call to the ministry and resisted continuing my education." Johnson's nine years of work at a customer service firm gave him some preparation for ministry. "My father told me whatever I did for a profession to make sure I helped others. I always felt my work in customer service helped solve people's problems with products and they could enjoy life better."

Last year, Johnson was a chaplain at the youth detention center in Danville, Tenn. "The kids were age 18 and younger and experienced all kinds of problems—drugs, murder, theft. I visited with them in their rooms. They responded so well, the center now has a chaplain in each dormitory with a full-time missionary assigned to the facility," Johnson stated.

What about the future? "I believe I will be involved in youth work in some way. It might be troubled youth in the inner city or with a church youth ministry. I'm waiting to see how God opens the door," Johnson said. "I'm so grateful for my experience at Clear Creek. It is possible for a 47-year-old to learn!"

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

**CLEAR CREEK  
CHRONICLE**



**Bill Whittaker**

# BOOKS/MUSIC

**Take My Hand: Guiding Your Child through Grief.** Sharon Marshall with Jeff Johnson. Zondervan Publishing, 2001. 184 pages. \$12.99. ◆◆◆◆ (out of five)

About a year and a half ago, my church began a grief support ministry. We were prepared for adults, but in the process, we discovered that a number of people also had children who had experienced the same loss.

We did not have a group for the children to attend, so I looked for material that the adults could use in helping the children. While some literature already was available, I am glad to add this book to possible resources.

The authors are mother and son, and their joint loss of a younger son/brother, who was only 4 months old, forms the framework for the book. Sharon Marshall shares her experience both as a parent and an experienced grief counselor. Her son, Jeff Johnson, a sociologist who works with emotionally disturbed children, concludes each chapter with his own recollections of the losses due to death he experienced as a child. Together, they successfully address how both a parent/adult and a child feels when death comes.

The book addresses the questions children ask, as well as considering many practical suggestions for dealing with the common effects of grief on children. Marshall is particularly effective in helping to recognize and respond to hidden grief. This book is not only beneficial for the adult who is directly related to the child who has experienced the death of a loved one, but is also a great resource for ministers, Sunday school teachers and other children's leaders who will encounter children in grief. This valuable resource is written in a clear and non-technical style. *Wayne Hager*

**A Choice to Cherish.** Alan Maki. Broadman & Holman, 2000. 184 pages. \$14.99. ◆◆

The problem with "Christian" fiction is that immediately upon calling a work of imagination, creativity or art "Christian" it has certain requirements upon it to uphold and even proselytize for the faith.

While most intentions of Christian fiction writers are good, placing such requirements upon a work of fiction often makes that piece of work seem forced. It reads as if the writer is trying to squeeze the writing into a mold of faith rather than letting the faith hidden in the work rise organically on its own.

In Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," for example, Dickens manages to write a story that exudes Christian faith and the Christmas spirit by allowing his realistic characters and images to develop naturally, even if the characters might do something differently than Dickens might have first intended when he sat down to write. His is a good story, first, and then a good Christian Christmas novel. Such is not the case, unfortunately, with Maki's book.

While "A Choice to Cherish" is a pleasant story of a grandson and dying grandfather reuniting, Maki tries too hard to make this story fit comfortably on Christian holiday bookstore shelves. As a result, the characters are flat and too much happens too quickly to make the novel seem plausible. For example, the main character finds a grandfather, the love of his life, God and \$10,000 in the same week. Unusual in the best of circumstances.

Those looking for a non-taxing holiday read with a simple, happy ending to give them warm fuzzies will enjoy this novel. But readers looking

for a truly great Christmas novel should probably still stick with "A Christmas Carol." *Victoria Moon*

**The Empty Chair: Handling Grief on Holidays and Special Occasions.** Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert DeVries. Baker Book House, 2001. 91 pages. \$9.99. ◆◆◆◆

Using the model of the firestorm that swept through Yellowstone National Park several years ago, Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge and Robert DeVries seek to provide solace and challenge to people grieving during the holiday season the death of a loved one.

Like a firestorm, death and grief cut a painful swath through life, burning away all that is familiar and safe. But the aftermath of a firestorm is not just death and destruction. Out of the charred remains, new life and possibilities arise.

Zonnebelt-Smeenge and DeVries draw upon their respective disciplines and training—she's a clinical psychologist; he's a professor/minister—to provide a guide through the grief process.

