

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

WESTERN RECORDER

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FOR THE RECORD

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Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, January 9

Americans giving churches a smaller portion of income

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (RNS)—Americans are giving a smaller percentage of their income to churches than they did three decades ago, a new report claims.

Church members donated 2.58 percent of their income to churches in 1999, a drop of 17 percent from 1968 when giving was 3.1 percent of income, reported empty tomb, a Champaign, Ill., organization.

The giving information is based on data from 29 denominations.

Researchers found that member giving as a portion of income to congregational finances—which support local operation costs of a house of worship—was 2.18 percent, which is on a par with giving levels to that category in the mid-1970s.

Giving as a portion of income to benevolences—which support activities beyond the local congregation—was 0.4 percent, a slight increase from the 1998 level of 0.39 percent. The 1998 level was the lowest recorded between 1968 and 1999.

The slight increase meant, at the aggregate level, congregations in the denominations studied gave \$42.8 million more to activities such as mission outreach, denominational support and seminary aid in 1999 than they did in 1998.

“The State of Church Giving Through 1999” by John and Sylvia Ronsvalle, the 11th in an annual series, was released Dec. 14.

Among its other findings:

■ A comparison of eight denominations affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals and seven tied to the National Council of Churches found that both received a smaller portion of income for total contributions in 1999 than in 1968, on a per-member basis.

■ Membership as a portion of U.S. population for a set of 37 Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church dropped from 45 percent in 1968 to 39 percent in 1999.

■ Giving was higher as a portion of income in 1933, in the depth of the Great Depression, than in 1999.

Faithful begin exploring forgiveness in wake of attacks & war

By Yonat Shimron
Religion News Service

RALEIGH, N.C. (RNS)—Four times a week in a sparse room not far from the Duke University campus, a handful of people sit in a circle and pray for peace.

They pray for Americans and others killed Sept. 11.

They pray for Afghanistan’s children, many of whom are starving.

And, quietly, in moments of silence, they pray for Osama bin Laden and the Taliban—convinced that as Christians they must pray for their persecutors.

And forgive them.

That the group is so small and its prayers for the enemy so private is evidence of how hard it is to broach the

issue of forgiveness, much less to put it into practice. Although forgiveness is a central tenet of every major faith, ministers and theologians say they need to do more to teach habits that would help the faithful let go of hatreds large and small, and move toward reconciliation.

“That’s one of the things we don’t talk about that much—we don’t really explore the concept,” said Lee Walsh of Carrboro, N.C., a member of Chapel of the Cross Episcopal Church in Chapel Hill. A committee there has been wrestling unsuccessfully for about a year with how to offer adults a course on forgiveness in a way that would allow them to explore their own hang-ups and not just their grievances with others.

Terror attacks in the United States

and war in Afghanistan have spurred a flurry of forums on war and peace, justice and reconciliation. Religious leaders across the spectrum have called on the U.S. to spare civilians in the war on terrorism and to seek justice, not revenge. But the public discussion of forgiveness is just beginning.

Is it too soon? Is the memory of terrorists crashing into the World Trade Center, a Pennsylvania field and the Pentagon too fresh in a jittery nation’s collective mind?

“I wouldn’t want to jump too quickly to say, ‘Oh, let’s forgive,’” said Gregory Jones, dean of Duke Divinity School. “It would short-circuit issues of accountability and repentance that are key ingredients in the issue of reconciliation.”

Donald Shriver, author of “An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics” and president emeritus of Union Theological Seminary in New York, agreed.

“The people who suffered the most from this need time to grieve,” he said. “Forgiveness has to be in our agenda, but so does living with this pain. There’s a trivialization of forgiveness if you rush into it.”

Then there’s the question of whom to forgive. The direct perpetrators—the 19 hijackers—are dead. Bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of the terror attacks, and his al-Qaida followers have not asked to be forgiven and don’t seem likely to.

That poses a special challenge for the faithful. In their respective Scrip-
□ See Christians, others ..., page 7

Baptistsmut.com

Pornography groups snatch expired Christian Web sites, seeking lure and profits

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

INDIANAPOLIS (ABP)—Visiting a few Baptist Web sites can be a hair-raising experience.

Some Internet pornography peddlers have taken to “hijacking” Web sites that previously were affiliated with Baptist and other Christian ministries.

These hijackers are putting porn on the expired sites either to lure unsuspecting visitors to subscription pornographic sites or to earn a profit by selling the Web address back to their original owners at an inflated price.

The Indiana Baptist newspaper is among the latest victims of a scheme that has affected various ministries, non-profit organizations, government agencies and political leaders.

Six months after the Indianapolis-based paper moved its content to a new Baptist state convention Web site, www.scbi.org, it gave up its rights to a former domain name. The day the old address became available, pornography appeared on the old site.

Registered to a person supposedly in an obscure location in Russia, the bogus Baptist page now warns that it contains adult content and includes a note that the site is for sale.

Indiana Baptist Editor Chip Bayer said he considers it an indirect form of extortion, which
□ See Pornography showing up ..., page 8



BAPTISTS

Baptist journalists rate Sept. 11 top story

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP)—Events of Sept. 11 overshadowed denominational controversy in a ranking of last year's top news stories by Baptist journalists.

Editors of Baptist newspapers rated reaction to and ministry following Sept. 11 terrorist attacks as 2001's top story. Two other stories related to the attacks—debate over Islam and controversial remarks by Jerry Falwell—also made the top 10.

Denominational turmoil in Missouri ranked second, followed by a recent dispute between a Southern Baptist mission board and the District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

Responding to an annual informal survey by Associated Baptist Press, Baptist journalists voted the following top 10 stories of 2001:

1. Baptists and others react to Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, seeking to minister in its wake.
2. Turmoil grips the Missouri Baptist Convention. Five agencies, including state Baptist paper Word & Way, adopt self-perpetuating boards. Con-

servatives who control the state convention take steps to recover agencies by legal action, if necessary, and es-crow funding for the current year. Moderate churches develop an alternative giving plan administered through the Missouri Baptist Foundation. Moderate leaders discuss plans to form a separate state convention.

3. The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board questions its relationship with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, citing stewardship concerns about the convention's triple alignment and indifference to Southern Baptist convention doctrinal concerns. In response, NAMB calls for unprecedented input into decision making of an autonomous state convention.

4. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship adopts a policy against funding any organizations that promote or endorse homosexuality. Described as "welcoming but not affirming" of gays, some constituents protest the change. It is upheld, however, by a wide majority at the CBF's General Assembly in July.

5. President Bush announces and pushes faith-based initiatives to make

it easier for religious institutions to receive federal funds for performing social services. Supporters say restrictions on religious ministries violate religious freedom. Opponents, however, say using federal funds to promote particular religious views violates the separation of church and state.

6. Two professors at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary lose their jobs rather than endorse recent changes to the Baptist Faith and Message statement.

7. (Tie) Atlanta Baptist Association debates and divides over whether to keep two member churches that include homosexuals in all areas of church life. Eventually one church leaves voluntarily and the second is dismissed.

7. (Tie) Debate over Islam results from Sept. 11 attacks. Fearing for safety of Muslim-Americans, President Bush highlights the religion's positive contributions. SBC President James Merritt urges prayer that Muslims will be converted to Christ. Evangelist Franklin Graham calls Islam an evil religion. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Al Mohler says Muslims and Christians don't worship the same God.

9. Jerry Falwell makes, then apologizes for, remark on Pat Robertson's "700 Club" that the Sept. 11 attacks are evidence that God has removed a protective hand over America, blaming the ACLU and others that seek to secularize the nation. Afterward, the episode shows up in a Falwell fundraising letter as evidence of the media being out to get Falwell.

10. (Tie) A national Mainstream Baptists network begins to take shape with a February meeting. Another national gathering is planned for 2002.

10. (Tie) The Southern Baptist International Mission Board says in January that, unlike other SBC entities, it won't force missionaries to agree with every detail of the Baptist Faith and Message. Later, an IMB regional leader said he acted on his own in requesting workers under his supervision to voluntarily endorse the document.

SBC president outlines goals, lessons learned

LOUISVILLE (BP)—The dawn of 2002 marks the midway point in James Merritt's second one-year term as Southern Baptist Convention president. His presidency will conclude at the close of the 2002 SBC annual meeting June 11-12 in St. Louis.

Reflecting on his first 18 months in office during a recent visit to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Merritt said he has "learned a tremendous amount."

"First of all, the saying really is true, 'Everything rises and falls on leadership,' everything," he noted. "The second thing I've learned is that leadership ... is based on relationship—the ability to relate to people, to get on their level, which then dictates your ability to motivate people to catch your vision for what needs to be done and to help you achieve that vision."

One aspect of leadership Merritt sees as crucial to success is the ability to stay the course of biblical conviction despite a postmodern culture's rejection of it.

"It takes courage to be a leader," he said. "If you're going to be a leader, you're going to have to make unpopular decisions. If you're going to be a leader, you have to realize up front that you cannot please everybody."

Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga., was re-elected SBC president by acclamation. Despite controversy and division in the SBC over the past 20 years, Merritt said he believes the denomination is about the business of winning souls and propagating the gospel.

"I anticipate (the SBC) will be peaceful for a while," he said. "I think that there's a tremendous sense of unity and harmony in the convention and excitement about what we're trying to do, what we're trying to accomplish. I think there is a strong confidence in the leadership of the convention, and I think right now Southern Baptists are a happy people."

Still, Merritt sees inroads the SBC needs to build.

"We've got to find a way to get younger pastors involved in our convention," he said. "I think that we're a graying denomination, and I think we've got to find a way to reach more young pastors, not just in preaching itself, but also in leadership."

"We've also got to do a better job of reaching the next generation," he added. "We're not doing a very good job overall of reaching teenagers and youth."

"I think the third thing, and this is going to be a perennial issue ... we need to keep the main thing the main thing and focus on winning people to Christ and evangelism and never letting anything else displace that as our No. 1 priority."



