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Poll: Spending less means better attention to real reason for holiday

TAKOMA PARK, Md. (RNS)—More than half of Americans surveyed said spending less money on gifts will allow them to focus more on the true meaning of the holidays this Christmas season.

A poll from the Center for a New American Dream, a Takoma Park, Md.-based organization, found 54 percent said spending less money will help them better focus on the holiday season.

"The poor economy is weighing heavily on people, but it's also true that Americans are using this holiday season to focus on what really matters," said Betsy Taylor, president of the center that encourages Americans to be responsible consumers and to protect the environment.

"Is the holiday supposed to be about racing from mall to mall and going into debt, or should it be about giving from the heart?"

The center offers suggestions for having a simpler holiday, such as giving "the gift of time," making donations to a charity in the name of a loved one or creating photo albums.

Other findings of the poll by Washington-based Widmeyer Research and Polling include:

- 77 percent said they would like to have a simpler holiday season this year.

- 64 percent of Americans are concerned about economic uncertainty as the holidays approach.

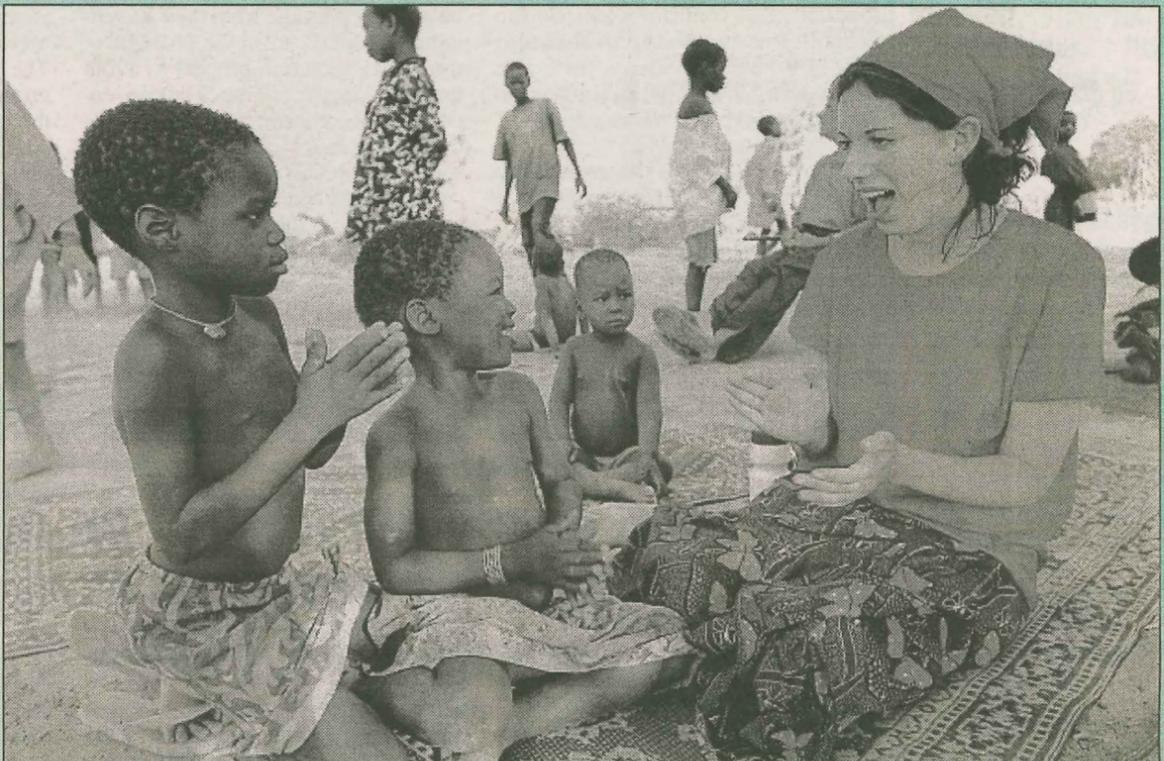
- 62 percent believe too much importance is placed on giving and receiving gifts during the holidays.

- 61 percent would rather spend less money on the holidays this year.

- 58 percent are planning to buy fewer gifts or spend less money.

- 28 percent said they need to spend a lot of money to have an enjoyable and fulfilling holiday.

'A rough life'



SHARING THE LIGHT Though she shared laughter and smiles with village children during a short-term mission project, Erin Joseph, a student at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., saw firsthand the hunger and poverty of the Marensé people of Burkina Faso. (BP photo by Warren Johnson)

Young missionaries brave hardships to share faith

By Shawn Hendricks
SBC International Mission Board

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso (BP)—Heather Miller smiles but can't hide the pain from the gashes and scrapes on her arms and legs.

Her smile fades to a grimace as she gingerly pulls back one of the bandages from the

skin to examine the damage.

Miller, a Southern Baptist missionary in Burkina Faso, crashed her motorcycle a couple days before as she rode out to the village where she lives.

She lost control as it dipped onto some loose sand and went down hard. A

hospital transport just "happened" to be driving by in the middle of

nowhere and picked her up.

"This was totally God," she said.

The young woman, with shoulder-length blond hair and fair complexion, looks more like a county fair queen than someone on a mission in a foreign land—but don't be fooled.

Despite Miller's bandages and banged-up wrist, her main concern is getting back to her village with the Marensé (pronounced mahr-ON-say) people. "Yeah, I need to let

□ See *Young missionaries ...*, page 8

That all peoples may know Him

W. Kentucky church's Thanksgiving Day feast continues to grow



THANKSGIVING MINISTRY Chris Yandell and Pam Collins fill plates during the community Thanksgiving dinner at Marion Baptist Church. Church members fed approximately 200 people throughout the community last week. Yandell flew in from Florida to help with the event, which was organized by his parents, Van and Margie Yandell. (Photo by Keith Todd)

By Keith Todd
State Correspondent

MARION—Three years ago, Van Yandell became aware that several friends in his church and community didn't have family with whom to share a Thanksgiving Day meal.

He approached the leadership of his church, Marion Baptist, to see if fellow members had any interest in hosting a community Thanksgiving dinner.

"There were several people who maybe didn't have any family or their family lives some distance away and couldn't make it home for Thanksgiving," Yandell explained. "I just didn't like the idea of anyone having to spend Thanksgiving Day alone."

Pastor Darrell Clarke and other church leaders endorsed the idea, appointing Yandell and his wife,

Margie, to head up the project.

The free Thanksgiving feast has become a true community event. Marion Baptist, which has a Sunday morning worship attendance of about 225 people, feeds nearly that many with its annual meal.

About 100 people gather for the sit-down dinner in the church's fellowship hall. (Half of those are church members, and half are from the community.)

Another 75 residents receive free Thanksgiving meals delivered to their doors.

Shut-ins and others benefit from the delivery service, Yandell explained. "We take food to the jail, to the hospital and to anyone in the community we can identify who wouldn't otherwise get a Thanksgiving dinner."

Volunteer participation by church members has been tremendous. □ See *Marion church ...*, page 6

Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, December 4

Shorter cuts ties to Georgia convention

"I continue to be sad that two Christian groups have not been able to settle their issues without going to extremes."

Ed Schrader, president of Shorter College

MARIETTA, Ga. (ABP)—Trustees of Shorter College approved changes Nov. 22 that will sever ties between the school and the Georgia Baptist Convention.

The new structure will allow the Shorter trustee board to become self-perpetuating. Previously, the Georgia Baptist Convention elected the school's trustees. Shorter trustees also agreed to take any means necessary to recover \$9 million in convention funds earmarked for Shorter but withheld during the dispute.

"I'm relieved that the uncertainty is over, but I continue to be sad that two Christian groups have not been able to settle their issues without going to extremes," Ed Schrader, Shorter's president, told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

The new trustee structure was approved by more than 70 percent of trustees, Schrader said. About half a dozen trustees have indicated they will no longer serve on the board.

The new bylaws call for at least 70 percent of the trustees to be members of Georgia Baptist churches. It does allow for the inclusion of others—such as non-Baptist alumni or Baptist alumni who live out of state—to be among the remaining 30 percent.

Shorter officials say they have been under pressure from their accreditation agencies to make changes in the trustee selection process to avoid undue political influence. The convention says the college is using accreditation as a smokescreen to distance itself from the GBC.

"We do not deny that accreditation by SACS is an important issue," said Robert White, executive director of the Georgia Baptist Convention. "We do not agree that the course Shorter has taken which they declare as the only way to remain accredited is, in fact, 'the only way.'"

"When Shorter says that a self-perpetuating board or separation from the convention are the only two options,

it is not difficult to feel that this is actually the desire of the college and is driving this entire crisis. Other colleges under the identical system we have had with Shorter are both accredited and happy."

The convention has placed endowment and trust funds—valued between \$8 million and \$9 million—in escrow until the dispute is resolved. The convention says the money is for groups in "friendly cooperation" with the convention and interprets that as entities whose boards are elected by the convention. Shorter argues that money designated in the past as endowment belongs to the school.

It remains to be seen if the convention will challenge Shorter's legal right to change its charter. Shorter's trustees have authorized its legal representatives to pursue the funding. Both sides have said they prefer to settle their differences without going to court, but neither have ruled out the possibility of lawsuits.

IMB, fired missionary differ on interpretation

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP)—Issues of Old Testament interpretation related to views of creation and science are among concerns cited in the teaching of fired Southern Baptist missionary professor Chris Harbin.

Southern Baptist International Mission Board administrators excerpted 13 passages from Harbin's 200-page "Narratological Theology and Homiletics" syllabus as evidence that he was teaching outside the boundaries of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

IMB trustees last month affirmed Harbin's termination by area administrators on grounds of "persistent advocating of doctrinal positions inconsistent with the Baptist Faith and Message."

Harbin and his wife, Karen, question the IMB's language used to describe their firing, insisting Harbin's teaching was not inconsistent with the Baptist Faith and Message. Harbin contends passages from his classroom syllabus used at the Baptist Theological Seminary of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil were lifted out of context and misconstrued to bring charges against him.

IMB spokesman Mark Kelly insisted the Harbins' termination is in no way related to their refusal to sign an affirmation of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

"In general, the problem was that his teaching on critical theories about the Bible was not balanced with a strong advocacy for the Bible as God's Word, totally true and trustworthy," Kelly said. "Understanding theories of biblical criticism is important, but we must never undermine trust in the Bible as God's word. When that happens, Christians begin to think they are too sophisticated to believe the Bible's stories are true. Inevitably, they are drawn away from a God whose heart breaks for a lost world—and they lose their sense of urgency for proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ."

Harbin has responded in writing to the passages cited by the IMB. The passages were taken from his course syllabus, originally written in Portuguese but translated into English this summer at the request of IMB regional administrator Robin Hadaway who does not read or speak Portuguese.

"The quotes in question as extract-

ed do not represent my beliefs," Harbin said. "My course text was apparently searched for content that could be used against me, regardless of whether a specific passage reflected my position or whether I was stating a position I was attempting to refute."

At multiple points in his syllabus, Harbin affirms the Bible's authority and trustworthiness. For example, in the introduction to the syllabus, he writes: "The authority is the word of God, supremely expressed in the Bible."

Harbin's syllabus on Genesis contains a recurring theme that the Bible is not a book of science, but of theology.

In discussing Genesis 1, for example, Harbin advises not reading the biblical text with an eye toward understanding the complete scientific process by which God created the earth.