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction to a particular aspect of grieving and holiday time. This is followed by specific strategies one can use to cope with that aspect of the process. Each chapter closes with a meditation on pertinent scriptures.

The book closes with a suggested candle-lighting ceremony for individuals, families or groups. The purpose of the ceremony is to highlight the stages of grief and help people to begin incorporating the loss into life.

"The Empty Chair" would be an excellent gift from churches to families and individuals who have lost loved ones in the past 12 months. *Jim Holladay*

**Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life.** Laura Nash & Scotty McLennan. Jossey-Bass, 2001. 316 pages. \$23.95. ◆◆◆◆

At first glance, I thought "Church on Sunday, Work on Monday" was going to be another how-to-be-a-successful-business-leader-by-adopting-Christian-leadership-patterns, along the line of "Jesus CEO."

As I got into the book, it became clear that Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan have more in mind than showing how to combine Christian insights with business acumen to achieve success.

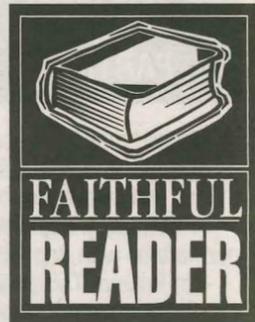
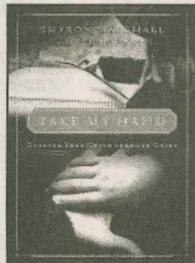
They intend to address the disconnect many business people experience between their church experience and the world they live in the other six days of the week.

Nash and McLennan's book was a struggle to read, and in this case that is a compliment. They raised issues related to the modern, business-related spirituality movement that illustrated the depth of challenge it poses to traditional Christian spirituality. They also challenge pastors, seminaries and denominational leaders to re-examine attitudes toward business and capitalism if they hope to reach and speak to business people.

Sometimes, Nash and McLennan aggravated me with their assumption that values based on the teachings of Jesus could be implemented in a highly competitive, capitalistic environment.

At the same time, they reminded me that other economic systems created as many problems for Christian ethics.

Do not expect to breeze through their work, but do read it for understanding the issues related to making Christian faith viable and real in the business world. *Jim Holladay*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C.; Jim Holladay, pastor of Lyndon Baptist Church in Louisville; and Victoria Moon, librarian for Deer Park Baptist Church in Louisville. They welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: [jwhager@surry.net](mailto:jwhager@surry.net), [docholladay01@aol.com](mailto:docholladay01@aol.com) or [victoria.moon@earthlink.net](mailto:victoria.moon@earthlink.net)

## Young quartets' popularity growing as fans flock to Southern gospel music

By Stacey Hamby  
Baptist Press

NASHVILLE (BP)—Legendary Southern gospel music groups such as the Statesmen and the Cathedrals may no longer be around, but their legacy is.

Young quartets such as CrossWay and N'Harmony are gaining in popularity—with both the traditional gospel music crowd and new fans.

"This is one of the fastest-growing genres of music," said Casey Cappleman, CrossWay Quartet's tenor. "There's so many young groups coming into gospel music recently, and that's great because it shows we are keeping gospel music going."

CrossWay, a quartet of men in their 20s from Mississippi, saw their first radio single land on the Singing News Top 80 chart of gospel songs this year. "I Won't Look at the Lions" rose to No. 42 on the magazine's chart this fall, and their latest release, "Live Right, Die Right," already is getting airplay.

With their first CD on the Spring Hill label, "No Distractions," this quartet is well on its way to establishing itself in the industry. CrossWay was nominated for

Horizon Group of the Year at the 2001 Singing News Fan Awards in September during the National Quartet Convention in Louisville.

Cappleman, 24, said the quartet was excited to have been nominated and to be invited to the convention. "We try to pattern ourselves after groups like Gold City and the Cathedrals, who were classy gentlemen on stage and off. Now we sing with Gold City on stage sometimes, and it's awesome to become friends with people I have looked up to."

Cappleman noted that even in the three years since CrossWay's founding, more and more young people are attending gospel concerts. "At a recent concert, I saw four young guys in their early teens sitting on the front row and watching the whole concert without moving. It's awesome to see a younger generation getting involved with Southern gospel music."

Bass singer Chris Weaver, 23, said the key word for CrossWay's style is variety. "Our ages give us an open door for reaching youth, and we have plenty of songs for the older crowd who remember the Statesmen and Cathedrals."

