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FOR THE RECORD

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Yes, Kentucky, there was a real St. Nicholas

By Kevin Eckstrom
Religion News Service

BRUNSWICK, Maine (RNS)—Memo to Santa Claus: When packing your sleigh on Christmas Eve, Jim Rosenthal would prefer if you passed him by.

You need not bother with Carol Myers' house, either. And please, if you know what's good for you, stay away from Walter Skold's chimney.



St. Nicholas

No offense, but they would much prefer a visit by St. Nicholas.

It's a conflict as perennial as the shopping mall

Santa: What to do with the North Pole's most famous resident on Christmas, a holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. A small but growing band of Christians has an answer: Dump Claus altogether and bring back the original St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas, a fourth century Christian bishop in modern-day Turkey, was known for his charity and kind heart. As the story goes, he rescued three poor women from prostitution by slipping gold coins down their chimney—landing in their stockings drying by the fire—so their father could afford a dowry for each.

The bishop of Myra became the patron saint of seafarers and pawnbrokers, brides and children. More than 1,200 churches are named for him.

□ See *Some Christians ...*, page 6

Lights, camels, action!

Nothing says Christmas like a live, spitting quadruped

By Victoria Moon
State Correspondent

LEXINGTON—What has four feet, a hump, a strong odor, tends to spit and shows up at several Kentucky churches once a year?

No, it's not a deranged version of Santa Claus. It's the live camels that some Kentucky Baptist churches rent each year for their Christmas pageants and shows.

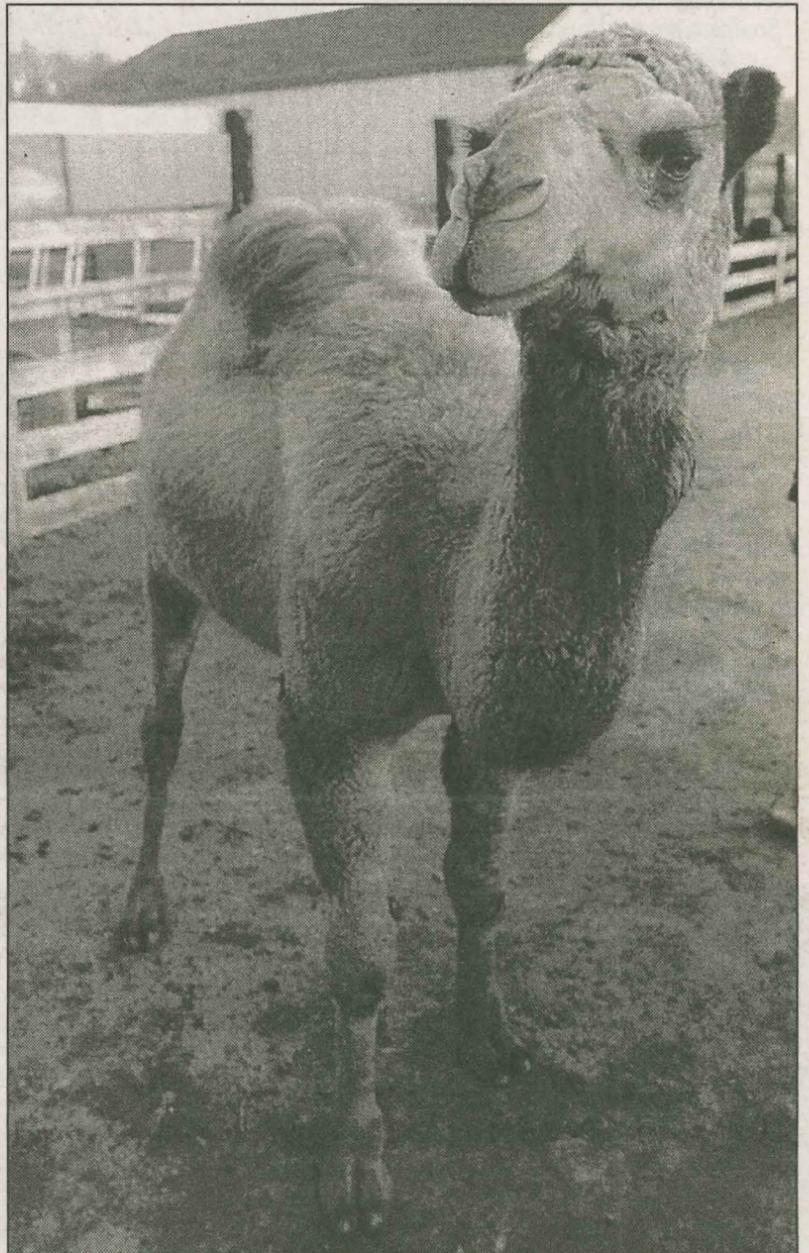
"They can make some really weird noises," said Margaret Caudill, secretary at Parkway Baptist Church in Lexington. That church's "Drive-Thru Bethlehem" program has used live camels for the past three years.

Caudill said the camel, along with a calf and some sheep, spend the three days of the performance on the church's property in a fenced-in, temporary shelter that church members erect every year.

The entire pageant is held outdoors on the church's property. It features church members in costume along with the live animals in a reproduction of the city of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth.

"We haven't really had any problems with them spitting on anyone or anything like that because the people just drive through in their cars and don't get out to touch the animals," Caudill said.

According to Donna McMurtrie, coordinator of "Walk Through Bethlehem" at First Baptist Church of □ See *Live camels make ...*, page 3



IN DEMAND Eosha, a seven-month old camel at Henry's Ark in Prospect, will be visiting Kentucky churches this month for Christmas pageants and programs. (Photo by David Winfrey)

World War II veteran recalls when 'Silent Night' saved his life

By Sue Ann Miller
Alabama Baptist

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Every time Air Force veteran Lawson Corley hears the Christmas carol "Silent Night," he remembers the day 57 years ago when a German soldier spared his life because of Corley's solo serenade on a snowy Christmas Eve.

The year was 1944, World War II was ravaging Europe and Lt. Lawson Corley was serving as a lead bombardier in the 705th bomb squadron in the United States Air Force. His 10-member crew had just launched a successful bombing raid when their plane was hit by enemy fire.

The only alternative for the crew was to bail out and hope they would not be captured. Anti-aircraft flak had penetrated the walls of the plane and lodged in Corley's backpack where his parachute was located. Corley jumped, hoping his chute would open.

He futilely pulled his ripcord, which detached in his hand. As he saw the earth spinning closer to him he knew death was imminent. He said a quick prayer to God pledging to serve Him if He would spare his life.

God answered Corley's plea. Miraculously, his parachute opened at treetop level. The hard jolt to the ground knocked the 20-year-old Birmingham native unconscious. He was discovered by the Belgian underground and hidden in a ditch with the promise of being retrieved under the cover of darkness.

But help never arrived. The fugitive was awakened to the sound of German shepherd dogs snarling above him as he hid in his snare.

Corley's battered body was dragged by uncaring German soldiers and dumped into a cubicle-size dungeon with only a wooden board for a bed. His most serious injuries includ-

ed a broken back and a ruptured kidney and spleen that went unattended for days while Corley was being interrogated.

At one point Corley was taken to a castle in Belgium where he was deposited on a marble floor in front of a Nazi Gestapo commandant. "He demanded that I give him information on the Normandy invasion but I pleaded ignorance. He tried to entice me with the promise of medical care."

Corley refused to cooperate, asking his enemy if he would reveal crucial information if he were captured. Indignant, the officer replied in perfect English that of course he would not. "I'm just as good a soldier as you are, sir," Corley replied. The German's fist flying toward his face was the last thing Corley remembered before passing out. The beating resulted in the loss of 11 teeth, a broken nose

Silent Night
And peace on earth

Inside:

- Widely-known carol had simple beginning.
- "Silent Night" caused temporary pause in World War I fighting. *Page 7*

and a ruptured eardrum.

Corley remembers regaining consciousness in a Nazi hospital in Belgium. His ruptured kidney would continually fill with blood and the German hospital attendants refused to drain it. Instead they ordered a 15-year-old Belgian boy to do the unpleasant task.

The boy, a member of the Belgian underground, returned one day with German identification papers he had retrieved from a soldier he had killed. The soldier's features were identical to Corley's. His young accomplice wrapped the identification in Corley's bandages on his back so that he could use them if he was able to escape.

□ See *Soldier says carol ...*, page 7

Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, December 19

BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **"Hope Has Come,"** a Christmas special produced by FamilyNet, will be available for broadcast Dec. 24 on ABC. FamilyNet, the broadcast division of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, produced the program in cooperation with Riverside Baptist Church in Denver. It features musical guests Geron David and Kindred Souls. Check local listings for broadcast times.

■ **Southern Baptist** missionary Jack Branan, a church planter in the Philippines, died Dec. 12 of complications following surgery for diverticulitis. Branan, 63, and his wife, Rosanne, had served since 1972 in Manila. He previously was pastor of churches in Missouri and Georgia.

NAMB, D.C. convention at odds over views & funding

WASHINGTON (ABP)—Leaders of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, citing concerns about the direction of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, have outlined a number of conditions for continued funding of Baptist work in Washington after next year.

Baptist leaders in Washington responded with indignation to the NAMB proposal, saying it violates traditional Baptist forms of church government, where state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention cooperate with each other but are autonomous in their own spheres.

NAMB's proposal "offends fundamental principles of Baptist polity such as autonomy, priesthood of all believers and soul freedom," said Jeffrey Haggray, D.C. Baptists' executive director.

Calling the proposal an "ultimatum," Haggray added, "What would it profit us to gain some funding and lose our faith?"

"This is not an edict or ultimatum, but a proposal," NAMB President Robert Reccord responded. "The proposal is our attempt to create a win-win solution by providing them with additional staffing while ensuring Southern Baptists that all money given by Southern Baptists will be used in ways consistent with the direction of our denomination."

The D.C. Baptist Convention, formed in 1977, historically has aligned dually with the SBC and the Northern Baptist Convention—later

renamed American Baptist Churches, U.S.A. The convention also aligned in 1998 with the Progressive National Baptist Convention, a predominantly African-American group begun in the 1960s by followers of Martin Luther King.

The D.C. convention's 2002 budget includes \$475,000 from NAMB. Approximately three-fourths is earmarked for salaries of eight jointly funded missions personnel and supplemental salary for several mission pastors. The remainder is for evangelism and church planting materials, training conferences and other support.

NAMB's proposal calls for restructuring the D.C. convention's staff to make SBC-funded staff supervised directly by NAMB.

"The proposal would undermine our autonomy and subjugate the work of our departments and staff to an appointee from NAMB, ... segregating Southern Baptist churches from American Baptist and Progressive National Baptist churches," Haggray said.

Other conditions for continued funding listed by NAMB include:

■ D.C. Baptists "must agree not to promote the cultural festivals that include non-Christian religious organizations." NAMB leaders cited participation by DCBC in a cultural festival sponsored by the Inter-Faith Coalition, a local ecumenical agency.

Haggray said his convention already has directed staff not to expend

any convention funds on promoting Inter-Faith Coalition activities.

■ The convention's newspaper, the Capital Baptist, "should not contain any future articles that will denigrate the SBC and its leadership nor any of its agencies." The Capital Baptist's editor, Robert Maddox, has at times questioned actions of conservative leaders in the SBC.

■ "NAMB requests that speakers at DCBC-sponsored meetings reflect the theological tenets of the SBC." While the SBC has experienced a conservative shift in the past two decades, the American Baptist and Progressive Baptist conventions generally are viewed as left of center in Baptist life.

Haggray, who became DCBC executive director in August, said he met with Reccord and other executives at NAMB's headquarters Sept. 19. Haggray said he initiated the meeting to answer concerns that Reccord previously had expressed in informal conversations.

Haggray said he left the meeting thinking that he had satisfactorily answered all of Reccord's concerns. He said he was blindsided when NAMB representatives flew to the Washington area to present him with the proposal.

Haggray said that at the Sept. 19 meeting Reccord subjected him to "hours upon hours of interrogation based on allegations from sources that he would not name." Haggray said that, according to Reccord, some of the sources were NAMB board mem-

bers, and some of the sources were Southern Baptists within the DCBC.

In their formal complaint, NAMB's representatives listed the DCBC's other denominational affiliations as the source of concerns that led them to propose such a restrictive agreement. Specifically, the NAMB proposal listed concerns with American Baptists' views on abortion, homosexuality and women pastors.

While the SBC has in recent years affirmed increasingly conservative positions in its theology and social agenda, American Baptists have taken a more middle-of-the-road approach on controversial issues.

Another concern with the DCBC staff listed in NAMB's proposal was "lack of confidence in the stewardship of SBC funding creating uniquely SBC churches and sponsoring unique SBC events."

Haggray responded that, because of the diversity of denominations involved in DCBC and because of the convention's respect for local church autonomy, "We do not determine the denominational character of the congregation. Once we plant the church, the church makes that decision for itself."

NAMB leaders initially requested a response to their proposal within two weeks of presenting it. D.C. Baptist leaders opted instead to appoint a committee to study the issue and report to the DCBC executive committee in February.

With additional reporting by Baptist Press

Baptist pilot helps aid workers flee rioting in northern Kenya

MANDERA, Kenya (BP)—A Southern Baptist missionary pilot came to the rescue of 16 Christian aid workers who had fled rioting in a northern Kenya town near the Ethiopia-Somalia border Dec. 11.

Violent demonstrations broke out in Mandera, Kenya, after authorities arrested an outspoken Muslim religious leader allegedly connected with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda movement.

Local youth raided a Catholic church and an agricultural training center. They set buildings and vehicles ablaze and looted property worth thousands of dollars in an effort to get the imam released.

Later that morning, hundreds of rioters encircled the aid workers' compound, chanting, throwing rocks and shooting rifles into the air. The aid workers said they could see homes of fellow Christians burning in the distance and knew they were in trouble.

"They destroyed our house, our schools and threatened us," said one worker, who stayed behind to protect property against looters and to encourage Christians in Mandera.

A Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary pilot heard the distress call during his lunch break and scrambled his staff into action. The pilot works in conjunction with African Inland Mission to serve Christian workers in East Africa.

The pilot landed his plane at a nearby Kenyan military base to avoid the tumult in town. Sixteen people crammed into the 13-passenger plane and were in the air within minutes, before any shots could be fired at the plane.

"I feel fortunate God allowed me to help," said the pilot, whose name was withheld for security reasons "There is no denying that God was at work today."

"The airplane was supposed to be in Tanzania today but that flight was canceled, so the plane was just sitting there ready to fly when the call came in."

Seminary cuts ties to journal over 'offensive' article

WACO, Texas (ABP)—One Baptist seminary in Texas has pulled out of a consortium sponsoring the Review and Expositor theology journal and another school is considering a similar move over content that critics find offensive.

Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary announced it would cease sponsorship of the quarterly Review and Expositor after publication of an issue on sexuality. Officials said Truett's faculty found some of the content "irresponsible" and "contrary to sound theological scholarship."

Officials at Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University indicated that school also might sever ties with the journal if an editorial board does not take steps to prevent similar problems in the future.

The reactions followed articles in Baptist Press highlighting controversial views in the Spring 2001 journal issue, themed "Sexuality and the Church."

Most attention focused on the issue's lead article proposing an "embodiment" theology of human sexuality. Rather than viewing sexual and spiritual experience as separate, author Leslie Kendrick Townsend contends that people's sexual experience as males and females influence their views of what it means to be human and thus shape their understanding of the nature and reality of God.

Using explicit references to contrast sexual experiences of men and women, Townsend, a pastoral counselor and family therapist in Louis-

ville, explored male and female "embodiment" as a "source of revelation" about God.

For example, she suggested, female sexuality fosters a theology that emphasizes relationship and community, while male experience promotes themes of dominion and power that have been used in history to subjugate women.

For some, however, her linking of sexual imagery like menstruation and impotence with attributes of God went too far.

Primarily because of publication of this article, faculty of Truett Seminary in Waco voted Dec. 10 to withdraw immediately from the coalition of sponsoring schools that publishes the journal.

"The theology presented in articles in the spring 2001 issue of the journal is judged to be irresponsible and is inconsistent with the theology embraced by Truett Seminary," according to a statement released by the university.

At Hardin-Simmons, a statement released by Bill Ellis, vice president for academic affairs, said some of the articles "are of an inappropriate nature for a Baptist journal."

Review and Expositor's managing editor, Nancy deClaisse-Walford of McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta, defended the decision to use Townsend's article.

"When I read the article, I thought, 'This is going to raise some eyebrows,' but one of the things I try to emphasize is that the people for whom this journal is written are pastors and

leaders in churches," she said. "They should be seminary educated and should be familiar with the language and issues being talked about."

The editor of the spring issue, Dan McGee, said he didn't agree with views in the article, which he described as "radical" and "provocative."

Had he known more about embodiment theology, he said, he would have selected a more conservative writer to address the topic.

McGee, who taught at Hardin-Simmons when he edited the issue, now is director of counseling and psychological services for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

While the BGCT has no direct connection with publishing the Review and Expositor, state convention Executive Director Charles Wade said the controversy could influence whether BGCT personnel are allowed to write for the journal in the future.

"The issue of sexuality and the church is worthy of thoughtful academic discussion and careful examination from a biblical standpoint, but the theological approach taken in the lead article of Review and Expositor was disturbing," Wade said. He said he found the article "distasteful" and lacking "a clear biblical foundation."

Review and Expositor originally was published by the faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. In 1996, however, the faculty declared the journal to be independent of the seminary, and a new coalition of sponsoring schools was announced.

Board allocates ministry funds, hears update on KBC facilities

LOUISVILLE—Members of the Kentucky Baptist Executive Board voted Dec. 11 to allocate more than \$1.77 million in available year-end funds to ministry efforts in Kentucky and worldwide.

Board members also heard an update from the Kentucky Baptist Convention's property workgroup about negotiations for new KBC facilities.

The year-end funds include Cooperative Program challenge funds of \$1,137,873, more than \$80,000 in excess funds designated for "restricted Kentucky only" use and available unrestricted funds of \$56,000 as well as \$500,000 transferred from the KBC's post-retirement income account.

Bob Long, chairman of the board's business and finance committee, explained that the post-retirement income funds were available because the convention's post-retirement account is fully funded.

Allocations include more than \$405,000 for Southern Baptist Convention causes and \$351,000 for Kentucky Baptist institutions and agencies. More than \$992,000 was allocated to more than 25 Kentucky Baptist ministry efforts including new church starts, student centers, disaster relief, remodeling projects at Cedars and the 2002 Billy Graham mission in the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region.

Jerry Dooley, vice chairman of the KBC property workgroup, reported that the group approved a recommendation from Faulkner Hinton & Associates developers to decline a proposed negotiation with Jefferson County officials to lease the KBC's current facilities in Middletown.

"I hoped I could tell you we were ready to dig a hole" to begin construction, Dooley said. "Such is not the case."

The proposal had called for Faulkner to lease the facilities to the county and construct new offices for the KBC by next summer. Dooley said the county's decision to lease less space and to take longer to finalize a decision made the initial proposal unworkable.

The workgroup's report added, however, that the group "desires to continue considering relocation."

Board members approved a request for the KBC to enter into a second letter of intent with Faulkner. The new agreement will permit the developer to continue to explore and recommend transition options to KBC leaders.

Camels aren't only animals in pageants

By Victoria Moon
State Correspondent

MORGANFIELD—Camels may be more well behaved than you think during church holiday programs and pageants. It's the ducks, sheep, goats and even tortoises that are the problem.

Jeff Baird, owner of the Circle B-7 Ranch in Morganfield, rents exotic animals and farm livestock to churches who use them in their live Nativity scenes, Easter pageants and children's programs.

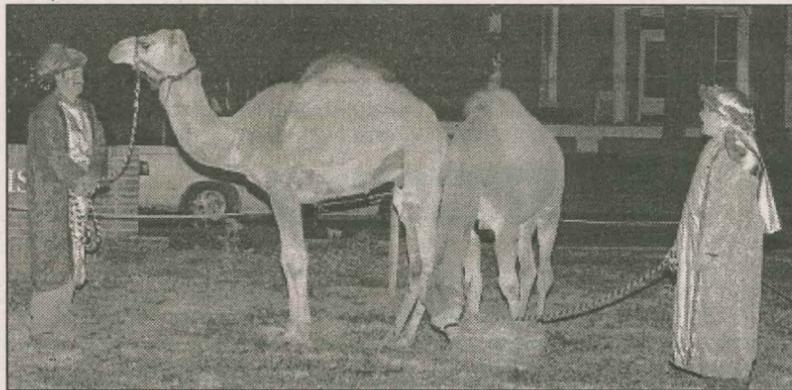
He said it tends to be the traditional livestock that can turn a beautiful Christmas program into, well, a zoo.

"At First Baptist Church of Madisonville, for example, they recreate the town of Bethlehem during Jesus' time. Part of the town is the village winemaker, and there's a vat of purple-colored water on the floor actors step into and pretend to crush grapes," he said.

"One year no one could find the ducks and geese, who are allowed to wander freely through the gymnasium where the 'town' is set up. They were later found swimming happily in the wine vat."

Baird also said that the same year a goat used in the Nativity scene wandered away from its pen and walked into the church with a number of human visitors, calmly walked through the town of Bethlehem and then headed for the refreshment table for a quick snack.

Shaun Wendt, owner of Animal



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT Two members of First Baptist Church of Madisonville tend two camels used in the church's "Return to Bethlehem" program, a walk-through presentation of Bethlehem during the time of Jesus' birth. The church offered the program Dec. 8-11. (Photo by Lowell Mendyk, courtesy of The Madisonville Messenger)

Enterprises Inc., of Cynthiana, said his biggest problems come from the donkeys.

"I always bring a male and a female donkey to these Christmas shows," he said, "and they will call back and forth to each other all night long, making this incredible racket. The churches put out these little candles along the pathways, and I guess it spooks the donkeys. It's awful."

But Wendt's most unusual animal story involves a tortoise.

"A Baptist church in Lexington wanted me to bring in a tortoise for their Christmas program so the children could touch it," he said.

"I guess it must have gotten spooked. You'd think having a tortoise inside a church wouldn't be that big a deal, but it was a mess. Let's just say it was one day you definitely

didn't want to be holding them by their back end."

Baird said the two animals most likely to ruin a Christmas pageant and try the patience of the Infant King himself are sheep and goats.

"They'll just break out of their pens and walk off," he said.

"One church tried to have goats onstage during the singing of three Christmas carols, with the Nativity scene in place and all these barefoot actors around. By the time the goats had used the bathroom onstage and tried to take off, the singers had made it through one song."

"People think if you're going to have problems with animals, you need to watch out for the 1,600-pound camel," Wendt noted. "Actually, I've found it tends to be the animals like the 40-pound tortoise."

Live camels make Christmas pageants interesting

Continued from page 1
Madisonville, the key to happy camels is dry feet.

"They don't like wet feet," she said. "They're used to having things pretty dry in their natural habitat, so if it snows or rains they can start acting up."

And how does she define "acting up"?

"They'll just start to get really stubborn," she said. "They'll spit at you, or they'll lay down and refuse to get up, things like that."

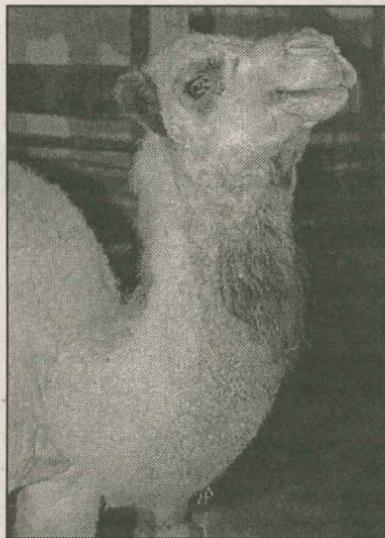
She said the three camels they use for their Christmas program are kept outside during the whole event, one led by its trainer and two others led by church members dressed as wise men. To avoid the wet feet problem, a special barn is built for the animals in case of rain or snow.

Jeff Baird, owner of the Circle B-7 Ranch in Morganfield, supplies the camels rented by First Baptist of Madisonville and confirms McMurtrie's assessment of the camels' feet sensitivity.

"Of course, it always rains or snows during the program as a result," he said. "One night it rained so much we had to just leave them in the barn for the whole program."

Baird noted that because the camels used by First Baptist are always outdoors, odor and personal hygiene issues are kept to a minimum.

"The only problems we might have are watching to make sure some of the children who want to pet the camels



don't startle them or grab them," he said. "We don't want anyone to get spit on or hurt."

Shaun Wendt, owner of Animal Enterprises Inc., of Cynthiana, rents his camels every year to Parkway Baptist Church.

"They're interesting animals," he said. "Despite not liking to get their feet wet, they're excellent swimmers, which people might not know. And they each have their own personality and attitude."

Wendt added that while camels do have an odor, it isn't something that bothers him.

"Of course, I'm around them all the time," he said, "but city folks who aren't might have a problem with it.

Temperance League names associate

LOUISVILLE—Howard Beaman has been named associate director of the Temperance League of Kentucky.

Beaman, former pastor of Highland Park First Baptist Church in Louisville, also has been pastor of other churches in Kentucky and Ohio. He is a graduate of Morehead State University, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Ind.

Beaman, who has served on the Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Board, also has taught New Testament and preaching at Boyce College in Louisville.

He will work with Temperance League Executive Director Claude Witt in the areas of lobbying against alcohol and gambling expansion as well as educational programs, speaking in churches and fund-raising.

The Temperance League, which is supported by the KBC, is an interdenominational organization that combats alcohol and gambling and addresses other moral and social concerns.

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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In search of the 'real' Santa Claus

By Jodi Mathews

The American view of Santa Claus is a far cry from the true inspiration for this merry, generous character.

The Orthodox Christian Church and the Roman Catholic Church commemorate the death of the real St. Nicholas on Dec. 6 every year. For many Orthodox and Catholic families, St. Nicholas Day is one of gift giving and celebration.

St. Nicholas was born in A.D. 280 in Patara, a city in Asia Minor, or what is now known as Turkey. He was the only son of his noble, wealthy and faithful parents.

As a young man, St. Nicholas became a priest. When his parents died, he distributed his inheritance and property to the needy.

St. Nicholas was a generous man, but one special kindness led to modern images of Ole St. Nick, Pere Noel, Sinter Klaas and Santa Claus.

There was a father living in Patara who had once been wealthy and renowned, but he suddenly lost everything and had fallen into poverty.

This man had three beautiful, virgin daughters, but had no money to

provide a dowry for them. He knew he would have to abandon them to prostitution.

St. Nicholas was disturbed by the state of this family and decided to help. But not wanting to embarrass the man by giving him money, and wishing his own identity to remain hidden, St. Nicholas decided to deliver the gold at night—in secret.

Some accounts say when St. Nicholas threw the bag of gold in the window it landed in a stocking hung by the fire to dry (hence the tradition of hanging stockings on the mantle). The father found the gold the next day, rejoiced, thanked God and used the money to marry off his oldest daughter.

St. Nicholas, seeing the good thing the father did with the money, decided he would deliver more gold to the needy family. The father again used the riches as a dowry, this time for his second daughter. Excited and grateful to God for the blessing, the father prayed and asked that his benefactor would be revealed to him.

The third night when St. Nicholas tossed the bag of gold through the

window, the father heard it hit the ground and ran after St. Nicholas. When he finally caught up with the saint, the father recognized St. Nicholas and fell at his feet thanking him for delivering his daughters.

St. Nicholas made the man promise that he would tell no one of the gold until the saint had died.

St. Nicholas went on to minister and travel, performing miracles and helping the needy. He later became a bishop and died on Dec. 6, 343. Today, many Christians still celebrate his memory on Dec. 6. St. Nicholas is also honored as the patron saint of children and the patron saint of Russia.