'Twas the month after Christmas

BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **Former BWA leader dies.** Joao Soren, former president of the Baptist World Alliance, died Jan. 3 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Soren, who headed the BWA in the 1960s, also served five terms as president of the Baptist Convention of Brazil. He attended seminary in Brazil and at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Georgetown College awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1955. Soren was pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church of Rio de Janeiro where he served 51 years as pastor.

■ **Retired music leader dies.** Fes Robertson, retired director of the former Genevox Music Group at LifeWay Christian Resources, died Dec. 31 from injuries he sustained in a fall at his home on Christmas Eve. He was 67. Robertson, a na-

tive of McLean County, Ky., retired from the former Baptist Sunday School Board in 1991 after nearly 25 years of service. He was both a consultant and supervisor in the church music department and was the first director of the former Genevox Music Group. He was a past president of the Southern Baptist Church Music Conference.

■ **Accident kills pastor, family.** A Southern Baptist pastor, his wife, and two of their children were killed Jan. 1 when a dead tree fell on top of their car, crushing the passenger compartment. Stanley Paul Jones, 46, pastor of Buck Creek Baptist Church in Cumberland, Ind., was killed along with his wife, Beth Ann Hobbs Jones, 39, and two of their children, Lauren, 6, and Tyler, 10. Another daughter, Emily, 4, survived and

was listed in fair condition at an Indianapolis-area hospital. The dead tree, about five feet in diameter, fell just as Jones' vehicle was passing underneath, according to Hancock County deputies.

■ **WMU Foundation launches fund.** The Woman's Missionary Foundation, in conjunction with national WMU, has established the HEART Fund to help WMU leaders with emergency ministry needs. The HEART Fund, which stands for Humanitarian Emergency Aid for Rebuilding Tomorrow, was established in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The fund will allow the foundation to provide resources for WMU ministries in response to humanitarian emergencies. For more information, contact the WMU Foundation at (877) 482-4483.

KENTUCKY

Holiday season fire destroys West Kentucky church

By Matt Sanders
The Paducah Sun

COLUMBUS—For 140 years, Obion Baptist Church was home to a congregation that considered itself family.

All members were called by their first names, and they were real neighbors, living within a 10-mile radius of the Civil War-era church on Ky. 808, about two miles south of this Hickman County community.

It was not uncommon for fellowship to keep most members at the church well after the worship services. But the congregation of approximately 35 members is worshipping temporarily at Columbus City Hall after fire destroyed the historic church building the morning of Dec. 29.

Kentucky State Police and Columbus Fire Chief Gene Bolin both said arson is not suspected. Trooper Barry Meadows said the fire may have been electrical in origin.

"So many memories burned up (Saturday morning)," said Judy O'Neal, church pianist since 1979. "That building meant so much to us. It's where we raised our three boys.

"This affects everyone. Our church family is just that, family. When one of us hurts, we all do. Everyone is hurting today."



RUINS The remains of Obion Baptist Church's facilities sit in the darkness after a Dec. 29 fire destroyed the 1860s building and subsequent additions. (Photo courtesy of The Paducah Sun)

O'Neal's late husband, Edward, was a church deacon. A comment from their son, Steven, led them to the church in 1978.

"We had been thinking about transferring our membership and had worshipped (at Obion Baptist) several times. Then my son, who was 7 at the time, said, 'I want to join this church.' We did. I guess the Lord

spoke through him."

Records were incomplete, but the wooden sanctuary and two classrooms were erected in 1861 or 1862, said Ronnie Bruer, church treasurer. A fellowship hall was added in the late-1970s, and more classrooms and restrooms were added in the mid-1980s.

"Now it's all gone," Bruer said. "I really can't put into words how I feel.

It's like losing your home."

Firefighters arrived at the scene shortly after 4:30 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 29, and "only a portion of one wall was still standing," Bolin said. They remained at the scene until about 10:30 a.m. Traffic on Ky. 808 was blocked while firefighters doused the burning rubble of wood, vinyl siding and church furnishings. A passer-by reported the fire at 4:30 a.m. No injuries were reported.

The fifth Sunday of the month was a special time at the church. Special singing and a potluck lunch followed Sunday morning worship, Bruer said.

"Everyone joined in, and it brought us closer," Bruer said.

There also had been talk among the members about lowering the high ceiling to make the building more energy efficient.

Pastor Timmy Stinson said the church plans to rebuild, but the church is reviewing its options. The congregation had \$60,000 worth of insurance, but that won't pay to replace the structure, he noted.

"We're going to rebuild," said Stinson, who has been pastor for 2½ years. "Of course, we're looking to the Lord to supply some of the need."

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State partnership workers cautious but responding to most needs

By Brenda Smith
Kentucky Baptist Convention

LOUISVILLE—Terrorist attacks in America and the ensuing war on terrorism might have made some Kentucky Baptists more cautious about traveling overseas for missions projects, but the attacks have not necessarily kept volunteers at home.

Volunteers reluctant to travel overseas instead are redirecting their mission energies into projects in New England and Kentucky, according to Ross Bauscher of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership missions department.

Kentucky Baptists have partnerships with Baptists in New England as well as Poland and the churches of the European Baptist Convention. Through these partnerships and earlier partnerships in other parts of the world, thousands of Kentucky Baptists have volunteered for mission projects ranging from medical projects and church construction to vacation Bible school leadership and prayer walking.

"We've had 15-20 calls within a three week period with churches contemplating mission trips to New England," Bauscher said. One caller specifically cited a desire to be involved in missions, but a reluctance to go overseas, Bauscher noted.

The partnership missions office currently has 50 requests from New England for mission groups.

Bauscher also cited another instance where a medical team wanted to minister, but did not want to travel outside the United States. He redirected the group to Eastern Kentucky.

Bauscher speaks regularly to both veterans of partnership missions and people who are newly interested in

volunteering. Reactions from both groups have been wide-ranging, he said. Some are afraid now to travel overseas; others feel more convicted than ever to go, he said. But no one appears to be backing away from partnership missions, he added.

When partnership teams do travel overseas, Bauscher urges them to be alert. Travel alerts and specific information for Americans overseas is available at the U.S. State Department's Web site, www.state.gov.

While a few people have expressed concern about traveling overseas, particularly to Muslim-dominated areas, interest in travel to Europe has not waned.

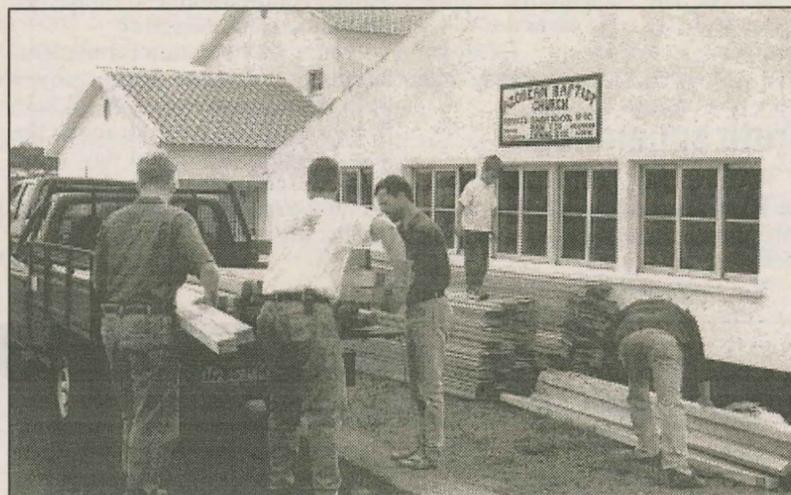
"I don't see that Sept. 11 has affected interest in our Poland partnership at all," Bauscher said. Of 40 projects listed for Poland in 2002, only 12 remain to be filled by a church or group.

The strong interest in the Poland partnership comes at a crucial time, Bauscher said. The partnership is entering its fourth year, with some Kentucky groups returning to Poland for the third time. Relationships are forming now, and through those relationships Bible studies and other ministry points are beginning to flourish.

"For three years we've been in Poland, and we've had this sense of planting and watering," Bauscher said. "Those relationships are now starting to bear fruit."

In fact, Sept. 11 offered an opportunity for Kentucky Baptist pastors in Poland to share their faith immediately after the attacks.

Like many Americans traveling abroad during the attacks, several pastors wanted to return home immediately to be with their families and churches. But after the group gathered



NEEDS CONTINUE Workers unload lumber for a construction project last year as part of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership with the European Baptist Convention. While some volunteers have expressed hesitancy to go overseas, other workers are more determined than ever to go, according to partnership organizers. (Photo by Calvin Wilkins)

and discussed the matter, they found a sense of peace and resolve, and decided to continue witnessing and preaching, Bauscher said.

The group went to the American Embassy in Warsaw, where Poles had erected a makeshift memorial to victims of the attacks.

The pastors distributed Bibles and tracts to the Polish people gathered, explaining their faith whenever they had the opportunity. They prayed with 60-75 people, according to Bauscher, and throughout the entire trip more than 100 people professed faith in Jesus Christ.

"It was remarkable," Bauscher said. "I've never seen anything like it."

Response usually is not so strong, he explained. Years under communist oppression, coupled with the widely held view of the Baptist faith as a cult makes Baptist missionary work a chal-

lenge in Poland. The warm response the team experienced after the Sept. 11 attacks was unusually receptive.

"I'm encouraged by what I see God doing," Bauscher said. "I believe God is going to accomplish His purposes and His will through His people."

The impact of Sept. 11 also was felt in other Kentucky partnerships. The KBC recently concluded a three-year partnership with Baptists in Tanzania. Closing was not related to the Sept. 11 attacks, but safety concerns after the attacks did cause coordinators Joy and Larry Lindsey to leave Dar es Salaam, the city in Tanzania where they were based, earlier than originally planned.

For more information, call the KBC partnership missions department toll-free in Kentucky at (888) 254-5424 or visit the KBC Web site, www.kybaptist.org.

BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ **Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children** will host adoption information and preparation meetings this month in Louisville. The orientation, providing information about domestic and international adoptions through KBHC, will be Jan. 10 at 7 p.m. at Highland Baptist Church. The adoption preparation class will be Jan. 19 from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. at the KBHC pregnancy and adoption services office, 10801 Shelbyville Road. For more information, call (800) 928-5242.

■ **The Kentucky Baptist Convention's** quarterly prayer meeting for spiritual awakening will be held Jan. 17-18 in Bowling Green at the Warren Baptist Association office, 6448 Scottsville Road. For more information, call the KBC missions growth team office at (800) 266-6477, extension 256.

■ **Ken and Edna Abbott** of Muhlenberg County will serve three months in Wiesbaden, Germany, as interim coordinators for the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership with the European Baptist Convention. They will serve in the place of Kenneth and Marianne Brown of Paducah, who are returning to Kentucky for family concerns.

■ **The Temperance League of Kentucky**, an interdenominational group supported by the Kentucky Baptist Convention, has changed its name to the Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems. Howard Beaman, the league's associate director, said the name change is designed to highlight "what our mission is about."

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

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New Baptist heroes

The District of Columbia Baptist Convention and Executive Director Jeffrey Haggray may go down as the earliest Baptist heroes of the new century.

Haggray's statement, "What would it profit us to gain some funding and lose our faith?", is not only heroic but a warning to other state conventions. That was in response to the so-called North American Mission Board's effort to force the D.C. convention to conform to Southern Baptist Convention dictates.

I say so-called NAMB because Mexico is in North America but is not under NAMB; insignificant to the SBC but important to 40 million Mexicans.

Haggray's account that NAMB head Robert Reccord subjected him to "hours upon hours of interrogation" about charges made by unnamed people sets off alarm bells. Given that Haggray is African-American, that the D.C. convention has many African-Americans and is affiliated with an African-American national convention (the Progressive National Baptist Convention as well as the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., and the SBC), one wonders if this is racial profiling.

Whether the racial bias is there or not, the attempt to dictate by one autonomous Baptist body to another is clear. The D.C. convention's only option seems to be to sever ties.

*Bill Moore
Owensboro*

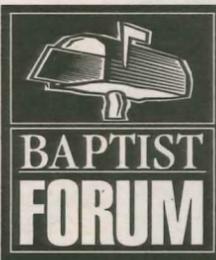
Truth squelched

It's a sad day when even moderate Baptist seminaries feel the pressure from biased journalism and seek to squelch truth.

My response is to the article

"Seminary cuts ties to journal over 'offensive' article" in the Dec. 18 issue of the Western Recorder.

Review & Expositor Managing Editor Nancy deClaisse-Walford explained that the decision to carry Leslie Kendrick Townsend's article was because the Review & Expositor goes to professionals who should be qualified to read graphic facts. And I believe Townsend has rendered a great service in scholarly analysis of a touchy subject.



We must ask this: When Baptists go to a doctor or nurse, they expect a clinical situation, with all the necessary facts. Patients would be suspect of medics who beat around the bush. In like manner, why should adult Baptists be squeamish regarding sexuality? Isn't that a great part of the problem now?

Yes, Townsend is candid in her embodiment treatment for male and female humanity. But even were we to grant that Townsend is entirely in bad taste, how will we treat the remaining articles in this issue of the Review & Expositor?

The second piece by Lane Powell, "The Case for Sex Education in a Religious Context," is priceless. Disregard for proper sex education aids and abets sexual abuse, resulting in untimely pregnancies and often in abortions. Contrast that tragedy with family planning that fosters wanted children and wholesome life for mothers and offspring.

Christian liberation for me (Galatians 5:1, 13) led me to pursue truth wherever it may lead. Where it led was a thirst for truth across the board. Again, it's a sad day when Truett Seminary and Logsdon School of Theology bow to a biased Baptist Press.

*Donald Cassidy
Premium*

Whatever it takes

I am writing in response to letters to the editor in recent days attacking the practice of worship involving modern music and praise choruses.

I take issue with the absurd premise that striving to reach a younger generation with contemporary methods is somehow "caving in" to the popular culture. On the contrary, Scripture makes it clear that we are wise to reach out to people through their own culture and customs.

The Apostle Paul boldly proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 9:22, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Such is the successful practice of our missionaries throughout the world. They share the message of Jesus Christ through the local, contemporary culture. The same approach is essential for ministry here.

Some criticism has focused on the lack of "art" in praise and worship music. My friends, God simply desires our praise and adoration. He does not want our art. The methods of our praises pale in comparison to the genuineness of those praises. We must praise God in our worship. We can experience art in museums.

I believe that much of this criticism boils down to jealousy. It's that big "sucking noise," the sound of church members fleeing Southern Baptist churches for the freedom of worship in other denominations (or non-denominations). It angers Baptists because so many people are leaving us with empty church "museums," full of the precious "art" of our traditions.

We must wise up, fellow Baptists. God is moving among this young generation. Our churches must break free of the shackles of tradition and go with Him. The issue is not what we want, or even what we are comfortable with. We must do whatever it takes to reach people for Christ!

*Geoff Baggett
Hopkinsville*

CHURCH

New year offers opportunity for new beginnings

By Doug Strader

Most people long for the opportunity to start over, to begin anew, because we have done something to mess things up where we are at the present. As one writer put it, we need to put off our mistakes like we would put off a shabby old coat and put on a bright new coat without any spots or stains.

Unfortunately, we are not perfect. We do make mistakes and we do get our clothes dirty and wrinkled to the extent that we must have them laundered and pressed so we can wear them again without feeling self-conscious.

Because we did not make godly decisions all the time last year, we found ourselves in need of a change. And now that we are in a new year, it is a natural time to begin again by taking off all the dirty ragged things that we messed up in exchange for a new wardrobe from Jesus Christ. As Christians, we can go to our Heavenly Father in prayer and confess our sins and with His help we can start over with a clean slate.

I do not have the time nor the wisdom to write about all the things that caused us to miss the mark with our lives last year, but I can write about one of the ways that many of us missed the mark.

How did you handle the material possessions God gave you last year? Were you a wise steward of your possessions?

As the Psalmist said in Psalm 24:1, everything belongs to God; He only allows us to use His things while we are on this earth. As one of His children, did you give at least a tithe (10 percent) of your earnings to Him last year? If not, why not begin this year right by committing to give Him at least 10 percent of everything you earn in wages this year?

Tithing is a matter of the heart, not the pocketbook. If you will trust God with your tithes, it will amaze you how He will provide for you and your family both spiritually and materially.

With the beginning of the new year you can make a new start with your commitment to Him of your resources, which belong to Him anyway.

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

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Unique Evangelism Conference

Kentucky Baptists' Feb. 25-26 State Evangelism Conference program is the best I have ever seen. It is unique in many ways, but let me share just a few:

Location. This will mark the first State Evangelism Conference to be hosted by an African-American Kentucky Baptist Convention church. Dan Garland, our evangelism growth team leader, said that in size and conference space Canaan Missionary Baptist Church in Louisville will be the best location ever. The sanctuary seats 2,500. Walter Malone, Canaan's pastor, is an outstanding church growth pastor, preacher and community leader.

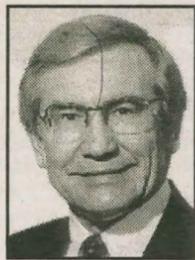
Divine direction. Joe Stowell is coming because he believes it is a divine appointment. Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, said he would go where he thought he could make a difference so he's coming to Kentucky.

Also speaking will be William Sheals, pastor of Hopewell Baptist

Church in Norcross, Ga. In 20 years of leadership, God has blessed with 10,000 members.

Application. All 10 conference speakers are anointed preachers who have distinguished themselves as effective practitioners. God blessed Richard Jackson to build an incredibly evangelistic North Phoenix Baptist Church, baptizing 20,000 people in 25 years as pastor. Young and James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga., have been used to build churches through Sunday school. Kentucky's own Ron Shaver has been used by God to combine dynamic Sunday school and discipleship ministries with worship to build a growing congregation at Little Flock Baptist Church in Shepherdsville.

Explanation. Most of these speakers, along with nine other leaders, will provide explanation of how God is at work in their ministries. Sixteen breakout sessions will provide an evangelism track for your inspiration



Bill Mackey

to run on when you return home.

Tuesday luncheons will feature Young, Ike Reighard (pastor of an innovative, rapidly growing new work), Jackson, Stowell and Sheals. If I could be present only one day, I would not miss Tuesday. Every pastor could strengthen evangelistic outreach by bringing lay leaders to all sessions and by organizing bus or van trips for night sessions.

Transformation. This is a wonderful opportunity for learning about God's transforming work. David Nassar is participating with our youth evangelism strategies to introduce youth and collegiate leaders and students to the deeper life with Jesus. Evangelist Junior Hill has a unique way of mixing down-home humor and biblical truth. Jennifer Kennedy Dean will lead a breakout session and luncheon on using the spiritual weapon of prayer and how to leave an unshakable legacy of prayer.

Find out more about this conference (and even see the speakers in action through a video) on the KBC Web site at www.kybaptist.org.

I look forward to seeing you.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

Adopt specific goals to help strengthen role as a parent

Q: I didn't bother making any New Year's resolutions but I would like to set some realistic goals as a parent. Any suggestions?

■ *Eat together as a family at least once a day.* Research shows the importance of families spending time together around the table. Children are healthier emotionally and families are happier.

■ *Know where your children are, who they are with and what they are doing.* Pay attention. Ask questions. Don't expect someone else to watch out for your children.

■ *Show your children love in these four ways:* Look them in the eye when you talk with them. Hug them and give them lots of physical affection. Spend time with your children and give them your undivided attention. Discipline them with fairness and consistency.

■ *Take your child to Sunday school and worship each week, and resolve to be on time.* Take an interest and talk with your children about what they are learning. Encourage their participation in activities that will help them grow spiritually.

■ *Be a parent, not a peer.* Your children have plenty of friends, but only one set of parents. Be willing to say "no" when necessary. Don't worry about being liked. Remember, the parent/child relationship is not meant to be one of equals.