But Cappelman admits there was a time when both he and baritone Paul Smith thought Southern gospel was "old people" music. "After our salvation experiences, the messages in the songs began to mean more to us," Cappelman said. "That's the strongest point of Southern gospel music—it's clear-cut. Now, I don't think any of us would disagree that it's the greatest music in the world."

CrossWay's lead singer and only married member is Marty Hurt, 26. All the men have moved to Nashville, where they now attend a Wednesday men's Bible study because they usually are on the road on weekends.

"We hope we can sing together forever," Cappleman said. "We're just a bunch of common guys who made a commitment to God and to each other. We'd like to stay out on the road all the time, but we've got to get Marty back home because he misses his wife," Cappelman teased.

Another quartet of men in their 20s also is gaining popularity with Southern gospel music fans. Just since becoming a fulltime quartet in 1996, N'Harmony has sung at the National Quartet Convention in

Louisville and toured in Ireland. They also have had two Top 10 songs in the past year from their most recent CD, "Out of the Blue" and another release, "The Devil Tried His Best," currently stands at No. 26 on the Singing News Top 80 chart.

Lead singer Shane Dunlap and his father, Steve Dunlap, founded the group in 1992. But by 1999, the father-son-anchored quartet was left with only the son at the helm after Steve died of cancer.

"It was very hard when Dad passed away," the younger Dunlap said. "I thought about closing down the ministry and doing something else. But God let me persevere, and we have become who we are today."

N'Harmony's members now live in the Nashville area, where they are working on a new a cappella recording.

"Our goal is to touch older and younger people alike with our music," Dunlap said. "We're Southern gospel, but we feel like if we can reach a young person with a particular song and an older one with a different song—mix them together and give one good concert and one good CD—then we have done what we need to do. That's the same if we're in our 20s or in our 40s; that's still what we want to do."

# 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:

■ Praise God for answered prayer in Romania. A missionary family, the Hatchels, have been prayer walking their neighborhood on Saturday mornings, asking God to lead them to leaders of the Roma/Gypsies who live there. On a recent Saturday morning, they met the Roma leader and he invited them to his home. Pray they soon will be able to start a Bible study.

■ Baptist representatives Don and Rose McCain as they begin a Wednesday night Bible study in their home in Portugal.

■ The Safwa in Tanzania who have no understanding of an all-powerful, loving and righteous God and missionaries among them as they ask God to show them a way to reach the Safwa with the gospel.

■ Missionary Pauline Eardensohn and Tanzanian volunteers as they begin another semester of sewing classes and Bible study for 30 women. The women are from many tribes and religious backgrounds.

■ Missionaries Michael and Michelle Dean as they work with internationals in Boston and as they seek to find a house to purchase for their family and for ministry.

## Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by staff

■ BIRNBAUM—Central Church called Philip Yancy as pastor.

■ GILBERTSVILLE—Bethel Church called Stuart Terry as minister of music. Deward Hurst is interim pastor.

■ MORTONS GAP—Salem Church called Don Canode as pastor.

■ NICHOLASVILLE—Edgewood Church called Jim Lyons as pastor. He has served the past several months as interim pastor.

■ WOOTON—First Church called Douglas Karius as pastor. He previously was pastor of First Church of Macon, Ill. The church also ordained Bradley Joseph and Clyde Vance as deacons.

### CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

■ BURLINGTON—Burlington Church's worship choir will present the musical "Tree of Light" Dec. 15-16 at 6 p.m. Jim Casson is minister of music.

■ CADIZ—Cadiz Church's adult choir will present the musical "The Road to Bethlehem" Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. Michael Rose is minister of music.

■ EDDYVILLE—First Church will present "Twas the Last Mailing Day Before Christmas" Dec. 16, 7 p.m., featuring the youth choir, and "Home for the Holidays" Dec. 23, 7 p.m., featuring the sanctuary choir. Tim Per-

due is pastor.

■ FORT THOMAS—Highland Hills Church will present the cantata "One King" Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 15-16, 5:30 and 8 p.m.

■ LOUISVILLE—Bethany Church's sanctuary choir will present the musical "Gift of Heaven" Dec. 16, 7 p.m. For information, call (502) 452-2681.

Fern Creek Church will present "Celebrate the Nativity" Dec. 16, 10:45 a.m., featuring the adult and youth choirs. Debbie Gorbandt is minister of music and education.