Affirming God as Creator of the universe, however, Harbin wrote that the biblical account's intent "is not scientific description, but theological—it was God who created, not an aimless undirected process, nor the activity of a pantheon of gods."

Southern team lays groundwork for church starts in Northwest

LOUISVILLE (BP)—When mission volunteer Shane Critser talks about Seattle, he uses a somewhat startling analogy: Imagine an unreached people group—in America.

It might be somewhat of a stretch, but his point is valid: The Pacific Northwest is in need of church planters and missionaries.

Critser, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a team from the Louisville school recently traveled to Seattle hoping to make a spiritual difference. Their main task was assisting Southern Baptist North American Mission Board church planters already located in the Seattle area. The Southern Seminary students performed door-to-door evangelism and research. They held free car washes and block parties.

Along the way, the team members also considered a key question: Was God calling them into church planting?

"There's an overall spiritual deadness feeling you get that you just don't understand here in the Bible belt," said Critser, Southern Seminary's coordinator of missions activities.

The latest religious data by Glenmary Research Center underscores Critser's point. The researchers found that—when including all religions—Oregon and Washington are the two least churchgoing states in America.

Seattle is one of the cities receiving intensive focus by Southern Baptist volunteers. The area is part of NAMB's Strategic Focus Cities initiative, a long-term effort to take the gospel to the nation's largest cities.

One church planter told Critser, "I'm not working with people who reject the gospel because they know it and don't agree with it. I'm working with people who have never heard the gospel."

"It's a very different culture there," said trip coordinator Mark Terry, professor of Christian missions and evangelism at Southern. "The people there are indifferent to religion—especially the younger people.

"It's not that they're antagonistic. They're just apathetic. They don't see the point. ... The church planters say that a lot of people go to that area ... because there are so few churches. They're really looking for a secular environment in which to live."

Critser said the trip met its goals as team members provided much-needed assistance to local pastors, shared the gospel and explored their own ministry call.

"Until you get on the field, you really don't know what it's like, so you're learning practical aspects of church-planting," he said.

BAPTIST DIGEST

■ Resolution affirms intelligent design.

Messengers to the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio adopted a resolution encouraging all school districts in the state to present intelligent design as an alternative to evolution. The action came in response to a State Board of Education of Ohio committee proposal to amend the state's science standards to include teaching the debate over evolution. The full education board is scheduled to vote this month on the proposed science standards.

■ **First, Dallas, shifts CP funds.** Members of First Baptist Church of Dallas voted Nov. 20 to give all its Cooperative Program gifts through the conservative Southern Baptists of Texas Convention rather than through the

Baptist General Convention of Texas. Mac Brunson, senior pastor of the Dallas congregation, is a member of the SBTC Executive Board. He said the current direction of the BGCT "is making it increasingly impossible for churches who want to be with the Southern Baptist Convention to remain a part of the state convention."

■ **White receives top CP award.** Robert White, executive director of the Georgia Baptist Convention, has been named the 2002 recipient of the Southern Baptist Convention's M.E. Dodd Cooperative Program Award. The award, established in 2000, is presented for "lifetime achievement" in Cooperative Program support. White,

executive director in Georgia since 1993, is a former pastor of First Baptist Church of Paducah. He is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Empowering Kingdom Growth Task Force.

■ **ABP cuts news editor position.** Citing financial concerns, Associated Baptist Press will eliminate its news editor position at the end of the year. The action will leave Bob Allen, a nine-year employee of the independent national news service, without a job as of Dec. 31. Faced with a projected \$40,000 deficit for 2002 and a reduced budget for 2003, ABP's board of directors voted to eliminate the news editor position. Executive Editor Greg Warner will assume responsibility for ABP's daily news operation.

Unity service

Stanford churches respond to Klan rally with worship

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

STANFORD—Pastors in this Lincoln County town hope a unity service that overshadowed a recent Ku Klux Klan rally will be the first step toward increased interracial cooperation.

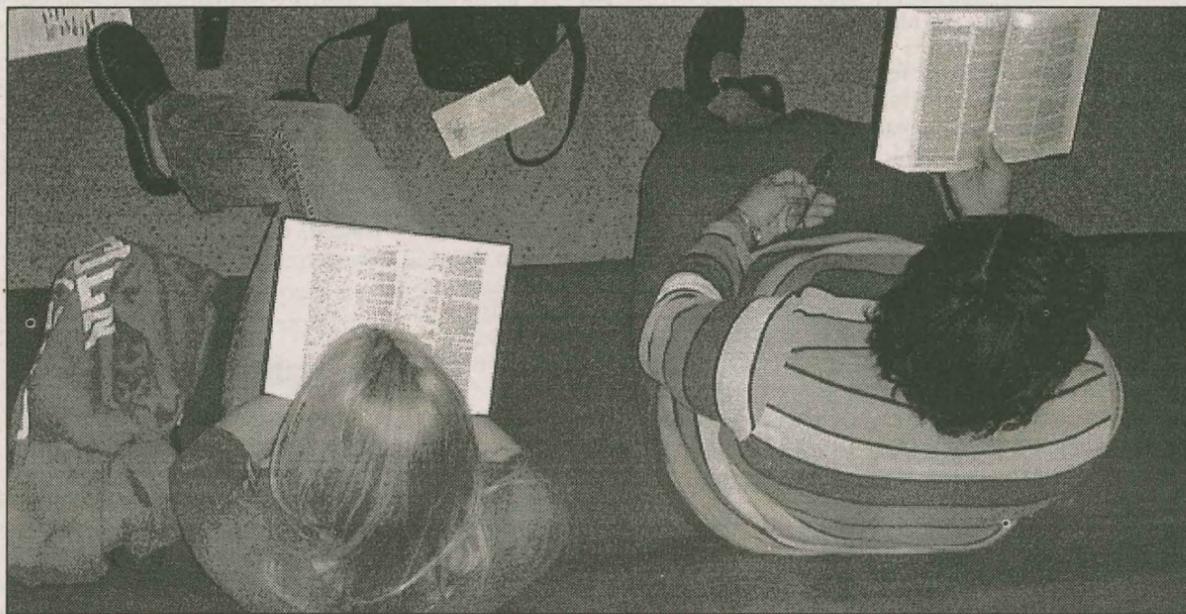
Max Hester, pastor of the mostly white Stanford Baptist Church, said pastors from white and black churches plan to meet after the holidays to discuss possible pulpit exchanges and joint worship services.

At a breakfast meeting with area pastors five days before the Klan rally, three African-American pastors told Hester that they preferred not having to deal with the issue.

"I agree, but if it weren't for this, when would you and I be sitting together at breakfast?" Hester said he replied. "This service was important to help Christians make a positive statement to this community that hate will not win, but love will."

"It was very important because of the message sent out to these people that are considering hate," agreed Robert Colter, pastor of Boneyville Baptist Church, an African-American congregation.

"It's a good message that we as Christians can show unity and say that there's no difference in race; it's just one human race," he added. "The comments I've heard so far is that it's long overdue that all the churches in



WORSHIP Two women worship at the Nov. 9 community service at Stanford Baptist Church in Lincoln County. About 90 people attended the event, while only a handful of people turned out for a Ku Klux Klan rally held at the same time. (Danville Advocate-Messenger photo by Allison May)

the community came together."

Stanford Baptist hosted the Nov. 9 event, scheduling it at the same time as the Klan rally. KKK members reportedly departed 20 minutes early, while the unity service continued a half-hour longer than its scheduled 2 p.m. conclusion.

About 90 people came to the church, including the mayor, mayor-elect, sheriff and other elected officials. During the service, someone reported that only a dozen Klansmen and several dozen onlookers were at the rally.

Sermons were delivered by Hester and Stanford resident Jerry Wilkerson, who is pastor of the black First Baptist Church of Hodgenville. Wilkerson's son, Nehemiah—a student at Kentucky State University—directed the choir. The service also included an open testimony time.

Harry Hunter, director of missions for Lincoln County Baptist Association, said he got the idea for the unity service after learning the Klan planned to follow up a rally in neighboring Casey County with a visit to Stanford.

"That's not what this community stands for," Hunter said of white supremacist views. "People have stopped me to say that they appreciate we did this. One of the major things it accomplished is we're making an effort to pull the community

together and pull down some of the walls that exist in every community."

At Stanford Baptist, the town's largest church, members have suggested holding a joint worship service with First Baptist, Hester said.

While coming together is important, Wilkerson said Christians also must avoid reacting to the KKK in a spirit of anger.

"We have to understand that the people in the KKK are spiritually dead," Wilkerson said. "They need life and to experience the love of God. I went from being ready to protest them to praying for them, that they would know God and we (all blacks and whites) would be united."

NAMB appoints 11 missionaries with ties to Bluegrass state

ALPHARETTA, Ga.—Eleven missionaries with ties to Kentucky were appointed recently by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board.

Brian and Diane Archer serve in Plainfield, Ind., where he is a church planting missionary pastor.

Archer, a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, previously was pastor of Cedar Grove Baptist Church in Franklin. Mrs. Archer currently is a homemaker and home-school teacher. Earlier she worked as a childcare provider and elementary school teacher.

Jason and Angela Brinker serve in Mukilteo, Wash., where he is a church planting missionary pastor.

Brinker is a graduate of Mid-Continent College in Mayfield and Southern Seminary. He previously served eight years as pastor of Suwanee Furnace Baptist Church in Kuttawa.

Angela Brinker is a graduate of Paducah Community College. She previously was a physical therapist assistant in Hopkinsville.

Stan and Judith Chaney serve in Cambridge City, Ind., where he is associational missionary for Eastern Indiana Baptist Association.

Chaney, a native of Campbellsville, is a graduate of Campbellsville University, Southern Seminary and



Brian Archer



Diane Archer



Jason Brinker



Angela Brinker



The Chaney's



Pamela Pyle



The Whitakers

Luther Rice Seminary in Georgia. He has been a pastor since 1965, serving churches in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Tennessee. His last pastorate was in Morristown, Tenn.

Judith Chaney was born in Alabama and grew up in Campbellsville. She is a graduate of Campbellsville University and has served in secretarial roles in various organizations.

Duane and Deana Floro serve in Columbus, Ohio, where he is state ministry evangelism director for the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio.

Floro, a Kentucky native, is a graduate of Cumberland College; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. He previously was pastor of churches in Oklahoma, Arizona, Indiana and West Virginia.

Pamela Pyle serves in church and community ministries in her hometown of Lexington.

Miss Pyle is a graduate of the University of Kentucky and Southern Seminary. She served as a student summer missionary in Grand Isle, La., for many years beginning in 1993. She also has served as a summer missionary in Lexington. From 1996 until 1998, she served as campus minister intern with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. In 1999, she served as a semester missionary in Grand Isle, La. She served as summer missionary with First Baptist Church in Grand Isle, La., in 2001. Since 2000, she has been working with Irishtown Baptist Mission in Lexington during the school year.

In her missionary assignment, she will continue to work with Irishtown Mission, coordinating volunteers and church groups to minister to the community. She also will serve during the summers in Grand Isle, La., which has a partnership with Elkhorn Baptist Association in Lexington.

Kentucky natives **Richard and Cheryl Whitaker** serve in church planting in Dupont, Wash., where he will be pastor of a new church start in the South Sound region of Washington. He will be serving as part of the Nehemiah Project church planting program of Southern Seminary.