Because St. Nicholas Day falls close to Christmas, many countries have combined the traditions for celebration on Christmas Day.

Through years of embellishment and combining several different cultures' stories, Americans have ended up with their own icon for St. Nicholas in Santa Claus.

St. Nicholas' legacy of generosity and compassion has translated even into the fantastic stories of Santa Claus. But how much better is it to understand the real St. Nicholas and retell his story this time of year?

Jodi Mathews is communications director for the Baptist Center for Ethics

COMMENTARY

God is exclusive

I cannot be silent any longer as I read letter after letter concerning the beliefs of Muslims and Jews, etc.

I do not believe that there is error in the recent article titled "Mohler: Muslims, Jews, Christians worship different Gods." I also believe that Al Mohler and other representatives of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary are not "damaging our image again" as the writer from Bowling Green indicated in your

Nov. 27 issue.

God's Word is very clear and I believe God is "exclusive" to the extent that Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6b). That's about as exclusive as it comes. Without Jesus there is no salvation for anyone, no matter how sincere they might be in worshipping a god named Allah.

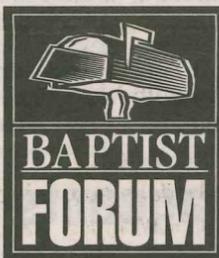
So "Islam acknowledges the existence of the same Supreme Being we do." So what? God's Word says plainly in James 2:19, "Thou believest that there

is one God; thou doest well: The devils also believe and tremble."

Let's stop saying that as long as anyone worships "a god" that they are OK and we'll all be together some day in heaven. That is a lie straight out of hell and we should be witnessing to these lost souls before it is too late.

Be politically correct if you so desire, but I will do my best to fulfill the Great Commission of my Lord to go to all nations and all peoples and preach and teach to them the truth that "Jesus is the only way" and that Jesus is Lord.

*Donald R. Daniel
Elizabethtown*



PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Kentucky Baptists' uniqueness

Every person and entity would like to be thought of as unique. And God uniquely creates every person.

During the past four years in my role as executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention I have had many contacts and experiences with Kentucky Baptists. I have spoken in more than 350 church and associational gatherings, represented Kentucky Baptists in more than 330 meetings and attended more than 120 committee meetings.

Based on this experience with Kentucky Baptists, I have some observations:

■ *Kentucky Baptists are committed to work together.* This was demonstrated at the KBC annual meeting in Murray when Kentucky Baptists strongly supported the recommendation of the Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee to adopt the Bible as the basis for faith and practice, and acknowledged the value of a number of confessions of faith for teaching and equipping for the mission. I want to commend all groups for their will-

ingness to stretch in order to support this recommendation. The committee felt strongly that God was at work guiding them. It is now obvious that God was at work guiding Kentucky Baptists in this decision.



Bill Mackey

The confessions of faith are helpful tools in understanding and interpreting our faith, but the focus must be on the biblical mandate to share Jesus Christ with every person. We can find consensus, but can we find the conviction and passion to sacrifice everything in order to share the gospel with all nations?

■ *Kentucky Baptists are committed to biblical faith.* Although some people may have different views on convention life, there is agreement on the basic truths of faith. Most Kentucky Baptists are theological conservatives.

We can use all of the right words to describe the authority and priority for the Bible, but how much time do we spend reading God's Word? Is biblical truth an academic exercise for you, or is it absolute truth for your life

that must be obeyed?

■ *Kentucky Baptists are committed to the mission of our Lord.* One of the exciting expressions of this is financial support of missions through the Cooperative Program. More than 86 percent of KBC receipts come through the Cooperative Program provided by churches. We are grateful for this commitment by so many churches and individuals to missions. I believe the ministries of the Executive Board, KBC agencies and institutions, and Southern Baptist missions deserve our sacrificial support. When we add gifts to partnership missions and the mission offerings, they represent a strong financial commitment to missions by Kentucky Baptists.

■ *Kentucky Baptists are committed to growth.* They are passionate about evangelism, missions and support of the Cooperative Program. I pray that all of our churches will experience Kingdom growth to the glory of God.

I know there may be a few exceptions, but I am grateful to God for the evidence that He is at work powerfully in bringing Kentucky Baptists together around the mission of our Lord. *Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention*

GIVING

Schedule time to review year-end tax strategies

By Laurie Valentine

With Dec. 31 right around the corner, now is a good time to review tax saving actions that you already have taken this year and determine if there are other things to do before year-end to further reduce your 2001 income taxes.

Tax rates will be lower in 2002, which might make it prudent to defer some of this year's income until next year and to pay deductible items before Dec. 31, 2001, that you normally would pay in early 2002.

Business and professional people who use the cash accounting method can defer the receipt of income by not billing until year-end for services rendered in 2001. The receipt of a bonus that your employer is free to give or not give can be deferred into next year to lower your 2001 compensation income.

Pay real estate taxes and the Jan. 15 installment of state and local income taxes before Dec. 31 to accelerate these deductible items into the 2001 tax year.

If possible, pay all medical bills, if the total will exceed 7.5 percent of your adjusted gross income, before year-end to be able to use that expense as a deduction.

Another income tax deduction that is easy to accelerate is the charitable deduction. You have total control on when this deduction will be available; all you have to do is complete your charitable gifts before Dec. 31.

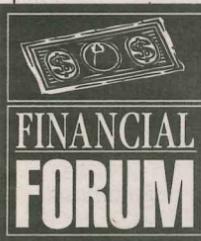
Your tithes and offerings are "charitable gifts" that can be deducted on your income tax return.

You also can deduct gifts of appreciated securities, mutual fund shares, real estate, business interests, artworks and life insurance policies to your church, Kentucky Baptist and Southern Baptist causes or other qualified charities.

Charitable income tax deductions are available both for outright gifts and life income gifts such as charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts.

Make time for year-end tax planning. It can pay off for you and the charitable causes you wish to support.

Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation



Find ways to enrich meaning of Christmas for children & teens

Q: How can I help my child prepare for Christmas?

The days leading up to Dec. 25 are exciting times for boys and girls. As the holy day approaches, let children enjoy the holiday hustle and bustle, but consider the following ideas to gently guide them toward the true meaning of Christmas:

- **Emphasize giving.** Shop together for gifts for friends or family members, or spend an evening making simple gifts. Bake Christmas cookies and take them to the nearest firehouse or police station. Make or buy cards for the people who deliver your newspaper and mail or for those who collect your trash.

- **Get involved in a Christmas ministry.** Collect toys, food or clothes for needy families, and if possible, participate in the distribution of those gifts. Make a special monetary gift to missions. Visit shut-ins. Go caroling. Help your children see these activities as their gift to Jesus—ways of showing and sharing love for Him.

- **Worship together.** Take advantage of special holiday services at your church and in your community. Worship at home as well. Make a simple Advent wreath for your kitchen table. Your church or local Christian bookstore can provide resources to guide your Advent celebration. Consider purchasing an Advent calendar to help children mark the number of days until Christmas. The calendar will remind boys and girls of the many wonderful events that led to the birth of Jesus.

On Christmas day, after all the gifts have been opened, sing "Joy to the World" and "Silent Night." Read the Christmas story from Luke 2. Pray together. Thank God for the greatest gift of all: Jesus.—*David Garrard*

Q: How can I use my teenager's natural enthusiasm for the Christmas holidays to deepen his faith?

One of the most effective and memorable things that families do is create and maintain meaningful rituals and traditions. You might consider creatively linking your family traditions to aspects of the Christian faith. Even secular traditions yield opportunities for spiritual reflection.

One example is choosing, setting up and decorating a Christmas tree. It is fairly easy to link this fun activity to something meaningful. You might suggest that as the family hangs ornaments on the tree that they remember with a prayer of thanksgiving those individuals whose names and faces come to mind. You might choose to read Liz Curtis Higgs' "The Pine Tree Parable" after finishing putting up the tree.

Since one of the goals with teenagers is to offer opportunities to reflect on normal events in fresh ways, consider the following options:

- Take a drive through a disadvantaged neighborhood and talk about reactions and possible responses.

- Volunteer together to prepare or serve food at a homeless shelter.

- Go together to choose a new Christmas CD; pick and discuss your favorite song.

- Write your teen a Christmas letter each year and leave it sealed on his or her bed.

- Institute an annual Christmas eve late night walk in which you remember together past Christmases and talk about what God might want to say to you this year.

Your holiday opportunities are limited only by your imagination. Keep in mind that if something doesn't seem to click you can just let it go and try something else.—*Scott Wigginton*

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.



What are your true Christmas priorities?

With Christmas just a few days away, what is your top priority in celebrating the season? Of course, we know the "right answer" from a Christian perspective is to emphasize taking time to reflect on the miraculous arrival of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago in a Bethlehem manger.

But in reality, most of us succumb to the clamor and commercialism of another hurried holiday, ringing in the season with countless credit card purchases, lavish parties and calorie-laden goodies. Not that there's anything wrong with good, wholesome celebrating once in a while. But it's a far cry from the setting and significance of that first Christmas morning.

Enjoy Christmas festivities with family and friends. But make certain to find time to clearly focus on the Christ of Christmas. Rather than reading one more Christmas editorial, take a few moments to ponder and cherish the words of Luke 2:1-20. Let Luke's account speak to you in a fresh, wonder-filled way as you quietly worship the Christ Child:

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped

Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

"And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

"And Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Recorder's partnership efforts aid five state conventions

Faithful readers of the Western Recorder are familiar with the content and format of the state Baptist paper.

What they might not know is that the paper they read each week isn't the only news publication produced by the Western Recorder. In fact, five other Baptist papers are designed, edited and published by the Recorder staff each month and mailed to readers in eight states from Hawaii to New Jersey.

The Western Recorder's first partnership paper was launched in 1992 in cooperation with the Baptist Convention of New England.

Within a few years, the Recorder staff was assisting state convention staff members in Utah-Idaho, Hawaii-Pacific, Minnesota-Wisconsin and Pennsylvania-South Jersey.

The partnerships are designed to aid smaller state conventions that have fewer staff members and limited resources. Staff members in each of the partnership conventions compile their local news and feature articles, columns, photographs and advertisements and transmit them

through the Internet to the Western Recorder office.

Joyce Martin, the Recorder's partnership editions editor since 1998, edits the material, designs layouts and adds national and international news and feature articles from the pages of the Recorder.

After the pages are produced by the Recorder staff, copies are faxed to the respective state conventions for proof-reading and corrections. The corrected papers then are printed and mailed at the same time as the Western Recorder.

The New England convention began producing its own publication a year ago, reducing the number of partnership papers to four. Within a few weeks, however, the Western Recorder welcomed the Baptist Convention of Iowa as its newest partnership paper.

Wyndell Jones, retired executive director of the Iowa convention, said he was pleased that the partnership would provide Iowa Baptist readers with "the additional view of the world along with a greater approach to Iowa news."

Affirming that the time was right for Iowa Baptists to enter the partnership earlier this year, he said staff members were "very excited about the partnership."

With the addition of the Iowa Baptist paper, the five partnership papers have a combined circulation of more than 16,000 readers.

"Our goal at the Recorder is to produce a quality product for each of the state conventions with whom we work and, at the same time, make the process as painless for them as possible," Martin said. "And, in the true spirit of partnership, we at the Recorder receive the benefit of staying in touch with how God is working through Southern Baptists across North America today."

As a missionary for 18 years in Detroit and Boston with the former Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Martin noted that she knows "firsthand how beneficial it is to have an entity such as the Western Recorder come alongside to offer resources and expertise."

"As partnership editions editor," she added, "I count it a privilege to be able to assist fellow Baptists in five new work conventions in telling the story of what God is doing among His people."



CHRISTMAS

Some Christians prefer St. Nicholas to Santa Claus

Continued from page 1

Along the way, the Nicholas legend split into two camps. One holds special devotion for the pious Christ, especially among Orthodox Christians. The other thinks of him as just another version of Santa Claus. Walter Skold wants to change that.

As founder of the "Anti-Santa Love Nicholas Society," Skold literally thinks Santa should be "sued for consumer and historical fraud, and exiled to Siberia." His disdain for Santa Claus runs so deep that he willingly accepts the label "Grinch."

"I'm more than annoyed," Skold,

41, said from his home in Brunswick, Maine, where Santa has been banned for good. "I honestly hate what Santa Claus has become. People hear that and they think you're anti-children, they think you're anti-gifts, anti-commercialism. But those are side issues. The issue is that Christ isn't getting the glory."

So seven years ago, Skold founded his "loose-knit group of kindred spirits" while serving as a missionary in China. He concedes he hasn't made much progress because "anyone who hears anti-Santa thinks I'm some kind of nut."

But there is an immensely serious side to Skold's campaign, and he is not alone. A similar, although more serious, St. Nicholas Society was formed two years ago in London by Jim Rosenthal, press secretary for the archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey.

As Rosenthal sees him, St. Nicholas is not a sleigh, the overstuffed red suit is replaced by a bishop's regalia, complete with mitre and shepherd's staff. The popular Santa image, Rosenthal said, "is a waste of an image."

"We're not opposed to Santa Claus or Father Christmas or whatever you

want to call him," said Rosenthal, who is originally from Chicago. "But we believe children should know his real name."

The origins of the modern Santa Claus are murky. Dutch immigrants brought the tradition of St. Nicholas as "Sinter Klass," which had been grafted onto the Kriss Kringle and Kringle legends from Europe. Along the way, Claus acquired a flying sleigh and reindeer.

By 1822, he was immortalized as rosy-cheeked, "chubby and plump" in "Twas the Night Before Christmas." The 1920s popularized the image of the overweight elf in a red suit, and it was cemented by Coca-Cola ads in the 1950s and 1960s.

It's not so much the person of Santa Claus that annoys Rosenthal, but the commercialism he has come to represent.

"The secular verity compels us to buy and shop 'til we drop," Rosenthal said, "whereas the St. Nicholas verity expressed in St. Nicholas is to enjoy and share and maybe drop to your knees in prayer."