Melbourne Heights Church will present "Where in the World is Jesus?" Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m., featuring the church's music and drama ministry. Jerry Douglas is minister of music.

Ralph Avenue Church's choir will present the musical "Let Earth Receive Her King" Dec. 23, 6 p.m.

Rockford Lane Church's celebration choir will present the cantata "One King" Dec. 23, 10:45 a.m. Janet Pollock is minister of music.

■ MOREHEAD—First Church will present "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" Dec. 16-17, 6 p.m., featuring the children's theater. Don Mantooth is pastor.

■ OWENSBORO—Seven Hills Church will present a living Christmas tree Dec. 14-15, 7 p.m., and Dec. 16, 3 p.m. Jerry Burke is worship pas-

tor.

■ PADUCAH—First Church will present the musical "Song of Emmanuel" Dec. 23, 11 a.m. Doug Crawley is minister of music.

Lone Oak First Church's combined choirs will present "The Light of the World" Dec. 16-17, 7 p.m. Randy Holt is minister of music.

■ SHELBYVILLE—First Church's sanctuary choir, orchestra and drama team will present "The Road to Bethlehem" Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m.

■ SHEPHERDSVILLE—First Church will present the musical and drama "Gift of Heaven" Dec. 14 and 16, 7 p.m. David Wells is minister of music.

■ SOMERSET—First Church will present a living Christmas tree Dec. 15, 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 16, 5 and 7:30 p.m. William Adcock is minister of music.

■ WILLIAMSTOWN—Williamstown Church will present "Light of the World" Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. Brenda Stanley is music director.

■ WALTON—First Church will present the children's program "The Smelly Shepherd" Dec. 16, 7 p.m. and the cantata "Night of Miracles" Dec. 23, 11 a.m. Ray Spaulding is minister of music.

### What's going on?

Send your happenings to Mountains to the Mississippi. Mail: Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. Fax: (502) 244-6474. E-mail: wesrec@ntr.net.

## New York Times profiles Baptist relief workers

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)—Southern Baptist disaster relief efforts in New York have captured the attention of the New York Times, which ran a lengthy article Dec. 4 on the ongoing apartment cleanup project.

The article—titled "Doing Good Deeds, and Windows"—leads with comments from volunteer John Gore, one of about 1,000 volunteers who have helped clean out dust and other debris from apartments adjacent to the former site of the World Trade Center. Gore has worked in disaster relief efforts around the world.

"Many members of this God squad are veterans of other cleanups—hurricanes in Honduras, mudslides in Venezuela," the article states. "This mission is a first because they are clearing glass, airline parts and acres of dust rather than tree limbs or mud. But, just as is the case at third-world disaster sites, the Baptists do not take money for their work."

One resident, according to the article, was quoted \$1,800 for a commercial cleaning service to do the work the Southern Baptist volunteers did for free.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**SEEKING:** Full-time preschool and children's ministries director for FBC, Greeneville, Tenn., to oversee the ministry of our children and reach young families. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, 211 N Main St., Greeneville, TN 37743, Attn: Tad Everett.

**SEEKING:** East Bend Baptist, a small country church, is accepting resúmes for a dedicated pastor. We average 27-30 for SS and Wednesday and Sunday evening services—more in morning worship. Parsonage available. Send resúmes to: East Bend Baptist Church, 12246 Lower River Road, Union, KY 41091, Attn: Search Committee.

**SEEKING:** Chief administrator/elementary principal. Bowling Green Christian Academy, an independent, non-denominational Christian school in south-central Kentucky with approximately 250 students in P3 through 10th grades. Responsibilities to include oversight of school resources, recruitment and development of staff and faculty, preparation and execution of annual budget and development plan. Full job description available upon request at bgca@bgcaky.com. Qualifications: Minimum of five years experience in education and a master's degree in education from an accredited institution. ACSI certification a plus. Must be on site by July 1, 2002. Compensation commensurate with education and experience. Please send resumé with references and salary history to: Administrator Search Committee, Bowling Green Christian Academy, 1730 Destiny Lane, Bowling Green, KY 42104, Attn: Mr. Jim Cox.

**SEEKING:** Minister of music/worship leader—full-time or part-time as God leads. Part-time duties include direction of adult choir, guidance of children's choir and leaders and initiation of youth choir/praise teams. Full-time duties include those previously mentioned, with the addition of a second ministry area (youth, education, missions/outreach, etc.) Gilead Baptist Church embraces music representing a blend of gospel, traditional hymns and contemporary selections. Please send resumé to: Rev. Nathan Joyce, Gilead Baptist Church, PO Box 56, Glendale, KY 42740.