■ *Protect your children from risky situations and unhealthy influences.* Don't assume a level of maturity on the part of your children that might not be appropriate to their age. Again, pay attention and ask questions.

■ *Pray for your children.* Ask God to protect them. Ask God to help them make good choices. Ask God to guide you as you guide them.—David Garrard

Q: Beginning the new year with the memory of Sept. 11 has been a challenge for my wife and me. As senior adults, how can we put the recent events in perspective for our peace of mind?

The horrific terrorist attacks have had a profound effect on people of all generations. Although everyone responds to such tragedy with varying degrees of grief, fear and anger, older adults who have lived through previous tragedies might be at greater risk for experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety.

Ways to cope in the aftermath of the attack include:

■ *Consider the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.* Dependence on Him is the starting point in facing any crisis in life.

■ *Talk about the traumatic experience and how you are feeling.* Expressing your thoughts with others gives you the opportunity to relieve stress, reduce anxiety and realize that other people share your feelings.

■ *Take care of yourself physically.* Exercise regularly. It also is important to eat well, drink plenty of water and rest.

■ *Spend time with other people.* Isolation and loneliness can increase the degree to which you experience symptoms. If you do not have a local network of family or friends, find a place where you can be with people.

■ *Do things you enjoy.* If you have put things aside that you normally enjoy, get involved in those activities now. Go for that walk, plant flowers or volunteer.

■ *Write about significant experiences in your life and how they have affected you.* Journaling gives you the opportunity to express your feelings in your own words and at your own pace. It also is an opportunity for you to share pieces of your life with future generations.—Jon Rainbow

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.



Gambling battle: Let your voice be heard

The Kentucky General Assembly convenes this week for its 2002 legislative session. Facing the prospects of a \$300 million budget shortfall, legislators are anxious to find additional sources of revenue. Some apparently are even willing to consider options that already are proven losers—such as expanded gambling.

Despite the failure of previous attempts to dupe Kentuckians into approving video slot machines as an answer to the state's financial woes, gambling advocates are expected to make another major push this year.

Hopefully, legislators have learned their lesson and won't waste their time on such claims. But concerned citizens must be willing to voice their views to ensure that politicians in Frankfort hear and respond to their concerns.

The first concern, of course, is moral. Kentucky Baptist Convention messengers have gone on record describing gambling as "inherently evil and grossly immoral." Seeking to strike it rich at other people's expense—the basic premise of gambling—reflects such negative traits as greed and selfishness.

Unfortunately, not everyone is swayed by moral arguments. But there are other legitimate reasons to oppose gambling, including social and financial issues.

Studies show that people living in poverty tend to gamble two to four times as much money as people with higher incomes, often depriving their families of adequate food, clothing and other necessities. Compulsive gambling, domestic violence, drug abuse, burglary, unemployment and suicide are among social ills often linked to legalized gambling.

Studies in Colorado, Florida and South Carolina found that social costs related to video poker and other casino-type gambling exceeded state gambling revenues by millions of dollars. That certainly doesn't sound like the kind of economic plan Kentucky needs or wants.

Despite the convincing statistical evidence, gambling

advocates are willing to spend big bucks to lobby for legislation that will allow them to rake in huge profits at public expense.

The key to defeating their tactics is for gambling opponents to be equally diligent in letting their voices be heard. Some people tend to put government officials in an elite class and seem intimidated about contacting them and sharing their views. In reality, however, our representative form of government works best when citizens freely share their opinions with elected leaders.

Several grassroots groups are taking an active role in leading such efforts, including Citizens Against Gambling Expansion, the Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems (formerly the Temperance League of Kentucky) and the Kentucky Baptist Public Affairs Committee.

CAGE, an interdenominational anti-gambling coalition, was organized in 1999. It has attracted the support of more than a dozen denominations, including the KBC as well as Catholics, Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Methodists and Presbyterians.

CAGE is holding a press conference this week in the Capitol Rotunda to announce efforts to battle expanded gambling. Describing proposed gambling expansion as "bad government, bad economic strategy and destructive to the well being, happiness and health of Kentucky's citizens," information released by CAGE warns that "state government cannot say out of one side of its mouth that 'education pays' while fleecing its citizens with gambling and encouraging them to believe not in education and personal responsibility but in Lady Luck."

In addition to group efforts, individual citizens need to take an active role in halting expanded gambling. Call, write or e-mail your legislators this week and let your voice be heard.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

A new you for a new year

By Rick Warren

LAKE FOREST, Calif. (BP)—In the ancient world there were no bottles, no recyclable cans. They would put liquids into animal skins that were tied together and used like canteens. Obviously, as time went on, the skins would become brittle, and they eventually would break, spilling out the liquid.

When Jesus told the parable of the wineskins, He said, "New wine must be poured into new wineskins" (Luke 5:38). New situations require new structures. You get a new job and you've got to learn new skills. New relationships require new ways of relating.

It's a new year with the challenges of new wine. Will you reach for the old wineskins or will you abandon them for new ones?

Even though I am not a prophet, I can predict three things you will face this year: new problems, new pressures and new possibilities. The new wineskins you will need to face these challenges are creativity, conviction and courage.

■ *New problems will require creativity.* The bad news is you'll have more problems in 2002. The good news is they're not the same problems you had in 2001. You get a whole new set.

The old ways of thinking and re-

lating might not work. The Bible says, "The intelligent man is always open to new ideas. In fact, he looks for them."

Most people spend more time and energy trying to get around problems than they do solving them. Yet, you're made by the Creator. You're creative. The biggest block to your creativity is your attitude: "Your attitudes and

thoughts must be constantly changing for the better. You must be a new and different

person, holy and good" (Ephesians 4:23-24).

■ *New pressures will require conviction.* Conviction is a willingness to stand up for what you believe.

Romans 12:2 says, "Don't let the world squeeze you in its mold, but let God remake you so your whole attitude of mind is changed." Have you decided what values you're going to base your life on this year? If you haven't, you need to decide what you're going to do. Write out what values are important to you.

One of the most popular songs in the 1980s was Boy George's Karma Chameleon, "I'm a man without conviction." What we need today are men and women of conviction, men and women who are not wishy-washy, men and women who say, "I don't care if everybody's doing it. It's not right, and I'm not going to get caught up in this materialistic binge. I'll do

what's right and not let the world squeeze me into its mold."

■ *New possibilities will require courage.* The year 2002 is going to be full of God's wonderful plans for you. I don't know a more exciting time to be alive. There are great possibilities! God wants to do great things in your life in this year, but it won't happen automatically. You've got to step out in faith. There's an element of risk.

Hosea 10:12 states, "Plow new ground for yourselves, plant righteousness and reap the blessing your devotion to Me will produce! It's time for you to turn to Me, your Lord, and I will come and pour out blessings on you."

What are you planning to harvest this year? At the end of 2002, how are you going to be any different? If you plan to have differences in your life a year from now, you've got to start cultivating now. You need to cultivate some new habits, new relationships and new activities.

What do you want different in your family? What do you want different in your finances? What do you want different in your personal walk with Christ? You've got to start cultivating now. Whatever you sow you're going to reap.

God wants to do such great things through you in 2002. I don't know a better time to say, "Jesus Christ, I personally commit my life to You. I open it to You. I recommit it to You."

Rick Warren is the author of "The Purpose Driven Church"

NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Report urges more Christian involvement in education.** A new report suggests that Christian organizations should be more involved in civic education. The study, commissioned by the Washington-based Center for Public Justice and the Center for Christian Studies at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., states many churches, Christian schools and think tanks aren't addressing the proper functions of government or responsible citizens. "The dominant concern is to promote good causes and behavior or to react to bad causes and behavior, presuming for the most part that people already know what is good and bad," the report concludes.

■ **Sacred skywriter leaves viewers jittery.** In Boca Raton, Fla., people already were on edge, what with the training of Sept. 11 terrorists near there and the appearance of anthrax in recent months. So skywriter Jerry Stevens' New Year's greetings—including "God is Great"—prompted outright panic. Viewers called police, only to be told that Stevens was of no harm. He said he hopes people will be inspired rather than alarmed when they see his messages. "You can't imagine what it's like when you're feeling low, wondering if God is listening to your prayers," he said. "And then you walk out of your house and up above in big letters right over you, there's 'God Loves You.'"

■ **'Omega Code' suit settled.** A West Virginia woman who sued the Trinity Broadcasting Network, claiming its movie "The Omega Code" stole her idea about a Christian apocalypse, has settled her lawsuit. Neither Sylvia Fleener nor the Christian cable channel would comment on the details of the agreement, reported Charisma News Service. Fleener had sued in July 2000 for \$40 million, saying the movie had numerous similarities with her self-published book, "The Omega Syndrome." "The Omega Code" was released in 1999 and was an unexpected box office hit, earning a top 10 place in its opening weekend in movie theaters.

Christian Coalition settles employees' discrimination suit

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The Christian Coalition has settled a racial discrimination lawsuit by black employees.

The settlement of the multimillion-dollar suit calls for workers to be paid about \$325,000 in exchange for the staffers' pledge to remain permanently silent about the case, The Washington Times newspaper reported.

Sources told the newspaper that 12 current and former employees would drop several lawsuits in exchange for the lump-sum payment, to be distributed by the staffers' lawyers.

Black staffers charged they were forced to enter the back door of the coalition's headquarters while whites were allowed to use the front door. They also said they were excluded from an employee lunchroom used by whites and from weekly prayer meetings and occasional social events. Coalition officials denied the discrimination claims.

The newspaper reported that the settlement came as Coalition leaders and former staffers traded accusations of financial irregularities and possible wire fraud relating to a Washington gala held last January to celebrate the inauguration of President Bush.

Several former coalition staffers have taken accusations to the FBI that the group defrauded hundreds of donors who took part in the inaugural gala.

Bush, Graham listed in poll's most admired

PRINCETON, N.J. (RNS)—President Bush is considered the most-admired man in a new poll, with Pope John Paul II and evangelist Billy Graham cited among the top five males receiving American admiration.