Whitaker is a graduate of Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, and is a student at Southern Seminary. He was chaplain at Twinbrook Nursing Home in Louisville from 1999 until this year. He was a church planting intern with River Oaks Community Church in Louisville, from 2000 until 2001. He served Highview Baptist Church as an adult ministry intern in 2001.

Cheryl Whitaker is a graduate of Western Kentucky University. She has served in various secretarial positions, and most recently served in child care at Bethel St. Paul in Louisville.

BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ **Jim McKinley**, former president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, was honored Nov. 22 as a distinguished alumnus of Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas. McKinley, a 1954 graduate of Wayland, retired in 1992 as a missionary to Bangladesh.

■ **Cumberland College** presented Chick-fil-A founder Truett Cathy with an honorary doctorate when he spoke at the school's convocation service Nov. 18. "All of us were created in the image, in the likeness of our heavenly Father," Cathy told students. "That creates a great responsibility for us to be at our best at all times, regardless of the circumstances."

WESTERN RECORDER

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

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God-called workers

Concerning Cordell Day's letter about missionaries who do not sign the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message:

1. Missionary service is not the usual employee/employer relationship. Mission boards formerly recognized that the missionary is called of God and answerable to God. In 26 years as a home missionary, the board was an enabler to help me do what God had called me to do. Now boards seem to be modeling their policies after big business.

2. About democracy of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, only 10 to 20 percent of the churches are represented. Moreover, thousands of moderates no longer attend the meeting because they believe it is not democratic and don't feel a part of it. Many feel discussion and amendments to motions are stifled or ruled out of order, with decisions by a handful of leaders being rubber-stamped. The convention is supposed to be the servant of the churches but that seems to be reversed.

3. Baptists do not believe in creeds. In earlier times, Baptists died rather than accept creeds. By requiring denominational workers to sign the Baptist Faith and Message, the boards have made it a creed. So far the SBC has not said the BF&M is a creed; it is the boards who are enforcing conformity.

4. The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message was far more democratic than the latest one. The 1963 version was written by a committee of all state convention presidents who are far closer to the grassroots than the SBC leaders. The 2000 changes were brought by a small committee appointed by the SBC president.

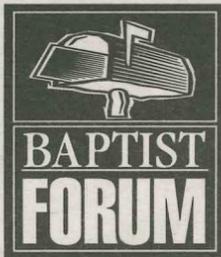
5. It is uncalled for to label missionaries "arrogant" for following

their deepest convictions. It is uncalled for to call "arrogant" those who have served God for years in difficult places when no one has ever questioned their doctrinal faithfulness.

Bill Moore
Owensboro

Beware of exclusion

In a recent issue of the Western Recorder, there were articles from two states about actions taken by Baptist groups seeking to officially exclude those Baptists who associate in any way with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.



In the past, this type of behavior was done, but held as private actions taken in board meetings,

etc. Today, with these articles as proof, there is now an open, direct and determined mandate to exclude Southern Baptists who refuse to loyally align themselves with the political machine that is powered by the Southern Baptist Convention's current administrative mindset of exclusion.

The Kentucky study committee, appointed to examine the prevailing Baptist Faith and Message creed that has become the plumb-bob of doctrinal demand, spent one full year examining it and reported to us that all the statements made in the past were good and this one had some good in it as well. This report, we were told, was designed to show the convention that all of us need to reach out and endeavor to heal the wounds that have been inflicted by the last years of ugly actions that left professors, ministers and state workers looking for jobs.

This report, hailed as a prototype for the convention, was misplaced then, is in error today and will continue to show that controlling Southern Baptist leaders cannot be placated by anything other than complete subju-

gation to political demand. When are we going to learn this lesson?

The missionaries know where they stand. The seminary professors know where they stand. Departmental workers know where they stand. If you hope to be aligned with current Southern Baptist agendas, a complete surrender to prevailing political demand is required.

We lost our sense of direction 20 years ago. If biblical history is to be trusted, we have 20 more years to wander.

Edward Clark
Danville

Valuable resources

I want to encourage my siblings in Christ throughout Kentucky to draw on the wealth of knowledge and experience at the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

One example: I recently was interviewed by Brenda Smith for part of a Western Recorder series on "Worship Without Warfare." It was a great experience and I sensed the Holy Spirit's moving through it.

I was impressed by the Lord to ask Brenda to come and share with our congregation her unique and exciting testimony. She grew our understanding that connecting with those who are being urged by the Holy Spirit is imperative as servants of God. It is not "church" that they seek, but an encounter with the risen Christ. It was a moving, tender, humorous, "connecting" experience.

No doubt there are many such reports from other churches who have hosted KBC staff members. Let's hear from you.

My thanks also to the Western Recorder for featuring the worship series. A family visited our worship celebration because they had read the article. Using the resources God has provided is good stewardship!

Paul Sisk, pastor
Anchor Baptist Church, Lexington

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

China is the focus of Southern Baptists' Week of Prayer for International Missions this year. This is very appropriate because it is a great time of opportunity for the gospel in China.

The Chinese population is growing rapidly and people are moving to the cities in unprecedented numbers. By 2010, 300 million Chinese will have moved from the countryside to the cities.

The people are moving to find work. Many will end up on the streets but others will find jobs and spend money. The surge in China's economy will be significant.

Each year, 10 new cities reach one million in population. China has 450 cities with a population of at least 250,000—compared to 68 cities of that size in the United States.

The trauma of moving to the city will enable millions of Chinese people to be receptive to the gospel. More people can hear when they gather in population centers instead of being scattered over the vast countryside.

With more than 27 million Internet users, China is one of the most wired nations in the world. Adult literacy rates in China are 89 percent for men and 71 percent for women.



Bill Mackey

Of China's population of 1.26 billion, 42.2 percent are non-religious; 28.5 percent adhere to Chinese folk religion; 8.4 percent profess Buddhism; 8.1 percent are atheists; 7.1 percent are Christian; 4.3 percent are Muslims; and 1.5 percent are Taoists.

China claims one-fifth of the world's people. Most live in the eastern half of the

country. China is home to about 480 distinct groups. Only 68 of these groups have an evangelical believers population of more than 2 percent, however.

The size and diversity of China presents a great challenge but the cultural transitions present an even greater opportunity.

Student volunteers are needed to share Christ on campuses and in remote villages; to backpack and carry

the gospel to large minority people groups; and to teach English to students in the outer districts. There is a need for literature distribution to Chinese tourists, prayerwalking, summer English teachers and English evangelism in the cities.

"Chinese students in Louisville are more open to the gospel than any other international group," said Tommy Johnson, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's strategist for international students. He is praying for a similar breakthrough with other international student groups.

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

We can pray for laborers to be called out to China, go personally and give sacrificially to support the laborers. Consider joining me by making your largest gift this Christmas your gift to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering!

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

GIVING

Falling interest rates can impact charitable giving

By Laurie Valentine

While falling interest rates have impacted personal cash flow both negatively (lower yields from CDs and bonds) and positively (reduced borrowing rates), they also have impacted charitable giving.

The tax savings reaped from life income giving techniques—charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts—have been somewhat reduced as a result of reductions in the IRS discount rate used to calculate the charitable income tax deduction for those types of gifts.

Lower IRS discount rates make two other giving techniques—life estate agreements and charitable lead trusts—more attractive from a tax planning standpoint. Federal estate tax uncertainty and increasing real estate values might add to the appeal of these giving options.

If you have a significant bequest in your will to one or more Baptist causes, a gift during your lifetime of a remainder interest in your personal residence or family farm to those causes could be an excellent alternative that will provide significant income tax savings. You retain a life estate interest in the property and deed the remainder interest to the charitable organizations. You remain in control of the property during your lifetime.

If you are 70 to 75 years old at the time you transfer the remainder interest, you will be entitled to a charitable income tax deduction equal to one-half to two-thirds of the current market value of the property. If you can't use the full amount of the deduction in the year you make the gift, the excess can be deducted over the succeeding five tax years.

Converting a major bequest to charity into a lifetime charitable lead trust gift provides significant current benefits to the charity and a way to leverage the future transfer of assets to family. A charitable lead trust provides a designated income stream to one or more charitable causes for a term of years. At the end of the trust term, the remainder of the trust assets either is returned to the giver or distributed to family members.

Life estate agreement and charitable lead trust giving options might be more attractive than ever in the current economic environment. Check them out.

Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation

Simple games can help focus on true meaning of Christmas

Q: My 7-year-old son is being bombarded with the commercialism of Christmas. How can I help him keep Christ at the center of his Christmas celebration?

One simple and fun activity is to draw a tic-tac-toe board on a piece of cardboard. Print "Jesus" in the center space. Print these words in the other eight spaces: angels, lights, gifts, music, star, manger, shepherds and candles. Tell your child what you have done, but do not let him see the board. Explain that the object of the game is for him to guess which Christmas-related words you have written, seeing how long it takes to get three in a row.

As your child guesses, mark the board accordingly and make comments about what each word has to do with Christmas: "Angels announced the birth of Jesus." "We're all excited about our gifts, and Jesus was God's gift of love to the world." "Christmas music helps us remember the Christmas story." "The star guided the wise men to the manger where Jesus was born."

When all the words have been guessed, ask, "Which word do you think I put in the center of the board?" (Show the card.) "Jesus is in the center of the board, and Jesus should be in the middle of our celebration too. After all, it's His birthday!"

Playing the game with friends can be a great way for your child to share about the true meaning of Christmas. Have each child draw his or own board and fill the spaces with Christmas words of their own choosing. Call out words from a list you have prepared. The first player to match three words in a row wins.—David Garrard

Q: Our middle school son seems to wrestle constantly with us for power. How do we deal with this without either ignoring it or flattening him?

In avoiding the extremes, you already have made a wise decision. The same biblical passage that encourages parents to "not provoke their children to wrath" also reminds us to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Parents of middle school students often can feel like they are playing the family version of "Let's Make a Deal." If you think about it from the young teen's perspective, it might make more sense. They have minimal influence on their school, possess little money, cannot be responsible for their own transportation and often have little input about such family issues as curfews and household tasks.

As a result, middle schoolers often are desperate to find ways to establish some control over their lives. Pay attention to the following issues:

- *Be careful to prioritize between negotiables and non-negotiables.* You might choose to allow flexibility in the way a room is kept (or not kept) but take a firm stand against alcohol and drugs. You might be willing to negotiate a bit on curfew but not on homework.

- *Allow the middle schooler to "win" sometimes when the issue is not crucial.* This will help your child experience a sense of respect as a person who is becoming more mature and capable of making good decisions.

- *Remember that "a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).* Sometimes stepping away or taking a "timeout" from a heated conversation can be the wisest choice.

- *Keep spending lots of time with your child.* A healthy relationship will serve as a loving lubricant when teens bump up against the rules.—Scott Wigginton

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



Don't lose sight of the Christ of Christmas

We typically hear the gentle reminders in our churches each Christmas season: "Jesus is the reason for the season." "Keep Christ in Christmas."

While those words can help Christians refocus our attention on the true meaning of Christmas, they also offer a subtle warning about the commercialism that seems to kick into gear earlier every year.

That also is a recurring theme in many Christian circles this time of year: Beware of the rampant commercialism that puts presents and profit above the birth of the Prince of Peace.

That remains a legitimate concern in 2002, but commercialism isn't the only culprit. It appears that our society rapidly is moving beyond mere commercial interests toward the absolute secularization of the Christmas season. Not content simply to use the celebration of Christ's birth for economic gain, many businesses and organizations are promoting a Christless Christmas that fails to even acknowledge the One whose miraculous birth truly is the reason for the season.