**SEEKING:** Minister to preschoolers. Immanuel Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky., is seeking an experienced seminary graduate to be on the cutting edge of preschool ministry with a strong leadership gift and a passion for reaching preschoolers and their families. Enthusiasm, a heart for God and an enthusiasm for preschool children and their families are a must as well as creativity, strong organizational, relational and communication skills. Responsibilities include the development of age-appropriate Bible education goals, recruiting and leading both volunteer and paid staff, and administrative duties consistent with a large church and ministry team. Respond to IBC Personnel Committee, PO Box 22022, Lexington, KY 40522-2022, or rusbar@gte.net.

**SEEKING:** Full-time pastor for growing church in south-central Kentucky. Please send recommendations or resúmes to: Pastor Search Committee, 201 Greensburg St., Columbia, KY 42728.

**SEEKING:** Central Baptist Church in Paris, Ky., is receiving resúmes for the position of minister of students. The minister of students will coordinate ministries for children through college singles, with an emphasis on junior and senior high student ministry. Please send resumé to: Search Committee, Central Baptist Church, 829 High St., Paris, KY 40361.

**SEEKING:** Immanuel Baptist Church, Lexington, Ky., is seeking a qualified person of Christian faith for the position of minister to the deaf. Responsibilities include assisting in the proclamation of the gospel, Bible teaching, church life, pastoral care and clerical services to the deaf members of the church. Individual must possess a bachelor's degree—seminary degree is preferred. Individual must be fluent in ASL and PSE. Qualified applicants should submit cover letter, resumé and salary expectations to: IBC Personnel Committee, PO Box 22022, Lexington, KY 40522-2022, or rusbar@gte.net.

**SEEKING:** Associational director of missions for Bethel and Logan associations located primarily in Logan and Todd counties in south-central Kentucky. Send resúmes to: Resumé Search Committee, PO Box 538, Russellville, KY 42276. Deadline: Jan. 31, 2002. Please include a return address without personal name.

**SEEKING:** Hardinsburg Baptist Church seeks energetic servant to lead music ministry. The position will be part time. If interested, send resumé to: Hardinsburg Baptist Church, Box 54, Hardinsburg, KY 40143, Attn: Music Committee.

**SEEKING:** Prayerfully seeking a pastor. Submit resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 350 Mt. Zion Road, Elizabethtown, KY 42701.

**SEEKING:** Director of Christian social ministries (managerial position directing the church's social ministries). Salary: \$20-25k plus benefits. Send resumé to: Walnut Street Baptist Church CSM Search Committee, 1143 S Third, Suite A, Louisville, KY 40203.

**SEEKING:** High Point Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 220 W Farthing St., Mayfield, KY 42066. E-mail: kent@apex.net.

**SEEKING:** The Kentucky Baptist Convention is seeking a part-time (10-20 hours/week) computer technician—would mainly assist in upgrading workstations from Windows 95 to Windows 2000 and other various Windows OS-related tasks. Some experience required. Send your resumé to: Administrative Services Department, Kentucky Baptist Convention, PO Box 43433, Louisville, KY 40253.

**SEEKING:** Full-time associate pastor/minister of youth. Position includes youth ministry and administrative duties. Resumé must include experience and/or education in areas of youth ministry and church administration. Applicant must have been an active member of a Southern Baptist church for the past three years or more. Please submit resumé to: Search Committee, Oak Ridge Baptist Church, 6056 Taylor Mill Road, Covington, KY 41015; e-mail to: kswaters1@aol.com.

# PEOPLE

## Web warnings on Harry Potter actually a hoax

By Mark Wingfield  
Texas Baptist Standard

MADISON, Wis. (ABP)—The Onion has taken a bite out of Harry Potter, and many Christians unwittingly have swallowed the satirical tale as truth.

The Onion is a weekly newspaper and Internet site that specializes in parody, satire and humor. In this vein, it published an article titled "Harry Potter Books Spark Rise in Satanism Among Children."

The story was thoroughly satirical and fictional, other than using the real names of characters and places found in the Harry Potter books written by J.K. Rowling. But somewhere in the mystical world of the Internet, the satirical article began to be circulated as a real news account.

Soon, e-mails were flying across the nation warning Christian parents of the evils of Harry Potter revealed in this article.