Presidents usually receive high ratings in the annual survey by the Gallup Poll, but Bush was mentioned by 39 percent of those surveyed, surpassing the previous high of 32 percent set by John F. Kennedy in 1961, Gallup reported.

The pope was mentioned by 3 percent of those polled, ranking fourth, followed immediately by Graham, who was mentioned by 2

percent of those surveyed.

Secretary of State Colin Powell ranked second, mentioned by 5 percent of respondents, and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani ranked third, mentioned by 4 percent.

Graham was included in the list of the 10 most admired men for the 44th time, surpassing by far other well-known men cited by Americans over the years.

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted Dec. 14-16 with a random national sample of 1,019 adults ages 18 and older. They had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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Construction progress at Jonathan Creek

Wow! It's hard to believe the New Year has arrived. It seems like only yesterday we were wrapping up camp season with a blend of exhaustion and fulfillment. As I have grown to understand clearly over the last four years, the physical and spiritual demands (and some emotional as well) are great in Christian camping ministry. The only way to endure and press on is to stay prayed up and continually celebrate the daily victories as God works in the lives of youth and children at Jonathan Creek and Cedarmore.

I was at Jonathan Creek just a couple of days ago. My excitement grew as I saw our expansion beginning to take shape. Two new small lodges are under roof and likely will be completed within 45-60 days. These two lodges each have eight guestrooms with a large central meeting/gathering area that will be fully furnished.

I'm also excited as we work with our design team on the details of our new worship/multi-purpose facility. The concrete's down and the steel is on site. We were blessed with a beautiful late fall period. The weather cooperated, allowing our contractor to make great progress early on. The critical path that allows us to take possession by May 1

is still on target. Last week we continued to work on details regarding this facility, planning the lighting and audio/video system that will accommodate our youth worship in the summers, but also be used throughout the year by other groups. I can't wait to see the finished product as we prepare for another great summer.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



Rusty Ellison

Where are your students going camping this summer? What about your children? We're rapidly approaching the time during the next few weeks when the reservation process begins. Won't you give serious consideration to sending your youth to camp at Cedarmore or Jonathan Creek? What about sending your younger boys and girls to the Mission/

Adventure camps at RABRO and Cedar Crest? We are blessed in Kentucky to have great camping ministries sponsored by our WMU, Brotherhood, Creative Ministries of the KBC and the Kentucky Baptist Assemblies. Our motive is pure. Our mission is to serve and reach this younger generation for Christ. It's exciting to be a part of such a challenging yet rewarding task.

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

Bowling Green
February 15 - 16



Kentucky Baptist Youth Choir Festival

February 15 - 16

Eastwood Baptist Church, Bowling Green

All youth choirs (grades 7 - 12) are invited! The festival is a great opportunity for your youth choir to join in fellowship, concert and worship with other youth from across Kentucky! Plus, your choir will have the option to perform individually, with or without comments.

Registration is just \$5 per student; for registration form, anthem selection information, schedule details and more, go to:

<http://www.kybaptist.org/ycfest>

Pizza fellowship Friday night just \$2 per youth!



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Trinity Baptist Church, Lexington

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Ministering through Missionfuge

By Robert Dunston

Cumberland College senior Nathan Riner, the son of Haywood and Dixie Riner of Campbellsville, spent his summer working in Missionfuge. During the previous two summers, Riner had worked with CrossPoint.

Riner's team consisted of 12 college students, with Kentucky being well-represented.

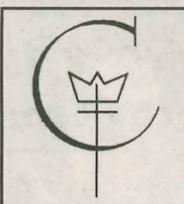
Of several Missionfuge teams ministering this past summer, Riner's team was the only one that traveled. They served four weeks in St. Louis and then four weeks in Jacksonville, Fla.

The team's weekday schedule left little time for relaxation. Breakfast began at 7 a.m. followed by a staff prayer meeting at 7:30 a.m. Team members led Bible study for the groups of young people who had come to participate in the program at 8 a.m. A celebration service followed that. At 10 a.m. the team members and young people left for a day of missions involvement.

Riner worked with the construction and home improvement crew. During his first week in Jacksonville, he helped put the

finishing touches on a house and yard being prepared for a woman. She was so filled with joy and gratitude that Riner began each week thereafter in Jacksonville by bringing the young people on his team to meet her and get a greater sense of the ministry they would be performing.

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



One week as his team of young people were cleaning out a field, they stumbled upon a cardboard shelter a homeless person had constructed. Around the box the individual had carefully arranged cooking utensils, a pair of shoes and a place to sleep. The young people stared at the makeshift home, horrified that someone

had to live like that. The experience made a lasting impression on all.

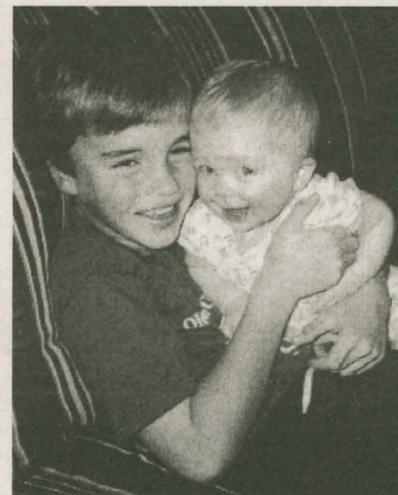
Riner, a health, movement and leisure studies major, said that serving as a role model for young people was "a neat opportunity and an awesome responsibility."

We appreciate his service for Christ and his mentoring of others.

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

Build A Family Of The Heart

Sometimes families are built, not born. These boys became brothers when they were adopted into a loving home with the help of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. Whether you are wishing to adopt locally or internationally, or if you are facing an unplanned pregnancy, KBHC is there to assist you. Call KBHC Pregnancy and Adoption Services at 1-800-928-5242 and consider attending the upcoming adoption education opportunities. Registration is required, so call today.



Adoption Orientation
Thursday, January 10
7 p.m.

Highland Baptist, Louisville

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Saturday, January 19
9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

KBHC Pregnancy and Adoption Services
10801 Shelbyville Road, Louisville (beside Spring Meadows)



Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children
Pregnancy and Adoption Services
1-800-928-5242

Christians, others start exploring forgiveness after attacks and war

Continued from page 1

tures, Jews, Christians and Muslims are commanded to forgive their fellow human beings. The word "forgive" appears 60 times in the Hebrew Bible, 71 times in the New Testament and 52 times in the Koran.

Jews and Muslims believe a prerequisite to forgiveness must be repentance on the part of the wrongdoer. Judaism holds that human beings can never forgive murder, because only the victim can bestow forgiveness.

Christians are divided. Some say their faith requires that repentance precede forgiveness; others say forgiveness is mandatory noting Jesus' command to forgive one's brother "70 times seven."

All Christians recognize the biblical imperative to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them. But many don't pray for opponents within their own congregations, never mind formidable foes overseas, Christian ethicists say.

Ethicists say prayer for the enemy can stimulate change by encouraging people to tame their hatred and to consider the possibility of future relationships. "To pray for our enemy requires a recognition of their humanity as a child of God," said Jones, of Duke. "It also involves gestures that create openings for that repentance and for a different relationship."

American Muslims blame U.S. policy for terrorism

WASHINGTON (RNS) —Seventy-nine percent of Muslims in this country say United States foreign policy led to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and 67 percent say that changing policy in the Middle East is the best way to wage war against terrorism, according to a poll released last month.

Scholars in charge of the American Muslim Poll say they are surprised that so many Muslims see U.S. foreign policy as a root cause of terrorism.

"It is troubling," said Sulayman Nyang, co-director of Muslims in American Public Square, a project aimed at tracking Muslim-American opinions, beliefs and demographics.

"This is strong sentiment among Muslims, there seems to be some kind of disconnect there, that Muslims seem to believe this so clearly in such large numbers," Nyang said. The same poll said that despite their feelings about the attacks and their causes, half of U.S. Muslims support the war. But that percentage is much lower than most polls of the U.S. population as a whole which show 80 percent to 90 percent of Americans back the war in Afghanistan.

"Before the bombing occurred, Muslims would say going in after bin Laden is one thing, bombing in Afghanistan is another. Many were concerned about the repercussions of that bombing in terms of leveling that country even more," said John Esposito, director of Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

The first-of-its-kind poll of 1,781 Muslim adults was conducted by Zogby International. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

Pornography showing up on expired Christian Web sites

Internet pornographers are snatching addresses with terms like "Baptist" in hopes that groups will be willing to buy back expired sites to get offensive material off them.

Continued from page 1

the newspaper has decided to ignore. He consulted an attorney about possible legal action but learned it would be expensive and might not succeed.

"It has not caused as many problems as we would have anticipated," Bayer said. He noted that when he told a public policy firm about the problem, a representative replied, "You're the second Christian group this has happened to this week."

Descriptive Web site names can be registered for only a small fee. But when they aren't renewed, they become available first-come, first-served.

With the growing influence of the Internet, domain names for promotional uses have become a hot commodity. Speculators can profit by registering desirable site names and then reselling them at an inflated price.

Internet pornographers, meanwhile, have long used innocuous-sounding URLs to attract unsuspecting Web surfers who otherwise wouldn't log onto their site.

In this latest twist, Internet pornographers are snatching addresses with terms like "Baptist" or "Christian" in hopes that groups will be willing to buy back expired sites in order to get offensive material off them.

The problem is even greater when search engines (a kind of Yellow Pages for the Web) continue to point to old sites after they no longer are used. Infrequent visitors also might save the outdated Web addresses in their own Web browsers.

"What Christian groups need to realize is they've become a target for pornographers," said Steve NeSmith, who handles Internet content for Life-Way Christian Resources. Pornographic sites "offer content, knowing if they can get young people or someone to view their site for 30 to 60 seconds, they can hook them."

It isn't a brand new phenomenon. One problem Rick Clore faced last winter after becoming coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's Virginia affiliate was computer users getting directed to its old site, which had been hijacked not only by pornographers but other businesses as well.