Rosenthal found an ally in Carol Myers, a 58-year-old mother of three grown children in Holland, Mich. They met online while trying to outbid each other for a St. Nicholas orna-

ment. Together they have more than 1,000 St. Nicholas icons and collectibles.

Myers, a member of the Reformed Church in America, introduced her children to the St. Nicholas tradition and helped organize a St. Nicholas festival in Holland. She said if the real St. Nicholas were to make a December visit, he probably would be disappointed.

"I would like to think that he would recognize the goodwill and would be pleased by that, but I think he would be saddened by the loss of the center, which really was living and responding faithfully as a disciple of Jesus Christ."

Dennis TeBeest, pastor of Prekness Reformed Church in Wayne, N.J., agrees. In his 500-member church, St. Nicholas Day is an important part of the Advent season. TeBeest said St. Nicholas is someone people can, and should, relate to.

"Here was an individual who decided that he could care in quiet ways. Nicholas, tradition goes, had great resources at his disposal but chose a quieter way of being involved in people's lives," he said. "It's not some magical Santa Claus, but a saint who is looking to the needs of others, and we can meet those needs, too."

NICHOLAS FAN Carol Myers of Holland, Mich., displays a St. Nicholas hand puppet from her collection on display at the Holland Museum. Myers said St. Nicholas is a better role model for Christmas than Santa Claus. (RNS photo)



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CHRISTMAS

Crisis led pastor to pen 'Silent Night'

By Victor Parachin
Baptist Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—“Silent Night” is one of the most recognizable Christmas songs in the world, but the world might never have heard this carol had it not been for a last-minute crisis in the tiny village of Oberndorf, Austria.

The year was 1818 and within the Church of St. Nicholas the mood was hardly one of joy that Christmas Eve afternoon. Curate Joseph Mohr, 26, had just discovered that the organ was badly damaged. No matter how much he tried to pump the pedals, he could only bring out a scratchy wheeze from the aged instrument.

By the time an organ repair specialist could reach the church, Christmas would long be over. To the young pastor, a Christmas without music was unthinkable and unacceptable.

Mohr had a natural talent for music. As a youth he earned money singing and playing the guitar and violin in public.

He put himself through the university with money he earned as a music performer. His church ability and musical talents captured the attention of a clergyman who persuaded Mohr to enter the seminary.

Ordained as a priest in 1815, Mohr was assigned to Oberndorf in 1817. There he not only preached well but surprised parishioners by occasionally leading worship while strumming his guitar.

Now faced with a Christmas crisis, Mohr realized the only music for that evening would be accompanied by guitar.

He also knew the traditional carols

would not sound right on his stringed instrument, so he decided to produce something new. Thinking about Jesus' modest birth almost 1,900 years earlier, Mohr began writing “Silent Night.” Using simple phrases, the young cleric retold the story of Christ's birth in six short stanzas.

For the music, Mohr turned to Franz Gruber, a friend who was a more skilled composer than he. Handing over the six stanzas, Mohr asked if Gruber could compose music to be accompanied by guitar in time for that evening's midnight mass. Historians who pieced together the story say Gruber was struck by the innocence and beauty of Mohr's words.

Quickly, he went to work on the musical composition.

With barely time for a rehearsal, the two agreed that Mohr would play his guitar and sing tenor while Gruber sang bass. After each stanza, the church choir would join in on the refrain. At midnight, parishioners filled St. Nicholas Church expecting to hear the organist playing resounding notes of Christmas music.

Instead, their church building was silent. Father Mohr explained their church organ was “down” but that midnight mass would include new music prepared especially for the congregation. With Mohr strumming the guitar, two voices sang and were joined by the choir in four-part harmony.

Father Mohr proceeded with the evening celebration of the mass. Even without their organ, parishioners felt they had experienced a unique and memorable Christmas Eve service.

The story of “Silent Night” almost ended that evening as Mohr put the

music away with no thoughts of using it again. After all, it was simply a stop-gap father for a temporary problem. Father Mohr was transferred to another parish, and for several years “Silent Night” was never sung.

The organ at St. Nicholas continued to have problems, and in 1825 the parish hired a master organ builder—Carl Mauracher—to reconstruct the instrument. Mauracher discovered the music left behind by Mohr and Gruber.

Its universal simplicity impressed the organ builder, and he asked permission to make copies of “Silent Night.” With permission given, Mauracher began introducing the carol to musicians and audiences, all of whom were enchanted by the piece.

Although the carol was making an enormous stir across Europe, Gruber and Mohr remained unaware of the accolades their music was creating.

Penniless, Mohr died of pneumonia in 1848 at the age of 55. He never learned his song was spreading around the world.

Gruber first heard of the carol's success in 1854 when the concertmaster for King Frederic William IV of Prussia began searching for its authors. When word reached Gruber, then 67, he sent a letter to Berlin telling the origin of the song.

At first, few musical historians believed the two men from obscure villages could have developed such an exquisite piece of music.

When Gruber died in 1863, his authority was still challenged, although questions gradually ceased as historians confirmed that Gruber and Mohr were indeed the authors.

Silent Night And peace on earth

Carol led soldiers to declare holiday truce in World War I

By Victor Parachin
Baptist Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—When World War I erupted in 1914 launching the first great European war of the 20th century, soldiers on both sides were assured they would be home by Christmas to celebrate victory. That prediction proved to be false.

The men on the fronts did not get home for Christmas as the war dragged on for four years. During that time 8.5 million men were killed, with hundreds of thousands more dying from injuries. The “war to end all wars” took a horrific human toll and transformed Europe.

But on Christmas Eve in December 1914, one of the most unusual events in military history took place on the Western front. On the night of Dec. 24 the weather abruptly became cold, freezing the water and slush of the trenches in which the men bunkered.

On the German side, soldiers began lighting candles. British sentries reported to commanding officers there seemed to be small lanterns raised on poles or bayonets.

Although these lanterns clearly illuminated German troops, making them vulnerable to being shot, the British held their fire.

Even more amazing, British officers saw through their binoculars that some enemy troops were holding Christmas trees over their heads with lighted candles in their branches. The message was clear: Germans, who celebrated Christmas on the eve of Dec. 24, were extending holiday greetings to their enemies.

Within moments of that sighting, the British began hearing a few German soldiers singing a Christmas carol. It was soon picked up all along the German line as other soldiers joined in harmonizing.

The words heard were these: “Stille nacht, heilige nacht.” British troops immediately recognized the melody.

“Silent Night” quickly neutralized all hostilities on both sides. One by one, British and German soldiers began laying down their weapons to venture into no-man's-land, a small patch of bombed-out earth between the two sides. So many soldiers on both sides ventured out that superior officers were prevented from objecting. There was an undeclared truce and peace had broken out.

Frank Richards was an eyewitness of this unofficial truce. In his wartime diary he wrote: “We stuck up a board with ‘Merry Christmas’ on it. The enemy stuck up a similar one. Two of our men threw off their equipment and jumped on the parapet with their hands over their heads as two of the Germans did the same, our two going to meet them.”

“They shook hands and then we all got out of the trench and so did the Germans,” Richards wrote.

Richards also explained that some German soldiers spoke perfect English with one saying how fed up he was with the war and how he would be glad when it was all over. His British counterpart agreed.

That night, former enemy soldiers sat around a common campfire. They exchanged small gifts from their meager belongings—chocolate bars, buttons, badges and small tins of processed beef. Men who only hours earlier had been shooting to kill were now sharing Christmas festivities and showing each other family snapshots.

The truce ended just as it had begun, by mutual agreement. Captain C.I. Stockwell of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers recalled how, after a truly “Silent Night,” he fired three shots into the air at 8:30 a.m. Dec. 26 and then stepped up onto the trench bank. A German officer who had exchanged gifts with Captain Stockwell the previous night also appeared on a trench bank. They bowed, saluted and climbed back into their trenches. A few minutes later, Captain Stockwell heard the German officer fire two shots into the air.

The war was on again.

Soldier says carol saved his life in Germany

Continued from page 1

Before long, Corley was taken to the first of three prisoner of war camps where he would spend the next 11 months and five days of his life trying to survive.

His first Christmas as a prisoner of war was at Stalag Luft III in Poland. On Christmas Eve the guards had promised the Americans they could visit with some of their buddies in other barracks. Corley, an avid singer, went from barrack to barrack visiting his fellow prisoners and singing Christmas carols to them. Walking through the snow to his barrack he saw a guard standing sentry in the moonlight. Having taught himself German, Corley spontaneously stopped and sang the carol “Silent Night” to the guard in German. The soldier listened to the American sing in his rich baritone voice, “Stille nacht, heilige nacht.”

At the song's conclusion, the Nazi replied twice in German, “Yes, I understand.” Corley went on to his destination, not realizing that this innocent act would prove to be another way God was protecting him.

Time marched on for the 10,000 captured Air Force officers housed at Stalag Luft III.

By January 1945 the Germans knew the war was turning on them. In an effort to use the prisoners of war as negotiating tools, the command was

given to relocate them to different camps. During January and February, when temperatures were well below zero, the men were forcibly marched from Poland to Nuremberg in central Germany.

“At one point we saw an airplane dropping altitude and heading toward us. Our instinct was to dive for safety. I dove into a frozen ditch, the ice cracked and I went under water,” Corley said.

Corley had only a wet blanket to try to keep dry. At one point he passed out from the cold during a break period. He awoke to the ferocious bite of a German shepherd dog penetrating his arm as he staggered back into the procession. At another point when he could go no farther a German soldier came up to him and twice jammed his bayonet into Corley's back and demanded that he “walk or die.”

The prisoners were housed in Nuremberg for only a short time before they were forced to march to another location in Moosburg.

Corley decided to escape. The prisoners were being kept in a large barnyard area close to the drainage ditches used for cattle dung.

The six-foot-two American trudged through the vile ditch until he was out of the camp. A civilian aided him with food but warned him he was in imminent danger and would be safer back in the camp.

Weighing the odds, he made the decision to return. He had almost completed his goal when he came upon an unexpected sight at the top of the ditch—a German soldier pointing his gun at him. “The guard said the Fuhrer had ordered them to shoot any prisoners trying to escape. I started to reason with him asking him if he wanted to see his family after the war was over. Hearing my voice he asked me if I was the prisoner who had sung ‘Stille Nacht’ to him. I said ‘yes’ I was the one and he let me pass.”

Shortly after this episode Gen. George Patton and his troops came through Moosburg and liberated the imprisoned heroes. Corley recalls being summoned to the general and quizzed about his treatment. When Corley shared the treatment he had been subjected to, Patton ordered the Nazi soldier to be brought to him. “The soldier who had stabbed me was brought to General Patton. He pulled out his gun, pointed it at the Nazi and asked if I wanted him shot for what he had done to me. I asked the general to spare his life, telling him there had been enough killing in this war.”

Every Christmas season Corley is asked to sing at holiday functions. “Silent Night” is always on his repertoire. He sings the verses in German and then shares his long-ago story of how God saved his life on a snowy Christmas Eve.

CHRISTMAS

'Holiday trees' replacing Christmas in some public spots

In 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that the Christmas tree "is not itself a religious symbol."

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

MADISON, Wis. (RNS)—In the rotunda of the Wisconsin Capitol stands a 40-foot balsam fir, decorated with garland, lights and ornaments.

It might appear to be a Christmas tree, but that's not what it's called. Its official name: the 2001 State of Wisconsin Holiday Tree.

But despite the nonreligious name, the tree still got in holy hot water this year when an argument arose over whether it could include religious ornaments among its branches.

The state debate highlighted a cross-country trend. Recently, some governments have decided to name pines, firs and spruces dressed up at this time of year more generically than they have in the past.

"It's a tree intended for people of all faiths to gather round at a time of coming together and fellowship and celebration," said Matthew Evans, landscape architect of the U.S. Capitol, whose duties include choosing the Capitol Holiday Tree every year.

Others have stuck with the traditional name. Just down Constitution Avenue from the tree near the U.S. Capitol stands a specially designated Colorado blue spruce, the National Christmas Tree. And the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree, a public New York tradition on private property, maintains its name.

But in some parts of the country, the special trees have received a new designation.

Renee Kidman, past president of the Iowa Christmas Tree Growers Association, said she has noticed that some municipalities and public schools that put up trees are likely to call them "holiday trees."

Asked if people in general are shunning the "Christmas tree" title, she said: "In public settings, yes. In private settings, no."

While some groups have changed the name to avoid church-state tangles, determinations about what can go on a tree labeled a "holiday tree"



"HOLIDAY TREE" You might think it's a Christmas tree, but it's not. It's the 2001 State of Wisconsin Holiday Tree, one of a number of decorated firs, pines and spruces across the country that governments have chosen to label more generically than in the past. (RNS photo by Debbie Monterrey-Millett)

can lead to controversy.

The Family and Freedom Foundation, a relatively new organization in Wisconsin, sued state officials over their holiday tree because several residents believed they would not be able to hang religious ornaments on it.

The case was dismissed after the state decided to permit them.

Debbie Monterrey-Millett, spokeswoman for Gov. Scott McCallum, said the state had not placed religious ornaments on the tree in recent years but the new governor "did not think

that was a good policy."

In a mid-1980s battle with the state chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, the tree's name was changed.

"I think that's appropriate," said Christopher Ahmuty, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin. "Even in a public forum, the state should not endorse one religion over against another or over no religion."

Courts have long dealt with governmental Christmas displays. In 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that the Christmas tree "is not itself a religious symbol." Five years earlier, the high court upheld a public display including a range of holiday objects, such as a Santa Claus house, a Christmas tree and a creche, as constitutional.

"Cases like that suggest why a lot of people would prefer to work on their Nativity scenes at their church or a Hanukkah display at their synagogue because the rules do get to be a little arcane in this area," said Melissa Rogers, executive director of the Washington-based Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

This year's Capitol Holiday Tree in Washington has no prohibitions on the religiosity of the ornaments. The decorations were created by citizens of Michigan, where the tree was harvested.