The e-mails also quoted Rowling as saying her books are intended "to guide children to an understanding that the weak, idiotic Son of God is a living hoax who will be humiliated when the rain of fire comes, ... while we, (the Dark Lord's) faithful servants, laugh and cavort in victory."

According to the urban legends tracking Web site Truth or Fiction.com, Rowling never said any such thing. The entire article is a farce, as evidenced in a disclaimer found on The Onion's Web site.

"None of it is true," the Web site TruthorFiction.com warns. "Some people have read or been forwarded the original article and apparently not recognized the satire. Others have used quotes from the article to write what sound like legitimate e-mail alerts. None of the people, quotes or stats in the story are true."

One version of the bogus e-mail warns that "open applicants to Satan worship" have increased from 100,000 to 14 million since 1995. This, too, was taken from The Onion article and is not true.

Cliff Vaughn, associate director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, urges Christians to be discerning in what they believe and to check for accuracy before believing everything that comes across the Internet.

"It's important to make decisions based on credible information," he said. "Unfortunately, the phenomenon of Harry Potter is clouded by misinformation and urban legends."

The bottom line for Christians, Vaughn urges, is this: "We must learn to evaluate our sources. Discernment never goes out of style."

## Busy pastors turning to Web for sermons

### Critics ask, Is it God's words or just plagiarism?

By Jeffrey MacDonald  
Religion News Service

SHEFFIELD, Mass. (RNS)—When churchgoers in Bluffton, Ind., turn out at Fellowship Baptist Church to hear Pastor Lenny Stringer preach, they might hear a sermon he wrote himself. Or they might hear one somebody else gave years ago to another congregation.

"I know and trust the men that have submitted sermons on the page" at www.sermons.org, Stringer said. "I have even preached a few. I would love to see more sermons added on a regular basis."

Stringer is one of thousands of preachers who consult pre-printed sermons and outlines when preparing their Sunday messages. He's also among an untold number who go one step beyond consultation, into a realm some consider plagiarism, by sometimes proclaiming a message that someone else composed.

Dozens of enterprises, from Logos Productions Inc. to sermon central.com, make pre-made sermons easy to get. Busy pastors have learned to tap the Internet, especially when they're in a pinch.

According to www.sermons.org founder Shelton Cole, the Massachusetts-based site gets most of its 500,000 hits each month during the wee hours of Saturday night, as preachers scramble to think of a few poignant words.

But not everyone is singing the praises of the sermon-marketing industry or of those who depend on it.

David Bartlett, Lantz Professor of Preaching and Christian Communication at Yale Divinity School, says the practice of preaching "anonymously inspirational stuff as if it were your

own" amounts to plagiarism and betrays the pastoral responsibility to the flock.

"A sermon needs to go to the particular needs of a particular congregation on a particular day," Bartlett said. "If you're too busy to do the job right, then get another job."

Apparently quite a few pastors do find themselves too busy to generate a fresh word each week. Craig Baugh of Fredericksburg, Va., for instance, praised one sermon-supply site for helping him deliver on Sundays as a part-time pastor.

"I have been preaching here for over six years now while holding a full-time job with the federal government," Baugh wrote. "Sometimes the demands are just too much to prepare a sermon from scratch. Your site has been a real blessing."

Those who furnish sermons, outlines and illustrations have no misgivings. As long as users treat the material as a springboard for their own ideas or give credit where it's due, Cole said, everybody benefits.

"They're there for people to use as they see fit," Cole said, noting that he doesn't allow copyrighted material to be posted on his site. "If God gave (a sermon or outline) to me, why couldn't God use it for someone else?"

Cole's point illuminates a reason why pastors often don't see the sermon-borrowing practice as plagiarism. Pastors traditionally have understood the preached word to be a gift of the Holy Spirit, not merely of human hand. To take credit for a sermon is to commit the sin of pride by depriving the Spirit its due. Hence, pastors often are willing to share—and borrow—sermons and outlines with few restrictions, since they do not consider any man or woman to be the true author.

"To be honest, most times when I preach an online outline, I preach it as a word of God" rather than as another person's work, said Stringer, who works 50 hours per week outside the church at a secular job.

"Sometimes you know what subject you want to preach on, or what verses have touched your heart, but you are having trouble getting a handle on just how to proceed," said Dennis McKinley, pastor of Landmark Baptist Church in Carlsbad, N.M. "You can then go to a site like sermons.org and see what other men have done with the same subject or text. I have even at times taken another preacher's major outline and then written it to fit what the Lord is leading me to do."