Consider a few examples:

- Many schools and civic organizations no longer have "Christmas concerts" or "Christmas parties." They now have "holiday concerts" and "winter festivals" that showcase elaborately decorated "holiday trees." Why? Because they don't want to offend anyone who is uncomfortable observing a season that honors Jesus Christ.

- Try to find a nativity set or other Christian-themed gift or decoration in a typical retail store. The shelves will be lined with Santas, snowmen and elves but very few Christ-centered options. Yes, there will be plenty of stars and angels, but most of those tend to reflect society's current interest in generic spiritual themes rather than the significant roles played by angels and a star on the first Christmas.

- "The Christmas Shoes," aired Dec. 1 by CBS, is based on the hit Christmas song and novel of the same name. The song and book share a strong Christian message about a young boy who wants to buy a

pair of shoes for his terminally ill mother because "I want her to look beautiful if Mama meets Jesus tonight." The TV movie takes a more indirect approach. It references God, but not Jesus, except in the lyrics of the song by Christian recording artists NewSong.

The approach by CBS is similar to that taken by the successful TV shows "Touched by an Angel" and "Seventh Heaven"—a positive view of God but no specific connections to Jesus Christ.

Beth Grossbard, one of the executive producers of "The Christmas Shoes," told Religion News Service the changes were made to the TV movie to make it "adaptable and appealing to the masses rather than a specifically targeted group."

NewSong member Billy Goodwin, who said the group is pleased with the movie, added, "If we had had total control of it, we would have wanted something a little more direct and in your face about the Christian message."

CBS is to be commended for producing a wholesome, inspirational Christmas story that treats belief in God in a positive way. It's just too bad they didn't see fit to keep Christ in the center of their Christmas production.

That's not to say Christians should be insensitive to people of other faiths and cultures who observe their own special traditions. It is appropriate for businesses to offer merchandise that highlights Chanukah, Ramadan, Kwanzaa and other observances—but not at the expense of keeping Christ in Christmas.

The angel declared to the shepherds in Luke 2:11, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." That is—and always will be—the essence of Christmas.

As you celebrate the Christmas season with family, friends and co-workers, feel free to enjoy Frosty, Rudolph and trips to the mall. But don't let your festivities fail to revolve around the One whose birthday we celebrate on Dec. 25. Jesus is the reason for the season.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Walking through the holidays

By Branda Polk

NASHVILLE (BP)—It's December, and with it comes the joy of the holiday season, shopping, decorating, celebrations, parties, time with friends and family and lots of food.

Many times these events cause additional stress and leave you feeling like you're "running" through the holidays.

To help handle the stress and still get everything done, try to "walk" through the holidays this year by adding more walking into your activities. Here are some ways to walk more during the holidays.

- Organize a group of friends, neighbors or members of your church and commit to "Walk to Bethlehem" between now and Christmas. Joseph and Mary traveled approximately 70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem before Jesus' birth. They walked and rode a donkey to get there. Surely you can lace up your sneakers and cover this dis-

tance as well. Break up the distance into two- and three-mile increments per day. Record your daily distances in a journal or on a biblical reference map marked with mile markers. As you walk, give thanks for all the blessings in your life including God's Son and your salvation.

- Parking is a premium at the mall this time of year. Avoid wasting time driving around looking for a close parking space. Take the one farthest away from the door and walk to your destination. Walking at a brisk pace in the cool weather will burn more calories for energy and save gas in your car.

- Before you actually purchase anything, walk around the entire mall or department store. As you walk, make a mental note of the stores or areas you will come back to on your next trip through.

- Share the spirit and good news of the season by caroling around your neighborhood. Walk from house to house with your family and friends, singing Christmas carols. You will

bleed those who hear your music, create a festive memory for those involved and receive the benefits of physical activity.

- If your city has neighborhoods that elaborately decorate the homes and front yards, park your car and walk through the area, admiring the beauty. Check with your local zoo or parks department to see if there are locations with special Christmas decorations you can walk through and enjoy.

Walking through your holidays will help keep your body strong, help you manage your weight, reduce your blood pressure and reduce stress. In the area of spiritual health, walking daily with Christ will strengthen your relationship with Him, give you a better attitude and keep your focus on the true meaning of the season.

Jesus came to earth as God's gift of salvation to the world. No greater gift could have been given. Praise God for the gift of salvation through Christ. Walk with Him through the month and into the new year.

Eranda Polk, a certified personal trainer and wellness coach, is the "Fit 4" coordinator at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville

KENTUCKY

Marion church feeds community each Thanksgiving Day

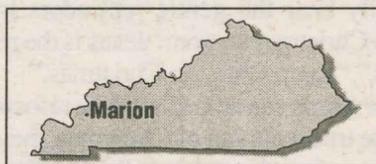
Continued from page 1

"This year we have about 70 volunteers helping with decorating, food deliveries, serving, waiting tables and clean up," Yandell said. "There are lots of little things that are needed to make this happen."

Showing one's thanks to God by offering a meal and fellowship to others is a wonderful magnet, Yandell noted. The event gives both volunteers and participants a great perspective on the true purpose of the holiday, he said.

"We have several families in our church who have actually stopped, rescheduled or postponed having a Thanksgiving Day meal in their home so they can come help with this event on Thanksgiving Day," Yandell said.

Pastor Clarke said the event has



been a terrific way to minister in the community and build strong fellowship within the congregation.

It also has attracted people from other churches who want to participate in the ministry, he added. "We've had people from other churches call and say, 'We want to be a part of this. What can we do?'"

As "empty nesters," the Yandells otherwise would spend most Thanksgiving meals alone. Preparing a typical Thanksgiving dinner, with turkey and all the trimmings, for two people is neither economical nor practical, he noted, and many other residents who come to the community dinner are in the same situation.

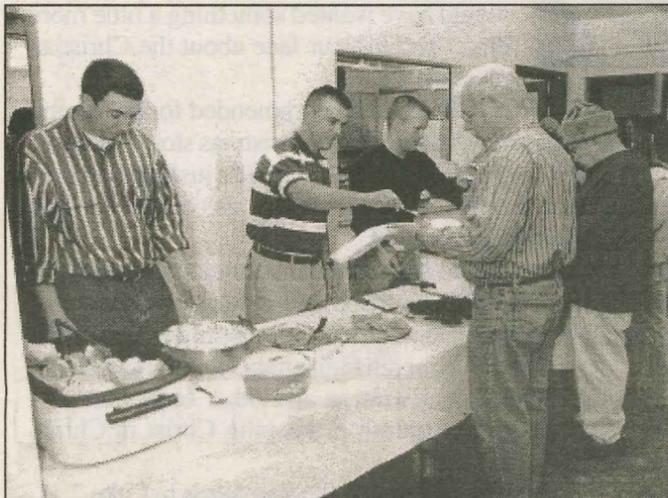
This Thanksgiving, however, the Yandells' son came in for the holiday. "One of the reasons he came is that he wanted to help with this event because he'd heard us talking about it."

Marion Baptist makes an extra effort to invite public service employees such as police, firefighters, deputies, ambulance and other emergency personnel.

"Often emergency personnel don't have time to go home for dinner, but they can get free long enough to come by the church for the community dinner. Anyone who wants to come by is just welcome to join in," Yandell said.

THANKSGIVING MINISTRY

Todd Ojeda (left), Denis Hodge (center) and Chris Yandell help fill carryout boxes for delivery during the community Thanksgiving dinner at Marion Baptist Church. Members delivered approximately 100 meals to shut-ins and other area residents who couldn't make it to the church fellowship hall. (Photo by Keith Todd)



Here's my two cents

Southern Baptist International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin is asking us, "Would you give two cents for each lost person in the world?" That's what this year's \$125 million Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal represents, two cents per lost person in the world.

One way to look at this is every \$10 you give to this year's LMCO represents 500 lost people; every \$100 you give represents 5,000 lost people; every \$1,000 represents 50,000 lost people; every \$10,000 represents 500,000 lost people; and every \$20,000 represents one million lost people. Surely each of us Kentucky Baptists individually can give at least \$10, and some of us can give much, much more. Many of our churches could collect from its members from \$20,000 to \$100,000. Think of that, an individual, couple or church giving an amount that represents one to five million lost people! Another way to look at this is by whatever amount you give you will be having a part in reaching all of the 6.2 billion lost people in the world.

When Lottie Moon appealed for the first offering in 1888, enough was received to send three missionaries to join her in China. Today, China has 1.26 billion people, of

which only 7 percent are considered Christians. Another 42 percent are considered non-religious, and the remaining 51 percent are Buddhists, atheists, Taoists or Muslims. This year, more than 7 million Chinese will die without Christ. What a tremendous challenge we have in China, not to mention the challenge we have in the rest of the world.

KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

I join IMB President Jerry Rankin in asking you to look beyond your personal priorities and lifestyles and to give generously and sacrificially to the LMCO to send out missionaries to reach China and the world for Christ. My wife and I are going to give more this year than ever before, and I encourage you prayerfully to do the same.

If you are 70 years old or older, you also should consider starting now a plan that will keep making your annual LMCO contribution beyond your lifetime. Call us to discover how. There is no cost or obligation.

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

While he claims not to have any cooking skills of his own, Yandell has concluded that cooking for a large group is actually easier than cooking for one family.

"We farm out the work in such a way that it's really efficient. We asked people in the church to help with desserts. I thought that if we got 10 or 12 cakes we'd be in good shape. We had more than 20 people sign up to bring cakes, and many will bring more than one," Yandell said.

In addition to members cooking and baking, the church gets some outside help.

"A friend of Margie's is a food services instructor at an area vocational school," Yandell said. "She helps by cooking the turkey. We bought about 70 pounds of turkey this year."

Clarke said that while the event has grown, its cost to the church is minimal because most food items are do-

nated. "It probably won't cost more than a maximum of \$500."

The community Thanksgiving Day dinner is a lot of work, but Yandell says it's also a lot of fun and the fellowship it generates is more than worthwhile.

"From both a church family and community point of view, it's just really a great thing to be doing," Yandell said. "To share this wonderful day with so many people is just fantastic. It really helps you to take Thanksgiving to heart. It's what Thanksgiving is about."

SBC YOUTH GROUPS NEEDED

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Campbellsville expanding Louisville center

People living in the Greater Louisville area, including Bardstown, LaGrange, Mt. Washington, Shelbyville, Shepherdsville and Taylorsville and across the river in Southern Indiana will have an opportunity to take coursework from Campbellsville University beginning in January.

For the past few years, Campbellsville's program has been located at St. Matthews Baptist Church. We deeply appreciate the church and its pastor, Les Hollon, for providing the university with academic space. We now are expanding our program by moving it to the third floor of the Bardstown Road Business Centre located at the intersection of Bardstown Road and Breckenridge Lane.

As we seek to expand our academic offerings in the Greater Louisville area, we are not seeking to duplicate what is being offered already. We are coming to offer adult learners the opportunity to better themselves and their own marketability through Campbellsville University's Louisville program. Education, particularly one that is Christ-centered, is a great way to get ahead. The innovative, convenient and affordable program we are designing for our Louisville

program should be of interest to many Kentucky Baptists.

Campbellsville University will offer the associate's degree in administrative technology and general studies; bachelor's degree programs in organizational management and pastoral ministry; and master's degree coursework in the-

ology. The university anticipates offering its master's degree programs in business administration and education, already being offered at its Campbellsville campus, sometime in the near future.