"Some of ours did have a bit of a religious overtone to them," said Lisa Klaus, public affairs specialist for the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan, from which the tree came. "We had a lot of them with, especially after Sept. 11, talking about God taking care of the nation."

Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the conservative American Center for Law and Justice, said he thinks religious ornaments are constitutional, but he's not crazy about changing the name of the trees in public places.

"If you talk to Jewish people, they know it's a Christmas tree," he said. "Calling it a holiday tree—you're not fooling anybody here."

City hall poinsettia plan backfires

ST. PAUL, Minn. (RNS)—An effort to make a more inclusive holiday display at the Ramsey Courthouse-St. Paul City Hall in Minnesota backfired after people complained they wanted the traditional red poinsettias to continue to grace the building.

Ramsey County Manager Paul Kirkwold tried to replace the poinsettias with ribbons and multilingual "peace" signs, saying some people complained that the red-leafed plants were viewed as a Christmas symbol.

"We've been decorating the hall for 10 years, and for 10 years we've gotten complaints," he told the St. Paul Pioneer Press. "We thought instead we'd put up something that all religions deal with, 'peace.'"

But Kirkwold got more complaints, including some from City Council members, after making that decision.

In a compromise move, white poinsettias were included among the decorations.

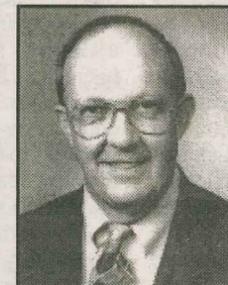
Later, someone added a half-dozen red poinsettias. A spokesman for Kirkwold said the red ones will stay put.

But the manager defended his stance, saying he didn't think it was his role to "impose my Christian traditions on others. We get people from all over through here and want them to feel welcome."

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CHRISTMAS

Ex-con's experience helped launch Angel Tree ministry

By Shelvia Dancy
Religion News Service

WETUMPKA, Ala. (RNS)—The items were not the usual Christmas stocking stuffers: small tubes of toothpaste, miniature bottles of lotion or shampoo.

But that mattered little to the recipients—the children of women incarcerated at Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka, Ala.

"My first thought was, 'Oh, the kids are not going to be happy campers.' But I watched when the kids visited with their mothers. They would just throw their arms around their moms," said Mary Kay Beard, who spent six years behind bars.

Each Christmas she watched her fellow inmates offer their children the Christmas gifts that community do-gooders had intended for the women themselves. "I think that when children see a sign that they are loved, things don't matter quite that much."

That image of humble Christmas gifts bringing joy to children remained with Beard after she left prison and began working for Prison Fellowship Ministries—a nonprofit Christian prison ministry founded by former Nixon aide Chuck Colson. Colson spent seven months in prison on obstruction of justice charges connected to the Watergate scandal.

Assigned the task of coordinating the ministry's Christmas project for

Alabama, Beard decided to help ease the pain of children and parents separated by prison walls at the Christmas season by collecting gifts for the children on behalf of the parents.

"I knew the women wouldn't care if I didn't give them gifts, if I gave the gifts to their children instead," said Beard. "I realized that just because you're in prison doesn't necessarily mean that you don't care about your children."



Beard

The community's response to the plea for gifts was "stunning," Beard said.

"In less than a week so many people wanted to help that I ran out of names of children—and people were still asking if they could help," she said. "I had to go back not only to the women inmates, but to the male inmates, too. The inmates

couldn't believe that people would care that much for their kids."

Under Beard's Angel Tree program, a child's Christmas wish list is written on a paper angel and placed on a Christmas tree. Volunteers select an angel, then purchase the gifts and deliver them to the kids.

"Last year, we had a little over 600,000 children across the nation, so you're talking about 1.2 million gifts," Beard said, reflecting on the program's growth in two decades from a two-city operation in Alabama (reaching 556 children) to an international program operating in England, New Zealand and 43 other countries.



In the United States, as many as 2 million children have incarcerated fathers and/or mothers, according to Prison Fellowship. Those children often aren't thought of as victims, but "they truly are," Beard said. "They didn't choose their parents, they didn't choose their parent's lifestyle."

Christmas is especially difficult for children of inmates because "that's a time when they are especially sensitive to being different from other kids," Beard said.

"Of all the days of the year, Christmas is a time that has always been associated with getting together with family," Beard said. "When children are separated from family, they are very aware of that loss."

The gifts—bluejeans, remote-control cars, coats, skateboards, dolls, shoes—"perk the kids up" and remind them they are not forgotten, said Ray Allen, who started the Angel Tree program at his church, Community Baptist, in Manhattan Beach, Calif.

"You can see in some of the kids a lot of resentment, even anger toward their parent in jail," said Allen, a retired detective supervisor for the Los Angeles Police Department. "But when they find out that their parent remembered them on Christmas, it breaks down a lot of walls."

The gifts "mean a lot to the parents, too," Allen said.

That was the case with Stanley Ratliff, who registered his two sons for the program while serving a nine-year sentence at an Illinois prison for drug-related charges.

"I didn't think my kids would ever have a happy holiday because I wasn't there," said Ratliff, who was pardoned in 1992 after two years in prison. "But my boys loved the gifts and they thanked me. It made me feel good. I felt like there was a God."

Ratliff felt so good that after his release he began an Angel Tree program at the church where he now teaches music, Lawndale Community Church in Chicago.

The program is now in its ninth year and has grown from serving 200 children to about 900 children, Ratliff said. "People who are incarcerated are usually forgotten. When someone remembers you and reaches out to you, you have to give back."

Beard said the Angel Tree program also affects the Christian ministry's presence inside the prison.

"Bible study in the prisons usually doubles after Angel Tree," she said. "We were stunned at first. Inmates who had never come to a chapel program would come to Bible study. Some of them came out of a sense of obligation, but many of them stayed and came to know Christ as their Savior."

ANGEL TREE Volunteer Janice Fullman helps distribute Christmas gifts to children of inmates in the Angel Tree holiday program, sponsored by Prison Fellowship Ministries. (Photo courtesy of Prison Fellowship Ministries.)

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CHRISTMAS

Modern view of the wise men combines facts, legend

Some scholars believe the magi—whose legendary names are Gaspar, Balthasar and Melchior—were versed in the Old Testament, which foretold the birth of Jesus.

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (RNS)—Each Christmas, Christians around the world sing the beloved carol “We Three Kings of Orient Are.”

But religious scholars say there could have been as few as two or many more “kings,” or wise men, as they are called in the Scriptures.

Mervyn Warren, professor of religion and preaching at Oakwood College, a Seventh-day Adventist school in Huntsville, Ala., said the wise men, or “magi,” probably came from the area of Persia or southern Arabia.

“It was more likely Persia because magi have historically been connected with that area,” Warren said. “It was somewhere east of Jerusalem, but definitely not the Orient as we know it today. The reason we usually say three wise men is because of the three gifts mentioned—gold, frankincense and myrrh.”

Some scholars believe the magi—whose legendary names are Gaspar, Balthasar and Melchior—were versed in the Old Testament, which foretold the birth of Jesus. Warren said they may even have had a genetic link to the Hebrews through Jews who were captured and taken to Babylon, which eventually was conquered by the Medes and Persians. Warren said the Hebrew captives likely intermarried with the people of the area, and passed down the biblical prophecies of a messiah.

No one really knows when these visitors from the east arrived in Bethlehem, but it’s almost a certainty they didn’t show up a few minutes or even

hours after the shepherds arrived. It takes quite a while to travel by camel—the wise men’s likely mode of transportation.

Some scholars say it may have been as long as two years before the “kings” arrived to pay homage to the Christ Child, but Warren said he thinks it was within a few days or a week. Many Christians celebrate Jan. 6—the Epiphany—as the day when the wise men arrived in Bethlehem.

“They may have seen the star even before Jesus was born,” Warren said. “We really don’t know the exact date, but the birth of Christ has almost been proved to have been in the fall. It’s all just speculation when the magi arrived.”

In his book “The Christ of Christmas,” author James Boice stated that the story of the wise men “has been embellished widely both in literature and in art.”

Drawings of the wise men often appear on Christmas cards, and the “three kings” are almost always part of children’s Christmas pageants.

The magi’s legend has even made the Internet joke rounds with the suggestion that if they had been women instead of men, they would have arrived sooner because they would have stopped and asked directions; and would have brought more practical gifts such as diapers, formula and baby clothes.

The “unpractical” gifts brought by the magi were symbolic gestures, according to Boice, who calls them “The Gifts of Faith.”

“The fact that so little information is given about the wise men clearly shows that (the Gospel of Matthew) was not focused upon the wise men themselves,” Boice writes. “Rather, he was interested in the fact that the Gentiles came to worship the Jewish Messiah, and in the gifts they bore.”

Boice states that the gift of gold is “an appropriate gift for Jesus Christ” because it is “the metal of kings. When gold was presented to Jesus it acknowledged His right to rule. The wise men pointed to His kingship with their gold.”

Boice says the gold probably was used by Joseph to finance the family’s trip to Egypt after they learned of King Herod’s attempt to kill the Christ Child.

Frankincense, or incense, was a “significant gift” because it was used in the Temple worship, Boice writes. The incense was mixed with the oil used to anoint the priests of Israel.

“It was part of the meal offerings that were offerings of thanksgiving and praise to God,” Boice states. “In presenting this gift the wise men pointed to Christ as our great High Priest, the one whose whole life was acceptable and well pleasing to His Father.”

The last gift may have appeared somewhat odd to modern readers because myrrh was used in embalming.

But Boice states that it wasn’t odd in the least because myrrh was a very important item of commerce and a valuable commodity because it was used for funeral arrangements.

“By any human measure it would be odd, if not offensive, to present to the infant Christ a spice used for embalming,” Boice writes. “But it was not offensive in this case, nor was it odd. It was a gift of faith. We do not know precisely what the wise men may have known or guessed about Christ’s ministry, but we do know that the Old Testament again and again foretold His suffering.”

The wise men, who had inquired in Jerusalem of the whereabouts of the Christ Child, were summoned by Herod, who heard about the strange group of visitors. When he learned about the object of their search, he cunningly told them to let him know where he could find the Child so he could also worship Him, although his intentions actually were to kill Jesus.

The Scriptures say the wise men were warned in a dream not to let Herod know where the Child was living, and they returned home by a different route.

That in itself was an act of courage on their part, Warren said.

“We don’t know if they all had the same dream, or just one had the dream,” Warren said, “but it was a bold move on their part not to return to Herod.”

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NAMB Christmas commercial highlights Sept. 11 response

By James Dotson
SBC North American Mission Board

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)—A new television commercial produced by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board will point people in New York—and many other areas of the country—to the hope found in Christ at Christmas.

Scheduled for broadcast until Dec. 30 on cable television outlets in New York City, the spot is designed as a follow-up to ongoing Southern Baptist disaster relief efforts in the city, said NAMB President Robert Reccord.

“In a time when we have the uncertainties of war and a possible recession ... we thought it would be good for Southern Baptists to remind the country there is hope, and this hope is found in Jesus Christ,” he said.

The television campaign was the suggestion of several pastors interested in the Southern Baptist response to the Sept. 11 attacks, Reccord said. There also are plans to air the ad in other parts of the country, including New York State, central Florida and north Georgia.

The spot, which opens with the question “What Will Become of This Child?” juxtaposes images of a newborn baby with images of the heroism and self-sacrifice that surrounded the terrorist attack in New York.

“Will his feet walk with others in times of trouble?” it asks, followed by shots of individuals helping others away from the disaster scene.

Similar cuts accompany the remaining

questions:

“Will his lips speak words of kindness and encouragement? Will his arms embrace and comfort those in need? Will he see through the eyes of compassion? Will his ears hear the longing of people’s hearts?”

The last phrase, “Will he be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice?” is followed by a wider shot of the baby and His surroundings—now obviously Jesus in a manger.

The answer, in white text centered on a black background, is simply “Yes.”

The ad then closes with a striking image of the steel-beam cross that recovery workers found at the World Trade Center site, accompanied by the words, “Jesus Christ, the true hope of Christmas. A message from Southern Baptists.”

“It’s a reminder of the sacrifice Christ made, that He was willing to give up His life to others—using the analogy of the firefighters who were willing to do that at the World Trade Center,” Reccord said.

He noted that NAMB hopes to follow up with a more evangelistically oriented spot next year that will include a telephone number for response.

The commercial, produced by NAMB’s FamilyNet subsidiary, follows a similar effort in late October in which a full-page ad in USA Today proclaimed, “There is Hope” through Jesus Christ.

The TV spot also has been made available to churches, state conventions, and associations to broadcast in their local areas, Reccord said.

Giving and receiving

In his farewell to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:35, the Apostle Paul reminded them of these words of the Lord Jesus Himself: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Every serious Christian steward has confirmed this truth in his or her life.

However, many Christian stewards are not aware of giving options today that did not exist in Jesus and Paul’s days. These options provide both an intangible spiritual benefit and a tangible financial benefit. By utilizing one or more of these options, you can receive income for your lifetime and the lifetime of someone you love, and at the same time leave a legacy for the future ministry of the Baptist cause you want to benefit.

The three giving options to which I refer are a charitable gift annuity, a charitable remainder trust and a charitable lead trust. All three provide some favorable tax advantages, and you can establish them with gifts of cash or appreciated securities. In some instances, appreciated real estate can be used. With current interest rates at 30-year lows, this is a good time to consider using a maturing CD to increase your income with one of these options. Charitable gift annuities are

particularly attractive at this time. Examples of our guaranteed rates are: 6.4 percent at age 60; 7.2 percent at age 70; 8.9 percent at age 80; and 12 percent at age 90.

Married couples or parents of children age 50 or older may choose two-life annuities. At the death of the surviving annuitant the funds not paid to the annuitants will be used to support the Baptist cause the annuitants selected at the time of the gift.

A charitable gift annuity is an ideal way to provide income for yourself and someone you love without the burden of managing the assets you exchange for the annuity. It is income that cannot shrink and you cannot outlive. If you do not need the income now, you have the option of a deferred gift annuity. This is particularly attractive if you have maxed-out the contributions to your retirement plan.