Unlike Cole, Yale's Bartlett sees the use of outlines as another "pastoral danger" because too often they substitute for preparatory work in developing a particular message. What's more, plagiarism is especially likely to occur with material found online, he said, because in terms of citation protocol, "we've got good guidelines for books, but we need to develop them for online resources."

All 10,000 members of Cole's site are told, he said, that the intent is for materials to serve as a catalyst for ideas. Nevertheless, he concedes, "you can't stop somebody from plagiarizing."

For example: He once found one of his own sermons, "Three Things From Hell You Should Find in Every Baptist Church," posted at another pastor's Web site where the other pastor was taking credit as the author.

"I wrote him a note saying, 'Nice sermon,'" Cole said. "He was embarrassed and took it down."

Cole operates his sermon material clearinghouse from his home in Sheffield, Mass., where he is an independent Baptist church planter.

Users of the site reported adapting the site's material to settings from the pulpit to Sunday school and prayer meetings. Others said they subscribe just to keep tabs on those who use such preaching aids.

"I like to follow some ministries to see where God is leading them," said Robert Humphrey, pastor of Mountain Park Baptist Church in Frazier Park, Calif. "Or if it is God at all."

## Man pleads guilty in Falwell threat

LYNCHBURG, Va. (RNS)—A man has pleaded guilty to threatening to blow up Jerry Falwell's church in response to anti-gay remarks the evangelist made after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Bill Connelly originally faced a felony charge of making a threat to burn or bomb a building. But under his plea agreement last month in Lynchburg General District Court in Virginia, he was sentenced to six months in jail on two misdemeanor counts of using obscenities and making threats via the telephone.

The sentence was suspended on the condition that Connelly remain on good behavior for a year and have no contact with Liberty University, the location of Falwell's office. He also must not contact Thomas Road Baptist Church.

On Sept. 17, Connelly made three phone calls to Falwell's office. He cursed and threatened to blow up the church.

The man apologized after the hearing. "I regret being pushed to the point of feeling the need to make inappropriate remarks over the telephone," said Connelly, who is gay. "I felt threatened by Falwell's reckless remarks."

## Many Christians join Muslims in fasting this holiday season

ELON, N.C. (RNS)—In many ways, Martin Fowler will prepare for Christmas as he always does.

The North Carolina philosophy instructor will decorate his tree, write cards to family and friends and light candles on his Advent wreath. But for eight days recently there was no nibbling on fruitcake and no sipping eggnog.

That's when Fowler fasted.

Though fasting isn't usually associated with Advent, the four-week period before Christmas that began Dec. 2, a number of Christians say this Advent is different. With the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 and the war in Afghanistan, Christians say they want to rethink their usual practices and try daylong fasts as a way of identifying with Muslims and developing a solidarity with those who go hungry, in this country and abroad.

At Fowler's church, St. Philip's Episcopal in Durham, N.C., the vestry called on

members last week to fast during daylight hours as a way of preparing to celebrate Jesus' first coming and instilling sympathy with Muslims, who are in the midst of their month-long fast of Ramadan.

"Solidarity is not just agreeing on creeds and doctrines," said Fowler, who teaches philosophy at Elon University in Elon, N.C. "There are deep values that as believers in one God we may not share in worship, but can share in practice. The fast is a neglected opportunity to do so, especially now."

Across the country, the idea of Christians fasting alongside Muslims has become almost chic.

Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary in California, said he would fast at least one day during Ramadan. Jim Wallis, editor of the ecumenical Christian magazine Sojourners, said he was fasting the entire month.

Though shunned by Protestant Christians

for more than 500 years, fasting is being rediscovered as a powerful Christian discipline.

With Ramadan and Advent overlapping this year, many Christians say it's appropriate to reclaim the tradition.

"There has never been a more important time for all of us to be praying fervently that this ancient promise of blessing on all of Abraham's spiritual descendants will be fulfilled with a season of sustained peace in our own troubled day," Mouw said in an article on the Beliefnet Web site. He was referring to the biblical patriarch, who is seen as the father of the three major monotheistic faiths.

The Southern Baptist Convention has joined this fasting trend. SBC President James Merritt asked Christians to fast on Dec. 16, the last day of Ramadan, that "God will reveal Himself through Jesus Christ to Muslims on that day."



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