At Campbellsville University's Louisville center, classes will be offered beginning in January at convenient and flexible hours—after work hours during the weekday and on Saturdays. Open houses and

registration information will be announced soon.

For more information, contact the center's director, Jim Woolums, at (502) 753-0264, or Karla Deaton, of the office of admissions, at (800) 264-6014, ext. 5078 or at krdeaton@campbellsville.edu.

Michael V. Carter is president of Campbellsville University, a Kentucky Baptist Convention affiliated institution of 1,811 students. Please contact him at president@campbellsville.edu.

CAMPBELLVILLE UNIVERSITY



Michael Carter

SMILE

Hope

By Robert Dunston

This year Norma Dunston, secretary for Cumberland College's religion and philosophy department, again has edited a booklet of devotionals for the Advent season.

As writers she selected a variety of Cumberland College alumni who are engaged in ministry. Each week we will print one of the devotionals to help you prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth.

Don Mantooh, a 1967 Cumberland graduate, wrote this week's devotional on hope. Mantooh currently serves as pastor of First Baptist Church of Morehead and as president for the Morehead-area Habitat for Humanity. His devotional is based on Hebrews 11:1-2.

"The wisdom of this world says that all things come and go. That which rises to the surface of life today may just as easily slip back into the hidden currents of nature and history tomorrow. The hope of the world is that things will be a little bit better with the next season or the next time around.

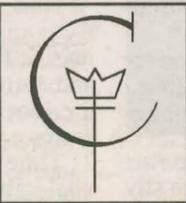
"The hope of every farmer, those closest to the earth, is that the unmanageable elements of nature will be more cooperative than destruc-

tive, more friendly than hostile. Hope is for a better year next year. There is a reality here that touches all of us. We share a commonality of field and mountain, of rain and drought, of prosperity and famine. For each of us, the cycles of life that call for planting and harvesting are no more persistent than the cycles of life and death, togetherness and separation, health and sickness. The wisdom of the world says all things come and go.

"In 'Weavings,' John Mogabgab says, 'How different are the rhythm and texture of biblical hope. In biblical experience hope draws sustenance not from predictable, if turbulent, cycles of nature and history but from the God Who is Lord of both.' "As people of faith, our hope rests with the God Who is with us in Christ, the God Who creates and saves, the God Who does not come and go."

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

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



Kudzu



Doug Marlette

For Heaven's Sake



Mike Morgan

Bible Crossword

Across

- 1 Chop down (as a tree)
- 4 Prong
- 8 "without him was not any thing" (John 1:3)
- 12 Gershwin
- 13 Golf club
- 14 "We ought to ___ God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)
- 15 Captain of the Canaanites (Judges 4:2)
- 17 Member of an ancient Jewish sect
- 19 "the wicked ___ their bow" (Psalm 11:2)
- 21 Wales from a whip
- 22 Traveled with Paul to Syria and Cilicia
- 25 Cain was his uncle
- 27 Blue (Sp.)
- 28 Large pitcher
- 29 In this manner
- 32 "I am like a broken ___" (Psalm 31:12)
- 34 Begat by Mizraim (Genesis 10:13)
- 36 Time zone (abbr.)
- 37 To tilt to one side, as a ship
- 39 Machete
- 40 Splendor
- 41 He led 10,000 men down Mt. Tabor
- 42 "There went up ___ from the earth" (Genesis 2:6)
- 45 Chinese monetary unit
- 47 Word repeated in the Psalms (pl.)
- 49 "Sing ___ to the Lord God" (Judges 5:3)
- 53 Navigate
- 54 Shortly
- 56 Street
- 57 Ancient kingdom at the head of the Persian Gulf
- 58 Writes
- 59 "But the poor man had nothing, save one little ___" (2 Samuel 12:3)

Down

- 1 Pronoun
- 2 Of the family of the Erites (Numbers 26:16)
- 3 Linking verb
- 4 Turbans (KJV usage)
- 5 Middle Eastern country
- 6 What you should just say
- 7 Compass dir.

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53					54	55				56		
57						58					59	

- 8 When he died at 120 his vision was most likely 20/20
- 9 He offered a "more excellent sacrifice" (Hebrews 11:4)
- 10 Impression
- 11 Notices
- 16 Belonging to a child of Shobal (Genesis 36:23)
- 18 Promised
- 20 ___ point
- 22 "He will ... hear their cry and will ___ them" (Psalm 145:19)

- 23 Causes to become (suffix)
- 24 "not fulfill the ___ of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16)
- 26 Tidy
- 28 "they came to ___, where were twelve wells" (Exodus 15:27)
- 29 Love (Lat.)
- 30 Feminine name
- 31 In a rage
- 33 City on the Red Sea, in the land of Edom (2 Chronicles 8:17)
- 35 River of Damascus (2 Kings 5:12)

Last week's solution

H	O	L	E	A	W	L	M	A	R	A		
A	D	A	R	L	I	E	O	V	E	N		
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Are these your cookies?



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

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Merry Christmas!



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MISSIONS

Young missionaries brave hardships to share gospel

"Most of the people of Burkina Faso don't know who the Marensé are, but God knows who they are."

Southern Baptist 'journeyman' missionary Cory Wilson

Continued from page 1

them know I'm OK," she said. "I know they are worried about me."

Miller serves on a team with several Southern Baptist International Mission Board "journeymen" (a designation for young adults serving two years) and International Service Corps missionaries in Burkina Faso, West Africa. Their goal: taking the good news of God's love to every Marensé village in the next two years.

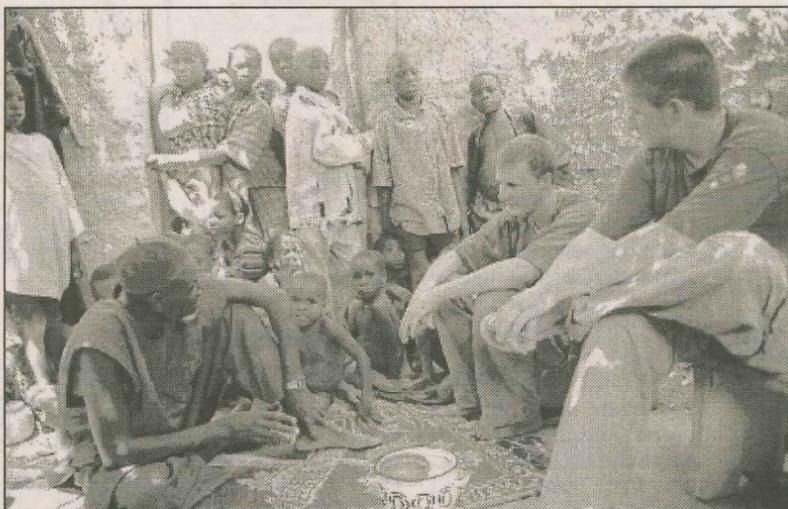
For now, she waits impatiently at the house of missionaries David and Tami Wood, who provide a place of support for the Marensé team when they need it.

The Woods oversee the team's work and give occasional advice, but the journeymen carry their load of responsibility. On a typical day, the Woods' place looks more like Grand Central Station with journeymen, summer missionaries and an ISC missionary coming and going, picking up supplies, medicine, catching up on e-mail, taking a rare shower or savoring a home-cooked meal.

Like racecars at a track, they come in, get fueled up and hit the road running.

If all goes as planned, all 23 Marensé villages will have heard the gospel by December 2004.

"They live a rough life, but they



CLOSED DOOR Southern Baptist Journeymen Cory Wilson (center) and Paul Preedy ask the chief of Seregueri village to allow a missionary team to stay there for a week. The chief, a professing Muslim, refused their request and politely asked the team to leave. (BP photo by Warren Johnson)



That all peoples may know Him

are doing what God has called them to do," Wood said.

The team may go a couple of days

wearing the same dusty clothes. Hospitals and main roads can be more than an hour away. Showers come in the form of a bucket of water drawn from a well and a bar of soap.

Water must be guzzled throughout the day to avoid dehydration. Noisy goats and roosters send out morning wake-up calls. For the goats, this can be any time after sundown.

The Marensé people do not have a Bible in their own language. Someone first had to learn their language and take the gospel to them.

Cory Wilson was one of the first of the journeymen to accept this challenge nearly two years ago.

"Most of the people of Burkina Faso don't know who the Marensé are, but God knows who they are," he said.

Wilson described his first week in the village as the scariest feeling of his life.

"When I first got out here, it

seemed like an impossible task," he said. "Where do you start?" he thought. "I don't know where all these people are. I'm horrible at language learning."

Since then, Wilson has learned to navigate confusing, winding dirt roads that make the streets of New York seem simple. He can politely debate village politics with the elders, make a stout tea and enjoy a little goat meat. But more importantly, Wilson has helped lead 12 Marensé in his village to Christ.

God comes in many forms to these missionaries. He's been a road map, a Healer in times of sickness and fatigue, and a Companion in the loneliest times when everyone seems a world away.

Time alone with God provides vital stability in an unstable environment, said Katie Boren, a journeyman who lives in the village of Tamlargo.

"It's not just about having your quiet time every day because it is the right thing to do," she said. "Here, it is a matter of survival."

As Boren retreats to her special "high place"—a rocky hill overlooking her village—she writes in her journal, prays and reads Scripture. Boren knows she's in the right place for now.

"As uncomfortable as it is, there is nowhere more comfortable than in His (God's) will," she said. "If it is here forever, I know I won't be happy anywhere else."

She never meets a stranger

I have tremendous admiration for people who never meet a stranger. My wife and daughter have that gift, but I was apparently in the wrong line when that gift was being presented.

On hundreds of occasions I have watched those who love to mix and mingle. They seemingly can discuss any subject and have nearly everything in common with those to whom they are talking. Though I have made a study of it, I have never been able to develop such a capacity.

It is particularly difficult to understand how some students can be so comfortable with strangers. We have one such student who loves to meet and talk with everyone, and I do mean everyone! When "Gladys" (not her real name) came to us more than four years ago, we were told that she was "too social." That was an understatement! Gladys came to Oneida after failing the seventh grade. She had been raised by her grandparents since the age of three and had been in private Christian schools most of her life.

While Gladys was not a behavior problem, she struggled academically. Her seventh grade was basically a disaster. A family friend who had worked at Oneida told the grandparents about our tutoring program. Gladys had mixed emotions about traveling hundreds of miles to attend boarding school.

Her grandparents said Gladys was strong-willed and "didn't always do what she was told to do." But she had never been in any serious trouble and had never been involved with drugs or alcohol. From the first quarter here, her grades improved. After testing Gladys, we determined that she did not need to be in the tutoring lab. Her scores indicated she was weakest in math, but she

has been on the honor roll nearly every quarter.

Gladys is very musically gifted. She enjoys being in our band, is an accomplished pianist and sings in our school choir. The first year she was in the choir, she nearly drove us batty talking so much. From the time she got on the bus until we returned to campus, she talked. Most churches provide our noon meal, usually a potluck dinner. Most of our students sit together, but not Gladys. She nearly always sits with an adult church member.

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Actually, she is a great ambassador for our school. She is quick to tell all who will listen about how her grades have improved and how much she loves Oneida.

When we have visitors on campus, Gladys is always excited to meet them. At mealtimes Gladys takes one look across the dining room and heads for the guests who are here.

My wife has taken her to the nursing home to visit with the residents. Many students are somewhat reluctant to talk with the residents, but not Gladys. She can strike up a conversation with just about anyone, and they always appreciate her visit.