Call Laurie Valentine or me for information about giving and receiving.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

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

Salvation Army braces for growing gay rights protests

By Mark O'Keefe
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Gay rights activists are stuffing fake \$3 and \$5 bills into the Salvation Army's red kettles this holiday season, protesting its denial of health benefits to gay partners of its employees.

The protests have been scattered so far. But officials at the Salvation Army—which takes in more donations than any other charity in the country—worry that they will mushroom after the holidays, making the organization, like the Boy Scouts of America, a symbol in the divisive battle over homosexual rights.

Gay rights groups have hinted that a broad-based, national campaign might be unleashed when the timing is right. They have been reluctant to go on the offensive while bombs drop in Afghanistan and amid public desire for domestic unity in the aftermath of Sept. 11.

But "when all of this subsides, and it will, this issue with the Salvation Army will still be there and there will be a reaction," said David Smith, a spokesman for the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign, a leading gay rights group. "The same thing will happen to them that happened to the Boy Scouts."

The Boy Scouts ban gays, and in communities across the country, homosexual activists have put pressure on the United Way, a major source of scout funding, to withhold money.

The current hullabaloo arises from

the Salvation Army's decision—and later reversal of that decision—to permit its 13-state western territory to offer benefits to "legally domiciled adults," a broad term that could include gay partners of employees.

"What can seem like a relatively insignificant decision—even a well-intentioned one—can five, 10 or 15 years down the line be one of historical significance. And this decision has that kind of importance," said retired Salvation Army national commander Robert Watson, referring to the insurance benefit.

"Is this homophobic? Some people might call it that. Those who judge us might use some of those terms.

"But if we change who we are to accommodate our culture or the pressures of those who would try to reshape us, we aren't who we say we are."

The Salvation Army, begun in London in 1865, says it is an evangelical Christian organization that serves the needy without discrimination.

The Army also maintains that sex outside marriage is sinful. And in 1998, the Army gave up \$3.5 million from San Francisco rather than comply with a 1996 requirement that organizations doing business with the city provide the same benefits to same-sex domestic partners as to married couples.

In late October, the Salvation Army's national policymaking team, the Commissioners Conference, decided to give each regional territory autonomy in making benefits decisions.

The western territory announced it would extend benefits to legally domiciled adults. San Francisco officials applauded.

But there was outrage on another front: Psychologist and evangelical radio host James Dobson, whose "Focus on the Family" is broadcast by more than 3,000 stations every week, urged listeners to protest the decision "because it will lead to similar decisions and compromises" at other Christian institutions.

The Army was flooded with complaints from donors and from members of the Salvation Army denomination, which is kept financially separate from the charity. Watson, the former national commander and author of "The Most Effective Organization in the U.S.," was among the influential critics.

In mid-November, the benefits decision was rescinded. "We deeply regret the perception that the Commissioners Conference surrendered any biblical principles in making the original decision," the charity said in a statement.

While that satisfied the Army's evangelical constituency, others were outraged.

"They are violating their own anti-discrimination language in their own mission statement and they're doing it absolutely in response to pressure from conservative religious groups," said Roey Thorpe, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon, based in Portland.

Thorpe has encouraged stuffing



red kettles with the fake bills, printed off the Internet. One bill says, "When the Salvation Army ends its policy of religious bigotry and discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people then, and only then, will this be a real dollar bill."

The Internet home page of the Washington-based Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbian and Gays also promotes the protests, which it says began with its Genesee County chapter near Flint, Mich.

Colonel Tom Jones, a national spokesman for the Salvation Army, said fake bills also have turned up in Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee. The impact has been insignificant considering that the Salvation Army collected \$1.4 billion in donations last year.

"There is something happening out there," Jones said of the scattered protests, "but it appears to be limited. At least at this point."

FAKE BILLS Roey Thorpe, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon, holds a \$3 bill printed off the Internet. Thorpe and other gay rights activists want to stuff such bills into Salvation Army donation kettles to protest the charity's decision not to offer health insurance benefits to same-sex partners of its employees. (RNS photo by Basil Childers)

Love

By Robert Dunston

Sharlene Dzugan, assistant professor of chemistry at Cumberland College, wrote this week's devotional on love.

She and her husband, Tom, who also teaches in Cumberland's chemistry department, have three children.

Dzugan grew up in Bangkok, Thailand, as a child of missionaries. Her hobbies include cross stitching and bridge.

Her devotional is based on Luke 2:10-11 and accents joy as well as love:

"For children, Christmas is a season of excitement, a season of fun, a season of joy. As a child, I heard stories from my friends about Christmas mornings with their families. Some went bounding into their parents' rooms waking them up. Others quietly crept downstairs while parents were still asleep and discovered all the goodies under the tree.

"That never happened at our house! My dad was always the first one up. He was the one who wouldn't wait; he was the one who woke the house! We would come downstairs to hot chocolate

and cinnamon buns. The joy of my father could not be contained!"

"Really, my dad's enthusiasm and excitement are totally appropriate for Christmas. On the first Christmas, the joy of the Father also could not be contained. The greatest gift was given, and the Father couldn't wait. He sent a

choir of angels to shepherds, filled the sky with music to wake the world. It's Christmas! Time to get up and see the gift!"

May this Christmas be a time for you to rejoice at God's wonderful gift of His Son Jesus Christ and to share God's love with everyone you meet.

Merry Christmas from the Cumberland College family to you!

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



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

Meeting Jesus

Decorations are a big part of the Christmas celebration. The timing of when certain decorations are set out, where they are placed and how much ceremony or fanfare accompany their arrival is a cornerstone of holiday traditions the world over.

Some of us might immediately think of the beautiful Christmas trees in Rockefeller Center or the White House, but it is the small ceremonies behind closed doors that perhaps mean the most and will stick with us for years to come. Even at our office here at Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, the nativity scene usually is set up in the same way with the figures placed in the same spots each year. It might seem like a small thing, but it is a comfort, especially in this time of uncertainty for our nation and our world.

While the china, wood or plastic figures of our nativity scenes may go up in the same way, putting Jesus in the same place every year, I'm glad the real Jesus doesn't stay in such a rut in our lives. In every trial, every celebration, He is there, supporting us, encouraging us, giving us joy, strength and hope.

There are children and teenagers currently in KBHC's care, or who were in our care earlier this year,

who are celebrating their first Christmas as believers in Christ. In some cases, a direct care counselor might have shared her testimony and the gospel with the girls in her care. Foster parents who pray over their foster children, read the Bible to them and faithfully take them to church, Sunday school and vacation Bible school have paved the way for

the Holy Spirit to work in those lives. Still other kids might have heard the gospel presented in a way that they had never heard before while attending a Christian concert, summer camp, a whitewater rafting weekend or the Greater Louisville Billy Graham Crusade.

Kentucky Baptists, without your prayers, donations and financial support, many of these venues I mentioned above

would not be available to our kids. Without your faithfulness, staff who are committed Christians might not want to come to work here. You make the difference. Thank you for making this Christmas so special for so many children. Merry Christmas.

HOMES FOR CHILDREN



Bill Smithwick

Bill Smithwick is president of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. Contact KBHC at (800) 456-1386 or at www.kbhc.org

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Graham named honorary knight.** Evangelist Billy Graham was presented with an honorary knighthood on Dec. 6 at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., in honor of his worldwide influence on religious life. In presenting the honor, British Ambassador Sir Christopher Meyer noted that Graham has conducted more missions in Britain than in any other country outside the U.S. since his first visit in 1946 when he was associated with Youth for Christ.

■ **ACLU offers Falwell support in lawsuit.** The American Civil Liberties Union has offered to support Jerry Falwell—usually a foe—in his challenge to Virginia laws. The ACLU offered to file a friend-of-the-court brief in Falwell's federal suit against the state and the city of Lynchburg. The suit challenges state laws limiting the amount of land that churches can own. Kent Willis, executive director of the state ACLU, said his group operates on distinct legal lines, which sometimes leads to "very different bedmates. ... This is an instance we believe Rev. Falwell is absolutely right."

■ **Biblical equality group names new leader.** Christians for Biblical Equality has a new president and chief executive officer. Mimi Haddad, who has been involved with the organization since 1989, has helped begin chapters of the organization across the continent. Haddad was appointed to succeed Catherine Clark Kroeger in June, when the organization held its biennial international conference. The organization believes the Bible teaches equality of men and women of all racial and ethnic groups.

■ **Presbyterians seek prayers for unity.** Leaders of the Presbyterian Church (USA) are asking other church members to pray for the denomination as divisions over homosexuality deepen. A move to remove a ban on noncelibate gay clergy has left the nation's largest Presbyterian body deeply battered. The measure was approved by last summer's annual meeting, but it must be ratified by a majority of the church's 173 regional presbyteries. Currently, the vote is running five to one against the measure.

■ **Airport prayer services ended.** The Jacksonville, Fla., Airport Authority has ended daily prayer services that began at the airport after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to avoid church-state entanglement. Under new guidelines created in late November on the advice of the authority's attorney, the authority closed the chaplain's office and has forbidden clergy volunteers at the airport to identify themselves as chaplains. "All of a sudden, boom, you can't do it anymore," said volunteer chaplain Tom Bane. "It was kind of a kick in the gut."

■ **Psychologists: Net sex highly addictive.** At least 200,000 Americans have a cybersex addiction, according to a San Jose, Calif., psychologist. Al Cooper and Kimberly Young, psychologist and author of "Tangled in the Web," told USA Today that such addictions aren't restricted to underachievers. Young said her clientele is loaded with lawyers, doctors, CEOs and elected officials. "These are people who go to church every Sunday," she said. "The Net is the crack cocaine of sex addiction."

School prayer struck down in one case, upheld in another

WASHINGTON (ABP)—School prayer received a boost in Florida but took a hit in Louisiana in recent court actions.

The U.S. Supreme Court sidestepped a school prayer controversy, leaving intact a Florida school policy that allows student-led "messages"—which may include prayer—at high school graduation exercises.

A federal appeals court, meanwhile, struck down a Louisiana law that judges said promotes school prayer.

The Supreme Court declined to review an 8-4 decision by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that upheld a policy of the Duval County School Board in Jacksonville, Fla. The policy allows high school seniors to decide by vote whether they want one of their classmates to deliver a "brief opening and/or closing message" at commencement ceremonies.

Opponents said the policy amounted to government-sponsored prayer, which courts have ruled unconstitutional. The appeals court said, however, that the policy could stand because it doesn't specifically encourage students to pray.

The appeals court earlier had upheld the Duval policy by a 10-2 margin, but had reconsidered the case at the request of the Supreme Court. The high court ruled in 2000 that student-led prayers at the beginning of football games in Texas were unconstitutional because school officials manip-

ulated the policy to ensure that prayers would be said at the football games.

The high court asked the 11th circuit to review the Jacksonville case in light of its decision on the Texas case.

The appeals court said the Florida case, *Adler vs. Duval County School Board*, differed from the one in Texas because prayer was not specifically listed as one of the options for students to choose.

Rick Mullaney, attorney for the Jacksonville school district, told the Florida Times-Union that the court was right to uphold the schools' policy, since it "does not advocate prayer at high school graduation ceremonies, nor does it prohibit it. It provides a level playing field."

Since the Supreme Court did not rule on the *Adler vs. Duval* case, the 11th Circuit's decision only applies in states over which it has jurisdiction—Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

Meanwhile, a three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has struck down a Louisiana law that allowed for spoken prayers in public school classrooms.

Louisiana legislators in 1999 amended a state law by deleting the word "silent" from a provision that previously allowed a brief time each day for silent prayer or meditation.

Civil-liberties groups filed suit on behalf of parents, saying the change permitted teacher- or principal-led school prayer, which the Supreme Court has ruled unconstitutional.

A new bridge over Goose Creek

Most of us get excited when something is given to us. Often the excitement wanes after a few days or weeks. Not often do we receive something that will make us smile for weeks, months or years. However, I predict that we have just received something that will bring smiles for many years to come.

If you have visited our campus and have driven across Goose Creek to see the farm, you had to cross the infamous "low water bridge." If you have never crossed a low water bridge, you cannot appreciate the anxiety that can accompany such a trip.

One reason for the anxiety is the fact that many low water bridges are not in the best condition. Often, you are not sure if you want to walk across, much less drive across. Fortunately, our bridge was hidden around a curve, so the folks we have taken across could not see it coming until we already were on it. We literally have taken thousands of visitors across our low water bridge to tour our campus and farm. Normally, it was only after we were on the bridge that the passengers could tell where they were, and their protests were too late.

The next point of concern is the fact that most low water bridges are not very wide. For the general motoring public used to traveling across four and six-lane bridges, the typical low water bridge has caused some to close their eyes in silent prayer.

Did I mention no guard rails? It is somehow reassuring to cross any bridge with railings. There is a sense of security that comes from believing that the railing, no matter what its condition, would somehow save us from careening over the side.

And finally, there is the anxiety that comes from crossing a low water bridge when the creek

is up, maybe even to the bottom of the bridge. Since I know what the reaction will be, I always begin to reassure my passengers as soon as we get on the bridge. I say that our staff and students cross this bridge dozens of times every day. There are always those visitors on board who do not care how many times we have crossed the bridge safely. They would rather not be crossing it!

Our new bridge is wonderful. It is rated to carry the same weight as any interstate bridge. It has rails—real, honest-to-goodness, heavy duty, they-really-will-stop-something-from-going-over-the-side guard rails. Best of all, it is 10 feet higher than the old bridge. That may not seem like much, but 10 additional feet for a low water bridge is a big deal! Come to think of it, I guess we cannot call it a "low water bridge" anymore. I suppose we will just call it "the bridge."

Those 10 feet mean that there will be very few days when the swollen creek will prevent us from crossing the bridge. In the past, there were many days each year when staff members were stranded on the other side of the creek. Typically, the creek is up for only two or three days. However, there have been times when the old bridge was under water for more than two weeks at a time.