The problem was compounded by Yahoo, a well-known search engine that also offers free e-mails, chat groups and other services.

Despite numerous phone calls and e-mail requests that Yahoo remove the old address from its database, CBF of Virginia never got a response.

The coordinator described it as a David vs. Goliath battle, one that prompted CBF to contemplate legal action. But the group never followed through after complaints tapered off; it hasn't had any calls for about six months.

"For a while it was a nightmare," Clore said. "We spent a considerable amount of time on the phone making calls and sending out e-mails." Neither he nor his administrative assistant had ever built a Web site. "We were relying on other people's knowledge," he said.

A recent story in the on-line Wired

News said the International Lutheran Woman's Mission League, the Nebraska Department of Education, the Ohio State Senate and municipalities from Kentucky and Iowa were among the victims of similar tactics.

So were a Christian legal organization and former Republican presidential hopeful Gary Bauer, according to Steve Watters, an Internet research analyst at Focus on the Family.

Steve Hewitt, the editor of Christian Computing magazine, said the practice of X-rated merchants buying up URLs was discussed at a technology and ministry conference in Anaheim, Calif., last fall.

"They represent a huge part of the economy of the Internet and they've got money," Hewitt said. "They may set up one page and buy 10 addresses, with links to that page."

Congress passed legislation in 1998 to prevent just this kind of phenomenon. But thus far, a Samford University law professor, said there have been problems enforcing the Anticybersquatting Consumer Protection Act.

Thomas Berg, who teaches constitutional law and intellectual property, said one problem is locating the culprit, such as the porn producer that reportedly operates from Armenia.

Another is when someone abandons the site, it allows others to lay claim to it. Whether the former owner can contest the new use, complaining it is fraudulent or confuses the public, is left for courts to decide, Berg said.

In the case of the Indiana Baptist, however, Berk said the newspaper could win a lawsuit.

"A defendant could argue once you're there you know this isn't their site, so you look somewhere else," the professor said. "Most courts have rejected that. They say the problem is attracting people to the site in the first place."

"It's like if a Burger King used (McDonald's) Golden Arches to get people in the door. That would be false pretenses."

But the best protection against pornographers is to first weigh the costs of maintaining an Internet site, according to a member of Life-Way's e-business group.

"I hate to be simplistic about it, but they have to do some due diligence," said marketing manager Gary McClure. "Make sure it's viable and when it's close to expiring, renew it."

Watters, who recently wrote a book on overcoming Internet addictions, said there are ways of maintaining a site name without spending a lot of money.

He advises Christians to exercise caution and think of who the new "tenant" might be if they release it.

With estimates that on-line pornography generated \$1.75 billion last year and may surpass \$3 billion by 2003, the threat isn't likely to vanish soon.

"There's no federal regulation that says it's illegal," NeSmith said. "It's unethical, but it's not illegal."

It's Christmas time at Oneida

On Dec. 20 we had our annual Christmas program during our normal chapel time. The service was extended from 30 minutes to an hour to accommodate all who had a part. We used to have our Christmas program on the last date of school, during the last hour of school. When it was over, everyone made a quick exodus to their homes.

We stopped having the program at that time for a variety of reasons. With parents and other family members waiting to leave as soon as the program was over, our students were understandably more interested in going home than in a Christmas program. If the weather was bad, the adults were just as anxious as the students to get on the road. There was a reason we had the program on the last day. Since we are a boarding school with students from across the U.S., it is very difficult for family members to see their children participate in school activities. The families were here to pick their children up anyway, so it seemed like an appropriate time to have the Christmas program.

The only difference between the staff and students is that the adults are able to contain their emotions just a little better than the students. What most students don't know is that most of the faculty and staff have their cars and vans packed and ready to go as soon as the last bell rings. Many of the staff are gone before the students can get back to the dorms to be checked out by their parents. As excited as everyone was about leaving for the holidays, nearly all will be just as ready to return after the break.

The week before the break we had final semester exams. Many students were holding their breath about their grades. We have high expectations about the number of students who will be

on the honor roll the second quarter. During the first quarter, 45 percent of our students were on the A or B honor roll. That is the highest percentage of students to earn honor roll status during the first quarter. Normally, the first quarter has the smallest percentage of honor students and the last quarter has the highest.

On the Saturday before Christmas break we had our Christmas party. This annual event has changed a lot during the past few years. Students spent several hours in the gym making Christmas gifts and doing other craft projects. Several played volleyball while they waited for their turns at the craft tables.

At 6 p.m. we moved to the dining room where everyone could make sub sandwiches. Some were rather simple with meat, lettuce and tomato. Others were ... well I am not sure how to describe them, but I am even more at a loss to understand how they were able to get the sandwiches into their mouths.

No party would be complete without ice cream. When they had finished eating their subs, students made their way to the line where they could choose from two flavors of cakes and a variety of ice cream.

During the two-week break the students will be able to eat some home-cooked meals and sleep as late as they want to. When they return, there will be about 25 new students enrolling for the first time. We hope the new students find the success and happiness our other students have found. Thanks for helping to make 2001 a banner year for Oneida.

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

Clear Creekers work six years in Idaho

The snow has fallen in Idaho, and often it can reach six to eight feet during the winter. Jeff and Debbie Stagg remember a day in which they received four feet of snow.

"People thought it was strange that I called off prayer meeting," Jeff said. "We were new, and I responded like we did in Kentucky. Out there everyone has a four-wheel-drive vehicle, and they don't even use snowplows until the snow is a foot deep."

Jeff Stagg graduated in 1994, and after a year in Nevada they moved to First Baptist Church of Pierce, Idaho. The 3,500-foot Sawtooth Range of the Rockies was behind their house. The community developed around the logging industry and recreation. Many retired people moved in and tourists enjoyed the ski slopes. Most of the men worked at a large mill that produced plywood until imports of cheaper plywood from Canada closed the plant.

In an effort to know the people and find acceptance, Jeff became chaplain of the Clearwater County Sheriff's Department. "I rode with the deputies, and at first the rumor spread that I was an IRS agent. My most unusual experience was arresting a church member twice within

three months for assault and battery. I saw some good changes in his life before we left," Jeff said.

"Drugs was a major problem. One survey of sixth grade schoolchildren found only one child that had not taken drugs. Many people would not come to church, but they would stop and talk with me and share their problems." They saw the church grow from eight people to 40.

The closest church was 35 miles down hill, both of them part of the Northwest Baptist Convention, which has churches in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. It was a two-hour drive to a shopping center. "The whole county doesn't have a stop light!" Debbie recalled. "We picked huge wild berries, cherries and apples. A lady in the church taught me how to can. Our freezer always had elk that Jeff got on hunting trips. We saw bear across the road and deer in the back yard. It is a beautiful place."

Jeff and Debbie celebrated their 27th wedding anniversary last September. They now live in Somerset trusting the Lord for the next ministry assignment.

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Gallup poll: Half of Christians in U.S. say Sept. 11 changed their life

PRINCETON, N.J. (RNS)—One-third of Americans say the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks were a “life-altering experience” that caused them to change their priorities, according to a new Gallup poll.

Nearly half of conservative Christians—46 percent—say the attacks caused them to change their lives, according to the poll of 1,019 adults. Non-whites and women under the age of 50 were the most likely to report a change after the attacks.

While 66 percent of Americans say the attacks have not changed their lives, more than half of those who have shifted priorities say they are spending more time with their families and friends.

And despite a surge in worship attendance immediately after the attacks, another Gallup poll shows no longstanding change in the religious observance of most Americans. Most Gallup polls show that approximately 40 percent of Americans recently attended a church or synagogue within the week before the poll.

That figure rose to 47 percent after the attacks, but has since fallen back to 42 percent.

Pollster George Gallup Jr. said the terrorist attacks have had a “powerful but short-lived impact on the spirituality of the U.S. populace.”

Still, Gallup found a slight rise in the personal importance of religion for most Americans. A May 2001 poll found that 57 percent said personal religion was “very important,” and that number rose to 64 percent a week after the attacks. The Dec. 14-16 poll saw that number fall back to 60 percent.

Americans, however, seem to have an increased sense that religion is playing a more important role in the larger society.

Last February, 39 percent of Americans said religion was increasing its influence in society. In December, 71 percent said it was on the rise. Those numbers closely resemble a December poll by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, which found that 78 percent of Americans saw religion’s influence on the rise in public life.

“It would, I believe, be very difficult for the average American not to believe that religion is increasing its impact on society, in view of the near total media coverage of the New York scene, including reports of record numbers of people flocking to houses of worship,” Gallup said.

The two telephone polls have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Wanna play?



BOARD GAMES Religious-themed board games, such as Bibleman, Redemption and Left Behind (all shown here) are rapidly growing in popularity. (RNS photo by Sue Beye)

Religious theme board games gain popularity

By John Zukowski
Religion News Service

FREDERICKTON, Ohio (RNS)—There’s a new kind of hero.

He leads dangerous journeys to rescue Lost Souls held captive by Evil Hordes in the City of Bondage. He walks through dusty streets into dark alleyways toward the city’s only bright place—the Well of Living Water. Along the way, the hero assembles a posse of biblical characters.

This quest doesn’t take place in a comic book, action movie or video game. It’s all in a religious board game called “Redemption.”

Religious board games were among the best-selling religious gifts in the 2001 holiday season. Some of the most popular games include Bible trivia and action games such as “Redemption.”

What’s more surprising than religion being transformed into games is that board games are thriving in the era of video games.

In 2000, video game sales in the United States dropped 6 percent to \$5.1 billion while board game sales jumped 11 percent to \$423 million, according to industry reports.

About 1 million Christian board games are sold each year. One of the top producers in this field is Bible Games Co. in Frederickton, Ohio. Its product line soared from eight games in 1987 to more than 400 today.

“The main reason for the growth is that people of faith want to take it to all aspects of their life,” said Bible Games Co. CEO Ron Zovar. “So they want it to be in their entertainment too, whether it’s the music they listen to or in a game.”