When Gladys enrolled, she told us she wanted to make better grades and she wanted to control her temper. She has done well with both of her goals. We have never seen much of a temper unless someone tries to crowd her space, especially when she is doing what she is supposed to be doing. She is a good worker, and most of the adults who work with her see her as a kind, compassionate and thoughtful person.

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

Making choices from the heart

"If you have a heart for missions, you'll make choices. It is not a matter of chance," Bob Blevins told a recent Clear Creek chapel audience.

Bob and Oakie Blevins, 1974 graduates, have made choices to share the good news in mission settings since their conversion in the early '60s. West Virginia natives with a Primitive Baptist background, they went to Ohio for work. Kentucky Baptists reached out to them. "Our first job as Christians was on the church missions committee," Oakie said. "The goal was to start a new work in Farmersville, Ohio. If we were unwilling to go 15 miles, we could have never gone to Africa."

Without seminary training a career mission appointment was impossible, so they went as volunteers to Grenada on a two-year assignment. An appointment to Namibia came after seminary graduation. Their primary task was to translate Bible study materials into six languages and start new work. Beginning with four churches, they left the country with 76 churches and missions. In one 14-month period they established 28 Sunday schools. The mission force grew to 10 couples, but now only one missionary couple

works in Namibia. "We retired," Oakie said. "Someone has to answer the call and help meet the need."

Retirement plans in 1999 included a Florida residence and travel in a motor home, doing mission work at their convenience. Oakie quoted Chet Huntley, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans." In

May 2001 they went to the top of Bradlow Mountain in McDowell County, W.Va., and prayed for God to use them to start a church. The opportunity came in the form of a nightclub, closed for seven years. "It had three bars, restaurant, pool room, gambling room and four bedrooms," Bob recalled. "We signed a lease purchase for \$50,000 with the balance due by January 2003." Before Thanksgiving, they had enough, with \$10,000 extra. At the first service a woman was saved, and Bob rarely preaches a service without eight to 10 lost people in the congregation. Bob and Oakie Blevins continue making choices in response to a heart for missions. What kind of choices will we make in this season of mission emphasis?

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

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

Answering the call

Baptists help Hong Kong Christians take gospel to India

ANDHRA PRADHESH, India (BP)—An elderly woman pushes her way to the front of the line. She bows her head and murmurs something in Telugu to the Chinese man praying at the front.

She is a devout woman. Evidence of her dedication and devotion, as well as blessing, is symbolized by the red dot on her forehead. She prays and offers sacrifices daily to a wide variety of gods and idols. She even came to tonight's gospel meeting to receive a blessing from the residing priest.

However, this Chinese man is different from the Hindu priests she knows. This man cannot speak her language, yet there is an unexplainable bond. He gently touches the woman's head and prays.

"Father, this woman reminds me of my own family back in Hong Kong—worshiping anything in search of the one true God," the man says through tears. "Even Hindu followers have come here to ask for blessings from You. This woman doesn't know which god is the true God; she is just fighting for a blessing. Bless her tonight as only You can. Amen."

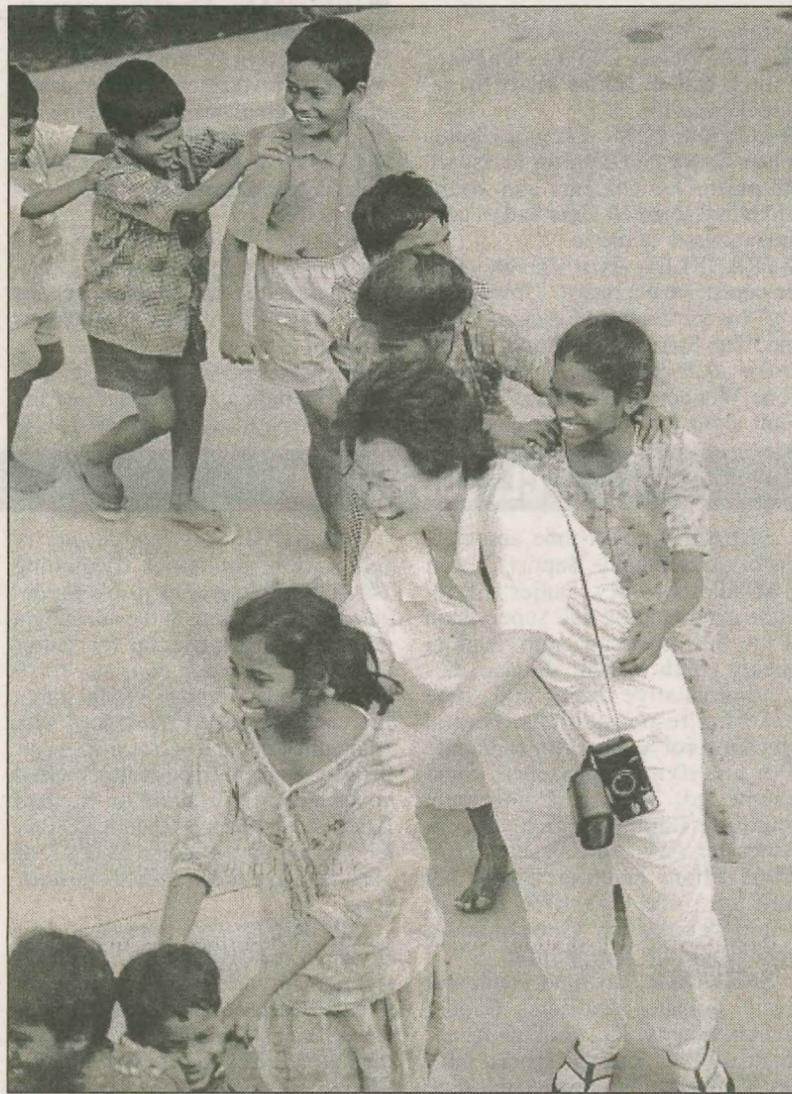
The woman walks away with a feeling of warmth as the Chinese man leans over to his wife and whispers, "I had no idea it was also like this in other parts of the world," he says about the masses of people without Christ. "I would not have missed this missions trip for the world."

A growing movement

A growing volunteer missions movement among Chinese Christians living in Hong Kong keeps church members busy during their holiday breaks. One Hong Kong Baptist pastor said in the last two years his church has sent out more volunteer missionaries than ever before. This year alone, his church sponsored 10 short-term trips to mainland China and Taiwan.

This particular trip is a little different, however. Instead of carrying the gospel message to fellow Chinese, this group of 14 Hong Kong Christians ventured into a Third-World community in southern India. Two weeks of playing with 150 children in a children's home, visiting villages and speaking at gospel meetings led to a new awareness in Christ.

"This is so different than other mission trips I have taken. We cannot speak their language here, and the culture is so different," "Lisa Tong" says. (Real names are not used in this article to protect Chinese Christians.) "You have no idea what you are getting yourself into and then it just hits you: You are here to speak about God's love, and His



PLAYING GAMES Chinese volunteers may have displayed typical Chinese reserve when they arrived in India, but by the end of the trip they were hugging kids, walking around holding hands with them and dancing and playing games. (BP photos)

love just comes shining through."

Tong and her teammates walk daily through the rice paddies on their way to visit the homes of their new Indian friends. They speak of how poor the country is and how they have never seen poverty such as this. At the small, thatch-roofed home, the host family offers a glass of warm water-buffalo milk—the best drink they can offer. Before the team members leave the home, they pray for the family and share about Christ.

"You would never have this reaction in Hong Kong or China," Tong says.

"There is more opportunity to speak the gospel here."

Strategy for the nations

A Southern Baptist worker who arranged the cross-cultural opportunity thinks this exact experience is what will help spread the gospel to "all" nations.

"When you take the gospel to a different culture, it makes you think more about how to communicate the gospel; it gives you new insights; and you grow in your love for people—all people," he says. "You begin to love and share with people you wouldn't normally share with. That's when you experience God's love in a different way."

Watching the transformation of the team from reserved Chinese to expressive "big brothers and sisters" of the children in the children's home is what cross-cultural missions is all about.

"Chinese culture is so reserved; they are not comfortable with or free to express emotion," the Baptist worker says. "By the end of this trip to India, the team is hugging kids, smiling and walking around holding hands with kids, and they feel comfortable talking to almost anyone."

"When they go back to Hong Kong, those on this team will be more involved in evangelism because of what they've learned here."

Chinese Baptist pastor "Jerry Yau" couldn't agree more. He encourages all of his church members to take a mission trip.

Bolder, stronger

"When Christians get involved in missions and preach the gospel and then come back to our church, they seem to get more involved," Yau says.

"They are bolder in their walk," he adds. "Their heart is stronger for God, and they want to preach the gospel locally. We see that they begin to openly influence others around them."

"In a city such as Hong Kong where there are only 300,000 Christians—most of (whom) are first generation—this new-found fire for the gospel is going to make all of the difference."

Preaching professor teaches new ways to tell old story

By Greg Garrison
Religion News Service

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (RNS)—The Beeson Divinity School student preacher stepped into the pulpit, the theatrical lights shining on her face, her fellow students and her professor watching her and taking notes.

Anna Teel, a master of divinity student from Red Banks, Miss., wore a veil and a long frock for a series of dramatic monologues in which she portrayed characters from various biblical scenes.

After one scene, she removed her veil. After another, she removed the frock, revealing a black dress that placed her back in the modern era for the conclusion of her message. She finished by singing "To Know Him Is to Love Him," a 1958 pop song by the Teddy Bears.

When done, preaching professor Robert Smith took center stage.

"Was that a sermon?" he asked. "She has three outfits on. What makes it a sermon? This was not what you would hear from the pulpit of a typical church."

When it comes to teaching preaching, Beeson Divinity School students at Samford University find that Smith offers a range of experience and teaching knowledge, said Beeson Dean Timothy George. "He is a gifted preacher."

Teel's fellow students began to offer their input. Indeed, it was a sermon, although unusual in its approach, they said.

Then Smith offered praise and a critique. "An enormous amount of research was done for this sermon, without highlighting it," he said. "You have a gift of God to teach."

He wished she hadn't read her sermon. "It could have been more effective by just talking to us," he said.

"A lot of doctrine was in this sermon," he said. He praised her description of the smell of her father's shirt. "When I preach, I must call upon all five senses," Smith said. But he thought she should have explored her chosen biblical text a bit further. "We need to live in the text long enough," he said. "We need to use all the imagery that's there."

Smith joined Beeson Divinity School in 1997 as its first black full-time faculty member, after serving as associate professor of preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, where he earned his doctorate in homiletics and theology.

Smith's students say he demonstrates to them a command of an unusual array of preaching styles, from traditional black narrative to academic and scholarly. He coaches them one-on-one outside the classroom. He makes the students listen to sermons in different styles and asks them to incorporate what works.

"He challenges us to take what we are not good at and get better," Teel said.

"We want to give them the basics," Smith said. "I want them to understand preaching has a history, like all the other disciplines. I want them to have an overall understanding of what preaching is all about. I want them to be exposed to a variety of voices, so they can be molded and shaped to find their own voice."

But he does have some strict ground rules for preaching.

"I don't like a Christless sermon, with no echo, no whisper of the person of Christ at all," he said. "I don't like sermons that lie to people, with prosperity theology. I don't like sermons in which someone gets on a platform and tells us their pet peeves."

Smith said he teaches the importance of putting both head and heart into a sermon. "Inspiration and information have to be wedded together," he said.