Now we will be able to smile as we cross the creek on the new bridge, and remember all those days during the past 50 or so years when we would not have been able to. We are grateful for the county, state and federal funds that made our new bridge possible.

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Sawdust and straw for loggers

Home for Christmas will not be the same for Cynthia Potts and her three children. Her husband, Andy, died June 20 at the age of 40. "Andy was a logger and a Baptist pastor. He loved God, his family, friends and logging. He had a diesel mechanics degree, but I always said his blood was part diesel fuel," Cynthia remembered. "His calling was bivocational ministry. Andy felt God had prepared him to share the gospel in the workplace and on the church field. He thought because he had a secular job, he could relate to people in a special way."

In 1994, Andy read an article about bivocational ministry training at Clear Creek in a national newsletter for bivocational ministers. He applied for admission, and Cynthia applied for a teaching position in the area. An offer for her to teach came before his letter of acceptance.

"Once the letter arrived we knew God was leading in that direction. Andy sold his log truck, 'Smokey,' which was two years from being paid off. He resigned from a wonderful pastorate of nearly seven years. We refinanced our home. God blessed our time at Clear Creek, and we made many lifelong friends. We saw more snow than we

had ever seen in our lives! Andy often said the classes helped him be more comfortable in his leadership role and better prepared to study," Cynthia said.

Anxious to return to bivocational ministry Andy completed the two-year associate degree. A church near their home in Fayette, Ala., extended a call, and God provided

Cynthia a teaching position at the school where the children attended.

Diseased lungs and other complications because of sarcoidosis eventually required Andy to take disability from the logging job. Later, he had to give up the pastor's job. "God strengthened him. His journals are full of praise for God's help, opportunities to preach, help in the community and for special times with family and friends," Cynthia said.

Andy launched a newsletter, "Sawdust and Straw for Loggers," to encourage his friends in the logging industry. Cynthia continues the newsletter with much of the material coming from Andy's journals. Cynthia used 10 percent of a life insurance payment to establish the Andy Potts Bivocational Scholarship at Clear Creek.

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

What's in a name? Christian charity learns the hard way

By Elaine Ruth Fletcher
Religion News Service

JERUSALEM (RNS)—When President Bush announced recently that the U.S. government was freezing the assets of the Texas-based Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, a Franciscan priest based in Jerusalem braced for yet another round of negative publicity.

Peter Vasko is the president of a Jerusalem- and Washington, D.C.-based charity with a name that is strikingly similar to the Richardson, Texas, organization.

Vasko's charity, The Holy Land Foundation, raises money to provide scholarships, jobs and housing to Christians in the Holy Land. The aid is intended to help stem the tide of Christian emigration from the land of Jesus' birth.

But since Sept. 11, the similarity in the names of the two organizations—one Muslim and one Christian—has become a major headache to Vasko, who operates the charity's Jerusalem office from the grounds of the Franciscan St. Saviour's Monastery.

While the Texas-based Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development is suspected by the U.S. administration of secretly funneling millions of dollars to the military wing of the radical Islamic organization Hamas—allegations it denies—no one questions the legitimacy of Vasko's organization.

In fact, aside from his priestly and charitable duties, Vasko is a tour guide who frequently escorts official U.S. consular guests around the Jerusalem area.

But when Vasko founded The Holy Land Foundation in 1994, and had it incorporated in the United States as a nonprofit organization, he saw no particular reason to copyright the name. And a name search failed to unearth another group using exactly the same title, he added.

"We didn't have any real problems until about two and a half years ago, when some press articles began to appear about the Richardson ... organization. Even then, the confusion was very localized and limited to our supporters in Texas," Vasko said.

"But since Sept. 11, the repercussions have become much more. We have a public relations office in Indianapolis which began to get a lot of hate mail. We received messages saying things like, 'If you are supporting the horror that has struck our country, I hope you burn in hell.'"

"When the name started to appear, people became very confused," said Denise Scalzo, of San Diego, who serves as vice president of the Christian charity. "We wrote to our legal counsels and to the major news organizations asking them to make a more careful distinction between the two groups. But even so, Americans just see the words 'Holy Land Foundation,' and it just doesn't register."

The confusion reached a new peak

this month when Bush announced the moves against the Texas-based Holy Land Foundation. Vasko immediately tried to contact the White House to ask officials there to use the extended name of the organization—Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development.

"I spoke to Josh Lefbroski, in the office of the Chief of Staff, who said that 'Holy Land Foundation,' unfortunately, was the name they had received from the Treasury Department. And when I tried to talk to the Treasury's assistant director for public affairs, Michelle Davis, she never returned my messages."

To make matters even more complicated, the Muslim organization recently has been using a more abbreviated form of its original name on its Web site, which features a strong denial of the U.S. government's allegations of its link to terrorism.

Vasko is a native New Yorker whose Brooklyn accent remains pronounced, even after 17 years in Jerusalem. In the early 1990s, as a young priest and tour guide assigned to the Franciscan monastery here, Vasko became increasingly concerned about the plight of Christian families who, because of economic and political strife, were leaving the country for Australia, Canada or the United States.

He convened an ecumenical meeting of Christian leaders from the Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian churches in order to address the issue.

"Most church officials say that within 60 years, if nothing is done to stem the Christian exodus, there will be no native Christian presence left in the land of Jesus' birth," Vasko said.

In 1995, the Jerusalem- and Washington-based Holy Land Foundation launched its first operations. Running on a modest budget of \$600,000 to \$900,000 a year, the organization has awarded scholarships to about 40 Christian students, helping them pursue higher education in the region, rather than going abroad. The scholarships are granted on condition that the students remain in the Holy Land for at least three years after the completion of their studies.

The foundation also offers job placement assistance for young Christians. And it recently completed a 13-unit housing project for young Christian families in the east Jerusalem suburb of Beit Hanina. Vasko says the aid effort is aimed at Christians of all stripes and affiliations, from Orthodox to Protestant and Coptic.

Even before Sept. 11, The Holy Land Foundation had experienced a dip in donations, which are collected primarily via its five regional U.S. offices.

"One of our principal ways of securing new donors is to meet with them when they come here on pilgrimage, and see the plight of Christians for themselves," Vasko said. "But for the past year and three months, we've had almost no tourists."

Confusion reached a new peak when President Bush announced new actions against a similarly named charity in Texas.

Muslims expand attacks on Indonesian churches

JAKARTA, Indonesia (BP)—Thousands of extremist Muslim fighters armed with automatic weapons have attacked Christian villages in Indonesia's Central Sulawesi province.

Already they have burned churches and thousands of homes, sending residents fleeing.

With a rallying theme of "No Christmas candles," the Muslim militia has threatened to eliminate churches and Christians from the area before year's end.

Perhaps as many as 63,000 Christians are trapped in the predominantly Christian city of Tentena.

One missionary in Indonesia said he fears the "jihad warriors" will break through to Tentena and massacre the Christians who have taken refuge there.

Five truckloads of Indonesian troops arrived Nov. 30 to provide protection. Their arrival apparently frus-

trated the advance of the "Laskar Jihad" on the city.

The Laskar Jihad is responsible for fighting in nearby Maluku province that has killed about 9,000 people since 1999. At least 1,000 people have been killed in Sulawesi in the past two years.

Almost 2,000 new Muslim fighters arrived in Sulawesi in the past month, according to police reports.

A policeman said he saw Muslim fighters stopping civilians at roadblocks and executing those found to be Christians.

"The Christians trapped in the Tentena area are waiting for the slaughter to begin," the missionary reported. "They feel helpless as thousands flee their homes and watch their homes, schools and churches burned to the ground."

The Christians, and even some policemen and soldiers, have been terri-

fied and largely defenseless, he said.

"The Christians of Poso (a nearby town) have seen the police and military flee into the forest as villages are attacked," he said.

The few Christians who have organized to resist the Muslim militia are armed only with homemade rifles and bows and arrows, the missionary said.

The attacks are part of a campaign by Muslim extremists to turn Indonesia into a strict Islamic state.

The country's constitution guarantees freedom of religion. While 88 percent of the population is Muslim, Christians constitute an 8 percent minority and in some places are the majority.

"As we cry out to God, beseeching Him to stop the slaughter, may we also ask His mercy upon those who perpetrate such atrocities," said Southern Baptist prayer leader Randy Sprinkle.

English churches launch campaign for 'Real Christmas'

MANCHESTER, England (RNS)—An advertising campaign to remind people what Christmas is really all about has been launched by a group of 150 congregations across the denominational spectrum in and around Manchester, England.

The campaign features 30-second TV advertisements during peak viewing hours. They began airing in late November during some of the most popular shows.

The campaign takes the popular football supporters' chant "Sing your heart out for the lads" and subtly

adapts it by putting it into the singular: "Sing your heart out for the Lad." It invites people to attend a carol service during Advent in one of their local churches.

Carol services are described by Stephen Goddard, director of communications for the Church of England diocese of Manchester, as "a natural way in" for those who would not normally see themselves as churchgoers.

"Attending carol services is not perceived as a committedly religious act—merely part of what makes Christmas Christmas," he said.

"Through this initiative, the church is taking advantage of its own inheritance."

The ads feature former England football star Kevin Keegan, athlete Diane Modahl, rugby player Apollo Perelini and dozens of ordinary citizens encouraging people to attend a carol service and "sing their hearts out for the Lad"—to the tune of "Cwm Rhondda," a popular hymn tune usually sung with the words of the 18th century Welsh hymn-writer William Williams Pantycelyn, "Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer."

Southern Baptists using store to reach people in restricted nation

SOUTHEAST ASIA (BP)—A Southern Baptist husband and wife team are using business savvy to reach the people of a restricted-access country in Southeast Asia with the message of Christ.

Partnering with national Christians who work as shopkeepers, the Southern Baptists have set up a store at the border between their own country and a neighboring, more open, country. They minister to nearly 5,000 people crossing monthly from the restricted country.

Their goal is to create a Christ-like environment, making the store a platform for discussions about Christ, explained the husband, who cannot be identified for security reasons.

"We started the store very simply, with about \$1,500 worth of stock," he said. They also taught shopkeepers basic lessons on buying, selling and finding good products that would interest people crossing the border.

The results have been amazing. Despite political restrictions, the longstanding reign of Buddhism and growing nationalism in their country, the couple's ministry is reaching many people who otherwise would not hear the good news.

Christian shopkeepers go the extra mile, allowing visitors to stay long after the shops close.

During after-hour visits, and sometimes during the day, they share Christian literature and show evangelistic films.

The couple realizes that these initial efforts at engaging the people with the gospel are critical to future church planting. The message is spreading. Newer groups of believers are seeking out older believers, receiving instruction and training, and taking it back to their villages.

They also know the clock is ticking. They said they feel as though they have "a window of opportunity—perhaps five years" before the country is completely closed, unless a great revival takes place.

"That is our sense of urgency," he said.

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:

■ The salvation of the landlord of missionaries Buddy, Sherry and Trey Gregg in Warsaw, Poland. The man and another missionary now are meeting regularly for Bible study.

■ A team of Russian and American Christians in Moscow who are writing a series of inductive Bible studies in Russian.

■ Al and Janice Smith who are scheduled to arrive in Arusha, Tanzania, on Jan. 2 to serve until July as International Service Corps missionaries. They will teach in the English certificate program.

■ Three English classes recently begun by Baptist representative Nancy Dill in Thuringen, Germany. Dill asks for prayer that she will be able to share more with the students about her faith in God.

■ Sasha Alexeitsev, a Russian national who is seeking permission from the government to show the "Jesus" film and start a Bible study in northern Moscow.

■ Neal Davidson, associate executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by staff

■ BENTON—Pleasant Hope Church ordained **John Bedwell** to the gospel ministry.

■ CADIZ—Ferguson Spring Church ordained **James Edmons** as a deacon. Hurricane Church called **Michael Wimberly** as pastor.

Liberty Point Church licensed **Paxton Reed** to the ministry.

■ CAMPBELLSVILLE—Lowell Avenue Church called **Benji Kelly** as youth minister. **Dave Walters** is pastor.

■ HOPKINSVILLE—First Church will host Christian comedian **Dennis Swanberg** Dec. 30, 6 p.m. For information, call (270) 886-1216. **Rodney Travis** is pastor.

■ PRINCETON—First Church or-

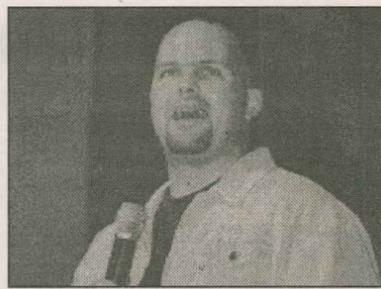
dained **Kevin Austin** as a deacon. **Thomas Hughes** is pastor.

■ RINEYVILLE—**Odis Weaver** resigned as pastor of Rineyville Church to become director of missions for Three Rivers Association in Joliet, Ill.

■ ROCKFIELD—Providence Knob Church ordained **Jeff Summerville** and **Larry Yates** as deacons. **Joe Causey** is pastor.

What's going on?

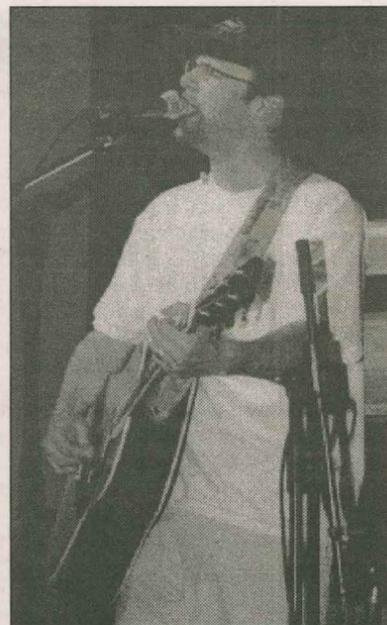
Send your happenings to Mountains to the Mississippi. Mail: Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. Fax: (502) 244-6474. E-mail: wesrec@ntr.net.