Playing board games also helps

busy families slow down and bond—a trend that’s accelerated since Sept. 11.

“Certainly Sept. 11 had an effect on people considering their spirituality and mortality, but even before then there was a general trend toward people finding out where they belong spiritually,” said Lew Herndon, CEO of Talicon Inc. The Chino, Calif., company produces the popular games “Bibleman” and “Left Behind.” “And these games are helping parents to bring spirituality into their homes.”

A few years ago, some people questioned whether spirituality belonged in a board game. But with more church groups and families using them, religious board games have gained legitimacy.

Today, biblical alternatives are offered for many major board games. The Christian version of “Trivial Pursuit” is “Bible Baffle.”

“Bibleopoly” is offered as an alternative to the capitalism and greed of “Monopoly.”

The Christian adaptation of the game “Risk” is “Missionary Conquest,” where players must fund and then go on evangelistic tours.

A religious alternative to the popular card game “Uno” is “Amen.” For children, there’s “Bible Charades.”

Other religious board games even urge serious religious discussion.

“What Would Jesus Do: The Game” confronts players with questions about Jesus’ possible reactions to real-life situations.

In the Christian version of “Un-game,” players answer questions such as, “When in your life did you feel closest to God?” and “If you met Jesus today, what two questions would you ask Him?”

Getting in on the game

Christians aren’t the only ones creating religious board games. Other faiths with games include:

■ **Jewish.** In “Exodus,” players follow Moses across the Red Sea to the Promised Land. But the most popular Jewish board game is “Kosherland,” based on the game “Candyland,” where children test their knowledge of kosher food.

■ **Muslim.** “Race to Kabah” challenges players to go on a journey to Mecca. Players get closer to Mecca by knowing the meaning behind the 99 names for Allah.

■ **Hindu.** “Leela” dates back to the second century B.C. In the 1890s, the English repackaged it as the secular “Snakes and Ladders,” which evolved into an American version called “Chutes and Ladders.”

“Leela” leads players through the ups and downs on the path toward enlightenment. Players roll a die and land on one of 72 spaces that represent different levels of consciousness. A detailed booklet outlines what each of the levels means.

■ **New Age.** “Go Goddess” offers players a chance for women to “awaken their inner goddess.” Players (women only) answer questions and earn beads to complete a goddess necklace.

Other games have the goal of playing for eternal life.

In the popular Catholic board game “Communion of Saints,” players accumulate sin, grace and sacraments. The game ends when all of the players have landed on a death square and are sent to heaven or hell.

There’s also the apocalyptic “Left Behind,” based on the book series inspired by the Book of Revelation. In the first part of the game, characters accumulate credits for Bible knowledge so they are prepared for the second part of the game when the Anti-christ arrives.

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

By Rodney Travis

We all begin a new year with excitement, expectation and apprehension. Sometimes we wish we could go back in the past year and relive some exciting events and change some painful events.

After Sept. 11, many people look at life and relationships in a different light and have changed the way they are living. A new year provides us the opportunity for a fresh start and reprioritizing our lives.

My life dramatically changed the day I realized that real life comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

My first step was to agree with God that I had done wrong and was living as if life revolved around me. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). It explains that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

My second step was to accept the wonderful good news: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The third step was to confess Jesus as Lord of my life. "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Today, if you need a fresh start and want to really live, simply tell God you are willing to turn from sin, receive His forgiveness and grace and ask Him to live in your heart.

Rodney Travis is pastor of First Baptist Church of Hopkinsville

Mountains to the Mississippi

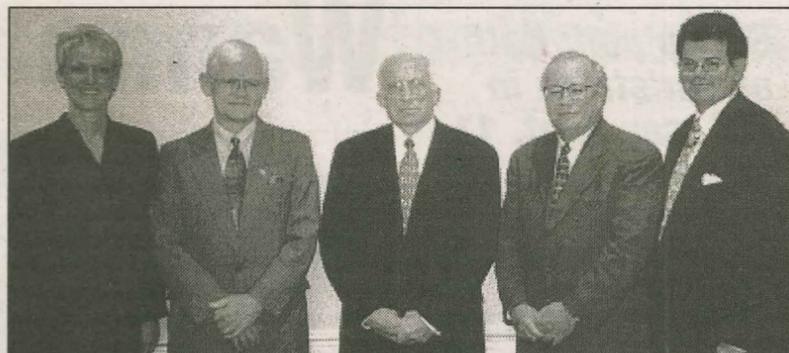
Compiled by staff

■ **CADIZ**—James Moody resigned as pastor of New Hope Church.
 ■ **CORBIN**—Central Church called Darren Gaddis as senior pastor. He previously was pastor of Liberty Point Church in Cadiz.
 ■ **FRANKFORT**—St. John Church called John Wyatt as pastor and called him to the gospel ministry.
 ■ **GREENSBURG**—Mark Lile resigned as pastor of Greasy Creek Church to begin a new church start.
 ■ **LAWRENCEBURG**—Anderson Association called Fred Knickerbocker as director of missions. He also is bivocational pastor of Goshen Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg.
 ■ **LONDON**—Scot Keen resigned as pastor of Hawk Creek Church to pursue international missionary training with New Tribes Mission.
 ■ **MAYFIELD**—First Church called Frances Irizarry as director of community ministries. She previously was on the staff of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Bob Swift is pastor.

■ **MOUNT STERLING**—Reid Village Church called Drew Martin as pastor. He previously was director of missions for Boones Creek Association.
 ■ **MURRAY**—Scotts Grove Church called Richard Walker as pastor and John Denham as associate pastor.
 ■ **PRINCETON**—Blue Spring Church called Jimmy Fuller as pastor. He previously was pastor of Nelson Creek Church in Central City.
 ■ **VERSAILLES**—New Hope Church called Wesley Noss as pastor. He previously was pastor of Lebanon Church.

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.



FOUNDATION LEADERS New officers for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation board of directors are (from left) Laurie Valentine, assistant secretary; Jim Hales, vice chairman; Glenn Armstrong, secretary; Arnold Caddell, chairman; and Barry Allen, treasurer.

WMU, KBHC leader Lillian Brown dies

LOUISVILLE—Lillian Brown, a longtime supporter of Baptist work in Kentucky, died Dec. 27 at age 90.

Brown, a member of St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, served on the boards of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children and Kentucky Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

She and her late husband, Ralph, also actively supported the work of Georgetown College, Long Run Baptist Association, Oneida Baptist Institute and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Brown served as Long Run Association's WMU director and chaired KBHC's Women's Advisory Board. She received the KBHC's 1990 V.V. Cooke Award for exceptional service to children.

Brown's funeral service was Dec. 29 in Louisville. She is survived by a sister, LaVerne Vinson.

CLASSIFIED ADS

AVAILABLE: Ordained Southern Baptist minister seeks conservative, Spirit-led church to pastor—full-time or bivocational. Open to traditional, contemporary or blended worship. Some experience in leading worship as well as youth ministry. Requests for resumé or more information can be sent to: Rev. George M. Bryant, 390 Nottingham Road, Lexington, KY 40517; or call and leave a message: (859) 272-7156.

FOR SALE: Konica 2125 copy machine. Approximately 3 years old; maintained under maintenance contract. \$1,500. For more information, contact Northside Baptist Church, (270) 765-5324.

SEEKING: Liberty Baptist Church in Leitchfield, Ky., is seeking a part-time youth minister. Interested candidates may submit resumé to: Gladys Duvall, PO Box 88, Millwood, KY 42762-0088.

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

SEEKING: Monument Heights Baptist Church is seeking a full-time associate minister of music and youth. The church supports BGAV, CBF and SBC. Salary/benefits package commensurate with training/experience. Please submit resumé by Friday, Jan. 25, to: Personnel Committee, Monument Heights Baptist Church, 5716 Monument Ave., Richmond, VA 23226. E-mail: personnel@monument-heights.org.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Highland Park First Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky. Please submit resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 7321 Billtown Road, Louisville, KY 40299.

SEEKING: Perryville Baptist Church is eagerly seeking God's man for the position of full-time pastor. Membership: 540. Church has begun a building program. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 26, Perryville, KY 40468, or fax to (859) 332-8729. Church phone: (859) 332-8721.

SEEKING: Part-time secretary. Send resumé to Gethsemane Baptist Church, 10400 Blue Lick Road, Louisville, KY 40229, or fax (502) 969-3191.

SEEKING: Part-time music director for Bethel Baptist Church, Eubank, Ky. If interested, please forward resumé to: Bethel Baptist Church, 5260 E Highway 452, Eubank, KY 42567, Attn: Music Search Committee.

SEEKING: Minister to families. First Baptist Church, Middletown, Ky., is seeking candidates for a newly created, full-time ministry position. The minister will develop and strengthen the current ministries to preschoolers, children, youth and their families. This minister will work with youth, grades 7-12, in a program of outreach, discipleship and ministry. He/she also will work closely with the leadership of the preschool and children's ministries to develop ministries in those same areas. The candidate should possess a love for children and youth and the desire to strengthen family life. A seminary master's degree or equivalent experience is required. First Baptist Church is an 80-year-old congregation in eastern Louisville with a growing youth and children's membership. Send resumé and a cover letter to: Dr. Jim Cobban, pastor, First Baptist Church, 11721 Main St., Middletown, KY 40243, or fax to: (502) 245-7945. Resumés preferred by Jan. 15.

SEEKING: Do you have a heart for missions? The Kentucky Baptist Convention, in partnership with the North American Mission Board, is seeking a Mission Service Corps (MSC) consultant. This missions-minded individual will enlist and place missionaries, identify needs and promote MSC in his or her area. This volunteer position does have an expense account and some great benefits. Interested people should contact Mission Service Corps, Kentucky Baptist Convention, PO Box 43433, Louisville, KY 40253, (800) 266-6477, ext. 397, or Eric.Allen@kybaptist.org.

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: 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: 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: Audubon Baptist Church seeks full-time pastor to lead a moderate church that 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: 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: 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: 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.