Smith said he works to instill passion and versatility in student preachers. "Passion has nothing to do with volume," he said.

Such passion is displayed in both versatility and boldness, he said, recalling having to preach once when the lights went out. "What do we do? Say, 'Sorry, there's no service today?' ... If the lights have gone out, stand up and preach."

PEOPLE

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

By Nell Bruce

As the Christmas season arrives, it also is important to remember the rest of the story—not just the manger, but the cross.

I would encourage each of us to stop at the foot of the cross each day.

As Christians, may we relive the first experience of our hearts being touched by Jesus' love.

For those who never have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, that relationship is available if you will stand beneath the cross of Jesus and experience the power of the blood of Jesus that washes away sins. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross also opened heaven's throne room door for us to join Him in intercession.

The Bible tells us Jesus is seated on His throne next to God the Father, making intercession for us.

Thank you, Father, for giving your Son so we can come into Your presence (Colossians 1:20).

We must not forget the pain God experienced when Jesus called out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34).

Forgive us, Father, for being so self-centered with our time on earth that we fail to thank You daily for Your willingness to suffer and experience the pain of Jesus in order to open the throne room door that we may come in day or night and have fellowship with You as Your children.

Thank you, Jesus, for the experience of the cross that opens the throne room door for everyone who seeks forgiveness from You and accepts You as Lord and Savior.

Nell Bruce is prayer consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention missions growth team

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by staff

■ **CADIZ**—Ponderosa Church held a dedication service Nov. 24 for an addition to the church facility.

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—David Preston resigned as minister to students at Campbellsville Church effective Nov. 24.

Palestine Church called Danny Pace as pastor. He previously was pastor of Gamaliel Church.

Saloma Church will present the cantata "Color It Christmas" under the direction of Jason Dunbar, Dec. 8, 6 p.m. The children and youth will present a Christmas program Dec. 15, 6 p.m. and Dec. 18, 7 p.m. For information, call (270) 789-0082.

■ **CENTRAL CITY**—Calvary Church called James Watt Sr. as associate pastor.

■ **COVINGTON**—Latonia Church called Casey Cockerahm as associate pastor for students and young adults and Randall Umstead as part-time minister of music.

■ **FRANKLIN**—First Church's music ministry will present "Unwrap the Joy" by the Young Musicians Choir and "The Spirit of Christmas" by the senior adult choir Dec. 8, 6:30 p.m.; "The Wonder of Christmas" by the adult choir Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m.; and

"Light a Candle" by the youth choir, signing group and youth handbell choir Dec. 22, 6:30 p.m. Don Phillips is minister of music.

■ **HINDMAN**—First Church recently presented ministry scholarships to five students in memory of Dale Niswonger, a bivocational interim pastor of several churches, who died in February. Mike Caudill is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Bethany Church called Steve Dwinells as pastor effective Dec. 1.

Carlisle Avenue Church will present "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," featuring the adult and children's choirs Dec. 15, 10:45 a.m. Shawn Merithew is pastor.

Crescent Hill Church called Winford Hendrix as intentional interim/transition pastor effective Jan. 15. He

previously was transition pastor of Columbia Church in Falls Church, Va.

■ **MARION**—Second Church ordained Gary Murray to the gospel ministry Dec. 1. He is pastor of Good Hope Church in Smithland.

■ **MAYFIELD**—Fairview Church recently called Mark Fields as associate minister/manager of music. Leroy Brent is pastor.

■ **RUSSELL SPRINGS**—Clearfork Church held revival services Nov. 4-8 with John Wilson as evangelist. Joe Sullivan is pastor.

Friendship Church held revival services Nov. 3-8 with Robbie Harris as evangelist.

■ **RUSSELLVILLE**—First Church honored Polly Sansom for 25 years of service as church secretary. Randall Neal is pastor.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Religious books (thousands). Send e-mail for list: dudley@dam.net. Evangelist Bill Dudley, 1116 Lacy Drive, Lebanon, MO 65536. (417) 532-2665.

FOR SALE: Two-story duplex in original Highlands in Louisville. Cash flow investor opportunity. Two 1-bedroom apartments, updated with new features. Easy to own—special programs. Asking \$74,900. Live in one; renter in other pays the mortgage. Call Chuck, Homebase Real Estate, (502) 421-8987, 558-4757.

HEALTHCARE: Pre-existing conditions accepted. Non-insurance solution for hospitals, doctors, medications, vision, dental, hearing and more. Representatives needed. \$54.95/month per family. (888) 645-4559. www.healthplanprovider.net; www.braxtonenterprises.net ceo6660.

NEEDED: PA system for evangelist Wesley. Powerful amplifiers, microphones, tape duplicator. (859) 260-8800. wesleypaul@juno.com.

SEEKING: Leonardtown Baptist Church in southern Maryland is accepting resumés for a full-time youth pastor. Ministry description available at www.leonardtownbaptist.org in December. Send resumés to: Leonardtown Baptist Church, PO Box 1757, Leonardtown, MD 20650, Attn: Youth Pastor Search Committee, or e-mail to: search@leonardtownbaptist.org.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music/youth. Please send resumés to: Otter Creek First Baptist Church, 13000 Quail Run Drive, Little Rock, AR 72210, Attn: Martha Owens.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for First Baptist Church, Greenville, Ky. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 145 S Main St., Greenville, KY 42345.

SEEKING: Worship leader for growing church with both contemporary and traditional worship in the Northern Kentucky area. Please send resumés to: First Baptist Church Cold Spring, 4410 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076, Attn: Carol Hitch; or send via e-mail to: hitchcarol@hotmail.com. No phone calls please.

SEEKING: Full-time or bivocational pastor for small country church located in western Kentucky near Fort Campbell. Send resumés with references to: Pastor Search Committee, Salem Baptist Church, 2828 Elmo Road, Pembroke, KY 42266.

SEEKING: Full-time associate pastor for Southside Baptist Church in Middlesboro, Ky. Duties will include song leading and supervision of the full music program, leading weekly youth worship service, daily administrative duties and some preaching responsibilities. Formal education not required for candidate with qualifying experience. Send resumés to: Search Committee, Southside Baptist Church, 410 W Doncaster Ave., Middlesboro, KY 40965. Phone inquiries: Pastor Jay Sulfridge, (606) 248-4094. E-mail: pastorj@eastky.net. Video or audio tapes would be very helpful.

SEEKING: Part-time youth and music minister for First Baptist Church, Liberty, Ky. Looking for individual called into this special ministry. Could, in time, turn into full-time position. Send resumés to: Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 58, Liberty, KY 42539. Phone: (606) 787-7360.

SEEKING: The Baptist Association of Greater Cincinnati is seeking names of individuals for the position of associational missionary. Please send resumés to: Baptist Association of Greater Cincinnati, 135 Williams St., Cincinnati, OH 45215, Attn: Bill Hounshell, search team chairman, or e-mail to: billnewhope@fuse.net.

SEEKING: Part-time, bivocational youth pastor for Georgetown Baptist Church, Georgetown, Ohio. GBC is a growing church currently averaging 100 in morning worship service. There are approximately 15 to 20 youth currently attending. There also is a parsonage available. Georgetown is located approximately 35 miles east of Cincinnati and 25 miles northwest of Maysville, Ky. Submit resumés to: Georgetown Baptist Church, 794 S Main St., Georgetown, OH 45121, Attn: Youth Pastor Search Committee. E-mail to philipshcraft@hotmail.com.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music. Growing church; blended worship style; Gene Snyder and Dixie Highway; \$150-\$200/week. Southminister Baptist Church, 11780 Tierney Drive, Louisville, KY 40272. Send resumés or contact office for appointment: (502) 933-2761.

SEEKING: Full-time minister to youth. Youth group averages 25-30. Please send resumés to: Search Committee, FBC Clinton, 320 Mayfield Drive, Clinton, KY 42031.

SEEKING: Part-time director of senior adult ministries (beginning 2003). Position is responsible for developing, managing and evaluating a comprehensive program for senior adults. Work week consists of 20 hours (Sunday through Wednesday). Individual must be experienced with adult ministries and be a current member of a Southern Baptist church. Send cover letter and resumés to: Richard Landers, First Baptist Church, PO Box 697, Richmond, KY 40476-0697, or via e-mail to rlanders@firstbaptistnet.com.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Boones Creek Baptist Church. Send resumés and video or audio tape to: Pastor Search Committee, Boones Creek Baptist Church, 185 N Cleveland Road, Lexington, KY 40509-9485.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of preschool/child development center director for Fern Creek Baptist Church. Send resumés to: FCBC, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291, Attn: Search Committee.

SEEKING: Energetic, growth-minded pastor for Henderson Memorial Baptist Church, a congregation with 385 resident members and a SS enrollment of 249. The church is located in an area with good growth potential. At least some seminary a plus. Please send resumés to: Henderson Memorial Baptist Church, 501 Noel Ave., Hopkinsville, KY 42240, Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

SEEKING: Fern Creek Baptist Child Development Center is looking for a teacher for the four-year-old preschool program. Hours are 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The Kentucky Cabinet of Health Services certifies our center. Requirements: College degree preferred—high school diploma required; experience working with preschool children a plus; love for children; ability to plan curriculum and activities; and ability to be flexible. Must be at least 18 years of age. Benefits: Competitive hourly wage; paid holidays; state-certified training provided; pleasant and positive work environment; possibility of extra hours, if desired. Interested individuals should contact Fern Creek Baptist Church, (502) 239-0316, or send resumés to PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291, Attn: Fern Creek Baptist Child Development Center.

SEEKING: A well-established, growing, rural church is seeking a part-time youth minister who will be energetic in leading and discipling our youth. Please send resumés to: Minister of Youth Search Committee, Persimmon Grove Baptist Church, PO Box 148, Alexandria, KY 41001.

SEEKING: Alexandria, KY minister of music for Fern Creek Baptist Church. Send resumés to: FCBC, PO Box 91146, Louisville, KY 40291, Attn: Search Committee.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church in downtown Ashland, Ky., is seeking two experienced associates to fill the positions of minister of music and spiritual formations and minister of youth and children. Each position requires a candidate who possesses organizational and people skills and is energetic and self-motivated. The minister of music and spiritual formations will be responsible for the overall music ministry of the church, and the development, promotion and direction of church education programs for all ages. The minister of youth and children will be responsible for the development, promotion and direction of programs for youth and children. Salaries based on education and experience. Please forward resumés to the appropriate search committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 787, Ashland, KY 41105-0787; e-mail to fbcashla@fbcashlandky.com; or fax to (606) 324-4344.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for First Twelve Mile Baptist Church. Send resumés to: Troy Richardson, 167-K Washington Trace, California, KY 41007.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor/minister for Grant's Lick Baptist Church, Campbell County, Ky. Send resumés to: Robert Miller (search committee chairman), 6098 Hissem Ave., Alexandria, KY 41001. Phone: (606) 635-7420.

SERVICE: America's Christian long distance. Free toll-free number; 4.9 cents/minute; 6-second increment billing; no contracts; online sign-up. www.talklongdistance.net, (888) 645-4559.

SERVICE: America's fastest growing Christian long distance company. No monthly service charge; 4.9 cents per minute; 6-second billing. Toll-free: (866) 587-8346. www.covenantphoneservice.com. Agent opportunity available.

Former pitcher: True identity found in God, not actions

HANNIBAL, Mo. (BP)—Accomplishments pale compared to belonging to God, former major league pitcher Dave Dravecky told a recent audience at Hannibal-LaGrange College.