YOUTH FOCUS More than 9,200 youth attended a series of eight Kentucky Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference events this year from April through November. Coordinator **Randy Record** said approximately 200 young people made professions of faith.

■ Above: **Clayton King** was the featured speaker at the recent Quest 2001 event at Cumberland College in Williamsburg.

■ Right: A member of **Caedmon's Call** performs at the rally on Cumberland's campus.



Churches can provide timely ministry to military families

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (ABP)—A young woman gets the call on a Friday. Five days later she's saying goodbye to her children for possibly a year. She's trained in the Army reserves for years, and now this mom is being deployed.

Army Reserve Chaplain Lt. Col. Scott Boyd, deputy staff chaplain of the 88th Regional Support Command at Fort Snelling in Minneapolis, has watched this and similar heart-tugging farewells repeated by one family after another. Boyd, pastor of Temple Baptist of Champaign, Ill., has been involved in the deployment of two Army Reserve units in Illinois.

"It was nothing like I ever experienced before," Boyd said. "It's almost like dying when they're saying goodbye" because they realize there's always a chance that their loved ones might not come back.

Reserve units and the National Guard constitute more than half of the United States' armed forces. Many have been summoned to active duty since the American military began pummeling Afghanistan to ferret out Osama bin Laden and other alleged masterminds of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

In the weeks following deployment, Boyd said, those spouses left

behind will battle loneliness. If they're parents, many wonder how they'll raise their families without help from their spouses. Children often feel betrayed, and they don't know "when their mommies and daddies are coming back."

Churches and Christians can play a significant role in helping these families ease the stress that comes with the adjustments they face, he said.

An easy first step, Boyd noted, is to express appreciation about the sacrifice the families have to make because their loved ones have left to serve their country. He said many of them feel others do not truly under-

stand their ordeal.

He said other options include volunteering to watch their children so the parent has time to go shopping, run other errands or just get a break. Offering to help with routine chores such as shoveling snow or car maintenance also is helpful.

Boyd said church members can help spouses combat loneliness by inviting them to a men's or women's group at church to help them develop new relationships.

"This is not a church growth thing," he explained. "This is a ministry if churches feel called of God to do it."

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: Bivocational pastor for Southern Baptist church. Average Sunday morning worship service attendance: 60. Send resumé to: Mt. Eden Baptist Church, PO Box 310, Hawesville, KY 42348, Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

SEEKING: Growing, Christ-centered church seeks part-time children's/preschool director (25 hours a week). Interested candidates should submit resumé to: Personnel Committee, Bethlehem Baptist Church, 5708 Preston Highway, Louisville, KY 40219; fax: (502) 964-9678.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of students. Salary negotiable. Church is centrally located between Louisville and Lexington, 11 miles north of Shelbyville. Please submit resumé to: Minister of Students Search Committee, Eminence Baptist Church, PO Box 134, Eminence, KY 40019. For information, call (502) 845-4154.

SEEKING: Audubon Baptist Church seeking full-time pastor to lead a moderate church who has adopted the 1963 faith and message statement. Located at the edge of the Audubon Park area. Seeking an individual who will be a partner in defining God's direction for the church. Thankful for more than 50 years of service and excited about God's plan for the future. Currently 80 to 100 in Sunday school and 100 to 150 in Sunday morning worship service. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Audubon Baptist Church, 1046 Hess Lane, Louisville, KY 40217.

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: Full-time pastor for First Baptist Church, Lebanon Junction, Ky. Average worship attendance: 140. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 577, Lebanon Junction, KY 40150.

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

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

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: 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. Seminary master's degree, minimum 5-10 years experience. Require strong congregational ministry skills as well as strong pulpit and counseling skills. Include salary requirements with resumé. Cut-off date for receiving resumé: Feb. 1, 2002. Mail to: Pastor Selection Committee, Goochland Baptist Church, 2454 Manakin Road, Manakin-Sabot, VA 23103. For more information about our church, go to www.goochlandchurch.org.

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

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: 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.

Pearl Harbor healing

Survivor-turned-Baptist preacher tells story of hatred, forgiveness

By Matt Sanders
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

HONOLULU (BP)—When the bombs that fell on Pearl Harbor in 1941 were changing the course of world history, they also were changing the course of one man's life and those who would be touched by his ministry.

Sixty years after the Dec. 7 attack, Joe Morgan still recounts the horror of Japan's surprise raid to many visitors at the Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor. When he does so, he shares how God helped him reclaim the call to preach and heal the scar of hatred that the attack had left on his life.

"He's like the Arizona Memorial's Billy Graham," said Morgan's son Robert.

Every Thursday, despite failing health, Morgan tells his story once or twice. And almost every time, it leaves people in tears.

"Grown men and women dealing with anger and hatred, this story brings them to a catharsis," said Robert Morgan, who assists his father during his talks. "Some can't say anything. They can only hug him."

Growing up in Little River, Texas, in the 1920s and '30s, Morgan felt from the moment that he committed his life to Christ at the age of 6 that God was calling him to preach.

Morgan intended to go to college and then seminary, but when he flunked a history class, he dropped out of high school and joined the Navy.

In the Navy, he began to drift away from God, living the stereotypical life of a young sailor. He began to drink alcohol, swear, smoke, chew tobacco and stay far away from church.

But even in his rebellion, Morgan said, "The Lord never turned me loose all this time. I knew He had a hold of my tail."

The morning of the attack, Morgan was on duty on Ford Island in the middle of Pearl Harbor when he heard planes approaching. At first he and the other sailors thought the planes were from U.S. aircraft carriers staging a mock attack. Then the sailors heard an explosion.

They thought a plane had crashed until they saw a plane dropping two bombs on a nearby runway. As it pulled out of its dive, they saw the symbol of the Rising Sun and knew Japan was attacking.

Morgan admits that his first reaction was fear and that he initially hid. But when he saw other men fir-

ing at the planes with pistols and rifles, Morgan knew he had to help. Trained to maintain and man machine guns, he joined the desperate effort to mount machine guns on planes near the hangar.

Morgan manned the last gun mounted and as he fired he became gripped by anger at the attackers. Morgan recalled helping shoot down one of the enemy planes, which eventually went into a kamikaze dive hitting the U.S.S. Curtis. He stayed at the gun throughout the night as the island feared further attacks. He didn't suffer physical wounds, but he left the battle scarred by a deep hatred for the Japanese.

"I think the anger was approved by God, but not the hatred that followed," he said.

While manning the gun through the night, Morgan said, "I promised the Lord that if I lived through the war, I'd get out of the Navy and get my training to be a preacher."

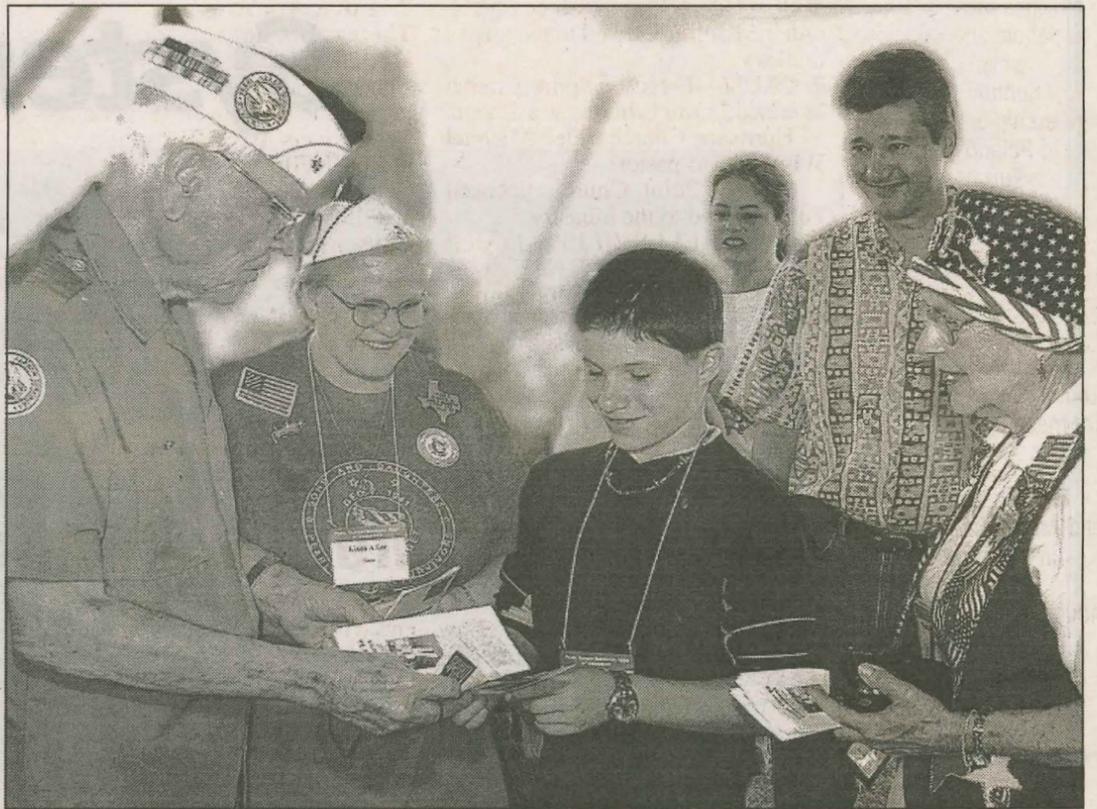
Shortly after the attack, Morgan was transferred to another unit on Maui while his previous unit was sent to the South Pacific where it suffered heavy casualties. Morgan felt God had a reason for protecting him, and the only wound he carried from the war was his hatred-turned-animosity for the Japanese.

After the war, Morgan kept his promise to God, graduating from college and seminary.

The war had affected Morgan another way. He had fallen in love with the islands and he had fallen in love with Blanche Fernandes, a Hawaiian woman who became his wife of nearly 60 years until her death in August. After graduating from seminary, he accepted the pastorate of Wailuku Baptist Church on Maui in 1954.

But as he faithfully followed God's call, he also carried his hatred for the Japanese. He never hated Japanese Americans who abound in Hawaii, just those from Japan. Two years into his Wailuku pastorate, Morgan heard that Mitsuo Fuchida, the Japanese naval commander who led the attack on Pearl Harbor, was speaking on Maui. "He was flying high above my head that day, giving orders to his pilots over the radio," Morgan recalls in his written account. But Fuchida had become a Christian after meeting a former prisoner of war who had returned to post-war Japan as a missionary.

Morgan felt the animosity resurface and didn't know "whether to shake Fuchida's hand or shoot him" if they ever met. After praying, he decided to attend Fuchida's talk.



"God gave me the grace to listen," he recalled.

After the talk, Morgan, touched but still unsure of how he felt, introduced himself to Fuchida as a Pearl Harbor survivor. Fuchida bowed slightly, said "Gomenasai (I'm sorry)," and reached out to shake Morgan's hand.

At that moment, Morgan said he realized God had changed his heart.

"The anger, hatred and animosity toward this man and his country were gone," he said. "It was not how great of a Christian I was, but how great of a God I had."

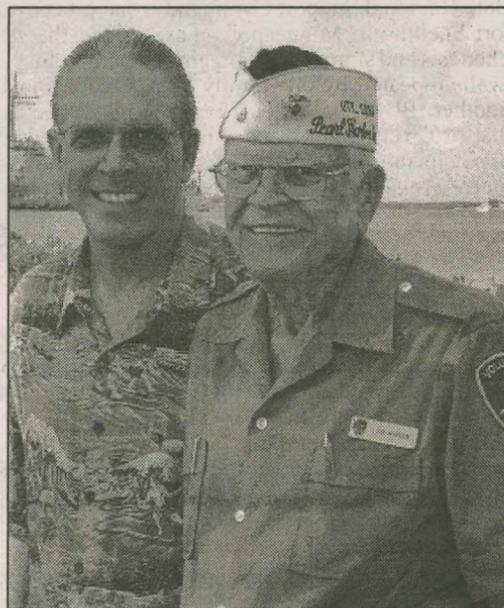
"We shook hands not as former enemies but as brothers in Christ," Morgan says at the close of every presentation on the memorial. "We both had received God's mercy and forgiveness."

"I believe what we both experienced is the answer to bringing peace to the world today."

Morgan served several other churches in Hawaii and later returned to the military as a chaplain, including two tours in Vietnam.

He returned to Hawaii as a pastor before health problems forced him to retire. He's the chaplain of the Pearl Harbor Survivors and the honorary chaplain of the Arizona Memorial. In addition to sharing with thousands of visitors about God's work in his life, Morgan performs weddings and funerals for survivors and park rangers on the memorial. He shares his testimony through a brochure that he prints at his expense and distributes to anyone who wants one.

Morgan's son often reminds his father of the important "church"



FREE TO FORGIVE
Pearl Harbor survivor Joe Morgan tells his story of "Fear to Forgiveness" 60 years after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. ■ Above: Morgan (left) visits with tourists at Pearl Harbor's Arizona Memorial Visitors Center. ■ Left: Morgan and his son, Robert, share Morgan's journey from hatred of the Japanese to forgiveness each Thursday at the memorial. Both father and son are ordained Southern Baptist ministers. ■ Inset: Morgan as a young sailor in Wailuku, Maui, in 1942. (BP photos)

Morgan now serves at the Arizona Memorial.

"The park rangers adore him," said the younger Morgan, also an ordained minister, "and to the congregation of tourists he can say whatever he wants to say about how Pearl Harbor changed his life."

Because of a loss of short-term memory, Morgan can no longer tell his story himself. Instead of a monologue, his son interviews him and helps him through rough spots.

Recently, a young man visited the Arizona Memorial after losing his fiancé in the World Trade Center attack. After hearing Morgan's story, he said, "You're helping me heal."

In a life that has included the attack on Pearl Harbor, World War II, Vietnam, three heart bypass surgeries and a heart attack, Morgan agrees with his son that telling his story of what God has done in his life is the only reason he is still alive.

"He's still here," his son notes, "because I believe he has a story to tell that you need to hear."

Our sincere thanks to our Baptist Healthcare System



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