Christians march in Bethlehem's streets for peace

By Elaine Fletcher
Religion News Service

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (RNS)—About 2,000 Palestinians, including area Christian church leaders and members plus supporters from Europe and North America, marked New Year's Eve in Bethlehem with a march to Jerusalem calling for peace in a region still wracked by violence.

"Our hope for the new year is that the simple people of this region will have peace, that the leaders of the region will have peace in their hearts, and that the international community will be more courageous in pursuing a solution," said Jerusalem's Latin (Roman Catholic) Patriarch Michel Sabbah.

Sabbah and the heads of the region's nine other major church denominations, ranging from Coptic to Protestant, led the demonstration on its two-mile march through Bethlehem, carrying a large gold cross.

"We urge both conflicting sides, Israelis and Palestinians, to gather around the table and reach a solution," said Greek Orthodox Archbishop Aristopholus, who represented the Orthodox churches in the procession.

The march, which had been scheduled to proceed from Bethlehem to Jerusalem's Old City holy sites, initially was halted inside Bethlehem by a convoy of Israeli armored vehicles and ordered to disperse.

Facing the armed Israelis, the church leaders waited patiently in the hot sun of a mid-winter day for nearly an hour, as the crowd behind them sang peace songs, before finally receiving permission to proceed another half-mile to the Jerusalem city limits.

There, West Bank Palestinian marchers were barred from proceeding further.

"We have the right to pray in Jerusalem. But Jerusalem has been closed to us for 10 years," said Father Raed Abusahlia, a top aide of Sabbah, speaking on behalf of West Bank Palestinians, who are unable to enter Jerusalem freely for religious services or family visits as well as business and entertainment.

Sue Longstaff, an Anglican from London, was among the hundreds of foreign Christians, Jews and Muslims who had traveled thousands of miles to join in the New Year's march for peace.

"I didn't feel that I could stand in church singing 'Oh Little Town of Bethlehem,' knowing that such suffering is taking place in the real Bethlehem," she said.

Indonesian Christians remain in danger

By Mark Kelly
SBC International Mission Board

JAKARTA, Indonesia (BP)—Troops prevented a threatened massacre of Christian refugees in Indonesia's Central Sulawesi province, but a series of church bombings on New Year's Day proves extremist Muslim militias still pose a serious threat to Christians in the province, even after a Dec. 20 peace accord was signed.

In Central Sulawesi's capital, Palu, midnight bombs exploded simultaneously at three churches. A fourth exploded later in the day as worshippers gathered at another church for a service.

Miraculously, no one was killed in the midnight blasts and only two people were injured, even though about 200 worshippers were in one of the churches when the bombs went off. One policeman was killed and another injured as they attempted to remove the fourth bomb, which had been thrown through the church window by men on motorbikes.

"It was a miracle that no one in our church was killed," Yohanes Moniaga, pastor of one of the churches bombed at midnight, told International Christian Concern, an organization that monitors persecution of Christians around the world. "As the bomb exploded, I saw people being lifted into the air. Immediately following the explosion, no one left the church. We just called on the Lord and thanked Him for His deliverance."

Before Christmas, the Laskar Jihad

Muslim militia had threatened to attack as many as 63,000 Christian refugees and residents in the city of Tenena. Thousands of militia fighters armed with automatic weapons rampaged through Christian villages in Central Sulawesi, burning churches and thousands of homes and sending residents fleeing.

A massacre was averted when the Indonesian government quickly sent about 4,500 soldiers to the predominantly Christian city. On Christmas Day, members of an elite police unit from the Indonesian army's mobile brigade guarded churches in the city. In some places, members of Muslim organizations helped police to safeguard churches.

Tens of thousands of Christian refugees, however, remain without shelter and basic necessities.

On Dec. 20, Christian and Muslim groups signed a peace pact designed to end three years of hostilities in the area. Militia members have been surrendering weapons and police will begin a major disarmament effort later this month.

The 10-point peace accord, the fifth such agreement in recent years, promises to stop all fighting, mediate disputes and reject outside interference, including the Laskar Jihad. More than 50,000 people—mostly Christians—have been driven from their homes by the fighting.

Since mid-2000 approximately 1,000 people have died in religious clashes in the province. Up to five times that number have been killed in

Want to get involved?

■ Encourage government officials to help stop violence against Christians in Indonesia, by faxing U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell at (202) 261-8577 and Indonesia's Charge d' Affairs, T.A. Samodra Sriwidjaja, at (202) 775-5365.

■ Contact your congressional representative. For e-mail or addresses, visit www.congress.org.

■ Encourage media coverage of the atrocities in Indonesia by e-mailing comments@foxnews.com and feedback@cnn.com.

■ Find out about Indonesia through the International Christian Concern's Web site: www.persecution.org

■ Locate resources on persecuted Christians through the Web site for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission: www.erc.com/RLiberty/Persecution/persecution.htm

even worse Muslim-Christian violence in neighboring Maluku in recent years. Central Sulawesi and Maluku are the only parts of predominantly Muslim Indonesia to have roughly equal Christian and Muslim populations.

On Christmas Eve 2000, 19 people died in attacks on churches in nine cities.

"The situation has remained calm," a missionary in Jakarta reported on Dec. 28. "We do need to pray that the Laskar Jihad will be removed from the area and that the Christians and Muslims of the Poso area will work together for peace. Some of the Christians in the Napu area are still holding off returning home until they feel they will be safe."

Russians battle for soul of mythical Father Frost

By Frank Brown
Religion News Service

MOSCOW (RNS)—Father Frost, a mythical figure fond of cold weather and children, dominates the last days of every Russian year.

He is in television, billboard and newspaper ads peddling everything from beer to vacuum cleaners. He is on the minds of small children waiting for New Year's gifts.

In the world's largest country, that kind of exposure translates into money and influence. So it is no surprise that a battle is under way to define just who is Father Frost, part Soviet man, part ill-tempered pagan god and lately part Russian Orthodox Christian.

He often is compared to Santa Claus. Both Frost and Claus bear gifts, wear red and are on the portly side. But while Claus is a Christian saint—St. Nicholas—who worked as a bishop in what is today Turkey, Frost had his beginnings in Vedic mythology, eventually earning the respect of the pre-Christian Slavs of Russia's far north as the god of night, snow and death.

The less pleasant aspects of Frost's personality and past were glossed over by the atheist Communists who ruled Russia until 1991 and were masters of reworking history. They were eager to promote a faithless, blandly good figure to preside over a purely secular holiday, New Year's.

It worked. Today, New Year's is Russia's most important holiday, bar none. It is a time for exchanging gifts,

gathering families and drinking more than usual.

Dec. 25 is an ordinary working day in Russia, where less than 1 percent of the population of 143 million are Roman Catholics or Protestants. Most people are nominally members of the Russian Orthodox Church, which still uses the Julian calendar that lags 13 days behind that used in the West.

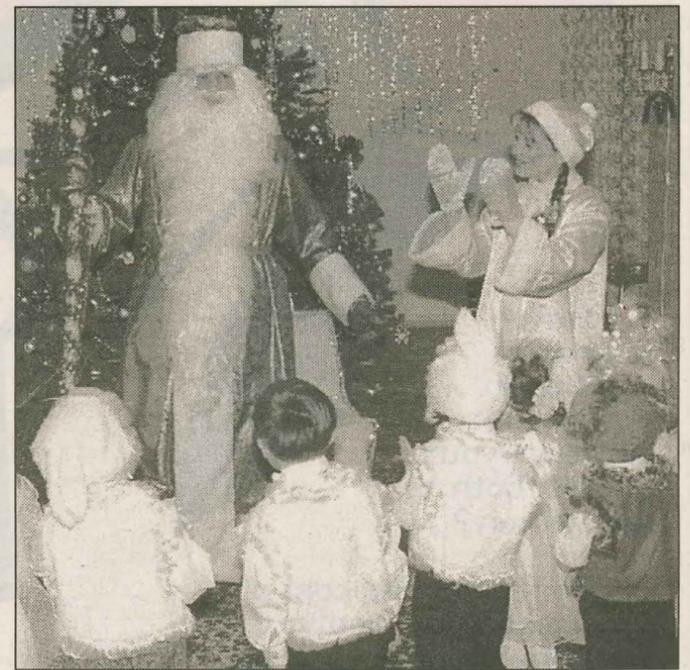
Christmas comes on Jan. 7 and many Russian families mark Old New Year's Day on Jan. 13.

Frost's most vocal promoters, found in the city of Veliky Ustyug which claimed Frost in 1997 as a native son, are trying to extend Frost's reign over the winter holidays to take in Christmas and Old New Year's. Their aim is to establish Veliky Ustyug, a city of 50,000 residents located 480 miles north of Moscow, as a leading winter tourist destination with Frost as the draw.

Local Orthodox leaders are beside themselves.

"The Orthodox Church has a very big objection to that park. I'm hoping that they will stop the project," said a Veliky Ustyug deacon who heads an Orthodox secondary school and asked that his name not be used. He added that Father Frost "has nothing to do with religion."

For Boris Pigaryov, one of the thousands of working Father Frosts to be found at this time of year in kindergarten pageants, office holiday parties and nightclubs, the notion of giving Frost a religious denomination, much less a Soviet-style rehabilitation



from his pagan past, is repugnant. "He is a fairy-tale figure. Creating any sort of a resume for him, it seems to me, is a bit forced," said Pigaryov, 30, as he changed into his Father Frost suit in a storage closet at Moscow's Kindergarten No. 1233.

Pigaryov's partner and Father Frost's granddaughter, Snowmaiden Tatyana Smirnova, has different ideas, saying it was high time Frost got religion. "Our people are Orthodox," she said. "If Frost were Orthodox, the kids could find out about their faith in a positive way without any pressure."

FATHER FROST Boris Pigaryov dresses as the Russian mythical figure with "Snow Maiden" Tatyana Smirnova at a show in a Moscow kindergarten. Father Frost is something of a cross between the gift-bearing Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas and is used to bring in the New Year, Russia's most important holiday. (RNS photo by Frank Brown)

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