"I learned that it's not what you do that matters most, it's who you are," said Dravecky, who pitched eight years in the majors during the 1980s for San Diego and San Francisco.

"If you are a Christian, you should know who you are—children of God—and that makes you more precious than anything," he said.

Dravecky was diagnosed with cancer in his pitching arm in 1988. "When you hear the word cancer, it changes everything," he said. "Cancer put life into perspective."

Despite predictions that he'd never pitch again, Dravecky went through surgery to remove the tumor and extensive rehabilitation. Ten months later, he was back on the playing field.

Dravecky pitched 93 pitches against the Cincinnati Reds, leading the Giants to a 4-3 win on Aug. 10, 1989. He authored a book based on his triumphant return titled "Comeback."

Then, five days later in Montreal, during the sixth inning, Dravecky's left arm broke with a snap that was heard throughout the stands. He announced his retirement following that game. The cancer had returned.

He endured more surgeries, radiation therapy and a painful staph infection that lasted 10 months. Doctors told him it was time to amputate his arm and shoulder. "At that point, I thought, 'Good, get this thing off. It's a nuisance. It's done nothing but cause me trouble for the last eight to 10 months,'" he recalled.

But the day after the surgery, when he looked in a hospital room mirror, he was shocked by the reality of his loss. "The thing that brought me more love than just about anything else in the universe was now gone, completely gone. I was spiraling down into clinical depression."

"After cancer, I had to face the question, 'How does Dave Dravecky define his true worth?'" he said.

Dravecky candidly described how both he and his wife suffered depression and went on medication to deal with their pain.

Dravecky said he had to return to eight years earlier when he had asked Christ into his life. "When I was 8 years old, I had a dream to become a Major League Baseball player. ... One dream may end, but there are other dreams to fulfill. Christ is what sustains me in my journey of life."

'Time to hope'

Art exhibit offers Jesus as answer to N.Y. tragedy

By Chris Herlinger
Religion News Service

NEW YORK (RNS)—In what has been a tough, sometimes difficult, season of commemoration for New York City, one gift has stood out for its quiet impact and astonishing beauty.

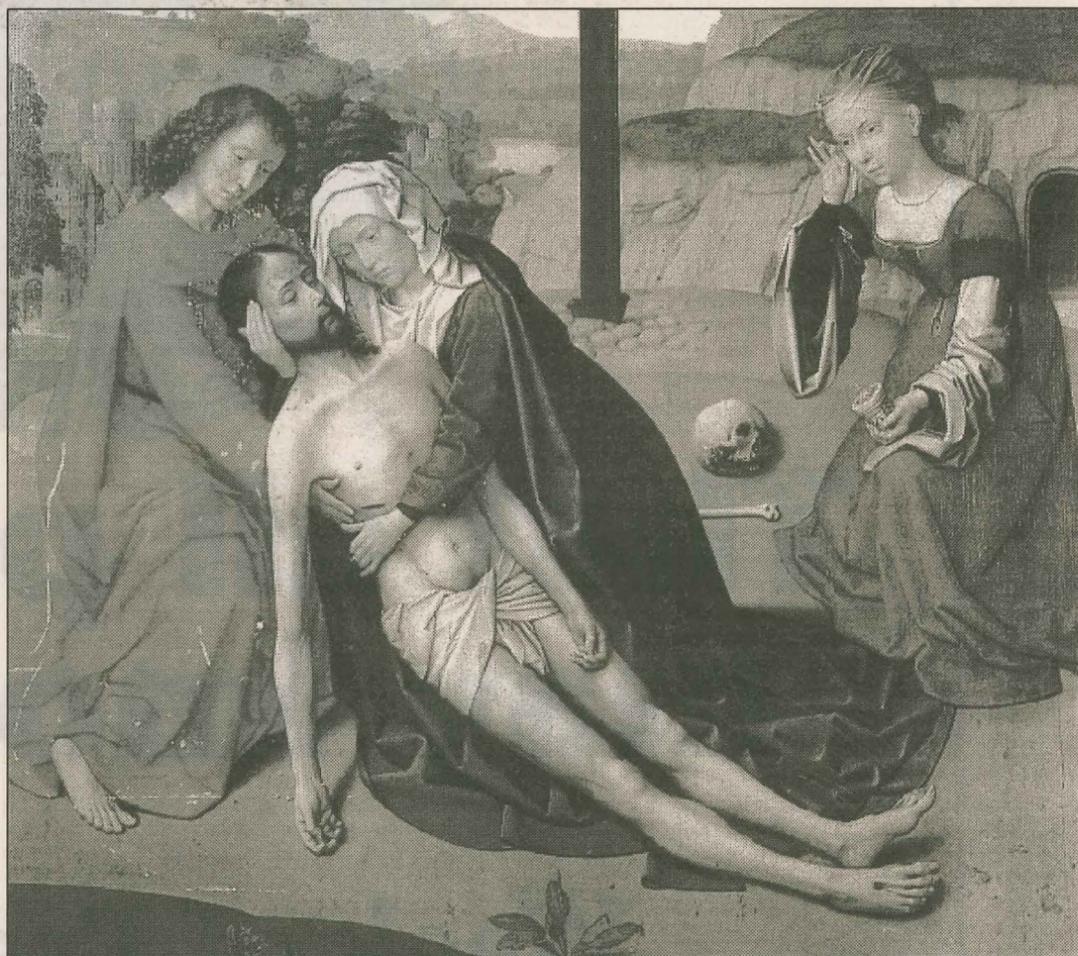
In the ambulatory surrounding the choir and main altar of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and in five of the cathedral's small chapels, are 100 pieces of rare religious art on loan from Castilla y Leon, the largest autonomous region in Spain.

The exhibit is striking in its diversity and rich in content, with pieces ranging from a Romanesque Bible dating from 1162 to several paintings by El Greco and Francisco Goya.

The exhibit, "Time to Hope," has provided New Yorkers the chance to see religious art in a setting befitting the theme: the hope that can emerge from tragedy.

The two-month exhibit, which recently was extended for another two weeks through Dec. 6, is unusual for a U.S. setting because of its overtly religious theme. Had it been exhibited in a museum, it might have gone under a more generic title, such as "Religious Treasures from Castilla and Leon."

But the Ages of Mankind Foundation, founded to conserve and promote the art found in the Roman Catholic cathedrals, churches and monasteries in Castilla y Leon, has always exhibited art around themes evoked by the



PIETA PAINTING: A 16th-century oil painting by Adrian Isenbrant, from the Church of San Gil in Burgos, Spain, is among the artworks contained in the exhibit "Time to Hope" at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. (Photos courtesy of The Ages of Mankind Foundation)

pieces themselves.

An evangelistic spirit also has been present in the 10 exhibits the foundation has produced since 1988. (All but two of those exhibits have been in Spain; the New York exhibit is the first outside of Europe.)

'No other reason for hope'

Make no mistake; the evangelism is pronounced. In depicting the life of Jesus through painting, sculpture, vestments, altarpieces, Bibles and manuscripts, the hope depicted in the exhibit is profoundly Christian.

Aside from belief in Jesus, the foundation says in a brochure accompanying the exhibit, "there is no other ultimate reason for hope."

Antonio Ignacio Melendez Alonso, the foundation's general secretary and the exhibit's curator, said the exhibit would still be a success were it shown in a museum.

"Our visitors can find an alternative interpretation: either religious or strictly artistic," he said. "We are equally satisfied in both cases, because it is important to offer beauty and some peace to such a gray world as ours."

A gift to New York

"Time to Hope," a compilation of art drawn from the previous "Ages of Mankind" exhibits, is intended expressly as a gift to New York in the wake of the Sept. 11 tragedy—"a reminder of the cause of hope for New York and for everybody," Melendez said. It has come as something of a surprise to the city's art critics and connoisseurs, who have been stunned by the exhibit's depth and range.

The day The New York Times critic Holland Cotter saw the exhibit, Cotter wrote later, he had the impres-

sion fellow visitors were thinking exactly as he was: "This? Here? How? It's one of those shows. All but unheralded, it seems to have dropped into place like an unbidden gift."

During a recent lunch hour at the cathedral, a steady flow of art lovers, tourists, students and those attending noon services at the cathedral took in the exhibit.

For those who love painting, there are numerous treasures, including a haunting depiction of Jesus by El Greco; for devotees of church history, there are astonishing curiosities, including a letter penned by the Spanish saint, Teresa of Avila.

Up close, many of the works are astonishing in their detail, such as the lifelike sculpture of Jesus by Gregorio Fernandez, dating from 1610 and once housed in a small parish church.

Ecumenical exhibit

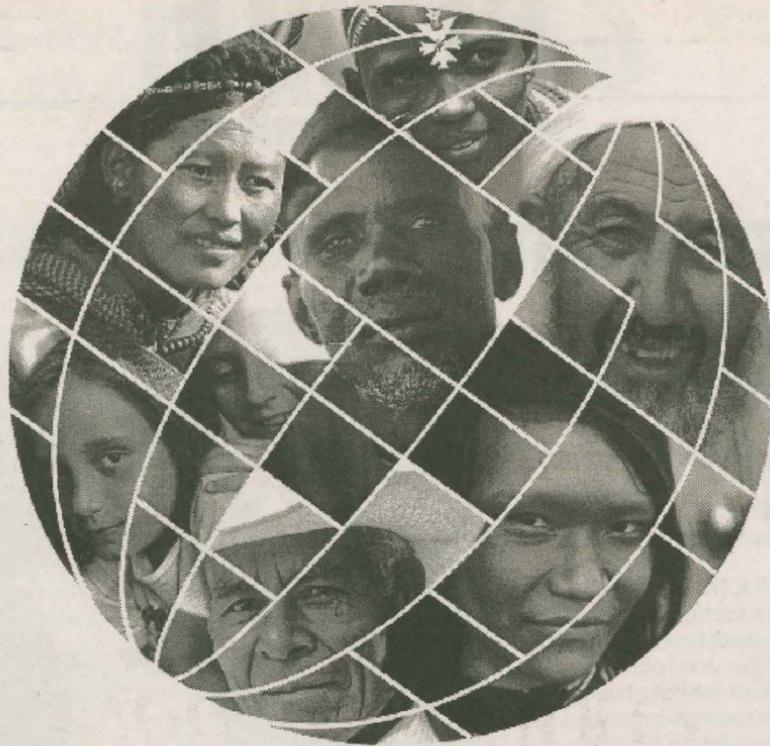
Some have asked why such a devoutly Catholic exhibit is being shown at an Episcopal cathedral. The foundation, in fact, looked for space in Catholic churches in New York but found that they had continuous services through the day and that space in the churches tended to be at a premium.

No matter. In the Cathedral of St. John the Divine's huge, cavernous space, Melendez said, "Time to Hope" has found a proper home, and all the better if it helps ecumenical relations. "In the end, Catholics and Episcopalians believe in the same Lord," he said.

What is most important is the art. "My wish is that visitors leave with their eyes full of beauty," Melendez said, "and take with them a little bit of peace in their hearts."



SCULPTURE Among the exhibit's sculptures is a 1610 polychrome wood image of Jesus by Gregorio Fernandez from the Diocesan Museum of Valladolid, Spain.



That all peoples may know Him

**Week of Prayer for
International Missions
and
International Mission Study
Dec. 1-8, 2002**

**Lottie Moon Christmas
Offering**

Offering goal: \$125 million